

## ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS AND LECTURERS

7 NORTHUMBERLAND STREET, LONDON WC2N 5RD TEL: 020-7930-6441 FAX: 020-7930-1359  
e-mail: info@atl.org.uk web site: http://www.atl.org.uk VAT REG NO 539 0866 17  
GENERAL SECRETARY Dr MARY BOUSTED B.A.(Hons) PhD



### ***Global Learning Strategy: A joint DFID/DCSF consultation on a strategy for schools***

***Response from the Association of Teachers and Lecturers***

***Date: 31 May 2010***

ATL, as a leading education union, recognises the link between education policy and our members' conditions of employment. Our evidence-based policy making enables us to campaign and negotiate from a position of strength. We champion good practice and achieve better working lives for our members.

We help our members as their careers develop through first-rate research, advice, information and legal support. Our 160,000 members – teachers, lecturers, headteachers and support staff – are empowered to get active locally and nationally. We are affiliated to the TUC, and work with government and employers by lobbying and through social partnership.

#### **ATL policy**

ATL believes that teachers as professionals must be recognised for their knowledge, expertise and judgement, at the level of the individual pupil and in articulating the role of education in increasing social justice. Within light national parameters, development of the education system should take place at a local level: the curriculum should be developed in partnership with local stakeholders; assessment should be carried out through local professional networks. Schools and colleges are increasingly encouraged to work collaboratively to offer excellent teaching and learning, and to support pupils' well-being, across a local area. Accountability mechanisms should be developed so that there is a proper balance of accountability to national government and the local community, which supports collaboration rather than competition.

#### **ATL's international approach**

ATL has a long and proud tradition of internationalism. We've supported sister education unions overseas, campaigned for more and better funding for education globally and worked to raise the awareness of our members of the impact of globalisation on the education sector in general and the profession in particular.

We live in one world. As never before, what we do affects others and what others do affects us. Education is crucial to ensuring that learners have the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to be effective global citizens and the education sector has a vital role to play in responding to the challenges of globalisation and to realising its benefits.

Our global vision for ATL is of an education union that recognises that responding to the global dimensions of education and to our work as a union will be central to our success. We actively engage with international partners in collaborative activities for mutual benefit, and seek to influence educational policy and practice both within the UK and internationally in support of universal, quality education that prepares learners for a globalised world.

As part of the development of ATL's international work, we are committed to increasing our influence on the global dimensions of educational policy and practice. These comprise domestic educational issues that have a global dimension, such as the importance of valuing overseas teaching experience, including volunteer placements, the mutual recognition and improved transparency of qualifications, supporting global learning within the curriculum and the level and quality of government funding and support for education for global citizenship.

### **ATL response**

ATL is broadly supportive of the global learning strategy and we are pleased that the October 2009 review cited in the consultation paper shows a strengthening in the teaching of global issues in schools. We hope that both departments are familiar with research the DEA has commissioned<sup>1</sup> showing public support for the necessity of global learning in schools, that the motivator global learning can provide aids teacher retention, and the strong contribution global learning can make to social goals.

Here we set out our views on some aspects of the strategy's proposals and discuss some of the work ATL has been contributing to this agenda. Attached are the key ATL documents relevant to this consultation, including *Our global future: ATL's international policy and strategy*.

### ***Principles behind the strategy***

ATL supports the definition of global learning as a 21<sup>st</sup> century curriculum which encourages learners in the UK to be aware of global issues, realising individual responsibilities in an interdependent world whilst having the confidence to take action as global citizens. It is apparent that at the heart of this lies the development of critical thinking.

ATL recognises the government's intention to enhance support for effective teaching with a global dimension. Empowering and enabling teachers' professional engagement with global learning is of course crucial to ensuring young people develop an understanding of interdependency in the world and to explaining complex individual identities whilst combating stereotyping and cultural misunderstanding. We are not surprised that DCSF's research data from 2009 shows teachers and leaders in schools recommending additional funding and other support for international work. ATL adds its voice to that call so other areas of school budgets are not sacrificed.

We strongly advocate education staff working in partnership within and amongst schools and are pleased to see this way of working threaded into the global learning strategy. Furthermore, the spirit of cooperation that partnership working involves, not only represents a value of the union movement to which ATL belongs, but also represents an ideal of global citizenship. Global learning in schools must convey the realpolitik of requiring collectivity.

We are pleased that the new Secretary of State for International Development, appointed since this strategy was produced, has made clear his commitment to development education in the UK. However, we are concerned that the cancellation of projects such as the School Global Gardens Network and training for nursery school teachers and outdoor education tutors sends the opposite signal.

---

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.dea.org.uk/resources/research.asp>

### ***A new governance structure***

ATL strongly endorses the proposed link between DfID and DfE being strengthened through a new joint governance structure. DfE will benefit from the knowledge of development issues and programmes that DfID will bring whilst DfID will benefit from closer integration with a department responsible for developing young people and preparing them for the world. If this, as the consultation paper suggests, can increase impact and streamline costs, then all the better for it.

A Global Learning Strategy for Schools Programme Board may provide a good focus on delivering the strategy's ambitions whilst proving an important internal advocate within each department. But we would urge the board to seek counsel from and engage with ourselves and others within the trade union movement on a regular basis, be that through the proposed advisory group or other new channels. We note that the ISOS report for the departments included on the consultation website highlights the need for 'More regular and systematic engagement with ... professional associations', yet its examples do not include any trade unions, who have an important role to play. It is essential that the intention that the board incorporates ministers from each department is fulfilled.

It is not clear at this stage whether the methods for evaluating impact of the strategy's programmes will be suitable and extensive enough. It is right that the outcomes to be tested include a stronger school leadership focus as passionate leaders have the ability to develop global learning coherently throughout a school and the potential to change a school's ethos. However, the strategy itself needs strengthening on how it will target leaders in order to reach such tipping points.

### ***Global learning and the curriculum***

It is right that for global learning to succeed, it must be at the heart of teachers' planning and not be an add-on to an already overcrowded curriculum. ATL continues to argue for a locally designed skills-based curriculum within a loose national framework. We believe that the highly centralised imposition of detail does not capitalise on the professionalism of teachers nor benefit young people. It risks posing insurmountable barriers to the sort of innovation, perhaps through drawing the links between the global and the local, which high quality teaching utilises to inspire pupils.

We note that the consultation paper makes a virtue of the work of the QCDA on the global dimension and sustainable development and so question the new government's intentions with this work if the ambition to abolish the QCDA is realised. At the same time, we welcome a new programme of support for schools through a Global Learning project – providing its impact is closely monitored and the project enables teachers to teach freely rather than dictating what should and shouldn't be done. A focus on the learner, but crucially the skills they are developing, will undoubtedly aid global learning.

The proposals for a new and ambitious global teaching website appear on face value to be a sound way forward. It is essential though that it capitalises on the cross-border nature of the internet and seek to connect students and teachers to enable international conversations to take place. We believe there is a strong case to argue that streamlining school linking programmes should not be a funding reduction plan by stealth. The evidence from the department's own research is clear that schools need appropriate funding for their international work. Efficiency savings in these programmes need to be ploughed back in to the development of global learning, be that to provide

more exchange visits or to rollout extensive professional development for staff.

***The role of teachers and trade unions – and the need for a strong programme of continuing professional development***

Educators occupy a unique position of influence in this world; they are central to ensuring that learners have the skills, knowledge, values and understanding necessary to engage effectively in a globalised economy and multicultural society, and as a workforce they are themselves increasingly mobile, making a vital contribution to the international knowledge economy.

The centrality of school staff then to the strategy is obvious. ATL's 2005 position statement, *New Professionalism*, says:

*"Teaching is an intellectual profession, based on a high degree of general and systematised knowledge. This includes an in-depth knowledge of:*

*1. learning: how pupils learn, potential obstacles to learning, pre-conditions and dispositions to learning; how learning develops; and*

*2. curriculum content: knowledge of subjects and the relationships between them, understanding of wider content such as the development of thinking skills, problem solving, questioning and group working, and a knowledge of how pupils' understanding of particular content grows and develops.*

*The teaching profession is also practical, and has a wide range of practices and methods."*

A strategy that does not fully recognise its greatest asset will never meet the ambitions it sets. Young people best develop new skills and attitudes in school when their teachers are empowered to use their professional abilities. The teaching profession needs knowledge about the complex and compelling forces that influence daily living in a changing world, including the political, economic, technological, social and environmental, in order to know what pupils need to learn both in the present and for the future. Inspiring teachers about what can be achieved through global learning will in make it much more likely that young people themselves will be inspired both to learn and to take action. ATL believes in education as a means to deliver social justice; government empowering rather than restricting education staff is key to achieving such a goal – in the UK and around the world.

While 99 per cent of teachers think education for global citizenship is important, confidence in teaching the subject is low. Only eight per cent say they have accessed CPD on global citizenship and the vast majority of those that didn't would be keen to (*Oxfam, 2007, Survey of teachers*).

ATL has provided CPD in the global dimension to its members. No matter how well the rest of the global learning strategy is executed, its success will be undermined unless there is a high quality and extensive CPD programme available to education staff to build upon global learning as a core feature of initial teacher training. Strengthening the continuing professional development (CPD) of educators is a crucial component of any strategy to help them meet the global learning challenge and respond more effectively to the challenges of globalisation.

The trade union movement in general across any workplace, as well as working with a range of staff in schools, has a role to play in global learning.

Trade unionism and global citizenship share common values and such learning could be facilitated through ULRs (union learning reps).

ATL, as a trade union, recognises that representing the interests of its members means helping them to maximise their individual and collective influence, including on the global dimension of their work and of education in general.

### ***Sustainable education***

Coordination between sustainable education and global learning is essential so that teachers can embed a coherent whole rather than struggling between two perceived add-ons. In ATL's position statement, *Sustainable education: review, rethink and reform*, we highlight that:

*"Meeting the challenges of creating a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace must progress from an acknowledgement and understanding of these global challenges to national, local and individual action."*<sup>2</sup>

A global perspective should inform and underpin any national, local and individual action in the creation of a sustainable society. ATL believes that education is at the heart of creating a sustainable society – through education we prepare our children and young people for their role in a global society. Sustainable education is a global vision and aspiration made real at local level.

### ***Conclusion***

As a new government considers its priorities, ATL is clear that it strongly urges the new Secretary of State for Education and the new Secretary of State for International Development to make a swift decision to implement the global learning strategy, taking account of the issues we have highlighted in this response. ATL is happy to discuss the implementation of the strategy further with ministers and officials.

### **Attached**

- *Our global future: ATL's international policy and strategy*
- *Subject to change: new thinking on the curriculum* – ATL position statement
- *New professionalism* – ATL position statement
- ATL Toolkit – Promoting Sustainable Schools and Colleges
- *Sustainable education - review, rethink, reform* - ATL position statement

---

<sup>2</sup> Preamble to the Earth Charter 2005, [www.earthcharterinaction.org](http://www.earthcharterinaction.org)