

Nottingham/Notts locality group 18/4/05
Controversial issues and stereotypes – minutes/issues

General issues/concepts/terminology

1. Definition of global perspectives?
2. Careful to emphasise that any perspective is an individual one and cannot be assumed to be held by all in a group – we all look at the world through different lenses/perspectives
3. Problem with word 'bias' – refer to point above – if we all look at the world through different lenses/perspectives we all have our own bias – can we substitute bias for complexity/assumptions
4. Need to identify what assumptions are being made and by whom and any implications on acting on these assumptions
5. Issues around a neutral perspective – is this from the dominant white middle class culture, e.g. colour blind approach
6. It was felt that we could separate out dealing with controversial issues from avoiding stereotypes (even though there is a strong link between them)
7. Flow chart mentions skills and attitudes but not knowledge
8. Need to accept that what may be controversial for one group is not for another
9. Acknowledging that having the debate/dialogue is very important

Support for teachers

1. Need for supporting teachers and raising awareness
2. Need training for teachers
3. Need to enable teachers to ask open questions
4. As well as support in planning a session on controversial issues teachers also need support in dealing with unplanned comments/attitudes in a non-confrontational way that avoids reinforcing stereotypes
5. Teachers need a strategy to field asked and unasked questions – training needs to provide curriculum examples in how to do this
6. Many teachers are already using resources promoting a global dimension with good intentions BUT end up un-wittingly reinforcing stereotypes
7. Need for general practical guidelines within context of what teachers are expected to teach
8. Teachers need the time and space to go through these discussions themselves
9. It was agreed that lots of knowledge and understanding is required to have the confidence to confront these issues in the classroom
10. Feeling positive in being able to have this discussion but also frustrated in how to translate this discussion into support for teachers

To avoid

1. Reinforcing stereotypes which can lead to children feeling pity, superior, guilty
2. Reinforcing stereotypes - people are 'poor but happy'
3. Reinforcing stereotypes – people are poor because they lack something

Methodology/process

1. Need to establish ground rules when discussing these issues, e.g. safe environment, open, build up trust
2. Enabling children to feel confident to ask ANY questions
3. Enabling the teacher to feel confident to facilitate ANY discussion without having to know 'all the answers'. Can field questions back to the children.
4. Enabling children to deal with inequalities in their home town/area.
5. Enabling teachers and children to begin to question their own privilege.
6. There are lots of resources available to promote a global dimension BUT not much on pre-empting and dealing with unplanned comments/awkward questions
7. Making links and finding similarities **versus** pointing out the stark inequalities and the reasons behind them (similar to old multiculturalism vs. anti-racism debate).
8. Compare like with like – study rural life in Nottinghamshire and the rest of the UK before examining rural life abroad.
9. Need to reflect that the global is in the local and vice versa.
10. Need to discuss openly and engage critically with campaigning and fundraising.

Whole school/governors

1. So important to have a whole school ethos around these issues with full senior management backing, evidence in displays, policy, school development plan
2. Need to reach governors
3. Need to relate this work to what is already being inspected