

The Global Issues Classroom: Facilitating Learners to Engage in Higher Order Thinking

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Introduction

Global Education

In recent years, research and classroom pedagogy has emphasised the need for more authentic materials to be used in English language learning classrooms, for the classroom to represent or reflect society, and for the inclusion of higher-order thinking skills. However, much of the teaching materials provided in textbooks rarely account for the above-mentioned points. Instead, classrooms highly focus on traditional general English topics, with very vague reference to the wider world or issues. This results in topics like ‘Introductions’, ‘Hobbies’, ‘Travelling’, ‘Places’, and ‘Shopping’ being used as the focal point of English language learning (Shug’a’a et al., 2019). With these topics come the inevitable emphasis on grammar, which can put a strain on students’ willingness to communicate and thus their learning. Additionally, it often lacks relevance to students’ interests, values and motivation for learning, which Keller (1983) and Bae and Kokka (2016) identify as key components for ensuring students intrinsically understand the meaning behind particular tasks.

Moreover, almost fifty years ago, Reischauer (1973) an American ambassador to Japan stressed that education was indeed lagging behind society. He advocated for a restructuring of the education system, arguing that global issues can only be attended to on a global scale, therefore education needed to move faster to ensure human survival. What is worrying, is that much of the literature discusses the need for global issues content pre-21st century. Yet, it is evident that educators, educational institutions and governments have not engaged enough to bring it to the forefront of education. Furthermore,

educational institutions and English language textbook-publishers are also slow to advocate for more globalised content in the classroom and textbooks. Additionally, if they do, it is usually on a surface level and does not allow students to dive deeper in their understanding of the issue(s) at hand. Therefore, the present paper advocates for “global education” in the English language as foreign language (EFL) classroom.

The importance of Global Educational Content

As language educators and learners, we are highly likely to interact with members of differing cultures and experiences. Moreover, with the rise of multinational corporations, the world of work is now more globalised than ever. Therefore, it is imperative that language educators equip their students with or provide opportunities for their students to gain the following skills and enhance their employability.

Knowledge

Knowledge and understanding of past, current, and possible future global issues are needed. This means that learners need to understand the effects that world-wide issues have on their local communities and also, how their local communities impact the wider world, which the researcher stipulates could lead to more accountable members of society due to heightened awareness of the consequences of their actions. Furthermore, it entails understanding the globalisation process and its impact on economic and societal inequalities. Here, knowledge is seen as something that is easily transferrable from one individual to another through mutual sharing and understanding. Cates (2006) state that for students to engage in the making of a better world, knowledge of global issues causes, and understanding of solutions are essential. Only once gaining knowledge and understanding of the global issues can students truly engage in actively acquiring other skills and begin the process of attitude change.

Attitude

Students need to be able to display an open and respectful approach within the language classroom, but more importantly the wider world. Although these can be taught in a traditional EFL classroom, they are grounded in global issues and the interconnectedness of nations. Additionally, it allows students to appreciate diversity, and view issues through multi-perspective lens (Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016). These attributes allow for more empathy, and acceptance of one's own social responsibility on a local and global level. Tye (1991) captures the essence of attitude in global education by stating that the focus is learning to understand, acknowledge, and appreciate those with differing backgrounds and viewing life from their perspective. Sny (1980) and Tye (1991) both emphasise the need for understanding and empathy, meaning the traditional teaching and testing methods are no longer adequate. Therefore, not only do the attitudes of our learners' need to change in order to keep up the growing interconnectedness of society, but also, educators' teaching and assessment methods.

Skills

Through the use of global issues in the language classrooms there are many skills that students can acquire; critical thinking, creative thinking, cooperative-engagement, problem-solving, conflict resolution, informed decision making, and viewing problems from multiple angles (Cates, 2002). However, this particular paper emphasises the importance of critical thinking skills and how they apply to global issues, and language learning. Although there are many different interpretations and ideas of what it means to 'think critically' they all follow the same basic tenets – a deeper level of thinking or analysing. Norris (1985) argues that critical thinking is rationalising actions and beliefs, to which Ennis (1985) agrees but also includes a reflective element to the critical thinking process. Moreover, researchers agree that for students to engage in a more globalised society, fully learn a language, engage in life-long learning, and to question the information they passively or actively learn; critical thinking is essential (Omidvar and Sukumar, 2013; Stapleton, 2001; Akdere, 2012;

Kincheloe, 2004; Lai, 2009; Gough, 1991; Halpern, 2003). With the lack of textbooks that truly allow for critical thinking in the language classroom through global issues (Rothman, 2011), the task for language educators is understanding how they can incorporate it into their classroom and monitor it effectively.

Nevertheless, many teachers assume that critical thinking will naturally be a skill that learners' acquire or can only be acquired once they have achieved a certain level of linguistic ability in their L2. However, Omidvar and Sukumar (2013) explains that the emergence of critical thinking ability is neither automatic nor accidental but is due to strategic teaching methods and approaches in the classroom. Additionally, Cates (2002) argue that language educators should shift their focus away from 'what to teach' and instead focus on 'how to teach', arguing that language is about communicating about the world, therefore language classes should actively involve the students and be student-centred as to their needs and wants. Through student-centred classes, language educators can give explicit critical thinking instruction that incorporates inquisition, negotiation, and cooperation tasks. These can be incorporated through discussion and or role-playing activities that allow language learners to organise their ideas, identify key concepts, consider varying views, and develop their own well-evaluated and well-reasoned opinions as they share knowledge and critically evaluate their peers' ideas (Stapleton, 2001; Omidvar and Sukumar, 2013). For these reasons, critical thinking has rightfully been considered an important skill to survive in the 21st century and has been put in place as a goal for educational institutions and educators (Lai, 2011). Furthermore, not only is critical thinking an important 21st century skill, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE, 2020) outlined that academic challenge that includes higher-order learning and quantitative reasoning are key components to ensure student engagement.

Although this is the case, many institutions claim to include critical thinking skills, but do not fully engage their students in it, if at all. It is often overlooked as it is not viewed assessable especially in the Japanese context. In Japanese high schools, teachers often feel restricted due to the formal testing

systems of Japanese education. Therefore, they fear that they will be doing a disservice to their students if they steer away from learning to pass the test (Bailey, 2018).

Criticisms of Global Issues in the Language Classroom

Although there are lots of arguments supporting the use of global issues within the language classroom, it is not without fault. Rivers (1968) argues that global understanding, or world peace cannot be achieved within the language classroom nor can it be determined if it does have any impact on the students being able to engage in understanding or the solving of global issues. However, it should be noted that Rivers (1968) made reference to previous traditional teaching methods: copying, recitation, and deciphering of texts. Therefore, it could be argued that with modern teaching methods such as task-based learning, and communicative teaching methods students are able to gain a greater understanding, thus a greater contribution in terms of action to the areas discussed within the language classroom.

Furthermore, there are also concerns regarding the potential for conflict between traditional pedagogy and progressive aspects of global issues learning, as well as the risk of indoctrinating our learners (Peaty, 2004). Peaty (2004) also notes that this may be a reason for the lack of educators' willingness to pursue the use of global content in the language classroom, which raises another question in regard to incorporating global issues without indoctrinating. Moreover, Peaty (2004) and Wenden (as cited in Strain, 1991) argue that educators cannot be accused of indoctrination if their teachings and students' learning is a reflection of societal values. Cunningham (1991) argues that using international agreements such as the United Nations, could be used by teachers to create a standard for understanding which views reflect society.

Additionally, Peaty (2004) argues that the main criticism was not the advocating of particular views, but when those views stray towards more radical ideologies. There are also additional issues when dealing with the imbalance

of knowledge sharing between governments and mass media. This poses as a challenge for teachers to deal with in their language classrooms (Stradling, 1989; Omidvar and Sukumar, 2013). He therefore suggests that any mainstream ideas to be challenged through critical thinking, especially regarding the ability for students to distinguish between factual and opinion-based statements, but also to evaluate the truthfulness of those facts. This should help to minimise the impact of potential indoctrination from teachers with extreme or radical views (Peaty, 2004; Omidvar and Sukumar, 2013).

Global Issues in Practice in the ELF classroom

As we have seen above, global issues cannot and should not be used in the classroom via traditional teaching methods, but educators must approach global issues with an entirely different teaching method (Cates, 1990). The incorporation of critical thinking, cooperative learning, meaning focused, collaborative skills, and content-based language teachings are all appropriate methods to be used when dealing with global issues in the language classroom (Cates, 2006). Additionally, Cates (2006) provides a thorough comparison between traditional, modern, global issues, and project-based approaches. Here, he highlights that there is strong overlap between modern teaching methods and approaches to those of global issues.

Moreover, Mattison (2003, as cited in Cates, 2003) makes connections to the students' curriculum and the outside world by allowing students to volunteer for 20 hours with an environmental organisation. They then use this experience to give a presentation using notes from their scrapbooks. Here, the students are able to gain both language knowledge, global environmental knowledge, and communication skills in practice. During the presentations there are key discussions that take place, which allows students to utilise the target language effectively, while sharing and critiquing ideas.

A more recent example was demonstrated by Ichikawa and Okuda (2019), where they took a collaborative approach to critical thinking. They tailored their classes to fit the Education for Sustainable Development as

outlined by UNESCO (2012), by incorporating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The main goal for this task was for students to write an essay, but they noted that there were some language barriers and lack of ideas when students engaged in the topic independently. They then decided to allow the students to collaborate on the tasks in the hopes of limiting the above-mentioned points. In fact, due to the collaboration students were able to share more knowledge and ideas with each other and therefore have a much wider and deeper understanding of their issues, which in turn, allowed them to write better essays. The NSSE (2020) also outlined that learning with peers through collaborative activities enables students to engage more in the classroom and in-line with Piaget's and Vygotsky's concept of social arbitrary knowledge and concept of the zone of proximal development respectively (Bae and Kokka, 2016).

Methodology

The Current Classes

The current classes used the United Nations' Sustainability Goals as the backbone for the curriculum. Classes were 90 minutes long and took place once a week for 15 weeks for the first semester, and again for the second semester. The students in these classes engaged with a topic for approximately 6-7 weeks. The researcher used Wenger's (2000) community of practice (CoP) to encourage students to participate and collaborate in the sharing of knowledge in order to aide further learning and interest. See Germain (2020) for an outline for how the classes are organised and structured to foster CoP. After a particular SDG has been studied, students are tasked with a writing and speaking task.

First Semester:

First year students: Poverty, and Climate Change

Second year students: Poverty, and Climate Change

Second Semester:

First year students: Good Health and Wellbeing, and Mental Health

Second year students: Gender Equality, and Reduced Inequalities

Data Collection

In order to analyse the effect of global issues on critical thinking and the overall effect on the EFL classroom the researcher's view is that a qualitative research approach is more fitting to describe the process of critical thinking that students undergo. This research is not particularly focused on the number of critical thinking actions, nor the number of students that underwent a process of critical thinking, therefore a quantitative approach deemed unnecessary for analysing critical thinking.

As the researcher was the teacher in this particular classroom, participant observation seemed to be the more appropriate observational method to obtain data. A classroom assistant was also present to give accounts of any observed phenomenon. Guba (1978) viewed qualitative research as being natural in the sense that it is based on discovering and understanding what is occurring, therefore minimising any predetermined evaluations or restrictions of research outcomes. Merriam (1988) agrees by stating that qualitative approaches usually focus on the process, not necessarily the result or products. It is important in this research approach to understand the meaning and how participants engage in making sense of the world and their experiences in it. Therefore, making it a suitable approach to use alongside global issues topics and research. The current paper aims to explore the effect of global issues content in the English language classroom and its effect on students' ability to think critically. Therefore, it is focused on understanding students' interpretation of the critical thinking process in evaluating problems, solutions, and decision-making. Patton (1990) also views the participants' insights as a crucial element of understanding the process. Thus, the researcher has chosen to use qualitative research practices in this study.

Moreover, the researcher used questionnaires to maintain clarity and fully engage the participants. All questions were translated by the classroom assistant into the students' L1 (Japanese). Questionnaire data was obtained during the 4th week of the second semester. However, the participant observation field notes were taken during the entirety of the course. To minimise students' anxiety the researcher felt that it would not be appropriate to video record the students and their interactions, but to instead rely on research notes of said interactions. In hindsight this became an evident limitation to the study, as the observers were only able to observe two group discussions at a time (one per observer). This could mean that behaviours, critical thinking and interactions in other groups may have been missed. The field notes were generally made after the class during reflection periods to avoid interrupting the lesson flow.

Research Design and Questions

Due to the nature of qualitative studies, interpretation of or from participants' remarks, observations, viewpoints, and behavioural is vital, as it forms the basis of the research data. Participants' observation is seen as a naturalistic research setting and therefore the researcher becomes the method in which data is obtained. Thin (2001) states that the role of the participant observer is to: observe, inquire, and intermingle with informants in the research process. The research analysis will therefore be structured as follows followed.

1. Steps to guide students toward critical thinking
2. Does the use of global issues result in critical thinkers?
3. Were students' attitudes impacted by studying global issues?
4. How can teachers minimise indoctrination or bias when interacting with global issues?

Results and Discussion

Taking steps to guide students toward critical thinking

A key to introducing critical thinking with global issues is for teachers to keep one particular topic that they can use as a model for students to always refer back to when students have issues with grasping some of the ideas. These can then be used to encourage students to formulate questions and connect their ideas to the wider world. It is also important to recognise the distinction between traditional teaching and learning methods in order to apply skill-based content to allow for better learning and understanding.

Formulating Questions

Initially, the concept of critical thinking seemed to be an alien concept to the students; it was not that they were incapable of critical thinking, but it was not something that had been required of them in their L1, let alone their L2. At the start of the course, students would wait for the teacher to engage in discussion or share ideas. However, it could not be deemed a discussion as they were simply sharing the information that they had researched with their peers. They initially viewed asking questions and initiating discussions as the teacher's responsibility. Therefore, one of the key aspects of introducing critical thinking is getting students familiar with asking questions.

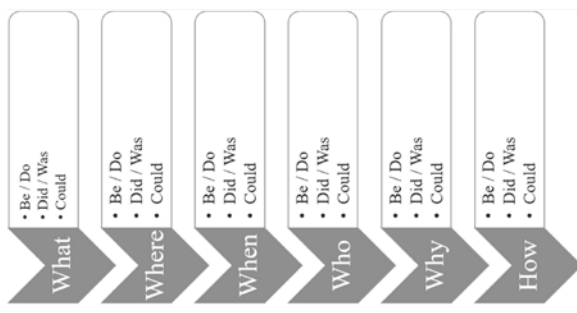


Figure 1: getting students to formulate questions

Figure 1 demonstrates a simple yet effective way for students to engage and familiarise themselves with asking questions and allow them to get past the hesitation of asking questions. It is important that teachers provide context that students can engage with as a class. When discussing Poverty, we used the examples of Homelessness in order to generate questions within the groups. Students were asked to think about what kind of information they want to know and to combine the question words to formulate their question. The questions were then elicited from the groups and were written on the board. Students were then tasked with looking at their own problems individually and formulating different questions for their own topics. They would then check each other's questions in their groups. This helped with the initial exploration of their own topics in order to gain an overview of their issues.

Connecting to the wider world

Although students were familiarising themselves with questions, they were not connecting the problems to the wider world, or fully explaining the potential effects of the problem. For example, students were discussing poverty, a particular student was interested in homelessness, saying "I'm so surprised [that] there are homeless people in Japan, there's about 6000". The reaction of the students was of shock and surprise, but none made any comment regarding the effect it may have on the life of those directly or indirectly affected, which made the researcher question whether they truly understood. The researcher then asked, "why is this a problem?" the student then replied "because they have no home" so the student recognised that it is a problem but had not quite explained why having a home was important. Thus, the researcher responded to the group "why is a home important?" this enabled student to recognise the importance of a home: safety (from dangerous animals, people, and weather), health, and to sleep well among others (students' had studied needs versus wants, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs prior). Yet still no connection had been made to the importance of having a home, with homelessness. The researcher then repeated the question, "why is homelessness a problem?" however,

students did not seem to understand or link the ideas together. It seemed as if students viewed the questions posed as separate issues or viewed their aim was to simply answer the question (Field notes data, class 6, 23 May 2019).

Moreover, upon further facilitation and observation, it became evident that many of the groups were struggling to engage in discussing the problems and their effects. Therefore, the researcher decided to engage the class in a demonstration to further illustrate how issues are linked by using the homelessness issue. Another issue that seemed prominent in getting students to think critically about a particular problem, is they would often rely on the extremes. With the researcher's first year class, when asked about a particular effect whether it was homelessness, single mothers, unemployment, or low pay, they would often say the effect is "they die," demonstrating no understanding of the sequence of events that could lead to the potential death of individuals in those forms of poverty or other avenues that could result from this problem. Additionally, students would avoid sharing other potential effects, by instead choosing to agree with their peers. However, getting students to view issues using snowball effect in their groups enabled students to envision the process, and aid critical thinking regarding the issues. By keeping the first two or three events that occur the same and encouraging students to change the next allowed students to recognise and understand that one problem does not mean one effect.

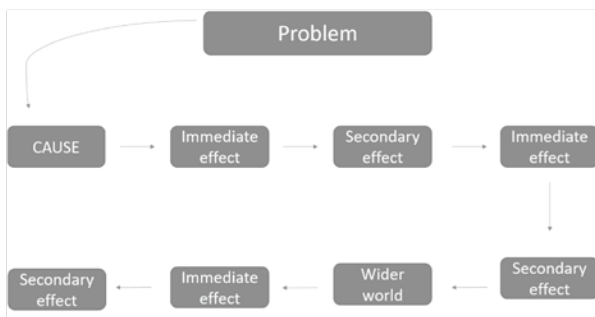


Figure 2: logical sequencing and wider world issues

After a few classes and demonstrations, the majority of students eventually grasped the concept of linking problems to wider issues, understood why problems are indeed problems, but most importantly could explain the connection. Therefore, critical thinking indeed begins by asking “why?” however, it also begins by posing questions and providing students with methods to see links between one issue and its effects on individuals, and the wider world. The students initially began repeating “why?” or were anticipating the teacher and other students asking “why?”. The students’ continued to ask “why?” but also began asking “how?” in relation to how the ideas a particular students’ mentions link to wider issues. This then led students to begin considering and preparing for inevitably being asked those and other possible questions. Thus, beginning their journey from lower-order thinking to higher-order thinking. Although students understood the sequence of events, they lacked the explanation in terms of explaining ‘how’ the immediate effect caused a secondary effect. Perhaps the students would have arrived at this stage if the snowball technique had incorporated ‘how’ between each stage.

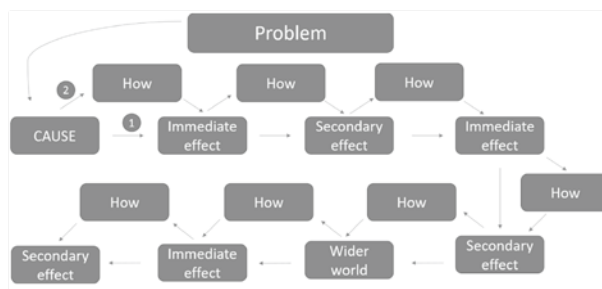


Figure 3: Event sequencing and wider world issue

Teachers should first consider the sequencing of events in figure 2, then get students to consider the ‘how’ between each stage of events. If the teacher does not want student to go into understanding the problem on such micro-level, then the second immediate and secondary effect can be omitted. If the teach would perhaps prefer to focus on the wider-world issues, then the ‘wider world’ can be shifted to earlier within the diagram. The ‘how’ element of the

diagram is particularly important for students that lack explanation of their ideas. Those that typically explain the sequence of events, but do not explain the relationship between the events. This will allow students to form a better understanding of their problem and better their reasoning and explanation skills.

Wait Time

Moreover, the researcher notes that time plays a crucial role in allowing students to begin engaging in critical thinking. Teachers need to ensure that they are aware of the pressures that students often feel when answering questions. By creating a supportive and encouraging atmosphere together with time, students' body language and facial expressions appear to relax more. Although the literature suggests that "wait time" the time between a teacher asking a question and students answering should be uninterrupted silence (Rowe; 1972; Stahl, 1990). Adding supportive words of encouragement at around 5 second intervals enhanced the willingness of students to engage more openly in critical thinking. Teachers should not be discouraged if their learners are new to the idea of critical thinking and they do not delve into the subject matter as much as the teacher intended or would like. It is therefore important to set realistic expectations and guide them through the process of learning.

Does the use of global issues result in critical thinkers?

As the above section describes, it was not necessarily the topic that eventually led to students thinking more critically about issues, but in fact the questions posed, and the methods provided to them by the teacher. However, this is not to say that the use of global issues is entirely redundant or irrelevant in the facilitating of critical thinkers. In fact, global issues proved to be useful in terms of students being able to connect to experiences that they have had, witnessed, read, or heard about. The examples mentioned in the section above, may appear to be lower-order thinking, but the ability to understand the issue at hand and the wider implication promotes and guides the critical thinking process.

Challenging students to collaborate in finding solutions to the problems that they mention may arguably be where critical thinking becomes prominent. Additionally, the solution aspects enabled the teacher to observe whether students fully understood the initial problem. It was noted by both observers, that students would often put forward a solution, but had not considered how the solution related to or would help alleviate or prevent the problem. Furthermore, group members would simply say “I agree” or “good solution” even when the solution had no direct or indirect link to the problem. Thus, demonstrating a disconnect from knowledge learnt when they were studying the implications of the problem. However, once students were reminded of the snowball technique and to apply it to their solutions, they were quickly dismissing solutions for not impacting the problem and dealing with the effects caused by the problem demonstrating more awareness of evaluating and reasoning.

Therefore, it is not the global issues alone that aids students’ ability to think critically. The methods provided to them, the mimicking examples of teachers, and the understanding of how things may be directly or indirectly related proved to be more important. However, given the nature of global issues and its connection to students’ lives and its ability to promote authentic materials, it does still have a place within the classroom. It helped students to be more globally aware or conscious. In response to “which class topic do you prefer” the students often chose global issues class because:

It is involving our future, and we need to think of it deeply to solve (Questionnaire data, Student 15, 17 October, 2019)

この授業では、英語と国際問題についての理解を深めることができたから
In this class, I was able to deepen my understanding of English and international issues (Questionnaire data, Student, 34, 17 October 2019)
疑問が他の授業より多くあるから。

I have more questions than other classes. (Questionnaire data, Student 25, 17 October 2019)

問題を多角的にみれるようになった。

I came to see the problem from various angles. (Questionnaire data, Student 5, 17 October 2019)

国際問題が世界に与えている影響の大きさ。

The magnitude of the impact of international issues on the world. (Questionnaire data, Student 17, 17 October 2019)

Learning about global issues is an important thing for us. I started to check news in English and keep my eyes on to the world. (Questionnaire data, Student 13, 17 October)

This demonstrates that students saw particular value in learning global issues and furthering their learning. Additionally, it is evident that studying global issues led to students being more inquisitive regarding materials provided or materials researched and learnt. Through global issues students were able to think critically about issues and were able to see a connection between learning English and global issues. Furthermore, students gained analytical skills by demonstrating awareness to different influences that lead to a particular problem.

Were students' attitudes impacted by studying global issues?

The literature demonstrates the importance of students gaining further knowledge and adjusting their attitudes through the studying of global issues. Sny (1980) and Tye (1991) recognised the role of global issues in creating more empathetic learners and fostering understanding.

世界のニュースに敏感になった。

I became more sensitive to world news (Questionnaire data, Student 14, 17 October 2019)

I found we need common language to save our world (Questionnaire data, Student 12, 17 October 2019)

Moreover, students demonstrated that global issues topics impacted how they viewed the world. They became more knowledgeable about global issues,

resulting in a change in their world view, which led to changes in their attitudes in approaching these issues.

周りに向ける視野がより広くなった。もっと知識のある人に聞きたい、知りたいという気持ちが強くなった。The field of view toward the surroundings has become wider. I wanted to ask more knowledgeable people and I wanted to know more. (Questionnaire data, Student 4, 17 October 2019)

日常的に国際問題に目を向けるようになった

I began to look at international issues on a daily basis (Questionnaire data, Student 27, 14 October 2019)

貧困問題や男女格差など、様々な国際問題をより知らなければならないと感じた

I felt I needed to know more about various international issues such as poverty and gender disparities (Questionnaire data, Student 23, 14 October 2019)

世界の見方が変わった

The world view has changed (Questionnaire data, Student 2, 17 October 2019)

世界に対する見方が変わった

Your perspective on the world has changed (Questionnaire data, Student 32, 14 October 2019)

Through observations particularly in the second-year class while studying “Reduced Inequalities” where students could choose any inequality in any country to research, attitudes towards religion, diversity and cultures were noted. Students displayed high tolerance and understanding towards other cultures, diversity and religion. However, it is impossible to determine whether students already had a high tolerance towards those issues or whether it developed through the studying of global issues. Nevertheless, it was interesting to see what issues students engaged in by choice and how their identity, and

curiosity led them to tackle key issues in the classroom. Arguably, ‘Reduced Inequalities’ was the most suitable SDG topic to engage students in issues that involved and exposed students to a wider variety of cultures, religion, and sexuality among other topics.

How can teachers minimise indoctrination or bias when interacting with global issues?

As the literature discussed, steering away from indoctrination is particularly important to avoid entrenching on students’ identity or forwarding radical ideologies is particularly important for teachers to be mindful of. When studying poverty, a student took particular interest in the refugee crisis and how it affected the life of Canadians. The student approached the researcher after the class and expressed the view that refugees resulted in a lack of jobs for Canadians. Although the researcher did not believe in this particular view, it felt particularly important for students to express what they have read and have understood from what they have read. The researcher then proposed that the student look at it from a different perspective in order to have a more holistic understanding of the issue. Upon further research, the student became more aware of other arguments and understood but still held her original view that it is having a negative impact on Canadians. However, her reasoning changed. She did not put blame on the refugees, but instead on the government for not ensuring better protection of refugees from exploitation, and for the lack of infrastructure to cope with the sheer number of refugees allowed into the country (Field notes data, class 12, 13 July 2019).

Another example was again during a second-year class while studying Gender Equality in the second semester. A student was interested in presenting issues related to men as he felt that gender equality issues often focused on the views of women. He took issue with trains in Japan having women only carriages. The researcher then asked if he understood the reason for trains in Japan having these rules in place, to which the student then explained. Upon further questioning and discussion, the student still concluded that it was not

equality, but understood that there is a particular need. However, he suggested that the problem could in fact be dealt with by increasing the number of CCTV on trains and train stations. Then when asked, which “solution” is more viable, he acknowledge that neither actually tackles the problem, but women only carriages would prevent the problem more so than CCTV (Field notes data, class 18, 26 September 2019).

On both occasions, the researcher did not agree with the students’ perspective, but the students were given the opportunity to fully express their thoughts and were asked questions to view the wider issue. The students did not always change their views but came to better understand the issue that they were researching and showed elements of reasoning to support their views. It is therefore important for teachers to remember that the aim is not to teach students the teacher’s views of global issues, but to guide them in exploring their own views. By suggesting to students to find an alternative view, the students were able to remain autonomous in their thought. It also ensures that students are not limiting themselves to one particular view but instead considering multiple perspectives in order for a holistic understanding of the issue at hand.

Conclusion

To conclude, the use of Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) proved to be appropriate in introducing students to critical thinking skills and global issues. This research demonstrates that relying on the topics alone does not guide or aid students to think more critically. Therefore, this paper is in agreement with Omidvar and Sukumar (2013) in that teachers must be able to provide methods and create an atmosphere of acceptance of ideas within the classroom. This will enable students to engage and share their ideas more openly, which in turn allow other students to critically evaluate the ideas proposed. If teachers expect global issues to automatically generate discussion and critical thinking, then they are sure to be disappointed. Additionally, this paper demonstrates that understanding how issues are linked proves to be essential in students being

able to think more critically. Without an understanding of how issues may be connected, students struggle to move beyond understanding the issue to its implication in the wider world. Once students gain an understanding of how the issue connects to the wider world, it seemed to have a positive effect on students' attitudes. Although it cannot be determined how much of an impact it had on students' attitude, as no prior interview or questionnaire was completed; their attitude appear to be more open and interested in issues around the world. As students become more aware of the issues it may eventually lead to more empathy and understanding. However, as noted in the discussion teachers should not force students to view issues from the teacher's perspective, but instead suggest to students to find alternative views for a particular problem or issue. Only allowing students to see one view or teaching one view limits the students' opportunity to think more critically.

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