International piracy: engaging teachers and pupils in exploring a global learning controversial issue at Key Stage 3

What was the aim?

This case study looks at international piracy as a context for exploring global learning. The teacher at a Hampshire secondary school in Bordon who devised the work, decided to use Human Rights Day on 10 December 2013 as a catalyst to explore international piracy and ask deep ethical and values questions about law, justice, human rights and globalisation.

The activity was designed to provide a compelling learning experience in citizenship; an experience which would build pupils' sense of agency and a belief that they can affect the public or political sphere by raising awareness or bringing about change. There are two things that must be in place for this to occur: pupils being given a voice and being able to take action. Also, pupils' knowledge, skills and action must be part of one coherent experience.

What was the link from citizenship to global learning?

- Exploring and gaining greater understanding about piracy as an issue in a modern context: its origins and impact; the complex views of different groups and individuals; how local and regional governments have reacted and the global concerns such as trade, security, human rights, justice and the rule of law.
- Considering how democracy, justice, diversity, toleration, respect and freedom are valued by people within different nations with different beliefs, backgrounds and traditions within a changing world.
- Weighing up what is fair and unfair in different situations, understanding that justice is fundamental to a democratic society and exploring the role of law in maintaining order and resolving conflict and how that might conflict with the perceptions of those in different jurisdictions and living different lives from ourselves.
- Considering the notion of global governance in conflicting situations.
- Engaging with and reflecting on different ideas, opinions, beliefs and values when exploring topical and controversial issues and problems.
- Communicating an argument, taking account of different viewpoints and drawing on what pupils have learned through research, action and debate.
- Analysing the impact of people's actions on communities and the wider world, now and in the future.

How did the work set about achieving this?

The work consists of four key elements

1. To provide a framework to explore aspects of modern day piracy.
2. To research the impact of piracy on communities.
3. To explore and discuss the moral dilemmas facing those who may consider piracy.
4. To look at actions the learning might inform.

This was a sophisticated issue for pupils to study, exploring the ethical and moral issues of pirates and piracy and how nations view this issue through the lens of citizenship. Teachers used a range of active learning approaches including 'goldfish bowl' techniques, question raising, exploration of ideas and research, presentation of those ideas and 'Diamond 9' discussions looking at the viewpoints of the pirates, their potential victims, their dependents, the nations involved, in particular, Somalia and the rule of law nationally and internationally.

How well did the activity work?

The school found that the theme resonated well with pupils; it was an exciting way to look at this complex issue. Teachers found a variety of ways to introduce the topic starting with the mythical image of piracy: playing music from the film *Pirates of the Caribbean*, putting up 'swash buckling' posters and jolly roger flags around the school and promoting the topic in assemblies. These drew the pupils into the spirit of the topic and helped unlock interest. Pupils took their learning with them to other lessons and other subject teachers became affected by the theme and considered how they could exploit this interest within their own subject. For examples, art teachers and history teachers were especially drawn to the work. What had started as one subject area's preserve became a catalyst for cross-subject linking by default rather than by design. The challenge for the teachers was to define exactly what their subject can contribute to the key ethical and moral themes.

What happened next?

The pupils presented their findings in class and then considered what actions they might take further. There were a range of actions they considered:

- creating a presentation about their findings to share with a wider audience

- leading a school or year group assembly on their findings

- creating a booklet or short film about the issues for the school and community website

- reporting findings to a specific community organisation, for example one associated locally with global issues through the local Development Education Centre and possibly involving the local media

- a school 'drop down day' (off-timetable day) to explore the issues in more depth or to focus specifically on Somalia as a global learning example

- running a stall at a local supermarket providing information for shoppers about the issues.

The school considers that this activity might initiate further work on:

- the role of the UN and international law

- the political and human rights situation in countries like Somalia

- how the world community can confront the challenges that so called failed states provide

- why Somalia is not seen as a hot world topic

- the sort of support refugee children from Somalia need.

The work may develop learning in a UK context, for example, asking if the moral attitudes of Somali pirates could be accepted in the UK and whether law and order could function in Britain if the same values or attitudes were inflicted on the population.

After the success of the modern day piracy topic, the citizenship teachers began to look for other occasions where a single issue could be raised through a particular calendar date.

More information and links

An activity plan for the work can be found on the ACT website:
http://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/case-study/global-learning-pirates-ahoy

A short *YouTube* video on the situation in Somalia can be found at this link
http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=ej4KskAuCNc or http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-18209357

The BBC has various news items on the theme http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10349155

Pupils might also look at this film http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=21m0X_AGK1s&NR=1

Research about piracy from this link http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/7280042.stm

The following are *YouTube* links to footage about ships attacked by pirates

http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=fxoVKG6Jmf0

http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=FbQHHoDSk_Q&feature=related

[On a much more light hearted Piracy theme - more information on *International Talk Like a Pirate Day* can be found at http://www.talklikeapirate.com/teachers.html.]