What's in the news? Global learning through news media at key stage 2

What was the aim?

In this case study pupils in a primary school in Lewisham, London learned about the importance of different media—television, radio, newspapers and internet etc.—in communicating topical and global news and information to the public. The role of media will always be relevant to young people, especially as it changes so rapidly, and particularly in relation to global learning. This is where students can interrogate different news media perceptions of an issue and then present views, sharing how different media and different types of media portray events. One teacher sought to take learning via Twitter to a new level whereby the teacher used this medium to enable learning around the lesson and this might be an extension in key stage 3.

What is the link from citizenship to Global Learning?

- Researching and interrogating different media portrayals of global events
- Knowing that different people live their lives in different ways and that different cultures have different ways of dealing with issues
- Understanding judgmental and non-judgmental attitudes
- Use sources to discuss different views reflect on varied issues and approaches different stand points
- Explore how media present information, comparing and contrasting how different sections of the media present information
- Appreciate how important the role of media in presenting information and news is to the community and society
- Show awareness of issues of current interest
- Use different ways and media to present and share views

How does the work set about achieving this?

Students at the school examined news stories from one day via a ‘treasure hunt’ approach, searching through newspapers and other media for stories and articles and photos about global issues; nations, events, people etc. Prior learning involved defining global perspectives so that students knew how broad to make their search. Working in small groups students selected a particular focus for their investigations, contrasting and comparing how different media approached the issue. This involved looking at headlines, bylines, photographic views, quotes etc. They looked out for bias in portrayal and examined the different perspectives in detail. Some used internet sources including different tv, radio and film sources eg: RT.com, Al Jazeera, BBC, Vimeo, Youtube, Truetube. They created new scripts for stories to demonstrate bias and fairer reporting and drew up conclusions as to how global issues are portrayed in media and a checklist they thought should apply in considering the quality of and accuracy in news media presentations on global issues.

How well did the activity work?

The work was considered successful against a number of criteria; engagement with the research, presentations of findings and knowledge about how news is gathered and reported. Pupils examined the use of persuasive language and use of pictorial material to support views and also looked at how pictures can be used to distort facts or present alternative narratives. Pupils reported a more analytical approach to understanding news media going forward. The school created a media wall where different global stories could be portrayed for a period of time, showing how the story and reporting of the events changed over time.

What happened next?

Some pupils decided they wanted to experiment with their own creation of the news. They used the cameras in their mobile phones—with the support of the teacher in charge—to create short films on both news stories and views they had collected on how media reports news. These were uploaded to the school website so that parents and others could see the work. The media wall became a place for pupils to gather and examine more critically news stories, which could be discussed in assemblies, circle time and other large group activities.

More information and links

Regarding using new media to aid global learning, Asia Society has a useful blog page on five ways to take this idea forward at http://asiasociety.org/education/resources-schools/professional-learning/five-ways-use-technology-and-digital-media-global-

Access to news media resources is very easy—making choices about good resources to use more problematic. This is especially so in relation to web based media. Safe choices may stem from CBBC and Newsround from the BBC http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/.

This work could be developed at key stage 3 to examine how new technology might be used to help explore approaches to news stories. Some good approaches to this can be seen on the website of the Five nations Network www.fivenations.net Two workshops from the 2012 Five Nations Network conference may be useful; Teacher Emma Chandler from London lead a workshop on using Twitter http://www.fivenations.net/social-media-and-citizenship-teaching.html and Emma McDermott from Northern Ireland led a workshop on using Comic Book software to create digital reporting http://www.fivenations.net/comic-life--citizenship-through-digital-story-telling.html