

Presenter: Henry Maitles, University of the West of Scotland

Title: **“Does learning about genocide impact the values of young people? A case study from Scotland”**

Panel: Pedagogy

In many countries throughout the world, an integral component of education for citizenship is the development of informed values and attitudes. Within this context, issues involving topics such as an understanding of human rights, democracy, genocide, Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and racism can be central to the development of more rounded human beings. There is a case for giving pupils experience in areas of learning relating to citizenship such as human rights and genocide outwith the structures of the traditional subject based classroom. Such a method of learning has been attempted in this West of Scotland comprehensive. Students in S1 (first year of secondary education – 12-13 years of age) and in the final year associated primary (elementary schools) – 11-12 years of age were taken off normal timetable for 12 days and were engaged in a series of rich tasks and learning experiences (involving role play activities) ranging from understanding genocide including the Holocaust and Rwanda to UNESCO rights respecting schools initiatives to understanding poverty in the developing world to challenging intolerance.

In conjunction with the school, a values and attitudes questionnaire was drawn up, using experience of Hahn (1998), Maitles and Cowan (2006), Maitles (2010), Torney Purta et al (2005) and Schultz et al (2012). The pupils were asked to complete the questionnaire immediately before the initiative started and immediately after it ended.

The results from case study research suggests:

Overall, there is evidence of a general improvement in values and attitudes after the pupils undertook the citizenship and genocide initiative;

In common with other research findings, the school students found it hard to recognize the word Anti-Semitism and there are lessons to be drawn from this;

The two areas that may need some examination in terms of overall citizenship strategy are attitudes towards English people and gay people. Negative attitudes towards both are problematic and may not be challenged as forcefully as other aspects of discrimination are.