School Linking and Global Learning – Teachers' Reflections
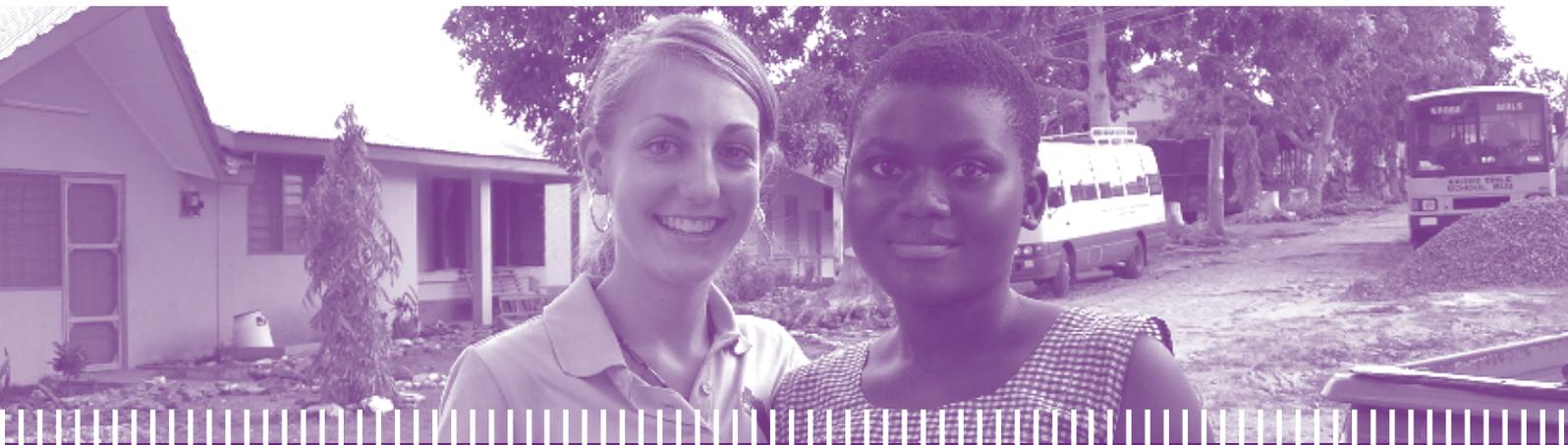
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Acknowledgements

Note on Terminology

In this research paper the terms 'Global North' and 'Global South' are used as metaphors to make distinctions between the richer and higher income countries and the poorer and lower income countries.

Executive Summary

Over the past decade, school linking has become an important feature of the landscape of global learning and development education in England. Yet what is the actual relationship between having an international link with a school in the Global South and the school's broader curriculum learning activities on global and development issues?

This paper addresses this question through a review of the existing literature on global learning and school learning, and through interviews and comments from teachers from seven schools in England.

For many schools, establishing an international link started from enthusiasm for supporting a school in a poorer country and for broadening the mindset of its pupils. Wider social and cultural influences have played an important part in how pupils perceive their link, despite the best efforts of teachers to encourage a more social justice, global outlook.

What is clear however is that, for all seven schools, developing a link has been of considerable value to the school. It has energised both teachers and pupils to look beyond their school to the wider world. Above all it has made global and development issues 'real' through practical examples of issues, people's lifestyles and comparable forms of learning and education.

1 ▶ Introduction

Interest and support for learning about global and development issues has increased in England over the past decade and one practical manifestation of this, promoted by schools and funders, has been the popularity of links with schools in the Global South.

From 2000 onwards this movement was fuelled by political support and funding from the Labour government of the time. Clare Short, Secretary of State for International Development from 1997 to 2003, stated in 1999 that she wanted to see every school in the UK have a link with a school in a developing country. Alongside the engagement of bodies such as the British Council and a number of international non-government organisations (NGOs), school linking became an important part of the educational landscape of England (Bourn and Cara, 2012; Disney, 2008; Leonard, 2008) and is still today a very popular feature of the activities of many schools.

Funders of this area of learning, primarily DFID, saw close relationship between school linking and wider learning about global and development issues. In 2007 Hilary Benn, then Secretary of State for International Development, said that 'building links between schools across the world, bringing pupils together, sharing experiences and learning will help us tackle the challenge of providing education for all' (DFID, 2007:2). From 2003 to 2012 the main vehicle for funding and supporting school linking was the Global School Partnerships Programme; and from 2012 the major programme related to school linking in the UK has been Connecting Classrooms (although the primary focus of this programme is the professional development of teachers, support for links is an element of the programme). Both of these programmes have been funded by DFID and managed by the British Council. Alongside these programmes, a number of non-governmental organisations, notably Plan UK and Link Community Development, ran linking initiatives between 2005 and 2012 (Bourn and Kybird, 2012; Bourn and Cara, 2013).

The impact and support for linking can be seen in the more than one thousand schools in England who have been awarded the full International Schools Award. This award, administered by the British Council, aims to accredit the nature, depth and quality of a school's involvement in a link; and the connections made to curriculum development and the quality of teaching and learning.

Learning about global and development issues within schools in England is not new and for many schools pre-dates their involvement with a link. There is evidence dating from the 1970s of schools actively promoting learning about global and development issues, regardless of its status within the curriculum,

often influenced by the materials of non-governmental organisations or the direct international volunteering experience of individual teachers (Bourn, 2014; Harrison, 2008).

As the interest in learning about global and development issues and linking grew in the 1990s, it was less clear whether a school having a link with a school in the Global South was a result of wider engagement in learning about global issues, or a direct response to specific national policy initiatives.

The need to address the relationship between having a school link and broader global learning within a school became apparent following the launch in 2013 of the five-year, DFID-funded programme on global learning. Central to this programme is the promotion of a journey for a school that may start from a 'charitable' view or relationship with schools and communities in the Global South to one that recognises and promotes understanding about the causes of the inequalities that exist and what young people can do to secure change towards a more just world.

Evidence to date from the Global Learning Programme (GLP) suggests a range of influences and starting points for schools in their journey on global learning. There are a number whose first engagement was through supporting the campaign of a particular international non-governmental organisation (NGO); or through a specific curriculum project; or through a school link. What is less clear from the evidence from the GLP and from other studies (Hunt, 2012; Blackmore, 2014) is the relationship between having a link and broader engagement in global learning. To what extent does one feed off the other? Has there been a journey of moving from specific activities to a broader learning approach? To what extent has having a link reinforced, questioned, challenged and transformed teachers' and pupils' views about the Global South?

This research paper aims to address the relationship for schools in England between the experience of a school link and global learning. Which came first and in what ways did one influence the other? Based on interviews and statements from teachers in seven schools and other known evidence, this paper specifically addresses these questions:

- How did schools become involved in a school link and what has been the role and relationship of that link in terms of building understanding about global and development issues amongst teachers and pupils?

- To what extent has the link played a role in shaping the attitude amongst teachers and pupils towards people and communities in the Global South?

- What role does the link currently play within the school in terms of its engagement in Global Learning?

● What is the relevance of the theme of 'Moving from a Charitable Mentality to one of Social Justice' to the school's journey in global learning?

This paper first reviews how schools have interpreted linking and global learning. It then summarises the changing wider educational context within which these areas have developed. The evidence to date of the impact of school linking is then reviewed, looking particularly at how broader learning about global and development issues emerges.

The second half of this paper outlines the methodology and findings from interviews and evidence gathered from seven schools in England which are active participants in global learning and school linking, and which have played a major role in promoting the Global Learning Programme.

The paper concludes with some observations and suggestions as to what could inform further research and professional development work in this area.

2 Historical Influences

Throughout the world there is evidence of schools that were initiated by educationalists from the UK, or schools that have relied on resources, support and guidance from supporters in the UK. The colonial heritage and missionary enthusiasm can be seen in the ways in which some schools were started, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. This deference to the UK continued in many places post-independence, through a post-colonial relationship in the form of copying dress codes and curriculum content, for example.

Chimanda Adiche, the Nigerian author, in her TED talk refers to her childhood education, where she learnt much more about snow, raining and life in the UK through English literature than she did about the history and culture of her own country[1].

It is not therefore surprising that to this day the influence of the UK education system can be seen in countries as diverse as Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, India and Pakistan (McEwan, 2009; Pasha, 2014; Schweisfurth, 2013). This influence is apparent, for example, in the content and accreditation of examination courses and in the training of teachers (Oluwu, 2014; Pasha, 2014). Whilst other factors such as global policies on education for all, and bodies such as the World Bank may be seen today as more influential, the colonial legacy is still an important factor.

Colonial influence is not only about how the partner in the Global North views the relationship but also how the Southern school views it. For example Alcock (2010) notes how a teacher from Kenya commented on how she saw their link through the legacy of colonialism and the expectation that the partnership was a way to gain funding and resources:

> *'Since independence, Africans had believed that the white people are colonialists and are rich, so as the Partnership started most people had believed that the partners were pumping a lot of money to the school and that if any person from this end goes to the UK then one was being given a lot of money and they expect a lot.'*

Alcock however also notes that the Kenyan teachers she was working with saw things differently and believed the partnership was about 'what we learnt from each other' (quoted in Alcock, 2010, 104–105). This reflects the importance of recognising the conflicting tensions that can exist within a link.

Recognition of these tensions and contradictions and how to address them

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1 http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en

has often been where the development education movement has historically played a major role. From an approach that was based on an uncritical view of development and aid in the 1970s (see Bourn, 2014; Harrison, 2008), development education began to promote an approach to learning that questioned assumptions about the Global South, through the activities of a number of non-governmental organisations and a growing network of locally based Development Education Centres (DECs), particularly through visual images and stories of people's lives.

This pedagogy of development education has aimed to demonstrate that we live in an interdependent world, but one that is unequal; and that through a critical approach to learning, different worldviews can be promoted and included within education (see: Bourn, 2014). Through international NGOs such as Oxfam, CAFOD and ActionAid, themes such as education for global justice and global citizenship have become part of the landscape of school practice. Initiatives such as the Rights Respecting School Award promoted by UNICEF and the Fairtrade Award promoted by the Fairtrade Foundation have ensured that a strong values base of social justice can be seen to be practised in many schools.

Despite cutbacks in funding to non-governmental organisations for development education in 2010 from the Coalition government, this practice remains an important part of the landscape today.

School Linking and Global Learning: Meaning of Terms

This research paper is concerned with school linking and global learning. Both of these terms are contested in terms of their meaning and interpretation. School linking in terms of the Global North and the Global South has been discussed particularly by Leonard (2008) who notes the concept has been defined thus:

> *'A link between schools in the UK and Africa, Asia and Latin America or the Caribbean is a partnership which is long-term, fully reciprocal, and embedded in the curriculum' (Central Bureau, 1998, quoted in Leonard, 2008).*

She goes on to suggest however that this reflects a rather idealised interpretation of school linking and that the practice has been much more diverse than this, incorporating a range of relationships from short-term associations to long-term partnerships and from a focus on curriculum to a focus on fundraising. A more appropriate approach would be to see the engagement schools have with each other as a continuum from relationship to partnership (Leonard, 2008).

Martin (2007) has commented on the controversial nature of school linking and has cited examples where pupils' experiences of exchanges of work can reinforce stereotypes that Africa is full of poor people living in mud huts. Moreover she notes from a particular example that the focus of the link was on charitable actions, which posed questions around reciprocity, power, inequality and the ideological lenses through which teachers and schools saw their linked school (Ibid.). Key to the issues raised by Martin is how teachers view the world, their assumptions and values base. She goes on to suggest however that when teachers look at links and learning about issues from the Global South in terms of mutuality and equality, and concepts such as global citizenship, then linking can have considerable educational value (Ibid.159).

Global learning as a term has come into common educational discourse more recently as part of the debates about how best to promote learning and understanding about global and development issues. The term within England is used by the DFID-funded Global Learning Programme which began in 2013. This programme defines global learning as:

> *'An approach to learning about international development through recognising the importance of linking people's lives throughout the world. It encourages critical examination of global issues and an awareness of the impact that individuals can have on them.'*

This definition is closely aligned to the practice of development education that has

been in existence in England since the 1970s. Development education practice in England and in a number of other European countries has been seen as an approach to learning that notes that we live in an interdependent world, that recognises and values social justice and that encourages a critically reflective understanding of development and global issues. For many organisations involved in this practice there has also been the added dimension of fostering personal involvement in action to secure a more 'just and sustainable world' (Multi-Stakeholder Forum, 2005: Bourn, 2014:12-13).

Other terms such as the Global Dimension, Global Education, Global Citizenship Education and International Learning have also been popular, depending on the agendas of specific organisations or the policies of particular governments. But what they all have in common is the promotion of learning about the wider world including consideration of themes such as social justice, human rights and globalisation (See McCloskey, 2014; Bourn, 2014).

So what do these debates tell us about how global learning and school linking are perceived in relation to each other?

School linking, as will be suggested in the next section, has historically had a connection to charitable giving, particularly in terms of links with schools in the Global South. But there is another perspective on linking that comes from seeing a link as a practical manifestation of promoting a broader world outlook. In terms of links with schools in Europe another driver was language learning. These wider themes and influences were heavily influenced by funding from the European Union (Cook, 2012).

Having a link with a school in the Global South need not have any direct relationship to global learning. A school might establish a relationship with a school for altruistic reasons, to provide resources, support their professional development or widen their experiences. The driver and importance of the link may be primarily for the Southern partner.

One area where there is a potential rationale for a link as a component of global learning is as a 'real world' and practical manifestation of learning about a school somewhere else.

Global learning and its historical roots in development education have tended to focus on processes of learning that question assumptions, challenge stereotypes and promote a sense of social justice. Practical examples can therefore help in this process of learning.

Global learning has also seen one of its roles as giving space to voices from the Global South, to enable peoples and communities to give their viewpoints and share their experiences, rather than these being mediated through an NGO, the

media or written texts. A link can therefore play a role in providing opportunities for learners to hear directly from voices from the Global South.

Where global learning and school linking have been discussed together there have been different views. For example, Temple, then at Oxfam in the UK, stated *'A school link isn't essential to developing your pupils as global citizens, it's only one of a whole range of ways you can do this'* (Temple, 2006: 14). This comment was made in response to the concern from a number of international NGOs and other development education providers at the time of a perception that funders were giving too much priority to links and not enough to supporting broader development education activity.

This comment continues to have some value. In a review of the value of funding for development education in 2011, a report for DFID stated that 'linking was a special case'. Linking, it was suggested, offered high levels of engagement, reciprocal benefits to the UK and the ability to create advocates (COI, 2011:30). Yet the evidence to substantiate these claims was limited. The only evidence referred to was another body of research conducted for DFID by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) for DFID (Sizmur et. al., 2011). This research, whilst showing evidence that linking contributed to building understanding of development issues, did not claim to demonstrate its value above other approaches such as curriculum-based projects.

Thus whilst there are a number of assumptions made by policy-makers and some research studies of a relationship between school linking and broader global learning, the evidence to demonstrate a causal connection is limited. The next section reviews the evidence to date on the relationship between linking and broader learning on global development issues, from a number of commissioned evaluation studies for UK government and the British Council, from masters level dissertations, from doctorates that address school linking and from specific research studies.

4 **Evidence to Date**

Public bodies whose primary interest is in aid and development have been the primary funders of global learning and linking between schools in the UK and the Global South.

There have been a number of studies that have looked particularly at school linking. These include: the study for DFID by NFER (Sizmur et al, 2011) referred to above; evaluations for the Global School Partnerships programme by Edge et al (2008) and Hirst (2012; 2014); a range of studies looking at the impact of NGOs' work in this area (Bourn and Bain, 2012; Bourn and Cara, 2012; Bourn and Cara, 2013; Edge et al. 2010); and a series of research-based studies, either for dissertations or doctorates (Alcock, 2009; Brown, 2006; Disney, 2008; Leonard, 2004; McNicholl, 2012; Pickering, 2008) or with research council funding (Martin, 2012). What all these studies show is that whilst there is evidence of the popularity of linking and its support by both teachers and pupils, there was concern about the extent to which links encouraged a more critical view of development and questioned assumptions about schools and communities in Africa and South Asia (Disney, 2005; Burr, 2008). As such studies note, it was not perhaps surprising that a lot of the development assumptions went unquestioned, when the funding for such partnerships came from bodies that were responsible for aid and development budgets.

Hirst's study (2013) for the British Council on reviewing the impact of Global School Partnerships identified evidence from a number of schools that were aiming to embed the partnership into their curriculum work. His study also noted that for some schools professional development was the most important reason for having a global school partnership. For staff, having some form of overseas exchange experience was seen as having a deep impact and 'life changing'.

Sizmur et.al. (2011) were commissioned by DFID to conduct an impact evaluation of the Global School Partnerships (GSP) programme. This was primarily a quantitative study based on an online survey with pupils and teachers. The study identified that teachers who had engaged in the GSP programme had 'used global learning to encourage pupils to reflect on their own values and attitudes' and supported 'other schools to provide global learning' (Sizmur et al.:44). The study also found that the overwhelming majority of teachers involved with GSP said that being involved with a link was very useful in developing pupils' awareness of global issues (Ibid.). The evidence from the qualitative aspects of the study, based on interviews with teachers from 21 schools, identified that having a link helped make 'learning about other countries less remote, and less abstract' (Ibid.: 60). An observation from this study was the impact of exchange visits on both teachers and pupils in terms of transformative experience:

'For many students it was a 'once-in-a-lifetime' experience and for some it represented an opportunity to travel that they might not otherwise have had. Not only were the visits enlightening about how other people live and their values and beliefs, they were also inspiring, and a chance for personal growth. The outcome for many students was increased confidence and self-esteem, a deeper understanding of the issues facing poorer countries and how they are affected by the relationship with the UK and other countries, and an awareness of personal responsibility' (Ibid.: 69).

These themes can be found in other studies, notably Bourn and Cara (2013) who showed the value of 'real world contacts' that also helped pupils to challenge their 'usual stereotypes of Africa' (Ibid.53). Hirst and Associates' (2014) evaluation of Connecting Classrooms found that teachers believed that international partnerships could help with learning because they bring real-life circumstances into the classroom. They also found that on the issues that partnerships typically address, all students are usually at a similar starting point and therefore those who normally under-achieve are not necessarily disadvantaged.

However there is also evidence that linking experiences can reinforce notions of dependency and paternalism, increasing support for more charitable based approaches such as raising money for infrastructure development and resources (see: Disney, 2005, 2008). Leonard in her in-depth study of the Aston-Makundichi partnership (Leonard, 2012) discusses this area. She notes that although there was evidence of a charitable relationship through sending equipment and raising money, securing appropriate books and computer equipment can be empowering to the partner school. Oxfam, in its guide on school linking, whilst noting that links can generate enthusiasm and motivation for learning, stated that they can also 'promote pity and sympathy rather than empathy, focus on difference rather than recognition of common humanity, and cultivate feelings of superiority and not examine global issues of inequality and injustice' (Oxfam, 2007: 5).

Burr notes in her reflections on linking that because of the pressure on demonstrating the contribution of linking to understanding of development the focus becomes the needs of the Global North rather than the partnerships and engagement with the communities of the South. She writes:

'There is a real danger that the Southern partners and communities simply become a resource for the North' (Burr, 2007: 6).

The tensions and contradictions within school linking and the relationship to global learning need greater debate. All too often because of the pressures of funders and the need to demonstrate impact within the school, evaluations and studies in this area have tended to emphasise the positive contributions linking has made to a school, rather than open up the dilemmas and challenges many of them have faced.

On the other hand studies that have had a primary focus on learning about global and development issues, whilst often making reference to linking, do not in the main suggest that having a link is the primary means of developing and embedding global learning within the school.

Most refer to linking as one of a range of activities (Marshall, 2007; Martin, 2007). Hicks and Holden's influential volume on Teaching the Global Dimension (2007) focuses primarily on a range of themes such as interdependence, sustainable development, human rights and diversity. Whilst linking is not explicitly mentioned within these thematic chapters, some specific examples make reference to how curriculum projects are developed as a result of visits or exchanges between groups of teachers. Wade, in her chapter on sustainable development, refers to how a group of teachers in Birmingham, as part of the TIDE network, worked on issues of climate change as a result of a visit to West Africa (Wade, 2007: 112). Claire (2007), in her chapter on diversity, notes the dangers of partnerships reinforcing stereotypes when looking at examples to discuss diverse communities.

Studies from the DERC also suggest that links have been seen as a stimulus for curriculum projects and professional development (Bourn and Hunt, 2010; Hunt, 2012). Bourn and Hunt's study on the Global Dimension in Secondary Schools (2010) found from interviews with teachers that school links were often seen as part of the broader curriculum: 'it's not just about a trip without any curriculum meaning'; 'through a joint project with pupils in India' they learned about issues regarding water (Bourn and Hunt, 2010: 25). Evidence also showed that from a visit and a link schools were able to learn different styles of teaching and bring that back into their professional development. Hunt's study (2012) on Global Learning in Primary Schools found evidence that teachers felt international links had a positive influence on both pupils' knowledge and broader curriculum activities. In terms of comments from one teacher, Hunt notes that results improved in part because of the 'global experience' the children had had (Ibid: 60).

This evidence suggests that having an international link can play an important and positive role within a school in terms of curriculum development and motivation for learning. But what is less clear is how this comes about; and how important the school culture and broader ethos is that enables this to happen. Hence the need to look in more depth at schools that have been involved in linking for some time, and have a commitment to global learning.

5 ➤ Methodology

Seven schools were chosen for this research study. They were chosen because they are actively engaged in the Global Learning Programme (GLP) and also have links with schools in the Global South. Six of the seven schools have the British Council International School Award. All of the schools are known for their curriculum work in global learning. This combination of experiences provides some ideal examples to address the relationship between their international link and their broader global learning work.

Within each school, the teacher with responsibility for global learning was interviewed or drafted a written response. With one school, there is joint responsibility and hence both teachers were interviewed. Three of the teachers interviewed had either completed or were undertaking further studies in development education and global learning. All schools signed a consent form prior to the interview or to completing the questions in writing.

Schools Involved:

Primary School in North of England (school A)

Infant and Primary School in West Midlands (school B)

Primary School in South East of England (school C)

Secondary School in East of England, part of a federation (school D)

Large Secondary school in the Midlands in former mining community (school E)

Secondary School in South East of England, with 20% of students from ethnic minorities (school F)

Village College Secondary School in East of England, part of a group Academy trust of 4 secondary schools, with 9% students from ethnic minorities (school G)

The teachers were given the option of either a telephone/skype interview or responding to the draft questions in a written form. Two chose to send in comments in writing. The others were interviewed. The telephone/skype interviews were transcribed. The comments of all participants, whether in writing or by phone/skype, were checked with the interviewee before being included in this report.

Two of the teachers from the primary schools were head teachers. All of the teachers were informed that their interviews would be anonymous. This enabled the teachers to speak freely and be able to critically reflect on the 'journey of their school'.

The focus of the study with these schools was to gather, through a series of structured questions, some understanding of the process of engagement in a school link and its relationship to their involvement with global learning. The aim of the interviews was to ascertain the processes by which a school became involved with a link, and the role this link has played in the broader work on global learning. The interviews particularly aimed to identify the factors that influenced the development of the link, and whether the school's engagement with global learning changed over time. The questions also aimed to address how the teachers saw their involvement with global learning now, and how the GLP programme related to their current activities. The interviews wanted to see whether the GLP theme of 'moving from a charity mentality to one of social justice' related to the teachers' own experience of the journey the school had made, in terms of its engagement in linking and global learning. The list of questions that formed the basis of the interviews appears in Appendix One.

The evidence summarised and analysed in the following sections is based on the main question areas: how the link evolved within the school, the current nature of the linking activity; what the school has learnt from the link; and its impact upon the teachers, the pupils and the wider community. The evidence is then grouped into themes related to the relationship of the link to broader learning within the school on global and development issues, and the extent to which perceptions about poverty and inequality elsewhere in the world have changed. Finally, the teachers' comment on how the GLP can help and support the school in its activities on global learning.

Within each theme, as well as summarising the comments from teachers, observations are made as to what this evidence tells us about school linking and global learning, and how it compares with other known data.

6 ▶ Evolution of the School Link

Many schools in England have developed links and partnerships with schools elsewhere in the world over the past twenty years or so. Most of these links have been with schools elsewhere in Europe, resourced either by a number of European Commission programmes, town-twinning relationships and other contacts elsewhere in the Commonwealth. The interest in linking was helped by the increased use of information technology, although it needs to be noted that this was disproportionate, with many communities in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia being at a disadvantage in terms of access to the Internet, use of computers and constant electricity supply.

The seven schools that are part of this research study all became involved in a school link after the increased political interest and support for this area, post 1997. But what is also noticeable from all of them is that chance and personal contacts played a role in initiating a link.

For example School F's involvement in linking began through being part of the pilot study for Plan UK's linking work as a result of personal contacts and connections between Plan UK staff and teachers at the school. School E's link came as a result of being approached by Oxfam to be part of their Millennium 'On the Line' project, which was based around school links and which resulted in a link being developed with Ghana. School C started its link with a school in Malawi as a direct result of contacts with a charity, Starfish Malawi. School D was approached by a local development education contact to be part of a study visit to Sierra Leone.

Another theme of how schools initiated links is that of chance personal contacts. School G's link started in 1997 as a result of a South African teacher spending three months with the school which led to exchanges of both teachers and students. In 2005, a teacher from Kenya was visiting a local secondary school which was seeking a primary school for a link and approached School B. School A's link came as a result of historical connections based on a wealthy family connection between two communities in England and an area in Kenya which led to a joint vision statement 'to build partnership that values diversity and promotes a school culture that appreciates internationalism'.

For six of these seven schools the growth and maturing of the links came as a result of the opportunities to access and secure funding from DFID-funded school-linking projects. School B, for example, was first able to secure funding for a reciprocal visit grant in 2006. School G had funding from the British Council Connecting Classrooms programme which encouraged a more curriculum-based

focus to the link. School D also referred to the positive contribution that funding for a reciprocal visit had had on the school.

Although linking was an important stimulus to most of the schools' engagement with global learning a number of them stated that they already had a strong international ethos due to leadership from senior management, historical connections or in the case of School D, a mission that had been heavily influenced by involvement in the International Baccalaureate. This school has consciously promoted this international mindset. *"We seek to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect."*

But the teacher contact from this same school also noted that after an initial exposure to linking through a study visit to Sierra Leone it became evident to the school that there was a lack of experience in how to relate the learning gained from the link to the broader curriculum.

Several schools referred to the importance of external support and professional development opportunities as part of their learning experience. A number of them participated in a range of British Council led courses on linking. Access to resources and support from local and regional development education providers was also important to a number of them. Seeing resources on countries such as Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa, and themes such as water, health and daily lives, enabled the teachers to see a broader and deeper learning connection to their link. For School B, and the Head in particular, the link was the start of a learning journey. Whilst they had done a lot of citizenship work, the link was the first time they had 'branched out globally'. It gave the staff the opportunity to learn about very different teaching environments and wider development issues. A regionally-based development education provider and their Compass Rose model led the teachers to look at the economic and justice side of global issues and to consider more critical and questioning approaches. For the Head of this school the journey continued by taking the Masters Programme in Development Education at IOE, which led to exploring the work of Vanessa Andreotti and exposure to a range of different and critical viewpoints on themes such as global citizenship.

This evidence suggests that whilst a link may have started for a range of reasons, often not specifically related to global learning themes, the relationship to broader educational goals and objectives developed for many of the schools as a result of exposure to support structures within development education, and opportunities for further professional development. This evidence also reinforces other research on the importance of funding and support programmes that have enabled schools to develop their skills and knowledge on global learning using the experience gained from their link (Hirst, 2013; Sizmur et.al, 2011; Bourn and Cara, 2013).

7 ► Current Landscape of Activity

For the majority of the seven schools in this study the decline in funding and support from government and NGOs has resulted in their link having a lower profile and influence than it had three or four years ago. This is particularly the case with Schools F, B, D and G.

For School F this was primarily due to the withdrawal of engagement in school linking by Plan UK, which had been sponsoring the link. The school, although now actively engaged in global learning, found it difficult to sustain the link without external support. For the other six schools it is clearly evident that the funding that had been on offer for reciprocal visits had been hugely beneficial. Teachers gained a great deal from visiting their partner school in terms of deepening their understanding of development issues; and the return visits helped to bring global themes into the classroom.

A feature of two schools, A and B, has been that in response to the desire from parents and the wider community to support their partner school, they have established independent charities whose explicit functions have been to raise money, send equipment and support the educational work taking place.

For a number of the schools, particularly the secondary schools, the links they have developed with schools in the Global South have become part of a broader programme of international links. For example School D has links with Spain, France and Croatia. School G has links with Spain, France and Peru. For both of these schools a motivation for these links was language learning. School E has a range of links with schools elsewhere in Europe and also links with schools in India and China, as well as its long-standing link with Ghana.

For some of the schools the links are now part of the everyday life of the school. For School E the link with Ghana is 'part of the furniture, what we do'. For this school the focus now is on student exchanges with the older pupils. But for most of the other schools if there is any direct exchange with their partner it is with teachers. This is partly because of lack of funds but also because it is easier and more appropriate. This is obviously the case with primary schools but has also become the case with some of the secondary schools as well.

Six of the seven schools have the International School Award (ISA) but this was seen more as recognition for what they were doing than as a stimulus for further linking and engagement with global learning. School G did however note that having the ISA kept the link and global learning fresh in teachers' minds.

This evidence suggests that despite the decline in funding and support for school linking, most of the schools still saw having a link as important to their activities, now seen more as an integral component of their global learning work rather than as another separate activity.

8 ▸ The Link as a Stimulus for Broader Learning on Global and Development Themes

For all the schools involved in this research having a link had certainly enriched the quality of their teaching and learning, made the curriculum 'real' and demonstrated that the pupils and the school as a whole were part of a global community.

All the teachers from the interviewed schools referred to the contribution of the link with the school in the Global South to enriching their school's curriculum. School C for example stated that they have done some fundraising to improve communication with the partner school. This has meant that they can use skype, which has helped to facilitate mutual learning. Learning is now central to their link and they have developed a three-year programme with their partner school through a number of themes: land use, water and energy. It is planned that the link will focus in the next year on equality, with a whole school focus.

School D developed from the link schemes of work that have been consciously written in a form to challenge and question preconceived ideas of the students. Stories, drawn from the link, were used to develop knowledge and understanding of global issues and improve critical global skills such as critical thinking, empathy and sustainability. For School D the link was a stimulus throughout Key Stage 3 and into Key Stage 4. School F commented that as a result of the link there had been significant changes to the curriculum in subjects such as Music, Geography and English.

A noticeable feature of the impact of the link on School G was its languages work. The contact teacher noted that, from the experience of their link, the school had learned that students from their partner school in South Africa were much more adept at learning other languages than their pupils were. This was probably because in South Africa a variety of languages were part of the local community and the pupils had much stronger oral language skills than their UK counterparts. This became very inspiring to the UK students and led them to be more enthusiastic about language learning. As a result the contact teacher believes the link is now much more of an equal partnership.

All the teachers interviewed for this study referred to the impact of the experience of having a link on them personally, in terms of questioning their own assumptions, broadening their perspectives and as a consequence developing their understanding of global learning. Key to this impact on the individual teacher is the extent to which this 'transformative experience' is translated across the rest of the school. The Head of School A noted that the link had had a lasting and profound impact upon virtually all of the teaching staff. Every teacher from

the school had visited the partner school in Kenya, and from this a phrase had emerged in the school 'You don't fully get it – until you have visited.'

For School D the funding secured from the British Council enabled clustering with local schools and this, the contact teacher noted, has helped with the Global Learning Programme in terms of providing a structure for further professional development of the teachers.

For School E funding from the British Council enabled quite a lot of projects to develop with their partner schools and the exchange of students. However because the link is now part of the everyday life of the school, global learning is also now seen as part of what they do all the time.

These themes of the impact of the link resonate with other studies which demonstrate that, where connections have been made to the broader curriculum of the school and the professional development of staff, an international partnership can enrich the quality of teaching and learning. The Edge et al (2009) study for the DFID funded Global School Partnerships programme showed the importance of support structures to teachers engaged in linking. This research identified the importance of relating any linking activity to broader teacher development and school leadership. A feature of the research was the identification of evidence of the role a link can play in driving change on intercultural understanding and broadening horizons for both teachers and pupils.

9 ▶ # Learning From the Link

All of the teachers interviewed for this study noted that having a link had played a positive contribution in 'bringing to life' learning and understanding about global and development themes. This 'real world' experience is clearly an important feature of the impact of linking in terms of its relationship to global learning. As the Head of School A stated:

> 'Our strong and equitable partnership continues to have a positive impact upon its students, enabling them to fully appreciate and experience the true meaning of being a global citizen through a real and meaningful curriculum'. She suggests the link has inspired and challenged 'children when learning about other aspects of the world, as they now naturally and critically reflect on similarities and differences between UK and Kenya'.

Having a link can also expose lack of knowledge and understanding amongst teachers within a school. The contact teacher from School D noted that having a link showed how little the UK teachers knew about global poverty, inequality and different ways of seeing the world. The contact teacher from this school noted that this lack of understanding was related to a broader issue regarding engagement with global learning. *'It became apparent during the initial stages of partnership that teachers, especially in the UK school, lacked knowledge on global learning. This hindered the development of embedding global learning content and approaches throughout the wider school'*. The contact teacher however noted that as a result of a concerted programme of professional development and support, schemes of work had been developed for years 7, 8 and 9 that include explicit focus on cultural diversity and global citizenship.

Another theme emerging from the comments of contact teachers in the seven schools has been the process of learning about how links can be unequal and the value of working on joint projects with their partner school to facilitate mutual learning. School G noted that initially the link was perceived as helping the partner school in a charitable way but now there was greater focus on mutual learning and the value of learning from sharing cultures, particularly in terms of language learning.

School E summarised the learning from the link into three areas:

> *Learning how to link with another school. At first you think it will be terribly easy, and as time goes by you learn that it's not, so that learning surrounding the value of things culturally and how those are quite different, how to plan to work together, how to align the needs of both schools, building up a relationship, reciprocity… we had obviously a very steep learning curve,*

because we'd never had a link before, and all of a sudden we had this link, and we had to try and make it work.

The curriculum learning, which would be among staff and then that obviously trickled down and was disseminated into student learning, and that was very rich, especially in those first years, because we had large amounts of staff visiting our link school and we had teachers from our link school coming to us so that we could really get the curriculum learning together. The music teacher went to Ghana and he learnt how to make drums, how to do the rhythms, how the drum meanings were culturally significant and the dance that goes with that. In return the music teacher from Ghana came to the UK school and learnt about British music traditions. Similar examples could be found across the curriculum of the school and each teacher who had that rich experience came back and created schemes of work, so that then came into the student learning, to really ensure that they had an authentic education about Ghana.

The third kind of area of learning would be the wider thematic and development education learning in terms of accepting and acknowledging that whilst we felt we had an equitable relationship we are not equal with our partners because we are not the same, and that leads into enquiry about key development education themes which are significant globally, including in our own country, such as education, health, the geography of different areas and the significance of that on daily life, poverty, and all of those things that kind of go in with that.

These examples demonstrate how through real-world examples learning can be deeper and provide opportunities for raising issues related to broader global and development themes. The comments from teachers also show a recognition that the process of learning from experiences, from concrete examples, can also be challenging, questioning assumptions and viewpoints, not only about the wider world, but about themselves.

A theme of recent debates in development education has been the impact of the learning process on the perceptions the learner may have about people and communities in poorer countries. Bryan and Bracken (2011) for example have commented upon the need to move beyond 'fundraising, fasting and having fun' as the basis for engagement in global and development themes, to a more critical and questioning approach to understanding poverty and inequality in the world. As Andreotti (2010: 10) notes, the role of the teacher is not to impose one view but to 'keep possibilities open and equip learners to engage critically with each possibility, to listen and to negotiate ethically with others'.

This is where professional development becomes important. As Alcock (2010: 106) notes, 'training and development can play a positive role' in the development of a partnership particularly if they provide a space for challenging stereotypes

and helping to locate the experience of the partnership within a broader learning context.

The wider influences on how children learn about global themes and their relationship to perceptions of linking was noted particularly by School C. They found that one of the biggest challenges had been in trying to separate out what the children know about the link school and their dominant representation of Africa which is fuelled by media images. The teacher from this school saw the GLP as potentially playing an important role in encouraging children to look at different points of view and question assumptions. The powerful influence of the media was noted here particularly, and the fact that schools have a hard task to overcome the images that many children get from just watching television.

10 ▶ **Perceptions of the Link from Parents**

Whilst there may be evidence that the link has increased learning about global issues and encouraged a greater sense of intercultural understanding, there is always the danger that direct engagement with partner schools and communities can, if not handled sensitively, reinforce existing prejudices and viewpoints.

Schools A, C and D noted that because parents often become involved in a link through fundraising, this can often re-enforce a 'charitable mentality'. Whilst there were examples of parents visiting projects related to partner schools, several teachers commented upon the impact of the pressure to focus on fundraising. This was noted particularly by a teacher from School D as being an obstacle to seeking equitable partnerships.

Teachers from schools A and D also noted that amongst some of their parents global learning was seen as a distraction from getting good results. The constant pressures of targets, testing and examinations meant that a number of parents were only interested in academic results and good OFSTED inspections.

On the other hand, Schools B, E, F and G found the parents to be much more open to learning about the wider world and fully supportive of the value of the links. School E for example, which is based in a former mining village, was conscious of the dangers of insularity amongst the children and the need for them to have broader experiences. School G stated that parents had been very positive about the link and that having such partnerships was seen as part of school life. A number of them had been very generous with their time and had helped with the hosting of visiting students.

These themes and experiences have not been the subject of many other studies. The research for Link Community Development (Bourn and Cara, 2012) and Plan UK (Edge et al., 2011) made only passing references to engagement with the wider local communities. It is also difficult to measure this engagement and support, apart from fundraising. Where the school has spawned an independent charity, (Schools A and B for example) there is evidence of more parental engagement.

Any school's engagement with a link and global learning in general needs to recognise the broader social, cultural and economic influences from society that may impact upon the activities. Themes such as aid and development can pose questions in the school and the wider community about social and political priorities. Whatever positive developments might take place within a school in terms of pupils' learning, external factors, whether from the media, family or peer pressure, can be a strong countervailing force.

11 ▶ # Impact of the Link on Pupils' Understandings of Global and Development Issues

NGOs have played an important role in influencing practice within schools particularly in terms of encouraging making connections between learning and action towards a more just and better world (Bourn, 2014). This enthusiasm has been promoted most notably in recent years in the UK through encouraging the use of terms such as 'global citizenship' within formal education.

Oxfam, for example, refers to 'education for global citizenship' that 'helps enable young people to develop the core competencies which allow them to actively engage with the world, and help make it a more just and sustainable place.'

Whilst Oxfam's approach makes a direct connection between depth of learning and possible follow-up action, there is a tendency amongst some NGOs to assume a relationship between awareness, learning and action (Scheunpflug and Asbrand, 2006).

Underlying this approach is an assumption that having a link and promoting learning about global and development issues within the school will have an impact on pupils in terms of changing their viewpoints, attitudes and behaviour. As commented elsewhere (Bourn, 2014; Bourn and Brown, 2010), there are dangers of making causal links between processes of learning and impact in terms of personal and social change. But what the evidence from this study does show is that a link, particularly where there is a strong connection to global learning, can have an impact within the school in terms of increased understanding, raising standards of learning and engagement with the everyday life of the school.

All of the schools involved in this study made reference to the impact of direct contact with pupils and teachers from their partner school, be it in person, via correspondence or by skype. School A referred to how as children progressed through the school the impact of having the link grew. Children, the Head of the school stated: *'regularly and naturally bring into conversations their knowledge of Kenya when focusing on different aspects of the curriculum, whether it be distinct geographical links or more cultural. In their free writing and in special times such as Leavers' Assembly in Year 6 children regularly comment with great affection and pride regarding the link'*.

School C noted that the link and global learning has had an impact upon all pupils in terms of how subjects were taught in the classroom.

Within the curriculum at School D the quality of students' learning in Geography and History in Year 7 had increased because of the inclusion in the scheme of work on material from their partner school in Sierra Leone.

School E regularly undertakes an audit of pupils' views about what they think is important to learn and know about. These audits are pupil led and global themes continue to be seen as important and popular. 77% of pupils stated that they thought having links was a good thing and this rose to 92% amongst key stage 4. 51% of students said that they would like to know even more about the wider world. They were gaining knowledge and understanding about issues and accepting difference and its impact upon them. This school also noted that the major role global themes play in pupils' learning and experience continues to have an impact later in life. A considerable number of students after leaving the school have gone on to live and work overseas and do international volunteering.

Similar themes emerged in School G where older students have gone back to South Africa and a number have stated how much they love Africa. This school also noted that, as a result of a visit to Peru, one pupil who had not been particularly good in her Spanish language work gained a new enthusiasm for the subject and as a result got excellent exam results.

Within School D there were examples of similar experiences. Students who face difficulties in school have consistently shown interest and progressed whilst learning and participating in the activities associated with the link. The school noted that the students' ability to ask questions had increased as they felt an attachment to Sierra Leone due to the link and the visits.

There is thus evidence that suggests that the quality of the global learning will increase by relating the knowledge gained from a link to broader learning within the school, particularly if it connects directly to the curriculum.

A common theme within development education and global learning practice has been the promotion within formal education of questioning negative perceptions learners may have of children and peoples elsewhere in the world. This breaking down of stereotypes has been a theme of much research and resource development in both the UK and elsewhere in Europe (see Bourn and Hunt, 2010; Hicks and Holden, 2007; Hunt, 2012; McCloskey, 2014). This area is also often used as one of the main indicators for measuring progress and change in attitude and viewpoints amongst pupils (Lowe, 2008).

The area of questioning assumptions and breaking down stereotypes is therefore a key theme to be analysed from the data from the teachers interviewed for this study. The contact teacher from School F referred to seeing this area as an ongoing process: they focus on strengths and similarities amongst their students with their link school and promoting a sense of being a global citizen. However the school noted this is not an easy process and for many students it is a steep learning curve. Similar observations were made by the contact teacher from School C. This teacher noted that whilst there was evidence of more critical and questioning comments, stereotypical outlooks could still be seen amongst the pupils.

The mere recognition of this issue is an important step in the learning journey of a school. As indicated earlier in this study, wider social and cultural pressures can have a powerful influence on pupils. Also specific experiences, regardless of good intentions, can often lead to a negative reaction amongst some pupils. This is why the final theme of this study, on moving from a charity mentality to one of social justice, becomes an important indicator of progress within a school.

Charity, Equity and Social Justice

The underlying theme of the Global Learning Programme in England is to encourage learning that questions a charitable mentality that perceives people in the Global South as poor and helpless victims, and that promotes one of social justice, recognising the inequalities that exist in the world and leading to a sense of wanting to secure social change.

Most development practice in the Global South has been funded by bodies in the Global North that have wanted to provide resources to poorer people in the world. It is not therefore surprising that a charitable mentality is often a natural starting point for learning about development.

Thus, as this paper suggests, the dominant motivation for engagement with a link with the Global South is often a charitable one. The Head of School B for example stated that when she started to get involved in linking and global learning, social justice was not in her vocabulary. She accepted the charitable approach and the focus was initially on fundraising. But as a result of deeper engagement and learning, and opportunities for professional development, the Head's views changed. The school started to encourage the questioning of global issues amongst its staff and pupils. There would still be fundraising activities, these are now set within a broader ethos and mission about global understanding.

For a number of schools this move away from a charitable approach to one of mutual learning and more equitable relationships was influenced by some of the funding criteria for visits and exchanges, particularly the Global School Partnerships programme funded by DFID. School A, for example, noted that in the process of using the funding available, there was a *'strong and conscious effort from both schools to ensure that a charitable approach was not considered at all – quite the reverse in fact'*.

The extent to which partnerships and links could ever be really equitable when the funder is from the Global North and the school with fewer resources is from the Global South has been addressed in a number of studies (see Leonard, 2008; Bourn and Bain, 2012). School D noted the difficulties of ensuring equal relationships, including institutional factors such as funding, and communication problems. There were also a number of practical factors that made such equitable relations challenging:

> *The British Council in Freetown did an amazing job of trying to ensure at least some communication was getting through. The teacher coordinator in Sierra Leone and I wanted to ensure that this link was based on shared learning and social action rather than on a purely charitable approach. This was hard to*

communicate and explain to the colleagues who we both worked with. The link school in Sierra Leone is located in a town that relies heavily on outside aid, e.g. Plan International, Red Cross, etc. The teachers found it a bit perplexing that our school wanted to learn from them.

School C has reported a noticeable change over the evolution of the link. There is still a charitable element but it is much less than it used to be. Also, the communities involved with both schools in UK and South Africa include both rich and poor families, so the traditional stereotypes no longer apply.

School F whose relationship with their partner school grew out of the work of Plan UK never had a fundraising element as the focus, due to the influence of the NGO, so the link was always based on social justice and promoting student voices.

School E stated it did not think charitable themes had been a feature of their links. There has always been the aim to work towards equitable relationships and there has been a mutual sharing of ideas, although less equity when it came to sharing of resources. The school did send some materials to one of their partner schools but this was perceived not in terms of charity but as a practical necessity to ensure that the planned joint project could be undertaken.

The tensions and complex questions around what is perceived as charitable also emerged from comments from School C. The school found a willingness to receive gifts and financial support from their partner school, and it was difficult to move on from this relationship. Other research has commented on these cultural influences (Bourn and Bain, 2012) and Leonard (2014) noting that having access to resources and equipment can be part of an empowerment process for the partner school.

Finally experience shows that whatever the learning taking place amongst the pupils, you are still likely to come up against challenges. One example is the following from School D:

'Due to the Y7 curriculum being rewritten, pupils at key stage 3 have had the most engagement with the school link. Students actively took part in representing the school whilst the visiting teacher was in the UK. These students then gave assemblies to the entire school cohort on our international link. Senior Leadership's response to the link was to offer them school badges and old school hoodies.'

This response from the leadership at the school suggests that there is still a dominant charity mentality here. A reason suggested by the contact teacher was that the school leadership had remained one step removed from the link, and had not been actively involved in visits to the partner school.

The process of moving from a charity mentality for a school is therefore a complex one and can be subject to a range of factors, many of them deeply embedded. But, above all, it is when there is recognition and understanding of the complexities of the relationships a school may have that movement can become more likely.

Engagement with Global Learning

The evidence from the interviews with the teachers suggests that the schools involved in this study have all developed a stronger and deeper approach to global learning, and that the links have made a contribution to this journey. Whilst the nature and extent of the influence of the links varies amongst them, there is a recurring theme of increased commitment to global learning through the curriculum, and examples of explicit global themes in the learning across the schools.

What seems clear is that having a link has had positive and motivating influences on the teachers. School A for example refers to how, over time, *'staff in both schools have become adept at ensuring a strong approach to global learning across the curriculum…The teachers' appreciation of ensuring at every opportunity that children should be exposed to global issues has grown over time'*.

School B has global learning within its mission statement. This school has done a lot of work in supporting teachers to include global themes within the classroom and has engaged in external initiatives such as Connecting Classrooms, the Global Teachers Award and special projects on themes such as literacy. A key challenge the Headteacher, who is also responsible for global learning in the school, has noted is the extent to which they can ensure continuity and progression through the school. This school has stated that today the broader global learning work is probably more important than the link. The visits in the past by teachers were very important because they gave the teachers real world experiences that could inform their teaching. This direct contact was a major driver for taking the work forward within the school. Whilst the school was still interested in pursuing and developing new links, including one with China, the focus was now much more on how a link could contribute to the broader learning within the school.

Other schools referred to the influence of the link on the wider ethos of the school. International work and global themes are part of the mission and annual plans for School E. This school gives regular opportunities for teachers to go on study visits to partner schools. A recurring theme from comments from schools C and G was that global learning is part of everything they now do. School G for example stated that they now see themselves as outward looking and internationally focused; and, as part of a trust of four schools, they are now trying to pass this on to partner schools.

These examples also reflect strong leadership within the school on a strategy on global learning and the role and value of links within that strategy. A word of caution was however noted in a personal observation from the contact teacher from school D who felt there was a lack of knowledge and understanding of good

linking practice and its relationship to global learning at a senior level. Whilst this school was prepared to support CPD in the area of global learning, it was difficult to assess its impact as this area did not appear to be a high priority for the senior leadership.

This school is however an example where, with passion and enthusiasm from an individual teacher, progress and engagement can be achieved. The individual teacher secured support from the Humanities Faculty and the school teaches the International Baccalaureate International Middle Years Curriculum at Key Stage 3. The school has also had a strong international link and within particular subjects, there is a commitment to learning about global and development themes.

Engagement with global learning can take many different forms. Studies of schools that have demonstrated evidence of engagement tend to have a plethora of activities related to curriculum-based projects, whole school themes, special theme days as well as having a link and being involved in a range of award programmes (see Blackmore, 2014; Bourn and Hunt, 2010; Marshall, 2007; Hunt, 2012). It is where the school has moved to the next level and looked at its engagement in global learning in a more strategic way that one can start to talk about a 'global learning school'. The evidence from the interviews suggests that a link can play a major role in this process as it brings to the fore a number of the issues and challenges central to global learning. But for the link to be seen as part of the broader learning experience within a school, engagement and support of the senior management are essential.

These issues were addressed in Edge et al's (2008) study on Partnerships which showed the positive impact of a link on the wider development of the school, particularly in terms of curriculum content. What is important is the wider impact of the link, its relationship to the quality of teaching and learning in global learning, and the extent to which there is evidence of a process of increased understanding and engagement across the schools.

14 ▶ **The School Journeys**

The broader evidence and knowledge about schools' engagement with international linking and global learning assumes that there has been a gradual process of moving from a charitable view about development and about partner schools to one of embedding global themes within the school, and a more critical and social justice perspective on development (Blackmore, 2014; Leonard, 2014). Whilst there is some evidence of this from the seven schools involved in this study, the picture is much more complex and less linear than perhaps other studies have suggested.

School B, for example, states that it may have been on a learning journey, The headteacher noted that it has been challenging, taken time and there are dangers, even when introducing a global learning approach, of doing so at only a superficial level. Understanding this journey, the Head suggests, needs to be recognised within GLP. For her, engagement with global learning themes around social justice is an ongoing process which requires in-depth training and professional development support.

For School E the process has been more one of evolution than a journey. Its initial engagement with global themes came about because it was, overwhelmingly, a white school and there was a need to broaden students' experiences.

What is clear from Schools C, F and G is that the link was an important trigger for engaging with global learning. For school G the link and global learning are now seen as inseparable and 'you can't have one without the other'. This school also noted that if there has been a journey it has been on 'deepening understanding and engagement' but that in order to go deeper you have to be 'shallow first'. For school C the focus today is much more on the curriculum and the evidence of the journey can be seen in the extent to which global themes are part of the topics undertaken within the classroom and in Assemblies and Circle Time.

Across all seven schools there is evidence that, whilst having a link has been challenging for teachers and pupils, direct personal experience and contact with teachers and pupils from the partner school have brought global issues to life, made them real and relevant to their everyday lives. The quality of teaching and learning has therefore increased. Pupils appear to have been more motivated towards learning as a result of having a link; and teachers seem to have recognised the need for further professional development.

The GLP will hopefully provide opportunities for all schools to build on their interest and engagement in learning about the wider world, demonstrate the role

a link can play on the global learning journey and provide opportunities for raising standards across the school.

All the schools interviewed for this study spoke positively about the value of the GLP, the opportunities it provided for them and also for the partner schools they worked with. They all also noted that the GLP needed above all to provide spaces and opportunities for teachers to learn from their peers and share examples of good practice and to support teachers in identifying practical steps they could take to more deeply embed global learning within their schools.

15 ▶ Conclusion and Recommendations

School linking in schools in England has been an important part of the landscape of the practice of raising awareness and understanding about global and development issues. For many schools in England the initial engagement with school linking came as a result of chance personal contacts, combined with a desire to support, in a charitable way, a partner school in the Global South. However where schools have had a consistently strong international outlook this charitable outlook has been less pronounced. Also as schools secured professional development support for their link, particularly if it came from a development education provider, recognition of the importance of equity, social justice and mutual learning gained greater influence.

The evidence from most of the schools in this study is that whilst there has been an increasing commitment to global learning, and the links have played an important role in developing this engagement, there remains a range of external factors that can have a negative influence on this journey. There was evidence for example that the colonial and charitable influence was still strong in a number of schools. Conscious of these influences, teachers in a number of the schools have addressed these challenges through activities and curriculum initiatives that challenge stereotypes and promote similarities as well as differences between children and communities around the world. But it has been more difficult to secure these changes in understanding amongst parents and the wider community around the school; this remains a major challenge that policymakers and practitioners need to consider, as decision-making becomes more and more devolved to the local level.

The relationship between a school having a link, and global learning, seems to have been important from all of the examples studied in this research. The link became an important resource for activities, bringing issues to life and making them real. The curriculum in all of the schools was significantly enhanced as a result of the link; and mutual learning around joint projects was noticeable in a number of schools.

But the major connection appears to have been in the area of professional development. A link that has included some exchange of staff has led teachers to re-think their views about the wider world, to question their own assumptions and to seek ways in which they could relate this learning to wider school practices. It is above all this awareness of the challenges a school faces through a link, in terms of the risks of paternalism and perpetuating a colonial mentality, that needs to be encouraged. For a school to engage effectively in global learning necessitates some recognition of the wider social, cultural and economic influences that affect

partnerships; and also some understanding of the causes of global poverty in general.

For a school to move from having a charitable mentality to one of social justice, it needs to look at its mission statement and ethos and consider where and how themes such as rights, responsibilities, global outlook and seeking a more just world are considered or addressed.

It is perhaps through looking at examples of practice in schools which have undertaken some form of journey or, as one school put it, an evolution, that those engaged in global learning practice can identify further ways in which a link can contribute to broader educational goals.

The following points that emerged from the discussions with the teachers in the schools can be seen as recommendations that policymakers and practitioners could consider:

All of the schools stated that key to taking forward activities around linking and global learning was the support of senior leadership within the school.

There was a need to make sure schools do not reduce global learning to being about linking. Having a link can facilitate and encourage broader global learning activities and offer real world examples. But they can equally lead to a restricted and narrow interpretation of what global learning means if the school's activities in these areas are focused solely around a link.

For effective school links face-to-face encounters between key people in both schools are important.

Linking that leads to broader global learning will only come if education and learning are central to the partnership.

There is no substitute for committed enthusiasts who are passionate about global learning.

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Appendix

Questions Used for the Interviews with the Seven Schools

Interview questions for schools involved in the research on school linking

- Why and how did your school first become involved with an international link?

- If the link school is in a developing country, why? If it was not the first link but a later one, why did you choose this one?

- What did you learn from this link?

- What links do you currently have?

- How have these links changed over time?

- Has your school been involved in any of the national programmes that have supported school linking, e.g. Global School Partnerships Programme, Connecting Classrooms, NGO specific initiatives such as Plan UK, Link Community Development, others…. ? What influence and impact has your engagement with any of these programmes had on your links?

- How has learning from the link(s) developed as time has gone on?

- What have the school's stakeholders including parents and the wider community thought about the link (s)?

- How have school stakeholders (e.g. teachers, parents, pupils) engaged with your school link(s)?

- What do you think your pupils have gained from being involved with the link, and have you any evidence to support what they have gained?

- How would you perceive the relationship between the linking schools in relation to terms such as: equality, charity and social justice?

- Has this changed over time and if so, why?

- How would you categorise your school's current engagement with global learning in terms of its ethos and mission, curriculum and professional development of staff?

- What have been the factors that have influenced your schools engagement with global learning? Have there been any particular trigger points?

- How does your school link relate to the school's global learning work currently?

- To what extent do you view the move from the school link to global learning as a journey? Can you elaborate?

- Do you have any specific recommendations and advice to other schools based on your own experience?

- What role do you think the Global Learning Programme could play to support your school further?

Author

Douglas Bourn is Director of the Development Education Research Centre at the Institute of Education, University of London. He is also Editor of the International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning and author of numerous publications on development education, global learning, global citizenship, global skills and global perspectives within education. His latest volume is Theory and Practice of Development Education (2014).

The Global Learning Programme (GLP)

The GLP is a ground-breaking programme that is creating a national network of like-minded schools, committed to equipping their pupils to make a positive contribution to a globalised world by helping their teachers to deliver effective teaching and learning about development and global issues at Key Stages 2 and 3.

The programme supports teachers to help their pupils learn about the challenges our world faces, and to think critically about how to deal with issues such as poverty, inequality and sustainability. It helps pupils make sense of the world in which they live and understand their role within a global society. It puts a primary focus on developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of development and global issues through subject-based learning in key curriculum areas. It also recognises the important role global learning initiatives can have in encouraging pupils' values and skills development.

The GLP offers schools in England:

- a free peer-led locally-based programme of support to enhance teaching about global issues and whole school approaches to global learning;
- e-credits which schools can use to pay for CPD from approved providers;
- a specialised online audit tool for schools to highlight current global learning strengths and areas of priority;
- an individualised action plan for schools to understand how they might enhance future global learning provision;
- curriculum guidance to support global learning in key subject areas;
- easily-accessible and approved resources available to support classroom teaching and whole-school global learning initiatives;
- an online tool to assess pupils' global learning;
- opportunities for teachers to become accredited GLP Lead Practitioners and for schools to become GLP Expert Centres;
- an Innovation Fund to support teacher-led research on a global learning issue.

The Global Learning Programme is funded by the UK government and runs from 2013 to 2017.

It is managed by a consortium of leading global learning and educational organisations: Pearson (lead), Geographical Association, Institute of Education, Oxfam UK, Royal Geographical Society, SSAT and Think Global. The Institute of Education (through DERC) is leading on two work streams: Continuing Professional Development; and Research and Evaluation.

Website: www.glp-e.org.uk.
Email: glp@pearson.com

The Institute of Education is the UK's leading centre for studies in education and related disciplines. It's staff of pre-eminent scholars and talented students make up an intellectually-rich learning community. A member of the 1994 Group of 19 leading research intensive UK universities, the Institute is the only college of the University of London dedicated entirely to education and related areas of social science.

The Global Learning Programme provides a major opportunity for learning about development and global themes to have an impact in schools.

Development education and global learning have been used to mean many different things; as a result there has been a lack of clarity about the meaning of the different terms, and their application within an educational environment.

Despite an emerging consensus in Europe of what is meant by development education, it is still open to wide interpretation and is not a concept that can be easily applied within formal education.

Development education is proposed here as a pedagogy of global social justice based on a sense of a global outlook, understanding of power and inequality in the world, belief in social justice, and recognition of the importance of critical reflection and dialogue and their impact on personal and social transformation.

Global learning is seen here as the application of this pedagogy in formal education environments, which may take different forms with different age groups and in different curriculum subjects.

Central to both the pedagogy and the practice is a process of learning that is open ended and not prescribed, but offers signposts for personal growth, exploration and engagement with broader societal needs.

Global learning can and does contribute to broader educational goals of raising attainment, personal self-esteem and motivation for further learning.

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