Power and representation: A postcolonial reading of global partnerships and teacher development through North-South study visits.

Abstract

This paper critically analyses the neoliberal discourse informing global education policy and practice. We use postcolonial theory to deconstruct the contexts for global educational partnerships, highlighting how issues of power and representation are central to their development and the learning that takes place within them. Teacher development through North-South study visits is one way of challenging teachers' worldviews, but these are not always effective. We argue that study visit *courses,* where learning is facilitated by differently knowledgeable others, have the potential to be more effective, but only if the courses are underpinned by postcolonial theory and informed by socio-cultural pedagogy.

Keywords

postcolonial theory; global partnerships; north-south study visits; intercultural learning; teacher development[1]

'Show a people as one thing and only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become … Where does the story start – with failure of African states after independence? With colonization? Depending on which it becomes a different story'. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009)

Introduction.

The following notice was seen recently, displayed in a prominent position in one of a well-known chain of garden centres:

We are trying to raise enough money to sent our old [name of garden centre] uniforms to Gambia. Many Gambians are very poor often dressed in little more than rags. Your generosity is much appreciated. Thank you.

The way in which Gambian people are represented in the garden centre notice is not uncommon and is indicative of a dominant discourse about the 'Other' (Said, 1985) that focuses on what is

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[1] Abbreviations used in this article are: CPD (Continuing Professional Development), DEA (Development Education Association, DfEE (Department for Education and Employment), DECs (Development Educatoin Centres), DfES (Department for Education and Skills), DfID (Department for International Development), ITE (Initial Teacher Education), MDGs (Millennium Development Goals), TIPD (Teacher International Development Programme).

lacking when judged against Western lifestyles, and raises questions about why, what Chimamanda Adichie calls the 'single story' of sub-saharan Africa, is so persistent in the Western imagination (Adichie, 2009). At one level the answer is relatively simple – it is in accord with the dominant discourse about Africa portrayed through the media. Since Bob Geldorf's 'Live Aid' in 1987, through to the setting of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, and 'Live 8' in 2004, it has been hard to avoid the focus on Africa as a poverty stricken continent dependent on the West to help it raise its standard of living. There is no denying that poverty does exist in The Gambia – it is a country with one of the lowest Gross Domestic Products in the world (lying 156th out of 182 countries according to the UN Human Development Index http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/) – but this is not the only story to be told about the country. As Graves (2002) observes, a persistent focus on economic poverty does nothing to value the richness of culture, history, and society that is also evident in countries in the Global South. At a deeper level, it is an indication of how dominant discourses can become reified such that issues of power and control affecting how the South is represented in the North[i] are hidden from those doing the representing. This matters to education because teachers' worldviews are informed by broader societal discourses and have a profound impact and how North-South intercultural experiences are interpreted within the context of global educational partnerships; what Carter (2004) refers to as 'translating difference', a concept we shall return to later on.

The aim of this article is to critique a Eurocentric, neoliberal response to the 'Other' (Said, 1985), using postcolonial theory as a framework for analysis. The article begins by discussing what we understand by neoliberalism and offering a rationale for why postcolonial theory is appropriate as a basis for critique of this discourse. We then show how a neoliberal understanding of development and global issues is leading to practices within North-South educational partnerships that are having unintended effects on the learning of all (pupils, teachers and wider community in both North and South) involved, reinforcing rather than challenging stereotypical views, perpetuating global inequalities and thus contributing to the unsustainability of contemporary Western lifestyles (Martin, 2005; Disney, 2008; Edge et. al. 2009). We show how there is a growing awareness, in the UK, of the need for such issues to be addressed through Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) (Holden and Hicks 2007; DEA 2009; Martin, 2008); to this end a variety of study visits to developing countries are available to students and experienced teachers, including those being promoted by government

through the Department for International Development (DfID), and heavily subsidised through, for example, grants available from DfID and the British Council (DfID, 2010a; British Council 2010). However, as we go on to argue, while study visits provide experience of another country and culture they do not, de facto, challenge teachers' worldviews for two key reasons. Firstly, study visits[ii] are often not facilitated by differently[iii] knowledgeable others, so participants' implicit [neoliberal] worldviews are left unchallenged, acting as filters to their experiences. Secondly, without facilitation, participants' attention is naturally drawn to the most obvious difference, that of inequality in the world *today*, without necessarily understanding the influence of the *past*, (that is, the former colonial relationship between the UK and southern countries), which potentially denies an understanding of how that inequality came about. We will conclude the article by arguing for a conceptual shift in study visit *courses*, towards socio-cultural constructivist pedagogies underpinned by postcolonial theory.

Neoliberalism.

The early 1980s, under Thatcher and Reagan, saw the beginning of what became known as neo-liberal politics. Slater argues that the spread of neoliberalism has 'been part and parcel of an enlargement of occidental power in the period since the 1980s' and that, given this global hegemony, it is necessary to 'critically consider the ways these ideas have been formulated, disseminated and broadened in the context of North-South relations' (Slater, 2004:87). Neoliberalism expresses itself in two distinct forms: political and economic. Political neoliberalism is essentially a strategy that seeks to prevent social injustice and conflict (Shah, 2010) through placing value on 'the agency of individuals and on freedom from social and structural restrictions in the pursuit of self-expression and self-actualisation' (Kumashiro, 2010:59). Economic neoliberalism is an approach to trade that is based on the belief that a free market economy, where restrictions and controls are removed, enables individuals and organisations to reach their highest potential through competition with each other. But, as Shah (2010) observes, a free market economy ignores power differentials that can be used to influence and manipulate trade for certain interests. In addition, Slater points out that economic neoliberalism is embedded in 'a political philosophy, which is not always made explicit, but which aspires to be universal' (2004:96) because of the belief in the benign nature of that power - i.e. that it has social justice as a core goal. Neoliberalism has been seen to pervade every aspect of many Western societies during the last 10 – 20 years, so much so that it is embodied within

Western psyche and culture, including education. The contradictory nature of political and economic neoliberalism has led to a situation in the USA where education policies 'undermine the very things that they purport to strengthen' (Kumashiro, 2010:60). From a postcolonial perspective, a free market approach to both trade and education is seen as a continuation of those old policies of plunder that characterised colonial times. As Martinez and Garcia (1997) point out, for some neoliberalism is equivalent to neo-colonisation, a phenomenon that has been shown to be evident in global education policy (Andreotti, 2006) and North-South school partnerships (Disney, 2009). It is this aspect that we seek to critique further through a postcolonial theoretical lens. Postcolonialism is selected over other theoretical frameworks (e.g. cosmopolitanism) because it emerged as a theory from the south, and seeks to directly and explicitly reveal and challenge the hegemonic discourses inherent in how the north and south relate to each other.

Postcolonialism.

Post-colonial, literally the period following independence from colonial rule, needs to be distinguished from postcolonial (without the hyphen) which is 'a critical approach to analysing colonialism and one that seeks to offer alternative accounts of the world' (Sharp, 2009:4). Postcolonial theory was first developed by Edward Said in his seminal work 'Orientalism', where he demonstrated how, during colonial times, the western binary way of thinking (like-unlike, them-us, rich-poor) was the basis for how colonisers made sense of what they encountered. Said (1985), showed how categorisations were not only binary and oppositional, but also hierarchical, with one term being privileged over the other:

> On the one hand there are Westerners, and on the other there are Arab-Orientals; the former are (in no particular order) rational, peaceful, liberal, logical, capable of holding real values, without natural suspicion; the latter are none of these things (Said, 1985: 49)

Categories divided the world into the 'West and the Rest' with the rest epitomising everything that the West found uncomfortable or unsettling to its superior image. During the colonial era, the spread of colonisation was from Europe as the centre and thus the rest of the world was represented as being at the periphery. The centre became the gold standard against which the rest of the world was positioned. Use of postcolonial theory today continues to hold relevance

because, as Sharp observes, 'while political, and to a less extent economic, decolonisation might have occurred with independence, cultural decolonisation – what some call decolonisation of the mind – has been a much more difficult process' (Sharp, 2009:5). The 'story' that continues to be told about developing countries today is one which compares them (unfavourably) with the Western standard and as a result alternative cultures, histories and knowledge systems continue to be relegated to the margins and devalued (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1998). In contemporary global economics, neoliberalism has seen the gap between rich and poor increase on a national and global scale, the irony being that the same ideological position that arguably created the situation in the first place now frames economically poor countries as 'lacking' – wealth, technology, sanitization – to which the neoliberal response is a paternalistic portrayal of the 'other' as child-like, unable to help her/himself without financial support or direction from the fatherly figure of the West (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1998).

Postcolonial theory therefore offers an alternative approach to making sense of what teachers learn from North-South study visits because they are so often between countries that have a historic colonial relationship with the UK, but,

> Under these 'post-modern' imperial conditions 'oppression has become increasingly invisible; [it is] no longer constituted in conventional terms of military occupation, onerous taxation burdens, blatant land thefts, etc.' (2005:58) but rather through a 'fluid confluence of politics, economics, psychology and culture' (Alfred, 2005:30 cited in Coultard, 2007:455).

It is this invisibility that educators such as Andreotti (2006) and Carter (2004) argue can best be revealed through the use of postcolonial theory. In the following section we use postcolonial theory to critically analyse how neoliberalism has affected global education policy, which in turn has had a significant impact on school partnerships policy and practice.

Contexts for Global Education Policy

Education policy is not developed in a vacuum. It is our contention that the UK's economic neo-liberal goal of maintaining a superior position within the global economy is hidden under the

rhetoric of political neoliberal goals of social justice, the latter of which are perhaps most powerfully expressed through the eight MDGs (UN, 2000). A critical analysis of the MDGs are particularly significant to education because they are embedded into the work of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) many of which, as we will show, have a significant impact on how the global dimension is interpreted in schools (Bourn & Issler, 2010).

From a postcolonial perspective, the MDGs are an example of a binary approach to making sense of the world that immediately divides the world into those that have, and those that have not. In the images produced to support the achievement of the goals within the UK it is clear where those that 'have not' are located[iv]. For example, in *MDG1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger*, poverty and hunger are assigned to the South while the West is represented as the advanced society with the power to 'help' in a paternalistic way. On further examination, those in the South are rarely shown in active roles in the achievement of the MDGs, and where a sense of agency is suggested, it is often portrayed as being in the gift of the West through the financial support of, for example, UKAid[v]. In all of this, the historical, colonial relationship between the UK and the South, and thus UK's implication in global economic disparities, remains invisible.
In another example, *MDG2: Achieve universal primary education*, represents universalist views of what primary education looks like based on Western conceptions of education taking place in formal school systems. Documentation states that 'One quarter of the children in the world who are not *attending primary school* live in southwest Asia', (DfID, 2010b, our emphasis), and the only locations in the world singled out for mention are sub-Saharan Africa, Pakistan, South America and the Caribbean. Education is therefore interpreted as formal schooling, and set up as the goal for all to achieve whether culturally, socially or economically appropriate.

At a broader, societal level, a neoliberal discourse is evident in media representations of the South and the unquestioning assumption that the problem can only be fixed through aid and the work of NGOs such as Oxfam, UNICEF, and CAFOD, and charitable organisations such as Comic Relief and Sport Relief – all of which, through their educational wings, aim to influence pupils' learning. In the same way that the South is so often represented by the single story (Adichie, 2009) of 'lack' – of wealth, education, sanitation – so too solutions are represented by a single story of 'aid'. Again, the causes of inequality are hidden under the ideal of the concept of care which, liberals would argue, represents a universal morality (Johnson 2004). Thus, when the English Citizenship curriculum expects teachers to prepare their pupils 'to play an active role as

citizens', the interpretation of what it means to be active in a global context is usually based on the liberal concept of care; as Jefferess points out,

> The notion of aid, responsibility, and poverty alleviation retain the Other as an object of benevolence. The global citizen is somehow naturally endowed with the ability and inclination to "help" the Other. To be addressed as a global citizen is to be marked as benevolent (Jefferess, 2008, p. 28).

The neo-colonial discourse is evident in most policy documents that promote intercultural learning and global citizenship, a phenomenon which is common to Canada, the USA and the UK (Carpenter, Chum & Weber, 2007; Zemach-Bersin, 2007; Andreotti, 2008). Andreotti (2006, 2008) argues that policy documents reflect a liberal multiculturalism approach to culture that de-politicizes difference, and a modernization approach to development, where poverty is viewed in purely economic terms. Focusing on the document, 'Developing a Global Dimension across the School Curriculum' (DfEE/DfID, 2000) she shows how it depicts the problem as,

> the poverty or helplessness of the 'other', resulting from a lack of development, education, resources, skills, knowledge, culture or technology' whereas a postcolonial reading presents the problem as 'inequality and injustice originating from complex structures and systems (including systems of beliefs and psychological internalisations), power relations and attitudes that tend to eliminate difference and maintain exploitation and enforced disempowerment (Andreotti, 2008:59).

We argue, therefore, that neoliberalism is, at the same time, exploitative, paternalistic, and presents a universal view of the 'Other' that reinforces the single story of Africa as a 'place of beautiful landscapes, beautiful animals, and incomprehensible people, fighting senseless wars, and waiting to be saved, by a kind white foreigner' (Adichie, 2009). This is the context within which educational policy has been developed which has, in turn, provided the context for policy on North-South school partnerships (figure 1).

Insert figure 1 here

Figure 1: Contexts for North-South school partnerships

The impact on school partnerships policy.

Within North-South educational partnerships the hegemonic Western discourse is evident in a number of ways, not least in how people and places in the Global South are represented. Western knowledge and the Western academy is often at the centre of policy and practice (Zemach-Bersin, 2007; Andreotti, 2008), with the drive for school partnerships coming from the UK government (DfES, 2004) and many being instigated by UK schools (Edge et. al. 2009).

The discourse evident in global citizenship policies can be seen to have filtered down to more specific guidance for schools interested in developing North-South school partnerships where competing educational and political agendas are providing conflicting aims and purposes for school linking. For example, a key document offering advice on developing global partnerships in education (DfID, 2007a) provides the following educational goals,

> Well planned school partnerships can help children from scores of countries learn more about the rich diversity of our global community. … School partnerships help students understand the world beyond their shores – through accessing the experience of other children who are living in different cultures and traditions. … Such 'local-global learning' is a tremendous asset in developing understanding, skills, attitudes and participation that is relevant to a changing, interconnected world. (DfID, 2007a:5-7)

However, in the preface Gordon Brown and Hillary Benn (Chancellor for the Exchequer and Minister for International Development respectively at the time of the document's publication) provide a purpose that has obvious connections to the Millennium Development Goals, stating that,

> Through school links, UK students will learn just how limited the provision of education is in so many countries and discover that across the world almost 80 million children – most of them girls – don't go to school, today or any day. And many more go to schools many miles from their homes, without enough textbooks, teachers and even simple things like toilets or classrooms (DfID, 2007a:1).

The impact of this conflation of education and development goals is evident in schools in both extra-curricular activities (such as fund-raising for Comic Relief, joining the OXFAM 'Send my friend to school' campaign) and in educational materials produced to support the curriculum (e.g. 'Change the World in eight steps' materials that link the curriculum to the MDGs, Oxfam 2010). In a political and educational context such as this it is hard for teachers to identify the underlying liberal and neo-colonial discourses, particularly since the rhetoric might be consistent with their own beliefs about the aims of global citizenship and school partnerships. Carter (2004) argues that if explicit understanding of such discourses is not present, then no matter how well meaning people are they unwittingly recreate colonial patterns of behaviour and reinforce the very stereotypes and attitudes they seek to change. This points towards the need for professional development for teachers that not only focuses on their understanding of development and global issues, but also develops a 'critical ethics of care' by enabling teachers to look beyond the immediate needs of individuals to understand the ways in which these needs have been created by social institutions and relationships (Engster, 2004):

> What this means is not simply that the powerful must learn to 'care about' the suffering and the destitute in what could possibly – although not necessarily – become a paternalistic act which preserves existing power relations. It means that those who are powerful have a responsibility to approach moral problems by looking carefully at where, why, and how the structures of existing social and personal relations have led to exclusion and marginalization, as well as at how attachments may have degenerated or broken down so as to cause suffering (Robinson 1999, 46, cited in Engster, 2004:18).

Against this context, there are a small number of groups who are working to challenge dominant discourses of neoliberalism and liberal interpretations of an ethics of care. Within North-South school linking, the Humanities Centre in Tower Hamlets has worked with Vanessa Andreotti to create professional development materials (Burr, 2008); these draw on postcolonial theory and aim to raise teachers' awareness of the historical and cultural influences on how partner schools might relate to each other in their intercultural conversations and activities. In a similar vein, the United Kingdom One World Linking Association has developed a 'Toolkit for Linking' that ask teachers to consider critical questions such as 'Making a difference, is linking the answer?' (UKOWLA, 2010), while the British Council has developed a programme of inservice training days for schools (British Council,

2011) involved in the Global Schools Partnerships programme that aim to support teachers in developing ethical and effective partnerships. The latter have been developed in partnership with southern countries. Finally, at a research level Michael Crossley, along with a number of others, has been involved in developing approaches to researching in collaboration with Southern countries that bring postcolonial perspectives and seek to challenge the dominance of the Western Academy (Holmes & Crossley, 2004; Crossley, et. al. 2005; Barrett et. al. 2011). However, although many HEIs and Development Education Centres run study visits for student and experienced teachers, and make assumptions that such experiences develop the deeper knowledge and understanding expressed above, there is very little research that has been conducted and that which exists provides conflicting evidence about the efficacy of study visits and other types of intercultural experiences.

Teacher Development through North-South Study Visits

Growing concern over the impact of North-South partnerships on pupils' learning in both the North and the South has led to calls for teacher development programmes to help teachers better understand development issues, global issues and their own worldviews in relation to these. In a British context, two broad types of related professional development exist for teachers: that which takes place across the UK (DfID, 2007b), and that which involves an intercultural learning experience in a southern country. Study visits for teachers (both trainee and qualified) from the UK to countries in the Global South have been taking place for over three decades (Harber, 1986) but it is only in the last decade that there has been a significant increase in such activity, much of it connected to the growing number of schools in the UK who have established a North-South partnership (Doe, 2007; DfID, 2010c). A variety of North-South intercultural learning experiences for teachers take place across the UK including those run by the British Council (often as part of the Teachers' International Professional Development (TIPD) programme), by Development Education Centres (DECs), or by university departments that have a strong focus on global education (Hutchinson & Rea, 2011). These may involve study visits, visits to partner schools or volunteer placements where participants work alongside their Southern partners; all of which offer very different experiences, depending on their purpose. However, whilst the length of these experiences can vary from a few days to several months the majority tend to be short-term experiences due to school holiday restrictions. Furthermore, visits are usually just that – individual teacher or small groups visiting schools in the southern country – and usually don't involve in-depth preparation or follow-up.

Similar intercultural experiences exist in other countries, with Australian, Canadian and US perspectives most widely documented. The most prevalent of these is the increasingly popular 'study abroad' phenomenon (Fuller, 2007; Williams, 2005; Zemach-Bersin, 2007), however there is also burgeoning literature on international volunteer experiences (Cook, 2008; Jorgenson, 2009) and what is variously described as inter-, cross-, or multi- cultural teacher education (Brock *et. al.*, 2006; Finney and Orr, 1995; Garmon, 2005). Again, these experiences are characterised by their diversity, involving a range of practitioners (students, trainee and qualified teachers, development workers) from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, and can range from a week-long visit to a semester long experience. A critical review of research in this area highlights a number of issues that are affecting the learning that is possible from such intercultural experiences.

Firstly, the pervasiveness of a neo-liberal discourse around these intercultural experiences is evident in much of the literature which focuses on procedural and managerial aspects of such programmes, rather than questioning the fundamental premise that it a 'good' thing (Robson; 2002). For example, geographer Dina Abbott writes about conducting undergraduate fieldtrips to southern countries and the 'danger of replicating the geographical traditions of imperial exploration' if challenging questions are overlooked:

> What does 'cultural exchange' really mean when two groups (the local community and the students/tutors) are interacting in historically racialized spaces and places in the midst of conditions of material poverty? ... Are we as geographers critically engaging in deconstructing the practice and pedagogy of long-haul fieldwork ... or are we simply distancing ourselves from challenging questions by concentrating on the organizational and the practical aspects of these overseas trips? (Abbott, 2006:329-330).

Indeed, a review of the literature on intercultural experiences suggests that issues of power and representation underlie many programs, despite their seemingly well-intentioned aims of enabling participants to become 'global citizens' who have the skills to be successful in a diverse world, or preparing trainee and qualified teachers for teaching diverse student cohorts (Brock *et. al.*, 2006; Fiedler, 2007). The push for the internationalisation of higher education in the US has

been well documented, but the policy has been increasingly criticised as a means of 'harvesting' resources of international knowledge and using them to strengthen the country's hegemonic political, cultural and social domination (Cook, 2008). As Zemach-Bersin has argued, 'The discourse of study abroad appropriates the global to service the interests of the US by re-naming imperialist and nationalist projects with the rhetoric of "global understanding", "international education" and "global citizenship"' (2007: 26). In a similar vein, the tendency for US experiences to be linked to 'service-learning' aspects of university courses suggests that students are providing a service to the host country, perpetuating connotations of superiority and of a donor-recipient culture. Unfortunately, it would appear that such a focus is prevalent in many study abroad programs. Retelling her own experiences, Zemach-Bersin (2008) describes how on the last day of her homestay with a Tibetan family one of her academic directors handed her a parcel of money to give to her hosts, raising pertinent questions around power relations. She reflected that: 'As a first-world student, I had literally purchased a third-world family for my own self-improvement as a global citizen' (2008: np). There is thus a danger that North-South study visits may merely replicate dominant practices, with participants unaware of the unintended consequences of their involvement and of their potential role in 'contemporary forms of imperialism' (Cook, 2008).

Secondly, very little research has been conducted into the impact of study abroad (US), or study visits (UK) on *teachers'* worldviews, and that which does exist provides a mixed picture. Research tends to focus on language teachers' study abroad (Byram, 1997; Kelly et. al. 2001), while the only major UK study into North-South school linking investigates North-South Partnerships at school level (Edge *et. al.*, 2009); although teacher development is identified as an issue it is not within the scope of the research. The premise that understanding development and global issues can be effectively achieved through 'cultural exposure' has been challenged for some time (Conle *et al.*, 2000; Graves, 2002). Research has shown that intercultural experiences, whether study visits abroad for students (Zemach-Bersin, 2007), overseas placements for experienced teachers and headteachers (Hutchings & Smart, 2007), or direct field experience via community or service-learning (Gallego, 2001) do not in themselves result in greater understanding or critical reflection on global and development issues. From the limited literature on the outcomes of teachers' experiences of the South it appears that whilst the experiences themselves may be very different, the outcomes in terms of participants learning may be similar.

Merryfield (2000), for example, found that experiences alone did not make a global educator. Depending on the nature of and relationship between power, identity and experience, different meanings would be ascribed to the same experiences by different educators. Moreover, they do not always have the desired effect regarding deconstructing teachers' knowledges and beliefs. In a study on intercultural field experiences for undergraduate students, Finney and Orr (1995) noted a disappointing lack of change in attitudes and suggested that this was due to students' individualist notions of identity, in which they ignored the socio-historic structures underpinning wider society.

There is similarly a paucity of research specifically relating to North-South intercultural learning experiences from a UK context. One study that does exist collected data as part of an evaluation of a VSO/NAHT programme for headteachers. Hutchings and Smart (2007) conducted a study on the impact of extended three-month placements in Namibia and Rwanda on UK primary headteachers and their schools. Their findings showed that an emphasis on fundraising was common to seven out of the eight placement schools, and it was noted that while some teachers 'hoped to move away from [fundraising] so that they were not seen as "white providers" … issues of power, discrimination, conflict, human rights, values and past injustices were rarely mentioned' (Hutchings & Smart, 2007:9). In a subsequent paper (Smart and Hutchings, 2008) a typology of global citizenship education (Halstead and Pike, 2006) was used to re-analyse the data; this enabled some unpacking of the neo-liberal paradigm that underpins government policy on intercultural education and global citizenship. Whilst the study raised questions about the need for a more rigorous approach to North-South intercultural learning experiences that have a clearer focus on such issues, postcolonial theory as a possible framework for interrogating existing practice was not suggested. In another study, positive impacts of short-term study visits on UK student teachers are reported (Hutchinson & Rea, 2010; Hutchinson & Rea, 2011), with students describing their experiences as 'life changing'. However, a postcolonial analysis of the data the authors suggest is evidence of transformation in ideas and perceptions of material Western culture shows that the single story of the 'lack of the south' predominates:

> ' [I] really value(d) the attitude they have towards money and kind of how little they have
> and the way that I kind of spend so much on my food every week [Interview 17/02/09]'
> (Hutchinson & Rea, 2011:556)

We argue that this is because the focus of the research tends of be on the transformation of the individual with the relational element of the experience (between students and members of host country) and the impact on the host country itself being largely ignored.

Thirdly, and building on this, in some cases intercultural experiences can serve to reinforce existing stereotypes and beliefs (or even create new ones), such as the dependency of people in the South and the exploitative nature of Western culture (Disney, 2009; Garmon, 2005). According to Brock *et al.* (2006) the stories teachers tell their pupils are thus in danger of becoming what they call 'frozen narratives' which reinforce stereotypes and misconceptions of 'others'. Recently, Jorgenson (2009) found that participants on a Canadian global citizenship program in Thailand focused on the material aspects of culture – what he refers to as the 'four D's of culture' (that is dance, dress, dialect and diet) – thus ignoring 'the forces underneath the similarities between cultures such as imperialism, neoliberalism and hegemony' (2009: 129). Other research has revealed how hierarchical images of West and 'other' remain deep-seated and unchallenged without support from differently knowledgeable others and opportunities for regular reflection (Garmon, 2005). In examining Western development workers' (including teachers) experiences in northern Pakistan, Cook (2008) notes that many participants saw their work as philanthropic and found it difficult to understand when local teachers didn't necessarily want their 'help'. These feelings of Western superiority remained unchallenged and pre-existing views of local women as 'ostensibly homebound, needy and dull-witted' remained (Cook, 2008: 23). However, despite all of this, relatively few researchers have suggested postcolonial theory as a means of critiquing global partnerships and North-South intercultural learning (although Jorgenson, 2009, Zemach-Bersin, 2007 and Andreotti, 2008 are important exceptions).

Fourthly, and finally, there is a dearth of research bringing Southern perspectives to this area of work. The need for southern voices has been recognised for some time (Gallwey, 2010, Leonard, 2010), but inclusion of these in global and development education is, as yet, rare. Graves, in considering materials produced through, for example, North-South partnerships observes that

> Their 'partners' present the Southern dimension. This means 'witness', case studies and
> inspiring stories. These voices are necessary, as is Southern analysis and research but …

> [Development Education] material seldom draw[s] on this. Overview and analysis rests with the North. Editorial control rests with the North. Presentation belongs to Northern people. These controlling processes usually exclude Southern people. (Graves, 2007: 69)

To sum up, there seem to be several reasons why study visits (and a variety of other types of North-South intercultural experiences) may not be effective and why they may have unintended consequences that only reinforce notions of power and representation. One of the principle reasons is that many such experiences do not have structures that enable learning to be facilitated by differently knowledgeable others. Both Fiedler (2007) and Brock *et al.* (2006) point out the need for facilitation or supervision during intercultural experiences. We wish to argue that without such facilitation, or mentoring, it is difficult for participants to critically engage in meta-reflection that will enable them to examine (and readjust) their beliefs, attitudes and dispositions (McAllister, *et al.*, 2006). Indeed, Merryfield (2000) concluded that crucial to a 'decolonisation of the mind' (p.439) was time to reflect and support to deconstruct previously held assumptions about the world; something that was not facilitated for the headteachers in the Hutchings and Smart (2007) study, nor for students in the Hutchinson and Rea (2011) study.

It is only by recognising our own worldviews and the ontological and epistemological foundations underlying these that we can begin to 'learn to unlearn'; the moment when transformational learning can begin to take place (Andreotti, 2007). Thus, not only must learning be facilitated, but those doing the facilitation should also be open to experiencing the same reflexive process themselves i.e. constantly re-evaluating their assumptions and worldviews (Brock *et al.*, 2006). Based on this evidence it seems valid to conclude that unsupported study visits/ experiences do not provide participants with sufficient grounding 'about the social-historical context of the country they are visiting as well as their positionality in relation to the people they engage with' (Jorgenson, 2009: np). Finally, there is growing evidence that sufficient preparation and follow-up work on return from a study visit is vital (Fuller, 2007; McAllister *et al.*, 2006).

Proposing a way forward: study visit *courses*.

> If education were to create intercultural spaces where meaning and knowledge is generated through negotiations it could also facilitate a learning space for global citizens.

> In such spaces dialogue concerning difference [has] to be reinstated (taking historical baggage into account), rather than initiated, and identities [have] to be re-negotiated, rather than formed and fixed (Fiedler, 2007:56).

In this article we have used postcolonial theory to critique policy and practice in the area of global partnerships and to problematise the learning that takes place for UK teachers who participate in North-South study visits. We have argued that too often the learning from such intercultural experiences is compromised because of a lack of awareness of an internalised dominant discourse of the 'other' as lacking, poverty stricken and in need of Western 'aid'. Our contention is that study visits, to be more effective, need to be facilitated and run as *courses*, and in this final section we explore how such courses might be designed to enable learners to move away from the neo-colonial tendency of the North to exploit the South for their own emotional and knowledge gains. We argue that such a move is only possible if the hegemonic discourses are explicitly revealed and discussed during a preparatory learning phase, and if, during the study visit itself, the intercultural space opened up is not seen as a site of encounter, but of negotiation and discussion, and in which questions of history, power and domination are raised and openly discussed (Fiedler, 2007:55). We propose that this requires explicit use of postcolonial ideas, a critical socio-cultural pedagogy, and an explicit consideration of the nature of knowledge and knowledge production. We will now discuss the implications of these proposals for designers and leaders of North-South study visit courses.

Postcolonial spaces for learning.

Any attempt to move away from hegemonic discourses means the adoption of an epistemology that is not binary, oppositional and hierarchical. Postcolonialists propose a view of epistemology that is situated (Sharp, 2009), multiperspectival and relational (Andreotti, 2008), and in which no one knowledge system is privileged over another. The importance of a situated, contextual epistemology comes from the critique of 'decontextualised, ungendered, disembodied, so-called 'objective' knowledge' (Sharp, 2009:116). The focus is on specificity, rather than universality. This specificity means that individuals and groups will know and understand the world differently, according to their geographical, historical and cultural contexts. In the context of North-South intercultural learning, a situated view of knowledge therefore requires not only access to multiple perspectives, but also access to the contexts within which the perspectives were

formed, and an appreciation that knowledge is socially constructed and thus relational. We argue that such an epistemological stance provides alternative ways of understanding identity, representation, difference and responsibility – these being the concepts that we have highlighted as being particularly problematic in the context of intercultural learning in North-South study visits.

How we understand our own identity is both a product of, and affects, how we think about and relate to others. If we view our identity as something that is a construction of the individual, decontextualised and fixed, then it is likely that this is how we will view others and makes the possibility of breaking down stereotypes more of a challenge. However, if we view our identity as something that is a social construction this allows for a more fluid, relational notion of self and opens up the possibility of change. The relational element is important here because it recognises that 'the subject creates meaning in the moment of differentation of self to other' (Paoline, 1999:16) and leads to an acknowledgement and acceptance that the other resides in the self, and thus that identities are hybrid (Bhabha, 1994). If identity is seen as a hybrid and fluid concept, then how one represents others encountered during intercultural experiences may then be seen as representations that are bounded by the geographical, historical and cultural contexts acting at the moment of encounter. This view of representation releases the represent*er* from being too attached to the represent*ed* because it is understood that representation is not mimetic but productive and experimental and thus is always, and *should* be, open to change. Differences will still be encountered, but how those differences are understood will change. Here we have found Burbules' work on the philosophy of difference helpful.

> The concept of difference is not merely concerned with a conceptual difference …
> Conceptual difference […] is given by different concepts such as man and woman …
> Conceptual difference gives us diversity. The concept of difference, however, permits us
> to think differently *within* identity, within the concept of woman or man...as both woman
> "contains" the other and man "contains" the other. This idea of difference within suggests
> that categories are never entirely stable: that the logic of identity (that a thing is what it
> is) must be situated within a more dialectical relation; that a thing is also partly what it is
> not, what it is differentiated from, what it is defined over and against. (Burbules,
> 1997:104 our emphasis)

How might a relational, fluid understanding of identity and difference affect how one interprets the active citizenship goal of responsibility towards others? We identified earlier that a neoliberal view of responsibility is problematic because it assumes a concept of care based on a universal morality. We also argued that the conflation of development goals with educational goals leads to a conflict in what forms of responsible action might be appropriate in the context of North-South educational partnerships. Johnson points out that 'development practice is usually projected as being an act of caring' (2004:2) and a Western, modernist conception of development (Andreotti, 2006). Postcolonialism problematises the concept of care and invites us to engage with Andreotti's question of how to develop an 'ethical relationship with the other' (2008); in other words to develop a care *ethics* that is 'founded upon a contextualized approach, rather than on abstract universal principles that can be applied consistently, as is an ethic of rights' (Gilligan, 1993, cited in Johnson, 2004:7).

In summary, because we live in a post-colonial world, we are proposing that any North-South study visit course needs to pay attention to 'new forms of imperialism embedded in globalisation of culture, identity and difference' (Carter, 2004:825). We would argue, however, that paying attention is insufficient and that a course would also need to enable participants to become aware of the influence of these forms of imperialism on their own worldviews, and to critically question them in relation to 'issues of location of culture, the assumption of a homogenous gaze and the ambivalent spaces where the historically colonized and the historical colonizers come into contact' (Abbott, 2006:337). However, it can be argued that opening up to questioning one's beliefs and assumptions about the world means opening up to uncertainty which can create a sense of discomfort and has implications for course pedagogy (cf Brock et. al. 2006).

We suggest that in an intercultural learning context that aims to unpack historical, social and cultural influences on worldviews, a critical socio-cultural pedagogy needs to be adopted. Such a pedagogy needs to incorporate a postcolonial framework that has a clear focus on 'translating difference'. Without this there is a danger that during intercultural conversations Otherness is too easily 'translated in ways that make it familiar, comprehensible, and predictable' and configured 'as alternative forms of sameness that can be appreciated as cultural pluralism only by the dominant group in whose cultural forms the difference has been constructed and represented' (Carter, 2004:827). This only works if, at the point of contact, the intercultural

element of the study visit is not seen as an encounter, but as a postcolonial space for learning that focuses on negotiation and discussion and in which participants think dialectically rather than dually. Bhabha (1994) adds to our understanding of what a postcolonial, intercultural space for learning might be like through his concept of 'Third Space'. During an intercultural conversation individuals occupy their own cultural space; it is only by stepping out of this space into the space *between*, that learning from the dialogue can take place. It is incumbent on both parties to do this and to create a Third Space in which new meanings and understandings can emerge.

Andreotti (2007) advises that raising awareness of one's own worldviews is insufficient as a precursor to entering Third Space, and that what is also needed is a process of learning to unlearn (what Spivak (1990) refers to as unlearning privilege); learning to listen (to multiple perspectives); learning to learn (taking on new perspectives, re-arranging and expanding one's own); and learning to reach out (exploring new ways of being, thinking, doing, knowing and relating). But what stimulates this process? We would argue that before this can happen participants need to become dissatisfied with their current worldviews through what Brock *et. al.* (2006) term 'displacement spaces'. These are the 'places we move into (either by force or by choice) whereby we see things differently' (Brock et. al. 2006:38). They can be spaces that are challenging not only intellectually, but also emotionally, physically, and metaphysically. In the context of postcolonial displacement spaces the types of displacement that we are suggesting may occur are ones that disrupt and resist: the notion of a single story; essential ideas about self and identity; forms of colonialism and imperialism; and neoliberal conceptualisations of care.

Such displacement spaces can be uncomfortable and possibly paralysing, and evidence from previous studies suggests that apparently negative (uncomfortable) experiences can become positive if experienced within a safe, supportive environment that provides time for reflection and discussion (Garmon, 2005; McAllister et. al., 2006; Martin, 2007). This reinforces the need for group forming during preparatory sessions, and indicates that the diverse nature of the group may be a critical feature in the extent to which deep learning takes place (Martin, 2007). As Brock *et. al* point out, 'it is not merely the diverse experiences that really make a difference in teachers' learning but the careful and thoughtful reflection and discussions of those experiences that matter' (2006:39) along with an openness and willingness to confront possible misconceptions,

fears and ignorance. In a sense, revision of ones identity in relation to cultural experiences is required.

A potential problem is that if displacement first occurs during the study visit itself, no strategies have been developed to cope with the displacement and so paralysis is more likely. We would contend, therefore, that spaces for displacement need to be built into the preparatory phase of a course. A further issue is that during the immersion phase course participants may interact with people in the South who are themselves locked into colonial patterns of relating to the North. Fiedler describes the need for the creation of alternative sites of enquiry that open up the possibility for what he terms postcolonial learning spaces (Fiedler, 2007). It could be argued that study visit courses run within an established global partnership that has spent some time working through these issues provide such spaces. This is the focus of the authors' current ESRC project: *[details removed for peer review]*. We conclude by discussing how we have attempted to put the ideas contained above into our own practice as researchers working in an intercultural context.

Researching postcolonial spaces for learning

The research design for our project has been developed in response to the question of how one can establish an ethical relation to the 'other' and avoid keeping 'Western academy and the Western academic at the centre' (Andreotti, 2007). We are also mindful of how *we* 'translate difference' (Carter, 2004), and have found Lynn Mario de Souza's work helpful in considering how we might approach learning from difference in a more ethical way. Souza (2008) warns that when focusing on multiple perspectives the goal should not be to arrive at a consensus (which re-creates polarity). Rather, he proposes a pedagogy of dissensus as an alternative, which requires an awareness of internal and external difference (which parallels Burbules' notions of difference within and difference without, 1997) and an openness to new possibilities instead of substantial and universal certainties.

The global partnerships for mutual learning project is examining two global partnerships (between UK-The Gambia and UK-Southern India) and the North-South study visit courses they run on a yearly basis. These partnerships are based on the principles of reciprocity, equality and mutuality. The study visits, with their emphasis on prompting changes in perspective through

intercultural, mutual learning are based on similar principles. It is therefore deemed inappropriate (a) for the research to be conducted in an objective way by an 'outsider', and (b) for the research to be conducted solely by UK researchers. In order to mirror the multi-perspectival, mutual learning principles, local researchers in The Gambia and Southern India have been appointed who are adapting research tools for data collection and analysis, and who are collaborating in the dissemination of the project's findings. This enables intercultural, mutual learning to take place between northern and southern researchers in the same way as takes place between northern and southern teachers during the study visits. As the research is progressing, during research conversations there is a tendency to want to find points of contact and to feel connected to those one is working with by focusing on similarities and seeking consensus. However, drawing on the work of Burbules and Souza, we are becoming increasingly aware that it is possible to feel connected through difference when one aims not to resolve those differences, but to understand them.

At a time when internationalisation and global citizenship are attracting large sums of money that enable teachers and students to engage in intercultural learning experiences in the Global South, organisations need to be assured that such activities are not counterproductive to their aims. We believe that the outcomes of our research will shed light on this concern, and be of interest not only to teachers and teacher educators working in the field of global citizenship, but also to other practitioners who are engaged in activities such as university study abroad programmes, international service learning programmes, and overseas field visits to Southern countries.

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[i] North-South is being used to represent developed and developing countries, since that is the term that is often used for educational partnerships between these areas of the world (Andreotti & Burr, 2008; Edge et. al. 2009). However, it is recognised that this term is problematic, not least because it reinforces a binary ontology that postcolonial critiques seek to disturb.

[ii] For the purposes of this article, we refer to study visits as those that are usually short-term, and which individuals or small groups take to developing countries without any specific training beyond logistical matters such as vaccination and visa requirements. Study visit *courses* are those where the study visit itself is framed within a broader course (but not necessarily an accredited one) facilitated by teacher educators who also accompany the group on the study visit.

iii We use the term 'differently knowledgeable' rather than 'more knowledgeable' to recognise that different forms of knowledge are equally valid, and to challenge the power hierarchy that exists between academic and other voices

iv The Department for International Development's front web page (accessed 28/09/10) for the MDGs, http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Global-Issues/Millennium-Development-Goals/, shows an image of a southern country for each of the eight goals.

v Operations by the Department for International Development (DfID) in the developing world were rebranded "UKAid" in 2009 in an attempt 'to make clear that the contributions are coming from Britain' (Sengupta & Starkey, 2009).