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A global partnership from the perspective of the Southern school: Perceptions, pedagogies, and the power of love

Keri Reid
2022

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Cover photograph: Les Dalziel

Abstract

Our partnership with a Ghanaian school is often used to promote International School Partnership (ISP) programmes. This study aims to explore our 'success story' from the perspective of our colleagues in Ghana. Do they consider our partnership to be successful or is our partner school merely serving a dominant Northern global citizenship agenda? The research considers teacher understandings and applications of global citizenship education (GCE) within a partnership context, from the perspective of teachers in the Global South through an ethnographically-informed case study approach.

Findings show that teachers in Ghana highlighted many successful aspects of learning and teaching around GCE within our ISP context. There is evidence of teachers taking a 'writerly approach' to our partnership work which creates space for a wider perspective of global citizenship and GCE. Data also highlights challenges around equity and the place of 'restorative justice' is discussed. Perhaps the most surprising and significant outcome of the study was the importance of relationships and emotions within ISPs, and the impact it has on perceptions of 'success'.

Key words: *International School Partnerships, Global Citizenship, Postcolonialism, Learning and Teaching, Love.*

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Introduction

This research stems from my own involvement in an international school partnership with a primary school in Ghana. It is considered a successful ISP and has been used as an example to promote the British Council's Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning (CCGL) programme¹.

However, the media articles and texts surrounding our partnership all speak from a Global North perspective. Bourn & Cara (2013) confirm that most ISP programmes tend to be driven by a Northern agenda and assume that mutual learning will take place. This has led me to question if the objectives and experiences of our schools in Scotland and Ghana are mutual. Is our partnership perceived as successful in Ghana or is our partner school merely serving a dominant Northern global citizenship agenda?

My reading highlighted some research which focuses on the Global South experience within school partnerships, but it mainly focused on the benefits to pupil learning. I hope to contribute to this dialogue by considering some teacher understandings and applications of global citizenship education within a Global North-Global South school partnership context.

This research therefore aims to explore, where possible, teacher perceptions of a global partnership from a Southern perspective.

The guiding research questions are:

1. What are Southern teachers' understandings about 'global citizenship education?'
2. How do they apply their understandings to their learning and teaching within a global partnership?
3. What are the benefits and challenges of partnership learning from a Southern school perspective?

It is interesting to note that most of the research that focuses on teachers in the Global South expresses a Global South experience through English and has been carried out within a Western academy. Funded research on ISPs has generally been commissioned and authored by Northern government agencies and NGOs, demonstrating Western hegemony (Leonard, 2012; Edge et al., 2012). I acknowledge that I am researching from such a stance.

This report begins with a summary of literature around international school partnerships, including the influence of teacher worldviews on partnership working. I then situate our own school partnership within the British Council context. The research process and findings are then discussed, followed by a conclusion which suggests possible implications for future partnership working and research.

¹ <https://connecting-classrooms.britishcouncil.org/>

Literature Review

To set the scene, this section explores the empirical findings around learning and teaching experiences of international school partnerships of teachers in the Global South and Global North. For consistency, I refer to the term 'international school partnership' (ISP) while acknowledging that authors use other terms such as intercultural partnerships, international partnerships, North and South partnerships, school linking and school exchanges.

Learning and achievement within ISPs

ISPs often sit under the umbrella of 'global citizenship education' (GCE) or global learning within the different UK school curricula. Many African countries teach 'civics' or 'civic education' which looks at aspects of citizenship, both national and global. Previously in Ghana, elements of GCE were taught through the civics programme and it now features predominantly under the 'Our World / Our People' section of the National Curriculum Framework (2019).

It is propounded that ISPs provide an approach that can give voice and space to the Global South to present their viewpoints and experiences; an approach which can challenge stereotypes and promote social justice (Bourn, 2014; LTS, 2001). While this may be so, there is less research on the impact of ISPs on schools in the Global South than in the Global North. However, the research that has been carried out among some schools in Global South countries identifies several emerging themes. The most robustly evidenced theme is the positive influence on student academic achievement and progress within education; not just knowledge but also skills, mainly literacy and ICT (Edge et al., 2012; Bourn & Cara, 2012 and 2013; Bourn & Bain, 2011). Other themes include some attitudinal change (Bourn & Cara, 2013), teachers gaining a wider range of teaching strategies and a positive impact on social attributes and motivation of pupils (Edge et al., 2012; Bourn & Bain, 2011).

Whereas schools in the Global South report an increase in knowledge and skills development, the impact on UK schools appears more about the knowledge gained (Bourn & Cara, 2012 and 2013), with evidence of some UK schools showing paternalistic notions towards their African partner school (Bourn & Cara, 2013; Andreotti, 2006). While I recognise that this may have changed in more recent years, I still feel it is important to highlight the dangers of colonial thinking and to consider the influence of teacher worldviews.

The consequences of unexamined assumptions and beliefs

The worldview of a teacher undoubtedly influences pupils' attitudes, pedagogy and learning experiences, both planned and incidental. Worldviews are informed by societal messages, including those of teachers. During the writing of this paper, there has been much debate about decolonising the curriculum and it makes sense that we may first need to decolonise the worldviews of teachers. Teachers' world views can be defined as their assumptions, beliefs and values (Martin, 2005) and these contribute to an ideological lens through which many teachers view their ISP.

The dominant discourse about the 'Other' (Said, 1985) is often the 'single story' (Adichie, 2009 cited in Martin & Griffiths, 2012) or the 'frozen narrative' (Brock et al., 2001 cited in Martin & Griffiths, 2012; Harré and van Langenhove, 1999 cited in Martin, 2007) of Southern economic poverty and stereotypes. This neoliberal discourse portrays the good global citizen as someone who helps the poor by fundraising (Disney, 2003; Brown, 2006; Bourn & Cara, 2012) which reinforces stereotypes and colonial thinking (Burr, 2008; Martin, 2007; Martin, 2005) and contributes to creating liberal and uncritical ethics of care (Jefferess, 2008). It is from this viewpoint that Martin (2005) illustrates the controversial nature of ISPs and problematises an area that is traditionally perceived as 'good' and uncontentious.

Research that has studied the effect of (UK) teacher ISP visits on teacher worldviews reinforces that this is an important issue to consider. Merryfield (2000 cited in Martin & Griffiths, 2012) posits that different meanings are taken from the same intercultural visit by different teachers. Unchallenged, many teachers will continue to filter their ISP experiences through assumptions and biases. Indeed, a lack of criticality allows inequality and injustice to remain unexamined and hidden under a concept of care and benevolence towards the 'Other' (Jefferess, 2008). Of course, teachers in the Global South may also be locked into colonial patterns of thinking and being.

In response to research findings, more recent professional learning programmes have been revised to challenge and shift paternalistic viewpoints of ISPs and to support criticality. For example, Department for International Development (DFID)-funded Global Learning Programme (2013-2018)², Connecting Classrooms (2013 – 2018) and Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning (2018 – 2021). Across Scotland, there are now many Learning for Sustainability (LfS) professional learning programmes in place which include GCE and ISPs, including some at Masters-level. In recent years, the British Council commissioned the University of Edinburgh to develop a bespoke course to support LfS and the programme has been accredited by the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS). More recent programmes highlight interdependency and encourage criticality, reflecting Bourn's (2014) observation for a need for spaces and opportunities to learn from peers, share good practice and to support teachers' thinking.

² There were separate Global Learning Programmes in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Our International School Partnership

Our own Global South-North ISP began in 2006 and has been supported by the British Council since then. In this section I provide a brief overview of the British Council's partnership programmes before describing our school partnership journey.

The British Council

The British Council is a UK-based cultural relations establishment and a key player in the ISP landscape. They work in partnership with DFID (now the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office) who funded the original Global Schools Partnerships programme (GSP) and now fund the Connecting Classrooms Global Learning (CCGL) programme. Due to DFID funding, the CCGL programme remains aimed at DFID priority countries. The British Council co-ordinate the programmes and related teacher professional learning. Initial CCGL teacher professional learning is free and open to teachers in both the Global South and Global North through a blend of face-to-face and online learning. Teachers from the Global South were involved in the design of the e-learning courses and teachers from across the globe can share responses through a digital forum. The current CCGL programme was launched in 2012 and aims to “*help young people worldwide develop the knowledge, skills and values they need for life and work in a global economy*” (British Council, 2018, p. 3).

This CCGL programme provided the funding for this research study.

Our partnership journey

Our Ghanaian-Scottish ISP began in 2006. Both our schools are rural primary schools. The Scottish school has only three composite (multi-age) classes and the Ghanaian primary school consists of non-composite classes from nursery upwards. Following an initial funded two-way visit, we secured three more DFID funded curricular projects with visits and two British Council Connecting Classrooms grants. There were several years where we continued to work together without funding as the GSP programme stopped and the alternative British Council programmes funded only UK teachers. In recent years the Connecting Classrooms programme has reinstated teacher visits from the Global South, and we secured funding through this refreshed version of the programme. The programme has evolved in line with changing policy and has moved away from a focus on environmental and / or intercultural education to a focus on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This shift is reflected in our own ISP journey. Having situated our ISP, I now share the research process.

Research Methodology

This section presents the research undertaken. First, the research aims and questions are set out. Postcolonialism as a framework is then introduced. Next, the methodology and methods are set out. In the subsequent section, findings are discussed, followed by some conclusions and implications for future ISP work and research.

Research aim and questions

Aim of research:

To explore teacher perceptions of a global partnership from a Southern perspective.

Key questions to guide the research:

1. What are Southern teachers' understandings about 'global citizenship education?'
2. How do they apply their understandings to their learning and teaching within a global partnership?
3. What are the benefits and challenges of partnership learning from a Southern school perspective?

Postcolonialism

Reading about the consequences of unchallenged underlying teacher assumptions, and how they can reinforce colonial thinking, led me to consider a postcolonial lens in which to frame my research. Postcolonial theory was developed from Said's (1985) *Orientalism* and the construction of the 'Other'. Said developed postcolonial theory based on the western binary, oppositional and hierarchical way of thinking that occurred during colonial times, when Europe saw herself as superior and privileged and the world was divided into the two categories of the 'West and the Rest'. We can see in society today that, whilst political colonisation may no longer exist in the physical sense, cultural colonialism is still visibly reflected in words and actions. Indeed, many UK educational programmes that come under the heading of 'global citizenship' are charity-based and focused on fundraising, for example, Comic Relief and Mary's Meals.

While I am aware of the dangers of colonial thinking, I am also conscious that I am a Westerner speaking about / for teachers in the Global South. Most ISP research that expresses a Global South perspective has been carried out in English and within a Western academy. I acknowledge that I am no different. I accept that I cannot truly reflect the perspective of another person's lived experience, even more so someone from a different country and culture. To help validate the research and reduce 'ventriloquism' of the dominant researcher voice speaking 'for' the participants (Fine, 1994), participating Ghanaian and

Scottish teachers were invited to evaluate and discuss the data analysis and findings of the research.

Mindful of a need to develop an ethical approach which actively sought to avoid colonial patterns, I applied Martin's (2010) approach to conceptualising aspects of a North-South partnership (see: Appendix A). It encourages a move away from traditional / Western views of knowledge, the curriculum and pedagogy within an ISP context, through providing alternative, more relational, ways of perceiving them. This has helped me be more alert as to how I am reading / analysing data, be more reflexive in my thinking, and reduce colonial thinking patterns.

Methodology and methods

Due to my insider-researcher position, I applied an ethnographically informed case study. This approach sits under a qualitative research paradigm and uses interpretative methods. Data sought the voices of three teachers in Ghana who have been involved in our most recent ISP work through the British Council's Connecting Classrooms programme. This included a visit to the school in Scotland. I also carried out the same research activities with two teachers from the school in Scotland who had been directly involved in our most recent ISP work, including a visit to the Ghanaian school. This helped me to retain an overall perspective and see where similarities and differences lay. The focal point of the research will be on the Ghanaian teachers' perspectives.

Data was sourced from individual semi-structured interviews (see: Appendix B) and several participatory activities (see: Appendix C) which provided some triangulation. The interview questions aimed to encourage a reflective narrative so that answers were grounded within a real, shared context. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to carry out the planned face-to-face interviews and activities and applied 'socially distant' digital methods instead. All interviews were carried out via Zoom and a WhatsApp research group was set up and used to communicate and send research materials.

The three participatory activities involved: a Venn diagram to explore shared and separate experiences, diamond ranking statements to describe global citizenship, and selecting and commenting on photographs that reflect memorable partnership moments. Teachers were given the choice to work together or individually on the tasks. Interestingly, all teachers chose to complete the first two activities on their own. However, our research WhatsApp group was used to share the memorable photos and comments. The chat thread itself became a rich source of data with teachers from both countries engaging in a warm and emotional dialogue.

Data analysis

Key themes were drawn out of the data using Martin's (2010) framework (see: Appendix A). This helped to expose knowledge and understandings that may otherwise have been missed, such as the 'writerly approach' that is discussed in the findings.

The Venn diagram data was collated in two final Venn diagrams which differentiated between the two schools (see: Appendix F). Data resulting from the diamond ranking activity were recorded in the form of an average ranking layout for each school (see: Appendix G).

Throughout the analysis process it became apparent that emotions were referred to a lot, particularly in the interviews and WhatsApp chat around the memory photographs. I therefore used a values coding system to capture the more affective / relational themes such as love and friendship. The highlighted words / phrases from the data were then transferred into a word cloud programme which creates a clear visual regarding the frequency of reference to the emotion / attribute (see: A partnership of 'togetherness').

Ethical considerations

Ethical issues were addressed in line with British Council Research Ethics policy and signed off by British Council staff. In addition, ethical approval was obtained from the University of Stirling, as the data from this study may also be used in my doctorate thesis. All the participating teachers received a letter of invitation (see: Appendix D) and signed consent forms (see: Appendix E) that made clear they could withdraw from the research process at any time. They were assured that their names would not be published without their consent. Part of the CCGL funding was used to cover costs for teachers in Ghana to buy data for their mobile phones, so that they could participate digitally in one-to-one interviews. All teachers met virtually before and after the enquiry to meet informally and discuss the research.

The participatory activities were based on the principles of Participatory Action Research (Bergold & Thomas, 2012) which ensures research:

- Is democratic.
- Aims to create safe spaces for sharing of views / learning (safe in that participants' utterances will not be used against them; that confidentiality will be assured; that research processes will not cause undue stress or harm).
- Enables participants to determine their own levels of participation.
- Treats participants as knowing subjects, rather than objects to be studied.
- Recognizes the importance of reflection – and so aims to build in time for this and to capture the results of individual and group reflections.

Research Findings

Several themes emerged from the data. Most were relevant to the original research questions, but an additional strong theme around relationships also arose. I have therefore included this aspect in my findings and argue that it still relates to the original aim of exploring teacher perceptions of an ISP from a Southern perspective.

Martin's (2010) ethical framework was not only a useful analytical thinking tool but also helped to frame my findings. The findings are organised under the following headings:

- Knowledges and understandings around global citizenship
- Application to learning and teaching – a 'writerly' approach?
- Benefits: Motivation, attitudinal change and pupil voice
- A partnership of 'togetherness'
- Challenges - equality and equity
- A pedagogy of love

Knowledges and understandings around global citizenship

The purpose of the diamond ranking activity (see: Appendix C – Participatory activities) was to explore understandings of the term 'global citizenship' within the context of global citizenship education. Bearing in mind Martin's (2010) point that there are many knowledges and understandings which are socially, historically, and culturally constructed based on the experiences of each teacher, I emphasized to the participants that there was no correct way to rank the priorities of global citizenship.

'Exploring the complexity of global issues and considering different perspectives' was an area that teachers in both schools ranked highly in the diamond ranking activity. There was also agreement that *'exploring issues of social justice, locally and globally'* was important. This was reinforced in interviews, mainly when discussing the reciprocal teacher visits. It was through the visits that teachers said they began to consider alternative perspectives in a deeper way, through both being in a different country and participating in classroom learning and teaching. The visits also encouraged pupils to ask more questions and helped both pupils and teachers to view issues from different perspectives.

The teachers in Ghana were unanimous that *'equipping students with knowledge and skills to participate in society as responsible citizens'* was the most important aspect of global citizenship. The interviews would suggest that 'responsible citizens' includes helping their neighbours, modelling how to keep the environment clean and educating others about the global goals.

The two biggest discrepancies were around *'partnering with another school from a different country'* and *'asking questions and developing critical thinking'*. The former statement was

ranked low by the teachers in Scotland and high by the teachers in Ghana. Teachers in Scotland rated the latter statement high on the diamond ranking activity whereas teachers in Ghana gave it a lower priority. This corroborates with Angyagre's (2020) observations of the Ghanaian social studies curriculum being one that focuses more on inculcating a set of attitudes and values in pupils, rather than fostering critical thinking. However, the recent revised National Curriculum Framework (2019) promotes critical thinking as a core global competence, and this was pointed out by one of the Ghanaian teachers when sharing research findings with participants. Critical thinking was also something we discussed before and during filming for an online global citizenship magazine (see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54iSBj3hd0g>).

Application to learning and teaching – a 'writerly' approach?

A child put their outside light on. They don't even switch it off. Because according to her, the mother said if they were late in coming home, there must be light outside. But she told them, mother no, you are wasting power. We have to switch it off and we have to come home early to put off the light. So now they know how to use water and electricity. Also, not to contaminate water. Those who use the stream, they go washing in the stream and they pour soapy water into the river. Because of this partnership and what we have learned about water bodies, no pollution. They don't pollute and they have been educating their peers also outside. We've also learnt that the world is a global. So we should have things in common (Teacher in Ghana).

The two schools have worked collaboratively on sustainability issues for over a decade. Findings concur with earlier studies that highlight the positive influence ISPs can have on pupil achievement in the Global South (Bourn & Bain, 2011; Bourn & Cara, 2012; Leonard, 2012). All the teachers spoke in detail about the learning experiences of their pupils and the knowledge, understanding and skills gained e.g., research skills. Sizmur et al. (2011 cited in Bourn, 2014) describes teacher visits as a transformative experience that makes pupil learning real and relevant, and this was reflected in all the interviews.

In addition to this, they also spoke of the relevance of the learning and teaching and the social action that followed. One teacher in Ghana took the class for a walk around the local area with pupils noting down environmental and / or social changes they would like to make based on the SDGs. Campaign work included writing letters to newspapers and village chiefs / councils, making posters and contacting the local radio station. Such action suggests more than just gaining knowledge and skills, as indicated in the literature review. It also supports the high ranking of the statements (see: p.13) around equipping students to be responsible citizens, demonstrating that teachers encourage active citizenship participation in the present as opposed to merely equipping / preparing pupils for their futures.

Furthermore, while the learning and teaching activities undertaken related to discrete areas of the Ghanaian curriculum, all teachers recognised the cross-curricular and interdisciplinary links. This reflects Martin's (2010) move away from viewing knowledge as a series of

discrete subjects towards a more collaborate and sense-making curriculum. Again, this is more than previous research findings which highlights learning within discrete subjects, particularly literacy and ICT.

Martin's (2010) framework also refers to den Heyer's (2009) 'writerly' approach to text. A 'writerly' approach distinguishes itself from a 'readerly' approach in that it invites readers to make their own meanings and connections through their unique life experiences. Rather than reading a fixed narrative, readers can interpret a text through their individual life lens. Regarding our ISP work, findings show that teachers are applying a 'writerly' approach to their learning and teaching within the ISP. They have interpreted the 'master' (Western?) SDG narrative through an individual and local lens, as well as considering the bigger, global picture. Each class teacher worked with their class to select one or two SDGs to focus on. They opted not use the programme that the Scottish schools used to guide them because it was not helpful in the Ghanaian context, instead coming up with their own interpretations and teaching ideas.

Benefits: Motivation, attitudinal change and pupil voice

In line with research, teachers in Ghana talked of increased pupil motivation (Bourn & Bain, 2011; Edge et al., 2012) and attitudinal change (Bourn & Cara, 2013). Bourn (2014) warns us that there is a tendency to assume causal links between ISP involvement and the impact on personal and social change. Other research confirms that establishing an ISP does not necessarily guarantee a more critical and social justice perspective on ISPs, or within GCE more generally (Leonard, 2012 and 2014; Martin, 2005; Edge et al, 2009). While agreeing with the points raised in general, I would argue that in this case, motivation has impacted on attitudinal change and social action. The above quote (see previous page) from the teacher illustrates this, and all teachers talked about pupils being motivated through knowing they were working together with pupils across the globe.

Teachers in both Ghana and Scotland reported that their pupils felt their views on sustainability and social justice issues were listened to, both locally and globally. One Ghanaian teacher discussed how the class had written to local newspapers to highlight the dangers of poor sanitation and to demand change. He reported that pupils felt:

they have people, have been observed with them, outside the country... We were able to educate some people.

Learning about what their partner school had campaigned for, and the reasons why, appears to have enhanced pupil knowledge, deepened understanding and created more critical questions. Findings concur with Bourn & Cara's (2013) research which suggests that when ISPs take a development education focus to raise awareness of global issues, it can give a voice to both schools. They go on to posit that such an approach can challenge stereotypes and create respect for difference as well as similarities, as pupils (and teachers) view issues from a different perspective.



A partnership of 'togetherness'

Teacher interview responses contained a few phrases which could be perceived as having colonial undertones, but this should not be assumed. '*Foreign knowledge*' was inferred to be a reciprocal notion, and this was reinforced in the Venn diagram activity. Teachers in both schools viewed the quality of their teaching as being equal to their partner school. Our ISP work was viewed as an enhancement to teaching and learning, particularly the teacher visits.

First, we have worked on togetherness. The children all know that both the Africans and Europeans are one people irrespective of their colour. They... they know that we are sisters and brothers... so that togetherness is there. Formally they were afraid when they see you, they run away, but now they have taken you also as their own (Teacher in Ghana).

'Togetherness' is a word that one of the teachers in Ghana used a lot in their interview (see above quote) and the way they used it portrays, to me, a feeling of solidarity. The teachers in Scotland often compared the partnership to 'family'. The word clouds below show that 'love' was mentioned the most in interviews with Ghanaian teachers, followed by 'togetherness', 'hospitable' and 'share'. Similarly, Scottish teachers referred to 'respect', 'hospitality' and 'friendship'. Those attributes were reinforced in the Venn diagram activity, where 'hospitality' and 'love' was written in the shared aspect by almost all the teachers. Teachers in Scotland also identified 'shared values' as something shared across both schools.

'Togetherness' would appear to sit opposite 'Otherness' but teachers spoke of 'Otherness' as part of the 'Togetherness'. Teachers in Ghana spoke of the excitement of pupils, teachers and parents when the 'obronis' (white people) come to their school. They spoke of how proud they all feel that we have travelled so far to meet them. Likewise, Scottish teachers spoke of how '*the children were fired up and enthusiastic when the Ghanaians were here and that spills over when they (the children) go home*'. In line with research, all teachers noted the positive impact on staff, parents and the local community. Perhaps it is not 'Otherness' as in colonial times that is being described, but rather an excitement of visitors/friends coming from far away to spend time together, as opposed to being 'studied'.

Ghanaian teacher word cloud	Scottish teacher word cloud
 <p>A word cloud for Ghanaian teachers. The most prominent words are 'togetherness' (green), 'love' (red), and 'hospitable' (cyan). Other visible words include 'enthusiasm', 'caring', 'share', 'pleasure', 'motivated', 'relationship', 'joy', 'proud', 'commitment', and 'dedicated'.</p>	 <p>A word cloud for Scottish teachers. The most prominent words are 'respect' (green), 'family' (red), and 'hospitality' (blue). Other visible words include 'enthusiasm', 'relationship', 'united', 'excitement', 'buzz', 'joy', 'trust', 'warmth', 'friendship', and 'love'.</p>

Challenges - equality and equity

All teachers spoke of sharing knowledge and practice, suggesting a strong reciprocal knowledge relationship. One Ghanaian teacher stated that *'we all share ideas. You learn from us; we also learn from you. We are all equal'*. While all teachers were quite emphatic that the partnership was fair / equal, the teachers in Ghana referred to material inequity, specifically monetary inequity. All teachers recognised the value of teacher visits, and it was pointed out that more Scottish teachers have visited Ghana, due to teachers being able to self-fund. This is simply not an option for most teachers living in Ghana. While teachers in Scotland did not refer to money, they did make comment that it would be better for their school to host more Ghanaian teachers due to the positive impact the visiting teachers have on learning and teaching experiences.

There is much debate that questions if South-North ISPs can ever be truly equitable. Research indicates that funding, power relations and sustainability will always be controversial issues within ISPs (Leonard, 2012; Martin & Wyness, 2013; Bourn, 2014; Bourn & Cara, 2013). Most often, the funder is from the Global North, which creates a sense of imbalance from the outset and could be viewed as reinforcing a colonial discourse of paternalism and donor-recipient patterns. Indeed, material inequality is highlighted frequently in ISP research (Brown, 2006; Martin, 2010; Leonard, 2012; Bourn & Cara, 2012) which often leads to fundraising by the Northern school. ISPs that also include teacher visits will always incur substantial travel costs and some schools fundraise for this to develop sustainability, our school included.

While many postcolonialists take a different position, Leonard (2012) notes that this could be viewed as 'trading' or a rebalancing of power relations and other inequalities. Drawing on Quist-Adade & van Wyk's (2007) 'reassessment justice', Leonard also posits that 'restorative justice' may be an alternative perspective to 'charity'. Some research suggests that a critical and meaningful GCE can be enacted if the '3As' (aid, assistance and action) are considered

as something restorative and determined by Southern schools themselves, and that this can create empowerment (Leonard, 2012; Quist-Adade & van Wyk, 2007; Bourn, 2014). This also suggests that investing in an ISP this way can help ensure partnership sustainability and mutuality/equity. This research would suggest that taking a 'restorative justice' approach could indeed make ISPs more equitable.

A pedagogy of love

'The way you love us, we love you' (Teacher in Ghana).

While recognising that teacher emotions were not part of my initial research, I found the reference to human emotions and relationships featured too often to ignore. It was interesting to note that all teachers spoke more about personal relationships and attributes than educational aspects. While it is recognised that sustained partnerships often lead to friendships and more collaborative ventures (Disney, 2008), the value of friendship is often ignored in ISP literature (Robinson-Miles, 2017 cited in Morrison, 2020). Perhaps this is due to it being a non-quantifiable outcome which are outcomes that are often ignored in ISP evaluations (Leonard, 2012).

The data suggest that hospitality has helped to build more personal relationships, create trust and revitalize learning and teaching. This enquiry posits that informal activities, such as socialising out with school, eating together and staying in one another's homes, play an underestimated role in developing sustainable relationships, strengthening school partnerships and creating spaces for authentic professional dialogue.

Bourn (2014) observes a need for spaces and opportunities to learn from peers, share good practice and to support teacher thinking. This need for time and space for mutual learning to happen is supported in other research which discusses 'spaces of displacement' as a way to interrupt teacher thinking (Martin & Griffiths, 2012; Martin & Wyness, 2013). They are described as supportive spaces where issues such as history and power can be openly and sensitively brought to the surface and discussed. While such interrupted thinking can cause discomfort in some cases, they argue that within a safe and supported setting, colonial thinking and behaviour patterns can be broken, and transformation of thinking and deep learning can occur. Could more informal meeting places be viewed as 'spaces of displacement' as a starting point?

Photo 1: Partnership teachers embracing



This beautiful photo illustrates the genuine warmth and love that is the basis for a wonderful partnership and the reason that it works so well ❤️❤️

Conclusion and Implications

In summary, this research considered teacher understandings and applications of global citizenship education within a partnership context, from the perspective of teachers in the Global South. It is not an attempt to make comparisons between the Global North and the Global South as this would not be accurate or appropriate. Every country differs in terms of educational, social, cultural and economic factors. Data was sourced from one ethnographically-informed case study and the limitations of such a small and unique enquiry should be noted. However, the related findings can contribute to the growing body of evidence of the impact of ISPs in both the global North and, more explicitly, the global South.

What do Southern teachers understand about ‘global citizenship education?’

All the teachers in Ghana ranked *‘equipping students with knowledge and skills to participate in society as responsible citizens’* as the most important aspect of GCE. Teachers referred to a moral citizenship where respect and kindness are valued and modelled. They also indicated that exploring global issues from a local and global perspective was important, highlighting issues relating to the environment and social justice.

The pedagogical approaches used to teach about GCE demonstrate a belief that learning about / through GCE is related to skills and action, and not just about gaining knowledge and understanding. Pupils are being *‘equipped with knowledge and skills to participate in society as responsible citizens’* now, not just in preparation for their adult lives.

How do they apply their understanding to their learning and teaching within a global partnership?

All teachers in Ghana talked of pupils learning about GCE through different areas of the curriculum, for example RME and literacy, not just through the ‘Our World/Our People’ section of the curriculum. Classes decided which SDG they wanted to campaign for, and teachers facilitated the learning of the pupils. The referred to ‘togetherness’, alongside the campaign work undertaken, reflects a critical GCE approach which has empowered pupils to take action, see beyond our racial and ethnocentric identities and appreciate both differences and similarities associated with the ‘Other’ (Said, 1985).

One of my initial concerns was that our partnership is Northern-driven with a dominant Northern agenda, in this case a focus on the SDGs. However, teachers were able to reflect and take a ‘writerly approach’ through writing themselves into the agenda from a Ghanaian perspective, which ensured mutual learning took place.

What are the benefits and challenges of partnership learning from a Southern school perspective?

The findings suggest that pupils gained more than the knowledge and skills identified in prior research, and that they have been successful in developing pupil voice and active global citizenship across the curriculum. When working collaboratively on shared projects, the research indicates that pupils feel listened to and that they have a global audience they can speak to through their partner school.

Surprisingly, all teachers spoke more about personal relationships and attributes than educational ones. Such aspects are often not considered on ISP applications, evaluations or related teacher learning courses. Recognising the positive impact it can have on ISPs, this is possibly an area that could be researched further and built into future ISPs programmes. Developing relationships and building trust is not something that can be forced but is arguably more natural in an informal setting. Perhaps we could consider 'spaces of displacement' as being more informal spaces in which to build relationships, as well as to challenge thinking. There was no evidence of colonial thinking in the data, although I realise that I cannot assume there is no colonial thinking within our ISP. Perhaps none came to the surface because of our long-term and informal relationships. If so, colonial thinking patterns may be interrupted quite naturally through a more informal approach.

Findings highlighted a challenge around equity, particularly around teacher visits. Teacher visits were viewed as having a positive impact on teaching, learning and communities (across both schools). However, most teachers in the Global South cannot self-fund, unlike teachers in the Global North. This has meant that more teachers from Scotland have visited Ghana, despite fundraising to subsidise extra visiting teachers from Ghana over the years. While ISPs may be perceived as educationally equal, this research suggests that more research could be carried out around equity. Taking a 'restorative justice' approach would appear to be a starting point, perhaps opening up deeper conversations with teachers in the Global South about what they want to achieve from their ISP and what they need to support it, as opposed to assuming 'West knows best'.

In conclusion, and on a more personal note, my initial concerns and wonderings have been explored. This research supports the view that there is a dominant Northern agenda within ISPs, even under the guise of global issues such as the SDGs. However, teachers in our partner school are extremely effective at viewing the agenda from within their own context and applying relevant pedagogical approaches that fit their curriculum and their school context. It is not just from this knowledge that I now view our ISP as successful in Ghana too, but also from the genuine and sustained professional and personal relationships that we have formed and that have shone through the whole research journey. I thank all teachers, in both schools, who have participated in both our ISP journey as well as the research journey.

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Appendices

Appendix A – An ethical approach to conceptualising aspects of a North-South partnership

Partnerships	Avoid South/Other as an 'object' of study as in colonial times; develop ways of working together through a process of mutual learning (Ballin, 2010) towards shared goals that are mutually beneficial.
Knowledge	Move from a universal view of knowledge, to an understanding that knowledge is socially, historically, culturally constructed. Similarly, move from a view of knowledge that is certain and unproblematic, to one that reflects a relational, multiperspectival understanding concepts such as culture, identity, space, place, interdependence, sustainability – knowledges, not knowledge; futures, not future; geographies, not geography; histories, not history.
Subjects	Rather than viewing knowledge as a set of discrete disciplines, Gilbert (2005) argues that it should be presenting as a series of systems that have particular ways of doing things (and particular strengths and weaknesses). Reframing our approach to knowledge in this way may allow us to work with students to develop the systems-level understanding, the big picture, [and the] connected ways of thinking they will need to function effectively in the knowledge society' (Gilbert, 2005:175).
Curriculum	Move away from conceptualising 'curriculum as thing', a body of facts, ideas, skills and attitudes already decided by those in power to be 'delivered', to conceptualising 'curriculum as encounter' (den Heyer, 2009:28), to be created collaboratively between teachers and students who work towards shared sense making (Lambert, 2009).
Literacy	Taking literacy in its broadest sense, and 'text' as including film, novels, popular music, art and so on, den Heyer proposes moving from a 'readerly' to a 'writerly' approach to text. Readerly approaches assume that meaning resides in the text, whereas writerly approaches invites readers 'to make meanings through the context of their lives' (den Heyer, 2009:27). Any intercultural experiences, and encounters with texts will be interpreted through individuals' lenses; adopting a 'writerly' approach therefore requires recognising that selves are implicated in texts and vice versa.
Pedagogy	Morgan (2002) proposes a 'deconstructive pedagogy that begins to take apart the categories and meanings that have generally been thought of as fixed and stable' (p. 27). Things that Morgan suggests should be deconstructed in an explicit way with students are the various forms of representation that are used in geography classrooms (similar to Den Heyer's 'texts'); taking such an approach will enable a move away from generalisations and a 'master narrative' to multiple knowledges, perspectives and representations.

Taken from Martin, F. (2010) Global Ethics, sustainability and partnership. In Butt, G. (ed) *Geography, Education and the Future*. London: Continuum. pp. 206-222.

Appendix B - Interview questions

1. Your school is quite unique in many ways. Please could you talk a little about how your school is different to other schools.
2. What would you say are the values of your school?
3. Your school has been partnered with --- for many years. Please could you talk through some of the shared project work that you and your class have been involved in?
4. How do these activities fit with the curriculum?
5. How has our ISP impacted on your pupils' learning - their skills, knowledge, understanding, values and/or attitudes? Can you think of any examples?
6. For you and your school, what have been the benefits/advantages of being in a school partnership?
7. We've worked together for a long time now and are seen to have a strong partnership. Why do you think our partnership has lasted so long?
8. The pupils, staff and parents at --- always give the --- teachers a very warm welcome when they visit. Please could you talk a little about how the local ---community view the --- teachers when they visit? Is it a stereotypical view? If so, in what way?
9. Can you give some examples of any challenges around being involved in a Ghana-Scotland school partnership for you and/or your school?
10. A British Council school partnership is encouraged to be fair and equitable. Can you give examples of where it might be fair and other examples of your experience where it might not be fair?
11. If you could change anything about the partnership, what changes would you make and why?

Appendix C – Participatory activities

1. Aim - to draw out teacher worldviews.
Activity - a Venn diagram that notes Ghana life, Scottish life and overlaps/shared experiences.
2. Aim – to explore the term 'global citizenship' within the context of global citizenship education.
Activity – diamond rank 10 statements (see below).
3. Aim – to explore the memorable/important aspects of a global partnership from a teacher viewpoint.
Activity – select a photo that reflects a highlight of our partnership experiences and write a little about why it was chosen.

'Diamond rank' the statements in order of importance:

Global Citizenship is about ...

Asking questions and developing critical thinking.
Revealing and developing our views, values and assumptions.
Exploring the complexity of global issues and considering different perspectives.
Exploring issues of social justice, locally and globally.
Applying learning to real-world issues and contexts.
Opportunities for students to take informed, reflective action and have their voices heard.
Equipping students with knowledge and skills to participate in society as responsible citizens.
Enriching all areas of the curriculum.
Partnering with another school from another country to work together on projects.

Statements adapted from Oxfam's Global Citizenship in the Classroom – A guide for teachers (2015).

Appendix D – Letter of invitation

Letter of Invitation to Participate in Research

A teacher perspective of an International School Partnership

14/1/21

Dear _____,

I invite you to participate in a research study I am undertaking with the UCL Institute of Education. It is funded by the British Council's Connecting Classrooms Global Learning research fund.

The purpose of this study is to explore an International School Partnership from the perspective of Ghanaian and Scottish teachers. As a teacher who has experience in this area, your views would be greatly valued and appreciated. The information given would also contribute to a doctorate thesis.

The research would consist of:

an interview by Keri Reid via Zoom/Teams. The interview would last approximately 30-45 minutes and the audio would be recorded.

three structured activities that explore your views on the International School Partnership and global citizenship in general. The activities would be emailed to you and could be carried out in your own time. Each activity should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.

Your responses would be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions. The recordings of interviews will be destroyed immediately after an (anonymous) transcript has been made. Consent forms and interview transcripts (in which all identifying information will be removed) will be retained in a locked cabinet until 2023. A digital copy of the transcript will be kept in the server at the University of Stirling until 2023. Thereafter, all forms and transcriptions (paper and digital) will be destroyed. You are welcome to access the information I have provided while it is in storage as specified above.

If you choose to participate, you may opt out at any time. I will reimburse you for your time and pay each teacher £20.00 through the --- bank account.

Please feel free to contact me at kerireid@live.co.uk, or on Whatsapp, should you have any queries or wish to discuss the research further. For further information on the Research Fund, please contact Dr Frances Hunt, Senior Research Officer, Development Education Research Centre, UCL Institute of Education at f.hunt@ucl.ac.uk. Dr Hunt is managing the fund and overseeing this project.

Yours sincerely,

Keri Reid

Appendix E – Consent form

A teacher perspective of an International School Partnership

Consent to take part in research

I volunteer to participate in a research project which is funded by the British Council's Connecting Classrooms Global Learning research fund. It will be conducted by Keri Reid and supported by the UCL Institute of Education. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about a teacher perspective on International School Partnerships. I understand that the information given will also contribute to a doctorate thesis written by Keri Reid.

- 1. My participation in this project is voluntary.*
- 2. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without consequences.*
- 3. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.*
- 4. Participation involves being interviewed by Keri Reid via Zoom and taking part in three structured activities that explore my views on International School Partnership and global citizenship in general. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes and the audio will*

be recorded. The activities will be emailed to me and can be carried out in my own time. Each activity should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.

*5. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.**

6. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.

7. I understand that the recording of my interview will be destroyed immediately once an anonymous transcript has been made.

8. I understand that signed consent forms and a transcript of my interview (in which all identifying information has been removed) will be retained in a locked cabinet until 2023. A digital copy of the transcript will be kept in the server at the University of Stirling until 2023. Thereafter, all forms and transcriptions (paper and digital) will be destroyed.

9. I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.

10. I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

11. I will be reimbursed for my time and paid £20.00 through the --- bank account.

12. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

_____	_____
<i>My Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
_____	_____
<i>My Printed Name</i>	<i>Signature of the researcher</i>

Appendix F – Collated data from Venn diagrams

Figure 1: Ghanaian teachers' intercultural responses

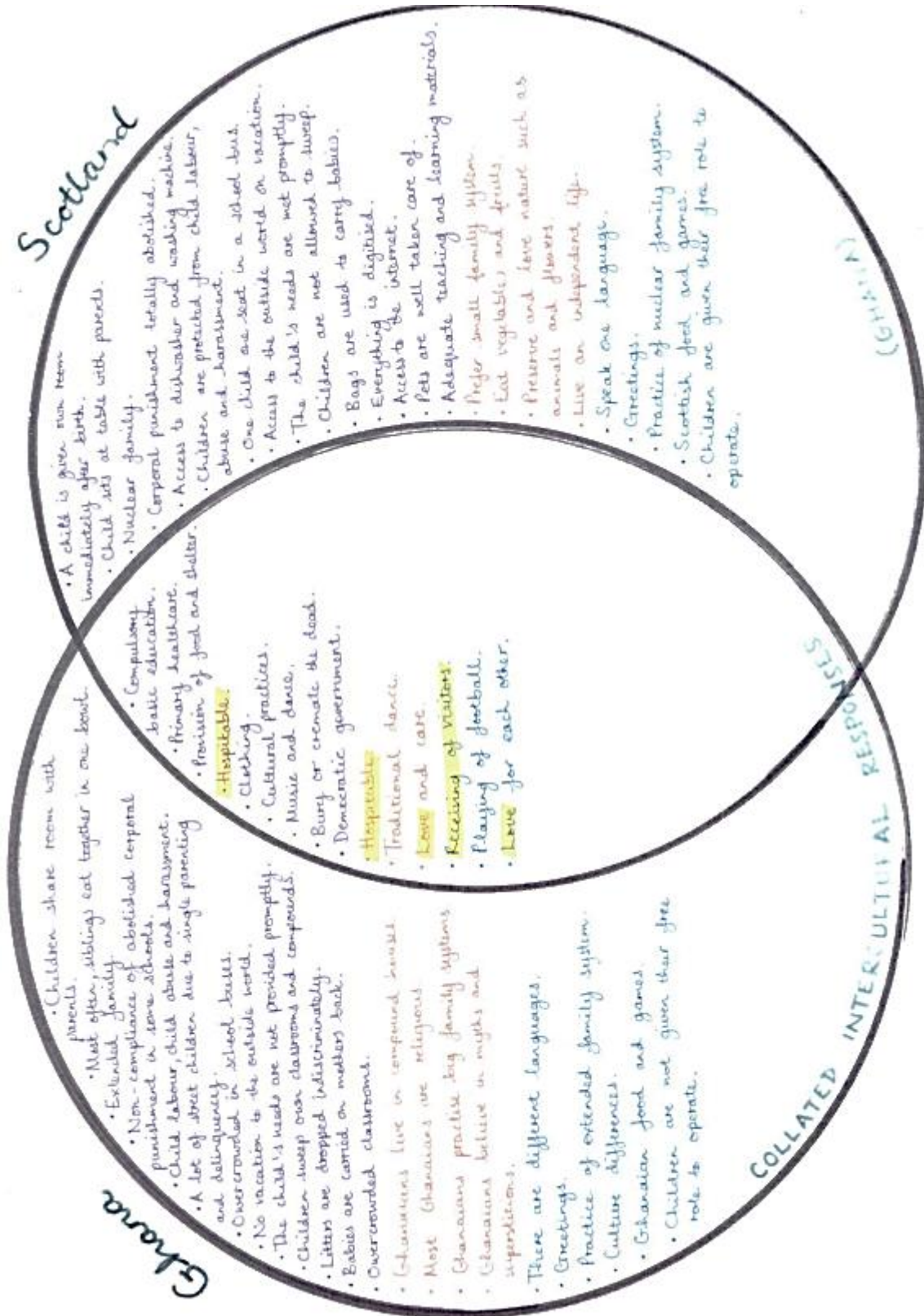
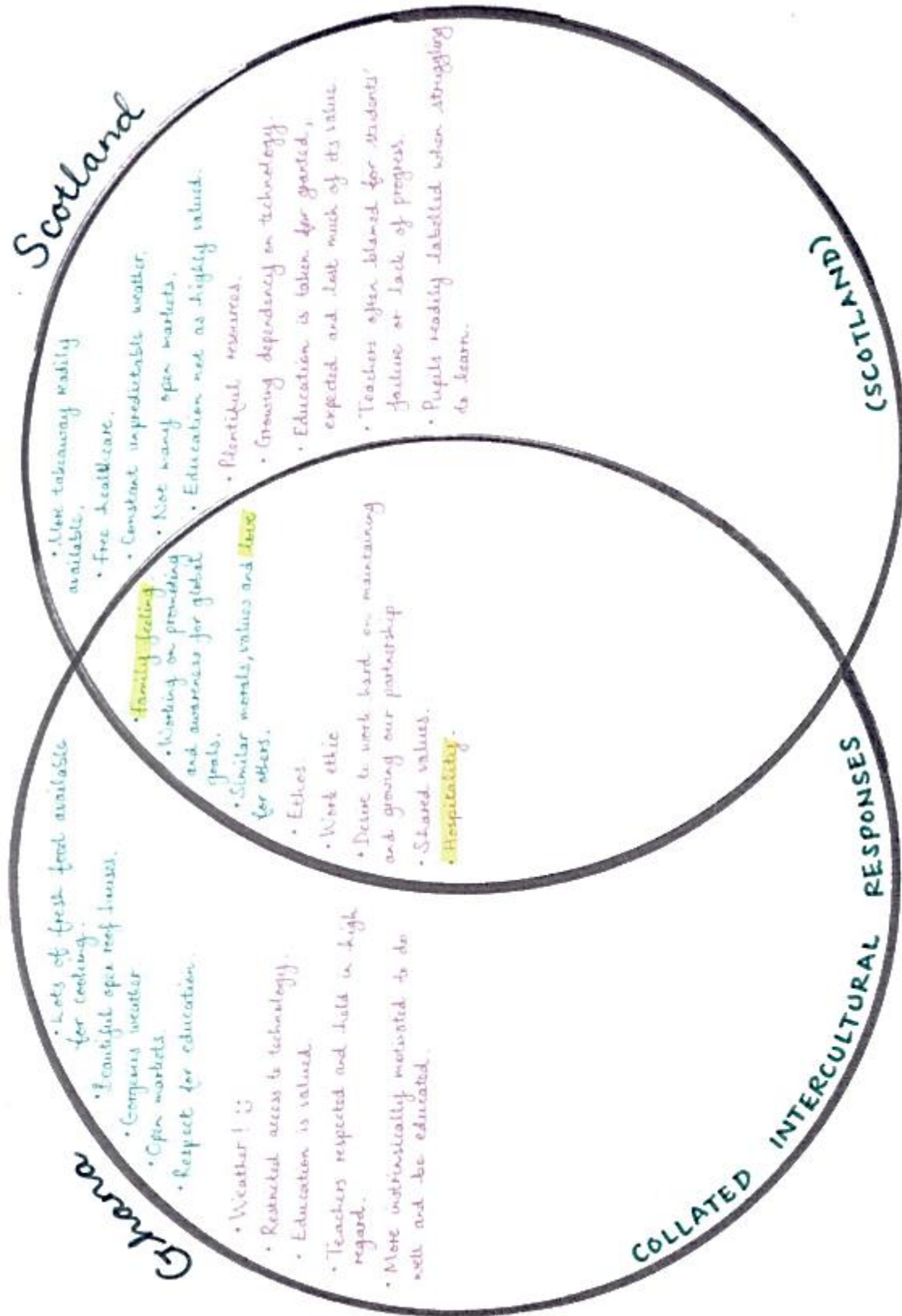
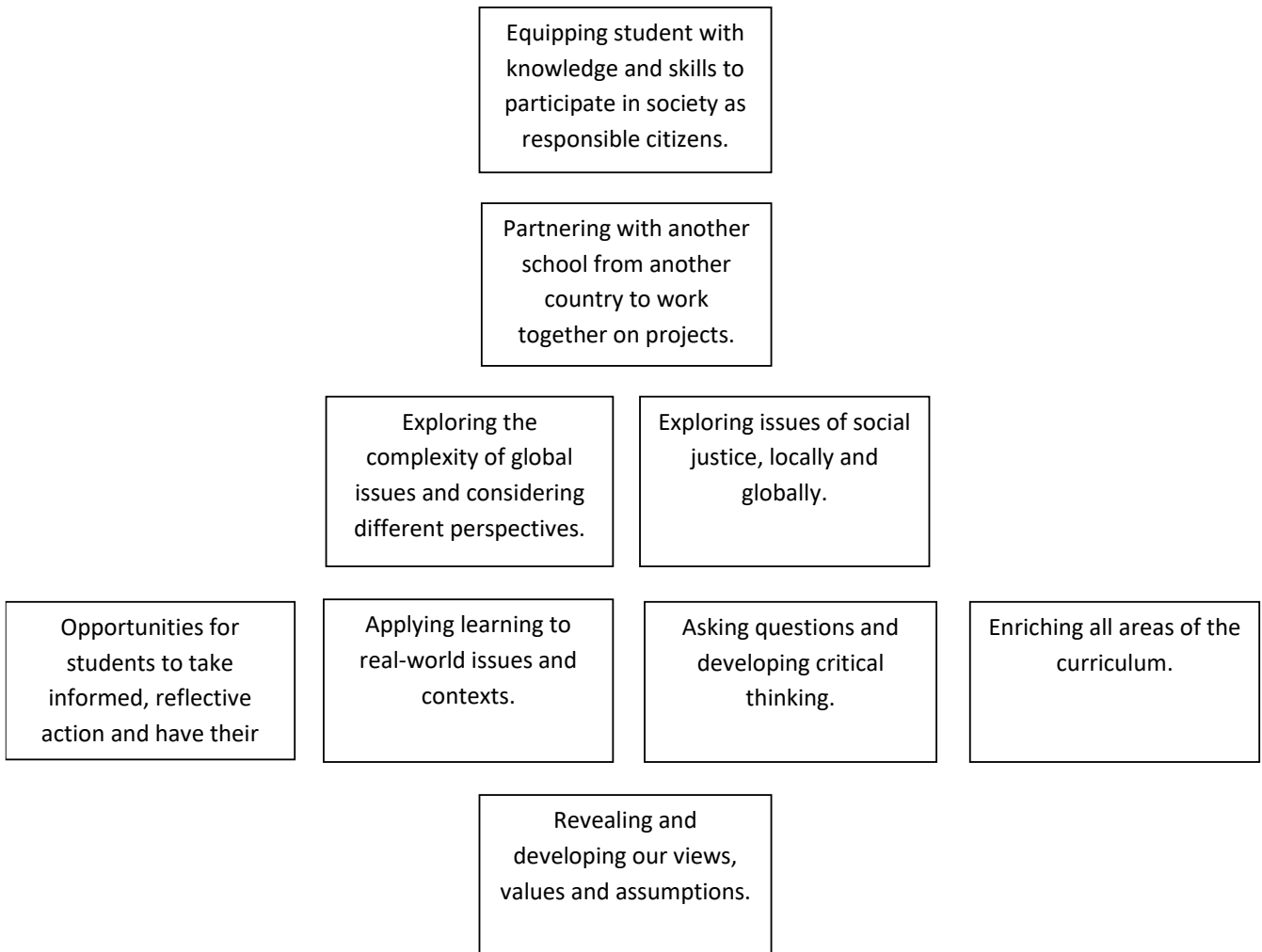


Figure 2: Scottish teachers' intercultural responses

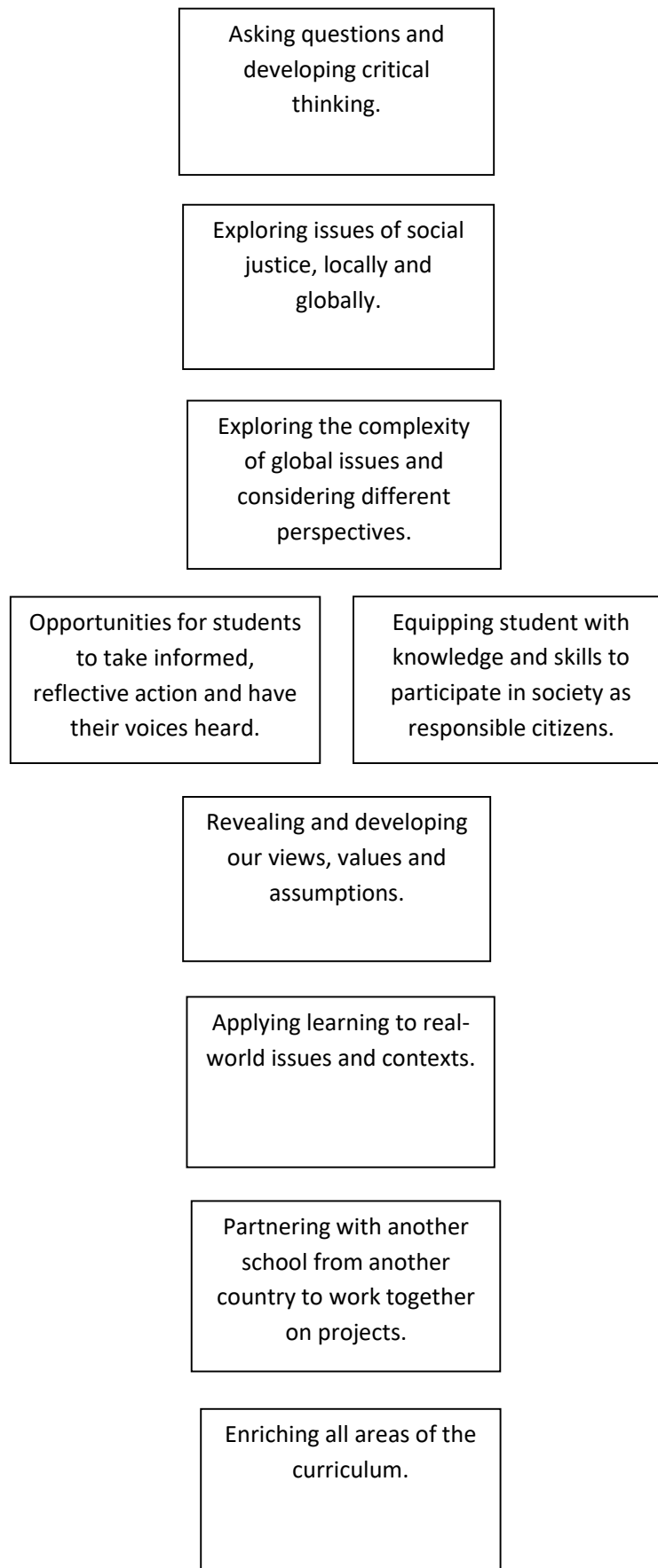


Appendix G – Collated data from diamond ranking activity

Average ranked responses from teachers in Ghana



Average ranked responses from teachers in Scotland





About the Author

Keri Reid is Principal Teacher of a small rural school in Perthshire, Scotland. She has developed learning across the school in the areas of Global Citizenship, Learning for Sustainability and Children's Rights. Keri delivered a teaching module on Global Citizenship as part of her role as a Teaching Fellow at the University of Stirling. She also has experience of tutoring teachers and postgraduate students on Professional Enquiry. Keri is currently working on her EdD which focusses on International School Partnerships within the Global Citizenship Education context. Contact Keri at kerireid@live.co.uk or [@deweygirl1](https://twitter.com/deweygirl1).

About Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning

Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning is a free and flexible programme for schools around the world based on learning, knowledge sharing and international collaboration. Connecting Classrooms supports teachers to equip pupils with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to act more thoughtfully, ethically and responsibly as citizens and contributors to society.

Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning is funded by the British Council and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and runs from 2018 through to 2022. For more information go to: www.britishcouncil.org/connectingclassrooms

The CCGL Practitioner Research Fund

The CCGL Practitioner Research Fund runs from 2019-2022 with the aim to support educators to conduct research related to global learning and overseas school partnerships within schools. DERC was contracted by British Council to support educators in the research and writing process.

About the Development Education Research Centre

The Development Education Research Centre (DERC) is the UK's leading research centre for development education and global learning. The DERC team conducts research on development education, global learning, and global citizenship education, runs a Masters' degree course, supervises doctoral students and produces a range of reports, academic articles and books. DERC also runs a highly successful free online course Global Education for Teachers which is hosted via Futurelearn. DERC is located in the UCL Institute of Education, the world-leading centre for research and teaching in education and social science.

For further information on the Centre visit: www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe-derc