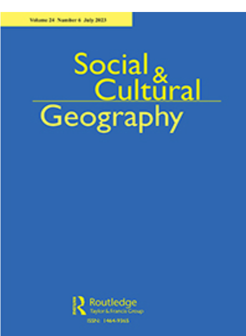

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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The art of internationalisation: 'unstrategic' dialogical cosmopolitanism within secondary schools in England

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores English schools' engagement with 'internationalisation' in the context of funding cuts and a highly pressured audit culture. The broader literature suggests two reasons why schools might partake in 'internationalisation'. The first concerns the 'strategic cosmopolitan' – schools are complicit in facilitating cosmopolitanism amongst the pupil body so that young people may attain 'positional advantage' in a crowded international or global labour market. The second invokes a deeper sense of ethics and a more equal 'exchange' of ideas. We use 'art' as a lens to explore this latter conception: proposing that artistic pursuits enable a more dialogic notion of internationalisation to develop. Focussing on international exchanges between schools in the Global North and Global South that foreground specifically artistic projects (involving drama, literature, fashion, textiles, art, creative writing, film making, dance and music), we illustrate a potentially more ethical, rich and meaningful form of 'internationalisation', which does not obviously conform to the notion of inherent and demonstrable (capitalised) value. We propose that educational value might be understood differently: in non-strategic, intrinsic and more essential ways, and that, furthermore, internationalisation can be fun.

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PALABRAS CLAVE
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MOTS CLEFS
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El arte de la internacionalización: cosmopolitismo dialógico 'no estratégico' en las escuelas secundarias de Inglaterra

RESUMEN

Este documento explora el compromiso de las escuelas inglesas con la 'internacionalización' en el contexto de recortes de fondos y una cultura de auditoría altamente presionada. La literatura más amplia sugiere dos razones por las que las escuelas podrían participar en la 'internacionalización'. La primera se refiere al 'cosmopolita estratégico': las escuelas son cómplices en la facilitación del cosmopolitismo entre el alumnado para que los jóvenes puedan alcanzar una 'ventaja posicional' en un mercado laboral internacional o global abarrotado. La segunda invoca un sentido más profundo de la ética y un 'intercambio' de ideas más equitativo. Usamos el 'arte' como una

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lente para explorar esta última concepción: proponiendo que las actividades artísticas permiten que se desarrolle una noción más dialógica de internacionalización. Enfocándonos en los intercambios internacionales entre escuelas en el Norte Global y el Sur Global que ponen en primer plano proyectos específicamente artísticos (que involucran teatro, literatura, moda, textiles, arte, escritura creativa, cine, danza y música), ilustramos un enfoque potencialmente más ético, rico y forma significativa de 'internacionalización', que obviamente no se ajusta a la noción de valor inherente y demostrable (capitalizado). Proponemos que el valor educativo puede entenderse de otra manera: de forma no estratégica, intrínseca y más esencial, y que, además, la internacionalización puede ser divertida.

L'art de l'internationalisation: le cosmopolitisme dialogique « non stratégique » dans les établissements scolaires de deuxième cycle en Angleterre

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article étudie l'engagement des établissements scolaires anglais avec « l'internationalisation » dans le contexte des réductions budgétaires et de la pression considérable de leur culture d'audits. La recherche déjà en existence sur le sujet suggère deux raisons pour lesquelles les lycées prennent part à « l'internationalisation. » La première concerne le « cosmopolite stratégique: »: les établissements se rendent complices en facilitant le cosmopolitisme parmi leurs cohortes d'élèves pour que les jeunes puissent atteindre un « avantage concurrentiel » dans un marché mondial du travail saturé. La deuxième invoque un sens de l'éthique plus profond et un « échange » d'idées plus égal. Nous utilisons « les arts » comme prisme pour étudier l'idée précédente, et proposons que les activités artistiques permettent le développement d'une notion plus dialogique de l'internationalisation. En se concentrant sue les échanges internationaux entre des établissements des pays du Nord et de ceux du Sud, qui mettent spécifiquement des projets artistiques au premier plan (portant sur l'art dramatique, la littérature, la mode, les textiles, les arts plastiques, la création littéraire, la réalisation cinématographique, la danse et la musique), nous illustrons une forme peut-être plus éthique, plus riche et plus significative de « l'internationalisation », qui n'est visiblement pas conforme à la notion de valeur inhérente et tangible (capitalisée). Nous suggérons qu'on peut comprendre la valeur de l'éducation différemment: de façons non stratégiques, intrinsèques et plus essentielles, et que, de plus, l'internationalisation peut être très ludique.

Introduction

'Human beings are constituted in conversation' (Charles Taylor, 1991, p. 65).

> 'The Speak School was given its name as it tried to give everyone a voice and make them feel heard' (Year 7 pupil, Greatsbrook School, England).

In summer 2014, Ella White,[1] Head of Drama at Smyth Willington School in Greatsbrook, England, visited a school[2] in Tanzania, East Africa. She set out to explore the possibilities for international school exchanges centred on the medium of drama. Ella initially played drama games with some of the pupils at the school, before striking up a conversation with Rebecca, the English teacher there, and a collaboration began. Ella said:

> "I had some ideas about what I wanted to do, but it wasn't, like, a normal drama lesson. In the Speak School they don't have a drama lesson. However, they do have a lot of English lessons . . . So, I met with Rebecca, and I had the idea that I would like [to write a] play about somebody going on a journey. And I'd been speaking to . . . [school's founder] previously about his studies into education for girls in Tanzania. How girls need to really fight to get the support from their parents to put them through school. So, when I was talking to Rebecca, I had this in my mind and as soon as I said I wanted to explore a journey and to show somebody going through challenges, she immediately thought of . . . a girl who was struggling to get support for her education . . . And we sat together, and we collaborated. Now the approach we took to creating this performance . . . Rebecca had a really different way of approaching, and that was to sit together and to write a script for the students to read . . . But I thought it was really interesting and actually a good opportunity to collaborate with another teacher. And to actually sit down and pen a script ourselves was . . . really good . . . She obviously knew a lot more about the culture than I did and she was able to inform me about the cultural differences. It was quite a learning process for me as well . . . Rebecca would be more aware of the way in which people would use English words . . . and so we created this script. [describes story]." [YouTube video, accessed 10/05/2021]

This extract, from a video on the website of Smyth Willington School, ostensibly describes a different way of 'doing internationalisation'. The video emphasises a collaboration and, above all, a (dialogical) *conversation* between staff and students from England and Tanzania. This vision contrasts with how internationalisation within schools has been represented in some of the literature – as primarily 'strategic' involving the accumulation of what Yemini (2014) calls 'international capital' (see also, Matthews & Sidhu, 2005) and/or as exploitative and neo-colonial (see collection by Engel et al. (2019)). Here, we draw on a particular conception of 'strategic' – one that invokes neoliberal ideas of profit, accumulation, and the garnering of personal advantage (Mitchell, 2003) – and what Bourdieu has described as 'acting in conformity with one's interests' (Lamaison & Bourdieu, 1986, p. 113). It should be noted that, to date, significantly less intellectual attention has been paid to internationalisation within *schools* compared to within higher education (De Wit & Altbach, 2021).

For our project, we collaborated with three secondary schools in England, including Smyth Willington. We wanted to explore if and how English schools identify with the concept of 'internationalisation' – whether the term and the ideas it represents, which have been so prevalent in academic debates over the past 20 years, has any substantive meaning for them. In this paper, we define 'internationalisation' in relation to different types of mobilities (of ideas, people and material objects; De Wit & Altbach, 2021) and as a 'cosmopolitan' ethos or outlook (as elaborated below). However, our aim was to explore what internationalisation means *for the schools themselves* – and so we began this project with a broad and malleable working definition. It only became apparent later, through the analysis, that 'cosmopolitanism' represented an important and relevant concept for understanding the kinds of internationalisation these schools were articulating.

Within broader scholarship, the concept of 'internationalisation' has been linked to a certain world view, promoting diversity, understanding and social justice (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). However, in relation to education specifically, a particular perspective on internationalisation dominates: as a tool for creating 'global', 'cosmopolitan' citizens able to engage successfully in an international labour market (Matthews & Sidhu, 2005; Maxwell & Aggleton, 2016). As described by the British Council in relation to UK education, international school partnerships 'prepare [pupils] for life and work as global citizens' (as cited in Edge & Khamsi, 2012, p. 457). Consequently, internationalisation can appear strategic (focussed on future workers), superficial, and potentially built on unequal and exploitative relationships with schools overseas. Worryingly, internationalisation has also been tied to a form of 'ethnocentrism' (Maxwell & Aggleton, 2016): perpetuating and sustaining 'normative national, cultural and ethnic identities' and (ironically) a form of elite isolation (Matthews & Sidhu, 2005, p. 49; Brooks & Waters, 2015). As one teacher in our study noted, the 'international dimension' has 'been deflected by a concern with 'internal British values and community cohesion' (partly linked to the consequences of 'Brexit'[3]; Barbara Burrows College). This is an example of what Yemini and Maxwell (2019) noted: that 'international education' is experiencing a 'crisis', with the 'rolling back' of international engagements within the education sector and the rise of 'authoritarian national popularism'.

Drawing on qualitative data collected within three English schools, this paper asks if a more ethical, less strategic and ethno-centric form of internationalisation is possible through artistic engagements that promote (after Taylor, 1991) *dialogical* interactions. International engagements between schools located in the Global North and South, which foreground artistic pursuits (such as drama, literature and art) are (our data would suggest) relatively rare but may signal a richer and more meaningful form of 'internationalisation' than, for example, more typical international activities focussed on 'fundraising' or 'exotic' travel. In the context of funding cuts and an audit culture (Apple, 2007; Granoulhac, 2017; Keddie, 2013; not to mention Brexit), state schools in England are often disincentivised to embark on international engagements[4] and might instead prioritise more insular, nationalistic agendas.

We draw upon and engage with literature on geography and the arts and participatory arts practices (Rogers, 2018; Waters et al., 2011) as well as scholarship on different forms of cosmopolitanism (a version of internationalisation) and dialogical interactions, to explore schools' international engagements. English schools' artistic collaborations with schools in the Global South included fashion design, painting, creative writing, drama, singing and dance, some of which are illustrated below. These interactions contrasted markedly with the kinds of international activities undertaken by other schools within our broader sample (of 75 schools), where 'charity' and unequal forms of knowledge transfer spoke loudly of neo-colonialism. As we will describe, the artistic engagements we uncovered seemed, at first glance to challenge conventional understandings of internationalisation in schools as primarily 'strategic' (in the ways outlined above; Brooks & Waters, 2015; Cheng, 2018). Instead, they evoke a more 'traditional' rendering of cosmopolitanism, involving openness to difference and a conceptual framing of internationalisation as *dialogical* intercultural exchange (after Taylor, 1989, 1991).

In what follows, we discuss literature on internationalisation within schools (highlighting the importance of cosmopolitanism) before proposing 'the arts' as a lens through

which to evaluate schools' international strategies. After Rings (2019), we explore the idea of 'aesthetic cosmopolitanism' as one approach to understanding international artistic collaborations undertaken in an ethical, dialogical and potentially non-exploitative way. Following a discussion of research methods, we consider examples of artistic engagement that emerged through our data, interpreted through ideas of dialogical and aesthetic cosmopolitanism. The aim is to evaluate whether the arts could proffer a preferable way of engaging in internationalisation.

Internationalisation and cosmopolitanism within education

Within the literature on schooling, internationalisation has commonly been viewed as a route to developing a 'cosmopolitan sensibility' amongst students (e.g., Fielding and Vidovich, 2017 in Australia; Wright et al, 2021 in China). According to some interpretations, cosmopolitanism refers primarily to 'an orientation': 'a willingness to engage with the Other' (Hannerz, 1992, p. 42). It is an 'openness toward divergent cultural experiences' and a 'search for contrasts rather than uniformity' (ibid.). However, discussions on schools and cosmopolitanism have habitually favoured a different view – cosmopolitanism is widely seen as a 'matter of competence':

> 'a state of readiness, a personal ability to make one's way into other cultures … And there is cultural competence in the stricter sense of the term, a built up skill in manoeuvring more or less expertly with a particular system of meanings and meaningful forms' (Hannerz, 1990, p. 239).

Here, cosmopolitanism represents a 'form of capital' (Lamaison & Bourdieu, 1986), accumulated by students through international mobility, which allows them to compete in a global labour market (Brooks & Waters, 2015; Waters, 2008). This rendering of cosmopolitanism as both individually 'strategic' and a way of promoting 'national interests' (creating internationally-oriented workers) reflects a shift in thinking within education, over the past 20 years. Mitchell (2003) describes this as:

> '[a] subtle but intensifying move away from person-centred education for all, or the creation of the tolerant, 'multicultural self', towards a more individuated, mobile and highly tracked, skills-based education, or the creation of the 'strategic cosmopolitan'. (p. 387)

The 'multicultural self' is 'able to work with and through difference' and believes in the 'positive advantages of diversity'. Cultural difference is valued *in and of itself* and not for any 'advantages' it might present. By contrast, the 'strategic cosmopolitan' is 'motivated … by understandings of global competitiveness, and the necessity to strategically adapt *[sic]* as an individual to rapidly shifting personal and national contexts.' (p. 387). This is a particular notion of 'strategy' – using education to attain a 'competitive' or 'positional advantage' (e.g., Brown and Hesketh, 2004). The strategy is deployed in the context of a 'zero sum game', where the individual strives to be more competitive in a (global and neoliberal) labour market. For Mitchell, this involves developing utilizable 'skills'. For other scholars, similar strategies can include pursuing informal or private supplementary education, as a means of enhancing one's 'prospects' vis-à-vis others (e.g., Holdsworth & Brewis, 2014; Holloway & Kirby, 2020).

Such shifts in the 'philosophy and practice' of education systems relate to 'the new imperatives of globalization as perceived by neoliberal politicians and educators'

(Mitchell, 2003, p. 387). There are, consequently, bigger issues at stake: 'global competitiveness, the reduction of the (publicly financed) costs of education, and of social reproduction in general, the necessity for greater market choice and accountability' (Mitchell, 2003, pp. 387–388) and the need to create citizens who are also 'globally oriented' workers (Cheng, 2018; cf., Spangler & Adriansen, 2021). Literature in this vein draws similar conclusions – 'global citizenship' and 'cosmopolitanism' used within educational settings reinforce a neoliberal notion of competition and conversely side-line a social justice agenda (see, Cho & Mosselson, 2018, on South Korea and also; Appiah & Bhabha, 2018, comparing Australia, Canada, Ireland, the UK and the USA). The International Baccalaureate (IB), renowned for promoting 'cosmopolitanism', has been critiqued by Maxwell and Aggleton (2016), who argue that despite claiming to enhance equality, the IB is used by elites (particularly in the Global South) to acquire relative social advantage through a globally recognised form of institutionalised cultural capital (Lamaison & Bourdieu, 1986). Consequently, in the context of contemporary schooling, cosmopolitanism has frequently been reduced to an 'exchange value'; stripped of its original, philosophical meaning as 'citizen of the world', developed during the Enlightenment, which stressed membership of a 'moral community' extending beyond one's immediate environs (Rings, 2019).

Alternative readings of cosmopolitan forms of internationalisation

Whilst cosmopolitanism, within educational settings, tends to be associated with a strategic and neoliberal vision of a globally competent worker-citizen, within broader debates, we can see the continuing importance of social justice. These arguments suggest the possibility for doing internationalisation and, thereby, cosmopolitanism differently within schools. Kymlicka (1995), for example, has written extensively on the philosophical underpinnings of cosmopolitanism (and multiculturalism) as social justice, most notably in relation to Canada's First Nations. An appreciation of cultural difference and distinctiveness, he argues, is non-negotiable and underpins human rights and global equity. In a related body of work, Taylor (1989, 1991) develops the idea of the 'dialogical self': a way of framing one's own cultural identity as a dialogue with others, in contrast to the atomised and neoliberal conception of identity that has emerged in modernity. A tendency towards 'methodological individualism' within some social science (whereby society is viewed in 'instrumental' terms and an individual's rights prioritised over society), Taylor claims, 'stands in the way of a richer and more adequate understanding of what the human sense of self is really like and, hence, of a proper understanding of the real variety of human culture and, hence, of a knowledge of human beings' (1991, p. 62). According to Taylor (1991), the self is produced *dialogically*. This assertion finds echoes in Marginson's (2013) exploration of international students' 'adjustment' to 'host country norms and institutions' (p. 6). He argues that their identities are (re)fashioned *reflexively*, necessitating 'a paradigm shift, from understanding international education as a process of "adjustment" of foreign students to local requirements, which is the paradigm that currently dominates research on international students, to understanding international education as self-formation' (p. 7). Here, ongoing dialogue with others is implied rather than explicitly asserted but, importantly, a cosmopolitan identity, arising directly from

internationalisation, is regarded *as a process of exchange*, rather than an 'end-product' to be utilised.

Nevertheless, we must be cognisant of the power relations embedded in these types of exchanges. As Madge et al. (2009) have shown, also in relation to the experiences of international students, teachers must strive to enact an 'engaged pedagogy' (after bell hooks) within the classroom setting, which:

> 'involves *genuine dialogue*, one that must contest the hegemonic discourse of western 'best practice' and at minimum take responsibility to care and to imagine everyday academic practices from a multitude of different perspectives and centres. To do this, frameworks of understanding will have to shift to recognise that many realities and knowledges exist and are valuable' (p. 43, emphasis added)

Thus, international exchanges between students/staff can appear, on the surface, to be equal, when in fact they are built upon the privileging of 'Western' knowledge. Likewise, Bhabha (in Appiah & Bhabha, 2018) cautions: 'The dialogical frequently assumes a symmetrical relation between the subjects involved in the dialogic relationship. Asymmetrical conditions are not significantly factored into the dialogical character of identity or the speech act' (p. 182). Thus, asymmetry in power relations is a necessary consideration when analysing intercultural exchanges. Yet, we argue, this does not rule out the *possibility* of a *more* equal and equally 'beneficial' dialogue than other forms of internationalisation promote.

Art and playfulness in cosmopolitanism and internationalisation

We turn now to consider specifically the role of art, artistic exchanges and fun within cosmopolitan internationalisation. Rings (2019) provides a useful starting point for this discussion, presenting what he terms a 'conversational model of [artistic] appreciation' as a means of engaging in cross-cultural, ethically cosmopolitan dialogue. Rings does not focus on the co-creation of art – rather, his discussions centre on an *imaginary* dialogue between an artistic creator (located in one culture) and the 'appreciator' (located elsewhere). The appreciator is asked to envisage a conversation with the creator, which informs their engagement with the work (in this case, a painting). Rings (2019) also emphases the 'playful' nature of the artistic exchange (which should be enjoyable), suggesting synergies with Cheung Judge's (2020) work on young British volunteers in Kenya and Zimbabwe. Cheung Judge seeks to expand debates on 'international volunteering' beyond a concern with the strategic reproduction of privilege amongst the White middle-classes (see also, Diprose, 2012 and Baillie; Smith et al., 2019 for critical work on volunteering). Instead, she focusses on relatively less privileged non-elite and non-White volunteers, to uncover the 'actually occurring politics' of 'doing good' in the Global South and how this can shape the 'subjectivities' of young people located in the Global North. Drawing on her data, Cheung Judge describes the 'fun' experienced by young volunteers, including 'a long, giggle-filled evening of play' (p. 11). She considers how best to conceptualise this enjoyment and a desire to 'connect across difference' (p. 11), addressing the potential critiques of international collaborations (such as their unequal nature). She writes:

> 'volunteering initiatives were also textured by many moments which seemed to exceed such criticisms [of neo-colonialism]. There were exchanges of dance moves accompanied by hysterical belly-laughter which momentarily dissolved lines of difference. There were the worthy voluntary tasks abandoned for joyful, spontaneous games, punctuated by hand-shakes, high-fives, and hugs which opened space for conversation across "North–South" divides. There were cheeky jokes muttered under the breath which took the wind out of a serious talk by a youth worker about the expected "lessons" of volunteering.' (p. 2)

Similarly, here in this paper we are also keen to explore alternative narratives of cosmopolitan internationalisation in schools (complicating the view that posits international engagements as either 'strategic' or exploitative), whilst also, of course, holding in mind the possibility that these interactions might be unequal and built upon neo-colonial relations. Like Cheung Judge (2020), we also noted the importance of fun in the international activities within our three schools and wondered how to interpret these feelings and experiences. She argues that fun can be 'political' but not necessarily socially progressive, alerting us to Ahmed's (2004) comments on emotions (such as enjoyment), which although may be perceived as 'innocent', are not necessarily so and could reproduce existing hierarchies. Similarly, as we have also argued elsewhere (Waters et al., 2011), whilst young people's objectives around international travel might include 'having fun', the implications of their practices can nevertheless lead to the reproduction of their privilege. Thus, these arguments are neither straightforward nor neat. In the next section, we explore the role that art could potentially play in a more egalitarian form of international, cultural 'exchange'.

Art, politics and egalitarianism

We are interested in exploring the potential for art to constitute *more meaningful* international interactions between young people within school settings (Rose, 1997; Waters et al., 2011). Here, we draw briefly on research within geography on art and artistic practices, to illuminate the role played by arts in our study. Hawkins (2011) encourages us to consider art as: 'an ensemble of practices, performances, experiences and artefacts rather than as a singular 'object" and "to explore not only art as a "finished" object, but also to think about art works as ensembles of practices, artefacts, performances and experience" (p. 472) wherein identities are formed. Thus, it is the process of artistic engagement and exchange, rather than the outcome, that is of primary importance in shaping participants' (cosmopolitan) identities through internationalisation.

Geographers have also highlighted the politics inherent in art, and the potential it offers for promoting justice and equality (Rogers, 2018). Rogers (2018) reflects upon how artistic performance can lead to more equal socio-cultural interactions, such as through the fusing (in a non-hierarchical way) of culturally different artistic styles (producing emergent creative forms). Understandably, intercultural performances raise questions about cultural appropriation and exploitation – exchanges can still be undergirded by power dynamics that favour a dominant party. Nevertheless, in their ostensible opposition to a neoliberal, strategic ideal, artistic practices may also hold the potential for a different type of cosmopolitan internationalisation to emerge. As McCormack (2008) has written on dance, movement is 'potentially generative of different kinds of spaces' (p. 1822). These can include *political* spaces, presenting new ways of understanding

intercultural relations and exchanges that do not necessarily reproduce neo-colonial power relations. Artistic performance can also cultivate affinity amongst participants – what Rogers (2018) describes as 'creating shared or co-constituted spaces of empathy' (p. 550). As will go on to discuss, our data strongly suggest the development of shared spaces of empathy through the arts, arising from a different type of school-led internationalisation.

Methods

In 2016, we conducted fieldwork in three state-funded secondary schools – Joan Godfrey Girls' School in the Midlands and Barbara Burrows College and Smyth Willington School in the South of England. This was part of a larger project involving a website analysis of 75 state schools across these regions to ascertain the nature and extent of their 'international' activities. We contacted eight schools to participate in indepth qualitative fieldwork, chosen because of their large size and prominence within their regions. Three agreed to take part. We were not personally connected with any of the schools. A total of 28 individuals were interviewed across the three schools; data included a mix of participant observation, walking interviews (around school sites with staff and pupils, in two schools), lesson observation, focus groups with pupils and interviews with school staff. In this paper, we focus on interviews and focus groups with school staff, pupils and headteachers (transcribed in full and analysed thematically), participant observation, and an analysis of a *YouTube* video made by one of the schools. During the interviews, staff were asked about their school's approach to internationalisation, how they viewed it, any constraints they perceived to following an internationalising agenda, to give examples of their international activities and engagements, and so on. Pupils were asked about specific experiences of international activities. The project was given ethical approval by Oxford University's research ethics committee (CUREC).

We are aware that the schools in this study are probably atypical. They were 'self-selecting' – responding to us because they *are* more 'internationally' active and interested than other schools. They may also have more time than other schools (schools with fewer resources/less time will have been unable to respond – indeed, some gave 'lack of time' as a reason why they could not participate in the project). The schools we worked with are also located in relatively affluent parts of the UK, although two have a mixed, comprehensive intake. All three received an 'Outstanding' grade for their last Ofsted[5] inspection. One of the schools is a state selective girls' grammar school – entry requires success in the 11+ exam – the other two were mixed and non-selective. Therefore, we are not making any claims for the representative nature of our sample but think they provide interesting examples of exceptional cases, highlighting what *might* be possible with resources, time and will.

We recognise that here we are obtaining only one side of this 'international' story – that of the relatively privileged and largely middle-class pupils at English state schools. We do not hear from the other side – the schools and participants located overseas. This could, of course, be seen as a shortcoming of our small project, limited as it was by funding and time constraints. However, our intention was always to focus upon what English schools were doing and why they (perceived they) were doing it. We acknowledge the partial perspective and stress that our findings should be interpreted in this light.

Internationalisation versus audit culture

The interviews with school staff revealed repeatedly that international agendas were being pursued *despite* a 'top-down' (government dictated) concern with accountability, metrics and standards (Apple, 2007; Granoulhac, 2017; Keddie, 2013). There was, it appeared, no direct material advantage to schools from 'internationalisation', other than the potential appeal of such activities to (inevitably middle-class) parents (noted by the Head of Joan Godfrey School; see, Soong, 2021; Yemini & Maxwell, 2019 on the appeal of international school trips to middle class parents in China and Israel, respectively). And yet, staff across the schools stressed unequivocally the benefits of international engagements – they were just largely unquantifiable. As one teacher indicated:

> 'It's a sad indictment that you live and die by ticking the box. We've done that . . . we've done that . . . And when someone changes the boxes, you get, 'oh well, we won't do that anymore. 'Community cohesion', that was massive in Ofsted 5 or 6 years ago. We don't need to worry about that anymore, that's gone'. (Teacher, Barbara Burrows College)

This quotation suggests that education policy is, to an extent, subject to short term whims of government and that the restraints on schools, preventing them from engaging more fully with international projects, are real. Although these schools have found a way of circumventing this box-ticking imperative, they recognise that other schools might not be in such a fortunate position and that 'jobs' can depend on Ofsted results:

> 'I think people are beginning to recognise that Ofsted is not necessarily the driving force. But it has been so much about measuring, people can lose their jobs overnight. Most people in most schools would be just watching their backs and, you know, just thinking, well I don't want to lose my job'. (Teacher, Smyth Willington School)

This teacher attributed their school's innovative internationalisation to an open-minded Headteacher – 'I think that's where it comes from. If you've got a Head walking around worrying about data the entire time, nothing is going to grow!'.

Another teacher reflected on the meaning of education following a particularly 'successful' overseas trip to a partner school, which offered some 'perspective' on the (in) significance of audit culture.

> 'It makes you think, well what is education all about? And what's important? And we still had Ofsted then, but I have to say it was a jolly sight less important on the way back [from an overseas trip] than on the way out!' (Teacher, Smyth Willington School)

She described how concerns over Ofsted had been 'put into perspective' and had diminished after the international sojourn. These quotations indicate the general tenor of our discussions with schools: that is, internationalisation is not 'valued' by the government and, consequently, is not rewarded by the 'system'.[6] However, leadership within these schools appreciated international engagements and allowed individual teachers the scope to pursue such projects. In what follows, we turn to discuss more specifically the ways in which schools mobilised 'art' (a recurring motif within interviews) as part of their internationalising agendas.

Artistic pursuits

> 'Arts was already very strong here. So, we used that as a catalyst for our international work' (Head Teacher, Smyth Willington School).

Hannah, a teacher at Smyth Willington School, described her 'eureka' moment when she realised the potential of art for enabling international cultural dialogue – and how, conversely, it could be used to perpetuate cultural stereotypes. The school created a partnership with a school in South Africa. Hannah described the first time she and another teacher went to visit: 'the whole school came out': 'I thought, obviously someone important is coming, you know, this will be interesting. We'll see who it is . . . And it was us! . . . It was extraordinary!'. She went on to describe the most 'bizarre' but interesting spectacle she had ever witnessed – some of the pupils started waltzing.

> 'I got ushered in, fed rather a lot, and then we saw European waltzing. Now, where they'd got this from, I have no idea! Our kids couldn't have done it! They were waltzing to the Blue Danube or something. I mean, it was extraordinary. I was sitting there with my mouth open. And then I had to go and talk about art to people who hadn't got television'.

This experience had a profound effect upon Hannah, shaping her views on international collaborations. After she returned to the UK, she sought to incorporate this experience into her teaching:

> 'So, when I came back, I thought, well the arts are such a . . . you know? They've [the South African school] obviously been sitting and having a discussion about well, you know, these guys [English pupils], they waltz. This is how they dance. That is how they think over there . . . So we established a year 7 course here, across the arts, so English, maths, drama, dance and music. We'd been doing various sorts of little themes linking them. So, we made a cultural thing – we made a 'gum boot dance'. There is a dance that they do in South Africa about going down the mines and they wear wellies and sort of stomp around. Well, of course, year 7 loved that!'

Over time, Hannah moved away from replicating culturally stereotypical dance types to realising the power of dance and music but also 'fun' in cultural exchanges. Her reflection on the implications of the Waltz resonates with the way in which McCormack (2008) discusses the Tango (a dance style) as a form of cultural exchange and 'a mobile, travelling movement practice. As such, its cultural meaning and imagined geographies are never stable' (p. 1826). McCormack (2008) goes on to describe the 'political spaces' in which dancing bodies move, reminding us that art – and fun – are also political (Cheung Judge, 2020; Waters et al., 2011).

Hannah had, in fact, spent some time considering the politics of the spectacle of waltzing bodies. She reflected on the fact that staff at the South African school had 'sat down' and discussed what European school visitors might expect and enjoy; the cultural underpinnings to this decision and the need she felt to respond in kind – by teaching her English students the gum boot dance, so that a form of cultural *reciprocity* could be enacted. This, however, was just the start. Her goal was to achieve a form of cosmopolitan dialogue (Taylor, 1991) – children from the UK school visited Tanzania and participated in activities (singing, dancing), whilst when students from Tanzania came over to England, they were integrated into drama, dance and other arts classes. These kind of engagements 'widen horizons': 'enabling them [children from both schools] to see perspectives

other than their own . . . ' (Teacher, Joan Godfrey Girls' School). The role that dance, as one example, can play in schools' international exchanges specifically has, to date, been neglected in scholarship. But dance, as a means of artistic cultural expression and exchange, holds lots of interesting potential.

Joan Godfrey Girls' School were similarly keen to discuss the 'creative' aspects of their school's cosmopolitan internationalisation. They focused on a school trip to India. One teacher described: 'What we haven't said about the India trip is that there was a creative writing element to it, which was very strong'. The staff team included a 'writer' and they ran writing workshops in each of the locations the children visited, where pupils were encouraged 'to reflect and really think about what it was they were seeing and hearing and smelling and feeling, and then put that into words. And that was really very powerful, you know, as a way of deepening the experience' (Teacher, Joan Godfrey Girls' School). The following year they took a 'film maker' with them to 'document' the trip. They selected participating pupils on the basis of 'interest in the creative arts'. Here, art was used as a vehicle for exploring cultural difference – a form of aesthetic cosmopolitanism (Rings, 2019).

Listening and talking: dialogical exchange

> 'Beginning from a space of doubt or uncertainty—whether it's epistemological, ontological, ethical—engages you in a critical process of cultural translation rather than cultural appropriation' (Appiah & Bhabha, 2018, p. 185).

Whilst the extant literature stresses the calculated pursuit of internationalisation in schools as a means of creating 'strategic cosmopolitans' (Mitchell, 2003; Soong, 2021), our interviewees discussed the importance of listening to – and conversing with – 'others'. They made no reference to a 'global job market' or the creation of culturally competent international workers (we of course acknowledge that such benefits can and do accrue 'unintentionally' – see, Waters & Brooks, 2013). There was a far greater sense of empathy-building than research on strategic cosmopolitanism within schools would suggest. We asked students to reflect upon the importance (or otherwise) of their school's involvement in international initiatives:

> 'I think it gives you, like, a broader view of the world around you and it, like, shapes you as a person . . . If you meet people from other cultures and, like, *listen to their point of view*, and how *they see* situations going on around the world, then it kind of changes your perspective a bit' . . . 'You are able to talk to them and *adapt your views* so that *you can relate to them* as well, yeah'. (Smyth Willington School, Year 11 pupil, emphasis added).

Staff made similar points with regards to empathy, dialogue, listening and understanding:

> 'I think it's widening horizons, it's enabling them [students] to see perspectives other than their own . . . To be empathetic, to look more widely . . . ' (Barbara Burrows College, Headteacher).

> 'The world is shrinking and all the issues we have, all the citizenship issues we have, the more work you do, based in internationalism and the more you understand what makes everybody else in the world tick, the less likely you are to have either very extreme views or you don't find a middle ground that means everybody can work together' (Joan Godfrey Girls' School, Headteacher)

Figure 1. Anna's painting.

A sense of empathic listening leading to greater understanding was also reflected in the art-work students produced as part of schools' 'international' activities. One painting, in particular, was presented to us as emblematic of this. Anna was a Year 11 pupil and shared her painting (Figure 1).

We asked Anna what motivated her painting and she replied:

> 'Well, our topic was, like, 'drama', so you could do anything within that and I was just thinking about how . . . .I've got, like, a Western, like, perspective, like, looking into the refugee situation [Syrian refugees in Greece]. It's, like, a mother and a baby – a Western mother and a baby and, like, a refugee mother and a baby. To see how similar their lives are but how completely different, like, their experiences are . . . I'm trying to put empathy into it so that people see that, like, how if they both stood next to each other, like how the same people would treat them, like, completely differently, like, even though they are both in exactly the same situation'.

Through her art, Anna grappled with issues of inequality and injustice – how two people can be both ostensibly 'the same' (mothers, women, human beings) and yet treated so differently. This view of cultural difference is far more aligned to the idea of 'transcultural appreciation' (Rings, 2019) that engages with a form of 'moral universalism' than it is with cultural appropriation or exploitation. It demonstrates an awareness that all human beings should be treated equally as members of a single community (ibid.), with little suggestion of 'strategic cosmopolitanism' (Mitchell, 2003). It also resonates with ideas that directly link an understanding of difference with social justice and human rights (Kymlicka, 1995). Anna's art is also, without a doubt, profoundly political in intent (Rose, 1997; Waters et al., 2011).

Askins and Pain (2011) stress the significance of 'materialities' in meaningful artistic interactions, just as the materialities of contemporary educational mobilities have been debated (Brooks & Waters, 2017). As part of one school's exchange trip to Tanzania, pupils engaged in a variety of artistic pursuits including working directly with materials through textiles and fashion design. The art teacher described to us how the students got together to design and make outfits, model them in a 'fashion show' and take photos of the results.

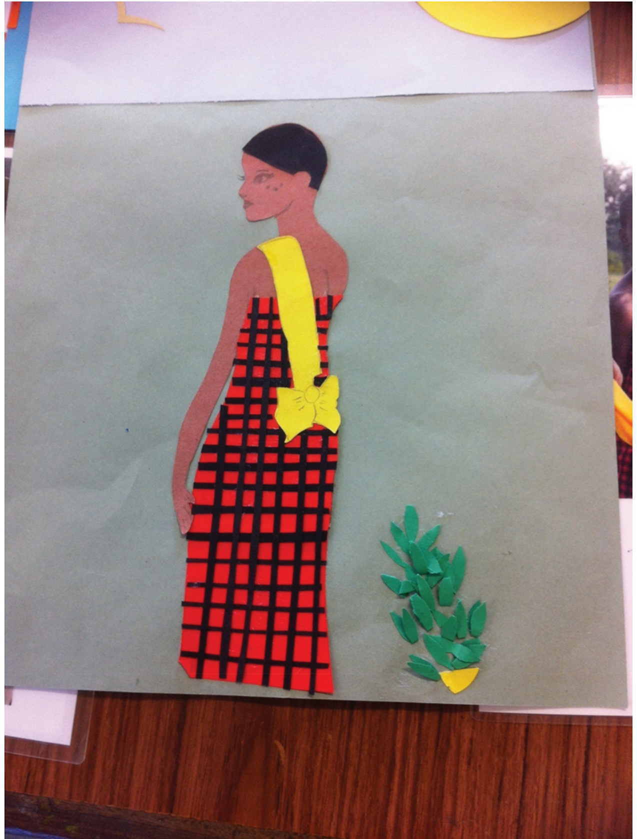

Figure 2. Examples of fashion design.

Both Tanzanian and English students were involved fully in all stages (Figure 2) of the production although (represented in Figure 3) pupils at the 'host' school in Tanzania modelled many of the outfits. Interviews stressed a strong sense of collaboration and shared vision amongst pupils, which centred on the design, making and modelling of outfits. The materiality of the interactions was stressed as a way in which an empathetic form of dialogue was initiated and developed amongst young people.

Co-producing understanding

Finally, we turn to discuss the event with which we opened this paper – the joint drama project between Smyth Willington School, England and the Speak School, Tanzania. Although we are conscious that we only hear Ella's side of the story – her interpretation of events – a sense of self-doubt and uncertainty in her interactions with Rebecca during her visit to Tanzania comes through clearly (we also spoke to Ella and her colleagues during our fieldwork). She admits that the way in which they constructed the play was 'not the way' she would have done it but felt that Rebecca was much better placed than she – had a far better grasp of the context – to bring life and meaning to their script.

Figure 3. Designs and photos of the 'fashion show'.

In the introduction to this paper, Ella discusses sitting with Rebecca and 'collaborating' (see, Figure 4). The body language suggests that, at this moment in time, Rebecca is 'taking the lead'. The approach was 'quite different' from how Ella would have gone about devising a play 'back home' in England:

> 'If I was creating a performance that was based around the students, I would quite often do a divising [i.e. planning] process, whereby I look at the different roles of the group members and, um, we'd maybe play out some ideas or maybe look at some stimulus – perhaps an object or a photograph to help the students to create. But Rebecca had a really different way of approaching it, and that was to sit together and to write a script for the students to read.' (YouTube Video, Ella, Smyth Willington School).

She went on to describe how much she had learned, personally, from the collaboration – how she had become aware that pupils at the Speak School 'used English words' differently from her own pupils in this dissimilar cultural context: 'even though we were writing in English and not Swahili, she [Rebecca] knew the way that people phrased things that the students would understand'. Such an understanding of the 'many Englishes' in use around the world reflects recent critiques of the idea that English is a uniform and global 'lingua franca' (Saarinen & Ennser-Kananen, 2020; Soong, 2021).

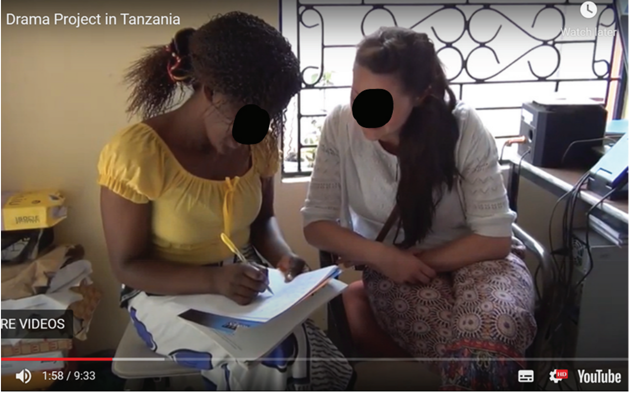

Figure 4. Screen shot from the video of the drama project (Rebecca on the left, Ella on the right).

Ella elaborated on the story represented in the script, about a girl who had completed primary school only to discover that her parents never intended for her to go to secondary school. It was about her struggle to find someone to support her and, in the end, a passer-by asked her why she was upset and offered to help. They wanted the play to reflect a sense of 'community spirit' and to provide hope as well as educating pupils on the importance of girls' education (Figure 5).

> 'Working with Rebecca was very inspirational for me because she is very creative and she is very very expressive, in her choice of words and in her facial expressions as well. She really engages all the students.'

The video ends with Ella discussing the 'message' from the play with one of the pupils at the Speak School. She concludes by stating how much she is looking forward to working with the school again in the future, in order to 'promote equality in education'.

During our interview, Ella described how what she learned through her trip to Tanzania was 'applied' as she taught year 7s in subsequent years:

Figure 5. Rebecca (right) discusses the play with the students as Ella (left) looks on.

> 'we explore the link we have with the school in Tanzania – we'll explore what happens in that culture in the school, look at video footage, look at photographs, through drama, and then they'll move on and study it within dance and then in music and then in textiles, which is really fantastic. And it all culminated in a performance at the end of the year, in the summer term, where all the parents come in. So they display all the arts that they've made, and the crafts and the pottery and things like that. They do a dance display, they do acting, they put together little sketches. And then they play some instruments and put together performances – a real sort of celebration' (Ella, Smyth Willington School).

She explained that pupils from the school in Tanzania have 'been over' and have participated in drama projects with students 'here'. 'So, the kids get a well-rounded perspective of the situation, and we've got a real strong link [between the two schools], haven't we? And they either go there or they come here, every year, for the past at least four, five, six years'.

Evoking the idea of 'fun' and 'enjoyment', we were struck when listening to Ella's account just how many times she laughed when reminiscing about her trip (Cheung Judge, 2020 – fun was also a key principle underpinning Waters et al.'s (2011) participatory art project). She said: 'When I start talking about Tanzania I go on and on! [*laughs*]. I just really enjoyed it!'. When describing the drama games she played with the children in Tanzania, she relayed how perplexed they were by her techniques: 'the kids over there weren't used to this at all. So I did some drama games with them, and they were falling about laughing. They thought it was hysterical!'. . . .

Ella's account of her time at the Speak School is full of examples of 'cultural clashes', and how dialogue and adaptation were used to remove any barriers to exchange. She said of her interactions with the pupils: 'So I realised that in order to allow the students to develop in terms of their drama and get what I wanted them to get from doing that, I'd have to adapt'. Likewise, in her exchanges with Rebecca, she very much let her 'take the lead' – 'she explained things [to me] in a way that was authentic' . . . and then . . . she let me take the lead again, so that was good!'. There was no sense in which Ella was there to 'impart wisdom' or impose her ideas, but instead the learning (between teachers) was seemingly mutual. She also described one interesting experience of 'dialogical exchange' when she was observing an English class:

> 'They [pupils at the Speak School] were looking at a story, and it was called . . . One Wife and Three Suitors. Something like that. And it was basically about how you are supposed to marry within the same tribe . . . You're supposed to pay a dowry to the family of the bride . . . and then the one who can produce the most money is the one who gets the bride, basically. And I was asking all of these questions, and through me asking the questions about the text that they were studying, they realised that obviously it wasn't the same *[loud laugh]*. So, I ended up standing at the front of an English class and they all just wanted to ask *me* questions. And they thought it was absolutely extraordinary that I'd got my own flat and I didn't have to live with a man if I didn't want to, and that when I married, like, a guy would give me an engagement ring and I don't have to have the approval of my parents . . . and I don't have to have several people give me rings and I pick the most expensive one! They thought it was completely extraordinary. They could not believe it. It was like a courtroom drama and there were gasps of 'no!'. They threw questions at me for a good twenty minutes.'

It is hard to reconcile the conversations we had with pupils and teachers at this school, including Ella, with the notion of the 'strategic cosmopolitan'. There is little doubt that the trip to Tanzania was intended to be enriching (for students and staff alike), but there was

no sense in which pupils were being taught the skills to participate in a 'global economy' nor were these experiences in any way discussed as C.V. enhancing or a means to 'self-discovery' (Prazeres, 2017). Instead, they were framed as a dialogue between individuals (especially school staff) and between cultures with a view to achieving greater 'understanding' and 'promoting equality' through teaching and learning.

Through the medium of co-created art (drama, music, collage, textiles, dance and so on), staff and students in these English schools have been engaged in meaningful conversations about cross-cultural collaboration and understanding. Rather than treating 'the other' as 'exotic', these exchanges have led staff (in particular) to reflect back upon themselves.[7] This description of Ring's (2019) 'conversational model of appreciation' would seem to capture well the ways in which internationalisation has played out in these examples:

> 'the conversational model of appreciation [is. . .] an antidote to exoticism. Whereas the latter finds the appreciator indulging in an exercise of . . . appreciation on a culturally unfamiliar object . . . the conversational model ideally pulls the appreciator out of her aesthetic comfort zone, challenging her to experiment with different recommended approaches and to consider the work in an interpersonal context that bears witness to other relevant communities of appreciators from whom she may learn. The virtuous aesthetic cosmopolitan will enter this discourse concerning the other culture's art as an informed, respectful, and critical outsider with her own unique contributions to make to the conversation. In other words, she will strive to exercise and cultivate the virtues of the good conversationalist in these transcultural encounters—a perspective that values the conversation as an end in itself, and one worth continuing' (p. 177 – 178).

Ella's account of her engagement with Rebecca in co-constructing a drama script has so many of these elements – Ella understood that *she was an outsider*, and she was there to *learn* not teach. She sought conversation not exoticism and (if anything, in her interactions with the children there) she marked herself as the exotic outsider. Thus, we might argue that internationalisation through artistic media creates not strategic cosmopolitans but 'virtuous aesthetic' cosmopolitans. We are, of course, aware of the counterarguments – that 'participatory' approaches can still signal unequal power relations and inadvertent exploitation (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). However, our data strongly suggest – at the very least – a more complicated picture and one not captured by the notion of the 'strategic cosmopolitan'.

Conclusions

Arising from contemporary pressures faced by state schools in England, agendas relating to 'internationalisation' – an explicit attempt by schools to engage in international activities – have been (schools told us repeatedly) side-lined. In this paper, we discuss the experiences of three secondary schools located in the Midlands and the South of England, in their attempts to counter this pressure and to pursue, in some way, international engagements. Within the academic literature, discussions around education and internationalisation have tended to stress (with some exceptions) the significance of cosmopolitanism and the creation of culturally astute 'global workers.' This is epitomised in the 'strategic cosmopolitan' (Mitchell, 2003), wherein ethically-oriented learning is diminished and replaced by 'a more individuated, mobile and highly tracked, skills-

based education' (p. 387; see also, Soong, 2021). Such a view of cosmopolitanism focuses on 'competencies'. And yet, as we have discussed, there is another perspective that stresses 'an orientation': 'a willingness to engage with the Other' (Hannerz, 1990). Various theorists have attempted to capture this more ethical notion of the cosmopolitan, including Taylor's (1991) 'dialogical self' and Rings's (2019) 'conversational model of appreciation,' which offer a means of engaging in cross-cultural dialogue with Others. The arts are suggested as a potential vehicle through which conversations/dialogue might be built within schools, encompassing different genres (including music, drama and painting). Dance, for example, can involve cultural communication (McCormack, 2008) that requires no direct use of language. Artistic engagements necessitate empathy and open mindedness. In our schools, the arts were prioritised, potentially enabling a more ethical, conversational model of 'internationalisation' to emerge.

From our data, these schools were seen to eschew a neo-liberal model of 'the strategic cosmopolitan' (although we note that international activities are still valued by parents), instead striving for a more dialogical notion of intercultural understanding (and, consequently, a greater sense of 'self' created in dialogue for the young people involved) (Taylor, 1991). This came through in interviews with staff and pupils but also in the art works shared with us as well as the video Smyth Willington School had made of their international activities. These activities were ostensibly non-strategic in nature. Whilst we appreciate that unequal power relations (stemming from colonial histories) underpin these relationships, and acknowledge potential critiques of our stance (e.g., Cooke & Kothari, 2001), our data suggest that schools were *striving* to engage on an equal basis – to learn from each other and, importantly, to *listen*. The (cosmopolitan) 'self' was produced in dialogue and not conceived as an individualised project of self-creation or self-actualisation. Whilst not the 'norm', it is nevertheless important to showcase examples of where internationalisation might be practiced ethically and responsibly.

When formal education is subject to pressures of audit, elements that fall outside the immediate 'curriculum' (and examination culture) are often the 'first to go'. This is especially the case for schools with fewer resources and less spare capacity, which our (more privileged) schools were quick to acknowledge. Evidently, there is a need for all schools, irrespective of Ofsted grading or level of resource, to engage in international projects, although how this might happen in a current climate of austerity is unclear. As we have shown in this paper, these are not just 'any' international projects, however, but engagements built on dialogue, mutual respect and, above all, listening.

Notes

1. We use pseudonyms for all names throughout to maintain anonymity.
2. This school has around 170 pupils and 15 teaching staff. It was established in response to a perceived need for 'good quality education', particularly for pupils with 'additional needs' and 'albinos' (presently only four schools accept albino students in Tanzania, including this one).
3. During fieldwork for this project, UK media were engaged in discussions around exiting the European Union (Brexit).
4. For example, several teachers mentioned that risk assessments accompanying pupils' trips overseas often made them untenable.
5. Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills.

6. During interviews, ‘benefits’ were largely articulated in terms of Ofsted results, which dominated discussions at all schools. One school did suggest that international trips appealed to (middle class) parents. These parents will have greater material resources at home, thereby boosting the school’s academic results indirectly. However, this was not a widely expressed view.
7. The data that we have mostly relates to direct accounts *from teachers* about their and pupils’ experiences of overseas trips and exchanges.

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