Global Education for Teachers

Online Continuing Professional Development as a Source of Hope in Challenging Times

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Introduction

Research on teacher education and global education suggests that teachers in different country contexts and school settings often have limited opportunities to engage in professional development related to global education and related terms, such as global learning, global citizenship education and education for sustainable development, particularly in the Global South (Bourn, Hunt and Bamber, 2017). Recent literature has also begun to pay greater attention to the ways in which global topics are, or could be, integrated within teacher education and professional development (cf. Estellés and Fischman, 2021; Bamber, 2020; Schugurensky and Wolhuter, 2020; Ekanayake et al., 2020; O'Meara, Huber and Sanmiguel, 2018). Both academics and key international organizations such as UNESCO have also produced a wide range of resources aimed at supporting teachers with these efforts (cf. UNESCO, 2018; UNESCO, 2016; Pashby and Sund, 2019; Andreotti and De Souza, 2006). The overall lack of access to training in global education and related areas (UNESCO, 2021), however, continues to be of concern.

This is even more significant given the importance of these educational approaches to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and particularly Goal 4.7 which requires:

> By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender

equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

It is also clear that teachers across the world themselves have a strong interest in preparing their students for their global futures (UNESCO, 2021). They want to make sure their pupils are ready to take on global challenges and to be able to positively engage with people across cultural and geographical contexts (cf. Ferguson, Roofe and Cook, 2021; Bruce, North and FitzPatrick, 2019; Howard-Jones et al., 2021). The passion for preparing teachers to introduce global citizenship in schools can also be seen in the numbers of schools involved in global learning initiatives and engagement with online movements such as #TeachSDGs. However, teachers can be hampered from engaging in global education in practice if a combination of motivational factors, skills and opportunities are found to be missing (UNESCO, 2021). Indeed, research suggests teacher education is key – and that providing teachers with relevant professional development opportunities related to global education could play a significant role in supporting them to address pressing social and environmental challenges within their practice (cf. Murphy et al., 2021; Roemhild and Gaudelli, 2021; Tarozzi and Mallon, 2019; Bourn, 2016), which in turn should support pupils' global citizenship attributes.

It is within this context that we explore in this chapter data generated from teachers as part of an online continuing professional development (CPD) course. While the literature base is increasing (Bourn, Hunt and Bamber, 2017), there remains a dearth of evidence on global education teacher education globally and who is able to access it. Given the current international focus on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and especially Goal 4.7, understanding more about the extent to which teachers are able to engage with global themes within their practice is crucial.

We therefore used the opportunity provided by the online course to explore areas of interest around teachers' access to global education teacher education, their motivation to engage and their experiences with global education in practice. We wanted to explore whether the format of the online CPD course could attract teachers not able to access training by other means. And through it all we also explore the notion of hope. Within the current complex global situation, can global education CPD nurture ideas of hope – either through the educator participants, their hopes for their students or through the nature of the course itself? In this chapter we respond to the following research questions:

- Who is engaging in the course?
- How do course participants experience and engage with global education in their current practice?
- How are ideas of hope evident within and through the course?

We look first at the course itself and locate the study within the wider academic literature. We then provide a methodological overview and present our findings in line with the research questions. Finally, we make some concluding remarks.

About the course

The Global Education for Teachers (GET) course was developed as a MOOC (Massive Online Open Course) by the authors in 2020 and is hosted on the FutureLearn[1] platform. The three-week course aims to provide online CPD in global education, which is accessible to teachers across the world. It is especially aimed at those without easy access to opportunities for training and professional development.

The course includes an introduction to key concepts and ideas related to global education and related terms, an exploration of approaches to global education teaching and pedagogy, and practical ideas and support for teachers who want to introduce global education into their practice (including lesson planning, guides, resources and further readings). It also provides opportunities for teachers around the world to actively engage in peer learning, support and knowledge exchange, and to share diverse perspectives and experiences – a key principle of any global education programme. The structure and teaching approach is organized around a mixture of inputs (videos, short texts), online discussions/posts, polls, a self-assessment framework, a final reflection and peer assessment activity, and a range of further resources and readings.

To date, almost 6,000 teachers and other educators from around the world have enrolled on the course, and it has received five-star reviews. Through the design of the course, we aimed to provoke discussion and exchange of ideas in 'bite-sized' pieces that would be accessible to all teachers, whether they have previous experience or knowledge of global education or not, and also to provide additional resources for those with experience who want to stretch their thinking.

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Literature

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Teachers, teacher education and global education

Research on teacher education and global education suggests that teachers in different country contexts and school settings often have limited opportunities to engage in initial teacher education and continuing professional development related to global education particularly in the Global South. Research from Bourn, Hunt and Bamber (2017) suggests that while there is some evidence of increased engagement with global themes in teacher education in some countries, its inclusion still often tends to be the result of individual interests of teacher trainers, school leaders or teachers in schools. They also note that 'unless there is a national drive or external input for GCED and ESD in teacher education, then provision by teacher educators tends to be ad-hoc and limited' (Bourn, Hunt and Bamber, 2017: p. 55). Research (Bentall and Hunt, 2022; Hunt, 2017) also notes the important role a vibrant non-governmental sector can play in bridging gaps in teacher education.

Unfortunately, despite calls for more research on the availability of teacher training and education related to global education (Bourn, Hunt and Bamber, 2017), the existing literature tends to focus more on how GCE, global education or ESD are conceptualized within teacher education or systematic reviews of research (e.g. Estelles and Fischman, 2022; Yemini, Tibbitts and Goren 2019; Fischer et al., 2022). That said, a recent study from UNESCO (2021) with 58,000 teachers gives some insight into the scale of engagement in professional development, although issues with sampling[2] suggest caution. The data suggest between 50 and 70 per cent of respondents had received some previous training input(s) on aspects of global education and a similar percentage identified availability of CPD opportunities. In a question on barriers to teaching global education–related themes, between a quarter and a third of respondents highlighted a lack of relevant professional development training. While there are caveats with the research, the study indicates more can still be done in terms of teacher education in global education.

Globalizing access to global education training via MOOCs

The Global Education for Teachers online course was developed as a MOOC with the hope of increasing access to global education teacher education. MOOCs are

designed to provide accessible online learning for free (or at very low cost) on a large scale. Their design allows for unlimited enrolment and as a result are more widely accessible than formal higher education or training programmes and can reach much larger audiences. The field has grown rapidly in popularity in recent years, and especially as a result of the Covid pandemic, with worldwide MOOC enrolment numbers exceeding an estimated 180 million by 2020 and continuing to grow (Shah, 2020).

Although MOOCs were initially envisioned as a way to provide learning for those without access to higher education, particularly in the Global South, more recent evidence suggests that MOOCs are most frequently used by professionals looking to further develop their skills or advance their careers. It also suggests that teachers are one of the key groups accessing these opportunities (Bragg, Walsh and Heyeres, 2021; Ho et al., 2015). Certainly, the potential benefits of online professional development courses for teachers are significant. Most importantly for this chapter, this includes the potential to reach teachers who may otherwise have limited access to professional development and training (Laurillard, Kennedy and Wang, 2018). However, further research is needed to better understand how MOOCs can reach and serve particular groups of learners (cf. Schmid et al., 2015).

Ideas of hope in global education

The theme of hope has long been present in global education and sustainable development-related disciplines (Hicks, 2014; Bourn, 2021), but we would suggest hope is increasingly important given recent research highlighting ideas of eco-anxiety (Panu, 2020, Coffey et al., 2021), the impacts of the Covid pandemic (cf. Selby and Kagawa, 2020), as well as evidence of the rise of nationalism around the world.

There are different ways in which hope is positioned within the global education literature in relation to teachers and teaching. This includes the importance of teachers' retaining a sense of hope as they navigate institutions, systems and their own positionality in their pursuit of global education (Kavanagh, Waldron and Mallon, 2021). Here hope is positioned as a critical part of teachers' repertoire needed to fight oppression and guard against potential despair. Bourn (2021) describes global learning as a pedagogy of hope in and of itself. He highlights the important role that teachers play in encouraging the idea that: 'change and progress are possible through a greater understanding of the issues and having the skills and belief in taking social action' (2021: p. 67). Swanson and Gamal

(2021) explore the potential of global citizenship (if reappropriated) to nurture ideas of radical hope in educating for alternative (more hopeful) futures. They proffer an approach which supports critical consciousness and reflexivity to reach beyond and challenge the status quo.

With these in mind we explore hope in relation to the online course, its participants, as well as how the course participants articulate their own ideas of hope and global education.

Methodology

Given the relative lack of research on global education training and professional development around the world, we felt it was important to include a research strand within the course design. Therefore, in addition to the course data generated by participants, we embedded an anonymous, voluntary online survey into week three of the course. The survey gathers qualitative and quantitative data about the cohort, their experiences and engagement with global education in their current practice, and their views on why and how global education is important. And it is this survey that forms the focus of the data in this chapter, albeit with our views being informed and influenced by our engagement with learners on the wider course.

An online survey was chosen as the best means to collect data as participants were located across the world and the survey offered the potential for a large number of responses. We also wanted to be able to match up demographic data to information on their experiences and perceptions, something that FutureLearn's learner profiles do not allow for, but that an additional data collection tool could offer.

Participants on the course were already online, and the survey was embedded within the course, along with ethical information which emphasized that participation was voluntary and responses anonymous. However, this approach created a narrow sampling framework that potentially limits the scope of the study. The participants in this survey were self-selecting as they had signed up to the online course; stayed with the online course until week 3 and agreed to take part in the survey. It indicates teachers involved in the survey were actively interested in global education and saw the benefit of this kind of research.

We received 293 responses to the online survey over four course runs between October 2020 and January 2022. These 293 responses reflect 38 per cent of active learners (i.e. defined as those who mark at least one step as complete within

the week) within the participants remaining in week 3 (combined total 779 active learners in week 3). Although the sample was self-selecting and may not be representative of the overall course cohort, the data nevertheless provides a useful glimpse of who engages in the course.

Analysis was conducted using both the SPSS Statistics package and thematic analysis of open-ended survey questions. We produced descriptive quantitative analysis through SPSS which provides useful detail on the nature of the cohort and their experience and engagement with global education. The open-ended free-text responses give a qualitative glimpse into participants' further thoughts and reflections on themes related to the research questions. Thus qualitative responses are used to illustrate participants' engagements with global education and how participants view global education as a source of hope within their practice. In presenting the data we retain a number of the quotes, not only to demonstrate their richness but also to illustrate the scope of teacher engagement from across the world.

Ethical approval for the study was granted by the UCL IOE Research Ethics Committee.

Findings

In the following sections, we explore the findings from survey data in terms of: the nature of the course cohort, their experiences and engagement with global education in their current practice, and their views on why and how global education is important.

Who are the course participants?

Table 12.1 provides an overview profile of course participants who took the survey.

It shows that respondents to the survey were predominantly female (71%) and the majority were teachers (72%) or school leaders (12%), working in schools as their educational settings.

Over 50 per cent of respondents had over ten years of teaching experience, with less than 10 per cent in their initial year of teaching. In terms of the age of students' participants worked with, about a third were working in primary schools and a third secondary schools. Ten per cent of respondents worked with adults only.

Table 12.1 Overview of Course Participants Who Took the Survey

	Characteristic	Number	Percentage
Gender	Female	206	71
	Male	76	26
	Others (combined)	8	4
Job	Teacher	211	72
	School leader	34	12
	Others (combined)	47	16
Experience (length of time teaching)	Under one year	25	9
	1–5 years	64	22
	5–10 years	44	15
	Over 10 years	159	55
School type	state	115	40
	Independent	64	22
	international	43	15
	Other (combined)	68	23
Age of pupils	Primary age (up to 11 years)	89	31
	Secondary age (11–18 years)	90	31
	Mixed age (primary and secondary)	40	14
	Adults	32	11
	Other (combined)	39	14
Subject specialism	Languages	77	27
	Literacy (reading, writing, literature)	39	14
	Humanities	42	15
	Science	31	11
	All/combination	29	10
	Others (combined)	69	24

Around 40 per cent of respondents worked in state schools, with independent and international schools also ranking highly. This differed by nationality with, for example, half of the respondents from the UK and 70 per cent from South Africa working in state schools; compared to almost 90 per cent of respondents from India working in independent schools.

Over 25 per cent identified languages as their main subject specialism, with around 15 per cent humanities teachers. In other UK-based studies, humanities teachers (particularly geography) tend to be the highest cohort engaging in global learning initiatives (Hunt and Cara, 2015), so this focus on languages is interesting. It might partly be an indication of who can access online international courses in English.

We had respondents coming from sixty-five countries (as per their nationality), which includes just less than a third of countries in the world. Not surprisingly, because this is where we are based, UK teachers made up the largest cohort (23 per cent). There were also strong cohorts from India (9 per cent), South Africa (6 per cent), Nigeria (5 per cent) and China (4 per cent), which suggests a relatively diverse range of participants. This is compared to FutureLearn's own estimation that most of the platform's overall learners are located in the United Kingdom, the United States, India, Egypt, Australia, Saudi Arabia, China, Japan, Ukraine and Spain.[3]

Interestingly also almost 30 per cent of respondents lived in a different country to that of their nationality, which suggests quite a mobile cohort.

Overall, this data indicates that the MOOC attracts an international profile of English-speaking (mobile) educators engaged in school-based teaching, with a particular interest in global learning approaches.

Teachers' experiences and engagement with global education

In terms of experience, almost half of the course participants indicate that they have had no previous training on global education (47 per cent), with 20 per cent having one training experience and 26 per cent more than one. This suggests the course attracted both interested participants with limited or no previous access to training and those with an informed and active interest in global education.

Figure 12.1 goes into more detail on how respondents engage with global education within their current practice. It shows responses to a set of statements, with participants asked to note whether they think they are at a beginner, early, developing or experienced stage within their global education journey against various categories related to practice and experience. It shows many respondents marking themselves at developing or experienced levels in many categories already. Those categories with weaker responses tend to be more about global learning in practice, including integrating global themes into their teaching, adopting appropriate pedagogical approaches and linking with external communities locally and internationally on a global theme. This is not surprising as research on global education indicates a lag between knowledge, confidence to teach and practice (Hunt and Cara, 2015).

This is also a bit odd in terms of formatting/ flow. The paragraph should link to the quotes below, but these are preceded by the table. Can the table be moved earlier or later so that this is not an issue?
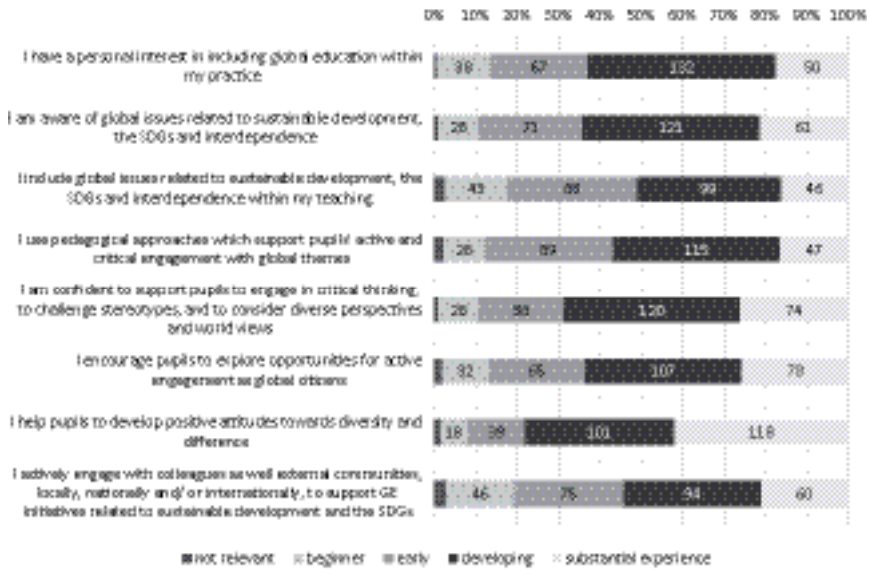
Figure 12.1 Teachers' experience, knowledge and confidence with global education.

Similarly, qualitative responses suggest that many teachers feel the need to develop more supporting knowledge and confidence through training, before including it in their teaching practice:

> I would like to become more knowledgeable and confident myself in dealing with all global issues and have regular access to discussion and information on current issues relating to GCE. (Irish secondary school teacher, government school, Ireland)

> I am aware of what global education is, and have had some experience teaching global citizenship as a subject in 6th grade.. . . Really grasping what is it and means for me personally, then committing and afterwards, leading my students. I need to feel confident first. (Mexican primary school teacher, independent school, Mexico)

> Deeper understanding of GCE so I can effectively put this into practice. (Filipino secondary school teacher, international school, Vietnam)

This highlights the importance of both CPD opportunities such as this and support for teachers more generally are much needed in order to develop knowledge, understanding and confidence to teach. It indicates that although around half of the respondents have experience in global education, many are only beginning to include it within their practice.

Exploring ideas of hope

In this section we explore ideas of hope which we identified through the survey responses and also our own engagement in the course. Key themes which emerged from our analysis included hope through global education itself, through access to online teacher education, through teachers and teaching, and through the children and young people they teach.

Hope through global education

Not surprisingly given the cohort and the focus of the course there was strong support for global education across the course cohort. Ideas about the importance of global education were a feature of discussions across all of the course runs, where participants frequently expressed enthusiasm and hope for the role of global education in promoting peace, understanding and change for the future. This sense of hope through global education was strikingly summarized by one survey respondent, who pointed specifically to the need for global education in our current, challenging times:

> Global Education is vital. This pandemic feels like a turning point in so much of our thinking. It feels like an opportunity to shape discussions and learning in such a way that we break with the traditions of the past, move away from colonial mindsets and begin to see education institutions as places where dialogue, creativity, open-mindedness, cooperation and empathy are favoured. (Canadian secondary school teacher, international school, Malaysia)

Hope through online teacher education

We argue here that our online Global Education for Teachers professional development course offers hope for teachers in two main ways.

First, as discussed previously the course reaches educators with little or no levels of previous training and experience (47 per cent of the respondents) and low or limited access to training provision (34 per cent). The online, free provision, while not without restrictions (e.g. due to language, access to time and technology), is seemingly able to fill a gap. Respondents noted:

> The professional development I have had this past year has been undertaken privately, not through my school. There has been no professional development related to GCE offered in my school. (Canadian secondary school teacher, international school, Malaysia)

> I didn't really [get] involved in real classroom teachings or handling the pupils because I was a teacher trainer.. . . And right now in this current situation, I don't have any opportunities to attend professional development courses at all, except through FutureLearn, edX etc. those MOOCs. (Malaysian teacher educator, Malaysia)

Second, the nature of the MOOC provides within it a space for interaction and engagement between teachers from across the world. Here they find commonalities across geographical barriers, while engaging critically with subject matter. This is something that participants spoke about in their responses:

> I've really enjoyed speaking with and listening to teachers from around the world share their thoughts, experiences and practices! The MOOC has helped me to view GCE from a wider perspective. (British primary school teacher, government school, Scotland)

> I enjoyed learning about global education and connecting with other teachers from around the globe. (South African primary school teacher, international school, Qatar)

Hope through teachers and teaching

When asked about their future plans for global education practice, responses were understandably varied, with some participants identifying specific targets such as finding new resources, sharing their learning with colleagues or identifying appropriate strategies for relevant curricular areas. Underpinning many responses, however, was a desire to incorporate more global education within teaching practice, with many noting the direct influence of the course. For some it was the beginning of their global education journey and they spoke about the newness of the field. Others spoke in more detail of changes they wished to make to current practice, with the course seemingly acting as a catalyst for action, adaptation and expansion:

> Develop my global perspectives department to be the best in the school with cutting edge practice, online training and teachers involved in diverse activities relating to improving the community. (British headteacher, international school, Egypt).

> Embedding meaningful changes in the sustainability practices at the school so we are role models for the children and their families. (British arts teacher, international school, Thailand)

We also take it as a sign of hope that the majority of the survey respondents (80 per cent) already see themselves as 'global educators'. While it is difficult to know whether the responses are evidence of actual teaching practice or are more aspirational in tone, it nevertheless suggests that participants see engagement with global education as positive. Teachers also spoke in some detail about their own role, not necessarily as activists or agents of change, but as learners – and the continuing need for them to access training to better support their students.

Overall, we suggest there are signs of hope both for teachers and within their teaching practice.

Hope through children and young people

Many survey responses highlighted a view of hope that focuses on children, their futures and the futures of the world. In this regard global education is a key part of supporting young people and subsequently in some cases a more hopeful global future, with the focus tending to be on young people as global citizens in the making rather than global citizens now.

If we look in more depth at this though as per Table 12.2, we see a range of respondents' accounts that relate to global education, young people and hope, with some more evidence-based than others. Can Table 12.2 be moved to directly under this para? Otherwise the quotes which follow the paras below are split up again.

Respondents were asked to complete the sentence 'global education is . . .'. and varied responses can be seen below. Many of the responses directly relate to young people, their development as global citizens and their role in the future.

A number of responses relate to developing children and young people as global citizens, whereby global education interventions increase learners' knowledge, skills and competences to develop as global citizens. For these respondents, global education is

Table 12.2 Typology of Hope

Through global education children and young people develop knowledge, skills, values to develop as global citizens	Through global education children and young people more globally informed and aware	Through global education children and young people either now or in the future (as adults) take informed action on a global issue	Through global education as adults, these children and young people, solve global problems, make the world better.
Evidence-based		Less evidence	Little or no evidence

> a process whereby students develop critical thinking skills, global values, and an awareness of the world and people around them, which together contribute to them becoming a global citizen. (British teacher, international school, China)

> preparing students with the essential knowledge and skills to be global citizens and become active members in the rapidly changing world. (British primary school teacher, government school, England)

Through the global education process, many respondents also saw children and young people becoming more globally informed, confident and able to engage with global issues. In these cases, global education is

> the active engagement of children in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills of the world and where they fit in. (South African secondary school teacher, international school, Qatar)

> learning about the world around us, issues we may face and learning to feel confident tackling issues. (British primary school teacher, government school, UK)

There is a growing evidence base that global education supports the development of children's global citizen attributes (cf. O'Flaherty and Liddy, 2018; Ahmed and Mohammed, 2021; Hunt, 2017; Hunt and Cara, 2015), but less on how this contributes to action. That said, global education in schooling often includes opportunities for young people to take part in and experience an 'active' citizenship element. Respondents therefore also noted how global education supports young people either now or in the future (as adults) to develop a sense of their role within the world, the interconnections between people and experience informed action on (a) global issue(s). For example, global education is

> essential for children who are hearing about significant problems in the world around them and who need to understand them and develop a sense that they can act on them rather than being helpless. (Australian secondary school teacher, government school, Australia)

> about facilitating learners to become more aware of their role on this earth and to see how their actions and behaviours can influence others. It is also about developing tolerance and understanding of the value of diversity and equality. (British secondary school teacher, government school, England)

> a way to exchange thoughts, to bridge cultures, to be more inclusive and to shape the world into a better world. (Chinese secondary school teacher (15-18), independent school, China)

> important for pupils as they will begin to take care of the Earth where they live. (Armenian primary school teacher, government school, Armenia)

There were also a large number of responses where global education was seen as a vehicle to support young people to solve major global problems in the future. While this approach is definitely hopeful, there is thus far limited longitudinal research which tracks the impact of global education into adulthood, so whether this hope is realistic, is not certain. Moreover, this kind of focus tends to put the onus of change on young people in the future and not the adults of today. Responses that support this include: Global education is

> of key importance to ensure life in the planet earth on the long term. (Brazilian teacher trainee, Brazil)

> foundational to giving students the mindset necessary for them to solve the problems of the world. (American teacher trainee, USA)

> very important to make the global citizens with the knowledge, values, skills and actions so that they would solve the global problems in future. (Bangladeshi primary school teacher, government school, Bangladesh)

Hope for and via young people emerge from these accounts and dovetail clearly with discussions about the aims of global education, as well as related areas such as global learning, global citizenship education, and education for sustainable development, throughout the academic literature (cf. Bourn, 2021, Davies et al., 2018). They also run parallel to current international policy statements, and especially the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which argue for the central role of education in achieving a more just and sustainable world in the future. They possibly link more readily to the concept of hope as advocated by Bourn (2021) whereby teachers develop skills and knowledge to foster the hope that change and progress is possible; but perhaps less obvious support for more radical versions of hope as advocated by Swanson and Gamal (2021).

Concluding thoughts

Literature in global education and related areas has often highlighted the need for global education pedagogies as an important source of hope, particularly in the context of increasing global inequality, climate change and, more recently, the global pandemic (cf. Friere, 2004; Bourn, 2021; Selby and Kagawa, 2020; Hicks, 2014). Alongside this, however, is also a long-standing recognition of the lack of support for teachers (and educators more generally) who would like to integrate these approaches into their educational practice.

So, while the news continues to be full of the challenges of climate change, the global pandemic and armed conflict, we found in this course evidence of hope

on a range of levels. First, in terms of the participants' own expressions of hope, their current practice and engagement, their plans for continued engagement and their hope for their pupils. Second, for us as educators, the course gave us hope for making global education accessible to new cohorts and bringing together teachers to speak to and engage with diverse peers around the world, to share practice, and to learn from one another. As Bourn notes, such educational initiatives are important because:

> People and communities need not only to be kept informed about these global issues, but also to have the opportunities to develop their skills within a framework of a values base built on social justice to ensure that change is long lasting and meaningful. (Bourn, 2021: p. 67)

While the long-term impacts of the course are difficult to assess, we believe that online courses like this one have a potentially important contribution to make in addressing the ongoing gap in teacher professional development related to global education around the world. Certainly, if SDG 4.7 is to be achieved, it will require not just attention to policy and curricula, but also much greater investment in the professional development of teachers.

Notes

1 The course can be found on https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/global-education-for-teachers.
2 Ninety per cent of their respondents came from two countries only (Mexico and Ukraine); there is little information about school type. Respondents were self-selecting.
3 https://www.futurelearn.com/info/blog/ten-million-learners

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