Transformative learning through service-learning: no passport required

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Abstract

Purpose- This paper aims to explore student learning within a local service-learning initiative that forms part of an Education Studies undergraduate programme at an HEI in the UK with a history of international service-learning programmes.

Design/methodology/approach- This paper outlines the context for this form of community engagement in the UK and reflects on the experiences of student participants and the nature of their learning. Ethnographic research into the student experience of international service-learning (ISL) provides a useful framework within which to frame this study.

Findings- This research draws on transformational learning theory to describe how students experience a shifting of their world-view through service-learning locally. This study reveals that challenges to stereotypes and personal values, as well as other previously accepted presuppositions, in a domestic context, are not dissimilar from those experienced by students involved in international service-learning initiatives.

Research limitations/implications- The framework presented here is a useful tool to explore the dynamic relationship between local and international volunteering and student learning. This particular case study has the potential to add to our understanding of critical pedagogy theory in practice.

Originality/value- This article also presents evidence of the complexity of identifying transformative learning. In order to elevate the outcomes of service-learning towards their transformative potential, the opportunities for learning that are afforded by such ventures must be pursued with vigour. The authors advocate a model of community engagement that embeds local service-learning within the curriculum.

Key words – Service-learning, Transformative learning, Citizenship education, United Kingdom

Paper type – Research

Introduction

This paper reflects upon the effect of a project that has given Education Studies students opportunities to promote global citizenship in secondary schools, with the added intention that they would gain a greater understanding of citizenship in the process. The perceived success of the project, taken with the goodwill it has brought with it, has heightened discussion as well as raising questions about the very nature and values of citizenship education. The process has drawn in students and their tutors equally in a 'scholarship of engagement', and may be a reflection of a general revival of interest in the role of civic virtue, social responsibility and service in higher education (Jacoby 1996; Hepburn et al. (2000); Butin 2003; Annette 2005a). In line with this revival, shifts are said to be occurring in higher education pedagogy, where efforts are being made to expand the social, cultural and human capital of universities and their local communities through experiential learning and active partnership (Peterson 2009; Bringle and Hatcher 2000).

Since the turn of the century global education has found new vigour and momentum, through the spread of citizenship education initiatives and through official recognition that an international dimension is essential in education (Marshall, 2005). A succession of government-commissioned reports has emphasised the role and responsibility of higher education in forming a democratic and inclusive society, both at home and abroad. A UNESCO report on Education for Sustainable Development makes connections between values and attitudes, the conduct of individuals and the power unleashed when teaching engages with the community:

> '[ ] among the most successful programmes are those that avoid the belief that awareness leads to understanding, understanding leads to concern, and concern motivates the development of skills and action. Instead, the key ingredient of success is to start from the questions, issues and problems that concern young people themselves, and to help them develop 'action competence' [which] brings the capacity to envision alternatives, clarify the values and interests that underlie different visions, and make choices between visions. This includes developing the skills to plan, take action and evaluate needed in active and informed citizens. Action competence brings knowledge, not just of the problem and its symptoms but also about its root causes - how it impacts on people's lives, ways of addressing it, and how different interests are served by different sorts of solutions.'
>
> (UNESCO 2002: 26)

Whilst citizenship education and global education may have different characteristics, both are informed by pedagogical approaches designed to encourage active participation (Davies et al.,

2005). The model of social action that attaches to active participation is enabling an academic component to surface in Higher Education, one that moves beyond learning *about* global citizenship towards a curriculum concerned to promote learning *for* global citizenship.

Although it is now futile to confine our concern for citizenship to within the nation state (Marshall 2009), the concept of the global citizen lacks meaning when no form of world government is universally recognised to which it can direct its allegiance. What is acknowledged is the transformative effect of globalisation, where the nature and impact of trans-national interaction and interdependence are of acute interest across a range of fields. The repeated use of the term Globalisation in the media means that it has become associated with multiple understandings of the nature of global citizenship in both public and academic debate.

The transformation of transport, media, and technology and communication systems has provided young people with considerable opportunities to engage, often directly, with citizens of other nations across the world. Where this new freedom excites concerns and action over distant social injustice, for example, its effect can be distracting. As the 'voluntourism' and gap year industries flourish, the phenomenon has been noted of individuals who waive responsibility within their own local and national communities in preference for the global stage:

> 'It is insufficient [ ] to feel and express a sense of solidarity with others elsewhere if we cannot establish a sense of solidarity with others in our own communities, especially those others whom we perceive to be different from ourselves.'
>
> (Osler and Starkey, 2003: 252)

The last two decades have seen a proliferation of organisations offering young people from the North opportunities to volunteer for work in resource-poor communities in the South. Inevitably this development has led to organisations operating without appearing to reflect on the experience they offer young people (Simpson, 2004). The voluntourism industry, with its ethos of 'holidays for humanity' and 'the giving trip', has been cast as, at best, self-serving, at worst providing students with life-enriching experiences at the expense of people living in poverty. The desire for all UK youngsters to 'learn about the issues that shape their world' has seen an expansion of opportunities for them to volunteer in developing countries, as listed in the Department for International Development's White Paper on eliminating world poverty (DfID, 2006:115). However, since global learning cannot automatically result from time spent overseas, there have been calls for regulation of the international volunteering sector in the UK (DEA, 2007a: 4).

So, just as there are consequences in omitting an international aspect to any education for citizenship, constructing a curriculum or pedagogy of education for global citizenship may be equally problematic. In England as elsewhere, traditions of 'Global Education' and 'Citizenship Education' have evolved concurrently in recent history. Recognition that this model may perpetuate a less relevant understanding of citizenship and a deficient view of global education has motivated calls for an alignment of these forms of education under the banner of 'Global Citizenship Education' (Davies and Reid, 2005).

Service-learning models are increasingly, if not universally, recognised as important in developing the key skills that might enable graduates to become active citizens both locally and globally. The term service-learning is taken to refer to that pedagogy which directs students' classroom learning to address the needs of relevant communities, where reciprocity between the institution and the community partner is essential in formulating 'proposals, solutions and strategies for meeting their organisational missions' (Ransom 2009: 215). A leading project researching the outcomes of service–learning in the American context concludes that 'service-learning practitioners tend to come down on the side of transformational learning: supporting educational approaches that raise fundamental questions and empower students to do something about them' (Eyler and Giles, 1999).

Harnessing students' energies and enthusiasms, their sense of adventure about the world and their wish to make a difference within it, has become a part of many universities' plans and vision. Many have also made distinctive commitments to communities in the developing world. Three decades of activity have seen our own institution develop a successful long-term model for working directly with the dispossessed and disadvantaged. Through it, scores of teams of staff and students have been dispatched to settlements across India, Africa and Brazil, to provide immediate relevant assistance in educational terms. Bamber et al. (2008) document the evolution of international service learning (ISL) opportunities at Liverpool Hope University (LHU). They present a set of guiding principles for developing sustainable North-South partnerships committed to reciprocity with 'relationships grounded in a spirit of openness, mutual respect and integrity' (xiv). These principles attempt to address the deficiencies of the flourishing voluntourism industry outlined above.

The success of the model has been recognised, most notably, with a Queen's Award for Higher Education. Its one great flaw is that it draws on a proportionately small (if significant) part of the academic community and it cannot be said to engage students, even those who have opted to study global affairs as part of their degree, with the burning local as well as global issues of the day. We have to find means to bring these alive for them.

Liverpool Hope University Service and Leadership Award (SALA)

This programme was launched in 2008 and builds upon more than 20 years of international volunteering through the university's charity, Hope One World (HOW), informed by concepts of service learning as practised internationally. The positive effects of service learning for the served community as well as for participants' enhanced sense of social responsibility when they turn their learning to practical application, are well documented. Such benefits are particularly marked where such learning is integrated with course content (Eyler and Giles, 1999; Zimmerman et al. 2009). The programme runs alongside as opposed to within students' degree studies and gives them the opportunity to graduate with recognition for the service work that they have performed. The programme aims in particular to encourage local volunteering and includes an introductory skills-based element providing leadership training and preparation for local and global projects as well as reflective work. The main part of the award is the service itself, with an additional strand requiring the student to demonstrate their contribution to the Hope community. This award is offered as an extra-curricular programme involving knowledge, skills and the possibility of international experiences and leadership. It aims to equip students for an international career.

Although the programme might be seen to promote the commodification of service and graduate employability, it does provide a response to the call from the Russell Commission (2005) to develop an ethos of volunteering across all phases of formal education. Opportunities are increasing for pupils in schools to volunteer. These chime with an expectation within the new secondary curriculum that cross-curricular dimensions be developed to include a global dimension and community participation (QCA, 2008). This sits alongside the compulsory provision of education for citizenship inspired by the Crick Report (QCA, 1998), to include strands on social responsibility and community involvement. It has already been suggested that faith-based higher education institutions such as Liverpool Hope University (LHU) are the most likely to build upon this grounding (Annette, 2005b: 64).

The Notre Dame (Global Education) Project - background

LHU is distinctive for being the only ecumenical university in Europe, placing itself as an ecumenical Christian foundation which strives, inter alia, to contribute to the educational, religious, cultural, social and economic life of the North West of England ' and beyond' (LHU, 2009). One of its founding groups is the teaching Order of the Sisters of Notre Dame (SND). Relations with SND have remained strong since the very recent days when they served extensively on LHU's academic staff. Faith links and HOW projects in SND Bangalore and Nigeria have reinforced this mutual regard. The Notre Dame Project (NDP) emerged from an international SND conference encouraging partnerships across sectors (ND schools with each other under the aegis of ND HE)

in ways that would improve networking between the schools and engage the HE students in widening participation activity: through service learning and community based learning methods they would present an example to the schools.

The essence of the project is that Hope students and Year 8 pupils would work together to further their understanding of issues affecting communities in both developing and developed countries. Hope students would devise sets of activities around ideas such as poverty in the UK, child rights, climate change, street crime and child soldiers. They were (are) free to consider other themes and associated activities they judged appropriate in raising issues of roles, rights and responsibilities with such a group of impressionable school students. The students would be aware of their role as ambassadors of Hope and advocates for global learning and citizenship in schools.

The Notre Dame (Global Education) Project in action

The Notre Dame Project (NDP) was established in 2006 and was embedded as a service-learning component of a year-long second Level course, The Global Citizen and Education, on the Education Studies undergraduate pathway at Liverpool Hope University.

Taught content on this course is front-loaded, opening with the exploration of frameworks for citizenship, education for citizenship and global citizenship education. Pedagogical approaches such as Open Space for Dialogue and Enquiry are modelled and evaluated. Issues such as poverty and climate change are investigated. Associated learning outcomes include the development of knowledge and understanding and of cognitive, social and practical skills and values and attitudes, although not all of these are formally assessed.

The NDP is the focus of the second half of the course. NDP was designed as a cross-sector initiative to involve our students in preparing, providing and evaluating a workshop on an aspect of the Global Dimension, in the network of Notre Dame Schools in London, Norwich, Glasgow, Sheffield and Liverpool. Hope students identify issues in the taught sessions about which they feel passionate and well informed. They prepare presentations to their peers to explore their issue from a variety of perspectives and to consider how these may be tackled in the secondary school curriculum. The subsequent delivery of the global citizenship workshop in Notre Dame schools is voluntary and counts as service hours for the Service and Leadership Award. More than 95% of the 80+ students in each cohort have completed the workshop to date.

The evolving NDP project fits the conventions that have come to delineate service learning (Zlotkowski 2007). It promotes civic responsibility; it offers structured opportunities for reflection

and there is reciprocity between the partners concerning the resources, objectives and priorities that serve to define their partnership. It also asks students to work to explicit learning outcomes amenable to assessment:

The NDP enables students to meet the learning outcomes of this course, specifically:

- an understanding of a range of pedagogical approaches that underpin education for citizenship in formal and non-formal schooling

- an ability to reflect on their own behaviour as a global citizen and develop critical awareness of the extent to which these practices correspond to aspects of the debate around contemporary citizenship

However, unexpected learning outcomes of this service-learning initiative, such as development of values and attitudes, have become evident and are worthy of exploration. Furthermore, it has been argued that citizenship education should help students develop skills of perspective consciousness in a globalised world: they learn to 'approach judgements and decision making with open mindedness, anticipation of complexity and resistance to stereotyping' (Merryfield and Duty, 2008: 87-88). Transformative learning theory has enabled us further to investigate these forms of learning.

Transformative learning (TL)

LHU has sought an appropriate theoretical frame on which to develop its service learning model. TL as it is applied here, draws on the ideas of Mezirow (1991) whilst carrying echoes of Freire's 'conscientisation' process and Habermas's principles of 'emancipatory action'. The former is defined as 'learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions – developing a critical awareness – so that individuals can take action against oppressive elements of reality' (Freire, 1970: 19). In other words, it seeks to transform students' perspectives through action learning, where they face a dilemma they must resolve: how to communicate world issues to younger people. Essentially it turns on them being forced to take responsibility for their own learning rather than 'banking' education mediated to them by others.

Transformational learning theory is an approach to adult learning that contrasts its potentially transformative nature with the formative, socializing and acculturating process of learning in childhood. Mezirow (1991, 2000) describes how transformative learning may lead adults to experience 'perspective transformation', a shifting of their 'world-view':

[perspective transformation is] the process of becoming critically aware of how and who our presuppositions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand and feel about our world; of reformulating these assumptions to permit a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable and integrative perspective; and of making decisions or otherwise acting on these new understandings.

(Mezirow, 1991: 14)

Mezirow argues that the ways in which we make meaning, or our 'meaning perspectives', are formed through a combination of epistemic, sociolinguistic, psychological, moral – ethical, philosophical and aesthetic factors (2000). These are the basic assumptions upon which our view of the world rests. Perspective transformation takes place when our meaning perspective can no longer assimilate a new experience. Confrontation with information that disrupts an individual's world view is the catalyst for change. A perspective change takes place in order to help them make sense of this and 'learn new ways to bring balance back into their lives' (Taylor, 1994: 169).

A propensity for individuals to ignore such dissonance may ensure that perspective transformation is a relatively rare outcome of service-learning courses (Eyler and Giles, 1999: 136). This has been attributed to individuals' 'readiness for change' and is dependent on personal biographic and programmatic factors amongst others (Taylor, 1994: 169). As Moore (2005: 84) reminds us, 'by avoiding transformation of perspectives, we may feel safe and secure; whereas shifting our underlying assumptions can make us feel insecure and unsure'. Mezirow has argued that people are often 'caught in their own history and reliving it' (1978: 101), making our meaning perspectives a 'double edged sword'. These perspectives give meaning and thus validate our experiences, while at the same time skewing our reality (Taylor, 1998). The main goal of transformative learning is to enable students to develop their own meaning perspectives that guide their action by helping them interpret evidence.

Perspective transformation through a service-learning experience may emerge where the 'unfamiliar' helps participants to question the 'familiar'. For example, the transformation of a socio-linguistic assumption would perhaps involve 'questioning and overturning one's fundamental assumptions about society' whereby students' understanding of the nature of social problems are transformed as well as their perception of approaches required to solve them (Eyler and Giles, 1999: 135). Similarly, immersion in a SL context may act to challenge stereotypes and personal values as well as expose participants to surprising information that contradicts their previously accepted presuppositions. Through critical reflection the students undergo a process of 'defamiliarisation' whereby they 'break with the taken-for-granted and set the familiar aside'

(Greene, 1995: 3). This process of making the familiar strange is a central aspect for ethnographic researchers working in settings within which they are familiar (Mehan, 1981).

Mezirow's transformational learning theory has been used successfully as a framework to investigate perspective transformation amongst adult learners in a limited number of cases (Taylor, 1994; Kovan and Dirkx, 2003; Kiely, 2004; Christofi and Thompson, 2007). The allure of transformative learning theory has ensured that it is said to receive more attention than any other learning theory from amongst those who study adult education (Schugurensky, 2002). Indeed, 'transformative learning' and 'critical consciousness' are terms which, because they have been loosely appropriated are at risk of losing meaning (Brookfield, 2003: 142; Deans, 1999: 22).

An interpretation of students' transformations on the Notre Dame project

Ethnographic research into the student experience of international service-learning (ISL) provided a useful framework on which to base this study. Illuminating this interaction, Agar claims that 'local discourse has to link to global analysis' (2005: 18) and furthermore that 'once you do get some of the global, the local suddenly makes a lot more sense' (ibid : 19).

Longitudinal studies conducted in both the USA (Kiely, 2004) and the UK (Bamber, 2008) have revealed that student participants experienced perspective transformation as a result of their international service-learning in at least one of the following dimensions of their frames of reference; political, cultural, moral, intellectual, personal or spiritual. These studies involved drawing up detailed case studies and included analysis of pre-departure application forms, project journals and subsequent in-depth interviews and focus groups with participants. Some of the students involved in the study had volunteered in an international context up to 13 years previously. The six areas identified by Kiely represent the areas in which the students' worldview was disrupted and indicate the nature of the assumptions that students re-evaluate as a result of their ISL experience.

Transforming form	Meaning of transformation
Political	Expanded sense of social responsibility and citizenship that is both local and global
Moral	Develop relationships based on mutual respect, care and sense of solidarity
Intellectual	Question assumptions re: origins, nature and solutions to problems

Cultural	Rethink dominant cultural and social values, norms and rituals; inc. questioning of Western thinking
Personal	Rethink previous self concept, lifestyle, relationships and career
Spiritual	A movement towards deeper un(conscious) understanding of self, purpose, society and greater good

There was also evidence of a discrete transforming form, regarding professional transformation, that was distinct from an increase in self esteem and career choice, or solutions identified to problems, and is characterised by shifting professional knowledge, skills, values and beliefs, for example challenges to previously held assumptions about teaching and learning or even the purpose of education itself (Bamber, 2008).

Details from interview transcripts with students who participated on the Notre Dame Project (NDP) are now presented to illustrate how these changes in perspectives were also experienced by students as they engaged with their local service. 75% of students were found to have experienced perspective transformation in at least one category in this framework. Although these interviews were conducted shortly after their experience of service in a local setting, this empirical documentation suggests that in some cases students have already learned to translate their new perspective from envisioning into action within different spheres of their lives.

Political transformation

All the students identified their appreciation of a more extended citizenship role at both local and global levels as evidence of their political transformation:

> 'Researching the Notre Dame Project made me more aware of the issues that I believed did not involve me because they were not happening in my own country or did not involve my own ethnic group.'

Researching a particular issue had often left a significant impression, although students were able to articulate their development of transferable skills of critical thinking;

> 'At the beginning of the year my overall opinion of the news was that it was rather uninteresting and was ignored unless a particular article or news flash caught my attention. News articles in the media are much more interesting to watch now, for example the debate about ID cards. I look at the issues more fully now – I recognise local and global implications, and know that understanding this more fully enables me to do something positive.'

Moral transformation

Unlike ISL projects where relationships are formed over a period of time, this short term initiative in a local setting apparently precludes opportunities to develop relationships based on mutual respect, care and sense of solidarity. However, students investigating the abuse of child rights in different contexts on the Notre Dame project were able to relate to specific cases from a distance.

> 'I learnt a lot from preparing for the Notre Dame presentations. This is because I learnt about situations children were put in at a young age and I was angry that this could happen. The preparation for our presentation led to me wanting to do more for less fortunate people at home and overseas. This is not because I feel sorry for them like before but because I feel I have a duty as a British citizen to make life better for them – even when they live far away.'

Unexpectedly, interactions with children in Notre Dame Schools in and outside of Liverpool challenged the students of higher education to raise their own expectations for action to promote social justice;

> 'The reaction our group got from the children was immense, and we felt that they wanted to help and act as global citizens- they embraced the subject material in ways we had not imagined.'

Intellectual transformation

Intellectual transformation occurs as students question the nature of issues they experience first hand, and begin to locate causes and envisage alternative solutions. On a service-learning project teaching in a developing country this may occur as a consequence of facing dilemmas such as giving to beggars or the selection of resources to take and leave with the schools in which students are working. This was also an outcome for some students as they prepared to deliver workshops on the Notre Dame project

> 'I have learnt that there is a big difference between knowing a problem or an issue exists, knowing why it exists and understanding the issues behind the problem.'

A number of students identified their emergent awareness of the impact of media on their views regarding issues such as immigration, poverty in the UK, child rights and the developing world as a significant learning outcome of the project. This illustrates how this local experience can lead

students to bring the actual definition of the problem into question. Furthermore, students articulated that this realisation altered their own expectations for any role they would play;

'It is important not only to learn about the world but also to act to change it. This involves identifying possible projects for change which I felt was carried out during the delivery of workshops within the Notre Dame schools. Before I was happy to do nothing. I now realise that participation and responsible action are the key skills worth developing.'

Cultural transformation

Cultural transformation is more than the development of intercultural competence. The exposure to diversity afforded by the Notre Dame project, was a revelation for students travelling outside of Liverpool for the first time, particularly for those working in Notre Dame High School Southwark:

'The school was majority non-white, the opposite of my education in Liverpool. There was a pupil in our group who went home to their village in Nigeria to visit their family every summer.'

For students who delivered a workshop on gun crime in a Liverpool school, the response of pupils to their activities also helped to challenge their presuppositions:

'Listening to the pupils' backgrounds, home lives and things that they or people they know have been through made me more aware that the problems aren't just in deprived counties but that they are happening on our doorstep.'

An ISL experience in the South has been seen to provoke students to question the emphasis on consumerism, materialism and individualism in western societies. On the Notre Dame project, a student researching a workshop on war and peace developed an awareness of their own western-centric focus for the first time.

'Having a father [who] had been in the military for 22 years, conflict was always of interest to me, so being able to focus on conflict and produce a PowerPoint to teach a group of 12 year olds was a truly amazing thing. I watch the news with much more interest now and also look at the other side of stories more. We looked at the different sides to political sanctions and trade embargoes – researching it from both angles. This year has developed my thought processes in a global way. I no longer think the West is right and everyone else is wrong.'

Other students explained how the combination of academic content, their own research and delivery of workshops in school helped them to see outside 'the UK bubble';

> 'I think I have a better understanding of how different people perceive different issues around the world. It has helped me to look further into things to find out the truth and to go outside the comfort zone we live in, being from the West.'

Personal transformation

The opportunity to prepare and provide global citizenship workshops in schools was valued highly by students in their evaluation of the course. Many identified an increase in their confidence and self esteem as a particular outcome. For some this benefit related directly to their professional life and future career:

> 'Going into school for me was one of the most enjoyable experiences of my life. I always knew I wanted to work with children and to teach in some capacity but I felt that it would be more as a teaching assistant or mentor. However the Notre Dame project taught me that I have more confidence as well as having the ability to teach.'

There was also evidence that some students reconsidered their self concept;

> 'The big discovery for me doing the group work preparation for the Notre Dame project was that I had strong feelings and opinions relating to certain global issues. I noticed that I often pushed my opinions onto others and expected them to develop the same viewpoints. Having to prepare something for children made me I learn that I must be more understanding and have respect for others' values and beliefs. I can only inform others and encourage them to develop their own ideas. You can't impose your values or opinions [ ] and I have been accused of that in the past and not really understood why or that I even did it. [ ] I do now.'

Discussion

The practice of fostering transformative learning has been described as illusive (Taylor, 2009). This study provides empirical evidence for a conceptualisation of the purpose and practice of transformative learning that remains poorly understood (ibid: 3). Research in the USA has indicated that perspective transformation is a relatively rare outcome of service-learning courses

(Eyler and Giles, 1999: 136) provoking questions as to why it doesn't happen more often. Indeed the findings above provide an account of what is possible as opposed to what usually happens. The difficulties in identifying transformative learning are apparent in this study. For example it cannot be claimed that perspective transformation has occurred when a person simply considers something that they have not thought of before.

> 'I was aware of the effect that climate change had on the world but I never took the opportunity to actually think about it until it was discussed through the presentations carried out by the other students. We have a responsibility to cut our carbon emissions to avoid disaster for others around the world.'

We can acquire new knowledge or extend our existing frames of reference without calling into question previously held assumptions and beliefs. To categorise this as transformative is inaccurate (Cranton, 2006). Further considerations include the difficulties students have with articulating their learning and the difficulties in categorising transformation using the framework above. This demonstrates the problematic nature of reporting on the breakdown of students who experienced perspective transformation in each category. For example the quote below could be perceived to be a transformation of either a political or intellectual perspective.

> 'It is important not only to learn about the world but also to act to change it. Before I was happy to do nothing. I now realise that participation and responsible action are the key skills worth developing.'

Two further areas of consideration for the promotion of transformative learning in this service-learning context have been identified. Firstly, students demonstrate a propensity to resist accommodating a more integrated world view, for example by challenging their own stereotypes. Secondly, there is evidence of an action gap whereby students do not draw upon perspectives that have been transformed to guide future action.

The confirmation of previously held suppositions

There was evidence that the preparation, delivery and evaluation of the Notre Dame project had not always challenged students to reformulate 'assumptions to permit a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable and integrative perspective' (Mezirow, 1991: 14) with regard, inter alia, to poverty and development;

> Researching our workshop on poverty I understood more then ever that the children in Africa have nothing but they are happy.

> I don't think I look at the world in a different way; it has just given me an explanation for how I already felt.

Such statements may be taken to demonstrate the dangers that, through this service-learning experience 'students are able to confirm, rather than challenge, that which they already know' (Simpson, 2004: 688). This is congruent with research that shows students have a propensity to interpret experiences that confirm rather than deny their understanding of the nature of social reality (Boyle-Baise and Sleeter, 2000; Erickson and O'Connor, 2000; Darley and Gross, 1983). A useful example in this context is the problematic nature of movement from a traditional charitable to a social justice perspective. Evidence collected in this study demonstrates that a charitable perspective is particularly resilient. Some students equated the giving of money with community involvement and action for social justice:

> I feel more active within the community now. It may not be a huge change; however I have started to put aside a small amount of money each month to go towards charity.

King proposes a continuum of service-learning from charitable to transformative service-learning (2004: 136). The former reinforces prejudice and exaggerates imbalances of power while the latter disrupts understanding of the self and society through critical reflection. Although King's research was in relation to ISL, his findings are pertinent to this local context.

This brings into question the role of the taught content of this course. Does it reinforce or challenge attitudes? How are students supported to enable them to develop as critical thinkers? In this respect, Andreotti (2006) draws on post-colonial theory to distinguish between 'soft' and 'critical' global citizenship education. The former perpetuates existing power relations between countries and individuals around the world and the latter challenges the learner to interpret global interdependence in new ways and envision a transformed relationship between the North and South. The evidence above suggests that for some students the experience on this course was of 'soft' global citizenship education.

Transformative learning theory evolved in part as a response to issues of power and hegemony and the 'post modernist threat that society's power and influence inevitably corrupts critical discourse and rationality' (Mezirow, 1996: 167). Transformative learning research and practice has been criticised for propagating an 'evacuation and reification' (Brookfield, 2000: 140) of the

meaning of the word transformation. The evidence outlined above suggests both ISL and the Global Citizen and Education Course at LHU have provided opportunities for students to critically reflect on complex concepts such as poverty, development and the purpose of education. This has led to changes in the foundational premises that direct students thoughts and actions as required by an understanding of TL grounded in critical theory (Brookfield, 2005).

Mind the (action) gap

TL has been criticised for neglecting power issues and a failure to address the issue of social change (Cranton, 2006; Taylor, 2009). Critical pedagogy theory as introduced by Paulo Freire, a pillar of TL theory, provides a useful lens for further investigations into how this service-learning project sustains or transforms dominant social and cultural values as demanded by the critical tradition. Freire's concept of conscientization (1970) is consistent with a view of TL that requires both critical reflection and action to be part of the same process of praxis (1970: 48): reflection and action upon the world to transform it. This particular understanding of transformative learning is concerned with fostering social change as much as personal transformation. Through critical reflection learners discover an awareness of the role of power and their own agency to transform both society and their own reality. If the social dimension is missing, reflection that simply changes the individuals assumptions can become 'an irrelevant and egocentric exercise' (Brookfield, 2000: 148).

Kiely uses the term Chameleon Complex to define the long-term challenges and struggles that students experience in attempting to change their lifestyle and engage in social action (Kiely, 2004). Students on ISL who have experienced profound changes to their world view, have been seen to struggle to take action that integrates these shifts on return to their home country (Bamber, 2008). It is beyond the aims of this study to evaluate any long-term impact of the Notre Dame Project, yet there was ample evidence to suggest translating perspective transformation into action for social change is not unproblematic:

> 'I look at the world differently now, but I am not ready yet within myself to put it into action.'

> 'My views of the world have changed, but I would say that the way I act in the world hasn't changed. There are many issues that I would consider trying to make a difference to in the future by taking action, but not right now. If I became a teacher, I would maybe think of bringing it in to my role as a teacher and sharing it in the classroom.'

Further analysis of the data in this study revealed that only 25% of students were able to identify ways in which a transformed view of the world related to changes in their social action. The relevance of the tension underpinning the 'Chameleon Complex' is highlighted in the wider discourse surrounding adult learning. A think piece by the Development Education Association to influence the debate about the future direction of Global Skills and Lifelong Learning concludes that 'The current challenges are to deepen the level of critical enquiry and move from increased awareness to action for change.' (DEA, 2007b: 1) This source acknowledges that 'even when people recognise that specific actions are needed, they often choose not to act' (p.7); it calls for an 'increased understanding of links between learning and action, the forces that result in changes in behaviour' (p.3). Transformative learning research has been criticised for failing to consider whether transformed views of the world are remembered in the long term (Taylor, 2009). In this case, further research in the form of a longitudinal study would be beneficial to examine actual citizenship behaviours over a period of time.

Towards a holistic theory of transformative learning

Anecdotal evidence from educators involved in this study indicates that students who had not demonstrated the ability to critically analyse in previous assignments were less likely to experience transformative learning as part of the Notre Dame project. Mezirow's theory has however been criticised for concerning itself narrowly with learners who have the capacity for uncovering, articulating and overturning unquestioned assumptions that they and others hold dear. He provides the example of a graduate seminar (Mezirow, 2000: 15) as an ideal model of group discourse indicating that transformative learning is more likely among sophisticated, mature thinkers.

This study highlights the importance of educators engaging with the reality of their student's lives. The unquestioned or distorted assumptions about the world that have been overturned are often deeply engrained. They are related to, for example, the students' experiences while travelling overseas, their time in school and relationships with parents. Educators with an understanding of the multiple selves of their students are better placed to facilitate TL. Connected knowing (Belenky and Stanton, 2000) encourages learners to embrace personal experiences, feelings and engage in the narratives of others rather than pursuing rational analysis. An overtly analytical orientation to interactions presents a narrow understanding of transformative learning. Acknowledging the role of connected knowing requires the learner and educator to engage in multiple ways of knowing and involves envisioning a more holistic theory of transformative learning.

Conclusions

This study reveals that challenges to stereotypes and personal values, as well as other previously accepted presuppositions in a domestic context, are not dissimilar from those experienced by students involved in International Service Learning initiatives. In order to elevate the outcomes of SL towards their transformative potential, the opportunities for learning that are afforded by such ventures must be relentlessly exploited both in the short and long term. In doing so, the Global Citizen and Education course, of which the Notre Dame Project is part, has the potential to add to our limited understanding of critical pedagogy theory in practice (Breunig, 2005: 110).

Notions of global citizenship are a contemporary concern for a growing number of individuals and institutions. The resonances may not in themselves be remarkable but all add to a picture of (mostly) young people making sense of the world. Such processes add to a dynamic picture. This demonstrates the potential for transformative learning amongst all students in HE beyond those who are predisposed to engage in extra curricular voluntary activity. This study has sought to contribute to the discourse and may inform the development of activities for students on the Liverpool Hope University SALA that are more closely linked to the curriculum.

Descriptions of the student experience of ISL have provided a useful framework to explore service-learning within the UK. The SALA at LHU seeks to promote a dynamic interaction between both local and international volunteering and student learning. The Notre Dame Project has provided an opportunity to explore how young people, tutors and researchers recognise how global changes affect local conditions (and vice versa) and adds to an under-researched area (Lauder et al, 2006).

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