Poor understanding? Challenges to Global Development Education

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Abstract

As members of a global community, we cohabit a metaphorically shrinking physical environment, and are increasingly connected one to another, and to the world, by ties of culture, economics, politics, communication and the like. Education is an essential component in addressing inequalities and injustices concerning global rights and responsibilities. The increasing multicultural nature of societies locally, enhanced access to distal information, and the work of charitable organisations worldwide are some of the factors that have contributed to the interest in, and need for, understanding global development education. The project on which this paper reports sought answers to the question: to what extent and in what ways can a semester-long subject enhance and extend teacher education students' understandings of and responses to global inequalities and global development aid? In the course of the project, a continuum model emerged, as follows: Indifference or ignorance → pity and charity → partnership and development among equals. In particular, this paper reports on some of the challenges and obstacles that need to be addressed in order to enhance pre-service teachers' understandings of global development education. The study, conducted in Australia, has implications for global development education in other developed nations.

Keywords

Global development education; Globalisation; Intercultural education; Global partnerships
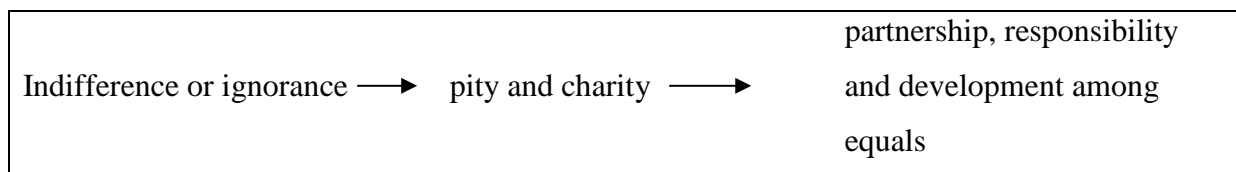
Introduction

We inhabit an increasingly globalized society where local and global issues, causes and consequences have become inextricable. Moreover, while some global phenomena have existed for millennia (e.g. El Niño/La Niña weather patterns), our knowledge and understanding thereof has expanded, thus abetting, and demanding, more informed responses to increasingly complex problems. The increasing mobility of goods, services people, ideas and ideologies presents both challenges and solutions to global issues. Further, as human populations increase and technologies advance, the impacts of human actions, both socially and environmentally, increase accordingly.

Traditional definitions of citizenship and civics now transcend national perspectives to include world and global perspectives. As members of a global community, we cohabit a metaphorically shrinking physical environment, and are increasingly interconnected by ties of culture, economics, politics and communication. Our survival and wellbeing depend on 'our capacity to understand and deal responsibly and effectively with other peoples and nations and with a variety of issues that cut across national boundaries' (Zong, 2009, p. 617). Education is an essential component in addressing global inequalities and injustices. The increasing multicultural nature of societies locally, enhanced access to distal information and the work of charitable organisations worldwide are among the factors contributing to the interest in, and need for, understanding global development education (GDE) (Buchanan 2013). The project on which this paper reports sought answers to the question: to what extent and in what ways can a semester-long course enhance and extend teacher education students' understandings of and responses to global inequalities and global development aid?

During the project, informed in part by Andreotti's (2014) soft and critical approaches to global citizenship education, a tripartite continuum response model emerged, as outlined below:

		partnership, responsibility
Indifference or ignorance ⟶ pity and charity ⟶		and development among equals

Andreotti (2010) proposes a post–critical as well as postcolonial approach to global education, one which helps learners to cope with complexity, ambiguity, imperfection and unresolved problems, to interrogate assumptions and perspectives, and to 'dream different dreams, to confront fears and to make ethical choices about their own lives and how they

affect the lives of others by analysing and using power and privilege in ethical and accountable ways' (p. 241). This paper reports particularly on the challenges and obstacles to enhancing pre-service teachers' understandings of global development education. We hope that teachers and their students might progress towards a disposition that embraces - both ideologically and practically - equal partnerships with people in developing nations. In the following literature review, we highlight briefly some existing global inequalities, then examine some responses within the bounds of GDE, a subset of global education.

Review of the Literature

Wealth and access inequality are rising, both within and between nations. According to Oxfam (Elliott & Pilkington, 2015), 'The share of the world's wealth owned by the best-off 1% has increased from 44% in 2009 to 48% in 2014, while the least well-off 80% currently own just 5.5%'. Oxfam predicts that on current trends, the top one percent will soon own more than the remaining 99 percent of the world's population. This has implications for the extent to which and ways in which the rich can disregard and infringe the rights of the rest, either inadvertently or deliberately, through their purchasing power.

GDE aims to educate citizens about their role and capacities in a globally interdependent world and to assist them in critically exploring concepts of development, sustainability and globalisation. It seeks to 'develop the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes required so that people can participate actively in their own development and in the development of local and global communities' (McCormack & Flaherty, 2010, p. 1333). GDE promotes critical thinking about our role and place in the world and 'promotes open-mindedness…with a predisposition to take action for change' (Australian Government, 2011, p. 2), while recognising international power inequality. Thus, developing empathy complements critical thinking skills to take action towards desired development outcomes. In short, GDE should encompass cognitive, affective and conative, that is, action-related, dimensions.

GDE is a dynamic and evolving field recognising the linkages between globalisation and development. Bourn (2014, p. 12) argues for GDE to 'provide a pedagogical framework for implementing global learning in schools'. Merryfield (2000) points out the limited capacity of 'ethnic majority' teacher educators to understand marginalisation. An increasing use of terms such as 'global learning', 'global citizenship education' and 'global mindedness' reflects a growing interest in the 'significance of transnational mobility for the formation of a global outlook' (Andreotti, Biesta, and Ahenakew 2014, p. 1). It also

responds to the 'new cultural, social, and economic contexts of a globalised world' (Bourn, 2014, p. 11), as well as a shift from an 'aid-giving' mentality to a social justice outlook. While individuals may adopt a charitable mentality and a positive predisposition towards development aid, GDE aims to outgrow such standpoints, progressing towards a recognition of power and inequity in the world, deriving from neo-colonialism and consequential fault lines between the global North and South (Connell, 2007), and seeking means to address these. This is arguably a shared responsibility between developed and developing worlds. Such an approach also aspires to instil an open-mindedness to a broader global vision encompassing social justice and solidarity towards fellow humans (Bourn, 2014). Acknowledging the economic and power differentials between and within nations, O'Connor and Zeichner (2011) argue that GDE targets 'politics of recognition' wherein teachers and students 'appreciate the complex relationship between and among modes of domination and oppression' (p. 524) and whose voices are being heard (or unheard) to effect change. Such transformative thinking can confront educators and learners with 'their own view points, their sense of place in the world and how they should respond' (Bourn, 2014, p. 6). GDE presupposes critical reflection, thinking and dialogue, and necessitates challenging dominant and pre-existing assumptions and beliefs about oneself and others. Bourn calls for a 'shift in consciousness…that alters our way of being in the world' (p. 29). And yet, education has its limits. Rodell Olgaç (2013) noted that teaching about issues such as the Holocaust and the UN Declaration of Human Rights did not distinctly result in changed attitudes towards Romani people.

According to the continuum described above, GDE initially raises awareness of inequalities, and challenges indifference to such issues. Andreotti, Biesta and Ahenakew (2014) advocate transcending mere changes in personal conceptions and perceptions, progressing to understand others and appreciate their perspectives. They draw attention to the 'wider social and political dimensions that shape the conditions for (mis) understanding and (dis) connection' (p. 2). They also call for a global mindedness, with its capacity to engender 'embodied possibilities for action' (p. 9) that will help individuals to 'engage ethically and productively' (p. 12) 'with otherness and difference in contexts characterized by plurality, complexity, uncertainty, contingency and inequality' (p. 9). Another important GDE factor is the development learners' efficacy and agency; that is harnessing and directing young people's idealism, goodwill and energy by reassuring and educating them of their capacity to effect change (Buchanan, 2013; Healy & Link, 2012). If true and equal partnerships are to materialise, this sense of efficacy and agency should also extend to people in developing

nations, as they set about developing their own liberation, and the means for its achievement, in our attempts to understand and combat the global and local dynamics that constrain such liberties. Strategies should also be devised to equip teachers and their students with a resilience that will enable them to persist against apparent disappointments with regard to the extent of change emerging from local political and other actions.

Challenges to the delivery and success of global development education are multiple. Public knowledge and attitudes, and, as a subset of this, student attitudes and knowledge, are crucial in global development education, including foreign policy, aid and international relations (Cassidy, Brunner & Webster, 2014). Milner and Tingley (2013), however, question an inherent assumption that the public either knows nothing or cares little about foreign aid. In an increasingly multicultural society where people from all over the world form the public, this notion can become even more complex. Individual perceptions are not only influenced by, and influence, personal choices, beliefs and understandings about other people and countries, but also derive from external factors such as unremitting information (including mis- and dis-information) via the media, including social media. Various media play a pivotal role in portraying disproportionately negative and disturbing images of war and political crises. This, in turn, can sap the public will for global development. Portrayals such as the 'Africa as the continent of helplessness and starving babies' can be very powerful and difficult to displace in an attempt to address the more critical questions of the role of power, justice and equality (Bourn, 2014, p. 10). Similarly, government and aid agency propaganda can serve to influence public attitudes concerning global development, with 'compassion fatigue' displacing optimism (Cameron, 2015). Nevertheless, public and media constructs of negative geopolitical circumstances in recipient nations cannot entirely be dismissed as imagined or ill-informed. Consequently, the public may be hesitant to assist aid organisations due to a reality and/or perception of corruption or oppression prevalent in some recipient countries or a limited capacity to implement programs effectively and accountably (Davis, 2011, p. 403). This might be due to, among other factors, poor and disintegrating infrastructure and rule of law. It needs to be noted, however, that factors such as compassion fatigue and mistrust might also serve as convenient cover stories and as camouflage for inaction. Moreover, the media can serve an important education and mobilisation role.

Geopolitical events locally and globally influence attitudes about global development aid, and can serve to undermine related confidence and empathy. Funding earmarked by wealthy countries for global development, might instead be diverted to internal defence and counter-terrorism programs (Crowe, 2014). The Australian Government (2014) defends its

expenditure on the grounds that global development aid can be diverted to fund extremist or terrorist aims and aspirations. By contrast, if development aid contributes to political stability, representative democracy and rule of law at the site of delivery, this serves Australia's, the region's and the world's interests, as well as local needs (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007).

GDE and human rights education have tended to be ad-hoc affairs in schools, with references to global perspectives largely limited to the civics and citizenship curriculum areas. Bourn (1997) emphasised the need for a global dimension as part of everyday school life so that all teaching is premised upon core human values of justice and equity. Burridge, Buchanan and Chodkiewicz (2014) reached similar conclusions in a nationwide Australian study; even within subjects such as history, implementation of human rights education tends to be sporadic.

Nevertheless, some recent events have lent weight to the importance of global education (Bourn 2014). These include the launch of the UN Millennium Development Goals in 2000 and Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO, 2015), rapid advances in technology and instant communications, and the increasing public global 'worldview'. A further potential contributing factor is the rise of international terrorism. According to Bourn (2014, p. 11) GDE has progressed from 'the margins…to being central and important to school curriculum'. Learning about development and global issues is now accepted as integral to 'developing a more global outlook in schools…and pupils as global citizens, with the skills to live and work anywhere in the world' (p. 11). The Australian Curriculum Civics and Citizenship subject (ACARA, 2015) 'explores ways in which students participate in Australia's civic life and make a positive contribution as local and global citizens'.

The Australian Government's (2011) Overseas Aid Program, recognises and promotes the relevance of global education across all learning areas and aims to serve as a resource and a reference point for teachers and students. Its framework for global education outlines the values, skills, knowledge and opportunities for action that encompass five interconnected learning emphases reflecting recurrent GDE themes: interdependence and globalisation; identity and cultural diversity; social justice and human rights; peace building and conflict resolution; and sustainable futures (p. 5), with supporting resources. The success of global education initiatives depends on the level of engagement and collaborative action both at school level and with the local and broader community to create partnerships and links (p. 25).

The observations above raise the question as to how well prepared teachers are for delivering GDE. The study reported on here investigated challenges to the development of an empathic stance with regard to people in developing nations, and to an effective GDE. The literature has informed the conceptual framework for this paper, which seeks to investigate impediments to global development education such as the (perceived) scale and complexity of global inequalities, and overcoming wilful or other ignorance or indifference, to shape a GDE that instils in young people the requisite skills, attitudes and knowledge (McCormack & Flaherty, 2010), as well as predispositions, to act, emboldened with a sense of agency and efficacy, and emanating from a sense of social justice, rather than mere sympathy.

Methodology

This study set out to ascertain the extent and nature of changes in knowledge, understanding and attitudes of a cohort of Australian pre-service primary (K–6) teachers, through a one-semester subject in Social and Environmental Education. While the subject necessarily concerns itself primarily with matters of related content and pedagogies, it also strives to imbue students with a critical understanding of globalisation and its effects. The subject also deals with prejudice and exclusion. One of the subject's stated goals is to equip students with pedagogical strategies to address social injustices personally and internationally. Elements of this are referred to by student respondents in the findings section. Other related activities and prompts include a discussion of prejudice using *Romeo and Juliet* as a springboard, sexism in advertising, and viewing Laos Unexploded Landmines (Global Education Project, n.d.). We note here in passing that funding has since ceased for the Global Education Project (Flitton, 2015).

All aspects complied with University's Human Research Ethics Committee and with World Vision Australia's related protocols to conduct the research. (World Vision provided funding for the research project.) Participants were provided with information explaining the nature and purpose of the research, and consent forms.

Data collection

The study involved the administration of near-identical before-and-after surveys (see Appendix 1) to a cohort of pre-service education students in the first semester of their third year of four, of a Bachelor of Education (Primary) degree in NSW, Australia. In all, 79 students responded to the first survey, and 63 to the second one. The pre-service teachers were each in one of four classes, all undertaking the second of two compulsory classes in Social and Environmental Education. Informed by the literature and problems raised therein,

the survey posed questions such as whether Australia should provide global development assistance, how important it is for Australia to do so, definitions of effective aid and the like (see Findings, below). The survey sought to elicit both knowledge and attitudes from the respondents. Supplementing the survey information, as part of the second survey, students were invited to take part in a semi-structured focus group to explore the issues and questions further. Regrettably, only one student responded to this invitation. As a result, the subject coordinator emailed all students who had attained a distinction grade or higher, approximately one quarter of the cohort, and another four students subsequently responded, one of whom subsequently responded by email to the focus group questions. The focus group members are referred to by their pseudonyms in this article. Other references to 'a student' or similar, refer to survey responses, which were anonymous. Survey responses informed focus group questions. (See Appendix 2.) This paper focuses in particular on impediments identified by the pre-service teachers, or inferred from their responses, to their understanding and appreciation of global development assistance, and, by extension, their capacity to deliver GDE to their students.

Data analysis

Numeric and other data from the surveys were analysed and compared, for indications of change or similarity in the responses to the beginning and end-of-semester surveys. Means were calculated for some numeric data, and open-ended data were subjected to content analysis (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013) to identify scatter and cluster in responses. Digital recordings of the focus group were transcribed, and then similarly coded according to emergent themes, consistent with grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Limitations

The focus group cohort is small, and from a non-random sub-group. This considerably limits the confidence with which their responses can be generalised. The focus group responses are not entirely consistent with the overall cohort responses from the surveys. This could be due partly to the anonymous nature of the surveys. Some focus group participants admitted their incorrect responses to the anonymous survey question on the proportion of gross national income Australia commits to global development aid.

The subject is coordinated by one of the authors, John Buchanan, who also taught one of the four classes. We concede the position of power and privilege that this accords, and acknowledge the corresponding potential for response bias. Also, in future research, in-class observations and/or interviews with teaching staff could elicit new perspectives, and confirm

or otherwise some of the findings, which are outlined below, under categories including justifications for increasing, decreasing or eliminating aid, current mis/understandings, and the contribution of education.

Findings

Justifications for contributing global development aid or not

The students were asked if Australia should provide global development aid. Responses are outlined below, in Table 1.

	Survey 1	Survey 2
Yes	77 (97.5%)	61 (96.8%)
No	Nil	2 (3.2%)
Maybe	2 (2.5%)	

Table 1. Should Australia provide global development aid?

Interestingly, the proportion of students recommending that Australia provide aid actually declined slightly by the end of semester, but the difference is insignificant. Moreover, the figures remained very high across the semester, at over 95 per cent. At the beginning of the semester, the main reasons provided for giving aid were:

- It's a duty for Australia, since we are a wealthy country (16 responses, 20.3%);
- it is a moral or God-given responsibility (7 responses, 9.9 per cent).

At the end of the semester, clustered responses were as follows:

- a duty as a wealthy country (17 responses, 27%);
- obligation to help others (11 responses, 17%);
- to improve the quality of life in developing countries (4 responses, 6%).

Most of these responses equate to the charity phase of the continuum outlined above.

The main reservation with regard to international development aid (from those who said 'yes') referred to possibly corrupt regimes, or those in breach of human rights (3 responses, 5%). One student commented that money should not be given to countries with homophobic regimes or policies. At the time, some African countries were implementing draconian regulations restricting homosexual activity.

The main reason for withholding aid was the need to focus on helping those less fortunate in Australia (3 responses, 3.8 per cent). As one student commented, 'we need to sort

out our own financial woes'. Another referred to budget cuts from health and education domestically. By contrast, one student observed, 'as an advanced country, we have the privilege of meeting the basic rights and needs for the majority of our population'. Some students responding 'no' offered concessions such as: 'if it is used effectively', 'only if it is used properly' and, 'it depends on what extent and the country's government'. One respondent appeared to suggest that development aid could be largely the responsibility of 'private organisations'.

Following the question about current amounts of aid, the participants were asked whether Australia should contribute more funds for global development aid. Responses are set out in Table 2.

	Survey 1	Survey 2
More	48 (61%)	50 (79%)
Less	6 (8%)	Nil
Same	19 (24%)	11 (17%)
No response	5 (6%)	2 (3%)
Don't know/vague response	1 (1%)	Nil

Table 2. Should Australia give more, or less, money for development aid?

Substantially more students called for an increase in aid at the end of the semester, the figures rising from 61 per cent to 79 per cent. This is perhaps explained by their better appreciation of the actual amount by semester's end. No one called for a decrease in aid at the end of semester.

The five focus group participants appeared genuinely convinced of the benefits deriving from international development aid. Nevertheless, they noted some possible counter-arguments, their own and others'. The respondents were asked to nominate any objections they or others might have to providing aid to other countries. Sarah observed, 'Take care of home…there's a lot of communities in regional Australia that I think also need help, so there's got to be a balance.' Heather expressed this as 'thinking internally about Australian society', and added possible concerns about having insufficient money.

It appears that the students' recent completion of a subject focusing on Australian Indigenous issues and education has influenced their views, but not necessarily to the benefit of global development aid. As Sarah recounted, 'Just hearing about the places Aboriginal

people live and the conditions they live in – it would be on a similar spectrum to the facilities and the resources that they [disadvantaged people in developing countries] have access to.' Ursula added,

> There's a shortage of health [services] in a lot of regions. There's a lot of areas that don't have GPs, so simple things and dentistry and optical, so those facilities aren't available to them – there are a lot of ear issues and things like that because nothing has been checked earlier and also [they're] not educated in what things are available to them as well.

Lucy asserted that such problems aren't restricted to remote areas, having undertaken professional experience (practice teaching) in a disadvantaged area of Sydney:

> [It was] half an hour from my house. The difference between the education I had when I was in school and what they have now – it is better, but things just like healthcare for example – a lot of the kids do not come from homes where they're educated because it was a high refugee count in the school so obviously their parents aren't aware.

The reference to the high proportion of refugee students is significant, and perhaps serves to highlight the plight of some people in developing nations. What appears sub-standard to an Australian tertiary student, may well be significantly better than conditions experienced by the family concerned prior to arriving in Australia. Heather raised concerns about money being spent 'frivolously', adding, 'The only misgivings I have about money are that it may not be put to good use and will be wasted at the expense of those who needed it to be put to good use.'

Issues of race might contribute to some people's objections to providing GD assistance. Ursula commented:

> There's racial things as well; especially it's all coming up now. There are probably some Australians that would be like, 'Yes okay, I'm okay with giving aid to this particular country but not this one because of certain people or what's happened in that country' or if they don't believe in their religious beliefs or they don't like how certain things have happened in that country.

Lucy questioned the merits of recent Australian funding for Cambodia 'as a trade-off for taking refugees', suggesting that the Cambodian Government is not very trustworthy. Ursula also shared concerns about giving money directly to some foreign governments, 'because it's probably not getting in a lot of places to the people that need it [and] a lot of people would be reluctant as well because they're not sure that their money is going to where it actually needs to go'. The legitimacy or otherwise of the views or assumptions set out above (e.g. 'a high

refugee count in the school so obviously their parents aren't aware') could be questioned, and could provide a starting point for discussion in class. Nevertheless, while such views persist, they will serve as impediments towards increased global development aid.

The (perceived) complexity of global development assistance appears to be a further stumbling-block to related efficacy and action. Ursula summed this up, saying, 'it's so deep. There are so many layers'. Sarah spoke of the dilemma of competing needs, such as health and education, given that each benefits from the other. When asked about the prominence of literacy as opposed to 'survival skills', Ursula responded, 'It's tough. What is it, the chicken or the egg that comes first?'

The focus group was asked to offer adjectives describing 'effective' development aid (see also Buchanan, 2015). When asked about effective development aid meeting local needs, Ursula argued:

> Why maybe it doesn't work in some cases is that it's not wanted in some places or not the right type of – you know like their [local people's] consideration isn't maybe being put into place … so it's more about the ideals of the people coming in rather than what will suit the people that are actually there.

Sarah added:

> I'm quite sceptical of the difference that can be made by some of the programs [with people who] go over to Cambodia for a week and help build an orphanage and…you've got a bunch of 16-year-olds; they don't have the skills to build. You'd be better off sending builders there.

She continued: It will enrich the kids that go over but how much help will they be able to provide and also specially working with kids [local orphans] if you've got new faces coming and going every week it's like, 'Oh, they're here – Oh, they're gone'. Lucy added, 'That would have a big impact on kids, especially in an orphanage, like no one is staying aside from the staff. It would be a hard thing.' Lucy suggested that sending TAFE carpentry students to developing communities to assist in building would produce a two-way benefit. Ursula was critical of short-term, hit-and-run development projects, preferring, 'a goal-driven sort of thing; so, not just going in and helping for a short time and then leaving. It's more about setting up communities so that they can provide for their community.' This appears consistent with the goal of autonomy mentioned previously.

Lucy noted that, during the focus group discussion, our 'word pictures' with regard to how, hypothetically, to help those in need, tended to stereotype them as rural people. 'What about people in cities?' she asked. She added that this reinforces the necessity of finding out

what particular people and communities need. When asked to respond to her own question, Lucy responded, 'It's harder – obviously sanitation and access to water are still really important like the video on India [*Slumming it,* (Bunce & Simpson, 2010)] we watched and I've been to Cambodia as well, its streets are lined with rubbish'. She added that opportunities for growing one's own food are limited in the city. Sarah observed that people are surviving in the cities, which presumes a certain level of independence to start with. Their comments suggest an engagement with partners, rather than recipients or victims, and informed by local intelligence.

Mis/understandings of current circumstances

The students were asked to indicate the proportion of Gross National Income that Australia currently devotes to global development aid. Responses are set out in Table 3.

	Survey 1	Survey 2
< 1%	12%	25.4%
1-5%	37%	28.6%
6-10%	14%	9.5%
11-25%	31%	9.5%
25%+	10%	1.6%
Not enough		1.6%
Don't know	6%	

Table 3 What proportion of Gross National Income does Australia commit to global aid?

As can be seen, the original ignorance of current levels of global development aid commitment is problematic, particularly if this is indicative of mis/understandings among the broader population, including educated elites and leaders, such as schoolteachers. The proportion of students who had close-to-correct answers (i.e. less than 1% of GNI) more than doubled by the end of semester. Those furnishing highly inflated answers declined considerably. Two students understated the amount, both at the beginning and end of the semester. Nevertheless, the proportion of incorrect responses remained disconcertingly high, given that the information was provided to the students during the semester.

The focus group participants were asked to recall the survey question about the proportion of Gross National Income devoted to development aid. There was general agreement that they had expected the figure to be higher. 'I think I put like four percent or

something,' said Lucy. Heather conceded that government funds need to be spent wisely, but lamented that, 'Australia does not give out nearly as much as it could in terms of foreign aid.' Incorrect knowledge of current global development assistance levels serves as a poor basis for making decisions as to whether those levels are appropriate or not. As Sarah observed, 'I think people's objections would be based on an unrealistic idea of how much we're giving away, but if they knew how little it was…'.

The students were also asked if they believed that numbers of people living in poverty had increased or decreased in the previous 30 years. Responses follow, in Table 4.

	Survey 1	Survey 2
Increased	47 (59%)	25 (40%)
Decreased	12 (15%)	24 (38%)
Remained the same	15 (19%)	11 (17%)
No response	4 (5%)	3 (5%)
Don't know/vague response	1 (1.3%)	1 (1.6%)

Table 4. Have numbers in poverty increased/decreased?

As can be seen in the table above, the proportion of students who correctly responded that numbers had decreased, rose significantly by the end of the semester. There was a corresponding reduction in the proportion responding that numbers had increased. Perceptions of numbers of people living in poverty are likely to be a powerful mediator of agency and efficacy with regard to addressing related challenges.

Contributions of education

The focus group members were asked where they felt that provision of education might fit into prioritising development aid. Heather referred to Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, citing, 'safe and healthy living accommodations for children and their families, proper sanitation, regular food and everyday living supplies, and clean drinking water'. Only once these have been met, argued Heather, 'steps towards improving education can be achieved'. She added that education was not limited to formal schooling. Educating locals on the importance of clean drinking water, and how to obtain it, are of central importance for her, as 'it goes back to making them self-sufficient'. Potentially, the conversation itself, and the question that prompted it, 'how to help' is paternalistically premised.

The survey respondents were asked about their recollections of global development aid from their own school days. Responses are summarised in Table 5.

	Survey 1	Survey 2
None	29 (37%)	17 (27%)
No response	7 (9%)	16 (25%)
Poverty	12 (15%)	6 (9.8%)
Collections for crises	11 (14%)	3 (4.9%)
Natural disasters	6 (7.5%)	2(3.3%)
Developing countries	6 (7.5%)	2(3.3%)
Climate change/global warming	8 (10%)	

Table 5: Recollections of global development aid from school

Interestingly, the number of students who could recall no school-related issues decreased during the semester. Presumably the contents of the semester prompted some memories, and/or clarified in the minds of the students what global development pedagogy might encompass and look like. By contrast, the 'no response' rate increased, and other specific recollections declined. This may be because students felt they had furnished the answer previously, or may be a casualty of end-of-semester fatigue. To the extent that fatigue (as opposed to end-of-semester inspiration) is a factor, this needs to be considered by teaching staff.

Specific recollections of learning about global development at school included studies on Mexico City, poverty in South America, unrest in Cairo, natural disasters, relief, peacekeeping, slavery, racism, the Holocaust, environmental concerns, struggles for women worldwide, Make Poverty History, millennium goals, China and the one-child policy, civil rights movements, poverty, a project with NGO Compassion, micro-funding, starvation in Africa, income inequality, fair trade, videos of developing countries, the UN, and the work of World Vision. In Legal Studies, one student recalled studying Indigenous peoples, asylum seekers and child trafficking. Students recalled studying the cultures of India, Papua New Guinea and Bali. While more details would need to be known about the school experiences in the table and discussion above before confident inferences could be made, it appears *prima facie* that these initiatives tend to privilege problems over partnerships. And yet, minimising problems may also lead to indifference and inaction.

The small focus group noted few meaningful inclusions of global development aid during their professional experience ('practice teaching'). Heather referred to 'mild videos in HSIE classes, and mildly illustrated picture books which describe the living conditions which some individuals live in. These would be followed up by student presentations which I was not around to see as I finished my PE'. On a hopeful note, Ursula explained:

> I see it as an important one, just as to educate children about global issues and global development – things that are happening outside their little bubble. I felt that was something that I didn't really get educated on and I see that my daughters are getting quite a good one on it and they're much more aware of things than me.

Ursula stressed that it is important to introduce her students to 'things that are happening outside their little bubble'. She added that her own school education was lacking in this regard. Heather made reference to teachers' 'responsibility to provide information to our students of the issues reflecting those which occur overseas, such as poverty and famine'.

In terms of elements of the *Social and Environmental Education* subject that had changed or challenged their views, the focus group students referred to:

- a documentary *Slumming it* (Bunce & Simpson, 2010), featuring children in the slums of Mumbai. Sarah said in response, 'I was really taken back by that. I think that to me has changed my view towards it'.

- a feature film, *Paper Clips* (Berlin & Fab, 2003) about which Ursula remarked:

  > I love the idea of all that. I don't think at this stage of my learning or teaching I would have the confidence to do something like that but I hope that as a more experienced teacher and as I learn more that I would love to come up with something like that with the kids and have them feel that they have a voice.

- a story titled *Ryan's Well* (Cook, n.d.), as an inspiring example of a young child who made a difference raising money. The focus group members referred to the energy, idealism and 'sense that anything's possible' that some children have, again, underscoring the importance of efficacy.

Other elements of the subject that resonated among focus group members included: an interactive exploration of homelessness and refugees, incorporating the picture book *The Silence Seeker* (Morley, 2009); and a guest interactive session by a World Vision staff member. The focus group students also commented without prompting on the thought-

provoking nature of the focus group itself, an implication of which might be the implementation of similar problem-solving and/or systems thinking group work in class.

Discussion and conclusions

These students arguably commenced as an educated and empathic elite concerning global development aid. The subject appears to have reinforced and emboldened their views, and to have provided new insights into the 'global condition' including their own place, privilege and potential therein. Nevertheless, their related knowledge is not universally high.

The survey results and focus group discussion indicate that the students typically progressed along the abovementioned 'indifference/ignorance – charity/pity – partnership/development' continuum, which is heartening, even though few progressed to the highest level. This continuum will be presented to future students for their consideration, and may help them step outside themselves and monitor their status or progress. If the Overseas Aid Program (Australian Government, 2011) can be taken as another yardstick against which their understanding can be measured, their thinking appears to encompass four of the five goals: cultural diversity; justice and rights; peace building/conflict resolution; and sustainable futures. The fifth, interdependence, appears to elude most of them, with the possible exception of the focus group members. Arguably, it is only this fifth element that is 'critical', as opposed to 'soft' (Andreotti 2014). A critical as opposed to a soft approach investigates causes rather than merely symptoms, recommends equal partnerships as opposed to a 'helping hand' and sees justice versus compassion as a motive for action. Some of these differences are outlined below.

The findings of this study, contextualised in the literature, raise a number of tensions, which are addressed in turn below. Each has implications for students' progress along the continuum outlined above. They constitute an attempt on our part to become comfortable (but not too comfortable?) with Andreotti's (2010) complexity, ambiguity, imperfection and irresolution.

Critically literate scepticism versus generosity

Andreotti (2014) favours critically literate scepticism over instinctive generosity. Accordingly, it is important for students to exercise intellectual and cognitive, as well as affective, caution, reflection and scepticism. And yet, countering world poverty may at times oblige on our part an immediate, no-questions-asked generosity.

Whose and which human rights?

While the argument of 'fixing our own problems first' is arguably a cliché, real and pressing problems persist in Australia. If life expectancy of Indigenous Australians can be taken at approximately 71.4 years (Australian Government Institute of Health and Welfare, 2016), this places it slightly below that of Bangladesh (World Bank, 2016). Nevertheless, more government funding, approximately one per cent of GDP (Parliament of Australia, 2012), is specifically dedicated to Aboriginal wellbeing, than to international development aid. Disadvantage is not limited to Indigenous communities and individuals, however. It finds a home in rural and remote areas, and in our largest cities, as observed by the focus group members. Compounding this problem is the reality or perceptions of corruption in some regimes. Yet it is the citizens of such regimes that may be most in need of assistance, again raising the prospect that a no-questions-asked generosity might be an appropriate response, at least in the short term.

Things are improving/deteriorating

Despite rising inequality, (Elliott & Pilkington, 2015), extreme poverty has decreased worldwide. The United Nations met its ambitious Millennium Goal to halve extreme poverty five years before its self-imposed deadline. And yet, welfare organisation campaign materials typically portray chronic, bottomless crisis.

Helpful or helpless?

The complexity of GD programs and related outcomes can be overwhelming, perhaps conveniently so. It is possible that true partnerships among equals in such endeavors may be an impossible, ideological ideal. Nevertheless, heeding local intelligence regarding greatest needs, as part of a mutual flow of information, may point to workable solutions.

Any of the above is arguably an avoidance strategy or cover story, to justify a reluctance to share our toys with others in the global sandpit. It is reasonable to invest in humans. It is also reasonable to expect a return on our investment, even if the political left and right might quibble over whether that return should be primarily fiscal or social in nature. While a vast prosperity gulf persists, it seems reasonable for those with overabundance to share with those lacking necessities – regardless of whose fault this lack might be, or be deemed to be. Classroom and extracurricular critical literacy should remain free to operate in holding nations, organisations and individuals, and ourselves, to account, and to prompt and inform related actions.

The results discussed here present several challenges to broader public understanding and acceptance of global development aid by the globally wealthy. These include: an initially poor understanding of current levels of development aid, and of numbers living in poverty, which is perhaps particularly disconcerting in an educated and educating elite; scant or unfavorable recollections of schooling experiences; bewilderment borne of the complexity of addressing challenges, and resulting retreat from concern and action; and, it is conceded here, plausible, competing demands on public funds, including health and education needs, particularly for Indigenous and other disadvantaged groups locally. An ignorance of or indifference to needs will also impede effective global development. We accept the validity of many of the students' reservations regarding global development aid, which have also been reported elsewhere (e.g. Tschirgi, 2004), and the implications this has for delivery of the subject, including permitting space for airing such reservations, along with counter-arguments, in class. Nevertheless, as part of GDE, it is reasonable to ask educators to assume bold leadership in contributing to a futures-, fairness- and peace-oriented education, and to a more socially just world, and to equip others to do so.

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Appendix 1 Global Development Survey 2 [with answer spaces removed]

1. Do you think the Australian government should / should not give aid to developing countries? Why / why not?

2. On a scale of zero (least) to ten (most), how important do you think it is for the Australian Government to give money to other countries for their development? _____

3. What percentage of Gross National Income do you think the Australian Government currently spends on overseas development aid? _____%

4. In your opinion, the Australian Government should spend on overseas aid (circle one):

(a) more than it currently gives   (b) about the same   (c) less than it currently gives

5. What things do you think should be prioritised in Australia's overseas aid budget? (List up to five).

6. Give three adjectives to describe what an 'effective' or 'good' aid program looks like.

7. In your own schooling, did you experience any teaching on global issues? If so, can you give any examples (e.g. topic, activity, content)?

8. In the last 30 years the proportion of the world population living in extreme poverty has… (circle one)

(a) increased   (b) remained more or less the same   (c) decreased

9. How likely would you do one of the following activities to help address global poverty?

	I would certainly do this	I would probably do this	I would probably not do this	I would certainly not do this
Write a letter to a Member of Parliament				
Donate money to an aid / development organisation				
Collect signatures for a petition				
Post an article on social media				
Buy fair trade products				

Sponsor a child				
Speak to friends / family				
Take part in a peaceful rally				

10. How interested are you in the following?

	Very interested	Quite interested	Not very interested	Not interested at all
What is happening in your local community				
Australian politics				
Social issues in Australia				
Environmental issues				
Global poverty issues				
Human rights issues				

11. What does the term 'global citizenship' mean to you?

12. I am willing for this information to be used, without identifying me, in research publications. ☐(If this box is unticked, answers will only be used for teaching evaluations.)

13. Do you believe your views about global development have changed during this semester?

Yes ☐No ☐If yes, can you identify any reasons (course content – be specific if possible), current affairs etc.

14. If you are willing to be in a focus group to discuss this further, please write your first name and phone number below. Or you can email [lecturer] …

Appendix 2 Focus Group Question Protocol

Focus Group questions for Global Development Project

1. Do you think it is important for Australia to provide aid for developing nations in the region or more broadly? Why/not?

2. Would you say your views about this have changed in recent times?

3. If so, what might have caused these changes?

Prompts: current events? This course? HSIE subject/s? Other subject/s? Other – personal etc?

4. If you think we should give aid, what do you think should be prioritised, and why? (and where?)

5. What do you think some of the main objections to Australia giving international development aid are? How valid or otherwise do you think these arguments are?

6. How confident or otherwise are you that global development aid can make a difference? Has made a difference?

Prompts: If so, how and why, if not, why not, and what might change this?

7. Do you think most people over- or underestimate the amount currently gives in aid?

8. Are there any things you do support or promote international development aid?

Prompts: writing to an MP, lobbying, online campaigns, collecting for charity etc.)

9. In any of your PEs, have you observed the inclusion of global development in teaching and/or school undertakings/events?

Prompts: HSIE teaching. Literacy/books read/shared, fundraising events etc.

10. What, if any, role does education have with regard to global development aid? What, if any, do you see as responsibilities specific to teachers (including yourself as a teacher) in this regard?

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