



Mackenzie, A., Enslin, P. and Hedge, N. (2016) Education for global citizenship in Scotland: reciprocal partnership or politics of benevolence? *International Journal of Educational Research*, 77, pp. 128-135.  
(doi: [10.1016/j.ijer.2016.03.007](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2016.03.007))

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Deposited on: 12 April 2016

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# **Education for global citizenship in Scotland: reciprocal partnership or politics of benevolence?**

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Links between schools in the United Kingdom and partner schools in developing countries are an increasingly popular approach to teaching global citizenship. This study addresses the limited empirical research to date on the influence of such links on pupils' learning and understanding. Following an overview of the curricular theme of global citizenship in the Scottish curriculum and in the context of a partnership between Scotland and Malawi, challenges and potential pitfalls of teaching global citizenship are illustrated by the voices of pupils at four schools. Data is analysed through the themes of knowledge and understanding, concerns about fairness, and giving and helping. We reflect on whether our study indicates the intended reciprocal partnership or a 'politics of benevolence'.

## **Key words**

Global citizenship, Scotland-Malawi Partnership, school links, benevolence, reciprocity

## **1. Education for global citizenship in Scotland**

School linking, as Bourne and Bain (2012) note, 'has been one of the major areas of expansion within UK schools in the first decade of the twenty-first century', and continues to receive attention in educational curricula. Fostering global citizenship is a significant aim of education in Scottish schools, pursued at the levels of both the school curriculum and national co-operation in partnership with schools in other countries. Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) encourages pupils to have greater awareness of their local, national and global environments, and to value the diversity that these contexts present. Global citizenship education within CfE aims to develop in children and young people a sense of responsibility 'towards each other and the wider world' to enable them to 'take up their place in the world, contribute to it confidently, successfully and effectively' (Learning Teaching Scotland, 2011, p.10). The publications *Developing A Global Dimension In The School Curriculum* (Department for Education and Skills, 2004) and *Putting The World Into World-Class Education* (Development Education Association, 2005) likewise recognized the importance of the global dimension in school curricula. These policy initiatives reflect a growing consensus in the citizenship education literature that citizenship education needs to be provided against a global backdrop (Humes, 2008) and that a global perspective means 'the

provision of insights, ideas and information that enable students to look beyond the confines of local and national boundaries in their thinking and aspirations' (Pike, 2008, p. 469).

In 2005 a Cooperation Agreement was signed between the government of Malawi and the then Scottish Executive. Reflecting the emerging idea of the global citizen as a 'good global neighbour', the Agreement set out to consolidate long-established ties between the two countries in a reciprocal partnership in which their resources would support Malawi in pursuit of its Millennium Development goals. Aspirations to closer ties are clearly reflected in the partnership and especially in the links it sets out to promote between schools in the two countries through twinning, exchanges and other curricular activities in which students and teachers are encouraged to interact.

Yet despite the growth of school partnerships, there has been little empirical research which examines the influence of school links on pupils' learning and their understanding of global and development issues (Bourne and Bain, 2012; Edge and Khamsi, 2012; and see Enslin and Hedge, 2010 for a philosophical exploration of the idea of the 'good global neighbour' in citizenship education), in Scotland or elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Despite the paucity of research to date, the research that is available is positive about the benefits of school linking. Edge, Khamsi and Bourn (2009) report, for example, that school-wide commitment to a global dimension can nurture cross-curricular collaboration and a sense of common purpose. Furthermore, implementing a school-wide global dimension can positively influence students' language learning and cultural awareness (Bourn and Hunt, 2011).

The small-scale exploratory study reported here addresses the paucity of research on this area of key curricular and policy development by examining data that explores young people's perceptions of what it means to be a good global neighbour within the context of the Scotland-Malawi Partnership. Initially, we provide a brief overview of the Scotland-Malawi Partnership and the associated curricular theme of global citizenship that formed the starting point for this research, followed by an outline of the empirical study from which we draw the data. As we proceed, we introduce some challenges and potential pitfalls of teaching global citizenship and we illustrate these with the voices of the pupils at four schools with whom we worked. We draw on three key themes that emerged from the data obtained in this study. The first and overarching theme comprises *knowledge and understanding* of Scottish pupils' counterparts in Malawi, including their perceptions of inequality in material circumstances. A

second theme to emerge from the data is *fairness*. Pupil data indicates concerns about an unfair world and what they might do about that. Typically, pupils talk of the need not only to redistribute material resources but to ‘*give*’ and to ‘*help*’, which forms our third theme. As we will show, such data brings to the fore questions about the extent to which an awareness of an unfair world can avoid a ‘politics of benevolence’ (Jefferess, 2008) as against one of reciprocal partnership.

## **2. Fostering global citizenship: The Scotland-Malawi Partnership and Curriculum for Excellence**

Twinning schools was one of several initiatives undertaken under the auspices of the Scotland-Malawi Partnership (2009), a network which aims to support and co-ordinate cooperation between the two countries, alongside other initiatives in governance, health and sustainable development. The Partnership aims to combine skills and expertise from both Scotland and Malawi, based on principles of equality, reciprocity and mutual benefit. In its guidance on forming partnerships between Scottish primary and secondary schools and their Malawian partners the Partnership states that:

School partnerships are an ideal way to enhance the global curriculum, by offering pupils an interactive dimension to their study of global issues. By partnership with a Malawian school you will continue to build the historic, cultural, social and political ties between the two countries. (Scotland-Malawi Partnership, 2015, p.3)

Guidance for schools participating in partnerships attends carefully to the principles that should underpin their organisation and activities, emphasising how exchanges can foster understanding – political, cultural and economic – particularly of poverty reduction.

Recommended activities include storytelling, exchanging letters, sending learning materials and clothes, and building and repairing schools and classrooms. Encouragement is given to reciprocal visits and to comparative projects about health and well-being, the environment, celebrating cultural practices and lifestyles, each cast as an opportunity to develop mutual understanding.

Whatever the merits of forging closer links and understanding, the Scotland-Malawi Partnership raises complex problems, not least with respect to the persistent and vast

differences in wealth, life opportunities and educational access of each country's citizens. Alongside shared membership of the Commonwealth and longstanding links through education and church organisations, a history of Empire defines the context for developing conceptions of global citizenship and good neighbourliness between the young citizens of both countries. In emphasising the principle of partnership, the guidance warns with this complex background in mind of the potential pitfalls to such partnerships. Partnership should not be interpreted as comprising simply the provision of material aid and funds. Instead, it encourages an interpretation of partnership as creating critical understanding among pupils of the lives of their partners, enhancing pupils' skills and teachers' professional development (Scotland-Malawi Partnership 2009, p.6). When financial support is given, for example to enhance learning and teaching, the potential impact of such aid should be carefully assessed. Partner schools must take care that 'money does not become the primary goal of a partnership otherwise the relationship can become distorted, as well as making mutual goals more difficult to achieve' (p.6). Similarly, in its advice on partnerships, the Department for International Development (2011) (DfID) suggests that fundraising by one partner school on behalf of another can distort their relationship, creating a power imbalance and fostering stereotypes. Making a distinction between learning and charity partnerships, DfID emphasises the importance of shared roles in the planning and the execution of fundraising activities, as well as in decisions about how funds so raised are spent.

The guidance provided by both the Scotland-Malawi Partnership and DfID acknowledges that partnerships between schools in Scotland and Malawi involve schools and contexts so differently resourced as to inevitably prompt the question of whether such programmes can succeed in promoting reciprocity and avoid what Jefferess (2008) calls a 'politics of benevolence'. Jefferess cautions that initiatives in developed countries that promote global citizenship can become implicated in imperialist projects, involving participants in unequal power relations between 'those who help and those who are in need of being helped' (2008, p.27). The needy Other receives aid from the privileged global citizen, who is positioned as the one who is able to act to make the world better. Partners may inevitably be defined not as equals, but as agents and victims, as 'aid' is channelled uni-directionally from donors to recipients.

In spite of the measured advice and the admirable principles that underpin both the Cooperation Agreement between Scotland and Malawi and the associated programme of

twinning schools in the two countries, the challenge of fostering equality and reciprocity and avoiding a politics of benevolence is considerable. This challenge demands investigation of how the young people involved perceive themselves and each other, as global citizens and more specifically as ‘global neighbours’. This study is limited to Scottish pupils and so the full extent of mutuality and reciprocity is not considered here, but must await further investigation in Malawi. However, our analysis will address the danger that education for global citizenship in the wealthier partner country could foster a politics of benevolence. This kind of problem has been acknowledged in citizenship education policy in Scotland. *Education for Citizenship in Scotland* (2002) recognises increasing inequalities between rich and poor, and that:

International and global trends create social pressures as well as opening opportunities for individuals and society. They raise fresh issues about the distribution of power and the extent to which individuals, local communities, territorial states and business corporations have influence over a host of social, economic and environmental matters. (p.6)

If people need the chance to develop understanding of how their own lives and those of others are linked, as well as the capacity to contribute to shaping a common global future, knowledge of both their own situation and those of others are crucial elements of citizenship education. In Scotland, Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) encourages pupils to have a sound awareness of their local, national and global environments, and to value diversity across those contexts. Global citizenship education is not a discrete subject, but is embedded within the Experiences and Outcomes, a set of statements which describe the expectations for learning and progression of the eight curricular areas (such as English, Mathematics and Languages) of CfE in Scottish secondary schools. Global citizenship is also present in the Primary curriculum from Level 1 (P1-3) to Level 3 (P7). Citizenship education is seen to entail the development of dispositions to care for oneself, care for others and justice; respect for self and others, and diversity and difference. Global citizenship draws on the ‘values’ of wisdom, justice, integrity and compassion. In pursuing its aim to produce ‘successful learners’, ‘confident individuals’, ‘responsible citizens’ and ‘creative contributors’, the so-called ‘four Capacities’ of CfE, young people will become:

independent, creative and critical thinkers, confident in themselves, secure in their own beliefs and values, committed to active participation in society, respectful of others and willing to find solutions to local and global problems. (Education Scotland, 2011, p.12)

Furthermore, pupils should be empowered ‘to act responsibly on local and global issues’, developing ‘solutions to the challenges students face as global citizens’ (Education Scotland, 2011, p.12). Global citizenship should also be part of the school’s policy and planning, so that citizenship education, in embodying principles of an ethics of care, critical thinking, values, does not just reside in the individual, but in the institutions that are to help foster these dispositions (Education Scotland, 2011). These are ambitious aims for global citizenship, as are the educational goals of the Scotland-Malawi Partnership. With both the Cooperation Agreement and CfE now over a decade old, we consider how they are being reflected in the perceptions of Scottish pupils.

### **3. The Study**

#### *3.1 Methodology*

The data presented here is drawn from a study with four participating schools in Scotland in which we sought to realise the central tenets of Participatory Action Research. The teacher-researchers, one in each school, were partners in the enquiry process with a high degree of autonomy to examine current approaches to education for global citizenship as they deemed appropriate with their pupils and colleagues. The initial key information categories were the themes of *impartiality and fairness, a sense of place and awareness of the global*. Using these categories as broad prompts, the teacher-researchers asked questions based on what it means, for example, to be a good global neighbour; what it is like to live in Malawi and Scotland; the differences between the two countries; and what is meant by fairness. The researchers invited young people and their teachers to articulate the questions they would want to ask of themselves and their global neighbour in order to better understand the other and to interrogate possible conceptions of, and activities in, global citizenship.

This research was an initial scoping exercise to assess possibilities for future school linking projects, and to consider the extent to which school linking might increase children and

young people's awareness of their local, national and global environments. Two of the schools have a partnership with a school in Malawi, one had a lapsed partnership while the fourth had never had a global school link partnership. However, given the small scale nature of the exercise, the research is not to be read as generalizable and serves merely as an initial indication of pupil views on global citizenship and as a prompt for further investigation.

### *3.2 Participants*

Participants for this study were drawn from two urban secondary schools in the east of Scotland, and two urban primary schools from the west of Scotland, each of which provided one teacher-researcher. The teacher-researchers were chosen because they had undertaken degree courses at the university in which the researchers worked and were interested in global citizenship. Both primary schools had a partnership with a school in Malawi.

The first primary school's participants were in P6 (Year 6, age 10), here designated as (P6/G). Through a class discussion with about 30 pupils, the teacher-researcher chose to explore what life is like for children in Malawi and what it means to be a good citizen. The second primary school's participants were in P5 (Year 5, aged 9). The teacher-researcher also chose to use a class discussion, again of about 30 pupils, to explore pupils' responses to questions on how we help others, and differences in lifestyles and resources between Malawi and Scotland. This group of participants are designated as (P5/G).

Of the secondary (S) schools one had had a partnership that had lapsed, while the other had never been involved in a partnership. The data was drawn from a Citizenship class of 30 S1 pupils (Year 8, age 11, no partnership) which focussed on a 55 minute class discussion about Scottish and Malawian people, and the differences and similarities between Scotland and Malawi. This group of participants are designated as (S1/G). Data from the second secondary school was collected from a Geography class of 26 S3 pupils (Year 10, age 14, lapsed partnership). Over three periods (55 minutes) this class discussed fairness, what it means to be a good global neighbour, and the similarities and difference between Scotland and Malawi. As this class produced posters and commentary on the selected themes, individual participants are referred to by pseudonym and year group (eg, Mathew, S3).

The data was collected using dictaphones to record class discussions, in addition to posters and written commentary (S3). Data was transcribed from audio recordings and transcripts were used for data analysis. Whilst teacher-researchers were provided with broad 'prompt' questions linked to Scotland's principles in Curriculum for Excellence, outlined above, the autonomy granted meant that the questions asked and data collected are by no means commensurate across the four schools. Nevertheless, three discernible themes from across the four schools emerged: knowledge and understanding, a sense of fairness, and giving and helping.

## **4. Findings**

### *4.1 Knowledge and understanding*

A necessary condition for global citizenship is knowledge of others beyond citizens' immediate national borders, and of one's own country too. The Scotland & Malawi Cooperation Agreement of 2005 was explicitly intended to enable citizens of both countries to learn about and from each other. Relationships between partner schools are supposed to enable pupils 'to develop a more critical understanding of the lives of their partner pupils' (Scotland-Malawi Partnership 2009, p.6). What do Scottish pupils say about their knowledge and understanding of the lives of their Malawian counterparts?

Pupil responses indicated some general knowledge of life in Malawi and of the conditions in which Malawian children live. Both the Primary and the Secondary school pupils worked on posters depicting the differences between life in Malawi and in Scotland. Malawi was illustrated as hot and sunny, with much of daily life spent outdoors, and housing envisaged as comprising mud and thatch structures: *'They make houses out of mud and straw and stuff'* (S1/G). There was clear awareness of poverty in Malawi and so that food and clean water are less readily available than in Scotland, as these pupils from P6 comment: *'Not much food or anything'*; *'they drink dirty water'*, *'a hard life'*, *'they're so poor'*. People are depicted as dressed in multi-coloured clothes and without shoes. African animals, like elephants, are in evidence.

Schools in Malawi are believed to be overcrowded and sparsely resourced, with some lessons taking place outside. Pupils commented of Malawian schools that they have no tables, chairs,

computers, or smartboards. Showing a tendency to exaggeration that nonetheless captured their sense of huge differences from their own schools, they added that Malawian pupils have no crayons, pencils or jotters, and that there can be hundreds of pupils in a class.

At the same time, the pupils demonstrated a strong awareness that their own lives and schools were privileged by comparison, being plainly aware that their schools have smaller class sizes and are fully furnished and well-equipped with learning resources. Of life in Scotland their comments included: *'Like Scotland's quite rich and maybe Malawi could be poor, or it could be rich, I don't know'* (S1/G). As a consequence of this greater wealth the pupils acknowledged the extent to which they saw themselves as materially better off - *'We have tvs, mobiles, microwaves, fridges, hair straighteners, phones'* (S1/G) – with wider opportunities for leisure:

We've got different things from them. We get all the toys from stores, they have to make all theirs from like junk. And when they make a toy they'd be really proud and like really love and treasure with their life. (P6/G)

While there were some wry comments about possible disadvantages to life in Scotland, *'More pollution in Scotland than Malawi – they don't have a lot of factories'*, *'At least if we've got bad weather you can be in your house and you've got a console or tv'* (S1/G), and *'People say that Scotland's rich but like some of it's quite poor ... like homeless people and people who don't get a lot of money'* (S1/G).

The Scottish pupils were in no doubt about the advantages of life in their own country:

It's pretty good that all of Scotland's water's clean – you can just turn the tap on and it's clean water. In Malawi, if they have taps, it's not going to be clean. (S1/G)

In Scotland we take many things for granted, for example most families will have more than one TV but in Malawi they won't even have a TV. We also take for granted that we have rights. We have rights for food, clean water, shelter and other things. We all take for granted that we can go to school for free but people in Malawi have to pay to go to school and most of the time they can't go because they need to help their parents. (Mathew, S3)

For depictions of life in Scotland, the secondary pupils focused on their hobbies (X-boxes, football, shopping, and roller skating). Houses were depicted as having two storeys, with running water, showers, kitchens with lots of cupboards containing food, TVs, and own bedrooms. When prompted to speculate on their future lives the pupils foresaw wide opportunities and prosperous futures, imagining themselves realising their dreams of being a footballer, a solicitor, going to university, making money, and living in comfortable houses.

Yet beyond the broad details the Scottish children were able to recount about their counterparts' lives and how different they are from their own, they also expressed both clear views about what they would like to know and some possibly predictable stereotypes. When asked what pupils in S1 would like to know about Malawi some responded with questions like: *'Do they not live in poverty?'*, *'It's very hot there, isn't it?'*, *'Is it a small country?'*, and *'Has it got lots of people?'* (P6/G). The pupils expressed interest in finding out about the lives of pupils in their partner schools: what Malawian pupils do in their spare time, what sports they play, *'What they do in school and stuff'*, as well as their homes and what their families do for a living. *'Probably how their life is different from us'* (S1/G).

Some were unsure of how much they know about Malawi and their partner school's pupils: *'Jobs in Scotland are like technology – I don't know if Malawi has that sort of stuff'*.

Unsurprisingly, some of the secondary pupils conceded, in spite of being interested and having done some research on Malawi, the limits to their knowledge of other countries in general, especially when needing to rely on media images for their information.

Alongside such frank comments on the limits of their knowledge of pupils' lives in Malawi and elsewhere, the pupils also expressed some quite stereotypical observations and assumptions. Some of the primary pupils, while aware of the challenges faced in trying to learn in less privileged circumstances, surmised that it is hard to learn in Malawi *'Because they don't have much to help them'* and that learning, furthermore, is *'Hard because they catch a lot of ... colds, flus and that stuff... . It's because they sweat and they don't have much water to get a bath'*. While aware of the difference in climate - *'It's hard for them to go out to play because it's so warm'* - it was also assumed, revealing some ignorance of the implications of living in a different climate, that: *'They don't wear very warm clothes because they can't afford them'*.

Although they were aware of the implications of poverty - *'No money, 'No food'*, fewer and smaller shops and no Macdonald's, *'A hard life'* - some primary pupils also surmised that these living conditions could have further adverse consequences, like boredom: *'It's hard because they've not got much to do'* (S1/G). When lack of friends and loneliness came up as suggestions, it was further elaborated that this was because: *'a lot of people die, because of diseases, so maybe like their best friend dies and they got very lonely and maybe they just stay in their house like far away from other houses'* (P6/G).

Alongside common European stereotypes about the presence of African wild animals like elephants, the primary children had been told that: *'Whenever they go to church they're there for like four and a half hours, singing and dancing'*. Some did also consider the possibility that in certain respects life in Malawi might be better than in Scotland, that people in Malawi looked happier because it is warmer, sunnier and less rainy than Scotland and,

It looks a lot more freer than Scotland – like in this picture ... their clothes, they're like baggy clothes – we've got to wear a lot like a shirt and smart clothes but they've just sort of more relaxed. (S1/G)

This idea was then qualified by the suggestion that: *'Maybe they don't have shirts and that there?'*

Yet for all the evidence of some stereotyping of Malawians, the Scottish pupils were also able to refer to Scottish stereotypes, probably knowingly: describing a typical Scottish person when asked as: white, wearing a kilt, Catholic or Protestant Christian, *'Red hair maybe'*, *'Not too tall, a bit fat maybe'* (S1/G). Yet another comment qualified these stereotypes: *'It's hard to describe the average Scottish person because, like, we're all different – we've not got the one personality'* (S1/G). But the pupils' observations resist easy categorisation as resorting to stereotype. When pupils observe that: *'Scotland is dull and boring and raining all the time'* (S1/G) they allude, not inaccurately, to their country's undoubtedly rainy climate and the frustrations this can engender. Their perceptions inevitably waver between seeing their own context as 'normal' and as more privileged:

People in Scotland obviously quite normal, we have things and outside we have cars and schools, buildings and different trees and all the different things like in the school

playgrounds we've got different activities to do ... we've got different technologies, they don't. (S1/G)

Further evaluation of the significance of the Scottish pupils' knowledge and understanding of their partner pupils needs to take into account their comments about the implications of what they know, the fairness of the contrasts they clearly recognise and about what should be done about it. These two issues are addressed in the next sections, and will enable us to comment on how well the Scottish pupils understand the concepts of citizenship and global citizenship, and how meaningfully they relate to the idea of the distant Other.

#### 4.2 Fairness

An aim of the Scotland & Malawi Cooperation Agreement (2005) is to reduce poverty in Malawi and to improve living standards for all. Though the term 'fairness' is not explicitly mentioned in the Agreement, or in the policies pertaining to Scottish citizenship education, it is evident that the Scottish pupils had some critical awareness of poverty in Malawi and of their own relatively privileged circumstances, as well as a clear sense that there was something unfair about the evident inequalities between their lives and those of their Malawian counterparts. As a P6 pupil observed, *'I get everything I want, like all I really need but people in Malawi don't get, like, as much as we get'*, while a P5 pupil remarked that she worries that: *'the children in Malawi won't get enough facilities to live on'*.

The concept of unfairness was aptly summed up by this primary pupil to mean that: *'If I had 10 pencils and my brother only had two pencils that wouldn't really be fair'*. Some pupils reported that unfairness resulted from 'selfishness', 'greed' and 'corruption', and that those in Scotland *'took too much for granted'* either because they had too much food, which they threw away, or because they had too many luxuries for which they do not have to work hard. Drawing closer to the implications of making comparative comments on life in the two countries, a pupil in S3 reflected on taking the benefits of life in Scotland, not only materially, for granted:

In Scotland we take many things for granted, for example most families will have more than one TV but in Malawi they won't even have a TV. We also take for granted that we have rights. We have rights for food, clean water, shelter and other things. We

all take for granted that we can go to school for free but people in Malawi have to pay to go to school and most of the time they can't go because they need to help their parents. (Jacob, S3)

This S3 pupil also expressed a strong opinion on how corruption and greed deleteriously affects people in parts of Africa and India:

The world is far from fair ... . People in parts of Africa and India go to bed starving while people in the west throw tons upon tons of food away every year. The West take so much for granted but still refuse to recognise the extreme poverty and suffering in these countries. (Emma, S3)

Pupils also observed that unfairness stemmed from unfair trade practices and so sought to define fairness in terms of better pay and conditions for farmers in less developed countries, frequently mentioning 'Fair Trade'. That pupils should often mention this is not surprising because many schools run Fair Trade stalls and have Fair Trade weeks. Fair trade is also frequently included in the humanities curriculum as an example of how to address the power imbalances between less and more developed nations. The pupils understood the inequities resulting from working long hours, for low wages, only for those in the rich West to waste so much of what the farmers produce.

There is different types of fairness like a right to a fair trade because they work so hard but get paid so little which is what's good about fair-trade – it allows the workers the money they deserve. I don't think it's fair that we have so much technology and food and water and they have so little in other less fortunate countries. (Mark, S3)

The advantage of fair trade is that *'when the farmers get the money they can afford to send their children to school and buy things for their family'*. (Chloe, S3)

So, what explicitly is fairness for these pupils? S3 pupils mentioned the importance of treating people with 'respect', regardless of appearance, social status, or geographical location.

I think fairness is about treating everyone in the world with respect regardless of skin tone, nationality or religion and you shouldn't judge people because who they are whether they're emo, goth, gay, lesbian, bisexual or transsexual. (Mairi, S3)

I think fairness is about treating other people fairly regardless of appearance. However, I think global fairness is about treating people around the world with respect like Fairtrade they give the farmers around the world who work hard enough money for the crops they grow. (Joseph, S3)

Our account of citizenship education in Scotland as an aspiration in Curriculum for Excellence explained how it aims at the development of dispositions to citizenship values such as care and respect for others, and valuing diversity, along with the values of justice and compassion. Pupil comments on the theme of fairness seem to demonstrate a disposition to be critically thoughtful of and caring about the world in which they live, with its inequalities and power imbalances. Their sense of citizenship seems rooted in and expressive of a respectful and caring disposition in relation to people and to humanity generally. Their comments on possible solutions to address the unfair inequalities that they observe, to which we now turn, will then lead this analysis back to the key question of whether the links under consideration are fostering reciprocity or a politics of benevolence.

#### *4.3 Giving and Helping*

Inevitably overlapping with their observations about inequalities between their lives and those of their Malawian counterparts and their commentaries on fairness, the language of giving and helping features in the comments of the Scottish pupils. Exploring emerging principles that might underpin global citizenship, one primary pupil remarked that a good citizen would *'probably like to treat people with respect and all that'*, and P5 and P6 pupils, respectively, suggested that a more fair world would be one in which *'you would share all your things'* and would require *'Being equal and not being too selfish'*.

A primary pupil commented that to be a 'good citizen' means to be: *'people who help people in other countries who have bad illnesses'*, and another said: *'if someone you know is being hurt you go and help them'*. This primary pupil spoke of donors and suggested that: *'you can help people with disabilities'* (P5/G). Helping was sometimes aligned with caring, with one primary pupil stating that a good citizen is *'someone that's always helpful and very caring'* and another suggesting that good citizens *'look after people all over the world and help them'* (P5/G).

Giving is even more frequently mentioned by pupils. A secondary pupil, talking of Malawi, talked explicitly of charity, asking: *'Does it need quite a lot of, like, charity and funds? To like survive?'* (S1/G). In one of the primary schools partnered with a Malawian school a pupil said: *'Everyone in the school was a global citizen when we made enough money and sent it over to Malawi to get a well'*, and another in the same class recalled: *'Once my class sent backpacks to them'* (P5/G). That same class were concerned that health was an issue for their Malawian peers and so comments included the need to be good global citizens by *'getting them medicines'*, *'sending money over so they can buy the medicines they need to save some of the children'*, and by being *'people who help people in other countries who have bad illnesses'*. Another primary pupil stated that being a good global citizen meant *'giving to charity'*.

However, some pupils demonstrated awareness of the importance of good citizenship that was not simply about benevolence but reciprocity and responsibility. On discussing the idea of good citizenship itself, a primary pupil suggested that it would mean: *'if you've done something bad you've got to be responsible'*, with another adding *'And be kind to others'*. Interdependence and responsibility was further noted by some secondary school pupils. For example:

Every single person in the world is a global citizen, even if we don't care that we are one. We are all independent but we rely on lots of different people all around the world for food, clothes and all the different technology we use. Our lives are constantly affecting other people's lives at the other side of the world and it's making their lives hard'. (Claire, S3)

These pupil observations prompt us to return to our central critical question and to ask whether, on the evidence presented here, particularly pupils' providing help to their Malawian counterparts in the form of charitable giving, we might detect a politics of benevolence rather than a reciprocal partnership in the links and the global citizenship education activities in which this selection of pupils participated.

## 5. Conclusion: Being a global citizen

Our data in this exploratory study of Scottish pupils' engagement with global citizenship, with reference to their perceptions of pupils in Malawi, suggests some learning and reflection achieved. But it also points to potential pitfalls that should be addressed in citizenship education programmes and links. There is some evidence of both knowledge and understanding of what life is like in Malawi and of acknowledgment by the pupils of the limits to their own knowledge, as well as a clear sense that the differences between their own circumstances and life in Malawi are in some way unfair. When it comes to considering what possible action they might take as responsible citizens, some pupils did indeed turn to charitable solutions. Yet we should not be quick to conclude from this that they exhibit a politics of benevolence. While it might be tempting to judge some of the pupil comments as politically incorrect, a realistic and age-appropriate assessment of the demands made on pupils by including of global citizenship in the curriculum ought to start by acknowledging how complex and abstract these demands are, especially for primary pupils.

In recognising the growing inequalities between rich and poor, *Education for Citizenship in Scotland* (2002, p.6) observes that:

The complexity of modern society and the magnitude of the changes taking place within it sometimes threaten to overwhelm individuals. People doubt their ability to influence events, but remain troubled by the manifestations of social stress they experience or see reported in the media.

This observation acknowledges the dangers of what Young (2011, p.124) has called 'the vertigo of political responsibility'. Faced with the dizzying realisation of the vast scale of global deprivation and poverty, how does the young global citizen start to take responsibility for justice in a world that is unequal and unfair? We ought to acknowledge that the pupils who participated in our study are not overwhelmed and do not succumb to paralysis in the face of the inequalities and problems they observe. In spite of their distant location from Malawi, they do exhibit a willingness to take some responsibility for the problems they observe, which includes offers of help. When commenting on what they had learned and how they might respond, pupils used the language of respect and responsibility to reflect on possible action.

That Scottish children's knowledge of the life and educational circumstances of their Malawian counterparts is incomplete and in some respects stereotypical should not come as a surprise. Caution should be exercised in the face of temptation to pass judgment on their occasional stereotyping, in judging their knowledge of a distant other by asking too much of them at a young age. Stereotypes, the sometimes crude unconsciously held heuristics (Anderson, 2007) that can exaggerate both the homogeneity of members of a particular group and the differences between groups, are likely when access to information is restricted by sheer distance, limited information and absence of close experience of life in Malawi. The degree of stereotyping reflected in the comments of our pupil participants would be less understandable if the participants had been asked to reflect about disadvantaged citizens geographically closer to home. Yet although the Scottish pupils in this study typically saw Malawi as hot and sunny and made references to African animals, large classes, mud houses, and insufficient water and food, many of their comments about life in Malawi were basically accurate, if superficial, and some did concede that their knowledge is limited.

Similarly, it would be too quick and probably unjust to conclude from the pupils' comments about providing charity to schools in Malawi as an appropriate way to take responsibility as global citizens that they were merely demonstrating Jefferess' (2008) 'politics of benevolence' towards a needy Other. While aware of their materially privileged lives, the Scottish pupils were able to refer to charitable giving as justified by principles of fairness and responsibility. Scottish schools have long established traditions of charitable giving to the local poor and citizenship activities commonly include raising consciousness about poverty through popular fund raising events such as Comic Relief and Sports Relief. The participants in our study are able to reflect on injustice, through the less abstract notion of fairness, in assessing what they have by contrast with what they believe Malawian children do not have. The pupils are aware of inequalities in both wealth and power between Scotland and Malawi, and that they share some responsibility, especially as citizens of a wealthy country, for finding solutions to global problems. Averting tendencies to a politics of benevolence in global citizenship initiatives in schools requires appropriate action on the part of teachers and other adults in ensuring that planning is shared with Malawian partners and in assessing impact as well as making resulting decisions about future activities.

In showing critical awareness and a willingness to take responsibility for solving global problems, we suggest that the pupils demonstrated sufficient understanding to warrant

describing their activities as evidence of what the guidance outlined in section 2 described as a *learning* rather than a *charity* partnership. Significantly, the pupils' references to charity did not resort to describing their Malawian counterparts with pity or contempt, as helpless victims waiting to be rescued by Scottish donations. We saw no grounds to conclude that money rather than education is the primary goal of the activities in question. Clearly, however, more can always be done to counter incipient stereotyping. The long-term outcomes of curricular efforts towards teaching global citizenship may need to be assessed in terms of whether eventually as adults participating pupils will be vociferous and active, in their own voluntary actions or as future voters, in supporting national policies that address global inequalities and development issues.

### **Acknowledgement**

This study was enabled by the University of Glasgow's Adam Smith Research Foundation Seedcorn Funding.

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