Practices, encounters, and narratives:

An ethnography of global school partnerships

Submitted by Lynne Diane Wyness

to the University of Exeter as a thesis

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Geography

May 2012

This thesis is available for Library use on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.
This thesis makes a productive contribution to understanding the rapidly expanding and contested field of global school partnerships, by placing the rich narratives from a handful of school partnerships into the global education context of social, historical, political, and cultural processes. Principally, it tells the story of one partnership, between two primary schools in rural Devon and urban Tanzania, nested within a network of partnerships and governed by DfID's Global School Partnership (GSP) programme. The cross-continental nature of the school partnerships called for a multi-sited, ethnographic approach, informed and shaped by postcolonial and feminist principles. Partnerships comprise a range of practices, most significant of which were the reciprocal teacher visits that punctuated, and energised, the partnership calendar, presenting spaces for encounter. The emotional and embodied encounters formed the backbone of the partnerships, and produced narratives that were circulated amongst the partnerships and re-presented to audiences in the home country. Firstly, school partnerships engendered the production of moral subjectivities, which were underscored by broad discourses of citizenship, global citizenship, and moral education. With its objective to foster global citizenship, the global partnership occupied an ambiguous position within this discursive framework. Secondly, the encounters presented moments in which narratives of education, teaching, and learning were produced, contested, negotiated, and in some cases, reworked by the participating teachers. As a cultural device, the GSP was both indicative, and constitutive, of the discourse surrounding the neoliberal realignment of the education sector around the world, and provided a productive lens through which to reflect upon the contemporary transformation of the institution. Importantly, the GSP presented a significant site in which neoliberal stories of aspiration, hard work, and global outlooks, became intimately entangled with ‘caring’ stories of concern and responsible citizenship. Most scholarship has focused on the role of secondary and tertiary education sectors in the production of the knowledge economy, but this ethnography finds that nascent discourses and imaginaries of the ‘global’ citizen are already being established and performed in primary schools around the world. Finally, this study of global partnerships supports the contention that both decolonising and feminist pedagogies could play a significant role in enhancing partnership spaces, practices, encounters, and narratives.
Contents

Abstract 2
Contents 3
List of Plates, Figures, and Tables 6
Acknowledgements 7

Preface 9
Conceptualising present-day school partnerships 10
Researching school partnerships: thesis aims and compromises 13
Partnership actors: who’s in this thesis, and who’s not? 16
Structure of the thesis 18

Part I Understanding Partnership 21

Chapter One: Placing the global school partnership 23

1.1 The changing landscape of education 24
1.1.1 Learner-centred pedagogy (LCP) 25
   (i) The British experience 26
   (ii) Global geographies of LCP 27
   (iii) A postcolonial reading of the rise of Western Education 28
1.1.2 English as the global language of education 30
1.2 Schools as sites of moral citizenship 32
1.2.1 Global citizenship 35
1.2.2 Moral education 41
1.3 The subjectivities of education 45
1.3.1 Neoliberal reconfigurations of teacher subjectivities 46
1.3.2 The globalised production of neoliberal subjectivities 49
1.4 Conclusions 51

Chapter Two: Researching global school partnerships 53

2.1 Ethnography 53
2.2 Multi-site ethnography 55
2.3 A feminist-informed ethnography 58
   2.3.1 A ‘care-full’ research practice 59
2.4 Postcolonial principles 63
2.5 The research process 65
   2.5.1 Research methods 67
      (i) Participant observation 67
      (ii) Interviews 71
      (iii) Reflective groups 75
   2.5.2 The final phases of research 76
2.6 Conclusions 79
## Part II Practicing Partnership

### Chapter Three: The governance and promise of partnership

- 3.1 Governing the partnerships: the policy context
  - 3.1.1 The international development context
  - 3.1.2 The wider British policy context
- 3.2 Implementing the policy: the promise of partnership
- 3.3 Copplestone Primary School, Devon, England
- 3.4 Donge Primary School, Tanga, Tanzania
- 3.5 Conclusions

### Chapter Four: Networks, practices, and encounters of global school partnership

- 4.1 Wider networks
- 4.2 The practices of partnership
  - 4.2.1 Early days: communicating with the other
  - 4.2.2 Securing funding for the next stage
  - 4.2.3 Curriculum projects
- 4.3 A cultural geography of ‘encounters’
- 4.4 The Reciprocal Visits
  - 4.4.1 The nature of encounters
  - 4.4.2 Encountering children
  - 4.4.3 The embodied encounter
- 4.5 Conclusions

## Part III Narrating Partnership

### Chapter Five: Narratives of charity, care, and contribution

- 5.1 The contested practice of fundraising
- 5.2 Sponsoring orphaned children
- 5.3 The role of care in global school partnerships
  - 5.3.1 Care at a distance
  - 5.3.2 The mediation of suffering
  - 5.3.3 Stereotypes of care
- 5.4 A postcolonial reading of care in global school partnerships
  - 5.4.1 Forms of caring
    - (i) ‘Carer’ – the story of the orphans sponsors
    - (ii) ‘Cared-about’ – the story of the orphan guardians
  - 5.4.2 Reworking the caring relationship
    - (i) The heterogeneous nature of caring
    - (ii) The co-production of care
    - (iii) Revealing the hidden and complex stories of care
    - (iv) Reworking the notion of ‘care’
- 5.5 Conclusions
Chapter Six: Narratives of education, teaching, and learning

6.1 The first visit – Copplestone, July 2009
6.2 The second visit – Donge, October 2009
   6.2.1 Observing
   6.2.2 Teaching
6.3 The third visit – Copplestone, June 2010
6.4 The fourth visit – Donge, October 2010
   6.4.1 Preparing
   6.4.2 Observing
   6.4.3 Reflecting
   6.4.4 Teaching
6.5 Lessons learnt
   6.5.1 Professional subjectivities
   6.5.2 The clash of the pedagogies
   6.5.3 Educational systems
   6.5.4 Reproducing the global knowledge economy
6.6 Conclusions

Part IV Evaluating Partnership

Chapter Seven: Evaluating the partnerships

7.1 Narratives of ‘success’ and ‘failure’
   7.1.1 The British Council story
   7.1.2 The public face of ‘success’
   7.1.3 ‘Opening children’s eyes’
   7.1.4 Changing professional and personal identities
   7.1.5 The immeasurable
7.2 Meaningful encounters?
7.3 Global or moral citizenship?
7.4 Placing the global school partnership within global educational discourse
   7.4.1 The performance of neoliberal and global education policy
7.5 Drawing it together
7.6 Moving forward

Bibliography

Glossary

Appendix I Schedules of the four teachers’ reciprocal visits
Appendix II Research inventory