

Practices, encounters, and narratives:
An ethnography of global school partnerships

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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.

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