1. What is the project about?

This is a three-year ESRC funded research project running from October 2009 – September 2012.

1.1 The participants

The four organisations that have agreed to be the focus of the research are:

- Canterbury Christ Church University, Canterbury, UK, and Goodwill Children’s Homes, Tamil Nadu, India who have what is characterised by the two groups concerned as a strong link/relationship

- Tide~ global learning, Birmingham, UK and the National Environment Agency of The Gambia who have what is characterised by both organisations as a partnership.
Both pairs of organisations have been working together for ten years and each UK partner runs a yearly (CCCU) or two-yearly (Tide~) study visit course\(^1\) (non-accredited) for UK education students (CCCU) and teachers (Tide~) to the host country where the southern organisation helps to facilitate the study visit.

1.2 The focus

The research project aims to investigate what teachers learn from study visit courses, and how they make use of what has been learnt back in their own educational settings, giving equal weight to the learning of both northern and southern partners.

The key research question is: What impact do two North-South\(^2\) study visit courses have on teachers’ understanding of development issues and how does this inform their understanding of, and practice in, global partnerships\(^3\)?

This is being investigated by a focus on the following supplementary questions:

1. How have two North-South partnerships developed and what context do they provide for educational study visits?
2. What do teachers from both North and South learn about development and global issues from their involvement in study visits?
3. What are the key factors that prompt any changes in knowledge and beliefs?
4. How does this learning inform their practice over time?

1.3 The need for the study

The initial impetus for the study came from the National Environment Agency in The Gambia who, after working in partnership with Tide~ global learning for some years and hosting study visits which facilitated intercultural learning between UK and Gambian teachers, thought that the partnership and the activities within it were something unique that needed to be documented. In 2008 during a study visit to Southern India, Canterbury Christ Church and Goodwill Children’s Homes also stated their desire for their work to be documented in some way and so became part of the proposed research.

From a UK perspective, for the last ten years schools in England have been encouraged to provide a global dimension to their curriculum and pupils’ learning. An increasingly common way schools are achieving this is through an educational partnership with another school overseas. Very often this is a school in an economically developing region of the world. The

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\(^1\) For brevity we are calling them study visit courses, but as non-accredited professional development activity which includes a study visit to a southern country they are not ‘courses’ in the strict sense of the term. For example, the Canterbury Christ Church ‘course’ takes place entirely outside the university’s programme of accredited courses, is optional and students pay a fee to take part.

\(^2\) North-South in this context refers to countries in the north that are sometimes characterised as economically ‘developed’ and countries in the south characterised as economically ‘developing’.

\(^3\) Global partnerships in this context are partnerships of an educational nature between education (not just schools) organisations in the North and South.
educational aims for school partnerships centre on developing global citizens who have positive attitudes towards people and places around the world, and who are motivated to take positive action to make the world a better place.

However, previous studies have shown that while these aims are being met in some instances, often the reverse is the case with stereotypical views of people and places being reinforced and with some citizenship activities (such as UK schools fundraising for the southern partner school / southern schools making requests for donations from the UK partner school) perpetuating imbalances in power and making it harder to develop equitable relationships. Researchers and educators have identified the need for professional development activity to support teachers’ understanding of development, and of the factors affecting how people from the North and the South relate to each other during intercultural experiences. Study visits courses are one example of the sort of professional development activity that is available, but very little research has been conducted into whether these have the desired impact on teacher understanding, and fewer still have investigated the impact of study visits from the UK to southern countries on the host organisations. These are the gaps that this study seeks to address.

2. The research team

The research team consists of two UK researchers, one Gambian researcher and one Indian researcher:

Dr. Fran Martin (Principle Investigator) and Dr. Helen Griffiths (Research Fellow) from University of Exeter

Dr. Lingam Raja (Research consultant, India) from Gandhigram Rural University

Dr. Lamin Sidibeh (Research consultant, The Gambia) from The Gambia University

UK researchers are responsible for gathering and analysing data from UK organisations, and the students and teachers taking part in the courses; Gambian and Indian researchers are responsible for gathering and analysing data from Gambian and Indian organisations and teachers. However, all members of the research team collaborate on all aspects of the research, which is participatory in nature.

UK, Indian and Gambian researchers also take part in research conversations, sharing findings, discussing approaches to data analysis and coding and, during the final year, co-authoring articles and collaborating on other suitable means of disseminating the research findings.

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4 For a fuller account of this, drawing on data from the project’s pilot study, see Martin (2008) ‘Mutual Learning: The impact of a study visit course on teachers’ knowledge and understanding of global partnerships’. Critical Literacy: Theories and Practice 2(1), 60-75. http://www.criticalliteracy.org.uk/
3. Research focus for Year One

In the first year of the project, the following data were gathered:

- Interviews with people in a lead role in each of the participating organisations to gain insight into the nature of the partnerships, how they have developed over time and what future plans are (Helps to answer Research Q1)
- Interviews with course leaders to gain insight into how the course has developed over time and gain views on the successes and challenges of the course in 2009-10 (Helps to answer Research Q1 and context for Q2)
- Participant observations of the two courses and study visits, biographical questionnaires of all course/study visit participants, interviews with smaller sample on three occasions spread across the course and study visit as a whole (Helps to answer Research Q2 and Q3)

Papers on the research in year one have been presented at conferences in Galway (October 2009), Washington D.C. (April 2010) and Warwick (September 2010). For details of these and other aspects of the project please refer to the project website: http://education.exeter.ac.uk/gpml/

4. Research focus for Year Two

In the second year of the project, the emphasis has been on analysing and interpreting the data gathered in year one, and gathering data for the longitudinal part of the research by:

- Sending questionnaires to all teachers who have taken part in the study visits courses over the last ten years
- Conducting follow-up in-depth interviews with a representative sample to gain insight into how they have made use of what they learnt from the study visit, and the longer-term impact it has had on their personal and professional development. (Helps to answer Research Q4)
- Conducting interviews and/or focus groups with year one sample to gain insight into what they have done since finishing the course in 2010. (Helps to answer Research Q4)

Phase 3 questionnaires have all been completed and entered onto a database. Analysis of the questionnaires will begin September 2011. Phase 3 interviews have been completed for India and the Gambia. UK interviews will be completed by end September 2011. It is expected that all phase 3 data will have been analysed by end January 2012.

Papers have been presented at a number of conferences (Institute of Education conference on Citizenship in a Globalised World, November 2010; Liverpool Hope University conference on Transformative Learning through study visits and service learning, March 2011) and research seminars (University of Winchester, September 2010; Reading University, October 2010; Plymouth University, May 2011). For details of these and other aspects of the project please refer to the project website: http://education.exeter.ac.uk/gpml/
An article co-authored by Dr Fran Martin and Dr Helen Griffiths has been accepted for publication by the international, peer reviewed British Education Association Journal (BERJ). Publication date is yet to be confirmed.

4.1 Approaches to data analysis

The research team is using several theoretical frameworks to assist in data analysis:

- **Postcolonial theory**: to identify ways in which colonial relationships are evident in, and/or challenged by, the intercultural experiences and exchanges over the period of the courses. We feel this is an important theory to bring to the data analysis because both study visits take place in countries that are former British Colonies and previous research shows that this is often a factor in how intercultural experiences are interpreted and understood.

- **Socio-cultural, constructivist theory**: to examine the individual and group, social and intercultural learning processes that take place in both courses. The two courses being investigated are based on a socio-cultural pedagogy in which participants are encouraged to examine their worldviews and, through collaborative, experiential processes, to challenge these in supportive ways. We will also be looking at ways in which such a pedagogy seems to support deeper insights into, and understanding of development, global issues and relationships in global partnerships.

- **Displacement spaces**: to identify those moments of discomfort / challenge from which learning takes place. The theory is based on the premise that incidences / experiences that are ‘troubling’, in the sense that they challenge previously held assumptions, are more likely to lead to deeper learning than those that remain within a person’s or group’s comfort zone. The displacement can be physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual; the spaces of displacement can be social, cultural, environmental etc. In some research these are sometimes called ‘critical incidences’.

4.2 Gambia visit to UK April 2011.

Dr Sidibeh visited the UK April 2nd – 7th to conduct further research conversations with Dr Fran Martin at University of Exeter. Matters discussed were:

- Phase 3 data collection – completion of same
- Interim workshop and conference, including nature of interim reports to be produced by each country
- Plans for collaborative writing – two articles co-authored, one to be led by Dr Sidibeh and targeted at an International African journal, the other to be led by Dr Martin and targeted at a Western journal of international standing
- Plans for future research collaboration – initial ideas to be discussed further during interim conference visit August 27th – September 3rd 2011.
4.3 UK visit to India July 2011.

Dr Martin visited India with the Canterbury group July 7th – 24th 2011. On this visit, phase 3 data collection was completed as outlined above, and research conversations of a similar nature to those held with Dr Sidibeh were conducted.

4.4 Interim conference.

Now we are nearing the end of the second year of the project, we are running an interim workshop and conference on August 31st and September 1st at which a number of major NGOs and UK government departments (such as the Department for International Development) will be present.

Who is the conference for?
The research team and some of the research participants will be running the conference. The intended audience is those working in global and development education, North-South school partnerships, and for those who run professional development activities in these areas. We have invited a mixture of teachers, educators, and representatives from organizations who are potential end-users of the research.

What is the aim of the workshop/conference?
On August 31st, all four organisations participating in the research (Tide Global Learning, UK; Canterbury Christ Church University, UK; National Environment Agency, The Gambia; and Goodwill Children’s Homes, India) will be working together on collaborative, mutual learning. On September 1st we will be joined by about 40 invited guests as outlined above.

The conference, through a mixture of presentations, discussion groups, workshops and feedback sessions, will consider the findings to date and their implications for teacher development programmes about global and development education and school partnerships. There will be a particular emphasis on professional development through study visits, from the perspectives of each country involved. The outcomes of the invitation conference will then inform further dissemination, including a website, practitioner publications, academic articles, and an end-of-study conference for educators, practitioners and policy makers.

This will form the basis of the dissemination and impact plan, which is the key focus of the third year of the project.

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