UNDERSTANDING AND ENGAGING WITH DEVELOPMENT THROUGH INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERING

ELEANOR JOANNE BROWN*

Department of Education, University of York, York, United Kingdom

Abstract: Understanding development issues and finding a space to interpret and debate our roles as citizens, consumers and individuals towards greater global justice are complex and contested. In this paper, I consider engagement in development through education-based international volunteering and report on a case study of a 9-month course designed to provide development education in preparation for a 2-month period of international volunteering. I argue that through opening spaces for dialogue and experiential learning, international volunteering, accompanied by critical development education, has the potential to address questions about what responsible development might mean, and how we can actively contribute to it. Copyright © 2015 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Keywords: international volunteering; development education; critical pedagogy; challenging stereotypes

1   INTRODUCTION

The focus of this article is on the role of the education for international volunteers from Europe, rather than an analysis of the impact of volunteering on host communities. The case study is a non-governmental development organisation (NGDO) based in Spain, so when discussing 'our roles' in development issues, this is taken from the perspective of European citizens. Spain has more opportunities for non-formal adult development education than the UK (Brown, 2015a) and was experiencing high rates of participation in deliberative politics at the time of the research in the run up to the 15M social movement in 2011. It offers an interesting site for international volunteering with many projects conducted in Latin America, reducing language barriers, and it has a high number of organisations working in this area [Coordinadora Andaluza de Organizaciones No

*Correspondence to: Eleanor Joanne Brown, Department of Education, University of York, York, United Kingdom.
E-mail: eleanor.brown@york.ac.uk

Gubernamentales para el Desarrollo (CAONGD), 2007]. Questions can be raised about the extent to which international volunteers benefit the local communities in which they work; however, this is beyond the scope of this article. That is not to say that the attitude change and learning resulting from the course considered here has no influence on development issues. On the contrary, it is often argued that international volunteers on short-term placements have limited and even questionable impacts on their host communities (Palacios, 2010) and that they may be better placed to fight for global justice on their return. This makes causal links tenuous and difficult to evidence. Nevertheless, there is value in exploring how learning impacts on volunteers, and its importance in promoting international understanding and solidarity, as this may lead to collective action for social justice in the future.

The literature suggests that international volunteering can be uncritical and reinforces pejorative stereotypes of other countries (e.g. Simpson, 2004). Development education is associated with engagement with critical pedagogies, which encourage learners to challenge stereotypes and assumptions (Andreotti, 2006; Bourn, 2008). Combining international volunteering and development education could open up a space for critical debate, something that is increasingly difficult to find (Baillie Smith, 2013: 401). Yet, there has been relatively little exploration of the ways these two areas intersect or the relationship between them. The question is how can collaboration between the two provide the experiential learning required by participative development education and the critical reflection so often missing from short-term international volunteering?

This paper explores the extent to which one NGDO's provision of development education and international volunteering fosters critical thinking and the potential for challenging stereotypical assumptions, often associated with volunteerism. This case study captures the complex ways in which international development and development education interact. On the one hand, the combined opportunities for confronting unfamiliarity with a critical attitude offer a model for transformative learning. On the other hand, the acceptance of small development projects as an approach to structural inequality, and the realities of temporarily living in some of the poorest areas of another country with vulnerable groups, can combine to reinforce stereotypes and silence neo-colonial relationships.

2   CONTRADICTIONS IN INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERING

At its best, international volunteering can generate positive attitudes towards cultural difference, call into question bias and prejudices and eventually 'transform the fixed, often exceedingly rigid ways of seeing the Other and oneself' (Gill, 2007: 176). Participants can gain a broader awareness, understanding and appreciation of host cultures, which can offer important ingredients for reducing ethnocentrism due to cultural dissonance and immersion that increase cultural awareness and competencies (Kambutu & Nganga, 2008: 949). It 'can provide tangible contributions to development in the form of skills and other resource transfers, but also perhaps more importantly it can promote international understanding and solidarity' (Lewis, 2006: 15).

However, it can also do just the opposite, by reinforcing precisely those frames about the 'South' that are most problematic. Indeed, the very use of dichotomising terms such as 'North and South' raises many questions, which require further debate. This is fraught with

contradictions regarding the relationship to colonial history and tensions regarding how volunteering 'encounters' with the 'other' act as an educative experience (Diprose, 2012: 187). There is also a danger of conceiving of the 'global South' as a 'playground for northern volunteers' personal development' (Baillie Smith, 2013: 404).

Palacios (2010) claims that with goals of development aid, there can be internal conflict for volunteers due to unrealistic expectations and role ambiguity, and reinforcement of Eurocentric attitudes in both volunteers and hosts. Zemach-Bersin (2007) argues that enthusiasm for intercultural exchange overlooks the ways that the discourse 'surreptitiously reproduces the logic of colonialism' (p. 17). International volunteering is multi-layered (Lewis, 2006) and has wide-ranging aims, which often compound the tensions and contradictions that arise. There is too often a 'lack of critical engagement with the processes through which international volunteering is produced, particularly as this connects with broader debates around neoliberalism' (Baillie Smith & Laurie, 2011: 548).

Simpson (2004) argues that international volunteers, or 'volunteer-tourists', go out to 'do development', which she describes as hedonism, altruism and learning about the 'other'. Her research examines international volunteer programmes run by private companies over less than 6 months. She argues that such projects reproduce particular notions of the 'third world', 'other' and 'development'. This 'produces a "geography" … that perpetuates a simplistic ideal of development' (p. 682). Her critique centres on the idea that such programmes advance a discourse of 'development' as something that can be 'done' by 'non-skilled, but enthusiastic, volunteer-tourists' (p. 685). As such, this work is based on a modernisation model of development, emphasising a universal journey of development towards Westernisation. This creates a dichotomy of 'us and them' where 'Poverty is allowed to become a definer of difference … [and] an issue for "out there", which can be passively gazed upon, rather than actively interacted with' (p. 688). This allows volunteers to confirm, rather than challenge, assumptions they already held and, on their return, assert these with the added authority of experience. Simpson argues for a need to question 'the presumption that travel to and encounter with "others" will be sufficient to generate structural changes and engender crosscommunity understanding' (p. 690).

Diprose (2012) found international volunteering can 'both perpetuate and disrupt stereotypes of the global South' (p. 186). She concludes that narrowing expectations for post-project activity to personal development and awareness-raising work legitimises the development industry rather than encouraging a radically realigned sense of the global community. This was because volunteers received 'mixed messaging about neo-liberal notions of individual responsibility and personal development alongside visions of solidarity, community and global justice' (Diprose, 2012: 191). Such tensions are also noted by Griffiths (2014), who recognises the structures of complex power relations in which international volunteers operate but argues that their affective and emotional experiences can also be framed by 'rich inter-subjectivities that cannot … be easily attributed to processes of neoliberalization' (p. 1).

Devereux (2008) claims that when handled correctly, international volunteering can avoid the paternalistic attitudes associated with imperialism, benefiting both the volunteer and the local community. For this to be successful, a social justice pedagogy is required, which is based on dialogic encounters conceived through interdependence. At its best, it provides a space for reflection, an exchange of skills and a commitment to 'combating existing unequal power relations and deep seated causes of poverty, injustice, and unsustainable development … it has the potential to challenge the economic and technical

focus of globalisation in favour of people connecting and relating with each other on a global scale' (p. 358).

However, there is a danger of emphasising the dichotomy of 'us and them' and perpetuating a 'poor-but-happy' understanding of development (Bourn & Brown, 2011: 22). In an analysis of faith-based volunteering in Latin America, Baillie Smith *et al.* (2013) note: '… issues of intercultural communication, language and identity are absent, as is consideration of the unequal power relations inherent in her [the volunteer's] capacity to move in and out of "their" social and cultural spaces as they are unable to move into hers' (p. 130). It is the way in which we frame these 'encounters' that could change the nature of the learning involved in international volunteering. By negotiating taken-for-granted assumptions, international volunteering can open a space for transformative learning:

> Focusing attention on instability helps us to identify sources and sites of tension and contradiction that can shape a more postcolonial reflexivity. This can then provide a more complex picture from which to develop educative and other strategies that seek to foster a more cosmopolitan politics in international volunteering and beyond. (Baillie Smith *et al.*, 2013: 134)

3 FRAMING DEVELOPMENT

The Bond report, *Finding Frames*, argues that there is a common set of values that can motivate people to 'tackle a range of "bigger than self" problems, including the environment and global poverty' (Darnton & Kirk, 2011: 1). Frames are defined as 'cognitive devises that we can use to understand words and things, and by which we structure our thoughts' (p. 66). We understand new things by reference to our existing frames (Darnton & Kirk, 2011: 1). These are based on 'deep frames', which are structures that shape 'our fundamental values and our ideas about how the world works and our place within it' (Lakoff, 2010: 10). Frames affect the way we understand messages, and how we use reason to interpret messages. Lakoff suggests that it is essential to take our frames into account and recognise that by simply giving people information, we cannot expect that they will reason to the same conclusion because 'people have different moral systems' (p. 15).

The argument in the Bond report is that we have both surface and deep frames; the latter are based on taken-for-granted premises that we do not tend to call into question. When NGDOs conduct educational work, they often draw unconsciously on deep frames, consciously working only on associated surface frames. If a person holds a contradictory deep frame, the message will be unintelligible; information and slogans will be meaningless because 'surface frames have nothing to hang from if there are no deep frames in place' (Darnton & Kirk, 2011: 102). These deep frames need to be embedded into the work of the organisation for the surface frames to make sense. Addressing deep frames is difficult in short-term interactions, which is why sustained or long-term educational courses, in addition to a placement, may have more hope of challenging deep frames, making the messages volunteers receive during an intense international placement potentially more intelligible.

Deep frames can inform our understanding of the problems raised by postcolonial theory to development education. Darnton and Kirk (2011) argue that the word 'charity'

is seen as problematic because of the deep frames it stimulates; it taps into the 'moral order' frame, which conceives a moral hierarchy. It is more appropriate to activate deep frames associated with non-hierarchical networks. 'Development' itself is similarly problematic, as it suggests a linear path through which all nations must go, where some are higher up the moral order than others (Shanin, 1997). Indeed, many scholars have critiqued development policies seen throughout the 20th century, as models that served to maintain the status quo and the unjust relations between rich countries and ex-colonial nations (e.g. Galeano, 1971). To challenge the moral order deep frame, development education needs to disrupt Eurocentric discourses and question the assumptions of modernism, so often taken as a premise in development policy (Hoff & Hickling-Hudson, 2011: 192). Development education should therefore avoid recourse to charity that 'serves to mask the structural violence of contemporary global relations' (Jefferess, 2008: 32) and move away from moral certainties associated with the imperial ideology (Smith, 2004: 746).

Andreotti (2006) claims that the neo-liberal ideology ignores the West's complicity in current international relations and inequalities and justifies the project of development of the 'other' as a 'civilising mission'. Therefore, a framework is required that seeks to 'critically engage students with, and challenge, common assumptions and dominant theoretical frameworks of international development (such as modernisation theory) that are often engrained in mainstream development discourses' (Bryan, 2008: 63). This requires a space to question assumptions and interrogate 'European cultural supremacy' (Andreotti, 2010: 243).

Lissner (1977) argued that there was evidence of a public understanding that the development problem 'is caused by endogenous factors inside the low-income countries' (p. 9). This leads to the conclusion that all is required of us is the benevolence to help the poor through aid. This phenomenon was observed in the Voluntary Services Overseas (2002) report *The Live Aid Legacy*. This argues that public opinion has not moved on from values of pity promoted in the 1980s, with 80% of the responses to what people associate with developing countries still relating to war, famine, debt, starvation, disasters, poverty and corruption. The research of the Voluntary Services Overseas suggests that breaking down stereotypes 'will create stronger associations with people, thereby leading to a more informed, engaged population who are likely to have a more humanitarian outlook' (p. 13). More recent studies suggest that public opinion about development is still framed in these ways and that NGDOs still struggle to engage people in more critical and nuanced discussions about development and poverty (e.g. Fenyoe, 2007; Hogg, 2011).

Development education should therefore work to avoid creating cultural stereotypes and negative images of 'developing countries' (Graves, 2002) and promote a deeper, more contextualised understanding of global issues. Often, however, NGDOs struggle to get away from the emphasis on charity. Baillie-Smith (2008) interviewed NGDO educators who commented that moving away from notions of 'progress' afforded by early modernity meant that they also had to abandon the comforting grand narratives in which the 'North' is central, which they claimed offered 'a useful story around which to construct appeals for funds' (Baillie-Smith, 2008: 13). Baillie-Smith argues that these contradictions and tensions 'actually present an opportunity for NGDOs to foster a more deliberative and dialogic politics, deepen their support base and enhance global civil society' (p. 15).

There has been much debate about how organisations represent the 'global South' (e.g. Chouliaraki, 2013). Finding a place to negotiate the subjectivities and assumptions caught up in these debates could offer powerful learning opportunities. By reframing international

volunteering through appropriate development education, there is a possibility for shaping the 'widely held conceptions of international development, of relationships between the global North and South, of the legitimacy and authority of development actors, and of the rights and responsibilities of individuals and institutions' (Baillie Smith & Laurie, 2011: 556).

4 THE SPANISH CONTEXT

Definitions of development education at European level consider it to be an 'active learning process, founded on values of solidarity, equality, inclusion and cooperation' (DEEEP 2007: cited in Bourn, 2008: 3–4), leading to deeper understanding, engagement and action. In Spain, it is understood to have a dynamic character, requiring constant 'adaptation' (Celorio & López de Munain n.d.: 124). It has therefore been defined in terms of 'generations' and is closely associated with international development cooperation (Celorio & López de Munain n.d.: 124). Each generation is conceptualised as a different approach to development, with the early generations espousing a vision that corresponded to a charitable understanding of development, associated with hunger, disaster and material lacking and that were characterised by uncritical acceptance of industrialisation as development (Mujeres en Zonas de Conflicto, 2010: 24).

The fifth and current generation of development education is understood as: 'An educative process that aims to promote knowledge, attitudes and abilities that are relevant to living responsibly in a complex and diverse world' (CAONGD, 2007: 11). It aims to facilitate tools for participation and social transformation tied to justice and solidarity and for socially committed and politically active citizenship (Grupo de ED de la CONGDE 2004, Mesa 2000, Celorio 2006: cited in Mujeres en Zonas de Conflicto, 2010: 17). It promotes a critical understanding of development and globalisation, creating the conditions for people to imagine alternatives and work in networks (Celorio & López de Munain n.d.: 132). Indeed, networks are seen to increase the quality of the activities, as well as the impact of the actions that are carried out (Escudero & Mesa, 2011). The pedagogy is understood as participative, where learners and teachers collaborate to construct new knowledge. This contrasts with the concept of education in which students are empty vessels waiting to be passively filled with knowledge by the teacher, something Freire (1970) referred to as 'banking education'. Banking education is unlikely to empower learners, because if students do not learn to think for themselves, they are unable to participate in democratic processes and will accept the 'passive role imposed on them' (Freire, 1970: 54).

There is an increasing body of literature discussing the different 'generations' of development education and its evolution (e.g. Mesa, 2011). One key feature of the latest generation is the idea of the 'conscious consumer' associated with many awareness-raising activities (Mesa, 2011). Mesa argues that while practice is still mixed, in its better instances, development education has come a long way from traditional fundraising campaigns (p. 137). Indeed, Brown (2015b) found evidence of some NGDOs opening spaces for transformative learning and 'fifth generation' development education. The model of five generations is used as a tool of debate about development education. It conceptualises the emphasis of development education activities, recognising that one generation does not simply replace the previous one. Rather, 'it is about a cumulative process in the discourse and practice of development education which has not evolved

uniformly, in that activities by a particular actor, one could simultaneously find characteristics of various generations' (Mesa, 2011: 123). Development education is a dynamic process that generates reflection, analysis and critical thinking about development, oriented towards the construction of a more just world (Mesa, 2011: 137).

However, many development education activities are short-term, with a focus on awareness-raising, and that do not engage in critical reflection. Escudero and Mesa (2011) found that activities often lacked space for reflection on practice and that there is very little research aiming to reveal how educators could improve their practice (p. 5). They found that very few activities could genuinely be described as 'fifth generation', with many reflecting the charity based approach associated with the first and second generations. Moreover, the short-term nature of many activities meant that there was rarely a focus on critical pedagogies (Escudero & Mesa, 2011: 52). As the CAONGD (2007) notes, most of the administrations in Andalusia have retained a concept of development education that coincides with the 'second generation'. This implies that many NGDOs, despite recognising the discourse about 'fifth generation' development education, and the emphasis on critical understand through dialogue and active citizenship, were not always able to employ this in their practice.

5 METHODOLOGY AND QUESTIONS

The research was part of an economic and social research council-funded doctoral study on the opportunities for transformative learning through development education. This paper focuses on one in-depth case study based on one NGDO in Andalusia, Spain. This Andalusian branch of the NGDO was set up in 1991 as part of a nationwide federation dating back to the late 1960s, when it grew out of solidarity campaigns and the desire to raise awareness about global inequalities. It conducts development education and has partner organisations around the world, collaborating on development projects. The organisation runs a number of campaigns and denounces poverty and structural injustice (documentary analysis). While the campaigns target a wider public, the development education courses are self-selecting and may attract people who are interested in development and social justice. Yet, with cohorts of over 60 per year, split across two cities, the course analysed here had a range of participants of all ages and from a variety of backgrounds.

The aim of the research was to understand how attitudes and understanding about development issues were constructed. The research was informed by participant observation, through attending each of the nine intensive weekend sessions in one city, generating detailed observation notes. These sessions were complemented by observations of other events run by the NGDO and interviews and focus groups with educators, trustees and participants. The research focused on two key questions: when a development education course is designed to prepare international volunteers,

- Are there instances of pedagogies that generate critical thinking and challenge ingrained assumptions about development based on charity and a 'moral order' frame?
- Do these create opportunities for attitude and behaviour change?

These questions are answered with reference to the observation notes and interviews with the course coordinator, Carlos; three trustees, Santiago, Pilar and Melissa; and three participants, Alejandra, Belén and Juana. Alejandra was a returned volunteer from the

previous cohort, who had worked in Colombia and coordinated a group of volunteers during the course observed. Belén had done a similar course with the same NGDO in Madrid 2 years before and had travelled through them to Bolivia. She was preparing to travel to Colombia. Juana was preparing to travel to Nicaragua, having never done any international volunteering previously.

Participants could sign up to a development education course, open to adults of all ages and experience. It was divided into three phases: input sessions, from October to January, were arranged during one weekend each month, with 12 hours of sessions in which invited speakers facilitated discussion on a range of issues. Preparation sessions ran from February to June and were informal group meetings, where returned volunteers from the previous years' cohort led discussions. The final phase was the placement: 1 or 2 months working as a volunteer. Most of the projects worked with vulnerable groups, particularly children. For instance, their partners included a foster home for street children in Bolivia, support programmes for working children in Colombia and a special school for disabled children in Nicaragua. There was a nominal fee for the course of €50, and volunteers also funded their own travel and accommodation abroad, although much of this came from fundraising activities throughout the year.

6 PEDAGOGIES FOR CRITICAL THINKING

Participation was central to the course, not only in terms of pedagogy, but also as an outcome of learning (Carlos, coordinator). There was a balance between encouraging active citizenship and focusing on critical learning about complexity; it was the praxis of these two elements that was essential for transformation (Santiago, trustee). Given that many international volunteering placements have little or no pre-departure training, this organisation differed in the emphasis it placed on the course. Participants saw the course as an essential way to prepare for the intense emotional experience of volunteering:

> I think to travel without having beforehand the information, you'd lose a lot, the trip wouldn't be as productive. On the other hand I think to do the course but not travel is like not putting it into practice, not seeing it or living it for yourself. So I think both are fundamental. (Alejandra, returned volunteer)

There is debate in the literature about whether volunteers can meaningfully contribute towards the project on which they collaborate. Indeed, some have criticised the assumption that international volunteers are there to provide development aid at all, and that volunteer programmes are more successful when volunteers and hosts have expectations built around intercultural exchange (Palacios, 2010). Here, it was recognised that volunteers could contribute valuably to the partner organisation's work, but the biggest gains were for the individual in the way of new friendships, more critical knowledge, a change of habits, a better knowledge of injustice, a desire to fight against injustice in your own country, a more critical vision of your own society and a different attitude to immigrants in your own country (observation notes). Most participants did not perceive themselves as 'helping experts', but rather as learners:

> … what has served me well … is the fact that when you travel, it's not for you to give, to provide, you get there with your European knowledge … No. Basically the idea is that you fit in with what is there … it's more about what you take away, what you bring back with you, than what you can provide there. (Belén, returned volunteer)

Much of the content of the first phase of the course focused on international development and the work of NGDOs. There were sessions on issues such as global economics, structural violence and the political influence of multinationals, and the role of pharmaceutical companies in medical research. Guest speakers came from a range of organisations and universities, and there was an emphasis on a large amount of detailed information; in some cases, this was combined with participative learning activities. Practitioners were conscious of power relations (observation notes).

Information was an important starting point for any discussion, and there was an effort to find information that challenged the status quo and highlighted structural injustices. There was a balance between engaging with structural historic, economic and political factors, while empowering learners to feel they could play a part in the solutions (Pilar, trustee). The complex nature of information was rarely over-simplified, and educators talked about generating critical understanding of complexity (observation notes). The pedagogy purported to develop critical thinking skills, with space for participants to question their prior understanding through reflection and discussion. Indeed, there was an overt movement away from 'banking education' towards dialogue. As Carlos noted: '*I see it that we all educate each other … it's bidirectional*, *we find points in common*, *we all learn and to some extent we all teach*' (coordinator). Naturally, this varied extensively from session to session with speakers coming from different backgrounds. There were ice-breaker activities, discussions and participative games:

> The course is very balanced because they didn't only use lectures, but also more participative methods, they did wheels of opinions, a balance of theory and practice, group exercises too. (Alejandra, returned volunteer)

In addition, there were informal lunchtime and break-time spaces with discussions of some of the controversies behind this work, sharing links for thought-provoking documentaries on the Internet, and getting to know one another (observation notes). Networking was another important outcome, and these spaces provided opportunities to share experiences. These informal discussions were expanded on in the second phase of the course, where returned volunteers took small groups and responded to questions and doubts (Alejandra, returned volunteer). Working in this way was an opportunity for groups to get to know each other and offered a safe space to talk freely and confront their experiences with those of their peers.

On the other hand, while there was generally space for discussion, this was not always critical, and to some extent, 'doing development' (Simpson, 2004) was taught as a predetermined skill. At times, it seemed that an overload of content prohibited more participatory learning, with a tight schedule throughout the weekend; often, the rush led to torrents of information (observation notes). Some sessions were two full hours of input without a break, which seemed to offer a more 'banking' style education (Freire, 1970). As Belén pointed out, it sometimes seemed that content was given a higher priority than process:

> The input sessions are really rich in information, but of course, then you lack time to… I don't know if it's time to assimilate all that information, or time to get into the debate. Maybe that is what's missing … There's no time in the end to say for instance, let's open a round table, let's reflect on this, let's elicit the important issues, maybe that is missing. (Belén, returned volunteer)

7   CHALLENGING AND REFRAMING

In terms of challenging assumptions about development, there was an effort by the educators to promote a positive relationship with partners in the 'South', to be open and aware of complexity and to recognise similarities as well as differences (Carlos, coordinator). The focus was on mutual learning rather than aid, and facilitators stressed that the aim was to 'share' and 'get to know' (observation notes). When returned volunteers showed photos of their experiences, they highlighted that it was important to show 'the positive as much as the negative' (observation notes). Partners were seen as '*equals living in different circumstances*' (Carlos, coordinator) and their political agency was reinforced. Educators worked to avoid promoting negative images and 'problems' perceived of as endogenous to 'developing' countries and discussed negative perceptions provided by the media, aiming to show alternative stories and encourage learners to read images more critically (Carlos, coordinator). In this sense, they worked to avoid 'second generation' development education.

The key message provided by the educators throughout the course was that through international volunteering, one could learn a lot, but no one should go thinking they are going to make a significant change in the country they travel to for 2 months. Rather, by learning about other people and places in-depth and through personal experience, one comes back ready to denounce structural inequality and promote change in Spain (observation notes). As Palacios (2010) recommends, there was a move away from the discourse of aid, as Alejandra commented: '*I think that you learn more than you give … in the end it's more enriching than helping*' (Returned volunteer).

Belén noted that despite difficult circumstances and a lack of material wealth, the people she encountered were happier than people in the 'North'. This cliché is a common interpretation after such short-term encounters. There is a danger that it justifies poverty or legitimises injustice and inequality, because they 'have nothing but they are happy', there is no need to change the situation (Bourn & Brown, 2011). However, rather than justifying poverty on these grounds, Belén reflected on the unnecessary material consumption in her own life and its meaninglessness, as well as unjust modes of production. In this sense, it disrupted her notion of development, making her question the idea that progress and standards of living are measured in terms of material wealth. This helped her consider what really makes people happy, making her question the assumptions of modernisation and the doctrine of mass consumption. She showed evidence of transforming frames of reference but claimed that a month did not give her '*time to assimilate everything that's going on and changing*' in her.

Belén felt that coming into contact with ideas, cultures, lifestyles and people who are different from you for a period of a month or two could open up many boxes that she was then expected to understand, assimilate and pass on to others. Her comments demonstrate the benefits of being exposed to lots of different perspectives and how these could help someone question their assumptions, but that there was also a need for reflection on the implications of some of the feelings produced. This corresponds with Diprose's findings that post-placement reflection is essential. Belén felt caught up in stereotypes and assumptions, and she felt unprepared to assimilate the complex power relations and deeply held frames of reference involved.

Alejandra collaborated on a project with working children in Bogotá and found this gave her an insight into some issues connecting her with other people and countries. She recognised the complexity of the situation in Colombia, developing an interest and

compassion that perhaps only personal contact can bring, and she demonstrated openness to new ideas. Nevertheless, she still held some deep frames that rested on 'moral order', and she used language of 'underdevelopment':

> When I set foot in Spain, the first thing I thought was how lucky we are, not just because of the poverty, less poverty, but because of safety. … really I was never scared at any point, but the truth is you have to be very attentive, you could tell that you couldn't be normal. (Alejandra, returned volunteer)

Volunteering on a project with working children in some of the poorest barrios of Bogotá, it is perhaps not surprising that this was her impression. Yet her analysis of the experience was varied. She said that she felt safe when she arrived back in Spain, even though she claimed to have never actually felt scared in Colombia; perhaps her own preconceptions about violence in Colombia were reinforced by the experience. There appeared to be a tension between the opportunity to reframe and challenge assumptions and the vicarious experience of volunteering, which did not fully get to the bottom of structural injustices or deeply held assumptions based on modernisation as a frame for development.

So, while the course challenged the 'charity' frame and critiqued aid-based attitudes towards development on the one hand, there were occasions where the focus on rural areas and vulnerable groups presented a distorted picture of Latin America. The aid discourse was strong for some volunteers, and there was some confusion about the extent to which they were expecting to 'help' (observation notes). They tended to relate more to the digestible narratives of benevolence that formed an undercurrent of the development cooperation discourse (observation notes). The heavy colonial undertones of international development in general, and particularly the historical, cultural and economic relationship between Spain and Latin America, were never discussed, and any postcolonial critique was thus foreclosed.

8 ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

Despite these tensions in terms of the extent to which assumptions where critically challenged through the experience, there was evidence that it created opportunities for attitude and behaviour change. All learners talked about the need to raise awareness of structural injustice in the 'North' so people could learn how their actions affected people in other parts of the world: '*It's the way your consciousness develops … it creates a change in consciousness, and you can keep working on that from here when you get back*' (Belén, returned volunteer). Juana made a commitment to taking actions in day-to-day activities, and she showed a deeper understanding of structural injustice, discussing the need to consider the sources of information:

> You live in a world so caught up in your own thing that you don't realise that what comes on the evening news isn't the only truth … whichever channel or newspaper or source you read, it's not all black and white. (Juana, volunteer)

Taking time to reflect on one's attitudes also led to changes in behaviour, such as choices of professional and voluntary work and lifestyle and consumer choices. The

learners were encouraged to feel they could participate in democratic processes, including the idea that they held a power to 'vote' with their consumer habits. Creating 'conscious consumers' (Mesa, 2011) was a significant aspect of this development education. This idea was tied to wanting to consume without exploiting people or the environment:

> Before I never looked where things were made before I bought them. Since I did the course the majority of clothes that I buy I try to make sure it was made … knowing that nobody has been exploited. (Alejandra, returned volunteer)

There is often critique of the ways neo-liberalism shapes and dominates learning and that any changes fit comfortably into neo-liberal structures rather than challenging them (Mayo, 2003). While there was some evidence of this from these interviews, the notion of consumption used was broad, not necessarily tied to a capitalist conception of the term. Learners also talked about consuming food through growing their own or buying local vegetables from sustainable sources such as cooperatives. Some learners mentioned the idea of consuming less and being less dependent on material things. Belén said that what had changed in her was the detachment from material things, commenting: '*Consumerism, of course it's there … but not like here, not the constant bombardment, you know*?' (Belén, returned volunteer).

Making these small changes was seen to be consistent with taking collective action or campaigning for change, and educators supported participants who wanted to take these steps. Often, behaviour change went further: forming networks, joining movements and passing their learning onto others. As Juana commented: '*I try to become more conscious … and I try to disseminate that to people, to my friends*' (Volunteer). Many participants talked about getting more involved with organisations and movements for social justice as a result of the course:

> Now I'm more interested in the idea of participation, citizenship in general … I'm more involved in small actions, in the streets, things about solidarity … Yeah, that's something I've noticed has changed in me. (Belén, returned volunteer)

9 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The research found that there was a clear aim for the course to work with participative pedagogies, creating safe spaces for dialogue and generating critical thinking about development and global justice. The course was content-rich, with an emphasis on presenting information on issues such as inequalities, economic and social relations, the media and structural injustices. Sessions addressed the idea that we often obtain biased information, that it is important to consider the sources of our information and recognise that things are complex.

The discourse of the educators demonstrated a move away from a charity frame towards 'fifth generation' development education, and the objective of the course was described as learning rather than helping. It claimed that the principal way learners could promote change was to live through some of the issues affecting people in other contexts, in order to be able to challenge unjust practices after they returned to Spain. Educators were critical of modernisation theory and used a discourse that sought to expose causes and consequences of structural injustice.

However, this discourse existed alongside an implicit acceptance of the premise that development projects are an adequate way to address injustice, with no explicit discussion of the neo-colonial undertones of the relationship between Spain and Latin America. Through accepting the need for NGDO development projects, there was a notion that countries in the 'South' are less advanced and can be helped by inexperienced volunteers from the 'North'. Some sessions contained aspects of 'second generation' development education, which had the effect of allowing participants to rely on the comforting narratives of modernism, with no recognition of the inherent power relations. This created a tension between challenging theories of modernisation and recognising exogenous factors in the perpetuation of poverty and injustice on the one hand, and accepting the development cooperation narrative and need for benevolence on the other. As such, two discourses vied for precedence, and this had implications for learning.

By ignoring colonial relationships, or placing them in the past, a critical analysis of the effect of colonialism on the present situation was not possible (Bryan, 2012). Moreover, by allowing the charity frame to coexist with other discourses, there was a danger that, despite the educators' best efforts, participants still understood the problem to some extent as poverty and lack of development. Therefore, they did not necessarily recognise that unequal power relations require political action rather than a humanitarian analysis based on benevolence (Andreotti, 2006: 46–47). Participants were often deeply attached to the idea being able to offer 'help' to vulnerable 'others', narrowing the possibilities for understanding development in terms of alternative paradigms, thereby reducing the possibility of more radical responses (Bryan, 2012).

On the other hand, participants clearly challenged many assumptions about development, consumption and capitalism, and there were many opportunities for participants to reflect on their own consumption patterns and consider the ways they are implicated in 'perpetuating global injustices through their ordinary actions' (Bryan, 2012: 275). The discussion of consumer choices framed consumption in terms of ethically sourced and locally sourced products that supported fair trade or food sovereignty, encouraging responsible consumption and in most cases less consumption. This combined with networking and connecting with social movements, which offered more structural challenges to the status quo. The small lifestyle choices they changed were not seen as definitive solutions; rather, it was consistent that these did not reinforce structures that they fought to challenge.

All of this reiterates a key message from the literature; that deep reflection on both the self and the other is essential for volunteers to negotiate the many contradictions bound up with this work (e.g. Simpson, 2004; Palacios, 2010; Baillie Smith, 2013). It was clear that international volunteering can both perpetuate and disrupt stereotypes and attitudes (Diprose, 2012), suggesting there is a need for development education to analyse the development industry more thoroughly, using a postcolonial perspective. The contradictions of renouncing structural injustice, while simultaneously advocating small-scale charitable projects working with vulnerable groups, require a more explicit discussion of the neo-colonial tensions implicit in international volunteering programmes. This can be unnerving for volunteers and will take a great deal of time to work through and negotiate throughout the international experience and beyond. Time and space for reflection during the placement and on their return are essential. This impacts both on the possibility of overcoming the 'charity' frame and engaging in more critical analysis, and also on the extent to which this transforms attitudes and behaviour in response to global inequalities and injustice.

Of course, it is impossible to establish a causal link between the course and the attitudes of the participants; they started with an interest in development and signed up to volunteer abroad. However, participants engaged with issues over a long-term course and challenged some of their prior assumptions, demonstrating an attitude to development that, it could be argued, might have an impact on collective approaches to inequalities and on policies that affect global injustice. Indeed, in the long-term, this learning, and the networks associated with it, is more likely to affect structural change than the short placements to which volunteers contribute. So, while the 'beneficiaries' of the volunteering placement appear to be the volunteer, rather than the host community, to some extent, this was the intention.

Overall, it seems the combination of development education and international volunteering is a useful model for providing a space for dialogue and challenging assumptions based on a 'moral order' deep frame of development. The course tended towards 'fifth generation' development education in terms of its intentions. However, while there was some use of participative pedagogies, there was a need for more time for participants to reflect and explore the many complex issues and extensive information provided. The course may have benefited from more reflection on the experience post-placement and from an opportunity to debate social constructions and prejudices to help make critical judgements and recognise assumptions and biases at play in cultural immersion experiences. Clearly, there are no quick-fix solutions to the deep reflection required to engage fully with these issues. The only way to avoid over-simplifying is to embrace and negotiate the contradictions, and this requires adequate time and space to reflect, discuss and assimilate the information and experience generated by the course and the volunteering, in order to take the next steps towards more radical change.

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