

**Developing Global Citizens: Challenging  
preconceptions through creating global  
links across classrooms**

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**Abstract**

The aim of this project is to explore how children learn about African countries. It explores what effect, if any, corresponding with a class in Zambia via letter writing, videoconferencing and recording videos has on attitudes and knowledge towards Zambia. The purpose of learning about other countries is explored and what it means to develop global citizens within the context of A Curriculum for Excellence. A class of Scottish children completed mind maps about Africa before and after completing the eight week communication with a Zambian school, via letter writing, videoconferencing and filming videos. The data was analysed to track any changes in knowledge and attitude towards Zambia and Africa. The children's letters were analysed and coded to look at what they want to know about other children in Zambia. Questionnaires were completed about the various modes of communication. The results have suggested that linking schools across countries can have strong influences on children's knowledge and attitude toward that country. By developing links between two countries, the research has shown that children can develop friendships despite distance and cultural differences, helping them work towards the true global citizenship.

**Introduction**

Learning Teaching Scotland (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2011) discusses developing global citizens through *A Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE). This concept is difficult to understand as by definition citizens are 'inhabitants of a particular town or city' (Oxford dictionary online, 2015). The very idea of global citizenship is metaphorical as you cannot be a citizen of the globe as of a country or city. I want to explore how this metaphor is interpreted in the classroom. CfE discusses global citizens as people who know how the world works and understand Scotland's place in it, whilst recognising how they impact each other (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2011). This highlights the need for critical thinking and understanding to underpin what children learn within what we deem 'global citizenship.' In schools children may be involved in fundraising without a clear understanding of why. Eido et al. (2011) state that children must be given opportunities to explore why fundraising is needed. For global citizenship to be effective, particularly in the long term, it must be more than a fundraising activity. It would develop positive attitudes about other countries causing children to decide when and where fundraising is necessary as they engage with what charities do and, more importantly, why. Children must have skills to investigate and think critically whilst developing an attitude of care towards the planet and its population. Throughout this project I will explore children's preconceptions and how they develop. I want then to investigate what is effective in addressing these and guiding children to create understanding of and healthy attitudes towards African countries.

**Literature Review**

*Sustainability*

The whole world is accessible to us and there is an increasing awareness of our interdependence on one other and globally shared responsibility (Tsukamoto, Nusplinger & Senzaki, 2009). In 2006, a link was made between education and the national sustainable development policy, raising the

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commitment to sustainable development education (SDE) in Scottish schools (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2007). LTS (2011) states that children need the skills, knowledge, attitudes and values to adapt and thrive in this fast changing world. Strange & Bayley (2008) describe sustainability by three pillars: environmental, economic and social. Davies (2006) discusses the concept of social justice as ensuring a better life is not made at the expense of others. Niens & Reilly (2012) explain that children have an understanding of interdependence and sustainability. In their research children understood it as shared global responsibility. Bradbery (2012) explains that globalisation and interdependence contain possible negatives and positives both to individuals and the globe. It is essential the school ethos provides children with skills, knowledge, attitude and values to identify and make a difference in reducing the negatives (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2007).

If children are to make an impact on global issues, which UNESCO (2014) say is essential, they must be equipped to tackle controversial issues (Oxfam, 2006b). It is a requirement of the General Teaching Council Scotland (General Teaching Council, 2012) that teachers engage pupils in local and global real world issues. This is in line with CfE's aim to develop responsible citizens who have a "commitment to participate responsibly in political, economic, social and cultural life." (The Scottish Government, 2006a, p35). Davies, Harber and Yamashita (2004) and Oxfam (2006a) found that children want to know more about issues of social justice but teachers feel uncomfortable. Peters (2009) and Fournier-Sylvester (2013) suggest that to explore such issues children must consider different perspectives (Oxfam, 2006b). In discussions, Hand and Levinson (2012) highlight that teachers must facilitate so all children may participate.

### *Global Citizenship*

Davies (2006) highlights that 'world studies' existed since the 1970s however the term 'global citizenship' is relatively new. Although used regularly it is undefined. If taken literally, global citizenship would mean to become stateless for the sake of a truly cosmopolitan world (Parekh, 2003). The metaphorical term is interpreted in various ways: LTS (2011) define it as an understanding of the world and Scotland's place in it. Oxfam (1997 as cited in Bradbery, 2012; Davies, 2006) state global citizens must "be outraged by injustice and both willing and enabled to take action against it." There is tension in education between these. LTS (2011) has a neutral stance, teaching facts and allowing children to form opinions whereas Oxfam's (1997) stance is value laden. Teachers have a responsibility to facilitate children to form their own decisions, but the GTC (2012) standards state that teachers must hold values close to Oxfam's (1997) definition.

Garrison, Forest and Kimmel (2014) say global citizens must care about social injustice. Eidoo *et al.* (2011) interpret the metaphor as being people who look beyond a national perspective to see issues from other points of view searching for a positive way forward for all. This is similar to Andreotti's (2006) perspective of looking at global issues critically and subjectively. She argues that failing to do this may lead to a 'civilising mission' where we see our view as right and all countries must agree. However, it is also important that children know they can make a difference, so Andreotti's (2006) soft model aims to empower children. LTS (2011) advocate the concept "think globally, act locally." There is a danger in both types of global citizenship; in the critical model children may be disheartened and in the soft model they may assume unhealthy attitudes of superiority. These models must be carefully balanced. Dobson (2005, as cited in Andreotti, 2006) states there are both human aspects of morality and politics in global citizenship. Bradbery (2012) reinforces this, as global citizenship is ultimately about humanity. This includes considering rights and responsibilities as a global community who share common identity as humans (Davies, 2006).

Global citizenship has been criticised by Heater (2004, as cited by Niens & Reilly, 2012) as citizenship at a global scale threatens democracy. The values behind it have been questioned by Parekh (2003) as maintaining a colonial perspective, enforcing western perspectives. Parekh (2003) rejects the idea of global citizenship as something in which we put the needs of the world before our own country. It is not wrong to feel loyalty towards your own country. We are, however, all of equal worth, with the same fundamental needs and have obligations towards each other, described by Copp (2005) as the basic needs principle. Parekh (2003) argues that global Citizenship education is about creating globally oriented citizens of our native country.

Andreotti (2006) and Eidoo *et al.* (2011) both maintain that children must engage with issues and stimulate action for it to be genuine. Global citizenship is a way of thinking; it must be more than charity work. Andreotti's (2006) models of citizenship highlight this further: the soft model's aim is to enable children to act whilst the critical model enables children to think, evaluate, reflect and take responsibility.

Within CfE, The Scottish Government (2006a) talks about developing responsible citizens who create informed views and make informed decisions. This shows that children must have opportunities to explore complex issues. James (1999) suggests that this not about unveiling truth for children but providing space for children to reflect and challenge their own assumptions in a neutral environment. In order to do so, Oxfam (2006b) discuss ways of developing thinking skills enabling children to challenge information. Eidoo *et al.* (2011) say that the aim of global citizenship should be for children to strive to understand the complexity of global issues. They should be enabled and encouraged to question things heard. The Scottish Government (2006b) explains that as children learn about other countries they become informed responsible citizens. Davies (2006) and Fournier-Sylvester (2013) disagree to an extent, saying children should be treated as citizens from the start rather than taught about citizenship with the potential to one day be an active citizen.

#### *Preconceptions and stereotypes*

In Social Studies, children learn about other countries to develop an understanding of the world (The Scottish Government, 2006b). Before such topics, children already have preconceptions gained from various places, often learnt incidentally. (Catling & Willy, 2009). Oxfam (2006b) discuss the impact of media on informing knowledge and attitudes. The 2004 MORI report (as cited by Oxfam, 2006b) states 89% of children said they learnt about other countries from watching television, 66% from the internet and 42% from the news. As this study was undertaken eleven years ago it is probable that the figures will have changed substantially, however it is evident that children are influenced by the media.

CfE includes outcomes learning about the influence of media, challenging what is read and seen (The Scottish Government, 2006b). Adichie (2009, para 24) says "The problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story." Adichie (2009) explains that if the media portrays Africa to be war torn and full of poverty all of the time then that is how we will think of Africa. The Nigerian novelist was told her characters were not 'authentically African' as they did not fit the editor's perception of what it was to be African (Adichie, 2009). Indeed, media has a big impact on children's understanding and views.

The West has a long history with Africa. It has and does exploit many African countries for resources. Reid-Henry (2012) argues that inequality developed from such exploitation accounts for global poverty. Pogge (2005) highlights that any positive acts of global citizenship become

meaningless when they are causing the problem to begin with. It would be more meaningful to engage in negative acts, refraining from things which cause harm.

In Tony Blair's speech in 2001 (para, 63) he stated: "The state of Africa is a scar on the conscience of the world." He continued to state that with foreign investment and guidance we could 'fix' the mess we created which is the continent of Africa. This perspective is dangerous as it involves only western thinking (Ross, 2014), that is to see the continent as poverty stricken. Rather, Ross (2014), outlines how global advisors work alongside governments to work together in developing countries. Any form of global citizenship must contain mutual respect, working together towards a common goal, or else the shift in power will cause a one sided partnership (Hook, 1994).

Niens and Reilly (2012) and Bradbery (2014) show that how we talk and act in schools can either deepen or challenge stereotypes. Biases start developing from a young age and only strengthen over time, if unchallenged (Niens & Reilly, 2012). As Adichie (2009, para 26) says "it is impossible to engage properly with a place or a person without engaging with all of the stories of that place and that person." Using a variety of books and multicultural textbooks teachers can challenge preconceptions (Richardson, 2012). It is important, according to Davies (2006), that children realise culture is complex and not easily defined or understood. This understanding may limit stereotypes forming as children investigate beyond superficial surfaces. James (1999) explains that trying to understand a culture without depth of knowledge leads to a projection of our own beliefs and prejudices. Learning about another's culture or country is ongoing as you cannot know it in totality having come from a different cultural background (James, 1999). Reading, Auh, Pegg and Cybula (2013) explain that a greater degree of intercultural awareness leads to more appropriate attitudes, skills and knowledge.

Whether consciously or not, teachers influence children's attitudes (Bradbery, 2012). Richardson (2012) discusses the impact widely travelled teachers have on tackling stereotypes through bringing personal perspectives. This can create negative impact if the experiences of travelling were negative. Bolloten and Spafford (1998, as cited in Bradbery, 2012) say that for children to understand someone else's struggles, they must understand what it is like to be that person. Getting to know the person helps to shed pre-conceived ideas (Tsukamoto, Nusplinger & Senzaki, 2009). One way to achieve this is to communicate with others in the studied country. These links can be through writing (Shandomo, 2009; Barksdale *et al.*, 2007, Liu, 2002 and Salmon & Akaran, 2005) or videoconferencing (Bali, 2014; Reading *et al.* 2013; Hopper, 2014 and Gerstein, 2000).

#### *Connecting classrooms globally*

Gerstein (2000) discusses the evolution of connected classrooms; firstly pen-pals were organised but classes had to wait months for replies. Emails allowed faster responses, but were criticised as de-humanising communication as impersonal print replaced handwriting (Tavakoli, Hatami & Thorngate, 2010). Then in 1964 the first real time video communication occurred (Anastasiades *et al.*, 2010), allowing people to talk face to face through the internet. Since then videoconferencing has been used in the classroom for virtual tours, expert speakers and connecting classrooms globally (Reading *et al.*, 2013). In the classroom context it is not always possible to create a one to one connection through videoconferencing as Liu (2002) suggests as being most beneficial.

In Shandomo's (2009) study of pen pals between USA and Zambia the children all moved from stereotypes to a personal understanding of their pen pal. Tavakoli *et al.* (2010) and Liu (2002) found similar results in their respective studies. Primary pen pals between USA and Malawi gave children a personal understanding of the others' country, culture and life (Barksdale *et al.* 2007). There was a high level of engagement. Whilst waiting for letters to arrive the American children independently researched information about Malawi. Videoconferencing allows children to

experience some of the other culture, in Reading *et al.*'s (2013) study between Australia and Japan children even taught each other traditional dances.

Andreotti (2006) explains how knowledge is partial, built from personal experiences, when we engage with others we gain new perspectives expanding our understanding. When we communicate in this way, we become responsible to each other as mutual understanding develops. This challenges the colonial idea that one culture is superior and responsible for the 'lesser' country (Andreotti, 2006). Reading *et al.* (2013) and Hopper (2014) both got children in the two classes to work on tasks together through videoconferencing. This work brought them together and they learnt about culture incidentally. This only works if everyone involved is open to each other's perspectives, taking place in an environment that is comfortable for all (James, 1999). Within this meaningful context, the children become increasingly aware of how big the world is (Liu, 2002; Salmon & Akaran, 2005).

When learning about one another's culture, every child becomes both an expert and a learner (Gerstein, 2000). In talking about their own culture and values, they solidify them in their minds, perhaps even understanding and developing them more deeply. This is part of the aim of social studies in CfE (The Scottish Government, 2006b). Whilst it is the child who shares questions and information, the pedagogy of the teacher is vital (Gerstein, 2000; Anastasiades *et al.* 2010). Teachers must communicate so that both classes have the same goals (Barksdale *et al.*, 2007). There must be preparation before videoconferencing, perhaps for children to present something (Gerstein, 2000). As Liu (2002) states pen paling (and videoconferencing) are routed in social interaction, so the majority of time is spent talking. In preparation, Gerstein (2000) advocates children should learn to use open questions to encourage extended answers.

Reading *et al.* (2013) talk about organisation and continued evaluation of aims between teachers. Gerstein (2000) also highlights practical concerns such as time zones and the set up of technology for videoconferencing and the delivery of letters.

As the content of the letters and videoconference sessions are not prescribed the children have choice and personalisation, ensuring everything covered is relevant and interesting (Lawson, Comber, Gage, Cullum & Hanshaw, 2010). The children in Barksdale *et al.*'s (2007) study were found looking for similarities, helping form connections. This reinforces LTS's (2011) aim in global citizenship to see all people as having essential commonalities, giving an understanding of human rights and responsibilities.

Bali (2014) highlights intercultural dynamics must be considered such as pedagogy, some cultures do not encourage students to speak out whilst others encourage it. English is an additional language to much of the world, Bali (2014) questions if translation should be offered. One group of children should not have power over the other and teachers should ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate. Letter writing allows children time to think about responses and have a more personal correspondence rather than being one in a crowd talking in a videoconference (Barksdale *et al.*, 2007).

Therefore the use of pen pals and videoconferencing opens up the world to students. Whilst there are several studies in this area, I only found two, mentioned by Lawson *et al.* (2010) and Edge and Khamsi (2012) undertaken across the UK showing a gap in Scottish research.

### **Methodology**

The study was conducted within a Paisley school, situated within an area of 26% income deprived households (The Scottish Government, 2011), double the Scottish average. The primary seven

class consisted of eleven girls and fifteen boys. Whilst the majority of children were Scottish, one boy was Indian and another girl was Lithuanian.

It was important to consider that there are multiple constructed realities when analysing knowledge and attitude (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 as cited in Evans, 2013). These complicated webs of thought influenced by various sources make it difficult to predict attitudes and values. Qualitative research methods were selected as they allow for unexpected results. The data collected was analysed in part through quantifying aspects of the results, forming the basis of discussions (Evans, 2013).

As the very nature of global citizenship in schools is a moral endeavour (Andreotti, 2006) I had to ensure I did not influence the children with my own opinion. In collecting and interpreting data I had to carefully consider methods which limit bias of my own beliefs (Koshy, 2010).

#### *Modes of communication*

Throughout the study, the class communicated with children from Zambia in three forms; letter writing, videoconferencing and filming videos. As Gerstein (2000) and Bali (2014) discuss, each mode presents positive and negative aspects. Using a mixture of all methods therefore creates a richer experience. Evans (2013) states that triangulating methods strengthens the internal validity as hidden pupil preferences, skills and confidences may affect attitudes.

#### *Mind maps*

I adapted Shandomo's (2009) study where children completed a KWL grid (what they know, want to know and later learned) to assess knowledge of another country. The children, in groups of four, wrote down everything they knew about Africa and Zambia. This was then coded into different topics to analyse trends of thought. As the original mind maps were completed with no direct teaching the ideas show prior knowledge (Evans, 2013). All content covered was via the children's communication, limiting practitioner influence (Evans, 2013). Concluding the study the mind map was repeated and evidence gathered from the two sets of mind maps was compared to analyse change in knowledge and attitude towards Zambia and Africa. Mills (2011) advocates open questions, this was important when collecting data through mind maps as the children explored questions however they wished. This provided accurate data of how they understood and prioritised their knowledge.

#### *Questionnaires*

The children completed questionnaires about the different modes of communication. Munn and Drever (2004) explain that questionnaires allow data to be collected efficiently from large groups. Munn and Drever (2004) state that whilst closed questions provide quick, easily comparative data they also create limitations as respondents are not as free in their responses. Therefore through using a mixture of open and closed questions the data collected showed a better overall picture. Munn and Drever (2004) advocate that as questionnaires are anonymous there is freedom in answering honestly, knowing they will not be judged for it, providing reliability. The answers from open questions will be analysed by highlighting key themes (Evans, 2013). By coding the data, Mills (2011) states, patterns are easily detected. There are limitations to completing data collection through mind maps and questionnaires as the children could not expand or clarify (Evans, 2013).

#### *Analysing letters*

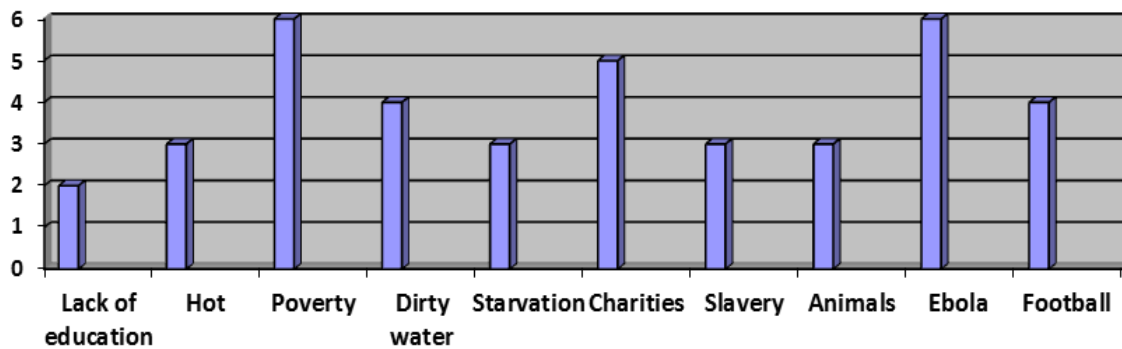
The letters written were analysed to evaluate what the children wanted to know about the Zambian children. This is adapted from Barksdale *et al.*'s (2007) study in which letters between Malawi and America were analysed. By looking through letters, common questions and thoughts were identified. This shows validity in answering what children are interested in finding out about

the children in Zambia as the letters were written independently. (Lawson *et al*, 2010). Whilst Mills (2011) states that pupils' work may be difficult to quantify, it is a valuable source of data showing what the children are thinking.

**Findings and Discussion**

1. *What are children's understandings of Africa?*
2. *What influences children's knowledge and attitudes toward Africa?*

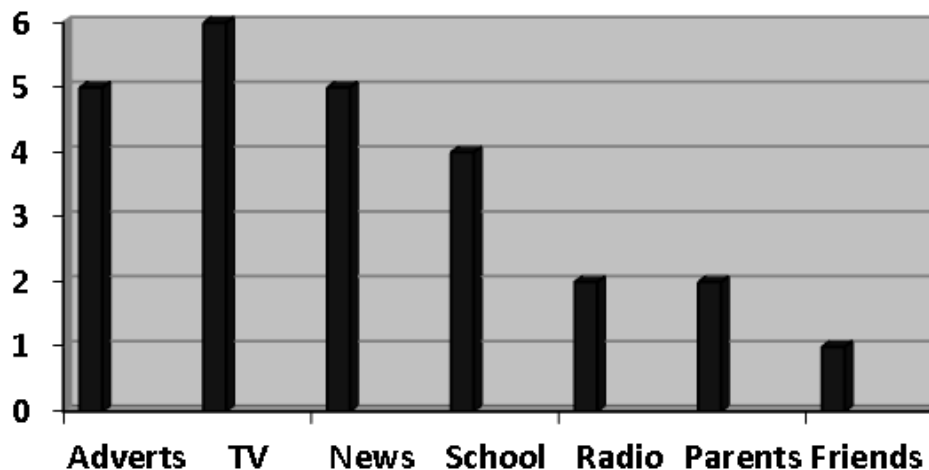
The chart in figure 1 was collected from mind maps completed by children prior to communication with Zambia. The vertical axis indicates the number of groups (n=6).



**Figure1.** Initial thoughts about Africa

Most common aspects represented hold negative connotations, reflecting the adult findings of Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO, 2001 as cited in Scott, 2009). This may be partly due to influences around children; if adults reflect certain attitudes children may adopt them (Oxfam, 2006b).

Figure 2, shows where the children say they learned about Africa. The vertical access indicates the number of groups (n=6).



**Figure 2.** where the children say they learned about Africa

Whilst we are aware of some influences, many are unknown (Niens & Reilly, 2012). Therefore some influences may have more or less impact than shown. At the time of the research, Ebola was a major problem in West Africa. All 6 groups mentioned Ebola, showing they are influenced

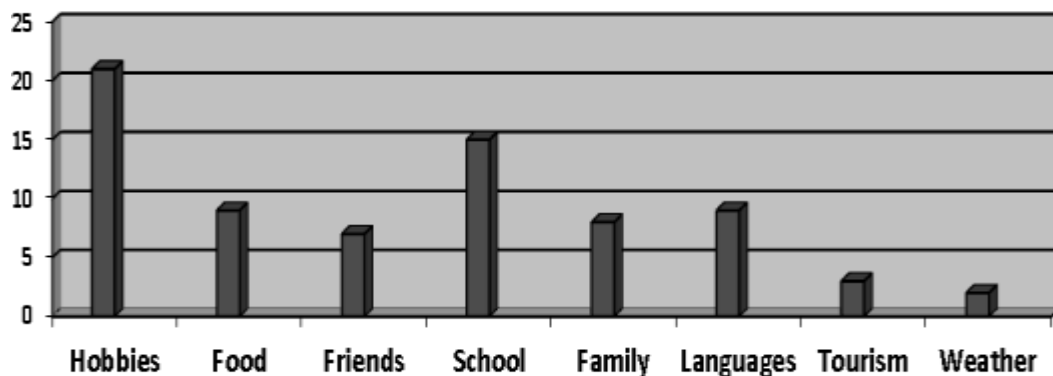
by current affairs to some extent. In discussion, many children held the misconception that all countries in Africa were infected. This reinforces what Adewunmi (2014) states that Africa is thought of as if it were one country. Two groups mentioned Africa as a country, whilst only two groups called it a continent.

Advertisements inform children, however misconceptions can also arise. One group wrote “It is a very poor country about 70% of them are poor.” This statement shows misunderstandings such as that Africa is a country and generalisations made. Further examples are “There is no schools so that does not provide education” and “The water is very dirty.” These appear to be ideas gained from adverts and widely generalised.

Four out of six groups cited school as an influence. This highlights the impact teachers have on children’s knowledge and attitudes about other countries. Niens and Reilly (2012) and Bradbery (2014) both state that not only direct teaching but also the attitude shown by teachers affects children. Although no direct teaching was used in the study, the attitude of the teacher in the class may affect children’s thoughts.

### 3. What do children want to know about different cultures?

The children had complete freedom to write about and ask the Zambian children whatever they wanted. The following graph, figure 3, shows what they wanted to know from the first letter. The vertical axis indicates number of letters (n=26)



**Figure 3.** What children wanted to know from first letter

The most common questions asked were about hobbies and school. These are topics the children can relate to. Most stated their own opinion before asking their pen friend. Andreotti (2006) states that if global citizenship and globalisation is about interdependence we must be willing to give of ourselves. It is through give and take of learning that respect and mutual trust can be built. Andreotti (2006) argues that without mutual respect and seeing global citizenship as only a moral duty than we take all power, seeing ‘the other’ as weak, which does not empower but destruct. By allowing children to both give of themselves and learn from others this attitude of authentic help (Hook, 1994) can begin to be fostered.

In Barksdale et al’s (2007) study, children did not focus on differences, but strived to find commonalities. These two extracts below show how the children here also did this.

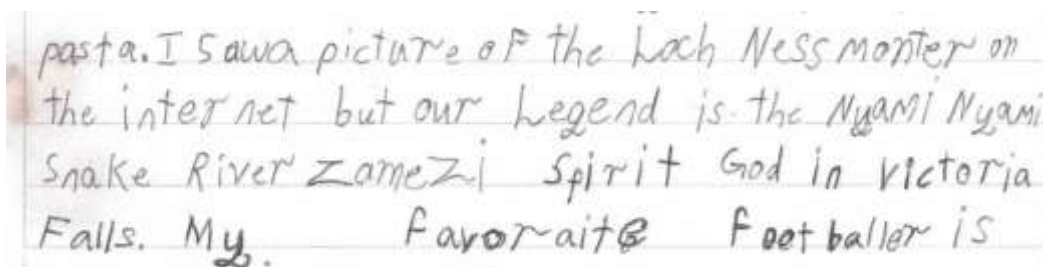
type of dogs do you have? We both have the same favourite colour, I love the colour blue too!



The children showed great excitement when realising children in Zambia had similar interests to them. The boys, in particular, wanted to know what football teams the Zambian children supported. One girl even exclaimed, 'She's the Zambian me!' when discovering her pen friend loved to dance and sing just as she does. This helped the children to see the children in Zambia as being of equal value as themselves, people who share common goals and desires (Parekh, 2003). Knowledge is partial, built constantly from what we already know (Andreotti, 2006). It is because of this that within the Experiences and Outcomes of CfE the Scottish Government (2006b) suggests comparing learning about a new place to life in Scotland. The children showed this to be natural, as they begin with their knowledge of Scotland and explore Zambian parallels. An example of this is shown below:

I also found out by reading your letter, you like 2 sports that i do; which are sprinting and swimming. I can't remember if i told you this but i am in a sprinting team which is called Killbarchan Running Team.

Here the child used his knowledge of legends from a familiar context to learn something new about Zambia, shown in the reply:



pasta. I saw a picture of the Loch Ness monster on the internet but our legend is the Nyami Nyami Snake River Zamezi Spirit God in Victoria Falls. My favorite footballer is

Through creating questions the children continually reflected on their own knowledge of Scotland, building on it to learn about the wider world. This was shown in what children considered important information to share about Scotland.

Many children showed an understanding of stereotypes and sought to know what Zambia is really like. For example, the children knew that haggis is the traditional food of Scotland, but they do not eat it regularly. An example of asking about the 'real Zambia' is shown below:

In Scotland the traditional food is haggis and mashed potato. But I like egg and sausage. Is there any traditional Zambian food? What do you like to eat? My hobbies are playing football and playing on

4. What impact, if any, does studying culture through a personal link have on children's attitude and knowledge toward that culture?

When completing the study the children, in the same groups of four, completed another mind map about what they know about Africa and Zambia in order to see what, if any, changes in knowledge and attitude had occurred.

It was difficult to find many common themes as comments varied across many aspects such as animals, water, poverty, weather and bordering countries. This reinforces Adichie (2009) who states that to really understand or connect to a place you must look at it from different angles. The children learnt various things as the Zambian children had different backgrounds. As the children discussed their letters with one another, they shared stories of life in Lusaka, providing a more holistic understanding.

In general, comments on the mind maps were much more positive than pre-study. Aspects mentioned by at least half of the groups included safari animals, shopping centres and markets, football, water pumps and poverty. This shows there was some shift in attitude as they focussed on positive aspects. The children, at points, compared knowledge learnt about Zambia to Scotland – for example, one group wrote “There’s a shopping centre, like Braehead, called Manda Hill.” This showed that they were able to relate to life in Zambia by thinking about their own life.

The children mentioned some negative aspects. This includes Ebola, mentioned by three groups, half as many as previously. This may be because the Ebola crisis was not in the news by post-study. Comments about Ebola were more specific than previously, one group wrote (NW) and another wrote “West Africa”, showing an understanding that not all of Africa was affected. Poverty was also mentioned by three groups. In the first mind maps, there were broad statements made such as “There is terrible poverty in Africa!” and “Africa is poor.” In comparison, the children did not make as many generalised claims, with comments such as “Not all countries in Africa are poor” and “There is poverty in Africa, but not as much as there’s made out to be.” This shows the children are starting to think critically and more widely than what is shown in advertisements (Andreotti, 2006 and Scottish Government, 2006b). It is important that the children recognise poverty exists as well as thinking positively, as according to Oxfam (2006b) they need a balanced view. This may motivate children to make a difference as they are aware of problems, whilst also holding respect for others. It is important not to pity others but work together as true Global Citizens (Hook, 1994).

There was a sense of appreciation of diversity across Africa which was previously missing. The children went from talking about Africa as being hot to mentioning different seasons. Four groups rather than two talked about Africa as a continent, no one called it a country. One group said there are 73 languages in Zambia. This shows a shift in attitude, children who, as Adichie (2009) states, are thinking of people and places in different ways, challenging stereotypes. Throughout discussions, one child was surprised the children had uniforms and another in a questionnaire said they learnt there was internet in Africa. These comments show how the children’s preconceptions had been challenged.

In completing questionnaires six children wrote they learnt that Africa is not all in poverty and five that children in Zambia were similar to them. This shows a change in both knowledge and attitude as they engaged with children in Zambia.

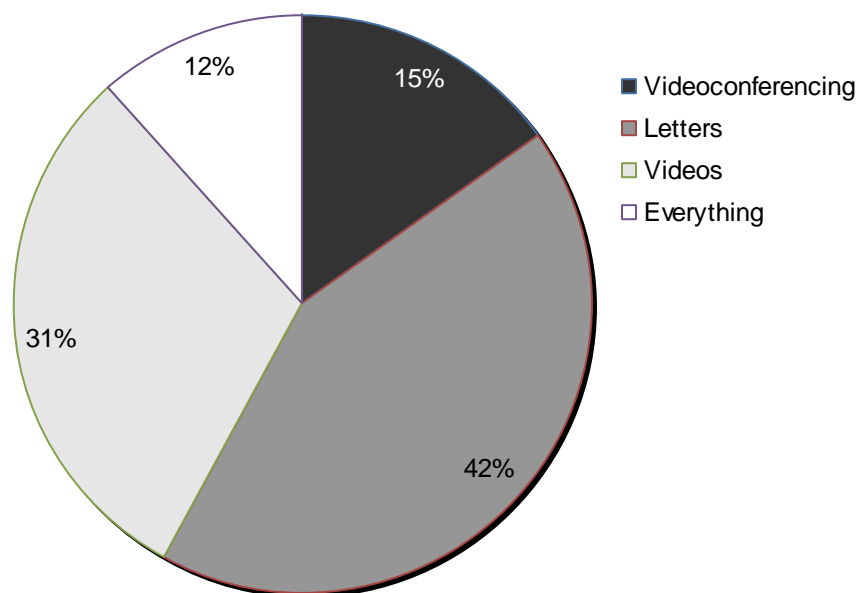
##### *5. Which forms of communication with another school are most effective?*

Throughout the study, the children communicated in three ways: videoconferencing, letter writing and filming and receiving videos. The children were asked which mode of communication they enjoyed most and the results are in figure 4.

The children were divided on which mode of communication was most effective, with letter writing being most popular. Each mode of communication will be discussed, using observations and children’s comments.

### Letters

All children wrote two letters to children in Zambia. Some letters were written by hand and some typed. They were scanned and emailed to save time (Gerstein, 2000). The children enjoyed writing letters for various reasons, the most common throughout the questionnaires appeared to be they were personal, each child had their own person to write to and create a bond with. Frustration was shown when the project finished as many wanted to develop their friendship.



**Figure 4.** Communication preferences

### Videoconferencing

Videoconferencing was completed using “Skype.” Anastasiades *et al.* (2010) discuss the different elements of organisation needed to set up Skype for the classroom. The first is communication between teachers. Many practical aspects must be considered, such as when, duration, purpose and content of the session (Reading *et al.*, 2013). In order to maintain this, the communication application “Whatsapp” was used. During the videoconferencing session each teacher facilitated their class so that every child had a chance to speak (Bali, 2014.)

Another aspect of organisation is technology. As Gerstein (2000) predicts, there were difficulties in setting up this invaluable resource. Whilst the school was supportive, the local authority has blocked Skype. An outside laptop, projector and internet source was needed to videoconference. The connection was affected and at times the sound muted and picture blurred, but overall the session ran well.

Prior planning was completed with the children. As Gerstein (2000) states, children should use open ended questions to receive full and detailed answers. As advocated by Lawson *et al.* (2010) the children also brought in Scottish objects to show.

The children enjoyed the Skype session and spoke about it often. From the questionnaires, the children enjoyed the immediacy of videoconferencing, receiving quick responses. They appreciated seeing their pen friend face to face and found the letters more effective afterwards. The children enjoyed seeing the learning environment of the Zambian children and hearing their accents. They were frustrated by difficulties in connection and time constraints, wishing to have longer.

### *Videos*

The children, in pairs, created short videos including information about Scotland, themselves and the school. They also received similar videos from Zambia. This allowed the children to set what they have learnt through the letters and videoconferencing in context (Shandomo, 2009).

Through the questionnaires, the children said they enjoyed watching the videos as they were much clearer than videoconferencing. The children could watch the videos several times. Some of the children wished they could see the Zambian children they were talking to whilst filming. Other children liked that they had time to think about what to say carefully and record messages. One girl was enabled to show highland dancing without everyone watching her.

From the literature review, videoconferencing was expected to be most popular (Gerstein, 2000). There are many possible reasons why it was not. As videos were used, it could be that those who enjoyed using technology were split amongst videos and videoconferencing. The connection was not stable and if unblocked the connection might improve and more children may have chosen this. It is also clear from the questionnaires that the children valued the personal touch the videos and letters provided.

Each mode of communication provided a different experience. Videoconferencing allowed for genuine face to face conversation and the videos allow time to think of what to say and are of better quality. They learnt details about one another's lives through writing letters in order to build friendship. Due to this, the most beneficial mode was to balance all three, allowing positive aspects of each to balance out frustrations. Each mode will be natural for different children and provide a holistic experience.

### **Conclusions and implications**

Similarly to Shandomo's (2009), Liu's (2002) and Salmon and Akaran's (2005) studies the children's knowledge about Zambia grew and became more detailed, breaking preconceptions. They began thinking about people in their diversity, rather than a stereotypically. Their attitude towards both Zambia and Africa as a whole showed a small shift from focussing on negative to positive images. They began to think more critically about advertisements, considering what is shown within a bigger picture.

In contradiction to Gerstein (2000) the children did not find videoconferencing the most valuable mode of communication. Rather, letter writing was seen to be the most popular, due to the children's priority for a personal touch and one to one communication. The children, similarly to Barksdale *et al.*'s (2007) study, did not choose to focus on the differences between them but what was in common.

Oxfam (2006a) and Andreotti (2006) both discuss how true global citizenship is about working together towards one goal. In order to do this it is not our differences that should be focussed on but our common goals, values and attitudes (Oxfam 2006a). I would argue that schools need to think carefully about what message they are sending as they teach about other countries. We can learn effectively about how common needs differ in various places such as what food is eaten in to value diversity but the core value of respect must be developed.

The idea of facilitating global friendships may provide a solution to the tension of neutral global citizenship education (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2011) and instilling values deemed healthy to encourage action (Oxfam, 1997 as cited in Bradbery, 2012). Here the children were given opportunity to develop friendships where subtly and naturally values and respect can form. Where human interaction is concerned there is always a risk, due to the unpredictability of

human nature. The aims set out for may not be achieved and any stereotypes and unhealthy attitudes could be engraved further. However, I would argue friendship and respect across cultures is worth the risk.

Technology can be used in many diverse ways, as shown to some extent through this study. Reading *et al.* (2013) discuss how Skype can be used to create meaningful learning contexts and experiences for children. However, this is not translated into practice as effectively as it could be. Further research could be undertaken into the use of Skype and other technologies for communication in order for local councils to see the value and look into how these can be used safely within the classroom.

As discussed, for school links to be created the teachers must communicate effectively with one another (Reading *et al.*, 2013). For this to work the teachers of both schools must be respectful of the goals the other is attempting to achieve and enthusiastically lead by example to create a cross cultural team. Further research could be undertaken in this area to support teachers in how to set up and maintain school links.

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