

**THE GLOBAL DIMENSION IN INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION
A CASE STUDY OF TWELVE MENTORS AND TWELVE ITE STUDENTS
FOLLOWING A BA (Ed) DEGREE PROGRAMME.**

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Abstract

This paper considers initial teacher education (ITE), and its role in incorporating the global perspective. It is a case study of one higher education institution (HEI) involved in the Global Teacher Project (GTP) in the UK. The concept of robust and fragile global educators is put forward as a tool for planning and evaluating programmes that incorporate the global dimension in teacher education.

Key words: teacher education; global dimension; 'robust' and 'fragile' learners.

Introduction

The GTP is an innovative approach to the promotion of the Global Dimension in ITET. This paper analyses the impact of the project on twelve student teachers and teacher mentors over an eight-week teaching practice at Swansea Institute of Higher Education in Wales. Students worked in primary (age 5-11) schools. The GTP and the HEI collected case study data in the form of lesson plans, evaluations, student observations and interviews with those involved. The GTP coordinator and teacher educator analysed the data to explore the research question: *'What are the characteristics of successful global teachers and teacher mentors?'* This question guided our examination of our raw data. Using grounded theory, (Strauss and Corbin 1990) we looked for conceptual labels to categorise our data and eventually drew on Claxton's (1999) concepts of 'robust' and 'fragile' learners. For Claxton 'robust' learners display a range of characteristics he refers to as the '4 R's':

Figure One. Robust learners personal attributes

* Resilience in the face of difficulty, characteristics of persistence and determination.
* Resourcefulness can draw on a range of strategies to help when they are 'stuck'.
* Reflectiveness able to use meta cognitive strategies.
* Reciprocity able to work effectively and empathetically with others.

These concepts allowed us to develop a continuum on which to map our data to identify robust learners in terms of the 4R's providing an insight into the personal

attributes of the students, which we judged to be necessary components of robust global teachers, however, we soon realised they were not sufficient. As well as personal characteristics, global educators would need knowledge, understanding and skills. In the UK, the government (DfES 2000) list the following eight key concepts that should make-up the global dimension (figure 2):

Figure Two

citizenship	sustainable development	social justice
human rights	interdependence	conflict resolution
values & perceptions	diversity	

Whilst our robust/fragile continuum provided for the personal attributes of a global educator – it did not cater for the knowledge and understanding aspect, here the work of Perkins' (1997) and his discussion of fragile knowledge helped us to extend our continuum to incorporate the knowledge and understanding aspect of global teaching. For Perkins, the 'fragile knowledge syndrome' incorporates the idea that pupils leave school with a 'trivial pursuits' view of knowledge. Our research suggests that some of our student teachers suffer from 'fragile knowledge syndrome':

Figure Three. Fragile knowledge

Do not understand what they are learning.
Have a fragile grasp of many key concepts even after considerable instruction.
Suffer from deep-rooted misconceptions (for example in science and maths) and stereotypes (influencing their response to the humanities)

According to Perkins, someone who has 'robust knowledge demonstrates the characteristics in Figure 4, summarised as constituting the *meta-curriculum*.

Figure Four. Robust knowledge

Can explain something;
Provide an example of it;
Apply it to new phenomenon;
Justify it through offering evidence;
Compare and contrast it with other ways of looking at the world;
See how specific knowledge fits with other ideas;
Can suggest general principles emerging from their understanding.

Robust global educators should be able to plan and implement practice to embed the core concepts into the statutory curriculum and show they have grappled with their own misconceptions and stereotypes as well as those from the society at large.

Application of the theoretical model

We wished to represent our core concept of robust and fragile global educators to incorporate the two aspects of the robust/fragile continuum: the personal attributes and dispositions of the global educator (the 4 Rs); and the meta-curriculum knowledge, understanding and skills encapsulated in the ability to embed the concepts of the global dimension in the curriculum. Data analysis placed students on a robust/fragile continuum for both these aspects and incorporated the sub-categories that made up the core concepts (see appendix.1).

Discussion of the continuum

The top line has a robust-fragile continuum showing how each student incorporated the global dimension in the curriculum. This continuum goes from a one-off activity, integration into subject planning through to infusion across the curriculum. The horizontal line shows how many subject areas included the global dimension. The students, listed down the left-hand side, are ordered hierarchically with those who were able to infuse the global dimension into the whole curriculum at the top down to those who planned one-off activities at the bottom. The activities planned were also analysed to determine which of the concepts (figure 2) they covered and these are written on the horizontal line. The diagram shows a tally box of the number of times each concept was covered.

The second horizontal line indicates students' position on the second continuum – the 4Rs, indicating fragility or robustness in the personal qualities. Students scored a high, medium or low position on each of the 4Rs. These were then amalgamated to place them on the continuum. The level for each one is indicated on the line.

The robust students

Having completed the continuum we compared and contrasted the students to identify similarities and differences between them. Four students identified as personally 'robust' have some things in common: all of them demonstrated sustained intellectual curiosity beyond the life of the project; three of them opted for a voluntary second placement with a global teacher mentor on their final teaching practice; four opted to

complete their final year dissertation on global education to extend their understanding of core concepts and practices in global education.

The teacher mentors emerged as an important mechanism in supporting the students. Three of them had characteristics we would associate with robust teacher mentors: the ability to model good practice in global education, and provide an apprenticeship approach (Lave & Wenger 1991) by demonstrating and coaching good practice. They also demonstrated sustained intellectual curiosity beyond the life of the project: one completed her MA dissertation on the GTP and presented at national and international conferences; four contribute to the BA (Ed) on the global dimension; two are preparing accredited modules for teachers incorporating the global dimension.

Whilst it is clearly an advantage for students to work with such teachers, it is not necessarily this factor that made the difference in terms of student position on the continuum. The student who is highest on the continuum in personal robustness did not work with one of these teacher mentors, yet she demonstrates all of the 4R's. The factor that seems to have made the key difference to her is intrinsic motivation.

The continuum also helps us to see the possibility that a student may have high levels in some of the robust characteristics, but low levels in others. One showed very high levels of resilience and resourcefulness, but low levels of reflectivity and reciprocity. The most important factor in this difference appears to be motivation. Motivating factors appeared to be mainly extrinsic, and the student therefore has many of the characteristics we would associate with fragile learners as discussed below.

The fragile students

A consideration of the students who cluster on the fragile end of the continuum also reveals similarities and differences between them. Two worked with teacher mentors who demonstrate fragility. This lack of a positive role model clearly impacted on their development. Although in both schools there were other mechanisms in place to support the global dimension, for example, either commitment from the head teacher or the senior mentor, this was not sufficient to provide the kind of support the fragile learners needed. Three fragile learners were largely driven by extrinsic factors. Only one was intrinsically motivated and made the most progress on the continuum.

Intrinsic motivation and sustained intellectual curiosity emerge as important factors when considering the impact of the GTP on student teachers and their mentors. None of the fragile students demonstrated the meta-curriculum knowledge to infuse the global dimension in the curriculum. They could not see the opportunities or potentials within the planned curriculum. They demonstrated little resilience in face of this difficulty and showed little resourcefulness. Reflecting on why they were unable to embed the global dimension, they blamed it on external factors.

One fragile student achieved highly in terms of national standards for ITET, yet on our global teacher continuum appears fragile. This shows that the required knowledge, skills, values and attitudes for global teaching do not form part of the standards on which students are assessed. Until global education is embedded into the assessment process students could achieve highly and not have the knowledge and understanding or personal characteristics necessary to be competent global educators.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The theory presented here has been inductively derived from empirical data generated from the GTP. The concept of robust and fragile global educators has the potential to provide a diagnostic tool to help judge the effectiveness of student teachers in a way that identifies both their strengths and weaknesses. It can provide an indication of how to plan further training to move individuals along the robust/fragile continuum. We need opportunities to use the theory described here to analyse the impact of strategies to promote the global dimension in teacher education. This evaluatory tool provides a mechanism to measure and analyse the impact of training on practice and help students move along the robust/fragile continuums.

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