Watering Cans or the Fire Brigade? African Voices in the Classroom

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> "Africa is a continent in flames. And deep down, if we really accepted that Africans were equal to us, we would all do more to put the fire out. We're standing around with watering cans, when what we really need is the fire brigade." Bono

This Bono quote is from an interview with the BBC thirteen years ago during the 'Make Poverty History' campaign. Since the Live8 concert in 2005 there have been significant changes to global economics and politics and even more since Live Aid concert twenty years earlier in 1985. We are told that the Millennium Development Goals are making a difference but for millions of people across the African continent fundamental global inequalities are inhibiting their full participation in the world economy. The lives Africans living on the margins or caught up in civil conflict are still as vulnerable as they were thirty years ago. The recent and ongoing 'famine' across East and West Africa and is a testimony to the legacy of European colonialism and a 'Western' negation of responsibility. After years of campaigning are we any nearer to accepting African people as our equals? Are we still using watering cans to douse the flames of an imperialist hangover? I hope that this presentation on African Voices in the classroom will provide an answer, or at least an explanation, to the questions posed by Bono in 2004.

Perceptions of Africa

> "...they show African children on TV drinking dirty water." Year 6 pupil

This was the response from a 10 year old to a question I asked a Year 6 class of primary pupils about why their views of Africa were so negative. The rest of the class affirmed what the pupil had said by nodding their heads and adding comments such as 'I've seen that one' and 'they're all like that'. It was a reference to one particular charity advertisement the pupil had seen on TV which had informed or shaped his perception of Africa. I probed a little further and asked the class whether they knew who made the advert and why. None of the pupils could remember but all agreed that it was a charity wanting money to dig wells.

Charity advertisements, like the one the pupils were referring to, shape and inform young people's perceptions of Africa. If no one challenges these images young people unquestioningly accept them as fact. This was something that Stephen Scoffham concluded after reviewing evidence from academic studies of children's perceptions of the wider world.

> "Without intervention infants are liable to accept uncritically the bias and discrimination they see around them. Stereotypes promoted in advertisements and stories of war, famine and disasters in the media further distort their perceptions. At the same time the influence of parents and peer group pressure may also serve to confirm negative views." (Scoffham, 1999, p134-135)

My question to the Year 6 class about why their views of Africa were so negative was prompted by an assessment activity I had asked them to complete the previous week. They were given a blank map of Africa and asked to write or draw anything that came to mind about Africa. A sense of

‘lack’ was pretty much common to all the African maps. A lack of food, a lack of clean water, a lack of health care and a lack of education all contributed to a perception of poverty and underdevelopment. This view of Africa is not new and is one that has changed little over the past twenty years. In a study undertaken by Gambrill in 1996, using the same blank Africa maps as a means of assessing young people’s perceptions of Africa, very similar views were expressed by Year 5 pupils. It occurred to me that day that the problem was not the failure of schools to challenge stereotypical perceptions of other peoples and cultures but something much more entrenched with our civil society.

This view was recently affirmed when I asked a group of undergraduates, who were studying a module on Contemporary Africa, to complete the same Africa map exercise. Whilst some of the students, who had had an opportunity to visit Africa for themselves, expressed a more balanced perspective of the continent there were many others who expressed the same perception of ‘lack’ that the Year 6 pupils had. When presented with Year 6 African maps, to compare with their own, one student commented on how ‘weird’ it was that primary school children had similar perceptions of Africa to university undergraduates.

I have no doubt that all schools strive to promote equality and an appreciation of diversity but, in the case of young people’s perceptions of Africa, they too, more often than not, accept unquestioningly the images of Africa portrayed by charity advertisements. Their endorsement of charities, and their willingness to organise fundraising events in school on behalf of them, propagates a perception amongst young people that ‘they’ have the problem and ‘we’ have the solution without any examination of the causes of the inequality.

> “At a broader, societal level, a neo-liberal discourse is evident in media representations of the South and the unquestioning assumption that the problem can only be fixed through aid and the work of NGOs such as Oxfam, UNICEF, and CAFOD, and charitable organisations such as Comic Relief and Sport Relief… In the same way that the South is so often represented by the single story of ‘lack’—of wealth, education, sanitation—so too solutions are represented by a single story of ‘aid’. Again, the causes of inequality are hidden under the ideal of the concept of care which, liberals would argue, represents a universal morality.” **(**Martin F & Griffiths H, 2011)

Charities are well respected and valued institutions within British civil society. To challenge their status and even suggest that their actions may be racist is akin to poking a stick into a hornet’s nest. On the whole the British public assume, without question, that what charities do can only be for the common good and, therefore, their representation of the problems they seek to address must be true. However, over the past 25 years many critics of charity fundraising adverts based on the use of imagery depicting ‘lack’ have tried to penetrate their Teflon coated public image.

Since the drought in the Sahel in the 1980s, and the exposure given to the victims of the ensuing famine by Band Aid and Live Aid, charity fundraisers have learnt how to effectively use the media to evoke compassion, sympathy and financial support from the British public. At the time there were some who criticised their use of overly negative images, depicting hungry, potbellied children, to evoke compassion from the viewer. So, in response, charities ceased using the most controversial ‘negative’ images and adopted a policy of ‘deliberate positivism’ depicting African

people as self-reliant and active. However, a study by Rhian Richards in 2004, which investigated the impact of using more positive images in charity advertisements, suggested that the change had little impact on people's perceptions of Africa.

> "…the use of more balanced and equitable images in charity advertising has had little effect on the British public perception of the Third World. For most of the focus group participants it was impossible to think of the developing world as anything other than one which desperately needs help." (Richards, 2004)

In 2007 another researcher, Nandita Dogra, conducted a study into the visual images used by International NGOs in their campaigns over a 25 year period. She also found that even though charities had over the years moved away from overtly 'negative' disaster images and adopted a policy of 'deliberate positivism' the content of the images used mostly depicted rural settings. In her conclusions Dogra identifies and questions the influence charity adverts have on propagating and maintaining stereotypical perceptions.

> "The images studied seem to raise the question of INGOs' possible contribution to the making and instutionalisation of the existing 'myth' by their subtle but persistent depictions of a stereotyped 'agrarian' Third World made up only of farmers." (Dogra, 2007)

Dogra also conducted a detailed analysis of the imagery used in charity adverts over the period of a year (Dogra, 2012). She found that about 72% of the characters in the images were children, mothers and children or women from, what Dogra refers to as, the 'Majority World'. She accuses charity campaigners of not only stereotyping Africa as 'agrarian' but of also infantilising and feminising the continent. In addition, Dogra points out that by marginalising male characters in the adverts charities avoid being associated with stereotypical images of 'bad' men such as corrupt leaders or guerrilla fighters.

> "The dominant characters in INGOs' messages and their typifactions infantilise and feminise the Majority world as a place inhabited by mostly vulnerable women and children towards whom the male / adult/ doer Developed World can be paternalistic and helpful." (Dogra, 2012)

Dogra also noted that, in her discussions with charity campaigners, adverts containing images depicting characters from Africa and Asia were more likely to be successful than adverts containing images depicting characters from Latin or South America. Andrea Cornwall in her 'Critical Stories for Change' report for Action Aid (Cornwall, 2005) also questions the lack of images of Brazilian children in sponsorship adverts and asks why the good practice in the charity's development work in South America is not reflected in the organisation's marketing campaigns. Neither of the authors explicitly used the word 'racist' in their commentary but in both cases it is implied that the use of images of black women and children in marketing campaigns is an acknowledgement that those who donate equate poverty with the colour of a person's skin.

It is clear from this evidence that those involved in charity marketing are primarily in the business of income generation rather than educating and informing the British public about causes of global inequality. Like any good commercial marketing company, charities know how to identify their customers and satisfy their needs. In the case of marketing charities it is images of black women

and children in a rural setting. Adverts that do not contain these elements do not resonate with the existing perceived knowledge or perceptions of the British public and are not successful in soliciting donations.

However, charities did not create this stereotype. Their marketing campaigns merely reflect and reinforce perceptions of Africa that are prevalent amongst the British public. These stereotypical perceptions of Africa were already there when Band Aid first harnessed them on a national scale. Since then charities have generated income for relief and development programmes in Africa using stereotypical images of Africans by 'feeding' the British public with images and messages that affirm their existing perceptions. In so doing, the charities that work in Africa have become respected national institutions which the British public are proud of and are willing to support.

Unfortunately, the dominant charity message of 'aid as a solution to poverty' has become so widely accepted that when the Live 8 concert in 2005 tried to promote 'justice not charity' the British public still wanted to donate money. In 2006 Andrew Darnton conducted research into public perceptions of poverty following the Make Poverty History (MPH) campaign. With respect to people's understanding of the campaign Darnton concluded.

> "There is also evidence to suggest that the 'justice not charity' message was not clearly understood by the mass audience, many of whom persisted in believing that MPH was aiming to raise funds for Africa. After July, Live8 was assumed to be synonymous with MPH, and that event added to the public's sense that MPH must be about money raising (just like LiveAid was)." (Darnton, 2006)

The idea of assisting those in 'need' through the provision of 'aid' is easy for most people to understand as it is generally accepted as being the morally right thing to do. Why there is a 'need' in the first place is a knotty question and one which makes people feel uncomfortable. Public responses to natural disasters around the world are good for a charity's cash flow. Emergency relief is big business and the presence of a charity on the ground is good for its public image. However, rarely is the question raised, at the time of the natural disaster, as to why some countries / communities are able to 'weather the storm' better than others. To do so would entail engaging people in discussions about global politics and economics and bring into question the morality of a world divided between those who 'have' and those who 'have not'. As donations generally come from those who 'have', charities avoid saying anything that would suggest, as Thomas Pogge (2002) asserts, that they are the problem.

> "We are familiar, through charity appeals, with the assertion that it lies in our hands to save the lives of many or, by doing nothing, to let these people die. We are less familiar with the assertion examined here of a weightier responsibility: that most of us not merely let people starve but also participate in starving them." (Pogge, 2002)

This perception of changing the world by raising money for good causes and not by addressing the underlying global inequalities which create or contribute to the problems in the first place is one that is prevalent in many British schools . Teachers find it easier and more acceptable to engender a sense of good citizenship in young people by encouraging them to share with those less fortunate than themselves than to explain all the historical, political and economic factors that have contributed to shaping the unequal world they live in. However, this ideological difference in

classroom practice, which is directed and informed by the National Curriculum, is not new. In the 1980s there were educational debates (Mullard, 1984 & Troyna, 1987) about whether local authorities and schools should adopt multi-cultural or anti-racist approaches to addressing racial tensions in society. Whilst multi-cultural approaches celebrate diversity, anti-racist approaches seek to address the underlying causes of global inequality.

In the 1980s I was a teacher in progressive secondary school in Leicestershire that adopted an anti-racist approach to counter the neo fascist ideas promoted by the National Front. Besides addressing the underlying causes of global inequalities there was also an emphasis on acknowledging that everyone had the potential to stereotype people from different backgrounds and to use our perceptions of others to act with prejudice or discrimination. At that particular time, and in that particular ideologically supportive environment, to accept ones potential to be racist and to acknowledge ones stereotypical perceptions was not threatening. However, as a teacher trainer in the early 1990s, working with more conventional teachers, I encountered an uncomfortable resistance to the personalisation of anti-racist education. Teachers were adamant that they were not racist and were reluctant to acknowledge that they had the potential to act in a prejudicial or discriminatory way. The doubt and uncertainty created by an examination of their own perceptions undermined their authority in the classroom and their ability to make objective decisions. This fear of anti-racist education led to the 'softer' and more 'palatable' multicultural education becoming the preferred approach to addressing racial tensions. Diversity is celebrated in the classroom in preference to challenging stereotypical perceptions. It is easier for us to admire 'Pandora's Box' than to lift off the lid and deal with what we find inside.

Postcolonialism

Whether it is our preference for multicultural education or our support for charitable giving, postcolonial theories can contribute towards understanding why British people are so reluctant to look inside 'Pandora's Box' or embrace 'justice not charity'. The origins of postcolonial theory are attributed to the writings of Edward Said who wrote about the Eurocentric depiction of Arab-Oriental peoples and their culture in his book 'Orientalism'.

> "On the one hand there are Westerners, and on the other there are Arab-Orientals; the former are (in no particular order) rational, peaceful, liberal, logical, capable of holding real values, without natural suspicion; the latter are none of these things." (Said, 1985, p49)

This stereotypical representation of a group of people from another region of the world with different cultural values not only denigrates that group of people but also bolsters the self-esteem of the people who hold those views. The demeaning of others builds a sense of pride and national identity which elevates the propagating culture above others. However, since Said first espoused his ideas about Orientalism, a culture of 'political correctness' has evolved in Britain which would argue that this blatant characterisation is no longer deemed to be acceptable and has been replaced by an inclusive multicultural perspective. I would contend though that the underlying self-esteem of British people, our collective national identity, is built upon an illusion that in some way we are superior to others and that we have developed the skills of political correctness to hide our true feelings and avoid offending others. However, we cannot be seen to be arrogant

about our perceived superiority, just not British, and our sense of 'fair play' means we can alleviate our guilt about our past exploitative behaviour by being compassionate and sympathetic.

Charity advertisements did not create the perceptions British people have of themselves; they are a legacy of a colonial era that we are reluctant to discard. In his book 'Decolonising the Mind', Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o explores the impact of colonialism on Africans and calls for a withdrawal from the Eurocentric culture of the neo-colonial state in which Africans have been nurtured. This concept of decolonising the mind has also been used by other academics, such as Sharp (2009), to explore the legacy of colonialism.

> "While political, and to a less extent economic, decolonisation might have occurred with independence, cultural decolonisation—what some call decolonisation of the mind—has been a much more difficult process." (Sharp, 2009, p5).

'Colonisation of the mind' works both ways, impacting on both the colonised and the colonisers. Within British society this postcolonial mentality has a significant influence on how we perceive ourselves, our national identity, and how we relate to others. When the denigration of other groups of people is unacceptable we celebrate multicultural diversity whilst still perceiving the other groups to be inferior. When reluctant to address the injustices of colonial exploitation we reinforce our sense of moral superiority by giving to charitable causes whilst retaining stereotypical perceptions of the peoples in former colonies. In this respect the images depicted in charity adverts, African issues covered in news broadcast, TV programmes about the continent, reports on events in Africa in newspapers or trends on the internet, all reflect this postcolonial mentality. As Vanessa Andreotti (2006) points out our cultural supremacy is assumed and our colonial past is ignored.

> "Cultural supremacy is based on the premise that one has achieved a better, more developed or universal way of seeing and being and prompts patronising and paternalistic attitudes towards the South and Southern peoples, as well as a foreclosure - or necessary denial - of the colonial past and of causal responsibility or obligations towards the South. This 'foreclosure' is related to the idea that, in our uneven 'interdependence', the North is also part of the problem." (Andreotti, 2006)

Young people are like a window into this world of postcolonial perception. If not challenged they reflect what they see and repeat what they are told, without the constraints of political correctness, revealing an accurate picture of the perceptions we propagate without question. Our failure to acknowledge and address our postcolonial mentality makes us guilty of the institutionalised denigration of 900 million Africans to maintain an illusion of British superiority.

Global Education

If the problem, as explored so far, was purely one of postcolonial perspectives being propagated from one generation to the next then it should be possible to 'intellectually' break the cycle by challenging young people's misconceptions and misunderstandings about the world they live in. Actively engaging young people in questioning the reality of their perceptions would develop a more balanced perspective of the world based on equality and social justice rather than colonial stereotypes and paternalistic compassion. If only it were that easy. Attempts to do this have been

around for over 40 years but, as previously mentioned, young people today still possess stereotypical and overly negative perceptions of Africa.

In the 1970s, a loose network of educators began to promote world studies in schools and the publication *Learning for Change in World Society* (Richardson, 1976) became a benchmark for a global dimension in the curriculum. At the same time, NGOs such as Oxfam and Christian Aid were seeking ways of disseminating information about their work in developing countries to the British public. Their source material and the methodological approach of World Studies combined in the Development Education movement and a network of Development Education Centres (DECs) established to support schools and teachers. Throughout the 1980s, World Studies and Development Education was a 'grass roots' movement that gained considerable support from some schools and teachers but struggled to make impact on national educational provision. With no financial support from the government, those working in the field were dependent upon grants from development NGOs and the European Commission. Even though high quality teaching and training resources were developed, such as *World Studies 8–13: A Teacher's Handbook* (Fisher & Hicks, 1985) and *Global Teacher, Global Learner (*Pike and Selby, 1988), there was opposition to their use in schools. Patricia Lança and Roger Scruton (1985) argued that World Studies and Development Education were being used for 'political' ends and that world studies was guilty of indoctrination of pupils, politicisation of the classroom, the use of improper teaching methods and of lowering educational standards.

The study of the wider world and development issues took nearly twenty years to become an integral part of the school curriculum. Whilst the introduction of the first National Curriculum in 1991 restricted opportunities for more radical teachers to incorporate a questioning global perspective, the guidance for Geography did require all schools to teach about an 'economically developing country'. This created a need for training and resources amongst non-geography specialists in primary schools. Whilst working for a Development Education Centre at the time I observed a significant increase in the number of photo activity packs published by Development NGOs, DECs and the Geographical Association to meet the demand. The guidance for Geography also specified the countries that teachers could choose to study - a list of mainly former British colonies of which only five were from the African continent – but the publishers focused on only a few of these countries limiting teacher choice even further. In the case of Africa this directed teachers towards the study of Egypt or Kenya.

In 1997, there was a change in government and a change in emphasis on what schools taught about the developing world. The Department for International Development (DfID) was committed to increasing the level of development assistance. Their White Paper 'Eliminating World Poverty' DfID (1997) included proposals to promote greater development awareness amongst the British public to ensure there was support for the increases in development assistance. DfID advocated that all schools should teach about international development issues and that all schools should establish a North / South school partnership. To support these initiatives DfID provided financial support through the Development Awareness Fund, Global School Partnerships and Enabling Effective Support. At the same time, the Department for Education and Science (DfES) undertook a review of the curriculum that led to the introduction of a revised National Curriculum in 2000. This revision supported the DfID initiatives by providing

schools with more opportunities to teach about international development issues. Following the Crick Report (1998) the DfES also introduced a Citizenship Curriculum that presented further opportunities to explore citizenship on local, national and global levels. In addition, the Macpherson Inquiry (1999) into the murder of Stephen Lawrence, required education authorities and schools to place greater emphasis on Race Equality and Community Cohesion.

Besides the inclusion of development issues in the guidance for Geography, the Global Dimension became a non-statutory Cross-curriculum Dimension along with Identity and Cultural Diversity. Whilst the Global Dimension was not a 'subject' in the curriculum, schools were required to demonstrate how they covered global issues within their educational provision. However, the Global Dimension was only one of a number of educational initiatives introduced to improve standards and prepare young people for life in an increasing globalised world. What schools actually delivered was also influenced by the financial incentives provided by DfID to promote its policy for alleviating absolute poverty and by the educational resources provided by NGOs to support their campaigns for social justice (Hicks, 2008).

Within the guidance provided for Citizenship Education, there were opportunities to incorporate a global perspective within the 'development of good relationships' and 'respecting the differences between people'. As a statutory subject, Citizenship Education has been the focus of attention of many issue-based educations, in particular Oxfam's Education for Global Citizenship (2002). However, Citizenship Education had a focus on the nation state and its relationship with the wider world and not the global interconnectedness promoted by Education for Global Citizenship (Davies, Evans & Reid, 2005).

In response to racial tension within Britain, the government identified schools as the place to address issues of community cohesion. The murder of Stephen Lawrence and the subsequent Macpherson Enquiry resulted in the Race Relations [Amendment] Act 2000 (RRAA) which required schools not only to address discrimination but also to promote race equality. The destruction of the Twin Towers, the London bombings conducted by 'home grown' extremists and the influx of refugees and asylum seekers from the conflicts in the Middle East and Afghanistan all contributed to a greater focus on Citizenship Education. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 required schools to promote community cohesion and the Curriculum Review into Diversity and Citizenship led to the introduction of the 'Identity and Diversity' strand of the Citizenship Curriculum. However, not all schools fully complied with these requirements and Citizenship Education continues to focus on promoting national identity rather that addressing issues of race and racism (Ostler, 2009).

Whilst changes to the curriculum and legal requirements presented more opportunities to incorporate global issues into educational provision; schools and teachers still had to decide how to deliver them in the classroom. In this respect, there has been competition for their attention from government and NGOs promoting their own spin on the limited time available to engage young people in their study of the wider world. Each of these bodies had their own agenda; DfID's development awareness and alleviation of absolute poverty; NGO campaigns for social justice and global interconnectedness; DfES's citizenship based on national identity and international relations.

African Voices

There has been one initiative though that has bypassed the intervention of specific interest groups and worked directly with people living in the Global South. The funding provided by DfID to promote and establish Global School Partnerships has facilitated schools, teachers and pupils to engage with their contemporaries in another part of the world. Grants from DfID, through the British Council, have enabled reciprocal teacher visits to establish the school partnership, increase their knowledge of the partner community and agree shared curriculum initiatives. Some partnerships also result in exchange visits that facilitate direct contact with people from a different geographical and cultural background. Global School Partnerships have allowed pupils to study a distant locality first hand through direct contact with their partner school without having to rely on second hand materials that generally focus on poverty, debt and underdevelopment (Pickering, 2007). They have presented schools with an opportunity to develop activities that require pupils to engage in a process of structured enquiry that relates to the experiences of real people (Disney, 2005). Also, the reciprocal visit experience has increased teacher knowledge and understanding of another culture and society and enabled them to teach about a distant locality more effectively and with more authority (Disney 2008). However, if partnerships are not embedded into a school's educational provision there is a danger that stereotypical perceptions of their partner locality can be reinforced (Pickering, 2007). In effect global school partnerships can have a positive impact on young people's perceptions of the wider world in schools where there is the intention and commitment to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions. But, in schools where global partnerships are used to enhance the profile of the school or entered into on the basis of helping those less fortunate, they can propagate and exacerbate existing stereotypical perceptions.

It is this direct contact with people from another culture, which Global Schools Partnerships provide, that is at the heart of my current work with the Leeds University Centre for African Studies. Instead of communicating over vast distances and arranging expensive exchange visits, the LUCAS Schools Project utilises a resource on its own doorstep – African postgraduates studying at the University. With training and support the postgraduates are prepared to deliver an African Voices activity day about contemporary Africa to classes of primary pupils. My research (Borowski, 2012) has shown that the African postgraduates can have a significant impact on young people's perceptions of Africa and its peoples. The presence of the African postgraduate in the classroom provides pupils with an opportunity to engage directly with somebody from the African continent. As a visitor to the school they are a break from normal lessons, like going on a field trip without leaving the classroom. It was clear from my discussions with pupils that the new knowledge and information they gain from their interaction with the African postgraduates makes them think more critically about their existing perceptions. In my own experience, as a writer of teaching resources about Africa and Development Education teacher trainer for the past 25 years, the African postgraduates present a more effective approach to changing perceptions of Africa than any teaching pack or CPD course. One explanation for the effectiveness of using African postgraduates as a classroom resources can be provided by examining the approach from a Postcolonial perspective.

At the start of each African Voices day the postgraduates use a range of activities that challenge any misconceptions or misunderstandings the pupils have about Africa and its people. Through

this approach existing perceived knowledge is questioned leaving pupils prepared to consider and incorporate new perspectives. In a classroom context this groundwork reflects the postcolonial ideas of Gayatri Spivak when she talks about ‘unlearning privilege’ or ‘learning to unlearn’. As adults we are reluctant to acknowledge that our perceptions of others are shaped by our social and cultural conditioning. Young people, on the other hand, have less perceptual baggage to carry, they have yet to embrace a collective identity that reinforces a sense of superiority at the expense of the ‘other’. Andreotti (2007) interprets Spivak’s assertions in the context of ‘North-South’ encounters from a Western perspective. The same principles apply to our African postgraduates in their encounters with UK pupils.

> “She addresses issues of voice and representation in relation to the 'Third World' and the role and place of education (both actual and potential) in relation to ‘North-South’ encounters. She invites one to look at one's own context, positioning and complicities, to unlearn one's privilege, to establish an ethical relationship to difference and to learn to learn from below. Spivak asserts that this baggage of sanctioned ignorances, as well as one’s institutional positionings, always mediate the representations and engagements with the Third World subaltern.” Vanessa Andreotti (2007)

Through challenging misconceptions and misunderstandings the pupils are no longer constrained by the views and opinions they had assumed were facts. They have let go of their perceptual baggage and their minds are open to accept new ideas and perspectives. A space for learning has been created that Homi Bhabha refers to as a ‘Third Space’ where peoples of differing cultures can engage equitably. In their study of North South school partnerships Fran Martin and Helen Griffiths emphasise the importance of this space to facilitate intercultural conversations in which new meanings and understandings can emerge.

> “Bhabha adds to our understanding of what a postcolonial, intercultural space for learning might be like through his concept of ‘Third Space’. During an intercultural conversation individuals occupy their own cultural space; it is only by stepping out of this space into the space between, that learning from the dialogue can take place. It is incumbent on both parties to do this and to create a Third Space in which new meanings and understandings can emerge.” Martin, F & Griffiths, H (2011)

Postcolonial interpretations of intercultural encounters provide a framework for equitably engaging with people from another culture and in practice has similarities with anti-racist education. To acknowledge that you have the potential to be racist is analogous to acknowledging that your perceptions of others are shaped by your social and cultural conditioning. Without questioning your own values and attitudes towards ‘others’ you are unable to engage equitably with someone from a different culture without prejudice.

African Voices activity days delivered by African postgraduates have, however, another dimension which contributes to their effectiveness as a means of embedding intercultural competencies in young people. Through delivering activities for a whole school day the African postgraduates engage both at intellectual and emotional levels, the pupils have the opportunity to really get to know their African teacher. This emotional engagement is something which the Belgian

sociologist, Jacques-Philippe Leyens, believes to be an essential component of intercultural relations.

Infrahumanisation

In 1994 ten Belgian soldiers, attached to the UN peace keeping force in Rwanda, were killed during the mass slaughter of 800,000 Rwandans. At the time Jacques-Philippe Leyens studied the reaction of the Belgian public and the national press to the genocide and observed far more concern for the 10 Belgians soldiers caught up in the conflict than the 800,000 Tutsi. To understand this phenomenon he developed the theory of 'Infrahumanisation' to explain why people deny humanness to groups of people they perceive as essentially different to their own group. The theory is based on the belief that people view 'out-groups' as less human than their own 'in-group' and that this view is reflected in the types of emotions people believe their own 'in-group' and other 'out-groups' possess. Some emotions are considered unique to humans e.g., love, regret, nostalgia (Secondary emotions), whereas others are viewed as common to both humans and animals e.g., joy, anger, sadness (primary emotions).

> "If people think that their group is superior to other groups, are concerned about their own group, and attribute different essences to their ingroups and outgroups, then they will attribute "the" human essence to their ingroup and infrahumanize outgroups by attributing to the latter fewer secondary emotions, or even by denying secondary emotions, which are considered typically human characteristics." (Leyens, 2000)

Studies carried out on adults have shown that people attribute uniquely human emotions to their own 'ingroup' but not to other 'out-groups'. According to infrahumanisation theory, the denial of uniquely human emotions to 'out-groups' is reflective of the belief that they are less human than the 'in-group'. The formation of an 'ingroup' can occur at many different levels, from the school playground to national identities. What they all have in common is a feeling of being more emotionally connected with a particular group of people who we believe to be similar to ourselves.

> "This phenomenon has subtle but substantial behavioural consequences in everyday life that may undermine harmonious relationships between groups. Infra-humanization is a process by which people consider their ingroup as fully human and outgroups as less human and more animal-like." (Leyens et al., 2000).

A study by John Martin et al (2008) demonstrated that young people are able to discriminate between primary and secondary emotions and a later study by Loris Vezzali et al (2012) revealed that outgroup mistrust amongst young people can be reduced by imagined intergroup contact.

Viewing African Voices days from an Infrahumanisation perspective provides an explanation for the success of the engagement between African postgraduates and their pupils. Through the emotional connection established, the African postgraduates are incorporated into the pupils' ingroup. Together with the creation of a 'Third Space' for learning, the pupils feel confident to ask questions they want to know about the life of their 'friend' from Africa. This emotional bond also adds validity to the information exchange and ensures that the new knowledge acquired is more likely to be retained and to inform and shape perceptions.

Conclusion

In answer to Bono's questions my involvement with the LUCAS Schools Project has demonstrated that intercultural exchanges are essential to the breaking down of societal perceptions of 'other' that inhibit equitable dialogue. However, these encounters have to be managed in order to acknowledge and set aside cultural baggage and create a 'Third Space' for unfiltered learning to take place. Only through establishing an emotional connection will Africans be incorporated into our ingroup. Only then will we call the fire brigade and not run to the garden shed.

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