# Young People and International Development: Engagement and Learning

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# Preface

This research report is part of a series undertaken by members of the Development Education Research Centre at the Institute of Education, University of London. It is produced in partnership with Think Global - the Development Education Association. Its purpose is to outline what is known from existing research and anecdotal evidence of the nature and forms of young people's engagement and learning about international development.

Its primary sources of evidence are: research currently being undertaken by one of the authors, Kate Brown, for her doctorate on this theme; material gathered from dialogue with staff at a number of non-governmental organisations; and published material produced by academics in the UK and elsewhere in the world.

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# Executive Summary

Building on several decades of development education practice in the UK, the first twelve years of the twenty first century has seen increased interest amongst policy makers in young people's engagement with issues of international poverty and development. Discourses in this area have tended to characterise young people in UK society as engaging with international development through specific, often campaign-related, activities, motivated by concern. Whilst this can be seen as a positive picture, and may well be the case for many young people, it is argued here that these assumptions are likely to mask a more complex and interesting picture.

Drawing on existing literature and anecdotal evidence, this report points towards a more nuanced understanding of young people's learning about and engagement with development. It adopts broad understandings of international development, and the relationship between learning and action. At the same time, the report acknowledges the dominant perspectives that exist on these issues in development education policy and practice, in particular an over-emphasis on engagement as participation and action which can mask the importance of the learning processes and the complex relationships between learning and behaviour.

Globalisation and its flows of media, technology, ethnicities and ideologies mean that young people are exposed to a range of opportunities to learn about development issues beyond those provided by specific educational interventions. A range of contexts for the 'where' or learning about international development are explored, including the media and personal connections to people and places in developing countries and to individuals already engaged with the issues, as well as formal and informal education, including youth work.

The notion of the individual learner is understood as crucial in learning theory but has received limited attention in the context of young people's global learning. What is known about the 'who' of learning about international development is explored, including the influence of factors relating to young people's identity and experiences (such as gender, age and socio-economic status) and to their motivation. For some, this may be based on 'being concerned' or 'caring about others' but for others it may be due to personal relationships, experiences and interests.

The report aims to stimulate debate and discussion on young people's engagement with issues of development and to suggest the need for more open-ended research which explores how, when and why young people engage with such issues. Many young people in the UK *are* clearly engaging with and learning about international development and poverty. Organisations and education systems seeking to facilitate this perhaps need to give greater consideration to young people's experiences and motivations and to look beyond assumptions about the processes and outcomes of learning and engagement.

# 1    Introduction

The first decade of the twenty first century witnessed a range of activities that demonstrated public interest within the UK in international development and global issues. These included the Make Poverty History initiative in 2005, more recent activities around climate change, and continued public support for leading international aid charities (Darnton, 2009). However, Darnton argues that the *'public in the UK understand and relate to poverty no differently than they did in the 1980s'*, with limited understanding and an emphasis on donations to charity as the solution to poverty (Darnton, 2011:5). Whilst Darnton's analysis provides useful food for thought, beneath his broad assessment of the state of public engagement are a range of questions and processes that warrant further exploration. These include the different forms that engagement can take, the relationship between learning and engagement and the factors that impact on these processes. This paper focuses specifically on young people, and seeks to begin to unpick these issues, bringing together existing evidence on young people's learning about and engagement with international poverty and development.

Development education has a long history in the UK, emerging in the 1970s in response to the work of aid agencies and in particular the work of a group of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that saw the need for a 'domestic' dimension to their work (Regan and Sinclair, 2006:108). In the last decade, the efforts of many NGOs and government policies to secure increased public engagement with issues of international development have focused on young people, particularly through formal education (Marshall, 2007). For example, from 2008 the English secondary school curriculum included a requirement that a 'global dimension' be incorporated throughout all subjects (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), 2007), with educators encouraged to bring the world into their classrooms by addressing a variety of global issues such as interdependence, diversity, human rights, peace, social justice and sustainable development.

This resulted in a wide range of materials, projects and a growing body of literature that supported young people to explore global issues including international poverty and development. For example, a review of projects funded by the Department for International Development through their Development Awareness Fund between 2000 and 2010 shows that the vast majority were focused around young people's involvement in learning and taking action on international development themes and issues (Thornton *et al*, 2009). The focus of activities and materials from leading NGOs such as Oxfam, ActionAid, Christian Aid and CAFOD has also been on encouraging young people to take action to combat global poverty.

As a result, there is much written about what it *should* mean for young people to engage with global issues broadly, and international poverty and development

specifically. Such discourses make significant assumptions about the processes of learning and engagement from young people's perspectives, which are echoed throughout related literature (for example, see Temple and Laycock, 2008; Hicks and Holden, 2007; Oxfam, 2006; Darnton and Smith, 2009) and reinforced in the discussions of practitioners that contributed to this paper.

For example, there has been a strong tendency towards broad-brushstroke pictures describing young people's motivations for engaging with development issues, largely presuming that concern about international poverty is the central motivational factor. The official support document for teachers on the cross-curricular global dimension in schools describes the dimension as addressing issues that are *'of direct concern to young people'* (QCA, 2007:2). Research specifically asking children about their hopes and fears for the future of the world (as opposed to their motivations for learning about global issues) reinforces this picture and couples it with findings that the majority of children feel they can do something to bring about positive change (Holden, 2007).

A second set of assumptions is often made around the context of young people's engagement. Resources and programme evaluations inevitably focus on young people's engagement through specific, targeted projects or activities (see, for example, Lowe, 2008; Baker, 2010). As a result, young people's engagement with development issues through such formal opportunities can often be emphasised, with limited attention given to other contexts in which they learn.

Thirdly, and related to the above, is an assumption about the form that young people's engagement takes: there is often a tendency to see engagement purely in terms of taking action (for example, campaigning or raising money). Young people's participation in campaigns such as Make Poverty History are often cited as activities in which young people have become actively engaged: *'White wristbands were everywhere; more than 200,000 people attended a Make Poverty History rally in Edinburgh; and in an Oxfam survey of 16- 25 year-olds, 84% said that the campaign had made an impression on them – compared to only 35% who said the same of the general election'*[1]. The assumption that engagement equals action has been reinforced by the findings of surveys with young people themselves (see for example, MORI, 1998; DFID/MORI, 2005; DEA, 2008), in which young people were asked about the areas in which they feel they can make a difference. Their answers are dominated by giving money, although over the past decade there has been growing support for purchasing fairtrade goods.

Underpinned by assumptions such as these about young people's motivations and the context and form of their engagement, the approaches adopted by many educators in supporting young people to learn about development issues have been criticized by some policy bodies and academics as resulting in a politically motivated form of engagement. One exponent of this viewpoint is Standish (2008), who suggests that the teaching of Geography in the UK has become too dominated by organisations and academics who are trying to inculcate in young people a specific moral and political standpoint based on environmentalism, social

1 http://archive.futurelab.org.uk/resources/publications-reports-articles/vision-magazine/VISION-Article253

justice and human rights. Whilst the authors of this report do not subscribe to the viewpoints outlined by Standish, which have been critiqued elsewhere (Morgan, 2009), he does pose some important questions for debate.

Assumptions about young people's motivations and the context and form of their engagement are not specific to the UK. Similar viewpoints can be seen, if with slightly different emphases, in North America and elsewhere in Europe (see for example, Tye, 2009; Lenskaya, 2009; Hartmeyer, 2008), though patterns across and between countries are not well-documented. At the same time, it is important to note that not all development education practice in the UK is understood to be based on such assumptions. For example, a body of 'global youth work' practice has aimed to support young people to explore the linkages between local and global issues rather than to campaign.

Whatever the picture, what is evident is that the common assumptions around young people's learning about and engagement with development issues have little robust research to support them. An important exception to the scarcity of research in this area is the 2010 focus-group based research undertaken by the International Broadcasting Trust (IBT) which suggested a more complex picture than one in which young people in UK society are motivated by concern about international poverty to take action through specific campaigning activities. For example, the research found that not all the 14-20 year olds who took part felt that international poverty was personally relevant or a concern to them, adopting instead a pragmatic 'that's life' response (Cross *et al*, 2010).

In the light of this new evidence, this research report aims to re-visit what we do know about young people's experiences of engagement with development issues, and to help readers reflect and clarify their thinking in this area. It is not the intention to undermine what is a positive picture of young people as concerned and active citizens, but rather to move beyond this broad-brushstroke picture to explore what is known, and where more needs to be known, about young people's engagement and learning. The report aims to do this by reviewing the existing literature and known research, as well as introducing anecdotal evidence from practitioners.

It is important to note the limitations of both of these sources of data. Current existing literature is sparse, and has methodological limitations in terms of coming from shallow, large scale surveys, or in-depth qualitative studies of very small numbers of young people. Its focus is also on those young people who are engaged in development issues in some way, and tends to ignore the large numbers of young people who are not engaged, and the reasons for this.

A greater body of literature is building in relation to young people and citizenship education. For example, research conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research (Keating, Kerr, Benton and Lopes, 2010) gives an important indication of key trends and themes in young people's civic and political participation since the introduction of the Citizenship curriculum in

2002. However, this research makes little reference to global issues, and whilst the influence of the citizenship agenda on young people's opportunities to learn about global issues is recognised, the paper does not seek to chart in more detail the relationship between citizenship education and young people's learning about issues of international development and poverty.

For this study, interviews with a small number of staff working in NGOs including Oxfam, CAFOD, Y Care, Plan UK and the Citizenship Foundation were carried out. Interviewees were purposely sampled for their experience of working with young people on issues of international development and poverty. This experience provides a wealth of insight which is often not captured in organisational documents or in broader research. However, it is recognised that these staff are one or more steps removed from young people, and that their viewpoints on young people's motivations and forms of engagement may be filtered by the activities and rationale of their organisation's work. Key themes emerging from the analysis of the interviews are incorporated into the text to add a different perspective and layer to the evidence collated, but the anecdotal nature of this data must be recognised. It is also recognised that, in inviting the contribution of practitioners active in the field of development education, the paper risks reinforcing one of the assumptions it seeks to question, that young people's learning is limited to specific development education interventions.

This paper does not attempt to be a comprehensive review of young people in relation to international development but rather to summarise what is known, to begin to frame a more complex understanding of young people's engagement and to pose some questions and themes for future research and practice. The report begins by locating the literature and discussions within the context of discourses on young people, globalisation, engagement and learning and then summarises existing research and knowledge on the 'where' and 'who' of young people's engagement with international development. It concludes with recommendations for future research and discussion.

## 2 ▶ Young people, international development and globalisation

For the purposes of this study, the term 'young people' is understood to refer to 13-19 year olds. 'Childhood', 'youth' and 'young person' are recognised as socially constructed and context-dependent terms (following James *et al*, 1998; Weber and Dixon, 2007:3; Wyn and White, 1997:3; Barratt Hacking, Barratt and Scott, 2007:530; Weller, 2007:13; Osgerby, 2004:8). Being a 'young person' is not used here to indicate a biological or psychological stage, although the experience of

ageing as a biological process is recognised. It is understood as a process in which the meaning and experience of becoming adult is mediated by engagement with institutions such as schools, the family, the police and many others (Wyn and White, 1997:3).

This paper seeks to explore young people's learning about and engagement with issues of international development. The meaning of this term is understood in different ways in international debates, for example as a process of economic growth, or a discourse and practice that promotes and supports western perspectives (see Sachs, 1992; Rahnema and Bawtree, 1997). The United Nations suggests that development should be seen as more than economic growth and as *'creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accord with their needs and interests… Development is thus about expanding the choices people have to lead lives that they value'*[2].

This paper recognises the different ways in which international development can be understood and presented and does not seek to explore young people's understanding of these issues through the lens of one particular perspective. However, it is also recognized that an unproblematic approach towards development is dominant in some of the literature around young people's engagement, as policy makers and NGOs wishing to see greater support for national and personal giving to aid projects play an important role in UK discourses in this area.

Within the discourses and practices around young people, there has also been a tendency to blur discussions around engagement and globalisation, global citizenship and international development. Whilst focusing specifically on young people's learning about international development, and seeking to avoid such conflation, this paper acknowledges that a key lens through which to understand young people's engagement in international development is a recognition of the impact of globalisation on their lives.

For young people in the UK, as in many other industrialized countries, the first decade of the twenty first century has been a period dominated by the increasing influence of globalisation and the wide range of economic, cultural and political activities across the world landscape, which *'cut across national boundaries, integrating and connecting communities and organisations in new space-time combinations'* (Hall, 1992:299). Globalisation is understood here as a combination of forces and movements that incorporate media, technology, ethnicities and ideologies which may appear at times to be contradictory and moving in different directions (Appadurai, 1996).

Global social, political and economic change often appears to affect young people disproportionately (Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat 2003:299). Many sociologists specializing in youth affairs have portrayed young people as being at the forefront of such change (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Miles, 2000), with globalisation having profound and far reaching

2 see http://www.undp.org

effects on their lives. In particular, a large body of evidence explores the ways in which the flows of globalisation impact on young people's identities, whether that be through Internet communities (France, 2007:157), consumption in a global marketplace (Wyn and White, 1997:2; Miles, 2000), mass communication systems (Nayak, 2003), or the way flows promote transnational cultural symbols (Jeffrey and Dyson, 2008:12).

In this context, young people are inevitably exposed to information about the lives of people in other places, including those in developing countries. Philo and Swanson argue that:

'[young people's understandings] *regarding their life-worlds are unavoidably saturated by knowledge of the broader forces impacting on their lives...and perhaps too by comparisons with places and circumstances elsewhere (possibly places with which their own world are networked materially or virtually'* (Philo and Swanson, 2008:204).

However, whilst recognising the impact of globalisation's flows on young people's learning about international development, it is important to acknowledge the perspective of some commentators, who point to the possibility that for many young people these flows may be negotiated without any accompanying learning about the wider world. De Block and Rydin point out that individuals may identify with increasingly global styles of music, fashion, graphics and dance without reference to other localities at a global scale (de Block and Rydin, 2006). In the same vein, Shah (2008:65) has effectively argued that, just as there are people who travel abroad but will not talk to anyone but other travellers, so it may be with the global world young people inhabit, on-line and off-line.

This note of caution relates to a broader danger of generalising about young people and their experiences, a reminder which came from this study's interviews with practitioners. Young people are not a homogenous group, and their experiences are likely to vary hugely with a complex interplay of factors including gender, access to information (itself affected by socio-economic status), and the nature of the communities in which they live. These issues are revisited in Section 5 which explores the 'who' of learning and engagement.

## 3   Engagement, participation and learning

The terms 'engagement' and 'learning' are used to cover broad and changing meanings. 'To engage with' can mean to 'show an interest in', to 'explore the issues', or 'to take action on'. In the same way, learning can be understood as the passive receiving of designated knowledge, as an active process of developing

understandings (Jarvis, 2006), or even as the development of identity (Wenger, 2009). The relationship between the two processes of engagement and learning are also understood differently, with assumptions made about the kind and content of learning which occurs through different forms of engagement.

In this paper a broad perspective is taken on engagement, with the term understood to cover a range of forms, including political activism, fundraising, consumer and social activism, the exploration and development of understandings about global issues and the building of relationships and understandings of self. However, in discourses around young people and development issues, the term engagement has recently been dominant, along with terms such as 'participation' and 'global citizenship', and has tended to carry with it a sense of activism rather than one of reflection and exploration.

In part, this reflects the rise of notions of 'active global citizenship', with their emphasis on individual responsibility and bringing about change, influenced by the introduction of the Citizenship curriculum and apparent within the rhetoric of documents produced by NGOs such as Oxfam and curricular support document. For example, the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency's[3] planning guide for schools on the cross-curricular dimensions describes the global dimension as an opportunity for students to consider the best ways to tackle global challenges and change things for the better (QCA, 2009:24). Oxfam's 2006 guide to Global Citizenship Education sees young people as global citizens, *'willing to act to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place'* (Oxfam, 2006:3). The same approach can be seen in youth work where, despite the creation of the concept of 'global youth work' in the 1990s as a practice emphasising dialogue and reflection, current NGO activity tends to prioritise taking action on climate change or promoting fairtrade. This, for example, can be seen in the activities of Christian Aid, People and Planet, and ActionAid.

Following an understanding of engagement as action, there was a tendency amongst the NGO staff interviewed for this report to characterise the relationship between young people and development issues at two different levels. The first level was seen as a shallower engagement, more likely to be associated with the words knowledge and information, and associated with 'picking up' stories from the media. The second level was seen as a deeper engagement, strongly associated with learning into action, and it was this form of engagement that NGO staff feel they are seeking to develop through their work. This deeper engagement was understood as taking different forms, either developing through a critical and fuller understanding of issues of development, or being more emotive, based on a feeling or narrative, with less developed understandings.

These varying understanding of the relationship between awareness, learning and action are reflected in development education discourses more broadly. For example, Scheunpflug and Asbrand characterize and critique an assumed relationship between information, awareness and action as coming from an action-theory-based paradigm of global education (Scheunpflug and Asbrand,

3 Formerly the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)

2006). The reverse relationship, that taking action will lead the learner to develop their understandings of issues of poverty and development is apparent in the work of some of the international NGOs working in development education (see for example Temple and Laycock, 2008). Jackson (2010), from Oxfam, explores the ways in which fundraising actions can help young people develop new skills of research, planning, creativity and communication, as well as learn more about international development. However, as Bourn and Morgan (2010: 270) have stated, young people's learning about development issues has been largely 'overlooked' and the relationship between learning and action is poorly understood. As a result, the authors of this report remain open minded about the process and outcomes of learning through different forms of engagement.

## 4  The 'where' of young people's engagement with development issues

Recent research by IBT indicates that young people become interested in issues affecting the developing world through a wide range of opportunities for engagement, including: programmes on TV; the news; reading articles about the issues; discussions with family; teachers; activities at school; going on holiday/travelling; charity ads; religious institutions; getting involved with a charity; films at the cinema; friends' experiences; having family/friends from another country; talking to people from charities (Cross *et al*, 2010:23)[4].

This section seeks to outline what is known about young people's opportunities to engage with and learn about international poverty in a range of different physical and temporal spaces, including the limited empirical research which explores young people's experiences of these opportunities.

### i) School

The main focus of development education practice since it first emerged in the UK has been in schools. Beginning in the 1970s, leading NGOs such as Oxfam put resources into supporting projects that promoted learning about development and global issues within formal education. These activities are well documented by Harrison (2008). Quoting Black, who stated that Oxfam aimed '*to open up hearts and minds, as well as…purses, to the problem of poverty in countries overseas*' (Black, 1992:102), Harrison shows the influence NGOs had in shaping development education.

In the 1980s and 90s practice shifted to encouraging the use of images of the developing world that questioned assumptions of dependency. The importance

These contexts compare with the following sites for Citizenship learning identified by Keating, Kerr, Benton, Mundy and Lopes, 2011: family and home; friends and peer group; community links; formal networks; informal networks; schools and teachers (Keating *et. al*, 2011:10-12)

of this approach was seen in the wake of Band Aid in 1985 and subsequent fundraising campaigns. Studies on perceptions of the developing world in the 1990s (Arnold, 1988; Adamson,1993; McCollum, 1996) and even VSO's study on the legacy of Live Aid (2002) showed that the dominant view amongst young people of Africa was one of 'starving babies' and a sense of helplessness.

From 1997 to 2010 the Labour government, through its Building Support for Development strategy, aimed to challenge these assumptions and establish *'a real understanding of our interdependence and of the relevance of development issues to people's everyday lives'* (DFID, 1998:1). The focus of its strategy remained schools, and resulted in the resourcing of a number of initiatives including a regionally based support strategy for schools, the creation of a website of resources and funding of a wide range of projects.

This political and financial support for learning about global poverty and development, aided by strong individual convictions as well as party policy, needs to be understood within the context of a range of other Labour government initiatives in schools during the period 1997 to 2010. These included curriculum changes, resources and educational agendas, which together can be seen as a move towards a more enabling environment for the development of a broader global dimension in schools and teaching and learning about a range of global issues. Between them, these initiatives and agendas provided spaces for global education in schools, and sent a clear message that *'incorporating a cross-curricular global dimension into the school curriculum is crucial'* (Marshall, 2007:355). This is in contrast to the position in 1996, when McCollum described development education as a *'marginal activity; marginal on the school agenda, the government agenda and the public agenda'* (McCollum, 1996:2).

At the same time, voluntary sector organisations such as subject associations and international NGOs, developed curriculum-relevant resources (Hicks, 2004:3). For example, Oxfam and CAFOD, two international NGOs active in this area, offer a range of different opportunities and materials. Staff from these organisations interviewed for this research talked about teaching resources for various key stages and subjects, GCSE syllabi, collective worship, assemblies and enterprise days.

How this policy context and availability of resources translates into practice is not well documented. As Marshall notes, *'little empirical research relating to global education in school exists, and data confirming the beneficial nature of a global dimension...is mostly anecdotal'* (Marshall, 2007:355-6)[5].

However, a number of studies offer some insight, both into educators' responses to the range of initiatives and agendas promoting global education and young people's awareness of learning opportunities offered to them. This distinction can be described as between the enacted curriculum (the way in which teachers put the curriculum into practice) and the experienced curriculum (as it is encountered by students) (Goodland and associates,1979; Banks and McCormick, 2005). This distinction is important, because what learners learn is distinct from what

5 These observations are further explored in DERC Research Report 1 on The Global Dimension in Secondary Schools.

teachers teach, and may include the *'serendipitous and accidental'* and the *'negative as well as positive'* (Scott and Gough, 2003:38). The enacted curriculum is again distinct from the curriculum as laid out in policy documents (the specified curriculum) indeed there is often a large gap between the two[6]. This is certainly the case in relation to global education, as schools develop their own global curricula independently (Marshall, 2007:363).

Whilst many teachers believe in the value of supporting young people to explore global issues (DEA, 2009), fewer are translating this into the opportunities they offer in their classrooms. For example, the inspection agency in England, Ofsted, found that *'most primary schools' schemes of work give insufficient explicit consideration to the global dimension'* (Ofsted, 2008:43).

This may relate to teacher confidence (DEA, 2009)[7] or educational restructuring and pressures on teachers' time (Smith, 2004). Smith observes that these factors also mean that teachers are less likely to use critical, open, discussion approaches to teaching about development, falling back instead on the communication of traditional messages about development (Smith, 2004). Smith's research in two UK secondary schools found teachers reporting a role for teaching about developing countries in Geography, Music, Art, Drama, History, Religious Education, Personal and Social Education, Science and Languages, but with extra-curricular fundraising activities as the locus for the communication of development (Smith, 1999).

Turning to the experienced curriculum, survey research found that 50% of students said they had experienced some form of learning about global issues in school that year (autumn term 2007), such as discussing news stories from around the world from different perspectives or exploring what people can do to make the world a better place. The research indicates that students in senior years are less likely to have experienced global education in school, which may indicate that curriculum choices and exam pressure for older students prevents these sorts of discussions in class. Almost one in five (19%) said they had not discussed news stories from around the world at all (DEA, 2008). Similar survey research found that only 32% of those students questioned had learnt about or discussed poverty and hunger at school (Geographical Association, 2009).

Marshall's in-depth qualitative research in one English secondary school, found that *'most students recognised that there was something international in the school's ethos, citing the existence of regular international exchanges and trips, European citizenship lessons…and the presence of students and staff from other countries'* (Marshall, 2007:367). However, no student talked about any sort of global dimension within their mainstream curriculum subject lessons without first being prompted to do so (ibid).

In contrast, in more recent focus-group research carried out on behalf of the International Broadcasting Trust (IBT), young people felt that school played a key role in contributing to their knowledge of development issues, both from a curriculum and broader 'community focused' perspective. They spoke

6 For example, Morris, Cogan and Meihui's comparative study of civic education across six societies in the Asia-Pacific region found a large gap between planned and implemented curricula (2002).
7 DEA's survey research found that whilst a high proportion of teachers expressed confidence in discussing general global themes such as the interdependent nature of the world, they were less confident in teaching specific issues such as those relating to global economics and trade (DEA, 2009).

of development issues covered in Citizenship and Geography lessons, and charity fundraising (Cross *et al*, 2010:14). In a study by CAFOD, primary school students questioned about the sources of information for their understanding of 'global issues' spoke of the influence of work in school including campaigns, presentations, RE lessons and assemblies. These children also cited a range of other sources for their learning about global issues, including television and radio news, ads on TV and in print, Internet surfing for project work, campaigns/projects with their mothers, books, the children's news programme Newsround and specific websites (CAFOD, 2009).

Whilst we do not have a full picture of the way in which global issues are explored in schools, we do know that the range and quality of learning opportunities available to young people through formal education varies. This variation in the operationalised curriculum is likely to be an important factor in contributing to variations in the experienced curriculum.

## ii) Youth Work

Development education work with young people outside of schools is not prescribed in policy in the same way as formal education, but it is an area of practice that has come to have its own identity and approach. Known today as 'global youth work' it has been defined as *'informal education with young people that encourages a critical understanding of the links between the personal, local and the global and seeks their active participation in actions that bring about change towards greater equity and justice.'* Whilst its impact may not have been as great as the global dimension within schools, *'Youth work has a long tradition of supporting young people's understanding of the world around them. For decades youth workers have run international exchanges and encouraged young people to reflect on the global issues and events which affect their lives'* (NYA, 2006:3).

A 2009 report identified a range of initiatives and organisations bringing global issues into youth work, including the Development Education Association's Global Youth Action Project, Y Care International (working predominantly through YMCAs), Development Education Centres and the East Midland Regional Youth Work Unit's Global Youth network, People and Planet, Envision and the Catholic Overseas Development Agency (CAFOD). Material produced by bodies such as DEA (2002), Sallah and Cooper (2008) and practices of organisations such as Y Care International also demonstrate evidence of global youth work activity. Today, opportunities for learning about global poverty, climate change and being a global citizen are apparent within the activities of organisations providing more structured informal learning, such as Scouts, Guides and the Woodcraft Folk[8], and Wroe (2007) has written of the potential emancipatory role global youth work can play in engaging young people from marginalised communities.

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8 For example, the Scouts has within its Explorer Scouts programme a 'Global Zone' that helps its members '*develop a better understanding of the world they live in and make the link between local activity and global issues'* (see https://members.scouts.org.uk/supportresources/255/global-programme-zone-explorer-scouts). The Guides has a range of badges and activity packs that promote understanding of world issues and world cultures. The Woodcraft Folk, in its list of resources for 13-15 year olds, includes suggested activities on fair trade, global poverty, climate change, human rights and peace.

However, it is *'difficult to get a clear picture of the proportion of young people who experience youth work'* let alone the proportion that have the opportunity to learn about poverty and development in informal education contexts (Cotton, 2009:12). There is also little published material that reflects upon the form and nature of young people's involvement with global issues through youth work. The only major study was in 1995 by Bourn and McCollum for DEA, *World of Difference*, which aimed to give an overview of the current state of provision based on interviews with both practitioners and young people. This study found that it is where young people are already motivated through their endorsement of a particular organisation or its mission that engagement on global and development issues takes place (Bourn and McCollum, 1995).

In his review of the History of Global Youth Work, Paul Adams states that global learning can *'still be seen as a curriculum area or campaigning issue'*. However he goes on to suggest that the ambition of global youth work is more subtle, based on the notion that there is a global dimension to every issue (Adams, 2010). This is particularly seen through environmental issues but is also evident in the activities of a number of organisations on themes such as migration and refugees, fashion, food and healthy lifestyles (White, 2002). For example, between 2005 and 2010 a number of regionally co-ordinated global youth action projects engaged with diverse groupings of young people on the global dimension on issues that were of interest to them. This approach is best summarised by the following approach taken in the Yorkshire region:

*'Young people are being supported to identify for themselves what is important to them and explore the global dimension of that interest. It's not about designing a project around a preconceived notion of what 'global' is, like looking at climate change or world poverty but starting with young people's real interests, whatever they are, be it music or fashion or computer games and supporting them to explore fully what those things are all about. We won't force the young people to look at the global aspects of those interests but we will lay money on the fact that you can only explore any of those interests for so long before discovering that they have a global dimension – and a global dimension that is crucial to the impact they have on your life'*[9].

This suggests a move within global youth work to avoid the common assumptions about young people's engagement with development issues. However, there is little evidence exploring participants' experiences of global youth work and how its aims translate in terms of young people's learning and engagement. It is also worth noting that global youth work has been critiqued for other sets of assumptions it makes. Jeffs and Smith (2002) argue that global youth work could be perceived as bringing agendas into the sector, rather than young people themselves determining their own areas of learning and social and political engagement (Jeffs and Smith, 2002).

Until there has been more research in this area, it is difficult to come to any more detailed conclusions on the impact of youth work and informal education

9 www.gyaleeds.org.uk/projects/index.php

on young people's engagement with global and development issues. It is worth noting that global youth work, as well as offering opportunities to learn about development issues in the formal education system, may well have a range of learning outcomes for young people (for example, around personal development and intercultural understanding), which are not explored here.

## iii) Media consumption

In a growing list of countries the use of digital technology has permeated almost every aspect of contemporary social life, influencing culture, media, and social rituals, and is being incorporated into contemporary childhood in multiple and imaginative ways (Weber and Dixon, 2007:1; de Block and Rydin, 2006; Wyn and White, 1997; Warren, 2000). Large scale studies have explored the amount of time that young people spend in contact with media sources. Livingston and Bovill (1999) found that young people aged between six and seventeen spent an average of five hours a day using some form of media. Of these five hours, around half the time (46%) was spent watching television and a further fifth was spent listening to music, with video, computer games and reading each accounting for around 10% of British young people's media usage. Ten years later, and with the advent of smart phone technology to access the Internet, videos, games etc on demand, these figures are likely to be significantly higher.

The media and new technologies have created ways of bringing the local and global closer together, *'both in the ways we experience them and in the ways in which one can influence the other'* (de Block and Rydin, 2006). For example, news organisations produce representations of a range of stories relating to poverty and development, though constraints of time, news narratives and story selection make it difficult to cover development issues in depth (Poland, 2004). Often the stories that are featured are of disaster and bad news, such as the earthquake in Haiti in January 2010 which received extensive press coverage. Borowski and Plastow (2009) comment that in an online search for BBC articles on Africa, they were invited to select from the following keywords: civil war, elections, famine, human rights, peace negotiations, political parties, war.

Media coverage of development issues also includes campaigning messages from key development agencies, particularly through high profile events such as *Red Nose Day* and *Sports Relief*. The public profile of such organisations has increased in the last two decades, including campaigns around debt, the WTO and international conferences (Smith and Yanacopulos, 2004). In the past the images deployed by development NGOs have been strongly critiqued for their presentation of unremitting misery and disaster and promotion of pity (Arnold, 1988). Although many NGOs have changed their practice to use positive, active images, 'victim' images still remain the *'stock in trade of many organisations'* (Regan and Sinclair, 2006:109). Such campaigning, particularly for child sponsorship and disaster relief, contributes towards a sense of *'development as charity'* (Smith and Yanacopulos, 2004:661)[10].

10 A noteworthy contrast to this is in advertisements for fair-trade products, in which southern producers are represented less as aid recipients and more as 'small traders' and a feel good message that northern consumers can do their bit is communicated (Smith and Yanacopulos, 2004:662).

In addition to news items and NGO campaigns, television coverage of development issues include films such as *Blood Diamond* and *City of God*, reality programmes such as *Ultimate Traveller* on T4 or *World's Strictest Parents* on BBC3, and dramas such as the BBC's *Wild at Heart* (Cross *et al*, 2010). These latter categories have been criticised for offering different kinds of stereotypes:

 *'Wildlife programmes such as the BBC's Big Cat Diaries, or ITV's appalling wildlife drama, Wild at Heart, where Africans usually come with thick accents and a willingness to serve while white people nobly rescue beautiful animals, are standard fare; while occasional series and documentaries tend to feature brave and beautiful young white people going off to live ostensibly alone…with Africans of the noble savage variety'* Borowski and Plastow (2009:7).

The argument that some media coverage contributes to the development of stereotypes amongst young people (Borowski and Plastow, 2009) is articulated well by a primary school student, interviewed as part of Elton-Chalcraft's study of awareness of race. The white,female student presented a relatively nuanced view of Africa, describing variations in wealth and availability of technology across the continent. She explained that, despite this, *'everybody always thinks of the dusty roads and small huts and like they have to go and collect water from a well..'* (Elton-Chalcraft, 2009:67). When asked why people think like this the student referred to the portrayal of Africans in the television and through charity advertising: *'They don't tend to mention about all the places that are well off...you try to help the people that are not well off so you don't really mention the people that are'* (ibid).

Polling research indicates that, amongst adults, television is the main source of information about poverty and development (DFID, 2008, DEA, 2010)[11], particularly television news and documentaries (DFID, 2008). These findings are reflected in research with young people (66% of 14-15 year olds mention the importance of TV news, 42% documentaries), with the interesting addition of comedy panel shows such as Mock the Week and QI as a means of keeping up to date with what is going on in the world (Cross *et al*, 2010)[12].

The Internet, providing instant access to information and new forms of communication and community, has disrupted boundaries and caused anxiety to parents and teachers by providing young people with a gateway to the global world (Weber and Dixon, 2007:4). In discussions about the nature of contemporary social change, young people are yoked together with new media[13] and communications technologies in different ways, with the Internet either seen as revolutionising young people's social interactions (HMT and DCSF, 2007:4) or as

11 80% of the 2,056 adults aged 16+ interviewed on behalf of DFID stated that TV was the most importance source of information about poverty in developing countries. 80% the 1017 adults, aged 15 + interviewed on behalf of DEA learnt about global issues such as poverty and climate change through TV programmes.
12 Such comedy panel shows were cited by 26% of the 14-15 year olds involved in this research, conducted on behalf of IBT (in total, 1,500 14-20 year olds were involved in the online survey). In part, this may relate to a perception of the media as controlling the news agenda in terms of information and perspective, with young people seeking out 'alternative' sources (Cross *et al*, 2010:14).
13 'New media' denotes a wide variety of recent developments in the fields of media and communications and new ways in which people use and interact with media texts.

creating a generation of socially isolated couch potatoes.

However, research in this area warns against such generalisations. For example, countering the idea of youth as pervasively new media savvy 'cyberkids', Facer and Furlong found a large number of young people who either actively disassociated themselves from computer use or struggled to gain access and expertise (Facer and Furlong, 2001)[14]. There is also an argument that those using new media incorporate it into their existing peer networks, using it as an additional means of reinforcing those networks alongside face-to-face visits (Buckingham, 2008; Livingstone, 2002). Buckingham indicates that there is little evidence of young people actually using the Internet to develop global connections (Buckingham, 2007:41), and the practitioners interviewed for this research reflected this viewpoint, tending to see young people as using the Internet as a medium for carrying out familiar activities such as watching television or communicating with existing friendship groups.

Whilst tempering notions of the Internet as revolutionary for young people, it is important to acknowledge the window it may provide for learning about issues affecting the developing world. A high proportion (80%) of 14-20 year olds cite the Internet as a key way of keeping up to date with what is going on in the world (Cross *et al*, 2010). Weller describes the way young people view the Internet as having potential to open up spaces to learn about other young people half-way across the world (Weller, 2007), and Kenway and Bullen argue that young people, though their use of cyberspace and social networking are making friendships and observing people's lives throughout the world (Kenway and Bullen, 2008)[15]. They adapt the term 'flaneur', which means 'a person who saunters or strolls about' to propose a concept of a 'youthful cyberflaneur' who traces the *'travels of things across time and space, watching to see who used what and with what effects'*, and in doing so becomes conscious of the self and the other on a global scale (Kenway and Bullen, 2008:27).

This section has outlined the potential spaces offered by the media for young people to engage with issues of international poverty and development, and the clues that exist as to what this engagement actually looks like. It is worth noting that amongst the practitioners interviewed for this paper, the media was seen as an 'incidental' and 'filtered' context for young people's learning. Opportunities for viewing programmes about development issues were seen as the product of 'catching snippets' as part of other chosen programmes. Reinforcing this perspective, *Cross et al* point to the way in which television provider websites such as *iPlayer* give young people increased audience control over what they watch, with fewer opportunities for chance encounters (Cross *et al*, 2010:14). News coverage of development issues was also understood by interviewees for this report as being 'filtered', for example through providing stimulus for online conversations with friends rather than being directly viewed.

14 They found that disparities between young people's access to computers reproduced existing lines of gender, ethnicity and socio-economic class (Facer and Furlong, 2001).
15 Sites that enable this include Rafi.ki (www.rafi.ki), where young people can communicate via moderated messaging, video conferencing and 'drag and drop page creation tools'.

## iv) Personal connections

Recent research by IBT pointed to a number of forms of personal connection in supporting 14-20 year olds' interest in issues affecting the developing world. These connections, including discussion with family, going on holiday, and friend's experiences (Cross *et al*, 2010:23), are the focus of this section.

Young people experience globalisation through greater social pluralism resulting from global migration, both voluntary and forced (Osler and Starkey, 2003). Migration is not a new phenomenon in England, but *'recent technological, cultural, economic and political developments have significantly increased its impact'* (Zhao, 2009:11). Between 1997 and 2009 the UK had a net immigrant increase of 2,337,000, meaning that at the end of this period 10% of the UK population was born outside the country (Zhao, 1999:11). A report published by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion in 2007 recognises 'super diversity' in the UK resulting from migration from all over the world, not just from places with which it has historical links (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007). As a result, UK society is made up of many ethnicities, cultures, and languages originating in many different parts of the world (Ajegbo *et al*, 2007; Waters, 2007).

Nayak (2003:162), talking to a number of students, initially identified as white-English, found that in fact these young people had family ties to a number of other countries. Such personal relationships may also come from family members working abroad (for example, serving in Afghanistan (Cross *et al*, 2010)). It is not clear what kind of learning young people experience through these relationships, but research indicates that one third of adults say they learn about global issues, including poverty, through friends, family or colleagues (DEA, 2010).

Such personal links to other parts of the world can also come about in a number of other ways: through travel with family, school trips, international visits with youth groups, and school or community linking. Opportunities such as these are on the increase. For example, school linking has a high profile within government policy interpretations of how best to deliver understanding and support for development issues within schools, with multiple linking schemes available (Leonard, 2008). In the period May 2009-2010 there were 43.9 million visits by UK residents to other parts of Europe, 3.5 million to North America and 8.8 million to other parts of the world[16]. A small proportion of this latter category includes volunteerism in southern countries, through posts offered by charities such as VSO and 'overseas experiences' promoted by commercial volunteering organisations as part of the 'gap year phenomenon'. Estimates put involvement of 18-20 year olds from the UK in short-term (less than six month) placements in developing countries at 10,000 young people per year (Simpson, 2004).

Research with young adults (18-20 year olds) involved in gap year volunteer-tourism programmes indicate that personal experiences of poverty can serve to emphasise difference and establish a dichotomy of 'them and us'. Simpson

16 www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=352, accessed 4/8/2010.

found that the volunteers she spoke to often perpetuated a 'poor-but-happy' understanding of the people around them, leaving little space for questions about the nature of or reasons for poverty (Simpson, 2004). Many translated the experience into a feeling of 'luck'. The students' reflections focused on their own comparative fortunate position and their feeling of luckiness, suggesting an emphasis on fatalism rather than on structures and systems which contribute to and reproduce inequality (Simpson, 2004:689).

However, staff from Raleigh International, an organisation providing international volunteering opportunities for young people, who contributed comments towards this paper, emphasised that where opportunities for development education are incorporated into the international volunteering experiences, young people are able to learn more deeply about themselves, others and global issues. As an area of growth and of UK government funding, much more research is needed into volunteerism with young people, and particularly the opportunities it can provide for engaging with development issues.

The interviews with NGO practitioners carried out for this report brought an interesting perspective to the idea of young people's learning through personal connections. Rather than focusing on personal links to people and places in developing countries, a number of interviewees spoke of the importance of contact with individuals who are themselves inspired and engaged around issues of development. These personal connections were seen as crucial in developing young people's deeper engagement. Such inspiring personal contact could come from other young people, but significant adults were primarily cited, particularly teachers and youth leaders.

A belief in the importance of these connections in supporting young people's engagement with development issues is central to the work of many NGOs in this area. For example, both Oxfam and Plan UK run youth boards or youth advisory panels which provide intensive opportunities for engaging with small groups of young people. An emphasis by practitioners on the importance of personal connections with teachers and youth workers may be seen as justification of the approach their organisations take to their work, and the points of access available to them. However, the ways in which young people learn through contact with others deserves further research and discussion, and may be closely related to the important role of motivation in learning, explored further in Section 5.

## v) Comparative research

Few empirical studies have explored young people's experiences of opportunities to engage with development issues, and fewer still have compared this experience across different contexts, exploring the relationship between context and form of learning and engagement. One significant study is that by Asbrand, a German academic who compared two groups of young people learning about globalisation and development, one through critical and intellectual discussion at school, the

other group through volunteering in organisations outside of school. She found that compared with the learning which took place in a school environment the construction of knowledge of the young volunteers was much more certain and secure. The latter group felt *'certain about their knowledge and there is no consideration of non-knowledge or different perspectives'* (Asbrand, 2008:36). They took their knowledge as true and objective, allowing clarity regarding the options of acting in a complex world society, and *'a self-image of being active'* (Asbrand, 2008:37).

## 5    The 'who' of engagement and learning

Within many theories of learning, the learner is understood as at the centre of the learning process (Jarvis, 2009:24), as an active participant in a highly individualised learning process (Rickinson, Lundholm and Hopwood, 2009:16). Understanding what individuals bring and take from opportunities to engage with international poverty is therefore crucial in understanding their engagement.

Various personal characteristics, such as socio-economic status, gender, age and role are thought to impact on learning (Jarvis, 2006:195). Although this process is not yet fully understood (ibid), there are some clues that such relationships exist in terms of engaging with global issues. For example, a survey of girls attitudes carried out by Girlguiding UK found that girls from ethnic minorities feel particularly strongly about foreign aid, with 77% in favour of more aid, compared with 61% of white British girls (Fagan, 2010:2)[17]. There is also some evidence of gender variation in relation to the global issues young people see as important, with females more likely to focus on issues such as poverty, education and health, whilst males are more likely to prioritise conflict/terrorism and economic issues (Cross *et al*, 2010:21). Two of the practitioners interviewed for this research indicated that they felt girls were more likely to be engaged on issues of development, attributed to their levels of maturity.

Age seems to have an impact on levels of concern about poverty with levels high amongst 10 year olds (Cross *et al*, 2010), declining amongst 14-15 year olds (Taplin and Darnton, cited in Darnton and Smith, 2009), and possibly rising again amongst young adults[18].

Motivation and emotional commitment are understood as having a powerful role in the process of learning (Jarvis, 2006:179), providing the incentive for the acquisition of content and development of understandings (Illeris, 2009:9). There is also a growing interest in understanding the way emotions and values

17 The same survey found that girls from higher socio-economic households are more likely to disagree that there is nothing they can do that will have an effect on global warming (Fagan, 2010:3).
18 Survey research is contradictory on this final point, finding varying levels of concern about poverty in poor countries in this group. 68% of 18-20 year olds expressed concerned in Cross *et al's* research, compared to 43% of those aged 21 or over who completed an online survey on the Dubble and other fair-trade related websites (Taplin and Darnton, cited in Darnton and Smith, 2009).

are important in influencing motivation and engagement, as well as in shaping the process of conceptual development and change (Pintrich *et al*, 1993; Sinatra and Pintrich, 2003; Watts and Alsop, 1997). Watts and Alsop (1997:335-6) stress the importance of considering *'not only what conceptual systems learners hold and the status that can be attached to them, but also how they feel about this knowledge as well'*.

Little academic attention has been given to learners' motivation, the purpose or the value that they perceive in learning about poverty and development. Survey research indicates that young people are motivated to learn about issues of interdependence and international poverty (without unpicking why this is) (for example, DEA, 2008; Geographical Association, 2009).

Underlying this motivation may be concern amongst young people about the state of the world (Holden, 2006), an interest in issues affecting the rest of the world (Cross *et al*, 2010) and an awareness that global challenges are relevant to their lives now (*Ofsted, 2009*) and in the future:

*'We will soon be ruling the world so if we don't know about these issues we will not be any good at shaping the future'* [12-14 year old, Devon] (Global Learning Network South West, 2010).

Act Global is a project of the Citizenship Foundation, supporting young people to learn about global issues through teaching resources and online forums. Young people active on the students' site were asked what global issue they cared about and why, and a high proportion indicated a concern about poverty[19]. Most students explained their concern as motivated by a sense of injustice (they often talked in terms of poverty being 'sad', 'bad' or 'unfair'). However, for one student his concern resulted from personal and difficult experiences of poverty: *'I know how it feels to starve from poverty and for being homeless'*.

More in depth focus-group research with 14-20 year olds carried out on behalf of IBT reflected the important place of relevance and interest in motivating young people to engage with development issues, but revealed a more complex picture. Not all those who took part felt that international poverty was personally relevant or a concern to them, adopting instead a pragmatic 'that's life' response. Indeed, some of the young people reported feeling disengaged from development issues, either (particularly for those studying GCSEs or relevant A levels) because of a sense that development is homework, or because of the broader barriers that exist amongst the public at large (including levels of corruption, the political and geographical focus on news, and an inherited sense of 'developing world fatigue'). A strong sense of personal choice meant that these individuals did not report guilt or embarrassment about a lack of interest or concern (Cross *et al*, 2010).

Other forms of relevance were seen as motivating, including links to popular brands and young people's interests (for example the Nike *Lace Up, Save Lives*

19 From personal communication with Ade Sofola, Director of Act Global, 20/01/11.

campaign, and ActionAid's *Bollocks to Poverty* tent at music festivals), and personal connection through celebrity campaign endorsements and young people's individual stories (Cross *et al*, 2010).

Staff from Raleigh International note that while some young people join Raleigh expeditions to developing countries to engage in international development, others join for the adventure, to travel, and to meet new people. For example, one volunteer spoke of how she *'decided to take part in a Raleigh expedition to give me hands on experience which would help me gain future employment in the charity sector'*, and another of trying something new, developing new skills and improving his employability as well as *'seeing more of the world at the same time'*[20]. However, Raleigh often find that whilst individuals such as these may start the experience with different motivations, they often become more engaged with development issues after their return from the expedition. For example, the first young person quoted above went on to secure a place to study for a Masters in International Development. Raleigh International work with returned volunteers on a Global Ambassadors programme, working to generate an even greater depth of understanding of global issues. For example, one participant stated that this programme had *'raised my awareness of lots of issues, and gave me a 'hunger' to go and find out more... It also made me want to go and tell my friends and explain how they could shape their behaviour too. Motivating, de-mystifying and created a sense of community'*[21].

A recent evaluation of the work of the NGO People and Planet with post-16 students found that *'engagement with students at both colleges and universities has been most successful where it started from their needs and interests'* (Bourn, 2010:10). This indicates that a greater understanding of young people's motivations for learning about and engaging with issues of development would be significant for the work of NGOs as well as vital for a better understanding of learning processes.

## 6   Conclusion

Discourses around young people and their engagement with issues of international poverty have tended to characterise young people in UK society as engaging through specific, often campaign-related, activities, motivated by concern. Whilst this may well provide one part of the story, it is argued here that these assumptions mask a more complex and interesting picture. This report has drawn on existing literature and anecdotal evidence that begins to provide clues to a more nuanced understanding of young people's learning about and engagement with development.

20 Cited in personal communication with Brandon Charleston, Training & Development Manager, Raleigh International, 03/03/2011.
21 Cited in personal communication with Brandon Charleston, Training & Development Manager, Raleigh International, 03/03/2011.

Young people, their learning processes, the opportunities available to them and their experiences are diverse. Their learning about issues of development may occur in a range of contexts, including through formal and informal education, the media and personal connections to people and places in developing countries and to individuals already engaged with the issues. It is likely that the interplay between learning processes in these different contexts is complex and different for individual young people.

The 'who' of learning is understood as crucial in learning theory but has received limited attention in the context of young people's global learning. Factors relating to young people's identity (such as gender, age and socio-economic status) may be important, as may their motivations and interest. Whilst 'caring' and 'concern' are clearly strong motivators for some young people, other forms of motivation warrant further investigation, including relationships to existing interests and the guidance or inspiration of others.

An over-emphasis on engagement as participation and action can mask the importance of learning processes, and the complex relationships between learning and behaviours, which deserve much greater exploration in this area

This report poses far more questions that in answers. In doing so, it aims to contribute to broader discussions about the nature of young people's engagement with issues of development, and to evidence the need for more open-ended research which explores how, when and why young people learn about and engage with issues of international development. In the meantime, organisations and education systems seeking to facilitate young people's engagement with international poverty and development need to look beyond their own assumptions about the processes and outcomes of engagement and learning, and give greater consideration to young people's experiences and motivations.

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