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Decolonial options and challenges for ethical global issues pedagogy in Northern Europe secondary classrooms

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Abstract

This article builds from scholarship in Environmental and Sustainability Education and Critical Global Citizenship Education calling for more explicit attention to how teaching global issues is embedded in the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo, 2018). It reports on findings from a small exploratory study with secondary and upper secondary school teachers in England, Finland, and Sweden who participated in workshops drawing on the HEADSUP (Andreotti, 2012) tool. HEADSUP specifies seven repeated and intersecting historical patterns of oppression often reproduced through global learning initiatives. Teachers discussed the tool and considered how it might be applied in their practice. The paper reviews two of the key findings from their discussions: a) the mediation of charity discourses and global-local relations and b) emerging evidence of how national policy culture and context influence teachers' perceptions in somewhat surprising ways.

Keywords: global citizenship education, decoloniality, education for sustainable development, teacher pedagogy

Introduction

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) go further than the Millennium Development Goals. They call for action in all signatory countries not just in so-called "developing countries" as was previously the case. Target 4.7 supports Goal 4, quality education, by specifically referencing education for sustainable development (ESD) and global citizenship (GCE). The imperative to take action in support of SDG 4.7 raises important questions as to how teachers in the "Global North" are resourced to encourage their students to engage effectively with the factors contributing to continued

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inequalities and to deeply consider ethical concerns around responsibilities related to who contributes to and who is most negatively impacted by global issues. If learners are to be supported, as a key aim of GCE, to "revisit assumptions, world views and power relations in mainstream discourses and consider people/groups that are systematically and represented/marginalized" (UNESCO, 2014, p.16), teachers should be encouraged to move beyond superficial approaches. In this article, we explore how teachers in England, Finland, and Sweden expressed challenges and possibilities for applying critical approaches to teaching about global issues.

Research in the areas of Environmental and Sustainability Education (ESE) and critical GCE have raised concerns that extant approaches to ESD and GCE tend to reproduce colonial systems of power where a "we" in the Global North can learn about and solve the problems of a "them" in the "Global South". ESE scholarship has critiqued mainstream approaches to ESD, including, for example, the United Nations Decade for Sustainable Development (UNDSD) (2005-2014) for an overreliance on universalising approaches (e.g., Wals, 2009; Sund & Öhman 2014). Scholars also suggest mainstream ESD promotes change largely through behaviour modification, thereby over-stepping systemic issues (e.g., Jickling & Wals 2008; Van Poeck & Vandenabeele, 2012). Scholars such as Matthews (2011) note a lack of attention to the interdependence of globalization, post-colonialism, and environmental matters, and a perpetuation of Western epistemologies at the expense of non-Western and indigenous worldviews (see also Blenkinsop et al., 2017). Scholars writing critically about GCE argue superficial approaches to teaching about global issues step over ethical issues and reinforce colonial systems of power in the materials and approaches offered to learners (e.g., Andreotti, 2011a; Martin, 2011; Pashby, 2012; Shultz & Pillay, 2018). Reflecting on the UNDSD, Huckle & Wals (2015) argue for a stronger transformative emphasis and suggest an approach that bridges ESD and global learning into global education for sustainable citizenship. It is outside of the scope of this paper to address the complex and contradictory expressions of Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Education in theory, policy, and practice. However, as scholars who have been involved in Environmental and Sustainability Education and critical Global Citizenship Education, respectively, we see a strong rationale for an explicit focus on the contribution of theoretical resources that highlight engagements with coloniality in each field (e.g., Sund, 2016; Pashby, 2012) as a way to work towards decolonial possibilities (Andreotti, 2011b). We sought to take up Huckle and Wals' (2015) call by using a critical GCE approach to teaching about global issues. This is one way to bridge the fields and promote *ethical global issues pedagogy,* which we define as directly taking up issues of power and coloniality.

In her seminal piece, Andreotti (2006) explicated the tendency of GCE to reproduce colonial systems of power. "Soft" GCE describes approaches based on common humanity and a single view of progress where global justice issues are framed and responded to

from within a Western, Global North[2] status quo. In contrast, "Critical" GCE seeks to centre rather than overstep differences in power. These are also important pedagogical concerns in ESD (e.g., Sund, 2016). Andreotti & Souza (2012) call for a critical approach informed by postcolonial theories as "tools for thinking rather than tools-as-truth", where "post" means "constant interrogation" (p. 2). Andreotti (2011) draws on Leela Gandhi (1998) to argue that postcolonial theory can be put to work on educational theory and practice by opening up possibilities to theorise non-coercive relationships with global "Others" who have historically been the production of Western humanitarianism. While it is outside the scope of this paper to describe fully the distinctions between and within the traditions of postcolonialism and decoloniality, our approach responds to calls for actioning postcolonial theory (Andreotti, 2014) and engaging decolonial possibilities in pedagogy related to global issues (Andreotti, 2011b). As Bhambra (2014) notes, "post-colonial and decolonial arguments have been most successful in their challenge to the insularity of historical narratives and historiographical traditions emanating from Europe" (p. 161). Following Mignolo (2011), Mignolo & Walsh (2018) Andreotti (2014), we understand this as a pedagogical imperative.

By drawing across how both postcolonialism and decoloniality have "radical potential in unsettling and reconstituting standard processes of knowledge production" (Bhambra, 2014, p. 161), we chose Andreotti's (2012) HEADSUP tool as a way to engage these discussions with secondary teachers. The tool, inspired by the troubling KONY 2012 phenomenon[3], articulated seven problematic patterns of representations and engagements commonly found in narratives presented in educational approaches to global issues, particularly North-South engagements with local populations who are structurally marginalized. Fitting the acronym HEADSUP, it helps educators and learners to start conversations about

- Hegemonic practices (reinforcing and justifying the status quo)
- Ethnocentric projections (presenting one view as universal and superior)
- Ahistorical thinking (forgetting the role of historical legacies and complicities in shaping current problems)
- Depoliticized orientations (disregarding the impacts of power inequalities and delegitimizing dissent)
- Self-serving motivations (invested in self-congratulatory heroism)
- Un-complicated solutions (offering "feel-good" quick fixes that do not address root causes of problems)

[2] We use the term "Global North" to indicate an area of epistemological, economic, and political privilege within the current geopolitical configuration. Andreotti (2006) argues that there are implications for GCE of the "the projection of Northern/Western values and interests as global and universal which naturalizes the myth of Western supremacy in the rest of the world" (p. 4).

[3] The Kony 2012 video created by NGO Imaginary Children was shared and viewed over 100 million times in 10 days, largely by well-intended youth in "Global North" contexts (Von Engelhardt & Jansz, 2014). The video, aiming to make warlord Joseph Kony a household name and to stop exploitation of child soldiers, was criticized for presenting a simplistic view with the NGO itself criticized over use of the funds raised (Gregory, 2012).

- Paternalistic investments (seeking a "thank you" from those who have been "helped") (Andreotti et al. 2018, p. 15; see also Andreotti, 2012, p. 2).

Andreotti et al. (2018) note that the tool is one intervention that can help to centre and make visible the "historical and structural foundations upon which current crises have emerged" (p. 13). It is not a "checklist for transformation" nor a guaranteed way out of current global problems; yet, it is one way of "engaging educationally with dominant practices in ways that enable learners to problematize" (p. 14) and move beyond dominant narratives about development evident in how global issues are taught in "Global North" contexts.

Having both worked with HEADSUP in our respective research and practice in GCE (Pashby & Andreotti, 2015) and ESD (Sund, 2016), and because it directly attends to the critique emerging from both fields, we chose it as a central framework for our study. The tool has been used to analyse NGO workers' views in Poland (Kuleta-Hullboj, 2016) and to promote reflexivity and dialogue in in-service learning (Grain and Lund, 2016). Sund (2016) adapted it into an analytical framework to examine how upper secondary teachers in Sweden articulated different ways of enacting pedagogies on global issues. However, we found no research into how secondary teachers might respond to this tool in regards to their practice in "Global North" contexts.

In the winter and spring of 2018, supported by funding from the British Academy, we introduced HEADSUP to secondary and upper secondary teachers (of students 14-18 years old) in England, Finland, and Sweden. Participants identified themselves as teachers of global issues interested in learning about a more critical and complex approach[4]. We were interested in the extent to which the HEADSUP tool was useful for reflection and application, and what the teachers' comments evoked through discussions of the tool reveal about approaches that directly take up issues of power and coloniality. While it was outside of the scope of the project to evaluate the tool, in this article, we focus on some key insights regarding the challenges and possibilities for an ethical global issues pedagogy inspired by HEADSUP.

Theoretical framing: Decolonial options and foreclosures

We consider our work as contributing to decolonial opportunities in education through a pedagogical application of the theory of Mignolo (2011, 2018) via Andreotti's (2012) HEADSUP tool. It is important to note that we are both cis gender, heterosexual, middle-class, White females who have been born and raised into "Global North" contexts, and we hold great socio-economic privilege as PhD educated researchers and educators in permanent positions in universities. We are ourselves engaged in an ongoing reflexive praxis regarding how to open up spaces for decolonial options while also recognising how these are continuously foreclosed. Our concern in this particular paper is the extent to

[4] For more information about recruitment and project design, please see the project report (Pashby, Sund & Corcoran, 2019)

which teachers in the northern European contexts in our study can be supported towards a praxis that enacts decolonial options in those particular contexts. We are also interested in identifying where such options are foreclosed or stalled. Overall, this exploratory project sought to identify some key themes to direct further theory and research in this area that might support teacher practice.

In order to define our approach to ethical global issues pedagogy for this project, we drew on Mignolo's (2011) shine and shadow of modernity/coloniality, and Andreotti's (2014) modernity's trick. According to Mignolo (2011), the light side of modernity holds much of what is deeply valued in international and national development, including: a teleological foundation promising on-going progress, individual freedom based on the assumption that progress is seamless, and shared human experience organised through nation-states and liberal democratic practices. Yet, he argues, these ideals are only possible because of and they depend on the dark side of modernity, coloniality, including continuous colonialism, imperialism, and over-exploitation of resources and people which can be observed in war, epistemic racism, dispossession, destitution and genocide (Andreotti, 2014). Reinforcing modernity does not "help" improve the dark side but leads to continued problematic patterns of engagement with those who seemingly "drag behind", as described in HEADSUP (p. 5). Mignolo's (2011) portrayal of the modern-colonial dynamic thus foregrounds the complicity in the violence on others that is required to believe in the light side. Building from Mignolo (2011), Andreotti (2014) identifies "modernity's trick" as occurring when altruistic efforts promote a continual helping of others to access the light side, together moving "ahead in linear time towards a homogeneous better future defined by rational consensual unanimity" (p. 4). She argues teaching about global issues can function as a trick of modernity, but also that by recognising the ways coloniality ensures a foreclosure of the shadow of modernity, global issues pedagogy can support educators and learners to imagine relating otherwise.

Walsh and Mignolo (2018) note, "modernity is not a decolonial concept, but coloniality is" (p. 3-4). Decoloniality builds from an analytic of coloniality. Possibilities emerge from recognising how coloniality provides a logic to "the rhetoric of modern salvation" (Mignolo, 2018, p. 146). As Mignolo (2018) says, "decoloniality is both an analytic of modernity/coloniality (its constitution, transformation) and a set of creating processes leading to decolonial narratives legitimizing decolonial ways of doing and living" (p. 146). It is neither a static condition, an individual attribute nor "a linear point of arrival" (Walsh, 2018, p. 17). Applying the possibility of decoloniality to critical global citizenship education, Andreotti (2011) reinforces a nuanced approach that "emphasises" 'decoloniality' and "diversality" and moves discussions away from the uncritical and wholesale embrace or rejection of modernity" (p. 392). We thus see "decolonial possibilities" in working to make coloniality visible, and HEADSUP is a tool to open up a critical intervention into practices of engaging with global issues.

Within the context of enactment to promote Sustainable Development Goal Target 4.7

(including education for sustainable development and global citizenship) in northern Europe, it is essential that the analytic of coloniality be taken-up through addressing the continued role of colonialism in today's global problems. Our project offered HEADSUP as a mechanism. However, we recognize secondary schools themselves, teachers working in them, and we as researchers are embedded in the colonial matrix of power (Walsh & Mignolo, 2018). Drawing on Bernstein's idea that we live in a "totally pedagogised society", Singh (2015) explains how social control operates through processes of cultural and social production and reproduction in and through education systems. In other words, schooling functions as an agent of production and reproduction. As Andreotti et al. (2015) discuss in the context of GCE in higher education, it is challenging to discuss modernity critically with those whose "existence and imaginaries have been framed by modernity", and this is particularly a challenge in the "neoliberal educational contexts driven by the desires of educational consumers to…be affirmed as 'doing good'" (p. 24). A decolonial possibility then, makes space for theoretical insights on distribution/inequalities, power and epistemology to reorient and generate reflexive and explicit discussions about global equity and justice within education, particularly where there is explicit teaching about global issues (e.g., Andreotti & Souza, 2012).

Neither we nor Andreotti claim that HEADSUP is a panacea. As a tool for critical literacy development, it is not a "perfect ultimate methodology for engagements with global issues"; rather, it aims to "support people with the on-going wrestling with concepts and contexts, choices and implications, that we face every day as teachers and learners working towards deeper and more ethical ways of relating to others and to the world" (Andreotti, 2012, p. 3). We thus take an always-contested position that such an approach is dynamic, moving, and cannot guarantee a secure stance. Yet, such an approach may open up possibilities for dissent, solidarity and strategic discourse that begins with explicit attention to historical patterns of oppression and their contributions to global issues (Pashby, 2013).

Methodology

Using the HEADSUP tool as a means to explore how to support ethical global issues pedagogy by encouraging teachers to deepen their approach to teaching global issues, we held workshops in England, Finland, and Sweden. We shared the rationales for the study including the critiques of both ESD and GCE, and we facilitated a series of activities first introducing the idea of critical GCE, and then directly working with HEADSUP. Teachers engaged in discussions throughout the activities including a reflexive activity based on HEADSUP (see Pashby & Sund, 2020, p. 318), and spent time in partners or small groups discussing their reactions to the tool and thoughts about how it could be applied in practice.

Our project sought to connect what is largely theoretical scholarship in the everyday

lives and experiences of teachers and classrooms (Lau & Stille, 2014). We sought exploratory data into teachers' reactions to HEADSUP through transcriptions of discussions at the workshops. This valuable "teacher talk" (Biesta et al., 2017) provided rich data regarding what shapes teachers' views of what is possible or not from their own work, and from their students and colleagues. It is important to note that our aim was to gather data and support practice across contexts in northern Europe, and our locations were selected largely by ability through our networks to gather participants in time, given the short timeline of the project and need to begin quickly.

We recruited participants who taught global issues in secondary classrooms through emails and social media, targeting professional networks and established groups through collaborating organisations (e.g., CSOs, global learning networks, teacher education networks). Workshops were held in Stockholm (ten participants), Birmingham (two participants), Manchester (eight participants), London (two participants), and Helsinki (eight participants). These locations had strong transportation links enabling for a mix of urban, suburban, and rural-based teachers. We had aimed for ten teachers per workshop, but had last minute participant withdrawals in England due to a snowstorm that closed schools for two weeks. The workshop structures were consistent, and we were able to collect transcriptions of conversations among different small groups within workshops. There was a range of teaching experience with most falling in the six-ten year range. Nine males and seventeen females participated, reflecting the demographic make-up of the profession. While some were highly experienced, most identified they have three to five years of experience teaching about global issues. The SDGs were identified as a priority across the sample. Participants taught a range of subject areas with most teaching social studies (geography, economics, ethics) and some teaching other subjects (religious education, natural science). A couple of months after the workshops, five participants from England attended a resource development day where they discussed applications in practice and drafted activities to be included in a teachers' resource (which was later piloted, reviewed, and published in all three languages. See Pashby & Sund, 2019b). Transcripts were analysed to identify and explore some key themes. In this paper, we share a set of findings from the discussions at the workshops and resource development day.

We aimed to identify challenges and possibilities for ethical global issues pedagogy across contexts and not to specifically compare different contexts. This was a small, exploratory project with a short project timeline and relatively small sample; thus we cannot generalise. However, the project enabled us to work directly with teachers to gain some insights into the "decolonial possibilities" of engaging with HEADSUP in secondary school global issues pedagogy in northern Europe. In this paper, we will consider what our findings from the workshops and resource development day discussions suggest for ethical global issues pedagogy and identify further areas of study in comparative education (for full findings, see Pashby et al., 2019).

Two Key Findings

The discussions at the workshops and resource development meeting provided a wealth of discussion among and reflection on the part of participants. In this paper, as a response to the call for this special issue, we review and reflect on two key themes that point directly to the question of decolonial possibilities and challenges: a) the relationship between formal and non-formal global education and mediation of mainstream charity discourses and global-local relations, and b) emerging evidence of how national policy culture and context influence teachers' perceptions and approaches in somewhat surprising ways (for further discussion of additional findings, see Pashby et al., 2019; Pashby & Sund, 2019a; Pashby & Sund, 2020).

Mediating charity discourses and global-local relations

Across the workshops, teachers discussed the influence of charity discourses, reflecting mainstream perspectives of development. This aligns with research that has demonstrated the influence of development-as-charity in formal education (e.g., Bryan, 2008). At Manchester, teachers spoke about the criticism of videos used in nation-wide public fundraising campaigns. They also discussed the challenges of how to contribute to a more complex approach as a teacher when extra-curricular activities promote money-raising, charity appeals. One teacher brainstormed how to advise students to complexify their approach to charity bake-sales:

> You could give [students buying cakes] an option, so it's like hey, if you want to give us some money for a cake, that's great but actually there's also a systematic problem here so if you wanted to campaign with your MP here's the contact details of your local Member of Parliament.

The Manchester workshop also included a discussion of how some schools allow students to choose what charity they will focus on. Generally, participants saw this as a positive option although at least one teacher raised the issue of how to politicize students' responses in a more systemic way. This raises a serious question about upon what criteria and ethical framework students are "choosing" charitable beneficiaries. Sometimes, schools have pre-existing partnerships abroad and pick from a set of particular "needs" identified by the partner while other times it seems schools select from a wider range of charities. There was a tension expressed among those participants who espouse a critical standpoint regarding how to engage with the charity-based development paradigm in the extra-curricular school projects, as one participant expressed:

> Because I work in an all-girls grammar school and every week there's some sort of bake sale, there's some badge they're wearing and they are in the right place but it's all well and good getting them to ask these questions but then like realistically what can they do. I don't know.

While this participant recognised a tension, she was at a loss as to how to engage constructively. Perhaps related to this sense of not knowing what to do, several participants

raised concerns that students should remain positive about participating in school-wide charity appeals.

A number of participants spent time in the Manchester workshop thinking up positive words to connect to the concepts in HEADSUP. Interestingly, one of those participants came to the resource development meeting and expressed a change of heart. He determined it is in fact important to engage in critique without adding a positive spin because students can miss the complexity and remain at a superficial level of engagement, and he found that a more nuanced approach enabled them to feel more deeply connected to the issue and engaged. This finding aligns with Ojala's (2015, 2019) research showing that learning about sustainability problems evokes and stirs up emotions, such as worry and indignation. She argues that this is not something that teachers should try to avoid. If teachers can respond to students' feelings and "meet" students' worries and constructively handle them, this can promote constructive and reflected actions among students.

In Helsinki, participants discussed a recent charity appeal walk-a-thon initiative, one of the teachers raised a concern: "The problem is that I don't know whether the children actually know what the cause is". Similarly, in the Birmingham workshop, one of the participants spoke about the former school where he worked who had a partnership with a school in a "developing country". As it turned out, he realised at one point that the partner school was in fact a private school that was quite well off in comparison to local state-run schools in that country. Another participant expressed the tensions around and challenges of trying to teach ethical global issues pedagogy in her classes when a wider mainstream approach based on charity is endorsed in school projects and wider society:

> You have things like every year like Children in Need… and they completely reinforce those sort of things [in HEADSUP]. There's always video and they're always drawing at the worst-case examples that stimulate people to give more charity money. It just reinforces the idea of you have to give them charity and they're underdeveloped and we have to support them. It's a completely wrong way of doing it. There are better examples you can sometimes use like and you're not just giving them money, giving support, it's about education. We can sometimes use the example okay if you can provide rather than give them like loads of food and water and give them the education to develop that, and then have that and then stimulate things like rainwater harvesting, improve this, uh, I don't think there's enough of those sort of examples in the mainstream. You can teach about them in a lesson but then I think it's reinforced in what I see.

It is important to note that research by Tallon and McGregor (2014) in New Zealand demonstrates young people are questioning traditional approaches to development and many have a critical view of the charity model.

Interestingly, teachers at schools that explicitly focus on global education also face, albeit a different set of, possibilities and challenges. At the Stockholm workshop, some teachers explained that their students are supported with theoretical knowledge about different theories of development and teachers explicitly promote a reflexive approach. This opens up opportunity for a critical approach but also demonstrates the challenges:

> We've had field study trips to poorer countries, since we started this school, and on most trips[…]there has been one point the students have asked us teachers at least it's very common that why they are poor, we are rich, why can't we just give them stuff and money[…] and we try to be

> more complicated about the situation [laughs], we are then the bad guys, it's very hard to handle. I mean they're sitting down and talking, and they know that they are poor, and they know that they are relatively rich […] I mean it's complicated, and I don't think that we teachers are agreeing on everything, sort of we're not speaking with one voice, no, but I think that we try to say things like what will happen if you will give a lot of things to one family, what about their neighbours, and do we have any idea what that's going to cost, socially and if you want to, really want to do something you can go back home to Sweden and you can go into organisations who do, yeah, try to get to the root of the problem instead.

There is a strong commitment to engaging with reflexivity around how to unpack the "roots" underlying issues of global inequalities. While she felt she was tackling a lot of HEADSUP with students, relationality remains a significant challenge. There is a pressure to as well as a difficulty to find a consistent message to students about how to resolve the tensions of global inequalities when they present in charity work, more bottom-up field work, or even within classrooms where a critical approach is being centred.

Across the workshops, teachers expressed an interest in critically engaging with wider paradigms. Yet, as a participant in Birmingham summed up, there can also be an over-focus on helping abroad: "I'd be interested in how do you empower students because they are more inclined to help people thousand miles away through your bake sales and things like that but they won't help their next-door neighbour". Across the workshops, as reflected in the survey data, this sense that students need to look "outside their bubble" was a strong discourse. In all cases, teachers are negotiating their teaching in relation to perceived attitudes of the students and mediating wider charity discourses event in popular culture and extra-curricular activities.

Surprising mediations of policy culture and context

There was diversity within and similarities across national contexts as demonstrated by the findings regarding mainstream charity discourses. However, the discussions indicated that teachers form their motivations and frame their challenges in response to some national and regional level policy cultures and contexts. As we had a small and self-selective sample, we cannot claim any generalizable findings from these discussions. It is outside the scope of this paper to explore thoroughly the policy and practice contexts. However, this special issue offered an opportunity to explore and raise important questions for further comparative investigation.

A concern arose in both the Stockholm and Helsinki workshops around ensuring that ethical global issues pedagogy as inspired by reflecting on the HEADSUP tool not stop at the level of analysis but that it should promote action. This concern likely reflects a policy culture influenced by a more than twenty-year-old Nordic tradition and a goal of environmental education to let students grow into responsible and action-minded citizens. Action competence refers to an educational ideal that regards sustainability problems as societal and conflicting issues and promotes "action" where an action promotes solutions to the problem and includes a perspective that directly enacts change. Teachers are critical and creative in how they present global issues and point to new visions of the future in

order to support students' capacities and willingness to act both at a personal and a societal level, and contribute to social change (Jensen & Schnack, 1997; Mogensen & Schnack, 2010).

One significant example was a discussion in Stockholm regarding the extent to which the HEADSUP tool focused more on global citizenship pedagogy in its attention to analysis and not as much on education for sustainable development via actions. While there was not one common conclusion regarding action competence in Sweden, and there were quite nuanced discussions, the notion of action itself was not as evident in the workshop discussions in England. The action competence discourse came out strongly in a response from one of the most experienced teachers who has leadership responsibilities in regards to global issues teaching and wanted to see a stronger notion of students as agents of change:

> I was thinking about sustainable development and thinking of solutions and the future. Is it there [in HEADSUP]? […] something with being active, and yeah, change agents, or something that is more pushing or that the, act, I don't know what word it would be, but something not only… Yes, that is what I, to me I would not be able to use this alone. I would like to add something.

Interestingly, this comment received a direct response from the participant's colleague who pointed out that in geography, students are required to "see connections between humankind and society and environment, and the highest level you can do that is complex connections". He suggested that global issues pedagogy is "more than the solutions", and is about "being able to describe the complexities of the world. Like this quote: for every complex problem there is an answer that is always wrong". A third colleague reasserted the conundrum around how to promote complexity while also promoting action, pointing out "I can understand what [the first colleague means] because if you leave the teacher and the students with all these questions and a lot of problems and then they don't see the solution, then it could also be counterproductive".

Perhaps related to the strength of an action competence discourse in the Nordic context, the issue around action was also raised in Helsinki, particularly in discussions about connecting global citizenship education with education for sustainable development and environmental education. Another very experienced lead teacher agreed on the importance of engaging with critical approaches as an absolute must. While firmly endorsing a critical approach, she pushed the discussion towards consideration of the role of action:

> If we just keep them on deconstructing stories and just keep them on kind of discussion, then there is no application in real life. And that's why for special environmental and ecological issues, we need to put also the hands on, so that there is also a kind of promotion of how you can do things differently.

Thus, the question of connecting critical GCE to ESD raises various and event contradicting views regarding action competency.

At the Birmingham workshop, teachers expressed a similar point when discussing how students could be inspired to identify a "next step" having explored historical patterns of

oppression via HEADSUP. However, the focus of that discussion was more on pedagogy and facilitating the students to develop a stance on moving the issue forward than on action in a direct sense. One participant suggested a future-oriented approach as type of action in itself. He suggested that in the resource adapting HEADSUP for use in secondary classrooms "there could be a question that forces [students] to think about uncertainty, so what maybe are the future uncertainties […] and gets them to look at all the evidence to actually think about a next step, so they know that the conversation's continuing". And, at the London workshop, a participant wondered about expecting a firm solution from students: "to be fair, I think, yeah, there's value in pointing out that there are a lot of people in really high-paid jobs that have a lot of education that still can't figure this out, so you know…". Another participant at the Birmingham workshop noted while it is important to consider solutions that can respond to issues, we must deeply consider changes moving forward "because [sustainable development]'s not just linear, it's not just static". Later in the discussion, she linked this back to the direct classroom context of a paradox between disciplinary thinking and the realities of an exam-based curriculum:

> Yeah…when we were looking at HEADUPs, I wondered how do you empower students to actually feel confident that there isn't an answer? […] Because geography is forever changing but they don't want it to change during their exam period.

In England, the teachers' discussions of ethical global issues pedagogy related strongly to the high stakes testing culture[5]. While it presents a significant constraint to teachers (e.g., Gewirtz et al., 2019), a surprising finding was how the HEADSUP tool supported them to be creative and strategic within this culture. A participant in London expressed this:

> [HEADSUP] opens your eyes to just how much the curriculum does need to be revisited, you know….because I'm so busy looking at my [course] spec and making sure that my spec matches so that the kids can do well on the exam, you know, it's like, it actually is, you know, missing a beat there.

She goes on to describe how breaking down the HEADSUP concepts felt like she was getting "sort of a get out of jail free card" in the sense that the workshop and this tool gave her permission to do critical work: "[HEADSUP's] a thing, someone's put that here, so it's OK". Across the workshops, geography teachers discussed ways taking-up HEADSUP could work within new curriculum specifications. Many were very positive, noting a stronger amount of "to what extent questions" on the new exams, which promoted a more complex approach. A teacher in Birmingham highlighted a more critical approach was possible in the content that considers theories of development in A Level which his students were finding engaging. At the Manchester workshop, another teacher

[5] For a more detailed and nuanced contextualisation of policy, politics, and practice in education in England, see Ball (2017).

saw HEADSUP as supporting a subversive approach to the mandated policy to promote Fundamental British Values in schools[6]:

> I'm a Citizenship teacher, and I think this is really good for Citizenship as well as, you know the British Values...? I think there's a massive opportunity to be quite subversive about that. And to sort of look at tolerance and democracy and to really pick that apart and see how democratic we are and our roles or the uncomfortable histories of Britain.

Across the workshops in England, the policy context shaped their engagement with HEADSUP, and although strict curriculum specifications and policy directives direct their pedagogical choices, they found some strategic and creative ways to adapt the tool and promote a more critical approach. In addition to advocating for curricular change, further research could consider the ways teachers are able to engage in ethical global issues pedagogies despite curricular constraints and how some strong citizenship education discourses, such as action competency, may present a challenge.

Discussion

In this section, we begin to analyse more broadly key insights emerging from two of the themes found in this small-scale exploratory study. It appears that the HEADSUP tool offered an approach to decoloniality by opening a space for an analytical engagement with coloniality that included a strong critique of the mainstream development discourse rooted in charity and awareness campaigns. However, teachers' discussions of HEADSUP suggest that while they can apply it to critique a charity model, and teachers in specialised field experience contexts can enable a deep critique of development discourses, teachers across contexts are stuck as to how to pedagogically respond to the ethical dilemma: what *should* "we" do? This finding raises the issue of the extent to which opportunities for critical approaches to global issues teaching may be foreclosed by a dominant liberal humanist discourse. When teachers are "not sure what to do", their ready reflective work engaging with HEADSUP suggest they may be able to critique ethnocentrism and also to promote existing political actions. However, it is quite difficult to engage with patterns of oppression such as salvationism and paternalism because these directly take up issues of complicity, and existing political "actions" do not line up easily to respond to these.

Teachers in our study expressed tensions around how to act and engage constructively with charity-based school projects. Ojala (2019) shows, through a review of theories and previous empirical studies, that if teachers have a solution-oriented way of communicating and take students' negative emotions and worry concerning societal issues into account, they have the potential to promote critical awareness and engagement among students. In

[6] In 2014, the British government passed anti-terrorism policy described as Promoting Fundamental British Values. Schools are required by law to actively promote "democracy", the "rule of law", "liberty", "mutual respect" and "tolerance of different faiths and beliefs". This policy has been widely critiqued (see for example, Lander, 2016; Winter, 2018; among others).

this sense, taking on an action competence approach means to aim at developing competences that are important for becoming an active and critically informed citizen. However, as she argues, to be critical is not enough. Teachers play a vital role in how they support students to find creative and optimistic visions about possible changes for a sustainable future. The action competence approach helps to evoke an ethical relation to others in combining critical thinking with "the language of possibility" and searching for solutions and a positive direction for those in worse conditions (Mogensen & Schnack, 2010). In this regard, Ojala (2015) identified that "constructive hope" among Swedish upper secondary students was positively related to pro-environmental engagement.

Our findings also suggest that teachers wish to build from students' determination to constructively act towards change. Yet, when focused on positive approaches, a teacher in our study found a superficial level of engagement, and when he took a more direct approach at engaging with systems of oppression outlined in HEADSUP, students felt more deeply engaged. Critically engaging with ethical global issues by centering ethical issues and explicitly treating decoloniality, adds nuance and supports teachers to think and act in ways that work to dismantle the structures of privilege, opening up possibilities for them and their practice. How can teachers promote active change without reinscribing paternalism and salvationism? We wonder about the ways that action competence may unintentionally present another script of and investment in coloniality due to prioritising solutions (Andreotti et al., 2018; Amsler, 2019).

Shultz's (2007) distinction between a radical approach and a transformational approach to GCE may be useful to unpack this finding. A *radical* approach sees globalization as an accelerated mode of Western imperialism whereby economic power is used for domination. In this view, global citizens recognise an unequal system and take responsibility to challenge state and corporate structures that marginalize so many, working with these structures to improve them. However, by over-emphasising structures, radical global citizenship actions could "prevent authentic change or relationships from developing" (Shultz, 2007, p. 257). Global citizenship based in *transformationalism* reads globalisation as "cultural, social, environmental, and political as well as economic resulting in new patterns of inclusion and exclusion, as well as the erosion of North-South hierarchies" (Shultz, 2007, p. 249). However, a transformational approach engages deeply with complex and dynamic sets of relationships, moving beyond globalization as singularly a new form of imperialism. It may, therefore, open up new opportunities for "negotiating between local and global actions and agenda, resolving conflict, and acting in solidarity" (Shultz, 2007, p. 255).

Similarly, Stein (2015) distinguishes between an anti-oppressive approach to global citizenship and an incommensurable position. Both positions recognise the oppression and symbolic as well as material violence that a modern/colonial universalism ascribed to be "the West" has had on cultures through on-going coloniality. However, in the incommensurable position: "existing scripts for thought and action are not outright rejected, but their limitations are illuminated through encounters with and across difference" (p.

247). She argues this position directly takes up a decolonial possibility of engaging differently with existing ordering of the world by "explicitly draw[ing] on possibilities offered by relationships across difference that do not need to be reconciled through consensus or synthesis" (p. 247).

Several teachers in our project expressed a struggle to advise students on how best to "act" when encountering the deep ethical dilemma. These could be in relation to charity bake sales or to encountering deep difference directly in field experiences in "Global South" contexts. We consider that this sense of "not knowing what to do" could be described through the incommensurable position. Receiving critical perspectives on development theory illuminates the limitations of existing scripts for action through encounters across differences (Stein, 2015). This leaves teachers feeling somewhat limited when they do not have a specific action or set of actions to recommend, a framing we are starting to refer to as "solutionism". Stein (2015) suggests that a key limitation of an incommensurable position is a lack of intelligibility from within mainstream institutions, particularly educational institutions with defined and progressive outcomes defining student learning. The possibility is therefore in the efforts to support on-going reflexivity in regards to complex choices teachers face every day (Andreotti, 2012).

As an ending discussion point, we draw on Amsler's (2010) reflection on critical pedagogy of crisis. Rather than seeing it as paralysis, the moments when teachers are "not sure what to do" may be the moments that enable the cultivation of ethics of ambiguity that could hold open decolonial possibilities:

> The political hope of crisis thinking need not lie only in the power of crisis experience to mobilize transformative action; indeed, this is to hope for too much and too little all at once. The hope of crisis thinking may rather lie in the more humble possibility that it disrupts the flow of historical time and consciousness enough to make space for criticism, encounter and alternative imaginaries. These imaginaries, of course, cannot be ours to determine. They may be fearful or hopeful, enervating or energizing. The critical pedagogy of crisis, therefore, cannot simply be a matter of learning to recognize crises in everyday life or to extrapolate them in more abstract terms. Rather, it is a matter of creating environments where we can cultivate an ethics of ambiguity that will enable us to engage with experiences of crisis in more critical ways. (Amsler, 2010, p. 150)

We suggest that our project is an example of one way to open up critical environments in the teaching of global issues and address solutionism, and reflexivity is in itself an action towards transformation. The creation of a learning environment to cultivate ambiguity is not easy. However, this project has provided some indication that it is happening and can be supported. We finish with a set of guiding principles developed with a group of teachers in the project as one possible way to engage further decolonial possibilities (Pashby et al., 2019, p. 4):

- Global issues are complex, and we need pedagogical approaches that take up rather than gloss over these complexities.
- Environmental issues are deeply tied to social, political, cultural and economic inequalities; it is essential to link such issues to historical and present-day colonial systems of power.

- Connecting to all species in our world requires an ethical stance towards both the deep issues threatening us all and the differently experienced impacts of environmental issues.
- Classrooms are important spaces for raising questions. There are solutions to promote and actions to be taken. Re-thinking and unpacking are themselves important actions. When schools and wider community activities promote charity appeals, classrooms can support students to deeply engage with and identify tensions and possibilities.
- Reflexivity must be encouraged and developed. Deeply understanding nuances and considering tensions and paradoxes are as important to global citizenship as is taking a specific action (or deciding not to take any action). These must go hand in hand.

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