



Graduate Institute of International Development and Applied Economics

**A Pedagogy of the Gap Year:  
Using a follow-up programme to stimulate ongoing involvement in  
campaigning and development education**

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## Summary

This dissertation seeks to present a partial response to Simpson's call for a 'pedagogy of the gap year' (2004, 230). It uses literature from a range of disciplines, including communication for social change, communication theory, study of gap year volunteering and development, adult and experiential education, in making a case for using a follow-up programme to engage returned volunteers in an experiential learning cycle.

It first sets out arguments to justify the importance of campaigners and development educators in the UK in attempting to end poverty in developing countries. This includes discussion of the challenges they face.

It then introduces experiential education, experiential learning cycles and their significant features. This is followed by an analysis of gap year volunteering, including a brief critique. These two sections are then brought together through the core argument of the dissertation; that by utilising gap year experiences as part of an experiential learning cycle it should be possible to enhance the possibility of returned volunteers becoming involved in campaigning and development education.

The dissertation then explores one possible way in which this could be put into practice: a one-day workshop for returned volunteers. It first justifies such a workshop and then considers the methodology that could be employed, including the style of facilitation. It discusses possible content and potential outcomes.

Finally it considers ways in which the concept of utilising follow-up programmes could be expanded to reach audiences other than returned volunteers, such as tourists and diasporas of developing countries.

Throughout the dissertation a number of challenges are identified, including critiques of the educational theories and 'barriers' which may act to impede individuals and groups from taking action.

It concludes that while the proposal offered by this dissertation may not be the ideal solution, it appears to be a sensible one, providing a route to obtain increased educational value from volunteer experiences and potentially creating more campaigners and development educators.

(Length: 14,969 words)

# Introduction

## Preamble and Chapter Summaries

### Preamble

This dissertation has its roots in Simpson's analysis of gap year volunteering (2004), which highlights its limited use as an educational experience (see Chapter Two). It attempts to provide a partial answer to her call for a "*pedagogy of the gap year*" (Simpson 2004, 230) by exploring the utilisation of a follow-up programme to engage returned volunteers in an experiential learning cycle, with the aim of enhancing the possibility of their involvement in campaigning and development education. It should be recognised that this approach, and its desired outcomes, is not the only possible route forward. It is one of many and has been heavily influenced by my experience and bias. These must be acknowledged; Freire notes that "*whoever really observes, does so from a given point of view*" (1997, 22).

My point of view is that of an educator with personal experience of volunteering in a number of developing countries. There is no doubt that my 'encounters with poverty' (a concept explored in Chapter Two) have played a part in my involvement in campaigning and development education. In addition I currently work for a volunteer sending organisation. I therefore have a definite bias and cannot claim to be impartial. However, I have attempted to be logical and objective in my arguments, making use of literature and theory from a wide range of fields of study. I believe the proposals made in this dissertation have merit regardless of my bias and are worth attempting to realise.

## **Chapter Summaries**

Chapter One argues that the roles of campaigners and development educators are important in the UK in attempts to end poverty in developing countries. It observes that actions by and in developed countries can impede development and that campaigning offers an opportunity to change this. It introduces development education and recognises that it can be used as a 'multiplier' of campaigners. Finally it considers a number of challenges faced by campaigning and development education.

Chapter Two argues that by providing a suitable follow-up to a gap year experience, returned volunteers can be engaged in an experiential learning cycle, enhancing their potential for involvement in campaigning and development education. It begins by introducing experiential education (EE), experiential learning cycles (ELCs) and their significant features. It then discusses the gap year, considering the what, who and why before offering a brief critique. Finally it brings these two sections together by making the core argument of the dissertation; that by utilising gap year experiences as part of an ELC it should be possible to enhance the possibility of returned volunteers becoming involved in campaigning and development education.

Chapter Three begins to explore one possible way in which the argument presented in this dissertation could be put into practice; a one-day workshop for returned volunteers. It draws upon previous chapters (including gap year volunteering and experiential and development education) as well as theories from the fields of communication, adult education, persuasion and social influence.

Chapter Four observes that there are other groups with the 'essential ingredients' of an experience of an 'encounter with poverty' and scope for action, and considers how the concept presented by this dissertation could be adapted to engage them. After some general comments it focuses on two potential audiences: tourists and diaspora of developing countries.

Finally, the Conclusion summarises all the preceding chapters.

# Chapter One

## Campaigning and development education

### Introduction

The argument made in this dissertation is that by utilising gap year experiences as part of an experiential learning cycle it should be possible to enhance the chance of returned volunteers becoming involved in campaigning and development education. It is therefore important to justify the importance of campaigners and development educators in the UK in attempting to end poverty in developing countries.

For a number of years it has been my intention to work for and with the poor in a developing country. However, I have begun to question this vision due to a growing awareness that the progress of developing countries is impeded by various 'root causes' of poverty, some of which can be traced back to developed countries. These include trade rules which favour richer countries over poorer ones, debt from loans which were sometimes of questionable legitimacy, corruption and poor governance. I therefore see campaigning in the UK as an important and useful role. Development education can be seen as a 'multiplier' of campaigners; making people aware of the issues and possible actions in the hope that they too will begin to campaign (and tell others, thus becoming development educators themselves). These thoughts are crystallised in a story told by Macedo in the Foreword to Freire's 'Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage', in which a white middle-class female had given up a successful business career in order to work with battered mothers from under-privileged communities in an American inner-city area.

*“Enthusiastic in her altruism, she went into a community center where she explained to one of the center staff how much more rewarding it would be to work helping people in need than it would be to work just to make money. The African-American staff member responded: “Ma’am, if you really want to help us, go back to your white folks and tell them to keep the wall of racism from crushing us”*

(Freire 1997, xxix).

This chapter makes the case for campaigning and development education, as well as considering various challenges they face.

## **Campaigning**

The process of development, even with all the contested meanings of the concept ‘development’, must be largely internally driven; *“the poorer must help themselves”* (Chambers 1983, 3). This does not mean that they must develop on their own. Instead, the point is that they will not be developed by external actors but by their own efforts with support from outside. This is reflected in the development industry’s frequent use of the word ‘empowerment’. While it is important to note that there is a distinct *“lack of clarity”* (Sen 1997, p1) around this concept and that it is sometimes used as a *“fashionable buzzword”* (Page and Czuba 1999) to provide *“warm and nice”* connotations (Cornwall and Brock 2005, p4), there is little doubt that for development to take place developing countries need to be empowered, at the level of both nations and individuals, to develop themselves. Freire and others have argued that such empowerment is blocked, intentionally or otherwise, by the actions (or inaction) of more powerful countries. This leads to underdevelopment as dependency due to exploitation; *“underdevelopment, which cannot be understood*

*apart from the relationship of dependency, represents a limit-situation characteristic of societies of the Third World*” (Freire 1972, 75). Issues such as debt, unfair trade rules, climate change, corruption and the arms trade can be seen to have contributing factors in the developed world and negative consequences in the developing world. Hence Freire calls for “conscientisation”, a process which *“embraces a critical demystifying moment in which structures of domination are laid bare and political engagement is imperative”* (West 1993, xiii). He also observes that development interventions themselves can be disempowering if they follow policies of “assistencialism”, a term used by Freire to describe policies of financial or social assistance which attack the symptoms, but not the causes, of social ills.

*“The greatest danger of assistencialism is the violence of its anti-dialogue, which by imposing silence and passivity denies men conditions likely to develop or to “open” their consciousness... it robs men of a fundamental human necessity-responsibility.”*

(Freire 1973, 15).

He even goes so far as to suggest that this is intentional; that *“in order to have the continued opportunity to express their “generosity”, the oppressors must perpetuate injustice as well”* (Freire 1972, 21). For the purposes of this discussion it is not important to establish whether or not powerful countries intend these factors to impede development, only that this is an effect they have.

Two arguments will now be made: firstly, that it is possible for people in the UK to act to remove some of the barriers to development mentioned above; and secondly, that they have a responsibility to do so.

It is important to note that while *“it would be misleading to suggest that human beings can control all the external forces that may shape their future... many of the major problems currently facing us are human-created”* (Docwra 2006, 5). The question is then: what can be done about these? This dissertation suggests that part of the answer can be found in campaigning (sometimes referred to as activism). This is *“part of the discourse and practice of democratic politics and social change”*, offering opportunities for citizens to *“have their views heard and to influence the decisions and practices of larger institutions that affect their lives”* (Gaventa 2001, 275). Campaigners, as individuals or groups, utilise a variety of methods including protests, boycotts, ‘shareholder activism’, direct action, petitioning and public shaming in order to advocate change to decision makers (Hilder et al 2007, 4) and to hold politicians, corporations, opinion leaders and power structures to account.

There is no doubt that campaigning, and civil society in general, plays a large role in the world today; *“from human rights to landmines, sustainable development, and democratization, global problem solving is increasingly being left to an agglomeration of unelected, often unaccountable transnational civil society actors”* (Florini 2001, 29). In the UK many campaigns have reached large sectors of the population, most famously in the Make Poverty History campaign of 2005, showing that the British public has *“both the capacity and the desire to engage in shaping foreign policy”* (Hampson 2006, 8). While often involving similar actors, campaigning is seen as distinct from charity; it involves a call *“not for charity but for justice”* (Benn 2005, 1). The fact that this statement was made by Hilary Benn, then Secretary of State for International Development, reflects campaigning’s proximity to politics; in fact in some ways campaigning is political action (Roker et al 1999, 4).

While for some campaigners it is worthwhile speaking out on an issue on principle alone, others require the hope of success. So can campaigning on development issues work? It would appear so; there have been victories. One of the most widely acknowledged is the, admittedly partial, success of the Jubilee Debt Campaign: "*Who would have thought back in the late 90s when the Jubilee 2000 debt cancellation was launched that many countries like Tanzania and Mozambique would achieve liberation from debt bondage?*" (Howlett 2007). A second claimed achievement is in legislation regarding landmines (Tussie and Tuzzo 2001). It should be noted that campaigning is not without a critique, which will be addressed towards the end of this chapter.

So, accepting the premise that 'something can be done', is it possible to argue that it *should* be? A first step in this direction is to suggest that there is a responsibility to know about the issues and possibilities for action. Claire Short, then Secretary of State for Development, wrote that it is "*important to understand something of our responsibilities, from local to national and international level, and how individuals, governments and others respond to these*" (cited in Smith and Rainbow 2000, 6). In today's globalised world, in which as Martin Luther King famously said "*before you've finished your breakfast this morning, you'll have relied on half the world*", perhaps it's true that it is not only one's duty to understand something of global citizenship, but also one's right to be taught about it.

It can be argued that the citizens of the UK, a developed country, have a moral responsibility to campaign on development issues. Through an on-going history of

exploitation (through trade and otherwise), their country has maintained a dominant position in terms of relationships with less developed countries. British citizens are among (or at least have more direct access to) the major stakeholders and creditors in the international corporations and organisations which control access to power, both economic and political. Chambers makes a similar argument; that increases in wealth, technology and opportunity to influence give new possibilities for campaigning:

*“There is more wealth in the world, and its distribution is more polarized and concentrated. The same is true of power. At the same time we are all more connected and more able to exert influence than before. For those with money and access, the revolutions in transport and communications have multiplied the number of activities which are open. Mobile phones and email have transformed communications. Over the past decade, for those with access to the internet and with money to travel, the range of things to do that make a difference has risen exponentially, almost beyond the reach of the imagination. It is easier than ever, and with a broader choice than ever, for a middle-income person in an OECD [Developed] country to choose to give money, to team up with others who are like minded or to campaign for causes.”*

Chambers 2005, 203

Chambers goes on to suggest that *“since our [citizens of OECD countries] scope for action is greater, so, too, is our responsibility”* (Chambers 2005, 204). The argument can be summarised as follows: 1) In some ways Britain, through its trade, industry and Government and by extension through its people as employees, consumers and voters, has been and is responsible for impeding development in developing

countries, 2) there are opportunities to act to change this and 3) such change appears possible. It therefore concludes that these opportunities should be taken.

## **Development Education**

Generally speaking, the probability of campaigning being successful increases as the numbers involved increase (although it should be recognised that this fails to take into account inequalities in power and status). Democratic ideals are relied upon in campaigns targeted at both political and corporate figures, as, in theory at least, those in power answer to their voters, shareholders or customers; the hope is that *“when the people lead, the leaders will follow”* (Moser and Dilling 2007, 14). It is therefore important to attempt to increase the number of campaigners; *“the political will to develop and implement the broad policies necessary to generate lasting global change can only be found if a critical mass of public opinion is engaged to influence decision makers”* (Docwra 2006, 7). Simply put, more people can create more pressure which will hopefully bring about more change. For this reason *“one component of an effective change promotion strategy has involved communicating issues to a very broad public, and mobilizing large numbers of people in a social movement”* (Meyer 2007, 452). From this understanding it is possible to make the argument for the importance of development education.

While it is overly simplistic to assume that just by giving people information about these issues it is possible to cause them to take action, creating access to information is a necessary first step. Unfortunately it is *“widely conceded that the public [in Northern countries] knows little about international development or about*

*the connections between development there and life here*" (Smillie 1998, 26). Images of the developing world presented by the media are often shallow and simplistic (wonderfully satirised by Wainaina 2005) so a more thorough development education is required. Chambers makes an intriguing proposal in this vein, calling for a "*pedagogy for the non-oppressed*" which would enable "*those with more wealth and power to welcome having less*" (Chambers 2005, 203). Going beyond this to something more radical, perhaps there is a need for a developed-country-appropriate version of Freire's conscientisation: an education which is "*painful yet empowering*" (West 1993, xiii), drawing attention to the reasons why one country is more wealthy and powerful than another, questioning whether this is fair and suggesting and supporting actions such as campaigning. This is one understanding of 'development education'.

Development education formally began in the UK in 1966 when Oxfam appointed a staff member to develop an education programme (Starkey 1994, 13). It is important to distinguish development education from simply learning *about* developing countries in a geographical sense; it is understood to also include elements of learning *from* and *with*; both to encourage understanding, for example of the concept of interdependence, and to foster a sense of solidarity. Different definitions exist, although most have a similar core. According to Oxfam, development education aims "*to develop existing concerns, challenge poverty and injustice, and take real effective action for change*" (Oxfam 2004, 2) through the following key elements:

*"Knowledge and understanding:*

- *Social justice and equality*
- *Diversity*

- *Globalisation and interdependence*
- *Sustainable development*
- *Peace and conflict*

*Skills:*

- *Critical thinking*
- *Ability to argue effectively*
- *Respect for people and things*
- *Co-operation and conflict resolution*

*Values and attitudes:*

- *Sense of identity and self-esteem*
- *Empathy*
- *Commitment to social justice and equality*
- *Value and respect for diversity*
- *Concern for the environment and commitment to sustainable development*
- *Belief that people can make a difference*

(Oxfam 2004, 3).

Fountain's (1995, 15) key concepts of development education cover almost identical topics: interdependence i.e. "*seeing the world as a system*" (ibid, 26); images and perceptions; social justice; conflict and conflict resolution; and change and the future. However she goes beyond simply aiming for a "*belief that people can make a difference*" to including action as part of educational process; "*the process of education for development can be thought of as a three-step cycle, consisting of an exploration stage, followed by a responding phase, and leading ultimately to an action phase*" (ibid, 16). Similarly, Smith and Rainbow include "*working towards achieving a more just and sustainable world in which power and resources are more*

*equitably shared*" (2000, 4); the doing is part of the learning. The justification for this is simple; "*action is needed because analysis and understanding are not enough. Nor is empathy. Nor, even, is feeling empowered, without some hope of action and change*" (Griffiths 2003, 113). It also serves an educational purpose, making concrete what has been learnt; "*it is crucial real opportunities for involvement are provided. This is not only a logical outcome of the learning process, but a significant means of reinforcing new knowledge, skills and attitudes*" (Fountain 1995, 16).

This inclusion of action after reflection is an example of one of the many ways in which development education, as it exists in the UK today, owes a debt to the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. For him, it was important to avoid the pitfalls of verbalism, meaning words without actions, and activism, action without theory for action's sake (Freire 1972, 60). Instead he called for 'praxis', "*the action and reflection of men upon their world in order to transform it*" (Freire 1972, 66), as "*words not given body (made flesh) have little or no value*" (Freire 1997, 39). Credit must also go to Freire, his collaborators and those who continue to develop his ideas for recognising that education is a political act as "*no pedagogy is neutral*" (Freire and Shor 1987, 12), the legitimate place of emotion ("*the kind of education that does not recognise the right to express appropriate anger against injustice, against disloyalty, against the negation of love, against exploitation, and against violence fails to see the educational role implicit in the expression of these feelings*" Freire 1997, 45) and the importance of the voice of the oppressed ("*histories of oppression and suffering must be recounted... Memories of hope, too, must be offered... These should include the voices of the oppressed and respect for their integrity and subjugated knowledge*";

McLaren and da Silva 1993, 77). These have all become integral parts of development education.

There is an ongoing debate whether development education is simply a subject to be taught alongside other subjects (for example as part of 'Citizenship' within the National Curriculum) or an "*approach to learning*" (Fountain 1995, 23) which should impact the entire curriculum. For the purposes of this discussion this is not of great importance; the point is that if it takes place, regardless of how exactly, it can serve to enhance the possibility of people engaging in the issues and becoming campaigners. Having said this, campaigning itself can contain elements of development education, thus serving a dual purpose. Docwra (2006, 26) makes a convincing argument that NGOs should include an element of development education in all their communications, for example inserting an explanation about the causes of poverty into fundraising letters.

## **Challenges**

The above presents a positive and idealistic picture of campaigning and development education. This should be tempered with realism by considering some limitations and challenges they face. "*Working for social justice is never cosy*" (Griffiths 2003, 59) as in many ways it opposes the dominant ideology. Freire writes that this type of education is "*swimming against the current...and those who swim against the current are first being punished by the current and cannot expect to have a gift of weekends on tropical beaches*" (Freire and Shor 1987, 37).

Development education does not take place in a vacuum; people already have a certain amount of knowledge, be it perceived or actual. It is difficult to judge how much; generally speaking *“the mass of the general public has little notion of the conditions of life for the people of the world’s poorest regions”* (Starkey 1994, 13), or indeed of poverty in the UK. A minority are more aware (Oxfam 2004, 2) due to the increased inclusion of development education within the National Curriculum. While such knowledge can be built on, other preconceived ideas can impede development education. Stereotypes, which are already in place by the age of ten (Fountain 1995, 82), are formed by exposure to other ‘noise’ as *“education is only one piece of larger lives in an even larger society”* (Freire and Shor 1987, 25). This could include family and peer opinions, images of the developing world portrayed on TV, in books and in literature produced by NGOs. The vast majority of these are negative, showing conflict, poverty, flood and famine without recognising positive elements. Development education faces a challenge reversing these stereotypes. It must recognise that they *“won’t disappear tomorrow: they are a useful shorthand that we all use from time to time”* (Midwinter 1994, 119). To prevent them being a barrier to learning *“all students need to be able to deconstruct their own cultural baggage of inherited knowledge”* (Nicholson 1996, 80), a difficult task for educators to support.

A related difficulty comes from the mixed messages sometimes transmitted by development NGOs. Their efforts to provide development education sometimes conflict with their desire for fundraisers; *“there is an ongoing debate within most of the NGOs about the importance of providing resources for schools, compared with the rest of their work. When funds are short, it can sometimes be seen by some in the agencies as a luxury they cannot afford”* (Drake 1996, 65). Clark argues that

many Northern NGOs are so preoccupied with finding financial support that they miss the campaigning potential of their supporters; *“they view their citizens as merely donors, neglecting their potential to act as educators (of their children and peers), advocates (for example through local newspapers or societies), voters, consumers (boycotting or favouring certain products), investors (making ethical choices), and – if all else fails – as trouble makers through demonstrations and direct action”* (Clark 2001, 27). On the other hand it could be argued that financial support is necessary to support development education initiatives, as this area has historically received limited funding (Smillie 1998, 33).

The assumption that providing an individual with an appropriate development education will necessarily lead them to action must be challenged. Chess and Johnson (2007, 223) argue that *“information is not entirely inconsequential, but is much overrated as a change agent”* as *“more knowledge does not necessarily lead to more appropriate behaviour”*. Research supports this statement; it has demonstrated that *“even if participants have high levels of knowledge about the problem and the community has invested in changing their attitudes through advertising or educational campaigns, behaviour is often unaltered”* (McKenzie-Mohr 2000). It must be recognised there will be a spectrum of outcomes; for some it will result in life-long campaigning, others may care but give priority to other issues, interests or responsibilities while in some cases *“the imperviousness of strong beliefs”* (Dunwoody 2007, 90) may make behaviour change extremely unlikely.

Reflecting today’s *“sound-bite culture”* (Docwra 2006, 23), issues are sometimes over-simplified as development narratives, leading to simplistic and often ineffective

campaigning solutions. Claire Short, then UK Minister for International Development, claimed that *“single issue campaigning can lead to a kind of irresponsibility – organisations say ridiculous things to raise their profile and money”* (quoted in Harper 2001, 251). Issues chosen for campaigns are necessarily those which attract campaigners’ attention; *“in invoking the public interest, NGOs will have to respond directly to the concern of a broad base within society”* (Newell 2001, 1999). Issues that attract interest, such as those involving children, receive attention, while other less populist ones, such as land reform, can be sidelined. The very number of different ‘causes’ could also be a problem, potentially leading to *“feelings of helplessness and pessimism”* (Osler 1994, ix) or numbness. In a similar vein, Weber suggests people have a finite pool of worry (2006); they *“can only worry so much about currently salient risks (e.g. terrorism), which makes it difficult to worry about another (e.g. climate change)”* (Bostrom and Lashof 2007, 68). Even so, perhaps it is preferable that campaigning and development education manifest themselves through a variety of separate issues; it may allow individuals to focus on particular areas and avoid the danger of attempting to present a ‘theory of everything’ or presenting a ‘truth’ which cannot be challenged (Freire and Shor 1987, 81).

Another criticism which can be made of campaigning and development education is that they can disempower the poor; it is not always easy to see how campaigners in Britain *“link their own voice as advocates with the knowledge and voices of local people on whose behalf they sometimes claim to speak”* (Gaventa 2001, 283). This is a particular problem when the question of inequality is raised; there is no doubt that *“Northern campaigns have significantly greater access to funding, equipment, technical skills, global policymakers, and international meetings, realities which mirror*

*the historic inequalities between North and South*" (Collins et al 2001, 143). It is also necessary to acknowledge the failings and responsibilities of developing countries themselves; the responsibility does not lie entirely in developed countries.

Finally it is important to challenge the notion that campaigning in the UK has a real impact. It is possible to argue that it makes no difference unless other countries are involved; *"it is no good just mobilising ourselves. We need to mobilise the world. What 1% of the world does will be lost if 20% (China in terms of population) or 25% (the US, in terms of GNP) is doing the opposite"* (Cooper 2006, 21). Are the claimed successes of campaigns truly a consequence of pressure or just a coincidence? Are they real successes or nothing but lip service to change? It must be of some concern that one of the most common targets for campaigning in the UK, the Government, is sometimes working in collaboration with campaigning NGOs, for example during the Make Poverty History campaign.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has made the case for campaigning and development education, before considering various challenges they face. The challenges are important; they must be listened to and learnt from. However, this chapter concludes that they should not prevent people from attempting to bring positive change; campaigners must keep on campaigning, while development education should be utilised to enhance the possibility of more people choosing to take action. It will not be easy, but must be worth the attempt; individuals must recognise that they have an impact on the world and that *"to change things is difficult but possible"* (Freire 1997, 74).

## Chapter Two

### Experiential Education and the gap year

#### Introduction

In the previous chapter it was argued that the roles of campaigners and development educators are important in the UK in attempts to end poverty in developing countries. This chapter will argue that by providing a suitable follow-up to a gap year experience, returned volunteers can be engaged in an experiential learning cycle, enhancing their potential for involvement in this manner. It will begin by introducing experiential education (EE), experiential learning cycles (ELCs) and their significant features. It will then discuss the gap year, considering the what, who and why before offering a brief critique. Finally it will bring these two sections together by making the core argument of the dissertation; that by utilising gap year experiences as part of an ELC it should be possible to enhance the possibility of returned volunteers becoming involved in campaigning and development education.

#### Experiential Education

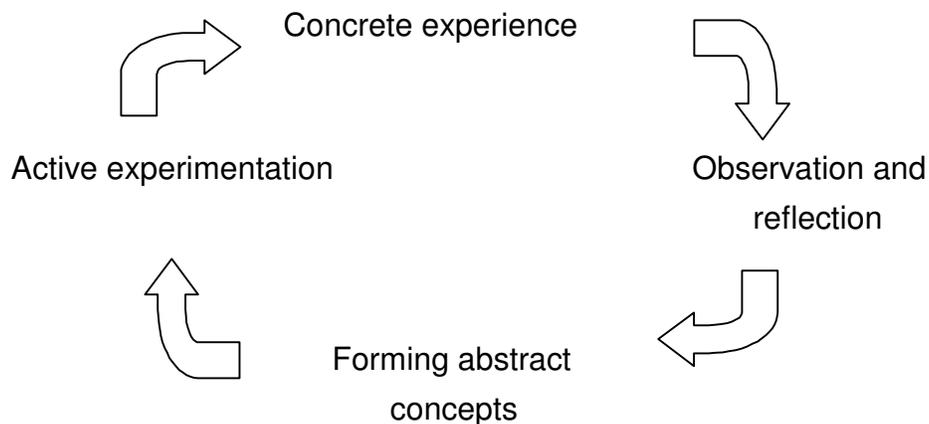
Experiential education (EE) is situated in the constructivist view of learning; *“experiences allow the student to construct their own meaning of the world around them”* (Beaudin 1995, 3). Its historical roots reach back to Aquinas’ hypothesis that there is *“nothing in the intellect which was not previously in the senses”* (quoted in Neill 2006) and were subsequently developed by others, most notably Dewey. He stated in his influential ‘My Pedagogic Creed’ that *“education must be conceived as a*

*continuing reconstruction of experience; that the process and the goals of education are one and the same thing*" (Dewey 1897). Experience is obviously a key concept. It can be understood in two ways; in the present tense as a "*subjective notion of one's current existence*" and in the past tense as the "*accumulated product (or residue) of past experience*" (Neill 2006). The focus here is on the latter understanding as this is relevant to the possibility of utilising the experiences volunteers had prior to their return to the UK.

Many arguments can be made in favour of experiential learning. Firstly, humans "*ultimately learn by doing*" (Conner 2007). Throughout history, for any individual, it is true to say that "*experience and reflection have taught more than any manual or lecture could*" (Conner 2007). A second argument can be drawn from the field of adult education: "*significant learning takes place when the subject matter is relevant to the personal interests of the student*" (Rogers 1969). People are interested in their own experiences; in fact they "*derive their self-identity from their experience*" (Knowles 1980, 50). Therefore by taking an individual's experience of something as the stimulus and initial subject matter for learning it can motivate and enhance the learning achieved. Broadly speaking there are two ways in which individuals are educated by experience: informally and formally. People learn informally from experience all the time as they go through their daily lives (Neill 2006). This is a simple one-step model; there is nothing but the experience. However exponents of EE would suggest that this fails to take maximum learning advantage of the experience. This is illustrated well by a story of a cat who sits on a hot stove: "*Rumour has it that once burned, the cat will never sit on a hot stove again. But it will never sit on a cold stove either, because it did not extract all possible learning from*

*its experience*” (Ricketts and Willis 2002). Formal experiential learning, “often contrasted with didactic education, in which the teacher’s role is to ‘give’ information/knowledge” (Neill 2006), “comes through programmes and activities” (ibid) based on experiential learning cycles (ELCs).

ELCs are “a means of representing sequences in experiential learning” (Greenway 2006) which “propose an iterative series of processes which underlies learning” (Neill 2006). They generally use flow diagrams to represent different stages in experiential learning. Numerous examples exist, from simple two-step models (‘do, review’ or ‘experience, reflect’) to more complex ones such as the five-step process referred to by Joplin (1981, 17-20): focussing (the learner’s attention), action, support, feedback and debrief. The most widely known is that of Kolb (1984).



(Kolb 1984)

Schugurensky (2002) presents questions for the learner to contemplate at each stage:

Stage	Questions
Concrete experience	-
Observation and reflection	What happened? What did you observe?
Forming abstract concepts	How do you account for what you observed? What does it mean for you? How is it significant? What conclusions can you draw? What general principals can you derive?
Testing in new situations/action	How can the learning be applied?

The next chapter will suggest that it is important to explain the basics of the argument set out in this dissertation to the returned volunteers. This would necessarily include introducing them to an ELC. For this reason the more accessible ‘Continuous Learning Cycle’ devised by Ricketts and Willis (2001) will be used. It is similar to Kolb’s more well-known cycle but uses self-explanatory language for the stages.



(Ricketts and Willis 2001)

A number of common features are shared between almost all models of experiential learning. These include the importance of a reflective stage (including the recognition of emotional reactions to experiences), the need for action and the cyclic nature of the process.

Following the observations of Dewey and others, many scholars have noted the necessity of reflection after concrete experience; for example Beaudin and Quick state that “*reflection is a process that needs to be actively pursued after every learning experience*” (1995, 4) and Joplin suggests that “*it is the reflection process which turns experience into experiential education*” (1981, 17). However, the meaning of ‘reflection’ is often unclear. It certainly involves “*those processes in which learners engage to recapture, notice and re-evaluate their experience, to work with their experience, to turn it into learning*” (Beaudin and Quick 1995, 4). For Anderson there are three steps to reflection: reflecting on the results, reflecting on the process and finally producing something concrete (Anderson 1992, 242). Boud et al see it as an opportunity for learners to “*recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it*” (Boud et al 1985, 19). The concept of recapturing or remembering the experience often involves tapping into the emotional responses felt by learners at the stage of concrete experience as “*experiential learning stresses humanistic values in emphasizing that feelings are part of the learning process*” (Beaudin and Quick 1995, 10). The understanding of reflection used in this dissertation will combine these with an element of ‘critical reflection’, i.e. reflection on experience armed with knowledge. Returning to the reflective elements of Ricketts and Willis’ model, it is suggested the following is required from reflection:

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Elements of reflection</b>
What?	Recapturing, remembering, sharing, emotions
So what?	Being given information, particularly in the form of a broader context and background to the concrete experience, followed by opportunities for individual and collective reflection.

Action can mean actively testing learning or putting the learning into practice, as in Freire's praxis, described in the previous chapter. It is an important link in the cycle; just as the learning process is impeded if the reflection stage is omitted, the action, or 'now what?', stage is required for maximum educational impact. Following this logic it is clear that the learning cycle, whose "*starting point is arbitrary*" (Neill 2006), has no natural completion point; it can be understood as a spiral continuing as the individual continues to learn formally or informally throughout their life. The job of the educator is therefore to support the learner through one or two stages and prepare them to continue on their educational journey.

In the following chapter it will be considered how these steps of remembrance ('what?'), reflection ('so what?') and action ('now what?') can be applied to the context of enhancing the potential for returned volunteers to become involved with campaigning and DE. Before this it is important to have an understanding of the 'concrete experience' stage: gap year volunteering.

### **Gap year volunteering**

For the purposes of the argument presented in this dissertation the exact what, who and why of gap year volunteering are not necessary at this point. What is important is to establish that there are large numbers of British people having some kind of short term 'encounter with poverty' (a concept discussed below) in the developing world and that many of them do so with a motivation which is at least partially altruistic. However, as the argument progresses towards the end of this chapter and in the

following one, other details will become relevant, particularly as it becomes important to 'know the audience' in order to facilitate learning. For this reason a broad discussion of gap year volunteering, including its critique, follows below.

There is a limited amount of topic specific research available, so this section draws heavily on three sources: Dr Kate Simpson's PhD Thesis 'Broad Horizons? Geographies and Pedagogies of the Gap Year' (2004), Dr Andrew Jones' 'Review of Gap Year Provision' (2004) for the Department for Education and Skills and the survey of returned volunteers and subsequent report 'Gaps in Development: An analysis of the UK international volunteering sector' written by Simon Power for Tourism Concern (2007).

*What?*

Gap year volunteering has developed within a number of contexts. These include a history of missionary activity (including students and medical personnel as well as those with a 'professional' religious position), tourism and national service. Gap year volunteering today sits somewhere on a spectrum between tourism and 'professional' volunteering, which involves organisations such as VSO placing professionals with a required amount of experience. It is often seen as closely aligned to 'ethical' tourism initiatives such as eco-, alternative-, justice- and community based tourism; where *"each prefix has its own particular focus, but all share an aspiration to be unlike the vilified mass tourism"* (Griffen 2004, 19).

Two definitions are necessary to understand the meaning of 'gap year volunteering': that of both 'gap year' and 'volunteer'. Jones defines a gap year as "*any period of time between 3 and 24 months which an individual takes 'out' of formal education, training or the workplace*" (2004, 8). This broad definition includes British citizens who spend this time anywhere in the world. The specific interest of this chapter is those who choose to spend this time (or part of this time) volunteering in a developing country. It is not within the scope of this discussion to question what exactly marks out a country as 'developing'; it is only important that in some way there is an 'encounter with poverty' overseas. This concept deserves further consideration.

Due to the media, it seems fair to suggest that the majority of people in developed countries have some level of awareness of 'poverty', in terms of knowing that people exist who have significantly less 'wealth' than them, where wealth could include money, health care, clean water, food, education, livelihood opportunities and so on. There is a difference between this, a sometimes almost theoretical knowledge, and a face-to-face confrontation which is experienced through all the senses. The term 'encounter with poverty' is used throughout this dissertation to refer to a first-hand experience causing personal realisation of the difference in wealth between self and 'other'. Such an encounter becomes part of an individual's personal experience. Examples may include a growing understanding of living conditions, meeting a beggar, seeing a slum or putting a name and a face to an illness or statistic. It is important to note that this, like the term 'poverty', is completely subjective; what is an 'encounter with poverty' for one person may not be for another. Considering this definition a number of observations can be made. It is certainly possible to have an

'encounter with poverty' in one's home country; however, this dissertation focuses on gap year volunteers' experiences in developing countries. It cannot be assumed that just because an individual has experienced such an 'encounter' they will want to 'do something' about poverty. Finally, such 'encounters' may or may not be the first or strongest impression a volunteer has; an individual may think more of some other aspect, positive or negative (for example, the 'poor but happy' cliché or an environmental feature). These 'encounters' should not be seen as the whole reality of a country or of an individual's experience of a country. However, they are the relevant part of the experience for this dissertation; an 'essential ingredient' of the argument made.

The term 'volunteer' is difficult to define "*as there is no standard practice in volunteering*" (Bussell and Forbes 2001, 245). Volunteering is traditionally understood as "*the branch of philanthropy in which time replaces cheque book*" (Oneworld 2007), an "*activity that is undertaken by an individual for no financial reward which benefits someone other than the person who volunteered*" (Papadakis et al. 2004, 321), although later discussion will challenge the notion that motivations are completely altruistic.

The work carried out by gap year volunteers varies greatly. According to research conducted by Jones (2004, 79) it can be loosely categorised as social work (45%), work with children (21%), conservation or environmental (17%), practical projects (12%) and other (5%). The type of work is not particularly relevant to this dissertation; only that through their experience overseas volunteers 'encounter' poverty, during their work or free time.

## Who?

Jones' research revealed that the 'gap year' is taken at a variety of life stages, including post school aged 16 or 18, as a break from undergraduate study, immediately after completing a first degree, as a break from employment or in later life (Jones 2004, 26). After analysing a number of volunteers he concluded that:

- Volunteers are predominantly white with few ethnic minority participants
- Women out-number men
- Volunteers generally come from relatively affluent 'middle class' backgrounds
- There is an over-representation of private and grammar school backgrounds
- There is an under-representation of disabilities
- Volunteers come mainly from Southern English Higher Education institutions

(Jones 2004, 49)

The more recent Tourism Concern survey suggested that 38% of those who responded volunteered pre-university (Power 2007, 3) and that "*the most frequent type of volunteer is young, inexperienced, unqualified and volunteers as an individual*" (ibid, 14). While this is undoubtedly true, it is interesting to note the rising numbers of retirees and workers taking a 'break' who choose to volunteer. Tourism Concern estimated the total number of gap year volunteers going to the developing world to be 25,000 (Power 2007, 3), although this likely to be an underestimate.

## Why?

To understand why so many people choose to volunteer as part of their gap year it is necessary to consider three inter-related aspects: their articulated motivations, the perceived benefits and the messages used to advertise and support the volunteering 'industry'. There is a vast range of motivations, including both 'push' and 'pull' factors, as *"gap year programmes represent a collision of agendas. Personal development collides with social change, the capitalism of tourism crashes against the altruism of the volunteer, and values of a corporate world encounter experiments in youth identity"* (Simpson 2004, 108).

Following research investigating motivation for volunteers generally, Clary et al. suggest that there are six categories of motivation: 1) expressing and acting on values; 2) supporting career development; 3) increasing knowledge and understanding; 4) enhancing self-esteem; 5) social reasons; and 6) self-protective reasons (for example reducing feelings of guilt) (Clary et al. 1998). Jones similarly presents a range of reasons for participation given by volunteers:

- *"The desire to take a break from formal education or work"*
- *To gain a broader horizon on life*
- *To experience different people, culture and places*
- *To gain personal life skills*
- *To enhance CV in relation to gaining university entry or employment (in a general sense)*
- *To earn money*
- *To make a contribution to society (civic engagement)*

- *To help people (altruism)*
- *Religious belief*

(Jones 2004, 10)

To these should be added the push factors; going away from the ordinary to something exotic (for them). All these articulated motivations can be broadly categorised into those which are altruistic and those not (though every individual will probably have elements of both). Tubb quotes a survey which suggests “*putting something back into the community*’ and *‘doing something useful*’ were for over half of the volunteers a motivation for volunteering” (2006, 19). Similarly Jones concludes that “*the evidence suggests that many gap year participants who undertake voluntary work do so out of a combination of motivating factors but that an altruistic desire to contribute to society plays a significant role in that*” (Jones 2004, 38). This desire to do something positive is reflected in the messages of those advertising or supporting gap year volunteering; “*a language of ‘making a difference’, ‘doing something worthwhile’ or ‘contributing to the future of others’ predominates*” (Simpson 2004, 122). It seems fair to say that “*gap year programmes are premised on a proclaimed usefulness, worthwhileness and value to others*” (ibid, 34). Volunteering has had high profile supporters and participants, including Princes William and Harry. Kofi Annan, then Secretary-General to the UN, suggested that “*volunteering, when properly channelled, is a powerful force for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals*” (quoted in Oneworld 2007). Although he can be understood to be talking more broadly about volunteering including ‘local’ or in-country volunteers, it is often claimed that this is stimulated by the presence of gap year volunteers. The perceived usefulness of volunteering will be challenged in the critique.

Many of the non-altruistic motivations for volunteering are reflected in the perceived benefits volunteers receive. Jones (2004, 58) lists the following benefits:

- Improved educational performance
- Formation and development of educational and career choices
- Reduced likelihood of future 'drop out' from education, training or employment
- Improved 'employability' and career opportunities
- Non-academic skills and qualifications
- Social capital
- Life skills
- Developed social values

Many relate to learning (formally or informally) in some way. These are of particular relevance to this dissertation. Travel has always made claims for developing knowledge; it is a popular modern myth that "*travel broadens the mind*" (Burns and Holden 1995, 75). The same is perceived of gap year volunteering; "*the advocates of volunteer tourism and gap year projects claim that a consequence of such interaction [with the developing world] is individual attitudinal change*" (Griffin 2004, 75). A gap year can also serve as a life course transition, from 'youth' to 'adulthood' (Simpson 2004, 50). For example, Jack Straw, then Foreign Secretary, suggested that "*taking a gap year is a great opportunity for young people to broaden their horizons, making them more mature and responsible citizens*" (quoted in *ibid*, 137).

## **Critique**

Generally speaking, volunteering is seen as a 'good thing', considered worthwhile for both the volunteer (in terms of education and experience) and the communities in the

developing world that 'host' them. It has received "*strong and vocal support from institutions and government alike, all extolling the 'value' of a gap year*" (Simpson 2004, 1), most recently evident in investigations by DFID into the possibility of supporting volunteering in the developing world on a larger scale. However, this perception of it being part of the good face of tourism (Wearing 2001) has been challenged.

First it is import to recognise that a profitable industry has developed around gap year volunteering; many organisations involved are aiming to make profit, blurring further the line between tourism and volunteering (Power 2007, 1). One of the largest sending organisations, i-to-i, is now owned by First Choice Holidays. These organisations have their own agendas and the question must be asked: "*Can the tourism industry 'afford' a conscience?*" (Smith and Duffy 2003, p7), particularly when it involves commercial businesses answering to shareholders. This leads to fears that alternative tourism, including gap year volunteering, may be nothing but a particularly invasive but "*more socially and environmentally friendly façade for continuing exploitation of Third World peoples and environments*" (Scheyvens 2002, 12). It is certainly true that it is the disparity in wealth and power between countries which makes gap year volunteering possible (Simpson 2004, 25).

When considering the perceived usefulness of gap year volunteers to the developing world it is not enough to accept Jones' simple suggestion that "*continuing demand from overseas organisations for volunteers indicates that they must feel these participants are having a beneficial effect*" (Jones 2004, 56). This highlights the largest hole in the existing research into the gap year; the voice of the host. Why do

communities accept volunteers? Reasons other than 'for the work they do' may include hospitality, financial benefit (real or perceived), interest in learning about the world or for prestige. Certainly dissenting voices are beginning to be heard in the receiving countries. One returned volunteer I spoke to about this dissertation told of a member of staff at the project she volunteered at asking her aggressively '*What was the good of coming to just cuddle a few babies and feel good?*'. While this point should not be overstated, as some work carried out by volunteers is of use, it seems fair to question whether it is as 'useful' as advertised. In addition it is interesting to consider how volunteering in developing countries has been linked to development work; "*in effect, development has been deprofessionalised, turned into something that anyone can become involved in... The gap year and eco or ethical tourism are a product of this popularisation of development, and the 'doing of development' has become a desirable holiday activity for people of the West*" (Simpson 2004, 41). The assumption that unskilled and enthusiastic people can 'do development' ignores much recent thinking about development, harking back to paradigms long since discarded (in theory at least).

The educational benefits of a gap year can also be challenged, which is done comprehensively by Simpson (2004). She notes that while educational outcomes are simply assumed, there is a "*notable dearth of either educational theory or practice*" (Simpson 2004, 17). She convincingly argues that contact and experience are not enough, particularly as they risk simply reconfirming volunteers' previously held stereotypes and preconceptions (see Chapter One). Freire writes strongly about a comparable situation; some well-off individuals attempt to side with the oppressed but "*they almost always bring with them the marks of their origin: their prejudices and*

*their deformations, which include a lack of confidence in the people's ability to think and to know* (Freire 1972, 36). This lack of learning is compounded by limited and poor pre-departure training for volunteers and a disappointing lack of opportunity for follow-up and reflection. Tourism Concern's survey suggested that just under half of the 107 volunteers who responded claimed to have received no training (Tourism Concern 2007, 6). In terms of follow-up, 39 of the 54 organisations who responded to the same survey claimed to offer some form of debrief. However, only 17 of the 54 organisations did so via face-to-face sessions (Power 2007, 8). As noted by Simpson (2004, 149) this limits the opportunities for the reflection required to make it an educational experience in terms of EE theory.

One solution to the problems posed in the above critique is offered by Tourism Concern's 'Code of Practice' for organisations placing volunteers in the developing world (Power 2007, 15- 17). This seeks to "*ensure that placements are of benefit to both the host community and the volunteer*" (ibid, 15) by providing a comprehensive set of benchmarks and indicators. Such a code is a step in the right direction. However, unless or until organisations are forced to comply, many will favour profit over ethics. An additional suggestion is the one proposed by this dissertation; by utilising DE and opportunities for reflection and action, the gap year experience can be turned into a stage in an ELC after the fact. This would hopefully help it to live up to its educational claims and enhance the possibility of returned volunteers becoming involved over the long term with campaigning and DE (as justified in the previous chapter). The next section will consider the arguments for and against this proposal.

## Returned volunteers and experiential education

In many ways gap year volunteers have great potential for campaigning and DE. This could be enhanced through a suitable follow-up programme to engage them in an experiential learning cycle; this dissertation is based upon this premise. They may have a particular interest, motivation and 'scope for action'. On the other hand it is also necessary to take a 'reality check' by considering challenges to this proposal, including the strength of preconceptions, criticisms of experiential learning cycles and an ethical dilemma.

An obvious argument is that returned volunteers are good candidates for experiential learning on issues relating to poverty and developing countries as they have had the experience of an 'encounter with poverty' (a concept discussed above). Docwra suggests that a major 'barrier for action' is the gap between an individual's "*radius of impact*" and their "*radius of moral concern*" (2006, 9). An experience volunteering in the developing world may lead to a lessening of this gap, increasing the "*radius of concern*" via direct contact and relationship with the people and environment concerned. Robert Chambers, writing for VSO's youth volunteering scheme, suggests that "*volunteers, with their enthusiasm, energy and grounded field experience, have a key part to play in inspiring and spreading the informed and committed activism so vital if we are to succeed [in fighting poverty]*" (VSO 2007, 4), although the use of the expression 'grounded field experience' may be questionable if applied to all returned volunteers. As discussed earlier, emotions can play a part in both experiential and DE. An experience in the developing world, and in particular a relationship with individuals, may well lead to emotions which could increase an

individual's "*radius of concern*"; returned volunteers may be angry, sad, shocked and so on. However, some emotions may also serve to decrease an individual's sense of their "*radius of impact*". For example, during conversations with returned volunteers they have described 'despair' and 'a lack of hope' caused by seeing the size of the problems faced by people living in poverty. This will be addressed in the next chapter.

Various academics and organisations support the concept of involving returned volunteers as campaigners and development educators. Simpson and others have drawn attention to the lack of appropriate follow-up for returned volunteers. She concludes her analysis by calling for a "*pedagogy of the gap year*" (Simpson 2004, 230) to support gap year experiences to "*become more than short term theme park experiences...and engage directly in the possibilities and mechanisms for action*" (ibid, 218). The Development Education Association (DEA) recognises that volunteers can be "*powerful change-makers and advocates in the UK*" (Edgerton 2007) and calls for a "*structured and supported learning programme*". However they also note that without such a programme returned volunteers can "*propagate misconceptions, stereotypes and a narrow understanding of poverty and inequality*" (ibid). VSO practices a similar concept, attempting to guide their returned volunteers towards becoming development educators. Their strategic plan states that VSO "*builds on volunteers' experiences and commitment to create a worldwide network of highly-motivated people working together for positive and sustainable change, whether through direct advocacy, personal example or sharing experiences with others*" (VSO 2004, 14). However, it is important to note the differences between their approach and the one argued for here; the people who volunteer, the training

offered and the work carried out all differ. VSO volunteers are generally older with professional qualifications. They receive far more training, both pre-departure and on arrival in their placements. They generally stay overseas for two years (much longer than the gap year volunteers focussed on here), working alongside a named local partner. All these circumstances allow VSO to enter the ELC at an earlier point than is possible with returned volunteers from other organisations.

VSO, along with the DEA and Simpson, suggests that the ideal situation is for elements of DE to be included at all stages of a volunteer's experience: prior to departure, while overseas and on return to the UK. Educational theory (as set out above) suggests that such a structure would have a greater learning impact. This does not mean that the later intervention proposed by this dissertation is not worthwhile, only that the same results should not be expected. Recognising that for-profit organisations are unlikely to conform to this educational ideal, this dissertation proposes using a follow-up programme to enter and enhance the learning cycle after the volunteer's return to the UK. The cyclic nature of experiential learning suggests that this should be possible. A similar concept is suggested by Wade (2000) who proposes a 'Social Justice Education' with three steps: personal experience, critical reflection and action (cited in Simpson 2004, 197). This model is an ELC beginning at the concrete experience stage. The next chapter will explore how this could be realised.

It can be argued that returned volunteers have an additional 'scope for action' as campaigners and development educators to that of a British person who has not 'experienced' the developing world in a similar way. Whether or not it is justified they

may be given opportunities to speak as 'somebody who has actually been there', able to add colour with photos, souvenirs and firsthand experience. According to the research they are likely to be economically confident, if not actually wealthy (Simpson 2004, 63; Jones 2004, 49). Many enter the higher education system on their return (Jones 2004, 26) which is significant as students can be argued to have a particularly high 'scope for action' (Trewby 2007). On the other hand their experience may limit them by confirming preconceptions or narrowing their focus to particular issues without considering the wider context and 'root causes' discussed in the previous chapter. They may be reluctant to have their knowledge challenged.

In the earlier discussion of gap year volunteering it was seen that altruism and 'doing something useful' played a part in motivating participants. It is also true that many question whether they were actually of use while away (Power 2007, 13). It therefore appears likely that if presented with a critical assessment of gap year volunteering and an opportunity to utilise it to 'do something useful' some may express an interest. Returned volunteers often do wish to become involved over the longer term; a survey of returned volunteers in America found that volunteers were more "*hungry to make a difference*" after their return (St. Vincent Pallotti Center 2005). Similarly, returned volunteers spoken to during research have often expressed an intention to act in some way after their return. For some this continued involvement takes place through supporting the organisation which sent them. This can take the form of promotion (Griffin 2004, 42), supporting new volunteers during training and while overseas or through financial contributions. Taking a less optimistic view, these factors may be weak or even in opposition to openness to involvement in a follow-up programme. The motivations given were only those which volunteers chose to articulate, and

even these were seen to be not wholly altruistic. In addition, motivations may fade or change, returned volunteers may feel that they have already 'done their bit' or perhaps be already involved in campaigning or DE (which could lead to 'preaching to the converted'). Organisations may attempt to block involvement in the fear of losing financial support, particularly as NGOs which campaign are often also looking for money (see discussion in previous chapter).

EE itself faces a critique. Although it is difficult to argue that people do not learn from experience, it is possible to challenge the overly simplistic concepts represented by experiential learning cycles. Greenway (2006) and others contend that the way individuals learn in reality is not in a number of distinct steps. People do not simply experience, then reflect, then form abstract concepts and then finally act. Instead these things happen in a more complicated manner; for example, someone may do all four while still being, theoretically at least, in the stage of concrete experience. There are also questions around outcomes. It cannot be assumed that if individuals have a similar experience of the developing world and receive the same follow-up intervention that they will have identical outcomes. Learning is understood to be constructed, built by individuals with the framework of their abilities and all their previous experiences (not just the last or most relevant one). Jarvis (1995) demonstrated that there are a number of responses to any potential learning situation (cited in Smith 2001), only some of which involve learning. Therefore while some returned volunteers may become campaigners or development educators, others may not. Additional factors such as responsibilities and interests may have greater influence on the returned volunteer. This does not mean that it is not worthwhile

beginning with these particular objectives in mind, only that they cannot be presumed as guaranteed outcomes.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to the concept proposed by this dissertation is an ethical one. Making the assumption that campaigning and DE are a 'good' thing, is it morally acceptable to attempt to build an educational structure for them on the ethically-questionable foundations of gap year volunteering? This is a difficult question to answer. The gap year phenomenon is not going to disappear in the immediate future, although it may well change (for example the trend appears to be that participants are getting younger and spending less time overseas). Tourism Concern's efforts to influence this change for the better (Power 2007) must be commended, but they face an uphill battle with organisations whose focus is on profit. The solution proposed is certainly not the ideal one; it would be better to have large scale DE for all and unquestionably ethical volunteer organisations. However, given the situation it appears to be a sensible route to gain the maximum 'good' for all parties involved. It is not that the end justifies the means, but that since the 'means' (the experience) is happening regardless the opportunity should be taken to create a good 'end'.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has introduced experiential education and the gap year, before making the argument that by utilising gap year experiences as part of an experiential learning cycle it should be possible to enhance the possibility of returned volunteers becoming involved in campaigning and DE. It has recognised various challenges to this

argument, including that not all returned volunteers will be interested, that the outcomes cannot be assumed and the question of attempting to build something 'good' on foundations of questionable ethics. It concludes that even with these challenges it deserves due consideration.

The following chapter will begin to explore how a follow-up programme could be devised to put this argument into practice. Various elements of this chapter will emerge as important ingredients, including Ricketts and Willis' (2001) 'Continuous Learning Cycle' (experience, what?, so what?, now what?), the role of reflection and action in EE and information about who participates in gap year volunteering.

## Chapter Three

### Putting it into practice

#### Introduction

Previous chapters have made two arguments: 1) that the roles of campaigners and development educators are important in the UK in attempts to end poverty in developing countries; and 2) that by utilising gap year experiences as part of an experiential learning cycle it should be possible to enhance the possibility of returned volunteers becoming involved in campaigning and development education. This chapter will begin to explore how a follow-up programme could be devised to put this argument into practice. It begins from the realistic recognition that such a programme will not cause all returned volunteers to become campaigners and development educators, or even guarantee that the majority take up some form of civic engagement.

The discussion that follows is an exploration of one possible way in which the argument presented in this dissertation could be put into practice; a one-day workshop for returned volunteers. It draws upon the content of previous chapters (including gap year volunteering and experiential and development education) as well as theories from the fields of communication, adult education, persuasion and social influence. It will first justify such a workshop and then consider the methodology that could be employed, including the style of facilitation. It will then explore possible content based around supporting participants through the stages of Ricketts and

Willis' (2001) 'Continuous Learning Cycle'. Finally it will discuss potential outcomes and measuring success.

## **Method**

The basic ingredients of the follow-up programme could be communicated to returned volunteers in a number of ways, such as through a book, website, email newsletter or information pack. While it would be ideal to utilise as many methods as possible for widest coverage, this chapter will concentrate on bringing groups of returned volunteers together for a workshop. This has a number of potential benefits, which may outweigh the ease of mass multiplication offered by the mass media. Universities, with the large numbers of returned volunteers enrolled, could offer a realistic starting point. The target audience is important as it is crucial to 'know the audience' (McGaan 2006).

Such a workshop would allow face-to-face communication. It has been shown (for example Rogers 1971, 13) that personal relationship is an effective method for changing attitudes; indeed "*the gold standard for behaviour change remains interpersonal channels*" (Dunwoody 2007, 94). The 'bringing together' may also motivate returned volunteers to come; from discussion with those who attended a gap year organisation's follow-up it appears their main motivation was to meet and share with others with similar experience. For many returned volunteers it is difficult to find these opportunities. For example, McFarlane discusses a similar situation in which a group of teachers had travelled to Tanzania and Kenya on a 'study visit': "*on returning to England, many of the group found it difficult to explain what they had*

*experienced to family, friends and colleagues. For many it was a relief to meet as a group again where there was a shared understanding” (McFarlane 1994, 230).*

The combined experience of a group offers other potential benefits. Jones (2004, 26;49) showed that although the majority of gap year volunteers may be from a similar background, there is a broad range of life stages at which people participate. It follows that there is a range of experiences which could be utilised to facilitate the groups’ learning. Adult education theorists note that *“each adult life is an accumulation of a unique set of experiences and contexts”* (Trusting and Barton 2006, 31), which can both support the learning of the group and stimulate an individual’s learning (assisting them to situate the content within their personal framework of experience and knowledge). Group learning can be advantageous as *“it affects both success and satisfaction in learning”* (Beard and Hartley 1984, 54). It can also be argued that reflection, a crucial part the experiential learning cycles, requires a collective element; *“to reflect critically is not something which can be achieved in isolation from others”* (McLaren and Da Silva 1993, 55).

Considering who communicates with workshop participants is integral to exploring the method. Information should come from a trusted source (Moser and Dilling 2007, 13) via a facilitator acceptable to participants. Such a person must be seen to be attempting to set a good example; denying the *“hypocritical formula, “do as I say, not as I do”*” (Freire 1997, 39). Some level of similarity to the participants is helpful for acceptability (Dugan 2007). This echoes communication theories use of homophily (Rogers 1971, 14) or co-orientation (Bordenave 1977, 16). In light of the above discussions, the facilitator must be comfortable to be in dialogue with the learners,

giving dignity to the participants and their experience and knowledge (Richards et al 2001, viii; xiii). The aim is then *“not to transfer knowledge but to create the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge”* (Freire and Shor 1987, 30). The method employed must be gentle and encouraging, rather than dictatorial as *“you can catch more bees with a spoonful of honey than a barrel of vinegar”* (St. Francis de Sales). Although the manipulation of ‘negative’ emotions such as fear and guilt is recognised as an influence tactic (Rhoads 2002) it must be used with care. Fear has been shown to be *“unreliable at best in promoting behaviour change. Frequently, this technique leads to the exact opposite from the desired responses: denial, paralysis, apathy”* (Moser and Dilling 2007, 11). The use of guilt is questionable; it could act to impede or encourage ongoing involvement (Moser 2007, 21). Appeals can be made to conscience (Dugan 2003), for example through the language of ‘need’ utilised already by gap year organisations (Simpson 2004, 114): ‘campaigning needs you’ rather than ‘children in India need you’. Tapping into participants’ initial altruistic motivations for volunteering may be a powerful tactic as some will already be questioning how much they actually achieved (Chapter Two; Power 2007, 13).

Two final practical questions are when such a workshop should take place and how long should it last. It is difficult to say when the optimal time would be; for some returned volunteers it may have most impact immediately after their return to the UK when memories and motivation are fresh, while others might appreciate a longer time to allow reflection. The pragmatic answer is whenever it is possible. The length of such a workshop would depend on many factors, including the time that participants are willing to give and the amount of material to be covered. From discussion with

returned volunteers, an initial proposal of a day seems reasonable. The workshop would not take place in an information vacuum; "*education is only one piece of larger lives in an even larger society*" (Freire and Shor 1987, 25). A number of issues involved may reach returned volunteers via other channels. Elements of development education exist in the school curriculum, at places of worship and community centres and in the media. In addition, critiques of the gap year are beginning to receive attention, an example being BBC Five Live's radio broadcast 'Mind the gap' (3/6/07) following Tourism Concern's report (Power 2007).

This workshop would not seek to 'debrief' returned volunteers; it has very specific educational goals. Ideally, it should therefore take place in addition to a good 'in-house' session facilitated by the sending organisation.

## **Content**

It is commonly accepted as good practice in education to set out learning objectives before beginning a lesson. These serve to make clear to participants what exactly they are expected to be able to know, do or feel (knowledge, skills and attitudes) by a specific time. The same is true of adults; Knowles et al observe that "*adults need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it*" (2005, 64). It therefore seems sensible to set out the basics of the argument made in this dissertation to participants. This should include:

- A critique discussion of the gap year
- A brief background to experiential education
- The importance of campaigning and development education

- The chosen ELC: Ricketts and Willis' (2001) 'Continuous Learning Cycle'.

This background information could be communicated to participants in the form of pre-workshop reading or through a brief introductory presentation. Space should also be provided for participants to consider and share their desired outcomes from the workshop (learner needs).

The remainder of the content could support participants through the stages of the learning cycle: remembering the experience ('What?'), reflecting on it ('So what?') and finally acting ('Now what?').

### *What?*

The aim at this stage is to facilitate participants' recalling of their experiences of gap year volunteering, and particularly their 'encounters with poverty' (see Chapter Two). This may involve remembering emotional reactions to this encounter, which can play an important role in both experiential and development education (Chapters One and Two). Facilitators should be sensitive to this, ensuring that a 'safe space' is created for participants to contribute. It was seen above that returned volunteers lack and desire opportunities to share their experiences; this method could be used to encourage their remembering. For example, participants could discuss their experiences in small groups, taking turns to share on a given 'theme', following a short period to think. Themes could include: best memories, funniest moment, special people/places, work, free time, encounters with poverty and stories of hope.

Care must be taken to ensure this is not the extent of the day. Sutton and Pfeffer (2000) suggest that there is a danger that “*memory substitutes for thinking*”. There is also a risk that individuals’ preconceptions could impede the group’s learning (discussed below).

*So what?*

In this stage participants will be given information, particularly in the form of a broader context and background to their concrete experience, followed by opportunities for individual and collective reflection to make the links between experience and new knowledge. Much of this is development education (see Chapter One). It should involve asking why poverty exists (Simpson 2004, 230) and investigating the “*structural relationships between communities of the developed and developing world*” (ibid, 216) and root causes of poverty (see Chapter One). For many participants this must include the introduction of new language and vocabulary (for example the WTO, World Bank, ‘developing’ etc) to allow the exploration of new concepts and issues; “*if we conjure only those ideas we already have the words to express, then our presence in history remains more or less comfortably static*” (McLaren and Da Silva 1993, 62). Similarly, the vast majority of UK school pupils receive no teaching about colonialism, an important part of the context of today’s situation. Therefore an element of history is necessary; considering the “*historical context of oppression*” (ibid, 77). It should also involve an analysis of the gap year industry, initial motivations and discussions of the extent that they ‘made a difference’ during their experience. As with all development education it must include the ‘voice of the poor’ and in particular of the hosts (see discussion in Chapters One and Two).

There are various barriers to learning. Preconceptions may have been confirmed through the experience of volunteering; *“as we accumulate experience, we tend to develop mental habits, biases, and presuppositions that tend to cause us to close our minds to new ideas, fresh perceptions, and alternative ways of thinking”* (Knowles et al 2005, 66). Individuals may be overconfident in their experiences and preconceptions and thus be unwilling to take new perspectives. It is therefore necessary that this stage includes challenging these preconceptions; *“catalysts for transformative learning are “disorienting dilemmas”, situations which do not fit one’s preconceived notions”* (Dover 2007). A second barrier is that of attempting to do too much development education in a short period of time. As discussed in Chapter One, this may lead to feelings that *“the problem is too big, too complicated, too overwhelming – it’s hopeless”* (Moser 2007, 65). To counter this, the workshop should concentrate on stimulating further learning without attempting to provide all the answers.

As discussed in previous chapters, experience and knowledge are not sufficient. Space must also be provided for individual and collective reflection. Opportunities for reflection must exist at all stages of the workshop to enable participants to internalise and prepare to act.

*Now what?*

As has been discussed previously, both development and experiential education require an action stage; for example Sutton and Pfeffer (2000) suggest that there is a

danger that *“talk substitutes for action”*. The workshop should therefore contain an action component; ‘doing something’ immediately as well as encouraging ongoing action. Griffiths suggests that *“social justice is a verb...an active verb, not a passive one. It must have a subject: justice does not get done unless somebody does it”* (Griffiths 2003, 113); the workshop should enable participants to be such a ‘somebody’. Without this it risks impeding action as *“information without an action strategy promotes a feeling of futility among those who hear it”* (Meyer 2007, 458).

In this final stage, campaigning and development education can be presented as opportunities for action. However it is important that these are of real use and not simply placebos. Participants will have other pressures and responsibilities so expectations should be realistic and relevant. Undue pressure can be avoided through approaching this stage in a supportive and encouraging manner rather than a demanding one. This could include an element of celebrating and affirming any ongoing action participants are already involved in.

Docwra notes that a lack of continuing support can be a barrier to ongoing action (2006, 31). For this reason, and to avoid the repetition of work carried out by others, it appears sensible to tap into existing campaigning and DE organisations. This could entail a process of ‘sign-posting’ or introducing workshop participants to groups such as the Jubilee Debt Campaign and the Trade Justice Movement, via websites, promotional materials or personal contact with representatives. A potential challenge to this approach was discussed in Chapter One; at times these organisations appear to want fundraisers rather than campaigners. As a consequence of this and of the size of the organisations, participants may not receive the ongoing support desired. A

possible solution would be to form small groups of participants who could guide and encourage one another in taking action and continued learning about the issues into the future. These groups could be based online around themes (for example: education, gender or HIV) to allow for focus, while still making use of resources and guidance from the larger organisations.

## **Outcomes**

The above exploration of a workshop's methodology and content had particular outcomes in mind; enhancing the possibility of returned volunteers becoming involved in campaigning and development education. These are high aspirations. Even if it is successful in this it does not necessarily follow that participants will become involved in these roles; *"just because someone has a positive attitude does not mean they will invariably behave in a consistent manner"* (Rhoads 2002). Their level of motivation may fade (or increase) over time (Rubin and Thorelli 1984). They may not become involved immediately, but instead at some time in the future, perhaps after exposure to other educational materials or experiences.

The uncertainty of outcomes makes monitoring and evaluating the success of such a workshop a challenging task. However, it is necessary to include some form of assessment to inform attempts to increase the workshop's effectiveness and relevance for future participants. According to the four-level model developed by Kirkpatrick, evaluation should begin by considering participants' reactions to the workshop, before continuing to consider their learning, the transfer (application) of this learning and finally the results of this application (Winfrey 1999). This could

involve a questionnaire at the end of the day followed by some form of contact at a later stage to consider transfer and action – have the participants become involved in campaigning and DE? While important, this would be difficult to assess due to the nature of the outcomes, the range of experience and level of involvement participants begin with and the impact of ‘external’ influences.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has explored one possible model for a follow-up programme aimed at enhancing the possibility of returned volunteers becoming involved in campaigning and development education. It has drawn upon previous chapters as well as theories from the fields of communication, adult education, persuasion and social influence to suggest a methodology and content for a one-day work shop.

The final chapter will consider how the concept presented in this dissertation could be expanded to target audiences other than returned volunteers.

# Chapter Four

## Expanding the concept

### Introduction

Previous chapters have argued that it should be possible to use a follow-up programme to utilise returned gap year volunteers' 'encounters with poverty' into a stage in an experiential learning cycle and thus enhance the possibility of them becoming involved in campaigning and development education.

This final chapter will first make a number of general comments on how this concept could be adapted to reach target audiences other than returned volunteers. It will then briefly explore two particularly promising potential audiences: tourists and diasporas of developing countries. There is also the possibility of expansion within the group of returned volunteers: for example to include those whose 'encounter with poverty' was a longer time ago (and who may now be working or retired) and volunteers from other developed countries.

### General comments

This dissertation's argument is built upon the foundations of experiential education. Returned volunteers were seen to be a suitable target group due to their 'scope for action' and experience of an 'encounter with poverty' in a developing country, as well as possibly having attitudes amenable to such a follow-up programme. They are not the only group with these essential ingredients; potentially the concept could apply to

any person living in a developed country with such an experience. This includes tourists, those who travel for business, soldiers and diasporas of developing countries

Chapter Two defined an 'encounter with poverty' as a first-hand experience causing personal realisation of the difference in wealth between self and 'other'. It was noted that this is subjective; groups will have differing understandings of 'poverty'. Similarly, each group (and individual within them) will have different previous experiences, motivations or barriers and 'scope for action'. It follows that the proposals of Chapter Three cannot be applied directly; they must be adapted.

In any communication or education initiative it is important to 'know the audience' (McGaan 2006). This would entail detailed research into each of the potential target groups in order to consider their 'scope for action', prior experiences, possible motivations and barriers to action. Groups with an older average age may have greater potential for influence but less freedom to act due to other responsibilities, due to families or otherwise. On the other hand, having dependants such as children may lead to a sense of concern for the future (Freire and Shor 1987, 65); a possible motivating factor. It would be important to investigate how best to communicate with each group. There can be no 'one size fits all' solution; as far as possible the communication channel must suit the group. It may well be the case that for some target audiences bringing them together for workshops is not the most appropriate or effective method.

The following sections will begin a preliminary discussion of two possible target audiences: tourists and diasporas.

## **Tourists**

The fact that there are large numbers in this group makes its potential particularly exciting; “*tourism is said to be the largest industry in the world and it’s growing rapidly*” (Scheyvens 2002, 4), with increasing numbers visiting developing countries. These tourists range from those who travel in luxury to backpackers, including a range of ‘ethical’ initiatives such as alternative- and eco-tourism and, as noted in Chapter Two, the line between tourism and gap year volunteering is sometimes blurred (Power 2007, 1). So-called ‘justice tourism’ such as slum visits or Fair Trade ‘meet the producer’ trips are of particular relevance. A suitable follow-up programme could prevent these being simply “*voyeurs of misery*” (Scheyvens 2002, 107) or visits to ‘poverty zoos’. As developing countries are often further away, those who visit on holiday are often among the wealthier tourists. They may also have a particular interest in learning about the ‘other’. Theoretically at least these factors should lead to a subsection with the essential ingredients of ‘scope for action’, motivation and an ‘encounter with poverty’ to be utilised in an experiential learning cycle.

However there are various barriers to involving tourists. Although it is likely that they experience an ‘encounter with poverty’ it cannot be assumed. Through staying inside resorts, affluent areas or ‘backpacker ghettos’, with “*western music, food and culture*” (Scheyvens 2002, 13), they may avoid such a personal encounter. As with volunteers their preconceptions may impede involvement; through media images and

promotional material the holiday experience begins long before departure (Urry 1990). Tourists may be reluctant to involve themselves in the issues addressed by a follow-up programme due to feeling they have already 'paid' for their holiday. This could be challenged through raising awareness of 'leakages', "*the proportion of the total holiday price that does not reach or remain in the destination*" (Mitchell and Page 2006, 5) instead returning to the developed world through airlines, hotel chains, food and drink manufacturers and so on. According to Tourism Concern, leakages can account for up to 90% of the total cost of a holiday. From discussion with British tourists in Brazil it appears they would be unlikely to attend a workshop due to the time commitment. However, they could identify personal 'encounters with poverty', were previously unaware of 'leakages' and expressed interest in learning more, including actions they could take to change the situation. One family suggested using a DVD or website, perhaps promoted through their travel agents.

As discussed with regard to gap year volunteering in Chapter Two, the greatest challenge is an ethical one. According to Wearing, tourism "*has led to the exploitation of host communities, their culture and environment*" (Wearing 2001, ix). Is it appropriate to build on these ethically questionable foundations? A follow-up programme to a holiday built on exploitation risks acting simply to alleviate guilt and perpetuate the situation. A possible solution may be to follow the lead of Tourism Concern, which works to raise awareness and campaign about exploitation in the tourism industry. Elements of this could be included in a follow-up programme for returned tourists.

## Diasporas

AFFORD defines diasporas as “*transnational communities...formed through dispersal (for whatever reason) but who maintain a memory of and links with “home”, the place of origin*” (AFFORD 2000, 3). Those from developing countries living in the UK often have the two essential ingredients of ‘scope for action’ as British citizens and an ‘encounter with poverty’, either from living in a developing country or, if born in the UK, from during a visit to their “place of origin”. They may also have attitudes amenable to the goals of a follow-up programme.

Chikezie notes that “*Diaspora possess a ‘double vision’ positioned at the interface between North and South*” (Chikezie 2006). If, as Docwra suggests, the gap between an individual’s ‘radius of impact’ and ‘radius of moral concern’ is a barrier for action (2006, 9), this group may be motivated to act. Through links to ‘home’ (state, ethnic group, village, family or friends) their radius of concern can be assumed to be different to that of others living in Britain. Some already utilise their ‘scope for action’ in the UK as is evidenced by the existence of diaspora-led campaigning and fundraising NGOs (Chikezie 2006) and financial remittances. In 2004 it was estimated that the African diaspora remitted forty-five billion dollars in addition to business and intellectual resources (Diageo 2004, 1). Similarly, the eight million Filipinos living and working outside the Philippines sent home around fifteen billion dollars (Higham 2007). However there remains the potential for greater involvement in campaigning and development education (AFFORD 2000, 14). The concept proposed in this dissertation could serve as one way in which this potential could be untapped.

Various challenges exist to such an attempt. Diasporas are in many ways difficult to reach, requiring careful consideration of communication channels, which may include community centres and places of worship, radio stations, money transfer agencies and supplementary schools. Recognising that learning is culturally influenced (Husen 1990, 141), the educational approach would have to be adapted to suit each group, taking account of age and religion as well as country of origin. All people carry with them a “*cultural baggage of inherited knowledge*” (Nicholson 1996, 80) which may lead to preconceptions impeding action. Commitment to work or family may limit the time available. Individual members of diasporas may be unwilling to be seen as campaigning against the status quo in the UK. It has been found that remittances decrease as individuals become more secure in the UK (AFFORD 2000, 9), which would suggest the motivation to support their ‘place of origin’ may be at least partially pragmatic. This feeling of insecurity may impede their ‘scope for action’ as campaigners if they are worried about drawing attention to themselves through ‘rocking the boat’. Finally, a sense of national pride may impede their involvement with campaign organisations perceived to be critical of their countries.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has returned to the foundations of the argument set out in the dissertation, recognising that it requires two ‘essential ingredients’: a ‘scope for action’ and an experience of an ‘encounter with poverty’. After observing that there are groups other than returned volunteers who may have these it has considered how the concept could be expanded. Particular focus was placed on tourists and

diasporas as these could offer much to campaigning and development education. Various opportunities and challenges were identified, but far more research into these groups is required.

## Conclusion

From the foundations of the importance of campaigning and development education (Chapter One) and critiques of gap year volunteering (Chapter Two), this dissertation has presented a partial response to Simpson's call for a 'pedagogy of the gap year' (2004, 230). It has used literature from a range of disciplines, including communication for social change, communication theory, study of gap year volunteering and development, adult and experiential education, to argue for the use of a follow-up programme to engage returned volunteers in an experiential learning cycle. It has proposed that this could take the form of a one-day workshop, aimed at enhancing the possibility of their involvement in campaigning and development education (Chapter Three). Finally it has considered ways in which this concept could be expanded to reach audiences other than returned volunteers, such as tourists and diasporas of developing countries (Chapter Four). This is an exciting idea because of the potential numbers involved, but would require further research.

Throughout the dissertation a number of challenges have been identified. These included difficulties facing campaigning and development education organisations, critiques of the educational theories and 'barriers' which may act to impede individuals and groups from taking action.

The core proposal offered by this dissertation is, at best, a partial solution. Ideally the gap year industry would be forced to listen to and learn from its critique, leading to gap year volunteering becoming of greater value to all concerned parties; supportive of local communities and providing beneficial educational experiences. Unless or

until this happens, the concept offered by this dissertation appears to be a sensible one, providing a route to obtain increased educational value from volunteer experiences and potentially creating more campaigners and development educators. It therefore appears worthy of further development and putting into practice.

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