

OXFAM  
EDUCATION & YOUTH  
RESEARCH  
REPORT

# You Are Therefore I Am

*How Empathy Education Can Create Social Change*

**Roman Krznaric**

**A report prepared for Oxfam GB**



**Oxfam**

*You Are Therefore I Am*

Oxfam GB Research Report, July 2008

© Oxfam GB July 2008

Oxfam GB is a member of Oxfam International. Registered charity no. 202918

This paper was written by Roman Krznaric, an independent consultant who specialises in empathy, education and social change from multidisciplinary perspectives. He has degrees in the social sciences from the universities of Oxford, London and Essex, where he obtained his Ph.D. in political sociology. He can be contacted through his website, [www.romankrznaric.com](http://www.romankrznaric.com).

Oxfam GB acknowledges the assistance of Alex Sevier (Department for Children, Schools and Families - DCSF), Alfie Kohn (education writer and critic), Andrew Ray (DCSF), Christopher Sarson (Roots of Empathy), Deborah Michel (National Strategies), Jan Humpleby (International School of Amsterdam), Julie St Claire Hoare (West Oxford Community Primary School), Kate Raworth (Oxfam), Kevin Watkins (UNESCO), Mary Gordon (Roots of Empathy), Moira Faul (Oxfam), Susan Loban (International School of Amsterdam), and Will Ord (Thinking Education) in its production.

It is part of a series of papers written to inform public debate on education and youth policy issues.

The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect Oxfam's views.

The text may be used free of charge for the purposes of advocacy, campaigning, education, and research, provided that the source is acknowledged in full. The copyright holder requests that all such use be registered with them for impact assessment purposes. For copying in any other circumstances, or for re-use in other publications, or for translation or adaptation, permission must be secured and a fee may be charged. E-mail [publish@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:publish@oxfam.org.uk).

For further information on the issues raised in this report, please e-mail [enquiries@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@oxfam.org.uk) or go to [www.oxfam.org.uk/education/policy](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/policy).

# Content

<b>Content</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Overview .....	5
Introduction.....	6
What is empathy? .....	10
Empathy as shared emotional response.....	10
Empathy as perspective-taking .....	10
Empathy as appropriate response .....	11
Why is empathy on the education policy agenda? .....	12
Social and Emotional Learning .....	12
Wellbeing.....	13
Economic and business benefits.....	13
Towards the age of empathy.....	15
Psychology .....	15
Evolutionary biology .....	16
Neuroscience.....	16
Cultural Studies.....	16
Economics.....	16
Philosophy.....	17

Empathy and social change.....	18
The struggle against slavery and the slave trade.....	20
Evacuation during the Second World War.....	21
The public response to the Asian Tsunami.....	21
Empathy education: a comparative survey .....	23
1.Roots of Empathy: the teacher is a baby .....	24
2.The Primary Years Programme of the International Baccalaureate.....	25
3.Climate Chaos: Oxfam’s Education for Global Citizenship .....	29
4.Through Other Eyes: Developing Empathy and Multicultural Perspectives in the Social Studies .....	31
5.Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme for primary schools in England.....	34
The future of empathy education.....	40
Conversational Empathy.....	40
Experiential Empathy .....	40
Global Empathy.....	41
<b>Conclusions .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Endnotes.....</b>	<b>47</b>

## Overview

We have managed to harness the power of the wind, the sun and the water, but have yet to appreciate the power of our children to affect social change’.

*Mary Gordon, founder of the Roots of Empathy education programme<sup>1</sup>*

Empathy Education is at the forefront of contemporary education reform. Since the mid 1990s there has been an exponential growth in the teaching of empathy skills in primary and secondary schools in countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as in international schools in many other nations. Today, Empathy Education is more extensive than at any time in the past. This paper is an attempt to map the landscape of Empathy Education around the world. Through a series of case studies, it highlights some of the most innovative empathy programmes currently being offered to young people, particularly at the primary level. After clarifying the meaning of empathy, the paper explains why Empathy Education has gained a place on the education policy agenda, and argues that policymakers have failed to recognise the impact that it can have in bringing about social change. The paper concludes by suggesting that Empathy Education programmes could enhance their social impact by expanding to incorporate more global themes, in addition to integrating a greater focus on developing empathy through conversational and experiential learning.

## Introduction

A class of eight-year-olds in Oxford studying Geography imagine what it is like to be street children in Delhi, and then write a story in the first person about the experience of leaving their village to find work in the city.

A class of six-year-olds in Toronto 'adopt' a baby, meeting it every three weeks, watching it closely and discussing its emotional development and experiences, then talk about how this affects their understanding of the emotions and viewpoints of their fellow classmates.

A group of eleven-year-olds in Amsterdam visit a museum of blindness, then do a project designing their own museum to give people the experience of stepping into the shoes of those who have visual impairment.

As part of a special week of teaching on climate change, nine-year-olds in Hull write an account from the perspective of their own grandchild about what life is like fifty years from now.<sup>2</sup>

All of these are examples of Empathy Education in action. That is, the activities encourage development of the two, interrelated, aspects of empathy: comprehending and sharing the emotional responses of another person; and understanding the perspectives or worldview of others, through the imaginative act of stepping into their shoes.

Empathy Education is at the forefront of contemporary education reform. Since the mid 1990s there has been an exponential growth in the teaching of empathy skills in primary and secondary schools in countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as in international schools in many other nations. Today, Empathy Education is more extensive than at any time in the past.

This paper is an attempt to map the landscape of Empathy Education around the world. Through a series of case studies, it highlights some of the most innovative empathy programmes currently being offered to young people, particularly at the primary level. The success of initiatives such as Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL), which has now been adopted in around two-thirds of primary schools in England, and which has developing empathy as one of its five core components, demonstrates the impact that Empathy Education can have on young people's lives.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, the paper shows how even the best contemporary Empathy Education often suffers from two limitations:

- *Limited vision:* Programmes frequently concentrate on developing empathy as an individual 'skill' to help 'manage emotions' and contribute to personal development, while placing insufficient emphasis on the potential that empathy has for bringing about large-scale social change.

- *Limited scope:* There is a tendency to focus on fostering empathy within the local community (such as at school, and with friends and family), without giving adequate attention to how to nurture empathy on a more global basis, with strangers who live beyond the boundaries of the immediate environment, including in the developing world.

This paper argues that these two problems at least partly derive from the origins of many empathy programmes, such as SEAL, in the work of the influential psychologist Daniel Goleman, especially his book *Emotional Intelligence: Why it Can Matter More than IQ* (1996).

It is vital to highlight these limitations because, as a consequence, the full benefits of Empathy Education are not being gained: the empathy lever is only being pulled down half way. While many programmes are highly effective, their impact could be even greater if they were expanded beyond their current confines. There is increasing evidence demonstrating that if we are to tackle some of the world's most significant global problems, such as inequality, climate change, and intercultural conflict, then it is essential that we develop greater empathy for those who are suffering from those problems today, and those who will suffer from them in future generations. Thus this paper suggests how contemporary Empathy Education can be extended and reoriented so that it can make a greater contribution to social change and the development of global citizenship.

This will be a necessarily wide-ranging and interdisciplinary journey, requiring forays into education policy, the psychology of empathy, and thinking about how social change happens.<sup>4</sup> Without understanding the broader context in which Empathy Education has developed, it is impossible to comprehend its potential not only to shape individual lives, but to bring about profound social transformation and create a new generation of globally minded citizens.

The paper is structured as follows:

- *What is empathy?*

This section cuts through the conceptual muddles, outlining the two different forms of empathy:

1. empathy as *shared emotional response*
2. empathy as *perspective-taking*.

- *Why is empathy on the education policy agenda?*

This analyses the three reasons why policymakers in the UK are talking about Empathy Education:

1. the emergence of the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) agenda
2. the increasing prominence of Wellbeing as a national and educational goal
3. the recognition that promoting empathy and other social and emotional competencies can have long-term economic benefits.

- *Towards the Age of Empathy*

Here I step back from the immediate policy context to examine how empathy-related themes have arisen in a range of disciplines over the past four decades, including: psychology, evolutionary biology, neuroscience, cultural studies, economics, and philosophy. This demonstrates an intellectual shift towards what could become a new Age of Empathy, in which the recent growth of Empathy Education is embedded.

- *Empathy and Social change*

While education policymakers are talking about empathy, they generally fail to understand the mass social change that it can bring about. So here, by way of example, I briefly examine three historical events that cannot be explained without recourse to empathy: the development of a social movement against slavery and the slave trade in Britain in the late-eighteenth century; the provision of new child welfare legislation following evacuation in the Second World War; and the public response to the Asian Tsunami in late 2004.

- *Empathy Education: A Comparative Survey*

With the potential impact of Empathy Education now clarified, I analyse five examples of current practice, highlighting their innovations and limitations:

1. The Roots of Empathy programme in Canada, where the teacher is a baby
2. The Primary Years Programme of the International Baccalaureate
3. Climate Chaos, part of Oxfam GB's Education for Global Citizenship curriculum

4. Through Other Eyes, resources for teaching Social Studies in the United States

5. The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme for primary schools in England.

- *The Future of Empathy Education*

What do the above case studies suggest about the direction that Empathy Education programmes should take in the future? This section argues that they should address three key areas of learning:

1. Conversational Empathy
2. Experiential Empathy
3. Global Empathy.

## What is empathy?

### *Empathy as shared emotional response*

If you pick up a psychology textbook and look up the meaning of 'empathy' you will usually find two definitions.<sup>5</sup> The first is the idea of empathy as a *shared emotional response*, sometimes called 'affective' empathy. For instance, if you see a baby crying in anguish, and you too feel anguish, then you are experiencing empathy – you are sharing or mirroring their emotions. This idea is reflected in the original German term from which the English word 'empathy' was translated around a century ago, 'Einfühlung', which literally means 'feeling into'.

However, if you see the same anguished baby and feel a different emotion, such as pity, then you are experiencing sympathy rather than empathy. Sympathy refers to an emotional response which is not shared. One of the reasons people often confuse the two is historical. Up until the nineteenth century, what used to be called 'sympathy' is what we mean today by empathy as a shared emotional response. Thus when Adam Smith begins his book *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) with a discussion of 'Sympathy', he is actually referring to a concept closer to the modern idea of empathy.

### *Empathy as perspective-taking*

A second definition of empathy is the idea of empathy as 'perspective-taking', which the psychology literature refers to as 'cognitive' empathy. This concerns our ability to step into the shoes of another person and comprehend the way they look at themselves and the world, their most important beliefs, aspirations, motivations, fears, and hopes. That is, the constituents of their internal frame of reference or 'worldview' (*Weltanschauung*, as the sociologist Karl Mannheim called it). Perspective-taking empathy allows us to make an imaginative leap into another person's being. This approach to empathy became prominent in the 1960s through the work of humanist psychotherapists such as Carl Rogers.

The way we do this quite naturally is evident in common phrases such as 'I can see where you're coming from' and 'Wouldn't you hate to be her?'. Although we can never fully comprehend another person's worldview, we can develop the skill of understanding something of their viewpoint, and may on that basis be able to predict how they will think or act in particular circumstances. Perspective-taking is one of the most important ways for us to overcome our assumptions and prejudices about others. For example, dozens of psychological studies show how perspective-taking can be developed to help challenge racial and other stereotypes, by encouraging people to imagine themselves in the situation of another person, with that person's beliefs and experiences.<sup>6</sup> Hence many empathy researchers, including Daniel Goleman and Martin Hoffman, consider perspective-taking as an essential basis for individual moral development.<sup>7</sup> With perspective-taking, the emphasis is on understanding 'where a person is coming from' rather than on the emotions, as with affective empathy.

### *Empathy as appropriate response*

Occasionally the psychology literature introduces a third approach to empathy, which is the idea of having an 'appropriate response' to a person, after having engaged in either or both of the two kinds of empathy noted above.<sup>8</sup> This could be described as 'consequentialist' empathy. Those who bring in this third definition often emphasise that if you have shared the emotions of someone, or gained an understanding of their perspective, yet take no action as a result, then you have not fully experienced empathy. In a sense, it hasn't really touched you. Empathy, by this definition, needs to make a difference. It has to inspire moral action of some form.

My view is that we should not include 'appropriate response' as a distinct meaning of empathy. Rather, it should be considered as a possible outcome of an empathetic experience. Sometimes we may respond actively and other times not. And while all the psychological evidence suggests that we can teach or nurture the first two kinds of empathy, this third form is less susceptible to conscious learning processes. In any case, who is to determine what constitutes an 'appropriate response'?

This paper, then, focuses on empathy as shared emotions and empathy as perspective-taking. Clearly these are interrelated, since sharing the emotion of another person helps you understand what they are experiencing, while gaining insights into someone's worldview can help you develop an emotional attachment to their wellbeing. Yet the distinction is important, since nurturing both affective and cognitive empathy requires different educational tools, and may have very different consequences.

The approaches to Empathy Education outlined below usually recognise these two meanings of empathy within their conceptual frameworks, although they are often confusingly merged in a single definition. More importantly, one of the arguments of this paper is that too much Empathy Education is directed towards affective rather than cognitive empathy. The emphasis on learning to identify the emotions of others (a classic method of nurturing affective empathy), needs to be balanced with a greater focus on children's ability to comprehend the perspectives and lives of others, especially people in other communities or countries who they may rarely or never meet.

But before embarking on a comparative survey of Empathy Education, it is necessary to examine how, after almost a century, empathy has escaped the narrow confines of academic psychology, and become a topical issue in education policy.

## Why is empathy on the education policy agenda?

Why has Empathy Education come onto the policy agenda in The UK, after being ignored for so long? This has primarily been due to two developments that have taken place since the 1990s: the growing interest in government in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL); and the popularity of the idea of promoting 'wellbeing'. A third factor is the recognition that developing emotionally related skills such as empathy has clear economic and business benefits.

### *Social and Emotional Learning*

The SEL agenda that has come to prominence in the past decade is described using a range of terminology such as 'emotional intelligence', 'emotional literacy', 'lifeskills' and 'resiliency'. Although the ideas have been around for several decades, Goleman's writings since the mid 1990s have given them an extraordinary boost. The emphasis is on developing self-awareness and nurturing skills such as empathy, with the aim of 'helping people form positive relationships with other people, understand themselves and their own emotions and understand and respond to the emotions of others in a helpful way'.<sup>9</sup> This has been referred to as an 'affective turn' in British education, towards 'management of the emotions', and away from more traditional knowledge and skills in areas such as maths, science, and reading and writing (although the testing regime maintains the emphasis on the latter).<sup>10</sup> The aim has partly been to respond to concerns around behaviour management in schools, so pupils are less likely to engage in bullying or to express their emotions using physical violence. The intention has also been to develop self-esteem, which can help tackle underachievement and social exclusion. The existence of SEL reflects the fact that other policy initiatives to tackle problems such as bullying, youth crime and teenage depression have been largely unsuccessful and that policymakers are looking for alternative strategies. Multiple quantitative and qualitative studies of the impact of SEL show that it can not only inhibit aggressive behaviour and boost self-esteem, but also contribute to mental health, the disposition to learn, improve attendance and contribute to general academic success.<sup>11</sup>

Empathy has been identified as a core skill within many SEL programmes such as SEAL and Family Links in the UK, and has a place in the Penn Resiliency Program in Philadelphia.<sup>12</sup> In a recent presentation on 'Early Intervention in Nottingham', Graham Allen MP (in his role as chair of the One Nottingham Local Strategic Partnership) said that the key to education reform was developing empathy since 'empathy is the single greatest inhibitor of propensity to violence'. Following the trend evident in SEAL documents, Allen directly refers to Goleman as his source.<sup>13</sup> Debates around the importance of Empathy Education have been sharpened by traditionalist views, empathy development is becoming accepted as a necessary element in modern education. The new Secondary Curriculum being phased in from 2008 is advancing the cause of Empathy Education through extending SEAL from the primary to the secondary level, with the profile of SEAL itself being raised through recognition of its contribution to the government's Every Child Matters framework (see below).<sup>14</sup> SEL education in general, and Empathy Education in particular, may receive a further boost when the government's Primary Curriculum Review reports

in March 2009, since its aim is to 'develop a framework of the personal development skills which all pupils should expect to develop through their schooling.'<sup>15</sup>

### *Wellbeing*

A second, related reason for the rise of Empathy Education in the UK, is due to the emergence of a 'wellbeing' agenda in government policy circles since the 1990s. Work by Richard Layard, the New Economics Foundation and others has argued that if people are to live fulfilling and happy lives, we need to shift away from narrow notions of economic wellbeing, to broader notions of personal and social wellbeing.<sup>16</sup> This has been bolstered by the growing interest in 'positive psychology', a concept most closely associated with the US psychologist Martin Seligman, which has 'happiness' or 'wellbeing' as its explicit goal.<sup>17</sup> A major development in national education policy has been 'the establishment of well-being as a legitimate pursuit of public policy for children'.<sup>18</sup> The idea of wellbeing has been given a prominent place in approaches to personal, social and health education (PSHE) in schools in England, and in the delivery of the government's Every Child Matters framework, which describes itself as 'a new approach to the well-being of children and young people from birth to age 19' and includes five objectives: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic well-being.<sup>19</sup> Wellbeing additionally emerges as an underlying concept amongst many of those who promote 'Values Education,' which has been portrayed as being 'ultimately about changing behaviour for the better - to enhance well-being of all'.<sup>20</sup> Wellbeing is also on the agenda because of the UK's poor performance in international comparisons: a 2007 UNICEF report placed the UK at the bottom of a survey of child wellbeing in twenty-one industrial nations, which included assessments of 'subjective well-being' and 'family and peer relationships'.<sup>21</sup>

Layard, in particular, puts empathy at the centre of efforts to promote wellbeing. In his book *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science* (2005), he argues that, above all, in order to live happier lives we need better education, a key element of which must be to 'teach the systematic practice of empathy' from the beginning of school through to the very end.<sup>22</sup> In a more recent paper he similarly suggests that one of the four 'secrets' to personal wellbeing and happiness is 'developing compassion for others,' and that this requires the 'deliberate cultivation of the primitive instinct of empathy, which is latent to a varying degree in all of us'. In presenting his argument he not only makes a moral case for promoting empathy education, but quotes psychology research demonstrating that 'if you care more about other people relative to yourself, you are more likely to be happy'.<sup>23</sup> That is to say, the pursuit of self-interest is not enough. Although Layard is never very clear about what he exactly means by 'empathy', he certainly makes it a priority, and his discussions of it have influenced the education agenda in the UK.

### *Economic and business benefits*

A third explanation of why Empathy Education is being talked about has to do with neither personal development nor wellbeing, but financial considerations. Policymakers and politicians are increasingly coming to realise that investing resources in personal and emotional development can have economic benefits. The

evidence suggests that a relatively high short-term injection of government funds into SEL programmes will have long-term effects such as reducing youth crime, mental health problems and dysfunctional family situations, all which can be a substantial drain on state funds, whether they are tackled through the prison system, the health system or welfare provision more generally. According to a study of the US government Head Start programme (which promotes the 'social and cognitive development of children'), for every \$1 invested, between \$2.50 and \$10 of tax-payers' money is saved in the long term.<sup>24</sup> This and other studies of 'early intervention' programmes that address topics including anger management and empathy, such as those that have been implemented in the state of Colorado, have got policymakers excited that 'soft skills' might actually save hard cash.<sup>25</sup>

A second economic angle is that the development of emotional and social competences such as empathy are now recognised as important in the workplace, being fundamental for successful teamwork, communication and management skills.<sup>26</sup> According to Daniel Goleman, in his book *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (1998), 'empathy represents the foundation skill for all the social competencies important for work'. These include: 'understanding others' (sensing others' feelings and perspectives, and taking an active interest in their concerns); 'service orientation' (anticipating, recognizing, and meeting customers' needs); 'developing others' (sensing others' development needs and bolstering their abilities); 'leveraging diversity' (cultivating opportunities through diverse people); and 'political awareness' (reading the political and social currents in an organization).<sup>27</sup> Taking a somewhat less sophisticated approach, James Borg's book *Persuasion: The Art of Influencing People* (2004), argues that empathy (in the sense of gaining insights into how other people are thinking and feeling) is a core skill required to get your way in the skulduggerous world of sales and business. If you go on a standard management course, you will probably be taught a range of empathy-related skills. The growing emphasis in the business sector on empathy and other emotional and social skills has filtered into education policy.

This extremely instrumental economic approach to developing empathy is very different from that promoted by some of the leading thinkers in the field of Empathy Education, such as the Finnish psychologist Mirja Kalliopuska, who argues that empathy is 'the way to humanity', the American educationalist Alfie Kohn, who sees empathy education as a means of encouraging 'pro-social behaviour', and empathy researcher Martin Hoffman, for whom empathising is the basis of individual 'moral development'.<sup>28</sup> Yet it is a sad reality of the modern world that financial arguments are often needed to legitimise innovative policy options that have a larger ethical and humanitarian purpose.

## Towards the age of empathy

The reasons cited above are not enough to fully explain why Empathy Education is on the policy agenda in the UK and elsewhere. An underlying factor is that in the past four decades there has been a larger intellectual shift across a range of disciplines which have both explicitly and implicitly brought the idea of empathy to the fore. This is the general context in which the education sector's growing focus on empathy is embedded.

The historian Eric Hobsbawm described the nineteenth century as the Age of Capital and the twentieth as the Age of Extremes. The emerging interest in empathy in multiple disciplines may be the quiet beginnings of an Age of Empathy that could come to characterise the twenty-first century. This is not to say that there has been an outbreak of empathy in human relations around the world. Far from it. There is as much social conflict, selfishness and exploitation today as there ever was in the past (and possibly more). But there is now a growing recognition that developing empathy is not only a means of living a more fulfilling life (as Layard and others have shown), but a fundamental tool for social transformation.

Here I wish to sketch very briefly this burgeoning of empathy thinking in a selection of disciplines. This growing intellectual wave not only helps to explain, but also to legitimise, the rise of empathy teaching within the education sphere.

### *Psychology*

Empathy has been an established sub-discipline within the field of psychology for almost half a century. Apart from the work of scholars such as Martin Hoffman (mentioned above), virtually every general textbook or encyclopaedia of psychology has a substantive entry on the subject, reviewing the hundreds of papers and books on empathy.<sup>29</sup> Psychologists are interested in multiple phenomena, such as the extent to which empathy as both shared emotional experience and as perspective-taking, are innate, and how much they can be nurtured. They study the development of empathy in children, and whether females are more empathetic than males. Since the 1990s, due to Goleman's work, there has been an increasing focus on how empathy can aid emotional development and reduce aggressive behaviour.<sup>30</sup> The growing popularity of forms of psychotherapeutic counselling that consider empathy as central to their method has also bolstered its popularity.

It would be a mistake, however, to believe that psychology is the only field in which interest in empathy is visible.

### *Evolutionary biology*

Primatologists such as Frans de Waal have been at the forefront of the study of empathy within contemporary evolutionary biology. Over the past two decades, he and others have shown that ‘the capacity to mentally trade places’ with another, and take into account their feelings and interests, is not only evident amongst humans, but also amongst chimpanzees and other animals. This research strengthens the idea that empathy is a natural human trait with a long evolutionary history, and that we are far from being little more than self-interested actors as many economists would have us believe, or mere carriers of selfish genes.<sup>31</sup> Empathy makes it just as natural for us to engage in cooperative action as to engage in self-interested action.

### *Neuroscience*

Neuroscientists have developed technologies such as magnetic resonance imaging that make it possible to demonstrate that there are core brain areas associated with empathetic understanding. In the past decade, numerous experiments have shown that when people engage in empathetic thinking or action, different neural mechanisms are at work compared with when, for example, they are engaged in thinking about their own interests. Perspective-taking has been shown to stimulate activity in the posterior cingulate/precuneus and the right temporo-parietal junction.<sup>32</sup> Like the research in evolutionary biology, this supports the general view that we have, until recently, underestimated the extent to which humans have the capacity to empathise.

### *Cultural Studies*

Cultural Studies took an empathetic turn in the late 1970s following the publication of Edward Said’s book *Orientalism* (1978). The main idea in this and similar analyses was that the ‘western gaze’ has dominated our understanding of, and depictions of, eastern culture and countries, and is imbued with our colonialist prejudices and assumptions. Said’s work ushered in an avalanche of literary, historical and other studies that attempted to prioritise and take the perspective of ‘the Other’ (such as those who experienced British colonial rule in India). What this amounted to was a shift in the empathetic imagination from oppressor to oppressed, which characterises Cultural Studies today. The multiculturalism that is found in contemporary education has partly grown out of this intellectual development.

### *Economics*

Even economists have not escaped from the rise of empathy. Orthodox economics holds that ‘economic man’ is a rational, self-interested actor. But since the mid-1970s, the work of Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen and others has challenged this idea. Sen famously described rational economic man as ‘close to being a social moron’.<sup>33</sup> Instead there is a growing belief that individuals sometimes will act against their self-interest and for the collective good, or will be swayed by their emotions as much as rational calculations. This has shifted the way economists think, for example, about collective action problems and welfare economics. Although Empathy Economics does not yet exist, the erosion of the rational actor model is bringing it closer.

## *Philosophy*

Moral philosophers have always taken empathy seriously. As noted above, Adam Smith wrote about empathy in the eighteenth century in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (he was Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University when it was published). In a series of books and essays published between the 1920s and 1960s, Martin Buber explored the idea that our humanity and moral action depended on our ability to empathise, through his concepts of 'I and Thou', 'distance and relation', and 'meeting'.<sup>34</sup> The idea of empathetic imagining as a means of devising a system of ethics has gained significant momentum since the publication of John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1971): his central concept of the 'veil of ignorance' is a classic empathy experiment of imagining yourself in the shoes of others. More recently, Martha Nussbaum, in *Poetic Justice* (1995), has argued that the literary skill of imagining ourselves into others' lives, can help us better identify the positions of victims and perpetrators of injustice, thereby extending moral thought and action.<sup>35</sup>

This is just a sample of evolving empathy thinking in the sciences and social sciences. Empathy, both explicitly and implicitly, is also an increasingly important topic in fields such as art theory, music therapy, sociology, religious studies, politics, and conflict resolution and peace studies. But one of the most significant areas in which empathy has begun to shed an increasingly strong light is in the study of social change.

## Empathy and social change

The idea of empathy is helping historians, and other analysts who take a historical perspective, rethink how social change happens. It is common to argue that fundamental shifts in society take place due to factors such as changes in the economic system (as Marxists or neoliberals believe), the rise and fall of civilizations or religions, the influence of new technologies, or changing laws and political institutions. What has been missing from the analysis, until recently, has been the role of empathy. There is now compelling evidence that some of the most significant shifts that societies undergo cannot be fully explained without resorting to empathy. And there is similarly strong evidence to believe that a society or government must endeavour to generate empathy on a mass scale if it is to make certain forms of change happen. That is, if we want change, we do not need a revolution of systems or institutions: we need a revolution of human relationships. Empathy is the source of a microcosmic and personal form of social change. We need to learn to see the world from each other's perspectives, and thereby treat one another differently. By doing so, we will create the human bonds that will reduce social conflict and encourage new forms of mutual understanding, respect and cooperation. This is an understanding of the possibilities of empathy that moves far beyond that which is associated with social and emotional learning or wellbeing, which tend to focus on how individuals can enhance their emotional and personal development.

One of the most important thinkers who has taken this view is the historian Theodore Zeldin. He suggests that the most effective way of creating empathy is through an intimate conversation between two people. 'Conversation,' he says, 'is becoming the experience which, more than any other, teaches us how to empathise with people different from ourselves and to develop respect for them.'<sup>36</sup> An empathetic conversation, which involves 'getting inside another person's skin...is the most effective means of establishing equality. Every time you have a conversation which achieves that, the world is changed by a minute amount'.<sup>37</sup> His thesis is based on extensive studies of the history of conversation, empathy and compassion. Amongst the issues he analyses in books such as *An Intimate History of Humanity* (1995) is the growing equality of women in the Western world during the twentieth century. He argues that it was not so much new laws that helped to erode discrimination against women in the workplace or reduce domestic violence. Rather, it was through men and women learning to talk with each other, and with men learning how to empathise with the experiences of women, and treating them differently as a consequence.<sup>38</sup>

A similar view is evident in the writings of Alfie Kohn, author of one of the most important books on the subject of empathy and social change, *The Brighter Side of Human Nature: Empathy and Altruism in Everyday Life* (1990). Kohn particularly stresses the empathetic act of perspective-taking, 'which offers a profoundly important way to promote social change'. Drawing on evidence from psychology and history, he argues that 'to transcend egocentrism by imagining another person's point of view frequently leads to modifications in behaviour, to prosocial activity and the avoidance of aggression'. Taking his analysis into the political realm, he writes:

'Perspective taking offers a deep way of taking account of others when making decisions with them or for them. But it also offers a way of detoxifying the poisonous We/They structure of nationalism. It is, to be blunt, what must be done if the superpowers are not to exterminate each other and the planet. Each side must consider how the other views any given situation.'<sup>39</sup>

Ultimately, this process of perspective-taking erodes our ability to dehumanise others, to treat them as anonymous strangers of less than equal worth to ourselves, whether they be enemy soldiers, those suffering from drought in sub-Saharan Africa, asylum seekers, homeless people, or others who frequently face prejudice, social stigma or whose plight is largely ignored.

It is for this reason that Archbishop Desmond Tutu saw empathy as being central to the process of national reconciliation during the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings of the late 1990s. When asked, as chairman of the TRC, what kind of people should be sitting on it, he responded: 'People who were once victims. The most forgiving people I have ever come across are people who have suffered – it is as if suffering has ripped them open into empathy. I am talking about wounded healers.'<sup>40</sup>

But what is the historical evidence to show that empathy can occur on a mass scale and really make a difference to social change? This huge topic cannot be addressed in a comprehensive way in this paper.<sup>41</sup> However, by way of example, I want to briefly mention three historical instances when this has been the case.

## *The struggle against slavery and the slave trade*

The first is the British struggle against slavery and the slave trade in the late eighteenth century. In the early 1780s slavery was an accepted social institution. Britain presided over the international slave trade and some half-million African slaves were being worked to death growing sugar cane in British colonies in the West Indies. But within two decades a mass social movement had arisen that turned a large proportion of the British public against slavery, such that the trade was abolished in 1807 (though slavery itself did not end until the 1830s). There are different interpretations of how and why this change took place. The traditional view was that the actions of the British parliamentarian William Wilberforce were the most significant factor in bringing an end to slavery. More modern analysis emphasises the revolts by slaves themselves, and the role of the Anglican deacon Thomas Clarkson and a group of highly active Quakers who spearheaded the mass movement against slavery.

These explanations fail to recognise the crucial role of empathy. According to the historian Adam Hochschild in his book *Bury The Chains: The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery* (2006), the campaign against slavery relied upon a 'sudden upwelling' of human empathy among the British public, remarkable for the fact that 'it was the first time a large number of people became outraged, and stayed outraged for many years, over someone else's rights'. Amongst the reasons he offers for this empathetic shift are: that the pervasive practice of forced impressment of men into the British navy gave the public a way of understanding the unacceptable denial of liberty that slavery entailed; the use of posters and other campaign materials and reports that educated people about the lives of slaves; and talks by former slaves themselves, some of whom toured the country telling of their experiences, which provided unforgettable and shocking firsthand accounts of suffering. Thus Hochschild concludes that the success of the anti-slavery movement was based on the fact that, 'The abolitionists placed their hope not in sacred texts, but in human empathy.'<sup>42</sup>



*A naval press gang at work, around 1780*

### *Evacuation during the Second World War*

A second example took place during the Second World War, when over a million British children were evacuated from urban areas to the countryside. For the first time, relatively well-off rural people discovered the realities of life in the city slums, because most of the children they were charged to look after were clearly deprived: they were malnourished, they suffered from rickets and lice, they lacked shoes. As an editorial in *The Economist* in May 1943 pointed out: 'when the social history of the war comes to be written, it is probable that this great migration will form the most important subject...because it revealed to the whole people the black spots in its social life.'<sup>43</sup> The result of this 'great migration' and meeting of strangers was a surge of empathy and social concern which led to new public health, nutritional and education provisions for children, which were famously documented by the social historian Richard Titmuss. These changes themselves accelerated the development of the welfare state both during and after the war. Analyses of the emergence of the welfare state in Britain frequently underplay the important role played by the mass empathetic shift brought about by evacuation.<sup>44</sup>

### *The public response to the Asian Tsunami*

Waves of mass empathy are also part of the more recent past, such as the public reaction in Europe to the Asian Tsunami in late 2004, in which over 230,000 people were killed. There was an unprecedented humanitarian response in terms of individual donations, far above what would normally be expected after a natural disaster in a distant country. The reaction has been described as 'a triumph of empathy'.<sup>45</sup> There are three main explanations for this empathetic response. First, the Tsunami took place just after Christmas, a period that Europeans traditionally associate with giving and compassion for the suffering of others. Second – and more influentially – there were many Western victims who were holidaying at the time in countries such as Thailand and Sri Lanka. Tens of thousands of Europeans were sending text messages to check if friends or relatives abroad had been killed or injured. And even if their loved ones were safe, people could easily envision how one of their close friends or children travelling around Asia on a gap year before university might have lost their lives. Third, extensive video footage from mobile phones and camcorders belonging to victims and survivors that was aired in the international media made it easier to understand the frightening reality of the oncoming wave. These factors helped spark the empathetic imaginations of Europeans, leading to the high levels of donations and other forms of public assistance.<sup>46</sup>

All three of these historical events – and there are many others that could have been chosen – demonstrate the importance of empathy as a force for social change. Empathy explains vital parts of these stories that other factors cannot.

Similarly, history is full of moments of empathetic *failure* that can help account for certain social shifts and events. There is extensive evidence, for instance, that an absence of empathy for Jews amongst the publics of Germany and Poland partially explains the possibility of the Holocaust, and that an historic absence of empathy for indigenous people is amongst the main reasons why colonial encounters so often led to bloodshed and decimation, whether it be the encounter between the Spanish conquistadors and the Aztecs in the sixteenth century, or between British colonisers and Australian Aborigines in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

But how does this all connect to Empathy Education? These examples suggest that if empathy can be developed on a mass scale – as it was during the struggle against slavery, for instance – then it is a possible means for bringing about major social transformations. And one of the best ways to develop empathy on a mass scale is

through education. If, for example, a whole generation of children in the UK can be educated to have greater empathy with people suffering the effects of climate change in developing countries, then there is a greater possibility that they will feel motivated to take action to tackle the impact of droughts in sub-Saharan Africa or floods in Bangladesh as they get older. If this same generation also develops empathy with refugees and immigrants, then they are less likely to discriminate against asylum seekers in the UK. That is, Empathy Education can become a tool for creating community cohesion, social tolerance and respect at the national level, and provide the elemental force for humanitarian action at the global level. What is required, then, is to take empathy seriously, and ensure that Empathy Education addresses not only important issues such as bullying in the school playground, but embraces a wider vision of learning to see the perspectives and understand the feelings of distant strangers.

We have thus reached the point where we can shift from the broad social and historical vision to a focus on what Empathy Education looks like in practice today. As it is currently carried out, does it have the potential to bring about the kinds of social changes that are described above? What more needs to be done to pull down the empathy lever all the way, so it not only contributes to individual emotional development and wellbeing, but also to a larger social project?

## Empathy education: a comparative survey

Empathy Education has a history pre-dating the Goleman era. In the 1970s, for instance, third and fourth grade students in several Los Angeles state schools were given 'empathy training', engaging in activities such as developing affective empathy by identifying feelings depicted in photographs, and perspective-taking through activities guessing what classmates might want as a gift.<sup>47</sup> In the early 1980s, twenty schools in and around Helsinki ran an 'empathy campaign', during which students aged eleven to eighteen participated in an intensive week of learning, including role plays designed to nurture both major forms of empathy.<sup>48</sup> One of the characteristics of this early Empathy Education was that it was generally limited to short-term experiments rather than taking the form of long-term, systematic programmes.

More generally, empathy-related skills have been taught in a variety of educational settings. For several decades history teaching has explicitly stressed the importance of empathy, for instance by encouraging pupils to identify with the plight of child evacuees in the Second World War, or what it was like to be a serf in the Middle Ages.<sup>49</sup> Outside schools, empathy training has been provided to counsellors and therapists, nurses (especially psychiatric nurses), medical students (a relatively recent phenomenon) and actors.<sup>50</sup> It has also been given to development-agency employees through 'immersion programmes', where analysts based in rich countries spend time living with families in poor countries in order to gain a deeper understanding of their lives.<sup>51</sup> There are, additionally, prison reform projects in which criminals meet with their victims and engage in an empathetic dialogue that aims at reducing re-offences.<sup>52</sup>

Today, Empathy Education is more extensive than at any time in the past. Since the 1990s, when Goleman popularised the idea through his work on emotional intelligence, it has been adopted in schools around the world. What does Empathy Education actually look like in practice? And how good is it?

Below is a survey of five examples of Empathy Education:

1. The Roots of Empathy programme in Canada
2. The Primary Years Programme of the International Baccalaureate
3. Climate Chaos, part of Education for Global Citizenship from Oxfam
4. Through Other Eyes, resources for teaching Social Studies in the United States
5. The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme for primary schools in England.

These examples have been chosen mainly because they represent some of the most innovative forms of Empathy Education currently available, and are based on conceptual frameworks that explicitly address empathy as a theme. For comparative purposes I have chosen examples that are mainly focused on primary level

education, which is where some of the 'best practice' Empathy Education takes place. Significantly, they also represent a range of approaches. While they all generally address empathy both as shared emotional response and perspective-taking, then do so to different degrees. Some aim chiefly at nurturing personal and emotional development, while others recognise that empathy can be a force for mass social change. They also differ in terms of the scope of materials used: some are primarily local, while others are more national or global in the themes they address. Finally, the examples represent a variety of forms: a national government programme (SEAL); a programme provided in schools by a non-governmental organisation (Roots of Empathy); teaching resources from an international development agency (Oxfam); international education (the IB Primary Years Programme); and a self-contained textbook (Through Other Eyes).

Although there are other important programmes that address empathy-related themes (such as Family Links and UNESCO's Living Values Education Program), these five constitute a strong basis on which to draw conclusions about the state of the art of Empathy Education on an international basis.

The UK government's SEAL programme will be discussed last, so that it is possible to see clearly both its strengths and weaknesses in relation to other approaches to Empathy Education.

### *1. Roots of Empathy: the teacher is a baby*

Amongst the most visionary, innovative and successful forms of Empathy Education existing today is the Roots of Empathy (ROE) programme in Canada, invented by the pioneering educational thinker and practitioner Mary Gordon. Since its foundation in 1995, ROE has swept across Canada: so far it has reached 213,000 students, and it is presently offered in nine provinces, involving 55,000 elementary schoolchildren from Kindergarten to Grade 8 in almost 1,600 schools. It has now spread to Australia, New Zealand and the United States, and a three-year pilot programme begins in 2008 on the Isle of Man. At the conceptual core of ROE is an understanding of empathy as 'the ability to identify with the feelings and perspectives of others', and to 'respond appropriately' as a result.<sup>53</sup> ROE is a charitable, not-for-profit organisation that delivers its programme in schools using an extremely unusual technique: the teacher is a baby.



*A Roots of Empathy class, Cardston Elementary School, Alberta, Canada<sup>54</sup>*

An ROE programme takes place over 27 weeks and covers nine themes, each involving three sessions with a certified ROE instructor. In the middle week of each theme the class is visited by a baby (with the mother or father), who is effectively 'adopted' by the class. The pupils observe this particular baby closely, watching its development over the months, discussing its emotional responses and changing view of the world, as well as the parent-child relationship. In the preceding and following week, they do a range of activities connected with the baby visit to reinforce and extend their learning, including drama, artwork and journal writing (they even prepare gifts for the baby such as songs and poems). They learn about the language of feelings, discuss their own emotional experiences, and are taught parenting skills in a hands-on and realistic way.<sup>55</sup> Crucially, they also do activities that encourage them to make what Mary Gordon calls 'the big leap', which is to shift from trying to understand the baby's feelings and perspectives to trying to understand their classmates' feelings and perspectives.<sup>56</sup>

The impact of ROE has been extensively documented. Multiple sophisticated studies have shown that children who have undertaken ROE programmes are significantly more advanced in social and emotional learning than those who have not. They exhibit less aggressive behaviour (such as bullying), and engage in more pro-social behaviour such as helping, sharing and cooperating, and have a greater ability to see the perspectives of others.<sup>57</sup> The focus on experiential learning has been acknowledged as an important factor contributing to the success of the programme in shaping pupil behaviour and dispositions.<sup>58</sup>

But ROE is not just about emotional development and parenting skills at the personal level. Gordon believes the programme has a larger social role, building the kinds of human relationships that foster the development of civil society. She points out that 'during the Nuremberg Trials, one of the judges described the war crimes as a failure of empathy' and notes that the public response to the Asian Tsunami in 2004 'was a triumph of empathy'. She continues: 'Empathy is integral to solving conflict in the family, schoolyard, boardroom and war room. The ability to take the perspective of another person, to identify commonalities through our shared feelings is the best peace pill we have.' The ROE classroom aims at 'creating citizens of the world', children who 'are developing empathic ethics and a sense of social responsibility... We have managed to harness the power of the wind, the sun and the water, but have yet to appreciate the power of our children to affect social change'.<sup>59</sup>

In other words, ROE is designed to go beyond developing the social and emotional 'competencies' or 'skills' of individuals (which is the common justification for Empathy Education programmes), to embrace a broader vision that recognises the importance of empathy as a means of bringing about fundamental social and historical transformation.

## *2. The Primary Years Programme of the International Baccalaureate<sup>60</sup>*

Empathy has found a significant place in the sphere of international education through the International Baccalaureate (IB). The IB, founded in the 1960s, offers

three programmes, which are followed in over 2,000 schools in more than 120 countries. The Diploma Programme is for students aged 16 to 19, the Middle Years Programme covers ages in the 11-to-16 range, while the Primary Years Programme (PYP) is for ages 3 to 11. All three programmes provide a curriculum with a strong internationalist orientation that sets out to produce globally minded citizens, as is reflected in the IB's mission statement: 'The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.'<sup>61</sup>

The PYP is the newest programme, and has been used in schools since the late 1990s.<sup>62</sup> Unlike traditional primary curricula, it is not organised around the teaching of subjects such as maths, literacy or science, but rather around six transdisciplinary themes that serve as the basis for the exploration of knowledge. They include: Who We Are; Where We Are in Place and Time; How We Express Ourselves; How The World Works; How We Organise Ourselves; and Sharing the Planet. Subjects like maths and science are studied within the context of the themes. These themes are themselves investigated by structuring learning in relation to four key elements: concepts (such as causation and perspective); skills (such as thinking and communication); action (such as reflecting and choosing); and attitudes. It is within this final element that empathy emerges. There are twelve attitudes that students learn about, including empathy, respect, tolerance, cooperation, creativity, and confidence. Each school has considerable leeway with regard to how it chooses to implement the PYP within this framework.

The consequence of this innovative curriculum is that attitudes such as empathy have a central place in the delivery of the PYP. To illustrate exactly how this takes place, I will present an example from the International School of Amsterdam (ISA), which is highly respected amongst IB schools for the way it puts the PYP into practice. Year Five students (aged around ten or eleven) undertake an eight-week unit of learning called 'Different People, Different Lives', which has been designed by a group of teachers at the school. The central idea that the teaching aims to get across to students is that 'empathy, respect and tolerance are essential attitudes in a diverse world'. That is, the unit focuses on learning about three of the twelve attitudes at the core of the PYP curriculum.<sup>63</sup>

Pupils engage in a wide range of activities that help them explore these three attitudes. Amongst them are the following.

- Students undertake experiential activities to help uncover their own assumptions about other people. For instance, they meet and talk with people of different abilities, such as a local resident who is blind and who brings in his guide dog, and a teacher who works with children with multiple physical disabilities. They also examine photos of people that challenge stereotypes, such a man who looks like a Hollywood actor but turns out to be a leader of the Ku Klux Klan.

- They visit In Het Donker Gezien (Seeing in the Dark), which is a ‘museum’ designed to simulate for sighted people what it is like being blind. Students are immersed in a completely darkened environment for thirty minutes, and do everyday activities such as going into a shop, dancing in a disco or crossing a busy street. This is then followed by in-depth discussions with museum employees who are blind.
- Students read novels such as *The Cay* by Theodore Taylor, and discuss in groups the ways that the three attitudes of empathy, respect and tolerance affect the characters in the book. They then decide on what the central message of the book is, and must design, build and write a guidebook for a museum that conveys the message. Often they choose to create a museum about empathy. Students specify, for instance, the kind of objects that would be placed in the museum that would encourage visitors to step into the shoes of another person, and challenge their assumptions and stereotypes.
- At different stages of the unit, students create visual metaphors of the three central attitudes, and they explore how their thinking about empathy, respect and tolerance has changed throughout the process. They then create personal ‘instructional brochures’ and podcasts to inform others about the role of these attitudes in their own lives, particularly in the context of school.



*Year 5 students at the International School of Amsterdam making podcasts of their personal experiences of empathy as part of the unit on Different People, Different Lives.*

This unit is undertaken at the beginning of the school year, and the attitudes of empathy, respect and tolerance then become a constant thread that is reinforced through teaching in later units. The following unit, for instance, is on human migration, a topic which is pertinent to students at an international school like ISA, as most of them have lived in other countries before coming to the Netherlands. One of the activities is that students are asked to interview family members about their

experiences of moving location, and also about their family's history of migration back as many generations as can be remembered. The objective of this is 'to guide children to view the migration experiences of others with empathy, knowing the uncertainties of their own moves to new places and schools'.<sup>64</sup> They also read books about children who have undergone migration experiences in a range of countries, such as one about an Afghan boy and his family trying to go to Australia (*Boy Overboard* by Morris Gleitzman) and another about a Bosnian boy who becomes a refugee (*No Gun for Asmir* by Cristobel Mattingly and Elizabeth Honey). Students explore empathy in relation to the characters in these books, then create an 'installation' to teach others about the issues of human migration and the need for respect and empathy for the people involved.

This is Empathy Education at its most sophisticated to date. This is not only because empathy is placed at the centre of learning, together with the related attitudes of respect and tolerance. It is also due to the fact that the learning process is extremely creative, highly experiential, and involves conversations with real people (elements that are missing from many empathy programmes, as will be discussed further below). Moreover, it combines an exploration of empathy in multiple spheres, such as with people in the local community, with family members, and with strangers in other countries.<sup>65</sup>

### *3. Climate Chaos: Oxfam's Education for Global Citizenship*

The international development agency Oxfam offers a 'Curriculum for Global Citizenship' that comprises hundreds of online and other teaching resources for all levels of education, including Foundation, Key Stages 1 through 4, and ages 16-19.<sup>66</sup> Empathy has a significant (although not exclusive) place within the conceptual underpinnings of the materials. 'Education for Global Citizenship,' says Oxfam, 'encourages children and young people to care about the planet and develop empathy with, and an active concern for, those with whom they share it.'<sup>67</sup> The curriculum identifies three key elements for responsible global citizenship: knowledge and understanding; skills; and values and attitudes. Empathy is identified as one of the six values and attitudes that the teaching resources are designed to develop. Given its obvious importance, it is somewhat surprising that Oxfam's publicly available documents do not explicitly define what they mean by empathy, although it is fair to surmise that it involves both shared emotional response and perspective-taking, with an emphasis on the latter.

A distinctive and innovative aspect of the Oxfam approach to empathy is its internationalist orientation: the objective is to nurture 'empathy towards others locally and globally' and a 'sense of common humanity'.<sup>68</sup> This is rather different from the more usual social and emotional learning approaches to empathy (such as in SEAL), which are much more concerned with issues such as anger management, and learning to empathise with classmates as a means of preventing bullying, than they are with learning to empathise with strangers, especially those living in some of the world's poorest countries. Thus typical Oxfam teaching materials, such as those using photographs of children from poor countries, are intended to 'challenge stereotypes, build empathy and develop respect for children's own and other cultures'.<sup>69</sup>

The most interesting Oxfam resource from an empathy perspective is also one of its most popular: a set of materials called Climate Chaos, which together comprise a programme for a whole week of teaching around climate change, for pupils aged nine to eleven.<sup>70</sup> The unit is recommended by the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID) on its Global Dimensions website as a resource that can bring a more global perspective to the classroom across a range of curriculum areas, such as PSHE/Citizenship, in addition to English, Geography, Science, Art and Design and ICT.



*'Children trying to plant a seed in dry earth,' from the Oxfam Climate Chaos resource website.<sup>71</sup>*

The source materials feature a strong element of Empathy Education. On the second day of the five-day programme, pupils do a series of activities that help them develop their perspective-taking abilities. One activity aims 'to increase pupils' understanding of the effects of climate change on people's lives' and 'to increase empathy with people living in different situations from their own.'<sup>72</sup> They read short case studies, then are asked to write a story from the viewpoint of one of the people they have read about, and also to draw pictures. They are encouraged to imagine whether the person has a family, what kind of home they live in, how they spend their days, and the kinds of things they worry about.

These are two of the case studies they can choose from:

***Tuvalu islander, South Pacific***

'When I was young, I used to visit my aunts on one of Tuvalu's small islands, with three houses and kitchens. Twenty-five people lived there, but now those houses have all gone. It's just sand. Near my island, Nukufetau, other islands have been swallowed up by the sea. People say, 'why don't you move your people inland?' But there is no inland – it's all coastal. On Nukufetau, the tarot roots that my family has eaten for generations grow less tall each year as the soil is becoming too salty. It's frightening me very much. I don't know what's going to happen. I'm worried about the island; this is the very best island I know, but unless there's a miracle, I think it's going to be drowned in the sea. Somebody has to stop people doing the things that damage our environment. People must look at us, see us as people who want to live a normal life but we can't do that – other people are doing what they want for their own development. What about us? What about me and my family? What about everybody else here worrying like me?'

***Home-owner, Shrewsbury, UK***

'I would rather forget 2004. In February, we were flooded again. It reminded me of 2000 when Shrewsbury led the evening news when we suffered the worst flooding here for fifty years. Luckily, my house wasn't damaged this time, but my insurance company won't renew my policy next year because the flood risk is too great. One of my neighbours has given up trying to sell her house. The estate agent told her she would have to sell it for nearly half of what she wants for it. The council is talking about plans to build expensive defences, with permanent walls along the river and a new design of temporary fencing for when there is a high risk of a flood. But I bet we end up paying for them through big hikes in our council tax.'

A second activity, called 'From My Grandchild', aims 'to raise awareness that the impact of climate change will increase in the future.' Pupils are asked to imagine what life could be like in the UK in fifty years' time, when they might have a grandchild the age they are now, if the climate continues to change. They then write a story or poem from the viewpoint of their own grandchild.<sup>73</sup>

There are three noteworthy empathy approaches evident in these Climate Chaos materials. First, they encourage empathy with people suffering from the effects of climate change in developing countries, such as Tuvalu, whereas more typical climate change resources have a greater UK focus on issues such as energy conservation in the home, and science and technology. Second, they contain activities which help pupils develop empathy with future generations who will suffer the effects of climate change (empathising with future generations is ignored in almost all other Empathy Education programmes). Thus empathy is encouraged both across geographical space and through time. Third, the tasks help pupils draw connections

between the effects of climate change in the rich and poor world: a homeowner in Shrewsbury is facing difficulties, just like families in the South Pacific. This nurtures the sense of common humanity that is fundamental to empathetic understanding.

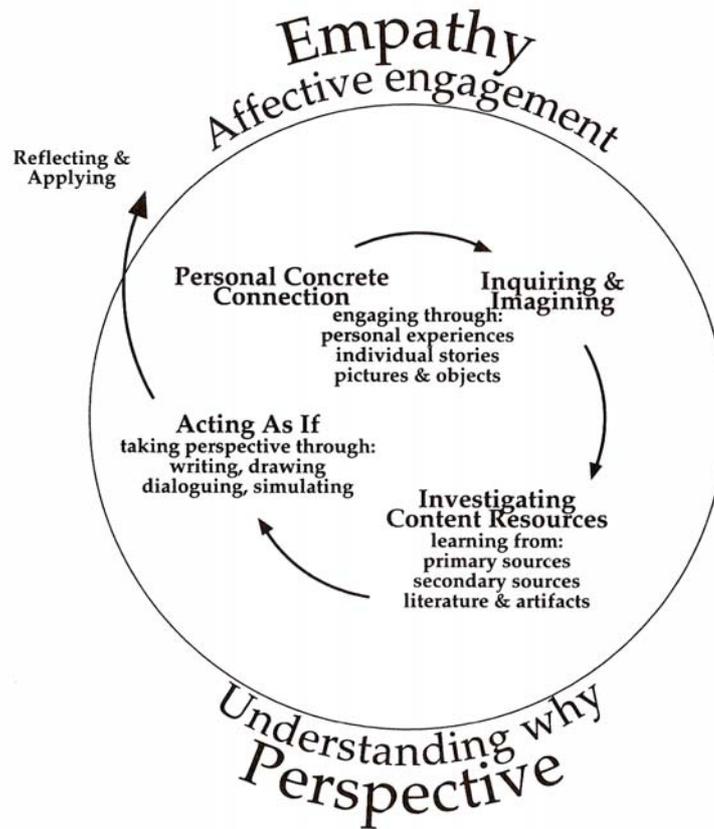
All three forms of empathy development are crucial educational objectives given that contemporary commentators increasingly recognise that building these various empathetic bridges is essential for successfully tackling the climate crisis.<sup>74</sup>

#### ***4. Through Other Eyes: Developing Empathy and Multicultural Perspectives in the Social Studies***

A further form of Empathy Education is that which can be found in the growing number of textbooks and teaching resources that are specifically dedicated to nurturing empathy in the classroom. Some of the best have been published in the United States, where empathy thinking is comparatively advanced, partly because it has been deemed an important skill or attitude to develop for young people living in a highly multicultural society. A representative example is the book *Through Other Eyes: Developing Empathy and Multicultural Perspectives in the Social Studies* (2004) by Joan Skolnick, Nancy Dulberg and Thea Maestre (who are teacher-education experts based in California). It contains fifteen separate activities to develop empathy for ages eight and above, across four major social studies topics: personal and family history; work; migration; and conflict and change.

A feature that sets this text apart from many others addressing empathy is the sophisticated theoretical framework that underpins the teaching activities. The authors distinguish 'empathy', understood as affective engagement, where you share the feelings of another person, from 'perspective-taking', which is the cognitive ability to step into the shoes of another person. In doing so, they are reflecting the classic definitions found in the psychology literature. 'Empathy and perspective-taking,' they argue, 'are at the heart of the multicultural curriculum', since they encourage students 'to venture outside of their own experience' in order to 'understand their classmates and the world'. The purpose is 'ultimately to foster in students a willingness to challenge prejudice in themselves and others'.<sup>75</sup>

Beyond this, they embed their empathy approach within a 'Thinking-Feeling Spiral' model, which draws on the work of Jean Piaget and John Dewey.<sup>76</sup> As the diagram below illustrates, the spiral identifies four major kinds of learning experience: making personal and concrete connections to the topic; inquiring and imagining about someone else's life; investigating content resources to learn more about a group's experience; and 'acting as if' one is actually in another's circumstances, making choices or solving problems.<sup>77</sup> Each of these stages build upon one another into a spiral of learning, and are evident in the teaching activities that they suggest throughout their book.



*The Thinking-Feeling Spiral*

An example of their approach is an activity called ‘Story Cloths: Migration Tales from Around the World’, designed for ages nine and above.<sup>78</sup> The activity uses children’s literature and first-person stories of migration as a basis for creating a piece of art to represent migration experiences. The students begin by reading and discussing a story called *The Whispering Cloth* by Pegi Deitz Shea. It tells the tale of Mai, a young Hmong refugee from Laos, who lives in a Thai refugee camp with her grandmother. Mai is taught by her grandmother to stitch a pa’ndau, or embroidered story cloth, which depicts her own life story in pictures, such as her parents’ deaths and fleeing soldiers’ bullets. The second stage involves reading first-person accounts of migration, some of which involve children who have come to the United States to start new lives, then brainstorming the most important parts of the account in a mind map. It is also suggested that the pupils do this stage by interviewing migrants of older generations who live in their community and then writing up their life story in the first person. The next step is that students add the feelings and thoughts that they think the individuals in their migration stories might have had during their journeys. In the fourth stage, they make a pa’ndau of one of the stories or the person they have interviewed. Finally, they present their artworks and discuss questions such as: What have we learned about why people move?; What choices have people had to make in migrating?; and, How does this relate to our own lives?.

‘Story Cloths’ provides an important model of Empathy Education for three main reasons. First, like the Oxfam materials on climate change, it addresses a major international issue (migration), encouraging the development of empathy on a global

basis, for people in distant countries. Second, it brings this global issue closer to home by exploring stories of people who have come to the United States, thereby encouraging empathy with migrants who live in the students' immediate community. Thirdly, and most importantly, it incorporates having real conversations with people through an oral history process (similar to the unit on human migration followed by Year 5 students at the International School of Amsterdam). This final element of learning about other people's lives through conversation is missing from so much Empathy Education, even though the evidence from thinkers such as Theodore Zeldin suggests it is one of the most effective and direct ways to encourage empathetic understanding.



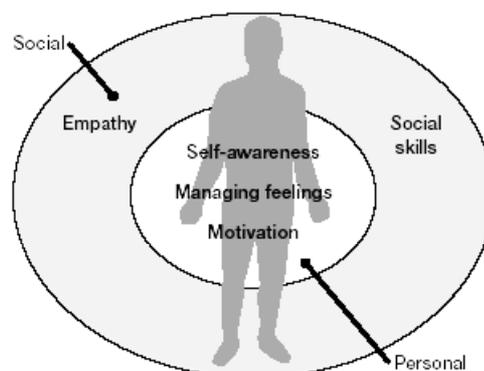
*A pa'ndau from The Whispering Cloth by Pegi Deitz Shea*

## 5. Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme for primary schools in England

The UK government undertook a major new initiative in 2005 through the creation of a programme called Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL), which has been designed for use in primary schools in England. SEAL is a voluntary programme which has proved to be an extremely successful extension of learning beyond the focus on traditional subjects such as mathematics and English. Currently around two-thirds of all primary schools in the country have adopted it, drawing on the guidelines and resources provided by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). This high take-up rate is evidence not only of the quality of the materials, but of the perceived need amongst schools to find a conceptually grounded and comprehensive set of tools for promoting social and emotional learning. SEAL is being extended into secondary schools in 2008, and government officials expect that by 2010, 80% of all primary and secondary schools will be using the SEAL materials to some extent. Studies of the impact of SEAL demonstrate that the programme has been effective in improving pupil behaviour (e.g. reducing bullying), communication skills, emotional awareness, confidence and academic achievement.<sup>79</sup>

At the primary level, which I will focus on here, SEAL plays a multifunctional role, providing discrete lessons, materials for use in a range of subjects such as history and geography, and resources for assemblies and Circle Time. In particular, it is designed to provide a significant portion of the content for teaching the non-statutory national curriculum subject of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE).<sup>80</sup>

The very existence of SEAL is testament to the fact that the government now takes social and emotional learning (SEL) more seriously than it ever has done in the past, and recognises the beneficial impact that it can have on young people's lives. SEAL aims to foster five social and emotional skills: self-awareness, managing feelings, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Typical of many SEL programmes worldwide, these five mirror the framework developed by Daniel Goleman, who specifies the same five areas as essential for developing emotional intelligence.<sup>81</sup> Although SEAL is not, conceptually, solely based on Goleman's approach, an explicit debt to him is acknowledged in the following diagram in one of the official SEAL guidance documents.<sup>82</sup>



The social and emotional aspects of learning, adapted from Daniel Goleman's five domains

The SEAL teaching materials are exemplary in many respects: they are clear, varied, creative, multicultural, and cover an important range of topics. Teachers generally report that they find them extremely useful for teaching social and emotional skills.<sup>83</sup> But the question of relevance here is, what kind of Empathy Education does SEAL provide? The answer is relatively simple and unsurprising: a form which is consistent with Goleman's concerns about developing emotional intelligence, but which does not extend far beyond this.

Goleman's work concentrates on individual behaviour and personal development. While recognising the importance of nurturing both the main forms of empathy, his interest is focused on how individuals can learn to better manage their emotions and feelings, such that they act in a more empathetic way with people in their immediate environment. In the case of school children, this means fellow classmates, friends, family and others they may encounter in their local community. In very practical terms, one of the main objectives is to discourage young people from expressing themselves by using anger or other violent forms of behaviour: empathy is seen as a key tool of 'anger management' and for tackling problems such as bullying and youth crime. The very fact that the SEAL programme is located within the Improving Behaviour and Attendance Unit of the Department for Children, Schools and Families is evidence that one of its original primary objectives was to help reduce behavioural problems (although officials now recognise that SEAL has wider implications, for instance in supporting the government's Wellbeing agenda). Goleman, however, should not be seen purely as an individualist interested in little beyond personal development. He also places some emphasis on the role of emotional intelligence in helping to build communities and social cohesion on the local level, an objective which is integrated into SEAL's approach to social and emotional learning.<sup>84</sup>

Where Goleman's work is deficient is on developing empathy with strangers, especially on an international level. His focus on the local rather than the global is evident in the chapter on teaching social and emotional learning in schools in his book *Emotional Intelligence*: it contains no examples of learning to empathise with people beyond national borders.<sup>85</sup> This blind spot, I believe, is a product of his research being derived primarily from academic psychology, rather than, say, sociology, history or development studies.

This lack of a global perspective in Goleman's work is reflected in the SEAL materials. For the purposes of this paper, I undertook a qualitative analysis of empathy content in 35 SEAL teaching resource documents for the primary level. The documents cover seven core topics (which are used to teach the five skill areas described above): New Beginnings; Say No to Bullying; Getting on and Falling Out; Good to be Me; Relationships; Going for Goals; and Changes. According to government guidelines, the first two have developing empathy as a primary objective, the next three have empathy as a secondary objective, while the last two are aimed at developing other social and emotional skills apart from empathy.<sup>86</sup> For each of these seven topics, I examined the materials offered for use with different year groups. There are separate resources for Foundation Stage, Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6. There is also a Theme Overview containing resources for use in assemblies.<sup>87</sup>

A representative resource is the Thematic Overview document for the topic 'Say No to Bullying'.<sup>88</sup> It focuses on a story about the experiences of a girl called Laura, who is being bullied in a typical English school. Like many SEAL resources, the story excels at being highly multicultural, as is evident in the names of some of the other characters, such as Farook and Yangsook. Pupils are encouraged to put themselves into Laura's shoes by hearing about how she feels:

'Every day when I wake up I feel sick and have a bad pain in my tummy. I never want to go to school but mum always makes me. When I walk in the playground I can hear my heart thumping. It hurts me in my throat. They say things about me and my mum that are horrible and nobody ever tells them to stop. At night I lie awake and think about what the children will say to me. Then, when I do fall asleep, I dream that I am in the playground and everyone is saying nasty things about me, and sometimes I cry out. Then I wake up and lie in the dark again. I wish I didn't ever have to go to school again!'

They then discuss issues around this case of bullying, such as how Laura is feeling, what the bullies might themselves be feeling, and strategies to prevent bullying.

Despite being multicultural and addressing issues of great importance in young people's lives (such as bullying), it is striking that the vast majority of SEAL documents do not tackle international issues or explicitly encourage developing empathy with people in other countries. The only exception comes through teaching ideas that appear at the end of each document after the core material, and which are referred to as 'curriculum and other links / follow up work'. A good example appears in the materials for Years 3 and 4 on the topic of 'Changes', where there is a suggestion for how to discuss the topic in a Geography class:

*'QCA Unit 10 A village in India: After using the materials on Chembakolli read a story (in materials produced by Action Aid, [www.actionaid.org/schoolsandyoung](http://www.actionaid.org/schoolsandyoung)) about street children in Delhi. Consider why children might end up living on the street. Ask them to imagine they have left the village to try to find work in the town. In small groups they could discuss the three major changes they would experience. They could write their experiences in role.'*<sup>89</sup>

It is certainly admirable that there is advice to draw on globally oriented teaching materials produced by the international development agency ActionAid, yet it is disappointing that such an activity which helps to develop empathy on a global basis is not featured as core material for the topic. It should also be noted that this excellent example of Empathy Education is featured for a topic - Changes - which is officially not even designed to promote the skill of empathising.

While such materials and ideas are often of a high quality, they are clearly not considered central to the SEAL enterprise. They are presented as something of an

afterthought, an added extra that does not constitute the main way of teaching the topic. Global empathy sneaks in through the back door of other subjects, particularly history (often through the topic of evacuation), geography and religious education. Furthermore, it is evident that the titles of the topics themselves do not contain an internationalist flavour.

The most obvious conclusion to draw is that Global Empathy is clearly not a priority for SEAL: the importance of developing empathy ends at the borders of the local community. That is, SEAL is currently restricted to a narrow approach to developing empathy, focusing on empathy in pupils' local environment, rather than broadening their horizons to consider empathising with those in other countries, especially people who may be suffering from some of the world's most significant global problems such as poverty, climate change and armed conflict. In this sense, SEAL is consistent with Goleman's approach to empathy.

While one might criticise the absence of Global Empathy in SEAL, it is worth pointing out that within its original vision, SEAL was never designed to embrace a global dimension: the intended focus was much more on the personal and community level. The good news is that officials within the DCSF have come to recognise that SEAL could be developed by expanding its materials to the global level.<sup>90</sup> This would help bring it more closely in line with the National Curriculum guidelines for Keystages 1 and 2, which state that:

'Pupils' social development involves pupils acquiring an understanding of the responsibilities and rights of being members of families and communities (local, national *and global*), and an ability to relate to others and to work with others for the common good.'<sup>91</sup> [emphasis added]

One way of remedying the global gap within SEAL materials has been offered by the Department for International Development (DFID), which has been engaged in a major push to introduce more 'Global Dimensions' to curriculum materials used in English schools, and has a website containing teaching resources for this very purpose.<sup>92</sup> DFID does indeed make a passing reference to empathy in a document on the eight key concepts which constitute adding a global dimension to the curriculum: one of the seven aims under 'Values and Perceptions' is 'developing multiple perspectives' on issues and events; and one of the seven objectives under 'Conflict Resolution' is 'understanding the importance of dialogue, tolerance, respect and empathy'.<sup>93</sup> Yet these are only two out of a total of 52 separate aims.

The problem is that no clear link has yet been made between the Global Dimensions approach and the SEAL materials. This constitutes a lost opportunity for joined-up thinking amongst different government departments. While SEAL has very little material of a global nature amongst its resources, similarly Global Dimensions does not specifically aim to encourage social and emotional learning through the resources that it features. The two could bring a lot of synergy if combined well.<sup>94</sup>

Overall, within its own parameters SEAL offers high-quality social and emotional learning. Globalising SEAL would help realise its full potential as an innovative approach to social and emotional learning in general, and Empathy Education in particular.

At this stage, it is worth summarising the results of the comparative survey of Empathy Education. The variation between approaches is evident in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Empathy education – an overview

Programme and target age group	Conceptual approach to empathy	Objectives of the programme or materials	Methods	Level of analysis (local, national, global)	Key topics
1. Roots of Empathy, Canada Ages 4-14	Empathy as shared emotions, perspective-taking, and appropriate action.	Social and emotional learning, reducing aggression, parenting skills, pro-social behaviour, and broader social transformation through developing 'empathic ethics'.	A real baby visits the classroom nine times over twenty-seven weeks. There are multiple support activities e.g. art work, drama, writing. It is highly participatory.	Primarily local through focusing on the baby. Activities broaden empathy learning beyond the local environment to the global level.	Nine themes related to the baby's development e.g. meeting the baby, emotions, communicating, safety, crying.
2. Primary Programme, IB, at the International School of Amsterdam Ages 3-12	Empathy is not explicitly defined but both main forms are encouraged. There is a greater emphasis on perspective-taking.	Empathy is one of twelve key 'attitudes' central to the curriculum. It supports exploration of six transdisciplinary themes.	A mixture of experiential learning, creative activities, conversations with outsiders, use of literature, photos, writing, audio and video.	A mixture of local, national and global approaches, with strong emphasis on the global.	Cultural diversity, challenging stereotypes, people of different abilities, migration and human rights.
3. Education for Global Citizenship, Oxfam GB Ages 4-19	Empathy is not explicitly defined but both main forms are encouraged. There is a greater emphasis on perspective-taking.	Empathy is one of six key 'values and attitudes' required for 'responsible global citizenship'. The materials aim to raise awareness and action around international development issues.	Multiple methods are used, such as written materials, photos, video and games. There are a large number of online resources and activities.	There is a very strong emphasis on empathising with people beyond national borders. Links are made to local experiences and issues.	A wide range of development issues e.g. climate change, fair trade, child labour, poverty, and social justice.
4. Through Other Eyes, US social studies resources Ages 8 and above	Empathy is defined as shared emotional response and distinguished from perspective taking. Both are deemed important.	Empathy and perspective-taking are central to the 'Thinking-Feeling Spiral' learning model. The materials aim to promote multicultural learning.	Multiple methods are used, such as primary resources (e.g. diaries), literature, art, role-play, mind-maps, and interviewing.	There is a mixture of local, national and global approaches, and links are drawn between all three levels.	Four key themes: migration, conflict and change, work, personal/family history.
4. Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) for Primary Schools, England Ages 4-11	Empathy is defined as shared emotions and perspective-taking. There is emphasis on the former – understanding the feelings of others.	Empathy is one of five core components of social and emotional learning, mirroring Goleman's typology.	Multiple methods are used such as stories, writing, discussions, photos, and role play. There is a whole school approach: materials for assemblies, discrete lessons, integration into standard subjects.	Has a primarily local focus – empathising with other school children, friends, family, and community members. There is very little global emphasis except in some curriculum linking materials.	Seven topics: New Beginnings; Say No to Bullying; Getting on and Falling Out; Good to be Me; Relationships; Going for Goals; and Changes. First five have empathy focus.

## The future of empathy education

Where should Empathy Education go from here? What do the case studies discussed above suggest about what it should, ideally, look like in practice?

Empathy Education has the potential not only to promote personal and emotional development, but to make a major contribution to social change. In order to do so, I believe all Empathy Education programmes should ensure that they address three important areas of learning: Conversational Empathy, Experiential Empathy and Global Empathy

### *Conversational Empathy*

One of the major gaps in much Empathy Education is the lack of attention given to the role of conversation.<sup>95</sup> As the discussion of the work of Theodore Zeldin indicates, one of the best ways to create an empathetic bond is to get two people to speak with each other and have a conversation that moves beyond superficial talk and addresses the real issues of importance in their lives. Empathy programmes could usefully draw on a range of conversation methods, such as those developed by Zeldin's foundation, The Oxford Muse, to provide opportunities for pupils to engage in dialogues that develop their ability to empathise.<sup>96</sup> Empathy Conversations could take place on three levels:

- Pupils could have conversations with each other, both within their own year group and with other year groups.
- Pupils could have conversations with people in the local community, especially those who they may rarely come across such as asylum seekers, people of different religions, or the elderly.
- Pupils could have global conversations with children at schools in other countries. This could be done using technologies such as Skype, and through existing school linking programmes.

On all three levels they can be stimulated to talk about topics such as aspirations, fears, friendship, family, compassion and cultural practices. That is, the issues which serve to unite people as human beings and which give insights into another's worldview.

### *Experiential Empathy*

Too much Empathy Education is currently based on secondary sources such as books. It is obvious that real-life experiences can have the biggest impact on changing the way we see other people and ourselves. Empathy Education needs to incorporate more experiential learning. This could be done in many ways. For instance, it might be possible for programmes such as SEAL or the International Baccalaureate's Primary Years Programme to integrate the Roots of Empathy, a

highly experiential programme in which pupils learn from having a live baby in the classroom.<sup>97</sup> Students could also be given more opportunities to develop empathy through travel. This might be very local travel, for instance to a Mosque or homeless shelter, where empathetic understanding is the focus of the visit. Experiential empathy learning can also take place through travel abroad and immersing oneself in another culture. This model has a long history in language exchange programmes at the secondary level and the Erasmus scheme at the tertiary level, as well as through school travel projects supported by organisations such as the Holocaust Educational Trust.<sup>98</sup> Activities including community service (as takes place at the United World Colleges) and job shadowing (which is part of many careers programmes at schools) could become part of an enhanced approach to Experiential Empathy.

Both Experiential Empathy and Conversational Empathy should be used to supplement regular learning techniques that have been developed in Empathy Education, such as using photos, role-plays, stories, imaginative writing exercises and thought experiments.

### *Global Empathy*

Finally, Empathy Education needs to be developed not just at the *community level* and the *national level*, but also at the *global level*.

It is certainly important for Empathy Education to address the community level, by tackling subjects such as bullying in the school playground, and relationships with families and friends. It must also encapsulate the national level, helping to create understanding of the lives of people who pupils may seldom meet but who are part of the national social fabric, such as those who are homeless, people with mental health problems, and those who are very rich or very poor. But it is also crucial that Empathy Education be extended to the global level. Children need to be encouraged to empathise with people who live in other countries, especially those in developing countries whose lives are very different from their own, as a way of promoting the idea of global citizenship. Why should a child at school in England, for instance, not be taught to empathise with the plight of a flood victim in the Indian state of Orissa, or with a child who has been injured in an earthquake in China when her school collapsed? Not to do so is to ignore our common humanity and interconnectedness, and misses an important opportunity for fostering social change.

Programmes such as SEAL could be extended to this global level, incorporating new topics such as inequality, climate change, migration and intercultural understanding. Governments, schools and organisations in civil society like Oxfam, could develop new Global Empathy teaching resources to expand the horizons of the next generation beyond the unnecessarily narrow confines of national borders.

## Conclusions

Empathy Education is at a turning point in its history. It can either stay localised, or its potential for creating social change can be realised by expanding it to the global level, so students develop mutual understanding across borders, with people whose thoughts, emotions, values and beliefs might otherwise remain a mystery. At the same time, Empathy Education must step outside the classroom, so that students are given the opportunity to engage in real conversations and experiences that will shift not only how they look at others, but how they look at themselves.

In the 1850s, Henry David Thoreau wrote, 'Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other's eyes for an instant?'

An instant of empathetic understanding need not be seen as a miracle. It is a real possibility that education could provide to a whole generation of young people.

## References

- Allen, Graham (2007), 'Early Intervention in Nottingham', a powerpoint presentation for the Recipes for Partnership Conference, Nottingham, 26<sup>th</sup> September 2007, [www.recipesforpartnership.org.uk/presentations/GrahamAllen.PPT](http://www.recipesforpartnership.org.uk/presentations/GrahamAllen.PPT).
- Anderson, Peter (2007) 'Child Poverty in Perspective: An Overview of Child Well-being in Rich Countries', UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Report Card 7 (Florence).
- Bartlett, Kevin (1998) 'International Curricula: More or Less Important at the Primary Level?' in Jeff Thompson and Mary Hayden (eds) *International Education: Principles and Practice*, Kogan Page (London): 77-91.
- Borg, James (2004) *Persuasion: The Art of Influencing People*, Prentice Hall (London).
- Christie, Tim, Getnet A. Asrat, Bashir Jiwani, Thomas Maddix and Julio S.G. Montaner (2007) 'Exploring Disparities Between Global HIV/AIDS Funding and Recent Tsunami Relief Efforts: An Ethical Analysis', *Developing World Bioethics*, Vol. 7 No.1: 1-7.
- Chung, Rita Chi-Ying and Fred Bemak (2002) 'The Relationship of Culture and Empathy in Cross-Cultural Counselling', *Journal of Counselling and Development*, Vol.80, Spring: 154-159.
- Conroy, James, Moira Hulme and Ian Menter (2008) 'Primary Curriculum Futures', Research Survey 3/3, Interim Report, The Primary Review, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge.
- Crow, Fergus (2008) 'Learning for well-being: personal, social and health education in a changing curriculum', *Pastoral Care in Education*, Vol.26, No.1, March: 43-51.
- De Waal, Frans (2005-6) 'The Evolution of Empathy', *Greater Good*, Fall/Winter 2005-6, 6-9.
- Department for Education and Skills (2007) 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning, Guidance Booklet', Secondary National Strategy, Ref: 00043-2007BKT-EN (London).
- Department for Education and Skills (2005a) 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning, Guidance', Primary National Strategy, Ref: DfES 1378-2005 G (London).
- Department for Education and Skills (2005b) 'Say no to bullying: Theme overview', Curriculum and Standards Excellence and Enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning, Primary National Strategy, DFES 1338-2005 G (London).
- Department for Education and Skills (2005c) 'Changes: Years 3 and 4', Curriculum and Standards Excellence and Enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning, Primary National Strategy, DFES 1372-2005 G (London).
- Faul, Moira (2006) 'How can education make poverty history?', QCA Futures, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, <http://www.qca.org.uk/libraryAssets/media/faul09.pdf>.
- Forstorp, Per-Anders (2005) 'Retorik och tsunami (2): Representing 'the Other' in tsunami fundraising discourse. A levinasian interpretation', *Interaction and Presentation*

Laboratory (IPLab), Numerical Analysis and Computing Science (Nada), Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, report number IPLab-262.

Galinsky and Moskowitz (2000) 'Perspective-Taking: Decreasing Stereotype Expression, Stereotype Accessibility, and In-Group Favouritism', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol.78 No.4: 708-724.

Goleman, Daniel (1998) *Working With Emotional Intelligence*, Bloomsbury (London).

Goleman, Daniel (1996) *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, Bloomsbury (London).

Gordon, Mary (2005) *Roots of Empathy: Changing the World Child By Child*, Thomas Allen (Toronto).

Gordon, Mary (2002) 'Roots of Empathy: responsive parenting, caring societies', *Keio Journal of Medicine*, Vol.52 No.4: 236-243.

Hallam, Susan, Jasmine Rhamie and Jackie Shaw (2006) 'Evaluation of the Primary Behaviour and Attendance Pilot', Department for Education and Skills Research Report No. 717.

Hochschild, Adam (2006) *Bury the Chains: The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery*, Pan (London).

Hoffman, Martin (2000) *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice*, Cambridge University Press (Cambridge).

Holman, Bob (1995) *The Evacuation: A Very British Revolution*, Lion (Oxford).

Irvine, Renwick, Robert Chambers and Rosalind Eyben (2004) 'Learning from Poor People's Experience: Immersions', *Lessons for Change Series No.13*, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex.

Jackson, Phillip L., Eric Brunet, Andrew N. Meltzoff and Jean Decety (2005) 'Empathy examined through the neural mechanisms involved in imagining how I feel versus how you feel pain', *Neuropsychologia*, Vol.44 No.5: 752-761.

Kalliopuska, Mirja (1992a) *Empathy - The Way to Humanity*, Pentland Press (Durham).

Kalliopuska, Mirja (1992a) 'Holistic Empathy Education among Preschool and School Children', paper presented to the International Scientific Conference on Comenius' Heritage and the Education of Man, Prague, March 23-27, 1992.

Kallopuska, Mirja (1983) 'Empathy in School Students', Department of Psychology, University of Helsinki.

Kohn, Alfie (1990) *The Brighter Side of Human Nature: Altruism and Empathy in Everyday Life*, Basic Books (New York).

Krog, Antjie (1998) *Country of My Skull*, Jonathan Cape (London).

Krznaric (2008 forthcoming) *What the Rich Don't Tell the Poor: Conversations with Guatemalan Oligarchs*, Inforpress Centroamericana (Guatemala City; in Spanish).

Krznaric, Roman (2007a) 'How Change Happens: Interdisciplinary Perspectives for Human Development', an Oxfam Research Report, Oxfam GB (Oxford).

- Krznaric, Roman (2007b) 'Empathy and the Art of Living', Blackbird Collective (Oxford).
- Krznaric, Roman (2007c) '[Why All Students Should Take a New Foundation Year in Human Awareness](#)', briefing note for the New Economics Foundation, June 2007.
- Lancaster, Tim, Ruth Hart and Selena Gardner (2002) 'Literature and medicine: evaluating a special study module using the nominal group technique', *Medical Education*, Vol.36: 1071-1076.
- Layard, Richard (2007) 'Happiness and the teaching of values', *CentrePiece*, Summer 2007: 18-23.
- Layard, Richard (2005) *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science*, Allen Lane (London).
- Moyn, Samuel (2006) 'Empathy in History, Empathizing with Humanity,' *History and Theory*, Vol.45 (October): 397-415.
- Oatley, Keith (2005-6) 'A Feeling for Fiction', *Greater Good*, Fall/Winter 2005-6, 13-15.
- Oxfam (2006) 'Education for Global Citizenship: A Guide for Schools', Oxfam GB Education and Youth Programme (Oxford).
- Peterson, A.D.C. (1972) *The International Baccalaureate: An Experiment in International Education*, George G. Harrap & Co. (London).
- Reynolds, William and Brian Scott (1999) 'Empathy: a crucial component of the helping relationship', *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, Vol.6: 363-370.
- Robb, Bill (1993) 'For What It's Worth', Times Educational Supplement, July 2, 1993, p16, also available at: <http://www.valueseducation.co.uk/articles/article-values-education.html>.
- Rogers, Carl and Barry Stevens (1967) *Person to Person: The Problem of Being Human*, Souvenir Press (London).
- Rolheiser, Carol and Debra Wallace (2005) 'The Roots of Empathy Program as a Strategy for Increasing Social and Emotional Learning: Program Evaluation - Final Report', Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT).
- Roots of Empathy (2008) 'Roots of Empathy: A Summary of Research Studies Conducted 2000-2007', March, Roots of Empathy, Toronto.
- Schonert-Reichl, Kimberly (2008) 'Effectiveness of Roots of Empathy Program: Research Summary, 2000-2008', Child and Adolescent Development Laboratory, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education, University of British Columbia, Vancouver.
- Seligman, Martin (2003) *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfilment*, Nicholas Brealey (London).
- Sen, Amartya (1977) 'Rational Fools: A critique of the behavioural foundations of economic thought', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol.6 No.4: 317-44.
- Skolnick, Joan, Nancy Dulberg and Thea Maestre (2004) *Through Other Eyes: Developing Empathy and Multicultural Perspectives in Social Studies*, Pippin (Ontario).

- Steuer, Nicola and Nic Marks (2008) 'University Challenge: Towards a well-being approach to quality in higher education', New Economics Foundation (London).
- Titmuss, Richard (1950) *Problems of Social Policy*, H.M.S.O. and Longmans, Green & Co. (London).
- Tooth, Chris (1987) *Evacuation: A Study in Empathy*, Teachers' Guide, Bridge Publications (Great Yarmouth).
- Weare, Katherine (2007) 'Delivering *Every Child Matters*: the central role of social and emotional learning in schools', *Education 3-13: International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education*, Vol.35 No.3, August: 239-248.
- Weare, Katherine and Gay Gray (2003) 'What works in promoting children's emotional and social competence?', report for the Department of Education and Skills (London).
- Zeldin, Theodore (1999a) 'How work can be made less frustrating and conversation less boring', *British Medical Journal*, Vol.319, 18-25 December: 1633-1635.
- Zeldin, Theodore (1999b) 'The Future of Work',  
<http://www.oxfordmuse.com/museideas/futurework.htm>.
- Zeldin, Theodore (1995) *An Intimate History of Humanity*, Minerva (London).

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Gordon 2005, 9.
- <sup>2</sup> These examples are from teaching resources discussed later in this paper. The first is from the DCSF materials for the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme on the theme of Changes for Years 3 and 4 for schools in England. The second is from Canada's Roots of Empathy programme. The third is adapted from the Primary Years Programme of the International Baccalaureate Organisation, as taught at the International School of Amsterdam. The final example is from the Climate Chaos teaching resources from Oxfam GB's Education for Global Citizenship curriculum materials.
- <sup>3</sup> Throughout this paper I often refer to 'the UK government' and 'UK education' as general terms, while recognising that education is organised separately in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. SEAL, for instance, is a programme designed for schools in England, and is the responsibility of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), which emerged in 2008, together with the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), out of the former Department for Skills and Education (DFES).
- <sup>4</sup> This paper draws on, and develops, some of my thinking contained in an earlier report for Oxfam on how social change happens (Krznaric 2007a). I have also discussed the subject of empathy in Krznaric (2007b).
- <sup>5</sup> The following discussion draws on Cotton's review of 58 articles about empathy (2001, 2, 3, 9), Kohn (1990, 99, 101, 114-6), Goleman (1996, 98-9), Kalliopuska (1992b, 2), and Rogers and Stevens (1967, 92-4).
- <sup>6</sup> Galinsky and Moskowitz 2000, 711, 714, 720.
- <sup>7</sup> Goleman 1996, 105; Hoffman 2000.
- <sup>8</sup> See, for instance, Gordon (2005, 30, 244), who draws on the work of Norma Feshbach.
- <sup>9</sup> Weare 2007, 240.
- <sup>10</sup> Conroy, Hulme and Menter 2008, 1, 7.
- <sup>11</sup> DFES 2005a, 48-50; Gordon 2005, 241; Goleman 1996, 305-9.
- <sup>12</sup> In Family Links, empathy is one of the 'four constructs' upon which their Nurturing Programme is founded. See <http://www.familylinks.org.uk/nurturing/fourconstructs.htm>. In the Penn Resiliency Program, empathy is primarily developed through perspective-taking activities. See <http://www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu/prpllessons.pdf>.
- <sup>13</sup> DFES 2007, 5; DFES 2005a, 48; Allen 2007.
- <sup>14</sup> Weare 2007, 241-5.
- <sup>15</sup> Ed Balls, written ministerial statement, 9/1/8; <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/wms/?id=2008-01-09a.9WS.1&s=speaker%3A11740>.
- <sup>16</sup> See, for example, Steuer and Marks (2008).
- <sup>17</sup> Seligman 2003, 261.
- <sup>18</sup> Crow 2008, 44.
- <sup>19</sup> <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/aims/>.
- <sup>20</sup> Robb 1993. See also the definition of wellbeing at the Centre for Alleviating Social Problems Through Values Education (CAVE) in Scotland, at <http://www.valueseducation.co.uk/index.html>.
- <sup>21</sup> Anderson 2007, 2.

- 
- <sup>22</sup> Layard 2005, 234.
- <sup>23</sup> Layard 2007, 20.
- <sup>24</sup> Allen 2007, slide 18.
- <sup>25</sup> See, for instance, the article 'Colorado...Early Intervention' by Norman Smith, BBC News website 27/4/8; and 'Early Intervention city starts', BBC News website 28/4/8. Also see Gordon (2005, 26).
- <sup>26</sup> Weare 2007, 245.
- <sup>27</sup> Goleman 1998, 137-8.
- <sup>28</sup> Kalliopuska 1992a; Kohn 1990; Hoffman 2000.
- <sup>29</sup> For a good general overview of this literature, see Kohn (1990, Chapter 4).
- <sup>30</sup> Goleman 1996, Chapter 7.
- <sup>31</sup> De Waal 2005-6, 6-9.
- <sup>32</sup> Jackson, Brunet, Meltzoff and Decety 2005. See also Goleman (1996, 102-4).
- <sup>33</sup> Sen 1977.
- <sup>34</sup> See Buber (1965) for an introduction to his thought.
- <sup>35</sup> See the discussion in Oatley 2005-6, 15.
- <sup>36</sup> Zeldin 1999a, 1633.
- <sup>37</sup> Zeldin 1999b, 3.
- <sup>38</sup> Zeldin 1995, 236-55, 326.
- <sup>39</sup> Kohn 1990, 158-9.
- <sup>40</sup> Krog 1998, 17.
- <sup>41</sup> I have written about this more extensively in Krznaric (2007a and 2007b). For a more theoretical approach to the relationship between history and empathy, see Moyn (2006).
- <sup>42</sup> Hochschild 2006, 5, 222, 366.
- <sup>43</sup> The Economist, 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1943, pp.545-6.
- <sup>44</sup> For accounts of evacuation that highlight the importance of empathy, and the way that evacuation affected the development of child welfare provision, see Titmuss (1950) and Holman (1995, 128-35, 142). It should be noted that the empathetic response was less evident in the first wave of evacuation in 1939 than in later waves.
- <sup>45</sup> Gordon 2005, xvi.
- <sup>46</sup> See, for example, the analysis in Forstorp (2005) and Christie et al (2007).
- <sup>47</sup> These were studied by Norma Feshbach (see Kohn 1990, 168).
- <sup>48</sup> The success of these campaigns was extensively documented by Kalliopuska using a variety of psychological measures of empathy (1983, 1992b). Another example from the 1980s was the Child Development Project near San Francisco, which emphasised perspective-taking, cooperative learning and community service (Kohn 1990, 172-3).
- <sup>49</sup> For a typical example, see Tooth (1987).
- <sup>50</sup> See, for example, Reynolds and Scott (1999) on nursing, Lancaster, Hart and Gardner (2002) on medical students, and Chung and Bemak (2002) on counselling.
- <sup>51</sup> Irvine, Chambers and Eyben 2004; Krznaric 2007a, 41.
- <sup>52</sup> Goleman 1996, 107.
- <sup>53</sup> Gordon 2005, 30.

---

54

[http://www.westwind.ab.ca/ces/images/stories/CES%20Videos%20Home%20Page/img\\_1779.jpg](http://www.westwind.ab.ca/ces/images/stories/CES%20Videos%20Home%20Page/img_1779.jpg).

55 Gordon 2005, 10-11.

56 Gordon 2005, 5.

57 Gordon 2005, 245-8; Gordon 2002, 242; Roots of Empathy 2008; Schonert-Reichl 2008.

58 A programme evaluation by researchers at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto concluded that: 'by providing many opportunities to see skills modelled, to apply these same skills in real-life situations, and to reflect on their learning, the program increases the chances that students will develop competencies that will guide their future behaviours and shaped their dispositions' (Rolheiser and Wallace 2005, 9).

59 Gordon 2005, xvi-xvii, 6, 9.

60 Special thanks to Susan Loban and Jan Humpleby from the International School of Amsterdam for their help with this case study, and for generously sharing materials from their teaching programme.

61 <http://www.ibo.org/mission/index.cfm>. For a history of the origins of the International Baccalaureate, see Peterson (1972).

62 For background on the Primary Years Programme see Bartlett (1998).

63 Different People, Different Lives is also designed to contribute to investigation of transdisciplinary themes, especially Who We Are.

64 Susan Loban, International School of Amsterdam, personal communication, 3/6/8.

65 For links to research showing the high academic attainment of International Baccalaureate students compared to those who do not follow IB programmes, see <http://www.ibo.org/programmes/research/resources/>.

66 Many of the resources are available free online at <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/>.

67 Oxfam 2006, 1. This emphasis on empathy also appears in an article on Education for Global Citizenship by Moira Faul from Oxfam Development Education (Faul 2006).

68 Oxfam 2006, 4-7.

69 Oxfam 2006, 10.

70 [http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/climate\\_chaos/](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/climate_chaos/).

71 [http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/climate\\_chaos/index.htm](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/climate_chaos/index.htm).

72 [http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/climate\\_chaos/day\\_two/files/afternoon1\\_more\\_climate\\_change\\_case\\_studies.pdf](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/climate_chaos/day_two/files/afternoon1_more_climate_change_case_studies.pdf).

73

[http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/climate\\_chaos/day\\_two/files/afternoon3\\_from\\_my\\_grandchild.pdf](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/climate_chaos/day_two/files/afternoon3_from_my_grandchild.pdf)

74 See, for example, <http://www.futerra.co.uk/downloads/NewRules:NewGame.pdf>.

75 Skolnick, Dulberg and Maestre 2004, 2, 5, 10, 11.

76 Skolnick, Dulberg and Maestre 2004, 14-15.

77 Skolnick, Dulberg and Maestre 2004, 14.

78 Skolnick, Dulberg and Maestre 2004, 81-7.

79 Hallam, Rhamie and Shaw 2006, 7-8, 78, 84, 86.

80 DFES 2005a, 11; DFES 2007, 19.

81 Goleman 1996, 43-4; DFES 2005a, 6, 8, 40-3, 48.

- 
- <sup>82</sup> DFES 2007, 5.
- <sup>83</sup> Hallam, Rhamie and Shaw 2006, 7-8, 68-73.
- <sup>84</sup> This is particularly evident in one of the main SEAL themes, 'New Beginnings'.
- <sup>85</sup> Goleman 1996, 261-287.
- <sup>86</sup> DFES 2005a, 19.
- <sup>87</sup> SEAL also offers materials for staff and parents, although I have not analysed them here.
- <sup>88</sup> DFES 2005b, 5-10.
- <sup>89</sup> DFES 2005c, 22.
- <sup>90</sup> This is based on written responses from officials to a draft of this paper.
- <sup>91</sup> [http://www.nc.uk.net/nc\\_resources/html/ks1and2.shtml](http://www.nc.uk.net/nc_resources/html/ks1and2.shtml).
- <sup>92</sup> See the special feature in The Guardian newspaper on global citizenship education sponsored by DFID and DEA (The Guardian, April 29, 2008, 'Think Global'). For the teaching resources see [www.globaldimensions.org.uk](http://www.globaldimensions.org.uk).
- <sup>93</sup> <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/dev-global-dim.pdf>, pp.12-13.
- <sup>94</sup> It appears that DFID may be funding work in this area, helping to apply SEAL to the Global Dimensions approach.
- <sup>95</sup> I have discussed in more detail the importance of both conversation and experience as ways of developing empathy in Krznaric (2007b).
- <sup>96</sup> For examples of Oxford Muse conversation projects, such as Conversation Meals, see <http://www.oxfordmuse.com/projects/oxfordproject.htm>.
- <sup>97</sup> In the UK, local authorities in Nottingham and Bedfordshire have expressed interest in piloting Roots of Empathy, and the programme has been strongly supported by the Children's Commissioner, Sir Albert Aynsley-Green.
- <sup>98</sup> The Holocaust Educational Trust gives two students from every sixth form in England the opportunity to visit Auschwitz. See the report in the DCSF magazine *Secondary Teacher*, May 2008, p.19.