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Learning about Development at A-Level

A study of the impact of the World Development
A-level on Young People's Understanding of
International Development

Gill Miller, Elizabeth Bowes, Douglas Bourn
and Juan Miquel Castro

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Abbreviations and Definitions

A-Level (Advanced Level) – a two-year post-16 qualification in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, comprising an 'AS' in the first year and an 'A2' course in the second year to make the full A-Level; usually a pre-requisite for university entry.

AO-Level (Alternative Ordinary Level) – secondary school qualification prior to 1988, usually taken by more able candidates following O-Levels.

BTEC – Business and Technology Education Council awarding vocational qualifications

DfES/DFE – Department for Education and Skills: responsible for education and children's services.

DCELLS – Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Welsh Assembly Government

GCSE – General Certificate of Secondary Education – academic qualifications taken by 14-16 year olds in various subjects in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

International Baccalaureate – an international course for students aged 3-19 for students seeking to develop the intellectual, personal, emotional and social skills to live, learn and work in a rapidly globalizing world.

Key Stage (KS) – stages within the English education system (KS1= ages 5-7; KS2= ages 7-11; KS 3= 11-14; KS 4= 14-16; KS 5= 16-18).

LDC – Less Developed Country

MDC – More Developed Country

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation, operating independently of any Government

O-Level – Ordinary Level: a subject-based qualification introduced to the English education system in the 1950s and replaced by the GCSE in 1988.

QCA/QCDA – Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency: formerly a non-departmental public body which advised the Secretary of State for Education on matters to do with the National Curriculum and assessments.

Russell Group – represents 20 leading universities in the UK which have a strong focus on research and academic excellence.

Sixth Form – the final two years of education for 16-18 year olds in England, Wales and Northern Ireland where students usually take A-Level examinations. This level of education is currently not compulsory.

Specification – the syllabus or course content for a specific subject qualification.

VSO – Voluntary Service Overseas, an international development charity

WJEC – Welsh Joint Education Committee (CBAC in Welsh language)

Acknowledgements

This research report is very much a collaborative effort bringing together evidence gathered from schools and colleges engaged in teaching the World Development A-level, the main themes to emerge from Liz Bowes' Master's level dissertation and broader evidence gathered on development education and the usage of the examination itself. We would particularly like to thank those schools and colleges who helped us circulate and gather the surveys from their students and to Juan Miquel Castro for helping us analyse the data.

Preface

This latest research report in the series produced by the Development Education Research Centre is part of its funding agreement with the Department for International Development that addresses gathering of evidence on how young people learn and understand international development.

Learning about development has been a feature of the school curriculum in England for a number of years, most notably through Geography and there has been increased interest in examination courses at post-sixteen.

By reviewing what young people have learnt and gained from such a course this report aims to demonstrate how young people perceive international development issues and what impact this has had on their views about the wider world.

Douglas Bourn

Director, Development Education Research Centre

Executive Summary

Young people's interest in development issues has been the focus of numerous studies but there has been little research that looks at the impact of learning of a specific educational course. This research paper looks at the impact of studying A-level World Development on young people in England and Wales. It summarises the outcomes of research by Bowes in 2011 and a further survey in 2012 with students who have completed the course.

This study looks specifically at the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the course on students. The evidence suggests that the A-level is popular and seen as relevant to young people's lives and views about the world. Both teachers and students state that the themes discussed are up-to-date and accessible to study.

In terms of effectiveness of the course overall, there is evidence of understanding of the key issues in development, although the priorities given to particular themes varied from school and college.

Programmes and projects on learning about development have often been promoted because there is an assumption that mere engagement with these themes has an impact on young people's learning in terms of changing their behaviour and attitudes towards taking action to reduce global poverty. The evidence from this research shows a complex picture of impact with the emphasis appearing to be more on the social and moral aspects of development than the political. The research indicates positive changes in perceptions of global poverty and inequality in the world, but less so on the more social and political aspects. There is evidence that studying the A-level has had an impact upon the students' future learning in higher education with Geography and Development Studies becoming more popular.

The first full World Development A-level began in 2008 so the examination is still relatively new. The sample taken for this study and the research by Bowes covered a relatively small number of students. However, what is clear from this research is that an A-level of this type can play an important contribution in deepening a young person's learning and understanding about development and that it is a subject that is seen as popular and relevant to their lives.

1

Introduction

Young people's increasing interest in international issues has been commented upon in numerous studies in recent years (Asbrand, 2008; DEA 2008; Hicks and Holden, 2007; National Youth Agency, 2006). Funding from the UK government, the European Commission and non-governmental organisations has further suggested that there is value in investing in opportunities for young people to learn and become more engaged with global and development issues. An earlier research report on Young People and International Development suggested that whilst there was evidence of learning, all too often the support systems that encouraged this tended to make assumptions about the processes and outcomes of young people's interests (Bourn and Brown, 2011). This report aims, through an in-depth analysis of one unique learning opportunity, the A-Level in World Development, to identify what motivates young people's study in this discipline to assess what they have learnt and also what level of engagement they have in taking the learning forward. It is based on a combination of research from one of the authors of this report (Bowes, 2011) alongside a survey conducted in 2012 with young people who have taken the examination. Central to the theme of this report is the interest and impact of in-depth learning about global and development issues, and that whilst it can, and has, motivated many students to further study in this area, it has not necessarily radically transformed their views or led to them becoming activists for global social change.

Learning about development has been part of the UK education landscape since the 1960s. The concept 'development education' emerged in Europe and North America as a specific response to the de-colonisation process and the emergence of development as a specific feature of government and NGO policies and programmes. Resources began to be developed to ensure the public was supportive, such as through educational programmes, production of resources and general awareness-raising. These programmes had in many cases a strong international outlook with, as Harrison (2008) notes in regard to the work of Oxfam in the UK, 'a desire to open up hearts and minds, as well as the purses', to the problem of poverty in countries overseas. However, much of this practice, as Hammond (2002) and others have commented, was located within an approach that served to educate for support of a 'largely ignorant or disinterested public' through an information-delivery model of learning.

From the late 1970s, more critical approaches emerged within this development education practice. Practitioners were beginning to question the legitimacy and effectiveness of the aid industry, and often as a result of personal experience and volunteering, were seeing the need for more focus on social justice (Harrison, 2008). By the 1990s, in UK, Canada, Germany, Netherlands and Japan there were movements of educationalists, mainly working with NGOs, but with some

support from teachers and academics, that were promoting an approach that was influenced by these critical perspectives on development, combined with the pedagogy of Freire (1970) and progressive classroom practices.

This stance has at various times since the 1970s been challenged and in some cases diverted, by media campaigns on development issues, often generated by crises such as famine or other disasters. This has meant that whilst development education has often strived to promote appropriate and positive images of people in continents such as Africa, media images have reinforced traditional stereotypes. The media has also reduced issues to simple messages that might have helped NGOs and governments, but not necessarily educationalists. The perceptions of Africa, for example, as a continent of helplessness and 'starving babies' was still evident in the school classroom in the first decade of the twenty first century (Lowe, 2008). VSO (2002) noted in its report on public perceptions of development that the 1984 Live Aid legacy was still very prevalent in UK society. Whilst at one level this led to resources and materials being produced for schools, it also led to increased emphasis being given to what became known as public education or communications strategies focused on promoting messages and visual representations. A consequence of this was that initiatives such as the 2005 Make Poverty History campaign increased awareness of development issues, but tended to be a 'mile wide but only an inch deep' (Darnton and Kirk, 2011).

Learning about development by its very nature poses complex questions and issues about what is meant by the term and concepts such as poverty and inequality. The discourse is also laden with controversial areas regarding power, perceptions of the 'other' and in whose interests is development being promoted (Andreotti, 2010; Blum, 2000; McCann and McCloskey, 2003). Lambert and Morgan (2011), in their research paper on Geography, note that within the teaching material in this subject, development is often discussed in an uncritical manner. The development education tradition has always found itself caught between the desire to encourage a range of views and perspectives about global poverty, against a funding driven agenda that is seeking public endorsement and support for aid (Bourn, 2008; Hammond, 2002).

Within UK schools, learning about development can be seen in a number of areas, often within primary schools through a 'topic' based around issues such as food, water and health, or in the promotion of concepts such as fairness, or in a secondary based curriculum through, for example, Geography that looks at lower income countries, unequal trade, globalisation and, more recently, the Millennium Development Goals. However, this learning is often influenced by resources and materials produced by external bodies such as NGOs. For example, Smith (2004) has noted the mediating influence of NGOs in what and how school students learn about global and development themes. Also, all too often, this learning becomes influenced by other themes and agendas within a school, such as a desire to support a fundraising cause such as Comic Relief, develop an

international link, or secure one of the ever growing number of awards such as the UNICEF Rights Respecting School Award.

There are now many resources, initiatives and curriculum directives to engage primary and secondary school students in development education and global learning, although historically there has been little focus given to the post-16 age group. Whilst the current non-compulsory nature of education within this age group, and the more personal menu of students' subject choices, goes some way to explaining this, the lack of continuity regarding the promotion of development education at the end of Key Stage 4 is marked. Think Global (2011a) noted that understanding our global economy is only present at the 'fringes' of our education system. Indeed, a recent report from the Association of Graduate Recruiters (2011) said that UK students were 'lagging behind' in the skills employers were looking for to flourish in a global economy, lacking 'global knowledge', 'global mind-set' and 'cultural agility'.

This view supports arguments from Huckle (1997:1) who maintains that young people lack knowledge about their world, often ignorant about their rights and responsibilities. He points to the failure of mainstream education, especially in the way it has not equipped people to contribute to the 'governance of social affairs as conserving, participative, and critical citizens' (ibid.), a concept he refers to as 'social illiteracy' (ibid.). The World Development A-level could therefore be seen as occupying an important position within this debate in helping to address such 'illiteracy'.

This paper contends that an analysis of an in-depth course about development is vital because there has been no major study in the UK to date that addresses the process of learning and its impact on the post 16 student cohort. Post 16-19 education is arguably the point at which young people on the verge of adulthood begin to make individual, independent and life-changing decisions which reflect who they are. It is thus pertinent to consider the contribution of a unique qualification such as the A-level World Development on development education. This research aims to discover the extent to which students and teachers perceive the study of development issues to be relevant, how much, if at all, such study affects student perceptions of development, and how much it impacts on their behaviours.

2

The World Development A-level

2.1 Post 16 Examinations

Advanced Level qualifications are delivered by three awarding bodies in England, one in Wales and one in Northern Ireland. They offer a range of subjects, approved by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). All A-levels are currently divided into a first year Advanced Supplementary (AS) course, taken predominantly by 17-year olds, and a second year Advanced (A2), taken by 18 years olds in their final year at school or college. AS is half of one full A-level and is a stand-alone qualification. AS plus A2 make up the full A-level. The minimum requirement for university entrance in the UK is two A-levels or equivalent, with most students entering university with three subjects. Some subjects are offered by all the awarding bodies, but the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC) is the only one to offer A-level World Development.

2.2 Development of the Qualification

The A-level in World Development is unique among the range of subjects offered by all five Awarding Bodies in the UK and Northern Ireland. While other subjects include elements of 'development studies', none cover the range and depth offered by the holistic nature of World Development. It is a reflection of this uniqueness that in 2005 the QCA approved AS and A-level World Development to be studied in conjunction with any other A-level.

The global dimension has long been integral to Wales' education policies. The WJEC has been committed to development education since the 1980s when it established an Alternative Ordinary (AO) level examination in World Development. World Development evolved into an O-level, then GCSE, and finally a one-year post 16 AS-Level for sixth forms. To its credit, WJEC continued to offer World Development even though numbers fell to an all-time low of only 90 entries by 2003. In England, after the first examination of the new A-levels in 2002, there was increasing interest in World Development from QCA as their scrutiny fell on the existing AS course. At a similar time, the Secretary of State for Education also set out international objectives for the Department of Education and Skills (DfES), including raising the level of international awareness and of developing countries in schools (DfES 2005).

Sustainability and development issues in education were reinforced as the Welsh Assembly committed itself to pursue action on social justice in the context of Wales. This extended to addressing international barriers towards sustainable development. In addition Department of Children, Education and Lifelong

Learning and Skills, (DCELLS), through the WJEC, maintained its concept of a broad education in citizenship as part of the Welsh Baccalaureate. As World Development came under scrutiny from the education community, teachers also sensed an interest by young people in development issues. The media highlighted increasing global environmental crises and major campaigns, such as Make Poverty History. Extending the study of World Development at post-16 was therefore seen as a natural progression. There was an opportune moment in 2006, with a new Chief Examiner, to embed social justice, citizenship and the international dimension into post 16 education by re-launching World Development with its extension to a full A-level.

2.3 Overview of the Specification

The A-level in World Development was approved in 2005 for first examination in June 2008. The specification explicitly states that:

- It is unique in its combination of breadth across a range of disciplines. The elements of development studies found in A-level specifications do not provide the depth or the inter-relationships of study which are required to understand the complex and challenging issues exercising the minds of global leaders and academics alike;
- Emphasises the multi-disciplinary nature of development issues. It combines the spatial characteristics of geographical study; the focus on international relations, institutions and systems of governance within political studies; historical perspectives vital for an understanding of current situations; aspects of sociology in exploring human interrelationships; and the emphasis in economics on production and exchange.

2.3.1 Specification themes, common concerns and skills

AS-Level World Development establishes the basis for in-depth study by encouraging students to understand the relationship between development, people, poverty and their environment, plus the nature of poverty and inequality. At A2 this extends to understanding development processes and the complexity of inter-relationships within development.

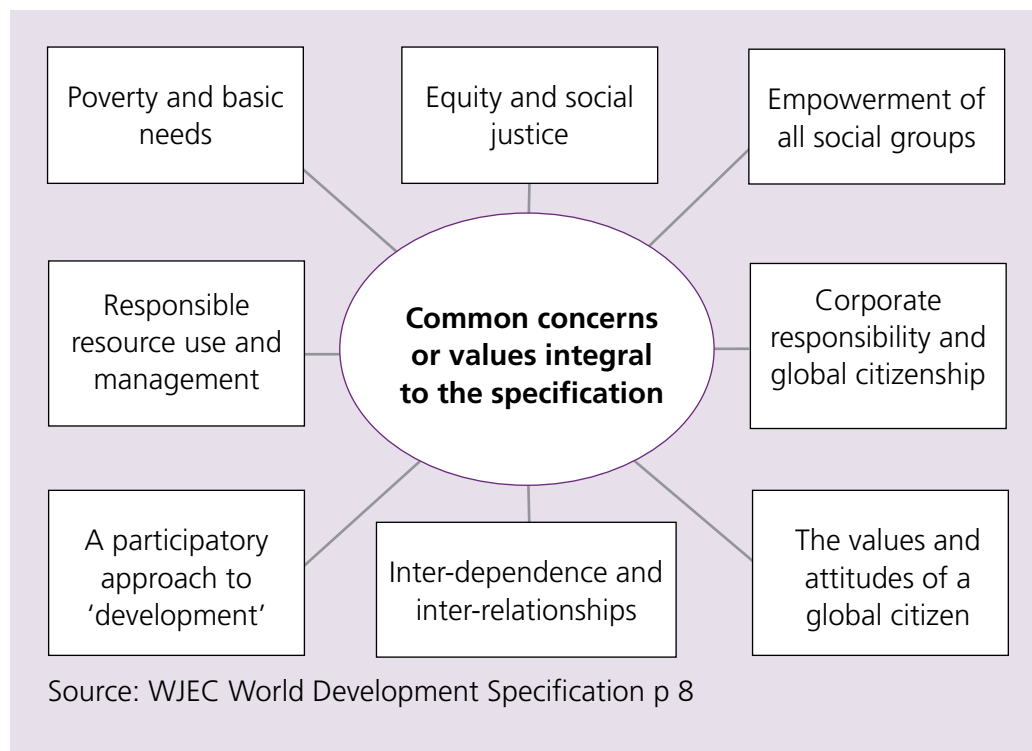
There are six themes to be studied, each of which anticipates links with the others.

- At AS, compulsory themes – Development, Resources and Global Citizenship; and Poverty and Inequality.
- At A2, compulsory (essentially theoretical) theme on Perspectives of Development; and optional themes Economic Development, Political Development and Social Development.

This enables teachers (and students) with a variety of expertise in other disciplines, to select the theme in which they are most interested and where they can most effectively bring other subject specialist knowledge and understanding into a holistic framework. It is such sharing of knowledge, understanding and experience that makes this A-level unique among others.

World Development encourages students to develop an understanding of real world complexities from a range of perspectives--political, social, economic and environmental. There are also common concerns and values which thread through the specification (Figure 1).

Figure 1 The common concerns or values which are integral to the specification



These common concerns, plus the key concepts in the specification, were identified for their contribution to education for global citizenship. More importantly, however, they were purposely drawn from themes studied in the broad variety of international development courses in British universities. These 'building blocks' of the specification aimed to bring current knowledge and understandings from universities to underpin those explored at A-level. In this way the A-level World Development offers a transition from the issue-based learning about development, usually through case studies in GCSE Geography, to more conceptual as well as broader thinking about development in higher education. Although the A-level specification is required to 'stand alone', it also contributes to the transitions debate currently exercising practitioners in both schools and universities.

World Development as a subject, it could be argued, can make a contribution to the wider curriculum by requiring students to engage with spiritual, moral and ethical issues. The subject content provides a framework within which students can develop an awareness of different groups, values and attitudes to society. In addition the specification encourages students to examine their own relationship with the personal and social and their response to gender, ethnicity, class, age and the 'Other'. The development of personal skills, as well as intellectual and social understanding, is also intrinsic to citizenship education, to which World Development could be said to make a significant contribution.

A range of intellectual skills are embedded within the World Development specification and these too could be seen to make an important contribution to the transition into higher education. In particular:

- Interpretative skills where students give meaning to evidence;
- Evaluation skills requiring students to consider evidence and reach informed, rational conclusions;
- Enquiry skills involving research, investigation and application of knowledge;
- Communication skills and referencing skills.

2.3.2 Assessment

There are two units of assessment at each of AS and A2.

The AS includes a coursework portfolio plus a written examination with stimulus resources, short questions and extended writing. At A2 the examination consists of an unseen case study of a people, place or issue in the developing world, which expects candidates to respond to economic, political and social aspects of development. There is a compulsory theoretical question on development and a traditional extended essay based on the chosen Economic, Political or Social theme.

A distinguishing feature of A2 is the Individual Report - coursework worth 15% of the total qualification. Students choose their titles based on any part of the specification. It is this assessment which gives ownership of study to the student and enables them to explore the development issue / country / environment in which they are really interested. In 3000 words students have to introduce a topic, evaluate their sources of evidence, present and interpret evidence and suggest meaningful, achievable recommendations. This approach provides an opportunity to develop skills for transition to university and report-writing.

2.3.4 Growth in the Examination

**Figure 2 Growth of the World Development examination.
Number of candidates**

	AS level	A2 level
2007	807	
2008	1151	172
2009	1730	357
2010	1918	445
2011	2011	587
2012	2158	620

This illustrates the significant growth of World Development in both England and Wales. The expansion of AS has been partly due to the availability of A2. Students and teachers were initially reticent about engaging with World Development if it limited student options at A2, particularly for more able students with high university aspirations. When the full A-level became available teachers felt more confident in 'advocating' the subject to students especially when its holistic nature clearly offered the 'stretch and challenge' demanded by QCA.

2.4 Schools and Colleges teaching the A-level

World Development A-level is delivered in various modes. Typically it is a two-year course for Year 12 and 13 students while some schools and colleges offer a fast-track one-year course in the sixth form. Typically students opt to study World Development within the usual array of A-levels but in other institutions it is part of the widening curriculum that includes General Studies and/or Critical Thinking. Some Geography departments offer World Development to the A-level Geographers as a supplementary subject.

2.4.1 Characteristics of the cohort

Figure 3 shows the type of institutions that offer A-level World Development. The smallest percentage of candidates comes from the Independent sector, along with further education Colleges. Comprehensive schools dominate the centre type – unsurprisingly - as they are more likely to have a wide range of student ability and an ethos of providing a range of post 16 courses. The take-up of sixth form and tertiary colleges has declined somewhat, probably due to changing funding mechanisms (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Cohort characteristics by centre, A2 level.
% of students in different types of learning institutions

	Comp / Secondary Modern	Independent or State Selective	Sixth Form or Tertiary College	Other /not classified	Total
2008	31.7	4.9	57.7	5.7	100
2009	55.4	4.7	37.6	2.4	100
2010	58.8	4.0	34.7	2.4	100
2011	57.3	2.5	36.4	3.8	100
2012	41.2	3.0	34.1	21.7*	100

*Reflects the changing status of schools and colleges to newly designated Academies

Figure 4 shows the gender profile of the student cohort. Initially, and some argue unsurprisingly, World Development attracted a significant majority of girls. Perceived ideas about 'feel-good', compassionate studies perhaps drew a more empathetic cohort. Clearly this balance soon changed as students' perceptions changed as they appreciated the complexities of political and economic, as well as social, development. Currently the gender balance is fairly equal and compares favourably with other social science cohorts

Figure 4: Gender profile, A2

	Male %	Female %
2008	29.3	70.7
2009	56.9	43.1
2010	39.9	60.1
2011	44.4	55.6
2012	39.0	61.0

2.5 Distinctiveness of the Examination

An important feature of the World Development examination lies in its opportunity to study development issues in a holistic manner. While such issues are included in other A-level studies this can lead to a partial and potentially simplistic approach to global issues. But this holistic approach can be challenging for both students and teachers. For teachers it may require developing knowledge skills outside of the subjects they have been trained to teach. Similarly for students with a subject discipline based examination system, courses such as World Development require a range of skills, breadth of knowledge and approach to learning that encourages a strong values base.

The specification provides space for students and teachers to learn in different ways, often more in partnership than in traditional didactic knowledge transfer. An important and distinctive feature of the course is that it offers differing opportunities for learning including collaborative approaches, spaces for students to follow their own interests and learning through research. The subject does not encourage activism but it does enable young people to respond intellectually to what they see as injustice and inequality. One of the most important opportunities within the specification is for students to develop informed personal opinions and judgements. This is reflected strongly in the evaluative nature of many examination questions as well as in an individual report.

The specification is somewhat unusual in that there is a coursework element in both AS and A2 levels. This provides the opportunity for students to develop transferable skills appropriate to higher education as well as develop that sense of 'ownership' of study content that appears to motivate and stimulate student engagement.

The AS written paper includes stimulus resources as well as extended writing, while the 3-hour A2 examination requires substantial analysis of unseen resources relating to a new development situation plus traditional essay questions. The specification therefore aims to assess candidate abilities through a variety of activities.

The rapid expansion of the full A level in World Development is testament to the concerns and interest of young people in building a more holistic understanding of development. They appreciate the necessarily partial perspectives offered in other A levels such as Sociology, History, Geography, Politics, Business Studies and Economics but also see a need to equip themselves more comprehensively to understand their potential roles as global citizens. This research aims to explore just how far the A-level in World Development may contribute to those aspirations.

3

Methodology

The research has adopted a mixed methods approach by integrating interview data from a Master's dissertation (Bowes, 2011) with a more recent student survey (2012) that included both quantifiable data and qualitative opinions. This enabled some triangulation through which more robust conclusions could be made.

3.1 Bowes' research in 2011

Bowes' research focused on the perception and status of the World Development A-level amongst students, teachers and universities and was based on results from eleven schools and colleges who offer A-level World Development (see appendix 3). Seven World Development teachers and 213 students took part in this research. 59% of these students were studying World Development at AS-level and 41% at A2-level.

The sample was self-selecting in response to an initial letter sent to all headteachers of those institutions offering World Development. A mixed-method approach was used to gather information, incorporating the views of different groups, with quantifiable data. The research included a questionnaire sent to students which was used to ascertain young people's perception of the World Development A-Level, including why they had chosen the A-Level, what they did and did not enjoy about the course, as well as any impact their studies had had on them as global citizens. The perceptions of teaching staff were also sought through a separate questionnaire and through semi-structured face-to-face interviews both of which focused on why World Development had been introduced into their institution and any change in attitude and practice which they noted amongst their students as the course progressed. One World Development teacher also shared emails with Bowes from eight leading universities, four of which were from the Russell Group, in response to queries about how higher education institutions perceived the relatively new A-level. This data complemented further research which Bowes carried out through email correspondence with the Admissions' departments of three other universities.

Additional semi-structured interviews were conducted by telephone with the subject officer for World Development at WJEC to gain contextual evidence and history of the World Development A-level.

3.2 Further research in 2012

Building on Bowes' 2011 study further research was conducted in 2012 with a specific focus on the relevance of the World Development specification, its

effectiveness in understanding development and the impact of the A-level in changing behaviours. This research involved 9 schools and colleges and 151 students, all of whom were A2 students. These schools and colleges throughout England had a history of teaching A-level World Development, three of which were sixth form colleges interviewed for Bowes' 2011 research. With teacher agreement, questionnaires, different from those created by Bowes, were offered to all the A2 students as they were concluding their World Development course prior to the final examinations (see appendix 2).

The schools and colleges which were targeted for this research in 2012 were those where the A-level World Development was well established and where there were significant numbers of students in each institution taking the examination.

There was some variety in the mode of delivery of A-level World Development between those schools or colleges who offered the course. All institutions included it in their option choices; others presented it as an enrichment course, mainly at AS level; while others link this specification closely to A-level Geography. The course is offered as a traditional two-year A-level in some schools and colleges but also as a fast-track one-year qualification. Most of the institutions in the survey are colleges which offer a wide range of post 16 qualifications from International Baccalaureate to BTEC and some adult education provision.

The characteristics of the student cohort from both surveys s very varied, from rural, predominantly middle-class, from 11-18 comprehensive schools to large urban sixth form colleges.

Figure 5 Numbers and type of schools and colleges that contributed to the research

	Comp / Secondary Modern	Independent or State Selective	Sixth Form or Tertiary College	Other
2011 Bowes' research	4	0	6	1
2012 research	2	0	6	1

The questionnaire used in the 2012 research (see appendix 2) aimed to discover the extent to which the study of A-level World Development impacted on students' engagement with development issues, their active response to development issues and how their values and attitudes may have changed as a result of the course. The questionnaire aimed to assess the assumption that learning about poverty and inequality would impact on student perceptions and ultimately their behaviours. To what extent might the study of A-level World Development affect future decisions about career, lifestyle and citizenship in the broadest sense? The questionnaire built upon the work of Bowes (2011) but used a different group of schools and colleges.

Students were asked to respond to very specific questions and then explain their response discursively. In many of the responses such comments were brief but even these were revealing. The analysis has tried to explain the quantitative results with reference to qualitative comments. In addition the analysis has been informed by the findings of Bowes (2011), in particular the views of teachers of World Development.

4

Relevance, Effectiveness and Impact

This research paper has noted the growing interest amongst young people in learning about development and the desire of development professionals and educators that young people recognise the importance of development education as they become global citizens. The A-level in World Development explicitly aims to nurture the global concerns of young people as they begin to think independently and challenge acquired views and perceptions. This research paper now addresses the extent to which the A-level has an impact upon the students in terms of the interest and engagement in development and relevance to the broader education. The following three questions are therefore now addressed using the evidence from Bowes' research and the survey undertaken with over 150 A2 level students in 2012:

- Is the specification relevant to the education of young adults?
- Is it effective in nurturing understanding of development issues?
- What impact has it had in changing the behaviours and attitudes of students in a global context?

4.1 How relevant is the specification for 16-19 students?

The relevance of World Development has been recognised beyond the classroom. Research by Think Global (2011a:13) noted that learners are more confident and enthusiastic when their 'studies are set in a global context' and that 'ensuring all young people learn to think globally will benefit them individually, strengthen the UK economy and build citizens' capacities to create a more just and sustainable world' (ibid). This is reinforced by research from the British Council and Think Global which shows that 74% of UK businesses are concerned that young people do not have the skills or broad horizons to operate in a globalised and multicultural economy (2011:3). Much of the evidence from industry and the wider public sector is the desire amongst employers to have more rounded and critically reflective graduates (Archer, 2005). There is also growing recognition

that in professions that are increasingly global, such as health, engineering and business, knowledge and understanding of international development themes is becoming recognised as important (Bourn and Neal, 2008; Willott, Rowson and Blum, 2012; Shiel, 2007).

Bowes' research in 2011 particularly explored the views of students and teachers regarding the relevance of the World Development qualification. The responses of many students illustrated that they recognised the relevance of the World Development specification. Students commented that it helped their understanding of global issues, of the world and 'how it is interconnected', how it changed their outlook and encouraged an interest in current affairs. One student stated 'I believe it's a subject that is increasingly relevant in the changing world' (Bowes, 2011: 103). Teachers in the 2011 survey also commented on the A-level's relevance to everyday life and its interdisciplinary nature arguing, for example, that it "is very relevant & contemporary; students are much more aware of global issues [...]; it draws on many disciplines & invites discussion on moral, ethical, political & economic issues" (ibid. 119).

Figure 6 Other subjects taken with World Development A-level, (Bowes, 2011: 25)

Accounting	2	German	4
Anthropology	2	Graphic Design	1
Archaeology	2	Health & Social Care	2
Art	12	History	46
Biology	42	History of Art	1
Business Studies	28	ICT	8
Chemistry	21	Journalism	1
Citizenship	1	Law	10
Classics	3	Maths	40
Communications and Cultural Studies	6	Media Studies	13
Critical Thinking	4	Music	3
Dance	2	Performing Arts	1
Design and Technology	7	Philosophy	6
Drama	7	Photography	9
Ecology	1	Physical Education	18
Economics	29	Physics	11
Electronics	1	Politics	24
English Language	40	Pre-teaching	1
English Literature	47	Product Design	1
English Lang & Lit combined	5	Psychology	49
Environmental Studies	16	Religious Studies	17
Equine Studies	1	Science	3
Film Studies	4	Sociology	28
French	13	Spanish	6
Further Maths	2	Statistics	2
General Studies	9	Textiles	2
Geography	92	Theatre Studies	2
Geology	7	Travel and Tourism	6

The 2011 and 2012 data showed marked similarities regarding the factors affecting students' choice of A-levels. Of particular importance is the combination of subjects with sciences, social sciences and humanities subjects, as well as vocational courses, all being taken with World Development A-level. Figure 6 shows this wide range of subjects with Geography and the social sciences proving most popular. This reflects the holistic nature of World Development, its relevance, and the potential for it to complement other disciplines by helping students to understand ideas and concepts from other perspectives. While development topics are included in other A-level subjects this inevitably means a partial and potentially simplistic approach to complex global issues. By contrast, one teacher of World Development commended the multi-disciplinary nature of the course arguing that this was the way education should develop in the future rather than forcing students to become so specialised in their subject choices by the age of 16 (Bowes, 2011: 38).

In Bowes' research, the relevance of World Development to other A-levels was ranked as first or second as a reason for choosing the course (Figure 7) with students commenting particularly on the links with Sociology and Human geography. In that sample, 68% of students had a GCSE in Geography and 14% chose World Development because they had enjoyed Geography.

Figure 7: Ranked reasons (%) why students chose the World Development A-level. (Bowes, 2011: 85)

Reason for taking course: %		Ranking									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Went well with other subjects	Male	33	13	10	2	7	8	2	11	13	2
	Female	25	17	11	3	8	8	8	8	8	4
Modules looked interesting	Male	17	28	17	10	7	3	5	5	3	5
	Female	28	25	13	7	5	4	2	6	5	4
Want to study Development at university	Male	2	8	16	15	23	15	10	2	7	3
	Female	8	7	7	12	17	16	7	7	12	7
Personal development and fulfilment	Male	5	10	20	21	11	8	21	2	2	0
	Female	5	10	19	21	17	12	7	6	2	1
Help future career	Male	11	8	11	16	23	13	5	8	2	2
	Female	3	5	18	16	14	20	12	7	4	1
Friends doing the course	Male	13	5	5	3	3	15	15	20	16	5
	Female	6	3	4	3	7	7	13	23	25	10
Like the teachers	Male	0	16	10	11	5	15	20	15	8	0
	Female	1	6	7	11	16	12	23	18	7	2
Course looked easy	Male	5	5	5	11	11	15	16	16	11	3
	Female	4	6	8	14	8	12	18	17	12	1
No choice—6th Form said I had to take it	Male	7	7	5	3	5	3	2	12	39	17
	Female	5	7	9	4	5	4	7	7	22	32
Other	Male	21	0	0	7	7	0	14	21	14	14
	Female	17	19	0	7	10	7	5	2	12	21

Similar evidence can be found from the 2012 survey in terms of linkages to subjects such as Geography. What is significant is the range of courses that both cohorts of students had studied. Whilst Geography was the most popular other option there was a wide range of other courses taken covering natural and social sciences, humanities and more vocational type courses. This suggests that, for many students, World Development was seen to have applicability and value alongside both traditional and more interdisciplinary courses.

Bowes' research also showed a strong response to the question about the relevance of the A-level to students' own lives. Appendices 4- 9 give examples from Bowes research of students views as to the value of, what they liked and disliked about the course and what impact it has had on their lives. Figure 8 shows that students reflected on how the course had helped develop their personal understanding of world issues and they felt they were better able to make a 'difference'.

Figure 8 Comments from students regarding the relevance of World Development, (Bowes, 2011: 105-8)

I feel it's important in the current state of the world to learn about this whole topic and make a difference.

It's generally a really interesting subject that offers a lot of detail and insight into world issues that helps you develop a personal understanding of current problems that face the world.

The course has completely changed my outlook on the world, furthering my understanding and challenges to world issues [sic] along with helping me to take a number of different viewpoints into my arguments before reaching conclusions on any issue.

It has made me more aware of what is going on in other countries – current affairs.

It's a good A-level, interesting and opens our eyes to the whole world. It also doesn't seem to be read out of a book and contains a lot of private study that allows you to actually be interested in what you are studying.

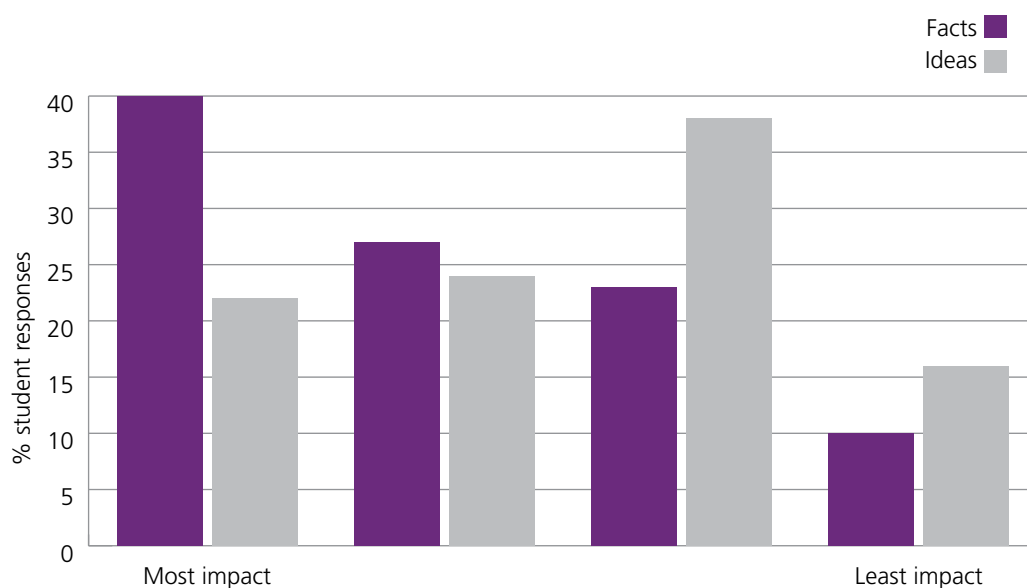
It improves your critical thinking as well as your knowledge base.

I would encourage everyone to do this course.

The relevance of facts and ideas are important to students of World Development. Many students in Bowes' study stated explicitly how much more informed they

felt about world issues and concerns. The 2012 survey reinforced this with 40% of students stating that this was the most important aspect of their studies. 27% stated it was the second most important (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Students' responses to the importance of facts and ideas in the World Development specification



Knowledge enabled students to discuss topical issues with confidence. For example one student from the 2012 research commented 'I take part in more intellectual conversations because I understand it'. Another student in 2011 stated 'It's a very good course, full of interesting facts and information that make you want to do to each lesson. You learn new things every day and I would encourage many people to take this course' (Bowes, 2011: 115). Such responses reflect the sense of purpose with which students approach World Development and reinforce its relevance.

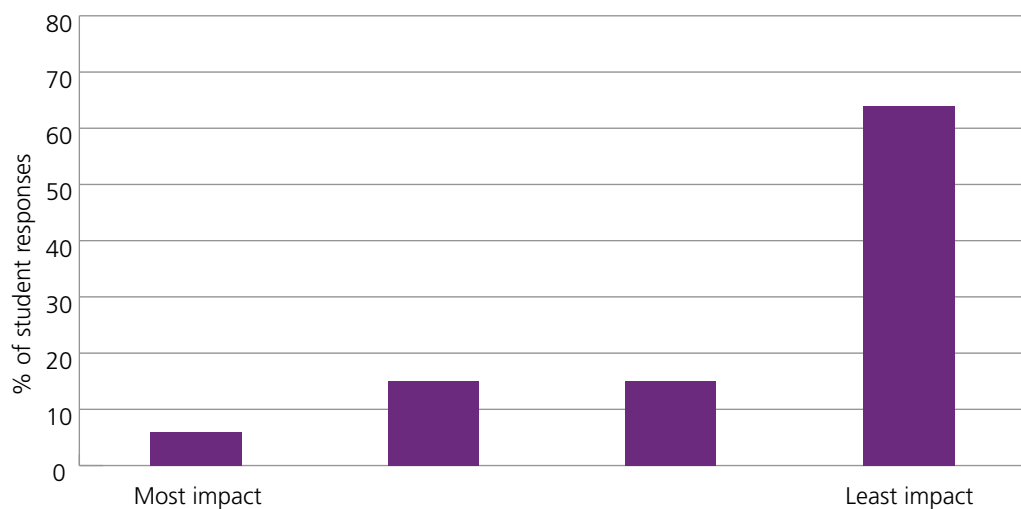
In Bowes' research there was little evidence from students as to the relevance of transferable skills gained from the course. The specification provides opportunities for skills to be developed such as independent research, data analysis, writing a critical literature review, evaluating evidence, discussion, extended writing and report writing as well as development of flexibility of learning and time management. These generic skills are essential for successful advanced level study but it is probably not easy for 17 and 18 year olds to reflect and appreciate their developing learning skills over the longer term. However, teachers in Bowes' study commented on the importance of transferable skills and that the course encouraged critical thinking and reflection and provided good preparation for higher education. Several teachers in 2011 noted that the course 'raised awareness and curiosity to study more' (Bowes, 2011: 38). This life-preparation was also highlighted by a teacher from one institution who explained:

It is very relevant and contemporary; students are much more aware of global issues especially the environment; it draws on many disciplines and invites discussion on moral, ethical, political and economic issues. (Bowes 2011: 119)

Bowes' research noted that some candidates perceived World Development to be more difficult than their other subjects: 12 per cent said it was harder, 29 per cent said easier and 59 per cent said of a similar level. Enjoyment certainly contributed to some of these perceptions as seen from comments such as 'the course has been easier simply because it is so enjoyable' (Bowes, 2011: 34). When asked what was not enjoyable about the course students commented on volume of work, structure of the course or not understanding concepts. Over 25% of students interviewed were keen to stress that there was nothing they had not enjoyed saying, for example, 'No, really enjoy it!' or 'Enjoyed everything so far' (Bowes, 2011: 34). Reflecting this enthusiasm for the course 68 per cent of students said they would recommend the course to others.

The 2012 survey found that teaching methods were regarded as unimportant by students (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Student view of the impact of teaching style.



These results may be because the course content dominated student enjoyment and the mode of study was taken for granted. In 2011 teachers of World Development took a different view. They recognised the more flexible, creative and interactive ways of teaching which help to engage students (Bowes, 2011). Informal, undocumented conversations between teachers and senior examiners at INSET meetings for World Development have consistently and positively commended the opportunities provided by the specification for flexible learning and teaching, and the nurturing of invaluable transferable skills, particularly appropriate for university.

Teachers recognise the relevance of World Development for themselves as well as their students. While its holistic approach is challenging and demanding of staff who are trained initially in one or two disciplines, teachers of World Development are often those with a personal interest in, or experience of, development issues. Without exception, teachers are enthusiastic about the specification (Bowes 2011). Informal evidence from the well-attended in-service training courses consistently suggests that they enjoy the challenge of exploring development from a range of perspectives and that students respond likewise.

Despite a lack of training and some concerns about limited resources, teachers are keen to bring their subject knowledge up-to-date. Indeed one teacher said how they regarded this time as an opportunity to invest in their continuing professional development (Bowes, 2011). This supports the research of Black (2009:24) who found that teachers working on the recently introduced Critical Thinking A-level were being stimulated professionally by engaging with a new course.

The relevance of World Development is reflected in comments from teachers about changes in attitude and behaviour they detected in their students as the course progressed (Bowes, 2011). With regard to examination results, Bowes' research highlighted how teachers have noted that student numbers are increasing, partly because of good examination results in terms of good value-added in relation to GCSE grades achieved. The proportion of A*, A grade and other pass grades are similar to other traditional subjects (WJEC, 2012). Examination successes encourage more students to take the course and all teachers said they would recommend the A-level to colleagues in other schools and colleges.

The course appears to be well regarded by most of the teachers who have taught the examination. Bowes' research found that the majority of teachers felt strongly about the academic content of World Development. Only one teacher in her study saw it as a soft or easy option. For the rest who were interviewed in her study there was praise for the approach and the content.

There is a view within higher education and amongst some academics that courses such as the World Development A-level are for those with particular interests and agendas. Furedi (2009:128), for example, believes that schools have become a vehicle for 'policy-makers, moral entrepreneurs and advocacy organisations' to promote their own agenda and values, resulting in pedagogic issues being confused with political ones. Some of these views may also be behind the apparent small percentage (currently 3%) of private schools who offer the A-level. Bowes' research found that one of the reasons some private schools did not offer the course was that there was a perception that some universities might not recognise it because of its apparent 'lack of academic rigour'. However, it is now the case that many universities operate a central admissions policy based on the total points score achieved at A-level. However, whilst there are of course some prescribed subjects for particular courses, A-level World Development is equally recognised in the total points score for university entry.

Overall, however, the evidence suggests that the World Development A-level is seen to be relevant by students to their own broader learning, potential future degree courses and wider views about society. To teachers, other factors such as broader skills and more holistic approaches are seen as relevant. To wider society there is increased recognition of the need to equip students to have the skills to be active participants in a global economy and that courses such as the World Development A-level will not only deepen learning about a topic that is globally relevant, but can also promote skills of critical thinking and team work, offering differing viewpoints alongside an understanding of causes of inequality in the world.

4.2 Effectiveness of the World Development specification changing perceptions and understanding of development issues

In order to consider the effectiveness of the A-level in increasing understanding of development issues the second question to address is the extent to which the examination has changed students' perceptions about global and development issues. This was one of the key themes of the 2012 survey involving 151 students who were asked to state the extent to which their perceptions had changed in terms of the five themes of study within the A-level specification.

Figure: 11 How perceptions of students changed in the study of different themes (% of students) (2012 research)

	People and Resources (AS theme)	Poverty and Inequality (AS theme)	Economic Development (AS theme)	Political Development (AS theme)	Social Development (AS theme)
Change in perceptions	56.6	83.0	46.0	42.0	54.0
No change in perceptions	43.4	17.0	54.0	58.0	46.0

These results revealed that the majority of students felt that their perception of inequality had increased, whilst the least number of students commented on how the course had affected their perceptions of world issues such as aid. The poverty and inequality theme had most impact while political development and the people/ resources themes had least. It should, however, be noted that few institutions study the political theme at A2 and much of the people/resources theme is broadly familiar for most students. The responses to this theme are likely to be influenced by exposure to resource issues at several points earlier in the school curriculum.

This evidence from the 2012 research also raises important points regarding debates around development education. There is clear evidence of the strong social and moral influence of the course. Secondly, the relatively low number of

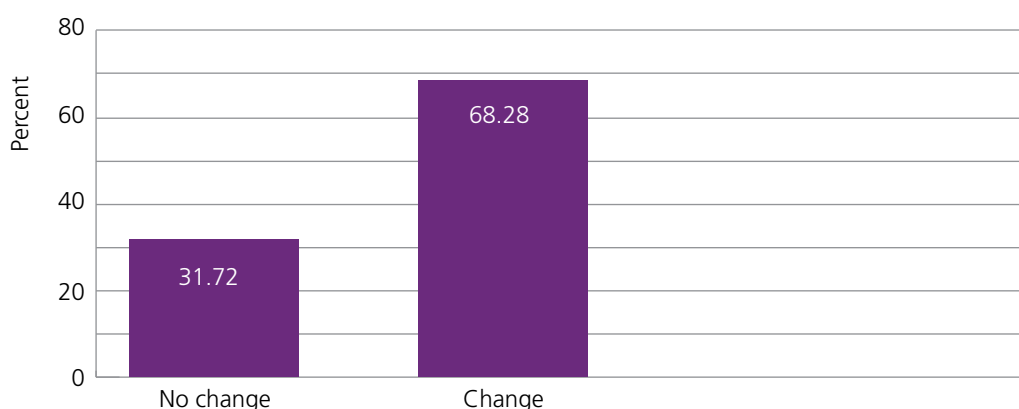
responses to political views and perceptions may, in part, be due more to where both students and teachers feel confident about which issues to study. Also many of the qualitative remarks note that the course has increased their interest and understanding of political issues.

This evidence now needs to be explored in more depth and related to students' own influences and how this compares with the research from Bowes.

4.2.1 Perceptions of Inequality

The 2012 survey revealed how 68 per cent of students were more aware of both the existence and extent of inequalities (Figure 12), with one student, for example, expressing that the course 'has helped me to consider how and why greater equality benefits everyone'. There was an awareness that inequality is to be found in all societies, not just less developed countries and of the complexity of inequality in relation to gender, wider social discrimination and impact of trade. There was increased understanding that inequality manifests itself in many different ways such as gender and racial inequalities. In particular, students identified gender equality as being vital for a country's development. There was also an understanding of the complexity of inequality, such as unfair trade laws favouring more developed countries.

Figure 12: Impact of World Development on student perceptions of poverty and inequality



Such findings support the research of Bowes (2011) who found that similar responses were expressed when students were asked what they had enjoyed about the World Development course. For example, one student revealed that s/ he had not only found the course very interesting but 'it has also made clear what I am passionate about which is the political and trade side of development and inequality' (Bowes, 2011: 116).

4.2.2 *Perceptions of poverty*

61 per cent of students in the 2012 research also commented on how the World Development A-level had affected their understanding of issues surrounding poverty, in particular its complexity (Figure 12). However, 16 students from the sample recognised how the course had helped them to understand the complexity of poverty issues, highlighting both financial poverty and poverty of opportunities, as well as its prevalence in both LDCs and MDCs. One student commented on how they now have 'more understanding of how difficult poverty is and how difficult it is to escape [from it]'. This reflects research from Bowes (2011) that showed that part of students' enjoyment of the A-level was learning more about poverty and its impact on the rest of the world.

The 2012 research also showed that as a result of taking the A-level some students had 'a better understanding about how poverty affects people's lives. Others explained that while they were aware of the existence of poverty it was 'not to an extent where I can understand how poverty impacts on education and healthcare', perhaps highlighting a superficial comprehension of key development issues.

4.2.3 *Perceptions of World Issues*

57 per cent of students from the 2012 research responded that the A-level had helped increase their awareness and knowledge of world issues, particularly looking at the use of natural resources and connecting this to issues such as climate change and the scarcity and exploitation of resources. For one student there was a realisation of 'how much we waste in the western world' whilst another was surprised by how quickly resources are being depleted. Several students commented on the inequalities evident in resource use, contrasting, for example, water wastage with those who struggle to access enough. This also echoed responses regarding the unfair distribution of resources with one student commenting on food distribution, as opposed to global food shortages, as a problem.

The course also helped students understand different interpretations of world issues such as globalisation, with one candidate recognising 'how demand from globalisation may benefit the economy, yet has social and environmental issues both nationally and globally'. A greater interest in world issues amongst the students also resulted in a realisation for the need for sustainable solutions to problems such as climate change and finite resources.

This increased awareness and understanding of world issues was something noted by Bowes' research with World Development teachers, with one teacher stating how he loved 'challenging students' misconceptions about the way humanity works' as well as 'witnessing students become more passionate about international development and issues of social justice themselves' (Bowes, 2011: 119).

4.2.4 Perceptions of Images of the Developing World

A central feature of development education practice is to challenge perceptions people may have of poorer places in the world, particularly sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore a key indicator of the extent to which the course reflects development education approaches is whether it has changed students' perceptions about their images of lower income countries. 43% said it had an impact and 57% no impact. There were examples from the 2012 survey that the examination did have an impact, such as 'need to recognise I had pre-conceived ideas', 'Africa is not as bad as I thought' or the recognition that the media tended to manipulate the images of Africa. One student commented, that there is 'much more to Africa than just extreme poverty', whilst five students highlighted how 'development' can be interpreted in different ways, 'taking many forms and working on varying levels'. Other issues such as aid and debt were raised, with one student expressing how 'I now understand the reasons for poverty and how it is often linked to exploitation by foreign interests'. Another student explained that, before the course, they had not appreciated how 'issues with Aid were so complicated, and how much conflict there is'. There was also a recognition that the media has a role to play in how images of the developing world are presented, especially amongst charities and their strategies used to fundraise. However, these views need to be balanced against the majority, as later evidence shows, who did not see the course as changing their perceptions.

The reasons for these differences are likely to be varied, with perhaps the most likely being that for many of the students who took the course they had already had perceptions that recognised the complexity of the developing world. Development themes are today addressed in ways within the school curriculum, particularly through Geography, that aim to move beyond notions of charity and dependency.

4.2.5 Students' changed perceptions of themselves

The 2012 research aimed to shed some light on whether studying and understanding World Development had affected students' perception of themselves. Just over 20% mentioned this area. The results were contradictory. Whilst 30% said the course had changed their perceptions, the majority said that it had not. However the qualitative evidence suggests otherwise. Students about to embark on a final examination may not find explicit personal reflection easy but their positive, changed attitudes were certainly evident from Figure 13. In particular students felt that they have some sense of privileged lifestyle, that their view of life has been broadened and that they are more aware of their actions, roles and responsibilities. They were also more sensitive and understanding to others. About 10% of students mentioned the impact on their actions in terms of knowing where and how to make a difference, with comments such as 'Put into perspective as to what I can do to help as well as becoming more aware of social

and economic issues' and 'consideration of what actions I can take'. Whilst these comments are significant they are from a relatively small section of the students surveyed, with the majority not mentioning these potential areas at all.

Figure 13 Some views of students relating to the effectiveness of A-level increasing understanding of development issues

Reflection on self – "I'm lucky"	<i>I appreciate my lifestyle and my possessions more I've come to realise how lucky I am and to really value what I have and the opportunities available to me More sensitive and understanding of those less fortunate</i>
Reflection on self a change in attitude	<i>It has broadened and changed my views on topics of the world I now feel more broad minded and informed about life in general</i>
Awareness of own actions	<i>I am more aware of how my actions affect issues It's made me give greater consideration to my actions and what effects they will have</i>
Increased awareness of own role	<i>I understand myself better and how I fit in as a global citizen I am more aware of what I value and how I can be true to those values</i>
View of development	<i>I take a more holistic view of development</i>

4.2.6 Summary

The results demonstrate that the World Development A-level is effective in raising interest in development issues. This supports findings from Bowes who interviewed teachers from a number of schools and colleges about how they perceived the course, with the majority commenting on how relevant and contemporary they found the A-level, drawing on many disciplines and inviting discussion on moral, ethical, political and economic issues.

The 2012 research shows that, whilst there is evidence of engagement with the complex nature of the themes, there is less impact on the students' learning

regarding the more political and social themes. However, it could be argued that it is not the primary concern of an A-level to achieve this but rather to equip young people with transferable skills and academic qualifications on which they can build as they enter higher education or the workplace.

There is evidence that through engaging with World Development at this level, there were some changes in student perceptions and deepening of understanding of, for example, the complex nature of global poverty and inequalities. Broadening one's views, being more concerned about global issues and seeing their relevance to their own lives were also themes to emerge from the observations by students on the impact of the course.

But perhaps of most significance is the positive impact which the A-level has had on students as individuals, affecting their behaviour, choices and career paths, as discussed in the next section.

4.3 Overall Impact of the Course on Students

As mentioned earlier in this report, there has been an assumption in the objectives of a range of school projects which have had an international development focus, that merely learning about global issues will lead to some form of personal transformation as a result of student engagement with the development themes. For some young people, international development was just another subject or theme to study. Others, because of personal experience or interest, have become involved in campaigns or taken part in an international volunteering programme (Bourn and Brown, 2011).

This section looks at how students themselves interpreted the impact of the World Development A-level on their views and knowledge about international development issues. It compares the evidence from Bowes' study (2011) with the 2012 survey sent to the nine schools and colleges referred to earlier.

4.3.1 Overall Impact

Bowes' study (2011) highlighted how World Development A-level made students consider the importance of thinking locally and acting globally, generating dialogue around what it means to be a 'global citizen'. Students often talked in terms of responsibility and rights, such as a global citizen being 'someone who is not only responsible for themselves, but others too' (Bowes, 2011: 32), or someone who is 'an agent for the world, as in your actions affect others and the environment on a global scale as well as a local scale' (ibid. 92).

The 2012 survey showed similar overall evidence that the course had an impact on students' increased knowledge, particularly factual data, on development

themes and some impact on ideas. This evidence is now looked at in detail in terms of students' changing attitudes and perceptions, specific areas of increased knowledge and understanding, and impact on future plans including university study and career path.

4.3.2 Impact on Future Plans

To gain further insight into how World Development is perceived, Bowes asked candidates about their plans following completion of their course. Despite the current economic climate and increase in tuition fees, the majority of candidates were keen to continue their education to university level, with 11 per cent wanting to take a degree related to Development. In fact several students expressed how studying World Development had influenced their decisions for the future, on both an academic and personal level with one student stating noting how much the course had made them think about what they bought in terms of clothing and food, noting that they 'now really know I can make a change' (Bowes, 2011: 102)..

However, alongside such enthusiasm, there was also concern amongst some students about whether the course they had benefited from so much on a personal level would be regarded well by others, especially universities. For example, a student from Institution 4 expressed concern that 'students with more traditional subjects will get preference when applying' to universities, and that some institutes do not recognise the subject as 'a solid A-level' (Bowes, 2011: 113). Thus, whilst the course might be perceived positively by students on one level, concerns of how it is regarded by outside agencies means that, for some, it also holds a lower status when considered more strategically in terms of future opportunities.

Yet despite this, the overwhelming majority of comments from students reflect a very positive perception of the course, suggesting it is seen as relevant, useful and challenging in today's world (see appendix 4), as reflected in this response from a student from institution 4 (see Appendix 3 for details of institutions).

It covers many different yet interrelated topics so there are bits to challenge and interest everyone. It improves your critical thinking as well as your knowledge base and I'm sure what you learn will stay with you forever in some ways, even if you don't go on to work or study in the field (Bowes, 2011: 116).

A teacher (Institution 10, see Appendix 3) mentioned that a highlight of his career was the fact that his students were discussing issues raised in the course with parents at the dinner-table (Bowes, 2011: 38). This positive impact on students is particularly pertinent when we consider that several of the schools and colleges involved in Bowes' research had few other opportunities to encourage students to learn about the wider world, other than tokenistic gestures such as working

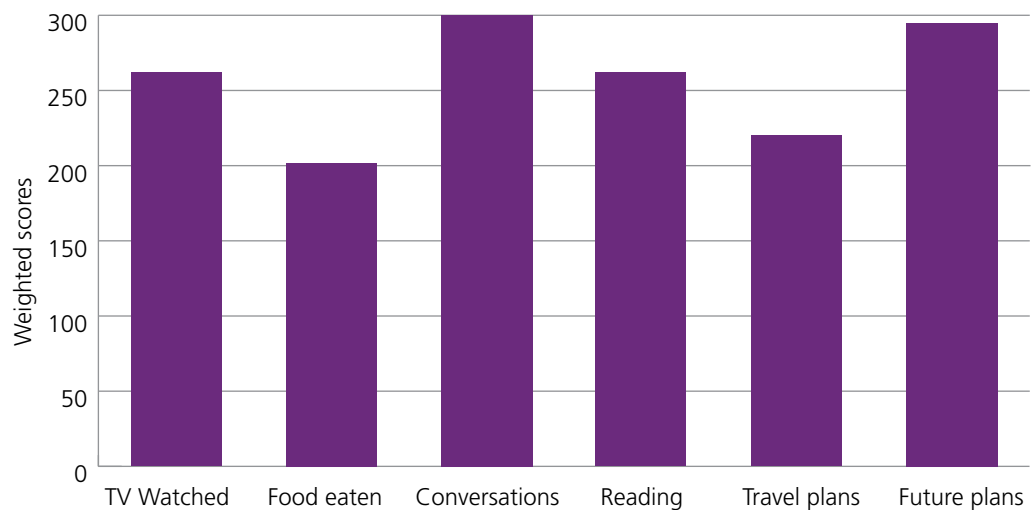
towards Fairtrade status or linking with a school in another part of the world (ibid.).

4.3.3 Impact on Attitudes and Behaviour

There is some evidence to suggest that the A-level has had a wider effect on students and their attitudes and behaviour. For example, research from Bowes showed 27 per cent of student participants said the A-level had made them more conscious about their power as consumers, making them consider the ethics behind food and manufactured goods. 12 per cent were more aware of pressure on finite resources and how their habits affect this. 13 per cent talked in terms of responsibilities, saying, for example, 'I feel much more responsibility in terms of recycling and charity work', or referring to a desire to travel or work 'to make a difference', whilst 8 per cent commented on how they have become cynical about processes within development. 26 per cent explained that the course has made them take a greater interest in the world and events in the news, realising how local and global events are interconnected, whilst 14 per cent expressed gratitude at being able to have unlimited access to energy and manufactured goods in the UK, recognising that much of the world goes without (Bowes, 2011: 33).

The 2012 survey, whilst showing less conclusive evidence of the impact on attitudes, did show similar evidence in terms of increased interest in world events and watching the news. For example, as Figure 14 demonstrates, the course did have an impact on the conversations the students had, their plans for the future, what they watched on TV and read.

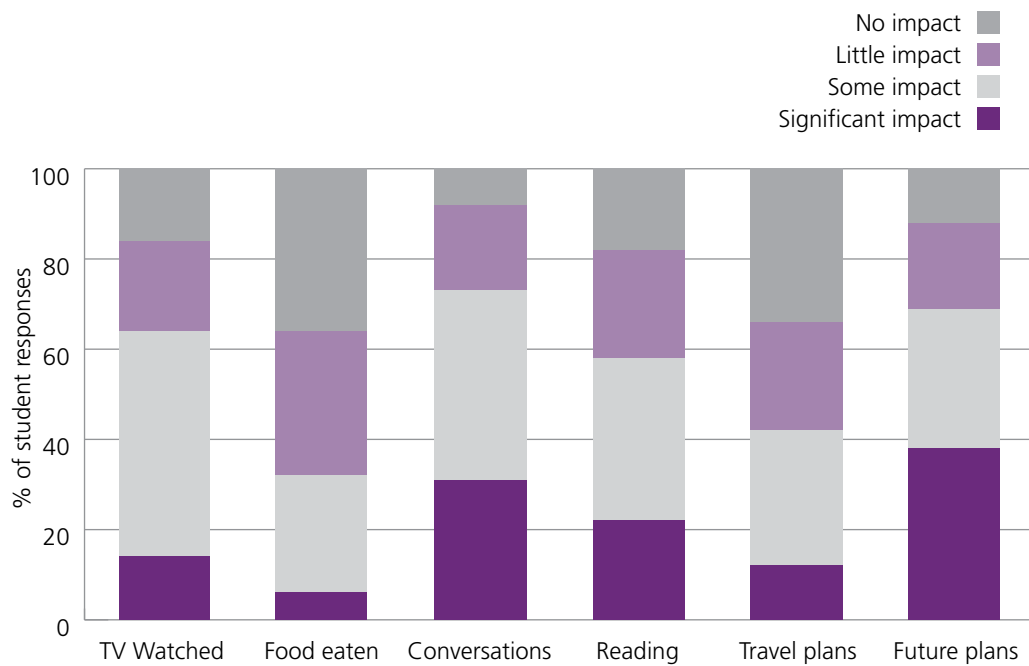
Figure 14 Impact of course on student behaviours



Weighted score reflects proportion of responses given as significant impact, some impact, little impact and no impact.

If one looks at the breakdown of this data in terms of the specific themes, what is noticeable is that the significant impact was highest in conversations and plans for the future and much less on travel and food. This suggests that the impacts appear to be greater in areas directly related to their course and future career.

Figure 15 The impacts of the World Development course on student behaviours



In terms of students’ comments regarding these specific themes, the following evidence of impact can be seen in relation to the impact of the course on decisions and actions taken.

Figure 16 Impact on Decisions Taken

<p>Newspapers, news, TV programs</p>	<p><i>Make more of an effort to be more up to date with the news</i></p> <p><i>Watching the news, reading the newspaper more, and what newspapers or development news sites, generally more interested in current affairs.</i></p>
<p>Change of consumer habits (fairtrade)</p>	<p><i>Taking notice of where food items are sourced from, when at the supermarket, and trying to buy more fairtrade produce</i></p> <p><i>Thinking twice about where my food, drink and clothes have come from</i></p>
<p>University Choice / Career</p>	<p><i>I would like to study global development at university</i></p> <p><i>I want to go to university and study anthropology and world development as a combined subject and then work in the IMF and sort them out</i></p> <p><i>it has affected my career choice from engineering to renewable engineering</i></p>
<p>Want to Travel</p>	<p><i>The course have made me even more inclined to travel to much more adventurous parts of the world It has made me want to see the world and perhaps get involved in small scale projects to help those in poverty</i></p> <p><i>I have always really wanted to go to Africa at some point in my life and volunteer/teach and World Development has definitely confirmed this and I am now going on my gap year.</i></p>
<p>Discussions with friends & family</p>	<p><i>Tell my mum about stuff I learn.</i></p> <p><i>Partaking in more intellectual conversations because now I understand it</i></p> <p><i>As it is an interesting topic I often discuss points raised in the course with my peers outside of class for their views</i></p>

Global awareness / Global citizenship	<p><i>Has opened my eye to worldwide issues not just in the UK</i></p> <p><i>My perception of the whole world, my views are now a lot fairer, I look at the whole picture before constructing a view</i></p> <p><i>It has helped me to understand and widen my own view in accordance with other views for a more wholesome view</i></p>
Volunteer / Humanitarian work	<p><i>This course has encouraged me to take a gap year in order to do voluntary work</i></p> <p><i>I previously travelled to Africa. In doing world development, I decided I wanted to do nursing and then return to Malawi</i></p> <p><i>Plans for the future: I want to volunteer in an LEDC to teach children who may not get the chance of a real education</i></p>
Further learning / Interest	<p><i>It has put into perspective the consequences of economic and social issues meaning I am now more interested in reading newspapers or watching news more. It also makes me consider whether to study it further and learn more</i></p> <p><i>It has made me want to study some issues further and put into perspective what consequences my actions have</i></p> <p><i>The need to be up to date on global affairs has caused me to widen my choice of reading</i></p>
Political views	<p><i>Probably would vote now whereas before I wouldn't have had knowledge to</i></p> <p><i>A lot more careful on what I buy/use</i></p>
Recycling	<p><i>I now recycle more, use less energy, eat fair trade items. Watch even more documentaries and tell others about these things</i></p>

What is noticeable about these observations is not just the similarity with other data and evidence (see Bourn and Brown, 2011), but also the wide variations in responses. There is evidence, as this study has shown through earlier sections, of the impact of the course on choice of further study and possible future career. A number of students refer to impact in terms of purchasing materials, travel and volunteering, but very few said it had any direct political impact on them. This suggests that for many students, World Development is still primarily seen as a moral subject rather than a political one, or one concerned with social change. There is evidence of 'opening up minds' and 'challenging and questioning assumptions' but the response to this is individual and personal, including volunteering and travel, rather than action for change.

5

Conclusion

This research study has aimed to address the value of the World Development A-level on young people's learning and understanding about international development, the extent to which it is perceived by them as relevant to their education, and its impact in terms of changing attitudes, perceptions and behaviour and global issues. Building on research conducted by Bowes in 2011, this study gathered evidence based on returned questionnaires from over 150 young people who had completed the examination.

The evidence gathered suggests that young people did learn a great deal from the course, it was seen as relevant to their lives, and, for a considerable number, influenced their future plans. The research also shows the complex nature of learning about development, especially its many aspects and wide range of themes and topics that are both challenging, in terms of knowledge and skills gained, but also pose responses in terms of values of justice and fairness in the world. What is less clear, however, is the extent to which the course resulted in young people's further engagement in international development.

For many young people who undertook the course, the pedagogical approach, whilst challenging, was seen positively, providing opportunities and space for them to pursue their own interests.

This research study has aimed to show what has been the contribution of the World Development A-level to young people's learning, understanding and engagement with international development. This has been based on comparing research by Bowes in 2011 with a survey with 150 students who have completed the examination in 2012. What the research has shown is that the course is seen overwhelmingly positively by those who completed the survey. The World Development subject is seen as relevant to young people's own learning and

future studies and career. It has had an impact upon their understanding of development, challenged assumptions and encouraged further investigation and possible travel and volunteering.

It is clear that, although the development community places more emphasis on values and attitudes, the students themselves responded more positively to the factual content of the course. There were suggestions that this equips them to contribute to debate and helps them to make informed decisions. The course has not, however, automatically led to transformations in their views and actions, but this should not be surprising for 17 and 18 year olds whose main concerns seem to be about securing a good university place and having some sense of personal security for their future career. Also the interest in the course and the subject matter cannot be divorced from wider changes and influences in society, be it the profile of development themes, current world events or crisis in global financial systems.

Finally, in terms of the evidence gained from this study in relation to pedagogical concepts underpinning development education, what is noticeable from the comments by students is the extent to which this A-level has resulted in some questioning of aid and development and particularly the role of NGOs. Critical thinking skills clearly have been a key feature of the course alongside a pedagogy that promotes participatory learning and understanding of 'real world' experiences. The enthusiasm of many of the teachers for the approaches in the course demonstrates the support for an approach that, in many ways, challenges the dominant modes of learning for A-levels in general. It is possible that one of the legacies of this course may well be as much to do with the underlying principles and approaches towards teaching and learning, as well as depth of knowledge about world development.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Participants in the 2012 research

Name or school or College	Number of students who participated in the survey
Colchester Sixth Form College	16
Hills Road Sixth Form College	11
Godalming Sixth Form College	25
Durham Gilesgate Sixth Form College	13
Truro Sixth Form College	31
Exeter College	34
Bishop's Castle Community College	5
Polesworth School	11
William Morris Academy	7

Appendix 2: Questionnaire for 2012 research**Development Education at A-level: the impacts of the World Development A-level qualification post-16.**

Research for DFID and the Development Education Centre, Institute of Education, London

1. Gender: Male Female

Name of College/School _____

2. How would you describe your ethnicity? _____

3. What other A-level/post-16 qualifications are you taking?

Have you travelled outside Europe? Yes No

If yes, please state where

4. Do any members of your immediate family live outside Europe?

Yes No

If yes, please state where

5. Which of the following has had an impact on you?

(Please place in rank order. 1= most impact)

Factual content of the course

Ideas discussed during the course

Values and attitudes discussed during the course

Teaching methods used / the ways you engaged and learned about development

Please explain why

6. Which aspects / themes of the course have changed your ideas / understandings / perceptions?

- People and Resources Poverty and Inequality
 Economic Social Political

7. In what ways have your ideas/ understandings / and perceptions changed?

8. Has the World Development A-level changed your perceptions about any of the following? If yes, please explain how:

Inequality

Images of the developing world

Poverty

World Issues e.g. resource use

Yourself

Other perceptions

9. What impact has A-level World Development had on your own personal actions?

What impact on ...	Some impact	A little impact	A significant impact	No impact
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What TV you watch

What food you eat

What conversations you have

What you read

Where you travel

Your plans for the future

What activities you take part in

Other impacts on your life?

If the course has affected the actions and decisions you take, please explain how and in what areas:

10. Please use this space to make any other comments about the World Development A-level course

Appendix 3: School and colleges involved with Bowes' research, 2011

Due to ethical considerations, all data from Bowes' 2011 study was anonymised. The table below identifies each school and college by a number and provides detail about the type of institution.

Number given to institution	Type of institution
1	Comprehensive/Secondary Modern
2	Sixth Form/Tertiary College
3	Sixth Form/Tertiary College
4	Sixth Form/Tertiary College
5	Comprehensive/Secondary Modern
6	Comprehensive/Secondary Modern
7	Comprehensive/Secondary Modern
8	Sixth Form/Tertiary College
9	Sixth Form/Tertiary College
10	Other
11	Sixth Form/Tertiary College

Appendix 4: Students' 'other' reasons for taking World Development A-level

(taken from Bowes' research)

Examples from a range of schools and colleges:

I wanted a change from dance and it was the only option available

Got good grades on human geography, world development seemed to be a subject I'd get good grades in.

It seemed really interesting to study something that I had no idea about and I was interested in learning about global issues

My parents were missionaries abroad in Nepal for 10 years, and so I lived there for most of my life. My sisters also have a keen interest in development and have encouraged me to explore it as well.

I have always been interested and concerned about developing countries and I wanted to learn more about them.

It sounded interesting. I already had some experience that made me enthusiastic about it from helping run a young co-operative selling fairtrade foods and doing assemblies about issues such as people trafficking and fair trade in high school.

Like to learn more about why there is so much inequality, why some people are so rich when there's some people with no basic needs

It's a bit different and not "traditional". I was interested in learning about the development of poor countries

Because it surrounds you in everyday life and there was not the opportunity to take anything like it at school. (The closest we had was geography but it was never very similar).

Appendix 5: Quotations showing what students have enjoyed about the World Development course (taken from Bowes' research)

Learning about resource problems in other countries and how they overcome them.

World Debt; it gave me a wider view of how poverty was caused and helped me to understand the reasons behind it

The most interesting part has been understanding about the wrongful allocations of basic needs in the world we live in today

One important thing I have learnt so far is that there is enough food for everyone in the world – just that it is not distributed properly.

Food crisis in Kenya and what is being done, because it's interesting to see different ways of life and be able to see what charities actually do and the results.

Learning about poverty especially in Africa as my mum was born in Zimbabwe

All the things we have had to do on social development, like China's one child policy because I enjoy social development more than economic or environmental

Looking at the World Bank and its control on the world

Pros and Cons of Aid as it makes you reassess commonly held views.

Writing an essay which compared the treatment of homosexuals in the Netherlands and Uganda and listening to a speech from a development worker in Mozambique

The most interesting part has been looking at the wide variety of case studies, how historical events have led to current situations now (e.g. Zimbabwe, Aral Sea, Australian Aborigines, colonialism etc) and also looking at Top down and Bottom up solutions that have been tried and that are in place now

Looking at the theory behind capitalism and the free market against communism, and looking at countries like Rwanda and China that show different positives and negatives of both ideas.

Studying the impacts of free-trade economics and globalisation. And also researching into the effect of stereotypes on social inequality for my coursework.

The NGO work and case studies on rural areas, also subjects like the oil spills and sweatshops that have such a huge impact on our lives but such a negative impact on other people.

Appendix 6: Quotations showing what students have not enjoyed about the World Development course (taken from Bowes' research)

Some of the language used can be extremely complicated

Lessons could be more interesting, more documentaries, hard hitting facts, such a great subject should be presented to students in a much more exciting way.

Was aware of quite a lot of topics already covered so lost interest in those regions.

Learning about how unfortunate people are around the world

The beginning of basic human needs was the least interesting.

Analysing data

Malthusian theory, it contradicts what we are taught in Geography

We sometimes don't have long enough to discuss the things we learn.

Contrasts regularly with information I learn in Geography, isn't scientific enough for me.

Development indicators as I studied this in Geography

It has challenged my pre conceptions of development throughout Asia and Africa while instilling a sense of personal morality and ethics.

I dislike when I hear about the sad stories and just feel so much guilt about what I've got

I, personally, prefer to learn more on how development affects people on a global scale so I often find topics which are more geography related ie things to do with land quite dry but I understand that it's part of the course

Population themes because it's hard to remember the different arguments

Course work

Style of teaching

A lot of the political elements I have found hard to understand

The lack of a textbook so you can't review the core ideas and modules.

I haven't enjoyed the economic aspects of the course as I find it hard to understand.

The exam does not cover a lot of what you learn as the course is broad and the exam really narrow.

Appendix 7: Quotations showing how students feel World Development A-level has influenced them personally and academically. (taken from Bowes' research)

Introduced poverty stricken places I could volunteer in around the world

It has helped me to understand different concepts in the human side of geography which may influence whether or not I choose geography as a degree.

Yes, studying World Development has made me want to consider doing aid work in poorer countries and perhaps once I graduate from university, or maybe later on in my life, I would like to go to Kenya or South Africa and help people there with living and maybe provide support for them. It has confirmed that I would like to continue travelling, and after university hopefully help others in my profession in less wealthy areas.

It makes me aware of the amount of water one uses for everyday life and think about those who do not have it

Has made me more grateful for what I have. Also made me more aware of current events.

Just by doing the first topic, I have tried to waste less water and waste less energy in my electrical items.

Previously I had not planned on attending university but now this seems ever more likely. Also, it has pushed me further to do a work placement or future in working within a charity possibly.

I wanted to study geography or human geography however I now want to study international development

I would like to travel around the world helping people in countries and would like to volunteer to teach English in a country.

I am just more aware of the environment around us and in other places around the world.

Has made me more aware of complexity behind development issues and how problems can have different sources

The course has completely changed my outlook upon the world, furthering my understanding and challenges to world issues along with helping me to take a number of different viewpoints into my arguments before reaching conclusion upon any issue.

I now don't like Comic Relief as they don't raise the right awareness of poverty such as high inflation on debts

Photojournalism has an element of world development in it, as my future jobs may include taking photographs in other countries about development issues

I am more aware of how the world is interconnected, and how I can make differences to my lifestyle that affect the world, i.e. buying fairtrade products, not buying cheap clothes that could have come from a sweat shop

I was already conscientious. However my ability to assess the effectiveness of charities has greatly improved, so I am in fact more sceptical and discerning about which I donate to.

Appendix 8: Quotations revealing students' high regard for World Development A-level
(taken from Bowes' research)

It is very interesting and a great course to learn more about life in different areas to us.

Interesting how each topic links in. I.e. Malthus theory links in well with the reason why there is hunger and drought around the world.

It is very interesting and engaging and all people should study it so they have an appreciation for what we have and what other people do not have, and so we do not take things for granted but be thankful for what we have.

The teacher is great and teaches the subject in a way everyone understands.

It's not what I expected it to be and it's still so interesting! Every lesson is different and you could never say you were bored in a lesson

It's a lot like the human aspect of Geography. Also the areas we have covered so far, have been covered at Citizenship GCSE

It has been the most interesting course I have taken throughout school and college. World Development should be available to many more students and promoted on par with more mainstream humanities subjects such as History.

I like the freedom to explore different case studies and still be able to answer the questions in the exam.

From the course and my own interest I know that the smaller lifestyle issues are important, however I am excited to learn more about development issues and learn how to challenge the systems that cause the inequalities- A2 especially has, so far, been a good kick start for this.

Appendix 9: Quotations showing what teachers have enjoyed about the World Development A-level

(taken from Bowes' research)

We've had a lot of feedback from parents and students who say it's the best thing they ever did as they really got into it. Lots of students chose it as their fourth subject but then carried it on to A2 and then at uni. (teacher from institution 10)

I think it's the way education should be heading in terms of multi-disciplinary nature, that education in this country is far too specialised from an early age. (teacher from institution 10)

An opportunity to deliver important content in a creative and engaging way (teacher from institution 10)

'I'm quite evangelical about it and if I were to pick one part of my job I love the most, it would be teaching World Development' (teacher from 10)

Development Education Research Centre

The Development Education Research Centre at the Institute of Education was established in 2006 with funding from DFID and acts as the knowledge hub for research and debate on development education and related areas. The Centre is engaged in a range of research and consultancy projects and runs a Master's programme on development education. It is also responsible for editing the International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning.

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