Examining the influence of North South School Partnerships on schools in Africa and Asia

To examine the influence of international school partnership (ISP) participation on southern schools, we conducted a meta-analysis of our findings of 13 research reports from our three north-south ISP research and development projects funded by DFID, British Council, and PLAN. We extracted each reference to southern partnership influence from each report and categorised them according to their specific reference to influence on students, teachers, schools and communities. Within each stakeholder group, we analysed and categorised the evidence and identified the emerging trends and patterns of influence. In order to prioritise the evidence, we present the findings below in order of the most robustly evidenced themes/patterns.

**Partnership influence on southern students.** Our overall meta-analysis indicates that southern students benefit from ISP engagement. Our evidence strongly suggests that students develop skills that potentially positively influence academic achievement, namely literacy and English skills, ICT skills, and other related skills (maths and critical thinking). Students also develop creativity skills during active engagement in their partnership work. For example, when describing their development of English language skills, a Tanzanian student shares: "We tend to try and outdo one another in speaking English language fluently especially weeks before, during and briefly after exchange visits to our school by partners from abroad." A Nigerian teacher discusses how partnerships develop creativity: "Students have participated in free art drawing and creative art work. The students also took part in a competition to create the partnership logo and their entries have been sent to the overseas partners." There was also evidence of teacher perception of ISP influence on students' academic achievement.

Our evidence also demonstrates that ISPs may assist students in developing other skills and attributes not directly related to academic achievement including social skills. A Ghanaian teacher describes the influence of exchange visits on their students: "It has also given them the opportunity to socialise with their counterparts from other countries when they visited Ghana". Some of the responses from the teachers include, "pupils learnt how to be sociable and how to cooperate with each other." Students also develop a better understanding of – and appreciation for – other cultures by interacting with northern students and learning about their countries and cultures. Students often indicate they learnt about specific content and issues affecting their partner students.

**Partnership influence on southern teachers.** Our meta-analysis underscores the importance of meaningful teacher ISP engagement - as teachers facilitate learning in their respective classrooms. Student learning opportunities depend on their teacher content and pedagogical knowledge. Our evidence suggests that participation in ISP training

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1. This research brief was prepared by Dr. Karen Edge k.edge@ioe.ac.uk & Mayowa Olatoye.
2. Our DFID reports: [http://www.ioe.ac.uk/study/departments/lcc/33261.html](http://www.ioe.ac.uk/study/departments/lcc/33261.html)
3. Our British Council reports: [http://www.ioe.ac.uk/study/departments/lcc/50794.html](http://www.ioe.ac.uk/study/departments/lcc/50794.html)
4. Our PLAN reports: [http://www.ioe.ac.uk/study/departments/lcc/50837.html](http://www.ioe.ac.uk/study/departments/lcc/50837.html)
programmes and exchange visits assists southern teachers’ acquisition of partner countries' knowledge and development of an understanding and appreciation for their educational systems and cultures. As one school study describes: “The benefits for staff are very similar to benefits for students and include the following: exposure to different cultures, development of relationships, exchange of ideas and communication with friends from a different culture.” Southern teachers also learn about topical global issues and often develop a more positive attitude towards those issues.

Our evidence also suggests that southern teachers report developing a wider repertoire of teaching strategies. Teacher learning most often derives from exposure to how teachers in other countries handle instruction and management. Through this process, teachers have the opportunity to reflect on their teaching. For example, a Zambian teacher describes how their collaboration with UK teachers influenced their teaching practices: “The use of traffic lights method has made it easier for me to determine pupils’ level of understanding. Pupils also find it easier to express their level of understanding of a particular task to me. If they put a red colour, I know they are saying 'they did not understand'. If they put orange colour, they are saying 'they understand but they need help' and if they put green colour, they are saying they have understood.'

**Influence of ISPs on schools.** Our research provides evidence of positive ISP school-level influence. There is strong evidence that ISP participation can support southern schools in focusing more on student learning and improving relationships and collaboration between teachers. There is strong evidence that ISPs may benefit schools by improving school-level facilities and leadership.

**Influence of ISPs on communities.** Evidence of ISP influence on southern communities was limited due to challenges in accessing communities during the study. However, according to teachers and leaders, ISPs may provide opportunities for better school-community relationships. ISP participation can also improve the stature of schools in their communities. ISPs offer communities opportunities to learn about their schools’ partner countries as one Ghanaian participant states: “through cultural displays, the community has also been exposed to the traditional games of other countries.” A South African teacher also comments: "The community has also learnt from meeting participants from overseas that 'we are all one people with similar problems and challenges despite the distances and different skin colour.' The staff also suggest that learners, the community and themselves have learnt valuable lessons from their partnership."