

CEID Seminar Series 2017/18

Seminar 3

More than Knowledge Transfer

Jeffery Hall, 5.30-7pm, December 14th 2017

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More than Knowledge Transfer? The wider benefits of postgraduate taught programmes for international development

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Project aims and research questions

Small scale exploratory study aimed to explore how the values, understandings and practices shaped through participation in postgraduate programmes on education and international development are enacted in students' personal and professional contexts, and whether and how this occurs in ways which support the wellbeing of others.

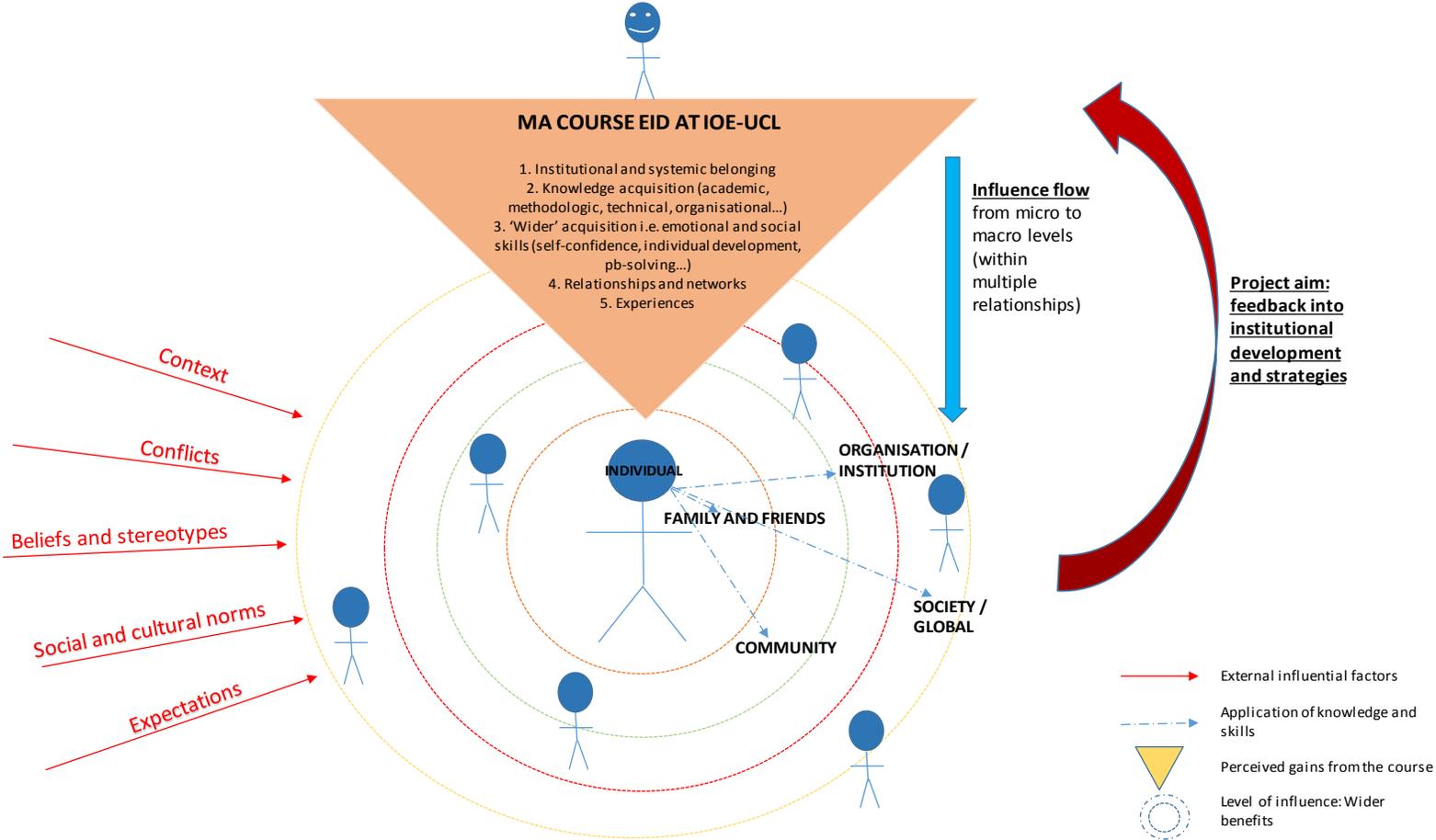
The research sought to answer the following questions:

- What do former students value about their experience of studying an MA programme in education and international development in London?
- How (if at all) do they consider their experiences to have affected their own personal and professional development?
- How do they feel that their experiences on the MA have influenced the extent to which they have been able to support the wellbeing of others?
- What factors affect the extent to which former students are able to draw on their experiences of the MA in order to bring about positive change to the lives of others?

Some background

- The University at a Cross Roads – Crisis and Renewal – Connecting to the outside
- International Education - The EDC-EID Project – Education in Developing Countries – Student-graduate linkages via **EDC News** – Minimally dialogic and largely transmissive; place bound...
- Connecting insiders and outsiders – The Connected University – Alumni Society – Again place bound...
- From hierarchal-networks to networked-heterarchies – Time and space compressions
- Building the cosmopolitan ‘ecological’ university - Extending and enabling diversities
- Identifying and overcoming absences and exclusions - Omissions, contradictions, tensions and disconnects- And connecting them
- A question of values, communication and power(s) (Castells; Ball et al)

Conceptual framing



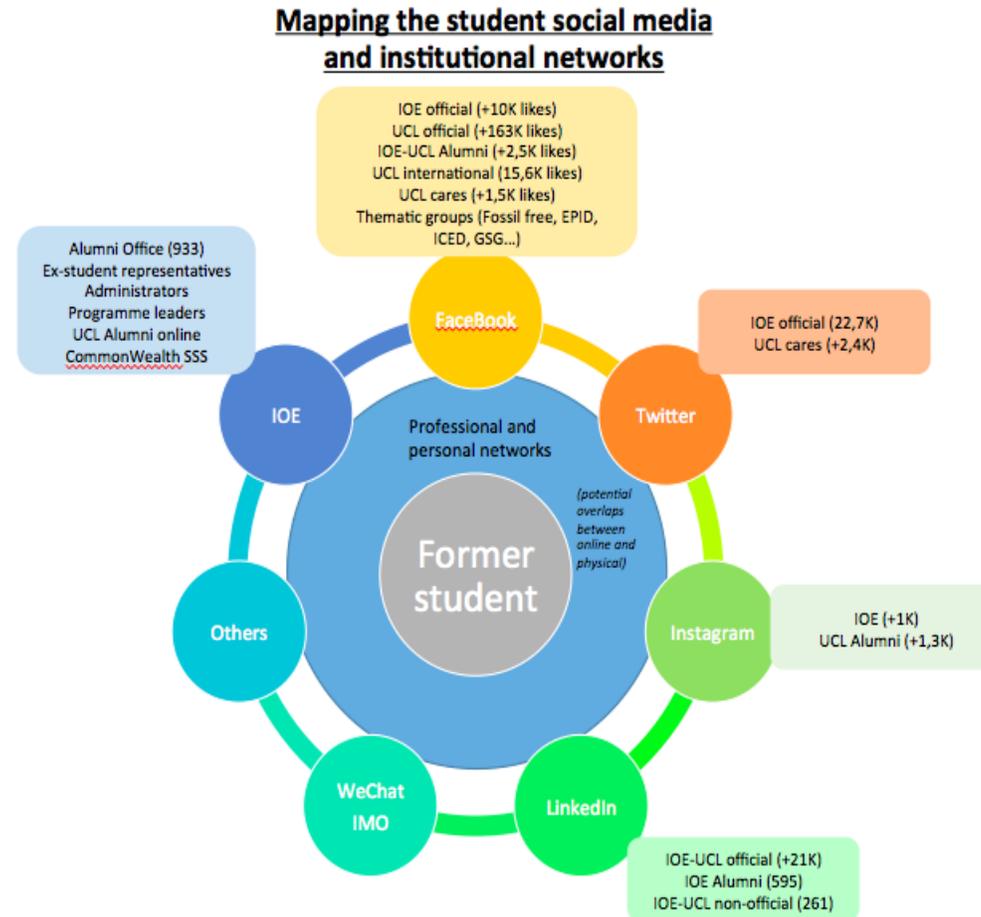
Methodology

Three phases:

(i) a mapping exercise to identify potential networks of former students from the programme who might participate in the research;

(ii) An online survey using SurveyMonkey which was administered between mid-June and mid July 2017 and which generated 127 responses;

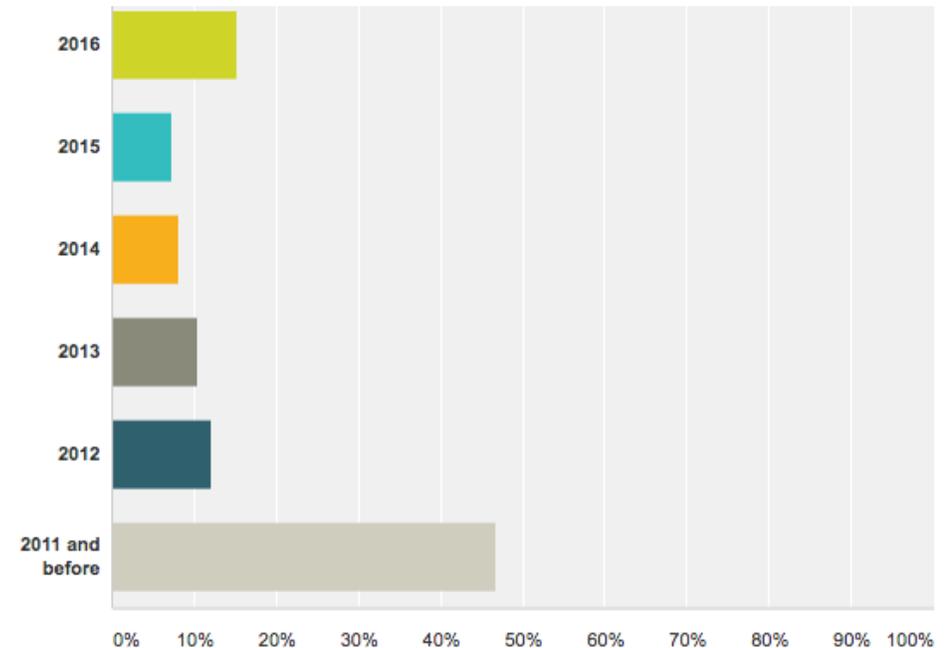
(iii) In-depth semi-structured interviews with (22) former students purposefully selected (from those who completed the survey and volunteered to take part in a subsequent interview)



Respondents: the online survey

- 66% female, 34% male
- 29% were from the UK; 21% from Africa; 19% from Asia; 12% USA and Canada; 10% from Europe; 6% from Central and South America; 2% from the Caribbean; 1% Australia/New Zealand
- 54% studied MA EID; 21% EGID; 19% EPEID; 12% EHPID
- 60% full-time face-to-face; 18% part-time face-to-face; 14% part-time mainly online

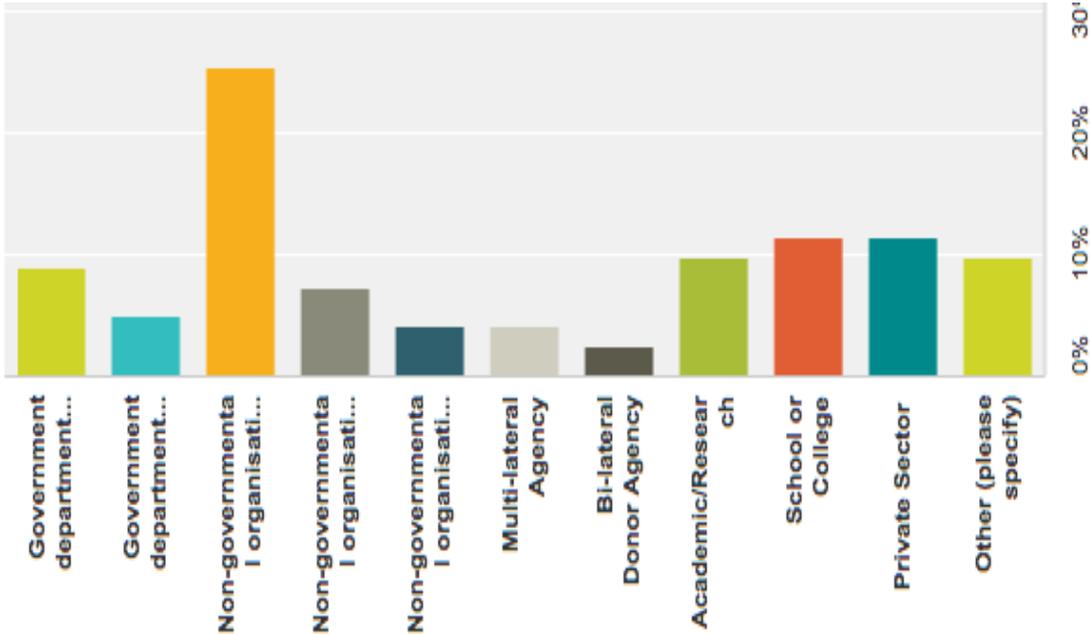
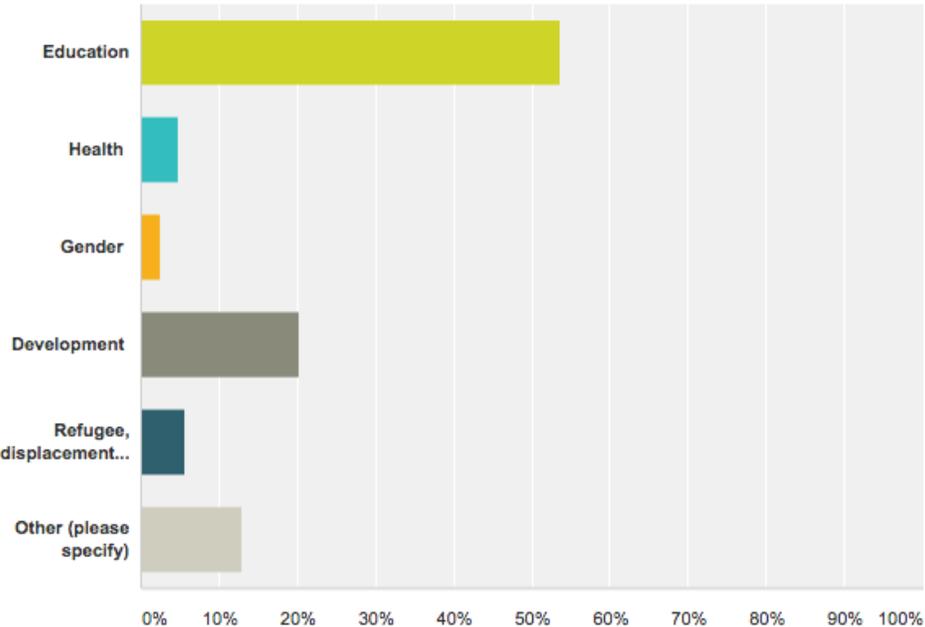
Year of completion:



Findings: the online survey

What participants are doing now

85% of research participants were working full or part-time; 7% were engaged in further study



Findings: the online survey

Experiences of the MA

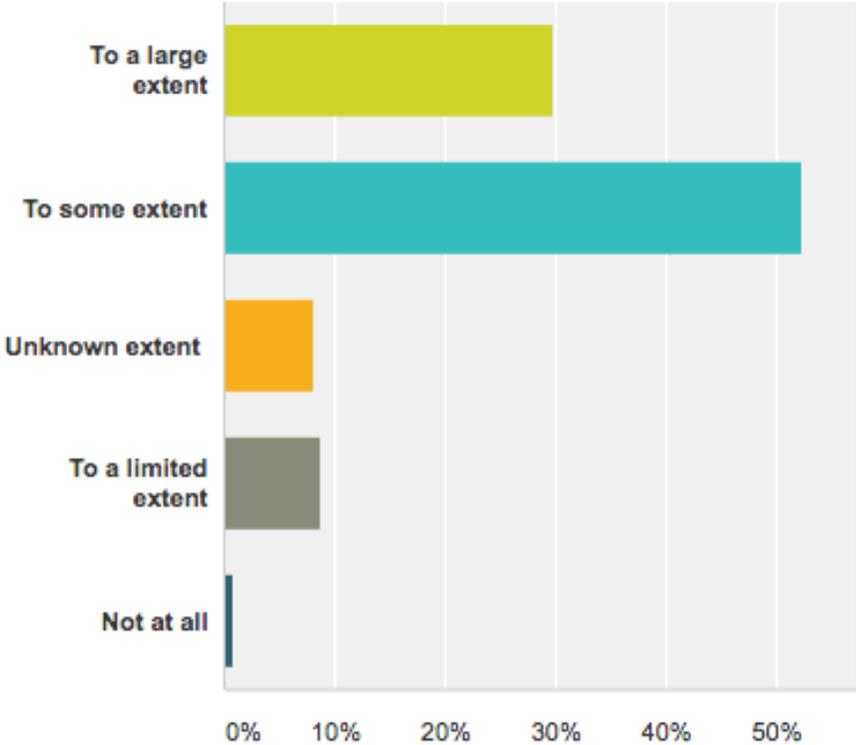
- 75% of respondents believed that the programme had prepared them either extremely well or well for their professional lives; 18% felt the programme had prepared them to some extent; and 5% felt that the programme had not prepared them well
- When asked which aspects of the programme they had found most useful the most frequently selected options were obtaining a professional qualification (70%); developing critical thinking (68%); exposure to new ideas and skills (60%); developing theoretical and conceptual thinking (54%); and academic writing skills (52%); developing professional networks (34%)

Professional and personal networks

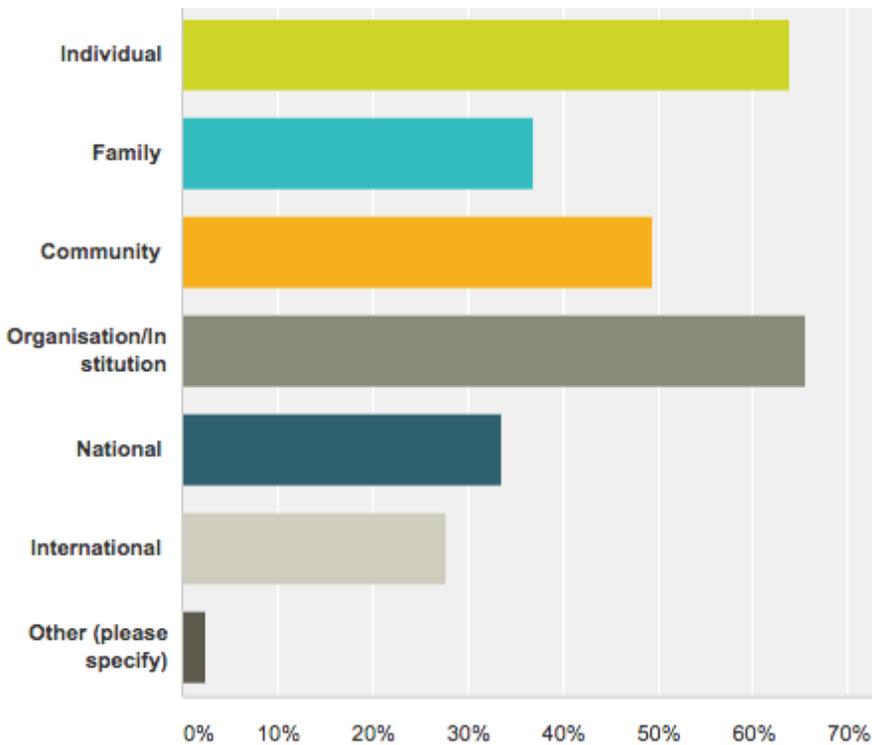
- 79% of respondents indicated that they were still in contact with former students on the same course; 38 % remained in contact with students on other courses; 43% with academic staff at UCL IOE and 16% with administrative staff.

Findings: the online survey

Wider benefits?



Spheres of influence



Respondents: Interviews

- Eight were originally from the UK, two were from Pakistan, two from Canada and the one from each of Australia, Mexico, Denmark, South Sudan, US, Kenya, South Africa, Japan, Costa Rica and China.
- Thirteen participants were female and nine were male.
- Fourteen of the participants had studied MA EID, four EPEID, two EGID and two EHPID.

Findings: Interviews

Reasons for studying the MA

*“I was fed up teaching English, and that wasn’t a long-term plan anyway... I came across the course at IoE, and thought, “Well, that almost exactly fits what I am interested in... It was to make that career transition from being a teacher into working to support the development of education systems”
(Participant 3)*

*I wanted to have a formal education qualification for professional reasons, and also just for, I suppose, a sense of self-recognition, I guess, in the sense that I was working in that environment, so I thought it would give me better status, I suppose, to have some kind of a formal qualification in education
(participant 2)*

I basically sat down and said, “Okay, I’ve come out of the country I’ve been in for the last number of years. It’s an opportunity to simply sit down and explore the world I’ve been living in,” really... Then maybe try and answer a few questions about what might that world look like in a few years’ time, and, therefore, in what way the Master’s would contribute towards developing that as a sort of professional narrative, without sounding... If we say, “It was a sort of professional development,” it sounds rather cold. I think it’s sort of fits more into that idea of personal transitions (participant 16)

Findings: Interviews

Expectations and experiences of studying

I actually had very low expectations. I didn't really want to be a student again. I wasn't really excited about studying at a university. The course was actually above my expectations. It was better than I thought it was going to be (3)

I guess content was a bit of an expectation. The general figuring, that a masters is going to be a lot of literature. I guess, for the core courses there, my expectations were pretty much what we got (...) That concepts, theories, and issues course, I found probably the most rewarding. It really expanded what I had already been trying pre-read and get into (18)

Oh yes [my expectations were met], in terms of being surrounded by other students from all over the world, yes, brilliant. (1)

While most participants felt the course met their expectations, a smaller number felt they had not been met fully, and some expressed concerns about where the programme would take them in terms of their career trajectories.

Findings: Interviews

What participants value: Academic, social and personal gains

I think, academically, I gained a lot in terms of being able to analyse, particularly, those skills, academic skills you need to write your dissertation and things like that on the academic side. So, yes, analysing your sources, developing arguments, structuring essays, absolutely fantastic, and that's been quite useful for me a little bit later on as well. (1)

What else that I took from the programme? If I can [answer] in one single word it would be awakening, intellectual awakening. (6)

...One thing I should say is that one thing that was an unexpected experience from the course, but in a slightly negative way, is that the more that I looked at development... the more I just thought, "Actually, what is the point of being involved in this?" (5)

It was genuinely international... The course made a space for people to share those experiences...I thought that was really positive and improved my knowledge, a lot, of contexts that I didn't know about. (10)

Findings: Interviews

From theory to practice

I go there and give points that I can actually cite authorities in that field, so find myself to be more convincing, because when you tell people that this issue should be tackled in this way, and you give examples maybe from other countries or suggestions that have been given by well-known scholars, you find that your point is received better as compared to just talking or just giving your own opinions (15)

moving on after the course, applying certain theories in the workplace as well has been very, very useful (1)

For instance, when approaching the issue of gender, that I'm aware that there have been different approaches in the past, and that in many cases, on the issue of gender, everyone thinks that they're all for it, but they tend to have very old-fashioned views of how it should be done. So, I suppose now I have the theoretical basis to be able to explain, kind of, the intellectual path that they need to make, if that makes sense? (2)

Findings: Interviews

But... challenges of applying learning

Facing resistance

in ministries or in international organisations, they're not used to kind of saying, "Okay, that's one way of looking at things and then there's this other way." I would say that having the theoretical basis which I acquired during the IOE course enables me to put in more kind of simple terms, "Okay, this is that, for instance, in gender. That way that you're approaching it is a way that was very popular in the 1970s and 1980s, and now there's this additional vision."... mean, I suppose it's a kind of constant resistance, because if you're looking at what you learn when you're in the university setting... obviously it's the cutting edge. Then, what policymakers are doing is several years behind, really. So, you can kind of try and push it slowly

The complexities of context

The other thing I would like to highlight is around evidence and this was really important even when I was working with DFID. The thing around developing a programme, there's no evidence. If you google for South Sudan and you really want to find research papers or research ...then in South Sudan I'm sure you won't find it... How do you begin to think around getting reliable context specific evidence to support our work I think in the scales that you learn in IOE we try to see how you can use evidence from thinking about context and sometimes even by the culture and diversity to help our programming.

And difficulties of career development, funding, and constraints on mobility

Findings: Interviews

Wider benefits? Spheres of influence from the family to the global

I feel, yes I have contributed to my child's life, I have contributed to my own life, I have contributed to my family as me and my husband's life, I have contributed to my general circle of family and friends (5)

With DFID as educational advisor and DFID is a donor so, I was a donor to the country. On top of the work that I did which I feel is really supporting children and have an impact on the country, we did some policy work, DFID supports policy work. So we were able to support policy involvement on national languages, policy on learning materials and work on the curriculum (11)

Of course, my contribution is limited and of course it happens mostly at the policy level, national capitals. Also now obviously again in a regional office... I'm travelling one country to another but working with very high-ranking senior officials, but my work is to influence their thinking and their decisions at their levels, which I want to believe are being translated in the way that I would like to see, especially among the communities and the children who are most marginalised... Of course, it's not as easy or as straightforward or simple as it could be, but still, I want to feel and I want to believe that I make a difference a little bit (19)

Conclusions

- What students value linked to knowledge gained about content and topics, but also the values which informed teaching, a critical awareness of development issues, learning alongside co-students (from a range of country contexts), and networking opportunities
- Data suggests that former students have been able to draw on their MA experiences in their professional and personal lives, and they are having impact on the wellbeing of others in a range of ways and spaces
- The extent to which they are able to do this has been affected both by personal factors which have influenced career trajectories (including limited mobility, family commitments, health, or making transitions late on in careers), and issues relating to the contexts within which they are working (including organisational as well as national contexts)

Moving forward

- Monitoring student expectations, experiences and trajectories during and after completing EID programmes
- Supporting development of student and alumni networks
- Wider research concerned with the student mobility and the wider benefits of postgraduate study in international development, looking beyond the EID cluster