CHAPTER 4

From the Local to the Global and Back Again: Reflections on Journeying to India, Learning about Gandhi's Philosophy and the Influence on the Professional and the Personal

Denise Summers and Dianne Dowling

This chapter explores what can be learnt from a journey such as the one Denise, who led the co-operative inquiry described in Chap. 3, and Dianne, one of the colleagues involved in the inquiry, along with other UK Postgraduate Certificate in Education and Certificate in Education (PGCE/Cert Ed) teachers, took to India to attend an intensive two-week course entitled Gandhi and Globalisation. A colleague had organised such trips for a number of years, and they had proved successful in helping develop Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in professional practice. This chapter explains how such an experience can inform practice generally and, in this case, how it supported us in embedding ESD into our PGCE/Cert Ed programmes, through learning first-hand about the impact of globalisation on small rural communities in India and the relevance of Gandhi's philosophy in encouraging peaceful, equitable and sustainable ways of living. To be immersed in such a different culture provided the basis for profound reflection on how such an experience may influence our plans and encourage our student teachers to address global issues within their teaching. We kept reflective journals during and after

D. Summers, R. Cutting (eds.), *Education for Sustainable Development in Further Education*, DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-51911-5_4

the trip that we shared with the rest of our co-operative inquiry team, Chris, Johanna and Ros, on our return.

We start by drawing directly from our experiences at Navdanya's (http://www.navdanya.org/earth-university) working community and by sharing examples of how the course speakers, Dr Vandana Shiva, Dr Satish Kumar and the Venerable Samdhong Rinpoche, Prime Minister of the Tibetan Government, in exile, embrace Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence to create a more sustainable way of living. Secondly, we examine the impact of globalisation on local communities and how global decision-making processes can affect access to resources. Lastly, we consider the influence of this on the different kind of learning needed for a sustainable future.

As student teachers in further education (FE) teach a wide variety of professional and academic programmes, the exploration of the sustainability agenda and its influence within different subject specialisms encourages a focus that might not otherwise have been considered. Sharing their learning with their peers provides an opportunity for the student teachers to consider sustainability issues from a much wider perspective than their own subject specialism, increasing their knowledge of the interconnections between subjects. This inspired students to plan joint sessions that encouraged links between programmes.

Box 4.1:

Think of ways in which you could work with colleagues from across your college to develop strategies that could help encourage ESD. What obstacles might there be? How might you overcome these? What other benefits beyond the sustainability agenda might be encouraged?

From the Local to the Global

The opportunity to attend the course on Gandhi and Globalisation, which takes place each year in India, deepened our understanding of the values underpinning sustainability, as well as introducing us to some of the global issues which would enable us to develop our curriculum further. It was held at Bija Vidyapeeth, which is based at the Navdanya Biodiversity Conservation Farm in Doon Valley, Uttarakhand, between the Ganga and the Yamuna rivers and the Shivalik and Himalayan mountain ranges. Dr Vandana Shiva, a leading international environmental activist, founded

Navdanya (meaning 'nine seeds'), which has rescued and conserved more than 5000 crops, which were in danger of extinction and are now made available to small farmers across India. It started as a participatory research initiative of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, with the aim of promoting non-violent farming and protecting biodiversity and small farmers. Following a cyclone in 1998, Navdanya distributed saline-resistant rice varieties which Shiva (2007, p.29) *calls* 'seeds of hope', in response to climate extremes.

The course lectures inspired us to explore the environmental, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical and spiritual issues underpinning ESD. Vandana Shiva provided us with a unique insight into India's resource inequalities and how basic needs such as food, water, shelter and healthcare are being denied to poor peasant farmers in India. Navdanya promotes the importance of indigenous knowledge and culture and awareness of the hazards of genetic modification and biopiracy in the face of globalisation. However, since the 1980s, in return for loans from the World Bank, Structural Adjustment Policies have forced India to open up to global corporations imposing the use of non-renewable, patented forms of genetically modified (GM) seeds requiring fertiliser and pesticides (Shiva 2005). She has major concerns about the use of land for growing crops such as sugarcane, cotton and oilseeds, for export, as this reduces the land available for food production, and as the acreage for these cash crops grows, the supply increases and the price falls. Poor farmers, who are now unable to use their farm-saved seeds, struggle to buy new seeds each year and become indebted to these corporations (Shiva 2005). As Sen and Grown (1987, p.61) argue, the pressure put on developing countries is unsustainable and:

> unless adjustment burdens are shared between surplus and deficit countries, and unless the most powerful countries stop living beyond their means, the crisis of the system will not be resolved.

With over 20 years of research and practical application of organic farming at Navdanya, Shiva (2007) maintains that the industrialised, globalised food system, which is based on oil, is unsustainable. She argues against monocultures and chemically fertilised soil that has little organic matter and is vulnerable to drought conditions and climate change. She promotes biodiverse organic farming systems that use less fossil fuel and helps develop water-retaining soil structures. This promotes quality soil,

less erosion and healthy food and avoids falling incomes and indebtedness for farmers, as well as rising consumer costs and the risk of polluted food. Navdanya is fossil fuel free, with solar panels producing hot water and bullocks ploughing and fertilising the land.

With hope as an imperative part of her message, Shiva continues to promote localisation of food production. In addressing issues of climate change, she calls for a reduction in 'food miles' and food sovereignty and for small farmers to be given the right to survive and operate in a vibrant local economy (Shiva 2007).

The Influence of Gandhi

Huckle (2006) suggests we need new systems of global governance that protect human and non-human nature and encourage ecological, economic, social, cultural and personal sustainability. This requires a greater emphasis on the role of community, active citizenship and democracy in developing sustainable livelihoods, with a consideration of eco-centric as well as anthropocentric values and a focus on sufficiency rather than efficiency.

As we learnt on the course, Gandhi believed in neither the power of the market nor the power of the state, but in the power of people and non-violence. Both capitalist and communist world views are based on the supremacy of human beings with natural resources and other species available for our benefit. In his lectures, Satish Kumar made the link between this 'speciesism' and other discriminatory 'isms' such as racism. Gandhi advocated respect for all beings (*sparsha bhavana*), which should be regardless of caste, colour, class, creed, sex, age, race and any other distinctions, including respect for all religions (*sarva dharma samanatva*). All should be free to practice their religion, but should also be free from any feeling of arrogance or exclusivity about that religion. The idea that one group can dominate or subjugate another group is violent and contrary to Gandhi's philosophy and practice of non-violence. However, although a focus on human rights is vital, this has to be balanced with the rights of the rest of the animate and inanimate earth:

> Basically it is a question of attitude. The attitude which allows people to kill animals and clear forests is the same attitude which allows strong nations to attack weaker nations. (Kumar 2006, p.317)

Sarvodaya, which is Sanskrit for 'all rise' and encourages taking care of each other, is Gandhi's view of how truth, love and compassion should form the basis of how we live our lives. This is an important example of how our learning in India influenced our teaching practice.

Introducing Gandhi's views provided an extension to the discussions on Equality and Diversity with our student teachers, avoiding a tick box mentality that some feel when introducing this subject and encouraged a very different perspective to the usual points raised.

Box 4.2:

Reflect on how you introduce equality and diversity in your teaching. Consider Gandhi's philosophy and his profound belief in equality, fairness and justice. Although subject to harsh treatment when imprisoned, he continued to work to create a better world with respect for all living beings and a fair division of resources. Consider how you might include a focus on Gandhi's life and philosophy and how you would make the links with the ESD agenda in terms of a respect for all living beings, as well as the Earth.

Gandhi was not against material but against materialism. As he states, 'Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed' (cited in Schumacher 1974). As Shiva (2005, p.116) reminds us:

> whenever we engage in consumption or production patterns which take more than we need, we are engaging in violence. Non-sustainable consumption and non-sustainable production constitutes a violent economic order.

This reveals a flaw in the concept of sustainable development introduced in the Brundtland Report (WCED 1987), which called for economic development to solve problems of economic degradation and poverty in developing countries. As Harding (2006, p.232) states, if development requires the further extraction of raw materials from the Earth, then:

> sustainability and development are contradictory concepts and 'sustainable development' is just economic growth dressed up in the language of deliberate obfuscation, used knowingly or not by those who care nothing for the Earth in order to fool us into thinking that they are taking her concerns seriously.

The problem for us in the developed, or perhaps over-developed, world is that we have become used to satisfying our greed rather than our need. Although there is recognition that emotional well-being improves as income increases (Kahnemann and Deaton 2010), there is no further improvement once income has reached a certain level. In order to accept the term 'development' in ESD, perhaps we should think of it as the flourishing of individuals within their local communities which is necessary to move away from mass consumption and work towards a sustainable future.

Box 4.3:

How do you encourage your students to flourish as individuals within their local communities? Are there enrichment opportunities at your college or can such opportunities be built into their programme of study? How can you involve your students in planning such activities and can their learning contribute to their studies.

Gandhi was confident in achieving an independent India, but did not want this to involve continuing with 'modernity, industrialisation, materialism and rule from the centre' (Kumar 2006, p.296), the characteristics of British India. He wanted to create a holistic and inclusive nation and proposed the following principles.

Non-violence (*ahimsa*) is the main principle through which we have come to know Gandhi's philosophy. It goes further than physical violence and includes restraining from aggressive and offensive thoughts which might lead to a cycle of violence. As Kumar (2006, p.298) notes:

> In spite of all the wars, conquests, colonialism and imperialism, humanity has learned nothing. We still believe in violence as the ultimate sanction. From newspaper articles to nuclear weapons, we follow the path of violence. Hindus and Muslims in India, Jews and Palestinians in the Middle East, Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland are too ready to believe that ultimately they will find a solution through violence.

In order to create a sustainable future, he calls for personal peace, world peace and peace with nature. The discussions around non-violence had a profound effect on us both, as we considered relationships with our students and our colleagues, and how we might introduce this philosophy when exploring classroom management with our student teachers. When

we shared this with the team, Chris suggested he would plan a session based on the non-violent approaches developed by Rosenberg (2003), as well as a session on 'values' (see Chap. 7). The classroom management session compared this humanist approach with the usual behaviourist approaches introduced and included role-play activities to experience the approach. In addition to supporting the development of classroom management strategies, it also encouraged a focus on using role-play as a pedagogic strategy, as follows:

Box 4.4:

The session developed encouraged our student teachers to reflect on a range of classroom management strategies based on behaviourist psychology. They identified the strengths and weaknesses of these and when they have found them useful, as well as times when they have fallen short of supporting them with difficulties faced in their practice.

Having introduced Gandhi's philosophy of non-violent communication, Chris used Rosenberg's (2003) strategies to introduce a more humanist approach in order to improve communication within the classroom. Student teachers carried out role-play activities to explore this approach and then reflected on how this helped to address the issues involved. Often students can feel negative about exposing themselves in role-plays and so showing how this can be done in groups of three, where two take part and one observes, helped to overcome this negativity and focus on the aim of the role-play.

Consider your approach to classroom management and whether you use behaviorist and/or humanist approaches. Are the approaches you use successful, or would it be helpful to explore the use of non-violent communication approaches further.

We also discussed the benefits of this approach in working with colleagues to avoid difficult working relationships and the consequent effect this may have on relationships and well-being. Taking this one step further and reflecting on the effects of terse communication when we go home to our families after a tiring day at work, encouraged us to consider how important it is to be aware of the way in which we communicate in all contexts.

Chris also used this approach to develop a session on cultural diversity and developing awareness of government policy initiatives for schools, colleges and universities which aim to prevent extremism and terrorism (see the Prevent duty guidance at HM Government 2015, online).

Non-consumerism (*asangraha*) is another of Gandhi's principles, and Shiva (2005) points out that to be non-violent, our processes of production, trade and consumption should not take advantage of the ecological space of other species and people. We should avoid acquiring, consuming and accumulating inessential, wasteful and harmful goods and services: This encouraged Dianne to develop our usual session on teaching and learning resources to include the sustainability of those resources (see Chap. 5).

It also resulted in Johanna developing generic sessions on advertising and consumerism that our student teachers could adapt for their students. They explored the key messages given in advertisements, whether the aim was to sell or raise awareness and the way in which they attract attention. They were then challenged to design an advertising strategy to encourage sustainability. Having worked through these exercises, they could then adapt these for their own subject areas. As well as helping them to understand concepts of sustainability, it also demonstrated an alternative pedagogic strategy that they could develop for other purposes too.

In addition to the environmental concerns of consumerism, there are also concerns about well-being:

> If I were caught in the trappings of wealth and power, I would be unable to live a truly comfortable, creative, and compassionate life. Much of my time would be absorbed in taking care of houses, cars, household gadgets, furnishings, paintings, silverware and china, computers, yachts and umpteen other things. I would need to work hard to earn enough not to meet my needs but to service these possessions. (Kumar 2006, p.302)

Perhaps this is the problem for us all in terms of improving our lifestyles. Stress and anxiety may be the inevitable results of working too hard to buy possessions, with the consequent cost to our emotional well-being.

Gandhi saw manual labour as an important part of spiritual practice and always made time to incorporate this into his day. Physical work (*sharirasham*) is an important principle, but, as Kumar (2006, p.304) suggests, there are marked distinctions between physical and mental work:

> There is always a deep tension between the managers and the managed, the intellectual workers and the manual workers, between those who manipulate the market and those who are their victims. Such a divided society is unhealthy. The purpose of physical work is to heal that division … It is a healing process and an antidote to alienation and exclusion.

This principle is enshrined in the philosophy at Navdanya, as well as their sister college, the Schumacher College https://www.schumacher-college.org.uk/ in Devon, UK, where all take part in daily manual labour which includes cleaning, cooking and farming. In industrial society, Taylor made a distinction between 'labour by hand' and 'planning of the labour by thinking' (Walters 1997, p.244), and today we have the shop floor and the planning office.

In pre-industrial societies, knowledge was passed on from older to younger generations within farming communities or in the kitchen through apprenticeships.

This is still the case in 'developing' countries and is still evident in rural India. Elsewhere, patterns of knowledge have become separated from individual ways of living and attached to a pedagogy based on the classroom model instead of the workshop and so the 'world of the hand' has become 'the world of the mind' (Korsgaard in Walters 1997, p.263). This pattern of knowledge became more apparent as we worked on the land at Navdanya. The act of threshing and saving seeds, composting, preparing organic food and using only half a bucket of water to shower each day became a practical educational experience, one that situated us in meaningful learning about sustaining resources rather than learning about it in an abstract, theoretical way.

The qualitative difference between the academic learning tradition and workshop learning, which we were exposed to in India, was full of authentic primary experiences—our relationship to the land, our contact with others on the farm and in the surrounding districts and our own personal response to these differences. The palpable contacts with our surroundings replaced the secondary experiences that we had had through textbooks. John Locke in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) first stressed the importance of primary experiences in the learning process. He advocated the combination of physical work with teaching. However, the difference between 'hand' and 'mind' is still a problem today in balancing educational experience.

Box 4.5:

Consider how you can encourage the hand and the mind in your teaching. Are there activities such as conservation work, building something for the community or fund raising or any other possibilities that could engage your students in physically active work alongside their classroom-based learning? Consider how you can use the local environment to encourage this.

Our experiences in India focused our attention on 'everyday life' which we constantly interpret. Such reflection resonated with a quote from Tunström (1993, p.20) which reminds us of what happens if we do not get the right balance between the mind and the hand in education:

> We come into the world out of a vast nothingness. We look around, discover different rooms, reach out, touch, taste, smell. We strain body and mind to their limits. It is a full-time job, for the world is wider than our reach. And suddenly it is late.

In developing our knowledge, we should reflect on traditional knowledge and think holistically, as a solution to one problem may instigate negative effects elsewhere which may not have been considered. In order to encourage our students to be aware of the need to think holistically, we introduced the 'linkingthinking' materials developed by Sterling et al. (2005). This builds on 'systems thinking', which was identified by Senge (1990) as one of the dimensions that distinguishes learning organisations from more traditional ones. Rather than separating out elements of a problem to solve it, systems thinking encourages a consideration of the connections between elements of the problem in order to avoid a planned solution resulting in other unforeseen problems.

There are many decisions taken in education that may seem to resolve one issue but cause others. A simple example of this was a decision taken to give our student teachers a wider choice of topic areas, by changing our programme from six 20-credit modules to eight 15-credit modules. What we had not considered was the additional work caused by them having to complete eight assignments instead of six, which resulted in an over-assessed programme and a heavy workload for students, as well as tutors. There were also insufficient students to make the choices viable, leading to disappointment when options were unavailable. Reducing the programme to four 30-credit modules, including an enhancement module chosen by

each centre to reflect their own priorities, had the positive effect of reducing the pressure on students and tutors, as well as enabling students to focus on four assignments and explore these in greater depth. Student teachers were introduced to systems thinking, by problem-solving activities using case studies or real issues in their own practice. As they consider the connections between elements of their problem, they can consider possible solutions and then work through the potential impact of these, with the aim of deciding on the best course of action. Encouraging our students to work together to develop communities of practice helps them to develop relationships and strategies to meet the challenges of their roles in FE.

Reflecting on Our Learning and the Influence on Our Role as Teacher Educators

What we learned at a local level at Navdanya helped us understand some of the issues that are moving the world towards the unsustainable use of natural resources. We and our student teachers are directly implicated in the process of developing environmental awareness and finding alternative and sustainable ways of working to reverse these trends. The visit has taught us the importance of working at grass-roots level using the experiences and skills of local people in the community, rather than imposing models of development. We do not have to start at the top to effect change; we can work from the bottom up, from our own local college communities. As Stevenson (2006) recognises, teachers have much to contribute to ESD with their knowledge of their subject, their students and their local areas.

In order for education to be sustainable, we and our student teachers need to be aware of the importance of ESD and how we might introduce global issues that are relevant to our subject specialisms. This may include encouraging less damaging forms of production and consumption, healthier and more fulfilling lifestyles and promoting social justice within a more secure world. As Huckle (2006, p.9) suggests, this requires a more radical approach to education with a shift in emphasis:

> from the past, industrialism, modernity and the nation state, to the future, post-industrialism, postmodernity, and global society. It may need to embrace new forms of knowledge, new ways of organising knowledge, and new ways of teaching and learning. (Huckle 2006, p.9)

As Orr (2004, p.8) argues, our education system must be developed to include a respect for the natural world:

More of the same kind of education will only compound problems. This is not an argument for ignorance but rather a statement that the worth of education must now be measured against the standards of decency and human

Box 4.6:

Orr (2004) calls for a rethinking of education with six principles. Read through these and consider your own practice in relation to these principles:

- Firstly, that all education is environmental education, as teaching any subject without reference to the natural world suggests there is no need to consider the effects on the environment.
- Secondly, we should learn from the Greeks and their concept of 'Paideia', that education is not simply a process of filling the mind with knowledge and skills but a holistic process which encourages development of the person.
- Thirdly, alongside the development of knowledge comes the responsibility to make sure it is used in a way which does not lead to tragedies such as Chernobyl and Bhopal, for which nobody takes responsibility.
- Fourthly, in order to be able to say we know something, we should also understand the effect of that knowledge on individuals and their communities. For example, he mentions the cost of such economic ideologies as the 'bottom line' which can lead to unemployment, divorce, lost savings, alcoholism and crime.
- The fifth principle relates to the power of example over words and however much you might encourage your students to understand the need for sustainability, if you and your organisation are not positive role models, they will learn helplessness in attempting to overcome 'the frightening gap between ideals and reality.' (Orr 2004, p.14) A question to consider is what a sustainable organisation would look like. Hopefully it would encourage a democratic, non-violent, nurturing and collegiate approach throughout the organisation and all within it would play an instrumental part in this.
- His final principle relates to the way in which learning happens:

  > Courses taught as lecture courses tend to induce passivity. Indoor classes create the illusion that learning only occurs inside four walls, isolated from what students call, without apparent irony, the 'real world'. (Orr 2004, p.14)

> survival—the issues now looming so large before us in the twenty-first century. It is not education, but education of a certain kind, that will save us.

In relation to the fourth principle, one of our student teachers who taught jewellery-making developed a role-play activity for her students involving a debate between the owners of a silver mine, the employees of the mine and the local community, in order for them to explore the different perspectives of each and understand the issues involved in the mining of silver. Up until then, she had simply given students the website link to purchase the silver. An activity like this encourages students to value the resources they use, as well as have empathy for those involved in their production.

Box 4.7:

Reflect on the natural resources used in your subject specialism. How and from where are these sourced and what are the effects on local communities and their environments? Consider how you can make your students aware of this and what impact you might hope this could have.

For Huckle (2006), ESD is about helping students understand the social practices that shape and are shaped by different discourses and empowering them to make critical choices amongst them. This will require a move from transmissive learning with its focus on information, efficiency and effectiveness, towards Sterling's (2001) transformative learning which encourages a creative and deep awareness of different world views and ways of doing things which encourage systemic change. It was Sterling (2001) who first helped us see how we could integrate ESD within our curriculum and start exploring how we can influence our students, and subsequently their students. As Huckle and Sterling (1996, p.26) suggest:

> Whether the future holds breakdown or breakthrough scenarios … people will require flexibility, resilience, creativity, participative skills, competence, material restraint and a sense of responsibility and transpersonal ethics to handle transition and provide mutual support. Indeed an education oriented towards nurturing these qualities would help determine a positive and hopeful 'breakthrough' future.

Gandhi acknowledged that our minds are conditioned through our education, culture and religion and we need to develop this to foster relationships rather than separatism. Our visit to India presented a rare

insight into how sustainable development works at grass-roots level in a different culture and allowed us the opportunity to take many ideas back to our local communities, inspiring some of the activities mentioned above. Although we travelled from local to global and back again, gaining knowledge and the confidence to start the process of embedding sustainability into our curriculum, it is also possible to experience outdoor and community learning at more local venues. There are opportunities for similar residential experiences and tutors may organise visits for groups of students, or students may volunteer or take apprenticeships at such places. Our experience has renewed our faith in knowing that change is possible and although support from the top down is important, a good place to start can also be within our own communities of practice.

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Further Reading

Stephan Harding's (2006) book *Animate Earth* explores Gaian science and how this can help us understand how we as humans connect with the 'more-than-human' world. Satish Kumar's (2006) autobiography describes his pilgrimage from India to America, and another in which he visited the holy places around Britain, as well as the ecological, spiritual and educational ventures he has been engaged in since 1972, including his involvement with Navdanya in India and the Schumacher College in Devon. He discusses the way in which he has been influenced by Gandhi's philosophy and this has been of enormous benefit in understanding the ESD agenda. Shiva's (2005, 2007) books describe her campaigns for change in agricultural practices and paradigms, biodiversity, seed freedom and against genetic modification, patents on seeds, chemical farming and other practices which increase farmers' debts, as well as contributing to climate change. Each of these books is very helpful in developing understanding of some of the issues contributing to the environmental crisis.