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The mainstreaming of charities into schools

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the ‘mainstreaming’ of charities into schools. There have been growing concerns about the permeation of business and business values in education, but relatively little attention has been paid to the ways in which schools are increasingly engaged in the ‘business’ of fundraising for charities. Drawing on survey data from the WISERDEducation Multi-Cohort Study (WMCS), the paper outlines young people’s relationship with charities. The data show that young people have a high degree of engagement with charities, in which schools play a significant part. There are likely to be many positive aspects to this engagement, inasmuch as it fosters and reflects young people’s sense of collective responsibility. However, there are also issues about the extent to which this high level of involvement marginalises other approaches to promote the social good and increases the permeation of business values and business into school. The paper concludes that the current mainstreaming of charities into schools is not necessarily a self-evident ‘good’ and that this under-researched phenomenon deserves greater critical attention within and outwith schools.


KEYWORDS

Charities; fundraising; civil society; altruism

Background

This paper focuses on the current ‘mainstreaming’ of charities into schools. Over the last three decades, there has been increasing disquiet expressed about the permeation of business values and business itself into education—particularly in England, the USA, and Australia, but also elsewhere. These have included concerns about the introduction of a culture of entrepreneurialism (Ritchie, 2006; Smyth, 1999; Woods, Woods, & Gunter, 2007), private sponsorship of schools (e.g. Hatcher, 2006), partnership working between schools and business (e.g. Taylor, 1998), commercial activity within schools (e.g. Molnar, 2013; Rayne, 2007), and the implications of new forms of philanthropic investment in education (e.g. Ball, 2016; Olmedo, 2017). However, relatively little attention has been paid to the ways in which schools are increasingly engaged in the ‘business’ of fundraising for charities.

Within the UK, there is a small amount of literature and research on the relationship between charities and schools, but it has tended to be undertaken by charitable organisations. For example, New Philanthropy Capital (Wharton, Kail, & Curvers, 2016) has published

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a review of the new ways in which charities can contribute to reducing educational inequalities. Here, the school system is the *object* of charity. The Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) has undertaken a survey of 1000 school children to gather their attitudes towards charities and to find ways of *increasing* school engagement with charities (CAF, 2013). However, their survey, like that of other research on charitable giving in general (e.g. Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011; DellaVigna, List, & Malmendier, 2012), tends to focus on individual motivations to give. There is, as yet, relatively little research on the role that institutions play, and virtually none on the role of schools in particular. Even the ESRC-supported *Centre on Charitable Giving and Philanthropy* (<http://www.cgap.org.uk/>), which has a dedicated strand focusing on 'Institutions of Giving and Philanthropy', does not appear to consider schools.

We think more critical attention should be paid to the relationship between schools, young people, and their engagement with charities. As the CAF (2013, p. 29) report argues, 'schools play a vital role in shaping young people's relationship with charities'. Moreover, a survey of 1500 schools from across the UK (JEM, 2013) suggests that schools invest a significant amount of time and resources in charitable fundraising. The JEM survey, like the CAF survey, is designed to find ways in which schools can be *more* active in charitable fundraising. There is nowhere any reflection on whether this is a good thing or not.

Of course, it could be argued that it is not surprising that there is little critical analysis of charitable activity within schools because it is so self-evidently worthwhile. In addition to the moneys raised, surely engaging young people in helping others is an important part of citizenship education and the development of a sense of social responsibility? We would not argue that it does not bring benefits—to the beneficiaries of the charities, to the charities, to the schools, and to the young people themselves—but we also think there are issues about the extent of this involvement that at least merit discussion. And these discussions need to locate the increased (and increasing) engagement of schools with charities within the broader social and political context.

Pupavac (2010) argues that the mainstreaming of charities in the UK is a distinctively British phenomenon whose roots lie deep in a long tradition of a particular kind of humanitarianism. It is evident, she argues, in the wholesale incorporation of the 'virtues' of charitable work into the school and the establishment—through the school curriculum and BBC programmes. She argues that:

... its prominence in public life in various periods has coincided with the contraction of social concern and progressive politics, rather than their straightforward expansion. Its present conservative character, notwithstanding its radical self-perception, is influenced by the demise of progressive politics and disconnect from a popular social basis. (Pupavac, 2010, p. 132)

The connection between a heightened profile for charities and the contraction of progressive politics is clearly evident in recent Conservative Party policies in the UK. In 2010, the then Prime Minister, David Cameron, launched the 'Big Society'—an initiative designed to foster 'a new culture of voluntarism, philanthropy and social action' (Cameron, 2010). The development of the Big Society was seen not to reside in government, but would 'depend on the daily decisions of millions of people—on them giving their time, effort, even money to causes around them'. While various voluntary associations celebrated the recognition of their contribution, other commentators (e.g. Levitas, 2012) argued that the initiative was little more than an ideologically driven attempt to reduce public welfare in a climate of 'austerity'. Similar arguments can be made in connection with the current Conservative Prime Minister's vision of the 'Shared Society'—which is not at all dissimilar to her predecessor's

vision. In 2017, in her speech to the Charity Commission, Theresa May endorsed the importance of ‘our great movement of charities and social enterprises’ in ‘helping to meet some of the greatest social challenges of our time’ (May, 2017). Again, the emergence of the ‘Shared Society’ corresponds with a continued emphasis on reducing public spending on welfare.

While this kind of political exhortation is unlikely to have any direct impact on the activities and motivations of schools and their students, it does signify the increasing importance which is being placed on charities and social enterprises to address enduring social issues. And it is likely that this augmentation of the role of charities will permeate the school.

In this paper, we consider the ‘rise’ of charities in recent years through examining young people’s relationships and engagement with charities, before we go on to discuss some of the implications of this engagement.

The research

In order to explore the embedding of charities in schools, this paper draws on data from the WISERDEducation Multi-Cohort Study (WMCS). This is a longitudinal study that has collected data from children living in Wales every year since 2012–2013. The sample design for WMCS is based on a form of clustered sampling. This involved identifying a selected sample of 29 schools (13 secondary and 16 primary) across Wales designed to include diverse communities (advantaged/disadvantaged, rural/urban, Welsh and English-speaking). Researchers visit the young people in their schools, usually during the spring term in each academic year, and ask them to complete a questionnaire on a tablet PC in either Welsh or English. Responses are securely saved on the tablet PCs until the research team transfer data to a secure online database. This ensures that the collection of data is as safe and anonymous as possible.

The youngest of the WMCS cohorts (Cohort A) involved pupils who were only six years old at the start of the survey in 2012;¹ the oldest cohort (Cohort D) involved pupils who were then 14–15 years old, but who have now left school. For the analysis presented here, we draw upon data from two sweeps of data (Sweeps 1 and 4) and three cohorts (Cohorts B, C, and D). Cohort B were in their final year of primary school (Year 6) at Sweep 1, Cohort C were then in Year 8, and Cohort D were in Year 10. Table 1 outlines the distribution of the respondents across the cohorts and across the sweeps. Although we are only using data from Sweeps 1 and 4 in this paper, we have included response rates from the intervening years to indicate the degree and rate of attrition. The table shows how Cohort D, in particular, shrank after Year 11—the point at which many of our respondents left school to go to post-16 destinations.

It was in these two sweeps that we included a range of questions relating to their engagement with charitable activities. In order to examine the reliability of our data, we replicated some of the questions from the Charities Aid Foundation survey (CAF, 2013). The pattern of

Table 1. Relevant WISERDEducation Multi-Cohort Study sweeps and respondents.

| | Cohort B (10–11 yrs in Sweep 1) | Cohort C (12–13 yrs in Sweep 1) | Cohort D (14–15 yrs in Sweep 1) | Total |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------|
| Sweep 1 (2012–2013) | 345 | 404 | 428 | 1177 |
| Sweep 2 (2013–2014) | 355 | 381 | 338 | 1074 |
| Sweep 3 (2014–2015) | 291 | 351 | 157 | 799 |
| Sweep 4 (2015–2016) | 264 | 259 | 95 | 618 |

the responses of the young people in the WMCS is very similar to that of the CAF survey. In addition to closed questions, we also included some open-ended questions. Analysis of these data has involved thematic coding of responses questions. Basic descriptive statistical analysis was undertaken of the quantitative data. In reporting their responses, we have used the young people's own language, including misspellings and punctuation errors. The exception to this is where responses are in Welsh (around 10%) which, for the reader's benefit, we have translated into English.

Children and young people's engagement with charities

In 2013, we invited our respondents to imagine what they would do 'if someone gave you £1 million today'. Somewhat counter-intuitively in view of concerns about the commercialisation of childhood, their responses revealed high levels of altruism (Power & Smith, 2016). One half said they would give a significant amount away, and one quarter that they would give *all* of the £1 million away. Even those who were planning to save their money, were often planning to do so in order to give it away at a later stage.

While many were planning to give to family and friends, the majority said they would give their money to charities. Their responses are often couched in very general terms, and indicate a conviction that giving the money to charity will make the world a 'better place', e.g.:

Give it all to charity, its much better for every body. Bisids wat would I spend it on?

Give most of it to charity because money doesn't really make you happy
creat a project to change the world for the better

give lots of money for people less fortunate and load of other charities like cancer
i would give it to charity and not use any of it for my personal needs

Most respondents, though, identified particular causes. While these are only intentions rather than actions, their responses are revealing in that they can be seen to indicate what they would like to see 'put right' in the world. Medical charities, and in particular medical research charities (and especially Cancer Research), dominate the list.

Give money to cancer

Donate half to Marie Curie and half to Save The Children.

i would give most of it to charity like BHF cancer research

donate it to breast cancer

Give it to the hospital for medicine.

Some way behind are charities that help children—both at home and internationally, e.g.:

Give it to charity and go and give to children in need or other people who need it.

Help children less fortunate than us

Help pore little kids

Help the children in Africa

Charities for children are closely followed by charities to help animals, e.g.:

save all horses from a bad life.

save horses and animals in foreign countries.

I would split it between several animal rights charities, e.g. PeTA

The extent of this perceived ‘hierarchy of need’ is clearly evident in responses to a further closed question asking them to identify where they would donate £10 (Figure 1). A charity ‘that helps cure diseases’ receives almost three times as many ‘donations’ as the second type of charity in the list—one ‘that helps children’.

It is clear from our cohorts’ responses that there is great faith in the ability of charities to effect change. This investment in charities is also apparent in the scale of charitable activities they undertake. Figure 2 indicates that the overwhelming majority had been actively involved in not only donating money and goods to charity, but also in fundraising for charities. Nearly 95% had been involved in fundraising in the last 12 months, and nearly one quarter (24%) in the past month.

In considering the importance that young people place on charities as a means of making the world a better place, and in shaping whose needs are greatest and which causes are most ‘worthwhile’, it is almost certainly the case that the school plays a significant role. The Charities Aid Foundation survey (CAF, 2013) reported that, after the television, young people were most likely to find out about charities through their schools. In addition, the JEM (2013) survey reported that the average secondary school donated nearly £7000 to charity in 2012–2013. Indeed, just over half (51%) of the secondary schools in their survey had a designated school-wide Charity Co-ordinator.

We asked our older respondents to name the last charity their secondary school supported. Fewer than 2% said that they did not think their school did support a charity and just over one half (52%) did not know which was the last charity their school supported—perhaps indicative of the scale and range of involvement. The remaining 46% identified a total of 37 different charities. Those with the most frequent mentions and cited more than five times within the survey are listed in Table 2. Six of these (Children in Need, Cancer Research, Sport Relief, CAFOD, Macmillan, and children’s hospices) also appear in the ‘Top Ten’ charities that UK schools generally were ‘most likely to support’ in the future (JEM, 2013). These charities obviously have strong relations with schools.

Some charities are clearly individual school initiatives. For example, mentions of CAFOD only came from students at our Catholic school. Another charity that appears to be supported

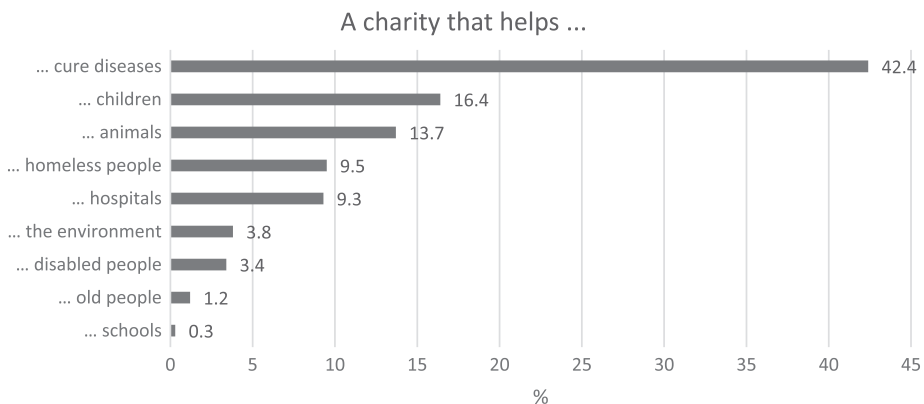


Figure 1. If you were to donate £10 to a charity, which ONE type of charity would you give it to?*(*n* = 677; Cohorts B, C, and D, Sweep 4).

Note: * Question replicated from the CAF (2013) survey.

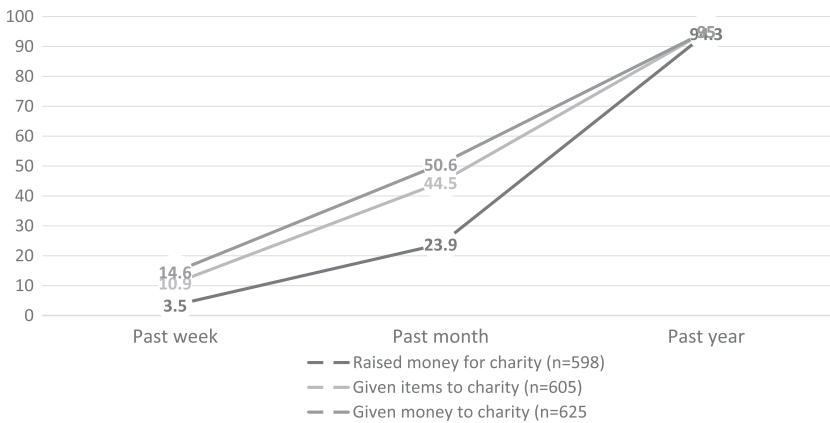


Figure 2. Which of the following have you done in the past year, month or week? (Cumulative %; Cohorts B, C, and D, Sweep 4).

Table 2. The ‘last charity supported’ by respondent’s school (Cohorts B, C, and D, Sweep 4).

| | Frequency |
|---|-----------|
| Children in Need (<i>BBC organised annual event</i>) | 118 |
| Cancer Research | 27 |
| Sport Relief (<i>BBC sponsored event</i>) | 20 |
| Air Ambulance | 16 |
| CAFOD (<i>Catholic international development charity</i>) | 15 |
| British Heart Foundation | 12 |
| Text Santa (<i>ITV sponsored Christmas Jumper activity</i>) | 10 |
| PATCH (<i>local foodbank and clothing charity</i>) | 9 |
| Macmillan (<i>Cancer support charity</i>) | 9 |
| Ty Hafan (<i>Welsh children’s hospice</i>) | 8 |
| Oxfam (<i>International anti-poverty charity</i>) | 7 |

by only one school in our sample is Micro-Tyco, which provides an interesting example of ‘corporate social responsibility’ (CSR) and evidence of the close relationship between charity and business—which we discuss later. For the most part though, the ‘big’ charities were supported across all schools—and particularly those which were focused around a particular series of media events, such as Children in Need and Sport Relief. The significance of these large televised charity events is evident in the fact that 97% of our respondents said they had watched a TV charity programme in the last year. What is clear from the overall list is how few of the charities mentioned are addressing local needs. From the list in Table 2, only PATCH can really be described as a ‘local’ charity. This raises interesting issues about the focus of civic responsibility that fundraising for these charities helps to foster and, in particular, whether the concentration on the ‘big’ national and international charities draws attention away from local community and neighbourhood needs.

Charitable engagement as ‘active citizenship’

Whether for local, national, or international ‘causes’, it is possible to argue that taking part in charitable activities—either through fundraising or donating—is important for children’s and young people’s sense of citizenship—in terms of their individual engagement, in terms

of participation in collective activities within the school, and in terms of engendering a broader sense of social responsibility. As Gonzales (2014) argues, the salience of charity lies in ‘the power to create a sense of community through altruistic actions ... and to create a sense of civic engagement or duty amongst those who give’.

In terms of communal activities within the school, nearly all of the charities identified above have dedicated resources for teachers to help them organise fundraising events. For example, Children in Need, the most frequently mentioned school-supported charity, provides a range of materials for school activities, such as cake stalls, art projects, and discos. The JEM (2013) survey indicates that these are among the most common kind of fundraising event, with ‘non-uniform’ days (84%) topping the list, followed by ‘bake-sale’ type events (64%) and ‘fun days’ (30%). The survey also reveals that only a minority (18%) of school fundraising events could be deemed ‘educational’. Even if these activities are of limited educational benefit, it can be argued that they will bring relief from the academic ‘press’ of school and provide a sense of common purpose. Teachers report that engaging students in these kinds of activities is hugely beneficial—and not only in terms of the funds raised but in terms of student self-esteem and school ethos (e.g. Robertson, 2013).

The mainstreaming of charities and charitable activity within schools is likely to increase as a result of moves to formalise volunteering and fundraising within programmes of citizenship education. From 2017 the ‘Skills Challenge Certificate’ is being introduced in Wales as an assessed component of the Welsh Baccalaureate at Key Stage 4. This will *require* students to engage in these kinds of activities. For example, the Community Challenge Social Welfare component stipulates that students must spend 10 hours on promotional activities for a selected charity, combined with either ‘active fund-raising’ or ‘active support’ (WJEC, 2017a). The Community Challenge Neighbourhood Enhancement component requires students to improve their local area through undertaking 10 hours of ‘voluntary’ work, including clearing litter, cutting grass, painting walls, and cleaning footpaths (WJEC, 2017b). In order to support teachers in these activities, the WJEC (Welsh Joint Education Committee) supplies resources—many of which have been developed by the charities themselves. For example, Macmillan Cancer Support invites pupils to plan a programme to promote awareness of the work of the charity and to organise fundraising activities, such as running a stall at a Christmas Fair.

While programmes of citizenship education appear less formalised within the English education system, there is still a strong emphasis on voluntary work and community engagement. The English National Curriculum requires that pupils be taught about ‘the roles played by public institutions and voluntary groups in society’ and ‘the different ways in which a citizen can contribute to the improvement of his or her community, to include the opportunity to participate actively in community volunteering’ (DfE, 2013). Supporting resources for teachers similarly emphasise the importance of charities. The Citizenship Foundation’s ‘Giving Nation’ programme provides students with the opportunity to ‘learn about charity’s role in society and strengthen their connection to chosen causes’ (<http://www.citizenship-foundation.org.uk>). They publish a range of lesson briefs that are designed to help students appreciate the importance of charities, including one on ‘Famous Philanthropists’ and another on ‘The Queen: A Life of Giving’.

We are aware that sociologists often tend to concentrate on the ‘dark side’ of giving—both in terms of the motivations of the giver and the impact on the recipient. Building on Mauss’ (1954) anthropological accounts of gift-giving as a form of generating obligation and

reciprocation, sociologists have tended to view altruism with some suspicion and looked for latent purposes—interpreting acts of giving as a display of privilege (e.g. Nieuwenhuys, 2006) or a form of ‘coercive generosity’ (e.g. Chin, 2001). In arguing that we need to bring some critical scrutiny to the scale of charitable fundraising in schools, it is not our intention here to cast doubt on the intentions of our young respondents and their schools. It is rather to throw light on some of the more *unintended* consequences of mainstreaming charities into schools. In particular, we want to question the self-evident virtue of all aspects of charities, the extent to which the mainstreaming of charities might displace alternative approaches to addressing need, and the potential for commercial permeation through charity–business partnerships.

The virtue of charities?

There have been a number of critical commentaries on the way in which charities have developed in recent decades that relate to their expansion and professionalisation, their relative (lack of) impact, and the ethically questionable nature of some of their practices. There is not the space here to consider these criticisms at any length, but it is worth pointing out some of the issues that particularly relate to the charities which our schools and their students support.

In terms of the expansion and professionalisation of charities, there have been growing concerns about the ways in which the larger and most ‘successful’ charities have become ‘corporatised’ in terms of their marketing and fundraising. Moore (2008), for example, in her investigation of what she terms ‘Ribbon Culture’ points to the ‘commodification of compassion’. Particularly in the light of ‘aggressive’ fundraising campaigns, there has been negative media coverage of the ‘big’ charities.² Routledge (2015), for example, claims that

charities are big business, and they ape the worst excesses of big business. They boast highly-paid bosses, celebrity champions, royal patronage, fancy offices, large staffs and shops on every high street. They spend millions on emotive TV advertising to rake in the money.

Relatedly, but on a different theme, there have also been questions raised about the extent to which some charities can be distinguished from government activities. As Kidd (2002) points out, many charities are not only run by paid staff but are often largely dependent on government income.

In terms of whether charities ‘work’, there have again been a number of claims that they do not necessarily make much difference—and certainly do not alleviate suffering to the extent that some of their claims, and the responses of our young people, would seem to suggest. This would apply most especially to the medical research charities, such as Cancer Research, that figure so strongly in our young people’s preferences. Critics point to the huge amounts of money that are donated and spent on medical research with apparently relatively little progress. Smith (2016), for example, has argued that money spent on finding a ‘cure’ for cancer is pointless, and the money would be better spent elsewhere. Indeed, Ryan (1997) has argued that far from being used to find a solution to cancer, the money is used only for the self-serving purposes of researchers. It is, he argues, money ‘used to sustain an industry which has been deemed by many eminent scientists as a qualified failure and by others, as a complete fraud’. In addition to these somewhat controversial critiques, there are questions about the ethical aspects of medical research, particularly in relation to testing on animals and the use of human embryonic stem cells.

We are not suggesting that these practices *are* unethical, but rather that we hope these kinds of issues are discussed within schools in the context of deciding which particular charities to support. Unless this happens there is a possible mismatch between young people's individual values and the charities the schools support. There is, for example, a potential tension between our respondents' perceptions of the ethics of using animals for medical research and their schools' support for medical research charities. In response to a series of questions about animal rights, only 6% agreed with the statement that it is 'acceptable' to 'use animals for medical research' (Cohorts B, C, D, Sweep 4). This is somewhat at odds with the identification of medical research charities, nearly all of which fund experimental research on animals, as the preferred recipient of donations. Of course, it may well be the case that teachers *do* discuss these kinds of issues and dilemmas with their students. However, if they do so it is likely to be as a result of their own personal initiative rather than any more explicit guidance or recommendation. Certainly we have found no such encouragement to discuss these kinds of issues in any of the citizenship education guidelines and resources that we have looked at. The fact that many of the resources are produced by the charities themselves will surely make it less rather than more probable that these issues will be raised.

The displacement of alternative approaches to address need

Over three quarters (76%) of respondents agreed with the statement that 'Charities play an important role in our country' (Cohorts B, C, and D, Sweep 4)—again about the same proportion reported by the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF, 2013) survey. However, there was significant ambivalence among our respondents about whether this *should* be the case. For example, in relation to the statement 'We should not need charities because the government should help people', our respondents were divided (Figure 3). In fact, the modal response was that charities should *not* be necessary.

There is an enduring debate about the relative merits of charitable versus government intervention to provide for those 'in need'. Many of the problems tackled by the charities supported by our respondents—child poverty, homelessness, animal welfare—are perhaps more appropriately addressed through political and structural solutions. And even in the

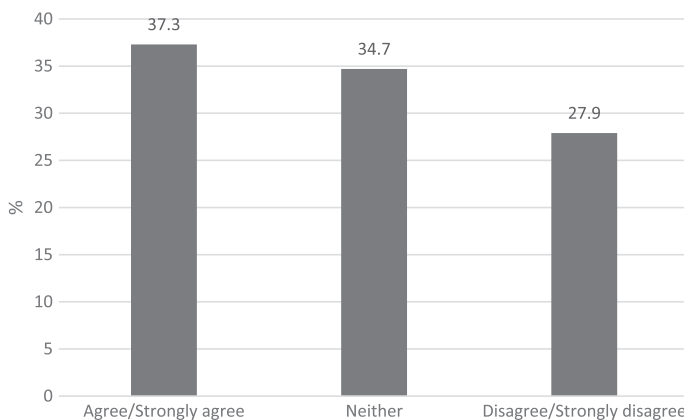


Figure 3. We should not need charities because the government should help people ($n = 688$; Cohorts B, C, and D, Sweep 4).

case of 'natural disasters', some might argue that global inequalities have contributed to the high levels of vulnerability experienced by those in developing countries. By continuing to provide 'sticking plaster' remedies for chronic social needs, charities might serve to maintain the conditions that create the problem and forestall the more fundamental changes needed. While charity may provide the giver with a sense of making things better, this may not be the case. Indeed, some have argued that charity actually makes things worse (Lupton, 2011). Clement Attlee pointed to the limits of philanthropic approaches nearly 100 years ago when he remarked that 'Charity is a cold grey loveless thing. If a rich man wants to help the poor, he should pay his taxes gladly, not dole out money at a whim' (Beckett, 2007).

Engaging in charitable activities might be important in terms of engendering a broader connectedness to external communities. Giving to charities is, like blood donation, a form of what Titmuss (1973, p. 240) refers to as an exercise in promoting 'stranger' relationships—'the processes, institutions and structures which encourage or discourage the intensity and extensiveness of anonymous helpfulness in society'. However, through encouraging young people to consider charity as the vehicle through which social needs can best be met, there is a danger that schools are not encouraging their students to think of alternative approaches. Again, we are not suggesting that schools should not be engaged in charitable activities, but rather that we hope that the issue of whether charity or government provides the best solution for particular needs or crises will be considered worthy of discussion with students.

Permeation of business into schools

Earlier we argued that one of the benefits of involvement in charitable activities is that it acts as a useful counterbalance to a culture of consumption. However, it might also be possible to argue that charities and consumerism are not so very far apart. There are two dimensions to this—one is the extent to which the activity itself promotes an enterprise culture, and the second is the extent to which charities increasingly have business partners who wish to demonstrate 'corporate social responsibility'—or CSR as it has come to be known.

Some charities are explicitly designed to develop skills in commerce. For example, as noted earlier, one of the WMCS schools is involved in supporting Micro-Tyco, a charity funded by a company called Wildhearts (<http://wildheartsgroup.com/>) which 'launches companies that through their activities and profits deliver entrepreneurship education and microfinance'. Micro-Tyco involves schools participating in a series of activities 'designed to liberate entrepreneurial thinking across our whole society'. Any money created by Micro-Tyco is then used to provide 'micro-loans' to poor entrepreneurs in the developing world. Schoolchildren 'become entrepreneurs to fund entrepreneurs'. Indeed, Wildhearts goes so far as to claim that 'by associating business excellence with economic justice, Micro-Tyco inspires the Leaders Our World Deserves'.

One way in which Wildhearts promotes itself is that it 'gives companies a credible way of demonstrating their CSR credentials to attract both customers and future talent'. The need to demonstrate CSR is increasingly apparent in the partnerships between charities and business. Almost all of the charities that our schools support have visible links with businesses. For example, the BBC Children in Need appeal—with which many of our young people are actively involved through their school—is heavily sponsored by its current 'principal partner', Lloyds Bank. Lloyds Bank provides dedicated resources for schools:

The exciting new Champions of Change education initiative by BBC Children in Need and Lloyds Bank, puts children in charge of fundraising for the much-loved charity, while learning and developing new skills to enhance their own futures (BBC, 2013)

The large UK supermarket chain, ASDA, now owned by Walmart, is also actively involved in Children in Need and directly markets its products to school children as part of the fundraising concern:

So get ready to cosy up for TV's biggest night of the year with Pudsey³ onesies, socks and pyjamas. Alternatively, swap your socks for sequins and your pyjamas for party gear and invite family and friends over for a glitzy night in front of the box. Either way, Asda has special deals on all your favourite party food and drink to help create the perfect evening. You can also purchase VR viewers at Asda for just £4 to really bring this year's appeal show to life. And don't forget to pick up your exclusive flashing LED Pudsey and Blush Ears while you're in store.

Sport Relief, the second most frequently mentioned charity that schools support, also has business partners, which include Sainsbury's (another major UK supermarket), British Telecom, British Airways, and Amazon. This example of the 'corporate social responsibility' of Amazon is particularly interesting in view of the recent controversies over the way in which Amazon has been 'off-shoring' profits in order to avoid paying corporation tax in the UK (Anon, 2015). It is not difficult to imagine what Clement Atlee would think of this.

The increasingly close alliance between charities and businesses may have a number of implications. For example, it has been claimed that these partnerships are simply to provide multi-national companies with good public relations (e.g. Gonzales, 2014)—to provide capitalism with a 'human face'. More fundamental critiques argue that this kind of gesture on the part of businesses simply hides the extent to which multi-national companies have contributed to some of the inequalities and emergencies that the charities they now partner are supposed to fix (Žižek, 2009). Business, and particularly 'big' business, cannot, it is claimed, be part of the solution when it is actually part of the problem.

Whether or not these critiques are valid, there must surely be concern that these kinds of partnerships mean that schools are being used as a venue for marketing (Molnar, 2006), but under the guise of fundraising for charities.

Discussion

This paper has attempted to illuminate some of the dimensions of the apparent mainstreaming of charities into schools. It is clear children and young people have a high degree of engagement with charities in general, and with charities such as Children in Need and Cancer Research in particular. They also display significant conviction that charities will, indeed, make the world a better place. Schools are clearly implicated in this engagement in a number of ways which indicates that charitable activity needs to be viewed as an *institutional* and *political* phenomenon rather than simply *individual* acts of altruism.

There are likely to be many benefits for schools' engagement with charities. Even setting aside any benefits that might accrue to the charities' beneficiaries and the charities as organisations, it can be argued that getting young people to work together on collective endeavours for others—whether it is through baking cakes or having 'non-uniform' days—is an important aspect of citizenship education. It may engender awareness of the needs of others, provide activities that bind the school together as a community, and provide some relief from academic pressures. The formalisation (and assessment) of this charitable engagement

and voluntary activity within programmes of citizenship education can also be justified in terms of the skills that students will develop.

However, these benefits do not mean that there are not questions to be asked. For example, should we see the mainstreaming of charities in schools as evidence of what some (e.g. Molnar, 2006) see as increasing commercialisation within the school? Or should we see the desire of schools and their students to help those less fortunate as either a partial response or even an antidote to commercialisation outside the school? Set within a political climate where civil society is increasingly being heralded as the answer to a wide range of enduring social and economic problems, are schools justified in endorsing the virtues of charities when state intervention may be a more appropriate response?

There are no straightforward answers to these questions—in part because of the slippery nature of the concept of charity itself. Loseke (1997) has identified ‘multiple vocabularies of moralities’. There is, she argues, a sacred morality of religion, a morality of democratic community, an economic morality of individual capitalism, and a human morality of compassion. Each of these vocabularies, even if they are not reconcilable with each other, can be invoked to endorse charity. As Kidd (2002, p. 388) points out: ‘Charity is indeed an extraordinarily flexible cultural mechanism’.

Rather than assuming that any kind of charity engagement within schools is a self-evident good, it is to be hoped that schools engage with these difficult questions, examine with their students which of these multiple moralities they wish to foster and which kinds of causes and activities are most worthwhile. It is certainly an area that merits closer scrutiny from the education research community.

Notes

1. After three sweeps we stopped gathering data from Cohort A as the data received indicated that the children were too young to provide meaningful and valid responses. As our older two cohorts (Cohorts C and D) have now left school, in 2016 we added a further cohort (Cohort E) of Year 7 pupils (aged 11–12 years).
2. The extent of targeted fundraising campaigns was highlighted in 2015 by the suicide of an elderly pensioner who was allegedly ‘harassed’ by charities requesting money. At the time of her death, she received 260 ‘begging’ letters each month.
3. Pudsey is the Children in Need mascot.

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