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Towards a Re-Thinking of Development Education

Zusammenfassung:

Im folgenden Beitrag wird die Verbindung von Theorie und Praxis Globalen Lernens in Großbritannien in den Blick genommen. Nach einem Überblick über historische Entwicklungslinien ab den 1970er Jahren werden aktuelle Themen und Herausforderungen Globalen Lernens benannt, jüngste Forschungsergebnisse in diesem Kontext umrissen und auf weiteren Diskussionsbedarf eingegangen.

Abstract:

The focus of the following article lies on the relationship of theory, policy and practice of Development Education in the UK. It overviews the progress of Development Education from the 1970s until today and reflects upon current issues and challenges in this field. It also refers to recent outcomes of Development Education research and draws conclusions for further discussion.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to discuss and reflect upon the progress that development education has made over the past thirty years. It builds on the work of a range of internationally renowned academics (Scheunpflug/Asbrand 2005; Beck 2000) and aims to suggest that development education needs to take greater account of broader debates around education, globalisation and social change. It further suggests that upon reflecting on recent small-scale research by the Development Education Research Centre, there is a need for development education to take greater account of the relationships between experience, learning and action. From these reflections the paper concludes by posing the need for debates on the relationship of development education to a range of social and educational influences, and at the same time suggesting framework based on a pedagogy of learning.

Historical Context

The term development education first emerged during the 1970s, in part in response to the growth of development and aid organisations and the decolonisation process, but also as Harrison (2006) has commented, through the influence of UNESCO and the United Nations (cf. United Nations 1975, quoted in Osler 1994). By the end of that decade, however, the term was becoming more and more seen in a narrower sense,

as governments and NGOs engaged in the development sector sought public support and involvement (ODA 1978).

But during the 1980s, two other influences began to have an impact on development education. The first was the thinking of Paulo Freire (1972) and the writings of Julius Nyerere, with their views on the relationship of education to social change. Alongside this was the influence of what Harrison (2006) calls the 'globalist' approach through the World Studies Project led by Robin Richardson and later Simon Fisher and Dave Hicks, and the work of David Selby and Graham Pike. This approach emphasises learning about the wider world, rather than specifically about poverty, came to have considerable influence during this period (Pike/Selby 1988; Fisher/Hicks 1985; Hicks 1990; Hicks 2003).

Throughout the 1980s, development education was perceived as being closely allied to social democratic politics and an overtly political agenda in the UK. Funding therefore became related to the political outlook of the government. Development education, world studies and global education agendas came under political attack (McCollum 1996; Marshall 2005a, Cronkhite 2000). Only in countries such as the Netherlands and Sweden and in the European Commission that political support for development education grew during this period (Osler 1994). The result was that it was therefore left to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to play the leading role in promoting and delivering development education, particularly within schools (Arnold 1987; Sinclair, in Osler 1994). Key to the future, Sinclair suggested, was the need for NGOs to work in partnership with teachers, to be more strategic and to engage in academic debate. By the late 1980s, in the UK as in other European countries, networks of NGOs were emerging to share and coordinate practice on development education.

What, however, still appears to be the case today is that many of the reasons as to why development education emerged are still given as a legitimisation for their existence, particularly by some government ministries with responsibility for aid and development and non-governmental organisations. For example in a number of countries, governments have seen development education practices as a form of public legitimisation of their aid programmes. For NGOs, development education emerged as a mechanism for securing public support and understanding of their development programmes and was, and in some cases still is, linked to either fundraising or campaigning

agendas (Arnold 1987). Whilst it could be argued that in the UK there is less emphasis on these themes than in some other European countries, it is still the 'bottom line argument' given as the rationale for funding. It could also be argued that in the case of particular NGOs in the UK, notably Christian Aid and Methodist Relief and Development Fund, learning was becoming increasingly secondary to awareness raising that links to supporting and engaging in campaigns.

In reviewing the progress on development education over the past twenty years or so, McCollum (1996), Blum (2000), and Marshall (2005) have raised issues regarding pre-

allenges. A key starting point is the recognition that the role and nature of the practice of NGOs is changing. No longer on the margins of educational debates, development education bodies in many areas are requested to lead on and promote global perspectives and global citizenship. As teachers and mainstream educators become better equipped to deliver the global dimension, what becomes the role of the NGO? Is it as an advisor, an expert or even should be working to do itself out of existence? Marshall (2005b) in reviewing of the practice of NGOs, posed this and she suggested that the strategy of many NGOs has been more with the 'how' than the 'what- in other worlds' there



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determined agendas. In addition, studies by Cameron and Fairbrass (2004) and Hammond (2002) have suggested that with the election in the UK of a Labour government in 1997, the independence and radical nature of much of earlier NGO practice was becoming compromised by government funding.

Development education has also suffered from a low academic profile (Bourn 2007) compared to say environmental education. Where there has been academic discussion on the role and nature of development education, it was either during the 1970s and 1980s when it was linked to perceptions and roles of government and NGOs (Lemaresquier 1987; McCollum 1996), or more recently in relation to debates on global citizenship (Marshall 2005a; Osler/Vincent 2002; Ibrahim 2005). The exceptions have been Osler's series of essays on Development Education (1994) and later references to development education practice by Steiner (1996), Osler and Vincent (2002) and Hicks and Holden (2007). Yet despite this lack of visibility, development education in whatever form or label you call it, continues to exist and thrive in most European Union (EU) countries. It has grown in terms of the volume of practice, funding from governments and the EU itself and broader policy influence (Hoeck/Wegimont 2003).

Issues and Challenges for Today

In taking forward the debates on development education, it is suggested that consideration needs to be given to purposes and processes of learning and relationships to broader global chal-

lenges. A key starting point is the recognition that the role and nature of the practice of NGOs is changing. No longer on the margins of educational debates, development education bodies in many areas are requested to lead on and promote global perspectives and global citizenship. As teachers and mainstream educators become better equipped to deliver the global dimension, what becomes the role of the NGO? Is it as an advisor, an expert or even should be working to do itself out of existence? Marshall (2005b) in reviewing of the practice of NGOs, posed this and she suggested that the strategy of many NGOs has been more with the 'how' than the 'what- in other worlds' there

appears to be more clarity about the affective and participatory domains than the cognitive'. Another key issue for NGOs is that a motivator for many of their workers is that education should be seen as a stimulus for social activism. However, there has been little evidence to suggest that even using participatory learning methods and discussing global issues leads to social action. As Steiner pointed out in 1995 which has been recently reinforced from evaluations of a range of projects, young people do appear to have gained understanding and skills and a greater willingness to consider a range of perspectives (Steiner 1995; Blum 2000).

Thirdly, the relationship between learning and understanding about development within UK society is now in a different place to a decade ago. It is much more than being linked to aid, combating poverty and charitable giving, despite media messages around these themes. Development cannot be divorced from understanding globalisation, sustainability and inter-cultural issues.

Fourthly, there is increased curiosity and interest in the wider world. Young people are more globally aware but this does not mean they necessarily see themselves as global citizens (Bourn 2007c).

Finally, people can access information about development and global issues themselves but this does not necessarily mean leading to a greater understanding of the complexities of the causes of poverty, sustainable development and influences of colonialism. The reviews of the impact of Make Poverty His-

tory (e.g. Micklem 2006) have demonstrated the limitations of celebrating major awareness campaigns as leading to a better informed and engaged public.

In taking these issues forward, the following key challenges could be identified:

- What is the nature of development education's contribution to understanding the impact of globalisation on society and the learning and skills required to understand, and critique it. Surely development education has a role if the key skills for the 21st century are posed as being able to deal with complexity, uncertainty and insecurity.
- Today people learn, experience and engage with global and development issues in a wide variety of forms. In some cases, a desire to take action to combat global poverty might result in going to experience living in a developing country and learning would then be incidental and informal. But within these complex and varying forms, critiquing perceptions of poverty and re-thinking one's relationship to colonialism and differing cultures may well not emerge naturally. Indeed it could be argued that the broader opportunities to have contact with global issues can lead to a lessening of critical thinking and an acceptance of the dominant orthodoxy.
- All of the evidence on identities suggests that people, again especially the young, have complex identities and that the most challenging of all for people in the UK, is the concept of being 'a British citizen'. Research suggests young people particularly most likely develop their own identities at multiple levels but with a strong local focus (Nayak 2005). However, global influences are increasingly strong, but there is little evidence to suggest that 'being a global citizen is one that is recognised by many young people'.
- A key issue in learning, engaging and understanding the wider world is the role of new technology in what and how people, especially in western industrialised countries operate (Apple/Kenway/Singh 2005; Kenway/Bullen 2008). This links not only to the issue of access, but what and how people learn and whether the internet is reproducing or challenging traditional consumer orientated forms of learning.
- Sustainable development is becoming the dominant discourse for much of the more discussions on learning and understanding the wider world. Key here is the promotion of a concept of 'learning for' some prescribed better world. There is also the challenge about the desire to promote a sense of urgency about the future of the planet with the purpose and role of education (Scott/Gough 2005). This relates to what Oxfam has called a 'sense of being outraged' (Oxfam 2006) and the desire to play a positive role in society and wish to make an more equitable and sustainable world.

Outcomes of Recent Research

Over the past year, the Development Education Research Centre has been engaged in a number of small scale research projects which all have as their theme, the changing processes and forms of learning about global and development issues. These have included the following:

- British Red Cross's work within schools in the context of its framework for humanitarian education;
- students perceptions of being a global citizens, comparative analysis of students from two colleges within the University of London;

- relationship of engineering education to global poverty and sustainable development.

A review of the activities of the Red Cross posed the extent to which it is its role to directly engage in work within schools. The research concluded: "To have a strategic impact it could be argued that the only value of undertaking direct work in the classroom would be in the form of pilot projects, to test out new resources and activities. It has been stated that by delivering sessions within a classroom can give teachers ideas as to how they could deliver the activities themselves. It is not suggested here that one mechanism is better than the other; it depends on the resources of the NGO, its aims and objectives and from past success, most effective methods of delivery." (Bourn 2007a).

An ongoing area of research by the Centre is the extent to which university students see themselves as global citizens looking particularly at how they were relating their increased interest in the wider world to their own forms of social and political participation (Lamb et al., quoted in Bourn 2007b).

Observations from students from a range of subject areas and covering both undergraduate and postgraduate at University College London (UCL) suggests a complex picture of views, outlooks and perspectives. The majority of students were ambivalent about their own identity, were not sure how to define themselves both in relation to their own community and the wider world. Virtually all of them said they would like to learn and engage more in wider world issues and questions. Several said they wanted to make a positive contribution to the world and studying at UCL gave them additional opportunities to do this. Globalisation was seen predominantly as about opening up communities to world trade and to being more interconnected with people around the world. Some saw it in terms of the domination of Western economic and cultural icons such as McDonalds, or Coca Cola. However, the majority still saw globalisation as more positive than negative. On being a global citizen, the majority who did respond to this question were dubious about the term. Some didn't like it, feeling it was an elitist concept. 'Only a very few people could be considered as global citizens' was one observation. Others said that they saw themselves as 'human beings'. For the majority who did respond, the term 'global citizen' was linked to globalisation. Those who were positive or at least neutral said that the term was about going beyond national boundaries, an ability to communicate with and learn from others. Those students who have lived and travelled around the world and who came from more than one specific cultural background were more positive about the term. On their role in the world in the future, those students who did get to this area tended to have a low opinion of their own potential contribution despite their interest in the world. Those who are studying subjects such as medicine and engineering for example were more positive (Bourn 2007b).

But where terms like 'global citizenship' were part of the academic discourse, as say for example in teacher education, there was more support and active engagement with the term and the debates. Students at the Institute of Education training to be teachers of geography and modern foreign languages saw the terms as relevant as a basis for dialogue with school pupils.¹

Research undertaken for Imperial College and Engineers Against Poverty in reviewing level of interest in global and sustainability issues found the following typical responses: “Engineering graduates that support positive world change and have an understanding of the wider impact of their engineering decisions will be able to make more of a difference and will be more motivated in their work.” (2nd Year engineering student) “We need modules that enable engineering graduates to know how the world works.” (Corporate manager for a major international automobile company)

The research also showed, however, that despite interest and recognition about the value of learning about global and sustainability issues, a range of approaches was given as to how this should take place from optional modules on courses to volunteering overseas to practical demonstration projects. A key challenge was also that for too many students, development issues were still seen as linked to charity and ‘helping the poor’ (Bourn/Sharma 2007).

These small scale research projects suggest that interest in and wish to learn more about global issues can be seen as increasingly relevant and important within education. Secondly, young people particularly translate their learning into their own personalised cultural framework and identity. The research with the Red Cross posed the wider issue that exists with many NGOs as to the pressures regarding profile raising. Finally, despite the best endeavours of many organisations, perceptions of development linked to helplessness and charitable giving are still very prevalent.

Also to emerge from the research and this has been reinforced by the observations of other NGOs and educationalists is that engagement with the wider world does not by itself lead to critical reflection. In many cases the opposite may be the outcome with the resulting perception of developing countries from travelling being one of negative imagery. This is seen as particularly a danger with school linking (Leonard 2007; Andreotti 2006).²

These observations have been reflected in broader discourse on education and globalisation, the role of identities and how young people locate themselves as their moorings become displaced (Harvey 2003). There is considerable evidence to suggest that young people are adapting their own responses to globalisation through partial adaptation of global messages and influences, notably consumer culture, into a form that gives them a status and role in their community (Harvey 2003; Kenway/Bullen 2008).

The recognition of the relevance of these debates and research is potentially very challenging for many NGOs because it suggests that the starting point for engagement needs to be around a dialogue with the group you are working with, to enable them to articulate how they see themselves in response to living in a global society and what skills and knowledge they seek to have more positive and confident views and ideas not only about themselves, but their peers and their communities.

Towards a Framework for Debate and Dialogue

In recognition of these observations, it is suggested in this paper that in order for development education to move forward, it needs to be more open and recognise the contradictions and

complex issues within which it operates, but at the same time maximise the opportunities that the current world situation provides. It needs to recognise its roots and see itself as an approach towards learning that is essence transformational.

As Blum (2000) has stated, whilst development education in some circles might continue to be perceived as ‘subversive, its origins are as much to do with existing understandings of development’ and as Harrison (2006) has stated, more broader liberal educational thinking. Its relationship to education and development is therefore always going to be contradictory.

The following themes are therefore suggested as the basis for a debate:

- continued importance of the term ‘development’ but in the context of human development;
- world is still dominated by inequalities and progress is all too slow on reducing global poverty;
- recognition of the dominant social and economic and cultural framework being globalisation and the impact this has particularly in terms of interdependence and local – global relationships;
- concepts of social justice must remain at the core of good development education;
- the future of the planet is now in question and therefore sustainable development must be incorporated into the debates and dialogue;
- the processes of learning about global and development issues and its relationship to development education requires a greater understanding of how people learn and the need to recognise that development education is as much about encouraging a way of thinking that would most likely challenge dominant ideological thinking about the world;
- key to learning is also the approaches and methodologies to be undertaken and the importance of understanding ‘other’ voices and perspectives and from this develop a sense of critical dialogue and enquiry;
- finally, whilst there is clearly an underlying agenda about education linked to social transformation and social change, development education is about giving people the knowledge, skills and values base that they themselves can take forward and not an agenda and goal that is already predetermined. Learning is not a natural consequence of awareness raising and nor does it automatically or should be perceived as being directly linked to campaigning and social activism. Development is recognised here as important but it needs to be seen now in the context of a broader discourse that is linked to post-colonial theory and postmodern philosophy. A potentially key figure for future debates on where development education needs to be re-thought is the work of the French philosopher, Michel Foucault. He views development as a way of thinking about the world. Development constructs rather than reflects reality. In so doing, it closes alternative ways of thinking and so constitutes a form of power. Development discourse is therefore linked to notions of power (Faubian 1994).

These critiques are often reflected within discussions in development education on perceptions of poverty, of people in the South being perceived via photographs, films and stories as the helpless victims. Smith and Yanacopulos (2004) in reviewing the debates and research on ‘public faces of development’

for a special issue of the *Journal of International Development* pose the need for research on the relationship between concepts of development with power relations. They note that a key theoretical agenda of development education is to work towards more equitable relationships between the North and the South. Another example is the way in which many school partnerships between UK and Southern countries re-inforce power relations (Leonard 2007). This imbalance can be gleaned from a comment given at the TIDE conference in June 2007: "When you come to us you are our honoured guest. When I visit you, I am a resource." (African teacher on reciprocal visits)

The relationship of development to wider debates on globalisation and sustainable development is also a key issue. To what extent is globalisation the framework within which development issues and perspectives should be debated, not only in economic but also in social and cultural contexts? Held has written that "globalisation is an idea whose time has come" (Held/McGrew 2000). But as he outlines it means many different things to different people. Similar questions have been posed about sustainable development. "We ourselves argue that the challenge for learning in relation to sustainable development is to confront learners with competing accounts of human and environmental reality wherever complexity and uncertainty mean that it is possible for competing rationalities to yield competing versions of the truth." (Scott/Gough 2005)

These observations link to the second area that needs greater attention by development educationalists and that is the relationship between the global and the local, particularly how the learner perceives their own role and identity in the context of a rapidly changing world. It is what some have termed 'globalisation' (Apple/Kenway/Singh 2005), or what Kenway and Bullen (2008) refer to as 'cyberflaneurs' or Nayak (2003) has looked at in the case of ethnic fusions.

If we are to grasp the complexity of young people's lives and choices they make we therefore need to understand the influences between local and the global. But young people are not just passive recipients of this consumer culture and globalisation. They adapt and re-create in their own image, with their peers and other cultural and geographical influences, develop identities that reflect this complexity (Nayak 2003).

The third and final area that is suggested needs re-thinking is the whole process of learning, for what, about what and what impact does the learning have on the individual, the group and the society. Development education, because much of its practice is determined by external funding, is constantly faced with proving evidence to demonstrate impact and effectiveness of the particular project and programme supported. What is rarely discussed is that if one ignores aims and objectives of the project, what did happen in terms of the learning rather than finding evidence to support pre-determined outcomes and objectives.

Jarvis (2007) suggests in defining lifelong learning that it is the combination of processes whereby the whole person and mind experiences social situations, 'the perceived content of which is the transformed cognitively, emotionally or practically and integrated into the individual person's biography resulting in a continually changing person.' (Jarvis 2007, p. 1)

This poses a key element of development education, what is the nature and form of that personal transformation as

a result of the learning. Are there common elements or is it really about methodologies?

The Open Space, Dialogue and Enquiry (OSDE) approach attempts to move forward from these debates. It is a methodology for the introduction of global issues and perspectives within educational contexts with the development of critical literacy and independent thinking as the central aims of this methodology. Key to OSDE thinking is the need to recognize complexity of global issues and that learners should be exposed not only to different perspectives, but to be supported in developing the ability to question and interpret assumptions and analyze implications of statements and where they have come from. Therefore in the context of perspectives and debates in development education, OSDE poses it is not just enough to ensure multiple perspectives are aired but to understand those perspectives, to reflect upon them and on basis of this engage in critical dialogue (Andreotti 2006).

Conclusion

This paper has aimed in reflecting upon the purposes of development education over the past 25 years, suggests there is need now to re-think its aims and methodologies. It has moreover suggested that development education is much more than one of a series of social and political educations, but a distinct approach towards learning that directly relates to educational and social change.

This relates to some of the challenges and difficulties development education practitioners have had about the inter-relationship of radical educational theory, particularly from Paulo Freire and its application to the school classroom. As McCollum (1996) has stated, "development education has been a movement which speaks only to itself, it is not located itself within a broader critical pedagogical discourse".

Development education should, if it is about learning, offer a range of perspectives and views. It needs to be perceived as making connections between the local and the global within a values base of equity, social justice and human rights. It should be about posing fundamental questions about the role of an educator. It should create a learning environment that enables the learners to critically assess in their own way and on their terms the subjects under discussion.

Development education as suggested needs to move away from seeing itself as a movement of NGOs and others who have common perspectives. It needs to be a coming together of development theories and theories of learning. It needs to take particular account of the influences of the ideas of Freire and liberation thinking. It needs to incorporate the debates about globalisation and social, cultural and economic change. It needs also to reflect on role and potential role of education in society. It needs to recognise that learning is not neutral or value free. Finally it needs to recognise in a broader social and cultural context the impact of critical social theory and post-modernism.

Development education needs above all to be located in an approach to learning that is about reflection, sharing and testing new ideas, providing conceptual inputs and learning from practice. It needs to move away from being a list of noble intentions and even a series of bodies of knowledge, skills and values to being an approach towards learning. This means that debates

and discussions should be contested. There should be critical dialogue and debate and space for a range of voices, views and perspectives. It must become a body of knowledge and learning with a transformative approach to education that has its own theoretical framework and dynamic.

Notes

1 Comments based on series of focus group discussions with teacher trainer students.

2 Dialogue and correspondence with young people engaged in travelling around the world.

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