

Prasad Reddy

## Linking Anti-Discrimination and Global Education

### Learning from the South as an Agenda for Educator Activists

#### Zusammenfassung:

Bezug nehmend auf Forschungsergebnisse im Kontext internationaler Entwicklungspädagogik und Anti-Diskriminierung plädiert der Autor in seinem Beitrag dafür, der Verbindung von Theorie und Praxis im Feld Globalen Lernens und Migration mehr Bedeutung zu geben und dabei die Perspektive von Akteurinnen und Akteuren mit Migrationshintergrund oder aus Ländern des Südens stärker einzubeziehen. Reddy entwickelt ein aus verschiedenen Phasen bestehendes Modell zu unterschiedlichen Akteurstypen im Feld internationaler Entwicklungspädagogik.

#### Abstract:

Drawing upon research findings and practise in the fields of international development education and anti-discrimination, the article calls for an increased relevance of interlinking theory and practise in the fields of migration and global education. He points out that there is a lack of concentrated exchange of ideas among researchers and practitioners engaged in this field. There is an urgent need react on the fact of under-representation of the Southern and migrant populations in research and practice of global education undertaken in the North. Reddy develops a model of different types of activists in the field of international development education.

#### Introduction

This article is written mainly in the context of international development co-operation. Therefore, the terms global education and global development education are used interchangeably. Global Education is education that opens peoples' eyes and minds to the realities of the world, and awakens them to bring about a world of greater justice, equity and human rights for all" (cited from The Maastricht Treaty of Global Education Declaration)<sup>1</sup>. Thereby, education should help all involved to recognise their responsibilities as citizens of the global community. It should equip them with the skills required to make informed decisions and take responsible actions. By including the global dimension in teaching, links can easily be made between local and global issues and people are given the opportunity to: critically examine their own values, stereotypes and attitudes; appreciate the similarities between peoples everywhere, and learn to value diversity; understand the global context of their local lives; develop skills, alternative forms of

thinking and acting that will enable them to combat injustice, prejudice and discrimination.

Such knowledge, skills and understanding would enable people to make informed decisions about how they can play an active role in the global community<sup>2</sup>.

To facilitate such global education, efforts need to be made to effectively recognise and level the power differences between the South and the North. In order to name the concrete problems existing in the complex of anti-discrimination and global development education one may speak of the certain Traps in global education in its South-North dimensions (Reddy 2008). If the inequalities of various kinds between the South and the North are not sustainably bridged, there is a possibility that global development education in the North can fall into self-made traps.

First among them is the Knowledge Trap. Down through the decades, there has been and continues to be an unquenchable thirst on the part of northern researches and praxis agencies to know the South (Escobar 1995, p. 46). Observing the continuing differences and pitfalls in development work and praxis, one wonders where all this knowledge of the South in the North leading to. Perhaps, it is now a matter of unlearning as learning something new about the South. It is time to learn to unlearn the negative images that are being constructed in the North about the South and develop a positive picture of the South. The Post-developmental arguments call for such alternatives (Rahnama/Bawtree 1997). Second among them is the Power Trap. Owing to the continuing economical differences between the South and the North there is also an increasing imbalance in the access to knowledge resources for the South. The reverse side of the coin is a failure to recognition the knowledge resources in the South. If global development education needs to be effective, these power differences need to be levelled and access to knowledge and financial resources to the South be enabled. Third among them is the Stereotype Trap. In Northern, development instruments like lobbying and publications regarding problems in the South, the 'South' is projected as an object to be helped, protected or saved. Development workers in the North still consider developing countries and their populations as 'the poor other' to be helped or a problem to be solved. In other places I called it Southernism (Reddy 2006, p. 18; 2005a, p. 86)<sup>3</sup>. In this constellation of helper-helped mentality, the North always stands out as observer and helper. It does not question itself as to 'its' own role in contributing to oppression.

Research and practice of global education in the North fails in its legitimacy if such power differences continue to exist and 'knowing about the South' continues to take place without the active and equal participation of the South. The lack of contact with the grassroots is the first legitimization crisis of global development education. The remnants of colonial and racist bias is the second legitimization crisis of global development education. The crisis of a lack of grass root involvement can be met through developing educator-activist identities.

### Educator Activist Identity

Although references to 'theorists' and 'practitioners' are frequently made, in-depth research regarding the importance of theorists' and educationists' involvement at grass root levels, and learning from the South are limited (Nolan 2002, p. 72). The need to intensify such identity-development and learning methods has been called for (McCarthy in Smith et al. 1997, pp. 243–249).<sup>4</sup> Researching trends in rural development work in the 1980s, Chambers spoke of two polarised worlds of "academics" and "practitioners" (Chambers 1983). Background to the dynamic between theory and practise could be found in the concept of "movement intellectuals" devised by Ron Eyerman (Eyerman/Jameson 1991).<sup>5</sup> Della Porta and Diani have also done valuable research into the motivation and ideals behind the involvement of people in social movements (Della Porta and Diani, 1999). McAdam has analysed intense activist experience and its effect on biographies of individuals (Mc Adam 1988).

Varied globalisation processes and the resulting transnational social movement organisations contribute to the development of activist identities (Kriesberg in Smith et al. 1997, pp. 3f.). Themes like global governance and transnational civil society are occasions to see the tasks of social theorists and activists in a new light and explore the possibilities of movementisation of modern society (Eder 2000). McLaren's (1997) critical pedagogy and revolutionary multiculturalism offers deep and intense ideas for developing educational alternatives to dominant and exclusive ideologies. The necessity to explore the possibilities of un-biased, critical and creative literature and participatory methods of learning has been approached from various perspectives. The emerging discussion of the need to find a basis of human dignity and human rights (Gundara 2000) in the field of education that accommodates peoples and cultures from multi-religious and multi-cultural societies necessitates closer research into relevant teacher training and learning material. Learning to live with differences, justly and without excluding the minorities is the challenge for educationists and learners in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Wulf 1996). These efforts at inclusion would then help us in the process of developing a critical consciousness among students and teachers alike. Developing a strong sense for human rights and a sense of acting for change involves not only the inclusion of the minority-perspectives but also imparting attitudes, values and skills to fulfil this task.

### Characteristics of Educator Activists

The task of educator activist identity building is a conscious, responsible activity. It is a lifetime project for individuals involved in global development work. The result of experiences and influences leading to the educator activist identity involved in this project, results in the cultivation of certain personal qualities. Exercising such qualities in personal, interpersonal, national and transnational relationships with peoples and institutions strengthens their effect and ensures their sustainability.

It is a conscious act of entering and remaining in this journey. Motivating factors involved in working not for but with the oppressed shows the "conscious" attempt on their part to embark upon and continue on such a journey (Mato 2000). As a consequence of a conscious decision to stay close to and work with the grassroots facilitates a change in the perspective of those holding particular, even, dominant ideologies regarding development work and advocacy. Experiences with oppression, familial and social influences during this journey changes previously held ideologies, giving access to dynamism and flexibility. Individuals, thereby, experience a change in perspectives. This change in perspective may even move some to give up their entire theoretical, professional career to go into alternative, non-institutional modes of working with the grassroots.

This change in perspective, further, aids educator activists in raising new questions and changing once dogmatically held perspectives regarding self and the other, specifically, regarding the marginalised. Looking at life and events from the perspective of the poor, advocates from the North involved with advocacy for the South, change their previously held, learnt and given, theoretical standpoints giving access to their own experiences and action.

### Stages in the Developmental Journey Towards Educator Activism

One could decipher and visualise certain stages in this journey to becoming an educator activist (table 1). This is a journey that could accompany persons who wish to work towards social

| Academics        | Intellectuals         | Educators                        | Educator-Activists                                      |
|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| pure research    | interested research   | action-oriented research         | action and research                                     |
| uni-disciplinary | inter-disciplinary    | eclectic                         | inclusive   |
| detached         | curious               | involved                         | participatory   |
| linear thinking  | multi-linear thinking | result- and situation-oriented   | dialogical thinking/ socially and emotionally competent |
| individualist    | community oriented    | people- and grass-roots-oriented | solidarity  |

Table 1:  
From Academics to Educator Activists: Development of an Educator-Activist Identity

justice and transformation. This depiction does not assume that such process strictly exists. It rather suggests that such and such 'types' of identities may take shape, given such and such experiences, various options made and decisions taken by individuals. The journey to becoming an educator activist involves four stages: the academics, intellectuals, educators and educator activists.

### The Academics

On the first stage are the academics. They could be defined as individuals who are pure researchers interested in facts and figures. They are therefore fixed to one discipline of thinking, rarely showing interest in other disciplines. They believe in linear thinking, adhering to their own work-field without giving enough attention to the implications of their work on others or to the implication of others work on theirs. Thus, they remain individualists. The next stage takes one to being

### Educator Activists

The stage of educator activists takes persons from being merely researcher-oriented to being praxis-oriented. Educator activists consciously seek, search and get actively involved in themes and situations they are analysing and criticising. They are inclusive thinkers, open to persons of all cultures and backgrounds. Owing to their emotional and social competence, they have an optimum level of dialogical thinking. They act in solidarity with the people at grassroots levels aiming at transformation of structures and institutions. Seen in the context of our discussion on advocacy in transnational and post-colonial times, the educator activist makes his/her task to be "sensitive to what is involved in representation, in studying the Other, in racial thinking, in unthinking and uncritical acceptance of authority and authoritative ideas, in the socio-political role of intellectuals, in the great value of sceptical critical consciousness" (Said 1978, p. 327).<sup>5</sup>

| Sources of Learning                 |  |  |   |   |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|---|--|
| A<br>r<br>e<br>a<br>s<br><br>o<br>f | s<br>t<br>r<br>u<br>c<br>t<br>u<br>r<br>e<br>s | Personal                               | Communal  | National  | Transnational  |
|                                     |  | a<br>c<br>t<br>i<br>o<br>n             | p<br>r<br>o<br>c<br>e<br>s<br>s<br>e<br>s                             | personal education and research, paradigms and roles        | educational institutions, work, environments, societal groups: family, religion, sport clubs /organisations etc. |
|                                     |  | individual encounters, key experiences | group dynamics through co-students, peers, colleagues, family members | political opportunity, structures, transformation potential | international transformation potential   |

Table 2  
Levels of Learning and Areas of Action

an intellectual whose research is interested in social issues. Such individuals study or research with an interest in making their research relevant to their interests and not just researching for the sake of it. They are, therefore, inter-disciplinary in their approach. They are interested in knowing what theorists and academics in other disciplines are saying and doing. Instead of adopting a linear way of thinking, they experiment creatively in a multi-linear way. They can be referred to as being community-oriented. While academics and intellectuals to a large extent remain restricted to the confines of their schools or universities, in the next stage educators leave the classical confines of the classroom, making research action-oriented. They are eclectic, taking in as many useful and critical ideas from different disciplines as possible. They aim at making their intellectual efforts result oriented and true to grassroots situations. Their research is therefore oriented towards grassroots and human interests. Yet, they maintain certain distrust and distance from the people whom they wish to educate.

### Sources and Levels of Learning and Areas of Action

Each of the above four stages is accompanied by respective sources, areas and processes (table 2) of learning corresponding to the various stages of development. The sources and levels of learning associated with each stage are: personal, communal, national and transnational. For each level of this learning there are corresponding processes that result from the experience at each stage or structure of learning. These structures and areas of learning are closely linked to the life experiences of the persons: through encounters with others, their professional and private involvement with the world. The process of learning in each of the above structures are similar: personal, community, national and international, each structure having corresponding processes of learning and possibilities for action.

On the personal level, the structures that influence one's identity are personal education and research, the paradigms and role models that a person sets for himself/herself. The educational and research aspects include access to schooling and

the possibilities of further formal and informal learning. On this level a big role is attributed to the paradigms and models the person chooses, and related role-models that he/she follows. The education, later learning, paradigms and role models generate corresponding processes of learning and action. These processes are personal encounters with people, situations and key experiences in life.

On the level of community, a wider sphere of a person's involvement, the structures of learning are educational institutions, workplace, and social groups that the person closely relates to: they could be the local interest groups, religious community, extended family, sports institutions etc. The corresponding processes of learning at this level take place in the experiences the person undergoes in relation to the members of the various community structures mentioned above.

On the national level, so far as the person is exposed to social movements in his or her region and country; the non-governmental initiatives; political parties; trade unions; the media and religious institutions, the processes of learning and possibilities of action depend very much on the political opportunity structures that the person identifies and uses. An important process at this stage of learning is the development of a transformation potential: an effort to transform unjust structures that the person encounters in his country or region.

The extension of the national structures exposes a person to experiences at the transnational level in the sense of involvement with governmental and non-governmental organisations, advocacy networks, trade unions, religious structures and the media. The main process of learning and action in this stage is the development of a transformation potential on transnational level.

### Conclusion: A Continuous Journey

Although there are no ideal types of educator activists existing, it is possible to develop and maintain such an identity. Often, analyses of people's involvement in aspects of transnational developmental issues border on rather narrow differentiation between theorists and activists. I wish to avoid this narrow differentiation and emphasise the grey areas involved in people's differentiated involvement in social change. The scheme developed in the above two tables, probably, gives an impression of a linear development of one's identity as an educator activist. That is not the intention. This representation only assists in seeing the importance of moving towards effective advocacy and involvement in social issues and not meant to give a fixed and static blueprint. It is most probable that individuals interact from different levels of learning and involvement at various points of their lives. One does not always remain being an educator-activist or a pure researcher. Rather, educator activism is a continuous effort to remain relevant and transformative, with respect to advocacy and political mobilisation. Being an educator activist is not a final stage that one has to reach, but a state of being where one dynamically integrates activist dimensions into her/his life experiences and the tasks of being an educator, academic and an intellectual. A judicious, conscious and critical effort is called for in this process of integrating and accommodating one's experiences in order to keep the possibility of being an educator activist ever open.

### Notes

- 1 For a detailed discussion see [http://www.coe.int/t/e/north-south\\_centre/programmes/3\\_global\\_education/h\\_publications/Maastricht\\_Congress\\_Report.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/e/north-south_centre/programmes/3_global_education/h_publications/Maastricht_Congress_Report.pdf).
- 2 Slightly modified version of the definition under <http://www.globaldimension.org.uk>.
- 3 Southernism can be defined as a careful construction of identities and cultures of individuals and populations in the South by the North.
- 4 McCarthy, in his article titled: "Globalisation and Social Movement Theory", under the section Activists' Identities and Careers, writes: "[...] understanding transnational activism requires understanding the more or less formal opportunities that allow committed activists to choose extended careers in transnational activism. Such an understanding leads to a consideration of mobilising structures and the mobilisation of resources..." (p. 249).
- 5 Representation in this citation refers to the knowledge-power issues involved, whereby, situations and peoples are 'represented' as advanced or backward, developed or underdeveloped etc. This concept of representation is one of the main issues discussed by Said in Orientalism. Although Said does not mention the term "educator activists", the role he designated to public intellectuals, corresponds in many issues to the role that I attribute to educator activists.

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### Dr. Prasad Reddy

is trainer, consultant and researcher in the field of international development co-operation and anti-discrimination.