

# Policy & Practice

## A Development Education Review

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# Editorial

## Examining development education in testing times

**Matthias Fiedler**

In times of global crises people yearn for good news, but to be blunt good news have become a scarce luxury, especially to someone working in the area of development education and global justice. This was one of the reasons I was delighted to find an email from a democracy and policy advisor of the Danish non-governmental organisation (NGO) platform IBIS in my inbox the other day. The email read,

“Denmark is planning to increase development aid to 0.83 per cent despite the financial crisis and recession...According to the Minister of Finance (MoF) the financial bill for 2010 will include a proposal for increasing the percentage of GDP (gross domestic product) spent on development aid to 0.83 per cent. The increase compensates the shrinking Danish GDP and maintains the aid at the same nominal value. The argument from the MoF is, that ‘even if the Danish economy shrinks due to the financial crisis, the need for aid is not decreasing. Poor people should not pay for the financial crisis’”.

For those of us living and working in the island of Ireland this sounds a bit like science fiction. At the United Nations’ Millennium Review Summit in 2005, the Taoiseach Bertie Ahern committed Ireland to reaching the UN target of spending 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) on overseas aid by 2012. The government proceeded to set interim targets by which to measure progress. The 2010 target set was 0.6 per cent of GNP. Contrary to many of its European neighbours and despite these past commitments, the Irish government has cut its 2009 projected expenditure for overseas development assistance (ODA) dramatically. These cuts have collectively represented an astonishing and completely disproportionate 21.8 per cent reduction in the aid budget, taking into account that aid represents less than 2 per cent of current government expenditure. The cuts to the 2009 projected budget, already amounting to €222 million, or 24 per cent of the total aid budget for the year, are also well in excess of the proportional

reduction in Ireland's GNP, which was estimated in April 2009 to be around 8 per cent. If the ODA budget was to shrink in proportion to national income (8 per cent) in April 2009, then that would have suggested a regrettable shrinkage in overseas aid of some €71 million. However, overseas aid was hit nearly three times harder than the shrinkage in national income would suggest (€195 million). Ireland is projected to spend 0.48 per cent of GNP on ODA in 2009, down from 0.58 per cent in 2008, which means that the government is moving away from its international commitment to spend 0.7 per cent of GNP on ODA by 2012, a commitment that Gordon Brown has just renewed for the United Kingdom.

In many countries, ODA budgets and contributions to NGOs are under review by national governments, which undeniably puts extra pressure on development educators to establish our work as a crucial component of overseas aid. The current economic downturn is affecting most everyone and everything on this planet, and poor families are in the frontline of the recession struggling to make ends meet. The balance between global solidarity and local needs is being re-negotiated throughout society, especially in the countries of the global North. Politicians have retreated to national or local contexts when deciding how to spend their now heavily limited resources. It seems global solidarity does not have a lot of currency at the moment. For those of us working for global justice this is a major challenge; however, it is a challenge we cannot afford to shy away from. For this reason, the current issue of *Policy & Practice* is a very timely and important intervention as it charts the provision of 'Development Education in Action' north and south of the border in the island of Ireland.

This issue of the journal will contribute to the ongoing challenge of showing how development education impacts on people in the global North. With increased strain on governments and development NGOs to cut their programmes in overseas aid, the pressure for development educators to demonstrate their effectiveness seems to increase manifold. In addition to pleading the cause of global solidarity and justice in the public arena, we also have to ensure that governments and NGOs continue to see development education as a core area of their work in which it is worth investing time and resources. It is our responsibility to demonstrate the results of our work and highlight the fact that development education is having a real impact on its target groups.

A development education response to the current crisis has to be framed as an education perspective that accounts for the seriousness of the current economic state. This crisis has arguably been most devastating for the more affluent people in the global North. It has deprived us of the illusion that the problems of the world are located in some far-away place, the so-called ‘underdeveloped’ world where we send aid to ‘help people to develop’. Furthermore, the crisis has affected people on a subconscious level. People’s confidence in the political, social and economic system in which they grew up has been radically put into doubt by reality. The largely unchallenged assumption of the strength of the capitalist market economy has suddenly been called into question. The economist Amartya Sen recently described the current state of affairs as ‘global confusion’. It is no longer just corrupt governments in other parts of the world that have failed their people but our own politicians, regulators and bankers. This confusion explains some of the frantic efforts of our governments in trying to ‘fix’ the problem without realising that they are using the same means that brought about the crisis in the first place. The confusion could also partly explain why so few people are moved to critically engage with their governments on the merits of their efforts. A silent majority appears to have accepted the limitless intervention of our governments in bail-outs, so long as we are not forced to admit defeat.

If this crisis has given us something positive, then it is the opportunity we have to stop and reconsider how we do things, how we live our lives and – as educators – how we teach, learn and think about the world in which we live. Educating citizens on social and global justice issues should always be an important part of any education (and for that matter of any development cooperation programme run by a state) because real involvement of the public only comes through a better understanding of the issues at hand. However, it is not necessary to re-invent the educational wheel to adapt the way we teach people to deal with 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges. As educational responses to the need to empower citizens in a globalised world, development education and global learning have already pushed learners in different educational settings to think critically, independently and systemically about the (often unequal) state of our world and the society in which we live. With a strong emphasis on a critical examination of cultural values, assumptions and perceptions, they have also prepared learners in all areas of society to participate effectively in society, both locally and globally, so as to bring about positive change for a more just and equal world.

Additionally, with its focus on active participation and process, development education has over the years empowered learners to be more active and engaged in democratic processes.

From an Irish perspective there is a lot to be proud of: the widespread exposure of young people to development issues is quite remarkable, as is the level of integration of global and social justice issues in third level. In recent years there have been major achievements in advancing development education in terms of research, integration into different areas of civil society and in youth work in general. At a European level, the island of Ireland is often quoted as an example of good practice in many areas of global learning and our educators are often asked to share their experiences abroad. One of the challenges, however, is how all these achievements in the educational field are translated into the public sphere. In other words, development education has to find new and more creative ways to reach the wider public. Both challenges will be increasingly difficult to address in the current climate of the economic downturn and budget cutbacks.

In his book *The Bottom Billion* in which he analyses the effectiveness of foreign aid, Paul Collier writes about the importance of a global dimension in education:

“To build a unity of purpose, thinking needs to change, not just within the development agencies but among the wider electorates whose views shape what is possible. Without an informed electorate, politicians will continue to use the bottom billion merely for photo opportunities rather than promoting real transformation” (Collier, 2008:xii).

Transformation is the key word here and Collier reiterates the importance of an educational approach to global justice that goes beyond simple public information about development issues. To put it bluntly, the Irish citizen is entitled to be educated as a global citizen and our governments would fail their people if they curtail this service.

Globally, investment in global citizenship education could create an environment in which a necessary debate on the prevailing model of development and growth could take place. Such a debate would have to concentrate on key issues such as the effectiveness of aid and how

development cooperation will look after 2015 - the target date for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (a discussion which has already started worldwide, and with which Ireland needs to engage). Furthermore the debate has to focus on the necessity to achieve real transformation by placing justice (rather than charity) at the heart of our thinking. For such a debate to happen both a healthy civil society and an investment in education are needed. The yield of such an investment would be immeasurable, as it could start a conversation free of domination from vested interests (for further elaboration on this point, the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) has developed a Thinkpiece available on [www.ideasonline.ie](http://www.ideasonline.ie)).

A central problem for global citizenship has been that it is too elusive as a concept to ensure a sense of belonging for citizens. A strong civil society could provide such a structure and allow citizens to be grounded as citizens of a particular state and yet, at the same time, as global citizens that are interconnected with the hopes and concerns of others around the world. If our governments are serious about their involvement in development cooperation, ensuring a healthy civil society that has the means to engage in an open and honest discussion then this kind of citizenship should be a key priority. But there is also a job to be done for civil society actors in Ireland. We have to start making serious connections between the various educational sectors that work towards creating a just and equal world. We have to start communicating with the view to create a public sphere that allows a structure in which an open discussion on how we can react to this global crisis and how we want our government to respond to it. Such a structure would allow us to become active as a civil society again. However, this means that we first have to reclaim the public sphere that we have handed over to the media and the politicians in recent years. The absence of such a public sphere in which a civil society can thrive is part of our problem in communicating with the public.

What we have to show is that development education works. That it contributes to educating active, critical and conscientious global citizens. This is why the kind of good practice such as that profiled in the current issue of *Policy and Practice* is of paramount importance for our work. The articles are a testimony of the fact that development educators – with all their expertise and knowledge about global and social justice issues – can and



should play a key part in what I would call the intellectual recovery from the global crisis.

## References

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**Matthias Fiedler** is the Director of the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA). IDEA's main goal is to advance and support a professional, cohesive and creative development education sector in Ireland. Prior to IDEA, Matthias worked for two years for the DICE (Development and Intercultural Education) project, an Irish Aid-funded project that aims to integrate development education and intercultural education in initial teacher education in Ireland. Originally from Germany, he moved with his family to Ireland in 2001. From 2001 to 2006 he was a Lecturer of German at University College Dublin. He studied German, history and anthropology at the University of Göttingen, Germany and holds a doctorate in philosophy with a thesis on German colonial discourses in the 18th and 19th centuries. He has worked as a teacher in Germany and Cameroon. He has published articles on development education, intercultural education, postcolonial theory and German colonialism.

# Focus

## READING OTHER WORLDS, READING MY WORLD

In this article, **Carmel Hinchion** and **Jennifer Hennessy** reflect on a project undertaken by the Ubuntu Network in partnership with pre-service English teachers and their lecturers at the University of Limerick. The project was set in the context of an English pedagogy course as part of the undergraduate initial teacher education (ITE) programme where student English teachers prepare for teaching in post-primary classrooms. Their article focuses on a literature unit where ‘culturally salient’ texts were chosen to promote, not only a reading of the word but of the world (Freire, 1970). A culturally salient text, as understood by Kress (1995), is one that allows us to ask questions about its significance in its own cultural domain and for other cultures. Drawing on the metaphor of a ‘reconstitutive mirroring experience’ (O’Loughlin, 2009), literature acts as a reflexive and reflective medium in shaping a world view.

### Introduction

This article briefly explains the reading model employed with student teachers for the Ubuntu project, and then looks at the value and purpose of reading literature. It examines the place of reading as an element of literacy learning, where literacy is framed by the Freirean idea of freedom and empowerment. This perspective is theorised with reference to both the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate English Syllabi in the Republic of Ireland. The article will go on to describe how the theme ‘Similarities and Differences’ underpinned a pedagogical model with student teachers as they prepared to teach literature, in this instance the novel, in their English classes. It explores how reading literature offers an opportunity to develop cultural awareness and provides a critical lens for problematising texts. The pedagogical model of dialogic and participatory practice is described and finally the authors offer some reflections on issues of cultural diversity relevant to the Irish school context.

### Reading and understanding text

McCormick (1994) explains three competing models of reading: the cognitive (which privileges the text); the expressivist (which privileges the reader's life experiences); and the socio-cultural (which privileges the cultural context). However he also contends that all three models are interconnected. A reader approaches texts with their own experiences, assumptions and viewpoints while texts intrinsically contain their own messages and viewpoints, all of which are mediated by historical and cultural contexts.

Hubard agrees that '... the understanding of a text is reached when the horizon of the spectator (their background, experience, personality, cultural and historical situation, and so forth) and the horizon of the work (what the object puts forth to the spectator) fuse into a new larger horizon' (Hubard, 2008). It is this fusion of horizons which underpins this model of reading. Foregrounded also in this understanding of reading is the concept of critical literacy which will be addressed in more detail later.

According to the Junior Certificate Guidelines for Teachers, 'reading is an act of making meaning' (1990:32); it is a creative interpretative process which happens through interaction between the text and reader with the text offering 'a spectrum of possibilities' (1990:46) to the reader. In keeping with the belief that knowledge is not a fixed entity but a continuous creation, then no reading is absolute. Rather reading is a process of building a relationship with a text where there is understanding, lack of understanding, remembering, forgetting, intimacy and distance, all shaped in a contextual space. Texts are always open to re-reading and reconstitution.

## **The value of reading literature**

Literature is a symbolisation of experience in language. Literature can be an artistic symbol where a literary encounter may be 'transformed into expressive realisation' (Webb, 1992:1) or a cultural symbol, a microcosm of a social world, or it can be one or both at the same time. However, it is literature as a culturally significant symbol that is the focus of our explorations. Literature is never a neutral or a value-free creation as a cultural force (Peim, 1993) and the teaching of literature also involves a consideration of values, morals, ethics and a context of 'some social philosophy' (Rosenblatt, 1995:16).

Culturally salient texts can act as a mirror which allows us to consider and reconsider ourselves in the world. They can help us to escape reality and crawl through the looking glass like Alice in Wonderland, and they can also help us to re-establish our position in the world. We can vicariously experience both reality and fantasy between the covers of a book. Literature tells a story, of which we become a part. Our own story is drawn forth as we read another person's story. Bakhtin describes this as dialogism where 'everything means, is understood as part of a greater whole - there is a constant interaction between meanings' (1981:426). Reading literature becomes a way to encounter experience, feel a response, think about situations, form perspectives, extend possibilities and critique our world.

Reading literature is an act of imagination and in turn requires empathy, for when looking at the 'what if's of life or viewing things from an alternate perspective, we need to take a leap into the minds and hearts of the storytellers or characters. Webb writes that reading literature is a reflective act as 'imagination enables us to connect with experience in ways simply not available in the moment or duration of experiencing itself. Imagination is, from the beginning, a reflective cast upon experience' (Webb, 1992:xii).

Literature can help us discover that across time, place and cultures, people share certain fundamental traits, desires and problems. At the same time, literature affirms the great diversity that co-exists with shared human commonalities. Literature from different socio-cultural contexts portrays a 'myriad of ways in which people of different times and places and cultures have dealt with the problems of human existence' (Bishop, 2000:76). It helps us to think about character, human motivations, relationships, moral dilemmas, traditions and heritage and many other themes and issues.

## **Reading as literacy: The English syllabi in Ireland**

Literacy is embedded in cultural norms and power relations. To participate effectively in the world there are many literacies to be learned (Mullins, 2002). These include reading, writing, speaking and listening in different contexts, and for different purposes. These are not separate and discreet or fixed attainments, but overlapping and dynamic evolutions for optimising strengths in life. New literacies are always emerging, especially technological and visual ones in the present era. The English syllabi in Ireland has centrally positioned literacy as the force for personal growth and

socio-cultural competence. Even though there are a number of English syllabi in the Irish schooling system (Junior Certificate Schools Programme, Leaving Certificate Applied, Transition Year, Leaving Certificate Vocational Preparation Programme), this article concentrates here on Junior Certificate English and Leaving Certificate English.

The Junior Certificate English Syllabus is premised on a personal growth model of education. It aims to enable students to become empowered in the world through reading, writing, speaking and listening in the domains of personal, social and cultural literacy. Personal literacy emphasises the expression and validation of the personal language register; social literacy emphasises the functionality of language; and cultural literacy emphasises the importance of the aesthetic uses of language.

The Leaving Certificate English Syllabus builds on the Junior Certificate aims and is premised on a socio-cultural view of the world where individuals understand themselves as constructed through social interaction. 'Text' is understood as any communicative product constructed in social and cultural milieus. Language in this context is not a neutral medium of expression and communication but an embedded signifier. It is also, according to Mullins, 'a living, cultural entity subject to permanent change and development in the mouths, pens and computers of its users' (2000:118). Mullins advocates a flexible approach to language development where students learn a wide range of 'discourses'. This approach is considered to be a significant political act as 'it places literacy development in a rich framework of social practices and invites students to play their role in our democracy as free, responsible, citizens' (Mullins, 2000:120).

Both the Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle syllabi essentially promote a concept of literacy which is values-based. These values include promotion of individual growth, promotion of citizenship and the promotion of a critical perspective of our world. The Senior Cycle Syllabus especially encourages this questioning stance where students are required to develop higher order thinking and evaluative responses to texts. Students are encouraged to problematise texts and challenge assumptions. This 'critical literacy' involves asking three broad questions: why was this text written?; how was this text written?; and are there other ways of writing this text? Critical literacy encourages students to see texts as 'opportunities for dialogue and speculation' (DES, 2009:8). In reviewing the approaches to reading, Fisher

states that critical literacy is not just about deconstruction and response but also ‘about making a difference, moving the book out of the classroom, developing an awareness of the book as an artefact and giving the children a real voice in discussing text’ (2008:20).

Reading critically undercuts efforts to essentialise beliefs and gives literature a subversive and transformative capacity. Following the liberatory model of education, our consciousness about the world is raised and there is a ‘constant unveiling of reality’ (Freire, 1970:64) so that we are not just receiving objects but active participants.

## **Reading cultural context**

The concept of culture is multi-layered and complex. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment defines culture as ‘the beliefs, behaviour, language, and entire way of life of a particular group of people at a particular time’ (NCCA,2006). According to Giroux, ‘culture is the medium through which children fashion their individual and collective identities and learn in part how to narrate themselves in relation to others’ (2002:187-8).

Both the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate syllabi are explicit in their promotion of cultural awareness in the classroom advocating that ‘a range of resources will be selected from different periods and cultures and students will be encouraged to approach them in a comparative manner’ (Department of Education and Science, 1999:3). Research into the development of students’ awareness and acceptance of cultural diversity has highlighted the necessity for a pro-active rather than re-active stance in the teaching of cultural texts (Burns, 2002; Hickling Hudson, 2003; Tuomi, 2005).

In the Comparative Literature section of the Leaving Certificate English Syllabus, students are asked to read the cultural context of a number of texts. According to the Draft Guidelines for Leaving Certificate English, this is not a sociological study but ‘it means taking some perspectives which enable the students to understand the kind of values and structures with which people contend. It amounts to entering into the world of the text and getting some insight and feel for the cultural texture of the world created’ (1999:72). This implies looking at the family, social, religious, economic and political structures embedded in this setting (DES, 1999:73).

Calder (2000) asserts that all of our experiences are filtered through lenses and stresses that if we believe what we see through our own individual lenses or our 'cultural filters' to be global reality, we may begin to act in a manner which leads to injustice for others. The study of cultural texts as part of the English syllabus highlights to the student the mono-focal parameters of their own individual experience and invites them to share in a multi-focal experience, taking cognisance of the cultural dissonance which often prevails in diverse societies. It allows literature to become a site for dialogue and cultural awakenings where the text might be positioned as a mirror, a window or a sliding glass door (Bishop, 2000).

### **Dialogic and participatory pedagogy**

According to Alexander, '...there is growing recognition that dialogic forms of pedagogy are potent tools for securing student engagement, learning and understanding' (2006:3). For him, dialogue is an educative process that, among other things, 'involves the ability to question, listen, reflect, reason, explain, speculate and explore ideas...[I]t involves a willingness and skill to engage with minds, ideas and ways of thinking other than our own' (Alexander, 2006:5).

The Ubuntu project aspired to a dialogic pedagogy to encourage student participation. Like Burbules, it understood that dialogue is relational where there is commitment and a spirit of engagement. Burbules suggests that the success of communicative relationships depends on 'communicative virtues', including patience, tolerance for alternative points of view, an openness to give and receive criticism and the willingness and ability to listen thoughtfully and attentively (1993).

As part of the exploration for this project, these 'communicative virtues' were discussed with student teachers, who consented to monitor the level of difficulty they encountered by writing about the process in their reflective journals. Time was allotted at the end of tutorials to consider this with student teachers in pairs and subsequently as part of a larger group if they so wished. However, the aspirational and enacted curriculum is always in tension.

As one of the students wrote in his journal:

“I am learning a lot about tolerance and patience. I find it very hard to really listen as I want to jump in with my opinion. I notice also that Carmel was tending to take over the class today so we will have to remind her about listening” (Student C).

These tutorials also aimed to create a pedagogical atmosphere where students felt free to work together and participate in active learning methodologies, such as the creation of ‘prop bags’ for characters and other drama-in-education techniques. We aspired to create an atmosphere of intellectual and emotional security. The pedagogical approach employed reflected many of the key components of development education as advocated by the Ubuntu Network, namely advancement of knowledge about the world, development of skills such as critical thinking, reflection and communication and a nurturing of attitudes such as appreciation, respect, empathy, self awareness and responsibility.

### **Louie’s framework for teaching culturally salient texts**

To promote interculturalism in the classroom, Louie (2006) employed the use of the audio-visual text Walt Disney’s *Mulan*, in conjunction with four variants of the story from textbooks. Louie found that when an effective and comprehensive framework for teaching of the film was constructed and implemented, students demonstrated critical understanding, empathetic understanding, and conceptual understanding of the story. From this research Louie asserted that a similar framework for teaching can be applied to the study of such texts in the classroom. Louie’s framework for the teaching of cultural texts outlines seven key methodological requirements: check the text’s authenticity; help learners understand the characters’ world; encourage students to see the world through the characters’ perspectives; identify values underlying the characters’ conflict resolution strategies; relate self to the text; use variants of the same story to help students build a schema; and encourage students to talk, write and respond throughout.

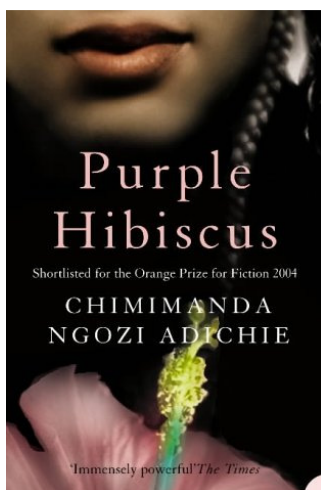
We adopted Louie’s framework for our study over a two year period with both a second and third year English Pedagogy class, using a number of novels selected to support our project work. These texts included the novels *True Believer* by Virginia Euwer Wolff, *Rabbit Proof Fence* by Doris Pilkington, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* by John Boyne, *Lies of Silence* by



Brian Moore and *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Following Louie's methodological requirements these novels were considered authentic in their cultural domain and significant in promoting cultural awareness. For the purpose of this article we will focus on the approach used to explore the novel *Purple Hibiscus*.

### ***Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**

*Purple Hibiscus* is based on the life story of fifteen-year-old Kambili and set in a time of great political turmoil in Nigeria. Kambili's family is also in turmoil due to a religiously fanatical father who tyrannises Kambili, her mother and her brother Jaja. The novel is centred on their domestic life but deals also with broader cultural themes such as tribal traditions, worship, conflict and the aftershock of colonisation. Despite the sadness in the novel, hope is sustained. Jaja symbolises the resistance to oppression and in the words of Kambili, 'Jaja's defiance seemed to me now like Aunt Ifeoma's experimental purple hibiscus: rare, fragrant with the undertones of freedom, a different kind of freedom from the one the crowds waving green leaves chanted at Government Square after the coup. A freedom to be, to do' (Adichie, 2004:16).



## Reading approach

The following section presents an overview of the methodological approach employed in the reading of this novel with student teachers. The approach was based on dialogue and participation, and used Louie's framework for reading culturally salient texts and a critical literacy stance to inform our pedagogy.

### *Primary explorations*

We began our work on this novel by looking at its cover and asking students to describe what they saw, e.g. people, objects, colours, words. We then asked them to consider any suggested meanings the semiotics of the cover might have for them. Ideas emerged about the colours black and pink; black suggesting Africa, sadness, oppression, and pink suggesting female, fragrant flowers, softness and subtlety. From the cover it was also obvious that a young black girl with braided hair was part of the story. Her position in the frame was observed where her eyes were not in view but her lips were prominent. Students commented that the lips and the pink flower and its stamen had sexual undertones and that the cover of the book itself exuded a type of seduction. We wondered about this young girl's life. We wondered why the title *Purple Hibiscus*? We considered the author's name and played with its pronunciation. We talked about our own names. Why were we named this way? What is it like if someone forgets our name or mispronounces it? We imagined that the novel was set in Africa because of the author's name, one of her previous publications titled *Half of a Yellow Sun*, and the colours used. The discussion about the cover set up our expectations and we moved on to find out more about the writer and Nigeria, where the novel is set.

### *Development*

Students then read the story facilitated by the lecturer's interventions. They kept a response journal recording some of their thoughts and feelings as they read. This journal was a type of 'personal scrapbook' (Department of Education and Science, 1990:40). Students commented on their responses to characters and situations, leading to many memorable discussions. Students showed strong emotion when Kambili's father was cruel and tyrannical in his behaviour, but were encouraged to consider his motivations, his religious fanaticism and his hypocritical nature. We considered how we all have the potential to be cruel in our actions and how we can oppress people. We felt

the brittleness of Kambili's mother as she polished the glass ballet-dancing figurines after a beating from her abusive husband. We admired Jaja's courage and wondered whether we would have the same courage to speak up to dogmaticism. We wanted to get to know Aunty Ifeoma as we loved her colourful personality and understanding nature. We filled 'prop bags' with artefacts and symbols representing the characters, role-played moments from the text and talked about both the happy and tragic happenings. We tried to understand the characters' world.

The following questions were used to guide our reading:

1. What are the habits and rituals of everyday life in *Purple Hibiscus*?
2. How are these same or different to your own life?
3. Would you like to live in the world of this text?
4. What are the relationships like in this text? How do people get on with each other?
5. Who has power in this text and who are powerless? Why?
6. How is language spoken in this text? What is the tone of this text? Is it a liberating form of language? Is it a disempowering form of language? How do characters speak their lines? What effect has this on other characters? How is language influenced by culture in this text?
7. What is your view of the characters in this text? Would you like any of them as friends? How is their culture influencing their behaviour and attitudes? What feelings do you have for the characters? Who do you most empathise with? Who are you least empathic towards? Would you have made some of their choices? What restricted them in making their choices?
8. Is there any other text (written, visual, spoken) that reminds you of *Purple Hibiscus*? What are the similarities?
9. As you read the novel what themes and issues emerged in the storyline?
10. Did you enjoy reading this novel? Why?
11. What the symbols of their culture are evident in the novel? What are symbols of your own culture?
12. Why do you think this novel was written?
13. Why was it written in this way?
14. In what other way could this novel have been written?

15. When you close the covers of this novel having read it what feelings are you left with? Explain.

### ***Final discussion***

Once they finished the novel, the student teachers created a ‘tableau’, a still image worked in collaboration. This tableau was a dramatisation of the overall journey of the characters through positioning ‘on stage’, facial expressions and gestures. The pathos as a result of the destruction of a family was the evident motif here but nonetheless the tableau expressed hope through the characters of both Jaja and Kambili. Rising from the ashes of tyranny were the beginnings of a new world. We discussed with students the cultural forces that created this picture and the cultural forces which might change it. We considered the title of the novel and looked again at the picture of the purple hibiscus flower. We considered if *Purple Hibiscus* was now an apt title having read the story. We asked the class to create alternative titles and to choose a symbol which captured the meaning of the novel for them. The following is an extract from a student’s journal entry:

“I think the title *Tongues of Fire* is apt for many reasons. It captures the turmoil in Nigeria with all the military coups, the fire of the father’s religious words and the fire of his temper. It also captures Jaja’s courageous words of defiance and Kambili’s growth as a woman and as a person finding her strength. The symbol I would use would be two hands clasping each other as they emerge from red flames” (Student A).

This section outlined the general approach to reading those literature texts which have cultural potency. There are many areas that could and should be further developed from this exploration including an evaluation of the learning outcomes from this approach and a consideration of the tensions experienced in trying to enact a dialogic pedagogy. However sharing our experiences with the reader becomes part of a reflective pedagogy for us as the project developers.

### **Conclusion**

Irish schools are currently endeavouring to promote intercultural education in response to the increasing socio-cultural diversity within Ireland. In the

*Guidelines for Intercultural Education in Post – Primary Schools*  
intercultural education is understood as:

“(a) an education which respects, celebrates and recognises the normality of diversity in all parts of human life. It sensitises the learner to the idea that humans have naturally developed a range of different ways of life, customs and worldviews, and that this breadth of human life enriches all of us and (b) as education which promotes equality and human rights, challenges unfair discrimination and promotes the values upon which equality is built” (NCCA, 2006).

In June 2009, the Economic and Social Research Institute released findings based on the first comprehensive nationwide investigation into how Irish schools are adapting to the changing make-up of our student population. This paper, entitled ‘Adapting to Diversity: Irish Schools and Newcomer Students’ (Smyth, et al., 2009), documents the experiences of schools in catering for immigrant children and young people and highlights key areas for development needed in order to meet the demands of the evolving student community in Ireland. The research draws on a survey of 1,200 primary and second-level schools as well as detailed case studies of twelve schools.

The research conducted by Smyth, et al. (2009) acknowledges a willingness amongst students to empathise with their non-national classmates on the difficulties they perceive facing them in their transition between countries, schools and cultures. Critically, the report also reveals that Irish students admit a lack of awareness about the cultures of their non-national counterparts.

The report also notes that in the provision of teaching strategies which promote cultural diversity, it is equally important that the culture of the native student is not overlooked. It has been asserted that the promotion of cultural awareness in certain situations has led to a sense of ‘culturelessness’ among ‘native’ students (Glazier & Seo, 2005). Therefore in the development of cultural understanding amongst students it is important to highlight the culture not only of the non-national student but also of the Irish student.

Also as highlighted by Gleeson & O Donnabhain (2006), the focus on performance indicators and tangible measurable outcomes emphasises a

bureaucratic model of accountability in education rather than a focus on process outcomes of a social, attitudinal, cultural or political nature. The latter focus is essential if we are to help students to develop ‘awareness and appreciation of cultural values’ (The Teaching Council, 2009).

According to Peim the modern school is at a critical point in the cultural field, representing knowledge and promoting certain practices but doing so through its own ‘cultural ambience and habitat (2003:31). Schools represent culture (values and knowledge) and enact culture. As educators we have a responsibility in this regard. If teaching is about values, ethics and intentions then we have to be open to self-inquiry and open to challenging our own cultural stances and belief systems.

By engaging student teachers and ourselves in the process of ‘reading’ culturally salient texts and engaging in a process of dialoguing these texts through salient questions, we are affording ourselves the opportunity to become more culturally aware and sensitised. More difficult, of course, is the idea of encouraging a maturity of response to complex and contested issues which are ingrained, entrenched and dominant in our psyche. However small steps in the right direction can lead to greater progress in our goals of cultural awareness and acceptance.

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**Carmel Hinchion** is a lecturer in Teaching, Learning and Assessment in the University of Limerick. Her research interests include the study of the identity development of student teachers, English pedagogy, reflective practice, literacy, and the arts in education. The project described was delivered in conjunction with the Ubuntu Network. The term Ubuntu is of Zulu origin. It expresses an African philosophy that describes togetherness and solidarity. The Ubuntu Network is made up of teacher educators and researchers from multiple Education Departments, with The University of Limerick being one of its founding members. The aim of the Network is to integrate development education (DE) and education for sustainable development (ESD) into post- primary teacher education.

**Jennifer Hennessy** is a postgraduate research student at the University of Limerick. Her research interests include poetry studies, arts in education and continued professional development.

## TEACHING ECO-LITERACY DURING A PERIOD OF UNCERTAINTY

A characteristic of the current global situation is that many of us believe that an environmental and developmental catastrophe is round the corner, whilst behaving as though all will be well. In this article, **Alan Peacock** begins by considering some ‘true-life parables’ that illustrate powerfully where previous communities have failed to heed environmental warnings. He then goes on to consider how best to learn in order to develop eco-literacy. The article proposes that ‘Collaborative Engagement’ strategies seem to work best, in which professionals with different expertise work together on a specific aim over an extended period of time. It addresses the difficulty of developing an appropriate eco-literacy curriculum, and suggests that key skills and attitudes are needed, including respect for evidence; understanding risk and predictability in relation to ethics; and communication skills and action competence. He concludes with a reminder that the key to long-term engagement and eco-literacy is to collaborate over extended periods with a focus on the right issues.

### **Introduction: ‘What do you do when you’re not sure?’**

This is the opening line of the film *Doubt*, spoken from the pulpit by Father Flynn (played by Phillip Seymour Hoffman), knowing he is suspected of various misdemeanours. The words resonate, I suspect, with all of us engaged in education at the present time of uncertainty and a perceived need for change.

We are unsure about many things. The global economic system is in a precarious state; capitalist institutions are being questioned; funding for all educational enterprises is likely to be affected, but in ways we cannot predict, especially as we are no longer sure about where power and decision-making lies. The climate is changing faster than anyone predicted, and whilst this is certain now, what we are not sure about is where the greatest impact will be felt, how quickly we will be affected, who will suffer and how best to prepare for potential difficulties. Energy supply is also problematic; we do not want to rely on fossil fuels, but at present we have little choice. Debate rages about wind, tidal and wave energy, hydroelectric sources, nuclear power, the relative cost of these, and above all, ways to reduce the dependence on coal, oil and gas. Will there have to be rationing of energy?

How can we reduce our dependence on cars? Water is also likely to be the source of conflict, as droughts and climatic changes affect supply and access to clean, reliable sources and these become contested across international borders.

We are responding to these challenges in ways that suggest we may be in denial. Politicians emphasise the importance of reducing carbon emissions, but do little to make a significant difference. As individuals we stop using plastic bags, but continue to use far more than our rightful share of the world's energy resources, with developed countries emitting several tonnes of carbon dioxide a year. We carry on filling up landfill sites with rubbish, equivalent to about the weight of one buffalo each year per family, knowing that the methane generated from these sites is 20 times more dangerous than carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. We kind of believe that a catastrophe is round the corner, whilst behaving as though all will be well.

### **True-life parables**

Two true stories illustrate the dangers we and our children face. The first of these is the story of the life and death of the community on St. Kilda, a small island off the west coast of Scotland. People lived on St. Kilda for centuries, keeping sheep on one rocky island whilst living on the other and harvesting gannets and their eggs for food, oil, bedding etc. Access to the eggs involved climbing up or down very steep and precarious cliffs; hence it became the role of the young, strong and healthy males. The community's lifestyle was sustainable as long as this section of the community was able to harvest the nests on the cliffs.

Two factors however reduced this sustainability. The first was the arrival of the Christian church, which discouraged work on Sundays, thus reducing productivity by one seventh, or about 15 per cent. The second and more pernicious influence, though, was the subsequent introduction of education. Teaching literacy and numeracy to the younger children was not in itself a problem; it became one, however, when the teachers encouraged the now-literate older children to leave the island for secondary and higher education. This deprived the island of the young men who were the only ones able to carry out the gannet harvesting, as well as being the potential future fathers of children, so the community's sustainability in terms of food, heating, lighting and reproduction was reduced to a level where only the very

old remained. The final 50 or so were eventually removed to the mainland in the mid 20th century, since when the island has been uninhabited, except by the staff of a radio station (Steele, 1975).

The second such cautionary parable relates to Easter Island, or Rapa Nui as it is known in Chile, of which it is a part. The island is 1,000 miles from mainland South America, and was first settled by Polynesians in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The island was rich in palm trees, birds and fish, and the population steadily grew over 1,000 years, and then suddenly disappeared almost entirely, mostly as a result of starvation or violent deaths. This was not due to any natural disaster, but largely because of the islanders themselves. Rapa Nui is famous for its rows of massive stone heads, some over 10 metres tall, weighing many tons. They were carved as tributes to the ancestors who the people felt protected them, and were moved into place by the use of rollers made from the trunks of palm trees. As the population expanded, more carvings were made and more trees needed, until virtually all the trees had been cut down and could not regenerate fast enough. Fewer and fewer birds could nest as a consequence, so the birds and eggs on which they lived became scarce. Without trees they could not make canoes for fishing. Food shortages became so problematic that civil wars broke out and many inhabitants were slaughtered. Without canoes they could not emigrate to other islands. The few survivors learnt their lessons and shared what they had, until Dutch explorers arrived in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and brought European diseases, which wiped out the rest of the indigenous people. Only the giant stone carvings remain.

### **What and how to learn to develop eco-literacy: the evaluation base**

The above stories emphasise the need for forethought and skills. Our children will need not only to anticipate and figure out what the problem is, but also have the skills, confidence, knowledge and interpersonal/management capabilities to be able to deal with problems as they arise. Starting from where we are now, in terms of teaching strategies and curriculum proposals, how can we set about supporting effective change that will move us in this direction? We must first take account of the professional and personal concerns of the teachers who are crucial in bringing about change, as Wenger explains:

“Workers organise their lives with their immediate colleagues and customers to get their jobs done. In doing so, they develop or preserve a sense of themselves they can live with, have some fun, and fulfil the requirements of their employers and clients. No matter what their official job description may be, they create a practice to do what needs to be done. Although workers may be contractually employed by a large institution, in day-to-day practices they work with- and, in a sense, for- a much smaller set of people and communities” (Wenger, 1998:95).

The evidence on which my conclusions are based come not only from a wide range of literature but also from evaluations of relevant eco-literacy programmes in recent years, including (in the United Kingdom - UK) the Eden Project in Cornwall, which evaluated programmes of school and family visits over several years (Peacock 2003b); the National Trust Guardianship Scheme (GS) for which two evaluations of short- and long-term programmes were carried out (Peacock, 2003c, 2005b); schools’ involvement with Soil Association programmes (Peacock, 2005a) and the Somerset Waste Action Programme (SWAP) which focused on waste minimisation and recycling across all schools in the county (Vrdlovcova, 2005). Overseas, we have carried out similar evaluations of primary teacher in-service programmes in Kenya, South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Senegal and Sri Lanka (Peacock, 1999, 2003a; Peacock & Rawson, 2001; Levy, 1994). For reasons of space, these will not be discussed in detail but alluded to where relevant. Sources relating to reports on these evaluations are however to be found in the list of references and websites below.

## **How to develop teaching and learning of eco-literacy: what seems to work?**

One feature common to successful eco-literacy programmes, both here and overseas, has been the Collaborative Engagement approach (Harvey, 1998). This approach necessitates: *partnerships* in planning, teaching, evaluating; *serial involvement* over extended periods of time; *communication systems* that work (e.g. email, chat rooms); *mutuality* in accepting we are all learning; and a *focus* that has relevance and interest to children. And crucially, the question, *what’s in it for us?* (i.e. the teachers), must always be addressed.

This approach evolved within the Primary Science programme (PSP) in South Africa ([www.psp.org.za](http://www.psp.org.za)), from a philosophy based on negotiated co-operation between teachers and professional ‘implementers’, and from the experience that one-off seminars and workshops alone do not achieve lasting changes in classroom practice.

The approach therefore involves:

- Modelling best practice (by professional ‘implementers’);
- Facilitating needs analysis by all those involved (including learners);
- Collaborative planning between teachers and professional implementers;
- Development of innovative resource materials (e.g. ‘Spider’s Place’ comics:  
<http://www.unesco.org/education/catalogues/sitevideo/themes/primary.htm>);
- Team-teaching lessons involving ‘safe practice’ for teachers;
- Mediating critical reflection and problem-solving, and coaching teachers in safe feedback;
- Promoting action research (e.g. on resource management);
- Formulating school policies;
- Providing ongoing support for teachers; coaching for application.

Collaborative Engagement strategies are also dependent on an analysis of the stage of the school’s evolution, the school’s political climate, its geographic distribution, and the number of schools a single implementer has to service (Harvey, 1998).

As a consequence, our evaluations identified considerable success in ongoing programmes such as the GS and the SWAP programme, both of which had involved partnerships and collaboration over many years that allowed environmental experts to work with children and teachers both in school and at their specialist sites on a regular basis. In contrast, visits to the Eden Project, despite the hugely exciting and stimulating nature of the venue, had little long-term impact on children’s understanding of key eco-literacy concepts (such as the interdependence of plants and people) since visits tended to be ‘one-off’ with little preparation or follow-up. The approach of more successful approaches has been summed up in the work of Michael Roth:

“Rather than preparing students for life in a technological world, I work with teachers to create opportunities for participating in this world and for learning science in the process of contributing to the everyday life of the community...Early participation in community-relevant practices provides for continuous participation and a greater relevance of schooling to the everyday life of its main constituents” (Roth, 2003).

The conclusions of this section are based on a wide range of research. Projecting what might work in curriculum terms is, however, much more of a crystal-ball activity, since much depends on the way any new idea is interpreted. ‘Innovation without change’ has been a feature of much curriculum development for the past 40 years or more. So it is important to proceed with caution, and to treat what follows as speculation, albeit of those involved in this field over many years.

### **Appropriate skills and attitudes**

An appropriate eco-literacy curriculum should at least incorporate essential skills and attitudes as well as knowledge. In this respect, the following key areas are crucial, namely:

*Respect for evidence* rather than uncritical acceptance. For example, a recent article in *The Times* on ‘Rising sea levels’, said:

“[In] the Carteret islands off Papua New Guinea, the anarchic nation of mountains, jungles and islands, the last tide could come at any time. Then these islands at the ends of the earth will simply vanish...the low lying atoll seems doomed...Every year the tidal surges are becoming stronger and more frequent; the Carterets are a portent of catastrophe to come” (*The Times*, March 2007).

The emotive language aside, I decided to check out these claims against reputable science websites, and discovered that the islands were indeed becoming swamped by the sea, but not as a consequence of rising sea levels, which are currently insignificant. The problem was actually a creation of the islanders themselves, who were dynamiting the reefs for coral and cutting the mangroves for fuel, both of which exposed the islands (which only rise 1.5 m

above sea level anyway) to big waves, which then also undermined the beach-front palms and allowed the sea to surge in (Peacock, 2007).

Any teacher could have helped their class to identify relevant websites to check this information in a very short time. Children should therefore learn to question what they find in the media and understand the difference between authentic evidence, opinion, bias and prejudice, as well as having the skills to find and assess relevant websites.

*Understanding risk and predictability in relation to ethics.* If you ask a child which is the most dangerous, a chair or a shark, they will almost inevitably choose the shark. But there are many times more fatalities arising from the use of chairs than encounters with sharks- the latter running at two or three a year at present worldwide. Two key dimensions to distinguish therefore are *risk* and *predictability*. A future event can be any of the following:

- *Low risk, easy to predict:* e.g. more people are going to use mobile digital technology;
- *Low risk, hard to predict:* e.g. there will be very cold weather next winter;
- *High risk, hard to predict:* e.g. there will be a huge earthquake soon in California; and
- *High risk, easy to predict:* e.g. more people will contract life-threatening diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

Risk and probability also relate to the teaching of ethics, since if something is high risk as well as high probability, then we feel morally obliged to do something about it, such as climate change. Children are usually extremely keen to address such issues, though many teachers may still find this the most difficult aspect of their work.

*Communication skills and action competence.* There has been a high emphasis on literacy in the primary phase in recent years, though in the UK this has tended to focus on reading and writing, to the detriment of listening and speaking. Robin Alexander's (2001) ground-breaking study compared (amongst other things) children's ability to communicate orally



across various countries, and showed that UK and United States' (US) learners used significantly less oral communication in school than those from France and Russia. Such skills are crucial in relation to what has been called action competence, i.e. the skills needed to get things done and achieve change.

Our studies of the GS, SWAP and others also showed that the earlier children are introduced to these skills in relation to environmental concerns, the more likely they are to be effective change agents, at home as well as in school. This has also been observed in South African primary schools, where collaborative engagement between UK trainee teachers and school staff has continued for many years, leading to a wide range of initiatives both in the school and overseas, including school choir tours to the UK, for example, which raised money to build classrooms, library and computer suites (<http://www.pembec.wigan.sch.uk/sitho/>).

This article has so far described the importance of skill and attitude development to support eco-literacy but what of the knowledge base that children might need? There are some obvious areas that are perhaps already gaining more attention, such as energy conservation measures, renewable energy sources, waste minimisation and technological literacy. All of these need to be brought into what might be called the core of the curriculum, rather than left to be championed by enthusiastic teachers and environmental charities. 40 years ago in Kenya, for example, the whole science syllabus for the final year in primary school focused on 'making work easier' and set out to help children make tools and construct systems for being increasingly self-sufficient. One school visited built its own windmill and used it to saw wood as well as generate power (Githinji, 1992). However, many teachers felt inadequately trained and confident to tackle this curriculum, and this remains a challenge, not only throughout Africa and other developing areas, but across the developed world.

The specific ways in which the above curricular foci can be articulated are already established, if not widely taught. But we will need other knowledge and skill-sets for the future. My proposition is that these might include increased emphasis on the following:

*Family health and disease prevention.* We have in recent years seen media panics over the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine, e-coli, bird flu and currently swine flu. Each of these clearly presents health risks and

challenges, but knowledge about the actual threat is harder to come by. The 'Healthy Schools' initiative in the UK has made some impact through its aim to offer:

“close support and guidance to primary care trusts, local authorities and their schools,...equipping children and young people with the skills and knowledge to make informed health and life choices and to reach their full potential” (<http://www.healthyschools.gov.uk>).

The initiative has reached the majority of schools. Sexual health education is, however, still optional in UK primary schools, and this situation leaves serious gaps in children's understanding. Climate change alone will present a considerable challenge to health, in terms of heatstroke and skin cancer for example, as recent heat-waves across Europe has demonstrated.

*Access to and conservation of clean water supplies.* Water has been labelled the 'new oil' given its importance as a resource, and is likely to be the focus of future conflict as droughts, melting glaciers and over-extraction in some places begin to have an effect on access to water supply. The rivers rising in the Himalaya and Tibetan plateau (Indus, Ganges, Brahmaputra, Mekong, Yangtze and Yellow Rivers) sustain half the world's population, and yet their sources straddle contentious international borders between India, Pakistan, China, Nepal and Tibet. Their glaciers, the largest outside the poles, are melting at twice the global average. This will initially mean floods, followed by rivers eventually being reduced to a relative trickle to dramatic effect, especially in areas like Pakistan which already suffer from great political instability (Lynas, 2007). Similar scenarios can be anticipated in the Middle East (Syria, Lebanon, and Israel) and Africa.

The other important reason for focussing on water is that it offers a good example to young people of the benefits of studying an issue that is absolutely familiar in their local environment yet relevant in an international, inter-cultural context. A major challenge in coming years will be to help young children escape the mind-set of many of the older generation, who (in the UK in particular) so often see themselves as separate from Europe, as well as the rest of the world, and do not always grasp the global implications of environmental issues. The generation born in the 1940s and 1950s has been largely immune from major catastrophes, and has in many ways come to see a comfortable life-style as their right. Young children are unlikely to

have this benefit, and need their horizons widened regarding the key issues that will impact on their lives. This is where ‘knowing what to do when you’re not sure’ will be essential.

*Gardening, food, cooking and increased self-sufficiency.* A corollary of this is the need to be more independent, in energy, food, transport and all the other day-to-day necessities that people depend on. In the UK there has been a recent increase in the number of people acquiring allotments and growing their own (organic, genetically modified-free) food. Initiatives such as the Garden Organics movement (<http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/organicgardening/schools.php>) have helped many schools start their own gardens and have encouraged teachers and children to learn the skills involved first-hand, as well as providing produce for school kitchens and encouraging healthy meals, packaging-free packed lunches, etc. The eco-schools movement (<http://www.eco-schools.org.uk/>) has also encouraged schools to raise the profile of energy efficiency, the use of ‘walking buses’, planting trees and other methods of engaging children actively in reducing carbon emissions. But the latest proposed revision of the primary curriculum in England, for example, does not make these matters a statutory component of classroom practice. Information communication technology (ICT) on the other hand has been elevated to core curriculum status, at the expense of science and the environment (<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/primarycurriculumreview>). The implications of these proposals will, sadly, not be lost on teachers and could have far-reaching consequences for young people.

*Environmental attentiveness.* The Indian philosopher and spiritual teacher Krishnamurti always proclaimed ‘attentiveness’ as a key aspect of understanding and coming to terms with life. Problems, he would say, arise from seeing the world fragmentarily. Encouraging young people to be attentive to their surroundings and to the natural environment in particular is not easy, in an age of ubiquitous mobile technology that in many ways isolates children dangerously from their surroundings. Yet our work with children and trainee teachers makes clear that it is perfectly possible to retain young people’s attention given the right conditions. Taking trainee teachers to a forest where they feel initially disoriented and perhaps lost, and asking them to spend a short time silently on their own, has prompted some quite astonishing reflection and writing, as has taking children to empty beaches, high hills, wetlands or other unfamiliar locations (Peacock &

Bowker, 2004). Many of the ‘earthwalk’ activities promoted by Joseph Cornell (1989) and Steve van Matre (1999), for example, successfully engage children in becoming attentive and highly aware, as evidenced by the creativity that ensues.

Recently, the ‘Learning Outside the Classroom’ agenda in England has happily begun to reverse the trend away from outdoor learning owing to a combination of factors such as lack of time, pressures of assessment and fears of litigation in case of accidents. However, there is still a lot of progress to be made, and many people still see off-campus work as ‘school trips’ rather than opportunities to deepen children’s awareness of their surroundings.

### **Simple activities for children; the shock of the unexpected**

Cornell and van Matre have suggested that children’s curiosity is best engaged by experience of the unexpected; and I will use four simple activities to illustrate this.

*1kg of greenhouse gas.* Wrap a 1kg bag of sugar or flour in plain paper, labelled ‘1kg of greenhouse gas’. Pass it round, and ask children how far their car has to travel to put this weight of carbon dioxide into the air. (The actual distance, for an average family saloon, is about 7km). They are likely to be very surprised.

*Melting ice-caps in the classroom.* You need two glasses of ice with a little water, and two thermometers; or preferably, two temperature sensors connected to a laptop. Ask the children to predict how the temperature will change as the ice melts. As they watch the read-out, they may be surprised to find that the temperature does not change at all until all the ice has melted, after which it rises quite quickly. You can then discuss the implications of this exercise for the melting of the north polar ice cap. To extend this activity, repeat the experiment with some reflective surface (e.g. a piece of tin foil) on top of a glass. How does this ability to reflect light and heat affect the melting of the ice?

*Halving your budget.* Present the children with a list of six things that your council could do to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill, and give a rough costing for each. Ask the children to decide which idea should take precedence, but first, tell them that their budget is only half of

that needed to do all of the things proposed. This generates debate and the important skill of agreeing on priorities, as real councils have to do.

*The oil sandwich.* You will need a sandwich from a shop, in its triangular plastic case, and a bottle of oil. The ‘deal’ is, they can have it free if they are willing to fill the container with oil and drink that too. They will of course be disgusted by this; you can then ask them how oil was used in the making of the sandwich, from planting seeds to growing wheat, greenhouse heating for tomatoes and salad greens, feeding the pigs for the ham, harvesting, transporting, preparation, distribution, refrigeration etc. It is more oil than could fill the triangular container!

## **Conclusion**

“In the coming decades, the survival of humanity will depend on our ecological literacy - our ability to understand the basic principles of ecology and to live accordingly. Thus, ecological literacy, or ‘eco-literacy’, must become a critical skill for politicians, business leaders and professionals in all spheres, and should be the most important part of education at all levels - from primary and secondary schools to colleges, universities and the continuing education and training of professionals” (Capra, 2002:201).

We are still a long way, in the UK at least, from achieving this, though awareness of its importance is gaining ground. Our research shows clearly that the earlier children are presented with these issues and ways of learning, the more impact they make on their practice in school and outside; for example, 5-6 year-old children learning about recycling, composting and cutting out waste in school not only carried these messages home but put pressure on parents to act accordingly (Vrdlovcova, 2005). There is evidence from the Guardianship Scheme long-term impact study (Peacock, 2005b) that children engaged in collaborative environmental programmes at National Trust sites when at school continued to champion these causes into adolescence, work and beyond.

But the key, according to our research findings, is to focus on the right issues, collaboratively over an extended period of years, on a regular basis, so that the complementary skills and commitment of teachers and other environmental professionals demonstrate to learners that these things not

only matter but are worth prioritising, in school and in their lives outside. Eco-literacy needs to become central to education, including teacher education and its learning extended into behavioural change that will address the global environmental issues confronting our planet. Without this practical application and behavioural change, eco-literacy, like scientific literacy, will be seen as an option for specialists or enthusiasts, with all the damaging implications that might ensue.

For example, our pupils may be required to address issues such as those raised recently by the Institute of Mechanical Engineers:

“As global emissions are not reducing and the climate is changing, the more pragmatic approach, as suggested by the Institution, is that only by adapting our behaviour can we hope to secure long term human survival. We have to look at how engineers might help our world to adapt to changes over the next few centuries. [In this report] four areas of engineering are considered under the above climate scenarios: energy, water, buildings and transport, and how they will need to be adapted to deliver a more resilient and robust adaptive management system” (Institute of Mechanical Engineers, 2009).

As James Lovelock has recently said, ‘It is not about saving the planet - earth will look after itself. It is about saving humankind’ (Lovelock, 2009).

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**Alan Peacock** is Honorary Research Fellow at the Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter, UK. He holds a doctorate in Philosophy in environmental education from the University of Ulster, and has worked extensively in developing countries, particularly Africa, as teacher educator and evaluator of educational programmes. His most recent book is *Eco-literacy for Primary Schools* (Trentham Books). He is also currently chair of a UNESCO group developing 'Guidelines for enhancing quality education through textbooks and learning media'.

## **PEACE STUDIES AND SOCIAL CHANGE: THE ROLE OF ETHICS AND HUMAN AGENCY**

Peace studies aims to analyse the existence of peace as an absence of violence and the existence of peace-promoting structures. In this article, **Iain Attack** will examine two critical issues for peace studies, one at the level of theory and one concerning its connection to action. He will address the relationship between positive and negative peace, and structural, direct and cultural violence. He suggests that the normative aspect of peace studies, with its inextricable connection to values systems, is an advantage that should be utilised in efforts to secure international peace. The article argues that responses to these issues of peace and violence can strengthen the link between theory and practice from a peace studies perspective.

### **Introduction**

Peace studies aims for a critical analysis of war, armed conflict and political violence as deeply-rooted phenomena that affect the daily lives of millions of people around the world. The purpose of this analysis is not merely to improve our intellectual understanding of the sources or causes of these phenomena, but also to provide us with an informed basis for effective action to end or resolve them. Peace studies involves a dynamic relationship between theory and practice, and between peace research, peace education and peace activism.

This relationship between theory and practice reveals some critical issues for peace studies, such as the on-going tension between its academic or theoretical dimension and its engagement with current issues of war and armed conflict that have huge, immediate significance at the local, national and global levels. As with cognate areas such as development studies, however, these two dimensions of peace studies are also inextricably connected, in the sense, for instance, that effective intervention around specific issues requires a sound theoretical framework and understanding for action.

At the level of theory, one issue for peace studies is the essentially contested nature of its core concept, 'peace', and the relative underdevelopment of its theoretical framework and methodology. The

connection between peace studies and political activism also raises questions about the normative assumptions of peace studies and often provides a rationale for its marginalisation within academia and formal systems of education.

This article examines both these issues, the underdevelopment of peace theory and the normative dimension of peace studies. It begins with a critical analysis of Johan Galtung's three categories of violence (direct, structural and cultural) and the corresponding concepts of peace (negative and positive) that have formed the basis of efforts to provide a more sophisticated understanding and theory of peace. These concepts are important because they connect a narrow or specific concern with war, armed conflict and political violence with wider social phenomena such as poverty and inequality through a much broader understanding of the different elements of peace. When we expand the range of concerns relevant to peace studies in this way, the complementarity between peace education and development education becomes obvious, even if their entry point to issues such as global poverty and human development (or human security) can be different.

The article then moves on to discuss a second critical issue for peace studies, its normative or ethical dimension, through examining human agency and the possibilities for social change. The article concludes by suggesting that the normative dimension of peace studies, rather than being a weakness, can contribute to strengthening its theoretical basis through examining the requirements or constituent elements of social and political change. Furthermore, peace education (like development education) can provide an awareness of the significance of human agency in challenging the status quo, a critical analysis of the need for such change, and the skills and understanding required to achieve it.

## **Peace theory**

The contested nature of 'peace' as a concept is demonstrated by the description of peace studies in the opening paragraph. Peace studies is defined in negative terms, by the central problems with which it is concerned: war, armed conflict and political violence. By implication, peace itself is understood primarily or initially as a negative, or as the absence of these phenomena.

It is this characterisation of peace as a negative phenomenon that prompted Johan Galtung to make his famous distinction between negative and positive peace in his article 'Violence, Peace and Peace Research' (1969). This distinction has since entered the lexicon of peace researchers and peace activists.

'Negative peace' is negative not because it is an undesirable goal, but because it is characterised by the absence or lack of these destructive social and political phenomena. 'Positive peace', on the other hand, is characterised by the presence of positive social and political phenomena such as justice, human rights, equality and well-being. Furthermore, it is suggested that positive peace provides the essential conditions of negative peace, because war, armed conflict and political violence result from the absence of positive peace. According to Ian Harris, '*Positive* peace is a condition where non-violence, ecological sustainability and social justice remove the causes of violence' (Harris, 2004:12).

This distinction between negative peace and positive peace did not originate with Galtung. Martin Luther King, for example, also employed it and said that, 'True peace is not merely the absence of some negative force--tension, confusion or war; it is the presence of some positive force--justice, good will and brotherhood' (King, 1957).

## **Categories of violence**

Galtung famously characterises peace with reference to multiple categories of violence. The best known and most used of these categories are direct, structural and cultural violence, which are intimately linked to one another. Direct or personal violence involves an immediate relationship between the perpetrator and the recipient of violence, most obviously in the form of physical violence. Examples of direct violence include specific armed conflicts between combatant groups or human rights abuses aimed at civilians by state security forces or other armed groups.

Structural violence, on the other hand, is built into structures or systems of social, economic or political relationships at the local, national and international level. These structures result in harm to the recipients of such violence through poverty, inequality, lack of access to medical care and education, and so on. There is no direct relationship between the perpetrators

and the recipients of structural violence, as there is with direct (or physical) violence. The violence or harm results instead from structures of inequality such as huge disparities of income or wealth, or highly unequal patterns of land ownership.

For Galtung, the distinction between direct (or personal) violence and structural violence revolves around the issue of deliberate or intentional action. In the case of direct or personal violence, according to Galtung, there is an actor or an agent who commits the violence (1969:170). In the case of structural violence, however, no person directly harms another person. The violence or harm is built into the structures of a society (1969:171). Examples of direct violence might be armed conflict, terrorism, genocide, or gross human rights abuses such as torture. An example of structural violence might be famine or malnutrition resulting from developing country debt, unfair trading relationships or unequal access to natural resources, including land.

In this case, no one sets out deliberately to starve a section of the population, although this may result from economic and social policies aimed at debt repayment, for example. The violence or harm results from unjust or unfair economic relations between developed and developing countries, rather than the intended consequences of action.

Peter Prontzos refers to structural violence as harmful conditions ‘that derive from economic and political structures of power, created and maintained by human actions and institutions’. He refers to this as ‘collateral damage’ because it is ‘an unintentional side-effect of specific policies’ aimed at increasing the wealth or economic resources of specific groups or institutions (Prontzos, 2004:300).

Furthermore, structural violence can result from ordinary people (in their role as consumers, for example) going about their ordinary lives, if this involves participating in or perpetuating unjust social or economic structures. Consumer campaigns around fairly-traded tea or coffee can be seen as attempts to redress this sort of participation in or support for structural injustices.

An important implication of Galtung's argument is that it is not enough to focus on or deal with direct violence. We must also deal with

structural violence, for at least two reasons. Firstly, structural violence can be just as harmful as direct violence. The human suffering resulting from global poverty, for example, is as important and of a similar 'order of magnitude' as the suffering and destruction resulting directly from war (although comparisons at this level are difficult and perhaps meaningless) (Galtung, 1969:185).

The United Nations estimates, for instance, that as many as six million children under the age of five die each year from lack of food, and as many as 10 million die from preventable diseases, because of the conditions of absolute poverty under which they live. One estimate of the number of deaths each year from structural causes is 50 million, 'the total in almost six years of combat in the Second World War' (Prontzos, 2004:299-300).

Secondly, structural violence often depends on and perpetuates direct violence. One example might be the role of state security forces, 'death squads' and so on in enforcing the unequal distribution of land and other resources within a society. In other words, direct violence cannot be deterred or prevented unless the structural violence that engenders it is removed. Galtung claims that, 'Much direct violence can be traced back to vertical structural violence, such as exploitation and repression, for liberation, or to prevent liberation' (Galtung, 1996:270).

Galtung added a third major category to this original dichotomy in the form of cultural violence some years later (1990). One of the functions of cultural violence is to legitimise both direct and structural violence, through the values and attitudes of the members of particular societies.

Cultural violence includes the norms or values, attitudes and beliefs within a society that allow or facilitate the use of direct violence or the perpetuation of structural violence. It includes widespread racist or discriminatory attitudes or beliefs that characterise one social, ethnic or racial group as inferior to another. Such beliefs support oppressive practices such as slavery, apartheid or the caste system in South Asia, which incorporate the subjugation and exploitation of one group by another into the basic social, economic, legal and political structures of a society. Similarly, norms or beliefs about the use of coercive physical violence or institutionalised armed force to deal with conflict between social groups or political entities such as states can promote or justify the use of direct violence. An example of the

‘deep culture’ of militarism might be the Western belief in the efficacy of, and justification for, direct violence as the ultimate sanction, for purposes of punishment or deterrence.

Thus, the relationship between direct, structural and cultural violence within any society is one of interdependence and mutual support. Structural violence can provoke direct violence on the part of oppressed groups as a form of resistance and an attempt to achieve social and political change. Beneficiary or elite groups can also depend upon direct violence to maintain their position of power or dominance in highly unequal social and political structures. In Galtung’s view, it does seem that cultural violence, or the ideologies justifying widespread poverty and inequality and the use of armed force, is fundamental to the persistence of both direct and structural violence as basic characteristics of so many societies around the world today. This is the case in so-called developed as well as developing countries, and as part of the relationship between these countries at the global level.

Galtung uses the dichotomy between direct violence and structural violence in particular to support his distinction between negative peace and positive peace. According to Galtung, if we extend our concept of violence to include structural issues as well as direct violence, this leads to a corresponding extension of our concept of peace.

Negative peace involves the absence of direct or personal violence, while positive peace involves the absence of structural violence.

The absence of direct or personal violence refers merely to the elimination or lack of a certain type of behaviour, referred to as ‘negative peace’. ‘*Negative* peace by averting war or stopping violence implies the absence of direct, personal violence’ (Harris, 2004:12). Positive peace is the absence of structural violence, but this implies or requires the presence of positively-defined social conditions such as social justice, equality and human well-being. ‘Positive peace requires...the presence of social institutions that provide for an equitable distribution of resources and peaceful resolution of conflicts’ (Harris, 2004:12). Thus, for Galtung the role of peace studies is to help us examine the two aspects of peace (negative and positive), and the inescapable connection between direct violence and social injustice, or structural violence.

## Some criticisms of Galtung

Galtung's categories of peace and violence are by no means uncontested, however, even within the field of peace studies. Kenneth Boulding, another one of the originators of peace studies, has referred to structural violence as 'anything Galtung doesn't like' (Boulding, 1977:84) and considered it far too broad to be analytically useful. Boulding also thought the depiction of the interdependence between direct and structural violence was too simplistic, and that the economic dynamic behind poverty, even as a structural feature of certain societies, was quite different from the political dynamic behind the use of violence to target specific social groups, for instance.

Boulding views 'structural violence' as a misleading metaphor, because the 'processes which create and sustain poverty are not at all like the processes which create and sustain violence' (1977:83) (i.e. economic as opposed to social and political factors). Such a broad and simplistic definition of violence, to refer to any and all sorts of harm against human beings, drains the concept of its analytical and ethical power. It is more a rhetorical device aimed at political mobilisation against perceived injustices, and does not really belong in academic discourse.

Boulding also criticises the term 'negative peace' as misleading. He claims that peace is never merely the opposite or the absence of war. Instead, peace and war are complex phases of an ongoing and dynamic system of warring groups (i.e. the international system), each with its own distinguishing characteristics (1977:78).

Ian Harris also makes the important point that: 'Peace has different meanings within different cultures, as well as different connotations for the spheres in which peaceful processes are applied' (Harris, 2004:7). In other words, the meaning of 'peace' as a concept reflects the cultural context from which it emerges and in which it is used. In some cultures it can have explicitly religious or cosmological connotations (such as the term 'shalom' in the Hebrew Bible). On the other hand, it can have an almost technical or instrumental meaning when used in a legalistic or political way in terms such as 'peace treaties' or 'peace agreements' in a secular Western context. Similarly, the meaning of peace can vary depending on the type of problem or level of analysis at which it is used. In some contexts, such as international relations, it can be connected to vast political and historical



forces or issues, while in others it can emphasise peace between or even within individuals (interpersonal and even intrapersonal, or inner, peace) (cf. Harris, 2004:7). Harris suggests:

“At the beginning of the twenty-first century controversies surrounding the word ‘peace’ in conjunction with concerns about a multitude of different forms of violence have led to five separate types of peace education: international education, human rights education, development education, environmental education and conflict resolution education. Each branch of this peace education family has different theoretical assumptions about the problems of violence it addresses, different peace strategies it recommends and different goals it hopes to achieve” (Harris, 2004:8).

There may be a resemblance between the meanings of peace employed by each type of peace education, but we cannot assume they are fully synonymous.

Boulding’s criticisms of Galtung and the multiplicity of meanings and educational strategies associated with its core concept indicate that the theoretical and conceptual apparatus of peace studies is still quite underdeveloped. This is partly because it is still relatively young (approximately half a century) as a distinctive field of study within academia and formal education more generally. It is also because peace studies is interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary, and represents an amalgam of different academic approaches applied to its core problems of war and armed conflict. These disciplines are drawn primarily, but by no means exclusively, from the social sciences and the humanities. As such, peace studies does not have its own distinctive methodology, but relies on methodologies derived from other disciplines. Peace theory is still very much a compilation of theories and concepts derived from other disciplines, such as international relations, political science, sociology, philosophy and theology.

## **The normative dimension of peace studies**

Another significant issue for peace studies that affects its status within academia and also its political vulnerability is its normative or ethical dimension. This is partly connected to its core concept, ‘peace’, which in addition to being somewhat broad or vague and contested, is also inescapably

value-laden. This normative dimension is brought out, for instance, in Galtung's emphasis on the significance of cultural violence in his typology of violence (and peace).

Thus, peace is seen as almost incontrovertibly good, however we define it, and war and armed conflict as bad. Peace studies has an explicit agenda, the achievement of peace (instead of war) as a distinct social and political objective. Such an agenda inevitably involves challenges to the status quo, whether one is concerned about direct violence or structural violence or both. Bill McSweeney refers to the analogy between medicine and peace studies sometimes employed to justify such a stance. 'Like medical scientists in respect of disease and physical suffering, peace researchers saw violence and war as an evil to be controlled or eliminated, and made an ethical commitment to that end' (McSweeney, 1998:2).

This normative or ethical dimension of peace studies is connected to its concern with both theory and action, or even activism. It also suggests to its critics that peace studies by its very nature lacks the objectivity or balance required of academic or scholarly study. Boulding, for example, suggests that, 'Galtung's thought is very heavily normative, to the point perhaps where the description of reality suffers' (1977:77).

This normative dimension is one of the distinctive features and strengths of peace studies, however. The explicit acknowledgement of the role of values and ethics in the study of social and political phenomena such as war and armed violence can be one of the particular contributions of peace studies. The acknowledgement of this ethical dimension can take several forms, in peace studies and elsewhere. It can involve a recognition of the significance of human agency and choice, even when confronting vast and seemingly intractable or unchangeable social and political structures and forces. As McSweeney points out, identifying a role for human agency in both constituting and changing the social order is essential if we want to achieve 'alternatives to the established institutions of politics and to the security arrangements which are presented as their necessary outcome' (McSweeney, 1998:5). Human agency, however, implies a set of values or norms against which choices are made:

“Peace studies...rests on the claim that there are alternatives to any existing social order and that human agency and moral choice are fundamental...to their realization” (McSweeney, 1998:6-7).

Peace studies, in other words, is not merely interested in analysing or understanding the status quo, it is also interested in changing it. Such an objective implies a normative agenda.

The importance of human agency and the possibility of social and political change for peace studies is reflected, for instance, in the impact of the great Brazilian educator Paulo Freire on methodological approaches to peace education. Freire’s concern with the poor and oppressed, and their capacity to become agents of their own destiny through transformational processes of education, has been adopted and absorbed into central aspects of peace action, including peace education and conflict resolution (or conflict transformation) (cf. Harris, 2004:12). Freire’s emphasis on human agency as a source of significant social change is a central theme of his seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, for instance.

“It is as transforming and creative beings that men, in their permanent relations with reality, produce not only material goods—tangible objects—but also social institutions, ideas, and concepts” (Freire, 1972:73).

The message here is that human beings shape and create not only the material reality that surrounds them and sustains life through economic production, but also the social and political institutions (such as the sovereign state or the market economy for example) that govern and regulate human communities.

Furthermore, the ideas and concepts, including norms and values, that create and contain our understanding of the social order also result from human agency and choice, even if they are so pervasive as to be almost invisible or to appear as unquestionable features of the social and political world in which we live. Such all-pervasive ideas and norms, affecting or influencing human social behaviour, concern attitudes towards or beliefs about social hierarchy or gender or the use of violence, for example. McSweeney refers to ‘a basic sociological assumption that the facts and institutions of the social order are socially constructed, cognitive artefacts,

which must therefore be unpacked, deconstructed, in terms of the interests, values and ideas which constitute them'. It is this dependence of the social world upon 'the standards and values of human individuals who constitute it [that means that] all social theory is normative' (McSweeney, 1998:5).

The important point here is that just as human beings can transform and change their material surroundings, they can also alter their social surroundings and also the conceptual framework and the ideas through which they understand the social order and what is possible within it. To an extent, this emphasis on the material, the social and the conceptual mirrors Galtung's concern with direct violence (or material forces in the form of weapons systems for instance), structural violence (in the form of social forces and political institutions such as the militarised sovereign state) and cultural violence (in terms of a fixation on both the inevitability and the acceptability of armed force as a method of conflict resolution, for example). It goes beyond Galtung's somewhat deterministic account of the relationship between different categories of violence, however, to identify the role of human agency at multiple levels (conceptual, structural and material) in achieving social change.

The importance of human agency and moral choice penetrates to a deeper level, beyond merely the assessment of the consequences of particular actions or policies. It also concerns our understanding of the meaning and significance of basic concepts that shape our understanding of the social and political world in which we live, such as community, society, the state and security. This normative dimension is an inescapable feature of our relationship with any social order, and one task of any social or political theory (including those that inform peace studies) is to acknowledge this and make it explicit. Such an understanding, achieved through transformational processes of education as Freire suggests, makes social and political change possible. While we must not underestimate the importance of achieving change at the institutional or structural level if we want to challenge the persistence of war, armed conflict and political violence, we cannot ignore the need and the possibility for change at the normative, cognitive and cultural level.

The explicit recognition of the ethical and the normative in this fundamental sense can be one of the strengths of peace studies, rather than a point of weakness. In order for this to be the case, however, we need to

return to our first point concerning the significance of theory, especially when trying to establish the links between theory and practice. In other words, the normative or ethical dimension needs to be an important component of a robust theory of peace because it helps to identify the constituent elements of social change, contributing insight and understanding at the intellectual level but also providing a solid basis for effective action.

## **Conclusion**

The growth and development of peace studies requires strengthening or deepening its theoretical and conceptual framework and ensuring its relevance to effective action around the specific problems of war, armed conflict and political violence that are its core concerns. Both tasks can be accomplished, at least in part, through acknowledging (rather than suppressing) the explicitly normative or ethical dimension of peace studies, through the goals or objectives connected to peace activism and the role of human agency in achieving positive or beneficial social and political change. The example of Paulo Freire shows that peace education (like development education) plays a crucial role in providing an awareness of the transformative potential of human agency in achieving such change at multiple levels through critical, normative engagement with the social and conceptual worlds in which we live.

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**Dr. Iain Atack** is lecturer and programme coordinator for the Masters in Philosophy programme in International Peace Studies at the Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin. He is the author of *The Ethics of Peace and War* (Edinburgh University Press, 2005). He is a member of the board of Afri (Action from Ireland) and a member of the Irish Forum for Peace in Sri Lanka.

# Perspectives

## DEVELOPING THE GLOBAL DIMENSION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

**Sian Higgins**

### Introduction

‘Developing the Global Dimensions in Peterborough Schools’ was a two year project co-funded by the Department for International Development (DfID) and The Leprosy Mission to engage six primary schools in development issues and support children to become effective global citizens. Using my perspective of the project as Head of Programmes Coordination at The Leprosy Mission, I will reflect on the importance of the Global Dimension in primary education and explore how these primary schools developed their curriculum, policies and ethos to ensure children are better prepared for the global world in which we live.

### What is the Global Dimension and why is it important?

*Developing the Global Dimension in the School Curriculum* (DfES, 2005:12), a Department for Education and Skills (now known as Department for Children, Schools and Families) recommended document for primary and secondary schools, outlines the eight concepts of the Global Dimension (GD): Diversity, Global Citizenship, Conflict Resolution, Social Justice, Human Rights, Interdependence, Sustainable Development, and Values and Perceptions. Children are our future leaders and decision-makers, and making them aware of these concepts is paramount if we are to address global issues such as poverty, health, education and discrimination, and prepare children for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

“We teach our children to read and write, to add up, to run and to jump. And we do those things well. But many headteachers, school staff and governors will tell you that success in their schools has an additional dimension to it. They will say that it is embedded in their school’s ethos. Invariably it includes valuing diversity, being outward-looking, tolerant and respectful to one another. This dimension – the

Global Dimension – is fundamental to learning in the twenty-first century. It helps make sense of the complexity of our world. It stimulates debate, encourages creativity and gives us skills for our work and our personal lives. Global education is good education. It is about success, both academic and social, and about engaging with our world as global citizens willing to take action in support of our local and global communities” Rt Hon. Hilary Benn MP in EES-SW (2007:3)

The Global Dimension is not intended as a bolt-on to an already overburdened curriculum. It is designed as a conceptual framework that should be an integral part of the curriculum, policies and ethos of communities of learning. Recognising the support that schools need to integrate these concepts, The Leprosy Mission (a Christian development organisation striving to eradicate the causes and consequences of leprosy) worked with Peterborough City Council to develop a pilot project to demonstrate best practice.

### **Outline of ‘Developing the Global Dimension in Peterborough Schools’**

Co-funded by DFID’s Development Awareness Fund and The Leprosy Mission, the project ran from August 2007 to March 2008. Its aim was to mobilise and build the capacity of primary school teachers in Peterborough to integrate the Global Dimension into teaching, and provide children with a creative curriculum that supports them to understand global issues and how they impact on their lives and the lives of others.

Six key objectives formed the heart of the project:

1. To ensure teachers have the knowledge, skills and understanding to develop creative strategies to integrate the Global Dimension across the primary curriculum;
2. To enable Peterborough schools to have improved access to resources and training that support the teaching of the Global Dimension;
3. To ensure primary strategy consultants, advisers and leading teachers in Peterborough Local Authority have an increased understanding of how to support teachers/headteachers to develop the Global Dimension across the curriculum;



4. To develop six ‘Centres of Excellence’ – schools that share good practice, creatively integrating the Global Dimension across the primary curriculum;
5. To ensure pupils and teachers are more aware of how The Leprosy Mission, other NGOs and the government are contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and of their own role in supporting development; and
6. To share project findings across the UK.

## **Strategies for integrating the Global Dimension**

There were six partner schools in the project and headteachers appointed an existing member of staff as a Global Dimension Co-ordinator to lead the project in each school. These teachers attended a series of workshops to develop an understanding of the Global Dimension and how it could be embedded throughout the school. Their first task was to establish a Global Dimension team to support them in their work. Team members varied from school to school, the most successful being those with a representative from Key Stages 1 and 2 (students aged 5-7 and 8-10, respectively), the senior management team, a teaching assistant and a governor. The teams utilised the Yorkshire and Humber Global Schools Association (YHGSA) benchmarks (see [www.yhgsa.org.uk](http://www.yhgsa.org.uk)) to identify which elements of the Global Dimension were already evident in their schools’ practice. The benchmarks examined a broad section of school life, including: leadership and ethos; teaching and learning; monitoring and evaluation; resources; staff development; and parental/community involvement.

For some of the schools this was the first time that they had focused on the Global Dimension and they had little or no understanding of the concepts. However, two of the schools were already engaged with the Global Dimension and this had been recognised through their achievement of the International School Award (ISA). Nevertheless, although both headteachers felt that the ISA was a good starting point, they wanted to embed the Global Dimension in a more sustainable manner. For example, one school had been awarded the ISA three years previously and, yet, the new headteacher now found little or no evidence of the Global Dimension in the school’s learning environment. Bearing in mind the warning that achievement of the ISA will not necessarily result in a sustainable impact on

practice, the schools opted to apply for the ISA as part of a wider strategy to integrate the Global Dimension.

Towards the end of the autumn term, each school prioritised various aspects of the YHGSA benchmarks and utilised this document to develop their school action plans. Schools developed a Global Dimension policy and revised existing policies accordingly. Training was delivered to all staff, as well as to school councils; regular assemblies presented a global theme; and international days like World Leprosy Day (see <http://www.leprosymission.org.uk/resources/lessons/>) were used to raise awareness of global issues. Some schools had an official launch involving the whole school; others also involved parents and the local community in an open evening. However, this project was not about one-off international events, but rather ensuring that children develop as global citizens.

As Stuart Mansel, headteacher of Nene Valley Primary School stated:

“It was not simply about learning about other countries and trying new languages and food. It had to be much broader. Developing awareness of poverty, human rights, the reasons for conflicts and the important role we all have in affecting the world as a whole was of deeper significance” (*Global Dimensions – The Journey of Six Schools*, 2009:21).

All the schools revised their medium-term and long-term plans, identifying which aspects of the Global Dimension were already evident in the curriculum. Schools stated that the eight concepts of the Global Dimension provided to be the best model for identifying their Global Dimension schemes of work. Some chose to colour-code these concepts in their planning which gave them a quick overview of what concepts were being taught as well as highlighting the gaps. Some schools focused on particular concepts each term while others linked concepts to their topic work. For example, learning about Victorian Britain provided great opportunities to explore human rights, particularly child rights, and draw modern day comparisons. This brought history alive for the children and enabled them to see its relevance.

Another important aspect of the project was the Global Dimension Resource Library run by Peterborough Local Authority, which was updated with £10,000 worth of Global Dimension resources. These included books, CDs, musical instruments, clothes and posters. The library was marketed to schools through Local Authority training sessions, headteacher meetings, school flyers and the Global Dimensions website (see [www.globaldimensions.org](http://www.globaldimensions.org)). The library was consequently in constant use and enjoyed a 257% increase in resources borrowed during the project period.

Funding was also accessed from the British Council to enable teachers from partner schools to visit Malawi, with the aim of sharing best practice in creativity and citizenship and to develop reciprocal links. This provided teachers with first-hand experience of global issues that proved to be a huge motivator when they returned to school. Teachers became impassioned, and were determined to prioritise the focus of the Global Dimension in their schools. The partner school visits also resulted in strong links between schools in Peterborough and Malawi. The global gateway ([www.globalgateway.org](http://www.globalgateway.org)) and e-twinning ([www.etwinning.net](http://www.etwinning.net)) websites were used for developing other partnerships abroad.

Partner schools recognised the importance of actively involving children in sharing the aims of the Global Dimension and empowering them to act as champions for promoting discussion on global issues. Working with school councils provided the opportunity for children to have a voice and to lead groups in Global Dimension activities. Two members of each school council attended a workshop to develop their understanding of the Millennium Development Goals. Activities included: 'Filtering and carrying water'; 'Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs'; and 'Poverty – the challenge of living on \$2 a day'. After these activities and a discussion on Fairtrade, the children went back to school and raised the issues with the staff and their peers. Teachers and parents were lobbied to drink Fairtrade tea and coffee, and members of the school council challenged their peers to consider what they could do to make a difference.

At the end of the project a conference was held for teachers, senior management, local authority advisers and school councils to share learning. Staff and children from Peterborough schools had the opportunity to hear

practical suggestions about how to develop the Global Dimension and address global issues.

### **Tips and lessons learnt from the six schools**

Various feedback was submitted as suggestions for future implementation of the Global Dimension in school curricula with some examples cited below:

- ‘Set up a school cluster group. The support of colleagues in other schools has been invaluable in developing the Global Dimension in our school’.
- ‘In order to fully implement the Global Dimension into your school’s curriculum, it is absolutely essential that you have the support and commitment of the management team’.
- ‘It is key to have a strong action plan in place to ensure the Global Dimension is embedded’.
- ‘Involve other staff in managing your international links. This will ensure sustainability and exposes the wider school to the Global Dimension’.
- ‘Have fun developing the Global Dimension; this will enthuse staff and children to become involved’.

### **Conclusion**

The six schools have reported a positive impact on the curriculum, the school environment, standards, ethos and school policy, staff, pupils and the wider community. Global Dimension coordinators are keen to highlight that the Global Dimension is not just relevant for older pupils; some very successful lessons have been taught in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Since adding the Global Dimension into their themes, learning has taken on a larger purpose and children are more motivated to read, write and communicate with others. Staff have become passionate about global issues and are enthusiastic about planning and delivering a curriculum that not only builds on children’s experiences, but allows them to develop ideas about their identity and the world in which they live.

Nicola Wynne, headteacher of Castor Primary school stated:

“We are confident that this motivational curriculum will raise standards of teaching and learning...The opportunities that the global curriculum has presented to our school have been the inspiration that has moved our school forward at a rapid pace because it has united us all in something we believe in” (*Global Dimensions – The Journey of Six Schools*, 2009:9).

If you would like to find out more about the project and are interested in helping your school develop the Global Dimension, details of the project and an associated publication with case studies from the six schools can be downloaded from [www.globaldimensions.org](http://www.globaldimensions.org). Alternatively contact Sian Higgins at The Leprosy Mission, Goldhay Way, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough, PE2 5GZ or email [sianh@tlmew.org.uk](mailto:sianh@tlmew.org.uk)

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# **TEACHING ABOUT FAIRTRADE**

**Susan Gallwey**

## **Introduction**

For nearly twenty years, Fairtrade has been a prominent feature in the Irish development education landscape. Because its trading system pertains to tea, coffee, chocolate and other food items that we all enjoy, Fairtrade is considered to be an accessible approach to global development issues. However, despite Fairtrade's popularity as a development education theme, the learning that goes on in Fairtrade education often remains unexamined. In this article, I look at Fairtrade education opportunities in the formal sector at primary and secondary levels, based on the experiences of the Waterford One World Centre (WOWC) and local schools in the Waterford area. I also describe the differences between consumer-based Fairtrade learning and critical Fairtrade learning, and explore the relationship between the two.

## **Fairtrade education in the formal sector**

The WOWC has utilised a variety of approaches to raise awareness, educate and promote action on Fairtrade issues in the local community. In the 1990s, our Fairtrade education strategy was linked closely to the Centre's Fairtrade shop. Because there was a comparatively low level of public awareness of Fairtrade at that time, we focused on providing visitors to the shop with basic information about the trading system. This led to giving Fairtrade talks in local schools and churches, which in turn developed into providing participatory workshops on Fairtrade and related issues.

Since 2000, Fairtrade education in the formal sector has been a strategic priority for the WOWC. We have delivered in-service training courses for teachers, developed curriculum-linked workshops for students and organised events for schools during Fairtrade Fortnight each year. Fairtrade Fortnight is an annual event where fair and ethical trading practices are celebrated and promoted.

In all of our formal sector work, we seek to link Fairtrade concepts to established curricula. At primary level, our main curricular target is

geography, in particular the strand unit ‘trade and development issues’ (DES, 1999:77). Through hands-on activities such as ‘The World in a Supermarket Bag’ (Oxfam, 1998:22), we encourage young children to explore why some of our food comes from so far away, and to consider how benefits from trade are distributed locally and globally.

Primary-level Fairtrade education is also well suited to cross-curricular theme work (Ruane, et al, 1999:12). Our workshops support curricular areas as diverse as history (the origins of the chocolate trade) and mathematics (how the profits from a chocolate bar are divided). There are many opportunities for creativity: for example, in 2002 the WOWC and Waterford Youth Drama produced a Fairtrade play that toured local primary schools.

At secondary level, perhaps the greatest curricular opportunity exists in Junior Cycle Civil, Social and Political Education (CSPE), which is taken by students aged 12 to 15 years old. In this course, students are required to design and implement an ‘Action Project’ (DES, 1998) on a relevant theme of their choice. Each year, the WOWC is approached by groups of local students who have selected Fairtrade as their Action Project theme. In response, we provide workshops to explore Fairtrade issues, concluding with an ‘action matrix’ exercise (ActionAid, 2003:101) that enables the young people to decide upon a realistic, appropriate and effective action to support Fairtrade.

In the Republic of Ireland, Senior Cycle is a non-compulsory period of education offered to students aged 15 to 18 years old who have successfully completed Junior Cycle. The Senior Cycle geography syllabus offers an optional project to explore Fairtrade within the context of the theme ‘global interdependence’ (DES, 2003:33). The significance of Fairtrade was highlighted in the 2009 Leaving Certificate exam, which included an optional question on how it supports sustainable development (SEC, 2009:26). To support study in this area, we provide teachers and students with resources from our lending library and information sheets about relevant websites.

Although CSPE and geography are the major areas of focus, Honan (2006) points out that there are opportunities for Fairtrade work across a wide range of second-level subjects, from agricultural science to religious education. At the WOWC, we have been involved with some unusual

Fairtrade initiatives from schools, such as a Fairtrade ‘mini-company’ set up by Transition Year (TY) business students.

Although the WOWC’s work focuses on Fairtrade learning in the formal curriculum, we have found that there is a cross-over between our formal sector work and our non-formal, community-based Fairtrade projects. For example, when Waterford made its successful bid to become a Fairtrade City in 2005, several students who had participated in our school workshops became active and valuable members of the Fairtrade City Action Group.

## **Challenges in Fairtrade education**

It is evident from the above examples that there are many opportunities to bring Fairtrade issues into primary and second-level classrooms. But it is important to identify what participants actually learn from these Fairtrade educational initiatives.

We aim to provide students with an age-appropriate understanding of how the world’s trading systems create unequal distributions of wealth and power, and how Fairtrade can help redress these imbalances. Students learn about the five goals of Fairtrade:

- A fair and stable price to farmers for their products;
- Extra income for farmers and estate workers to improve their lives;
- A greater emphasis on environmental concerns;
- A stronger position for small farmers in world markets; and
- A closer link between consumers and producers (Litvinoff & Madeley, 2007:16).

This learning seems to be straightforward, but it can lead into challenging territory. The Fairtrade benefits received by global Southern producers depend, of course, upon consumers in the North buying Fairtrade products. Therefore, Fairtrade education may appear to give the message that *buying* is the ‘solution’ to poverty in the South. Whilst it can be argued that ethical consumption is an important first step towards genuine civic engagement (see O’Rourke 2006:301 for a summary of this debate), some students can become so focused on their new role as Fairtrade consumers that other learning possibilities are eclipsed. Tucker (2006:9), a producer from



Sierra Leone, warns against a mindset which sees Fairtrade as ‘just a brand of food that demonstrates you are paying a little more to desperate farmers’.

Andreotti’s (2006:46) framework of ‘soft’ versus ‘critical’ global education can be usefully applied to Fairtrade education. We can argue that ‘soft’ Fairtrade education focuses solely on how purchasing these products helps farmers and communities in the global South. ‘Critical’ Fairtrade education, however, requires an examination of the legacy of colonialism and an exploration of how our own culture’s perceived needs have driven the trade agenda. Critical Fairtrade education should address the relationship between trade and aid, and make connections between Fairtrade and major development themes such as human rights, sustainable development and gender equality.

Critical Fairtrade education is an ambitious goal, requiring substantial commitment from both educators and learners. Because the WOWC, like most development education organisations, is not part of the mainstream education system, our contact with teachers and students is often limited. To encourage genuine critical engagement within the confines of the brief time-slots typically allocated to development education is very difficult, if not impossible. Consequently, Fairtrade education work carried out in schools by ‘outsiders’ such as the WOWC requires follow-up by teachers if critical learning is to take place.

**Students’ responses to Fairtrade education**

To make a start towards exploring the nature of Fairtrade learning, last year I carried out some informal research involving seven classes of TY students. The students viewed *Black Gold* (Francis & Francis, 2006), a powerful documentary about Ethiopian coffee producers, and then participated in an hour-long workshop. At the close of the workshop, I asked students to read four statements and to indicate which one best summed up their personal ideas about Fairtrade. After indicating their choices, students discussed the statements in a plenary session. The statements, and percentage of students choosing each one, are listed in the table below:

1	Fairtrade is about using our power as consumers to help people in need.	34%
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2	Fairtrade is about empowering producers and their communities to make their own choices about what is important for their development.	47%
3	Fairtrade is about recognising that people all over the world depend upon each other in different and sometimes unequal ways.	12%
4	The term 'fair trade' is a ridiculous over-exaggeration. We need a much more profound change in the world before we can honestly stand before a producer and say that our relationship with one another is 'fair' (Roy Scott quoted in Tucker, 2006:9).	7%

34% of students chose Statement 1, which depicts Fairtrade as a means of using Northern consumer power to provide 'help' for the South. Comments made by students who selected Statement 1 indicated that the film and workshop had made them aware of Fairtrade products, and that they planned to purchase Fairtrade goods. No one who selected this statement mentioned broader development issues nor did they comment on the language of the statement (e.g, 'our power' and 'people in need').

The largest percentage of students (47 per cent) chose Statement 2, which connects Fairtrade to empowerment and development, and an additional 12 per cent chose Statement 3, which associates Fairtrade with the concept of global interdependence. Comments from students who chose these statements (e.g, 'Being paid a decent price for their work means that producers don't have to rely on food aid') suggest that the film and workshop had successfully acted as a 'way in' to the consideration of broader development themes.

Finally, a small but not insignificant percentage (7 per cent) of students selected Statement 4, which asserts that we need 'a much more profound change' in our world. In two of the seven workshops, this statement sparked intense discussion about how fundamental social change can, or cannot, be achieved.

To summarise the findings from this informal research process, roughly one-third of the students showed evidence of 'soft', consumer-based Fairtrade learning. The remaining two-thirds showed at least some degree of 'critical' learning (which of course does not preclude consumer awareness as

well). Further research is needed to provide more detailed insights into this area; it would be especially interesting to chart learners' responses over the course of an extended Fairtrade education programme.

## **Fairtrade education and Fairtrade shopping**

I recently had an opportunity to explore Fairtrade education from an unusual angle, through my involvement with a European Union project titled 'Accessing Development Education'. This project involved teachers and development education practitioners from Ireland, Scotland, Cyprus, Lithuania and Bulgaria.

During a training week held in Lithuania, I was asked to facilitate Fairtrade workshops for teachers from the five participating countries. I approached these workshops with some trepidation because I was unsure about levels of awareness and interest in Fairtrade issues in the five countries. However, I was surprised to discover that teachers from Lithuania and Bulgaria, where virtually no Fairtrade products are available in shops, were very enthusiastic about Fairtrade activities. The teachers said that they would use these activities in their own classrooms to promote understanding of interdependence and to develop a sense of the importance of 'fair play' in trade, locally and globally. Indeed, as a follow-up to the conference, a Bulgarian primary school produced a DVD of their students working on the 'Banana Sketch' - despite the fact that they did not have the option of purchasing Fairtrade bananas.

This example is worth bearing in mind in relation to the many young people in Ireland, who, for whatever reason, are not able to purchase (or more accurately, persuade their parents to purchase) Fairtrade products. We need a Fairtrade education strategy that is broad enough to encompass a range of actions, so that people who cannot purchase the goods do not feel that they have 'failed'. Certainly, it is vital to the Fairtrade movement that people purchase the products, but as educators, we need to highlight other strands of action as well, such as lobbying decision-makers at local, national and global levels.

## **Conclusion**

WOWC's experience of Fairtrade education suggests that it *can* promote real learning about global development issues. However, this learning will not happen simply by handing out Fairtrade stickers and sample tea bags. Opportunities for Fairtrade education abound in established curricula, and it is up to development education practitioners to encourage critical engagement with the many complex issues surrounding Fairtrade. Fairtrade Fortnight offers excellent learning opportunities each year, including the chance for young people to meet face-to-face with producers from the global South (through Fairtrade Mark Ireland's producers' tour). I highly recommend celebrating Fairtrade Fortnight 2010 to explore the full potential of Fairtrade education.

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**Susan Gallwey** is the Education Officer at the Waterford One World Centre.

## **TWENTY FIFTEEN: THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS ON THE FIRST MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL**

**Patsy Toland**

### ***Twenty Fifteen: A book and a learning process***

“Every person in Ireland will have access to educational opportunities to be aware of and understand their rights and responsibilities as global citizens and their potential to effect change for a more just and equal world” (Irish Aid, 2006).

Development educators are often pre-occupied with the question, ‘how should we facilitate learning?’ We have moved on from the task of imparting knowledge about the geography, economics or history of development and now tend to focus on how to encourage people to undertake learning or campaigning initiatives themselves. Most would agree that the focus of development education is on empowering people to become aware of issues and to act to change things for the better. As educators we should provide the tools for people to engage with the issues, or better still, we should encourage them to develop the tools best suited to their needs. The book *Twenty Fifteen*, and how it came to be, is an excellent example to how development educators might empower people to take control of tools for change.

I participated in the creation and publication of *Twenty Fifteen* as Self Help Africa’s Development Education Coordinator, a role that involves enabling students and teachers in Irish secondary schools to engage with sustainable development issues in the context of rural sub-Saharan Africa. From this premise, we delve into issues of human rights and development on a wider scale. Indeed, looking at the bigger picture of development education in Ireland, it is important to encourage development NGOs and development educators to work cooperatively to provide a comprehensive and professional service to all schools (as well as those other interested and interconnected community-led groups) across the whole of Ireland. At present, development education provision is fragmented and disjointed and much work is needed to coordinate our efforts into a more effective service delivery for learners to support their capacity for development at local and

global levels. Can we empower students and teachers to take on the responsibility of educating themselves and their peers? Having been through the process of creating this book, I believe we can – but it is a soul searching task and not one for those who believe they already know the answers. To really ‘empower’ is a humbling process and an education in itself. It involves relinquishing control, questioning your own knowledge and beliefs, trusting in others, re-ordering the usual power structure of teacher/educator/student and acknowledging abilities and expertise beyond your own experience.

### ***Twenty Fifteen: The process***

The *Twenty Fifteen* project began in September 2008 with the aim of understanding and engaging with the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG), which focuses on the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. School visits and workshops were held between St. Peter’s Community College in Dunboyne, Co. Meath, and Colaiste Bhríde Community College in Carnew, Co. Wicklow. Teachers Aideen Flood and Eleanor Lee, respectively, and Transition Year students from each school also participated. Joint workshops were held by Self-Help Africa and Joe Clowry of the Combat Diseases of Poverty project in National University of Ireland Maynooth.

For two schools separated by 127 km or two hours travel time, the project was never going to be straightforward. It involved principals’ support, teachers’ free time, students’ time and dedication, and real and virtual communications and partnerships with interested supporting organisations. With a limited number of face-to-face meetings available, Skype was often utilised in the process. As all students and teachers were unable to attend every meeting, individual delegates were entrusted to bring their classmates’ views to the creative process. The skills developed through the year included written and oral communication, delegation, cooperation, decision-making, compromise, innovation and meeting deadlines; these skills constituted an excellent list of learning objectives for any development education project.

As the book aimed to address issues of poverty, the schools held a ‘Poverty Week’ to give students an experiential background before they wrote their submissions to the book. Each of the students and teachers involved

began their journey to understand and fully empathise with the subject matter by living for one week without the electronic lifelines of information technology (IT), including mobile phones, television or radio. Basic food and shelter needs were met at home and teachers and students attended school as usual. The reflections of this experiment are recorded on the inside cover of the book beginning with Zoe Horan's comment, 'Ni thuigeann an sach an seang. The well fed do not understand the lean'. This activity was an effort by the group to 'understand' and more information on this activity can be found in the Poverty Week publication.

To compile contributions for the book, students developed a standard letter for submissions and used their own contacts from home, school, etc to distribute the letter. Returns were slow at first but a few high profile connections kept morale high within the group. The project grew in stature with support and submissions by Sebastian Barry, Seamus Heaney and Anne Enright, among others. The original deadline was extended and successful funding sought from Irish Aid for design and print costs. Alan Davis was brought into the team to bring the design and publication needs to a professional standard.

The process did not just include the publication of the book but also extended to its marketing. When the project won the overall prize at the 2009 Young Social Innovators Showcase at the Royal Dublin Society, another phase of the project began. The group turned their energies to getting the book into bookstores, direct selling, publicity drives, print runs, delivery dates and more. Since May 2009 the book has been on sale in Eason's in Dublin, Byrne's bookshops in southeast Ireland and other local bookshops and newsagents; available on the Self Help Africa web site; and sold to family and friends. Copies have been presented to many key people in international development, the most recent being United Nations' Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon on a recent visit to Dublin in July 2009.

### ***Twenty Fifteen: The book***

*Twenty Fifteen* is a beautiful collection with wonderful reflections, housed in a format that invites the reader to participate by picking up the book and engaging with its contents. This is something that development educators need to remember if we are to reach out beyond our usual audience.



*Twenty Fifteen* is a collection of comments, reflections, pleas for action, statistics, visual artistic expressions and remembrances – all connected by a wish to express a view on the first Millennium Development Goal: the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. The strength of the collection is its variety of submissions and the honesty of the contributors. Additionally, the book is supplemented by a ‘Poverty Week’ activity manual for schools. Considering the book began as a school project, and had no expectation of ever reaching a wider audience, the contributions are personal and sometimes parochial. Alan Rickman (2009:20) simply expressed his feelings by looking to a nearby town, Bray, and comparing the loss of life to hunger in the world to that town’s population – real people not just statistics. Betty Brown thought back to a childhood of having little – ‘My mother bought a sheep’s head and pluck from a small butcher who came around once a week’ (2009:25). Senator David Norris measured the statistics against his own life stating that ‘The population of this small planet has doubled since I did my leaving certificate’ (2009:64).

The book features writers of great stature and fame, like Seamus Heaney, and those of lesser renown, like Aaron Naylor (3rd class, All Saints NS, Carnew). It acknowledges the validity of each contribution and unites them in their concern for the poor and less fortunate of this world. Students are united with their teachers, principals and the chief executive officers of their county vocational educational committees in voicing their concerns on this issue. Africa is united with Ireland.

The contributors are from all backgrounds, professions and experience – children, teenagers, adults, politicians, film and television personalities, poets and novelists, men and women, singers and sisters, young and old, professors and doctors, Irish, Africans and others – and each one makes this issue their own and expresses their feelings in the form that is best for them. One look at Jakub Galka’s art work (2009:32/33) begs the question: ‘is this not what development education seeks to achieve?’ The book is a testament to people who are challenging the persistent problem of poverty and hunger in this world. Some of the contributors have been tireless campaigners for justice yet for others this publication marks the beginning to their campaigning experience.

### ***Twenty Fifteen: The audience***

Who could benefit from having this book?

- Everyone with a real concern for achieving the MDG deadline of 2015 for halving the number of people living in extreme poverty;
- Everyone working in development education who wants to be inspired to maintain their best efforts;
- Everyone who thinks that school text books are written by people who know everything for people who don't know everything;
- Everyone who judges a book by its cover – they won't be disappointed;
- Everyone who likes a surprise when they open an unknown book;
- Everyone who thinks we don't make a difference;
- Everyone who knows we do make a difference;
- Everyone who knows the contributors; and
- Everyone else.

The project will proceed with a second volume on the second MDG target - to achieve universal primary education. Some of the issues raised by the first volume could be addressed by this next phase of the project, such as the obstacles to wider participation, how to best display our work and how to best engage a wider audience with the project..

The participation of those that will be directly affected by the achievement of the MDG targets is a major issue and will prove a more difficult obstacle than the two hour road trip from Carnew to Dunboyne. To simply ask for contributions from Africa or elsewhere is too much like the development model that has been promoted in the past and still dominates today. There are 1,200 people employed in the development industry in Ireland today, who run the national development agenda. It remains to be determined whether this project, along with other development and development education programmes, needs to place some of the editorial control directly into the hands of a partner African school, and what logistical challenges will arise if this path is followed.

Like the Poverty Week activities and publication included with *Twenty Fifteen*, the second phase will have to address the needs of schools who want to participate in a similar action or awareness programme. The project developers will need to decide whether these school activities would

be most beneficial to students here in Ireland or those in countries where primary education is least developed. They will then need to identify which aspects of the project should differ according to the target groups.

The projects workers also need to agree on whether it should serve to initiate a campaign for change in primary school provision in Ireland. Given the number of ‘universal education for all’ campaigns already in existence, they would have to direct the project and its publications to highlight the work done by NGOs and by those aiming to achieve the MDG targets described.

*Twenty Fifteen* has been an outstanding success as a project. It has produced a publication that is relevant and inspiring, and has shown that development education can empower people and support change across a wide constituency in our society. It is especially relevant and powerful as it was compiled and published by students and young people, an important constituency for development education, and I believe that it has set a standard to which other development and development education publications must aspire to.

*Twenty Fifteen* is published by Self Help Africa on behalf of St. Peter’s College, Dunboyne and Colaiste Bhríde, Carnew. It is available on the Self Help Africa website at a price of €11.19 which includes post & packaging ([www.selfhelpafrica.com](http://www.selfhelpafrica.com)).

**Patsy Toland** works as the Development Education Coordinator at Self Help Africa.

# **A CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE: CONNECTING VALUE, VALUES AND EVALUATION**

**Pete Mullineaux**

## **Introduction**

For the past several years I have worked as a drama and creative writer facilitator under the auspices of Poetry Ireland's 'Writers in Schools Development Education through Literature Project'. The project, which works in both primary and secondary schools, seeks to highlight global issues like child labour and Fairtrade. In this article, I will describe in detail how the project has been delivered at primary level. I will illustrate how a concept such as Fairtrade encompasses abstract ideas such as 'value', and how it can be handled in a classroom setting in a way that empowers children. I will touch briefly on the way in which the 'values' we hold as a society feed into our work and outline methods of evaluation that both reflect and complement the values extolled in development education work.

## **Finding an appropriate way to introduce the concept of Fairtrade**

Introducing broad and complex concepts like 'fairness' and 'value' in the classroom is challenging, especially when working with young children, in this case age between 8-11 years. It is important not to overwhelm them at the initial stage with complex terminology, or to draw them passively into one side of the discussion despite the personal perspective of the educator. The intention from the outset must be for the young people to become critical explorers, to make their own judgements, but to still retain their 'child's' perspective. In addition, it is important to remember that the intention of this project in particular is not to offer pre-packed knowledge, but to elicit a creative response through poetry, song and drama, where the pupils and the educator are learning together.

To begin a discussion about Fairtrade, the young people are asked what they already know about the subject. There are usually a few in the class who are well informed, and their responses demonstrate that they have parents who are active supporters of Fairtrade. However, most know little or nothing about it which requires their involvement in a lesson to separate the

two words: 'fair' and 'trade'. We suggest other words for trade, such as 'swap' and 'exchange'. These are active verbs, which can be attached to concrete nouns like sweets or compact discs (CDs). We encounter more difficulty in suggesting synonyms for 'fair', which is a more abstract concept. Does this word mean something that is rational, reasonable, acceptable or justifiable? To elicit a reaction, I pick up a pencil and offer to exchange it for one of the children's possessions. They will immediately respond that they do not want to make the exchange, as they feel their item is worth more than the pencil. From here, I can introduce the concepts of 'worth' and 'value'. At this point the whole class is usually involved, each student contributing their own idea of what makes one thing more valuable than another.

Another approach to the issue of value is to ask them how much are *you* worth? When extended to the whole class, they laugh at the absurdity of the question; it's obvious they are priceless. But is everybody valued equally? We discuss, for example, the value of a child's life in developing countries. As the discussion continues, I realise that not only is 'value' being understood at a level beyond price and commodity, we are also revealing and consolidating values that are prevalent in our society.

## **Going Bananas!**

At this stage, I turn to something more familiar in explaining the trading system, telling them about the journey a banana makes from plantation to shop. They are genuinely taken aback at both the extent of the journey and the disparity in the incomes of each contributor along the way, from worker, plantation owner, shipper, wholesaler through to retailer, especially considering the variety of labour involved for each. They are also shocked at the fact that some of the unpleasant and dangerous work is done by children, and allows us to introduce the topic of child labour and how much children's experiences vary in different cultures around the world.

To actively engage the students, I have them act out the bananas' journey by playing the parts of the different contributors. This offers them an opportunity to experience and articulate contrasting perspectives. Then they repeat the journey, this time with the bananas as actual characters. We approach it in a variety of ways, for example, bananas in conversation (one fairly traded/one not fairly traded), or using speech, song and dance. Such involved and creative methods helps keep up the levels of interest and

enthusiasm while exploring the wide variety of topics that are involved in the general issue of Fairtrade. Finally, they perform a series of improvisations with bananas singing protest songs, escaping from lorries, etc. We turn these improvisations into poems, stories and songs and publish them as a class 'book' for Concern's National Literacy Day. In terms of 'values', it's significant that the children introduce their own concepts of fairness without any prompting from me. Later, when we take part in Concern's 'Eat a Fairtrade banana day', they feel strongly that they have made an informed decision.

### **From values to evaluation – Teachers as witness**

Working in the ways I have described here avoids the pitfall of favouring students who are more articulate or academic. It promotes a model of learning where each child and their contribution is 'valued' so that even those who find it hard to articulate their feelings about the issue in either a written or oral presentation can still participate. It allows everyone an opportunity to explore issues of value and fairness, firstly from their 'child's' perspective, then by taking a more reflective position, and finally by turning their experience into a creative piece, whether it be song, dance, drama, or a visual representation.

However teachers will require support in objectively evaluating this kind of developmental learning. What are the criteria? How can achievement and progress be assessed? How does a teacher assess or even recognise the learning potential in a group of children playing a bunch of bananas? Instead of 'grading' these activities, educators have to rely on something I call 'teacher as witness'. The teacher's sensitivity and awareness of what is happening is crucial. In evaluating development education, it's vital that schools and teachers apply the same 'values' that development education extols, such as co-operation over competitiveness.

Drama in the curriculum (and associated training) enhances opportunities for teachers to conduct the kind of open-ended, creative projects I have outlined, where both teacher and pupil learn together. While privileging the role of 'teacher as witness' and allowing for the subjective aspect of each individual teacher's approach to this type of learning and development, there are still numerous criteria which can be isolated for consideration in evaluating achievement and progress both for the individual

and the group. These include the participant's capacity to: be imaginative; to articulate their opinions through physical, oral, written and visual representation; to co-operate and work together; and to reflect on outcomes in a way which extends the learning process. While the teacher can isolate these factors in assessing achievement and progress, it is important to emphasise that these elements continually overlap and work off each other during the learning process.

## **Conclusion**

Working on projects such as those I've described above, the need to identify and connect with specific values such as fairness, justice and equality becomes apparent. These 'values' fit in with the broad values promoted (at least in theory) in primary schools: values of kindness, politeness, mutual tolerance, unselfishness etc. Primary level children seem to value these concepts highly, but sometimes as the child gets older these basic human notions are devalued, replaced or compromised by conflicting values such as success versus failure and losers versus winners. In my own experience this is especially true at Senior Cycle, as pupils enter the exam system and values of competitiveness and success take over.

Knowledge is seen as something to be acquired in order to gain an advantage over competitors, and survival of the fittest is the environment in which many people operate, professionally and academically. A main concern is that many schools, due to multiple pressures, will shy away from a form of learning which is more complex, and therefore more difficult to monitor and evaluate, or which does not have prepared 'objective' criteria for assessment. The potential for development education to contribute to the overall development of a child is enormous. In terms of self-confidence and awareness, of instilling values of fairness and equality, and of exposing students to the world of global politics which demands joined-up thinking between history, geography and various other subjects, the lessons of development education are priceless.

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**Pete Mullineaux** lives and works in Galway, Ireland. He facilitates drama and creative writing in schools and other contexts, specialising in devising plays around development themes. In October 2009 he will provide an input into the Babaro International Festival for Children and present a paper at the Development Education Research Network (DERN) conference to be held at the National University of Ireland Galway. He has contributed previously to *Policy and Practice*, Issue 6, on Education for Sustainable Development. Pete has written plays for the stage and RTE radio and recently published a poetry collection, *A Father's Day* (Salmon Poetry, 2008). He is also the author of two learning resources for teachers linking drama with development education.



## **SUGAR CANE AND THE HUNGER PROBLEM**

### **Juan Cambindo**

#### **Introduction: The history of sugar cane**

The sugar cane crop arrived in Colombia around 1760, and it was primarily used to feed the African and indigenous slaves working in the mines. As sowing and manufacturing methods advanced, sugar cane production became an industry which required cheap and abundant labour. In 1900 the first sugar refinery opened in Manuelita Palmira, in the Cauca Valley in Colombia. It was a modern structure belonging to the North American-descended Eder family, whose father was Consul in the region before the founding of the refinery.

From the 1950s through to the present, the sugar cane industry has employed workers from the Chocó, Cauca and Nariño regions to perform the manual labour required in sugar cane production. The workers are drawn to the industry by the guarantee of continual work, decent pay and of free transportation to and from the fields; they are attracted to the ethanol production industry for similar reasons. The workers also set up mono-crop farming in rich soils to produce rice, cotton, millo (similar to maize), soya and fruit.

Unfortunately, this resilient source of employment is being wiped out by technological advances in the area of sugar cutting. One machine replaces 120 to 150 workers, and there are now 63 cutting machines available for use in the sugar refineries. Threats of labour cutbacks are being heard throughout the industry with between 62 and 80 per cent (7,500 and 9,500) of the 12,000 cutters currently working vulnerable to mechanised cutting and unemployment. Taking into consideration the probability that each worker is earning for an average family of four persons, this adds up to between 30,000 and 36,000 people affected in the region.

#### **Labour conditions**

It is important to remember that current salaries amount to \$700 United States dollars (USD) per month, from which social security benefits and

others are taken. In reality, these wages barely reach the basic legal minimum wage, which is currently \$497 USD. However, despite working 10 and 12 hour days, the Cooperative Company of Associated Work does not recognise sugar cane cutters as employees due to their unstable and impoverished working conditions.

The region where the cutters live is populated by Chocoanos, Nariños, Caucanos and Vallecaucanos people, and they depend to a large extent on the agro-industrial business of sugar cane. Currently, the majority of workers live in inadequate conditions, and the boost in ethanol production is worrisome as it will result in even more unemployment.

Many agriculturally-based Colombian workers, particularly sugar cane cutters, are presently living in very worrying conditions involving: state abandonment; lack of education and health care, poor living conditions and recreation; low salaries; and unattainable former public services that have been privatised. This means that living costs are steadily increasing, work hours are long and education is unattainable for adults and our children; young people are denied access to university because the cost per semester is exorbitantly high and sugar cane salaries are not sufficient to cover the payments. Health care services have been largely privatised and the entities that offer these services are interested more in increasing their profits than in serving the public community.

The same phenomenon occurs with pension and disability funds. At present, there are many agricultural workers unfit to work, with spinal injuries and other physical impairments and the companies, insurance entities, and the government all fail to respond with pensions or payments to allow them to survive. Some have been reduced to begging, after having spent their lives working for the development of the industry and the wider economy of the country. This all contributes to a continually unstable labour system.

I live and work in the valley of Cauca, where 80 per cent of the cultivable land is planted with sugar cane. The owners of these sugar cane farms are currently initiating a project which will mechanize the cutting of sugar cane, replacing the more than 12,000 local workers with machines. There is no plan by either the sugar industry or the government to offset this 'delabourization', which will bring not only unemployment but social

catastrophe for those who depend on the industry directly and indirectly. This plan will be disastrous for the region, socially and economically. Practically all of the labour force will be redirected to the ethanol and biodiesel industries, whose purpose is to fuel the machines and vehicles that are replacing workers in agricultural industries across the country. The quality of life is no longer a priority for the industry or the government, nor are basic human rights respected; our lives are dominated by the needs and demands of business and profit. Additionally, the biodiesel business is replacing those crops which are basic food staples with crops that produce agrocombustibles (fuel), creating an even more severe food shortage. There are no labour guarantees in Colombia for the people who work in these agricultural sectors industries.

## **Conclusion**

There was an attempt to address this problem at a national level in 2008 with the owners of the sugar refineries and the government, but the workers were not heard. At eight sugar refineries in the region, there was a strike which lasted 87 days without resolution, due to political unwillingness by the government and the owners of the industry to reach a settlement with workers. There was a military strike and no labour deal was negotiated. During this strike, 33 workers were wounded by riot police and there were six imprisoned, charged with crimes they did not commit. These events reflect the lack of guarantees and the absence of democracy for our population.

This account is offered as a personal, detailed experience which can hopefully be useful in educating people outside the sugar cane industry and outside of Colombia about poor labour conditions and the difficulty of exploited workers in being recognized and protected by their government. This can open up discussion on how this system needs to change to better respect the rights of workers at all levels of industry, and how people around the world can help advocate for them, either by encouraging local ethical consumption or through educating on how labour policies vary in different countries. It is important to engage with these issues both looking at wider development themes and looking at specific personal accounts such as this.

[http://www.redcolombia.org/oscar/vallecauca/NegozioCanna\\_Sinaltrainal\\_es.pdf](http://www.redcolombia.org/oscar/vallecauca/NegozioCanna_Sinaltrainal_es.pdf)

**Juan Cambindo** is Director of the Sugar Cane Workers Union in Colombia. For more information please see: [http://www.redcolombia.org/oscar/vallecauca/NegozioCanna\\_Sinaltrainal\\_es.pdf](http://www.redcolombia.org/oscar/vallecauca/NegozioCanna_Sinaltrainal_es.pdf).

# Resource reviews

## *Famine: A Short History*

By Cormac Ó Gráda

### Pádraig Carmody

*Famine: A Short History* is an impressive book written by Cormac Ó Gráda, professor of economics at University College Dublin. In his book, he examines the history of famine, drawing out commonalities and themes across geographical and historical contexts.

The book begins with a historical overview. It describes how individual famines are often known by specific names, such as Ireland's *bliain an áir* ('the year of slaughter') from 1740-41. Surprisingly this event was more deadly than the Great Hunger of Ireland from 1845-1852. The book details symptoms of famine, including rising food prices, food riots and a substantial number of actual or potential deaths from starvation. Due to the various scenarios in which famine can exist, a more precise definition is difficult.

Ó Gráda describes the impacts of acute food crisis on crime, infanticide, slavery, and details different coping strategies. Famine foods and other topics are described in a magisterial historical sweep. Examples of great selflessness and selfishness are catalogued, along with facts and statistics. Women are more likely to survive famines than men as they have higher fat reserves. Husbands starved for their wives; cases of murders and cannibalism occurred, even within families. In one Egyptian famine, people were reportedly plucked from the street with hooks into buildings. One survivor of the 1984 Ethiopian famine notes 'it was a time of hating – even your own mother'. A shocking photo shows a well nourished man stealing food from a starving child.

Famine can also be an opportunity for some, such as merchants who hoard food to charge higher scarcity prices and moneylenders that prey on people's distress. In some cases, governments have banned these practices, with counterproductive results. For example, the persecution of traders under

the Marxist Dergue (committee) in Ethiopia was partly responsible for the terrible famine there, as trading food became more difficult. However, famine also brings out human empathy. During *bliain an áir* according to one source, Dubliners ‘gave willingly gold and silver...making no distinction between Protestant and Papist’. The Choctaw Native Americans also provided money for famine relief in Ireland in the 1840s, only a few years after their own experience with starvation during the ‘Trail of Tears’.

Ó Gráda also discusses the contested relationship between colonialism and famine. It is a complicated one which has varied depending on the time period, the level of technology and the prevailing ideology in the colonial metropolis. By the twentieth century, the British state was less likely to tolerate famine in its colonies as a necessary evil to purge ‘over-population’, although the requisitioning of food for war was sometimes partly responsible for famines. The disruptions associated with World War II were implicated in the Bengal famine of 1943-4 in India, which receives considerable attention in the book.

He notes that there were ‘improvements in governance’ during the colonial era and that the end of colonialism in Africa brought the return of mass famine mortality, as a result of post-colonial complications such as civil wars. However, it can be argued that colonial policies of creating ‘tribes’ to divide and rule hardened ethnic dissention and laid the basis for subsequent conflict. The colonial state was no longer present to repress latent disputes by force. More detail on the economic and social structures underlying vulnerability to famine would have been interesting, but perhaps beyond the purview of the book.

Another impressive feature of this book is the incisive economic analysis brought to bear. Ó Gráda shows that in some cases, markets have been relatively efficient in reallocating food from surplus to deficit regions, whereas in others they were not. An important factor is identified as whether food deficit regions have sufficient purchasing power. As he notes ‘well functioning commodity markets are a mixed blessing when the distribution of income moves against the poor’. Food may be exported to the highest bidder, rather than sold locally.

On balance Ó Gráda is favourable towards the role of markets in food provision and distribution. He questions whether it would be too much

to hope that Africa can move away from subsistence agriculture and use the receipts from exports to buy food from other countries. However, it is possible that this might be part of the problem historically. African economies were structured under colonialism, and guided through more recent policies of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund towards 'free' trade and exports. Consequently the continent is now heavily dependent on food imports, which is now a source of substantial debt. For example, ninety seven per cent of poultry in Ghana is now imported, as compared to only ten per cent twenty years ago.

A United States (US) Senator is quoted in the book as saying 'food is power', and is consequently a national security issue. The US has in the past blocked food aid for political reasons, for example to stop Bangladesh trading with Cuba. It is certain that Europe would never accept not growing enough food to feed its own population.

Ó Gráda is critical in the book of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for over-selling the contemporary threat of famine in order to raise funds. However this 'over-selling' may also partly be due to the difficulty of defining and identifying a 'true' famine. It may also stem from the idea that it is better to err on the side of caution to ensure sufficient food supplies.

Despite the theme, this is a hopeful book. Modern famines claim fewer victims less murderous and their incidence is declining around the world. This is a result of the spread of economic development, the globalisation of relief efforts through NGOs and improved transport, information and technology infrastructure. However, there is no cause for complacency on hunger. As the proportion of malnourished people falls, their absolute number is growing.

Apart from the author's encyclopaedic knowledge, this book is distinguished by its attention to detail, insistence on evidence to back up arguments and clever structure which enables the reader to engage easily with cutting-edge arguments about the nature and evolution of famine. It is likely to become the standard academic text on the subject, but its accessible style, clarity and illustrations make it of much wider interest and significance. In terms of class usage it would be suitable as a text for courses related to food in economics, geography and other social science disciplines.

Ó Gráda, C (2009) *Famine: A Short History*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.

**Pádraig Carmody** is lecturer in human geography at Trinity College Dublin.



## ***Cuba in Revolution – A History Since the Fifties***

**By Antoni Kapcia**

### **Douglas Hamilton**

Much has been written about Cuba over the past fifty years of its Revolution. However, it's difficult to think of another country where such writing has generated so many crude and clichéd representations. On a daily basis newspapers and magazines churn out distorted, negative and highly superficial articles based on at best selective and at worst incorrect information. Across the range of establishment political opinion, from the liberal left to the neo-liberal right, a conventional wisdom has built up, depicting Cuba as a corrupt dictatorship under the ruthless, power hungry, unpopular and even megalomaniac Fidel, and more recently Raúl, Castro. We are told repeatedly that Cuba is characterised by: one party rule, thus offending conventional Western notions of a functioning democracy; a society without freedom of expression in its media; a country with hundreds to thousands of political prisoners (numbers vary considerably between sources); and a people in severe economic and social hardship. Of course, mention is typically made of the generous health and education systems, and the damaging impact of the United States' (US) embargo, but these are normally add-ons in an attempt to provide some 'liberal' balance. However, if all these allegations are true, then how has the Cuban Revolution managed to survive for fifty years? Is the answer simply political repression, as we are so often led to believe?

In his deeply informed, concise, well-written and above all refreshing book, *Cuba in Revolution – A History Since the Fifties*, Antoni Kapcia provides a highly credible explanation for the Revolution's remarkable endurance that eschews simplistic analysis. Instead, the author adopts a necessarily complex and analytical framework which emphasises both internal and external factors, in particular historical colonial processes dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He argues that pre-1959 Cuba had deep ideological and political roots, what he terms *cubanía*, a radical and at times revolutionary nationalism. Kapcia shows that the Cuban Revolution has passed through a series of cycles rather than phases, with each cycle being defined by a repetitive process of crisis, debate, decision and certainty, until the next crisis. Thus, a state of crisis is regarded by Kapcia as something

inherent to the revolutionary process. Using this framework, he analyses why Cuba turned to socialism after 1959; how its economic strategies developed and changed over time; how it survived the fall of the Soviet Bloc; and how it has managed to respond to the ever-tightening US economic blockade. Most importantly, he shows how the system has managed to retain the support of a loyal but not uncritical 'silent majority' - that significant part of the population who are neither unquestioning loyal activists nor opponents of the system who have sought emigration.

In a highly informed and fascinating discussion, Kacpia takes the reader through a range of crucial issues:

- the huge social benefits of the Cuban system, in particular the development and maintenance of comprehensive education and health systems;
- the cultural divisions and debates which have taken place, involving far more inclusion than is commonly depicted;
- the adoption of a 'Third Worldist' approach to culture and foreign policy;
- the development of popular mobilisation through a series of hugely significant institutions and mass campaigns;
- the origins and changing role of the Cuban Communist Party;
- the implementation of formal popular participation through the Organs of Popular Power;
- the way in which the system has dealt with dissent;
- the role of the Catholic Church and religion more generally;
- the role of trade unions;
- the defining beliefs and values he identifies as underlying the Revolution, including activism, unique culturalism, moralism, youthism and ruralism;
- the functioning of the press and media; and
- the changing nature of the émigré community, especially in Florida.

From a developmental point of view, Kacpia highlights Cuba's highly distinctive new role, status and meaning in the world. For Cuba, revolutionary foreign policy has always meant more than just the normal processes of relating commercially or diplomatically to other countries. Rather, Cuba redefined itself in the world by actively emphasising its independence from both the US and the Soviet Union, and placing itself as

the revolutionary vanguard of Latin America and the ‘Third World’ more generally, a position most clearly reflected in its leading role within the Non-Aligned Movement. Kapcia shows how Cuba took the lead in resisting US imperialism; and even when Cuba had close economic links with the Soviet Union in the 1970s, it continued to be a frequent critic of Moscow because of the latter’s need to keep Cuba on board as part of its own ‘Third World’ strategy. A key and continuing aspect of Cuba’s foreign policy has been its ‘internationalism’ and its unique form of development aid, sending not only financial resources but thousands of doctors, nurses, teachers and expert advisors to some forty countries, an example from which ‘developed’ countries could clearly learn.

In conclusion, Kapcia uses his explanatory framework to show why there was such a smooth and orderly transition of leadership when Raúl recently took over as President from Fidel, a process totally at odds with the anticipated popular unrest and chaos that most external observers expected and the Revolution’s critics and enemies had sought.

Antoni Kapcia has written a hugely rewarding and accessible book, completely free of the prejudice and political bias typically associated with accounts of the Cuban Revolution. He openly addresses vexed questions and answers many of the criticisms aimed at the Revolution by its opponents, but without resorting to glib and dogmatic justifications. This book should be the starting point not just for anyone wishing to get a truly informed understanding of the Cuban Revolution, but also for those who want to learn about a truly radical, just and ongoing developmental process.

Kapcia, A (2008) *Cuba in Revolution – A History Since the Fifties*, Reaktion Books, London.

**Douglas Hamilton** has worked as an economist in a number of research bodies in Scotland, England and Ireland. He has a PhD in Economic and Political Geography and has written extensively on Cuba in academic and other journals. He has lived in Havana and currently lives in Spain.