

A LONG LOOK BACK: SOME CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION IN IRELAND AND THE UK

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Abstract: This article examines development education (DE) from the perspectives of content, methodology and audiences, and looks at issues of funding and coordination, concluding with some reflections on how a review of past omissions and weaknesses may be of help to the sector in forging newer partnerships, innovative outreach delivery, and greater emphasis on activism and political engagement.

Key words: Development; history; economics; anthropology; Africa, African socialism; Cold War; activism.

The tenth anniversary of *Policy and Practice* in 2015 (<http://www.developmenteducationreview.com/issue20>) was a welcome event in the development education (DE) sector. As well as providing an assessment of current challenges and methodological issues, it also offered some exciting lines of enquiry and possible directions for future operations in the sector. This article will, however, leave the future to other – younger – students, teachers, researchers and activists, and concentrate on a personal reflection on over forty years' engagement with development initiatives. Such a historical perspective may help shape thinking on current and future challenges and how best to respond to them in a rapidly changing world context.

Development perspectives

After World War II, Britain and France lost their empires and many colonies moved towards independence. As the drive to development took off, academic thinking in the West was a prisoner of the Cold War, with little effective challenge being offered to hegemonic paradigms of a free democratic West versus an enslaved, dictatorial East. The DE sector was born and grew up within those narrow perspectives and, whilst much

activism focused on the political independence of colonial Africa, there was little understanding of the importance of international relations or global economics in the elaboration of a broader perspective on development.

Indeed, as independent countries began to establish strategies for their own development, they engaged increasingly with economic issues but the DE sector was perceived to fit more readily with geography and cognate disciplines, leaving economic development to universities and colleges. This represented the beginnings of an important dichotomy between academic research on development and a schools-based DE which did not often incorporate the empirical findings and theoretical propositions of the post-school academic community. The school system – especially in Ireland – continued to ignore central issues of development such as power relations and inequality, and to concentrate instead on softer issues such as cross-cultural relations, charitable support to poorer peoples, and a continuing view of ‘their’ poverty being the problem rather than ‘our’ wealth.

Increasingly, the Cold War fostered different perceptions of development which the DE sector in Ireland and the UK appeared disinclined to challenge. As we look back over DE in the 1960s and 70s, the lack of any countervailing perspectives to the US-dominated worldview appears obvious. Much of our ‘evidence base’ was provided by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, n.d.), or the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), especially in terms of statistics, but we often appeared unwilling to examine other perspectives. Young minds were hugely impressed in Africa by the free newspaper, *China Today*, detailing Chinese domestic and international nation-building efforts. The Soviets produced *Sputnik* – also a propaganda tool but important for offering people in developing countries different perspectives and ambitions. Cuba after 1959 produced *Granma* which also offered alternatives to Western worldviews.

The development initiatives of the Soviet Union were hardly enlightened but the fact that the DE sector here largely ignored them cannot

be considered an accolade. The Warsaw Pact archives are now available for research and one can see, for example, the huge number of scholarships offered to students from developing countries to go to the Patrice Lumumba International University in Moscow and return to their home country with internationally recognised qualifications to begin the task of nation-building. Much of the Soviet effort towards developing countries lay in armaments and ‘defence’ equipment but it would be both churlish and neglectful to ignore Soviet development initiatives, especially some of the more iconic and inspiring actions such as the saving of the Aswan High Dam in Nasser’s Egypt through the offer of a \$1.2 billion loan, at 2 percent interest, in 1956. The role of Soviet and Cuban forces in Africa’s liberation struggles was hugely important and any balanced and nuanced picture of African development should include a deeper understanding of those important contributions.

China, of course, is now seen to be a major partner and champion of Africa. The economic importance of early Chinese flagship projects in Africa – for example, the TanZam Uhuru Railway, 1970-1975 – was huge and, at a time when China itself was not seen as prosperous, impressed Africans with a sense of altruism and real partnership that they had not seen in their dealings with Western nations.

As well as ignoring much of the development work conducted by ‘the other side’ in the Cold War, the DE sector appeared to bypass much indigenous development thinking and practice, especially from African political activists and politicians. President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania formulated a version of African Socialism, based on the Swahili term of ‘*ujamaa*’ (‘collective effort’). Kenya’s President Jomo Kenyatta embraced the concepts of ‘*harambee*’ (Swahili for ‘working together’) and ‘*uhuru*’ (‘freedom’) for effective popular mobilisation. Zambia’s President Kenneth Kaunda extolled a form of Christian social democracy which became known as African Humanism but – again – it didn’t make much impact on the DE sector here in terms of building a broad-based understanding of different people’s perceptions of what development could be (James, 2014).

There were, of course, myriad other development initiatives – from simplified exhortations in Mao Zedong’s *Little Red Book* and other writings, to the pan-Africanism urged on the continent by the likes of President Sékou Touré of Guinea or President Nkrumah of Ghana, in the heady, euphoric days of early post-independence. And what about the initiatives adumbrated outside the English language? Whilst peoples recently freed from an experience of British colonialism were pursuing ‘community development’, peoples in former French colonies attempted ‘*animation rurale*’ (Alldred, 1978) – rural animation, or an attempt to organise rural resources for a more autonomous, indigenous and community-focused development pathway. Was that not worth examining in our DE work, especially in comparison to the rich literature on community development?

Equally, the French concept of ‘*assimilation*’ (literally assimilation or integration), echoed by the Portuguese idea of ‘*assimilação*’, brings out wonderfully different perceptions of the goals of development, compared to British understandings. Few Britons sought to accept any of their colonised peoples as eventually being able to live and work in Britain, alongside British men and women, whereas French and Portuguese conceptions of development saw an ultimate goal of drawing those former subjects into equal citizenship rights beside former colonists. Such fundamental concepts, at the heart of the development experience of so many African and Latin American peoples in particular, should surely have found a place in the DE curriculum in Ireland and the UK (and even inform our collaborations with Francophones and Lusophones), but appear to have left very few traces.

Indeed, the Portuguese colonial experience is even less well understood among anglophone audiences than that of our French-speaking friends. In 1974, a revolution took place in Portugal, which sloughed off an obscene dictatorship and led to the rapid decolonisation of Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau and the Cape Verde islands (Storey, 1976). It was impossible to fully understand the truly historic importance of the end of apartheid and the onset of black majority rule in South Africa without a basic understanding of the independence struggles in the former Portuguese

territories in Africa. If a proper grasp of economics – in the context of newly independent states seeking industrial and financial emancipation as well as political freedom – is poorly understood, how much more lacking is our grasp of the histories of those same newly independent countries? Histories of Africa may be fascinating in themselves but many are also instructive for understanding colonialist and imperialist phases of British and other European countries' past – and how that has shaped the world we all inhabit today (see, for example, Arnold, 2005; Davidson, 1968; Hargreaves, 1979; MacMillan, 1938; and Oliver & Atmore, 1967).

It might be understandable that the sector concentrated both on Africa – our nearest developing continent – and on English-speaking Africa, but it may well be seen as a form of parochialism which should have been eschewed much earlier. We could have looked more profitably at other development experiences, too. In China, for example, the lessons of the revolution of 1949 were not readily examined, except by specialist researchers and sinophiles: the DE sector did not adopt in any meaningful sense an independent position from mainstream Western economic and political analysis sufficient to establish a better balance among the competing subjectivities surrounding development discourses.

The content and materials of our DE work could have usefully looked at such fascinating concepts as '*ubuntu*'. In the UK and Ireland, Archbishop Desmond Tutu's formulation is perhaps the best known: 'My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours' (1999: 186). Similarly, we could have examined Africa's experience of village palavers as a better means of achieving community consensus rather than the divisive oppositional politics fostered in the West by voting on yes/no alternatives. Indeed, anthropology – like history – has been piling up huge resources that point the way to constructing theories based on the lived experience of developing countries, rather than the imposed schemas of Western academics (see Balandier, 1957; and Lévi-Strauss, 1955).

Development theory

The DE sector has often tried to recognise and to reconcile the global facts of inequality and the comfortable, privileged position most of us enjoy. Ha-Joon Chang puts it pithily in his wonderful deconstruction of capitalism: ‘The wage gaps between rich and poor countries exist not mainly because of differences in individual productivity but mainly because of immigration control’ (Joon-Chang, 2010: 23). People in rich countries are beneficiaries of structured inequality across the world. If we do not have a theory of development sufficient to grasp that, and to inspire us into positive collective action to change that, we cannot be effective in helping others understand global social and economic forces.

It remains an unforgivable blot on the history of DE that the sector rarely challenged the Bible of capitalism’s apologetics – Walt W. Rostow’s *The Stages of Economic Growth: a non-communist manifesto* (1960). An economic historian with no track record of theoretical elaboration, Rostow was a zealous cheerleader for the American way of life and formulated ‘modernisation’ as *the* recipe for development. His simplistic, ahistorical and unempirical contention that the US evolved through five stages and that every other country can and must go through those same essential stages has been handed down as gospel to generations of scholars, students and pupils. We hardly challenged with any serious intellectual rigour the ideological notion of Rostow and his fellow apologists that capitalism represented the only way forward for developing countries.

Rostow’s ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to development does not even faithfully portray the history of the United States itself – where are the references to expropriation of lands from native Americans, or the extermination of entire peoples, or the European invasion of the western hemisphere? A more faithful reading of US history would perhaps, instead, offer a blueprint for European colonisation of Africa and Asia. This was not development theory but Cold War propaganda – the clue is in the book’s subtitle – barely passing as academic literature. Allowing the educational sector in the UK and Ireland, and the media, as well as business and political elites,

to continue to parrot this empty and damaging paradigm for so long remains a grave failing of the DE sector over the last fifty years.

With the arrival of theories of underdevelopment in the mid-1960s, the sector had empirically-based and theoretically strong constructs for principled opposition to Rostow's ideas – but we rarely made serious attempts to articulate, develop and propagate them. We struggled to generate consistent, continuous DE narratives that challenged capitalism – that same capitalism that often financed comfortable positions for DE teachers in the top economies and societies in the world. We lacked a good balance between voices from the global South and the dubious postulations of our leaders and elites which were clearly articulating a narrow national interest, *which was also our own self-interest*. Joris Luyendijk (2015: 184) puts it more eloquently in his book, *Swimming with Sharks*: 'How do you agitate against a practice that you are taking part in yourself?' Or Upton Sinclair's 'It is difficult to get a man to understand something, when his salary depends upon his not understanding it!' (1994: 109).

In Latin America, development theory produced a wealth of ideas, evidence and analysis, which remained marginal to most teaching concerns in these islands. Re-reading in the past 4-5 years the works of Raul Prebisch, Andre Gunder Frank, Illich, Freire and even Dom Helder Camara has been a wonderfully liberating experience, although emphasising once again how little development theory (broadly defined) has progressed from the 1960s and 1970s. Samir Amin in Egypt, and Franz Fanon in Algeria and then in France, offered us some brilliant insights and analysis, but little else that emerged from Africa compares to the wealth of robust theory or evidence-based analysis that came out as Latin American activists and engaged thinkers, researchers and teachers developed the fundamental concept of 'underdevelopment' and Dependency Theory (see, for example, Amin, 1977; Câmara, 1971; Fanon, 1971; Freire, 1970; Gunder Frank, 1966; Illich, 1973; Prebisch, 1950).

The West has encouraged us all to look at the creation of wealth but we have rarely been exhorted to look at the factors, structures and processes which create *poverty*. The academic community has produced impressive work on the failings of Western economic models of development – to the extent that the hallowed status of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is now seriously undermined. The fact that the King of Bhutan offered his nation a National Happiness Index in 1971 – and was mocked the world over for his naivety in ignoring the primacy of GDP – has been followed, forty years later, by the Sarkozy Commission on Wellbeing, or former Prime Minister Cameron’s short-lived commitment to wellbeing, and the New Economics Foundation’s (NEF’s) Happy Planet Index. The fixation on ‘free trade’ for developing countries has now been seen to be yet another failure of Western economic nostrums and policies pronounced by nations and elites that themselves benefitted from anything but free trade. The desire of early African leaders, post-independence, to pursue import substitution strategies – so harshly condemned and extirpated in the 1970s and 1980s – is now recognised as being an appropriate strategy for many developing countries. Merely to articulate the idea that every nation state has a unique selling point, a comparative advantage that it can use to grow its way to prosperity, is to call attention to the poverty of theory that has been the hallmark of Western elites for so long, and which has been so abjectly accepted by the DE sector (see, for example, Senghor, 1959).

Over forty years or more, the Western development community has flirted with a rash of fads and fashions – felt needs, basic needs, rural development, integrated development, participatory rural appraisal, the capabilities approach, the rights-based approach, etc. Donors have insisted on monitoring and evaluation, on gender equity, on institutional learning, and so on. The HIV/AIDS pandemic in the late 1980s onwards saw donor agencies insist that almost every single project had an HIV/AIDS component, whether relevant and helpful or not. Indeed, the shaping of development pathways – intellectually in places such as the UK and Ireland, and practically in ‘developing’ countries – by the insistence of funding agencies on following inappropriate Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) or

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), has pushed the DE sector on to the back foot.

If we are to understand fully the structural causes of poverty creation and the burgeoning inequality in all countries, we need to have a strong intellectual foundation, in order to arrive at a robust and action-oriented theory of social change relevant to issues of international development. There is little obvious evidence suggesting that the DE sector has achieved much in this area.

Audiences

It has been fascinating to follow the shifting focus of DE, especially in the UK and Ireland since the founding of the then Ministry of Overseas Development in 1964 and of Irish Aid in 1974. In recent years, the Department for International Development (DfID) has become loath to fund initiatives aimed at development education work within the UK, and Irish Aid has trimmed its expenditures on awareness-raising within Ireland. As with education for sustainable development, policy makers have decided that primary school children should be the main focus and the main beneficiaries of most teaching initiatives. This didn't used to be the case: faith groups, trade unions, young peoples' groups, sports clubs and many other civil society organisations engaged in many activities that helped members of the public understand the broader issues of wealth, power, inequality and international solidarity.

Today, Trócaire largely concentrates on the Catholic community in Ireland whilst Christian Aid and Tearfund largely concentrate on the Protestant communities (mainly in the North), but most of their work focuses on fund-raising: the days of church officers campaigning fearlessly (à la Father Huddleston against apartheid) appear long gone, except on rare occasions such as the Make Poverty History campaign in 2005. The Coalition of Aid and Development Agencies Northern Ireland (CADANI) and Dóchas (the Irish Association of Non-Government Development Organisations), still try to mobilise consensus views on important

development-related issues, and there are a small number of university-located initiatives (such as TIDI – the Trinity International Development Initiative) but the idea of aiming to educate the public on international development themes and priorities appears to be yesterday’s challenge. Nationwide campaigns that were articulated through a loose network of One World Centres or Fair Trade shops, or through churches or pubs or community centres, have all but disappeared.

The Trade Union Congress (TUC) still produces its monthly Development Matters bulletin. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) used DfID and Irish Aid funds for successful DE work for a few years but has now reduced its activities to offering basic support to trade unions’ own Global Solidarity campaigns. There is a Global Learning Union Group offering trade union learning and activism that does focus on international development issues. But where are the large campaigns, the summer schools, the online courses offering help to those who express an interest? Perhaps the DE sector has followed the money a little too closely so that, when the money dries up in one area, the sector abandons that audience. Far too little is on offer to the general public, who are instead exposed to stronger media presentations of global issues, through the lenses of commerce, self-interest or partisanship.

There still remains the obstacle that much DE work assumes that ‘here’ is somehow developed and ‘there’ is somehow underdeveloped. We cheerfully teach our primary school children that people in developing countries have the same rights as us and should therefore – morally speaking – be able to benefit from the same great conditions of daily life as we are able to enjoy. The fact that our history, our current lifestyle, our hegemonic domination (through soft power), are themselves problematic, needs to be addressed. That Norway can receive around 70 percent of the value of its oil and gas by way of royalties, but Zambia took more than eight years of struggle against Western corporations, backed by Western governments and institutions, to move its own royalties on copper up from 3 percent to 6 percent, should also feature in our development ‘education’ (Hill, 2016).

Those better understandings, and their implications for action, need to be brought before newer, wider audiences.

Methodologies

Education has long been synonymous with the school system. The DE sector has been accustomed to what used to be called ‘chalk and talk’ – using the blackboard to inform the class about some of the teacher’s expertise. The advent of ICT, PowerPoint and Prezi updated those tools but left the *modus operandi* unchanged. Fortunately, we have had a few exemplary innovations such as Beyond Skin’s podcasts on development themes; Northern Vision’s television documentaries; occasional – but almost always superb – RTE documentaries (although a disappointing output from the BBC’s many channels and services). The Centre for Global Education’s (CGE) Global Issues seminars and published collections have been really helpful in bringing development themes and perceptions to a wider audience – and this journal is another excellent example of DE adapting its methodology to changing circumstances.

We sometimes pay lip service to the old adage that ‘In Africa, an old man [or woman] dying is like a library burning down’ but we don’t often embed that idea in our teachings. We still rely on books and DE ‘resources’ – but what about using the experience of people from developing countries who live and work here? And what about the myriad other opportunities not seized, the many other channels of engaging with the public in today’s 24/7 society? In schools and colleges, and online, language classes could be used to help explore other regions: Spanish teaching could use films from Latin America to explore issues of poverty, trade, freedom and gender rights; French teaching could use films from Senegal, Mali or Burkina Faso to explore similar themes but also slavery, oral history and environmentalism. Indeed, cinema has massive potential for bringing development issues to new publics. Pudovkin’s *Storm Over Asia* (1928), Kalatozov’s *I am Cuba* (1964), Pontecorvo’s *Battle for Algiers* (1966), Alea’s *Memories of Underdevelopment* (1968), Sembene Ousman’s *Xala* (1975), Niccol’s *Lord of War* (2005), Zwick’s *Blood Diamond* (2006), Iñárritu’s *Babel* (2006) are

all important, commercially mainstream films that explore themes of development, inequality and global poverty with sensitivity and compassion. Economics and business studies could achieve their goals using a wider range of examples and examine global value chains, the elements of pricing policy, ‘free’ trade, local and global labour migrations and so on. Maths classes could teach basic arithmetic skills by focusing on how an item of clothing is priced in Dunnes and Primark, compared to M&S or Next, or on how profit margins are calculated on different products, or elements of SROI (Social Return on Investment), etc.

Those are just some of the possibilities of educating in formal, structured sessions that the DE sector hasn’t yet turned to its advantage. What about methods of teaching other audiences, in other situations? Many people appear to believe that campaigning is somewhat old-fashioned, that demonstrations in the street, or writing to MPs, are not the best ways to engage people, or that they are inefficient. Online petitions may be more acceptable and social media should surely be used to much greater effect than they have so far, but there may be still other ways of generating interest and commitment. Towns and boroughs ‘twin’ with one another, so why not have more North-South twinnings – such as that between Coleraine and Zomba, Malawi? If African governments are possibly corrupted by Western corporations, why not focus on African *local* government as a target for local, responsive and effective development work?

Activism on development issues is surely an important *method* of development education – as well as a resource, a means of mobilising concerned citizens, and a funding source. A strong case could be made for suggesting that the 2005 Make Poverty History campaign and buying Fair Trade have both done more to anchor development issues and values in ordinary citizen’s minds and behaviours than any amount of pedestrian development education. *Occupy Belfast* (or Toronto, New York, London, etc) was an opportunity to engage in wider debates and discussions about the kind of society we wish to see emerge from the ruins of current socio-economic failures, yet the DE sector did not engage meaningfully with them

as a way to advance its own educative and transformative agenda. The August 2011 riots throughout England were decried by (then) British Prime Minister David Cameron as ‘criminality, pure and simple’ but other voices should surely have been raised to examine parallels with other instances of popular disaffection and indignation.

The hopes that were raised – and dashed – by the Arab Spring, and the implications of popular discontent as expressed in Syntagma Square (Athens) or Tahrir Square (Cairo) or in the rise of *Podemos* in Spain, seem to me to suggest that social, political and economic change does not come about in classrooms and seminars but in populations actively contesting current paradigms and contemporary mythologies, and in trying to formulate new visions, new practices and new social forces (see, for example, E. P. Thompson, 1963).

Funding

Until the 1980s, much DE was financed by organisations seeking support from their own constituencies (church congregations, trade union members, pub customers, sports clubs and community associations’ supporters, etc). In the 1990s, development NGOs concentrated efforts increasingly on DfID and Irish Aid. That led to a dependency on those two institutions and – following the dramatic decline in funding which set in after 2007/8 – those same development NGOs are increasingly desperate to diversify their funding for all types of development initiatives, and, once again, they allow themselves to believe successive government pronouncements to the effect that spending overseas has to be more important than spending in the UK or Ireland.

It would be really interesting to offer a consortium of development NGOs £1 million (or €1 million) to be spent only in agreed developing countries and designed to have maximum impact on the development situation there; and then to offer a different consortium the same amount of money to be spent wholly and only within Ireland and/or the UK and with the remit of generating maximum impact on the development situation in developing countries. Would ‘projects’ offering polio vaccinations, or

gender rights training, or disability mainstreaming, or tax collection improvement – in those developing countries – always and irrevocably offer poor people in poor countries better outcomes than monies spent on lobbying policy-makers in London, Dublin or Belfast, or on promoting fairer trading relationships through better monitoring of global supply chains, or on educating the public here on its global position, responsibilities and opportunities?

In December 2016, DfID will cease funding through its PPAs (Programme Partnership Agreements). The removal of these guarantees of unrestricted funding of development NGOs, provided a number of agreed outcomes are achieved, will inevitably hamper DE work. The sector thus needs to escape its dependency on UK and Irish government funding and seek instead revenue streams of its own. Fair Trade outlets, One World Shops, second hand bookshops, coffee shops and community centres need to reimagine activities that engage, inspire and challenge new audiences in new locations using new methods and new funding arrangements.

Management and coordination

There are perhaps some strong arguments against the DE sector having too formal a structure or too rigid a form of organisational control, since the flourishing of civil society does not require uniformity or single-mindedness of purpose. In the UK and Ireland, there have been three consistently important co-ordinating bodies – BOND, Dóchas and CADA. Each of these platforms is essentially an opportunity for individual development NGOs to share best practice, and to build collective strength among the development NGO community. For the DE sector, these respective collaborative associations have not really offered significant advantages. Indeed, their primary responsibility is not to development education per se and so there is little reason to expect them to deliver major benefits to the sector. In a world where DFID now has a budget upwards of £12 billion a year but fewer staff than in 2010, there is huge pressure to disburse monies in ever larger amounts in order to keep contract management operations within reasonably manageable limits. This means that the UK Alliance of National Networks

for International Development has become focused on ensuring that those monies are disbursed by member organisations and – increasingly – by coalitions and consortia of members.

So the DE sector articulates its specialist concerns through ‘trade organisations’ such as the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) and Think Global. In Ireland, IDEA has had some impressive successes in a number of areas. Colm Regan’s blog (2016) lists some of the strengths, some of the weaknesses and some of the challenges that need to be addressed. His principal conclusion is that the DE sector has lost its original vision and has, to some extent, allowed its pursuit of professionalisation and respectability to cloud its original aims of activism, social change and political engagement. Perhaps thirty or forty years ago the DE sector *was* too amateurish, hoping that zeal and enthusiasm alone would compensate for any lack of organisation, polish and efficiency. But in its drive towards good governance it has allowed professionalisation and what Regan calls the ‘academisation’ of DE to set in, much to the detriment of the sector and to those it aims to serve and support.

Perhaps what is required is a new constellation of partnerships, in which schools and educators link up with faith groups, trade unions, community groups, sports clubs, youth organisations, consumer groups, activists, local government organisations, disabled peoples’ organisations (DPOs) and others in order to capture new energies, perspectives and inspirations.

DE and the fight against global poverty and inequality

Development education has long been seen as a noble, morally-elevated endeavour whose right-mindedness shines through. It may be more helpful to see it as victim of its own niche role within an overall development sector that is itself increasingly compromised. Just as the trade mandate entered the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA’s) portfolio in 2011, so DfID’s own mandate has thrown development down to the third priority – after defending the departmental budget, and working with other Whitehall departments to

ensure that the UK establishes a new place in the world following the decision by the British people to leave the EU (DfID Alumni Association, 2016). In this fast-changing context, the DE sector needs to redefine its relationship to the wider development community and to communities across the world suffering from the failings of economic orthodoxy and political stasis.

Many people despise politics and politicians and prefer to stay in the morally clearer waters of DE, or fundraise for ‘worthy’ causes, or offer help in one-to-one settings such as child sponsorship, participation in gap-year or summer vacation development projects, etc. Just as buying Fair Trade is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for empowering workers in poor countries, so those individual initiatives are laudable and necessary, but they are not sufficient to effect systemic social change. Perhaps concentrating on the plight of the poor in Chile, Cameroon or Cambodia is more compelling than analysing the social problems of people in our local communities here in Ireland and the UK, but it is far from certain that we will thereby contribute more, or more effectively, to the global change that all communities need, in all parts of the world.

If we believe that all action for change must be circumspect, reasonable and tolerant, maybe we need to re-read Marcuse’s essay on *Repressive Tolerance* (1965), or Fanon’s *On Violence* (1971). Maybe we need to seek the advice of those who have already sloughed off colonial and other imperialist dominations. The Marxist notion of praxis – of practice informed by theory, and theory tempered by practical experience – may be relevant here: DE has become too complacent, too comfortable, too *bourgeois*, and needs a much stronger dose of activist political engagement. Marx noted in his *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845) that ‘Philosophers have hitherto only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it’. Development education in Ireland and the UK has perhaps achieved a pass mark in understanding the global community, but has failed so far to mobilise for a more just international polity.

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