Editorial

FINDING THE 'HISTORICALLY POSSIBLE': CONTEXTS, LIMITS AND POSSIBILITIES IN DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

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"Throughout history one does what is historically possible and not what one would want to do" (Freire, 1985: 171).

One of the characteristics of development education (DE) which makes it a complex and multi-layered area of education is that the contexts it engages with are multiple, diverse and sometimes contradictory. This diversity is evident in the range of target groups and sectors with which DE programmes engage and the multiplicity of settings in which DE occurs, settings which range from the high visibility of public billboards to the intimacy of classrooms, from settings that are constrained by the demands of state curricula to those that are premised on the more open spaces of informal education. Development education can also be differentiated by its providers (non-governmental organisations [NGOs]/formal education), its sources of funding and by its geographical location, all of which can serve to limit or expand its possibilities, depending on how it is defined and what its purpose is perceived to be. Given this level of differentiation, it is perhaps not surprising that questions have been raised regarding its coherence with its core mission in different contexts. Some have questioned whether the project of education for transformation which lies at the heart of development education, can retain its integrity in the context of a dominant and all-pervasive neoliberalism (Bryan, 2011; Selby and Kagawa, 2014). Does the policy environment in education, for example, which is seen as increasingly instrumentalist, inevitably compromise DE as a radical, political project? Does dependence on state funding inexorably lead to the individualisation and domestication of the concept of social action in development education contexts? McCloskey (2014: 6) suggests that while state agencies might

envision social action as the desirable outcome of DE, it is likely to be conceptualised as individualised consumer-oriented responses such as fair trade rather than the potentially radical responses envisaged by Freirean pedagogy.

Others have questioned whether NGOs themselves are unavoidably compromised by the environments in which they operate, particularly in relation to their capacity to critique the role of transnational corporations (TNCs). In this issue of *Policy & Practice*, Lynda Sullivan traces the convergence of the neoliberal agenda of the Peruvian state and the interests of TNCs, and demonstrates how the cynical co-option of development discourse to support modernisation recasts vulnerable communities fighting for their rights as impediments to national economic progress. In an earlier issue of *Policy & Practice,* Andy Egan forcefully argued the need for DE to 'question and challenge the hegemony of corporate power' (2011: 12). Yet, as David Monk suggests, also in this issue, when it comes to challenging corporate power, are NGOs silenced by their dependence on state funding? Like Egan, Monk asserts the need for development education to engage with the pervasive influence of corporations on the lives of people, including the power of corporations to determine state policy through close cooperation with governments and through mechanisms such as international trade agreements.

Given its counterhegemonic and transformative potential, development education inevitably works within environments that are in many ways hostile to its underpinning philosophy, regardless of whether it is at the level of public awareness or as part of formal and informal education. Within formal education settings, bringing development education closer to the mainstream involves negotiating the constraints imposed by formal curricula and by state agendas around national priorities and accountability at all levels of education. Can development education maintain its critical stance and its focus on transformative social action in the light of such constraints? Or is this asking the wrong question? Freire's argument that rather than give in to 'annihilating pessimism' where contexts are hostile,

educators should do 'what is historically possible' is relevant here. Although education cannot be seen as 'independent from the power that produces it', educators should seek to reach their goals 'according to the concrete historical conditions under which they live' (1980: 170-171). Bourn takes a similar view, and argues that development educators should seek to identify and maximise the possibilities for DE in any given learning environment. DE he argues 'is not about identifying one universal approach but about clarifying what is feasible and possible' (2014: 61). Part of that analysis and clarification includes ongoing critical reflection on development education itself and the assumptions that underpin its practice, along with analysis of the constraints, pedagogical challenges and opportunities which different contexts present.

There are a number of articles within this issue of *Policy & Practice* that demonstrate the 'possible' and illustrate what can happen when development education seeks to leverage the opportunities presented by the system. Likewise, opportunities to extend and deepen our understanding of development education are evident across the issue but explicitly addressed in the Focus section where articles by Vanessa Andreotti and David Monk and by Murphy, Ozawa-de Silva and Winskell present a range of theoretical perspectives informed by context and practice.

In the first Focus article in this issue, 'Critical Literacy: Theories and Practices in Development Education', Vanessa de Oliveira Andreotti engages in a conscious process of theory building, drawing on her earlier work in critical literacy to extend the conceptual map of how we understand development education. In the first half of the article, de Oliveira Andreotti uses examples from her work to illustrate how critical literacy can enable students to engage with issues in ways that are open to a range of possibilities, challenge dominant and/or fixed narratives and bring to the surface difficult questions relating to historical and ongoing complicity in perpetuating systems of oppression and inequality. The author builds on her earlier analysis of the distinction between 'soft' and 'critical' approaches to global citizenship, which hinged on whether the approach went beyond the

humanistic towards a justice-oriented perspective and the recognition of 'complicity in harm'. Premised on the power of critical literacy to unearth the root narratives that underpin collective, individual or systemic ideologies, assumptions and worldviews, Andreotti presents a 'new conceptual cartography' which builds on that earlier analysis. Emphasising that mapping in itself is not a neutral exercise, de Oliveira Andreotti deconstructs the root narratives of four orientations: technicist instrumentalist; liberal humanist; critical and postcritical and 'other' narratives of society, education, development and diversity. De Oliveira Andreotti argues that the first three, in different ways, present routes towards social change through social engineering premised respectively on human capital theory, human capabilities and social transformation. With their origins in the ideational and material bases of European movements such as the Enlightenment, colonialism and anti-colonialism, these anthropocentric narratives represent the 'frames of reference we have become used to'. The author illustrates the fourth orientation, that of 'Others', through presenting the principles underpinning the work of the global education centre in the Peruvian village of Pincheq and argues that this fourth orientation offers a plurality of narratives which are 'non-anthropocentric, non-teleological, non-dialectical, non-universal and non-Cartesian'.

The second article in the Focus section, 'Introducing Corporate Power to the Global Education Discourse', by David Monk, discusses the need for critical development education to unveil the exercise of power by corporations and the silencing of critique by governments, and calls on educators to engage in action as a necessary component of praxis. Monk's analysis draws on the work of Egan (2012) to address the Canadian context. Locating his work within a critical frame, he outlines key features of the dominant ideology of neoliberalism and argues that the concentration of power in corporate hands enables TNCs to hold economies to ransom. Referencing human rights violations and environmental damage attributed to Canadian mining corporations, examples are presented which illustrate how the work of NGOs and state aid agencies can be subsumed by the corporate agenda. Monk concludes by arguing that development educators need to

embrace both critique and action, marrying critical engagement with corporate power with grassroots action 'completing the link between critical awareness and action to catalyse change in this world'.

In the final article in the Focus section, 'Towards Compassionate Global Citizenship: Educating the Heart through Development Education and Cognitively-based Compassion Training', Caroline Murphy, Brendan Ozawa-de Silva and Michael Winskell argue that global citizenship requires both the capacity to engage critically with the world and a level of emotional literacy that enables compassionate action while supporting resilience in the face of injustice. The article focuses specifically on the TIDAL programme (Teachers in Development and Learning) developed by the NGO, Children in Crossfire (CIC), which seeks to integrate Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) with DE through a pedagogy entitled 'Educating the Heart for Compassionate Global Citizenship'. Inspired by the philosophy of the Dalai Lama and, in particular, by his understanding of the role of compassion in overcoming self-interest and promoting altruism, CIC seeks to explore whether compassion, if developed intentionally, and integrated with critical DE, will support the development of a more proactive global citizenship. The authors disregard the idea that an appeal to compassion suggests a voluntaristic approach to world poverty, i.e. that its solution is dependent on changing the values and attitudes of individuals and hence their actions. Recognising the structural and political genesis of global inequality they argue instead for an approach which sees the kind of values and attitudinal change that a programme in emotional literacy would support interacting with the critical literacy developed through DE to develop 'compassionate global citizen[s]'. Murphy and colleagues distinguish between the type of compassion developed through CBCT and a more common-sense understanding of compassion, which could be seen as 'pity'. They argue that CBCT cultivates a compassion that is 'unbiased', 'engaged' and 'built on inner strength and critical thinking', ultimately motivating the global citizen to act against injustice and inequality rather than accept it.

The Perspectives section presents a range of articles, the first three of which provide good examples of the kinds of opportunities presented from within the system to open new spaces for engagement with global justice issues. The final article of the section offers a compelling case study which anchors a number of the themes raised elsewhere in the issue in the lived realities of people of the Cajamarca region of Peru, including the power of transnational corporations and neoliberal economic agendas to determine those realities and the politics of knowledge, language and signification.

In her article 'Integrating Development Education into Business Studies: The Outcomes of a Consultative Study', Siobhán McGee reports on an initiative which seeks to build awareness of African business and knowledge of African economies among students studying business at third level in Ireland with a view to ensuring that future business leaders understand how their choices can impede or support poverty reduction in developing countries. The initiative arose in response to a perceived need to counter bias against African suppliers and products on the part of buyers and suppliers which was identified by the social enterprise group Value Added in Africa (VAA). In the article, McGee presents the findings of an initial study undertaken by VAA which prompted an intervention called the Proudly Made in Africa Fellowship in Business and Development, developed in partnership with the School of Business in UCD to support the integration of DE into business education programmes. While some resistance is evident from within business education to the need for a development focus, early evidence suggests that the initiative is gaining ground, with students showing a growing interest in the area.

Access to appropriate resources has been identified as a key issue in the integration of DE across formal education and the creation of good and appropriate resources provides an important pathway of influence for DE. In 'Twelve Years in the Making: An Audit of Irish Development Education Resources', Tony Daly and Ciara Regan present key findings from the first systematic review of DE resources in Ireland commissioned by Irish Aid. In addition to identifying 236 resources, the audit categorised them by sector

and thematically; this allowed for the identification of gaps in provision, such as the dearth of resources available for the primary sector in general and for Irish medium education. The findings also indicate the continued reliance on NGOs for resource development, many of which are produced primarily for advocacy and fundraising rather than specifically for educational settings. As Daly and Regan indicate, this is an initial audit which needs further and ongoing development. Nonetheless, it identifies gaps in provision and opportunities for development. Studies such as those by Murphy (2014) and Tallon and McGregor (2014) suggest that fundraising materials created by NGOs can reinforce rather than challenge stereotypes relating to the global South, suggesting the need for greater involvement of development educators working in the education sector in the creation of resources. In addition, consistent with findings elsewhere, studies suggest that Irish children internalise prejudice against the other and stereotypical views of life in the global South from an early age (Connolly, Smith and Kelly, 2002; Ruane et al., 2010); more emphasis on developing age appropriate resources for younger children would therefore seem to be advisable.

In 'Opening Eyes and Minds: Inspiring, Educating and Engaging Third Level Students in Global Citizenship', Joanne Malone, Gráinne Carley and Meliosa Bracken present an evaluation of the global citizenship programme developed for Irish third level students by Suas, an NGO founded in 2002 by students committed to progressing a social justice agenda locally and globally. Informed by de Oliveira Andreotti's conceptualisation of critical literacy (2006) and premised on a critical global citizenship approach, the programme facilitates students to reflect on their own assumptions and complicity in perpetuating global inequality and to recognise the need for collective and individual action in ways that are accessible and take account of their interests. The findings suggest a strong demand from students for global citizenship education and support from the sector in general. There is compelling evidence that the programme is effective in building students' critical understanding, skills and knowledge and that students maintain their interest in development issues beyond the initial engagement. The article usefully outlines the evaluation approaches and tools developed by the

researchers. While Malone et al. acknowledge the complexity of capturing the changes in student learning that occurred on foot of the programme, they argue that a robust process to monitor and evaluate the programme on an ongoing basis is essential.

In the Perspectives article, 'Getting to the Bottom of Extractive Capitalism: A Case Study of Open Pit Mining in Cajamarca, Peru', the power of corporations to influence state policy explored by David Monk is compellingly revealed in Lynda Sullivan's cogent case study of one community's struggle against open pit mining in Peru. Sullivan's case study focuses on the resistance of local communities to the plans of the Yanacocha mining TNC to implement the Minas Conga project in the region of Cajamarca. Described by Sullivan as a 'mega mining project', the Conga project has received government approval despite its potential to inflict catastrophic damage on key water sources. Sullivan's case study outlines the extent to which the Peruvian state and its agencies have acted to suppress dissent through enacting laws which limit the right to protest and through using the police and the courts as coercive forces, resulting in violence against protesters and their incarceration on spurious charges. Even more sinister is the use of the media for pro-mining propaganda and the co-option by the state and by advocates of mining of the language of development. Protesting communities are characterised as anti-progress and as holding back the economic development of Peru. As Sullivan points out, this identification of neoliberalism with development devalues the knowledge and the environmental values embedded in traditional Andean ways of living and recasts social rights as obstacles to progress. The author argues that such cases can be the stimulus for global activism, an activism that recognises the interdependence of global communities and the power of ethical consumerism in the fight against extractive capitalism. Sullivan argues also that case studies such as this can be powerful sources for development educators to draw on to exemplify the power relations that underpin global inequalities.

Finally, Stephen McCloskey's Viewpoint article, 'Foodbanks are an Important Barometer of Contemporary Poverty: Development Educators Should Take Notice', returns to a question which has been raised repeatedly since the onset of the current global economic crisis, that is whether and how DE should engage with local manifestations of structural inequality and poverty (see, for example, Issue 14 of Policy and Practice). McCloskey addresses the phenomenon of foodbanks as a response to the financial crisis in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. The foodbank, he notes, has a long history rooted in the voluntarism of civil society. In the current context, while governments in both jurisdictions have heralded the advent of economic recovery, the continued need for foodbanks demonstrate the ever-increasing gap between those who benefit from the existing economic order and those who struggle to survive in a climate of benefit sanctions, reductions in family budgets, rising debt and the persistence of low paid jobs. McCloskey argues that foodbanks, which represent 'an important element in the narrative of contemporary poverty', provide an opportunity for development educators to challenge current models of economic growth and development and suggest alternatives.

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