Editorial

REFLECTIONS AND PROJECTIONS: POLICY AND PRACTICE TEN YEARS ON

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This is the twentieth issue of Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review which is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year. The journal was launched in 2005 as part of a capacity-building initiative from the Centre for Global Education designed to address some perceived deficits in communications, practice and strategic thinking within the development education (DE) sector in the island of Ireland. These deficits were identified in research by Kenny and O’Malley in 2002 and the journal, by way of a response, aimed to:

“[C]elebrate and promote existing good practice in global education, inform the work of practitioners in development education and related adjectival education organisations, and to promote global education within the statutory education sector in Ireland” (http://www.developmenteducationreview.com/).

In a comparatively small and somewhat fragmented sector both within Ireland and also in the context of countries across Europe, North America and the global South, Policy and Practice has played an important role in facilitating dialogical exchange between DE practitioners. An independent evaluation of the journal carried out by Community Change in 2012 found that it has played ‘a significant role in building the academic credibility and respectability of Development Education across Ireland’. And, in a global context, the journal web site has attained a substantial, geographically spread readership of more than 100,000 visitors (Google Analytics, 2014) in each of the last two years suggesting that DE is a burgeoning sector with an international audience. This is the result of an open access publishing format.
and high quality contributions to the journal on a range of aspects of DE policy and practice.

To mark this special issue, we decided to revisit the journal’s first theme, ‘Reflections and Projections’, to reflect on the rich seam of debate that has resulted from ten years of Policy and Practice. We reflect on the dominant development discourses that have informed the conversations between authors over the past decade. The most influential discussions include the ‘soft versus critical’ analysis of global citizenship education presented by Andreotti in 2006. This article has framed important discussions on how development education has responded to the interconnected global challenges of neoliberalism and environmental sustainability. There has been a vibrant debate about how we engage with political power and retain the radical origins and transformative goals of development education. Reflecting on what has been important for our emerging development education community over the past decade, we consider what hindsights and insights we can distil. We consider some of the challenges before thinking through some of the key upcoming opportunities for development education from both policy and practice perspectives.

**Development education discourses**

A recurring theme in *Policy and Practice* over the past decade, but particularly in the aftermath of the 2008 international financial crisis, has concerned the role of DE in the global North. DE has traditionally been preoccupied with poverty and inequality in the global South but the crisis in capitalism has resulted in recession, mass unemployment and cuts to public services in Europe and North America. Inequality has deepened on a global scale and been attended by an increasing concentration of wealth in fewer hands. An Oxfam report published in January 2015 shows that a small elite (1 percent) controls nearly as much wealth as the bottom 50 percent of the world’s population (Oxfam, 2015: 2). Moreover, if this trend continues, the top 1 percent will have more wealth than the remaining 99 percent in just two years (ibid). Thomas Piketty’s (2014) analysis of the accumulation and distribution of capital argues that the main driver of inequality – the tendency
of returns on capital to exceed the rate of economic growth – threatens to generate extreme inequalities and undermine democratic values. Governments and non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs) alike agree that development education should contribute to public debate and understanding of the causes of social and economic inequality, locally and globally. Irish Aid, for example, states that the aim of DE is ‘to deepen understanding of global poverty and encourage people towards action for a more just and equal world’ (2007: 6). A similar approach to DE is advocated by the Development Awareness Raising and Education (DARE) Forum which represents development NGOs across the European Union. However, the DARE Forum emphasises the role of the individual rather than collective responses to inequality and injustice when it suggests that the role of DE is to enable us:

“to move from basic awareness of international development priorities and sustainable human development, through understanding of the causes and effects of global issues to personal involvement and informed actions” (DARE, 2004)

Whilst there is apparent agreement across society on the need for awareness raising and public action on development issues, a recurring question for the sector is to what extent should this learning and action focus on transformative agendas seeking alternatives to the neoliberal model of economic growth that has created current levels of extreme inequality? Or, alternatively, should it seek accommodation and traction within existing neoliberal structures and institutions? These contrasting approaches were best exemplified in a Policy and Practice exchange between David Selby & Fumiyo Kagawa and Douglas Bourn in 2011. The former asked if DE and education for sustainable development (ESD) were ‘in danger of striking a Faustian bargain so as to achieve some purchase and influence over educational directions, a bargain that brings short-term gains at the expense of transformative goals?’ (2011: 15). Given their radical origins and remit for social change, Selby and Kagawa asked if there were signs within DE and ESD:
“of a compromising of values and trimming of original intentions and visions happening in the light of the global marketplace? And, if so, is that happening by commission, by oversight borne of sleeping immersion in current orthodoxies, or by studied omission?” (ibid: 18).

In reviewing several policy and research documents published by prominent players in the DE sector in Europe, including the Development Education Research Centre, Selby & Kagawa found that ‘explicit attention to issues of economic growth, neo-liberal globalisation and consumerism’ were ‘barely mentioned, let alone problematised’ (ibid: 19). In response, Bourn agreed that there was a lack of critical engagement with economic agendas in the NGO sector but argued that ‘there is a tendency to criticise without analysing why this is the case or reflecting on the skills and expertise within the development education communities of practice’ (2011: 12). Bourn urges:

“a constructivist approach to development education that tailors its social and educational interventions to the particular pedagogical perspectives being addressed. He suggests that within the sector there needs to be greater debate and research on how development education approaches can be relevant and most effective” (ibid: 11).

Rather than regarding DE as a ‘monolithic approach’ to education, Bourn argues that it is ‘a pedagogy that opens minds to question, consider, reflect and above all challenge viewpoints about the wider world and to identify different ways to critique them’ (ibid: 26). The debate between the ‘constructivist’ approach to DE articulated by Bourn and ‘transformative’ approach advocated by Selby and Kagawa has resonated in a series of articles on DE and sustainability which we turn to next.

**Development education and sustainability**

The question of sustainability and DE’s relationship with other ‘adjectival’ educations such as ESD, education for sustainability (EfS) and environment education (EE) has regularly surfaced in *Policy and Practice* over the past decade. In 2008, the journal devoted an entire issue to ‘Education for
Sustainable Development’ which raised the sometimes testy question of how DE fits into the sustainability agenda. Given their shared values, methodologies and common sustainability agenda, DE and EE should be natural partners but as Hogan and Tormey highlight, there were contests between DE and EE actors over the ownership of the ES) agenda in the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) planning process undertaken by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). This dispute developed into an ‘ideological battle for the soul and political capital of the ESD concept’ (Hogan and Tormey, 2008: 7) and while an accommodation was found, the relationship remains ‘a source of confusion and apprehension for advocates and professionals in the field’ (ibid: 6). As the origins of this dispute were more territorial than ideological, the two sectors may find common cause in future initiatives, not least in their efforts to combat climate change.

Ros Wade argued that the urgency of the climate justice agenda may, in fact, demand a new paradigm of education to challenge the unsustainable, high carbon patterns of consumption that have characterised the era of economic globalisation. She argues for the adoption of EfS, rather than the more ‘mainstream’ ESD as providing the critical thinking skills necessary ‘to critique the very Western-dominated discourse on development and to reflect an openness to alternative perspectives and radical viewpoints encompassed in education for sustainability’ (2008: 32). Wade sees EfS as offering wholesale change rather ‘than a modification of the existing paradigm’. EfS, she suggests, ‘could be regarded as possessing both the process towards and the vision of sustainability’ (ibid). This invites the question as to what extent DE will support personal and collective activism toward more sustainable and socially responsible lifestyles? Certainly, the scale of the climate change crisis seems to call for more radical measures and enforceable agreements than those adopted to date. According to the development agency CAFOD (2015), the next twenty years will see 200 million people placed at risk of hunger if the planetary rise in temperature falls between 2-3 degrees. The majority of those most vulnerable to food and water shortages are living in the global South with Trócaire (2015) estimating...
that ‘two thirds of the world’s population (5.4 billion people) are likely to experience some kind of water stress’ by 2025.

The politics of development education
The theoretical roots of DE lie in the pedagogy of Paulo Freire (1972) who regarded education as a socially transformative, empowering process both at an individual level and in wider society. He regarded education as a means toward altering unfair and exploitative social, cultural and economic relations through practice that combined reflection, analysis, debate and action. One of the challenges for development educators in the industrialised world over the past forty years, has been implementing Freire’s radical conception of education within contemporary practice. A recurring theme in the strands of Policy and Practice’s archive has been the contrasting approaches to DE. We have, for example, the constructivist versus transformative approach to development discourse, the EfS versus ESD approach to sustainability, and the soft versus critical approach to citizenship education. According to Andreotti, ‘understanding global issues often requires learners to examine a complex web of cultural and material processes and contexts on local and global levels’ (2006: 40). This requires the ‘development of skills of critical engagement and reflexivity: the analysis and critique of the relationships among perspectives, language, power, social groups and social practices by the learners’ [italics in original] (ibid: 49). By contrast, soft global education, lacking critical engagement, is more likely to tell learners what to think or do, perpetuate myths, and reproduce civilising ‘power relations’ with the global South.

Audrey Bryan asked if the mainstreaming of development education through government funding and policy support had resulted in a ‘declawing’ of a sector ‘stripped of its radical underpinnings’ (2011: 1). Storey offered evidence of this ‘declawing’ in an Irish context when he drew attention to the muted response from the development non-governmental sector to the intervention in Ireland by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2010 following the spectacular collapse of the ‘Celtic Tiger’ economy post-2008. Given the IMF’s controversial and, some would suggest
destructive, role in implementing structural adjustment programmes in developing countries (see for example Klein, 2008), Storey argued that ‘the development sector was well placed to provide some analysis and critique of the IMF’ (2011: 81). Essentially Bryan, Storey and other contributors to the journal (Egan, 2012; Hilary, 2013; Kirby, 2012; McCloskey, 2011) have argued that key stakeholders in the development sector should do more to connect the local to the global and use their knowledge of the global South and development issues to inform their activities in the global North. Rather than dodging debates on domestic policy issues, development NGOs should recognise that many industrialised societies are confronting similar austerity policies to those that have been foisted on many parts of the global South from the 1970s onward. As John Hilary suggested, the current crisis of capitalism, austerity and inequality offers a unique opportunity ‘to join up domestic struggles with those in other parts of the world’ (2013: 11).

Development education’s promises and possible directions
Having looked retrospectively at the debates that have taken place in the pages of this journal over the past twenty issues, we now turn to the themes and prospects that are likely to be important and to consider upcoming opportunities to enhance development education practice and the environment in which it operates. The debates so far mark out some of the challenges that contributors have identified, and some of these concern the basic identity and purpose of development education itself. In the background lurks a foundational question concerning the ethical, and not just practical, ambitions of development education which are rooted in its radical and transformative promise. Can development education live up to its radical promise of transformation for social justice, given a context where professional practice may be swimming upstream against powerful mainstream currents of neoliberal globalisation which are powerfully pushing the economics, culture and politics of polarisation.

The articles in this decennial issue offer a wealth of opportunities to progress a critically productive conversation about the directions development policy and practice may take in the next decade. Doug Bourn’s
reflections on his own, very central, work on the UK context (2015) maps the movement of development education from the margins to the mainstream. A review of his latest book appears in this issue, discussing his insights and contribution in greater detail. Bourn suggests that development education’s preoccupations have changed over time, from organisational efforts to define a community of practice, to the emergence of a substantive body of pedagogical work oriented towards global social justice. A mainstream of development education practice has definitely emerged, concentrating on formal settings, professionalisation and creating resources, largely focused on teacher education. Alongside, runs a more diffuse and radical current which is interested in approaching the issues of social justice and transformation by challenging dominant framings and perspectives on development and poverty. There is a productive, but sometimes difficult tension between these streams. The resources, power and influence that came with ‘mainstreaming’ allowed development education to reach the ‘high point’ of state and public support which coincided with the establishment of this journal and enabled development education to develop strategically as a field, in a networked way across Europe. Bergin’s Perspectives article discusses the UNIDEV project as a good example of a productive mainstream effort to ‘build capacity’ between old and new European member states, answering to the EU agenda of ‘Policy Coherence for Development’ across Europe.

**Critical research and relevance**

One of the express objectives of this journal is to foster the role of independent and critical research and establish its relevance to development education in policy and practice. Critical research is important to illuminate the climate and context that development education works within. This is essential to enable practitioners identify, and choose between different perspectives. The point of critical capacity is to enable people to understand the dominant and oppressive ways of thinking which lie at the roots of poverty and injustice, so they can stop or prevent the reproduction of unjust structures. Poverty and injustice are not only problems of economic deprivation, but are related to fundamentally inequitable and unjust ways of knowing, thinking, perceiving and representing. Dillon’s review of
attitudinal surveys in Ireland concludes that, despite continual references to critical thinking, development education in practice is still likely to reflect patronising and conventionally modernising mindsets. Dillon and Bourn both point to the potential of critical and reflective professional practice to undo and go beyond this problem. Donor and public interest in development education may have peaked, in Bourn’s analysis, but the professional capabilities of practitioners may provide an alternative focus, as does the area of non-formal adult learning. In the case of UNIDEV, what was considered to be ‘valuable learning’ drew on a range of resistant and alternative perspectives from the grassroots sector, and took on global and post-development perspectives that countered the patronising mainstream ‘modernising’ view that Dillon finds deficient.

**Bypassing the impact trap**

Bourn’s crucial insight for the DE field is that it needs to move beyond the expectation that it should work primarily as an adjunct to poverty reduction, as defined by the development mainstream. This expectation creates vulnerabilities for development education, as it sets up a demand to demonstrate easy or direct causal links between development education and the global goal of ‘poverty reduction’. In an era where global development efforts are dominated by an ‘impact agenda’ that favours quick and easy wins, the development education sector may be opening itself to criticism as a less-than-effective tool for reducing poverty. Bourn’s insight highlights intrinsic tensions and choices within development education – should it be seen primarily as a ‘development’ intervention or an ‘educational’ intervention? Despite over half a century of critique and proffered alternatives, the ‘development’ mainstream has not succeeded in escaping its own narrow and ambivalent understandings of ‘economic development’, poverty and progress. ‘Education’ has similarly narrowed, not widened in scope. Education has come under increasing global pressure to define itself in terms of a direct instrumental economic role, and to relate its role to narrow and generalised understandings of ‘poverty alleviation’. However, direct causal links between education and economic outcomes are difficult to establish and evidence. For development educators, it may be wise to push
the horizon of expectations outwards, toward fundamental questions about education and poverty, and to reject simplistic assumptions about how education relates to poverty or global justice from the outset. Development educators have the possibility of defending a vision of ‘development’ that strives for education, wellbeing and equality as social goods or human rights that people value, and should not be deprived of, in their own right.

Nearly all the contributors to this issue highlight the importance of maintaining and increasing research in development education and for a broader integration of the academic contribution. Bourn notes that as development education expanded in the years up to 2005, development education practitioners increased in confidence as they had strong support from policymakers in many countries. However, uncertainty followed with respect to the ‘impact’ of what they were doing. The academic research that came out of this period helped to clarify basic assumptions. For example, a direct relationship between development education and attitudinal change about poverty and development could not be established. The learning for the development education sector was that ‘global learning’ should be treated as a broader and independently valuable goal that should not be reduced to the instrumental goals of effective advocacy, awareness raising, or public communication about development goals. Alasuutari and Andreotti’s research paper critically examines ideas of ‘efficiency’ in Zambian-Nordic educational development partnerships, drawing on a combination of political economy and postcolonial critiques. Their critical evaluation leads them to demand that critical educational approaches challenge hegemonic, ethnocentric and paternalistic ways of thinking. They ask for education itself to be re-thought, to support ethical and self-reflexive forms of North-South partnership, using Andreotti’s HEADSUP tool to test and challenge the ‘dominant single story of development’. They call for new educational partnerships to develop self-reflexivity, grounded in a fuller awareness of the politics and historicity of knowledge production, and for a willingness to share authorship and ownership of goals, processes and outcomes. The shared goal of ‘development’ is not the efficient achievement of an outcome...
set by one party, for another to comply with. Instead it is an ethical imperative to trust, take risks and ‘work without guarantees’.

**Deparochialising development education**

Simon Eten makes a timely contribution that takes this critique one step further and in a practical manner that de-parochialises the development education imaginary. He argues that a more radical conception of development education practice is desirable from an African perspective because it supports more engaged public activism on issues underpinning poverty and injustice locally and globally. His contribution brings to mind O’Carroll’s critique of Ireland’s own domestic ‘culture lag’ and democratic deficit. O’Carroll identifies corporatism and shared culture as factors contributing to a generalised failure to realise the extent to which institutions co-opt, legitimate the status quo and neutralise critical efforts to develop alternative frameworks for addressing social problems (2002: 13). He is biting particularly critical about the institutional imperative to control and the way consensus and cohesion have been achieved at the cost of a sense of exclusion. Access to power and resources is restricted, even amongst the ‘organized public’ of the community development sector. O’Carroll’s main criticism is that Irish institutions have denied wider Irish society the possibility of airing communal differences in the public sphere, and denied community on the ground the recognition that it needs to remain vital and authentic. Eten points to very similar limitations posed by African notions of national citizenship that focus only on engendering support for national institutions and policies, while ignoring the development of critical thinking skills. In his view, this does not lead citizens to challenge poverty, because the latter requires ‘enhanced civic engagement’, including a critical, Freirean dimension and activism to build up a critical mass behind a transformative agenda. Eleanor Brown’s study of non-formal learning spaces in the UK and Spain examines the possibilities for adults and the wider public to engage in transformative learning around global injustice and their role as citizens and consumers and points to the potential to learn from international comparisons.
‘Once in a generation’ opportunities

Lappalainen’s useful article identifies a ‘once in a lifetime (or at least in a generation) opportunity’ for practitioners of development education, global citizenship and education for sustainable development alike to stay, and move higher up, in the global policy agenda by taking part in the goal-setting process leading to a new global development consensus for the post-2015 era. This will set the framework for understanding and engaging in development and education activities for the next decade or more. However, the inclusion of development education and global citizenship is not a given and the opportunities may be missed unless there is active support and advocacy from a wide constituency of stakeholders. Active support requires critical mass to be built across the development education sector, advocating common goals such as sustainability and global citizenship for all. The global education agenda is a crowded one and critical, justice or values-based priorities will be in competition with powerful mainstream agendas addressing rather technical frames of reference like ‘quality’ or ‘effectiveness’, monitoring, and financing. A key strategic proposal for the development education sector is to build shared positions based on a properly global understanding of universality, transcending the default North/South or ‘developed’/‘developing’ binaries. A common framework will establish common understanding and obligations across all countries to address issues like climate change, inequality, (in)tolerance, growth, and social development, by re-grounding the global economy in the twin prerequisites of ecology and social justice based on respect for life. Lappalainen notes that this represents a big change in mindset, and perhaps a big change is necessary to re-orient society and education – not seeking to reaffirm the presently unequal and unsustainable society that we already have, but to strive for a democratic and eco-social civilisation that foregrounds wellbeing.

Michael Doorly’s Perspectives piece asks whether the development education ‘sector’ is any closer to ‘finishing the job’ identified by the 2002 Kenny and O’Malley report on development education in Ireland. What has happened in the meantime is that the ‘sector’ has broadened, and the ‘job’ has transformed as mainstreaming offered new opportunities and new
possibilities. The sector has grown more global, critical, reflexive and professionalised and a less parochial. It still has not answered the question that makes Doorly weep – ‘what is development education?’, but this is because the changing landscape has unsettled the consensus and changed the frame of reference. The expectation of simply achieving a linear developmental trajectory has been replaced by a more critical questioning of the development consensus and the need for new and de-parochialised frames of reference. In practical terms, the ground has also shifted from Kenny and O’Malley’s initial assumptions that development education can be almost exclusively identified with the NGO sector as the development education sector has opened up and broadened to overlap with a range of global citizenship and global learning efforts, while the NGO sector has partially withdrawn, leaving development education up to new actors and initiatives. Non-formal and public education, ‘adjectival educations’, the formal education sector, research, educationalists, youth and broad social movements have all moved within the ambit and definition of the ‘sector’.

The contributions demonstrate that declining state and even NGO support for development education and the challenge of difficult questions about its impact on global poverty do not necessarily mean that development education is declining in public relevance, or that it has no impact on global justice and poverty. It is increasingly recognised that such impacts are mediated by critical questions about the nature of the development and education sectors themselves and what relevance critique, transformation, learning and justice have in society more broadly. These questions have become more salient as a variety of social forces begin to ‘occupy’ the public sphere, to question given models of economic recovery or development and to advance alternative projects of transformative learning and democratic participation. Less funding and a narrow concern with ‘impact’ have not resulted in a narrowing of development education’s content or constituency, as Bourn’s research and reflection shows that the sector is gradually adapting and transforming. In the broader domains of education and development, attention has turned to an agenda of ‘quality education’, yet the question of how such ‘quality education’ contributes to poverty reduction and global
justice remains wide open as a research question that begs conceptual, empirical and practical attention. Looking back at ten years of Policy and Practice, and at the contributions in this tenth anniversary volume, we can take heart that the development education is itself developing and engaging in forms of global learning. We very much look forward to engaging in the next ten years of critical dialogue and conversation and to documenting the next transformations of development education in concept, policy and practice.

References


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