REVIEWING DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF NON-CURRICULAR DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION RESOURCES IN IRELAND

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Introduction

This article considers how a selection of Irish development education (DE) resources work toward increasing understanding of development in the context of public discourses, which are generally informed by media coverage of disaster relief and the fundraising campaigns of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The study is based on a discourse analysis of a sample of resources produced for young people of secondary school age in Ireland. It aims to examine these texts as tools that transform understanding of development issues and our roles in relation to them, and to make an assessment of their approach, style and components.

The analytical approach centres on the concept of two categories of discourse on development, herein labelled as popular discourse and non-popular discourse. The popular discourse is the general public discourse, mainly involving basic engagement which is usually based on ideas of charity and humanitarianism (Simpson, 2004; Smith and Yamacopulos, 2004). The *non*-popular discourse (as opposed to *un*popular) is more refined and informed, and is justice-based involving action for change. Although these discourses are a dichotomy, they are not necessarily in conflict. It is more helpful to see them as different levels of understanding of development.

With its aim of improving understanding of development and encouraging active and informed citizenship (Irish Aid, 2006), DE can be seen as part of the non-popular discourse. It is, however, also a transformative tool which can bring individuals and societies from one level of understanding – the popular discourse – to the other, the non-popular discourse. DE has a 'transformative potential' (Osler, 1994: 3) which enables participants to move from simple awareness through deeper understanding to informed involvement (DARE Forum, 2004; KADE, 2005). This educational process is generally seen

to consist of the successive steps of informing, understanding, reflecting and acting (Irish Aid, 2006), with an emphasis on active learning and skills development (Osler, 1994; Tormey, 2003; McCloskey, 2009; Serrano, 2009). The study aims to consider how a selection of DE materials enable a learner to move from a general basic understanding of development issues to a more nuanced position, and in doing so, encourages positive lifestyle change on these issues. This survey is informed by arguments for the need for critical interpretation of DE (Dillon, 2003; Alldred, 2007; Ní Chasaide, 2009) and a need for further research into the DE texts and resources.

Development Discourses

The umbrella terms of a popular development discourse and a non-popular development discourse encompass a range of features and approaches that can be adopted in an analysis of DE texts. The ideas and trends central to the definition of the popular/non-popular discourses have been identified by several commentators.

Andreotti, in discussing global citizenship education, presents the concept of 'soft' and 'critical' global citizenship. Soft citizenship understands development as being largely about deficiencies – a lack of education, resources, and so on – which can be addressed through resource allocation. It is based on 'Responsibility FOR the other (or to teach the other)' (author's emphasis) (Andreotti, 2006: 47). Critical citizenship understands the problem to be rooted in complex structures, power relations and underdevelopment. It is based on 'Responsibility TOWARDS the other (or to learn with the other)' (ibid.) and involves individuals analysing their own position and participating in changing structures and power relations in their contexts. The value of Andreotti's concept in the study of DE is demonstrated by Bryan and Bracken's (2011) analytical use of it in their review of global citizenship education and DE in Irish post-primary education.

Comparably, Dobson (2005, 2006) uses the concept of cosmopolitanism to propose the categories of 'thin' and 'thick' cosmopolitan citizenship. Thin citizenship, in terms of development, involves compassion for the vulnerable, while leaving global asymmetries of power and wealth intact, whereas thick citizenship is defined by justice and attempts to influence larger

structural conditions. The distinction is rooted in the difference between moral obligations (relativistic or voluntary), which are easily withdrawn or altered, and political obligations (justice-based), which are more solid, involving the acceptance of responsibility and requiring action.

McCloskey discusses the distinction between awareness/fundraising campaigns and DE, with the former being motivated by action on a single-issue agenda or financial needs and the later involving a sustained engagement to explore the underpinning causes of poverty and inequality. While he highlights the important and productive role of these campaigns, he still stresses the 'pedagogical distance between the aims and outcomes of fundraising activities and development education' and the need to appreciate such (2009: 2).

An analysis of DE materials that uses the popular/non-popular discourse concept will need to focus on how the texts convey the characteristics of the non-popular discourse to an audience largely familiar with the popular discourse. To facilitate this analysis, the texts will be studied in terms of components of the DE educational process: the informing/understanding phase and the reflecting and action phase. The enrichment of knowledge and understandings needs to challenge simplistic models, explore the complexities of an interconnected world and adopt justice based arguments. This requires a focus on representations, the portrayal of a globalised world and the encouragement of identity and global citizenship. Learners also need to be given the means to reflect on these issues and supported in making lifestyle changes and taking action for change.

Discourse Analysis

The concept is applied using a critical discourse analysis of a sample of educational resources produced for secondary school students in Ireland. Discourse analysis involves the critical reading and interpretation of the texts which allows for the underlying arguments to be understood and studied (Hall, 1992; Nederveen Pieterse, 2000). In analysing the texts as tools to deepen knowledge about development, attention will be focused on the processes involved, looking at how the learner is presented with information and activities to help develop their understanding and facilitate action. It involves repeated critical readings and engagements with the materials, considering how the

information is presented, looking at the content thematically and examining the suggested actions and projects.

The primary aim of the study was to analyse a small sample of DE texts, rather than produce an exhaustive or truly representative study of the sector. A selection of texts from the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) linked to One World Week, Fairtrade Mark Ireland, and Trócaire and Concern (two prominent Irish development NGOs) were chosen. A number of factors influenced the selection of these texts. Firstly, they are specifically DE texts, rather than formal curriculum text books (for example a Geography or Home Economics text book) which may partially address development related themes (in this regard, this study is quite distinct from Bryan and Bracken, 2011). Second, they are produced by professional bodies with expertise in both DE and the topics being addressed and, third, they are sufficiently complex, given the target audience, to facilitate critical analysis. It should also be noted that this methodology focused entirely on the resources themselves and cannot speak to the way they may be used in an educational setting or how they are received therein.

Table 1: Development education resources examined in the research

Text	Organisation	Main Themes
Just Us or Justice	NYCI	Justice, Inequality, Legal Systems, Human Rights
All Work, No Play	NYCI	Child Labour, Social Justice, Human Rights, Exploitation
Making a Difference!	NYCI	Youth Participation, Voting, Poverty
Drinking from the Well	NYCI	Health, Social Justice, MDGs, AIDS

Fairtrade CSPE Pack	Fairtrade Mark Ireland	Fair Trade, Interdependence
Give Credit to the Poor	Concern and ILCU	Microcredit, Credit Unions
Combating Desertification	Concern	Desertification, Environment, Agriculture, Indigenous Culture
A Seat at the Table	Trócaire	Poverty, Global Inequality, Marginalisation
Bread and Bombs	Trócaire	War in Afghanistan, Peace, Media, Prayer

As stated, the analysis centred on elements of the informing/understanding phase (representations, globalised world and identity and global citizenship) and the reflecting/action phase (the application of these concepts). The examination of the texts as tools for creating understanding considered: how they present a more realistic and complete picture of development; how they increasingly convey the interdependent and interconnected nature of the world; and how the skills and attributes of global citizens are shaped. While the reading of the reflecting/action phase considered how the texts enabled the learner to apply what they learned in the provision of guidelines and examples of activities and lifestyle choices, the examination of this latter component was entirely discourse-based.

Survey of Texts

Representation

The texts generally have stimulating and appealing styles, with attractive and contemporary presentation, good illustrations and images, and some have accompanying DVDs or web resources. Images and illustrations are used to support and clarify the text. In a book titled *All Work, No Play* (NYCI, 2001), participants are given photos of children engaged in labour and are asked to imagine being in their position, while *A Seat at the Table* (Trócaire, 2010) has accompanying photos and information on the work the agency is doing to reduce poverty.

There is evidence of the materials being influenced by multiple voices, which shows differing perspectives, highlights common issues and encourages non-hierarchical approaches. Contributions from Southern-based individuals and organisations, and from minority groups in Ireland inform many of the texts; for example, the *Fairtrade CSPE* Pack (Fairtrade Ireland, 2008) features detailed personal profiles of producers which gives them a space to tell their story and *Combating Desertification* (Concern, 2006) highlights the value of indigenous knowledge and practices.

In terms of how a specific issue is represented, *Just Us or Justice* (NYCI, 2009), with its focus on social justice, is one of the best introductory texts examined in the study. The work illustrates the multifaceted nature of justice, including showing it to be relevant to issues of climate change and global trade. One exercise investigates the role of the developed world as the main beneficiary from global trade which sometimes results in the exploitation of workers and producers in the developing world.

All the texts facilitate discussion on elements of development, and in the process broaden and reconceptualise what the idea means but unless clear definitions and guidance are provided, the overall concept will not be appreciated. Gaps in understanding lead to differing interpretations, inconsistencies and even contradictions in regard to development and DE needs to address this.

Global Connections

The global links component of DE is seen as being most important in an increasingly interdependent and interconnected world. In these circumstances, it is important that these ideas are framed correctly so that people can understand the contemporary world.

Fairtrade Ireland (2008) explores the concept of global interdependence and the power people in the developed world have as consumers. Students have to think about the foods they eat and where these foods originate. They are given basic facts relating to how dependent the North is on the South for foodstuffs and the unfair trade relations involved between the two. Educating about fair trade is greatly helped by the fact that it is a concept which is firmly established in Ireland. Increasingly, institutions, schools and towns and cities are supporting fair trade and promoting it to consumers.

All Work, No Play (NYCI, 2001) focuses on child labour and includes an exercise called 'The Hidden Causes of Child Labour', which explores the causes of child labour around the world. The participants reflect on ways in which different causes lead to the exploitation of children and impacts on their future. This approach is significant as it examines the enduring impact of child labour on children when they become adults, resulting in cycles of poverty. 'Chains of Justice' (NYCI, 2009) highlights how products bought in the North have links to injustice in the South. The buying of a new phone, a common occurrence for individuals in the North, particularly for young people, is linked to the indirect support for the warring parties in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This is a particularly strong example as it relates to more than unfair trade and illustrates how actions in one part of the world can indirectly increase conflict and suffering in other parts of the world. These types of exercises highlight the role of choice with everyday activities redefined in terms of their connections with other human beings.

Numerous texts effectively linked development issues experienced by those in the South with those experienced by young Irish people. For example, *More Power to Youth* (NYCI, 2007) explores how young people in different parts of the world experience power in similar and different ways, and

Combating Desertification (Concern, 2006) links desertification to the loss of indigenous flora in Ireland. The issues faced are shown to be, at their core, the same, albeit in markedly different circumstances. Furthermore, hands-on empathy activities attempt to forge new ties of appreciation and solidarity in place of the sympathy and pity of the popular discourse.

Global Citizenship and Identity

DE advocates an ethical framework that informs the emergence of active global citizens. In several texts, personal ethics are developed with reference to universal values. *Just Us or Justice* (NYCI, 2009) uses the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as the basis for activities, while *All Work, No Play* (NYCI, 2001) explores child labour in the context of the rights of young people and children. Human rights are a powerful tool to help young people frame their own understanding of the world and develop their own moral code, especially when linked to issues in an Irish context.

Skills and capabilities are seen as a defining characteristic of active global citizens, who can think independently, critically and constructively, and so make judgements based on a commitment to longer-term societal interest (Irish Aid, 2006). Numerous texts have specific activities that are aimed at using skills, such as critically analysing media representations of development (Trócaire, 2002), evaluating their own position in the world (NYCI, 2005) and examining important social issues (NYCI, 2006).

Despite the strong citizenship component of DE only a small number of texts link the topics covered to the civic-political system in Ireland. In terms of creating greater awareness of an interconnected world, this feature could strengthen understanding of political systems and how citizens can go about encouraging positive change at community and national levels. Some recommend that citizens ensure they are registered to vote (Trócaire, 2002; NYCI, 2005b), while *A Seat at the Table* (Trócaire, 2010) proposes contacting Teachtaí Dála (TDs, members of the Irish parliament) to enquire about Ireland achieving its Millennium Development Goal (MDG) commitments. This feature assists in ensuring that citizens do not neglect their local/national responsibilities.

One of the criticisms levelled against global citizenship is that it can result in people opting out of local involvement, or at least prioritising global issues (Chandler, 2004). Exercises which focus on participation in national civic-political life buttress the connections made by other activities and themes between local involvement and global change. Notably, there is little reference to young people as European citizens in the texts, which is surprising given the role of the European Union (EU) in legislating at a local level and influencing foreign policy.

Action Projects and Lifestyle

Numerous resources integrate the informing/understanding and the reflecting/action phase in a manner which produces coherent programmes. For example, Fairtrade Ireland (2008) organise projects that enable students to reflect on the issue explored, and come to a class consensus on an action project. *Making a Difference!* (NYCI, 2005) for example has a 'Take Action' suggestion related to each exploratory activity, and *Combating Desertification* (Concern, 2006: 17) contains a selection of activities that facilitate the making of 'everyday choices for a more sustainable lifestyle' and mobilising for 'environmental and social justice'.

There are, however, also several texts in which the reflecting/action phase is not sufficiently attended to. *All Work, No Play* (NYCI, 2001) and *Bread and Bombs* (2002) have action lists that are poorly linked to the exploratory content. While in *A Seat at the Table* (Trócaire, 2010) the project and lifestyle section is proportionately very small, which weakens its overall impact, and in *Drinking from the Well* (NYCI, 2006) there is no discernible action-based component.

The encouragement of meaningful action or lifestyle changes must include guidelines which address basic practical issues. In discussing campaigns – one of the most common forms of actions suggested – only a small number of resources provide relatively detailed accounts of how to run one (Trócaire, 2009). This is also true of other types of action projects with sources providing little explanation of what is involved in an action project and how the young people involved should go about completing it.

Findings

The findings of the study are concerned with both the outcomes of the analysis of the reflecting/action and the informing/understanding phase, and the application of the main concept as a framework for examining and understanding DE and its role.

In terms of broadening and deepening knowledge and understanding of development issues, the texts studied offer appealing presentations, complex portrayals and informed comment. This indicates that Irish DE practitioners are mindful of the challenges involved in debating development issues and are making strides toward accurately representing the South and its peoples, using different and alternative perspectives in the process. Indeed, commentators have stressed that DE needs to be intensely aware of its standards and of the context in which it operates (Duke, 2003; Tormey, 2003). Learners are presented with a fuller and more nuanced version of development than they may have encountered previously. This model is based on equality, with common burdens and experiences, and shared solutions and responsibilities.

The texts have a strong strand relating to showing young people how they are connected to other people, particular other young people, and how these relationships can have positive and negative effects for both sides. These programmes and activities locate the global in the local, and vice-versa. In the popular discourse, these relationships are developed in the space of charitable donations and, possibly, fair trade, which unless fully discussed with the young people can be seen as an altruistic act. In responding to these challenges, the texts demonstrate global connections in people's lives, try to develop empathy with others, and build on knowledge concerning the environment and sustainability. Crucially, as is stressed by several writers (Bourn, 2008; Gyoh, 2009), the resources build on the young people's experience and provide them with arguments which are relevant to them and their lives.

The strengthening of ties and forging of understandings is the basis of solidarity. Part of this process is a commitment to justice and equity in both seeing and doing. By educating young people in the realities of the development process it is intended that they will exercise their power as consumers and citizens to work for a more just and equitable world.

Global citizenship is shown to involve rights and responsibilities, on scales from the local to the global. It is strengthened through foundations centred on universal human rights and skills to analyse and critique the world. The development of these skills is greatly facilitated by focused, practical activities; indeed, the NYCI's 'One World Week' books in this case, are recognised for their role in facilitating the development of skills (Hill and Sheehan, 2009). The emphasis on skills allows for non-prescriptive education whereby the learner is not told what and/or how to think; instead young people are allowed to 'analyse and experiment with other forms of seeing/thinking and being/relating to one another' (Andreotti, 2006: 49).

The texts, however, have not sufficiently linked identity to political citizenship. Global citizenship must be a part of the Northern youths' identity if DE is to achieve its aim. Also, in many resources, the role of young people as consumers is inadvertently emphasised (NYCI, 2001; Concern and ILCU, 2007; Fairtrade Ireland, 2005, 2008, 2009; Trócaire, 2010). However, unless framed properly, this could produce people who are more aware of their identities as global consumers rather than global citizens. These texts must definitively locate their role as consumers within their identity as global citizens.

DE is ultimately an outcome focused endeavour, which presents considerable challenges for practitioners and the producers of materials. The reflecting/action phase is the stage of the educational process in which learners enact and apply their new understandings. As McParland (2009: 2) explains, successful education should 'bring about changes in decision making processes and subsequent action'. While this rhetoric and understanding is present in many of the texts it is not sufficiently developed. The action and lifestyle sections need to be developed, particularly by integrating them within the main body of the texts and with the provision of guidelines and examples. Texts such as *Making a Difference!* (NYCI, 2005b) or *Fairtrade CSPE Schools Pack* (Fairtrade Ireland, 2008) serve as good models for the linking of the informing/understanding and the reflecting/action phase. These texts allow a learner, whose knowledge comes largely from the popular development discourse, to be educated and motivated to action and change in an organised and easily followed process.

The application of the concept has shown that it has the potential to offer insights into aspects of DE. Firstly, the concept is focused on the educational process. The concept is interested in the subject as a transformative process which takes the learner from one level of understanding development to a more advanced and holistic understanding, and the manner in which this is achieved. Second, the concept brings together different theoretical approaches to the study of the discourses of development. While much of the literature dealing with DE is pedagogical in nature, this approach is primarily informed by political science and development studies. This allows for links to be forged between disciplines, which enables new understanding and provides a theoretical foundation. It also facilitates a discussion on how the DE sector conceives of development, something which has been overlooked in many debates (Bourn, 2011).

However, the subject's approach has been linked to different strands in development studies, particularly dependency and world systems theories (Dillon, 2003). Furthermore, a theoretically informed approach will buttress arguments against the simplistic arguments of the popular discourse and the still-prevalent influences of modernisation theory in educational materials (Andreotti, 2006; Bryan and Bracken, 2011). Finally, it should be noted that this was a limited survey, the main aim of which was to examine the potential of the concept for analysing DE resources. This will hopefully serve as the beginning of a conversation around this concept, especially in circumstances in which the elements of the popular and non-popular discourses are being increasingly recognised in the discussions and debates around development.

Conclusion

Different academic engagements with development and DE are identifying and explaining features, which are seen in this study as belonging to either a popular or a non-popular discourse. This suggests the potential basis for a framework to understand development related materials, especially DE materials. Its application in the study of a sample of DE texts resulted in findings which point to three main recommendations for DE practitioners in regard to resource development and practice.

Firstly, DE needs to be cognisant of the challenges and opportunities offered by the popular development discourse. The challenges come in the form of overcoming dominant conceptions by broadening the debate and encouraging self-reflection. The opportunities lie in basic awareness of and interest in development issues. In building on this general interest, the subject should avoid an excessively critical approach. DE practitioners need to focus on ways to advance the development discourse; to take it from the current levels of basic engagement to more analytical frameworks, which are intended to lead to action for positive change.

Secondly, DE needs to ensure that the resources it produces are focused on facilitating the transformation of the learner's knowledge and understanding of development. This requires texts that engage the learner, deepen their understanding of the issues in an active educational process, and provide direction on action for social change and lifestyle choices. The latter component needs to be firmly linked to the other sections and be attentive to practicalities. To facilitate the intended outcome, it is recommended that focused single-issue themed publications be used more frequently, as they can succinctly provide knowledge and explore the issue sufficiently to effect commitment to long-term lifestyle change.

Finally, it is crucial that DE remains a firm champion of the non-popular discourse. This will involve the sector and practitioners being continually self-critical by reviewing and researching the discipline, its practices and, particularly, its products. DE materials need to be examined and studied to ensure that their approaches and themes adhere to the principles of the non-popular discourse. This approach can then be utilised by the advocates and practitioners of DE to produce high quality materials that will improve the subject's ability to contribute to the creation of informed, imaginative and active global citizens.

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