

Editorial

Jordan Harris-Campbell

Development education emerged in the latter half of the 20th century, paralleling trends in development and international cooperation, including relations between developed and underdeveloped countries. Manuela Mesa's 'Background and Contextualization of Development Education' (2005) provides a comprehensive overview of how development education evolved, broadening its agenda to "promote a better understanding of global interdependence and the structural connection between the North and the South, and between...everyday life and 'macro issues' ". Though the topics prioritised for inclusion in development education may vary among actors in the sector, definitions coined or compiled by organisations such as the Development Education Exchange in Europe Project (DEEEP) provide a general framework in which practitioners can operate, emphasising their own priorities while adhering to a generally accepted standard of aims and values. While guidelines for the delivery of development education can be found through web sites such as the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) and the Development Education Association (DEA), there seems to be an ever-increasing array of activities and methodologies tweaked and modified for incorporation into development education practice.

As a newcomer to development education, I am fascinated by the innovative and creative ways in which practitioners incorporate tools and methodologies from other disciplines to maximise the impact of development education on their target audiences. In keeping with the 'Breaking Barriers' theme of this issue, each of the Focus articles explores how development education has obliterated barriers between sectors or between individuals far-removed in place and perspective.

While the Focus articles share a common theme, the authors explore how their respective organisations have broken the barriers that limit the impact, potential and effectiveness of development education. The barriers described in the articles differ greatly—where one article describes the challenges involved in developing an effective partnership between a non-governmental organisation and third-level institution to promote global citizenship education, another explores how one social research method could be an effective teaching tool for development education practitioners wishing to promote analytical and systems thinking skills emphasised in a

number of development education publications. The authors discuss their respective challenges and each presents mixed results. Regarding their common theme, though, each of the articles indicates that cross-sectoral exchanges or partnerships can be hugely beneficial for development education practitioners. The challenges faced by the organisations partnering for a global citizenship initiative in ‘Never the twain shall meet?’ are probably familiar to many readers of *Policy and Practice*. The authors—Blee, Britton, Davis, and Young—provide a realistic overview of the obstacles organisations face when initiating and subsequently strengthening partnerships while reminding me that, despite the challenges faced along the way, investing in such partnerships is worthwhile when the impacts of projects developed by the partners are likely to be much greater than those a non-government organisation acting alone could achieve.

In ‘Development education in higher education: Ethnographic research as a development methodology’, authors Roland Tormey and Marie Kiely explore the use of ethnographic research methods to develop thinking skills associated with development education. Tormey and Kiely developed a research project in which these research methods were taught to a group of third-level students, who then completed two participant observation sessions in different settings. This study indicates that development education practitioners could adopt ethnographic research methods as useful teaching tools for honing thinking skills and achieving the learning objectives of development education.

Each of these articles is a reminder that, just as development education practitioners and organisations have something to offer those outside the sector, so can we learn from the experience and skill sets of those working in the areas on which we would like our work to impact, such as third level institutions or businesses. Developing partnerships with and incorporating best practices from these areas could lead to more effective development education for a greater number of audiences.

Other Focus articles explore how the arts can provide a glimpse into another’s experience through verbal or visual imagery, thereby exposing and potentially removing the barriers that our nationality, gender, or economic status impose on our worldview. In ‘Breaking barriers through children’s global arts’, Nadine Cruickshanks describes how art is used to communicate human experience around the globe and how effectively these images shatter ignorance and indifference. Similarly, in ‘Fabric crafts and poetry: The art of development education in Canada’, Darlene Clover and Budd Hall illustrate how the images produced through art often express “counter stories”, challenging the socio-political norms of the artist’s environment and conveying his or her reality to persons external to that environment.

The articles by Cruickshanks and Clover and Hall are inspired accounts of how art provides each of us the opportunity to share the experiences of people we have never met and re-imagine the world in which we live. That a child's drawing can wield such a powerful influence suggests that any number of art forms might serve as a tool for breaking the barriers of our own experience and opening us up intellectually and emotionally to the everyday realities of others.

Although each makes an independent contribution to the issue, taken together they hint at the range of physical, institutional, and psychological barriers that development education challenges and can potentially break. The Focus articles highlight some of the countless potential benefits to removing these barriers: improving teaching methods of development education practitioners by incorporating methods from other disciplines; delivering effective global citizenship teacher training as a result of a successful partnership following a substantial investment of time and resources; challenging people's perceptions of the world by displaying art depicting realities they have never imagined. There are countless opportunities for development education to change people and institutions. The authors of the Focus articles show that there are also countless opportunities for these same bodies to shape and improve development education.

References

Mesa, M (2005) "Background and Contextualization of Development Education", Madrid: Centro de Investigación Para la Paz.

Jordan Harris-Campbell serves as the Development Education Co-ordinator for Suas Educational Development in Dublin.