Editorial

THE SHIFTING POLICY LANDSCAPE OF DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

Su-ming Khoo

The contributions in this issue of *Policy and Practice* provide reflections on the state of development education and recent policy shifts in the UK and Ireland. This issue revisits the theme of the changing policy landscape, a theme initially covered in Issue 5, in 2007. At that point, the time seemed right to reflect upon a decade or so of great constructive change, increased government commitments and greater policy engagement. The policy environment for development education became more strongly linked with official aid policy after the UK and Irish governments issued White Papers on International Development. Substantial government funding and broad support for development education followed, resulting in development awareness and education activities becoming more programmatic, and aligned with government commitments. An ambitious agenda began to emerge around the mainstreaming, formalization and professionalization of development education. Academic support for development education increased (Bourn, 2007) and a tentative research agenda began to emerge in an atmosphere of greater engagement and dialogue between development education practitioners, academics, development practitioners and government.

This increased profile and policy engagement brought challenges and conundrums, as well as opportunities. Many of the articles in previous issues of this journal have documented, and reflected upon, the challenges and risks of increasing formalization and professionalization. Critical voices have worried about the problems and challenges for the development education sector, even as they documented its diverse efforts and achievements. Recent articles have questioned whether the governmental influence and professionalization have meant de-radicalization and the accommodation of dominant social and political ideas (Bryan, 2011), while pointing to a failure to engage with fundamental and systemic problems, such as sustainability or the current financial collapse and economic crisis (Selby and Kagawa, 2011; McCloskey, 2011).

The big issue: a policy reversal for Development Education?

The biggest concern overshadowing this particular journal issue is with the changes in funding and policy priorities on the part of both the UK and Irish governments. Economic crisis and budget cuts mean that development education has moved from an expansionary to a contractionary or survivalist mode. Existing tendencies towards managerialism have intensified, with an overwhelming emphasis on the need to demonstrate 'impact' and 'value-for-money'. In the UK, the transition in May 2010 from an established Labour regime to a new Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition meant sharp policy shifts. In his Perspectives article, Stephen O'Brien, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development, explains the stance of the Coalition government towards development education. He begins by emphasising that DfID has maintained its commitment to the 0.7 per cent aid target for 2013, in the face of cuts for other budget sectors. This means that a 'double duty' must now be fulfilled: showing the benefit to the intended beneficiaries - the poor in developing countries - while delivering 'results', transparency, accountability and value for money to the UK taxpayers.

He also states that DfID has retained its support for development education. However, DFID's *Building Support for Development Strategy* (1999) was immediately re-appraised. Broad government support for public education and awareness-raising was replaced by an emphasis on evaluation, 'results' and 'development impact'. Some education projects were terminated, on the basis that they could not demonstrate development impact or value for money. No new funding would be provided for development awareness. From the perspective of one development education centre which had its grant terminated, the Con-Lib government's '…actions and communications have so far indicated a new and deep scepticism about development awareness: "the link between development awareness in the UK and poverty reduction overseas is at best unproven". So we are under no illusion; DfID's support for our work has changed' (Knowles, 2011).

These policy shifts were highly significant, yet the qualified support for development education and retention of the aid budget represented a less negative outcome than what pessimists had initially feared. O'Brien states that there will still be support for schools-based development education. The view is that children are the next generation of the workforce and should learn the 'bald facts of poverty and underdevelopment which face children their own age in other countries'. According to this view, global learning underpins a disposition to promote '…the potential of trade, wealth creation and economic

development to build a freer, more prosperous world'. The position reflects assumptions, intentions and approaches to education that are quite different to those implied by New Labour's efforts to stimulate and coordinate development education, which could be described as a Keynesian or 'demand-side' approach. The present UK government prefers deregulated 'supply side' activities, rolling back state direction to allow 'markets' (in reality, schools and teachers) to shape development education, for example through teacher-to-teacher networks, and popular activities such as school linking and volunteering.

Cathryn Gathercole's article assesses the transition from DfID's Enabling Effective Support (EES, 1999) initiative, which put in place relatively long-term (five to ten year) frameworks of support for schools to integrate the global dimension. This initiative brought not only funding, but also profile and status for global learning and development awareness. Gathercole sees the policy shifts as financial and ideological, reflecting a deeper philosophical and political reconfiguration. Cuts to development education are part and parcel of wider cuts in public spending, especially on education and an ideological opposition to 'centralised' and 'top-down control'. The UK government no longer positively endorses learning about global and sustainability issues. Instead, the understanding is that individual schools will make their own decisions about which activities to prioritise and decide how to fund them.

The major lesson for Gathercole is that government policy is liable to sudden and significant change. She rightly points out that these policy changes do not mean that everything has gone backwards. Significant capacity has been built for development education over the last decades and the challenge is how to build on this legacy. Gathercole sees the challenge for small educational charities like her own organisation, as one of how best to support educators' autonomy and ability to set their own agenda. Teachers' creative practice is the foundation, in her view, and the question is how to build capacity for creative teaching practice in both individuals and institutions within the education system. The key factors that she identifies include educators giving themselves permission to be curriculum makers and greater prioritization of learner- led activities, favouring a degree of risk over teacher control and relating learning to real life contexts.

Towards a constructive and critical approach?

The opening Focus article by Doug Bourn helps us to take stock and reflect on the changing landscape, by stepping back and surveying different understandings and interpretations of 'development education' that have

emerged over the past twenty-five or thirty years. He suggests that the sector as a whole needs to take a 'constructive approach' that connects theory and practice. He argues for more research and a deeper and more critical analysis, to better explain the variety of interpretations of development education that have emerged in different practice settings. A lack of such a constructive critical analysis could leave the sector vulnerable to politicization and unable to challenge dominant ideas.

In its early phase, development education was led by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and inspired by Freire's ideas about popular education for social transformation. This embodied a challenging approach to dominant societal ideas, and optimism about the transformative potential of an alternative educational perspective and methodology. Bourn attempts to move past the current pragmatic concerns with 'relevance' and 'effectiveness' by dwelling upon a more fundamental distinction between 'learning about development' and 'critical global pedagogy' – a distinction which connects theory and practice. Drawing upon diverse global understandings of development education, Bourn broadens the debate, while making this distinction.

In South Africa, development education is primarily about 'promoting indigenous knowledges'. This can be correlated with Andreotti's theory of critical pedagogy, which is concerned with the voices of the dispossessed and excluded (Andreotti, 2010). In India, development education is rooted in dialogue and reflection, and influenced by the Gandhian critical humanist tradition. In the UK, Oxfam's version of development education emphasises universal goals around global citizenship (Oxfam, 2006) while in Ireland, Regan's 80:20 textbook makes the links to human development (Regan, 2006). Within theory and practice of global citizenship and human development, reflection, dialogue and critical questioning about the universality of human goals are also common concerns.

Public funding looms behind ideas of 'understanding and support for' and 'learning about' development. However, for practitioners the question can no longer simply be how to do more, or 'integrate' development education – what is needed is a debate about what development education means and the extent to which its practices are questioning and challenging dominant educational thinking. With regard to further and higher education, Bourn contrasts the largely uncritical agendas of 'global skills' and internationalization against critical global skills approaches that privilege complexity, difference and

uncertainty. The critical global skills approach is more open and demanding in terms of learning, requiring the learner to shift from accepting given knowledge to questioning and possibly shifting perspectives.

The state of Development Education in Ireland: constrained and 'safe'?

Annette Honan's article comments on the publication of a key piece of recent research, commissioned by Irish Aid: 'Mapping the Past, Charting the Future' (Bracken, Bryan & Fiedler, 2011). This research had two main aims: to document the history of the Irish government's involvement in development education (DE) and to undertake a meta-analysis of development education research in Ireland (north and south) which might provide 'a baseline from which future research strategy and priorities can be identified'. The meta-analysis finds that there are significant barriers to deep and comprehensive engagement with social justice issues through development education. These barriers are of three kinds: attitudinal: (lack of confidence to teach complex and controversial issues), structural (the low status of education for justice within the system) and curricular (lack of time and an over-crowded curriculum). The report implies that there is a heavy reliance on individual teachers' interest and capacity to bring in development education. At the post primary level, students 'are hindered by a system that marginalizes global themes, privileges recall and outputs over learning, and provides little time or space for self-reflective interrogation'.

Studies of in-service teachers point to 'somewhat superficial' and 'soft rather than critical versions of development education'. There seems little room for the sort of creativity Gathercole assumes for UK teachers, since there is little deviation from standard curricular content or evidence of active and participatory methodologies. Honan suggests that schools face three main challenges for development education: 1) regarding it as 'core business'; 2) understanding its contribution to classroom learning and school culture; and 3) that the teaching and learning methodologies in Irish classrooms are not generally conducive to educating for global citizenship. Honan essentially concurs with Gathercole's suggestions when she argues for a shift away from providing resources and information, and towards teachers - building up teaching methodologies and skills, with more time and space for reflective practice. However Honan also diverges from the broad lines of DfID's new 'supply side' assumptions for the UK, when she calls for DE practitioners in Ireland to be more active in influencing the 'demand side' in the form of broader curricular and educational changes that are coming down from the national curriculum authority.

For the non-formal sector, the report finds that there is a dearth of research. What there is focuses on attitudes and perceptions of development issues, rather than educational practice. Caroline Murphy's Focus article examines the perspectives of non-formal, NGO-based development educators. The participants in Murphy's study saw their DE practice as being constrained by the priorities of fundraising and charity, leading to the predominance of 'safe' development education, meaning 'fundraising or multicultural or whatever' – 'yes so it is all right for people to go and buy fair trade but not to lobby the government'. Safe development education is depoliticized and pays lip service to global justice. Murphy contends that this decreases educators' capacity to engage in dialogue and solidarity with the developing world.

The operation of 'civilised oppression' makes it difficult to embed an African perspective that engages with African voices beyond fitting into an agenda and tokenism. One of Murphy's educators thinks that funders and the government operate a deliberate policy to render development education 'a very harmless activity' with 'no real impact on the structures'. Even where development education privileges critical thinking and learning processes, the actual actions taken are more consonant with charity, fundraising and consuming. Murphy's participants all feel that functional, 'Safe Development Education' is not what development education should look like, but do not go so far as to make definite suggestions about what an alternative 'Radical Development Education' might look like. Murphy reaches out to a conception of 'visionary active citizenship' which 'is proactive rather than reactive, involving scoping alternative futures and finding better ways of doing things, and challenging the existing structures, values and power relations underpinning the existing society'.

Bryan's recent study of development education in southern Irish schools (forthcoming) finds that the official aspiration to build 'deep public understanding of the causes and complexities of poverty' is unlikely to yield the desired results in the context of the formal school curriculum. However, she remains hopeful that having a critical discussion which identifies such absences and contradictions opens up spaces for pedagogical practice. Critically reflexive, 'deeper thinking' citizenship can be enabled by educators who take on a more critical approach to ***development***, for example by scrutinising the 'development industry' and our roles in relation to it.

Partnerships in development: where is the Development Education?

Since the 1990s, the dominant idiom for development has been 'partnership', most notably expressed in the Millennium Development Goal 8 to build 'a global partnership for development'. While there are common themes of equality, respect, reciprocity and ownership, the lack of clarity has led to criticisms of it being a 'feel good' panacea and a form of rhetoric that covers up power asymmetries. The theme of development partnerships is explored in two articles: Bailey and Dolan's Focus article looks at Irish-African teacher education partnerships, while McDevitt's Perspectives piece provides an example of a proposal to forge a development partnership between Northern Ireland and North-Eastern Uganda. International development is a 'reserved matter' in Northern Ireland, however the Northern Ireland Assembly has established an All Party Group on International Development (APGID), as lobby group without statutory powers, in order to influence policy on international development.

McDevitt's starting point is an assertion that Northern Ireland has a higher level of interest in international development than any other part of the United Kingdom (UK), and a long history of development work through faith-based and development non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Despite the perception of being a 'generous society', Northern Ireland's Assembly had not developed a specific, Northern Irish 'branded' development link, in contrast to other devolved assemblies in the UK. Scotland has strong links with Malawi, while the Welsh Assembly has links with Lesotho. The APGID therefore proposes to create 'an overseas development project branded from Northern Ireland' which will link Northern Ireland with north-eastern Uganda. The relevance of the link to 'development' or 'development education' is not yet entirely clear, in theory or practice, but there is an understanding that a defined link with the global South will enhance public engagement with global issues.

Development partnerships have been criticized for the one way flow of capacity from the North and an absence of genuine sharing (Nakabugo et al, 2010), even if there are benefits such as improved human or infrastructural capacity, or a greater voice for Southern partners. These issues were examined by Nakabugo and others in relation to Irish-African partnerships that have been emerging in the higher education arena (2010). Bailey and Dolan's article looks at teacher education partnerships that are part of this, such as the Centre for Global Development through Education (CGDE) and Zambian Irish Teacher Education Programme (ZITEP) projects which have enabled teacher educators from Uganda, Zambia and Lesotho to be placed in colleges of education in

Ireland. Their analysis implies that development education needs to bridge a formal-informal sectoral gap. Irish development educators could have benefited more from the higher education partnerships if the formal partnerships could work more closely and share resources (theory, practice, documented results) with the development education sector. However, this cooperation would require a common network or framework for development education across formal and informal education.

Alternative viewpoints

The previous survey of the changing landscape of development education in Issue 5 of 2007 mainly reflected professional and formalized approaches to development education, but I personally strongly recall one article, by Marina Sitrin (2007) about movements for direct democracy (*horizontalidad)* in Argentina following their 2001 financial crisis. This article documented spaces for reclaiming politics, pointing to similar developments across Latin America in Chiapas, Mexico and Brazil. Sitrin's discussion pointed to the potential importance of educational alternatives from below, and the role of informal, indigenous, adult and vocational visions of education in attempting to redefine development on alternative terms (such as cultural emancipation or indigeneity), directly challenging the dominant global neoliberal consensus (e.g. King, 1998; Fasheh and Pimparé, 2006). McCloskey's Viewpoint piece in this issue follows a similar vein, suggesting that the Cuban case and model of development should be used more often in development education as a concrete example of a development alternative.

In the resource reviews section, Byers reviews a film, *The Pipe*, which documents local resistance to the multinational energy giant, Shell in the West of Ireland. It follows local opposition to Shell's pipeline, carrying gas from the sea, through their village, to a nearby refinery at Ballinaboy in County Mayo. This unique campaign of communal resistance has fed into a heated national debate on the future ownership of Ireland's natural resources. *The Economics of Happiness* is a very different visual resource that makes sense of globalization's impacts on societies, local economies, cultures and ecosystems. Challenging the persistent use of economic growth as the yardstick for measuring human development, the documentary promotes a shift in emphasis towards community and cultural integrity, well-being and happiness. Education is seen as a key driver of change by many commentators and this could be re-rooted in alternative efforts to preserve local knowledge and lay expertise, especially in relation to local systems of food production that work with, rather than against, nature. What the reviewer finds appealing in this documentary is

its emphasis on cultural diversity and resilience in the face of globalization's negative effects. It is optimistic, and its attention to practical, bottom-up solutions makes it a particularly suitable tool for local, action-focused initiatives.

References

Andreotti, V (2010) 'Global Education in the '21st Century': Two Perspectives on the 'Post-' of Modernism', *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning*, 2 (2):5-22.

Bourn, D (2007) 'Building academic support for development education' in *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 5, Autumn 2007, pp. 31-42.

Bracken, M, Bryan, A & Fiedler, M (2011) *Mapping the past, charting the future: a review of Irish government's engagement with development education and a meta-analysis of development education research in Ireland.* http://www.irishaid.gov.ie/Uploads/Mapping%20the%20Past_Fiedler_Bryan_Bracken_2011.pdf

Bryan, A (forthcoming) 'Band Aid Pedagogy, Celebrity Humanitarianism, and Cosmopolitan Provincialism' in Wankel, C & Malleck, S (eds.) *Ethical models and Applications of Globalization: Cultural, Socio-Political and Economic Perspectives*. Hershey, Pennsylvania: IGI Global.

Bryan, A (2011) 'Another cog in the anti-politics machine? The 'de-clawing' of development education', *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 12, Spring 2011, pp. 1-14.

Fasheh, M & Pimparé, S (2006) *Emerging and re-emerging learning communities: Old wisdoms and new initiatives from around the world*, Paris: UNESCO November (ED-2006/WS/16), pp. 6-11.

King, L (ed.) (1998) *Reflecting Visions: New Perspectives on Adult Education for Indigenous Peoples*. Waikato: UNESCO: Institute for Education, The University of Waikato.

Knowles, E (2011) 'DFID's changing funding and policy priorities'. *Index: Irish Newsletter for Development Education Exchange*. Dublin: Comhlámh.

McCloskey, S (2011) 'Rising to the challenge: Development education, NGOs and the urgent need for social change', *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 12, Spring 2011, pp. 32-46.

Nakabugo, M, Barrett, E, McEvoy, P & Munck, R (2010) 'Best practice in North-South research relationships in higher education: The Irish African partnership model' in *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 10, Spring 2010, pp.89-98.

Oxfam (2006) *Education for Global Citizenship: A Guide for Schools*. London: Oxfam GB.

Regan, C (ed.) (2006) *80:20 Development in an Unequal World*. Dublin: 80:20 Educating and Acting for a Better World.

Selby, D & Kagawa, F (2011) 'Development education and education for sustainable development: Are they striking a Faustian bargain?' in *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 12, Spring 2011, pp. 15-31.

Sitrin, M (2007) 'Ruptures in imagination: Horizontalism, autogestion and affective politics in Argentina' in *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 5, Autumn 2007, pp. 43-53.

Su-ming Khoo is a lecturer in Political Science and Sociology, NUI Galway. She teaches and researches alternative development, postcolonialism and public activism and is involved in mainstreaming development education at NUI Galway.