

GLOBALISATION AND THE RE-IMAGINATION OF RESEARCH: TEACHING AND LEARNING IN IRISH HIGHER EDUCATION

Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are currently re-imagining their future research and education activities in response to complex processes of globalisation. **Su-ming Khoo and Orla Lehane** map out, and think through, recent trends that are pushing research much more to the fore in this sector. This article contrasts two scenarios for globalised higher education - the 'market-rational' and the 'democratic-deliberative' and suggests that development education fits with the latter. As HEIs and research play a key part in a wider restructuring and re-imagination of the 'knowledge society', we suggest that development education can provide spaces within HEIs where critique, debate and diversity come into play to contest globalisation and promote alternatives. The article suggests that a revised interpretation of 'accountability' is needed and explores the possibilities for a development education programme to re-imagine a pro-development vision of globalisation that sees accountability through the lenses of human rights and health.

Introduction: Contesting higher education

This article suggests that current debates around research reflect wider contestations about the **values** and **purposes** of higher education and even of knowledge itself. The emerging research agenda is part and parcel of the dramatic expansion and reform of higher education institutions (HEIs). These changes are likely to continue and accelerate, radically restructuring the HEIs, and, by extension, the nature of knowledge and learning within the 'knowledge society' (Gilbert, 2005).

Previous reflections on development education in this journal (Khoo, 2006; Khoo, Healy & Coate, 2007) have suggested that the reforms within higher education have a profound impact on the meaning and practice of development education. This article further explores the theme of research within higher education policy and practice, and looks

at scenarios and models for research and research-led teaching. As HEIs have become more globalised, they have become increasingly marketised and driven by productivity concerns and audit culture. The pressure to compete internationally has led to an increased emphasis on performance management, institutional branding and global market positioning, with Irish HEIs locked into maintaining or desperately seeking ‘world class’ status. Their research activities are increasingly eschewing traditional scholarly autonomy in favour of market values and competitive rankings on global league tables.

This article argues that development educators must critically engage with the globalisation of Irish HEIs. We suggest that development education has the potential to provide an important corrective to an increasingly instrumental, dehumanised and economist vision of global education. However, we further suggest that development education must re-imagine itself and its role. Globalisation is inherently contested and contestable (Munck, 2007). Given the increasing predominance of market values, and the push for academics and educators within HEIs to adopt market values and measures as *reform takers*, this article suggests that development educators within HEIs can contribute as *reform makers* by actively creating, and participating in, healthy spaces for critical reflection and contestation. Development education provides non-coercive spaces for reflexive praxis, where commitments to the values of humanity, solidarity, diverse voices and meaningful participation can be explored.

We further examine the particular contribution of HEIs to furthering dialogue about human rights and health. Steiner (2002) asserts that human rights should no longer be regarded as a tightly defined scholarly field, but can be considered a lens (or set of norms) through which diverse issues such as development, gender, terrorism, religion or even pandemics can be viewed. Human rights discourse is now used by many different actors for imaginative advocacy and problem-solving. Steiner argues that it is critical for universities to foster the study and teaching of human rights as ‘[f]ew institutions other than the university are positioned to undertake such work’. HEIs play a critical role in the global human rights movement because they are uniquely positioned for critical and interdisciplinary debate. There are multiple routes open to them. Steiner notes that the ‘...basic tenets of the international [human rights] instruments – freedoms of belief, inquiry, advocacy and association, for example – constitute the foundational values of the university itself’ (Steiner, 2002:318). HEIs can combine traditions of academic freedom, scholarship and autonomy with the wide spectrum of disciplinary knowledge required to approach human rights contextually and concretely. They provide an enabling milieu where conversations

about common values and universal rights can be conducted. Research and teaching can be channelled towards widening such conversations, and this can be extended to a range of professional and practice activities that ‘walk the talk’.

In the next section, we sketch out two scenarios for higher education, representing different sets of research and education priorities – one driven by market rationality and the other enabling democratic deliberation. We argue for development education to position itself within, and to promote, the latter. The final part of the paper concludes with an exploration of a vision of a development education programme within higher education that focuses on *human rights* and *global health* as key areas. We suggest that this can engage researchers, teachers, students and professionals with global development issues, and contribute to positive global transformation in both intellectual and practical ways.

Two scenarios for higher education

This section presents an analytical view of, and contrast between, two scenarios for higher education within the context of globalisation. Scenarios are analytical tools for clarifying the present, mapping the past and exploring futures (see Inayatullah, 2005). The scenario of **market rationality** is contrasted with that of **democratic deliberation**. We examine the critiques of market rationality, especially corporate managerialism and issues surrounding market-oriented technoscience research. The democratic-deliberative scenario is explored, and its relationship with development education is sketched. The discussion centres on HEIs’ role in generating and facilitating contestation as a public good and an essential aspect of democracy.

Cutting across these two scenarios are different kinds of strategies that researchers, educators and learners might adopt in HEIs: passivity, adaptive or instrumental conformity; a resistant and critical position; or an alternative and transformative approach. We focus on the last of these, and set this within a general defence of the role of HEIs in enabling transformative knowledge and action. We suggest that the seeds of a working consensus are in place and point to the potential of development education to use human rights and global health as common ground to mobilise for a more creative and transformative future.

Market-rational globalisation of HEIs

Bureaucratic and managerial reforms have taken place in Irish HEIs under the auspices of the Irish Universities Act (Government of Ireland, 1997).

This Act committed HEIs to reforms including strategic planning, quality assurance and financial accountability, along the lines of New Public Management (NPM) (see Marginson, 2007). The reforms suggest a reduced role for the state and increased emphasis on accountability, measurable performance and compliance with financial and management protocols. Delanty suggests that managerialist practices can be traced to the increasing demands of the neo-liberal policy context: ‘...the state responded by forcing universities to be competitive, with league tables, quality assurance tests, research assessments and various performance indicators being used to determine the allocation of resources’ (2001:122). The reforms have also had the effect of challenging the traditional autonomy of universities and have resulted in the reorganisation of traditional departments into larger units.

The NPM emphasis on *accountability* has translated into a preoccupation with measurable research outputs, while many of the HEIs’ other core roles and outcomes have been relegated to a lesser status. ‘The NPM imagines national systems as economic markets and universities and other HEIs as firms driven by desires for economic revenues and market share, not by teaching, research and service as ends in themselves’ (Marginson, 2007:3). Lynch (2008) is highly critical of the ways in which market accountability is replacing the democratic responsibilities of HEIs. She notes that academic culture changes for the worse as performance management replaces trust with constant surveillance (see also Davies & Petersen, 2005; Marginson, 2007). Recent research (Archer, 2008) suggests that ‘younger’ academics have internalised performance culture and competitive market values and, although conflicted about them, recognise and even celebrate these as essential aspects of their professional identities.

Global university rankings have compelled HEIs worldwide to conform to competitive, hierarchical market rationality, with an emphasis on research outputs, graduate studies and prestige. The two most widely cited league tables are the Times Higher Education World Rankings and Shanghai Jiao Tong University’s Academic Ranking of World Universities. The complexity of HEIs’ activities makes performance measurement inherently difficult (Marginson, 2007:6) and these ranking tables have been criticised for being reductionist, biased towards a certain interpretation of ‘science’ and therefore ‘unscientific’ in their methodology (Lynch, 2008). Many HEI outputs, including those which development educators might be most interested in, (for example the quality, content or process of teaching and learning) are simply not amenable to measurement and ranking. Yet, there seems to be a strong compulsion towards hierarchical ranking as an end in itself, without much regard as to what is actually measured, what objectives

or activities are involved, or what the ethos of the institution is. As Marginson says: '[L]eague tables rule...normalising higher education as a market of competing institutions in which 'quality' is grounded in 'performance' and equated with market power' (2007:5-6).

For academics committed to progressive values, the message may be depressingly pessimistic. Citing Rose (1999:138, 141), Davies and Petersen contend that neoliberal policies have totally reshaped universities, leading to the reconceptualisation of 'all aspects of social behaviour along economic lines...A person's relation to all his or her activities, and indeed to his or her self, is to be given the ethos and structure of the enterprise form' (2005:77-78). Academics and students have become subjects of neoliberalism through the imposition of managerialist practices:

"Managerialism is both an ideology and an instrument of power, a mask to disguise coercion and a series of explicit strategies to reorganise the work-place. Ideology, power, mask, and strategies have been contained in the language of efficiency, productivity, competitiveness, and accountability" (Rees, 1999:197, cited in Davies & Peterson, 2005:78).

The technoscience/market complex has become the strongest driver behind research in universities. Within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Ireland has historically lagged behind in research investment, but since the end of the 1990s has been striving to catch up and develop a 'world class research infrastructure' that reflects a technoscientific vision of 'Ireland, Inc'. According to Delanty, the boom in research reflects the new importance of universities as a crucial site for the expansion of global capitalism, where industry, the state and academia form a triad for knowledge production (2001:123-4). HEIs provide publicly funded research infrastructure and scientific expertise, while industry supplies the context of distribution and linkage to the market. In Delanty's view, public resources have been made available to corporate interests, but the process is far from democratic. Patenting is a case in point where knowledge is converted into private, monopolistic intellectual property (Delanty, 2001). University-based research now supports a pro-business regulatory regime, the development of intellectual property law and patenting regulations (Holden, 2008a; 2008b).

The commercial technoscience funding model is a difficult one for non-commercial disciplines to match, since the funding policy aims for a model where two-thirds of the funding comes from the private sector. Substantial public funding has been made available for collaborations between academia and industry, with much of the research investment being

directed to medical and health-related industries, due to the importance of these industries to Ireland's 'knowledge economy'. The research model favours the formation of internationally competitive research groups, ideally in the form of industry-academia partnerships. These are seen as 'win-win' scenarios, giving private industry access to academic research, while schooling academic researchers to adopt an industry focus and commercialise their research. Academics can use these partnerships to gain access to commercial technology facilities while industry partners aim to 'mine' publicly subsidised basic research, tapping into the creativity that follows academic freedom (O'Connell, 2008).

Democratic deliberation and HEIs

In contrast to the market-rational scenario, Delanty (2001) argues that higher education must respond to globalisation by enhancing the democratisation of knowledge by creating *inclusive spaces of communication*. Delanty calls for the university '...to occupy the space of the public sphere', and to avoid becoming a '...self-referential bureaucratic organisation' within which critical voices are stifled (2001:7, 115). In his view, universities must enable a plurality of voices and support a diversity of views and dissent rather than consensus, to counteract the totalising tendencies of globalisation and market rationality. Critical theorists like Delanty look to HEIs to go beyond dominant market values, to play the role of critical, learning and transformative agents: '[U]niversities do not simply reproduce social and cultural values but also problematise the cultural models of society... Intellectuals are not just *reproducers* but also *transformers* of society's cognitive structures' (2001:10).

We contend that the democratic-deliberative approach fits better with development education's core ideas, values, content and practices. It fits with ideas of contested globalisation (Munck, 2007) and alternative views of globalisation based around ideas of global ethics, (Dower, 1998; Küng, 2004; Pogge, 2002) global civic culture (Boulding, 1988) and global citizenship (Dower, 2003). We can contrast understandings of accountability based on technical forms of accounting and a different sense of accountability informed by development and human rights. In the development context, 'accountability' refers to *inclusivity* and global ethical responsibilities. If human rights are to be more than just window dressing, they must be supported by a system of accountability involving entitlements and legal obligations (Hunt et al, 2007:18). A great deal of debate has taken place in development thinking about how to avoid the inappropriate export of accountability models from one setting to another (Newell & Wheeler, 2006). In contrast to the hierarchical processes of differentiation and

control described in the market-rational scenario, notions of accountability in development studies address ethical, social and environmental concerns (Gaventa, 2006). The global campaign for human rights might be thought of as a process of ‘demanding accountability’ (Bunch & Reilly, 1994).

Performance measures and benchmarks are available for this version of accountability, such as the widely understood Millennium Development Goals. It is not a big leap to re-imagine global league tables that rank HEIs by their contribution to local and global development goals such as poverty reduction, disease eradication or environmental sustainability, or by their contributions to helping the poorest and most disadvantaged people claim their rights.

At the outset of this article, we drew on Steiner’s arguments (2002) that HEIs play a critical role in the human rights movement, and that a great diversity of issues and subjects that are researched and taught at HEIs have relevance to human rights. This role hinges partly on the HEIs’ traditional autonomy and freedoms, and partly on the wide range of disciplinary knowledge needed, both theoretical and applied, for a contextual approach to human rights.

Bringing this back to the relevance of development education, the definitions of development education from both Irish Aid and the European network of development non-government organisations (CONCORD, Confederation of Development and Relief NGOs, 2007) incorporate the language of rights and emphasise values of justice and solidarity:

“Every person will have access to educational opportunities to be aware of and understand their rights and responsibilities as global citizens and their potential to effect change for a more just and equal world” (Irish Aid, 2003).

“Development Education is an active learning process, founded on values of solidarity, equality, inclusion and co-operation. It enables people 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” (DEEEP, 2008).

Our project on development education in higher education, located within the Development Education Research Network at the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG), draws and expands upon these official definitions. We see development education as more than just awareness-raising; it has the potential to embed within the activities of research, teaching, advocacy and

professional practice a sense of global solidarity and justice based on human rights. Development education also fosters attitudes and skills necessary for responsible global citizens and explores the idea of professional education and engagement of professionals-in-information, including Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Within our own university context in Galway, this provides a global perspective and rights-based approach to the theme of civic engagement and can inform the way the university conducts research and teaching partnerships. A similar initiative is the University of Alberta's Global Education Programme, which combines the development of a university-wide global citizenship curriculum with a regular programme of awareness-raising events.

The concept of **progressive realisation** provides a starting point for a framework of development education centred on deliberating and debating human rights. There is a significant amount of diversity and contention within the field of human rights, and a common understanding cannot be taken for granted. However, this diversity does not mean that there is only disagreement that stifles debate. The common starting point is rather one that affirms the inherent dignity of all human beings and promotes shared responsibility across society (ICHR, 2003:63).

It might be said that human rights are reinventing development, just as development is potentially reinventing human rights (Gready & Ensor, 2005:14). The conceptualisations of human rights are intrinsically creative or 'generative' and are continually under construction (2005:11) and this productive difference is enabled by deliberative, democratic debate (Rosenblum, 2002:305). We agree with Steiner (2002) that this kind of communication, debate and discussion is crucial and that critical and dissenting voices must be encouraged; however, shared responsibility and action for change are also needed. Teachers who use the lens of human rights activism '...hope to show students that they are entering a realm of advocacy tools, not abstract truths – a dynamic amalgam of norms, procedures and fora, full of tensions and contradictions'. This approach draws out '...the myriad possibilities within human rights: the multiple discourses, divergent ideologies, and vast array of possible fora' (Rosenblum, 2002:305, 315). The purpose is 'to train students to be "ambivalent advocates" – committed to action, but alert to multiple consequences; to make them more sympathetic to the plight of people trying to do good, while at the same time more critical of those who do it without reflecting on the possible negative consequences' (*ibid.*:304-5).

A rights based approach to development education is informed by an emerging consensus around 'progressive realisation', which reinvents development through rights. 'Rights lend moral legitimacy and reinforce

principles of social justice...[t]hey help shift the focus of analysis to the most deprived and excluded, especially to deprivations caused by discrimination' (Robinson, 2005:38-39). The key principles of a rights-based approach corroborate those of development and development education: inclusion and non-discrimination, national and local ownership, accountability and transparency, participation and empowerment (*ibid.*:37). A rights-based approach to development seeks enhanced accountability and a vision of empowerment and citizen participation that is owned by people who are engaged in free, meaningful, and active social and political participation. It entails debates about what development and rights mean. Robinson hopes that this will lead to a more complete and rational way of doing development, integrate safeguards against unintentional harm by development projects and provide an authoritative basis for advocacy (*ibid.*:38).

A key debate remains about what knowledge can be considered to be authoritative. Academic institutions should provide spaces for intercultural dialogue and cooperation, yet most are tremendously conservative, or at best somewhat patronising. Can indigenous, traditional and local knowledge be included in education and research partnerships, and contribute to shared visions of learning? Development education can draw from notions of cultural rights and human dignity to emphasise respect for different knowledge traditions, acknowledging the need to protect cultural uniqueness and the philosophical, artistic and expressive 'goods' of particular cultures. A notable example is the 'Through Other Eyes' education initiative, which supports learners to 'read the world' through different lenses, using a variety of indigenous perspectives (<http://www.throughothereyes.org.uk/>). However, this involves a respectful, reflexive and egalitarian attitude that sees 'communities' and non-academics as inherently knowledgeable, not something that HEIs are used to practising.

This vision for development education recognises and considers the changes taking place in HEIs as a result of globalisation, looking to a human rights perspective to engage research and teaching in a transformative way. A transformative vision necessitates more than just critically commenting upon, or passively resisting, market rationalisation. Development educators can go further to engage with, act upon and respond to these changes in a practical way - 'walking the talk' - by rejecting market rationality as the predominant template for their reality as academics, scholars, teachers and practitioners.

‘Walking the talk’ – a focus on health and human rights

So far, we have suggested that development education can be identified with, and serve to promote alternative approaches to globalisation. ‘Ethical globalisation’ entails the recognition of the responsibility of the international community to help people who have been denied their fundamental rights, thus requiring that human rights be taken beyond their more traditionally political and legal realms and applying them to other fields (<http://www.realizingrights.org>).

This section deals with a triangle of mutually reinforcing disciplines: global health, development and human rights. We note that global health is an area where the interdisciplinary and critical debate about human rights and development is already fairly advanced and sophisticated. The Right to Health is now widely used as an advocacy tool that adds both normative depth and policy relevance to debates on global health and development (Hunt, 2007:2-3). Paul Hunt argues that ‘...*for the first time*, the key pieces are now in place for health and the right to health to invigorate and enrich each other in an operational systematic and sustained way’ (Hunt, 2007:6). ‘[T]he enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health’ is recognised as a fundamental human right that is indispensable for the exercise of other human rights (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2000).

The Right to Health emphasises the ‘underlying determinants of health’ and a broad approach to poverty and rights. Four out of the eight Millennium Development Goals target improvements in health, and make explicit links between health and development (Meier & Fox, 2008:315). Meier and Fox contend that the Right to Development takes this debate even further (2008). Practical development concerns such as safe water, sanitation, child health, maternal health, and access to essential drugs are at the centre of the Right to Health. The rights-based approach complements the development focus because the principle of non-discrimination leads to a particular concern for the disadvantaged, marginal and those living in poverty, placing the health sector in the context of a wider struggle against discrimination and disadvantage.

A focus on health links local and global perspectives (Steiner, 2002; WHO, 2005) and provides concrete starting points for mobilising local and global knowledge and action to tackle poverty, inequalities and injustice. Hunt draws attention to the importance of cultural respect and the need for public information and education in pursuit of the right to health (Hunt, 2007:5). Local and global perspectives meet in global health issues that transcend traditional global North-South divisions. A human rights approach to health provides an important resource for supporters of public health

and advocates of reform for people-centred and accessible health systems, regardless of where they are located.

From the perspective of development education within higher education, this discussion highlights our role in facilitating collaboration and the development of a common understanding. This understanding is based on shared teaching approaches and collaborative research as part of our training and professional education programmes for scholars and researchers in a wide range of disciplines.

The Francois-Xavier Bagnoud (FXB) Center for Health and Human Rights in Boston, Massachusetts, is a leading example of an academic initiative that brings together health, development and human rights (Meier & Fox, 2008:333). The intersection of these concerns creates new conceptual frameworks that expand the discussion of cross-disciplinary problems. For example, public health scholars and activists can use human rights to build a broader social justice framework for developing public health systems (*ibid.*, 2008:334). Hunt specifically calls for human rights and health workers to collaborate to mutual advantage (2007:6), but this call for collaboration could be extended to many other relevant disciplines.

Lorntz, et al. (2008) give an example of a ‘Trans-University Center for Global Health’ at the University of Virginia (UVa). This initiative engages researchers across a variety of disciplines, from undergraduate scholars to experienced research leaders in research collaborations and action projects. Their focus on health is justified on the basis that health is ‘[o]ne of the most universal human values...Health transcends all our cultural geographic and political barriers to provide a fundamental base for human dignity’. They emphasise the university’s key role in bringing together different disciplines, in order to address health disparities and engage in sustained international collaborations. They also point to the power of such initiatives to change students’ and researchers’ outlook on the world (*ibid.*, 2008:165). These collaborations result in inter-disciplinary curricula and research-led teaching. They place a strong focus on fieldwork, case studies and applied research. We propose that our development education project might draw upon a similar approach, involving the disciplines of applied ethics, medicine, nursing, sociology, politics, human rights, gender studies, engineering, environmental research and geography, amongst others.

Conclusion

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights sets out four aims for education: full development of human personality; respect for human rights; promoting understanding; and tolerance and peace (UDHR, Article

26:2). Development education plays an important role within this remit for education, but we suggest that its ambitions might extend to the broader context of human rights and to substantive matters of global health.

Bourn calls for development education to respond to the challenges of globalisation, countering pessimism and engaging actively to shape the world for the benefit of all. This response requires innovation and imagination (2003:6). This article has attempted to contribute to that process by re-imagining an agenda for development education based on global health and human rights. This vision appeals to development educators in HEIs to reject passive conformity and acceptance of market rationality as inevitable. We can challenge this by playing an active role as change agents, taking a democratic and deliberative role that enhances the realisation of human rights.

We conclude this article with reference to a recent conference held at the National University of Ireland, Galway, on the theme of critical thinking and the role of the universities (<http://ollscoil.blogspot.com/>). The papers presented a striking contrast that echoed the two scenarios presented in this paper. On one hand, there were views that accepted and lauded the market-based globalisation of Irish higher education. League tables, a market-based view of science and technology, and audit culture were accepted and promoted as the everyday discourse, habits and currency of life in HEIs. Yet on the other hand, democratic deliberation also flourished as other presenters offered a rare wealth of critical and alternative views, and creative and resistant responses. One paper challenged participants to call forth the imagination to transform the way we think about the reality we take for granted (Evans, 2008).

Universities play an important role in producing and creating not just the 'knowledge economy', but also the 'knowledge society'. At present, a great deal of attention is being paid to measuring and managing knowledge, but perhaps not as much care is going into whether we are using that knowledge wisely. Commenting generally on global futures, Michael Edwards observes that we already have the resources, technology, ideas and wealth to address the problems of global poverty, however, we do not yet have the will or the imagination to harness these things to a higher purpose (1999:232). He notes that international cooperation is needed to achieve a future that is at least positive, if not perfect.

As a corrective to the more problematic aspects of globalisation and passive acceptance of undesirable trends towards a dehumanised 'iron cage', how can universities nurture and provide the intellectual, professional and practical resources to address global problems and work for positive transformation? The work of some futures scholars remains optimistic that

universities need not merely be followers of futures mapped by the market, but have the potential to play a role in shaping alternative futures which could be wiser, fairer, more human and more sustainable. For Gidley (2000:236, 237) the key to higher education breaking out of the vicious circles of globalisation is *inspired human agency* and a sense of *higher coherence* underpinning the attempts to solve tomorrow's problems. She contends that those of us in the HEI sector, '...[a]cademics, administrators and students alike need to become creatively courageous in reinventing universities if we are to become the creators of transformed futures and not just creatures of the past' (2000:238, emphasis added). Courage as well as creativity and a certain critical mass of people are needed if we are not to be subjected by the new political economy of market-rational globalisation to recover our role in securing pro-development outcomes.

We suggest that human rights and health provide an important starting point and points of agreement that can inspire human agency and provide a sense of higher coherence towards a re-imagination of our roles and contributions. This is a mature debate that has already yielded some consensus and agreement – embodied by the World Health Organisation's 'Health for All' campaign, which has adopted an encompassing and developmental definition of health for three decades. This also fits with the Right to Health, the Right to Development and many policy commitments which have equity and the well-being of people as their aim.

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