

Focus

FROM DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION TO GLOBAL LEARNING: CHANGING AGENDAS AND PRIORITIES

Douglas Bourn

Abstract: This self-reflective article addresses my own involvement in development education (DE), first as Director of the Development Education Association (DEA) and, since 2006, as Director of the Development Education Research Centre (DERC) at the Institute of Education in London. It reviews the changing nature of political support for development education, the influence of UK government policies and recognises that 2005 could be perceived as a high point for funding and societal engagement in support for development. The article reflects that a major challenge for development education has been evaluation and impact. It concludes by reflecting that despite declining funding in the UK, development education continues to have an impact within education and that a feature of recent changes has been the increasingly central role educational practitioners are having.

Key words: Development education; global education; political lobbying; evaluation.

This article is a self-reflective paper on my personal journey of engagement within the policies and practices of development education during my time as Director of the Development Education Association (from 1993 to 2006) and since 2006 as Director of the Development Education Research Centre (DERC) at the Institute of Education in London. Here I aim to reflect on the issues I have faced in both posts in promoting development education to educational academics and practitioners, and in working alongside policymakers in the UK and elsewhere in Europe. The article focuses primarily on the decade from 2005 to 2015, on the basis that in many people's eyes, 2005 could be identified as the highpoint of development

education in the UK, with perhaps a perception of apparent decline thereafter. Throughout this article are references to themes I have explored in more depth elsewhere, including the move from a community of practice to a pedagogy of global social justice, and the move from the margins to the mainstream of educational practice (Bourn, 2012, 2015).

The practice of development education

Development education as a body of educational practice has been well established in UK, Ireland and much of Western Europe for over thirty years. Despite changing political influences and consequential funding priorities, development education continues to survive and has gained increased support amongst practising educationalists, particularly in schools, colleges and universities. Within Europe, support for development education has been primarily located within funding and policymaking bodies with responsibility for aid and development budgets. This has meant that within the broader educational community, its profile has been lower than other areas such as environment and human rights education that may have benefitted from a greater sense of collaboration across policymaking bodies. This is despite attempts to re-think development education as part of broader strategies on global education, such as the Maastricht Declaration of 2002 (see Osler and Vincent, 2002).

In countries such as UK, Ireland, Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Belgium, Norway, Finland and Spain there is however evidence of initiatives that aim to break out of the mould of development education being tied to support for aid and development, and that move towards a pedagogical approach to learning involving a range of stakeholders, partners in education and links to broader educational themes (Bourn, 2015; Hartmeyer, 2008; Krause, 2010; Mesa-Peinado, 2011a,b; O'Loughlin and Wegimont, 2009; Ongevalle, Huyse and Petergem, 2013). Central to these initiatives has been the continuing strength and role of civil society organisations, often non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and bodies with a specific focus and remit for development education, such as the network of local development education centres (DECs) in England.

Through these organisations a body of practice has evolved that could be summarised as reflecting:

- an increased focus on influencing and working within formal education structures and institutions;
- a focus within the learning on values such as social justice, human rights and interdependence, and seeing development education as a vehicle towards greater social change;
- a challenge to dominant images in societies about Africa as being about poor rural communities in need of aid and support; and
- the production of resources and delivery of professional development courses aimed at teachers.

Funding support for development education in the UK, 1997-2005

I was appointed the first Director of the Development Education Association in 1993 at a time when the then Conservative government showed minimal interest in funding development education. NGOs and development education bodies in the UK looked to the European Commission or to the leading international NGOs such as Oxfam, Christian Aid and CAFOD for leadership and support. Conscious of likely political change in 1996 the DEA published a lobbying document called *The Case for Development Education* which had as its main objectives the securing of funding and political support for development education and recognition of the value of learning about global and development issues within mainstream education (DEA, 1996).

In the lead up to the 1997 general election, much of my time was spent on influencing Labour politicians, notably Clare Short, who became Secretary of State for International Development, and influential members of the House of Lords such as the Earl of Sandwich, Lord Judd and the Bishop of Worcester, as well as civil servants who had responsibility for awareness

raising work on aid and development. The result was that when the Labour Party came to power in the UK in 1997, there was already a strong body of support to build on. From 1998 to 2005 the focus of lobbying work in the UK was on implementation of the Building Support for Development strategy (DfID, 1999). This was published by the new Department for International Development, led by Clare Short as the first Secretary of State, with support from her junior minister, George Foulkes, who chaired the Development Awareness Working Group. This group played an important role for five years in developing policies and strategies for work within formal education, trade unions, the media and faith groups. However looking back on this period, what is noticeable is that only perhaps within formal education and the media is there any evidence of long-term impact.

One of the reasons for this was that the aims of the strategy were vague and rather nebulous; and because the department decided to blur the distinctions between broader awareness raising and education, measurable targets became difficult to identify, apart from seeking recognition of development education within the formal education curriculum. There has been some discussion of the nature of this development education practice, most notably by Cameron and Fairbrass, who in my view offer a rather narrow and naive approach to how policies and strategies on development education were developed and implemented. They suggested that in 2000, DfID was ‘embarking on a process of colonising the development education community’ (Cameron and Fairbrass, 2000: 23). They also suggested that DfID was through its funding, de-politicising development education by not funding advocacy or direct lobbying work. As someone who was centrally involved in debates with government at this time, I argued strongly against funding lobbying work because this could result in development education being reduced to being seen as little more than an instrument of NGO agendas.

There is no doubt that at this time it could be argued that there was a ‘vagueness and lack of conceptual clarity’ (Hammond, 2002: 35) in DfID’s policies. But this was arguably a good thing since it meant the government

was less instrumental in its approach. More importantly, it gave space for civil society bodies to develop strategic and coherent programmes that could influence policymakers.

2005: The high point of engagement and support in the UK

By 2005, the development education community in the UK was probably at its strongest in terms of funding, political support and influence. Through DfID, there were a number of funding initiatives to support development education. These included not only major and mini grants programmes but also strategic initiatives within formal education, including regionally-based strategies for work in schools (see Gathercole, 2011). The Department's White Paper, *Eliminating Poverty: Making governance work for the poor*, published in 2006, demonstrated this political commitment by stating that it would:

“Double investment in development education, as they seek to give every child in the UK a chance to learn about the issues that shape their world; Set up a scheme to help other groups - such as faith groups, community groups, local government, business and charitable organisations - build links with developing countries; Expand opportunities for young people and diaspora communities to volunteer in developing countries” (DfID, 2006).

Equally significant was the fact that the strategic funding agreement DfID had in place with the leading NGOs now had to include evidence of awareness raising and educational work. NGOs such as Plan UK and Oxfam particularly used this opportunity to expand and develop their development education activities (see Bourn and Kybird, 2012).

A number of other initiatives were also launched in 2005 including the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, the Make Poverty History campaign, and the Prime Minister's Commission for Africa. All of these initiatives had an impact on development education in the UK. In England, perhaps the most important initiative was the publication of the second edition of *Developing the Global Dimension in the School*

Curriculum (DfES, 2005). This publication had first been published in 2000 as a guidance document, in partnership between the Education and International Development ministries. The second edition in 2005 was more important than the first for a number of reasons. Firstly it had greater ownership by and engagement from the Education ministry and the Curriculum Authority. Secondly the content took account of comments raised by both academics (Andreotti, 2008) and practitioners, and included a stronger and more critically reflective approach to development. Thirdly, copies of the publication were sent to all schools in England. In 2005, over 50,000 further copies were distributed to schools and teacher education bodies around the country.

This expansion in England was mirrored elsewhere in Europe with increasing political engagement at the European level through the European Consensus Document. This document, supported by policymakers and practitioners, called for recognition that learning about development issues needs to take account of the ‘interconnectedness of people’s lives’ and the importance of engaging a broad range of stakeholders across societies. What also located this document within a broader development education pedagogical tradition was its promotion of participatory learning methods, critical thinking, and working through existing educational systems (EU Multi-Stakeholder Forum, 2007).

Strategies for development education in Ireland, Finland (Alasuutari, 2011), Austria (Forghani-Arani and Hartmeyer, 2011), and Germany towards the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century reflected this increased commitment to promoting development education to the broader educational world, and working in partnership with a range of organisations. An example of this was the first objective of the Irish strategy, published in 2007, which aimed at ‘strengthening coherence between development education and national education, citizenship and development policies and supporting the growth of best practice in development education at European and international levels’ (Irish Aid, 2007: 9).

This growth reflected the confidence of practitioners and the strong support from policymakers in many countries. But what it hid was the lack of evidence of impact or clarity about how development education and related themes such as global learning, global citizenship and global education were being perceived. The lack of rigour and conceptual clarity at this point in time resulted in a number of confused messages, and as a consequence the practice was laid open to criticism in terms of measurable impact.

Importance of research, evidence, impact and evaluation

My own engagement in development education from 2000 onwards became increasingly influenced by this need to address impact, evidence and measurement of effectiveness. We had begun work on this in the DEA in 2001 through the measuring effectiveness project that I led with Ann McCollum. The outcomes of this project were a publication (Bourn and McCollum, 2001), a toolkit on evaluation (Hirst, 2002), and a series of conferences and events. But its impact was limited despite the messages it raised being in tune with similar initiatives taking place elsewhere in Europe (Asbrand and Lang-Wojatsik, 2003; Scheunpflug and McDonnell, 2008).

One reason for the relative lack of impact of the measuring effectiveness project was that the main themes addressed were not carried through into reviews of funding streams and the more difficult issue of the relationship of the impact of development education to broader development goals and objectives. The project for example stated that:

“A development education programme does not, and in most cases will not, have as its main objective changing attitudes and understanding of global poverty and international development. This is likely to be much more specific, such as improving the capacity of teachers to deliver effective programmes, or giving educators the tools and resources to engage with development issues” (Bourn and McCollum, 2001: 27).

Other studies on evaluation (Scheunpflug and McDonnell, 2008) began to pose some of these issues more openly regarding the relationship between learning, awareness raising, communication and advocacy; and also gave recognition to the fact that learning is a complex process and cannot be reduced to a series of achievable targets (Asbrand and Lang-Wojatsik, 2003).

Another factor that needs to be recognised during this period was that in many European countries, NGOs and civil society organisations were very powerful players in the development community. Policymakers needed their support at a time when public engagement and support for development was seen as paramount, with commitments amongst G8 countries in particular working towards 0.7 percent of GDP being allocated to aid and development. This meant that when it came to development education, funding and grants to non-governmental organisations were seen as politically necessary, regardless of their strategic value. It was therefore not surprising that when a review of funding for development awareness was undertaken within DfID in 2009, serious questions were raised. The review identified that there was effective innovation and experimentation in some areas, notably in formal education. But it went on to note:

“Little is known about the overall effectiveness and impact since regular review and lesson learning were not effectively integrated into the programme.... What has emerged is a fragmented programme that serves some better than others” (Verulam Associates, 2009: 1).

A further review in 2010 by the new Coalition government in the UK was even more critical:

“We are confident that raising awareness of development issues in the UK has contributed to reducing poverty overseas. However, the evidence is circumstantial and consequently we have been unable to prove conclusively that this is the case. We can make the argument that it does, but there are simply too many causal connections to be able to prove it.”

Similarly we have been unable to prove that DfID-funded awareness raising projects have made a direct contribution to reducing poverty. In part, this is because DfID's historic approach to funding projects in this area has been unstrategic, and individual projects have not been properly evaluated" (COI, 2011: 4).

These criticisms helped a sceptical coalition government to decide to end its grant funding programme, with the consequence that only three programmes, one on formal education, one on school linking, and one on international volunteering have been supported since 2012. Whilst there are some justifiable criticisms of government policies in both reports, the civil society community perhaps had to recognise that it could have done more at this time to address the questions of impact and evaluation. Perhaps organisations, because of their vulnerability, tended to focus too heavily on securing grants and funding at all costs. What is most disappointing is that it was one of the DfID-funded projects during this period that provided us with a model for how development education bodies should measure their impact. This was the project, *How Do We Know Its Working?*, led by the Reading International Solidarity Centre (RISC) which took a research based approach to addressing how children learn about global and development issues. Their research identified that learning about global and development issues may increase knowledge but not necessarily change attitudes. Through a series of structured activities which were closely monitored and reviewed, accompanied by a professional development programme for teachers, resources and support mechanisms were put in place to encourage potential evidence of progress. (Lowe, 2008: 64).

This programme, which has been influential since 2008 across Europe, demonstrates that there is no magic formula to measure impact of development education. How young people respond to learning cannot be controlled or manipulated. Understanding development and global issues is also a complex process and requires support, help and advice. But above all is the need for greater depth of research, and evidence that goes beyond the

superficial data often gathered from evaluations of increased use of materials, attendance at events and teachers' and pupils' enjoyment of the activities.

Creation of the Development Education Research Centre

As stated earlier, unlike areas such as environmental or intercultural education, until 2006 there was no strong academic tradition in development or global education. Without a clear theoretical basis, initiatives were all too easily at risk of simply responding to external funding priorities. In the UK Lynn Davies, in her reflections on a DfID funded global citizenship project, noted the lack of clarity within the educational world about what is meant by 'global citizenship' (Davies, Harber and Yamashita, 2005). She identified the need for more research on the long-term impact of global citizenship education (Davies, 2006).

The rationale behind the establishment of the Development Education Research Centre has been summarised in this journal (Bourn, 2007) and elsewhere (Bourn, 2013). Central to my task in 2006 was to raise the profile of development education within the academic community, to secure recognition of its contribution to broader educational goals and to establish development education as an integral component of mainstream learning within formal education. Whilst there were few published articles or major books on development education before 2008, this did not mean there were no discrete themes or bases for the practice. What was needed was recognition of these themes, and a clearer conceptualisation into a sound pedagogical framework (Bourn, 2008). My aim then and now was to build on the practice, conceptualise more coherently and demonstrate the links to broader educational debates of the excellent practice that had been taking place throughout Europe led by a range of non-governmental organisations, particularly those with an overt and discrete development education focus.

McCann and McCloskey, in reviewing definitions of development education had posed these questions:

“Do we focus on methodology (active, participative, learning), the social and economic issues it addresses (trade, aid, conflict, etc.), the

skills it engenders in learners (tolerance, respect, cultural awareness), the outcomes it intends (social justice and equality), the social relations it examines (between rich and poor), the educational sectors in which it operates (schools, youth groups), or the tools it employs (resources, training etc.)?” (2009: 239).

My response to this in 2008 was as follows:

“Development education as a field of education has a continuing value if it is seen not as learning about development issues but rather as a pedagogy of making connections between the individual and personal, from the local to the global, and which by its very nature, is transformative. It needs to be seen as an approach to education that challenges dominant orthodoxy on education and perceptions about the world and enables the learner to look at issues and the world from a different place” (Bourn, 2008: 15-16).

What I was trying to do in that article was to locate the discourses around development education within broader discussions on critical pedagogy, recognising particularly the influence of Paulo Freire, the debates on globalisation and postcolonialism, and the complex processes of learning. I was also trying to encourage a move beyond seeing development education as simply part of a broader series of ‘adjectival educations’ within global education, to seeing it as a discrete and distinctive approach to learning.

The influence of Scheunpflug and Andreotti

Key to the progress of development education and its related fields of global education, global learning and global citizenship has been the writing and ideas of Vanessa Andreotti and Annette Scheunpflug. In different ways and using different approaches they not only raised the profile of this area of learning, but also encouraged a more rigorous and theoretical approach, rooted in social theories, postcolonialism in the case of Andreotti (2008), and Luhmann’s concept of a world society in the work of Scheunpflug (2008). Both have published groundbreaking material and have engaged directly in debates with policymakers and practitioners, influencing particularly at a

European level recognition of the centrality of the learning process and the broader social, political and ideological influences on this process.

Andreotti has, through at least two influential projects, ‘Open Space for Dialogue and Enquiry’ and ‘Through Other Eyes’, encouraged an approach to learning that questions assumptions about development, seeing the issues through a range of world viewpoints and recognising the value of dialogue, reflection and critical enquiry (Andreotti, 2010; Andreotti and de Souza, 2008). Schuenpflug (2011) has been particularly influential within Germany and Austria in encouraging a re-thinking of how knowledge is constructed, to understand the influence of global forces and to recognise the importance of evidence to inform effective delivery.

Their influence can be seen through a range of programmes, strategies and policies not only in Europe, but also in North America, New Zealand, Australia and Japan. Today there is a greater recognition in strategies and programmes, whether led by policymakers or practitioners, of the need to take account of the following:

- the complex nature of societies, particularly the influence of colonialism and globalisation on what and how people learn;
- the need for evidence and research to support programmes and to encourage academics and researchers more directly in evaluation initiatives;
- the central role of learning and recognition that it cannot be pre-determined; this means working in partnership with or supporting initiatives that have a research component; and
- encouragement of self-reflection and critiques that may be difficult to address and may require support, advice and resourcing to achieve long-term impact.

It is through the influence of these two academics, particularly alongside the discourses on globalisation, global citizenship and a knowledge society, that I have developed my own conceptual thinking in shaping a framework for development education based on four discrete elements:

- a global outlook
- recognition of power and inequality in the world
- belief in social justice
- commitment to dialogue, reflection and personal and social transformation (Bourn, 2015).

I have decided to retain the concept of development education as a way of summarising these themes, as they build not only on the ideas of Scheunpflug and Andreotti but also on the practices of development education bodies around the world for the past thirty years.

Passing the baton from the experts to the deliverers

This article to date has suggested that there has been significant progress since 2000 in development education in terms of its influence and impact within academia and educational research more widely. My own research centre has published twelve research reports since 2010 (www.ioe.ac.uk/derc). We have also supported five students through to completion of their doctorates. I am aware of similar initiatives and examples of academic research, publications and mainstream education in a range of universities in the UK, and also in several institutions in Ireland, Netherlands, Spain, Germany, Austria, Sweden, Finland, Portugal and Belgium. There is clearly a strong academic discourse now in Europe, and strong links exist between many of these institutions and bodies, for example through the Global Education Network Europe (GENE) and the Development Awareness Raising and Education Forum for NGOs (DARE).

But at the same time, the strength and contribution of organisations that have historically played an important role in development education, such as NGOs, civil society organisations and development education centres in countries such as England and Ireland have noticeably declined. Whilst the relative continued influence of such organisations varies from country to country, there appears to be a broader trend that by its very nature may be as much an indicator of progress as a challenge and a threat. This trend is that the ownership and development of development education, particularly within formal education, is increasingly being led by educationalists, whether teachers and schools or teacher educationalists and academics, and not as in the past by NGOs. An example of this is the Global Learning Programme (GLP) in England, funded by DfID, which, although being coordinated by a consortium of organisations including Pearson plc, Oxfam, Think Global, the Institute of Education and specialist teacher organisations, particularly in geography, has the needs of teachers and schools as its driving force.

This programme aims to engage 50 percent of schools in England with global learning by offering a range of professional development opportunities, promoted by civil society organisations and by schools themselves. Central to the drive for change within the education system is the establishment of 400 expert centres based in schools that act as the leaders to partner schools in promoting global learning. This approach consciously moves the leadership for change within schools to the teachers themselves, as opposed to the lead coming from external bodies such as NGOs which have often, through funded projects, developed resources for use in the classroom and run courses related to these materials. This approach has clearly been empowering for schools, and has resulted in an increased body of expertise in many schools. It has also brought the development education approach much closer to the needs and agendas of teachers.

This means that to survive, civil society organisations, particularly local development education centres, need to be able to demonstrate they have courses and expertise of value to schools and teachers. Evidence to date

suggests that whilst some DECAs can and do provide such a service and are valued by schools and teachers, relying on this form of income is not sufficient for their survival. In 2014, for example, ten DECAs across England either closed down or reduced their level of operation to being a team of individual consultants who rely on securing funding for individual pieces of work. My experience to date from close involvement with the Global Learning Programme in England suggests that whilst more and more schools are engaging in global learning, there are dangers of their involvement being shallow and not necessarily long-term, unless there is strong support in the form of professional development programmes and opportunities for creative and innovative approaches.

Understanding development and global issues is complex. Evidence from the GLP programme (www.glp-e.org.uk) suggests so far that the majority of schools in England still have their initial engagement with learning about development and global issues through some form of fundraising activity or a school link. For many schools, the influence on their approach to learning about development came from what is called a 'charitable mentality', of wanting to help poorer people, accepting and working within the dominant discourses on development. Development education has progressed in the UK and other European countries to question and challenge these dominant orthodoxies, to challenge the stereotypes that many teachers and children may have about peoples in Africa, for example. Moreover, development education ideas and practices, influenced particularly by the work of Paulo Freire, have aimed to locate their approach within a philosophy of social justice, working towards a more equitable world.

I would suggest therefore that alongside initiatives such as the Global Learning Programme there is going to be a need, at least for the next decade or so, for initiatives, resources and critical approaches that reflect an approach to learning that is located within a discourse around global social justice. This resourcing and support can come from governments and policymakers or it can come from elsewhere. Indeed a range of resourcing and support would be an advantage. However in increasingly 'austere'

economic times, this is not going to be easy. What perhaps is needed is for academics, organisations and policymakers to consider thinking ‘out of the box’ to see where and how development education approaches and the practice of global learning can contribute to address some of the challenges of today’s society – the impact of globalisation on communities, increased insecurity and lack of identity, and divisions between rich and poor in the world. Development education cannot solve these problems but what it can do is, through educational opportunities, to equip learners to make a positive contribution to addressing these challenges.

In 2005, development education may have been at a high point in the UK in terms of profile and political support, but unless it can move beyond being seen as an adjunct to broader development aims, it will always be vulnerable to the criticism that there is no easy link between development education and global poverty reduction. It is where links can be made between domestic needs and the interdependent nature of the globalised world we now live in, that development education can and will be able to retain its relevance to the educational needs of societies.

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