Editorial

ANOTHER COG IN THE ANTI-POLITICS MACHINE? THE 'DE-CLAWING' OF DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

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> "Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral" (Paulo Freire, 1921-1997).

This issue of *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review* is devoted to the theme of 'Professionalisation and Deradicalisation of Development Education' and is centrally concerned with a number of paradoxes and contradictions that characterise the field in an era of neo-liberal shaped globalisation. It addresses, in particular, the question of why the development education sector endorses, tacitly or otherwise, the very ideologies and political-economic arrangements that are responsible for producing or exacerbating conditions of poverty and injustice, while simultaneously encouraging people to take action against this poverty and injustice? It asks: What are the implications of retaining a politically detached stance on crucial policy issues that the sector is ideally positioned to respond to? Why does the sector sometimes have surprisingly little to say about key development issues and crises as they are played out in local contexts? What are the consequences for development organisations that do take on divisive 'local' issues? What have efforts to 'mainstream' development education within formal education meant for the radical underpinnings of the field? What does it mean to 'do' development education in an era of financial austerity and insecurity, where people's lived experiences increasingly clash with their inward expectations and desires for their (now blunted) futures – futures which were, for many, until very recently, imagined in far more positive and hopeful terms? How are government cuts to development education impacting on its practice? Do the long-term educative goals of informing citizens about the underlying structural causes of poverty and injustice inevitably become compromised or obscured within the context of more immediate 'bread and butter' tasks like fundraising for development programmes in the global South? How can those whose task it is to educate people about the structural and systemic features of global poverty best align

themselves within organisations whose primary function is to fundraise and raise awareness about their projects overseas?

The question of whether development education has been 'de-clawed' or stripped of its original radical underpinnings, based on the ideas of such radical thinkers as Paulo Freire, is an uncomfortable one for those of us who identify ourselves as development educators, with our claimed commitment to ambitious goals like social transformation, global justice, and poverty eradication. The question is 'thorny', not least because it requires us to cast the gaze on ourselves, forcing us to ask—as well as respond to—difficult questions about the possible disjuncture between the professed rhetoric, values, and organising principles of development education, and the policies and practices we enact, endorse or contest through our work. As development educators, we are acutely aware of how our everyday actions or inactions, our complicity or contestation of dominant discourses and ideologies, can have very real material consequences. We encourage learners to embrace *pedagogies of discomfort* which cause them to reflect on their own positionalities within local and global hierarchies (Boler, 1999). Applying the same principles of reflexivity and critical scrutiny to the field itself is a challenging, conflictual, and in some ways dangerous endeavour; yet it is arguably also a very timely exercise because unprecedented political, economic, and environmental crises are forcing us to think and teach about familiar topics in radically different ways. While in many ways, the old questions — whether they be about effects of loan conditionality imposed by international institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), or the social and environmental impact of multinational corporations — remain the right ones, it seems that now, more than ever, they need to be posed in new and different ways.

Concepts such as de-radicalisation and de-politicisation are also already familiar terrain within the broader field of international development. Ferguson's seminal *Anti-politics Machine*, from which the title of this editorial takes inspiration, explains how the development apparatus, similar to the anti-gravity machine which suspends the effects of gravity in Science Fiction stories, can function as a kind of 'anti-politics machine,' 'suspend[ing] politics from even the most sensitive political operations,' while simultaneously strengthening statutory power, all at the flick of a switch (Ferguson, 1994:256).

Moreover, the co-optation of radical projects and discourses by powerful actors, and the subsequent muting of their transformative potential, is one of the hallmark strategies of neoliberalism. Feminist scholars have

demonstrated the ways in which policy commitments to gender equality often 'evaporate' or become heavily 'diluted' as they move through development bureaucracy (Longwe, 1997), such that an essentially political project gets reduced to a technocratic activity to be measured and evaluated in terms of analytic tools, frameworks and mechanisms, thereby restricting rather than amplifying the scope for transformation (Cornwall, Harrison & Whitehead, 2008:9). The neoliberal emphasis on performance, efficiency and accountability within the development industry is further implicated in a narrowing of development aspirations and a reluctance to tackle some of the more challenging dimensions of global poverty, gender injustice, etc. The preoccupation with impact measurement, for example, has arguably resulted in a situation whereby tangible and expressible indictors and measures often drive development goals and targets, rather than the indictors being determined by, and following from, the goals themselves (Unterhalter, 2005).

Concrete examples of de-politicisation in action can be found in recent development frameworks such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The disjuncture between the ambitious nature of the third MDG, with focuses on promoting gender equality and empowerment, and the far more limited target of eliminating gender disparities in education, has been the subject of considerable criticism. The *Beyond Access* project in the UK, for example, has highlighted the problems associated with employing gender parity as a measure of gender equality, pointing out the persistence of gender-based inequalities in societies where universal access and high levels of educational attainment for women already exist.

Indeed, the most powerful players on the international development stage, including the World Bank and the IMF, have become increasingly skilled at appropriating political concepts like gender to present a progressive face while perpetuating the *status quo.* As Vavrus (2003) suggests, policies and programmes aimed at promoting gender parity and girls' education supported by development institutions like the World Bank tap, albeit superficially, into equity concerns, thereby obfuscating the economic and political crises triggered by the neoliberal policies that these very same institutions devised. As Klees explains, the situation is akin to a 'good cop-bad cop' scenario, with frameworks like the MDGs serving as a:

> "compensatory legitimation' function for states and agencies that are deeply implicated in the perpetuation of global poverty. In order to compensate for the intensification of poverty and inequality associated

> with detrimental political-economic arrangements, which call into question the legitimacy of the social order ('the bad cop'), key players in the world system of neoliberal globalisation introduce policies like the MDGs, aimed at ameliorating some problematic symptoms and thus restoring legitimacy ('the good cop')" (Klees, 2008).

As development education becomes more formalised in institutional and policy arenas, and concepts like 'global citizenship' have become ubiquitous across a range of ideological camps, some development education scholars and practitioners are becoming increasingly concerned about a possible de-radicalisation of what they see as an essentially political, ethical and transformative project. Within the formal educational sector, for example, some have pointed to an inherent tension between the goal of development education — which seeks to develop active citizens who can respond to pressing global issues — with a more dominant instrumentalist approach to schooling which views the primary purpose of education as to prepare students for competitive employment in the global marketplace (Andrzejewski & Alessio, 1999). Recent policy proposals to 'eliminate' or 'discontinue' academic subjects from education programmes within Colleges of Education in the Republic of Ireland and to instil a 'relentless focus' on literacy and numeracy within teacher education and in schools, as laid out in the recently published *Draft National Plan to Improve Literacy and Numeracy* (Department of Education and Skills, 2010), can be seen as part of a broader trend to further entrench this ideology of instrumentalism and performativity that is characteristic of the encroachment of neoliberalism in all spheres of life. The Literacy and Numeracy plan, which argues that the inclusion of subjects and themes like social and life skills, environmental issues, arts and music education has meant that '…the time available for the acquisition and consolidation of critical [sic] core skills has been eroded' (2010:25), has potentially negative implications for already marginalised subjects like development education.

Fears about the future of development education in schools are amplified within a context of global and national economic crisis. Since the onset of the recession in the Republic of Ireland, public debate about education has become almost exclusively concerned with economic rationalism and the role that education can and should play in national economic recovery. Within this instrumentalist framework, the type of 'knowledge worth having' is identified, implicitly or explicitly, as only that which supports employability, competitiveness and 'our' international reputation and educational rankings in a context of market-led globalisation. Within post-primary schools in the

Republic of Ireland, the exam-driven focus of the curriculum has *already* been identified as a major obstacle to the meaningful inclusion or in-depth exploration of development issues and global justice themes in schools (Bryan & Bracken, forthcoming). There is much evidence to suggest that the wider context within which teachers perform their work may constrain their more ambitious aspirations to foster more critical forms of engagement with development themes and issues (Smith, 2004). Those teachers who have a sophisticated understanding of complex development issues are often torn between engaging students critically with complex development issues and ensuring their students produce 'safe' and acceptable answers in the context of a competitive national examination system (Bryan & Bracken, forthcoming).

The implementation of Citizenship Education as a discrete academic subject in formal educational settings, while creating a formal space for consideration of development themes and issues, has also arguably contributed to the de-politicisation or 'de-clawing' of development education. Citizenship Education is widely perceived by teachers and students as a Cinderella subject, due to the failure to grant it parity of esteem with other academic subjects (e.g. Bryan & Bracken, forthcoming; Davies, 2010; Gleeson, 2009; Niens & McIllrath, 2010). Problems also abound with the substantive content of citizenship curricula in schools. A comparative analysis of Citizenship Education textbooks produced in Australia, Canada, and the UK by Davies & Issitt (2005) highlights a disconnect between official rhetoric, which supports a radical conception of Citizenship Education, stressing the need to engage with the challenges and complexities of the current historical moment, and the reality of curriculum resources providing mere surface treatment of these issues, and failing to engage with issues of power. These authors highlight the tendency within these materials to privilege national rather than global issues, to devote limited attention to issues of diversity and to favour cognitive thinking or reflection about personal issues over active involvement in political issues.

David Gillborn has likened Citizenship Education in the UK to a placebo drug – maintaining that it 'gives the appearance of addressing issues like racism and race equality but which, in reality, manifestly fails to tackle the real problem' (2006:85). Similarly, Bryan (forthcoming) suggests that Citizenship Education in the Republic of Ireland context functions as a kind of 'band-aid' pedagogical response to the problems of global injustice – denying complex political or economic realities in favour of overly-simplistic, easily digestible and 'regurgitatable' laundry lists of symptoms of global poverty and the promotion of overly-simplistic, quick fix and ultimately ineffectual solutions to global

problems. Consistent with the 'soft' versions of development education being promoted in textbooks, development activism in schools is often characterised by a 'three Fs' approach, which defines development education within narrow parameters of *fundraising, fasting and having fun* in aid of specific development causes (Bryan & Bracken, forthcoming).

Some of the available evidence on the 'mainstreaming' of development education in schools points to a less pessimistic analysis than that afforded by looking at its integration within discrete subject areas like Citizenship Education alone. Seán Bracken, Gareth Dart and Stephen Pickering (2011) suggest that while government support for development education in the UK, and the associated mainstreaming process may have resulted in a diminution of more radical development education perspectives articulated in earlier development education policy documents, it has nevertheless facilitated more profound engagement with development issues—both in the context of teacher education and classroom-based practices. They argue that the mainstreaming of development education has indeed provided significant opportunities for all learners to engage with issues of equality, identity, social justice and development. Yet they conclude that in the current climate of market-driven changes in the educational landscape, it is likely that future debates regarding the place of development education in the formal curriculum are more likely to be driven by a concern with maintaining momentum made through mainstreaming rather than on further radicalisation of current policies or strategies.

The disjuncture between the radical aims and professed rhetoric of development education and its practical implementation has led many to become deeply disillusioned by, and increasingly sceptical of, the agenda behind development education itself. Biccum (2005) argues that official development education efforts constitute part of a broader effort to normalise neoliberal-shaped globalisation and to produce a citizenry which is complicit in, and unquestioning of, a 'new imperialist' agenda. Similarly, Schattle (2008) presents evidence to suggest that some development education programmes implicitly endorse neoliberal free-market ideologies and have been packaged in ways that 'appeal to the political right' (Schattle, 2008:85), focused as they are on stressing the need to prepare students to compete in the world economy. Leslie Roman (2003) offers an equally sceptical view of the ways in which the discourse of global citizenship has been used by some North American universities to fulfil a nationalistic, as opposed to transnational, democratic agenda.

David Selby & Fumiyo Kagawa (2011), apply a related set of arguments to the related fields of development education and education for sustainable development as they are being framed in a European policy-making context. More specifically, they examine the impact of what they refer to as the 'global treadmill of neo-liberalism' (so-called 'globalization from above') on these fields (which they refer to as educational expressions of 'globalization from below'). These authors interrogate the failure of mainstream institutions which promote development education to problematise the discourses, ideologies and political-economic arrangements that are responsible for, or complicit in, producing the very conditions that development educators seek to promote deeper understanding of and action against (e.g. poverty and related injustices). Particularly worrying are the ways in which recent development education policy documents produced in Europe appear to be re-defining development education as being centrally concerned with workforce preparation for technocratic competitive efficacy. Selby & Kagawa apply the useful metaphor of the Faustian bargain to explain the mechanisms of dilution and depoliticisation at play within the related fields of development education and education for sustainable development. They suspect 'collusion with the prevailing neo-liberal worldview in return for some, likely ephemeral, purchase on policy' such that original radical values and aspirations are compromised for a place at the policy-making table *now*, 'whatever the dystopian future prospects afforded by the growth imperative' (2011:17).

A number of the articles in this issue are centrally concerned with the current economic crisis and its implications for development education. Stephen McCloskey's article, which focuses on the failure of the development sector in the Republic of Ireland to intervene in public debate about Ireland's recent financial collapse and its loss of economic sovereignty, gives further purchase to the metaphor of the Faustian bargain, laid out in Selby & Kagawa's article. McCloskey criticises the development sector's failure to locate its 'Act Now on 2015' campaign to engage public support for, and prevent further cuts to, the aid budget within a broader international political-economic context. He outlines how development campaigners failed to connect fundamental 'dots' between aspects of domestic economic policy which were instrumental in bringing about the financial crisis (e.g. de-regulation, reckless lending practices by banks, etc.) and a dwindling development assistance budget, thereby de-politicising the campaign, at the flick of a switch. Moreover, with notable exceptions, McCloskey points to the virtual absence of a critical voice from the transnational development sector about the likely effects of IMF loan conditionality and related austerity measures 'locally' in the Republic.

Ultimately development organisations have undermined their role as the very organisations best placed to educate the public in Ireland about these issues, by virtue of their long history of campaigning against, and working 'on the ground' to ameliorate the effects of conditionality and austerity on people in the global South.

As Cornwall, et al. (2007) point out, the pressure for complicity with bureaucratic norms, or to remain silent on policies to which one might otherwise object is far greater within an economic and employment context characterised by dwindling resources, growing unemployment, increasingly insecure working conditions, recruitment and promotion embargos, etc. The Irish example speaks to broader questions about the relationship between development actors and agencies and those who hold the purse strings. As McCloskey points out, in the Irish context, 'the relationship between the NGO and government sectors goes beyond that of donor and aid partner to, for example, joint missions to multilateral development gatherings which can arguably result in a blurring of roles, policies and agendas' (2011:38). McCloskey attributes this reluctance to intervene in the public debate on the EU-IMF 'bailout' to, in part, the funding distribution mechanisms within the development sector, suggesting that 'when the stakes are so high in terms of financial support, policy formation and government access, development organisations may be reluctant to overtly criticise government policy, particularly in areas beyond international development.' (2011:38).

Thus the adoption of a politically detached stance on the EU-IMF 'deal' by development NGOs may be partly understood as part of a broader strategy not to further compromise an overseas development aid programme that had already been slashed in successive budgets. While this desire to secure funding and resources for, or to prevent further cuts to, development projects is understandable, the consequences of failing to adopt a more political and critical stance has arguably proven detrimental to the development education project, whose *raison d'être* is to deepen public understanding of local and global injustices and inequalities. McCloskey maintains that NGO detachment from the debate undermined the sector's credibility as a critical voice and represented a derogation of development education's role as an agent of *local* as well as global development. McCloskey's arguments are reinforced by Andy Storey (2011), whose Perspectives article addresses a similar theme of the development sector's failure to draw upon its knowledge of similar processes in the global South to inform the debate about of the loss of Irish economic sovereignty under the terms of the EU-IMF 'deal.' As Storey suggests, 'if an opportunity for

education *from* the South is being lost here then so also is an opportunity to learn *about* the South' (2011:36). The development sector's reluctance to adopt a more critical stance on the EU-IMF 'bailout' reveals a lot about the ways in which professional and economic investments shape what we choose to see, hear, say and how we act in critical moments. It might also be explained in part by our *emotional* investments in particular ways of seeing the world and 'our' place in it, which prevent us from being able to draw parallels between 'our' experiences of structural adjustment in the West (or in Ireland more specifically) and 'theirs' in the global South. These blind-spots are especially regrettable in light of the current public appetite for understanding the structures that led to the current financial crisis (See Henderson & O'Neill, 2011).

A number of the articles in this issue illuminate an important contradiction at play within the field of development education in an Irish context as it relates to one of its major organising principles: the local-global dialectic. Effective development education is seen to hinge on educators' capacity to make explicit local-global linkages, whether in terms of highlighting the connection between the global consequences of local everyday choices, actions or behaviours or in terms of highlighting the ways in which international political-economic arrangements and issues are 'appreciably intertwined' with the daily living conditions of people in each respective society (Carr & Thesee, 2008:177). For example, as Henderson and O'Neill (2011) point out, there is an urgent need to empower people locally to recognise existing global interdependencies, and the ideologies and institutions that have created excessive wealth and persistent poverty, so as to enable them to make sense of their part in altering oppressive structures. Yet as a number of the articles in this issue make clear, despite its mandate to illuminate the dynamic, interactive relationship between the global and local, the development education sector has sometimes surprisingly little to say about key development issues and crises as they are played out in local contexts. Even more problematic, perhaps, are the policing mechanisms through which the parameters of the dialectic are restricted, such that the very prospect of development education organisations or actors addressing 'local' issues becomes unthinkable or sanctionable.

Narrowly articulating the remit of development education so as to focus exclusively on the global South is, as many of the articles in this issue point out, to pass up an important opportunity to educate people 'at home' about global justice issues. Moreover, it reinforces an artificial binary between 'the global' and 'the local', which conceives of the relationship in hierarchical, vertical, and separational terms. This has the unfortunate side effect of re-

inscribing a problematic 'them' and 'us' dichotomy, which closes off consideration of the possibility of 'us' being similar to 'them' in any way, of 'our' struggles' being 'their' struggles, and ultimately how the struggle for justice is *really* about '"us all", always' (Andreotti & Dowling, 2004:611). Furthermore, this policing of the borders of the global and the local fails to allow for the possibility of national policies, practices and events *being both shaped by, and in turn influencing,* local, national and international forces. By restricting the terms of the local-global dialectic, how can we truly understand the mutually interdependent ways in which the local and the global construct and shape one another? How can we ever seek to 'know' those distant 'others,' with whom our lives are so intimately, yet often invisibly, bound? How can we expect local issues to have a broader impact or to connect to different projects? How can we expect alliances across different places and peoples to be forged? And ultimately, how can we work collectively towards better worlds? (Sheppard, et al., 2008).

On the other hand, conceiving of global issues as *already and also* local ones, and of local issues as *already and also* global, opens up important spaces for exploring critically and creatively how issues and lives are deeply and irrevocably inter-connected. Bringing local and global manifestations of the same phenomenon into the same analytic frame (such as the case of Shell Oil in the Niger Delta and North Mayo, for example) is to open up real opportunities and issues with which people can relate, and better understand their inter-connectednesss with distant 'others'. While not suggesting that these 'local' and 'global' global situations are directly comparable or commensurate, drawing linkages between the lived experiences and struggles of 'local' inhabitants whose lives are affected by global forces, whether it be local fishermen or farmers in Erris, or the Ogoni, Urhobo, Ilaje, Ijaw or Itsekiri peoples of Nigeria, also facilitates deeper understandings of the ways in which contestation and action (another central pillar of development education) can work in multiple and context-specific ways (Sheppard, et al., 2008). It is through drawing these kinds of connections and comparisons with diverse local and non-local actors that people will be best placed to understand the complex workings of globalisation, and to 'envision and make different worlds' (ibid.). Embracing the elasticity and inseparability of the local-global dialectic is instrumental to the realisation of development education's radical goals because it is within these merged 'glocal' spaces that social actors can come together (both individually and collectively, both virtually and materially) to forge alternative, more equitable futures for 'us all'.

Helen Henderson and Grainne O'Neill present a useful analysis of some of the most pressing contemporary challenges for the field, as seen from the perspective of development education practitioners working within a development NGO which seeks to support children and communities living 'in the crossfire' of poverty in Africa. Their case study raises a number of important questions about what it means to 'do' development education amid funding cuts to the sector and demands from official funders that development education programmes show demonstrable links between overseas aid and poverty reduction. These authors caution against the perception held by some development NGO representatives that development education should be used primarily for the purposes of fundraising and raising awareness of overseas projects, as this 'will call into question the extent to which it can maintain a critical perspective on the structural causes of poverty' (2011:77). Nevertheless, they feel that development education can and should retain its 'critical edge' while still working within the boundaries of a development NGO. This critical edge, they suggest, can be maintained by stressing historical and contemporary practices of exploitation and oppression perpetrated by the North that adversely affect inhabitants of the global South.

Collectively, the articles in this issue call for the development education sector to re-claim its radical roots, so that it can 're-claw' its way back to doing what it knows best, and what it is positioned to do, better than most. I close this editorial with the words of an Australian Aboriginal woman, who responds to those who would offer her 'solidarity' as follows:

> "If you have come here to help me
> You are wasting your time…
> But if you have come because
> Your liberation is bound up with mine
> The let us work together" (Holloway, 2010:271).

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