



SEMINAR REPORT

Teaching Global Issues in the Classroom: Exploring New Perspectives

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Introduction

This seminar was organised by the Centre for Global Education and facilitated by Matthias Fiedler, Audrey Bryan and Lesley McEvoy as part of the Centre's larger 'Capacity Building in Development Education' project, supported by Irish Aid. The other key elements of the project are the publication of a development education journal, *Policy and Practice* and an annual development education conference for practitioners and academics.

Purpose of Seminar

To teach DE practitioners and teachers how to incorporate a global and social justice perspective in culturally diverse classroom settings.

To examine competing and often contradictory meanings of development within teaching resources.

Aims of Seminar

1. Discuss frameworks of learning that prepare students to participate effectively in society, think critically, and challenge notions of development.
2. Identify necessary changes that need to be made to the education system to adapt to changing realities and needs of our postmodern society.
3. Recognise the importance of key principles of development education and intercultural education, such as diversity of identities and interdependence, in developing an education system capable of preparing students for a knowledge-based society.
4. Recognise the centrality of a sense of identity to educating students as responsible global citizens.
5. Understand the basic principles of post-colonial theory, and discuss why it should be used to critically examine notions of development and diversity.
6. Examine how development education curricular content is communicated in school resources, and the importance of using a post-colonial framework to challenge common assumptions and dominant frameworks of international development.
7. Identify competing frameworks for looking at development issues and their weaknesses in educating students to critically engage with the world around them.



Presentation

The format of the seminar consisted of each of the two speakers presenting their papers, allowing the other speaker to address concerns or criticisms in the paper, followed by a rebuttal from the original speaker. After both papers were presented, the seminar participants were invited to join in the discussion.

Below are reprinted versions of Matthias Fiedler and Audrey Bryan's articles featured in Issue 7 of *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review*.

Teaching and learning about the world in the classroom: Development education in culturally diverse settings

In this article, **Matthias Fiedler** discusses the importance of a global and social justice perspective when educating children about our rapidly changing and complex world. He states that knowledge should be viewed by teachers and students as a process or activity, rather than a product to be accumulated. Development education and intercultural education are presented as educational responses to the need to empower young children to think critically and independently about both local and global issues. He acknowledges the growing cultural diversity in Irish schools, and argues the importance of a global perspective in addressing some of the challenges of intercultural education.

Introduction

If we accept that ‘good’ education prepares children to critically engage with the world and society in a meaningful way, then it is important to frame education according to the needs of the 21st-century learner. But what exactly are those needs and how can educators best cater for them? In approaching this question, this article engages with two different, yet related discourses. It will first argue for the inclusion of a global and social justice perspective in the discourse about the so-called knowledge society. In a second step, it will examine the challenges of teaching development education in culturally diverse settings in Ireland. The article concludes by combining these two discourses and arguing that the integration of a global perspective in education in general can help to address some of the challenges faced by intercultural education today.

Framing ‘good’ education in the knowledge society

The integration of a global and social justice perspective into 21st century teaching is happening in the context of rapid change, persisting global inequalities and increasingly diversified societies. While many people worldwide experience the benefits of prosperity, millions of others live in poverty and hunger, suffering from malnutrition and with little or no access to clean water, healthcare or education, deprived of basic human rights. Nor has Ireland been immune to global trends: the benefits of recent economic success here have not been equally distributed across society. Moreover, having become one of the world’s wealthiest countries, Ireland attracts immigrants from many parts of the world, bringing a rapid expansion of cultural diversity to Irish society.

These developments place special demands on the education system and emphasise the need to equip children in the 21st century with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to live and act as global citizens in an increasingly interdependent world. Drowning in information but gasping for knowledge, today’s learners are confronted with a level of complexity, uncertainty and diversity that necessitates a clear orientation in schools. With modern media such as the internet, schools are no longer the main providers of information but remain important factors in relation to how this information is processed. In a changing global context schools

too have to change, making it critical for Western education systems to develop new frameworks for learning in order to adapt to these changes. Practitioners and researchers in development education (DE) and intercultural education (ICE) have gone a long way over the past four decades in developing ideas and approaches as to how to address global and social justice issues in culturally diversified settings. Discussions on how education systems should adapt to changing global and societal environments should therefore be informed by these ideas and approaches.

A prominent feature of liberal literature on education in the 20th century was to emphasise the role of education in imbuing children with the values of a society and the consequent power of education to bring about societal change (Baere & Slaughter, 1993). Poststructuralist concepts like critical literacy have qualified this emphasis by highlighting the connection between education and social justice. In the preface to the first volume of *Critical Literacy: Theories and Practices*, Lynn Mario De Souza, sees literacy as a cultural practice ‘involving the ongoing negotiation of meaning in continuously contested sites of meaning construction’ (2007:4). Approaches of this nature provide a framework for readjusting education to the rapidly changing context, both globally and in Irish society. However, before an investigation into the frameworks can begin, it is important to clarify the changing context.

In *Catching the Knowledge Wave*, the educational researcher Jane Gilbert refers to this context as the ‘knowledge society’. In line with postmodern thinking, she describes this society as one which forms ‘people’s social identities’ (Gilbert, 2005:29) through discourses and patterns of consumptions rather than through a fixed set of values and socio-economic status. In terms of culture, she maintains:

“We live in a culture dominated by images, sound bites, and fragmentary ideas that, because of their rapid turnover, can never settle or be properly processed. Differences, novelty, change, and choice are valued over standardisation, stability, and external authority” (Gilbert, 2005:29).

This societal ‘paradigm shift’, Gilbert argues, has altered our understanding of two concepts of Western civilisation upon which our education system is founded: knowledge and individuality. Our present education system ‘is a product of the industrial age’ (Gilbert, 2005:47), where knowledge was seen as ‘a thing, a product’ (2005:71) and perceived as a factual and true outcome of a thinking process that can be ‘stored’ in our minds and that builds the foundation of what we have learnt to know as academic disciplines. In this view, knowledge is an objective and exists independently of people as a factual ‘thing’ that can be accumulated, i.e. learnt over time.

This perception of knowledge results in what Gilbert calls the ‘production-line model of education’ (2005:68) in which learning is perceived as a ‘process by which knowledge gets stored in minds, [and can be] broken down into parts and introduced as a series of steps’ (2005:70). While this type of education system served its purpose during the industrial age by preparing students for industrial age society and workplaces, this is no longer the case. The focus of today’s society is on ‘contexts, processes, and systems in which a thing functions or is used in order to find new functions or uses for it’ (Gilbert, 2005:30). Consequently, we have to adapt our education system to the changing realities and needs of our postmodern and post-industrialised society.

The other concept that has been affected by the knowledge society is our understanding of individuality. Again linking it to the very foundations of our present system of education and in line with postmodern political theory, Gilbert argues that 'we should move away from the one-size-fits-all model of individuality and equality ... and look for new and different ways of thinking about individuality, ways that allow difference to be expressed *as* difference rather than deficiency, lack, or exclusion' (2005:109). She argues that 'because the system is to turn out standardised products ... it has no way of dealing with individuals' (2005:58). Based on the concept of ability, Gilbert describes the flaws of the present education system in most Western societies:

“Success at school is defined via the education system’s quality control checks, known as assessment, the results of which are used to sort students by ability. A high-ability student, that is, a quality product, is sent on for further processing, designed to prepare them for professional and/or managerial jobs. Those students deemed to be of lower ability are rejected by the system and allowed to drop off the production line. However, by the time they have been rejected, they will have developed basic skills and habits needed to work on one of the industrial age’s many low-skill jobs” (Gilbert, 2005:59).

This vivid description of how 'product orientated' our education system is reminds us also of the fact that education is always political and that any analysis of education has to take institutionalised power relations into account. This is especially so because current discourse about the knowledge society clearly tells us that power relations are shifting. But how has education to change in order to adapt to these new realities? In many ways, schools of thought like the critical literacy movement or research and practice in DE and ICE have already paved the way for new approaches to education. It is now more a matter of convincing decision-makers in the education sector to go down that avenue.

A first step in the right direction would be to prioritise further research on key principles of DE and ICE, like the multiplicity and diversity of identities and interdependence and complexity, as important cornerstones of any new educational framework. This would entail the conceptualisation of knowledge as a process or as an activity, rather than seeing it as a product that can be accumulated by learning. An education system that takes this on board would focus more on learning and less on teaching. Such a new framework would also allow us to do justice to multiple forms of intelligence, which are summarised by physiologist Howard Gardener in eight different categories:

“verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, physical-kinaesthetic, visual-spatial, musical, natural-environmental, interpersonal (understanding of other people) and intrapersonal (self-understanding)” (cited in Gilbert, 2005:80).

It is easy to see that our present education system only caters for some of these categories. If it is true that, as Jane Gilbert claims, 'knowledge based societies emphasise creativity and innovation' (2005:68), we therefore have to accept that the existent education systems of most European countries do not adequately prepare

students for the reality of the workplace. Teamwork, problem solving, innovative ideas, change, and lifelong learning are the new words buzzing around in the marketplace. But they are much more than buzz words; they are messengers telling us of a paradigm shift that has already taken place and which most education systems have failed to acknowledge. In order to prepare children for a postmodern society in which fragmentation and diversity are common features and to prepare students for a post-industrialised marketplace in which homogeneity is replaced by plurality and interdependence, we need to develop new ways of framing education. In other words, we need an education that emphasises 'connectedness over autonomy, processes over products, and systems over details' (Gilbert, 2005:118).

DE and ICE can both be seen as educational responses to this need to empower young people to think critically, independently and systemically. With their strong emphasis on values and perceptions, they also prepare learners to participate effectively in society, both locally and globally, so as to bring about positive change for a more just and equal world. In relation to DE, these challenges are echoed in the definition of this term by the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA):

“Development education is an educational process aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of the rapidly changing, interdependent and unequal world in which we live. It seeks to engage people in analysis, reflection and action for local and global citizenship and participation. It is about supporting people in understanding, and in acting to transform the social, cultural, political and economic structures which affect their lives and others at personal, community, national and international levels” (<http://www.ideaonline.ie>).

Process, analysis, reflection, action, understanding and transformation - all these key words emphasise the dynamic nature of this educational approach. As such, DE contains a number of elements summarised by Roland Tormey in his introduction to *Teaching Social Justice*:

“It [DE] is education *as* personal development, facilitating the development of critical thinking skills, analytical skills, emphatic capacity and the ability to be an effective person who can take action to achieve desired development outcomes. It is education *for* local, national and global development, encouraging learners in developing a sense that they can play a role in working for (or against) social justice and development issues. It is education *about* development, focused on social justice, human rights, poverty, and inequality and on development issues locally, nationally, and internationally” (Tormey, 2003:2).

If we look at various definitions of what intercultural education entails, the similarities are striking. Echoing the dynamic understanding of development education, Sedano, for instance, identifies a framework in which intercultural education should operate:

“Understanding of the cultural diversity of contemporary society; increasing the possibility of communication between people of different cultures; creating positive attitudes towards cultural diversity; increasing social interaction between culturally different people and groups” (Sedano, 2002:268).

Both Sedano and Tormey refer in their definitions to another skill that is key to DE and ICE: the ability to think systemically. In a diverse and multifaceted world such as ours, where one needs to make meaningful connections between a multiplicity of things and systems, this seems to be one of the key 'survival skills'. And it is, again, an argument for a more integrated way of teaching different subjects.

Indeed, the fact that both DE and ICE transgress the traditional boundaries of academic subjects makes them a prime example of how teaching in the knowledge society may be furthered in the future. Thus, both DE and ICE should be seen as much more than 'just' additions to the existing curriculum. With their existent repertoire of teaching methodologies, research and thinking about education in general, DE and ICE should play a pivotal role in crafting an education system that is capable of educating our children for a knowledge-based society. As many practitioners in DE and ICE have argued over the years, this imperative also necessitates a further development of the research dimension in DE and ICE (Andreotti, 2006a:7). As Andreotti convincingly argues in her PhD thesis (Andreotti, 2006b), one research dimension that is yet to be fully explored in its added value for development education is that of post-colonial theory. In order to advance the theoretical grounding of DE, post-colonial theory should be seen as both a method and a tool for a critical examination of existing notions of cultural supremacy and Eurocentrism within DE. Post-colonial theory can also provide guidance to navigate the way through contested fields of today's knowledge society by providing a framework to deal with notions of diversity and hybridity.

Finally, there is another, probably even more important, reason why DE and ICE should be at the heart of any realignment of our education system. Most of the writing and thinking about the knowledge society has so far been driven by the economic interests of the business world, and hence a capitalist marketplace. The added value of including the expertise of practitioners and researchers in DE and ICE in this process is therefore almost self-explanatory: with its commitment to values such as sustainable development, human rights and global and social justice, both DE and ICE are perfectly positioned to educate children as socially responsible global citizens. And an education that claims to be focused on the future cannot miss the opportunity to ensure that we educate our children to live a just and sustainable life as conscientious global citizens. Thus, the required change is about a different kind of education that allows us to make connections and links the way we learn and teach to the realities of our globalised world.

Development education in culturally diverse settings

One of these realities in Ireland is the experience of diversity in schools, and the question arises how these theoretical deliberations about teaching with a global and social justice perspective in the knowledge society could be translated into the realities of today's classroom. In order to find some orientation I suggest looking at two of the five key themes of intercultural education as identified in *Intercultural Education in the Primary School* (NCCA, 2005): (1) identity and belonging and (2) similarity and difference. The other three themes are: human rights and responsibilities; discrimination and equality; conflict and conflict resolution (NCCA, 2005:53f).

The examination of such themes central to interculturalism can be a first step to an informed navigation through culturally diverse settings, as they offer a

conceptual framework to negotiate the local and global dimensions of these settings. In the following, they are used as lenses to chart some challenges of pedagogical practices within development education in culturally diverse classrooms.

According to recent research in development education, the themes of identity and belonging are about:

“...knowing who one is socially, culturally and politically. It means being aware of oneself as a citizen of Irish, European and global communities. Learning about the diversity of Irish culture and heritage, and of the different identities within Irish society, helps develop awareness of and respect for the multiplicity of identities, each equally valuable. Identities are seen to be interconnected and not mutually exclusive, each with the right to be heard and respected. Learning about the European aspect of one’s identity and how languages are linked to others allows a sense of connections, while knowledge about the contribution of Irish people globally develops a wider context for the sense of identity” (DICE, 2008:29).

Making connections between ‘myself and the wider world’ by showing the interdependence between the local and the global is one of the cornerstones of integrating a global and social justice perspective into teaching. As we have seen in the deliberations about the knowledge society, learning about the complexity of this interdependence is a necessity for the 21st-century learner. From a global and social justice perspective, it is important to note that a sense of identity and belonging is central to the process of educating students as informed and responsible global citizens. The challenge for educators, however, is to support learning that develops a sense of identity and belonging without imparting an essentialist concept of identity. According to Katherine Zappone, ‘having multiple identities allows a person to relate to different people in different situations and contexts in different ways at different times’ (2003, p. 15).

In order to be able to relate to others, we have to find our position in the world, in society and in our personal environment. At the same time, however, this position must be perceived as flexible and dynamic enough to allow real engagement with others. The teaching and learning about the complexity of different and multiple identities, as well as the fact that identities are not fixed but fluid and dynamic, is one of the big challenges for educators in their attempt to create a sense of belonging. It requires a learning process that constantly negotiates between the Self and the Other without fixing one to a position from which a dynamic and changing engagement is rendered impossible. Such an approach to teaching is asking a lot of educators but is one of the key concepts on which intercultural education should be based.

In this respect, the integration of a global dimension in intercultural education helps to address some of these challenges, as learning about the world will ultimately help to critically engage children with the world in their classroom. Using such a model to engage with identity and belonging from a global perspective should be based on a concept of ‘cosmopolitan citizenship’, as developed by Audrey Osler and Kerry Vincent in their study, *Citizenship and the Challenge of Global Education*, in which children are expected to learn about their own place in the world from a local, national, European and global perspective. They claim that citizenship requires a sense of belonging because ‘without such a sense it is unlikely that individuals will be

able to contribute or achieve what Braithwaite referred to as 'full responsible citizenship' (Osler & Vincent, 2002:126).

There is, however, a caveat to be made in relation to the concept of citizenship as it is framed by Osler and Vincent. I have argued earlier that development education could benefit hugely from an inclusion of post-colonial theory and Osler and Vincent's concept of citizenship is a prime example of why such a theoretical framework is necessary. With its emphasis on questioning the fixed nature of Western ideas and concepts such as identity, nation, culture, knowledge or meaning, post-colonial theory offers a critical reading of notions such as global or cosmopolitan citizenship. Rather than creating a sense of belonging through an attachment to fixed entities such as the nation or a specific, clearly defined culture, post-colonial theory argues for a critical engagement with such concepts by advocating positive notions of hybridity and diversity.

The challenge for teachers to integrate a global and social justice perspective in their teaching, therefore, is not just to impart 'skills and attitudes which allow them to make connections between different contexts and situations, and to respond to change' (Osler & Vincent, 2002:124), it is also about questioning the underlying presumptions of these contexts. Learning about citizenship, therefore, is a prime example of how combining existing knowledge and methods in development education and intercultural education with premises of post-colonial theory can enhance teaching and learning about new ways of knowing in the knowledge society. It does however put an onus on individual teachers to investigate their own assumptions and presuppositions in relation to their own identity and, more importantly, about diversity.

According to Ann Louise Gilligan there is a general 'willingness and openness within the Irish education system to accommodate difference', but she claims that 'we as educators have had little opportunity to examine our own presuppositions, or reflect on our inherent conceptualisations of difference' (2007:39). I would argue that a critical engagement with difference from a post-colonial perspective should be central for any educator in today's knowledge society. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) accounts for this by promoting similarity and difference as one of the five key themes of intercultural education. And yet, as Gilligan points out, there are a number of different understandings of what difference means or entails.

Some people still see difference as a set of binary oppositions such as black/white or male/female and very often such a viewpoint is accompanied by a vision of the world divided into different entities of different values. Another way of looking at difference is, as Gilligan notes, to put it into opposition with sameness 'that is to make little of [difference] and assimilate it into the *same*' (2007:40). The latter can often be seen as the foundation of liberal ideas of equality and fairness, in which a common set of rules, laws and regulations is defined by a majority group, for everybody to adhere to. As Gilligan points out, such a view is problematic because 'when sameness is normative the expectation can grow that those who are different must leave their difference behind and pretend to be the same, especially if you are going to "make it" in society' (Gilligan, 2007:40). With this in mind, she goes on to suggest that the 'recognition and public celebration of group difference is at the heart of building a truly equitable society' (2007:41). In order to investigate the complexity of difference, it is important to examine how this concept is linked to different group identities.

“Different groups have different needs and groups are also made up of individuals with differing needs. However, recognising similarities means that individuals can come to know that they often have something in common with individuals from other groups. Everyone is a member of a wide variety of groups, but no one group solely defines a person. Learning about the diversity within groups helps break down the propensity to stereotype. Identities are complex and layered: and every individual has differences from others within their groups, as well as commonalities with those from different groupings. Exploring the diversity in cultures and lifestyles shows that no one way of life is ‘normal’. Through observing how images are used to portray aspects of being Irish, being male or female, being Catholic or Protestant, and how others are portrayed by others, we learn to recognise bias and stereotyping images and texts” (DICE, 2008:29-30).

But there is another building block to be added to our investigation of difference. Difference does not happen abstractly; it is a reality in the interaction between different groups, and between different groups there are power differentials. An investigation that fails to analyse power relations between groups will therefore not be able to engage fully with all aspects of difference.

As with teaching and learning about multiple identities, the integration of a global perspective can facilitate a deeper understanding of the underlying premises of difference. The investigation of global inequalities is one of the building blocks of development education and there is an abundance of knowledge, resources and methods to investigate unequal power relations in the world. Combined with the theoretical framework offered by post-colonial theory, these different forms of engagement with the Other could help to structure intercultural dialogue in the classroom. There is, however, a cautionary note to be made before relating the learning about global connections to the intercultural encounter in the classroom; a note that shows the importance of integrating the power aspect in every facet of our work in education.

Many handbooks and resources in development education offer the methods of making children from other ethnic backgrounds experts in the learning process about other cultures or global issues. Anecdotal evidence, however, shows that this method often fails, or worse, has a negative effect on the child. In a classroom with minority and majority groups, children from other cultures often aspire to be part of the mainstream, not to be seen as different, and inherently adapt assimilationist thinking. The reaction is a telling one and confirms that Western society is still based on a normative notion of sameness and that intercultural dialogue is often not a conversation between equals.

What this scenario also tells us is that, despite all the talk about the global village, unequal power relations between the global North and South, as well as the historical baggage of many centuries of conflict and colonialism, are still engrained in the intercultural encounters we have today. Ignoring or overseeing this aspect of modern life in the 21st century does not seem to be an option if we are to build a sustainable future through education. Thus, it does not seem to be enough to recognise and celebrate our differences. It is more, as Ann Louise Gilligan notes, that ‘true celebration of difference should alter the power relations and challenge majority groupings to share their power and privilege in new ways’ (2007:41).

Conclusion

In order for such a 'balance of power' (Gilligan, 2007:41) to develop, we have to create what I have elsewhere called 'postcolonial learning spaces' (Fiedler, 2008). Such spaces could 'facilitate a process in which the fixed nature of Western ideas and concepts such as identity, culture, knowledge or meaning are questioned by positive notions of hybridity and diversity' (Fiedler, 2008:56). Integrating a global perspective in such learning spaces can enhance our work as educators by addressing the challenges of culturally diverse settings and combine them with those of today's knowledge society. Integrating a global and social justice perspective in teaching could therefore be seen as a necessity in meeting the needs of 21st-century learners in Ireland.

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Audrey Bryan's comments:

1) The main challenge lies in the Fiedler's notion of the need to reframe the education, especially regarding development education and intercultural education, which should both be more than just 'add-ons' to individual subjects.

2) In the Republic, the critique of policy documents says that not enough attention is paid to diversity. Proposed changes to the curriculum would be radical to include significant focus on equality and human rights. Also, ICE's notion of preventing racism through increased empathy and understanding is also quite progressive. However, with the recent intensification of racism in the Republic of Ireland, ICE can be a potential response.

3) ICE challenges the Irish idea of citizenship to celebrate and embrace multiple ethnicities. It is a difficult and problematic notion, especially considering that ICE is generally considered as an add-on instead of a fundamental basis to the curriculum. The goals of ICE contradict the existing curriculum. Ireland is not only just becoming multicultural; people are viewing diversity as a new phenomenon that is changing the social fabric of society but that is not the case. There is a failure to recognise long-standing religious diversity. The 'we' of Ireland is already diverse, and it is possible that an increased focus on diversity could further entrench power relations in Ireland that have 'us' surrounded by 'otherness' but still completely separate. State-organised cultural enrichment programmes put ethnic minorities at a different level, existing only to enrich the cultural diversity of Irish society. This brings up an even more controversial question of who is worthy? Who has a significant contribution to make to Irish society? A stronger and more critical version of ICE can focus on engagement instead of accommodation challenging the current curriculum and some of these problems that are presented in it.

Questions:

1) **AB:** We agree that critical engagement in a post-colonial framework is necessary, but what does it look like in practical application?

MF: In the knowledge society, where learners are taught skills to critically engage with the world around them, people can negotiate other cultures.

Often cultural diversity is engaged with on a superficial level. The NCCA published a list of key skills for the 21st century learner, including: (1) identity and belonging; 2) similarity and difference; 3) human rights and responsibilities; 4) discrimination and equality; and 5) conflict and conflict resolution

2) AB: Do you have any advice on how to prepare students to be more disposed to engage with cultural diversity?

MF: The first question we need to ask is how do we as teachers impart knowledge without incorporating our own personal perspectives. Can we as educators engage critically with the material we're presenting? We must constantly engage in a process of self-reflection and change, then self-reflection again, and change again. We must never become complacent, because we will never know how the world really works.

Researching, and searching for, international development in the formal curriculum: Towards a post-colonial conceptual framework

In this article, **Audrey Bryan** presents a selection of ongoing research that seeks to analyse how development education curricular content is communicated in recently produced textbooks designed for lower secondary students in the Republic of Ireland. Using specific examples extracted from selected texts, she demonstrates how development issues are often represented in contradictory ways. In response to these contradictions, she argues that in order to more critically engage with students in a formal educational setting, a post-colonial framework is necessary to better understand development issues and problems in a broader political economic context.

Introduction

This article seeks to enhance our understanding of some of the curricular resources that educators utilise in teaching global citizenship in formal education settings. More specifically, it provides a critical (albeit necessarily selective) analysis of some of the ways in which development education curricular content is communicated in recently produced geography and civic, social and political education (CSPE) textbooks designed for use with lower secondary students in the Republic of Ireland. This study is part of a much larger ongoing research project, funded by Irish Aid, which seeks to provide a representative critique of recently produced and currently used textbooks and curricular resources concerned with international development themes and issues. It draws on existing research conducted by the author into representations of diversity and interculturalism in Irish schools and society (Bryan, 2008; Bryan, forthcoming). Combining ethnographic and critical discourse analytic techniques, it focuses on the forms of development engagement these ideas or images are likely to produce.

The article will first provide a brief overview of the rationale and methodology informing the study. It will then seek to demonstrate some of the core, often contradictory ways in which development is represented in schools, drawing on examples from two of the subjects that have a strong development focus: geography and CSPE. It concludes by advocating a post-colonial framework as one means through which more critical engagement with development-related content can be fostered in formal educational settings.

Study rationale and methodology

Development education has evolved considerably as a field over the last six decades. Mesa (n.d.), for example, identifies five generations, or periods, in the evolution of development education from its origins as a 'charitable and assistance-based approach' in the 1940s and 1950s to its present focus on a 'global citizenship education' approach, which stresses the effects of globalisation and the need for a global consciousness in the face of an escalating range of issues which transcend national borders, such as poverty, climate change, HIV, etc. Within this current focus on global citizenship, development education can be further categorised according to

soft and critical versions of global citizenship education. Soft global citizenship education stresses poverty and underdevelopment as resulting from a lack of resources, skills, technology and education. This is distinct from more critical approaches which seek to redress unequal power relations and stress the structures, systems and assumptions that produce and maintain social and economic inequalities in the first instance (Andreotti, 2006).

Post-colonial theory is an example of a critical approach to global citizenship education, through which development issues and problems can be examined in their broader political economic context. Broadly speaking, post-colonialism is a theoretical framework which makes visible the history and legacy of European colonialism, including the ways in which the wealth of the global North has been acquired and maintained through a history of exploitation, and examines how it continues to shape contemporary discourses and institutions (Rizvi, Lingard & Lavia, 2006). It is closely aligned with the philosophy and aims of development education itself. As Young explains: 'Post-colonialism claims the right of all people on this earth to the same material and cultural well-being; it seeks to change the way people think, the way they behave, to produce a more just and equitable relation between different peoples of the world' (Young, 2003:7, cited in Rizvi, Lingard & Lavia, 2006).

Development educators who adopt a post-colonial framework seek to critically engage students with, and challenge, common assumptions and dominant theoretical frameworks of international development (such as modernisation theory) that are often engrained in mainstream development discourses, such as school texts. Post-colonial and other critical approaches to development education encourage us to consider the theoretical and ideological underpinnings of internationally derived development policies and practices, to engage deeply with the structural dimensions of poverty, injustice and oppression, and to consider alternative progressive political, economic, and social arrangements. From this critical vantage point, the purpose of development education is to ensure that 'injustices are addressed, more equal grounds for dialogue are created, and people can have more autonomy to define their own development' (Andreotti, 2006:6). This article will consider the extent to which these critical approaches to development are evident in a selection of contemporary school texts designed for use in the Republic of Ireland.

While recent research carried out in the Republic offers insights into the nature and extent of development education provision in Irish post-primary schools, to date there has been little systematic research into how notions of development are actually constructed in curriculum resources and mediated in Irish schools. The significance of examining textbooks and related teaching materials is highlighted by recent research on the profile and methods of development education teaching at post-primary level carried out by the Shannon Curriculum Development Centre and University of Limerick (Gleeson, King, O'Driscoll & Tormey, 2007). Despite development education's emphasis on active learning, this survey of post-primary teachers indicated that textbooks are the most frequently used methodology for teaching development issues, with over 70 per cent indicating that this was the medium they used most often for delivering 'Third World/Developing World' topics in the classroom (Gleeson, King, O'Driscoll & Tormey, 2007). While there are a range of instructional resources besides textbooks that are available to educators who teach about development issues, the reliance on textbooks as an authoritative source of knowledge in the classroom suggests that an analysis of textbooks is warranted.

Furthermore, the study by Gleeson et al. (2007) revealed that school is the second most important source of information for students on the developing world,

after the media. This underscores the need to critically engage with the nature and implications of the messages conveyed in formal education settings. The practical value of such research lies in its capacity to explore the relationship between how development is portrayed and the nature and level of engagement that these representations are likely to evoke. For example, do they change consumer habits, increase charitable giving, enhance protest and political activism or engagement in other forms of broad-based collective action (Smith, 2004a; 2004b).

The following section provides a snapshot of some of the dominant understandings of development portrayed in school texts, using a number of examples drawn from recently produced geography and CSPE texts designed for lower secondary or 'junior cycle' students in the Republic of Ireland. Similar to recent ethnographic work carried out in the United Kingdom (Smith, 2004a; 2004b), findings suggest that the formal educational domain is not dominated by a uniform understanding of development. On the contrary, students in the Republic are presented with a range of competing and contradictory narratives. On the one hand, some of these narratives and images continue to perpetuate traditional understandings of development, based on development-as-charity motifs and modernisationist assumptions. On the other hand, some narratives offer a more contextualised analysis, focused on the structural features of global inequality, often within the confines of a single text. The aim of this analysis is not to criticise specific texts, but rather to highlight tensions that exist, and to highlight educative opportunities or moments that arise from these tensions (Smith, 2004a; 2004b).

Given that the study outlined in this article is part of a much larger ongoing research project, it should be viewed as a work-in-progress which builds upon and extends the scope of previous research examining curricular representations of cultural diversity, racism and interculturalism in an Irish context. The findings presented here illustrate some of the ways in which international development is represented in some of the core subject areas and texts, but do not constitute a comprehensive or exhaustive analysis of the second-level curriculum in the Republic of Ireland. As a necessarily selective analysis of textbooks representing only two subjects, it is likely that there are other development 'storylines' presented in school texts and curriculum resources that are not reflected here.

Methodologically, the study is informed by a critical discourse analysis of a selection of CSPE and geography texts, and to a lesser extent on interviews conducted with students from majority world countries that attend a large, ethnically diverse secondary school in the greater Dublin area, which is referred to here as Blossom Hill College (BHC). The discourse analysis involved a multilayered process of repeatedly reading, writing and interpreting each of the texts to derive recurring patterns and themes. A general method employed was to examine the prevalence or absence in the texts of such features as foreground information (those ideas that are present and emphasised), background information (those ideas that are explicitly mentioned but de-emphasised), presupposed information (that information which is present at the level of implied or suggested meaning) and absent information (Fairclough, 1995).

The analysis was also informed by focus groups, and one-on-one and small-group interviews involving 30 students, including some from developing countries, conducted at BHC. The study was conducted over the period September 2004 to December 2005.

Key findings

‘Developing countries...still have some way to go’: Modernisation theories and the curriculum

The following definitions of development and underdevelopment, which appear in the CSPE text *Make a Difference!*, are reflective of the extent to which a modernisation framework undergirds how global inequalities are understood in some accounts of development in junior cycle textbooks:

“Some countries are at different stages on the road to development. While some are very advanced, others are **underdeveloped**. These countries are known as **developing countries**, because they still have some way to go” (Harrison & Wilson, 2001:91; emphasis in original). (A revised version of this publication was published in 2007; the present analysis is based on the 2001 edition).

Modernisation theories are based on a crude dichotomy between ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ societies, and seek to explain how societies move from traditional to modern stages of development. They maintain that traditional societies can eventually catch up with their more advanced (capitalist) counterparts provided they adopt a series of global North-style economic, financial, social, cultural, political and psychological interventions. Modernisation theories, therefore, are based on a linear view of history, that promote a stage-like trajectory of economic growth which maintain that Northern countries are further along the path of modern development than developing countries. In describing countries from the global South as ‘developing’, a crude distinction is drawn between us (developed, modern, advanced) and them (underdeveloped, traditional, backward).

Modernisation theories explain the prevalence of poverty in poorer countries primarily as a consequence of internal or endogenous factors. They lack a more structuralist approach to understanding global inequality, which would include the policy environment and power structure in which ‘developing’ nations are forced to operate (Greig, Hulme & Turner, 2007). Furthermore, as post-colonial critiques of modernisation theories have argued, ‘far from being an innocent or neutral or objective discourse of how a society might become modern, modernisation theory was part of the conceptual architecture of a diffusing imperialistic logic’, which provides theoretical legitimisation for geopolitical intervention in Third World societies (Slater, 2008:85).

Equally lacking within the modernisationist paradigm is an appreciation of the heterogeneity of developing world societies, including their diverse social, cultural and political histories (Slater, 2008). Arturo Escobar (1995), for example, has critiqued the process of ‘discursive homogenisation’ prevalent in mainstream discourses of development wherein ‘the complexity and diversity of Third World peoples’ is erased, ‘so that a squatter in Mexico city, a Nepalese peasant, and a Tuareg nomad become equivalent to each other as poor and underdeveloped’ (Escobar, 1995:53). The following section seeks to develop this critique further within the context of textual representations of India, and student reactions to the ways in which it is portrayed in the Irish curriculum.

‘They only show the bad, they never show the good’

The ethnographic dimension of the research revealed considerable discontent among students from so-called Third World countries in terms of how aspects of their cultures and geographical backgrounds were portrayed in school texts. Asmitha (a pseudonym) - who was born in India but had lived most of her life in Ireland - recounted the

frustration she experienced during a geography lesson which sharply deviated from her own perceptions, understandings and experiences of India:

“We are actually from the South of India, and the cities we are from are so like urbanised. They are very urban cities. They only show the bad, they never show the good. Like in that [geography] textbook it talked about [India] being a Third World country. Its being poor and the people being illiterate all the time. And they never once showed the prosperity of the country, they never showed the real riches, they never showed, just how people are in India, how intent they are on education, on getting somewhere, on getting sort of a mark on the world. They never said anything about that. Nothing about the economy or anything about that. Just that it is a Third World country” - Asmitha, aged 16.

Indeed, representations of India evident in some texts examined lend support to Asmitha’s criticism that ‘they only show the bad, they never show the good’. *New Complete Geography*, for example, contains a chapter titled ‘Urban problems in Calcutta’, which includes a case study of ‘Calcutta and its problems’ focused on the ‘unplanned development of Shanty towns’ and its ‘lack of infrastructural services’ (Hayes, 2003:272-273). The lived reality of existence in a bustee (defined in the text as ‘hastily-built urban slums’) is portrayed through the voice of an Irish development worker, who was hosted temporarily by a local family (Hayes, 2003:272). Readers are informed that the Gomes family, who are described as ‘kindness itself’ ‘generously share the little they possess with this Irish stranger and face life with a cheerfulness which to me seems quite astonishing’ (Hayes, 2003:273).

Simpson (2004) critiques this well-intentioned and benignly poor yet happy storyline on the grounds that it implies a trivialisation and romanticisation of poverty, by advancing the notion that somehow people do not really mind living in poverty. Simpson argues that narratives of this nature lay the basis for excusing or justifying material inequality, to the extent that they imply that those subjected to it are not unduly concerned by their material wellbeing. Our understanding of the lived realities of bustee dwellers in Calcutta is further compromised by a narrative device which constructs development through the Northern gaze of an ‘Irish stranger,’ whose exposure to these overcrowded and cramped conditions, described as ‘a little smaller than our kitchen in Ireland’, is short-lived. This rhetorical strategy has the simultaneous effect of privileging the voice of the Irish Aid worker while marginalising and silencing local perspectives, preventing the Gomes family from describing their lives in their own terms. The comparison of the Gomes household to that of the size an Irish kitchen reinforces the us/them dichotomy, defining the Gomes family in narrow and negative material terms.

While the representation of radically different living standards and conditions in parts of the majority world may encourage students in Ireland to reflect critically on their own lives, analyses of this nature also run the risk of depoliticising poverty, in the absence of a concomitant critical consideration of why these differences between ‘us’ and ‘them’ exist in the first instance. In the context of this chapter, Calcutta’s problems are attributed primarily to ‘its rapid population growth’ (Hayes, 2003:272), eclipsing consideration of inequality, oppression and injustice at multiple levels, and the nature of the global North’s relationship with ‘developing’ countries like India. On the other hand, those representations of development which emphasise the underlying structural dimensions of global poverty, and how individuals as well as national governments and international institutions are implicated in sustaining it, open up

possibilities for students to consider how the very structures and systems that underlie it can be altered (Smith, 2004; Simpson, 2004).

Another chapter in the same text about the effects of high and low population densities provides a case study of Calcutta, profiling such problems as overcrowding, a lack of open space, and a shortage of clean water and pollution (Hayes, 2003:195). It is not suggested here that such problems do not exist in Calcutta, or that students in the global North should not be exposed to these issues. However, by mobilising a particularly negative representation of Calcutta (which comes to represent India as a whole), using bleak images of people who know only overcrowding, poverty, pollution, disease, and hunger, the text eclipses a multidimensional representation that would capture the diversity of experience which students like Asmitha describe. In other words, in the absence of other storylines about India and the experiences and accomplishments of its people, textual and pictorial representations of Indian people in poverty ensure that they will be almost exclusively associated with poverty and dependency in the minds of those lacking another frame of reference.

Other chapters in this text engage directly with the underlying dimensions of poverty and global inequality, drawing attention to the exploitation resulting from colonialism (Chapter 65), as well as the excessive profit margins generated by multinational corporations (Hayes, 2003:350), and the unfair trade policies implemented by international financial institutions (IFIs). However, the chapters on Calcutta discussed above do not address the causes of poverty but describe its manifestations, thereby providing a somewhat decontextualised and partial understanding of the problems outlined. Accounts of poverty which are disarticulated from their underlying causes are unlikely to generate the kind of understanding necessary to fuel changes in the structures and systems that perpetuate global injustice (Smith 2004a; 2004b).

Not all depictions of India paint such a uniformly negative picture. Directly following the modernisationist definition of development in *Make a Difference!* is a more progressive view of development: a case study of Kerala State, India, adapted from *The Developing World: A Study of the South* (Ashe, 1995). The passage identifies Kerala's 'secret to development' as one of 'small scale, village-based solutions to its problems...without the help of any foreign aid'. It describes its transformation from a state characterised by 'fast population growth, famine and malnutrition, poverty, unequal land ownership and a very high level of illiteracy' to one which had tackled malnutrition, developed its education system, and promoted female literacy (1995:91).

“[Kerala] now has one of the highest levels of female literacy in the developing world at 92%. Literacy is freeing women and girls from the *traditional roles* they had in the past. Women now see themselves as *people with choices*; they can choose whether to stay at home or to pursue work outside the home. Women are now training as secretaries, accountants, nurses, etc. Because of the decline in infant mortality, and because most of the children are now reaching adulthood, *parents no longer feel the need to have large families*” (Harrison & Wilson, 2001:91-92, emphasis added).

This passage is atypical in the sense that it is one of the few instances where development is presented as something that was realised internally, highlighting the policies of the indigenous state government and the actions of stakeholder communities in providing health, literacy and education services and preventing

malnutrition. In the following section, evidence suggests that development is more commonly presented within the context of external assistance, where Northern non-governmental organisations (NGOs), governments and other donors are positioned as central agents in the development process.

Despite the passage's emphasis on internally-achieved development, the Kerala example offers yet another illustration of the centrality of the modernisationist framework to how development is presented in this text. Taken as a whole, the passage depicts a state which has progressed along the development ladder or trajectory, thereby ridding itself of its 'many problems'. Women as a collective have been transformed, from a group who were once ignorant, poor, uneducated, illiterate, tradition-bound, and domesticated, to a group who are now empowered and educated, with the freedom to pursue careers and make their own decisions, including about how many children they wish to have.

This discourse of transformation reflects the trope of the feminist modern, with the image of an empowered woman that has become increasingly popular in development discourses since the 1990s. The feminist modern positions women as capable of transforming themselves, and their societies, often without the recognition of political and economic forces that make such development transformations difficult or unlikely (Greene, 1999:227, cited in Vavrus, 2003:25). There is a clear parallel between the transformed female Third World figure depicted in the Kerala case study and the implicit characterisation of women in the global North evident in Western feminist discourse (Mohanty, 1991). Equally, the depiction of women prior to Kerala's 'development' bears a striking resemblance to the female character Mohanty identifies as the 'average Third World woman', who leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and life in the Third World (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, religious, domesticated, family-oriented, victimized, etc.) (Mohanty, 1991:56).

The foregoing example shows that school texts do not always offer a wholly negative portrayal of developing countries. However, this 'positive' representation is couched in a modernisationist framework charting Kerala's evolution along the road to development, which presupposes a particular kind of developed person, possessing modern beliefs, attitudes and behaviours predicated on assumptions of the global North (Vavrus, 2003). Meanwhile, through this discourse of 'positive' transformation, the 'average Third World (underdeveloped) woman' continues to be constructed as traditional, illiterate, uneducated, and confined to the home (Mohanty, 2003).

Development as positive self-presentation of the nation

The previous section alluded to a tendency for development-related issues to be discussed in school texts within the context of policies, institutions and practices in the global North. In CSPE texts in particular, development-related issues are typically discussed within the context of a broader consideration of Ireland and its 'links with developing countries' (Quinn, Mistéal, & O'Flynn, 2004:140). Ireland is typically presented as a developed nation which plays an important role in helping to reduce global inequality. As such, emphasis is often placed on the role of Irish governmental agencies and departments, NGOs and public figures in the development process.

The CSPE text *We Are the World* features an article from the *Irish Examiner* which discusses Irish musician and activist Bono's role in getting the 'Group of Eight top industrial countries to provide greater debt relief for the world's poorest countries' (Cassidy & Kingston, 2004:233).

“[Irish development agency] Goal Director John O’Shea believes Bono will achieve more in ten days than the international community has in ten years. ‘Bono has been a phenomenon, he is another Bob Geldof. To get the alleviation of the suffering of the poorest of the poor to the top of the agenda, to get into the White House and places of that nature, has been sensational. Now he must find the courage somewhere over the coming ten days to look directly into the eyes of these African leaders and tell them he wants to advise the World Bank to relieve the burden of debt on these countries, provided the Third World countries agree to conditions’” (Cassidy & Kingston, 2004:233).

Elsewhere, Irish non-governmental institutions as well as the Irish Defence Forces are depicted as fearlessly championing the cause of human rights around the world. In *New Complete Geography*, for example, Irish NGOs are described as famous, widely respected, and fearless defenders of human rights:

“Many of Ireland’s NGOs are famous for the outstanding work they do on behalf of people in the majority world[...]Many of our NGOs are widely respected because they are politically neutral and yet fearless in championing the cause of human rights. Trócaire, Oxfam and Afri, for example, do much to inform Irish people about the causes of and possible solutions to poverty and oppression in the Third World” (Hayes, 2003:354-355).

We are the World carries a story from the *Irish Examiner* on the pullout of Irish Troops from Lebanon:

“The pullout brings to an end twenty-three years of peacekeeping in southern Lebanon by Irish troops. But they leave behind concrete evidence of their deep involvement in this poor and formerly war-ravaged corner of the world, from the orphanage in the nearby village of Tibnine to the goat farm up the road towards the coastal town of Tyre, to the savagely destitute family successive battalions adopted, to the monuments to the Irish who died, to the Irish brogues of some of the locals” (Cassidy & Kingston, 2004:235).

In an interview with a former Captain of the Irish Defence forces, quoted in the CSPE text *Impact*, readers learn that there is something about the temperament of Irish people and their ability to communicate, that has resulted in their ‘considerable reputation as excellent peacekeepers and the respect with which they are held in many trouble spots around the world’ (Barrett & Richardson, 2003:164).

These extracts are saturated with a discursive strategy known as ‘positive self-presentation of the nation’ (Van Dijk, 1997). These development narratives are often utilised to describe Ireland’s role as a generous and compassionate provider to the less fortunate in the world as much as they are to raise awareness and understanding of development issues themselves. This has the effect of obfuscating the complicity of the Irish state in Third World exploitation, fuelled in part by exaggerated claims about Bono’s ability to ‘achieve more [for the Third World] in ten days than the international community has in ten years’

Equally problematic is the way in which these tropes simultaneously mark the ‘Third World,’ and other ‘war-ravaged corners of the world’ as trouble spots requiring Ireland’s humanitarian interventions (Montgomery, 2005). Furthermore, the emphasis devoted to the loss of Irish life in the Lebanese account has the simultaneous effect of

glorifying 'self-sacrificing' representatives of the Irish nation while eclipsing the loss of Lebanese victims during the conflict.

Development-as-charity, consumer aid and structural change

The development-as-charity motif, exemplified through such NGO programmes as child sponsorship and disaster relief, is one of the most contentious and pervasive representations of international development in the public domain (Smith & Yanacopoulos, 2004). It is hardly surprising, therefore, that representations of development-as-charity should also be evident in the formal curriculum. In *We are the World*, the development-as-charity theme is illuminated through an article on the *Bóthar na nGabhar* campaign, which is described as 'a primary school project that children all over Ireland are taking part in...[where]...each class, or school,...raise[s] €320 and sponsor[s] an Irish dairy goat for a poor family in a Third World country' (Cassidy & Kingston, 2004:236).

A recent study of knowledge, attitudes and activism among young people in post-primary schools in Ireland suggests that donating money is the most popular form of development activism in Irish schools, thus demonstrating the prevalence of the development-as-charity motif (Gleeson, King, O'Driscoll & Tormey, 2007). During the fieldwork period at BHC, senior-cycle (upper secondary) students and teachers spearheaded a number of highly successful fundraising campaigns, most notably in the wake of the 2004 South Asia Tsunami, when students raised almost €30,000 towards the replacement of fishing boats destroyed in the disaster. Such efforts should not be criticised, but it is important to question the understanding of, and response to, development that charitable and fundraising efforts of this nature are likely to foster. The framing of development in charitable terms portrays majority world inhabitants predominantly in the context of their dependency and need for immediate financial assistance.

The enduring popularity of the development-as-charity motif is, of course, in part related to its strong practical appeal. Programmes such as *Bóthar na nGabhar* make international development 'doable, knowable and accessible', even to very young children (Simpson, 2004:681), rendering individual schoolchildren active agents of development. However, this activism is rooted in a particular relationship to the poor and representation of development based on charitable donations, pity, compassion and dependency.

As with the modernisationist framework, development-as-charity leaves little room to address the underlying factors that produce and perpetuate poverty. The *Bóthar na nGabhar* segment, for example, in describing education provision for children in the developing world suggests that 'the biggest dream that most...children [in the Third World] have is to go to school...but [that] schools are not free in most of these countries' and hence 'unaffordable for the average boy or girl' (Cassidy & Kingston, 2004:236). The segment is suggesting that problems with accessing education pertain across the developing world irrespective of regional and national differences in provision. Moreover, these problems are disassociated from the underlying issues that present barriers to educational access such as the material, political and economic conditions that constrain families' from sending their children to school (Vavrus, 2003). The development-as-charity framework is therefore problematic in the sense that it privileges decontextualised and 'do-able' notions of development and individualised solutions to what are in effect highly complex structural problems.

These decontextualised accounts of poverty coexist alongside more structural analyses of poverty and inequality in school texts, suggesting that multiple and often contradictory meanings of development are articulated in the formal sector curriculum. In *We are the World*, for example, the *Bóthar na nGabhar* segment is juxtaposed with an article on fair trade, a development theme that features prominently in CSPE texts. The article highlights issues of interdependence and inequality as a consequence of unfair trading policies and practices:

“Trade ‘liberalisation’, enforced by the World Trade Organisation, makes it increasingly difficult for small traders to compete. ‘Free trade’ is supposedly in the interests of increased competition, but when multinational companies are able to benefit from subsidies and protections denied to small economies this competition is unfair” (Cassidy & Kingston, 2004:237).

Narratives of this nature, which highlight the role of political-economic forces in shaping development problems, are important as a means of stressing the need for fundamental change in the nature of the global North’s economic relationship with developing countries (Tikly, 2001). Yet despite the structural analysis offered in such segments on unfair trade, there remains the danger that the fair trade storyline could be reduced to the realm of yet another individualised response to development-related problems; in this case that of development-as-consumer aid. In one CSPE text, for example, students are presented with possible Action Project ideas, such as organising a fair trade event at their school or surveying their local supermarket to see what fair trade goods are available (Harrison & Wilson, 2001:169). Activities of this nature, considered in the context of the development-as-charity framework, raise questions about the extent to which individual acts of making ethically informed consumer choices or promoting the sale of fair trade goods is likely to foster structural and systematic change. While learning to make ethically informed consumer choices may alter individual attitudes and behaviour, the danger resides in limiting activism to the level of personal support, and thus undermining the need for broad-based political organisation and action (Mohanty, 2003).

Implications: Post-colonialism and development education

This article offered a critical analysis of how development knowledge is constructed in recently produced textbooks designed for use with lower secondary school students in the Republic of Ireland. In recent years, the Irish government has invested heavily in a range of development education initiatives, in both the formal and non-formal education sectors, in an effort to increase public understanding of development issues and the underlying causes of poverty and underdevelopment in the world (Irish Aid, 2008). As an educational process, development education aims to ‘...challenge attitudes which perpetuate poverty and injustice, and empower people to take action for a more equal world’ (Irish Aid & Trócaire, 2006:6). A critical examination of how development issues are represented in curriculum materials is particularly important for a sector that encourages action for change by promoting understanding of global issues. It is precisely because the level and nature of one’s engagement with the developing world is linked to one’s perceptions of this world that we need to examine how these perceptions are constructed in the classroom given that they are influenced to a large degree by what is learned in school.

The study on which this article is based suggests that multiple and often contradictory meanings of development are at play in school texts, some of which rely on more traditional modernisationist and development-as-charity frameworks, while others draw on narratives which focus attention on the need for structural change, based on a reformulation of the global North's political-economic relationship with so-called developing nations.

In order for development education's agenda of empowering people to take action for a more equal world to be fulfilled, development-related curricular content must convey what Mohanty has called 'emancipatory knowledge' about the developing world and global issues (Mohanty, 2003:1). The findings presented here raise questions about the emancipatory capabilities of some of the development narratives in the curriculum, to the extent that they adopt homogenising discourses which fail to capture the diversity and complexity of the developing world, trivialise poverty, and prioritise individualised responses to development problems. Representations of development which emphasise difference and reinforce us/them dichotomies between the 'First' and 'Third World' are unlikely to establish global interconnectedness or inform the practice of solidarity with the majority world; concepts which are central to development education's radical agenda. It is suggested, therefore, that some development narratives need to engage more deeply and critically with the structural dimensions of poverty as well as the international political-economic contexts and conditions that impact on society's capacity to 'develop' (Vavrus, 2003).

The processes that shape the multiple meanings of development in the classroom and limit teachers' capacity to engender reflexivity and critical engagement with development have not been examined here (Humble & Smith, 2007). The study's analysis is further circumscribed by the limited attention it devotes to what happens when instructional materials interact with their intended audiences, and how development messages are understood by recipients. As Olneck has remarked in the context of multicultural educational content; '[A]t issue is not only *what* is in the curriculum, but what is *done* by teachers and students with the curriculum' (2001:345, emphasis in original). For example, the lack of analysis of the underlying causes of poverty highlighted above could be used as a context for opening up alternative storylines that privilege the role of international economic policies in producing and sustaining global inequality in the context of the classroom. Similarly, existing representations of development could be problematised by asking: how could this issue be otherwise imagined? This question is central to a post-colonial orientation to development education (Andreotti, 2006). Exposed to development issues through a post-colonial lens, students will be empowered with the skills, values and understanding needed to challenge the perception that the developing world is continually in need of saving or intervention, and that 'we' in the global North have all the solutions (Andreotti, 2006).

The post-colonial orientation to development education offers a powerful counter-narrative to functionalist, modernisationist frameworks which are privileged in the existing curriculum. If exposed to this orientation, students will be better equipped to interrogate accepted understandings of development problems and solutions and to critically evaluate widely held ideas about the so-called 'developing' world that might otherwise go unquestioned. Understanding the ways in which existing development ideas are mediated and produced in schools in different geographical contexts is a small but necessary step in building alternative storylines and curricula, grounded in more emancipatory frameworks of this nature.

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Matthias Fiedler's comments:

1) First, I have to say that I found Audrey's findings shocking. I would have thought that the material provided to students would have been more advanced. They are unfortunately not as far ahead as I would have anticipated.

2) It is important to recognise the critical role texts and resources play in education. There's not always time for teachers to plan critically engaging

lesson plans. Often they rely on texts and resources, so it is incredibly important to ensure that the materials available to teachers encourage students to engage with the information they are being taught.

3) Another thing to consider is the connection between the 'self-identification of the nation' and the 'other' that Audrey mentions. In texts, in order to engage with the other, one needs to identify themselves with Ireland or the nation in general, which is a very colonial way of looking at the situation. Colonialism, for our purposes, is defined as the building of a nation by creating an identification with 'our' nation in comparison to the other. It is the mentality prominent in the 19th century, the eye cast on indigenous cultures, looking down on them. It is the predecessor to the developed versus developing nation view, the colonial heritage of the Northern gaze.

Questions:

1) MF: Could the colonial critique lead to disempowerment of students?

AB: People can feel disempowered, and they often will. It is the intractable nature, the structure of the problem. In a post-colonial perspective, however, it is not about the 'answer'. There is no preconceived solution. Awareness is the beginning. We are giving students the knowledge and skills to engage with these issues and make a difference in the future.

2) MF: Are the resources available to teachers now failing to create critical literacy skills in students?

AB: This study focused primarily on textbooks identified in earlier studies that offered examples of contradictory notions of development as previously described. As Matthias said earlier, approximately 70 per cent of teachers primarily if not solely use textbooks as learning material. It is incredibly important to ensure there are quality resources available. That being said, there are good textbooks, but they were not the focus of this particular piece of research.

Participant questions:

1) Has there been any research done regarding the portrayal of religion in texts, for example how Muslim students in Ireland respond to the portrayal of Islam?

2) Could critical literacy skills be used in initial teacher training (ITT) to give teachers the ability to deconstruct complicated notions of development portrayed in texts, in the classroom?

3) If we succeed in communicating the diversity of experiences, the complexities of development, the imbalanced distribution of wealth, etc., will that not just cause confusion and disempowerment in students?

SPEAKERS

Matthias Fiedler is currently Coordinator of the DICE (Development and Intercultural Education) project, an Irish Aid funded project that aims to integrate development education and intercultural education in initial teacher education in Ireland. Originally from Germany, he moved with his family to Ireland in 2001. From 2001 to 2006 he was a lecturer of German at University College Dublin. He studied German, history and anthropology at the University of Göttingen, Germany, and holds a Doctorate in Philosophy with a thesis on German colonial discourses in the 18th and 19th centuries. He has worked as a teacher in Germany and Cameroon. He has published articles on development education, intercultural education, postcolonial theory and German colonialism.

Audrey Bryan is a lecturer in the School of Education, University College Dublin, where she teaches courses in international educational development, development education, comparative education and research design. She holds a PhD in Comparative and International Education (with a specialisation in Sociology), and a Master of Education in the Sociology of Education from Columbia University, New York, an MSc in Applied Social Research from Trinity College Dublin. Her scholarly interests include: globalisation and education; multicultural and anti-racist education; representations of development and diversity; and international educational development policy and practice.

Lesley McEvoy is a lecturer in the School of Education at Queen's University, Belfast. Her research interests include: human rights education; citizenship education; education for social justice; children's rights and participation; pedagogical practice in handling controversial issues in the curriculum. She also serves as Chair of the Centre for Global Education.

Special thanks to Lesley McEvoy and the School of Education for helping to organise this event.



L-R: Matthias Fiedler, Audrey Bryan, Lesley McEvoy and Training and Research Officer Jenna Coriddi

Appendix A

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Appendix B

Participants List

Neil Alldred	University of Ulster
Eimear Barrett	Queen's University Belfast
Joanne Briggs	Habitat for Humanity N. Ireland
Jenna Coriddi	Centre for Global Education
Julie Currie	CMS Ireland
Orla Devine	British Red Cross
Deborah Gadd	British Council
Catherine Gleave	RSPB Northern Ireland
Anna Grindle	Oxfam in Scotland
Maxine Judge	European Studies Programme
Una Lynch	Queen's University Belfast
Katrina McCallion	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
Stephen McCloskey	Centre for Global Education
Nora McQuaid	Global Dimension in Schools NI
Ulrike Niens	Queen's University Belfast
Julissa Ossorio-Bermúdez	Queen's University Belfast
Anne-Marie Poynor	Western Education and Library Board
Agata Stanek	Queen's University Belfast
Elizabeth Welty	Queen's University Belfast

Appendix C

Participant Feedback

‘The discussion allowed me to see relevance to delivery techniques in the classroom.’

‘The interrelated approach used by the facilitators was very clever!’

‘I would be interested in future events that combined theory and practice as this is where the challenges are.’

‘I particularly found participant input and the discussion toward the end of the seminar useful.’

‘I found the critique of each speaker’s contribution very interesting.’

‘The seminar was an appropriate and engaging way to launch the newest issue of *Policy and Practice*.’

‘I now have a better understanding of the challenges presented when teaching global issues in the classroom.’

‘The seminar certainly gave a taste of the journal and an appetite to read more.’

‘It was well organised, speakers were interesting, and great example of research on the ground, especially in school curricula.’

‘I realised there are many more challenges in teaching global issues than I’d originally thought.’

‘The number of participants was good and the engagement and discussion were very helpful.’

‘I was able to get to grips with many big concepts in the discourse of development education that have been a bit ‘out there’ to date.’

‘The seminar brought the journal to life.’

‘It might be useful to have quotes and phrases projected up as to get time to write them down!’