

Book review

The Theory and Practice of Development Education: A pedagogy for global social justice, by Douglas Bourn, London: Routledge (2015), 222 pages, ISBN: 978-1-13880-476-0 (hardback); 978-1-13880-477-7 (paperback); 978-1-315-75273-0 (e-book).

This book claims to be the first of its kind, an academic treatment of development education that integrates theoretical and practical concerns, offering a perspective on development education with a genuinely global framing. It draws from the author's own considerable personal experience and research in the UK, but also from research, policy, and practice in many other parts of the world, including Europe, North America, Australia, South Africa, Japan, and India. It opens with a history and context where the author explains the heated debates that emerged around the different terminology of development education and global learning, and describes the emergence of strong networks of practitioners. Although these networks gained ground educationally and politically, there was a lack of academic traction and relative dearth of scholarly work, especially when compared with cognate sub-disciplines like environmental education. The discussion de-parochializes development education research, which otherwise tends to be country-focused and Northern in its mindset. It includes discussions of Freire's popular education as resistance, South African politics of knowledge reconstruction, and Indian reconstructions of critical humanism as a dialogue between Gandhi and Freire in its scope.

Despite many arguments for alternative terms such as 'global education', 'global learning', and 'education for sustainable development', Bourn maintains his preference for the term 'development education' to characterize 'a pedagogy for global social justice', and to argue for its relevance to a range of organizations and approaches. 'Development education' marks a broad field of thought and practice that has been growing and expanding, but in the face of certain constraints and challenges. It is politically and ideologically contested and has tended to be funding-driven and project or activity-centred, resulting in concerns about narrow agendas and confusion over its basic purpose. Bourn reframes development education to move it away from narrow and politically influenced outcome-oriented perspectives towards a wider approach centred on a process of learning. This includes, *inter alia*, learning in a global society, global citizenship, sustainable development, and understanding the deeper causes of poverty, beyond thinking and acting in a

charitable way. These strands have tended to diverge, threatening to fracture the field, even though it seems obvious that all are important and needed in order to foster a greater sense of global responsibility in our shared, unequal, and unsustainable world.

Development education is not the easiest subject for a book, since its position as a subject or discipline has been rather ill-defined and contested. It emerged 'from below' as a largely practitioner and NGO-led area of activity, a field of interest that has arisen through networks, constituting communities of practice where awareness-raising and fundraising co-exist somewhat uneasily. In practice, development education pulled together strands of education, learning, and advocacy (p. 31), initially driven by NGOs with strong religious and social justice values. The historically dominant role of NGOs in development education is a factual legacy that gives rise to inherent tensions: Bourn finds their individualist focus when it comes to action at odds with their values base. Further, their mission as development agencies with charitable origins, whose legitimacy depends on demonstrated efficacy towards beneficiaries, is at odds with the expectation that they should play a role in promoting radical forms of consciousness and learning in a completely different constituency of 'learners'. The rise of the evaluation and impact agenda has tended to raise awkward questions about 'effectiveness', 'value for money', and the relationship between awareness raising and poverty reduction, while the open-ended, critical educational mission of development education is focused on the skills and thought processes of the learners. It is a sign of changing times that, even from the perspective of the most progressive UK-based NGOs, open-ended learning processes, dialogue, and critical reflection have become perceived as luxuries that can no longer be afforded or tolerated (p. 163).

Bourn suggests that the independence of development education and its community, or communities, of practice may have diminished as their activities have become more mainstream, leaving little space for 'marginal' perspectives and practices. This has given rise to worries that the authentic *raison d'être* of development education is being compromised. But what exactly is this *raison d'être*? The literature reviewed and described in Chapters 2, 3, and 5 represents a number of different approaches and focal points, with commitments to justice, citizenship, and/or open-ended educational processes. Bourn adopts Pike and Selby's descriptive and pragmatic approach, enabling the inclusion of many different and otherwise potentially conflicting elements.

Development education has a distinct 'pedagogical approach that responds to both theoretical and practice debates', but this claim to a distinct pedagogy is in effect a proposal and a work-in-progress. The author draws upon a variety of theories to pull together a pedagogy that is not yet settled, and still 'needs to evolve' (p. 99).

He proposes that development education should be understood as a pedagogical framework comprising three *learning outcomes*: (1) a global outlook; (2) a recognition of power and inequality; (3) a commitment to social justice and equity. These 'outcomes' are combined with a specifically pedagogical set of processes of (4) reflection, dialogue, and transformation, which are to do with learning itself.

This framework is applied to the literature on development education in practice, focusing on *learning knowledge about development* in Chapter 7 and *learning global skills* in Chapter 8. Learning 'about' development looks at school geography textbooks, school linking, specific courses on world development, and travel and volunteering experiences in different countries. While all these activities promote a 'global outlook', they (unsurprisingly) also tend to reproduce dominant, paternalistic, and patronizing perspectives on poverty and development (p. 136). The 'global skills' agenda is promoted through youth work, schools, and higher education. Here, the focus is on the skills individual learners need to face economic globalization and competition, seemingly disconnected from a substantive, discipline-based knowledge of global justice pedagogies that would be deeper and more sustained.

The dual commitment to pedagogy and social justice underpins an ambivalence about the ultimate purpose of development education and its ethical commitments. The theoretical approach answers three main demands: (1) the need to address questions surrounding development and globalization; (2) an acknowledgement of the tension between universalist perspectives on social justice and more specific critiques of inequality and injustice; and (3) an interest in more properly educational questions concerning learning, knowledge construction, and pedagogy (p. 75). Bourn's theoretical grounding particularly highlights two contrasting theorists: Annette Scheunpflug and Vanessa Andreotti, representing key exponents of a broadly cosmopolitan global learning and radical post-colonial critiques respectively. He sees both as contributing to the ethical core for development education within a broad context of globalization, interposing further key elements such as global citizenship and transformative learning into the framework. This is a theoretically loose approach enabling an accommodation between needs to 'learn about the world' and to 'find one's place in it'. The social, cultural, economic, and political contexts for learning (e.g. 'geography') are suffused with colonial legacies, yet contain the desire to build common sympathies (p. 9). Globalization provides a new context that assumes a kind of practical universalism of necessity, but post-colonial critiques of development (p. 19) and of Enlightenment universalism resist and critique this assumption. Bourn remains optimistic that 'an understanding of the global issues' can be squared with 'critical and creative thinking' and 'a sense of optimism about a better world' (p. 20), yet this implicitly cleaves to the universalist position and shies away from the more plangent critiques of the post-colonialists.

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A pedagogy of global social justice is ultimately committed to social transformation. However, the commitment to pedagogy throws development education back on to the political and ideological commitments that Bourn seeks to escape by way of pedagogy. It seems evasive for a pedagogy *of* social justice to avoid explicitly being a pedagogy *for* social justice. The latter implies a social and political expectation that the education process will necessarily lead to actual change in the direction of social justice, and to remedies for injustice. His historical survey shows that ‘development education had the greatest impact when subsumed or metamorphosed into broader movements in education – for sustainable development, global citizenship, or global learning’ (p. 24). Bourn has exposed a difficult conundrum, its practical implications further explored in the chapter on evaluation and impact. Development education may act as a pedagogy *of* social justice, but this is unlikely to be effective as a pedagogy *for* social justice with an impact within the necessary timeframe, unless it actively embraces the content as well as the attitudes and aptitudes fostered by wider movements for social justice.

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