

International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning **Editorial**

When we began this journal in 2008, we identified that there were two major gaps within the debates on development education and global learning: the lack of articles and publications that looked at the relationship of theory to practice, and evidence of the impact of that practice.

This issue is an excellent example of how the journal has addressed these gaps, through a major theoretical and conceptual article by Professor Gregor Lang-Wojtasik and two major research studies based on their doctorates by Dr Eleanor Brown and Dr Nadya Weber.

The latter two articles cover similar fields in terms of the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in development education, albeit from different theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Eleanor Brown's article discusses research with development education practitioners in Britain and Spain and looks particularly at their pedagogical approaches to development education and how these relate to transformative learning theory. Nadya Weber's article examines the changing nature of international development non-governmental organizations' development education programming in England and Canada, with particular reference to the work of Save the Children.

Although the two articles use very different methodologies and have different theoretical and conceptual bases, they both raise themes that have been ongoing features of the debates in this journal. One of these is the role of NGOs within the landscape of development education practice. Dr Alex Standish has criticized NGOs engaged in development education and global learning for being instrumentalist and using formal education as a means to propagate their views. These articles suggest that the role and practice of NGOs is much more nuanced than this. Brown, for example, identifies evidence of the importance of critical thinking within the work of NGO practitioners. And Weber, while finding an increasing drift towards projects that raised the profile of the NGO, also identified examples of resources and materials produced by Save the Children that were highly regarded by educationalists.

However, the two articles do also pose the question as to what is and could be the contribution of international NGOs to development education and global learning. There is evidence from these two articles that the promotion of specific value bases and distinctive viewpoints enables learners to assess issues from different perspectives. Weber's article also makes the point that because of the global nature of the work of these NGOs, they can facilitate access to dialogue and engagement in programmes and learning that involve practitioners in both the global North and the global South.

Nonetheless, these two articles remind readers of this journal of the fragile nature of development education and global learning, with shifting funding priorities by governments and also changing priorities of NGOs. Save the Children, for example, is today no longer a major player in development education in the UK. And in Spain, funding for development education has been heavily cut because of the economic crisis in that country.

Gregor Lang-Wojtasik's article is rather different in focus, although it presents some of the same themes of learning and social change. Influenced by the theories of Luhmann and the work of Scheunpflug, Lang-Wojtasik outlines a framework for change within global learning. Central to this are four dimensions: spatial, factual, temporal, social. He develops this framework by identifying distinctive features of human activity and our ability to learn, change, and act. Influenced particularly by German anthropological and sociological traditions, Lang-Wojtasik suggests that there are potential linkages between global learning and debates regarding the role of human beings in securing social change, particularly in the context of the worldwide society in which we now live. He proposes a model, influenced by Luhmann and Plessner, of 'reflexive difference learning', a model that he hopes will open up minds to reflect on the 'paradoxes of the world society'.

All three articles, therefore, in their very different ways, remind us that central to the debates within development education and global learning is a desire to see a better, more just and more equal world. They all raise questions about the role that education can play in this process, about who the key actors are, and what important messages can help secure these changes.

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