Principles and Practices of Development Education

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Assignment 1

Deconstructing Development Education:

Towards a pedagogy of empowerment

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Introduction

What is development education? In order to understand this multifold concept, it seems appropriate to have a closer look at its elements: development and education. After outlining various approaches to development, I would propose an excursion in the thinking of French adult educationalist Marcel Lesne, before linking both to various concepts of development education. In the conclusion, I'll attempt to outline an approach to development education based on values, empowerment and social transformation.

What is Development? Beyond growth, there's freedom

Storey (2003:26) states that "*economic growth [..] still underlies much current official thinking*" on the nature of development. In public discourse, such a narrow concept of development seems to apply not only to so-called developing, but also rich countries, as shows us any random European newspaper these days, where growth (may it be "green") is presented as the one and only solution to the supposed "crisis state".

The obvious short-comings of a purely growth based development model, constantly criticised by development educators, have already been denounced by the Club of Rome claiming "The Limits to Growth" back in 1972 (Meadows et.al. 1972). A constructivist, post-modern critic of development based on Michel Foucault's discourse analysis (Lehman 1997, Blum 2000, Storey 2003) explains the dominant role of growth in public discourse and decision making by looking on aspects of power: Who takes which advantage of the maintenance and promotion of a certain discourse on development? This led Storey (2003:35) to question the very concept of development: *"The real purpose of the development exercise [..] is to discipline and dominate."* Not progress, but power would be at the core of the development system, and the main objective of the development discourse is to legitimise and reinforce it's own existence, including a multitude of institutions, programmes, projects and jobs in the aid industry, still largely dominated by former colonial powers. According to this view, development is not a solution, but part of a problem created by its very own discourse.

Sen (1999), going beyond an economic, supposedly measurable conception of development and the neutral fatalism of discourse analysis, proposes a resolutely

human-rights based approach: „*Enhancement of human freedom is both the main object and the primary means of development*" (Sen 1999:53). However, this concept of "Development as Freedom" lets aside a self-critical reflection of the development subjects' enhanced possibilities. Giri and Van Ufford (2004) propose to enlarge Sen's thinking towards a concept of development as a shared human responsibility. This would introduce a reflective and self-critical element to the concept of freedom, underlining the need for self-development and constant questioning of the actors in development.

Sen's and Giri/Van Ufford's conception of development as freedom and responsibility goes past a normative power discourse and integrates the role of individual and collective positive action, beyond a "powerful giver – grateful receiver" (DEEEP 2011:4) approach to development, which might still be used by the "aid industry" and other actors to justify their existence and maintain a position of power.

What is education? From instruction to social action

Before approaching the concept of development education, it seems useful to have a look at the second word in the terminology: Education. Marcel Lesne (1994), based on comprehensive practical experience in adult education (he was director of the French national adult education institute) proposes three distinct pedagogic "action modes" which are interesting to look at also in the context of development education:

1) A *transmissive, normative mode*, aiming to prepare the learner to fit in expected or predefined social roles and to reproduce the existing social and economic system. Knowledge is considered objective and cumulative. The individual is object of education; (pedagogic) power is accepted and applied.

2) A *facilitating, personal mode*, aiming to enable the learner to actively adapt to changing economic and social roles and exigencies. Knowledge is considered multifaceted and versatile. The learner is subject of education; pedagogic power is used indirectly and implicitly.

3) An *appropriative, social mode*, aiming to empower the learner to modify and produce new forms of social and economic interaction. Knowledge is considered as social construction. The learner is agent of his/her education and of society; pedagogic power is democratic.

Marcel Lesne, who refers his thinking to Paulo Freire and Pierre Bourdieu, doesn't talk about development education as such, but we'll see that his model shows striking similarities to certain concepts in the context of development education.

Development education: Empowerment of agents for social change

The model proposed by Johannes Krause in the European Development Education Monitoring Report "DE Watch" (European Multi-Stakeholder Steering Group on Development Education 2010) draws its categories on observed development education concepts and definitions in 28 European countries. While "public relations" is explicitly excluded from recognized development education (see also the European Development Education Consensus, DEEEP 2007), we can draw interesting parallels between the three "recognized" Development Education concepts in the "DE Watch" and Lesne's educational modes: *Awareness raising* on a specific agenda with predefined objectives closely relates to the *transmissive, normative* mode, in which the learner is object of education. Krause's *Global Education* category, aiming at a personal emancipation of learners as subjects of education, reflects a number of key principles in Lesne's *facilitating, personal* mode. Finally, the *life skills* category, aiming at the empowerment of agents for social change, transposes the *appropriative, social mode* of Lesne's adult education theory to the context of development education.

These educational concepts correspond to a certain degree with the three approaches to development outlined earlier:

Awareness raising or even PR might show elements of convergence to a growth, or at least linear and measurable notion of development: The complex, multifold character of development is neglected in order to organize support around a pre-defined agenda of supposed solutions, to be implemented by experts and leaving the learner in an assigned role, having to accept the discourse power of the campaign he is participating in.

Global education (according to the DE Watch) would address a more complex picture of development, including various elements of global interdependencies and aiming at responsible action, which are key elements in Sen's (1999) and Giri's/van Ufford's (2004) work. Similarly, refering to Freire and Gandhi, Kumar (2008) emphases "*freedom, autonomy and responsibility*" as cornerstones of development

education, considering participatory democracy and genuine dialogue as central elements: "*dialogue [..] is the primary thinking skill, reconceptualised as 'learning to learn', with all other thinking skills following from this induction.*" (Kumar 2008:45). Close to Lesne's 'facilitating, personal mode' in its approach to knowledge and the learner's role as subject of education, Kumar's critical humanist and dialogical view on development education goes beyond the individual and adds a collective dimension aiming at empowerment of social change agents and democratisation.

Krause's life skills concept, explicitly rooted in a "*constructivist, systemic*" (European Multi-Stakeholder Steering Group on Development Education 2010:7) worldview, and Lesne's 'appropriative, social mode', which considers knowledge as social construction, are close to post-modern, discourse analytic development concepts. Such approach can also be observed in Andreotti's conception of global learning, rooted in post-colonial development critique. Putting an emphasis on culture and language as tools of power, the global learning process would include four steps: "*learning to unlearn, learning to listen, learning to learn and learning to reach out*" (Andreotti 2008:29). The self-reflective character of Andreotti's conception moves development education far away from any activist or campaigning approach and shifts the political agenda to process related aspects that learning should "*think in ethical, critical and accountable ways*". (Andreotti 2008:35)

Open questions: South or world, learner or collective?

A recurrent question in both literature and the group discussions is the geographic scope of DE: Is it somehow connected to „North-South" questions, or is it about the world as a whole? Andreotti (2008) strongly challenges „western" perspectives and points to the importance of „indigenous knowledge". Yet, supposing that such knowledge existed in opposition to "western knowledge", might unwillingly reinforce a "North-South" dichotomy. In contrast, Kumar (2008) doesn't use at all "North-South" language and underlines strongly global interconnectedness, joint humanity and responsibility, which seem to reflect a truly global perspective.

Another open question seems to be the focus of the learning process: Is it about empowerment and change (i.e. directed to social transformation, no matter if predefined or not), or about the learning process itself (self-reflection, „un-learning" according to Andreotti 2008 or Scheunpflug, in Bourn 2008). Is it about the learner,

who should question him- or herself, or about the world, which should be changed through the learning process? One could think of *global learning* on the one side (Scheunpflug in Bourn 2008, Andreotti 2008) and *social agency* on the other side (Kumar 2008, DEEEP 2007, DEEEP 2011).

Conclusion: Values, empowerment, transformation

Both approaches, global learning and social agency, contain an aspect of *empowerment*: The emancipation of the individual, based on its rights and responsibilities, seems to be a cornerstone of development education. However, in order to consider the collective in this individual process, it has to be rooted in *values* - an aspect largely discussed by Darnton and Kirk (2011), which might merit further reflection in the context of development education. Values and empowerment should lead to a positive *transformation* of society, which helps to shape a "*just and sustainable future*" (DEEEP 2011:6). Knowledge transfer doesn't play a prominent role in this conception: Empowered and armed with strong collective, intrinsic values, the individual does not need to be taught, it will teach itself, in dialog and interaction with society, to bring upon the great transformation.

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