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Academic support and understanding of development education

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- **Campus Global an der Universität Lüneburg**
- **Research Centre on Development Education**
- **Informelles Lernen in studentischen Initiativen**

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Doug Bourn

Academic Support and Understanding of Development Education

Zusammenfassung: Der Beitrag leistet zunächst eine Bestandsaufnahme der Beschäftigung mit Globalem Lernen bzw. entwicklungspolitischer Bildung im wissenschaftlichen Kontext vor und kommt dabei zu dem Ergebnis, dass es zwar im englisch-sprachigen Bereich einige Wissenschaftler und Wissenschaftlerinnen gibt, die sich mit diesem Arbeitsbereich befassen, dass das Thema aber keinen Eingang in den Mainstream der erziehungswissenschaftlichen Debatten gefunden hat. Ausgehend davon werden die Zielsetzung und die Forschungsagenda des Research Centre on Development Education (London-University, Institute of Education) dargestellt.

Abstract: First of all, this article gives an inventory control of employment with global learning resp. political development education in a scientific context with the result that there do exist English-speaking scientists that deal with that working area, but that the subject hasn't found entry to the pedagogical mainstream debates. Proceeding from that, the objective target and the research agenda of the Research Centre on Development Education (London-University, Institute of Education) are formed.

Development Education and Higher Education

Development education and its related terms of global education and global learning are becoming increasingly well supported by governments, policy-makers and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) across Europe. But most of this activity has been based around the practice of a range of NGOs. There has been some increasing activity within higher education in recent years linked mainly to influencing the training of teachers or deepening the study of development issues across a range of degree courses. But there has been no independent body of educational research in development education.

In the UK for example there is a growing network of academics interested in development education and global perspectives. There are a number of institutions that have developed, or are considering initiatives, research centres or programmes that relate to global learning. There are research centres in areas that link to development education, including

a Centre for Human Rights Education at Roehampton University and one on Sustainable Development at Plymouth University. There are a number of individuals and universities who have undertaken and are undertaking research under the heading of 'global education', including Bath Spa, Leeds, York, Bristol, Leicester and Exeter Universities (Hicks/Scott-Baumann/Clough/Holden 2003). But there is no centre of learning that has focused specifically on the 'international development' aspects of education.

These trends are mirrored across Europe, although there are a number of courses and research groups at a number of universities, including University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, Vienna, Warsaw and Dublin.

The consequence of this lack of independent research focus on development education is that it has minimal academic profile. There is for example no academic journal for development or global education, unlike areas such as environmental education or citizenship education. Where there has been research, such as Osler and Vincent, it has been looking at the relationship of global education to topics such as citizenship (Osler/Vincent 2004). There have however been a number of conferences in recent years that have begun the process of engaging in debates on development and global education and their relationship to learning in a global society (O'Loughlin/Wegimont 2002; 2003).

Policy-Makers and Request for Evidence

The growth in political and educational support for development education and global perspectives has posed the need for evidence to justify the value of the funding and its relevance. Development education throughout the 1980s and 1990s across many countries suffered from being susceptible to moods and changes in policies from governments. Elections of social democrat led governments often led to increased resources whilst conservative led governments led to reduction in funding (Bourn 2003; Cronkhite 2000; McCollum 1996; Marshall 2005).

Since 2000 there has been an increased support across the political spectrum for development education but in most countries, funders have increasingly posed the need for

broader educational support. In the UK for example the International Development Ministry, DFID, has stated that one of the aims of its funding is to support proposals that 'embed' greater understanding of international development issues within mainstream education. To achieve this, the Department has recognised that there is a need to produce evidence that development education does contribute to the 'essential learning' of children and young people (DFID 1998).

The Education Ministry in England, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in launching in 2004 their International Strategy, 'Putting the World into World Class Education' made reference to the importance of promoting the global dimension within all sectors of formal education. In planning its implementation in the summer of 2005, DfES officials have stated to officers within the Development Education Association (DEA) they wish to work with them, its members and other key educational bodies to promote and ensure an effective understanding of the 'Global Dimension' amongst policy-makers. DfES officials have stated that a priority has to be to demonstrate the value and impact of the global dimension and 'international experience' for young people. There is also a need to promote and publicise existing academic research in this field to the wider educational world.

Similar debates and initiatives have taken place in other countries such as Finland, Austria and the Netherlands. The Peer Evaluation initiatives led by Global Education Network Europe (GENE) have started an important process of reflection, analysis and need for strategies. GENE also organised a series of seminars and events on the need for evaluation and quality assurance strategies (North-South Centre 2005; 2006).

But there has been no mechanism or structure that can bring together, identify and promote outcomes of research and evidence on the impact and effectiveness of development education programmes.

For example despite work undertaken in the UK and Germany on evaluation there is still a recognition amongst many NGOs across Europe of the importance and value of publishing evidence and research of work undertaken. The comments made by McCollum commenting on the challenges for evaluation for development education in 2001 are still relevant. 'The key to moving forward is to identify ways for development education practitioners and organisations to work collectively to develop analyses of changes in the wider environment and their implications for their work' (McCollum 2001).

Development education has therefore not been a subject of broader educational debate. A consequence of this is that it is vulnerable in terms of its long-term viability if it is not seen as part of mainstream learning. Without published bodies of evidence and research it is likely that development education and related terms will continue to remain on the margins of education thinking, policy-making and practice.

A comparison could be made with environmental education. That field has generated a well-respected international academic journal entitled *Environmental Education Research*. The editors of this Journal are based at the research centre for environmental education at the University of Bath in the

UK. The National Foundation for Educational Research has also been actively engaged in a number of projects reviewing research on environmental education, some of which have been published in *Environmental Education Research*.

There are a number of projects in many countries that engage individual academics and institutions in particular initiatives. But unless evidence is gathered and learning undertaken which deepens understanding of what 'development education' means, there is a danger that initiatives around the theme of the 'global dimension' could be superficial and not grounded in understanding of international development issues (see www.dea.org.uk/measuringeffectiveness).

One example is the Global Citizenship project at Birmingham University led by Professor Lynn Davies. The project report demonstrated the lack of clarity there is in the educational world about what is meant by 'global citizenship' (Davies/Harber/Yamashita 2005). Professor Lynn Davies identified the need for more research on the long-term impact of global citizenship education. There is a need she suggests assessing 'the impact of teaching and learning on young people's attitudes and dispositions to challenge injustice and violence' (Davies 2005).

Harriet Marshall, author of a recently completed thesis on Global Education, in a review essay of this area stated that there are few contemporary books in this field, 'despite the burgeoning interest amongst teachers, NGO workers and research students'. She says that 'it is vital for a discourse to be developed in this area, particularly at a time when there is such a demand by young people to learn more about global issues' (Marshall 2003).

This means that none of the academic debates that have links to development education put at their centre the agendas of promoting of greater understanding and support for development.

Creation of a Research Centre on Development Education

In recognition of these challenges, the Institute of Education of the University of London submitted a proposal to create a Research Centre on Development Education to the International Development Ministry in partnership with the DEA.

The application was successful and the Centre began operation in the autumn of 2006 with a formal launch in November of that year.

The purpose of the research centre at the Institute of Education is to act as the hub for generating issues and areas for knowledge generation, new thinking and quality output on development education. An initial task of the centre is to develop a body of evidence that can demonstrate the value and impact of development education and to give it increased status and profile within higher education.

Its objectives are to:

- promote the value of development education as part of the essential learning of the twenty-first century to the academically focussed educational world through the creation of a research centre;

- provide evidence to DFID as to where and how development education contributes to their strategy on 'Building Support for Development';
- promote and encourage critical reflective engagement with the meaning and effectiveness of development education programmes with the educational community in the UK and internationally;
- develop a community of researchers engaged in development education;
- develop a body of evidence through a series of published monographs, academic articles and seminars on the contribution development education practice for building public support and understanding of international development;
- develop the first ever Masters degree course in the UK on development education aimed at NGO practitioners, teachers and educationalists;
- develop and embed development education principles and practices across teacher training and other educational courses and initiatives within the Institute of Education, and thereby in turn to other similar institutions.

Support for the concept of the research centre came from a range of policy-makers and academics across Europe. Professor Annette Scheunpfug, from the University of Nuremberg in Germany has written of the need for more sharing of thinking internationally as to the conceptual framework for development education and global learning (Scheunpfug 2004). In support for the Research Centre she has stated the following: 'The ongoing globalisation means challenge for education in general but in particular to all these educational

endeavours which deal with all efforts to educate for solidarity and justice in the one world. In all industrialised countries we can observe an educational scene coming from school practice and NGOs which provides materials and ideas for global education and learning for sustainability. In contrast there are nearly no activities on research in this field. And if there are some – for example as our existing work in Germany – they are focused in national perspectives not reflecting the international dimension of these learning challenges. The research centre is an international answer to this deficiency' (Scheunpfug 2005).

Ange Grunsell, former Head of Development Education in Oxfam in the UK stated the following: 'The progress of Development Education into mainstream policy and practice in this country is undoubtedly being held back by the absence of a rigorous and substantive body of evidence as to how Development Education methodology and content can raise both achievement and political participation. At Oxfam we identified this in 2002 when we undertook a comprehensive review in consultation with a range of external educationalists and therefore identified the building a body of evidence as a priority strategic area. [...] Only universities can provide the development of scholarship in this area, which will change its image and its status and create a body of understanding about teaching and learning through development education' (Grunsell 2005).

Matt Smith from Northumbria University in UK stated: 'Despite being a significant element of their practice, there is little research that focuses on NGOs' development education work. The ways NGOs define and deliver development educa-



Institute of Education of the University of London; Foto: <http://ioewebsserver.ioe.ac.uk>.

tion alongside their other fundraising, campaigns, marketing and service delivery commitments is crucial to understanding their practice, but is also an important part of the wider issue of public engagement in issues surrounding global development and social justice. The establishment of a Research Centre will provide an important step towards building of a body of knowledge to underpin challenge and motivate NGOs' development education policy and practice. It should also contribute to the embedding of development education as a significant factor within wider debates around global democracy, social justice and citizenship' (Smith 2005).

David Lambert, Chief Executive of the Geographical Association in the UK, the professional body for geography teachers stated: 'Development education has enormous potential in connecting the subject to a range of global issues and to the lives of young people in English schools.' He suggested that through partnership with academic discourse, practice can be enriched and deepened (Lambert 2005).

The Need for Published Material

In terms of publications in the English language on development education, there has been very little over the past decade. The only book main produced with the title Development Education is that by Audrey Osler, first published in 1994 (Osler 1994). There have been a number of books written by Pike, Selby and Hicks during the past decade but they take a wider remit based around Global Education as it is defined within a UK or North American context (Hicks 2005). There have been a number of other publications involving Osler but most of them are framed within a citizenship context (Osler/Vincent 2002). There has been some valuable work published in development education in Japan. In addition to ZEP there is the UK's Development Education Journal, a similar journal recently established in Ireland called Policy and Practice. In terms of academic articles, the Journal of International Development had a special issue on 'Public Understanding of Development' (Smith/Yanacopolos 2004). Elsewhere there have been occasional articles covering areas such as global citizenship and global education (see Davies 2005; Richardson et al. 2003; Holden 2000; Smith 2004). This lack of material compares very unfavourably with areas such as environment education, human rights and citizenship education or even inter-cultural education. For example in Citizenship education there is now a considerable body of evidence based on research, published papers and books which demonstrate the desire and interest of young people to learn and engage more in political and social issues of today, including the importance of global dimension (see www.nfer.ac.uk/research/citizenship; Heater 2002; Osler/Starkey 2005; Delaney 2000).

The reasons for this lack of material are in part due to the emphasis on practice within a context determined by NGOs. These comments have been made by McCollum, Blum and Marshall (McCollum 1996; Blum 2000; Marshall 2005). It can also be seen in the articles published in the Development Education Journal in the UK where academics tend to write the more reflective papers and the NGO workers the examples of practice.

Why a Centre with a specific focus on development education?

In developing the rationale for the Research Centre a question continually posed has been why use the term 'development education'. The North-South Centre's work in this area uses the term 'global education'. Terms such as 'global citizenship' and 'global learning' could well be argued are more often used in educational discourse than development education. In addition to an increasing number of practitioners the term 'development' is seen as problematic as presupposes a linear approach to human and social development. Debates in development education are also often framed within an 'international development' and therefore pre-determined NGO and government agendas. It has also been argued that because the world is more complex, one can longer see issues and debates within a North-South and 'developed' and 'under developed' context. Finally terms such as 'global education' or 'global learning' used more than 'development education' in majority of policy statements produced in countries such as Canada, Australia, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland (Marshall 2005).

However the following points could be argued as the basis for the need for a research centre specifically with the term 'development education':

- It has been a discrete body of practice with its own internal dynamic and approach to learning across Europe and beyond for over thirty years: There is for example a well respected European network of NGOs on development education.
- Government bodies that fund these areas of work are interested in initiatives that build greater public understanding and support for development.
- The linkages and roots in pedagogy, methodologies and perspectives from Southern countries have always been a key element of practice.
- Definitions of the term emphasise the relationship between learning and action for social change.

Using the term 'development' enables the debates to be framed within the policy agendas from both government and NGOs. This is likely to result in the outcomes of any research to have a more receptive audience. For example central to the work of the Research Centre is to develop within higher education, knowledge and understanding of the major challenges and prospects for development, especially the poverty reduction agenda (DFID 1998). Also if there is to be a greater understanding of our global interdependence within education and learning, then academic support is essential to secure recognition of its importance in the skills and knowledge people will need for the twenty-first century. Finally to strengthen public confidence in, and support for, the fight against global poverty requires leadership from educational thinkers and policy-makers. This requires the engagement and involvement in the debates from academic figures in the UK and elsewhere in the world.

Research Issues and Themes

An early activity of the Research Centre was a seminar for 40 UK academics that identified the following key research issues and questions:

- What underlies government policy on Development Education and how does this political commitment translate itself into practice and understanding and are the objectives envisaged by policy-makers for example realised in the classroom?
- How can we demonstrate to policy-makers that a global dimension is just as important (or almost just) as say literacy or numeracy?
- Definitions of development education within Europe and relation to conceptual influence from learning in Africa, Asia, Latin America?
- What constitutes the theoretical framework of development education and how do we develop this theory and conceptualisation?
- There is a need to map the sector and to identify where and what are the connections between development education and related terms such as 'global education', 'global citizenship', 'education for sustainable development' and 'international dimension.'
- What does DE in the North look like to people in the South and what is the nature of the relationships and partnerships between practitioners in this area North and South?

From these discussions the seminar agreed to develop the following themes as the basis for ongoing debate and dialogue:

- The relationship of policy and practice and to look at approaches in different countries as to what and how development education practice mirrors and reflects government and NGO policies;
- The question how greater understanding and engagement with the global dimension can be reflected within the training and education of teachers;
- The relationship between themes and perspectives of development education to the internationalisation of higher education;
- The concept of development education and its framework and relationship to other concepts;
- Partnerships and Linkages between schools in the North and the South – value, influence and impact (see www.ioe.ac.uk/development_education_research_centre).

International Debate and Dialogue

Key to taking forward these research ideas and themes is the need for debate and dialogue at an international level. The GENE network has been an important initiator of such debate as can be demonstrated by its support for the Global Education in Europe conference at Maastricht in 2002 and the Learning for a Global Society Conference in London in 2003 (O'Loughlin/Wegimont 2002; 2003). The network was also a supporter of the Development Education Theory, Policy and Practice conference organised by the DEA and the Institute of Education in November 2005. This event attended by

over 150 academics, NGO practitioners and policy-makers from around the UK and elsewhere in Europe identified the need for more debate particularly around the areas of dealing with complexity, multiple perspectives and critical engagement. Presentations and comments from participants noted the need to move on from seeing development education as about responding to agendas of government and NGO needs to that of recognising the centrality of the learning process. Development education should not be about changing people's behaviour to pre-determined goals and aspirations, but opening up minds to enable them to critically re-assess their own views and perspectives on the nature of the world in which they are living (see www.dea.org.uk/conference_presentations).

As Morgan has commented, development education and its related disciplines need also to engage in wider educational and philosophical debates, particularly in the context of dealing with complexity and debates around place and scale (Morgan 2004). These points have been re-inforced by Andreotti who has stated that 'in order to understand global issues, a complex web of cultural and material local global processes and contexts needs to be examined and unpacked'. She goes on to pose that key to debates are notions of power voice and difference. 'We need to engage with our own and other perspectives to learn and transform our views, identities and relationships' (Andreotti 2006).

Long-Term Benefits of Having a Research Centre

Establishing a research centre around a theme that at present has minimal academic profile is a great risk. But if it is successful it could play a major role in changing not only political and educational support for development education and its related terms, it will provide evidence of its value to the educational needs of societies.

The following could be argued as the outcomes the Centre is working towards:

- Governments will have bodies of independent evidence and research that could be used to justify and support more resources and work on the 'global dimension' to education.
- National organisations responsible for policy development on development education and related subjects will be more aware of development education through publications, events and engagement in strategic initiatives.
- NGOs engaged in Development Education practice will be able to refer to independent research and publications that demonstrate the value of their work. A wider educational audience will know their work.
- The educational research community internationally will be more aware of development education and the contribution it can make to learning. Those members of the academic community who are interested in development education will be encouraged to undertake more research work in this area and publish papers on these themes.
- The Development studies community internationally will be aware of where and how development education links to

public support and engagement with development. They will also be better informed as to the linkages between development education and development studies.

- A learning community in development education will be created including academic staff, research staff, M.A. and Ph.D. students.

These outcomes will be built upon the creation of a global network of academics who together act as a lobbying body for greater support for development education within higher education and with educational policy-makers and the development of a body of knowledge on development education. Key to this will be the establishment of a new academic journal, a series of monographs and other publications and the development internationally of a range of postgraduate level modules and courses.

As one of the leading thinkers and practitioners on geography education commented in his support for the research centre, development education 'needs to build a body of evidence that can inspire and motivate and contribute to raising standards of educational attainment it is likely that such evidence does exist in fragments, locked away in dissertations and the experience of individuals. Building academic support and understanding will enable greater communication and help bring development education into mainstream debates' (Lambert 2005).

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