Campaigning and Development Education

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Introduction

For a number of years it has been my intention to work for and with the poor in a developing country. However, I have begun to question this vision due to a growing awareness that the progress of developing countries is impeded by various 'root causes' of poverty, some of which can be traced back to developed countries. These include trade rules which favour richer countries over poorer ones, debt from loans which were sometimes of questionable legitimacy, corruption and poor governance. Campaigning in developed countries is therefore an important and useful role. Development education can be seen as a 'multiplier' of campaigners; making people aware of the issues and possible actions in the hope that they too will begin to campaign (and tell others, thus becoming development educators themselves). These thoughts are crystallised in a story told by MACEDO in the Foreword to FREIRE's 'Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage'. In the story a white middle-class female has given up a successful business career in order to work with battered mothers from under-privileged communities in an American inner-city area, but the twist in the story lays the basis instead for the case of campaigning and development education:

"Enthusiastic in her altruism, she went into a community centre where she explained to one of the centre staff how much more rewarding it would be to work helping people in need than it would be to work just to make money. The African-American staff member responded: "Ma'am, if you really want to help us, go back to your white folks and tell them to keep the wall of racism from crushing us".[1]

Campaigning

"The poorer must help themselves" (CHAMBERS 1983, 3). The process of development, despite all the contested meanings of the concept, must largely be driven by the peoples concerned. This does not mean that they must develop on their own but rather that their development will not be developed by external actors with external interests but by their own efforts with support from outside. This is reflected in the development industry's frequent use of the word 'empowerment'. True there is a distinct "lack of clarity" (SEN 1997, 1) around this word, sometimes used as a "fashionable buzzword" (PAGE and CZUBA 1999) to provide "warm and nice" connotations (CORNWALL and BROCK 2005, p4), yet there is little doubt that for development to take place developing countries need to be empowered, both as nations and individuals. FREIRE and others have argued that this empowerment is blocked, intentionally or otherwise, by the actions (or inaction) of more powerful countries. This serves dependency and exploitation and leads to underdevelopment.[2] Realities such as debt, unfair trade rules, climate change, corruption and the arms trade that benefit the developed world have consequences in the developing world. Hence FREIRE calls for "conscientisation", a process which would "embrace a critical demystifying moment in which structures of domination are laid bare and political engagement is imperative" (WEST 1993, xiii). He

also observes that development interventions themselves can be disempowering if they follow policies of financial or social assistance which only attack the symptoms, but not the causes, of social ills. FREIRE characterises such policies as violent because the lack of dialogue imposes "silence and passivity" and robs them of responsibility for their own future.[3]

Two arguments will now be made: firstly, that it is possible for ordinary people to act to remove some of the barriers to development; and secondly, that they have a responsibility to do so. References will mostly relate to the experience of campaigning and development education in the UK but the lessons are relevant throughout Europe.

It is important to note that while "it would be misleading to suggest that human beings can control all the external forces that may shape their future… many of the major problems currently facing us are human-created".[4] The question is then: what can be done about these? This article suggests that part of the answer can be found in campaigning (sometimes referred to as activism). Campaigning is "part of the discourse and practice of democratic politics and social change"; it offers opportunities for citizens to "have their views heard and to influence the decisions and practices of larger institutions that affect their lives".[5] Campaigners, individuals and groups make use of many methods including protests, boycotts, 'shareholder activism', direct action, petitioning and public shaming in order to advocate change to decision makers and to hold politicians, corporations, opinion leaders and power structures to account.[6]

There is no doubt that campaigning, and civil society in general, plays a large role in the world today; "from human rights to landmines, sustainable development, and democratization, global problem solving is increasingly being left to an agglomeration of unelected, often unaccountable transnational civil society actors" (FLORINI 2001, 29). In the UK many campaigns have reached large sectors of the population and have showed that the British

ANETA KORDALA

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public has "both the capacity and the desire to engage in shaping foreign policy" (HAMPSON 2006, 8). Whilst charity organisations are often involved, campaigning is seen as representing a call "not for charity but for justice" (BENN 2005, 1). This statement was made by Hilary BENN, then Secretary of State for International Development, and reflects campaigning's closeness to politics; campaigning is indeed a form of political action.

Some campaigners are motivated by principle alone but others are fixed on success. To reward them, there have been many victories. There is the legislation regarding landmines (TUSSIE and TUZZO 2001) and one of the most widely acknowledged is the success of the Jubilee Debt Campaign. "Who would have thought back in the late 90s when the Jubilee 2000 debt cancellation was launched that many countries like Tanzania and Mozambique would achieve liberation from debt bondage?" (HOWLETT 2007).

If we are persuaded to accept that 'something can be done', we have then to talk about what *should* be done? First one must recognise the responsibility to be informed about the issues and the possibilities for action. Claire SHORT, then Secretary of State for Development, wrote that it is "important to understand something of our responsibilities, from local to national and international level, and how individuals, governments and others respond to these" (cited in SMITH and RAINBOW 2000, 6). It is a duty not only to understand our responsibility in the world, but we also have a right to be taught about our global citizenship.

It can be argued that the citizens of developed counties have a moral responsibility to campaign on development issues. This is especially true for the citizens of the UK whose on-going history of exploitation (through trade and otherwise) allowed their country to maintain a dominant position. British citizens have more direct access to the major stakeholders and creditors in the international corporations and organisations which control access to both economic and political power. The greater wealth of developed countries along with their technological advances gives them great opportunity and power to influence the course of development and exploit new possibilities for campaigning. CHAMBERS comments on this and suggests that "since our scope for action is greater, so, too, is our responsibility".[7]

Development Education

The importance of development education lies not only in our shared responsibility to act and be informed but in the need for a democratic movement for change. Democratic ideals are relied upon in campaigns targeted at both political and corporate figures. Those in power answer to their voters, shareholders or customers and a campaign is most successful when it can claim to represent a large proportion of voters, shareholders or customers; "when the people lead, the leaders will follow".[8] It is therefore important to attempt to increase the number of campaigners; "the political will to develop and implement the broad policies necessary to generate lasting global change can only be found if a critical mass of public opinion is engaged to influence decision makers".[4]

Whilst creating access to information is only a first step, it is vital. It is "widely conceded that the public [in Northern countries] knows little about international development or about the connections between development there and life here" (SMILLIE 1998, 26). Images of the developing world presented by the media are often shallow and simplistic, leaving a need for more thorough development education. CHAMBERS makes an intriguing proposal, calling for a curriculum "for the non-oppressed" which would enable "those with more wealth and power to welcome having less".[5] Something more radical is perhaps needed, that is a system of education for developing countries which is "painful yet empowering" (WEST 1993, xiii) – an education

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that awakens and equips the conscience, drawing attention to the reasons why one country is more wealthy and powerful than another, questioning whether this is fair and suggesting and supporting actions such as campaigning. This is one understanding of 'development education'.

Development education formally began in the UK in 1966 when Oxfam appointed a staff member to develop an education programme (STARKEY 1994, 13). It is important to distinguish development education from simply learning *about* developing countries. Development education learns *from* and *with,* to encourage understanding and to foster a sense of solidarity. According to Oxfam, development education aims "to develop existing concerns, challenge poverty and injustice, and take real effective action for change" (Oxfam 2004, 2).

The following are key elements:

"Knowledge and understanding:

» Social justice and equality
» Diversity
» Globalisation and interdependence
» Sustainable development

Peace and conflict Skills:

» Critical thinking
» Ability to argue effectively
» Respect for people and things
» Co-operation and conflict resolution

Values and attitudes:

» Sense of identity and self-esteem
» Empathy
» Commitment to social justice and equality
» Value and respect for diversity
» Concern for the environment and commitment to sustainable development
» Belief that people can make a difference"

(Oxfam 2004, 3).

Others use similar elements to explain development education but go beyond this by crowning the education process with action; "the process of education for development can be thought of as a three-step cycle, consisting of an exploration stage, followed by a responding phase, and leading ultimately to an action phase" (FOUNTAIN, 16). Given the reality and urgency of the subject, this final step is simply justified; "*a*ction is needed because analysis and understanding are not enough. Nor is empathy. Nor, even, is feeling empowered, without some hope of action and change" (GRIFFITHS 2003, 113). It also serves an educational purpose, reinforcing and making concrete the issues and skills that have been taught.

Development education, as it exists in the UK today, owes a debt to the Brazilian educator Paulo FREIRE. FREIRE strongly emphasised the need for action. For him, it was important to avoid the pitfalls of verbalism, meaning words without actions, but just as important to avoid are the pitfalls of action without theory, action for action's sake. Instead he called for 'praxis', "the action and reflection of men upon their world in order to transform it". FREIRE's many insights are crucial: "no pedagogy is neutral"; "the kind of education that does not recognise the right to express appropriate anger against injustice, against disloyalty, against the negation of love, against exploitation, and against violence fails to see the educational role implicit in the expression of these feelings"; "histories of oppression and suffering must be recounted… Memories of hope, too, must be offered… These should include the voices of the oppressed and respect for their integrity and subjugated knowledge."[3]

Wherever it takes place, and there are calls to include development education in national curricula, development education is necessary to inform everyone of the world they live in and of their responsibility. Where it leads people to action, it enables people to truly engage with the issues and to campaign effectively. Campaigning itself should reflect this education and include elements of it when seeking supporters and lobbying decision makers.

Challenges

So far we have pursued a positive and idealistic view of development education but in many ways it opposes the dominant ideology and, as FREIRE writes, this type of education is “swimming against the current...and those who swim against the current are first being punished by the current and cannot expect to have a gift of weekends on tropical beaches.”[9]

Development education does not take place in a vacuum; many people already have a certain amount of knowledge, be it perceived or actual. Generally speaking “the mass of the general public has little notion of the conditions of life for the people of the world’s poorest regions” (STARKEY 1994, 13), or indeed of poverty in the UK. A minority are more aware due to the increased inclusion of development education within the national curriculum. While such knowledge can be built upon, other preconceived ideas can impede development education and stereotypes abound. The majority of these stereotypes are negative without recognising positive elements. Development education faces a challenge to reverse these stereotypes. If “all students need to be able to deconstruct their own cultural baggage of inherited knowledge” (NICHOLSON 1996, 80), it is the job of campaigners and educators to enable this process.

A related difficulty comes from the mixed messages sometimes transmitted by development NGOs. Their efforts to provide development education sometimes conflict with their desire for fundraisers; for example whilst work in schools is attractive to supporters “there is an ongoing debate within most of the NGOs about the importance of providing resources for schools, compared with the rest of their work. When funds are short, it can sometimes be seen by some in the agencies as a luxury they cannot afford” (DRAKE 1996, 65). CLARK argues that many Northern NGOs are so preoccupied with finding financial support that they miss the campaigning potential of their

supporters; “they view their citizens as merely donors, neglecting their potential to act as educators (of their children and peers), advocates (for example through local newspapers or societies), voters, consumers (boycotting or favouring certain products), investors (making ethical choices)” (CLARK 2001, 27).

Sadly we cannot assume that development education will always lead people to action; “even if participants have high levels of knowledge about the problem and the community has invested in changing their attitudes through advertising or educational campaigns, behaviour is often unaltered” (MCKENZIE-MOHR 2000). It must be recognised that there will be a spectrum of outcomes; for some it will result in life-long campaigning, others may care but give priority to other issues, interests or responsibilities, while in some cases strong opposing beliefs may remain unaffected and may make behaviour change extremely unlikely.

Reflecting today’s “sound-bite culture”,[4] issues are

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sometimes over-simplified as development narratives and lead to simplistic and often ineffective campaigning solutions. Claire SHORT, then UK Minister for International Development, claimed that "single issue campaigning can lead to a kind of irresponsibility – organisations say ridiculous things to raise their profile and money" (quoted in HARPER 2001, 251). Issues chosen for campaigns are necessarily those which attract campaigners' attention; "in invoking the public interest, NGOs will have to respond directly to the concern of a broad base within society" (NEWELL 2001, 1999). Issues that attract interest, such as those involving children, receive attention, while other less popular ones, such as land reform, can be sidelined. The large number of different 'causes' could also be a problem, potentially leading to "feelings of helplessness and pessimism" or numbness (OSLER 1994, ix), especially as concern for some threatening issues like terrorism may block out other urgent issues like climate change. Still it is preferable that campaigning and development education happen separately around different issues; this allows individuals to focus on particular areas and avoid the danger of presenting a 'theory of everything' or presenting an unchallengeable 'truth.'

Another criticism which can be made of campaigning and development education is that they may disempower the poor; it is not always easy to see how campaigners in Britain "link their own voice as advocates with the knowledge and voices of local people on whose behalf they sometimes claim to speak" (GAVENTA 2001, 283). This is a particular problem when the question of inequality is raised; there is no doubt that "Northern campaigns have significantly greater access to funding, equipment, technical skills, global policymakers, and international meetings, realities which mirror the historic inequalities between North and South" (COLLINS et al 2001, 143). It is also necessary to acknowledge the failings and responsibilities of developing countries themselves; the responsibility does not lie entirely in developed countries.

Finally it is important to challenge the extent of the impact of campaigning in the UK. It is important that other countries join the campaign and demonstrate an emerging democratic call for change across national borders; "it is no good just mobilising ourselves. We need to mobilise the world. What 1% of the world does will be lost if 20% (China in terms of population) or 25% (the US, in terms of GNP) is doing the opposite" (COOPER 2006, 21).

Conclusion

This article has made the case for campaigning and development education, before considering various challenges they face. The challenges are important; they must be listened to and learnt from. However, we might conclude that they should not prevent people from attempting to bring positive change; campaigners must keep on campaigning, while development education should be utilised to enhance the possibility of more people choosing to take action. It is not easy, but is worth the attempt; individuals must recognise that they have an impact on the world and that "to change things is difficult but possible."[1]

(Endnotes)

1 FREIRE P, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield. 1997. Xxix, 74.

2 "underdevelopment, which cannot be understood apart from the relationship of dependency, represents a limit-situation characteristic of societies of the Third World" FREIRE Paulo (Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Sheed and Ward. 1972. 75.

3 FREIRE Paulo (Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Sheed and Ward. 1972. 15, 60, 66.

4 DOCWRA Richard, *Why is it so hard to change people's behaviour?* 2006. Available online from www.changestar.co.uk

5 EDWARDS M and GAVENTA J (Editors), *Global Citizen Action*. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publications. 2001. 17-28, 275.

6 Hilder, Paul with Coulier-Grice, Julie and Lalor, Kate (2007). Contentious Citizens: Civil Society's Role in Campaigning for Social Change. The Young Foundation and Carnegie UK Trust.

7 CHAMBERS Robert, *Ideas for Development*. London: Earthscan. 2005. 203-204.

8 MOSER S, DILLING L (Editors), *Creating a climate for change: Communicating climate change and Facilitating Social Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2007. 14.

9 FREIRE, Paulo and Shor, Ira (1987). A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education. London: Macmillan Education. 37.