

## **Strong questions and weak answers. Discussing CONCORD DARE Forum's universalistic values from activist citizenship perspectives**

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*Abstract:* The paper analyses current trends in the definition and positioning of “development education” by European development education actors in relation to the European Commission and the Member States’ policies in this field. It claims that development education should go beyond a narrow focus and relation with the European Commission and the Member States’ development co-operation policy. Based on data collected during the recent DEAR Study (2010) the paper suggests that in addressing global issues from a transformative learning perspective, a post-colonial turn would require development education to acknowledge a diversity of resistance practices while promoting consistent alternatives to the growth paradigm, i.e. considering a radical conception of Citizenship Education, engaging with issues of power.

*Key words:* Citizenship education; Development education; Transmodernity; Transformative learning

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### Introduction: DEAR core values

The Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) field is a unique construction, a planetary system that has two geographical/stellar centres: one in the European Commission's and one in the Member States' (international) development co-operation policy and it is mainly relevant for a variety of non-stellar actors orbiting the Brussels and own government's star. In the past five decades they have tried at the same time to make use of available resources for information and learning activities while coping with contradictory EU and national development policies patchworking neo-colonialist and solidarity tensions. Providing a definition of DEAR from a non-stellar perspective as recently done by the CONCORD DARE Forum is a useful process as it encourages DEAR actors to map their normative and pragmatic identities and to share common references. In fact, DEAR actors are far from adopting a shared approach (Fricke *et al.* 2010; Krause 2010). Similarly, "multiple and often contradictory meanings of development are at play in school texts, some of which rely on more traditional modernisationist and development as charity frameworks, while others draw on narratives which focus attention on the need for structural change, based on a reformulation of the global North's political-economic relationship with so-called developing nations raising "questions about the emancipatory capabilities of some of the development narratives in the curriculum" (Bryan 2008, p.75).

During most visits to the 27 EU Member States DEAR networks, the members of the DEAR Study team (Fricke *et al.* 2010; DEAR Study Annex, pp.115-116) applied the Diamond Ranking method in order to encourage the representatives of the DEAR national network or platform to produce a ranking of the following statements, according to their relative importance:

*DE is required in my country because...*

- ...DE contributes to challenge global injustice and poverty (1.6)
- ...DE challenges misinformation and stereotypes (3.3)
- ...DE encourages active participation (3.5)
- ...DE helps to understand globalisation (4)
- ...DE strengthens civil society (4.1)
- ...DE provides relevant skills (6.1)
- ...DE contributes to challenging climate change (6.6)
- ...DE is informative and supportive of development aid (6.8)

The figures in brackets indicate the average position the statement was given when combining the results of all 17 National groups who participated in the exercise. The result clearly indicates a tendency to give the lowest priority to DEAR as development aid policies amplifier while “Challenging global injustice and poverty” is considered by far the top priority. “Challenging misinformation & stereotypes”, “encouraging active participation”, “understanding globalisation” and “strengthening civil society” are mentioned as important rationales for DE, too (all of these statements are ranked above average (= 4.5).

Therefore, challenging global injustice and poverty seems to be the shared ultimate goal and the defining feature of DEAR as far as the European Union non state actors are concerned.

Such actors are aware that this is not an easy goal and the statements 2-5 (challenging misinformation and stereotypes, participation, understanding globalisation, strengthening civil society) provide indications about the type of means that they consider essential to work towards the DEAR overall objective – overcoming global injustice and poverty – can be most effectively reached. Fricke and colleagues (2010, DEAR Study Annex A, p. 116) comment that “this result may indicate that DE practitioners believe that enhancing differentiated knowledge and understanding of global interdependencies and empowering citizens and their associations for active participation in making structural changes (here) is a more appropriate and effective way towards fighting global poverty than simple “aid works” campaigns. This interpretation is confirmed by comments made during the Launch Seminar of the DEAR Study which called for a paradigm shift in DEAR moving away from “education for development co-operation. A renewed concept of DEAR involves an explicit appreciation of citizens and of civil society as actors and promoters of change”.

In a recent article Selby and Kagawa (2011, p.27) show their concern about the normative dimension of development education activities. They ask “what values, competencies and dispositions do we think will best realise the future, personal through global, that we are working for?”. The answer by the CONCORD DARE Forum translates development education into education for active global citizenship which should be based upon “a set of universalistic values (...), such as humanism, solidarity, equality justice or well-being for all”. Such set of values is identified in the CONCORD DARE Forum position paper “Development needs Citizens -

The place of Development Education and Awareness Raising in the Development Discourse” (May 2011) as essential to development policies because “people who have stronger ‘self-transcendent values’ engage more and longer in pro-social behaviour” and therefore in “active global citizenship with a emphasis on social justice, globalisation and human development”.

### **A variety of DEAR practices**

What is the likely impact of such definition of DEAR’s core values on development education practice in the EU? Does it imply a shift in the way the relationship between development education and awareness raising are being conceived and implemented?

The CONCORD DARE Forum position paper’s values echo those already agreed in the European Consensus on Development which states that “public awareness raising and education approaches and activities that are based on values of human rights, social responsibility, gender equality, and a sense of belonging to one world; on ideas and understandings of the disparities in human living conditions and of efforts to overcome such disparities” (DEEEP 2007, p. 5).

Based on the above mentioned values the CONCORD DARE Forum position paper generates three pillars, namely that DEAR fosters public engagement, a Global Civil Society, new development paradigms.

As for the public engagement, within a EU context in which the “public as a whole remain uninterested and ill-informed” the CONCORD DARE Forum position paper stresses that “Development communication and top down campaigning are not sufficient to provide deep and values based options for citizens to engage (...) To create lasting support and engagement for global justice, NGOs should aim to strengthen intrinsic and positive values”. The position paper does make specific recommendation about how to do it in practice although it makes a specific reference to the need for a “broad and deep democratic debate on development issues, to make global justice a central concern for all citizens – and thus to obtain a real and solid democratic mandate for needed policy changes”, including non-aid policies related to development, such as trade, migration or climate change.

In the CONCORD DARE Forum vision and strategy this is closely linked with the emergence of a Global Civil which is considered to be “crucial to shape the process of globalisation in a positive way:

- As an enabling space for dialogue, mutual learning, participation and purposeful interaction of citizens;
- As a value based, non-profit economic alternative to the business sector;
- As a global watchdog, counter power and pioneer in political and economic processes”.

This is linked in the position paper to an explicit invitation to non state actors to “initiate and deepen alliances with social movements, youth movements, trade unions and other civil society actors”. While there is no reference to existing worldwide and regional fora such as the ten-years old World Social Forum, this invitation opens a door for qualifying awareness raising and educational activities beyond the short-term-project format which often the case. While the position paper makes an explicit reference to the Istanbul Civil Society Organisations (CSO) Principles on Development Effectiveness, it does not enter into details in qualifying global citizenship, a concept which is discussed by authors as Bryan (2011, p. 4) as “ubiquitous across a range of ideological camps” and ambiguously used in formal education as Davies and Issitt (2005) show in their comparative analysis of Citizenship Education textbooks produced in Australia, Canada, and the UK which “highlights a disconnect between official rhetoric, which supports a radical conception of Citizenship Education, stressing the need to engage with the challenges and complexities of the current historical moment, and the reality of curriculum resources providing mere surface treatment of these issues, and failing to engage with issues of power” (quoted in Bryan, 2011, p.5).

As Engin (2009, p.369) stresses “citizenship can be both domination and empowerment separately or simultaneously” and that the existing categories of states, nations, cities, sexualities and ethnicities become “‘containers’ with fixed and given boundaries. By contrast, when we begin with ‘sites’ and ‘scales’ we refer to fluid and dynamic entities that are formed through contests and struggles, and their boundaries become a question of empirical determination”. Beyond the widely recurring and overarching concept of active citizenship Engin therefore suggests to focus on “acts of citizenship”: those constitutive and disruptive moments when rights are claimed, responsibilities asserted and obligations imposed, i.e.

the performance, enactment, making and unmaking of citizens, strangers, outsiders, and aliens. Therefore “thinking about citizenship through acts means to implicitly accept that to be a citizen is to make claims to justice: to break habitus and act in a way that disrupts already defined orders, practices and statuses” (Engin, 2009, p.384).

Within the strong economic focus that is the dominant feature of the development discourse, acts of citizenship would imply major attention for the construction of the public space in ways that it acknowledges and makes individual and collective changes in lifestyle possible. This dimension seems to be neglected in the position paper - although there is an appreciation that “engaged individuals make a difference through their daily activities (e.g. as a fair trade consumer, volunteer, online activist or voter) – while – content wise – the main focus remain the development paradigms that are endorsed and translated into DARE activities by the CONCORD DARE Forum actors:

- The Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) to development overcomes the notion of needs and charity and puts the rights and responsibilities of people at the centre
- Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) aims to tackle root causes of global poverty in fields like trade, migration or climate change, going beyond aid policy and development cooperation
- Development Effectiveness enlarges the debate on quality and coordination to non-aid issues such as HRBA and PCD.

### **Strong questions and weak answers**

Santos (2008, p. 251) states that “it is characteristic of a transitional time to be a time of strong questions and weak answers”. The CONCORD DARE Forum position paper seems to fit this statement: while it addresses core and controversial development issues claiming a space for non state actors and civil society as a whole, it seems reluctant to provide an analysis of the root causes of global injustice issues and to identify concrete options in bridging DARE and other “civil society” initiatives. As such, it can be regarded as a very constructive document that allow space for inclusive debate and sharing within the European Union. Nonetheless,

one has the impression that DEAR actors could do better in terms of “deconstructive” and critical analysis of the development discourse. The DEAR study (2010, p.14) highlights the risk of a “narrow interpretation of awareness raising of and education for development, aligning it as an added aspect of development cooperation, rather than as a core challenge to be met by a wide range of sectors in society”.

Vandana Shiva (in “Making Poverty History and the History of Poverty”, March 28, 2005) was very explicit about it “The poor are financing the rich”. This statement is probably shared by the majority of EU DEAR actors but nowhere to be found in the position paper which is still struggling with “subjects” and “objects” of development. Shiva focus on power relations seem to deserve more attention and was very explicit in her deconstruction of Jeffrey Sachs’ “progressive” views on poverty: “ If we are serious about ending poverty, we have to be serious about ending the unjust and violent systems for wealth creation which create poverty by robbing the poor of their resources, livelihoods and incomes. Jeffrey Sachs deliberately ignores this “taking”, and only addresses “giving”, which is a mere 0.1% of the “taking” by the North. Ending poverty is more a matter of taking less than giving an insignificant amount more (...) wealth has been appropriated and wealth creating capacity destroyed. Development has been based on the growth of the market economy. The invisible costs of development have been the destruction of two other economies: nature's processes and people's survival. The ignorance or neglect of these two vital economies is the reason why development has posed a threat of ecological destruction and a threat to human survival, both of which, however, have remained 'hidden negative externalities' of the development process. Instead of being seen as results of exclusion, they are presented as ‘those left behind’ ”.

Selby and Kagawa ((2011, p.17) have recently suggested the Faustian bargain metaphor as a way to understand and to reflect upon the depoliticisation that seems to characterise both the development education and the education for sustainable development fields . These authors stress the risk for “collusion with the prevailing neo-liberal worldview in return for some, likely ephemeral, purchase on policy (...) whatever the dystopian

future prospects afforded by the growth imperative". This perspective encourages reading the DARE Forum definition of "Development Education" (approved by the DARE Forum during the 2004 annual meeting, and endorsed by CONCORD during the General Assembly of November 2004):

"Development education is an active learning process, founded on values of solidarity, equality, inclusion and co-operation. It enables people to move from basic awareness of international development priorities and sustainable human development, through understanding of the causes and effects of global issues, to personal involvement and informed actions of European citizens and public institutions. The concept of development education is a complex and multidisciplinary, taking different forms across the EU, including awareness raising, formal, non formal and informal education, life-long learning, campaigning, advocacy, training and learning. It involves a diverse range of players, predominantly non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs), trade unions, educators, the media and public institutions".

The 2011 position paper is in line with this definition and equally vague in providing a "political" democratic answer (in terms of a global civil society) to an "economic" major threat to life and to democracy as neoliberal capitalism has shown to be.

Authors such as Dowbor (2010. p.6) suggest that while political democracy, "the idea that power over society must be wielded according to a social pact and in a democratic way, was an impressive progress", economic democracy still seems a rather unfamiliar concept. Bertrand Russell, however, described a paradox in the forties: we consider as remote past a royal family wanting to rule a country as well as bestowing a region with inhabitants and all to a nephew, but we find it absolutely normal that families or corporate groups should wield the economic and political power they hold and buy or sell enterprises with the workers and all as if they were personal fief. Today, with 435 families in the world managing, as they please, more resources than the income of the poorer half of the globe's population, and steering the planet through increasingly irresponsible paths, it becomes legitimate to expand Russell's intuition and start to focus on a central theme in economic science: the economy could use some forms of democratic management, corporations could go about their business with some transparency, and banks who play around with our money could be

held responsible for the impact of their initiatives. In a word, economic activities must be democratized”.

### **The implications of a decolonial turn**

Is DEAR ready to move beyond the homo economicus dominant model and Western modernity (Andreotti, 2007)? In answering such question the concept and the implications of “trans-modernity” as defined by Enrique Dussel (1996) might be a source of inspiring dialogue. Dussel’s use of the term trans-modernity is both an invitation to move beyond the modernity and its effects and to critically engage and support non-Western knowledges. This implies encouraging a reflection upon individual and collective lifestyles and production means rooted in a dialogue with other communities and knowledges. As Santos (2008, p.262) claims “ what we need is the work of translation. Translation is the procedure that allows for mutual intelligibility among different experiences of the world without jeopardizing their identity and autonomy, without reducing them to homogeneous entities”. However, Santos has to admit that even within the World Social Forum, such translation work remains limited as the possibilities for joint action. The question is how to articulate a diversity of resistance practice and struggles while promoting consistent alternatives to the growth paradigm. This is needed as “unending growth is the centrepiece of globalization, the mainspring of its legitimacy. While a recent World Bank report continues - amazingly - to extol rapid growth as the key to expanding the global middle class, global warming, peak oil, and other environmental events are making it clear to people that the rates and patterns of growth that come with globalization are a surefire prescription for an ecological Armageddon” (Bello, 2007, p.31).

From a cultural and learning perspective this makes it essential the “decolonial turn” advocated by authors such as Anibal Quijano, Ramón Grosfoguel, and Santiago Castro-Gómez. A significant historical analysis for educational practices is introduced by Mignolo (2000) that shows how the distinction between “the ancient and the modern” coincides with a distinction between alphabetical European culture and the nonalphabetical languages (a fact that played a major role in the conquest of the Americas).

It seems worth recalling here some values and attitudes based on “Southern perspectives” highlighted by the DEAR study (2010, p.11) This

implies mutual visits, partnerships, twinning; migrant communities and Southern experts involved in key roles as well as Southern organisations being involved as equal partners and similar activities. According to the study, methodologies based on a recognised and shared set of values include: “empathy and a sense of common humanity, respect for diversity and cultural differences, sense of identity and self-esteem, commitment to social justice and equity, belief that people can make a difference, appreciation of participation and autonomy of the dialogue partners”.

The study clearly identifies that a key challenge for DEAR is to overcome the Eurocentric perspective: “ Although DEAR put North-South relationships, Southern realities, global connections, multi-perspectivism etc. into the centre, many of the current initiatives in DEAR are almost exclusively led by European actors, using European concepts, building on European experts and so on. This Study in itself – its Terms of Reference, the composition of the Study team, the stakeholders it engages with – perfectly reflects this Euro-centric perspective which is unfortunately characteristic for a wide range of DEAR theory and practice. Moving from Euro-centrism (and from a tokenistic approach to North-South exchange) to multilayered global perspectives, might become the most important challenge for this area of work in the coming years. It would require, for example:

- to conceptualise and implement programmes with full, equal participation of actors from all over the globe;
- to engage with concepts and approaches from all corners of the world and to renounce from reframing everything with European meta-concepts;
- to give up the focus on “the South” as object and the focus on Europe as the subject of education;
- to develop approaches, institutions and practices that strengthen the emergence of a global civil society as a multi-layered and pluralistic but unified actor.

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