

Pedagogy of community development: educating the next generation of colonisers or global saviours?

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Effective international and community development (ICD) pedagogy will result in improved quality of life for many people. Ineffective education could lead to lost opportunities, or harm being done. I teach post graduate (I&CD) students. Currently I&CD face major challenges to legitimacy as stated goals have not been achieved, and the global condition has become increasingly precarious. This paper is an attempt to gain a fuller picture and frame a response.

This paper examines I&CD through a historical lens from the colonial period to the present time, using the device of reality-as -story. Stories are universal to all cultures. They provide us with a means to order complexity, to formulate agreed versions of the world, and to develop values. There is considerable evidence that we think and act in a metaphoric / narrative world more than in a world of rational logic. According to Boas, interests are maintained through language, which in turn frames identities, social practices, beliefs and actions, *“An effective frame is one which makes favoured ideas seem like common sense, and unfavoured ideas as unthinkable”* (Boas, 2004 p2).

I. EPISODE 1 – THE COLONIAL STORY

The colonial period contains all the elements of story: setting, plot, conflict, character, point of view and theme. Colonialism was defining period between the West and the ‘other’. Today it is dismissed as a period of brutality, populated by evil men. In fact entire societies of the time ‘storied’ it as rational and moral. The elements of the story included Social Darwinism, technology, geopolitics, science, religion, discovery, opportunism and adventure (Fanon xx). According to an advocate of the day,

The task of governing from a distance the inferior races of mankind will be one of great difficulty. One that will tax every resource of intellect and character. But it is one that must be faced and overcome if the civilized world is not to abandon all hope of its continuing economic conquest of the natural resources of the globe

(Benjamin Kidd in Hoogvelt 1997, p20).

Institutions were created to support this edifice, constructing a self-referential universe that appeared logical. For centuries the story was unchallenged by all but a few in the North.

Empirical data on this period tells a different story of violence and inhumanity. Appropriation of natural resources resulted in the global political economy that we see today (Hoogvelt 1997 p19). Tens of millions of slaves taken out of Africa (Hochschild 2002; Marks 2002). In some countries hundreds of millions of people, or up to ninety percent of the population, perished (Stannard 1992 p151). This domination was not possible through pure force, but required complex processes of complicity and consent.

A. What type of I&CD education was deemed appropriate from within the colonial paradigm?

Preparation and education was generally considered to have been achieved by dint of living in an educated society (literacy, numeracy, schooling, trades or profession), socialisation in an advanced culture, and Christian morals. In a minority of cases it was deemed necessary to prepare departees with some knowledge of foreign culture, language and living conditions.

II. EPISODE 2 – IS ODEAS BOLD NEW PROGRAM

The colonial story collapsed by the end of the Second World Ward. Instead of this leading to a period of global reconciliation and redistribution, two new great stories were invented: the ‘cold’ war, and ‘Bold New Program’ – both with strikingly similar assumptions to the earlier version.

The Cold War narrative from the 1940s to the 1980s had as its cast two ‘super’ powers, separated by an ‘iron curtain’, an ‘arms race’, and ‘mutually assured destruction’. Their conflict was over ideology. On one side had a worldview espousing individual freedom, incentive, enterprise, markets, an ‘invisible hand’ and ‘level playing fields’. The other side believed in a centralised state, and collective economic systems. The metaphor of dominos provided a justification for the treatment of the poorer countries bordering these two powers. President Eisenhower explained it as such:

...consideration... might follow what you would call the ‘falling domino’ principle. You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly. So you could have the beginning of a disintegration that would have the most profound influence.

(1945 news conference in Rist 2002)

This cost 3 to 5 million lives in Vietnam alone.

A second story was enthusiastically created at this time. President Truman’s inauguration speech told of a world where unlimited wealth was about to be unleashed,

We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate. They are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and skill to relieve suffering of these people. The United States is pre-eminent among nations in the development of industrial and scientific techniques. The material resources which we can afford to use for assistance of other peoples are limited. But our imponderable resources in technical knowledge are constantly growing and are inexhaustible.

Text of the Speech in Department of State Bulletin, January 30, 1949, p. 123

In a startling repetition of the earlier colonial ideology, a series of seemingly incontestable maxims had been created (Kapoor 2005), in which the lifting-up of the less advanced was a noble mission. The narrative of ‘development’ linked both how the world was known, and how it should be acted on (Boas 2004, p27). On one side of a simple dichotomy were the ‘developed’ with ‘imponderable’ and ‘inexhaustible’ science, industry, knowledge, skills, progress and growth. On the other side existed misery, hunger, disease, stagnation and suffering. Other theories were invented to justify intervention: ‘natural stages’ to ‘take off’ (Rostow 1960), ‘modernisation theory’, ‘green revolution’ (Broham 1996 p203), and a ‘New International Economic Order’. All proved ephemeral.

During approximately this period CD gained currency as a form of human services practice in advanced industrial countries. The new professionals were to achieve social change through self-determination and participation. The targets included an underclass of poor and unemployed living in ghettos and slums. Thousands of small and large-scale experiments sprung up.

1) What pedagogy of I&CD is appropriate during the Bold New Program?

Similar to the colonial period, the majority of preparation was to be found in the disciplinary foundations of science, socialisation in an advanced culture, Christian ethics, and the professions of administration, health, education, engineering, finance, and agriculture. Participatory and self-determining approaches were also gaining currency, for which preparation might be found in the general social sciences of politics, sociology, or the human relations areas of communication and 'people skills'. (Kothari 2005).

People in the South began developing their own versions of the world through liberation theology, Gandhian approaches, and popular movements.

III. EPISODE 3 - I EOLIBERALISM

The events of the time called for a new story: the collapse of communism, failed Bold New projects, unsustainable debt, oil shocks, and a growing global problematique (Ekins 1992). This version of reality called for a strikingly similar solution: social engineering that would unleash growth and wealth, this time imposed on an unwilling recipient that must be treated with Tough Love (Jordan xx). According to classical economic theory, the 'invisible hand' of 'the market' would provide the means. The definition of development remained as it had been through the colonial and New Program eras: economic growth, modernisation and industrialisation. However globalisation now meant these could now be achieved through a 'world market'. Structural Adjustment Programs were the means through which the North was able to "...attack hitherto sacrosanct UN principle of non-interference in internal affairs of individual states" (Simon & Dodds 1998, p603). Tectonic geopolitical shifts were further consolidated through Multilateral Free Trade Agreements. It was declared that history had ended (Fukayama 1995) and that there was indeed 'No Alternative'.

The same measures were applied in the 'developed' North. The lingua franca became of public choice, rational self interest, user-pays, privatisation and mutual responsibility (Osborne and Gaebler 1992).

A. A pedagogy of I&CD for the neoliberal era?

A pedagogy of I&CD became irrelevant. Classical economics and business practice were the frame through which the world was viewed. In Australia thousands of projects were shut down, and CD was written out of job descriptions. Training became subject to the 'competency' standards. I&CD was provided to ameliorate the worst effects of necessary restructuring.

IV. EPISODE 4 - FRACTURING AND REFRACTING

What is the story of I&CD told in the modern era? There is a fracturing into multiple different narratives. The elements become increasingly complex and nuanced. Contradictory versions of reality are proposed by a cacophony of actors, including rock stars and Bill Gates. Multinational aid organisations market their brands to an increasingly sceptical audience. International aid budgets increase alongside louder debates about aid effectiveness. The global predicament of disasters, famine, war and ecological crises increases. Thousands of Non Government Organisations spring up with their own solutions. Some new social movements argue for aid, others against it. Right wing and left wing think tanks jostle to promote their messages. The prescriptions are contradictory and incommensurate: neoliberalism and popular development; modernisation and appropriate technologies; participatory methodologies and service delivery.

In the North, the discourse of community makes a surprise re-entry in the North. Ideas like new civics, social capital and Third Way gain currency. Governments respond programmatically through a multitude

of initiatives like Empowerment Zones, Neighbourhood Renewal, Comprehensive Community Initiatives and place management. The corporate world engages with social entrepreneurship, corporate social responsibility, and triple bottom line accounting. In the South, the prescriptions for improvement includes what Bernstein (in Kothari 2005) calls an ‘ever expanding agenda’, *from the ‘hard’ fields of macro-economics, state reform, and redesign of public institutions, to the ‘softer’ fields of democratization, small scale credit, NGO mgt, self help, empowerment and re-localisation*. Most organisations in the field practice contradictory models of partnerships, logframes, rights-based approaches, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, and asset based community development. Some attempts are made to reconcile these competing visions through shared agreements like the Millennium Development Goals, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the Human Development Index, and the ACFID Code of Conduct.

A. A pedagogy for I&CD education in this period

According to many, development studies are at an impasse (Edwards 1998; Chambers 2009). One option is for educators to choose their version of analysis and practice, and aim for students to develop a level of expertise in that domain – whether neoliberal, bold new program or communitarian / cultural. Another option is to present a shallow understanding of all the different versions. A third and challenging possibility is to provide the means to for students to critically evaluate the competing claims, and build their personal action models.

However, without careful effort, the likely scenario is that I&CD education reflects a field that is a confused pot pourri. Such careful effort is less likely in a context of semi-privatised educational institutions, competing with each other to maximise profits in competitive markets.

V. EPISODE 5 - I LT-GLOBALISATION, INDIGENOUS METHODOLOGIES AND POST DEVELOPMENT

Contemporary narratives challenge the legitimacy of the above worldviews (Wallerstein 1991). Inequality exists. It is not a result of a series of historical accidents, nor racial inferiority. It is the result of a world systematically organised by the North to enrich themselves. ‘Development’ is a Eurocentric construct that has been imposed on the South. Aid is, “...always and inevitably an expression of imperialist and neo-colonial interests” (Grillo 1997 p17; Hayter 2005; Wallace 2006). Eurocentrism is infected with the ideology of capitalism, individualism, racial superiority, and interventionism (Rist 2002). Consequently “[r]estrain of development, not promotion of development, should become societies default position” (Ehrlich 2004 p).

Without a fundamental reorientation, first the South, and then the globe, will face dramatic consequences. However this is a ‘diabolical’ problem – the way to a sustainable future is not known (WCED 1987; IPCC; Garnaut).

Postmodern perspectives explain that language constructs the world and thus the tools we choose to intervene in it. Narrative creates the world, not vice versa. Consequently, mental models need to be changed, rather than the technical aspects. The development discourse is itself problematic.

“[t]hird world reality is inscribed with precision and persistence by the discourse and practices of economists, planners, nutritionists, demographers and the like, making it difficult for people to define their own interests in their own terms – in many cases actually disabling them from doing so”

(Escobar 1995b 216 in Boas 29)

Indigenous methodologies build on this perspective, but now as told by the subjects of development rather than its loyalists. They argue that the positivist epistemology and ontology is at the core of the European predicament. The assumption that humans are rational and separate from the world (Boulet xx) predetermines relationships with self-other-world that are imbued power, self-interest and self-

righteousness. Indigenous ontology by contrast offers access to other conceptions of individuals, society, space and time (Smith 1999).

What happens in encounters between indigenous and European? “... the subaltern cannot speak, so imbued must s/he be with the words, phrases and cadences of ‘Western thought’ in order to be heard’ (McFarlane 2006, p1422/3). Indigenous and First Nation people therefore need to reclaim their own strengths through methods consistent with their worldview. At some points there may be capacities for ‘reverse learning’ from South to North.

A. A pedagogy for post-development education

There is no panacea as the post-development paradigm requires unlearning many of the things we have learned in education, “all these complex theoretical questions bewilder teachers (and students!) and very often create a deep nostalgia for the return of ‘the Arbiter’” (Boas 2004, p53). It requires examining how knowledge is created – a co-evolutionary view of reading and writing our environment (Schott & Gough 2004). Fisher calls this “..clarification of the underlying structures of thinking and knowing that give rise to our present ways of doing things” (Fisher 2006, p26), with an aim to enhance the capacity to initiate responsible action (ibid p43).

I&CD can learn from many other disciplines that have devised pedagogies for transformation learning, including the critical social sciences (Foucault 1979; Habermas 1971), adult education (Freire 1972;), organisational change (Schon 1983), ecological literacy (Fisher 2006), emotional intelligence (Goleman 2006xx) and critical thinking (Brookfield).

The elements of such a pedagogy could contain:

- A historical view and analysis of I&CD’s former and current theories and practices.
- Engagement with critiques of I&CD, expressed from both the North and the South.
- An engagement with ‘other’ worldviews and other ways of knowing – particularly forms of social organisation in both relational and positivist ontologies.
- Developing a personal theory and practice of change and power – from simple to complex (Stackpool et al 2006). This would include learning to progressively contextualise how power from the micro level to the global level (de Sardan 47).
- Shedding light on the processes of domination, exploitation and resistance.
- Gaining an understanding of different lifeworlds, and how to work between them. This includes the possibilities for conflict or creative transformation at the point of intersection (Arce & Long 2000, de Sardan)
- Learning about learning – at individual, organisation and cultural levels (Schon). This includes learning how to be sustained in conditions of uncertainty where ‘solutions’ are not to be accessed through technical rationality.
- Healing in relationships with our selves, other people and the earth (Westoby 2009, Buber 1937, Rogers x, Gandhi x).

B. Education as a process

From a positivist perspective, learning is a relatively simple process of knowledge transfer. Constructivist educators have reached consensus that “two cornerstones of transformative learning are experiential learning and critical reflection” (Davis, 1996 p32). A constructivist process requires students to be active agents in question asking, goal setting, and information gathering (as consistent with process models of community development). Such a process puts a premium on linking knowing and acting, in contrast with purely intellectual knowing.

Typical strategies include working in teams to progressively understand and act on problems of relevance to the students. High level of social interaction, are commensurate with experimenting with kinds of community, and “.. be[ing] confronted with a range of representations and discussions [in order] to understand the arguments in different discourses and disciplines” (x).

C. Is the university the place to do it?

These models of learning would require reconceiving curriculum, pedagogy and institutional management. There are significant challenges to such a reconceptualisation – as discussed above. However some educational institutions have been able to put considerable resources into such a design, especially if this is funded outside of the market system (for example from the national aid budget) (Taylor & Fransman 2004). Most educators will only have the option of working incrementally toward these goals. However the alternative is drifting to reproduction of colonial relations.

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