

Focus

CONNECTING THE PERSONAL AND THE POLITICAL: FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

EILISH DILLON

Abstract: This article explores feminist perspectives on development education (DE). It situates feminism and DE within the context of debates on feminist epistemologies, critical pedagogy and the politics of DE, and it argues that ‘feminism is for everybody’ (hooks, 2000). Drawing on the experiences of development educators, in particular some who identify as feminist, it focuses on DE from different radical and poststructuralist feminist perspectives. In short, it argues that feminism adds to critical understandings of the political in DE primarily through its focus on the links between the personal and the political. When applied to DE learning processes, feminism highlights exclusion on the one hand and agency on the other. In doing so, feminism supports other approaches to DE which emphasise a focus on the politics of DE and learning processes founded on interrogating and challenging power relations - critically, radically, sensitively and reflexively.

Key Words: Feminism; Development Education; Global Citizenship Education; Politics; Discourses of Development Education.

Introduction

‘We should all be feminists’, Chimamanda Adiche has popularly argued. Echoing bell hooks’ (2000) view that ‘feminism is for everybody’, at the recent annual Dóchas (Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations) conference (May, 2019), the two keynote speakers Winnie Byanyima of Oxfam International and Anne-Birgitte Albrechtsen of Plan International, argued that development organisations need to embrace feminism if they are to challenge ubiquitous and persistent gender inequality, oppression

and violence against women in our societies. So, it seems that it's not that special or radical these days to argue the legitimacy of a feminist perspective or standpoint. And, yet, talk of feminism is loudly silent in the literature on development education (DE). While there are many constructions of feminism, I am suggesting here that feminist epistemology, or 'feminist ways of knowing' (Ryan, 2001), in its contribution to critical pedagogy and otherwise, is far more significant for DE than the relative absence of reference to it in the literature might suggest.

In this article, I explore feminist perspectives on DE. I draw on research I conducted with development educators on discourses of DE in Ireland in 2016 (Dillon, 2017; 2018), as well as short interviews conducted in 2019 with three development educators who identify as feminist. While gender and feminism emerged in some of the interviews conducted in 2016, for this article, I wanted to augment that research with interviews with a few purposefully chosen educators I have known through my work, and who were not involved in the initial research. These are: Dorothy Tooman, gender specialist at the DE Network - Liberia (DEN - L) and political aspirant for the Liberian senate elections in October 2020; Nbombi Nare, co-ordinator of the GRAIL Training for Transformation Programme in Kleinmond, South Africa; and Caoimhe Butterly, who facilitates workshops on human rights, social justice movements and forced migration with a variety of groups in Ireland and internationally, and who is a trainee psychotherapist.

I am arguing here that in highlighting the relationship between the personal and the political, feminism calls for development educators and DE researchers to articulate their politics more clearly. It challenges development educators not only to understand women's experiences of oppression, exclusion or agency and power, but to integrate 'the personal and the political'.

While most development educators are aware of the need to link the personal and the political, as evident in my research (Dillon, 2017), there is a tendency among some to focus on learners' experiences to the detriment of the structures which shape them, or to emphasise action which has little bearing on participants' lived experience. A focus on feminism, I argue, helps us to reconceptualise the personal and the political as interconnected rather than as two

ends of a pedagogical spectrum. In acknowledging women's different experiences of exclusion, oppression and agency, feminism emphasises DE which is based on a nuanced and complex understanding of people's experiences of marginalisation on the one hand and agency, challenging unjust power relations and self-reflexivity on the other. As such, feminist epistemologies contribute to expanding rather than general discussions of the political in the literature on DE (Bourn, 2015), as well as constructions of DE as being about 'the other' (as highlighted by Andreotti, 2006). Before exploring these issues in greater detail, I begin with a short reflection on my own encounters with feminism.

My early life experience of feminism and gender power relations was shaped in a family with three sisters and a strong, independent mother who was acutely aware of gender inequality. For most of my youth in Ireland, feminism was considered to be something for 'radicals', not people like me, though I could not accept many of the gender roles or expectations ascribed to me as a girl. As a teenager, I became aware that I benefited from women's rights campaigns and from European Union (EU) equality legislation and increasingly conscious of oppression and injustice against women around the world. In my 20s and 30s, I was influenced by post-development thinking including Marianne Marchand and Jane Parpart's (1995) edited book *Feminism, Postmodernism, Development*, and Anne B. Ryan's (2001) book *Feminist Ways of Knowing*. They offered a critique of simplistic notions of feminism and complex understandings of gender inequality and power relations.

Thus, in the early 2000s, at least partly influenced by these books, I became active in Banúlacht, 'a feminist organisation committed to political action' (2003: 1), and I participated, with others, in the development of its statement of feminist principles (ibid). In short, when asked, I often described Banúlacht as a 'feminist DE organisation'. In 2004, Siobhan Madden and I presented a paper we co-authored at a conference in University College Dublin. A key theme of the paper was the tension experienced by Banúlacht in trying to maintain its critical feminist stance while dealing with the limitations of state DE funding requirements. Since then, my understanding of feminisms has been honed through personal experience as well as through engagement with feminist

epistemology and critical pedagogies in teaching and research. In this article, I draw on these experiences as well as the experiences and perspectives of others.

Politics and DE

The importance of the political in DE has been highlighted in the DE literature. Hillary (2013), for example, has argued for ‘putting the politics back in’. This has been echoed by McCloskey’s call (2018: 65) for ‘more critical and political activism to be central to education practice if citizens are to be equal to the global challenges that confront us all’. On the other hand, much of the talk about politics in relation to DE is either tied up with discussions about activism or it is quite general, and understandings of politics are often assumed (Bourn, 2015). As evidenced in my research (Dillon, 2017), development educators are often wary of or uncertain about politics. While many acknowledge the political role that DE can or does play in certain circumstances, some talk about their concern that DE is too directive or prescriptive. At the same time, there is a sense that if DE is value-based and directed towards social transformation, it is bound to be ‘political’. But what does ‘being political’ in DE actually mean?

The research I conducted in 2016 found that, among the 30 DE facilitators and key informants involved, there was a reluctance to talk about the politics of DE, especially when compared to their relative ease in talking about values. Though 17 of the DE facilitators and five key informants interviewed acknowledged that DE is political, there was little agreement on what this means in practice. Their understandings of the political in relation to DE varied from those who argued that DE is about ‘politics with a small p’, or that development educators ‘need to be careful when it comes to politics’ to those who suggested that ‘power and politics are at the core of DE’ or that ‘DE is deeply political’. Nine of the development educators interviewed understood the politics of DE mostly in technical terms. This involves an understanding of politics as formal, where the role of individual citizens is to appeal to elite decision-makers to enact legislation which is favourable for justice or equality.

On the other hand, a technical understanding of politics is also characterised by talk of individuals realising change in their own lives at a personal level rather with little reference to power structures. Eleven talked about politics in more critical terms, with references to the role of DE in challenging unjust

structures and power relations, but many of these emphasised the structural, public or dominating politics rather than how these connect with people's lived experience. Where the links between people's lived experience and structures of power were made, it was often assumed that DE starts with the personal and moves towards the political. As such, there was a tendency among development educators to under-emphasise the connection between the personal and the political, a key insight of feminism, as discussed below.

Understanding feminisms

When many people think about feminism, they focus on women. Despite that, there are many feminisms and they are as much individual perspectives and standpoints as they are reflective of movements and a variety of ideological and theoretical positions (Harding, 1987; Ramazanoglu, 1989; Butler, 1990; Skeggs, 1994, 1997; Smith, 1999; Ryan, 2001; Fraser, 2013). Most students of development studies are introduced to different theories (and related policies and practices) of gender and development. These are usually discussed in chronological terms as 'WID, WAD and GAD' and are sometimes associated with different trends in feminist activism and theory - liberal feminism, socialist feminism and critical and later post-structuralist and postmodern feminism (Marchand and Parpart, 1995).

Such representations of gender and development or feminist theoretical positions highlight that feminism isn't just about women but about power relations, identities, the economy, politics and the social constructions of gender identities, roles and relationships. They also signal some diversity in approaches, ideological positions and philosophies. Though it is outside the scope of this article to present a history of feminisms or of different trends in feminism, Anne B Ryan's comments are worth noting on the matter. For her: 'feminism is far from being a unified body of thought... feminist poststructuralists recognise identity differences and power differentials, in common with other 'branches' of feminism, but avoid speaking with authority for "women" or for "feminists"' (2001: 7). She goes on to argue that differences between types of feminism are 'never as clear-cut in practice as they may seem' (2001: 42).

These differences in emphasis are evident in what Dorothy Tooman, Ntombi Nare and Caoimhe Butterly highlight as important in feminism. Dorothy Tooman's practical perspective sees feminism as 'an idea that helps people investigate, analyse and understand the actual root causes of women's exclusion, oppression and marginalisation in society and to identify tangible solutions for more equal relationships between men and women and for a better world'. Ntombi Nare explains the influence of radical feminism and DE on her work, and the importance of raising 'awareness of exploitation or layers of exclusion by women that are social and structurally mainstreamed'. For her, it is asking questions and addressing structural exclusion: 'how do we change the social norms and traditions? How do we radically uproot those and what are the new seeds we need to plant that can also be mainstreamed and internalised?... radical feminism is addressing the structural exclusion of women... we need to address those structures and their roles and to explore possible ways of changing laws'.

For Caoimhe Butterly, reflecting a radical and poststructuralist perspective, feminism is 'a deconstruction of power that goes beyond gender'. It is 'an ethics of accountability... and care in terms of how we understand power and it's also an overt understanding of positionality'. In that sense, she mentions the importance of intersectionality and the plurality of feminisms. For her, feminism 'means subversion... and disruption of status quos of both education and of politics that are lacking an understanding of power... at its best I think it's liberation but it's liberation that goes beyond gender and I think that is in a way what a lot of the conversations and practice around intersectionality is getting at'.

These perspectives on feminism identify different understandings of power and politics, and different emphases in terms of structures of oppression and exclusion, and women's positionality and agency in relation to them. While one might be tempted to focus on the commonalities among feminist theorists and activists, it is important to remember that it is a diverse and sometimes divided field, with various influences on epistemology and approaches to pedagogy. Highlighting diversity, as the feminist contributors here do, shows that feminism is far from just being about 'including women' or 'women's issues' in DE and that politics needs to be considered in complex and nuanced but strong and clear terms.

Feminist epistemologies and pedagogies

Feminist epistemology is concerned with questions around knowledge and understandings of the world from different feminist perspectives. Numerous writers have highlighted different feminist philosophies and the pedagogies associated with them. While some feminist epistemologies draw on discussions of critical pedagogy (Chow et al, 2003) and on the work of Paulo Freire, others are critical of them. For Brid Connolly, feminist educators attempt ‘to create pedagogical situations which empower students, demystify canonical knowledge and clarify relations of domination and subordination, which are marked by gender, class, poverty and other differences’ (2008: 60).

Dorothy Tooman talks about Paulo Freire’s influence on her education work and about the importance of conscientisation at grassroots level. Talking about DE in quite different terms to many in Ireland or Europe, from her 21 years working with Development Education Network – Liberia (DEN-L), she sees it as being about transforming the lives of participants, many of whom are among the most marginalised in society. It helps ‘people increase their skills and analysis to drive their own solutions’. She feels that in Liberia and internationally, DE has become more marginalised and she describes her frustration at many years of hard work at grassroots level which can be ‘thrashed by decisions from above’. Feminism has helped her ‘to see better that I am an agent of change’, she says, linking this to her decision to run for political office at a national level.

Also influenced by Freire’s work and critical pedagogy, Ntombi Nare sees a feminist approach to radical DE as different to other approaches. She says:

“first of all, you have to acknowledge that women have been excluded. That’s number one. That the privileges of women have been limited time immemorial ... even if the laws are in place, the practice can be totally different. So, the dedication or the commitment to translate makes it, the feminist radical education, different to any other because we have a focused area. We have a problem. We are questioning and trying to explore what works, what enables the practice”.

For her, addressing these ‘problems’ means that ‘the structures and the systems have to be changed They have to be questioned ... women have to challenge these structures and systems and to create spaces for themselves’.

Feminist epistemologies have also advanced thinking on the value of knowledge based on women’s standpoints, identities and experiences. What this has meant in practice is valuing the ‘everyday/every night’ lived realities of women (Smith, 1999). Influenced by standpoint theory, feminist epistemologies have highlighted the value of women’s experiences which are often silenced in mainstream accounts of realities. At the same time, post-structural, Black or postcolonial feminisms, for example, identify that women’s experiences cannot be homogenised or essentialised. As such, there are on-going debates about how to acknowledge women’s different and shared experiences (including exclusion, oppression and agency) without essentialising women or universalising some women’s experiences.

In highlighting the importance of real lived experience, without reifying it, feminist epistemologies highlight the importance of valuing the personal in multiple ways. Caoimhe Butterly emphasises emotional connections in critical learning processes, including emotional experiences of and responses to trauma. She suggests that:

“if you’re opening up topics that have potentially painful resonances for young people in terms of their lived experience of injustice, there has to be... facilitation that responds to an emotional register in the room and that is conscious of trauma... not a pathologisation of those processes ... how do you make sure that a young learner, a young participant comes into a room and leaves that room feeling validated, feeling held, feeling seen... How do you deal with the more complex, emotional, subtle glimpses of material in a room in a way that honours them?”

In challenging the gendered power relations implicit in the so-called ‘neutral’ and ‘objectivist’ assumptions of positivism, with feminism the subjective and the personal come centre stage. Along with other critical epistemologies such as participatory and postcolonial epistemologies (Spivak, 1988), feminist

epistemologies open up the space for valuing knowledge and personal experiences ‘from the margins’ and for challenging dominant ways of knowing. Calling for challenging power relations in education processes, Caoimhe questions if DE is ‘extractive’, and she criticises processes that are not based on self-reflective practice among facilitators. She calls for educators to question learning which is not ‘authentically emancipatory’ or which represents ‘a wasted moment’. In doing so, she highlights an important insight from critical and feminist pedagogy more broadly, the importance of self-reflexivity, explored in relation to DE by Hannah Alasuutari and Vanessa Andreotti (2015). They argue that ‘self-reflexivity offers a way to understand the complex constitution of subjectivities, the interdependence of knowledge and power, and of what is sub- or un-conscious in our relationships with the world’ (2015: 80). For them, a key skill in critical education is to ‘unsettle’. They argue that ‘when the self is not unsettled, the modern desires of mastery and control, and the desires underlying racial, gendered, and class hierarchies both historically and contemporarily are left unquestioned’ (2015: 81).

The personal is political in feminism and DE

Over many years, one of the key phrases associated with feminism has been ‘the personal is political’. For Banúlacht, adopting a women-focused analysis of feminism, for example, this meant that:

“the personal is political and the political is personal: women’s personal experiences are shaped by wider social and political decisions and circumstances. Our political, economic and social analysis is based on a critique of patriarchal structures, systems and ideologies of male values, interests and supremacy that have systematically and disproportionately denied women the conditions and possibilities for reaching their human potential” (2003: 1).

Banúlacht went on to highlight that women are not a homogenous group: ‘women have a key role to play in shaping the social and political contexts of their lives and have a right to have and to make choices that impact upon them’ (2003: 2).

Though there is not one feminism and feminisms have changed over time, in terms of feminist epistemologies, there is a clear sense that the personal is infused with the political, and subjects are constructed in complex contexts and have agency in different ways therein. Such an understanding sees the personal and political as intimately connected rather than two ends of an experiential, political or education spectrum.

The personal and political in discourses of DE and GCE – reflection on research with DE facilitators

The relevance of the personal and the political in DE emerges at the juxtaposition of considerations around DE learning processes and understandings of the politics of DE. For some, the political in DE relates to how it is facilitated and practiced, the kinds of learning spaces constructed, its emphasis on learners' experiences and conscientisation. For others, it is in the action dimension of DE where learners are facilitated to understand key structures of oppression and where DE is regarded as having a transparent political agenda of social justice and transformation.

While such debates are evident in the literature (Ní Chasaide, 2009; Selby and Kagawa, 2011; Hillary, 2013; McCloskey, 2016), they also emerged in my research with DE facilitators in Ireland (Dillon, 2017). There, I attempted to understand tensions around DE and politics, and different understandings of DE more broadly, in terms of understanding different discourses of DE. Based on how development educators talk about DE, drawing on the work of Andreotti (2014) and Krause (2010), among others, I analysed these discourses as overlapping, sometimes contradictory and complex. In simple terms, on one side, there is the liberal and technical discourse with its assumptions about the importance of individual experience and action for change. A liberal discourse prioritises the individual over the collective and individual relationships and agency are regarded as distinct from, and more important than, the structural. Here, learning experiences and reflection are limited to the personal (Andreotti, 2014) and politics is about giving voice to the individual or realising change at a personal rather than a structural level. For some of those involved in my research (Dillon, 2017), DE starts with knowledge acquisition or mindset change and

moves from there to action for change. This implies that there is a kind of progressive graduation from the individual to the collective and from the personal to the political. This is compartmentalised, evolutionary and dichotomised thinking that does not sufficiently take account of the complexities of how the personal and the political are connected (Andreotti, 2014).

Though some involved in the research seemed to reflect a liberal discourse, most drew more on a critical one. Similar to Vanessa Andreotti's distinction between 'soft' and 'critical' DE (2006), this discourse is based on the assumption that the personal and the political cannot be separated and that power relations are complex. As such, DE is seen to play a significant role in facilitating understandings of how power works and in challenging unjust power structures. This is similar to the Freirean-inspired DE talked about by Dorothy Tooman and the radical DE that Ntombi Nare describes. In critical DE there is an emphasis on DE knowledge as process; critical thinking and understanding of 'root causes'; critique of power relations and effects at local and global levels; and personal and political reflection on agency and structure. In this case, DE facilitators talk about DE as an integrated process, leading to critical action and activism, similar to Freire's understanding of praxis. Despite this, among some who reflect a critical discourse, there can be a tendency to under-emphasise the connection between the personal and the political, with structural, public and dominating politics the chief focus (Dillon, 2017).

Some DE facilitators interviewed exhibited what I call a 'post-critical discourse of DE' (Dillon, 2017), as they questioned stereotypes, scrutinising the values which are regarded as underpinning DE and encouraging themselves and other facilitators to question their own experience. Reflecting Andreotti's understanding of self-reflexivity (2014), in this context, DE can be viewed as a 'politics of democratic struggle, without a politics with guarantees' (Giroux, 2004: 36). Here, politics is not focused 'out there' or on the 'other'. It tries to develop skills to hold complex, diverse and sometimes contradictory realities in tension (Todd, 2009). Where DE is understood in these complex and interconnected ways, it resonates with feminist understandings of 'the personal and the political', as discussed below.

Feminists' perspectives on 'The Personal is Political' and DE

In the recent interviews I conducted, from a feminist point of view, Dorothy Tooman talks about 'the personal and the political' in terms of the interconnection between personal experience and structural factors affecting people's lives. For her, it means that 'whatever we experience has bigger and greater connections that are political, that are formed in a system or structure and through decision-making. Whatever happens to people may be tiny but it has a bigger picture'. For Ntombi Nare, drawing on the African concept of 'Ubuntu', a community-based philosophy of relationality and non-individuality, identity is not just individual: 'I am an individual who is part of the universal and that universal has many layers... This universal cannot be made without individuals like me so it becomes political'. Caoimhe Butterly sees it as 'an acknowledgement of the pervasiveness of injustice and discrimination in our world'. She argues that it is only 'through a prism of extreme privilege' that one can try to deny that everything is political and suggests that 'there's very little in my life, I actually can think of nothing in my life that is not political in one way or another'.

These educators emphasise the importance of seeing the personal in the political and the political in the personal. In so doing, they challenge many of the taken-for-granted understandings of the political in DE. In this view, the personal is not confined to the realm of the single subjective individual but is understood in collective and socially constructive terms, and the political is not regarded as something only for the public, formal world, but as tied up in domestic, intimate, local and interpersonal relations. Politics is not regarded as being just about formal power but about power relations as they operate in all facets of life. Ryan, for example, argues that it is a mistake for feminists to call for work to "move beyond" personal development... the personal should not be regarded as constituting merely a "first step" which is less important than structures' (2001: 14). The feminist educators involved here question any form of DE which does not take account of participants' (different, complex and intersectional) lived experience while acknowledging and questioning various layers of oppression.

Feminist perspectives on DE learning processes

In their edited book, *Postcolonial Perspectives on Global Citizenship Education*, though not specifically feminist, Alasuutari and Andreotti (2015) echo feminist and other poststructuralist and postcolonial critiques in their description of their attempt to ‘emphasize the connections between knowledge, power, positionality, cultural assumptions and identity amongst educators and researchers engaged with global citizenship and international development’ (2015: 3). On the other hand, they argue against initiatives, feminist or otherwise, which:

“foreclose the complex historical, cultural and political nature of the issues, identities and perspectives embedded in global/local processes and events and in the production of knowledge about the self, the other and the world” (2015: 1).

Building on these concerns, there are many potential insights for DE from different feminist perspectives, epistemologies, movements and practices, as suggested above. In addition to reflections around the connection between the personal and the political, the feminist critical educators interviewed for this article highlight the importance of feminist radical education and collective learning processes which challenge power relations.

Dorothy Tooman explains the importance of a ‘gender action programme’ rather than a ‘women only’ focus in DEN-L’s work. In the context of a society where men make many of the decisions, DEN-L’s experience, she says, was that this focus on women didn’t work. Even if, for example, women acquired property, it was often taken away from them by their spouses. For her, a gender approach which views the personal and political as relational rather than ‘for women only’ and which does not exclude men, has allowed for more acknowledgment of the historical oppression of women on the part of men in the community.

Ntombi Nare focuses more specifically on women’s experiences of exclusion and argues that ‘if we are to do feminist radical education we need to name it. We need to be certain that we are talking about women’s exclusion and women claiming their identity and their space and using it’. As a member of

‘The GRAIL Women’s Movement’, she describes ‘the significance of the type of DE, of feminist radical education, that I have dedicated my life to work on, just those small meanings that have to be seeded and they grow on their own’. For Ntombi, ‘what is special about a feminist approach is that there is an acknowledgement that women have been excluded. I think that’s the key for me... “feminist forms of radical” acknowledges this structural exclusion, sometimes structural and economic, social and economic and political exclusion of women. We have to acknowledge that and then we can start working with it’.

Caoimhe Butterly talks about the relevance of feminism for DE learning processes in that DE:

“is a collective process co-created and curated within whatever room you go into... [it] has integrity and depth, [and is] something that’s honest to ourselves and to others, because I think sometimes there’s a worrying lack of honesty around our own power and privilege but a worrying lack of honesty around how is DE a radical departure if we’re not deconstructing power”.

She calls for DE learning processes which support ‘the nuance, the depth, the complexity, the empathy and the politicisation of younger learners’. For her, young people ‘understand what’s going so disastrously wrong in the world on so many levels, climate change, climate crisis, conflict, inequalities, but they get it. They really get it’. She suggests that development educators need to ‘respond to the gravitas of that... that means that sometimes it’s ok just to hold the space in a calm, regulated way not to do the cheerleading, not to have the “wake up shake ups”’. It also, she suggests, recognises that:

“active learning can be subtle, collective learning, that we can have fun, we can make it creative, we can make it engaging but sometimes I think too much serious depth is lost in the need to make everything shiny and happy. Teenagers know that this world is not shiny and happy but they also know that they have a lot of potential to change that”.

For her, there's a 'tendency within DE to tie everything with this kind of neat little bow and the neat, little bow is the action. And I don't think there's an understanding that the process is the action, that the conversation is the action'.

Conclusion

In this article, I have explored some feminist perspectives on DE especially in the light of the experience of three development educators who identify as feminist. In summary, though there are many feminisms, education influenced by feminism identifies and acknowledges exclusion and challenges unequal power relations. It focuses on ethics and the role of the facilitator, as framed by feminist educators here, as authentic and radical. It is education that tries to put experience at the heart of learning processes. In challenging dominant knowledge paradigms, it emphasises and values subjectivity, reflexivity and experiences and knowledge from the margins.

Questions about the relationship between the personal and the political have been debated in feminism and in DE in different ways for many years, and have also been explored here. As indicated in my research, and discussed above, the relationship between the personal and the political is framed differently in different discourses of DE. Feminist perspectives explored here highlight the interconnection between the personal and the political where individuality is not primary or separate and where 'everything is political'. For DE, a key insight from feminist considerations of 'the personal and the political' is that learning does not 'start with' the personal and 'move' to the political but that they need to be addressed as interrelated at all times. Where development educators see the personal and political as connected in this way, they challenge power relations and structures which exclude but also reflexively engage in critical questioning of how DE can, as Caoimhe suggests, 'be extractive'. This is DE which is on the one hand intensely political but on the other extremely sensitive. It is about validating people's real and varied lived experience while, as Ntombi puts it, 'uprooting existing social norms and planting new seeds'. It is not about development of or for 'others' or development issues 'out there', but 'people in the room'. This is not easy or simple DE. It is complex and radical and it demands not just to be thought or talked about this way but to be practiced as such.

In exploring feminist perspectives on DE, this article also attempts to advance thinking on the politics of DE. In so doing, it highlights the importance of moving beyond rather generalised understandings and discussions of politics, which is common in the literature on DE (Bourn, 2015). It opens up diverse understandings of the political in feminism, including different emphases on liberation from oppression and exclusion, or on the importance of reflexivity and intersectionality. As such, it suggests the need for DE not only to forefront the political but to acknowledge different political positions, analyses and actions (as well as their different effects) in different constructions of DE. Khoo, in her challenging article on human rights reminds us of Santos' 'sociology of absences' and of the importance of being 'attentive to silences' (2017: 48). In highlighting the importance of voice in DE, she echoes bell hooks in questioning who speaks, who listens and why. In bringing to the fore insights from feminism for DE, this article highlights the importance of giving voice to different experiences of marginalisation, power and agency in DE, as well as acknowledging the important role that feminism and other critical and subaltern epistemologies have played in how we understand the world today. It also suggests the importance of bringing other experiences, critiques, perspectives and movements from the margins more centre stage in DE, both in terms of what they share in common with feminisms and what specific and different insights they might bring.

References

Adiche, C N (2012) 'We Should all be Feminists', TedXEuston, available: https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_we_should_all_be_feminists/transcript?language=en (accessed 23 September 2019).

Alasuutari, H and Andreotti, V (2015) 'Framing and Contesting the Dominant Global Imaginary of North-South Relations: Identifying and Challenging Socio-Cultural Hierarchies', *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review*, 15, Spring, 64 - 92.

Andreotti, V (2006) 'Soft versus critical global citizenship education', *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, 3, Autumn, 40-51.

Andreotti, V (2014) 'Critical Literacy: Theories and Practices in Development Education', *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, 14, Autumn, 12-32.

Banúlacht (2003) 'Statement of Feminist Principles' (Currently unavailable)

Bourn, D (2015) *The Theory and Practice of Development Education: A Pedagogy for Global Social Justice*, Routledge: London.

Butler, J (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

Chow, E, Fleck, C, Fan, G-H, Joseph, J and Lyter, D M (2003) 'Exploring Critical Feminist Pedagogy: Infusing Dialogue, Participation, and Experience in Teaching and Learning', *Teaching Sociology*, 31, 3, 259 - 275.

Connolly, B (2008) 'Praxis, Critical Pedagogy and Critical Adult and Community Education', Doctoral Thesis, National University of Maynooth, Ireland. [Online] available: <http://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/5084/> (accessed 22 August 2019).

Dillon, E (2017) 'How Critical is Talk? Discourses of Development Education among Facilitators in Ireland', Doctoral Thesis, Maynooth University, available: <http://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/9558/> (accessed 23 August 2019).

Dillon, E (2018) 'Critical History Matters: Understanding Development Education in Ireland Today through the Lens of the Past', *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 27, Autumn, pp. 14-36.

Fraser, N (2013) *Fortunes of Feminism: From State Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis*, London: Verso Press.

Giroux, H A (2004) 'Critical Pedagogy and the Postmodern/Modern Divide: Towards a Pedagogy of Democratization', *Teacher Education Quarterly*. Winter, 31 - 47.

Harding, S (1987) 'Is there a Feminist Method?' in S Harding (ed) *Feminism and Methodology*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Hilary, J (2013) 'Putting the Politics Back In: Radical Education and Action in the Cause of Social Justice', *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 17, Autumn, pp. 9-26.

hooks, b (2000) *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*, Cambridge: South End Press.

Khoo, S (2017) 'Engaging Development and Human Rights Curriculum in Higher Education, in the Neoliberal Twilight Zone', *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 25, Autumn, pp. 34-58.

Krause, J (2010) *European Development Education Monitoring Report: 'DE Watch'*, European Multi-Stakeholder Steering Group on Development Education, DEEEP, available: https://gene.eu/wp-content/uploads/Gene_OtherPublications-DEWatchReport.pdf (accessed 23 August 2019).

Madden, S and Dillon, E (2003) 'Positioning between tensions and connections: A critical exploration of Banúlacht's work in contesting globalisation through linking local and global issues', Unpublished paper presented at UCD WERRC Conference: 'Feminism Contesting Globalisation'.

Marchand, M and Parpart, J (eds.) (1995) *Feminism, Postmodernism, Development*, London: Routledge.

McCloskey, S (2016) 'Are We Changing the World? Development Education, Activism and Social Change', *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review*, 22, Spring, 110 - 130.

McCloskey, S (2018) 'Activism as Development Education', *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 26, Spring, pp. 42-73

Ní Chasaide, N (2009) 'Development Education and Campaigning Linkages', *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review*, 8, Spring, 28 - 34.

Ramazanoglu, C (1989) *Feminism and the Contradictions of Oppression*, London and New York: Routledge.

Ryan, A B (2001) *Feminist Ways of Knowing: Towards Theorising the Person for Radical Adult Education*, Leicester: NIACE.

Selby, D and Kagawa, F (2011) 'Development Education and Education for Sustainable Development: Are they Striking a Faustian Bargain?', *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review*, 12, Spring, 15 - 31.

Skeggs, B (1994) 'Situating the Production of Feminist Ethnography' in M Maynard and J Purvis (eds.) *Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective*, London: Taylor and Francis.

Skeggs, B (1997) *Formations of Class and Gender*, London: Sage.

Smith, D E (1999) *Writing the Social: Critique, Theory, and Investigations*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Spivak, G C (1988) 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in C Nelson and L Grossberg (eds.) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Basingstoke: Macmillan Education.

Todd, S (2009) *Towards an Imperfect Education: Facing Humanity, Rethinking Cosmopolitanism*, London: Paradigm Publishers, Boulder.

Notes:

1. I use the term 'development education' throughout this article recognising the debates about the limitations of this term while assuming that the arguments presented here also apply to similar educations such as 'global citizenship education', 'global learning' or 'education for sustainable development'.
2. In 2016, I conducted in-depth Doctoral research (interviews, questionnaires and workshops) with 21 DE facilitators and nine key informants in Ireland. This adopted a critical analysis of discourse approach to understanding different discourses of DE. It also focused on how DE discourses are shaped within the context of the politics and economics of DE in the Irish context.
3. My sincere thanks to all those who contributed to my research in 2016 and to Caoimhe, Dorothy and Ntombi for most recent interviews. Thanks, also, to Dr. Niamh Gaynor of Dublin City University and the anonymous reviewer for very helpful suggestions on earlier versions of this article.

Eilish Dillon is the Head of Department at the Maynooth University Department of International Development, where she also co-ordinates the MA in International Development. She has a long-standing interest in discourses and representations of development

and has facilitated development education and development studies programmes and courses in various contexts since the 1990s. She completed Doctoral research in 2017 entitled 'How Critical is Talk? Discourses of Development Education among Facilitators in Ireland'.