Introduction

Sustainable Theory and Action for South - North Co-operation: A Transcultural Educational Task

The Context

The role of Transnational Advocacy Networks (henceforth TNANs) (Naples in: Naples & Desai, 2002:3-14; Keck & Sikkink, 1998)[1] in the coming years is essential to ensure the sustenance and multiplication of collective action. It is possible to concretise and continue the activity of these networks on a sustainable basis only with the co-operation of people at the grassroots levels. The concept of TNANs entails the importance of mobilising communities for action around perceived problems in the field of "development" work /Escobar, 1995:215ff; 1997a).[2] Theoretical knowledge and analysis of the activities of such movements needs to be matched with a parallel mobilisation at the community level. Theoretical interests and practical mobilisation activity should interact and fructify one another. However, there exists a dichotomy between theory and action in this context, which can be examined from national, sub-national and local points of view. To achieve the goal of community mobilisation, it is imperative that educators and activists involved in South-North (*henceforth S-N*) issues develop an identity as "educator activists". This concept of *educator activists* and the related concepts of *advocacy from below*, and *learning from the south* and the required *educational methods* are developed in the dissertation. Theorists, educators and activists, both in the South and in the North, are invited thereby to see the advantages in realising the full potential in their theories and actions. Such potential can find expression in the field when spaces are provided for mutual fructification of theory and praxis.

Detached and Involved Approaches to Transnational Advocacy

Knowledge about theory and analysis of TNANs can be looked at from a purely intellectual perspective, desiring to satisfy one's intellectual hunger and be at the forefront

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[1] I use this generic term to signify Northern individuals, groups, governmental and non-governmental institutions involved in "development" work on a transnational level. Specific references made to Southern individuals and institutions are clarified in the text wherever necessary.

[2] Some authors and philosophers, including Arturo Escobar, do not consider "development" as an appropriate concept or term to denote South-North efforts at justice. South is not a thing or object to be developed. There are even moves to replace discussion over "alternative development" with "alternatives to development" wishing to usher in a post development era.

of "knowing" the latest theories. This approach results in hypothetical, cold and unrealistic assumptions of situations. It is more of a bystander approach giving way to an "academic" identity lacking and shying away from necessary involvement with issues at the grassroots. Conversely, involvement in social action without possibilities of reflection and analysis of the complexity of the problems involved, results in an "activist" identity without an end in view. This is evident in fundamentalist or violent movements of the past and the present. Alternatively, theory, knowledge and analysis of social movements can also be preceded by, and be a result of, co-ordinated action and involvement with the grass root levels. Such efforts motivated by empathy, concern and passion for change results in an "educator activist" identity, a concept that I will be dealing with throughout this dissertation. Such educator activists have been, and will be, the mobilisers at the grass roots level, bridging the gap between transnational advocacy and community mobilisation. Combining activism with theoretical reflection results in sustained and realistic movement for social change.

Historically, it has been a problem to find a connection or a balance between theory and praxis/action (Habermas, 1973:1-40). Theory could remain enigmatic in the sense that it can contain within itself an orientation to praxis. It could, therefore, manifest itself as a pure, detached analysis originating from self-interest and at the same time make statements that go beyond one's interests. Relatively, it could study the possibilities for action, and thus attempt to provide possibilities for change. Theory could embody both insight and concrete action for change. The problem arises when theory regarding advocacy networks moves only in the contemplative, insight-providing dimension. Who would provide possibilities for social change? Who would take up the responsibility for implementing theoretical insights in practise? My aim is to develop theory which would help both theorists and activists to orient themselves within the emerging scenario of transnational advocacy and its relations to the local.

Co-operation between Theorists and Practitioners
The influence of NGOs on the international scene (Willets, 1996) is increasingly bringing into focus the role of individuals who initiate actions on a local level that lead to significant effects on the international level. This kind of involvement establishes the need for politically motivated intellectuals matching the tactics of global economic powers to colonise the "life-world" of the marginalised (Habermas, 1997:70). This task can only be

realised when theorists and educators dialogue and co-operate with activists through participatory communicative action in the social, economic and political spheres (Reddy, 1998). This implies a conscious effort by intellectuals to get involved at the grassroots levels, avoiding the danger of arm-chair and virtual activism, getting down to real, field work. It means a sagacious ability to mix intellectual awareness with emotional insight and thus initiate action that is concrete, just and sustainable.

Analysing the role of educator activists and other key actors within the grassroots movements in the South leads one to explore the possibilities and parameters of transitional activism in the coming years. I highlighted the Dalit Movement and its current key actors in India as a concrete example to illustrate the role of educator activists in initiating movement for justice and equality on a transnational basis. It also supplies one with ideas for developing relevant pedagogical tools used in formal and informal educational structures that enhance awareness and involvement in educator-activism. However, attempts made by late Pierre Bourdieu and his colleagues to revive and unite social movements in Europe include a call to individuals and groups working for social justice to mobilise their energies and root themselves more consciously at the grassroots level.

Social movement organisers (Tarrow, 1998) and movement intellectuals were strongly called for by Gramsci (1998; 1997) and further theorised by social scientists like Eyerman and Jameson (1991).[3] Currently, examples of movement managers are more frequent in the South. One of the important lessons that movement organisers and theorists in the North can learn from such actors in the South is the importance of replenishing the efforts of social-change theory with mobilisation for action at the grassroots levels. It also raises many questions, creating opportunities to understand the gap between theory and praxis; tension between intellectuals and activists; learning from the South and the formation of educator-activist identities.

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[3] Chapter 4 of this work comes close to my discussion on educator activists. Eyerman and Jameson talk about cognitive praxis and Movement Intellectuals. I think they still fall short of completely exploring the action potential in theory and theorists from a Southern perspective. That is what I wish to explore in my dissertation.

The Dynamic Hypothesis and Resulting Research Questions

The *central hypothesis* of the proposed dissertation is that the development of an educator-activist identity calls for a combination of theory and praxis. Concerned scholars need to be involved with issues/people at the grass-root levels. Unlike academic social scientists, educator activists do not busy themselves just with „what" and „why" of development and underdevelopment but also with „how" of development and human rights. They try to transform such situations. Combining the „what" and „how" in their activities of research and action is the hallmark of an educator-activist. There is a need to learn from educational activists and grass-root movements in the post-colonial South where education is seen not just as accumulation of knowledge, but also as an instrument for change. *Learning from the South* is an essential aspect today to evolve a fruitful dialogue and active co-operation for change. In a way, learning from the South needs to be coupled with *learning from the grassroots, marginalised groups.*

The above hypothesis was meant to be dynamic. It was re-shaped, based on constant comparison of my own formulation, the interview analysis and review of literature. There is a growing need, in the area of S-N "development" work, for individuals and groups involved therein, to form an educator activist identity. This effort calls for a combination of theory and praxis. In the South, there is a tendency and an effort to make action go hand-in-hand with theory. Since the early 90s movement intellectuals and activists in the South have shifted paradigms in their social and political thinking: These emerging paradigms bring in fresh thinking and attempt to conceptualise a positive synthesis of ideas with social praxis. Social change is viewed in its totality, where development and democracy are integral components. They introduce to the debate regarding "missing elements in conventional paradigms: culture, values, democracy and people's participation" (Wignaraja, 1993:3).

Creative, theoretical formulations of the above kind are a product of reflection following involvement with issues at the grassroots levels. However, the physical, linguistic and experiential distance between these two kinds of 'actors', namely, the Southern and the Northern, is immense. There is a marked lack of sympathy and minimum communication between these groups. TNANs speak for and act on behalf of marginalised people across borders. Yet, individuals and organisations that form part of the advocacy networks in the

North find themselves in the danger of being caught up in the biases inherited from their national and cultural pasts. These biases blur and negatively colour their knowledge of situations about other peoples and nations. It is a matter of differences in the colonisation of life-worlds of peoples across continents. This dissertation, therefore, primarily challenges Northern advocates who carry the remains of their colonial thought and action. Owing to their colonial past and the resulting lack of grassroots contacts, there is now a need for concerned individuals and institutions in the North to learn from educational activists and grass-root movements in the post-colonial South. *Learning from the South* is an essential aspect today for a fruitful, just dialogue and active co-operation for change at a transnational level.

With a large amount of financial capital still flowing from Northern funding agencies to grass-root movements in the South there is a lot to be done in removing the biases entrenched within the "donor-recipient" dynamic. This dynamic strategically hinders an equal and just relationship between the "donor" and the "receiver" and in turn the process of learning from the South. The North remains in a dominant and paternal position in such a relationship. It is still a fact that "development" projects in the South are the domain and under the control of the Northern dictates (Mathur, 1995:153-170).[4] No doubt that certain co-operative initiatives, by bringing together educators and activists from the North and the South, have been dealing with this issue of "just" relationships in development work. Such un-biased and non-discriminatory efforts at learning from the South on the part of Northern individuals and groups could help bridge financial inequalities, balance power structures and reduce the remains of colonial ways of thinking and acting.

South -North Advocacy: An Educational Task

This South-North "bridging" and learning is essentially an educational task. It involves close co-operation between actors in the South and North. If one seriously embarks on this educational journey, one sees the need for academics to become intellectuals, intellectuals to transform themselves into educationists, and educationists to become educator activists (see section 3.8.1ff and table six, p.180 below). It is a journey and a transformation

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[4] Between 1993-95, the Development Centre of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) conducted a research titled, "The Human Factor in Development" about improving participatory methods of co-operation in the field of development. In a publication, later, of its findings, it stated, "Projects funded by donors carry certain conditions. NGOs fear that in carrying out such projects their goals could be submerged in those of the aid agency. The quote above is to be found on p. 165 of the article cited in the main text.

process, which often involves painful experiences and hard decisions on the part of individuals deciding to enter this process of transformation.[5] Concerned scholars need to do something practical, coupling their theoretical contribution with involvement in the activities of social movements. Critical activists need to pause sometimes and examine the intellectual and epistemological basis of their activism. These demands on theorists and activists also lays bare a need to create more space for critical research in areas of "developmental" research in educational institutions. The starting point of such action-oriented research would not be the developers of the dominant discourse but the marginalised groups: the poor, the children, migrant labourers and unorganised labourers, women and the refugees. This is a project of "critical pedagogy and revolutionary multiculturalism" that speaks "to" and not "about" the marginalised and, in the process, "learns" from them (Mc Laren, 1997: 12-13). There are unorthodox concepts of development, which place the poor and the marginalised at the centre. Such approaches need the support of academic knowledge (Schrijvers, 1992). Such support would only be possible when academics bid farewell to narrow, uni-disciplinary approach and to the growing isolation of intellectual work from active participation in the dynamics of change.

Status of Literature and Research

The concept of "educator-activist" does not, as yet, exist as a concentrated area of research. Yet, there is a debate regarding the need for individuals and educational institutions to make their theoretical initiatives contemporary and action-oriented. The core curriculum of the recently introduced "European Masters in Intercultural Education", a pilot project at the institute of intercultural education in the Department of Education at the *Freie Unviersität,* Berlin, focuses on issues such as: education of children of migrants; the role of family and community in education; education as a tool to combat factors that exclude and marginalize people.[6] My research shows that such efforts at praxis-oriented study areas are important in the coming years considering the growing multiculturality and the resulting

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[5] The life of Ambedkar, in my view and in the view of other researchers, is a typical example of such a journey. Although belonging to the most oppressed of the Indian society (the so called Untouchables) he rose to be the leader of millions of poor in India and established the Dalit Movement sensitising people to the need to overcome oppression through developing ability to combining intellect and action. This developmental journey of Ambedkar is well depicted in two classics on his life. See Keer, Dhananjay. Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission. Bombay: Popular Prakashan. Reprint Ed., 1997.Especially Chapters II – IV present more "personal" traits of the leader. Also see Zelliot, Eleanor. From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement. Delhi: Manohar Publications and Distributors. Reprint Ed. 1998. Of special importance is the essay "The Leadership of Babasaheb Ambedkar". 53-78.
[6] This course is in the stages of being evaluated for its effectivity. More details as to its contents can be found under the Website: http://www.fu-berlin.de/interkultur/emindex.html

challenges to teaching instruments. A critical examination of the educator-activist identity would then definitely serve to enhance such efforts.

Although references to "theorists" and "practitioners" are frequently made, in-depth research regarding the importance of theorists' and educationists' involvement at grass root levels, and learning from the South are limited (Nolan, 2002: 72). The need to intensify such identity-development and learning methods has been called for (McCarthy in Jackie, *et al*, 1997:243-249).[7] Researching trends in rural development work in the 80s, Chambers spoke of two polarised worlds of "academics" and "practitioners"(Chambers, 1983). Important background to the dynamic between theory and practise could be found in the concept of "movement intellectuals" devised by Ron Eyerman (Eyerman and Jameson, 1991).[8] Della Porta and Diani have also done valuable research into the motivation and ideals behind the involvement of people in social movements (Della Porta and Diani, 1999). McAdam has analysed intense activist experience and its effect on biographies of individuals (Mc Adam 1988). Varied globalisation processes and the resulting transnational social movement organisations contribute to the development of activist identities (Kriesberg in Smith, et al, 1997:3-18). Themes like global governance and transnational civil society are occasions to see the tasks of social theorists and activists in a new light and explore the possibilities of movementisation of modern society (Eder, 2000; Brand et al, 2000). McLaren's (1997) critical pedagogy and revolutionary multiculturalism offers deep and intense ideas for developing pedagogical and educational alternatives to dominant and exclusive ideologies. His works serve to direct our future research and praxis in the area of just relations and actions on the international arena.

The necessity, especially in the North, to explore the possibilities of un-biased, critical and creative literature and participatory methods of learning has been approached from various perspectives. The emerging discussion of the need to find a basis of human dignity and human rights (Gundara, 2000; Zambeta, 2000) in the field of education that accommodates peoples and cultures from multi- religious and multi-cultural societies necessitates closer research into relevant teacher training and learning material. Learning to live with

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[7] McCarthy, in his article titled: "Globalisation and Social Movement Theory", under the section *Activists' Identities and Careers*, writes: "…understanding transnational activism requires understanding the more or less formal opportunities that allow committed activists to choose extended careers in transnational activism. Such an understanding leads to a consideration of mobilising structures and the mobilisation of resources…" (p. 249).

differences, justly and without excluding the minorities is the challenge for educationists and learners in the 21st century (Wulf, 1996). These efforts at inclusion would then help us in the process of developing a critical consciousness among students and teachers alike. Developing a strong sense for human rights and a sense of acting for change involves not only the inclusion of the minority-perspectives but also imparting attitudes, values and skills to fulfil this task (Weinbrenner & Fritzsche, 1993).

Novelty in this Research Project: Multi-disciplinary, Southern Perspective

The above-mentioned literature and research, however, deals mostly with theory around social movements and mobilisation from a Uni-Disciplinary approach, particularly sociological. It makes little reference to the fields of anti-discrimination, S-N relations and the related research, education and training methods. It is also, essentially a research area dominated by researchers and knowledge producing structures from the North. I included as much of a Southern perspective, theory and experience as it was possible (Freire, 2002; 1997; 1981; 1974; 1972; Escobar, 1995; Petras, 2001; Raj, 2001). Ambedkar's approach to education and his critic of the control over knowledge structures in India by dominant castes is being now re-discovered and implemented by formal and informal educational institutions in India (Fernandes, 1996). Such educational and mobilisation methods helped me examine the power relations existent in S-N learning structures.

Combined with such a Southern perspective, it was also my intention to attempt at a comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach to social movement theory and S-N issues to critique and complement Northern research in this area. Analyses of the history of human rights, women's rights and ecological movement in India offered an interesting picture of their leaders, a good profile of educator activists (Omvedt, 1993; Mohanty, 1995; Oommen, 1990, 1995, 1996; Wignaraja, 1988, 1990) and corresponding pedagogical tools. Apart from the findings gathered from available literature, the results of the qualitative analysis of interviews with theorists and activists India and Germany involved in the theoretical and practical aspects of transnational advocacy have played a crucial role in this dissertation. As a result of intensive discussions with theorists and activists in the South and the North, the dissertation, which started off as a reflection on my many years of involvement with grassroots justice issues has turned out to be a close listening, reflection of the action and ideas of 29 educators and activists in India and Germany. The findings

embody their pains, disappointments, desires and hopes. Examining their activities from the point of view that I am proposing helped me understand how intellectuals become or choose to become educator-activists. A closer reading of their biographies, as revealed to me through the interviews, gave me valuable insights into the values that drove them to become what they are: not just theorists or activists, but educator-activists.

Methodology

The next chapter of the dissertation deals extensively with methodological aspects of my research. Here I limit myself to a short introduction to the method. My methodology was aided by my experiences during working as a co-ordinator of South-North learning projects; observations as a facilitator of anti-discrimination trainings for development workers; attendance at seminars and conferences; exchanges with colloquium colleagues; research and teaching and experiences in daily life. The project presented here can be understood as a socio-philosophical-historical analysis with a conscious, inter-disciplinary approach. My aim was also to gather ideas generated through the practical implementation of educational projects in non-governmental and informal educational structures. This, I believe, provided for an ideal background to develop a theoretical framework regarding "educator-activists" and their identities. In developing the thesis the attempt of mine was to capture as much of the complexity and movement in the real world possible, while knowing that I will never able to grasp all of it. Consequently, I included extensive references to and excerpts from the transcribed interviews. The philosophical backing of participatory action research (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Reason, 2001) and the techniques of Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, 1968 and 1978) were appropriate instruments that helped me in this process-oriented research. The manner in which I employed the software-based qualitative analysis (see Chapter One, Section 1.2 below) is a novelty in the research in the field of S-N development work and education.

Limitations and Difficulties in the Research Process

The theme of my dissertation being novel very little pre-existing material was available. I had to start from scratch while building up my theoretical arguments. A particular difficulty in this regard was getting access to titles and works written from a southern perspective, namely, works by authors from the South. The interviews with Southern researchers and activists, however, bridged this lacuna and served as a good source of

information and critique regarding issues under consideration. For instance, I qualified my argument of "Learning from the South" by saying that the task of accomplishing learning from the South is a "common intellectual challenge" of intellectual activists in the South and in the North. Therefore, it should not give one an impression of an intellectual superiority of the South over the North.

Presentation of the Findings

My final text is limited to those categories, properties and dimensions and statements of relationships that exist in the actual data collected. I tried to delete parts of earlier reflections and formulations that I could not compare with my data. No research is a finished product but always has open ends to be taken up by the next generation of researchers. Readers can and must make their critical observations but do not just reject my theory because it does not fit their scheme of thinking and ideology. The presentation of my research findings are not meant to be a "report of blame" against the industrialised North, but formulation of a "possibility for liberation", a positive contribution to the debate regarding the establishment of a just and equitable S-N advocacy in the field of development work.

Chapter One - *Reconstructing the Research Process*: *Methodological Considerations*. Special emphasis is laid in this chapter on the philosophy of participatory action research and the techniques of Grounded Theory. Attention is also given to the specialised software *Maxqda* designed to aid qualitative research, using the methods involved in generating Grounded Theory. **Chapter Two** - *Transnational Advocacy Networks: Strengths and Crises*. The chapter discusses current theory and praxis of TNANs and their legitimation crises. Beginning with examining the challenges posed by economic globalisation to TNANs, it shows the effect of such global processes on the identity formation of marginalised individuals and groups. Owing to the economic imbalances between South and the North, current theory and crises relating to advocacy work in transnational advocacy networks are dealt with. With the help of certain post-colonial analysts, the affectivity of "northern" advocacy networks intervening on behalf of the marginalised groups in the South and migrant populations in the North is critically examined. This part concludes with stating the two main legitimation crises hindering the affectivity of advocacy work: *the lack of contact with grass-root levels* and *the remnants of colonial*

thinking in S-N development work. **Chapter Three -** *Learning from the Grassroots: Becoming Educator Activists,* deals with a possible way out, for TNANs, of the crisis generated by the lack of contact with the grass roots. I argue that developing an identity as educator activists is a "bottom-up" alternative to current advocacy work, which runs "top-down". Effective advocacy work for S-N development and education needs individuals who can consciously move from being mere academics and intellectuals or from being mere activists to becoming practitioners and educator activists. **Chapter Four -** *Learning from the South: Non-Discriminatory Advocacy* deals with possible ways for TNANs, to deal with the crisis generated by the remnants of colonial thinking and acting existent in the North. Here, I examine the possibility for a just, bias-and dominance-free S-N development co-operation and learning. Learning from the South is here offered as a counter-measure to the remains of colonial thinking in the North. **Chapter Five -** *The Push-Pull-Balance: Discussion of Findings and Suggestions for future Research and Action.* The findings of the discussions in the previous three chapters are here deepened and critically discussed. Suggestions for further research and action, to inculcate the Southern perspective, the possibilities of educator activism and learning from the South are included. A checklist of questions for a critical self-examination of Southern and Northern individuals and organisations involved in advocacy work vis-à-vis the findings of the research is developed. **Conclusion** - This part briefly lists the findings of the whole research.