

Chapter Six

Final Conclusion: Summary of Findings

Contemporaneity of Reflecting Theory and Action Related to South-North Inequalities

In this dissertation I have established the basic arguments for: the need to cultivate identities as educator activists; learning from the South; and related educational and pedagogical aspects. One may object to this initiative, arguing that most people involved in transnational advocacy issues are aware of S-N inequalities and, therefore, it is anachronistic and superfluous to talk of such issues. The idea of mine is not to contradict the presence of such awareness. It is, rather, an invitation to search for alternative, just and co-operative ways that would reduce such inequalities. Therefore, it is not old fashioned, anachronistic or unrealistic to talk of S-N inequalities and the need to challenge the role therein of advocates from the North. If this search is not undertaken, it would amount to a blatant denial of centuries of oppression undergone by the South and a neglect of injustices imposed by the knowledge and economic structures of Western colonialism. Searching for Southern alternatives to dominant Northern viewpoints helps co-operative, S-N efforts counter the continuing colonialism in the name of “one-world“, “ world economy” or “multilateralism”.

The argument here is to offer to the South its deserving role to open up possibilities for improving S-N development co-operation. It is only through strong links and just co-operation with marginalised groups in the South, can the North critically observe ways and means in which inequality and oppression function. Owing to their longstanding experiences of being oppressed, it is only the Southern grassroots actors who will be able to build sustainable, horizontal and transnational networks for change. To enable this, we need to strongly counter the increasing rhetoric of a “pseudo-world community” which claims that everyone has equal chances to succeed or communicate or move between South and the North. Ironically, it is this “pseudo-world community” that offers political opportunity structures which allow educator activists to impregnate and fructify it. This will bring to completion, what both people in the South and North wish: a world where there is true openness to one another’s biases and a resultant readiness to think and act

alternatively to transform unjust power structures that generate and continue such inequalities.

South-North Networking

Transnational Advocacy Networks from the North do highlight S-N imbalances and advocate credible alternatives. But they face various obstacles in concretising such outlook in action. One of the challenges, thereby, is the lack of their contact with Southern grass roots. While desiring the “big” and drastic, Northern advocates fail to connect with people at the grass roots. Tensions hindering constructive communication between educator activist networks in the South and advocacy networks in the North have multiple sources. One important source is the way in which the North defines the South and continues the paternalistic, Northern project of developing and democratising the South. The views of Southern educator activists, and those of certain grassroots oriented Northern NGOs, need to be given increased prominence in order to inhibit such reduction of the South to being an instrument for the political and financial “advocacy business” of the North. In view of the similarities in the aims and goals of such a political struggle, there is a need to co-ordinate the demands and activities of Southern and Northern advocates without leading to any reductionism or compromise. This co-ordination should be in the form of a network that would include Southern and Northern individuals and groups without giving any opportunity for controlling or limiting each other. It should protect and nurture the richness of varied experiences, viewpoints and programmes. This networking would have also an important task to stop S-N initiatives that are responding in a fissured manner owing to ghettoism and particularism. Thinking and propagating ideas like “Fortress Europe” or “Europe for Europeans”, or “India for Indians” are all equally undesirable for building just and forward-looking transnational structures. This will not help, anyone involved, overcome the dilly-dallying between phases of intensive mobilisation and moments of latent or laid-back existence. This release from ghettoised and particularistic thinking and action need to be achieved devoid of bureaucratic controls and excessive professionalism.

Education for Critical Consciousness and Educator Activism

Education for structural transformation is one of the issues that takes a back seat when the North stresses only projects that aim at short-term financial and material well being of the

South. This amounts to a strategic mechanism of underplaying knowledge reserves in the South. It operates on the basis of an unconscious belief on the part of western NGOs, that the poor or the marginalised in the South are somehow incapable to act for themselves. Majority of advocacy agencies in the North are working with an image of the South generated during colonial times. By not breaking the South-North relationship based on Southern helplessness and Northern capacities, current Northern advocacy prevents and assimilates the revolutionary potential, cultural resistance and the formation of social actors in the South. Such S-N inequality prevents the South from having meaningful access not only to the global, financial and economic resources but also to its knowledge and epistemological resources. This leads to a struggle for the formation of social actors, in the South, who can achieve their own, self-defined rights and privileges. This is an on-going struggle for the control over self-definition and access to knowledge producing structures. However, awareness regarding such facts exists among certain key individuals and organisations in the North, working with a critical and differentiated approach to the South. This differentiated view of the South would provide ideal situations for speech and action with the South. On the other hand, educator activists in the South and the North need to continually stress the transformatory power of the poor.

The underlying factors that dictate the terms and conditions of knowledge flow between the South and the North need to be constantly revised to give a central place to the South. In the current situation of financial flow from North to the South, however, the nature of projects implemented in the South and the terms of their evaluation are still dependent on the philosophy and terms set out by Northern funding structures, state-owned “development” departments and large, often, church-based NGOs. These agencies see themselves more as “managers” of development work and less as “learners” from and “co-workers” with the South. A consequence of such managerial, impersonal attitude is the increased “technocratisation” of international co-operation and development. Northern, developmental infrastructure and advocacy structures are increasingly outsourcing their intervention in the South to semi-private agencies and “development banks” in the name of professionalism and transparency. While this may seem necessary, the motives behind privatising development work and commitment to transforming paternalistic relationships between the South and the North remain suspect. This is a challenge for Northern, advocacy workers in non-governmental agencies and educational institutions: how to

motivate and lobby their governments to shift from their “management” mind-set, from their role of “givers” and “helpers” to becoming “learners” and “co-operators” with the South.

Spaces for Theory and Action

It has also become clear from various conversations and life-stories of theorists and educators that it is essential to create, cultivate and preserve spaces for theoretical reflection and practical implementation of ideas. One could even say that theories need to be developed from learning generated through praxis at the grassroots levels. It is a simple formula of learning by doing. What often occurs in various advocacy organisations and educational channels in the North is learning for the sake of learning. In extreme cases, it is learning for the sake of controlling processes in the South. On the other hand, there is also a danger of mere activism in the South which can be described as doing for the sake of doing. Generating theory without taking into account its relevance to praxis results in lop-sided theories about the South, having little to do with reality or grassroots wisdom. In addressing this issue, Southern and Northern educator activists working in informal, non-governmental structures need to recognise and influence political opportunity structures offered by mainstream educational structures. This involvement is not an invitation to get assimilated into dominant knowledge producing structures, but a means to modify the mainstream, making its theory relevant and ready for action.

Concerted Anti-Discrimination Trainings and Educational Initiatives

Especially recommended during the interviews, with *dalit* educator activists in India and certain Northern advocates, was the need to make anti-discrimination, “bias-conscious” thinking and action an integral part of Northern involvement in the South. Anti-discrimination efforts, which incorporate discriminations other than those merely based on class and economy, need to permeate the philosophy of Northern “development” initiatives. This will generate a synergy and enable the coming together of present, isolated efforts dealing with one “specific” form of discrimination: racism, sexism, nationalism or *Southernism* etc. Most often such anti-discrimination trainings are inadequately conducted either exclusively for the oppressed communities, in the dubious guise of empowering them; or exclusively for Northern employees on the lower rungs of the ladder of “development” institutions with the argument that the directors and leaders of institutions

are already “there”, free of all biases. Instead, anti-discriminatory education needs to become part and parcel of the on-going formation of all involved in transnational South-North advocacy. Such initiatives will be even more effective when conducted in groups composed of both Southern and Northern advocates, theorists and activists. They could jointly confront, critically reflect on: each other’s biases, the international structures of discrimination, oppressive ideologies and jointly explore non-discriminatory alternatives.

Internationalisation of Research

Contemporary, just internationalisation of research promotes dialogue between different world pictures, applying a processual understanding of geography of areas and regions. Internalisation of research should be combined with a critique of the misinterpretation or misappropriation of knowledge and information acquired from the subalterns or the underprivileged. Research should be a collective activity, passing through the primary sieve of specific communities of reference including non-professional publics, especially outside the North. This involves the opening up of a dialogue between mainstream scholars who are suspicious of applied or policy research and educator activists who are profoundly involved in social transformations sweeping their respective societies. It would imply making justice, equality, and transformation of international structures, concerns central to modern social science without losing the methodological rigor. The need is also to find ways to bring together public scholars on an international level whose work is not primarily conditioned by professional criteria of criticism and dissemination. It requires a close working together between institutions of technical trainings in the social sciences and actual happenings in the field of social criticism and debate. The important question, then, is whether we are prepared to move beyond a model of internationalising academic research that is mainly concerned with how others practice our precepts? Is there something that Northern researchers can learn from colleagues in other national and cultural settings whose work is not characterised by a sharp line between social scientific and humanistic forms of inquiry?

The North continues to protect and propagate elements of a hidden armature of Northern research ethic as “given” and excludes other viewpoints, except those who wish to join its ranks. It could, however, choose to enter a laborious, but a liberating attempt to dialogue with other researchers from the South who have been ignored all through. This opening up

to the South would generate new criteria for establishing knowledge which would be relevant to practical issues facing the legitimation of Northern transnational advocacy work. In this stronger and longer version, there is no pre-established adherence to a particular research ethic. It will be discovered in the process of dialogue and working together between different viewpoints and values adhered to by people from different cultures and areas. Western scholarship has lost much from ignoring and dominating Southern points of view, and, therefore, has only much to gain from working together with those now.