INSTITUTIONAL CULTURES AND DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

In this article, **Maria Campbell** and **Niamh Hourigan** outline the findings of a comparative study which interrogated the impact of institutional cultures on two undergraduate development education programmes. The perceptions, attitudes and beliefs of lecturers and students participating in development education modules at both St. Angela's College, Sligo and University College Cork were evaluated over a full academic year to explore how differing cultures inform both lecturers and students' perceptions of development education issues. Using data gathered from reflective portfolios and questionnaires, this article identifies the dominant values which emerged from each student cohort and highlights how these values impact on learning outcomes. The study also provides a new route to examine how lecturers' institutional career pathways impact on their beliefs, attitudes and teaching styles and perpetuate the institutional culture into which they have been initiated. The authors argue that an understanding of these contrasting institutional cultures can inform future plans for development education at third level in Ireland.

Introduction

The recent rapid social and economic transformation of Irish society highlights and reflects the interrelated nature of local and global developments. As social, economic and political changes emerge, such as the increasingly diverse nature of Irish society, the rapidly changing nature of the market economy and the over demand on natural resources, our ability to critique and engage with these developments becomes of paramount importance. This presents a range of challenges to the third level sector, where lecturers at universities, colleges of education and institutes of technology are introducing a range of new curricula and innovative pedagogical approaches to meet the skills requirements of an increasingly complex economy and to engage a culturally diverse and sophisticated student cohort. To this end, it is

essential that the cultural assumptions which have historically been implicit within the pedagogies and institutional cultures of Irish third level institutions be explicitly identified and examined in order to assess their impact on the learning process. As lecturers embark on the process of reflecting on their own values and those of their respective institutions, new opportunities for critical engagement between students and lecturers are created.

The research project discussed in this article was funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs through the Ubuntu network, which was established to support teacher education for sustainable development at second level. The aim of the project was to interrogate how the contrasting institutional cultures of the Department of Sociology, University College Cork (UCC), and the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programme, St. Angela's College Sligo, impacted on the philosophical paradigms and pedagogical approaches which underpinned students' experiences of their respective development education programmes. The comparative structure of the project operated at two levels. The substantive elements of each institutional culture, including its size, scale and ethos, were compared in terms of their impact on student-lecturer relationships and lecturers' narrative of their own pedagogical role in the learning process. In addition, active learning methodologies and in particular, problem solving approaches, were used during the research process in order to generate a greater level of critical engagement with development issues amongst the two different cohorts of third level students. The problem solving approach was utilised specifically because of its potential to provoke students to reflect on the complexities of development issues and global/local relationships, and in turn to interrogate their own beliefs and values in relation to development issues.

An analysis of data gathered during the research exercise indicated that institutional cultures have a significant impact on development education outcomes even when similar teaching methodologies are employed. Although much research remains to be completed on institutional cultures within education in Ireland, at least four facets of institutional culture were found to be central in this process: differing relationships between students and teachers; differing constructions of the relationship between theory and practice; differing ideological influences; and different narratives of practice amongst course facilitators.

A key strength of the project was the collaboration and combination of two distinct disciplinary perspectives, education and sociology, provided by the course facilitators in St. Angela's College, Sligo and UCC, respectively. Throughout the course of research, the micro- and mezzo-educational focus, and the macro-sociocultural perspective were woven together to enrich the analysis of institutional cultures within each learning context. The micro-

and mezzo-educational focus refers to the common teacher education practice of extracting elements from discourses and theories which have an obvious relationship to specific teaching and learning practices. The macro-sociocultural perspective refers to the common sociology practice of engaging with and exploring the historical and current significance of a variety of grand theories such as that of gender or power. While each discipline has its merits and challenges, this project explored the potential transferability of cultural strengths at inter-institutional levels. While acknowledging that the active learning methodologies constituted an integral part of this research, this article will focus instead on interrogating both the concept of institutional culture and on the paradigms and practices that embody and perpetuate it in the context of the delivery of the two development modules as outlined above.

Institutional cultures

Peterson and Spencer define institutional culture as 'the deeply embedded patterns of organisational behaviour and the shared values, assumptions, beliefs, or ideologies that members have about their organisation or its work' (Peterson & Spencer, 1991:142). It is reasonable to assume that a number of cultures can co-exist within an institution, particularly a third level institution, which can be host to cultures representing a range of perspectives including staff, management and students. In his research on institutional cultures within higher education, Bergquist (1992) identified at least four co-existing cultures.

Collegial culture arises primarily from the disciplines within the faculty and values scholarly engagement and shared governance. Managerial culture focuses on the goals and purposes of the institution and values efficiency, effective supervisory skills and fiscal responsibility. Developmental culture is focused on the personal and professional growth of all members of the institution. Finally, negotiating culture values the establishment of equitable and egalitarian policies and procedures, valuing confrontation, interest groups, mediation and power. One would expect to find elements of all these institutional cultures within the Bachelor of Education programme at St. Angela's and the Sociology Department at UCC. However, in their review of Berquist's model, Kezar and Eckel (2002) acknowledge that the relative proportion of each type of culture is also closely linked to basic factors such as the size, scale and historical mission of each institution. Therefore, we began the comparative process by creating a substantive overview of the history and structure of each institution.

University College Cork was established as part of the Queen's

College system in 1849, initially to cater for the educational needs of the Protestant ascendancy class in the south of Ireland. Subsequently, the university became a fully constituted institution within the National University of Ireland. UCC currently has 16,000 students with 120 degree and professional programmes delivered among 60 departments. Students taking the final year module on Globalisation and Development (SC3035) offered by the sociology department are drawn from a wide range of disciplines and degree programmes across the College of Arts, Social Sciences and Celtic Studies. The class group (approximately 40 per annum) includes American 'junior year abroad' students and participants in the European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) programme. Therefore, the module facilitator cannot presume the existence of a particular skill-set or set of interests amongst the student cohort. Moreover, in many cases the facilitator would not have encountered students prior to the start of the module nor have further contact with them after course exams.

The Globalisation and Development course at UCC provides a conceptual and theoretical overview of global inequality with a case study approach used at each stage to illuminate core themes in applied contexts. The overwhelming majority of students who take this course do not pursue careers related to development or globalisation issues after graduation though development discourses have a visible and continuing impact on student politics on campus. There is an active and vibrant 'One World' society and frequent student participation in anti-globalisation organisations, fair trade initiatives and peace movements in various forms. Within the discipline of sociology in Ireland more generally, analysis of globalisation and development issues has been influenced by both Catholic clergy who played a prominent role in establishing the discipline in Ireland in the 1950s and 1960s and the more recent influence of left-wing scholars (Lee, 1989). The tension between these two influences continues to impact on the position of development education within the discipline of sociology in Ireland today.

St. Angela's College was established by the Ursuline Order in 1957, an order with strong traditional links to missionary activities. The institution was established with the explicit mission of educating second level teachers in the discipline of home economics. The College is a constituent part of the National University of Ireland (NUI) and has a formal institutional link with NUI Galway. Traditionally there were 120 students enrolled on the College's four year B.Ed. programme, which has now risen to 240, or 60 students per year, allowing staff and students to become relatively well acquainted during the course of the four year programme.

Historically, the student cohort was overwhelmingly female and Irish, however, since the 1990s the College has expanded into an increasingly

diverse cohort of 1,400 students registered across a range of full-time, part-time, undergraduate and post-graduate programmes. The B.Ed. programme is intensive and supports the development of close working links between students and their lecturers during the course of their studies. Each lecturer has a clear idea of the other dimensions of the programme and can assume the existence of particular skill-sets within the student cohort. In addition, students progress through the programme with the clear expectation that they will become teachers themselves. They, therefore, constantly reflect on how knowledge accumulated during each module can be applied in the practical context of the classroom. The development education module is delivered in the final year of the programme with the support of a handbook that aims to ensure that other elements of the programme also engage with development issues.

Comparisons between the basic structure and history of each institution can suggest where differences in institutional cultures might be found. However, this approach did not provide the conceptual tools needed to examine how institutional cultures impacted on behaviour and the critical thinking processes of students and lecturers during the teaching and learning process. To this end, Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of 'situated learning' was employed in order to illuminate how institutional cultures impact on student and lecturers' understandings of their own roles in the learning process.

Situated learning is based on the premise that through participation in the activities of a community, people's behaviours or identities change as they are enculturated into the dispositions and belief systems of that community and are subsequently prepared to engage in similar activities. This perspective emphasises the interdependent relationship between the mind and the environment and is in keeping with socio-cultural perspectives that focus on the communal nature of cognition and learning. It is also consistent with Vygotsky's (1981) premise that the internalisation of socially learned behaviours is in essence how identities are formed. According to Hung and Chen (2002) as people engage in the practices of a community they learn to *be*. This means that they appropriate the cultural lens and the relevant knowledge of that community, forming dispositions to use. An example of this form of learning is the assimilation of the tools of teaching in a way that teachers use them or, similarly, glimpsing how sociologists view the world. This can lead to a future desire to become part of that community.

While the object or the objective of a community, such as the development of teachers or sociologists, ultimately shapes the actions of the participants, Etienne Wenger (1998) states that the following elements underpin the formation of identity within a community of practitioners:

language, which includes the documents, images and symbols used to communicate with each other; tools that people use to get their work done such as selected readings and teaching methodologies; explicit roles, procedures and regulations that define how work is done in that community; and implicit behaviours that make the culture of that community unique. Throughout the research process, the four elements outlined previously - language, tools, explicit roles and procedures, and implicit behaviours - underpinned the design and the analysis processes and provided the means by which similarities and differences within the cultures of the two institutions could be interrogated.

Outline of project structure and tasks completed

In this section, we present an outline of the project structure and the main tasks completed during delivery. The project began with a conventional lecture given by course facilitators on the theme of globalisation and the role of the global economic institutions in facilitating global economic change using current readings by key thinkers in the field (Stiglitz, 2002; Held & McGrew, 2000; McMichael, 1996). Within the first session of the unit, students were assigned to problem solving teams with specified roles. An outline of a key problem was presented to them, such as the failure of policies recommended by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Tanzania and Uganda (Watkins, 2002). Students were asked to engage with provided readings and formulate a response to the problem through a specific role designated for the second stage of the task. An outline of the problem solving process was also given in this session and students chose team leaders from their peers.

The second session consisted of student-led workshops on the assigned problem with small group structures used to facilitate the completion of a series of tasks that concluded with a whole group discussion of the key issues raised by the problem. Then, in the final session, each team presented their report on the problem discussed through their team leader. Other members of the team contributed information on specific areas such as economics, education, and the role of civil society organisations.

Students' experience of the task was analysed in St. Angela's through a reflective portfolio process which uses successive entries to explore anticipatory, contemporaneous and retrospective reflection (Lyons, 1998) to examine its impact on attitudes, values, beliefs and potential practices. Students' experience of the task in UCC was analysed through a succession of questionnaires and focus groups in order to reflect on the differences between the problem solving methodology and conventional lecturer-led approaches to development education. Each course facilitator supported

the assessment process by keeping a diary of their reflections during the research.

Analysis of research exercise

At a very basic level, the small cohort of 28 female students enrolled on the B.Ed. programme in St. Angela's generated relatively intimate relationships among each other and with the course facilitator. This intimacy facilitated frank discussion on the themes covered during the class and gave the students confidence in voicing opinions within the problem solving exercise. In contrast, the UCC cohort was larger, consisting of 41 students (14 male and 27 female), and students were consequently less familiar with each other and with the course lecturer. More time was needed in this context, to develop the atmosphere of trust and mutual respect necessary for the frank discussion of development issues. Therefore, the contrasting size and scale of each institution was the first aspect of institutional culture which became immediately apparent as impacting on the learning process during this research exercise.

The teaching of development education within the B.Ed. programme appeared to be defined by the broader goal of educating future teachers in Ireland. While students found debates about macro-political issues in the global context interesting, they were more concerned about the application of the ideas encountered in the programme in direct personal and professional contexts. While St. Angela's students indicated that they found the active learning methods stimulating and providing 'a welcome break from the regular lectures', they indicated a preference for a more structured approach to problem solving where the process of completing proscribed tasks was outlined in detail and the need for creative problem solving within the group itself was removed. A review of the portfolios submitted by students at the end of the course provided evidence of enhanced critical thinking but this could not be attributed exclusively to the problem solving task.

The majority of UCC students on the Globalisation and Development module do so purely out of interest in the topic and are unlikely to utilise the concepts encountered during the course in their future careers. Students within this cohort tend to major in either sociology or other social science subjects such as politics, economics, philosophy or psychology. The ideas encountered within these disciplines primed them to focus on the macro-political dimensions of globalisation and development but they were less prepared for the applied tasks of the problem solving exercise. While students from UCC indicated that they enjoyed engaging with active learning methods, they found aspects of the problem solving approach frustrating

as it required them to complete a range of tasks with guidance rather than direction and forced them to engage with too many roles and perspectives.

Both cohorts stated that they needed more time to complete the task, with the UCC cohort indicating that they were unable to read substantial material on the issues and thus gain a greater understanding. In the case of St. Angela's College, students highlighted difficulties in grappling with the concepts but stated that their greatest challenge lay in critiquing the problem in a way that either could be applied to their own life or teaching experiences. Thus while both cohorts provided evidence of critical engagement, it was apparent that systemic thinking with its expansive focus was more indicative of the sociological perspective and critical thinking with specific application to the context of the classroom was indicative of the educational perspective. Therefore, some of the frustrations which students experienced with the problem solving task in both St. Angela's and UCC were linked to previously established patterns of critical thinking about the relationship between theory and practice. These established patterns of critical thinking are closely linked to the other subjects encountered during their degree programme and the broader institutional culture which creates firm expectations about future careers and the place of critical thinking within these occupations.

To a lesser extent, development education programmes in St. Angela's and UCC were shaped by the ideological influences which have been historically prominent within the culture of each institution. The development education programme in St. Angela's has a long-standing tradition informed by the College's Christian ethos and the broader role of the founding Ursuline order in missionary activities worldwide. Catholic religious orders have historically had an enormous influence on teacher training within secondary and primary education in Ireland. As a result of this historical institutional culture, there is not a strong tradition of political activism within the teacher training colleges. Graduates of St. Angela's can, in most cases, expect to teach in second level schools which are also managed by Catholic religious orders. Thus, students in St. Angela's were primarily focused on the application of development concepts in personal and professional contexts as opposed to radical political engagement on a broader level.

The teaching of Globalisation and Development within sociology in UCC has historically been rooted in the secular tradition of conflict sociology focusing on macro-sociological debates around global inequality. A considerable proportion of the module is devoted to exploring the work of early modernisation theorists such as W.W. Rostow and the neo-Marxist dependency frameworks of Andre Gunter Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein. Although many students who take this module are Catholic, the class usually

includes students from a number of different countries who espouse different religious and political perspectives. There is a longstanding tradition of activism amongst development students in UCC and some evidence that there is a higher than average proportion of student 'activists' from within the visiting student body taking this module. During the research exercise, some UCC students commented that their participation in the course had impacted on their political activism and their engagement with broader debates about globalisation and development. This political engagement was identifiable in aspects of their participation in the problem solving exercise as well as in their written work and questionnaires. Therefore, it could be argued that the ideological influences which shaped the institutional culture of both the B.Ed. and sociology programmes had a direct impact on students' experience of the research exercise.

As the research progressed, it became evident that institutional culture impacted on lecturers largely through each individual's personal narrative of their own role in the learning process. In both the UCC and St. Angela's courses, the lecturers' academic pathways or journeys began in institutions similar to those in which they now worked. Thus the researchers recognised that they also needed to rigorously critique their own philosophical paradigms and pedagogical practices. The application of a situated learning perspective successfully facilitated an in-depth critique of the narratives of the participants in the programmes delivered by the two institutions and the researchers' own roles in interrogating the learning process in each.

In relation to St. Angela's, the lecturer assumed the role of teacher educator and used tools such as selected academic readings, commonly found in a teaching context. Furthermore, she encouraged the students to make connections between their practices and the issues under discussion. It became clear for the students that their role as student teachers was of paramount importance and this generated further discussion on what it means to be a teacher. In the course of this discussion, many of the students raised concerns about 'practical classroom issues' such as 'behavioural problems and differentiation'. In the majority of instances they struggled to see the relevance between the development module and their teaching practices, but noted that it did influence how they viewed the world and would influence their lifestyle choices as consumers and resource users. Thus the students appeared to view their professional identity as being quite distinct from their personal identity, ascribing tentative links between the values system underpinning both.

Within UCC, the lecturer assumed the role of lecturer/sociologist within the university context, and assigned tasks, set readings and regulated student participation in discussion using understandings gleaned from her

own experiences as a student within an NUI university. Students were encouraged to make connections between globalisation and development issues and their own behaviour as political actors, consumers and social scientists. Given the diversity of political opinions expressed during class discussions, the lecturer frequently assumed the role of mediator/moderator of discussions.

Conclusion

The influence of both the philosophical perspectives and historicity of both programmes were evident throughout the analysis process and reflected in the roles, tools and implicit behaviour utilised throughout the activity of the programmes. In relation to roles, the students identified themselves in light of their perceived identities; that of the socially aware citizen was prevalent in the case of UCC and that of the socially aware teacher dominated in the case of St. Angela's College. In both cases the lecturers' practices contributed to the formation of these perceived roles. The role of teacher was described as that of innovator and change agent within the classroom primarily and, to a lesser extent, within society. It became evident that the tools used in each institution, such as selected literature and teaching methodologies, reflected the explicit and implicit object of each of the programmes, which was to produce socially aware active citizens and socially active teachers. It also called into question the definition of 'active' within each programme.

While it is not suggested that these findings may be applied to all colleges of education or to all sociology departments within the university sector, both institutions in this study had much to learn from each other in synergising pedagogical approaches and broader philosophical paradigms central to development programmes. While students in UCC clearly drew on the concepts encountered in development programmes in terms of direct participation in political activities and broader critical engagement with global issues, students from St. Angela's were better equipped to communicate the essentials of development issues in applied contexts with their primary focus on awareness and not action.

The adaptation of pedagogical practices may help address some of the issues identified in the study. For example, in the case of St. Angela's, focusing students initially on a local case study may facilitate greater engagement with its relationship to the global or to the concept or theory underpinning it. Alternatively, the practice of continued application of broad concepts to the classroom context may prove reductive due to students' limited experience, thus contributing to a narrowing or microfocus of development issues.

Ultimately, one of the most substantial learning outcomes of this research was resulted from juxta-positioning the two programmes and the drawing of direct comparisons. It highlighted for both lecturers the extent to which the habitual nature of their practices was linked to the cultural context of their institution. This highlights the importance of collaborative research projects, both inter-departmental and between institutions, if we are to critically engage with our practices on an ongoing basis and enhance and enrich the experience for our students in the area of development.

References

Bergquist, W (1992) *The Four Cultures of the Academy,* Jossey Bass, San Francisco.

Held, D & McGrew, A (eds.) (2000) 'The Great Globalization Debate: An Introduction' in *The Global Transformations Reader: An Introduction to the Globalization Debate,* Polity Press, Cambridge.

Hung, D & Chen, V (2002) 'Learning within the Context of Communities of Practices: A Re-Conceptualization of Tools, Rules and Roles of the Activity System' in *Educational Media International,* Vol. 39, 3-4, pp. 247-259.

Kezar, A & Eckel, P (2002) 'The Effect of Institutional Culture on Change Strategies in Higher Education: Universal Principles or Culturally Responsive Concepts?' in *The Journal of Higher Education,* Vol. 73, 4, pp. 436-460.

Lave, J & Wenger, E (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, Cambridge University Press, New York.

Lee, JJ (1989) *Ireland 1912- 1985: Economics and Society,* Blackwell, Oxford.

Lyons, N (ed.) (1998) *With Portfolio in Hand: Validating the New Teacher Professionalism*, Teachers College Press, New York.

McMichael, P (1996) 'Globalization: Myths and Realities' in Timmons Roberts, J & Hite, A (eds.) *From Modernisation to Globalization: Perspectives on Development and Social Change,* Blackwell, Oxford.

Stiglitz, J (2002) *Globalization and its Discontents*, Penguin, New York.

Van Oers, B (2004) *Steps towards a sociocultural theory of learning*, lecture at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, 10 December 2004, accessed 1 December 2005: http://home.planet.nl/~oers0054/Steps%20towards%20a%20sociocultural%20theory%20of%20learning.pdf.

Vygotsky, LS (1981) 'The genesis of higher mental functions' in Wertsch, J (ed.) *The Concept of Activity in Soviet Psychology*, ME Sharpe, White Plains.

Watkins, K (2000) *The Oxfam Education Report*, Oxfam, Oxford.

Wenger, E (1998) *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Maria Campbell is a member of the Education Department of St. Angela's College, Sligo, lecturing in sociology, development education and information and communication technology and coordinating the colleges MA Programme. Her previous research has focused on exploring the relationship between pedagogy and technology in Teacher Education Institutions across Europe. Currently her research focuses on examining the concept of teacher identity development in the current context of Ireland's changing demographics while she continues to explore the relationship between global developments and the local and international use of technologies in teaching and learning contexts. She is a member of the steering committee of the Ubuntu Network, the Centre for Global Development through Education and the Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development.

Niamh Hourigan, PhD is a lecturer at the Department of Sociology, University College Cork and coordinator of the Department's MA Programme in the *Sociology of Development and Globalisation*. She has written two monographs: *Escaping the Global Village* (Lexington Books, 2003, 2004) and *A Comparison of the Campaigns for Raidio na Gaeltachta and Teilifís na Gaeilge* (Irish Sociological Research Monographs, 2001). She has co-edited two collections: *Minority Language Media* (with Mike Cormack, Multilingual Matters, 2007) and *Social Movements and Ireland* (with Linda Connolly, Manchester University Press, 2006). Her PhD focused on campaigns for

indigenous minority language television services in Europe and was highly commended by the European Union's *Committee of the Regions*. Her current research focuses on the response of Irish language activists to immigration as part of a broader assessment of the relationship between nationalism and multiculturalism in Ireland. She previously lectured at the National University of Ireland, Galway (1998-2002) and the University of Limerick (1997).