

Development Education in Digital Era

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Abstract

Development education has been acknowledged for a long time as an essential instrument for advancing social justice, global citizenship, and sustainable development. The field of development education is entering a new era that is fraught with both new opportunities and new problems brought about by the proliferation of digital technology. This paper explores the role of development education in the digital era, focusing on how digital technologies are being incorporated into educational settings to enhance learning and engagement, as well as the theoretical and practical repercussions that these changes have for the field of development education. The paper argues that while digital technologies offer new possibilities for engaging learners and promoting global understanding, they also present challenges related to access, equity, and critical engagement. Drawing on existing literature and case studies, the paper concludes by outlining some of the key issues and opportunities for development education in the digital era.

Introduction

Development education is a field that has traditionally focused on promoting social justice, human rights and interdependence through a range of educational activities, including formal and non-formal education, advocacy, and community engagement (Bourn, 2015). The term development education reflects multiple dimensions of development and education. Whether it can be observed as development in education or education in development or development for education or education for development? In this paper we will undertake multiple theoretical underpinnings to address above mentioned questions.

With the advent of digital technologies, we find that public spheres¹ have become more porous and there is more public engagement on digital platforms. As described by (Kumar, 2008) that in a dialogical approach there is a constant communication amongst learners and there is an intention of 'learning to learn'. There is a constant co-construction of knowledge in this process by learners and teachers. According to this perspective, knowledge and reality are not only acquired through the process of discovery; rather, they are actively built by humans through the processes of interpretation, negotiation, and communication. Bourdieu (1977) contends, in "Outline of a Theory of Practice," that human acts are not just the consequence of individual decisions but are instead moulded by social structures and cultural norms. He says this in an attempt to show that social structures and norms have a significant impact on human behaviour. He suggests that people take on these social structures and cultural norms as a result of the experiences they have had, and that these standards are then mirrored in the actions and habits that people engage in. Thus, the

¹The term "public sphere" refers to a setting in which members of the public congregate for the purpose of deliberating, discussing, and coming to a consensus on matters of public concern.

structure under which the development education is taking a global shape needs to be understood in the framework of digital as it has challenged the traditional way of communication.

Another key aspect of the development education is collaborative learning, as Wegerif(2005) discusses about the computer supported collaborative learning (CSCL), an interesting argument has been drawn where he said that the “The educational technologist can work to improve the affordances for clear and productive thinking provided by the conferencing system or software interface that mediates collaboration”. In this way he predicted the future of the collaborative education in 2005. When the world was facing the crisis of covid-19 pandemic many digital platforms such as zoom, google meet gave an alternative to carry on the learning. Not only these digital platforms acted as a mediator platform rather they are turning into a collaborative platform with the active intervention of artificial intelligence (Kim et al., 2022).

Defining Development Education in Digital Era

Development education has been defined in various ways, but it is generally understood as a form of education that aims to raise awareness and understanding of global development issues, promote critical thinking and active citizenship, and encourage individuals and communities to take action to address the root causes of poverty, inequality, and injustice.

As Bourn(2008) cites the definition propounded by UNESCO and the United Nations in 1975 “Development education is concerned with issues of human rights, dignity, self-reliance, and social justice in both developed and developing countries. It is concerned with the causes of underdevelopment and the promotion of an understanding of what is involved in development, of how different countries go about undertaking development, and of the reasons for and ways of achieving a new international economic and social order.” (United Nations, 1975, quoted in Osler, 1994)

Also, Bourn (2008a) in his edited volume “Development Education: Debates and Dialogue” cites the definition:

“Development education is an active learning process, founded on values of solidarity, equality, inclusion and co-operation. It enables people to move from basic awareness of international development priorities and sustainable human development, through understanding of the causes and effects of global issues, to personal involvement and informed action.” Development Education Exchange in Europe Project (DEEEP) 2007

Learning through the lens of development education is a method that leads to a deeper comprehension of (global) inequities, including the reasons for their existence and the potential solutions to these problems. It invites students of any age to investigate the ways in which global challenges, such as poverty, are relevant to their own day-to-day experiences. The goal of development education is to assist individuals in acquiring the knowledge, abilities, and self-assurance necessary to effect good change not just in their own communities but also on a worldwide scale. This is accomplished via the promotion of critical thinking and the subversion of preconceived notion. These ideas are inspired by Friere(2018) instrumental work “Pedagogy of Oppressed”, which has motivated the entire phenomenon of development education or global education and challenged the ‘banking concept’ of education. The ‘globalist’ approach towards education has garnered huge support

across the world(Harrison, 2006) and the idea of participatory learning and social change through education has established its ground.

New possibilities for participation, communication, and instruction have emerged as a direct result of the proliferation of digital technologies, which are playing an increasingly significant role in the field of development education. Learners may be connected with one another regardless of their location or culture through the use of digital technologies, which also make it easier for learners and teachers to work together on projects and find solutions to problems and provide them access to a far wider variety of educational resources and materials.

Through online learning platforms, social media, and mobile applications, digital technologies may also be utilized to improve the accessibility and efficacy of development education activities. As Jeong & Hmelo-Silver(2016) identifies seven core affordance where CSCL can assist in learning opportunities as (1) engage in a joint task, (2) communicate, (3) share resources, (4) engage in productive collaborative learning processes, (5) engage in co-construction, (6) monitor and regulate collaborative learning, and (7) find and build groups and communities. Digital technology may play a significant role in development education for giving equitable and quick access in any corner of the world and the collaboration is possible on any scale.

Discussion

Knowledge is not neutral or objective, but is constructed and shaped by power relations: "Knowledge is not a thing; it is a relation" (Foucault, 1976, p. 27). Knowledge is not neutral or objective, but is constructed and shaped by power relations, it has had a major impact on the way that people think about the relationship between knowledge and power. knowledge is not an isolated entity, but is instead a product of the relationships and power dynamics that exist within society. He argues that knowledge is not neutral or impartial, but is shaped by the interests, ideologies, and power structures of the people and institutions that produce it.

For knowledge construction a constant dialogue is required in a socio-cultural setting(Wegerif, 2004). The constant interaction between teacher and student is not sufficient rather there is a need for a dialogue based on mutual respect so that the learning experience can trespass the boundary of one-sided communication. The exponential proliferation of Social Media in people's everyday lives has made it interestingly crucial to investigate the challenges and opportunities to development education in order to ensure that people have access to the information they need to be lifelong learners. During the Covid-19 pandemic, world has observed the power of digital media where digital apps like zoom and google meet has given a great access to learners and teachers however the issue of digital divide also came into notice.

Despite the opportunities that digital technologies offer for development education, there are also significant challenges to be addressed. One of the key challenges is the issue of access, particularly in the context of the digital divide. While digital technologies offer new possibilities for learning and engagement, not all learners have equal access to these tools and resources. This can create disparities in learning outcomes and opportunities, perpetuating existing inequalities and hindering efforts to promote social justice and equity as there exists social, economic, geographical and generational divides (Mathrani et al., 2021). People in higher social echelon have better access to ICT and digital technology and they will further

use it, in this way their economic capital will turn into social capital and the difference in lower and higher will exist and recur (Tewathia et al., 2020).

Technology is not neutral and has its own politics (Winner, 1980). The dialogue which is mediated by the technology has biases and with the active intervention of artificial intelligence the biases towards socio-cultural dynamics has become a serious concern. Heidegger was concerned that technology might 'enframe' experiences and present objects in an objective way where there can be a drop down option which makes a student to traverse in a particular way thus restricting the randomness (Wegerif, 2005). However, it is a bit reductionist view because a software interface can direct the dialogues and can help in making online social relationships (McAlister et al., 2004).

Therefore, it is a challenge to ensure that digital technologies are utilized in ways that encourage critical thinking and reflection. The use of digital tools can occasionally result in a superficial degree of engagement, in which students merely take in material without critically assessing or commenting on what they have learned. In order to foster more in-depth learning and comprehension, practitioners in the field of development education need to provide activities and tools for students that encourage them to engage critically with the problems at hand and to reflect on their own presuppositions and prejudices. For, an instance a game developed by Belgian researcher "In the Shoes of an Algorithm", for high school students gives a simulation model for students to understand how Youtube algorithm works, this helps them to understand the logic of algorithms and give them critical and in-depth understanding of their choices and opinion getting shaped (H.-S. Jeong et al., 2022). In, similar way a pedagogical tool in the realm of development education shall be built so that the critical thinking can be disseminated with the help of technology and people become more aware about their rights and the principle of social justice.

Conclusion

Development education in the digital age is a discipline that is quickly expanding and is essential for solving the difficult issues of the 21st century. The purpose of this paper was to investigate the many facets of development education and how it integrates with various forms of digital technology. It has examined the key principle, social justice of development education and how digital technology can offer a challenge and opportunity to meet its objective.

The paper has also highlighted, how the collaborative way of learning can be fostered in the digital era and can be effective in arena of development education. It has also addressed issues of access, equity, and digital literacy, as well as fostering meaningful engagement and participation among learners. The research also highlights the potential for digital technologies to facilitate innovative approaches to development education, such as gamification, social media, and online communities of practice.

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