REPORT ON UPPINGHAM SEMINAR 24-26 FEBRUARY 2000: THE IMPLICATIONS OF INCREASING DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Participation

A total of 23 persons participated in the Seminar (see list attached). Eight guests from the locality attended the dinner. Several of those who could not attend sent e-mails or other messages to express their regrets and best wishes for the Seminar and to ask for reports on its proceedings (Terry Allsop; Ash Hartridge; Rosemary Preston; Rosa Maria Torres; Sheila Aikman).

Location and resources

Most of the participants found the setting congenial to the discussions. The apparent difficulties of travel to Uppingham via Oakham was felt by some participants to be an advantage - this was a part of the world they would never normally come to. Time was taken to walk round the town, visits the market and shops (especially the bookshops and the art gallery) and to do some shopping; but a request was made that future Seminars might try to fit in either a wider visit or some field visits to local communities.

There was a good display of some recent relevant literature, including new publications and notices of forthcoming publications by members of the group. Some papers were also tabled and copies made available to the participants. Some participants brought examples of their work with them.

THURSDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2000

SESSION 1.

Anna Robinson-Pant made a presentation on developmental discourses, using OHPs and slides; then the participants were broken into groups to discuss issues of discourse and development. Peter Tamas agreed at very short notice to undertake the role of respondent; a full report on this session is appended to this report. One indicator of the success of this session was that the issue of discourses of development (which to some participants was new) constantly came back throughout the later debates.

HOUSEKEEPING SESSION

After dinner, a short meeting was held to outline the agenda and timetable for the rest of the Seminar. The overall agenda was agreed as being
" Is there increasing diversity in educational provision in developing societies?
" The nature of diversity: the kinds of diversity. The definition of 'diversity'. Do we mean 'diversity between' or 'diversity within' or both?
" The reasons for diversity - where is it coming from? who are the drivers?
" The implications of increasing diversity in educational provision in developing societies - implications for whom?

It was agreed only to settle the first session on the Friday and to review where we were at the end of that stage.

FRIDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2000

SESSION 2:

This was intended to concentrate on examples of increasing diversity and questions of  definitions of diversity; is it increasing? what is its nature? what

are the reasons for any increase (if there is any)? The session was facilitated by David Theobald, with Keith Watson as respondent. The participants had a plenary discussion; then in small groups took detailed case studies drawn from the experience of each of the participants; with a further plenary to draw it together.

There is no full report on this session but some of the points which struck different participants were:

Areas of increasing (or decreasing?) diversity in education: Some areas were identified (but not all): e.g. increasingly diverse providers and therefore managers of educational opportunities (e.g. private sector involvement); clienteles; structures (e.g. community and parental involvement); provision, especially delivery systems (e.g. ICT, open learning systems); curricula; increasing commercialisation (especially of training); evaluation and assessment. There was some feeling that while many of these were becoming more diverse, others (especially assessment and certification) might be at the same time becoming narrower. The implications of increasing knowledge might also lead to diversity.

Rhetoric? How far is there simply a rhetoric of increasing diversity? Does increasing diversity result in increasing choice? (for whom?). For example, in some countries, asking each school to prepare its own development plan seems to lead to increasingly standard outcomes, not to diverse outcomes. On the other hand, in other situations, while central policies may be standard, on the ground there may be diversity.

Drivers towards or away from diversity: Diversity in education is not something which is sought for its own sake, but arises from or within some other context. Increased diversity seems to arise from attempts to solve some problem, deal with some issue or respond to some new situation (e.g. refugees and mobile populations; changes in student participation such as older students in higher education; financial pressures which may lead to increased roles for NGOs and/or community involvement in education; attempts to fulfil agreed obligations such as Education for All, which may call for new partnerships; etc). It (like so much change) seems to arise from a specific sense of dissatisfaction and a search for solutions. Increased diversity is not in itself the answer to the issue but a spin-off from the proposed answer. Diversity itself is not the primary agenda; the primary agenda may be HIV/AIDS, or the search for increased equity and/or social transformation, or for more effective state provision, etc.

Diversity is contextualised: Diversity therefore arises as a secondary agenda in specific conditions ('situated diversity'). It is necessary to look at the specific situation - which in turn will tend to define the forms in which diversity will occur. Diversity would seem to arise within a specific context and as a response to pressures. We need to avoid meta-narratives in this area.

Pressures within/outwith: Diversity may arise from pressures within the educational sector. Or it may come from pressures outside the sector, such as newer ideologies of a market in education; the increased involvement of civil society in education; the demand for increased choice for parents and clients; the clamour for multi-lingualism in the liberal discourses. Education is not

separate from the socio-economic-cultural context in which it takes place - and therefore it is influenced by the changes (towards or away from increasing diversity) in that context. But is this context local or national/international/global - or both?

Diversity-conformity contest?: Diversity can be contested. Just as globalisation and centralisation may induce its own reaction (increasing diversity), so increasing diversity may create its own reaction (increasing pressures for conformity or at least for regulation of diversity), just as increasing centralisation might provoke local reactions. Some participants here saw a conformity-diversity (or decentralisation and standardisation; or diversity and essentialism) cycle, or perhaps distinct phases. These phases may depend on other factors. It was suggested that during an equity struggle, for example, the encouragement of diversity may be 'quiet'. On the other hand, when diversity 'wins', it may fossilise.

Top-down or bottom-up: Diversity can be top-down (i.e. encouraged by governments etc - e.g. decentralisation); or it can be bottom-up (e.g. grassroots movements). Increased diversity can be both formal and non-formal.

Change or lack of change: There was a debate about whether (in many developing societies) the general characteristic was one of resistance to change and therefore diversity would need to be encouraged, or whether the general characteristic was one of continuing change and therefore increasing diversity was a direct offshoot of this change process, and needed to be assessed/evaluated in terms of its effect on education in that area. It was suggested that some people see their lifeworld as being in a process of rapid and great change and therefore may resist increasing diversity; others see their lifeworld as more static and feel the need to encourage change and diversity. On the other hand, it was noted that whereas some areas might seem to lack change when viewed from the outside, within those situations, local residents would almost always talk in terms of change pressurising them into responses.

Whose diversity? The issue then arose as to 'whose diversity?'. What may seem to be (increasing) diversity to some people may not be (increasing) diversity to others.

Is diversity a 'good thing'? There was a debate among the participants about the value attached to the term 'diversity'. Several participants saw diversity as a 'good thing', something to be encouraged. Others saw it as more neutral and some even saw it in some circumstances as being malign (e.g. commercial interests in education and training; certification etc).

Diversity/change/innovation/flexibility: There was also a tendency at times for the term 'diversity' to be mixed up with 'change' (which many participants felt in many situations needed to be encouraged) and 'innovation' (which would nearly always be small-scale but would lead to issues of scaling up) and 'flexibility'. Change is not always increasing diversity. It was pointed out that some change was designed to deny diversity - for example, new structures are sometimes created to replicate old orders. Clearly, most of the participants were defining the term 'diversity' (and indeed also 'increasing') in their own

way. Again, the term needs to be unpacked within a particular context and discourse.

Agenda-setting: At the end of this session, a brief discussion took place about the following session. It was agreed to concentrate on the implications of these issues for the following:
" educational institutions (managers and teachers)
" administrators
" political action (e.g. scaling up/down)
" researchers (who? and what?)
" consultants
" students/educational participants and clients
" funders/resourcers of educational programmes.

Some examples were called for, and the following case studies were chosen to be examined in more detail during the afternoon session:

a) Bangladesh (non-formal primary education programme): Alan Rogers
b) India (National Literacy Mission and DAWN): Anita Rampal
c) Brazil: Guillerme Rios
d) South Africa: Shirley Walters.

Instead of a clearer picture emerging, what we had was growing complexity, a realisation that the issue of diversity was much more complex than any of us had originally thought.

After lunch, participants were free to wander round the town or do their own thing.

SESSION 3:

This session was facilitated by Shirley Walters with Charl Walters as respondent. The participants broke into two groups to look at the chosen case studies - a) Bangladesh and India; and b) Brazil and South Africa. Each group was asked to examine the following questions:
" where is the diversity in this case study - or not?
" how useful is 'diversity' in this case? what does it mean? for whom?
" issues of the individual and the collective
" managing conflict in this case study
" do you/we support diversity in this case?

There was a brief report-back session. A range of points arose from the case studies and plenary discussion as follows:
" why diversity?
" pseudo-diversity
" whose diversity?
" diversity and difference (Derrida); difference can be between two entities; diversity may be defined as 'multiple differences'.
" the relationship between collective(s) diversity and individual(s) diversity (and also between diversity - community - individual)
" how can we justify applied local activities; is it necessary to upscale? the dilemma between local and large-scale
" imposing the discourse of diversity on educational programmers
" are we in favour of diversity and in what circumstances? who are 'we'?

" who do we (in the Uppingham Seminar) think we are?
" issues of conflict and conflict management.

Some of these set the agenda for the next session.

At 6pm, there was a reception and at 7.30pm, the Seminar dinner at the White Hart. In the absence of Cream Wright, David Barton agreed to speak informally. Eight guests joined us for this occasion - a local solicitor who served on the Steering Committee for the Uppingham Seminars and his wife; a local college lecturer who has worked in South Africa; the Chair of the County Education Committee; two of the staff of the School of Continuing Education from Nottingham University.

SATURDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2000

SESSION 4:

This was facilitated by Anita Rampal with Janet Hannah as respondent. Anita suggested that we should examine the implications of (increasing) diversity for

" institutions
" administrators
" political action
" research/consultancy.
She had asked several persons to introduce these sessions.

Institutions: The session started with Shirley Walters outlining as a case study her own institution, University of Western Cape, and the issues it faces. A traditionally black university, it was now facing major changes

a) changes in the age, culture, class, gender, abilities and geographical spread of the students coming to it (including white students)

b) changes in the national context - including in national policy (e.g. in funding, and in quality and planning issues); in competition from other institutions now opening their doors to black students on an equal basis and from privatisation of education, the entrepreneurial market; in accreditation (the South African Qualifications Agency). Issues of conformity to growing expectations and of safety are also of increasing importance.

c) changes in educational ideologies - lifelong learning (who, what, when, where, and how?). With this comes an internal as well as an external pressure to fulfil its historic mission, to serve the disadvantaged better?

These pressures impact on the three elements in the institution she identified

" institutional - services, frameworks, financing, physical plant, accommodation
" socio-cultural - questions of safety on the campus, language, entrepreneurial attitudes
" substantive - issue of pedagogy and curriculum
[these three all overlap].

This leads to the key questions facing the institution today

" should it move from uni-lingual to multi-lingual activities?
" what are the implications on a traditionally black institutional culture of its changed relationships with the dominant white culture?

" is it only the strong institutions which will survive? where will that leave a university traditionally with more limited resources than its neighbours?
" will we witness the demise of the special provision for highly disadvantaged populations?

Discussion centred on how to help an institution and the different interest groups within it to change.

Administrators: David Theobald suggested that administrators and managers in all kinds of institutions, including educational institutions, are under twin pressures towards and away from change.

He drew a picture of the administrator situated within a particular institution which has its own structure and its own agency (mission); the two may not always be compatible - the structure may militate against the mission.

The administrator is subject to two sets of factors (she may also in part be creating these same factors for herself). On the one hand, she is subject to the rules of the bureaucracy of which she is a member and to the pressures of the impartiality (or partiality) of local politics within the institution. These pressures, together with the existing set of practices within the institution, tend towards Stasis; to a concern for better management and better development ('better' here being defined as whatever leads to Stasis). There may be espoused theories of social/institutional change, but the pressures on this side will lead to Stasis.

On the other side, she will have concerns for capacity and competency - using the institution's capacity to the fullest. This will tend towards increased confidence leading to innovation and creativity, and this to risks and rewards. These too lead to demands for and the development of better management and better development ('better' here being defined as whatever leads to change).

In discussion, there was a feeling that, while this model works well, it is perhaps too limited; it does not allow for the context within which the institution sits. This context too is the site of a contest between stability and change. And both elements of this situational context will impact on the institution, just as the institution contributes to the contextual contest.

Much of the discussion of this case study concentrated on risks and rewards. In some contexts, there is a drive towards taking risks in order to earn the rewards (e.g. entrepreneurial contexts). In other contexts, the rewards are earned by avoiding risks. It was suggested that the private sectors encouraged and rewarded risk taking while the public sector discouraged and penalised risk taking: while most of the participants felt this was too generalised, it was also felt to have some truth in it. Once again, context determines all.

Political action: Anna Robinson-Pant and Brian Street outlined the Community Literacy Project in Nepal (CLPN) as an example of managing diversity.

The aim of the project is to see if local agencies can be encouraged to develop locally specific literacy activities in the community - not in the form of traditional classes but in the form of activities in the community (i.e. workplace

and socio-political-cultural activities) or in family life. It is based on the research findings that the literacy practices of different groups (and individuals) are different, and on the consequent judgement that a uniform literacy skill learning programme may not be the best way to help the very diverse groups of literacy users to learn their own literacy skills. What may be needed is a programme of directly relevant and therefore different learning assistance activities.

The project is funded (and now actively overseen) by DFID, and managed by CfBT with specialist inputs from Education for Development. In-country, the project is located within World Education (an NGO), with a Resource Centre.

The project was working not only at the level of the central Resource Centre but also at District level. So far, two Districts had been taken, one in the hill country, the other in the lowland terai areas. Here the project was working with local agencies and groups such as a British-funded forestry development project and its local Forest Users Groups, and Save the Children Japan. One set of activities which had approached it for support was a group of local activists running radio towers (broadcasting structures which gave out news and messages from central points to the local communities). In other areas, different kinds of groups were local partners for this project.

The questions here related to the following
" how can one manage the diversity of management systems involved?
" how can one meet the very diverse expectations of the different stakeholders?
" for example, DFID with its pressure for statistical data on the number of illiterates made literate? A key issue raised here was how to measure the enhancement of literacy activities rather than the numbers of individuals trained in literacy skills.
" for example, the radio towers who wanted funds for their towers: how to help them to see that CLPN is limited towards helping them with their literacy activities and how even this can be useful to them in the way they perceive their work?

Much of the discussion centred on measuring achievements. One suggestion was that setting targets tends to lead to uniformity, not to diversity. However, capacity building is not always measurable in statistical form, and CLPN might use the capacity building element in the project (assisting local agencies of all kinds to develop their own literacy enhancing activities) as one of the key measures for achievements.

Research and consultancy: Stephen Matlin outlined some of the concerns which he saw arising from this discussion. These are included in the summary of the session prepared by Janet Hannah as follows:

Stephen Matlin identified the implications for research that arise from diversity in education. He began by highlighting the need for a mapping exercise to shed light on the nature of diversity, revealing sources of funding, sources of provision, sites and modes of delivery and teaching methodologies, identifying the learners, the content and outcomes of the education.

We also need to learn more about the origins and instigators of diversity. Is increasing diversity a result of decentralisation? Is it filling a void in State

provision caused by the lack of financial or human resources? Is it responding to differences in language, culture, religion, gender etc?? To what extent is it economically driven, seeking to develop particular skills?

A number of policy-related issues need to be researched. Is diversity a phenomenon arising out of development, or is it a development tool to achieve certain objectives? How is diversity perceived by governments, aid agencies and consultants? In the context of development, when is it appropriate to encourage diversity rather than expand a uniform system? What is the capacity to manage and administer diversity? What are the training implications for administrators and teachers? What kinds of provision are appropriate and should be made in relation to regulation, monitoring, assessing and certifying courses and graduates? What are the implications of new technologies?

The question was raised as to whether diversity is a manifestation of a state of transition? How are the shifts in the specific diversities coupled with the wider developmental picture and how might they be changing or expected to change as development proceeds?

To what extent is diversity a response to disasters and emergencies? Does a higher level of diversity in education make a country or region more resilient in times of crisis such as war, famine, HIV/Aids? (Chris Yates reminded me of Sheldon's Second Law: "the strength of an eco-system is directly proportional to its diversity").

In relation to the undertaking of research, Stephen raised the questions of who should do it? Who should pay? For what reasons should it be done (to validate existing policy or be genuinely exploratory?) Which methodologies and tools should be adopted? Can new ones be developed? What is the role of consultants? Who sets the timeframe, criteria and benchmarks for research?

Uta Papen contributed her thoughts from the perspective of a researcher, asking us to think of diversity not from a realist perspective (i.e. where is it?) but as a discourse. Where do discourses of diversity come from, and how they relate to other discourses such as deficit and disadvantage? Whose discourse is it? What are the underpinning assumptions about knowledge, learning, development and society? What are the practices associated with these discourses? Where does it get its power from? What are the structures in which it is embedded and which support it?

Researchers ourselves need to define our own epistemological and ontological assumptions. It is no longer possible to engage in research with pre-conceived ideas about sites of research. This makes our research more complicated, and implies more emphasis on qualitative approaches, particularly ethnographic methods.

[One issue was how far 'managing diversity' should be seen as 'controlling, running, keeping-in-shape diversity', and how far it should be seen as 'promoting diversity'. Is management reactive, maintaining the status quo, or proactive, promoting change and development? Or both in different situations, at different times? or indeed, will any one action be seen by some persons as maintaining the status quo but by others as promoting change?]

CONCLUDING SESSION

After a rather elongated lunch at which the participants transacted much inter-personal business, a final session was held. There were three parts to this session.

1. Gains from the seminar.
Each of the participants was asked to write down one or two of the most important things they had got from the Seminar. The list included the following items:

" The development and discourse analysis; the more you look, the more you see
" Diversity emerges as a secondary agenda in specific conditions
" Does the presence of diversity encourage resilience to crisis?
" Does diversity really mean more choice? - for whom?
" Whose diversity is it we are talking about? Whose interests does diversity serve?
" Diversity can be and often is contested.
" For some people, diversity can be a con.
" At the individual (teacher-lecturer) level, there is a tension between diversity/ conformity and competency; between teaching , administration and research.
" The diversity-conformity cycle: how do we recognise when to strive for diversity and how do we do that?

2. Where do we go from here on the issue of diversity?

In a discussion on any follow-up to this debate on diversity in education, the following points were made:

a) Stephen Matlin outlined the steps towards the Commonwealth Ministers of Education meeting at Halifax in November when the theme of diversity will be one of the major topics to be studied. The Secretariat is commissioning some papers on this issue.

b) Chris McIntosh invited papers on this theme for IRE and suggested there might even be a special issue

c) Several participants felt that the Seminar provided a set of tools for analysing the issue of diversity in their own situation; for mapping diversity and measuring its increase. Perhaps a comparative research project could be developed.

d) It was suggested that, if any participants wished to prepare draft papers on this issue, they might be floated (at least at first) in an electronic form on the web (Peter Tamas offered to help with this if it progressed further).

3. Where do the Uppingham Seminars go from here?

It was felt that the participants would wish to keep in touch with each other. An internet link or discussion group might be formed.

It was felt that the existence of such a think tank centred on a core theme but without too closely prescribed agenda or timetable and without the preparation and presentation of papers was useful; and all would welcome the series to be

continued. There is little space elsewhere for such a generalised debate, and so far as we know, no other agency providing it.

It was agreed that Seminars should continue to be organised in a very personal style and that attendance should continue to be by invitation. But there is the danger in this that they will come to be seen as one person's fiefdom: i.e. that persons are invited to attend someone-else's Seminar, rather than feeling they are all members of a coherent group (certainly not a collective). It may be this that accounts for the high rate of late cancellation for this Seminar. It is not clear how this can be avoided; but Alan Rogers sees the convenor's role as being a facilitator for participants to engage in their own discussions and debates, not his.

It was also felt that there should be some continuity of personnel between Seminars. The current balance between

a) persons from overseas (to avoid 'us' talking about 'them')
b) practitioners, including aid agencies and consultants
c) academics, researchers and trainers
a) younger persons (to avoid oldies from spouting about their wide experience, and also to make some contribution to future generations of practitioners and thinkers)

should be maintained. But how can we effectively and equitably ensure that there is some overlap between this Seminar and the next? Some new persons need to be brought in, to cover the theme chosen for debate, and to widen the group.

Participation in the debates might be made more inclusive. For example, a computer-mediated-conference might be mounted.

One way forward may be for a small number of participants to be invited and to request them to invite a further group of participants. We may try that for future Seminars (if there are any!).

The themes must be topical and therefore not decided too far in advance. On the other hand, it takes nearly a year to organise such a Seminar, and therefore the theme does need to be suggested some time in advance. A balance needs to be maintained.

It was felt strongly that the themes should be general, not too specific. These Seminars are not training workshops (e.g. in PRA or assessment methodologies). They are open-ended think-tanks; a place I hope where one can think the unthinkable.

Some specific cross-cutting themes were suggested such as
" participation
" development
" civil society/good governance
It was suggested that jargon phrases might be taken to be unpacked. However, it was also felt that the theme should emerge from contemporary concerns much closer to the time when the next Seminar might be mounted. One which might be interesting is that of 'community' in community development/ community schools, etc (or is that old hat by now?' Can it be treated in a new way?).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

My personal reactions to the discussions include the following:

1. I was surprised that the Seminar seemed to move from the discussion of generalities to more specific case studies. My own prior experience has been that most seminars move the other way. Does this tell me anything about organising any future events?

2. The Seminar for me moved from some measure of certainty to increasing uncertainty, to a recognition that these matters were much more complicated than I thought at first. Indeed, perhaps to increased confusion. Is this what a 'think-tank' essentially is?

3. Throughout the discussions, there was a sense that the 'developing society' element in the title was an anachronism. There was a feeling of dissatisfaction during the discussions with confining our attention to the so-called 'developing world' and a recognition that these same issues related also to the so-called 'industrialised societies'. But we keep the 'development' element alive because the Seminars are aimed primarily at working with those engaged in the development industry.

4. The issue of measuring outcomes (of development and of educational programmes) was a constant theme. The need for qualitative assessment; the problems of converting qualitative findings into the kinds of quantitative data which donors, governments and inter-governmental agencies require; the value for development agencies themselves to be able to measure progress - these came up time and again. [The value of statistical data in its own right was not, to my memory, raised - statistical data, like donor agencies, was at times 'demonised' - Peter Tamas's term].

Some practical lessons to be learned:
" to make sure that full details of the Falcon Hotel are sent to all participants in advance, especially telephone numbers
" to ask all participants to bring one paragraph about themselves to the Seminar for circulation to the other participants
" to warn the participants that they may be asked to talk about themselves and their work and therefore to bring material with them; also books and articles they have found helpful. It may be that a collection of such papers could be put together during the Seminar.

END PIECE
My sincere thanks to everyone for coming (especially those who travelled long distances solely for it)
My sincere thanks to all those who joined in the discussions so freely
My sincere thanks to all those who responded so willingly (?) to requests by me or by the convenors of each session to talk rather more formally
My sincere thanks to Anna for opening the whole Seminar so splendidly
My sincere thanks to those who supported the project during its preparation, especially Brian Street and the other members of the Steering Committee/Group (which never met!)
My sincere thanks to all those who have supported (and to those who I hope will support) the project financially

My very sincere thanks to Jean (Baker) for all she did to keep me and the participants in line and on time.

Alan Rogers
28 February 2000


APPENDIX I prepared by Peter Tamas

Anna's presentation followed her introductory paper in fairly close detail, so I have chosen to elaborate on that paper as suggested by discussion during her presentation.


PART I: DISCOURSE AND DEVELOPMENT

Anna opened by offering a few working definitions of discourse as follows:


"Discourses are composed of people, of objects (like books), and of characteristic ways of talking, acting, interacting, thinking, believing, and valuing, and sometimes characteristic ways of writing, reading, and/or interpreting... Discourses are out in the world, like books, maps and cities" (Gee, 1992).

"a 'discourse' is not just a set of words, it is a set of rules about what you can and cannot say (Barrett, 1995) and about what" (Apthorpe, R. and Gasper, D., 1996: 4)

"Discourse.. includes language, but also what is represented through language. A discourse (e.g. of development) identifies appropriate and legitimate ways of practising development as well as speaking and thinking about it" (Grillo, R., 1997 : 13)

"the system of relations [between development institutions, forms of knowledge etc] establishes a discursive practice that sets the rules of the game: who can speak, from what points of view, with what authority, and according to what criteria of expertise: it sets the rules that must be followed for this or that problem, theory or object to emerge and be named, analyzed and eventually transformed into a policy or a plan" (Escobar 1995, p 41)


Anna pointed most to the work done by Crush (The Power of Development 1995) and Escobar (Encountering Development 1995) for the emergence of 'discourse' in development speak. She mentioned Clifford (Writing Culture) in reference to the dissolution of boundaries between the studied and the expert and the emergence of reflexivity in ethnography (anthropologists becoming aware that their presence is not neutral and realizing that their description may be somewhat inescapably determined by the dispositions and frameworks they bring to the ethnographic exercise).

Discussion in the group ranged pretty widely…at points we were using rather restrictive definitions of 'discourse' and at others the boundaries became blurred to the point that we questioned the usefulness of the term at all. At one point, I returned to Foucault and offered a summary of what I understood of his discussion in Power Knowledge…

So far as I'm able to see at this point (this may change tomorrow), 'discourse' was a term used to describe the interplay of knowledge, power and right within a 'discursive community.' By my limited reading, 'power' often seems to be understood in pretty Marxist terms, knowledge is understood as whatever the powerful deem to be 'true', and 'right' is what is used to hide the raw exercise of 'power.'

According to this analysis, a few generations back we had 'Divine' right…these days we have 'Scientific' truth. In those days, 'Divine' right led us to defer to the Monarch/Patriarch and these days 'Scientific' truth (admittedly a moving target) inclines us to believe that those who follow the right methods and look at the right things speak the Truth. Conversely, this leads us to devalue the sentiments/statements of those who don't follow the right methods and/or look at the right stuff.

On the topic of essentialization, Chandra Mohanty wrote a piece in 1984 that questioned the Western Liberal Feminists' inclusion of half the human race under the homogenous category of 'woman.' Since that time, a number of other authors have questioned whether it is reasonable to posit the category of 'third world woman' in opposition to 'first world woman', and this debate has proceeded to indefinitely fragment our conceptual universe. Authors such as G. Spivak have decided that all essentialisms are, though created by us, necessary for meaning making, and as such should be created and deployed strategically. Other authors, such as bell hooks, have avoided the whole debate by just speaking and allowing others to create the 'position' from which she speaks.

The consequence of these moves is to somewhat 'decentre' 'Western' knowledge. That is, by becoming critical of the social and conventional processes by which one group creates a cannon of 'truth', we may be able to appreciate the possible validity of statements/sentiments that do not meet our standards of 'legitimacy' but may be quite legitimate in their 'home' context.

Development 'discourse' then is more than a new way of labelling the ideologies behind the various trends in development policy..it is a 'regime of representation' that 'constructs the world' (Crush) and 'constructs the objects of development.' It is the framework which enables us to see, and helps us to assign value to those things that we have seen.

Thus far, this summary has done an injustice to the conversation in that it has talked in terms of the development 'discourse', not 'discourses.' We seem to have concluded that, in development, there are a number of different 'discourses', each with its own somewhat independent modes of expression and legitimation. Despite these possible diversities, however, the development discourses compete in an economy where some projects get funded and others don't. The operations of power, and therefore truth (though it may be contested), are quite evident. The suggestion at this point was, then, that we may be well advised to be instrumental in our use of the pallette of development discourses that are available to us.

While this suggestion parallels Spivak's suggestion that we be instrumental in our creation and use of essentializations, it assumes that these 'discourses' are something that exist on a table somehow separate from us. Both Anna in her

presentation and Foucault in his Power Knowledge were quite clear that we are both products and creators of the various discourses that we purport to be able to 'use' to our advantage. There is no 'outside of the text' from which vantage we may play (note that getting to this point requires that we assume that all thinking is linguistic). Placing us back firmly within the bounds of our overlapping discourses does complicate things somewhat, and many authors have used this point to accuse the 'post-modernists' of an irretrievable relativism.

Contrary to this, many authors are using discourse analysis and other post-structuralist (the assumption that language is more a system of differences… one word to the next…than a set of invariant labels for things 'out there') techniques to help them pursue very strong moral agendas. Foucault was most concerned that the techniques he used be used to explore the mechanisms by which dominance is hidden and normalized in a society through 'discourse'. Escobar is interested to know who is making the definitions and who benefits from them. Grillo suggests that the developers are creating the discourses and that these discourses are being resisted by those who are the 'beneficiaries' of development. Finally, Apthorpe points out that the 'development' discourse (to use an unacceptable essentialization) does not acknowledge that there are pre-existing legitimate discursive communities/economies in the 'undeveloped' countries where 'development' is practised.

The process of inclusion and exclusion is critical. Apthorpe talks about this in terms of

"Rival ways of naming and framing set policy agendas differently. For example, economistic writings on development aid and poverty alleviation tend not to cover the situations of political and economic refugees and other disaster-displaced people; they are treated under separate headings and 'emergencies' calling for 'relief.'"

For further examples of this, see Majid Rahenma, The Post Development Reader for a range of examples of the western construction of the 'development problematic' in modes amenable to the western 'developmental' solution, and the remarkable ability of the 'development' enterprise to create human tragedy of remarkable proportions, and then successfully re-define itself as the only appropriate and desperately needed solution.

Adding one final complication, it appears that the criticism of 'essentialization' also applies to discourses. That is, it is likely to be impossible to draw a meaningful line around the conceptually useful category of a 'discourse community' or identify the 'essential' characteristics of any given discourse. Fairclough suggests that the "boundaries between and within discourses are constantly shifting", and Porter states that "new forms of discourse, new voices, and new rules of the development game are emerging" (Porter p. 65)

All this leads to the question of what is the concept good for.

Anna had us examine texts in small groups. The groups found that looking at the texts as the product of a discourse, or possibly the site of the clash of two or more discursive communities, enabled us to be more critically aware of the 'development' language.

At the field level, how we think and frame the 'objects'/beneficiaries/targets of development has very real consequences for how those people are engaged in the 'development' process, and, conversely, these sorts of tools can help communities to become more critical of the discourses/ideologies that are being 'sold' by the development community that is 'serving' them.

At a policy level, there is a danger of sitting back and critiquing development discourse from this perspective to the point where we effectively immobilise ourselves.

Escobar posits that it is possible for new social movements to use the tools provided by the 'linguistic turn' to good effect in their bottom-up grassroots activities; and Crush is hopeful that there is a way of writing beyond the 'language of development.' Wodak states that "the results of our studies are important in many ways. First, they make transparent inequality and domination. Secondly, they enable us to propose possibilities of change. And, thirdly, they show the limits of possible emancipation through new patterns of discourse alone…"

Anna suggested four tools that might be useful in doing this sort of analytical work.
1. Look for moments of crisis…when things are going wrong (de-naturalized), power is more likely to be obvious
2. Look for the use of metaphors and their uptake by various parties…
3. Look for development practices that seem to attend development programs but do not seem to be immediately related to the stated program goals such as (singing … marching …slogans etc.)

By way of conclusion, a number of participants volunteered one thing that they had learned in the session. The session closed with the thought that there might be some difficulty if, in modelling our ability to appropriate instrumentally the discourse of our donors, we offer exactly the instruction and example required to have that very same strategy visited on us, and the very convictions that bring us to and sustain us in our efforts.


3. What use is the concept of development discourse?
Looking at "power in discourse" and "power over discourse" (Wodak, 1996)

It is all very well to describe and identify various development discourses, but what practical use are they - or where do we go next? Anna started by suggesting that the earlier four background papers had used the term 'discourse' for differing purposes, ranging from a descriptive label to an analysis of power. She said that she thought that the challenge at Uppingham is to work out how to use this concept creatively. Discourse can be more than a tool for describing differing development ideologies in order to decide where we stand or which we prefer. As Gee states (above), discourses are there "out in the world" - we can easily describe them, say what they are, but then it is tempting to ask, so what? The hard part is perhaps what Maria Rosa was attempting to do - to ask why these discourses are there. Why does the discourse of educational diversity appear to dominate, when the overriding trend in educational policy seems to be towards uniform patterns of educational provision ("...never before had diversity been underlined to such

an extent, and never before had policies, notably educational policies, been so uniform and global", Torres, 1999)? We can identify changes in discourses - but we also need to ask why these changes have taken place?

In her background paper, Anna wrote: From my own experiences, I have found the concept of development as a discourse has implications for the way I write, think and most importantly, act in my role as development worker and researcher. I have become more sensitive to the way I write in reports, articles and papers : for example, trying to get away from polarisations such as indigenous/modern or developed/undeveloped, being wary of using the word "we" when narrating (I am aware that all too often, as in Alan's paper, there is an assumption that "we" in papers like this one, refers only to the developers, or even that there is a community of developers with shared perspectives and values), trying to include multiple voices and viewpoints, being aware of possible bias in the kind of information and research that I draw on to present my case or the kind of text that I produce.

More important than texts and how they are created or analysed, is the realisation that development discourse encompasses actions. What would be useful at Uppingham is to begin to use the concept of "discourse" to critique our own role as developers, whether researchers, policy makers or educational personnel. Recognising that the discourses of development consist not just of reports or policy documents, but also of the practices that we participate in (e.g. meetings, literacy classes, PRA activities), we can begin to work out how both the developers and developed can have "power over" these discourses.

[It may be noteworthy that at Uppingham, we did not accept this challenge. Why not?]

Anna Robinson-Pant, February 2000
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PART II: SOME DEFINITIONS


1. DISCOURSE

"Law school is a set of related social practices. We say that such related social practices constitute a Discourse (with a capital 'D' to distinguish it from 'discourse' which means a 'stretch of spoken or written language' or 'language in use'). So, there is a 'law school Discourse', which is of course connected to the larger Discourse of the law.

A Discourse is composed of ways of talking, listening, reading, writing, acting, interacting, believing, valuing, and using tools and objects, in particular settings and at specific times, so as to display or to recognize a particular

social identity...The Discourse creates social positions (or perspectives) from which people are 'invited' ..to speak, listen, act, read and write, think, feel, believe and value in certain characteristic, historically recognizable ways, in combination with their own individual style and creativity.

There are innumerable Discourses in modern societies: different sorts of street gangs, elementary schools and classrooms, academic disciplines, police, birdwatchers, ethnic groups, genders... and so on. Each is composed of some set of related social practices and social identities (or 'positions'). Each Discourse contracts complex relations of complicity, tension and opposition with other Discourses... Discourses create, produce and reproduce opportunities for people to be and recognize certain kinds of people".
From Gee, J., Hull, G. and Lankshear, C., 1996, The New Work Order: behind the language of the new capitalism, Allen and Unwin, p. 10

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"Discourses are composed of people, of objects (like books), and of characteristic ways of talking, acting, interacting, thinking, believing, and valuing, and sometimes characteristic ways of writing, reading, and/or interpreting... Discourses are out in the world, like books, maps and cities. Though humans do use their heads (as a matter of empirical fact) when they engage in the social practices that compose Discourses, they don't (logically) need them." (p. 20)

"...any Discourse is defined in terms of who is and who is not a member, and sometimes in terms of who are "higher" and "lower", more "central" and "less central" members.. any Discourse is ultimately defined in relationship to and, often, in opposition to, other Discourses in the society... If we define "ideology" as beliefs about the appropriate distribution of social goods, such as power, prestige, status, distinction, or wealth, then Discourses are always and everywhere ideological. Each Discourse necessitates that members, at least while they are playing roles within the Discourse, act as if they hold particular beliefs and values about what counts as the "right sort" of person, and the "right" way to be in the world, and thus too, what counts as the "wrong" sort and the "wrong" way.." (p142)
From: Gee, J., 1992, The Social Mind: language, ideology and social practice, Bergin and Garvey: New York

"a 'discourse' is not just a set of words, it is a set of rules about what you can and cannot say (Barrett, 1995) and about what". (p 4)
From: Apthorpe, R. and Gasper, D. (eds), 1996, Arguing Development Policy: Frames and Discourses, Frank Cass: London

"discourses are, therefore, multi-layered, verbal and non-verbal, they are rule-bound, the rules being either manifest or latent, they determine actions and also manifest them, they are embedded in forms of life (cultures), of which they are simultaneously co-constituent" (p 17)
From: Wodak, R., 1996, Disorders of Discourse, Longman

2. DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSES

"...development discourse is embedded in the ethnocentric and destructive colonial (and post-colonial) discourses designed to perpetuate colonial hierarchies rather than to change them. It has defined Third World peoples as the 'other', embodying all the negative characteristics (primitive, backward and so forth) supposedly no longer found in 'modern', Westernized societies. This representation of Third World realities has provided the rationale for development experts' belief in modernization and the superiority of the values and institutions of the North.." (p 253)
From: Parpart, J., "Post-modernism, gender and development" in Crush, J. (ed.), 1995, Power of Development, Routledge; London

"Development Discourse (DD) as a field has no clear boundaries, since development and development studies have none either: further, the types of discourse in them are not all of one type. Since we face not one type of nail, no single type of hammer will suffice. Here are some alternative delineations of DD, beginning with the broadest:
i) discourse that centrally uses the term (social/economic/political) development
ii) discourse in development studies
iii) discourse that uses 'developmentalist' presumptions (see Sachs)
iv) discourse of development policy (see Apthorpe)
v) discourse of leading international development donors (see Ferguson, Porter)"
From: Gasper, D., "Essentialism in and about development discourse", in Apthorpe, R. and Gasper, D. (eds), 1996, Arguing Development Policy: Frames and Discourses, Frank Cass: London (p. 151)

Discourse.. includes language, but also what is represented through language. A discourse (e.g. of development) identifies appropriate and legitimate ways of practising development as well as speaking and thinking about it" (p.13)
From: Grillo, R. and Stirrat, R.L., 1997, Discourses of Development: anthropological perspectives, Berg: Oxford

"The term 'development discourse' is used in a variety of ways, for example, to mean talking rather than doing; diversionary and deceptive language; a prescriptive rather than descriptive stance; or as expression of the type of modernisation approach that became derogatorily known as 'developmentalism' originally in Latin America" (p 2)
From: Gasper and Apthorpe, "Introduction: Discourse analysis and policy discourse", in
Apthorpe, R. and Gasper, D. (eds), 1996, Arguing Development Policy: Frames and Discourses, Frank Cass: London (p. 151)

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"Thinking of development in terms of discourse makes it possible to maintain the focus on domination... and at the same time to explore more fruitfully the conditions of possibility and the most pervasive effects of development. Discourse analysis creates the possibility of "standing detached from [the development discourse], bracketing its familiarity, in order to analyse the theoretical and practical context with which it has been associated (Foucault, 1986). It gives us the possibility of singling out 'development' as an

encompassing cultural space and at the same time of separating ourselves from it by perceiving it in a totally new form.." (p.6)

"What does it mean to say that development started to function as a discourse, that is, that it created a space in which only certain things could be said and even imagined? If discourse is the process through which social reality comes into being - if it is the articulation of knowledge and power, of the visible and the expressible - how can the development discourse be individualized and related to ongoing technical, political, and economic events?" (p.39)

"To understand development as a discourse, one must look not at the elements themselves, but at the system of relations established between them...the system of relations establishes a discursive practice that sets the rules of the game: who can speak, from what points of view, with what authority, and according to what criteria of expertise: it sets the rules that must be followed for this or that problem, theory or object to emerge and be named, analyzed and eventually transformed into a policy or a plan" (p 41)

"The discourse of development is not merely an "ideology" that has little to do with the "real world"... The development discourse has crystallized in practices that contribute to regulating the everyday goings and comings of people in the Third World. How is its power exercised in the daily social and economic life of countries and communities? How does it produce its effect on the way people think and act, on how life is felt and lived?" (p 104)

"Discourse is not the expression of thought; it is a practice, with conditions, rules, and historical transformations. To analyze development as a discourse is "to show that to speak is to do something - something other than to express what one thinks;... and to show that to add a statement to a pre-existing series of statements is to perform a complicated and costly gesture" (Foucault, 1972)" (p216)
From: Escobar, A., 1995, Encountering Development: the making and unmaking of the Third World, Princeton University Press, New Jersey

"In attempting to conceptualize development as a discourse, as an interwoven set of languages and practices, these writers see it also as a modernist regime of knowledge and disciplinary power... This approach is also particularly attuned to the language of development itself, pushing towards an analysis focused on the texts of development without abandoning the power-laden local and international context out of which they arise and to which they speak" (p xiii)
From: Crush, J., Power of Development, Routledge, London


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