to update its methodology in the 21st century to be inclusive of indigenous populations that are often sub-summed in comparisons based on the current definitions of comparative education. Another justification for my argument is the need to accommodate comparisons between linear and holistic concepts as frameworks for comparative education in a globalized world where the learning community is a contested concept. I have established Freire’s ideas as being Andragogic and I have used that argument to compare it with Orality in traditional African education and learning. Similarities and differences were used to establish the fact that there is a viable basis for intercultural comparison using Freire’s Andragogy and Orality in indigenous African lifelong learning.

**References**


---

Work in progress. Comments are welcome; quoting not (yet)

Michal Bron Jr, PhD, Associate Professor, Centre for Baltic and East European Studies. Södertörn University Stockholm, SWEDEN, Michal.Bron@sh.se

**Non-formal learning - similar settings, divergent cultures**

**Comparison of Polish and Swedish ENGOs**

1. **Introduction**

Non-formal learning of adults is in focus of this paper. Its characteristic features are: it is organized outside the formal school system, is voluntary, usually short-term, the presence of a teacher (trainer, coach, instructor) is not necessary (cf. Schugurensky 2007:164f). What is important: Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner’s perspective (COM(2001) 678 final).

Adults whose non-formal learning were studied are staff of WWF and Greenpeace - two world-wide environmental organisations (ENGOs). They work in two countries - Poland and Sweden. The empirical material of this study consists of interviews with the staff of WWF and Greenpeace. My questions concerned mainly capacity building of the organization, its educational needs and training/learning activities that has been organized or attended. Language of interviews was English, Polish and Swedish.

I was interested to determine how learning in these two ENGOs was organized; who did what? But also to learn where did training competences come from? Were there any significant differences in how non-formal learning processes are run in two ENGOs in two countries? Some of these questions are focusing on a phenomenon called social movement learning (SML) - a term that is discussed later.

Polish and Swedish WWF and Greenpeace share with their mother-organisations missions, goals and ways of working and acting. Thus, a starting hypothesis for this paper was that similar organisational settings are present in both country organisations.

My working hypothesis was the following:

Despite many similarities how a given ENGO work is organized, its staff and members do act and learn differently. One possible explanation is a political culture of a society they are living in.

A broad definition of political culture was formulated by Kavanagh (1972) according to which it is a set of values within which a political system operates. Individuals are socialised into a country’s political culture. The underlying assumption is that norms, rules, habits, traditions and belief systems shape the behaviour of citizens. If they have trust in public authorities, there will be a closer relationship between state and society (Askvik et al 2011).
In his influential article, Pye (1968) stressed the importance of history. According to him a political culture is the product of both the collective history of a political system and the life histories of the members of that system, and thus it is rooted in both public events and private experiences. My point of departure was that Poland and Sweden have different capacity for action. Such differences may facilitate or hinder functioning of civil society organizations, and among them environmental NGOs. This has been corroborated by some interviewees:

There are also significant differences between the options available to produce and to influence in different countries (WWF Sweden, Näslund, Feb. 24, 2012).

WWF Sweden’s staff is skilled to make use of the principle of public access to official documents (offentligheftsprincipen). Sweden has a strong culture of open government and a relatively easy access to officials and decision-makers. Other countries around the Baltic Sea does not have this easy access. It has happened that WWF Sweden have gotten official EU documents from officers [civil servants], while their colleagues have been refused the same documents from their counterpart. They have the same right to see the documents, but the principle of public access to official documents is more restricted in their countries (WWF Sweden, Näslund, Feb. 24, 2012).

… it’s difficult to be a NGO on the east side of the [Baltic] sea. Because of cultural distrust towards NGOs it is hard to get supporters and to obtain a political space … It’s very difficult to drive a successful regional campaign… without solid national support (Greenpeace Sweden, Jacobson, March 20, 2012).

Thus, I believed that Poles and Swedes employed in the same international organizations were in reality working and behaving differently, as different were the conditions of their work.

2. Points of departure

The assumption while preparing this paper was twofold - theoretical and practical one. Obviously I had to subscribe to adult educational theory that would suit best my research (it will be discussed in section 3 below). However, studying educational phenomena that occur in social aggregates, non-governmental organizations, I was compelled to adhere to sociological theories, too.

2.1. Theoretical assumption

Sociological theory that I found most useful stems from Eyereman and Jamieson (1991) and their argument, that social movements characteristic feature is their cognitive praxis. Social movements, according to them, do generate new knowledge and, eventually, new worldviews. One of the best examples (and proof) of this assumption are environmental movements. They were often instrumental in pursuing new knowledge about pollution, hazardous chemicals, transport and agriculture impacts on the environment.

As an adult educationist I find some support in North American school of social movement research called resource mobilisation theory (McCarthy & Zald, Oberschall, Tilly). Their studies on internal and external resources that facilitate collective actions appeal to me, as it is similar to my own discipline’s approach.

Due to its emphasis on macro-social perspective and disregard of individual motivation I find less support in new social movement theories (Melucci, Offe, Touraine).

2.2 Practical assumption

Practical assumption, based on my previous studies on NGOs, was that participation in NGO is - also - an educational endeavour. Knowledge and skills acquired in working for the organization, change or strengthen competences and attitudes for those involved in NGO work. Expectations and requirements concerning competences of members and volunteers are steadily growing. Especially when goodwill and commitment are not sufficient in a longer perspective.

3. On learning

Researchers of social movement focused their interests on cognitive aspects of their work and on knowledge generated by them. Even if much was written about cognitive praxis, communities of practice, and alike, learning itself, however, was not investigated. Before I report my provisional results I ponder first on terminology.

Learning, form a psychological point of view, is defined as any process that for living beings leads to a durable change of capacity and is not caused by oblivion, biological maturing or aging’. For humans this process is ongoing throughout life, whether it be intentional or incidental (Illeiris 2008:401). Very often learning is envisaged as only knowledge and skills. However, it does also encompass attitudes, competencies, viewpoints, meaning, insights. For an adult educationist it is important to stress that … it is basically characteristic that adults learn what they want to learn, and have very little inclination to acquire something they do not want, that is, something they do not perceive as meaningful for their own life goals (Illeiris 2008:406).

3.1. Learning: formal, non-formal and informal

Of the three types of educational provisions - formal, non-formal and informal - the two latter is connected with social movement learning (SML).

‘Formal learning’ is commonly associated with ‘schooling’ - a chronologically graded system of teaching and learning, structured courses, assessments and certificates. Is typically provided by an education institution with prescribed
curriculum, explicit goals, assessment mechanisms and certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner’s perspective.

'Non-formal learning' is an organized teaching/learning activity outside the rigid frames of formal education. Typically it does not lead to certification. It is, however, often structured in terms of learning objectives and time. It is usually short-term and voluntary. There might be teachers (also called instructors or facilitators), and a curriculum with various degrees of rigidity or flexibility (Schugurensky 2007:164). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner’s perspective.

'Informal learning' is unorganized and often incidental. Informal earning results from daily life activities related to work, or family or leisure. In most cases it is non-intentional.

3.2. Social movement learning - understanding the concept

As a reaction to ruling perspective on learning by an individual, various theories on social learning have been formulated (cf. Wenger 1998, Fenwick 2000, Wildemeersch & Vandenabeele 2007). There is a number of definitions of what is meant by social learning, and what makes learning to be "social".1 For the purpose of my project, I found the following definition most useful. 'Social learning' is the learning of groups, networks, communities and social systems, engaged in problem solving activities, in conditions that are new, unexpected, uncertain, conflicting and hard to predict (Wildemeersch & Vandenabeele 2007:21).

There are three characteristic features of social learning:
- First and obviously, social learning is done in and by groups, communities, and networks.
- Second, social learning is about social issues. More precisely: it concerns matters of common interest and collective action. Sustainability issues typically belong to this category. Third, social learning implies that, even in the middle of conflicts in views and interests, there is an effort at collaboration and consensus (van Koppen 2002:376).

In my research I subscribe to two tracks of thoughts: the one that conceptualize social learning as individual learning that take place in a social context as well as to that which sees social learning as a process of social change in which people learn from each other in ways that can benefit wider social-ecological systems (Reed et al. 2010:2).

Social movement learning can take place in two different forums. Through their actions social movements attempt to persuade and educate the general public, decision makers, other target groups, for the sake of their cause. Thus the first forum lies outside organizations; people learn as a result of the actions undertaken by them.

1 For an extensive analysis of understanding and use of 'social learning' concept see Rodela (2011).
advocacy training.²

Most important, and most valued, were opportunities to learn latest developments within the area of responsibility of an individual employee. Be it scientific, legislative, political. This could be seminars or lectures given on sustainable consumption, transport policies, petroleum pollutant spills, eutrophication, blue-green algae. Topic and type depended on personal interests, aspirations, needs.

Scope of the courses outside the main domain of work span from working with media, creating web-pages, raising funds, conflict management. In time WWF and Greenpeace employees amassed a set of know-how that enabled them to pursue their organizations' missions. Interestingly, what comes out of all three interviews is the fact that contents that were learned in courses given by others were often similar to topics discussed during internal workshops.

Learning outcomes are often of direct relevance for those who partook in learning situation. Nevertheless, some results contribute to a long-term personal development, too. Among social skills that use to be learned through active participation in NGOs are diplomacy, persistence, consistency, public speaking. 4.2. … and how?

Even less diverse then content were ways in which the knowledge and skills have been obtained. With ENGOs that do not have members three main learning opportunities were courses, workshops and information meetings. Sometimes e-learning is chosen instead of more traditional form. The use of Internet, and of internal (requiring log-in procedures) web-sites is a growing phenomenon. Usually Polish and Swedish Greenpeace and WWF staff attended relevant events organized and hosted by other NGOs, specialized firms or state authorities:

In this fashion, we learn while attending conferences and courses organised by others. Upon certain occasions, we work in a similar way, i.e. by holding an event for the needs of other organizations (WWF Poland, Tymorek, May 17, 2012).

Equally important, though less frequent, is a knowledge transfer within own organization: Sometimes we have internal exchange of knowledge. When someone goes to a workshop or has a certain knowledge - tries to transfer it to other co-workers (Focus Slovenia). Some organisations are better equipped to do so than others. For instance WWF Poland profits from 50 years of experiences collected by WWF International:

Whenever we initiate a new theme or programme, and there exists such a need and/or possibility, a person designated to plan a given programme may travel to those countries where necessary experience had been already won… In other words, we learn from inner-

² Although one reservation is needed here - educational work within ENGO that do have members differs from those who work mainly through its own professional staff.

organisational experience (WWF Poland, Tymorek, May 17, 2012).

If WWF Poland commences a certain theme, we always check whether it had not been already studied elsewhere in order to avoid, e.g. similar errors or to formulate targets and plan our work as best as possible… This is a feature that other organisations - both on a national scale and even more so local ones - simply do not possess (WWF Poland, Tymorek, May 17, 2012).

ENGOs, as mentioned before, are knowledge-intensive organizations, but only as far as environment is concerned. They work intuitively in other spheres of their activity. Usually, "methods" that ENGOs often "apply" in public-relation work, contacts with authorities and/or media are based on common sense, try-and-error, experiential learning.³

Conclusions

My working hypothesis, as I presented earlier, was the following:

despite many similarities how a given ENGO work is organized, its staff and members do act and learn differently. One possible explanation is a political culture of a society they are living in.

Examples of how political culture of Poland and Sweden indeed differ have strengthen this assumption. Nevertheless, contrary to my hypothesis pertinent findings show the opposite:

despite significant differences in political culture, traditions of civil society and practical conditions in which ENGOs work, learning processes that occur in these ENGOs were visibly alike.

As my research shows, adults do act differently in different countries, while they do learn similarly.

References


³ Again - one reservation needs to be made here. More innovative forms of learning and educating could be found in ENGOs that not only have members and/or volunteers, but also rely on them in their work.


Wenger, Etienne. Communities of practice. Learning, meaning, and identity. Cambridge: CambridgeUP


Ann K. Brooks, Texas State University, abrooks@txstate.edu, USA
Alexis Maston, Texas State University, am2041@txstate.edu, USA
Pen Bovathana, Asian Institute of Technology
(with the help and support of Ly Monirirth)

Becoming Educated: A Comparison Of Women’s Educational Resilience In Post-Conflict Cambodia and Urban Black America

Educational resilience can be defined as persisting in school in spite of the adversities in life one faces. Worldwide, girls from poor backgrounds have low secondary school completion rates and even lower completion of tertiary education. Their challenges are exacerbated and intensified when they grow up in contexts characterized by extreme social disruption, such as in a conflict or post-conflict nation or in an urban area impacted by a high rate of drug use, violence, and crime.

This paper compares the educational life histories of young Cambodian women, who grew up during and after the Khmer Rouge genocide, and Black American women, who grew up during the crack cocaine epidemic in the urban United States. We are looking for ways in which girls’ and women’s experiences of accessing and persisting in school from primary through tertiary levels are similar across two nations with very different economic and social profiles.

In Cambodia, the net enrollment ratio for girls/women at the secondary level in 2006 was 33%; at the tertiary level in 2008, it was 34%. In the U.S., secondary-level enrollment for girls/women overall was 91%; at the tertiary level in 2009, it was 57% (United Nations Statistics Division). In Cambodia, the girls most likely not to complete secondary school have come from poor, rural areas. Eighty percent of Cambodians live in rural areas where access to education, health and other social services is limited. In the U.S., one of the demographics least likely to complete secondary school has been poor, urban Blacks girls (NCIS, 2010). Black girls are almost 2 times more likely to drop out than their white counterparts (NCIS, 2012). While studies have addressed the high dropout rates for Black boys, 53% for Black versus 22% for White boys in 2007-2008 (Schott Foundation, http://blackboysreport.org/; Toldson, 2008), 63% of Black female students nationwide failed to graduate from secondary school (NCES, 2009).

This paper goes beyond the statistics, seeking “inside out” stories from women about their efforts to stay in school.

Research Design

This educational life history study compares the educational resilience of poor,