



LEARNING TO CHANGE THE WORLD: DISCOURSE AND POWER IN THE PORTUGUESE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper explores how the discourses surrounding Development Education (DE) may challenge or reproduce Power inequalities, focusing on the case study of the Portuguese National Strategy for Development Education. By understanding Power as discourse, this paper argues that dominant perspectives may reinforce Power inequalities within this field if not challenged by counter-discourses, such as of postcolonial thinking. The research investigates the contextual and main discourses of Development Education within the Portuguese strategy to find the inclusion or exclusion of key actors, elements and assumptions which frame the subject. Although founded on critical foundations, it is argued that Development Education will have limited impact if it does not account for complicity and greater inclusion of diverse voices.

Keywords: *Development Education; Postcolonialism; Power; Discourse.*

Introduction

Development Education (DE) first, officially, emerged in the 1960's in Europe, with the purpose of increasing political support for international Cooperation and aid from the North² to the South³ (North-South Centre, 2019). Since then, in response to decolonisation challenges and the need to question Development dominant narratives, the term developed and embraced other purposes (Coelho, Caramelo, & Menezes, 2019).

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² 'North' and 'West' are simplified terms here defined as the group of countries commonly interpreted as 'Developed' in economic, political, and social dimensions.

³ 'South' is a simplified term here defined as the group of less and least 'developed' and 'developing' countries.

A few European countries have developed national strategies for a tangible image of DE, such as Portugal. Portugal introduced the first Portuguese National Strategy of Development Education (PNSDE I) in 2010 and, since then, has received varied praise and critique (GENE, 2018). The prominent recommendations, surrounding the recognition of the strategy's purpose, led to the need to update the strategy for a second cycle. This response was equally fuelled by new emerging international action, such as the Development of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2020). The case study of Portugal, and especially the PNSDE II (the second cycle), was chosen due to the presence of (or lack of) its Postcolonial legacy within the strategy's discourse, as it may be argued that this can contribute to either challenge or reproduce Power inequalities.

The following paper is a result of a piece of research that sought to investigate how the discourse of Development and hence, DE, is framed in the PNSDE, and to explore consequent Power dynamics of actors, elements, and key assumptions. To achieve this, the author performed a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA), followed by a Power Analysis based on Kapoor's *Stepwise Approach to Questioning Development Discourse*, to assess whether the framing challenges or reproduces Power inequalities. The results of the Power Analysis allowed the author to make final reflections and considerations, which may be relevant for future developments and research.

Development Education: concepts and criticism

The concept of DE⁴ has evolved in line with major political lobbying campaigns, as a response to emergent issues and dominant Development discourses, which went through significant changes since the 1960's (Mesa, 2011). The expansion of the field was greatly influenced by the multiplication and consecutive work of non-governmental Development organisations (NGDOs) and by the contributions of progressive education approaches by Paulo Freire and his post-colonial perspectives (Bourn, 2008, 2015).

Within the Development field, emerging questions regarding its dynamics, policies and aims evidence new challenges which are not limited to so-called 'Developing countries' (Andreotti et al., 2018; GENE, 2018; Hoppers, 2015; Underhill, 2019), and hence, DE has a new role in attempting to contribute to formulate solutions to address varied questions, such as Power, politics, identity, and culture (Andreotti, 2006b).

This role may have been reinforced by the *2030 Agenda* and the SDGs (UN, 2020), with the introduction of target 4.7⁵, which reads "ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable Development", and acts as a catalyst for a system-wide focus in DE and related aliases. The introduction of this target, however, has raised some criticism. From an international policy perspective, this may result from an over reliance on universalising approaches (Sund & Öhman, 2014; Wals, 2009). Additionally, Pashby and Sund (2020) claim that mainstreaming DE and emphasising large behaviour modification may overstep systemic issues.

⁴ Krause (2010) typology with the different contextual understandings of DE.

⁵ This led to the creation of the Bridge 47 network, aiming to gather all kinds of education actors towards achieving the target 4.7.

Further criticism is related to the perspectives and voices feeding DE. DE was born from Western 'enlightened' perspectives and continues to grow from the same vision and imaginary. Jones and Nygaard (2016) claim that, if DE continues to ignore Southern views and concerns, it will remain covering up truths and hindering genuine understanding (Hartmeyer & Bourn, 2016, p. 196). From this, one can understand that involving Southern perspectives will transform the 'understanding the other' from a moral option or act of charity to an open and honest defence of values, interests, and Development of an inclusive world – which, in its essence, is what DE intends to exist for.

The most prominent research in the field of DE has been conducted by education investigators. As such, criticisms and limitations have been identified to respond to pedagogic methods, such as, for example, *the soft versus critical* framework (Andreotti, 2006a; Bourn, 2008). The *soft* approach to DE, being in total conformity with established neoliberal frameworks, is claimed to have the potential of creating a generation which, with the 'mission' of saving and educating the world, will reproduce Power inequalities similar to those in colonial times (Andreotti, 2006a).

Development Education in Portugal

In Portugal, the first traces of DE practices date back to the dictatorial period (CIDAC, 2006). After the revolution of 1974, Portugal invested in informing and transforming the population with the support of emerging NGDOs, and from the 1990's, the NGDOs and the Portuguese Government started building links to European networks and organisations which support the establishment of DE as their core field of action⁶. This came into effect not only for NGDOs but also for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Emergency Assistance and, in 2005, the Portuguese Cooperation set DE as strategic priority. The establishment of the first Portuguese National Strategy for Development Education (PNSDE I), in 2010, placed Portugal in the European DE policy map and, again, in 2018, with the second cycle of the strategy (PNSDE II, 2018-2022).

The Portuguese National Strategy for Development Education

The PNSDE is a political document prepared by a diverse range of actors, from public institutions to civil society organisations. The construction of this strategy was led by a strategic group to guide the process and an advisory board with expertise on specific topics or social groups.

The inclusion of such a diverse group of actors (see Table 1) avoided the lack of ownership and allowed for different voices to be heard in the planning of a complex and fragile topic. GENE - Global Education Network Europe (2014) characterises the PNSDE as being highly participative among all stakeholders and praises the 'open leadership' on maintaining and providing direction to the strategy.

⁶ The work was very limited due to lack of financing. It improved after the NGDOs entered in the CONCORD in 1996.

Public Institutions	Civil Society Organisations	
Portuguese Institute for Development Assistance (IPAD) (I), renamed (in 2011) Camões - Institute for Cooperation and Portuguese Language (II) Ministry of Education and Science ARICD – Intermunicipal Network for Development Cooperation (only II)	Portuguese Platform for NGOs CIDAC – Amílcar Cabral Centre for Intervention on Development	Strategic Group Monitoring Commission
Portuguese Environment Agency, I.P. High Commission for Migration, I.P. CIG - Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality UNESCO National Commission Portuguese Institute for Sports and Youth, I.P. National Education Council (only I)	APEDI – Teachers Association for Intercultural Education CPADA – Portuguese Confederation for Environmental Protection CNJP – National Commission for Justice and Peace (only I) CNJ – National Youth Council Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (only I) ANIMAR – Portuguese Association of Local Development (only II) PpDM – Portuguese Platform for Women’s Rights (only II) Association for Reflection and Intervention in Higher Education Policy (only II)	Advisory Group Subscribing Entities

Table 1 – Institutions involved in the elaboration of the PNSDE (I and II Cycles 2010-2016/2018-2022).

PNSDE - Cycle I (2010-2016)

The first cycle of the PNSDE claims that DE is “an unfinished and complex task” (PNSDE I, 2010, p. 16). Although highly inclusive, strategy evaluations have shown, among other aspects, that the definitions of DE vary depending on the actor; the strategy presents a projects-logic; DE is approached in a *softer* way (Braga, 2018; Caramelo & Menezes, 2019; Costa et al. 2017; Santos, 2013).

Further recommendations, such as the need to update the strategy in line with its relevance at a social, political and educational level, and at a national and international scale, fed the motivation to elaborate a second cycle of the same strategy.

PNSDE - Cycle II (2018-2022)

The PNSDE II (2018-2022), currently ruling, was updated and adapted to be aligned with international agendas and commitments, such as *Agenda 2030* and the most recent European Consensus, as well as national policies which have emerged, such as the Portuguese National Strategy of Citizenship Education.

Theoretical framework: Development, Power and Postcolonialism

DE has mirrored the Western discourses of global challenges and how to 'solve' them. Within Development studies, several researchers have explored the disadvantages of using dominant and seamless progress narratives, which dangerously reproduce them (Crush, 1995; Escobar, 1995). Understanding how Power as discourse reinforces narratives of Development is important as this encourages perceptions of reality by excluding certain people, contributing for the silence and oppression of certain groups.

The Development discourse has been widely researched and criticised, namely by researchers such as Escobar (1995), who has argued that what explains 'underdevelopment' is the discourse of Development itself, due to, among other factors, the system of Power which controls its practice. The research provides evidence of this by evaluating repeated patterns of colonisation through 'Development' practice and its consecutive consequences for the South.

Even though new international agendas, such as that of the UN (*Agenda 2030* and its SDGs), which lean towards post-development thinking (Kothari et al., 2019), the reductionism of Development thought is still very present (Sachs, 2019) and the 'industry' is not immune to Power inequalities and perpetuation of colonial narratives.

Regarding the discursive framings of Development and/or the 'other' within DE (and other aliases), these tend to reproduce colonial systems of Power where the Global North can learn about and solve any problems of a 'them' in the Global South (Pashby & Sund, 2020). The authors claim that by using a postcolonial discourse and erasing such assumptions, decoloniality might be achieved.

The conceptualisation of Power is extensive and will not be covered here in its totality. However, Power is recognised as a concept present in everyday behaviours, attitudes, and decisions, having influenced greater theories which will be explored, such as postcolonialism, and Development. The study of Power has been undertaken by influencing philosophers, mostly from Western countries, who understood the concept in different ways. Foucault (1991; originally in 1972), as such, opens a broader discussion where Power is truth, knowledge, and is embodied in discourses, institutions and practices (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2008). Gaventa (2006) identifies that Power may be also seen as something which must be given up by one to be gained by another, which can lead to conflict or Power struggles, as well as the vision that Power can be a negative trait, where holding Power is to exercise control over others (Lukes, 2004; originally in 1974).

Regarding Postcolonial theory, there have been several authors exploring the different ramifications of its meaning. Founded on the desire of forgetting the colonial past, anti-colonial nation states started to emerge, and postcolonial studies surfaced as a reminder of the uncomfortable realities and consequences of colonial

encounters (Gandhi, 2019). Edward Said's theory on postcolonialism is based on the image of the Orient, or the East, that has been constructed by Western civilisations. This image is seen to be portrayed as primitive and uncivilised, contrasting significantly with the reality of the West. Said considers that the consequences of colonialism are still very present, and the Powerful coloniser has imposed language, culture, histories and values, ignoring and distorting the reality of the Oriental populations (Said, 1978). According to Said's identification of the proliferation of such assumptions, these are embedded in discourse, knowledge, and therefore, Power (Burke III & Prochaska, 2008). Spivak (1985), similarly, confronts Eurocentric attitudes by claiming that knowledge is never 'innocent' and is constructed to attend Western Power. Postcolonialism, therefore, focuses on the role of texts and literature and how they construct the colonisers and the colonised.

On this note, Spivak (1999) argues that the Western literary canon is corrupted by imperialist assumptions and the naturalisation of modernisation, where colonialism is ignored or placed in the past, so there is no recognition of its relevance to the construction of the present. This is identified as sanctioned ignorance (Spivak, 1999). This term will be very relevant when understanding institutional positionings and the use of Power.

The Portuguese Context

The Portuguese postcolonial studies are vivid, with a strong preoccupation about the Portuguese colonial past and the shadows of its encounters being very persistent until today (de Sousa Santos, 2002). Portuguese colonial Power is often seen as subaltern, represented in terms of what it was not; namely not hegemonic as British or French colonialism (de Sousa Santos, 2002). This idea of having had a colonial past 'not as bad' as the other colonisers creates a national understanding that the country was a different coloniser, less violent, less distant, and with a special inclination for miscegenation or mixture (de Almeida, 2008). The long dictatorial period (1933-1974) may have supported to encapsulate the population into regressive views of the world and Power relations, securing heavy inequalities between rural and urban communities, gender disparities and racial division. Today, and for the first time since 1974, a far-right political party has gained a seat in the Parliament - and seems to be gaining space within the Portuguese society (Marchi, 2019). In the most recent *Eurobarometer* on EU citizens and Development Cooperation by the European Commission (2019), 96% of the Portuguese respondents consider that it is important to 'help' those in developing countries, the second highest level of any Member State, and 82% agree that providing financial assistance for developing countries contributes to a more peaceful and fairer world. In contrast, Portuguese Public Development Aid has been decreasing since 2018 (Plataforma Portuguesa das ONGD - *Portuguese Platform of NGO for Development*, 2020). Portuguese postcolonial context offers valid insight for a deeper interpretation of how Development discourse is framed by the Portuguese society and higher Powers. The above findings are essential to grasp possible correlations which may exist and contribute to challenge or reproduce Power inequalities through the discourse of the PNSDE II (the current cycle).

A Postcolonial Approach to Challenge Power Inequalities

By engaging with unequal relations of Power and the figures of authority behind knowledge production (Andreotti, 2011), postcolonial vocabulary allows for clarification on how culture, traditions, values, and interests of Western countries have shaped and framed their knowledge, privilege, and justification for intervention in the rest of the world (Alasuutari & Andreotti, 2015). Kapoor (2004), while adapting the postcolonial concept of hyper-self-reflexivity⁷ to the Development field, reflects on the representation of the subaltern⁸ in Development practice, and acknowledges that the need to get to know the 'other' is also about getting to discipline and monitor them, framing 'help' as the burden of the North (Kapoor, 2004). The author composes an approach to questioning the representation of the South in Development practice using lessons given by Spivak's postcolonial research (1985-2004). Kapoor (2004) understands that such approach, or step-by-step exercise of hyper-self-reflexivity, yields the possibility of an ethical encounter with the 'subaltern'. A summarised description of the approach is presented below (see Table 2):

<p>i. Intimately inhabiting and negotiating discourse</p>	<p>One cannot claim to be 'outside' Development; romanticise the subaltern and social movements as pure or entangled; pose a utopian alternative from the 'outside'.</p>
<p>ii. Acknowledging Complicity</p>	<p>One must acknowledge their own contamination and contextualise the claim as this reduces risk of arrogance and imperialism.</p>
<p>iii. Unlearning one's privilege as loss</p>	<p>One cannot simply efface or benevolently try and step down from a position of authority –stop thinking of oneself as better or fitter, unlearn dominant systems of knowledge and representation (decolonisation; conscientisation; accountable positioning).</p>
<p>iv. Learning to learn from below</p>	<p>Refraining from thinking the 'other' is always in trouble and one must fix it. One cannot always be the speaker – one must listen and take a stand.</p>
<p>v. Working without guarantees</p>	<p>One must accept the subaltern is heterogeneous and <i>non-narrativisable</i>. Working without guarantees of knowing and understanding the other.</p>

Table 2 - Kapoor (2004) *Stepwise approach to Questioning Development Discourse* (adapted).

⁷ Kapoor (2004) adapted from Spivak 'Can the subaltern speak?' (1988).

⁸ In Postcolonial theory, the term 'subaltern' represents the oppressed subjects; other social groups; natives; lower social classes.

This approach is useful to assess one's actions, assumptions and positionings from discourse and, therefore, Kapoor's approach shall be used in the present paper to identify whether the PNSDE II challenges or reproduces dominant discourses of Development and consequently, Power inequalities.

If only responding to the established constructed view of the West being responsible for the 'other', this will perpetuate a vicious circle of charity (Simpson, 2017). Simpson (2017) compares charity and social justice mentalities, with the latter disrupting myths of Power inequalities. This comparison is what will distinguish a *soft versus critical* education, an individualistic versus collectively transformative action, and challenging versus reproducing Power inequalities.

Methodology

The choice of the single case study of Portugal and its PNSDE arose by the significance of the example and its advances in the field of DE, its' evaluations and international praise and, most particularly, its' postcolonial foundations.

The first cycle of the strategy suffered praising and critique. The decision to update for a second cycle is said to be a consequence of the external evaluations and recommendations and the arrival of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and goal 4, target 4.7 of the SDGs (PNSDE II, 2018). It becomes relevant to assess such changes and, simultaneously, to identify Power relations embedded in the discourse of the most current strategy (the second cycle of PNSDE - PNSDE II).

This paper presents the results of two analyses, which complement each other. Initially, the PNSDE II undergoes a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA), to investigate the construction of the subject of DE and identify Power relations within the discourse. A Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis acknowledges the link between discourse and Power (Lewis-Beck, Brymman, & Liao, 2004), as well as enables the examination and influence of knowledge, understanding that discourse transmits, produces, and reinforces Power, but also undermines and exposes it (Foucault, 1978; Gaventa & Cornwall, 2008).

Conducting a FDA requires the comprehension of discourse as entrenched in institutions and practices under a dominant form, often considered as 'common sense' (Parker, 1992). Discourses that challenge this form of dominance are coined counter or alternative discourses. Hence, for the purpose of this research, dominant Development discourses are challenged by postcolonial discourses. Thus, at a macro-level, the following questions guide the present work:

1. How is DE problematised?
2. How is DE defined?
3. What subject positions are offered in the discourse?
4. How is DE acted upon?

Following the identification of such elements within the discourse of the PNSDE II, a Power Analysis was performed, to understand how this framing might challenge or reproduce Power inequalities. By the adapted

postcolonial stepwise approach by Kapoor (2004), the author attempts to identify if the discourse of the PNSDE II abides by a postcolonial counter-discourse and hence, challenges dominant discourses.

Limitations and Ethical Considerations

Limitations outside the scope of the research, such as intimate processes that occur during the planning and writing of the PNSDE II and interactions which arose, must be safeguarded, acknowledging the varied actors involved. The author recognises the diverse backgrounds and processes undergone, namely with the Portuguese Platform of NGOs (PPNGOs), which is a group of different actors. The process was also heavily reliant on and supported by evaluations and recommendations from other European experts (such as GENE, North-South Centre, CONCORD), and therefore all these factors were considered when generating a final argument.

Moreover, the author must acknowledge that this research cannot possibly cover all aspects of the strategy and analysis, for its length.

The researcher must ponder the documentation being used as ethical consideration, understanding which is mostly documented in Portuguese. Detailed, conscious translation and interpretation must be undertaken, as well as a thorough inspection of potential misinterpretations within the exercise of identifying patterns and elements within discourse.

The author's own positionality as a Caucasian, European Portuguese individual, using a postcolonial approach and exploring issues of privilege and Power, must also be considered.

Discourse and Power Analysis: main findings

The findings presented below are a result from two separate but complementary analyses. At first instance, the author explores the discourse of the PNSDE II by conducting a FDA, through the use of the four guiding questions. This is succeeded by a Power Analysis, undertaken using Kapoor's (2004) adopted postcolonial approach to questioning Development. The following data was collected from the PNSDE II (2018-2022), officially translated, which can be found online⁹.

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

1. Problematisation – *How is DE problematised?*

When analysing the text, DE is identified as constructed under the problematisation of Development itself. By mentioning Power relations within the statement, the PNSDE II challenges current dominant discourses, advocating for a constant reinterpretation of realities. The PNSDE II establishes that dominant narratives must be challenged, and the world is not as divided as expressions of North-South relations may suggest. There is a justification for the use of Global North and Global South expressions by adopting them as

⁹ The PNSDE II translated document can be found [here](#).

representations of unbalanced Power and wealth relations but emphasizing that there are wells of wealth and poverty in both geographic coordinates and are, therefore, complex.

2. DE definition – *How is DE defined?*

The definition of DE is presented by adopting the definitions of PPNGDOs, Strategic Vision for Portuguese Development Cooperation (SV) and European Consensus (EC).

PPNGDOs:

The definition by the PPNGDOs is clear in the message of awareness, understanding root causes and use of words such as “inequalities”, which bend towards postcolonial thinking. It is also relevant to highlight the last sentence, which mentions a need to include discourses ‘on and by the South’ in this process.

SV:

DE is framed as an educational process which improves North-South relations by creating a foundation for public understanding and support for Development Cooperation. The SV discourse is unambiguous in separating ‘us’ and ‘them’ (dominant discourse), when admitting that DE is not confined to international matters and rather promotes solutions and responses to issues of our society.

EC:

The EC demonstrates a more neutral vision, meeting the dominant narrative, by framing DE as a strategy for poverty eradication and promotion of a set agenda. The definition uses the word “disparities” instead of “inequalities”, which may take some of the weight off the message.

By presenting a summary of the above definitions, PNSDE II shows there is an evident effort to assimilate all perspectives into one clarifying note, seeking coherence and clarity on the conceptual aspects of DE. This definition presents a more critical approach, towards social transformation and enumerating several and intersectional challenges of the field, in accordance with a postcolonial perspective, but also with the *2030 Agenda* and its SDGs.

3. Subject Positioning - *What subject positions are offered in the discourse?*

The PNSDE II positions DE in a postcolonial framework, by delimiting the positions one can take when practising DE as reflective, critical, and participative. The authors of the strategy equally delimit what DE is *not*, forcibly naming dominant Development practices.

PNSDE II anticipates changing the subjectivity of students in all school years, (in this case) to a humanist, fairer, people centric and dignified profile, as well as active and committed to the principles of action.

4. Action Orientation and Practice – *How is DE acted upon?*

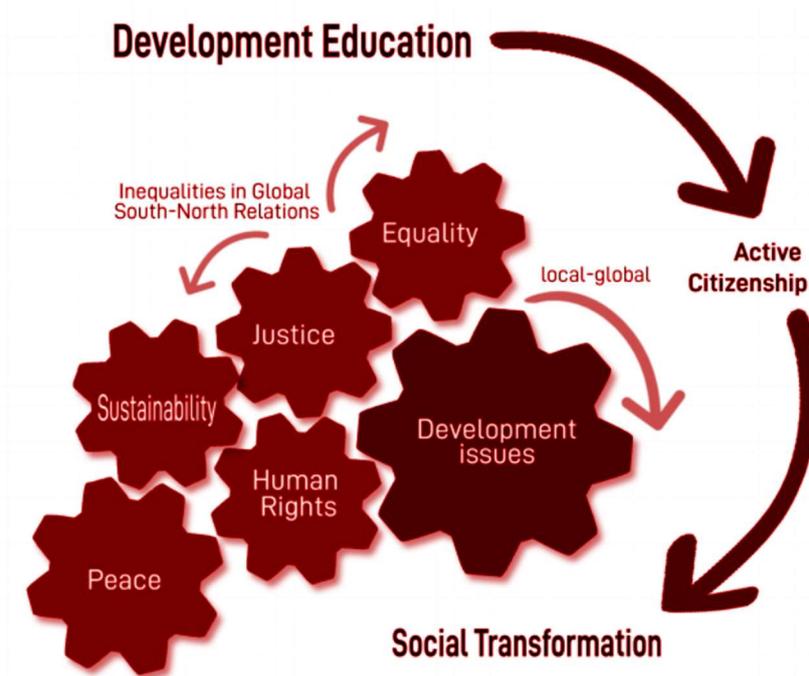


Figure 1 - *Development Education: Concepts and Objectives* (PNSDE II, Conceptual Framework, 2018-2022:14).

The PNSDE II claims social transformation as the final goal of DE, for more conscious and mobilised citizens, through educational approaches. In Figure 1, resembling a machine in motion, North-South relationship inequalities force equality and justice to work, which then allows all other values to materialise, ensuring that questioning Development remains at the centre, not only in global but also in local contexts. Such an approach appears postcolonial and critical. To be critical and challenging, such action should always be reflected upon, with the inclusion of “questioning Development” and imagining new futures. Nevertheless, the discourse does not allude as much to the responsibility of each individual, conveying instead a message of a possible fix of something which may have happened in the past or elsewhere (rather than the local context).

Throughout the statements, there is a repetition of key words such as ‘peace’, ‘social justice’, and ‘sustainability’, generally at the end of each paragraph. This is also found in other areas of the Strategy, such as forms of intervention, highlighting the relevance given to each of these terms, which, in their essence, translate hope and optimism. Similar terms are also presented under “Framework for action” (p. 16): ‘coherence’; ‘cooperation’; ‘co-responsibility’; ‘equity’; ‘equality’; ‘social justice’; ‘non-discrimination’, ‘participation’, and ‘solidarity’. These principles can be considered political and ethical, consistent with a postcolonial approach. Under the co-responsibility principle, the PNSDE II (p. 16) claims that: “sharing common, though potentially differentiated, responsibilities between North and South (...). This sharing of responsibilities in facing the existing problems and in searching for solutions removes any understanding that only one party has obligations to change”; on participation, it claims that everyone is the agent of their own Development and lastly, on solidarity, conscious attitudes to share difficulties and find possible solutions.

Finally, analysing the form of practice that the discourse intends to generate, the strategy presents “Forms of intervention”. The PNSDE II seeks to promote intervention in three different areas with different responsibilities, such as awareness-raising and mobilisation to change; pedagogical action to educate on being critical and reflective of the problematic of Development; and policy improvement. There is clear insistence into changing behaviours and thinking, from all angles, but also to act on what is reflected by ‘finding or creating’ alternative proposals and manifesting them. There is mention of ‘active engagement’, which promotes taking action. The PNSDE II communicates that individuals, institutions and structures need to change, all towards an ideal set of principles thoroughly repeated.

Under the last part of the strategy, the PNSDE II presents the strategic objectives, in which relevance is given to: reinforcing capacity and intervention (including improvement of quality of resources by articulating with higher education institutions – no mention of alternative voices); amplifying reach and quality of the intervention; affirming political commitment (ensuring DE is recognised and articulated by all political actors and sectors); and consolidating the implementation of the strategy (ensuring continuous debate and institutional dialogue).

Power Analysis

The international and Portuguese institutional frameworks represent the hidden Powers within the PNSDE II, influencing the direction of the narrative and discourse. As established when defining DE, both EC and SV present more neutral, and perhaps *soft* approaches, whilst the PPNGDO and other participant NGDOs advocate for more *critical* perspectives, according to Andreotti’s framework (2006a). Being a political document, essentially coordinated and approved by the Portuguese Cooperation institute, this vision was expected, and yet, it could have been further challenged.

On the PNSDE II discourse, the author identified the intention of the strategy framing DE as an action for changing behaviours and beliefs, according to a mixture of values which encompass global agendas and national participation. The ideology, although hidden, is indeed of questioning and challenging Power relations which result from dominant narratives. The dominant narrative of changing and transforming, listening only to Western values and principles, does not entirely challenge or criticise dominant discourses, but rather feeds into sanctioned ignorance of accountability (Spivak, 1985).

Responses and strategies to hidden and invisible Powers seem to attempt to challenge Power inequalities. Nevertheless, there are missing elements. Through the literature review, it was identified that to both challenge Development discourse and practise DE in a critical manner, there must be inclusion of voices from the South, decolonisation of thought and action. In order to explore this further, Kapoor’s (2004) *Stepwise Approach to Questioning Development Discourse* was used, as below.

i. Intimately inhabiting and negotiating discourse

The PNSDE II tries to cover all perspectives within its discourse. The NGDOs narrative does intend to erase the 'outside' dimensions of the Development narrative. However, the louder voices in the strategy discourse do not allow for this to be the dominant perspective. The research found that there is a main outcome or 'utopian' alternative of eradicating poverty and wealth asymmetries as an aim of DE, which incorporates the obedience of all ethical principles – in accordance with *Agenda 2030*. The 'them' and 'us' dimensions are present within the strategy. Overall, the existence of dominance and control in the discourse may be argued; and yet, intention for collective/individual action to transform, conscientize and mobilise also exists.

ii. Acknowledging complicity

Often, the discourse presents inclusions of expressions such as 'international context'; 'Global South challenges or 'our' context. There is a distancing, from the challenges or Development that affects the Portuguese local and national context, and the challenges that affect the international scene, even though the term interdependence appears on occasion. The discourse positions the learner as being able to acknowledge their role in 'fixing' the problem, and yet, it does not consider their role as complicit from a historical perspective. The exclusion of the historical perspectives places the subject as the future hope for resolving issues of others, therefore possessing Power over other realities. Such discourse corresponds to a *softer* approach, as argued by Simpson (2017), that does not eliminate or challenge Power inequalities.

iii. Unlearning one's privilege as loss

Following the step above, the discourse fails in addressing a retrace of History. There is, however, the reinforcement of critical literacy, reflection, collaboration, social justice, and transformation. This may indicate a subtle message of letting go of learning habits and adopting the values from the invisible voices in the discourse, such as those of the UN (SDGs), EU, and Portuguese Cooperation. It may be argued that this does not, in effect, alter Power dynamics, as the ideas followed are again Western. There is no replacement of privilege as the dominant voice keeps hold of the truth (or Power), and no Southern voices are included. Thus, the PNSDE II is only relying on universalising approaches; a practice previously criticised by Wals (2009) and Sund and Öhman (2014). *Unlearning* (Andreotti, 2006b; Kapoor, 2004; Underhill, 2019) is extremely valuable for the action *empowered* by discourse, as it will be what re-positions the subject.

iv. Learning to learn from below.

The PNSDE II addresses discourses and processes *on and by the South* from the vision of PPNGDO. Other than this entry, the discourse does not demonstrate the inclusion of the need for the South's participation in the strategy. The document urges for action and mobilisation, with the final goal seemingly doable through awareness of the world's current concerns. Nevertheless, following Spivak's theory (1985), such Eurocentric attitudes may only favour dominant Power.

v. Working (learning and acting) without guarantees

The repeated use of 'international context', although rightful in establishing a worldwide perspective, does present the international panorama as homogenous. When problematising DE, the PNSDE II adds the importance of knowing there are *Norths in the South and Souths in the North* (PNSDE II) – this may be a sign of understanding the heterogeneity of the 'other' (although solely wealth and poverty related). Yet, it cannot be argued that the discourse shows full acknowledgement of this, due to the major interest in changing behaviours to unify the world under certain values and principles set by the invisible agenda, which holds the greatest influence.

Final reflections and future considerations

The Portuguese strategy has proven to be effective in the inclusion of actors from the Development sphere in Portugal. However, it also showed discrepancies in the inclusion of their voices, using more political and dominant views when establishing definitions. Even though repeatedly including principles and terms, which fit to different voices and perspectives, this reads as an attempt to accept counter-discourses but not fully committing to them.

By proposing to explore and dissect 'international' realities without including such 'international' perspectives, the discourse reproduces the common binary narrative of 'us' and 'them', growing into individualistic truths of the 'developed' countries. Nonetheless, it offers important efforts to counter traditional narratives when it distances itself from institutional Development Cooperation, and encourages conscientisation, alternative transformation and critical thinking. The latter is meant to change beliefs and behaviours of the learner, based on global agendas, and yet, such agendas are not challenged. The discourse omits the role of the learner as an accomplice in the current landscape and rather opens space for responsibility *to* change.

Portugal has, throughout the years, written a positive story about Portuguese-South relations and keeps reinforcing this same discourse by detaching itself from the problems of the 'other'. This does not invalidate the efforts made by NGDOs to change these patterns and force a new perspective – it appears these have been made. Nonetheless, while the dominant Power and discourse is greatly heard, the counter-discourse will not get as much visibility and therefore, will be limited. The history of DE in Portugal is unique and must be retraced.

Subsequently, the dynamics between the postcolonial foundations of DE in Portugal and the current Development and Cooperation field (as well as public perceptions) must be considered. As mentioned through the literature reviewed, DE's role and practice should respond to current Development approaches, which in a global view, corresponds to post-development thinking. Yet, if considering dominant narratives raised through the analysis and public perceptions, the field still seems to be standing by more traditional approaches. The analysis has shown an accentuated effort by the DE practitioners (NGDOs) to challenging dominant discourses, compared to the other actors involved. Arguably, this may translate into a greater gap between the fields of Development and Cooperation and DE, which can increase the likelihood of implications

towards a more critical view, such as of dismissal of its relevance or lack of recognition, even when the main goal and meaning of both fields should be the equivalent.

The strategy does try to include critical and reflective action to listen to all voices, but ultimately, the elements missed (such as relationships, the voices of the South, and historical dimensions) and the inclusion of 'outside/inside' terms, can invalidate and minimize its intentions. The lack of perspectives from the South or of an intention for their inclusion throughout the strategy, future aims, and process, represents a substantial gap in a plan to challenge Development discourse.

In the PNSDE II, DE is, overall, framed as a compassionate learning approach, not accounting for a critical view of the self but only of the systems which surround the learner, and with the final goal of transforming all. This frame does not fully challenge dominant discourses and, hence, can contribute to sustaining Power inequalities. To challenge Power inequalities, the discourse must acknowledge the Power of the collective and disregard the conventional dividers which limit a fairer participation.

Following this, understanding if the PNSDE II challenges or reproduces Power inequalities is a complex task. The strategy presents several perspectives and tries to apply them on a dominant discourse held by the key-actor in the process - the Portuguese Government. While this may imply that there is a challenge in Power discourses and inequalities, it may also represent an act of accepting all involved without fully committing to changes. In a generalised view, as it cannot be otherwise, the dominant Powers prevalent in this discourse could be challenged further, which could generate increased potential for the strategy to uphold its critical origins.

Consequently, the continued investigation in DE, mainly in its conceptualisation and discourse, is considered relevant. The author proposes a few considerations for further research, as follows. First and foremost, research and reflection on the gap between the field of Development and Cooperation and DE, in the Portuguese context, is recommended. More research into the roles of the stakeholders and their relationship would likewise be beneficial, exploring where unequal Power structures are delimited and, thus, where they can be reworked. Still within the planning phase, further studies on the views and perspectives of the South regarding DE and its discourse could be imperative for a more equal approach to the subject, as found here. As for the PNSDE II, additional postcolonial studies on the Portuguese discourse and context are needed. Regarding implementation, the author suggests increased research into the interpretation of the discourse and practice of DE by actors at the delivery end, such as educators and Development practitioners.

The present study, although not exhaustive, recognises the relevance of Power in the dynamics of DE. In sync with postcolonial thinkers and Power theorists, Power structures must be first disassembled to be addressed. As put forward by Green (2016) in *How change happens*: "We will have more impact if we are prepared to take risks, try new, uncomfortable things, question our own Power and privilege, and acknowledge and learn from our failures, all the while continuing to work with zeal and commitment" (p. 258). 'Learning to change the world' does not signify acting on a broken structure, but rather deconstructing all that is known (to *unlearn*) and act to build it up again, in an all-participatory way.

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