Development Education (DE) Synergies: A Pilot Experience of Knowledge Co-creation

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### 1. Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks and Approaches

#### A. AN ONGOING EPISTEMOLOGICAL DEBATE

- **“Academic monopoly”** (Tandon, 2016) - Creation, Validation and Dissemination

- **Risks**
  - Distant from reality;
  - Fragmented in disciplines;
  - A single perspective

- Promotor of:
  - Cognitive injustice;
  - “massive epistemicide” (Santos, 2007)

- Serves an academic purpose,
  - BUT DOES NOT
  - influences practices and informs public policies
  - NOT transforming society

- **Alternatives**
  - co-production of knowledge - which interfere with conventional research practices and roles of researchers (Schucksmith, 2016)
  - importance of building networks and long-term relationships of trust between academics, their partners and policy and practice communities.

- existence of a **boundary work** made by “knowledge brokers or boundary organisations” which can bridge the gap between researchers and practitioners and/or decision makers (Oswald, 2016; Schucksmith, 2016).

- some hybrid person - a **researtioner** (Roque Amaro, 2014).
1. Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks and Approaches

C. ENGAGED EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

IDS identifies four pillars of engaged excellence in its Strategy 2015-2010 (IDS, 2015):

- i) Delivering high-quality research;
- ii) Co-constructing knowledge;
- iii) Mobilising impact-oriented evidence;
- iv) Building enduring partnerships

Source: Author elaboration based on John Gaventa's model (Oswald, Gaventa and Leach, 2016, p.2)
2. The context of the study

**B. PROJECT CONTEXT**

*Development Education Synergies*
*Getting to know so as to act better – promoting research on DE action in Portugal*

- Shared perspective between the two organisations: FGS (NGDO) and CEAUP (I&D)

Need for alternative scientific research methodologies:
- horizontal logic of reflection
- joint knowledge production
- practical implications as the driving force behind the transformation and legitimisation of actions in the field.

DE as “a framing paradigm that fosters the re-conceptualization of knowledge and promotes the transformative role of education” (Tarozzi, Torres, 2016)

DE as a fundamental field and discipline for:
- an integrated vision and action in development field;
- promoting a closer relationship between Universities and NGDOs.
2. The context of the study

C. COLLABORATIVE WORK

- 12 HEIs and 12 CSOs were invited
  - relevance or interest in DE field;
  - diversity of entities
  - territorial decentralisation
  - easy to reach

- 10 HEIs and 11 CSOs joined the project

- 4 meetings within the 2 years of the project (it were foreseen 2 in the project description)

- Phases of the work:
  - matching of the partners
  - decision about what would be research topics, methodologies, sources, etc.,
  - data collection and analysis, finalising, in some cases, with the joint writing of a paper.

- Knowledge co-creation:
  - 6 papers were published in the Sinergias journal

- Other unexpected synergies
  - creation of a virtual communication,
  - active participation in other activities of the project
  - co-organisation of events among entities,
  - creation of a post-graduation course in a partnership involving entities from the project
2. The context of the study

D. METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Qualitative Research

- Research design - “case study” - it allows us “the study of the particularity and complexity of a unique case, being able to understand its activity in the extent of important circumstances” (Stake, 2009)

- Research Techniques
  - bibliographic analysis, mainly to build the conceptual framework
  - content analysis, from available documents and interviews performed with participants in the partnerships of the project.

I PHASE – Document Analysis - very diverse, elaborated in very different times, through several methodologies and presenting multiple perspectives

  i) Transcription of a panel (recorded in video) devoted to the collaborative work that took place in the international meeting - "Synergies for social change: dialogues about Development", in January 2016 (8 organisations);

II PHASE – Interviews to some of the participants in the collaborative work
3. Testing the framework

- **Engaged**
  The identification with a common cause, of a collective meaning for the study, was really important for the success of the partnership. (CSO1)

- **Plurality of perspectives**
  Sometimes as a richness and complementarity, some others as a constraint: conceptual frameworks, different languages, timings, perspectives (HEI2), backgrounds (CSO2) and expectations (CSO3). In order to face these difficulties it was stressed the need of more “time for dialogue” (HEI2), of a “constant clarification” (CSO2) and the development of more “communication skills” (CSO2).

- **Rigorous and robust** (few references)
  “(…) we are in a work in progress, we made just a working paper, very exploratory right now but we intent to go deeper in the next phase” (HEI1)

- ** Relevant and usable**
  “It helped in getting to a better definition of what DE means in the projects” (CSO1)

  “This collaborative work allowed us to build a course, with the teachers of the HEI, devoted to DE issues” (CSO2)

  “The application for the next phase of the project we have studied was completely different because of the research made together” (CSO1)
3. Testing the framework

- Diverse typology of actors:
  - 10 HEIs involved – University, Research Centres, Polytechnic Institutes
  - 11 CSOs involved – NGDOs and Local Associations

- In all the phases of the research project
  “There was some difficulty to the HEI to accept the collaboration in all phases of the research – this created some discomfort between the partnership” (HEI2)

When the study was planned in a “service provider” logic, meaning the University studying the NGDO, for example, the partnership was not consolidated and did not reach the final goals (HEI2)

- Ecology of methodologies, kinds of knowledge and perspectives
  “There was an initial difficulty because we both came from different fields (psychology, educational sciences), it was a challenge (…) we had to create our own “research language” that it would be different if we were doing the study on our own” (CSO1)

  “We had no specific expectations with the study. We wanted to look at that project with DE lenses and that helped to avoid a relationship based on power asymmetries” (CSO1)

  The acknowledgement of differences and complementarities between the entities helped identifying the role of each institution in the collaborative work. (HEI4)
3. Testing the framework

- Individual and institutional
  “I am not sure if change has been made, but I am sure that this project left some seeds in my institution” (HEI2)

- Focus in the process
  “The project was much more than the final products, the papers were just an excuse to develop joint activities. (…) There were learnings that exceeded our initial purposes, and that was really great”. (HEI2)

- Improved practices and policy influence
  “We wanted an impact evaluation of our 7 years project and it was really important to work with someone from the Academic world and to reframe our own expectations and our own knowledge” (CSO3)

- New assessment approaches
  “It was important to notice that this project, because had no funds for the research, made us emancipate of the usual funding and project logics” (CSO2)

“The application for the next phase of the project we have studied was completely different because of the research made together” (CSO1)
3. Testing the framework

- **Based on trust, transparency and reciprocity**
  “In this kind of work it is needed a mutual trust (...) and a constant dialogue. It was very important to meet in presence – Skype calls or emails are not enough”. (HEI2)

  “The previous personal relationships were very important”. (HEI1 and CSO4)

  “The geographical distance was a challenge”. (CSO1)

- **Bring together different perspectives**
  It [the project] reinforced a culture of collaboration between different institutions learning to reconcile diverse times, concepts, languages, instruments, cultures and objectives” (HEI4)

- **Mutual learning and benefits**
  “It’s important to know very clearly the motivations of each partner, that helps to shape the partnership and the role of each one” (HEI3)

  “We developed communication skills – listening, explaining, arguing – the dialogue was really important for mutual understanding and learning” (CSO2)

  “Because it become almost a platform of communication, it was a really added value - we had opportunities to work with other organisations that were new to us” (CSO3)
To finish the data analysis:
- i) memory of a reflexive moment proposed within the 4th meeting of the project (the last one), in October 2015, with the presence of representatives from 14 organisations (out of 21);
- ii) data base of the questionnaire sent to the participants of the project for the external final evaluation of the project (through an e-survey sent in the second half of January 2016, it was possible to collect 15 answers);
- iii) External Final Evaluation report presented in March 2016;
- iv) memories and Final Reports of the process of Systematisation of Experiences, that took place between September and November 2016.

To analyse the content of the 14 semi-structured interviews to the participants of the seven partnerships.

To elaborate on the findings, especially guided by the following analyse topics:
- relationship between what is said by the participants and its type of institution (CSO or HEI);
- categorisation of the seven collaborative processes (seven partnerships) to make clusters of cases with similar characteristics;
- comparative analysis of the balance among the pillars - are they equally represented in the references of the participants? Are pillars more represented than others? Which? For what reasons?
- major lessons learnt about the factors that hindered or promoted the collaborative processes.

To contribute to the theory itself, questioning and enriching the its framework thorough the learnings of this experience
Thanks for your attention!

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