

Case Studies of Teacher Education Forces in the Global South: Pedagogical possibilities when the main door is closed

Lars Dahlström & John Nyambe, University of Namibia

Abstract

Critical pedagogies are marginalized in the present common sense about teacher education. This also applies to the global South due to the co-option of conservative thought and neoliberal marketization as part of the present world capitalist system. This development creates unexpected alliances between the local and the global.

However, counter-hegemonic practices of critical pedagogy make intrusions in the midst of the waves of intellectual submersions by conservative and neoliberal forces from global metropolis. In Laos there are creative examples of 'critical pedagogy of place' (Gruenewald, 2003) within Master and PhD studies that challenge the mainstream global development paradigm that has entered the country in a deceptive way. In Ethiopia there are attempts to further previous practices connected to the Critical Practitioner Inquiry (CPI) concept through advanced studies at doctoral level (Dahlström & Lemma, 2008). In Namibia a new arena for critical educational struggle is about to be opened through the site-based continuous professional development (CPD) of beginner and veteran teachers.

These examples of counter-hegemonic practices of critical pedagogy are contrary to mainstream practices that locate educators in a neo-colonial model where they are found deficient of certain skills and knowledge, and thus are positioned as clients that need 'fixing' (Sayed, 2004, cited in Maistry,

2008). Furthermore, the examples also show that hegemonic forces are sometimes possible to counter-act from new positions and perspectives as a way to move forward what Connell (2007) has called southern theory.

Keywords: Teacher education, global South, counter-hegemonic practices

Education trapped in the global neoliberal net

This paper examines education, specifically teacher education, from a broad societal and global perspective. The arguments emanate from a critical perspective on the world capitalist system that allows financial greed and profit to dictate development and encourages the transfer of neoliberal perspectives into the field of education worldwide (Scheer, 2010; Chossudovsky, 2003). Furthermore, the paper attempts to problematize the discourse of global inclusiveness that tells us that we are all members of a global village. We use three countries in the global South - Laos, Ethiopia, and Namibia - as examples where counter-hegemonic practices are identified.

Looking back, we can claim that ‘the best side’ of the era before the collapse of the Eastern bloc was the effect the East and West dichotomy had on keeping back the most extreme conservative and neoliberal ideas in the West, even though the ‘Chicago boys’ managed to introduce their neoliberal master plan in Chile already under the Pinochet dictatorship in the early 1970s.¹ The era of the East and West dichotomy was also a golden age for social democratic policies of the welfare states in the West and the solidarity with liberation movements and progressive forces in the South was high on the agenda. This also ‘saved’ the West from more progressive demands from the left on the home front while optimism for the future flourished in the global South, thanks to national liberations.

The situation radically changed after the collapse of the Eastern bloc. This further released global financial forces facilitated by the birth of the information age with its global omnipresence and acceleration of capital

flows (Castells, 1996). The neoliberal master plan once introduced in Chile soon became the only way forward or as the conservative Prime Minister of England, Margret Thatcher, once put it “there is no alternative”. Today, more than twenty years later, the neoliberal model of marketization is the common sense (Gramsci, 1971) taken for granted based on what Martinez & Garcia (2000) have identified as the main characteristics of neoliberalism. These are the rules of the market (i.e. private enterprises, capital, goods, and services freed from restrictions by the state); the cut on public expenditures for social services such as education and health care; deregulations and marginalization of workers’ unions; privatization of state-owned enterprises and public services like education; and a discursive elimination of the public good replaced by free choice. Furthermore, the real economy, i.e. the production of necessary goods and services for people, has to a large extent moved its production to low-income states like China, India, Vietnam, and Ethiopia and by that been overridden by the finance economy that operates to accumulate capital for its financial owners.

The initial optimism in the global South, which rested on the discursive image of inclusion, created by concepts like the ‘global village’ was soon exchanged for another disappointment. The new global forces turned out to be the old masters dressed in new clothes of global financial influences. This created a new type of economic and social colonialism under the disguise of an unavoidable and discursively inclusive globalization. A few years later the neoliberal logic of the market forces also became the rule in the social fields of education and we had entered a new era of development that Chossudovsky (2003) has called the “the globalization of poverty and the new world order” in his book with the same title. The social norms have all been drawn into the logic of finance and every aspect of human life has become ‘marketed’. Kuehn (1999) has pointed to the eventual potential of the field of education for a neoliberal project of marketization with reference to Education International, the international trade secretariat for education unionsⁱⁱ, when it states that the global public spending on education goes beyond one trillion dollars on an annual basis. Kuehn (op.cit, p. 2) concludes that education “is the last great frontier to be tapped for profit-making

ventures, if the public sector can be even partially replaced by privatized education”.

The new capitalism signified by uncertainty threatens people’s need for narrative and to create meaning by being able to connect experiences (Sennett, 2006). This threat operates through the institutionalizing of insecurity and creates a lack of power and voice to interpret what happens to their life. Secondly, the new capitalism affects the sense of usefulness as a way to contribute something which matters for other people. The new capitalism that has emerged from neoliberal ideas in the globalized markets of profits has according to Sennett set people free from the iron cage of the old bureaucratic capitalism and created an illusionary freedom through new flexible organizations, a freedom that is circumvented by “a new geography of power, the centre controlling the peripheries of power in institutions with ever fewer intermediate layers of bureaucracy” (op.cit. p. 81). This is made possible through new technologies hindering the degrees of freedom for interpretation, transforming the prestige of work and the social capitalism of the welfare state.

In these ways, the social has been diminished; capitalism remains. Inequality becomes increasingly tied to isolation. It is this peculiar transformation which has been seized upon by politicians as the model of ‘reform’ in the public realm. (Op.cit. p. 82)

Furthermore, Sennett (op.cit) points to the threat from the new capitalism to the value of craftsmanship, i.e. the desire to do something well for its own sake. The culture of the new capitalism lacks values that are closely connected to craftsmanship like commitment, continuity, and loyalty, while encouraging flexibility and superficiality as in the consultancy trade. Sennett (op.cit. p. 197) concludes

Since people can anchor themselves in life only by trying to do something well for its own sake, the triumph of superficiality at work, in schools, and in politics seems to me fragile. Perhaps, indeed, revolt against this enfeebled culture will constitute our next fresh page.

Therefore, it is time to remove the free market logic from its hegemonic position and to answer the question that George (2010, p. 14) has implied: “which goods ought to be bought and sold with prices fixed according to supply and demand and which ones should be treated as public or common goods and services, the latter priced according to their social usefulness”? The false consciousness that the free market system has created globally “prevents critical debate and masks the truth” and its only promise “is a world of landless farmers, shuttered factories, jobless workers and gutted social programs with ‘bitter economic medicine’ under the WTO and the IMF constituting the only prescription” (Chossudovsky, 2003, p. 12). Amin (2004, p. 7) describes how this free market process escalated:

Towards the end of the twentieth century a sickness struck the world. Not everyone died, but all suffered from it. The virus which caused the epidemic was called the “liberal virus”.

An inclusive discourse in a divided world – a view from the global South

Even though the masters still remain more or less the same since colonialism with some new recruits and new faces, there are discursive differences that make the agendas more difficult to detect and identify as they operate in “The Dialectic of the Global and the Local” as Arnove & Torres (2007) suggest. Furthermore, the common globalization discourse has changed from being concerned with backwardness and catching up to a concern about inclusion based on new monopolies of technologies, financial control, and access to natural resources, media, and weapons of mass destruction, according to Amin (1997). Other analysts, like Hormeku, the head of programs at TWN-Africaⁱⁱⁱ, said in connection with the preparations for a seminar on ‘The Global Crisis and Africa’ that “the influence and impacts of the crisis in Africa is shaped largely by the nature of the continent’s systemic integration into the global economy as primary commodity export dependent economies, constructed under colonialism and ever since perpetuated in different forms” (Obeng, 2011). But what kind of world is it that humanity is supposed to be included into?

The vulnerability of inclusiveness has become most obvious in relation to marketization and the financial system in times of crises that we recently were made aware of in connection with the 'neoliberal meltdown' (Dahlstrom, 2009). What started as a bursting bubble in the housing and banking sectors in the US in the middle of 2008 due to an accelerating financial greed (Sheer, 2010; Grey, 2011) has multiplied around the world affecting people everywhere, the majority to the worse due to social regression, growing inequality and impoverishment, increasing insecurity, loss of credibility of democratic practices, instability, and political chaos (Amin, 2008). The neoliberal system survived the latest meltdown thanks to the backing from governments all over the world who took the taxpayers' money to rescue the banking sector (Wallerstein, 2008). What came next as a consequence of the ever growing depth in the crises of capitalist development was another rescue of government bankruptcy starting with European countries (Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Italy and Spain) through loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the European Community (EC). Attached to the so called financial rescues are humanitarian restrictions that in the Global South for long have gone under the label 'structural adjustment programs' (SAPs), well-known for their severe effects on the living conditions for ordinary people and the poor (Samoff, 2007). Now it seems that the same bitter medicine has to be swallowed by people in the western world as informatively illustrated by the Greek video Deprocracy (Kitidi & Chatzistefanou, 2011).

Since the introduction of SAPs in the Global South more than thirty years ago the effects on social aspects of human life like education have been severe as such societal activities have all along been seen solely as costs that should be reduced rather than investments that would pay off socially (Samoff, 2007). Therefore, what is marketed as a noble slogan, 'education for all' (EFA), has been undermined by measures like school fees that hinder poor children from receiving their rights-based education; by privatizations that have a tendency to create parallel systems for the rich and the poor; by globally directed focuses on efficiency that treat social activities like education as production lines in factories; and by 'just enough' training programs for teachers that reduce education to technical rationalities as another imitation of the 'just-in-

time' production lines in the industry. This doublespeak is installed to hide the real intention at stake, namely to transform the world to a neoliberal heaven, for some (Tamatea, 2005).

The present globalizations and its discourse of inclusiveness are of two kinds. Santos (2002) makes a distinction between hegemonic globalizations from above and counter-hegemonic globalizations from below. The former are the kind of globalizations that we for example connect to the expansions of international operations of transnational corporations, the mushrooming of free-trade enclaves in the global South, structural adjustment policies enforced by the Bretton Woods institutions, and the EFA doctrines that all countries have to follow when in need of donor funding. The latter are for example the new types of networks that are made possible through the expanding international electronic communications that connect individuals and groups of people with common interest for anti-neoliberal solidarity, critical and humanistic education, and local/global environmental issues for example through transformative non-government and critical scholastic networks. Some of these counter-hegemonic forces have recently evicted corrupt and autocratic leaderships in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya as well as shaken the basis for the leadership in Syria. These responses from civil societies were sparked by the death of Mohamed Bouazizi, a vegetable seller in the town of Sidi Bouzid, south of Tunis, who took his own life when he no longer could stand the harassments from state enforcements. Some of the nonviolence forces that operated in these civil responses to corrupt leaderships were also inspired by the handbook for civil and peaceful action by Sharp (2002).

Removing corrupt national leadership is a necessary move even though not enough, as much of the global economic power that previously was closely connected to national leadership and governments has today moved into the hands of transnational and world venture capital (VC) that has further enriched the already rich in spite of the recent economic crises. Joan Baxter (2011) has looked into the latest Forbes List of the world's wealthiest people that tells about the present situation^{iv}. Baxter presents her position in the following way:

On the heels of the global financial crisis, with sky-rocketing food prices, climate change already making life even more difficult for poor farmers in developing countries, with conflict and political turmoil around the world and with a billion or so people going to bed (if they have one) hungry every night, the super-rich are doing very well for themselves indeed. The Forbes List of billionaires has swollen this year to a record 1.210 individuals. On a planet with nearly 7 billion people, just 1.210 people (including 14 in Africa) possess \$45 trillion, equivalent to 77% of the world's GDP. (Baxter, 2011. p. 1)

In addition, this enormous private fortune does not include the billions of dollars' worth of tax money and development funds that have been pocketed illegally by so called national leaderships around the globe. In this perspective another doctrine by the world's donors, 'poverty reduction', becomes problematic. The poor are called to be included into the neoliberal global market as cheap labour in a machinery that actually feeds the super-rich and their tax avoiding banking without borders called 'cloud banking' (Baxter, op.cit). It comes as no surprise that the international donors suggest school fees for the poor instead of demanding proper taxations of the super-rich as a solution to 'costly' education systems and the introduction of Tobin taxes on cross-border currency transactions to avoid further askew financial developments in favour of the already rich.^v

These concerns are part of the global context we have to keep in mind if we want to analyse the field of education not only in the global South. Furthermore, we adhere to a definition of globalization that is in line with our previous reference to Santos (2002) and that Chen (2010) has expressed as follows:

... by globalization I refer to capital-driven forces which seek to penetrate and colonize all spaces on the earth with unchecked freedom, and that in so doing have eroded national frontiers and integrated previously unconnected zones. In this ongoing process of globalization, unequal power relations become intensified, and imperialism expresses itself in a new form. (Chen, 2010, p.4)

Our research perspective tries to avoid a plain repetition of analyses growing uncritically from the metropolitan research traditions in the world, but to give it a southern flavour without dismissing any sound critical perspective with roots in the global North. The scholastic work carried out by researchers like Bacchi (2009), Chen (2010), Connell (2007), Gruenewald (2003), and Hydén & Mmuya (2008) is acknowledged and has influenced the foundation for our own research perspective based on a concern for education as a humanistic and socially critical endeavour. We will return to this research perspective towards the end of this paper.

What does hegemonic neoliberalism do to education?

Educational systems worldwide are still formally confined within national borders, even though in many ways becoming more and more captured by neoliberal trends or what a Finnish scholar calls the Global Educational Reform Movement, GERM (Sahlberg, 2012). Following GERM, countries in the global North are concerned about their ratings organized through the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) system by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) where Finland is the shooting star that everyone else wants to follow. However, what they have missed is that Finland is not part of the GERM devise but has for long gone its own way far from the trends as exported into the field of education under the reform banner.

The countries in the global South are similarly hijacked by another reform movement that follows the 'education for all' (EFA) and 'poverty reduction' doctrines emphasized by the world system of donors under a euphemistic UNESCO leadership. The doublespeak of the EFA doctrine has been thoroughly analysed by Tamatea (2005), who has exposed the relationships between the contradictory messages of the official EFA-goals and the way that this doctrine is operationalized. The concepts of quality, transparency, and accountability have been redefined to fit hegemonic aims that will mould education according to neoliberal thinking. Quality of education becomes measurable learning outcomes, transparency reduces education into the self-evident and taken-for-granted, and accountability is turned into punitive measures against countries who fail to live up to the donors' expectations. And everything

is framed within the continuous surveillance through annual EFA Global Monitoring Reports carried out by groups of consultants employed by UNESCO. (Samoff, 2007; Tamatea, op.cit)

However, when the global educational doctrines hit the ground they change their characteristics due to national contexts as analysed by Steensen (2006) with references to Archer (1996) who makes a distinction between agencies in the social, structural, and cultural spheres. Steensen (op.cit) maintains that in the global South where culture has a more powerful influence, compared to the western situation, the global doctrines will create severe cultural clashes with localized outcomes, when ideas and trends are imposed from outside. This is in line with Hydén & Mmuya's (2008) conception of power and policy slippage. This dialectic process between the global and the local will further obscure the omnipresence of the global doctrines as we will demonstrate with cases from three countries in the global South. These cases are chosen due to their internal discrepancies as a way to demonstrate the differences in the ways that global doctrines are played out nationally. One country is a communist one-party state in Asia, another a northern African state that has never been officially colonized and a third is a southern African country with a double burden of colonization. The cases are also chosen due to our educational and scholarly experiences from the three countries involved.

Breaking way for counter-hegemonic practices?

In the midst of the hegemonic waves of intellectual submersions by conservative and neoliberal forces we will always find alternatives. Alternatives are seldom making great entrances but start to grow from discontent with the hegemonic situation as moral wishes to change social practices, which happens politically around the world presently and historically. Alternatives to the mainstream are often based on what Elliott (1993) has called situational understanding. Situational understanding can be characterized as a combination of practical, contextual, and theoretical knowledge, where theoretical knowledge is subordinate to practical and the contextual knowledge, but has from its subordinate position the power to initiate new thinking and therefore also to inspire new social practices not least by pointing to possibilities that

can be opened through new contextual perspectives. These relations between the practical, contextual, and theoretical is also in line with how Critical Practitioner Inquiry (CPI) has developed as an alternative educational approach in the global South (Dahlström, 2006).

We will now look into what we tentatively present as alternatives in their early stages. These alternatives are examples of what Santos (2002) calls counter-hegemonic globalizations from below and are as well representations of a 'southern' research perspective coming into being.

Laos – Lao People's Democratic Republic

Laos is one of the few countries in the world that officially follows a socialist one-party state governing. Laos has a historical context marked by sixty years of colonial neglect by the French; the disastrous effects of the American war (the Vietnam war) that turned more than one third of the entire population into national and international refugees; a legacy of a collapsed economy in 1975 when the socialist government took over; the changes in the Eastern bloc towards the end of 1980s and the diminishing financial support from Soviet Union and other communist countries; and recent international pressures from metropolitan powers. As a consequence Laos embarked on a marketization policy called New Economic Mechanism (NEM) in 1986 that opened its borders to international financial interests and donor organizations. Laos also started to follow the measures of the Washington consensus and introduced decentralization, trade liberalization, acceptance of foreign investments, and privatization of education, as mandatory consequences of the country's need for financial donor support. (Phonekeo, 1996;

An unholy alliance with neoliberalism in Laos

Many infrastructural changes started to affect teacher education. For example, during the early years of the socialist government from 1975 to late 1980s teacher education was organized through a highly decentralized system including close to 60 smaller teacher education schools that answered to the local needs of primary school teachers in the surrounding communities (Bousengthong, 1996). This was a significant way to organize teacher education from both professional and social perspectives, because of the different educational needs, the lack

of general infrastructure, and the ethnic situation in the country. Laos is to this day a country with a complex ethno-linguistic situation, where just above 50% of the population have the official language, Lao, as their mother tongue (Kosonen, 2005). The other half speaks different languages and some of these languages are not even written (Pholsena, 2006). Therefore, it would make sense to have a system that is strongly decentralized; at least to cater for the need of primary teachers as such a system would be able to respond to local languages and local cultural traditions. However, this system was changed towards the mid-1990s, probably by two disparate but in this case cooperative ambitions, the government's wish to control and the donors' calls for efficiency as illustrated by a report commissioned by the Asian Development Bank, ADB (Adams, 2000).

The ADB report touches upon this issue by referring to the need of 'economy of scale' and 'national consistency' in a country that is actually highly differentiated. The changes led to a merger of the 60 teacher education schools, which were turned into 9 larger institutions where little attention was given to multi-ethnic issues as new curricula were streamlined to fit the national needs of consolidation that can also be read as global needs of efficiency (Bounyasone & Keosada, 2011).

Furthermore, the surveillance of education that the EFA doctrines are based on encouraged the Ministry of Education recently to set up a Teacher Education Evaluation Division that would facilitate the collection of information regarding teachers and teacher education (Ministry of Education, 2006). The evaluation system is based on a computer and internet based data system to collect information from the different teacher education institutions, a system that will benefit the needs for control and surveillance from both the national government and the international donors, as long as the vulnerable internet system works.

Laos also introduced private alternatives in education following the NEM policy. Officially, this policy was introduced to expand the opportunities for education because of the weak public system that could not cater for the education opportunities that the more affluent parts of the population asked for; conveniently forgetting to mention that privatization of

education is one of the stipulations by and an integrated part of the international donors' policies as a response to a country's request for financial support. Furthermore, the numbers of private educational institutions have mushroomed in the major urban centres like the capital Vientiane, where there are a total of 92 private colleges (Vilaythong, 2011). This situation does not help the majority of the population that live in rural villages and who lack both the availability of the private institutions and the capital needed for costly private education. Another consequence of the privatization of education is that some of the institutions that offer training possibilities do that on doubtful grounds and offer programs that do not meet the necessary quality, but seem to be more interested in the gathering of fees. Because of these reasons the government administration has established a Department of Private Education and thereby expanded the already top heavy bureaucracy. (Bounyasone & Keosada, 2011)

Laos also follows the global doctrines of education for all and student centred education as another consequence of the country's need for economic support from outside, presently directed by the World Bank and its allies like the Asian Development Bank, under the official program surveillance by UNESCO. Analyses of the policies of student centred education and an attached policy of action research to improve student centred education have been carried out by the Lao researchers Chounlamany & Khounphilaphanh (2011) and Bounyasone & Keosada (2011). These analyses have shown that policies introduced as technical rationalities of taken for granted versions of western policy ensembles create frustrations, laissez-faire practices, reductions to simple organizational structures like group work, and at best redefinitions of previous practices amongst practitioners, while the reforms at the discursive level remain successful through 'political symbolism' mainly to satisfy the donors (Jansen, 2002).

Bounyasone & Keosada (2011) conclude in their thesis on national education reform in Laos that the national policies are strongly influenced by and interwoven with international donor policies, educational policies that are recognized as 'national' are in fact part of what the authors call hidden policy ensembles operating globally with concealed legacies^{vi},

and reforms that are donor driven create policy backlashes due to local traditions and cultures that are ignored in the reform processes but still operate as counterhegemonic forces of resistance with resulting national specifics.

An intersection with counter-hegemonic intentions

While the neoliberal onslaught on education in Laos continues, there are also signs of alternatives that have entered the educational arena in the country through new alliances created from the degrees of freedom that exist in social situations. Already during a Master course for Lao educators initiated in 2004 and carried out for four cohorts of students before the course was taken over by the National University of Laos (NUOL) there were signs of critical and counter-hegemonic studies. As an example, Isoutha (2006) studied the strategic choices that poor parents in a Lao village have to take to prioritize their need of manual labour within the family in relation to their children's need of education. The study looks into the dilemma created by the lack of situational understanding when modernity is imported into a pre-modern village life and explained by official government representatives as an effect of 'ignorant' parents.

Furthermore, the PhD thesis by Bounyasone & Keosada (2011) makes an attempt to combine cross-cultural dialogue with a critical pedagogy of place as a way to create a foundation for an alternative way to use action research for meaningful educational development. Cross-cultural dialogue is a concept taken from Santos (2002) that is developed to create counter-hegemonic perspectives on essential aspects of human life, while a critical pedagogy of place has been developed by Gruenewald (2003) as a combination of a critical pedagogy for cultural decolonization and a re-inhabitation as a way to recognize the particular attributes of place. By combining cross-cultural dialogue with a critical pedagogy of place Bounyasone & Keosada have created a basis building on "forgotten, non-inclusive, or marginalized contributions from different historical and cultural locations" (Bounyasone & Keosada, 2011, p. 68). The basis is related to action research practices that draw on the Buddhist concepts of mindfulness, connectedness, and impermanence; education as an activity that produces meaningful learning and

production drawn from ideas in the so called Freinet Movement that was started in France in the 1920s with far reaching effects on progressive education globally; and the complex method developed by the Russian educator Shatskii after the Russian revolution in 1907 and even praised by western educators such as Dewey (Bounyasone & Keosada, 2011; Winter, 2003; Legrand, 2000; Partlett, 2005; Engerman, 2006).

Bounyasone & Keosada (2011) suggest a critical and educative action research network in Laos that would reverse the flow in the national education system. At present this flow has a strong current of control that goes from the centre to the periphery and the suggested network is a way to show the benefits of a reverse flow within the education system. The network will utilize the infrastructures that already are in place like the national system of cluster schools, the district and regional system of Pedagogical Advisors (PAs), as well as the provincial teacher education institutions.

The cluster school system creates cooperative possibilities between local schools in a district and is also aiming at support to each cluster with educational material and equipment. Through the new network the PAs will get a more educative rather than controlling role. The PAs will be the educational link between the clusters and the provincial teacher education institutions. Furthermore, where possible the network will also utilize community learning centres when these are more easily available for cluster schools and PAs. This infrastructure will also be connected to a national centre for educational development with a capacity to produce educational material. (Bounyasone & Keosada, 2011)

The idea with the network is to respond to the national lack of relevant educational material like readers and textbooks at all levels instead of putting all efforts into the global doctrine of student centred education that follows with the donor programs like a mantra. Rather than imposing student centred techniques that have a tendency to reduce the educational process into technical rationalities like monotonous group activities, the network will build up a much needed resource base of educational materials that emanate from action research activities within the clusters. The action research activities will start from *educational*

themes identified in the curricula guidelines and syllabi. Groups of educators in the clusters will investigate how the educational themes can be integrated with local natural conditions, social artefacts, and aspects of social life in the communities. These investigations will lead on to activities when data are collected from the surrounding communities and used as the educational content in the teaching and learning processes. Whatever is produced and developed within each cluster can be shared between different schools in the cluster, but also between clusters and then forwarded to the teacher education institutions for further integrations as part of teacher education, before it is sent to the national centre for educational development for their considerations. (Bouyasone & Keosada, 2011)

This brief outline of a critical and educative action research network for educational development building on locally produced education material can be seen as part of the alternatives that can make a difference in a country like Laos. Laos is at present forced to follow the hegemonic global doctrines that actually destroys the socially critical aspects of education necessary for a better life for the majority. The present marketization of education has other ambitions that are unmasked through the global doublespeak. (Lockhart, 2001)

The Federal Republic of Ethiopia

Education reforms have for long been part of the development agenda in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia not least when new regimes have entered their power positions. For example, when the Emperor Haile Selassie was replaced by the Workers' Party of Ethiopia after the revolution in 1974 the education system was changed from what was characterized as an elite system carried out by foreign teachers to an expansion that created a cadre of Ethiopian educators but also unrest because of unemployed secondary school leavers (Negash, 1990; 2006).

Student centred education bypassing the teacher

When the present government came in place in 1991 a new policy change was established with a main feature of ethnic languages as the medium of instruction for primary education corresponding to an Ethiopia

that was changed to a combination of federal states with language differences (Engida, 2006). The present government also found the previous education system inadequate and the latest national reform within teacher education was initiated in 2003 under the label Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) including a call for student-centred methods in all government schools and universities (Lemma, 2006). The TESO also announced a paradigm shift within teacher education that among other things would “professionalize teaching by introducing certification requirements for teachers at all levels” (Engida, 2006, p.107). TESO also introduced other international trends following the neoliberal influences such as fewer years for teacher education, national control of standardized curricula, and the reduction of new study areas into technical packages for specific purposes in addition to the most awkward example of what has been marketed as student centred education, the plasma teachers (Dahlström & Lemma, 2008). An official government report to the UNESCO Forty-Seventh Session of the International Conference on Education in Geneva, Switzerland, in September 2004, describes the introduction of this Information Communication Technology (ICT) as follows:

Information Communication Technology is introduced in the education system to strengthen the expansion of quality education. The introduction of ICT is done phase by phase starting at the secondary level followed by the primary and then ultimately at all levels. At present for the secondary level (9 – 12) multi-faceted programs and major preparations have been underway to reach the goal of implementing ICT in the education sector and improve the quality of education. The main activities that are accomplished in the project includes, production of Educational TV programs, installation of satellite receiving devices known as plasma display panels (PDPs) in every classroom at secondary level, establishing a computer network system, and install generators in schools which have no electricity, installation of satellite TV programs transmission system at the centre Education Media Agency (EMA) and organizing adequate training for teachers, media heads and school directors so as to enhance the practical and effective utilization of the program. (The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2004, p 8)

This is the official picture of what is going on in secondary classrooms in Ethiopia to enhance 'quality'. At first, by building on the findings by Lemma (2006) and Dahlström & Lemma (2008) we want to state that the plasma teachers are not in any way near anything that can be called student centred education even if you apply little philosophical thought about what student centred education could mean. We would rather call it another educational and economic swindle carried out by the World Bank. The accumulated costs for the production of the alien programs, the installation of satellite discs, plasma TV sets, and the necessary things that comes with high technology equipment at each secondary school in the country including a generator where there is no electricity and that is hoped to last at least as long as there is petrol available, all add up to money that the Ethiopians need to pay back to the World Bank in due time. So what is this wonderful solution that guarantees student centred education and quality education?

The answer is officially called 'educational satellite television programs' for all secondary school students in grades nine to twelve in Ethiopia, who are doomed to watch lessons in natural sciences, mathematics, civics and ethical education, and English for four years of schooling that are all presented on an uncommunicative plasma screen that continues to teach the lesson as planned even when students do not understand. For sure, it will become the quick fix for modernization as young Ethiopians will soon learn to become modern by sleeping in front of the TV screen. It is understandable that it has not been tried out elsewhere as it would never have left the drawing table after an accurate evaluation. Furthermore, the programs are produced in South Africa by the most successful marketing university on the African continent, University of South Africa (UNISA), with the consequence that neither the South African English dialect nor some of the social references in programs are contextually accurate for secondary students in Ethiopia. Today the plasma teachers are an enduring pain to students as very little help is offered to students during or after the plasma teacher has stopped his or her performance. There is no time for the teacher in the classroom to carry out any follow-up activities, because the next lessons will start on the clock as soon as the teacher has locked the case where the plasma is kept, before it is unlocked again by another teacher in time for the next

lesson to start on schedule according to the national time plan. (Brook, 2006)

Through this system teachers are reduced to caretakers of plasma screens as their educational role in relation to the students has been diminished significantly. Teachers do not even dare to disturb the plasma lesson as tests and examinations follow strictly the plasma script and no teacher wants to be blamed for hindering students to learn.

Frustrated educational administrators might have seen the plasma teachers as the salvation for education as it can bypass the troublesome middle-persons, the teachers, and establish a direct link to the students and thereby wrongly believe that education can be fixed by managerial systems and efficiency. Furthermore, if all students get the identical lessons, education may also become democratic and student centred as there is no disturbing factor between the message and the student. However, the previous analyses by Dahlström & Lemma (2008) show that the plasma teachers replace education as a social activity with information that a minority of students are able to transform to an acceptable grade in the examination. Very little quality education is involved, especially if you expect student centred education to take care of differences. Ravitch (2010), an educator and researcher in the US who once believed in the neoliberal measures in education has after extensive research changed her mind about the fact that tests and examinations set the agenda and the choice discourses to govern who will educate our children. Ravitch concludes concerning the role of the teachers and the curriculum:

The most durable way to improve schools is to improve curriculum and instruction and to improve the conditions in which teachers work and children learn, rather than endlessly squabbling over how school systems should be organized, managed, and controlled. It is not the organization of the schools that is at fault for the ignorance we deplore, but the lack of sound educational values.... Pedagogy – that is, how to teach – is rightly the professional domain of individual teachers. Curriculum – that is, what to teach – should be determined by professional educators and scholars, after due public deliberation. (Ravitch, 2010, pp. 225-226)

Very little of such educative concerns and sound educational values that Ravitch is searching for can be part of the management of an educational system that allows plasma teachers to take centre stage, unless they have been fooled by the doublespeak of the global educational discourses. Based on the work that was carried out in Ethiopia as part of a Masters course for university lecturers, one course tutor made the following reflection:

Working with education in Ethiopia is a wonderful and painful experience certainly for Ethiopians, but also for participating foreigners... As a European you will soon discover that much of what you believe is your own particular European culture, apparently pretending to become the global culture, was already in full bloom in Ethiopia when your own ancestors were still living their primitive way of life in the forest. You will discover an African country without a colonial past... But at the same time, your experience will soon be accompanied by an underlying suffering, when you discover that even here you will meet what may become the tragedy of our time, the radical change from education by educationalists to education by neo-liberal management. This radical change, which you have met in the USA, the UK, Scandinavia, Namibia and Mozambique, is constantly disrupting our combined professional efforts across national borders to achieve both a broader competence and social justice. (Callewaert, 2006, p. 127)

Critical Practitioner Inquiry and beyond in Ethiopia

Critical Practitioner Inquiry (CPI) was developed in Namibia after independence in 1990 as an alternative to the more widely used concept of action research (Dahlström, 2006). The intention with CPI was to combine critical perspectives on education, contextual studies, and education practice into alternative views on educational development. This approach was used as part of teacher education reform in Namibia both through staff development courses on Higher Diploma and Master's levels and as an integrated part of the Basic Education Teachers Diploma (BETD) after independence. The CPI approach became one of the professional themes in the BETD and was connected to educational studies as well as the practical part of the program, the school-based studies. Both the BETD program and its professional theme attracted

international interests beyond the Namibian borders. A UNESCO institution in Addis Ababa, the International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA), suggested that a Master course should be developed in Ethiopia based on the CPI experiences from Namibia.

The Master's course was carried out in Ethiopia during the period 2003 – 2005. The course participants came from different universities in the country and the course was organized as 'national institutes' when clusters of course participants from the different universities came together for course inputs and face-to-face tutorials. A combination of international and national tutors was responsible for the tutoring of each cluster group, who also met at the different universities. An evaluation of the course amongst the course participants who managed to follow the course until its end and who presented their master theses at a final seminar in Addis Ababa, showed that the course was appreciated for its alternative approach. One of the course participants expressed it like this:

CPI is best viewed as a part of an international movement which is directed to liberate teacher education from hegemonies and monopolism. It analyses issues of power and status in educational research and attempts to narrow the existing gap between the worlds of teacher research and academic research. CPI advocates the idea of looking beyond the obvious and conventional, i.e. a critical inquiry must go beyond the mainstream research paradigm, and should develop practitioner knowledge beyond every day tacit common sense about education. (Abdu, 2005, p. 2)

The experiences from the Master's course led to further discussions during an international conference in Addis Ababa in May 2009 about the development of a Doctoral Program at the Addis Ababa University based on the same type of educational philosophy. Therefore, an outline of a rationale and course structure were developed and further elaborated in dialogue with Ethiopian scholars (Addis Ababa University, 2011).

The rationale expresses the view that the latest financial and economic crises have created a rare opportunity to revisit the world order and to push for alternative views. The rationale also calls for a new start within

the field of education as an alternative to the present global educational doctrines fabricated to impose the neoliberal marketization on all social aspects and all people. Furthermore, the rationale suggests that a new start for education is possible if it follows a refocused research program based on diversity and the following tentative notions. Education shall develop awareness, understanding, and a social situation that will help people to live their lives in a way that they themselves recognize as a worthy way of living – education as craftsmanship for life. Education shall connect to the surrounding society so that it can become both a basis for inquiry and a receiver of the benefits of integrated and innovative educational activities – education as usefulness beyond the classroom. Education shall work from the local social situation and create a critical contextualization of the national and the global – education as critical contextualized praxis. Education shall construct a multidimensional narrative of life that connects the present with the past as a way to prepare for and shape the future – education as narratives of a new type of social development. (Addis Ababa University, 2011)

This tentative outline also includes two study themes and each theme has three course modules outlined as follows (Addis Ababa University, 2011):

Theme I. Foundational influences on educational research: historical flows and transfers

Course 1. Education and Society: A critical research perspective for education

Course 2. Comparative research in the age of globalization

Course 3. National arenas of education reforms and change

Theme II. The crafts of educational research: towards a critical praxis

Course 4. Beyond the qualitative and quantitative divide: critical policy text analysis

Course 5. Classroom anthropology and the social life of schooling: observations and interviews

Course 6. The purpose and meanings of statistical data beyond common sense

Following the CPI tradition as described above the course participants of this future doctoral program offered to Ethiopian educators will carry out

their inquiries on aspects related to their own educational practice within Ethiopia and integrate these inquiries to relevant policy contexts and critical perspective of education as a way to develop new and humanistic educational practices as part of a craftsmanship for life. The implementation of this PhD program is still under discussion with different university representatives in Ethiopia.

A different and promising development that was thwarted by conservative forces is our next example.

The Republic of Namibia

In the introduction to this paper we mentioned the solidarity with liberation movement in third world countries. It was in those times, when the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) was fighting for the independence of Namibia and the Swedish government in many ways supported the liberation movements in Southern Africa, that an educator from Sweden was trusted with the task to travel to a refugee camp in Angola in 1983 to identify a way to support the untrained Namibian teachers who worked in the camp to give the exiled Namibian children some hope for the future by educating them in the midst of a liberation struggle. (Dahlström, 2002)

Teacher education that became dangerous to the elite in Namibia

What started as a pilot program for teacher education in a refugee camp developed into a national teacher education program in a free Namibia after independence in 1990 (Cohen, 1994; Swarts, 1999). This national program survived for twenty years before it was overrun by the old elite who had tried to avoid it and worked against it since its introduction. This was only possible with the help from the most powerful global donor, the World Bank, when the previous support had come to an end and been transformed to business relations in a new neoliberal era. The life of teacher education for Namibians during the last seven years in exile in Angola and the first twenty years after independence has been thoroughly described and analysed both by Namibian and other educators through the years, including us.^{vii} Therefore, we will only make a brief commentary in relation to what has been at stage for teacher education the last twenty years or more in Namibia.

Liberation movements like SWAPO and its 'sister organization' the African National Congress (ANC) were highly acknowledged even by forces in the West during their attempts to get rid of the racist apartheid regimes in their respective countries Namibia and South Africa, even though also considered to be 'terrorists' by their enemies, including conservatives, corporate representatives, and multinational companies. When Namibia got its independence and the former 'terrorists' became the new rulers in the country, the main objective within teacher education was to brush off the remnants of the apartheid era. Therefore, the aim was to build up and develop a new teacher education program for all Namibian teachers irrespective of race and colour. Furthermore, the new national program also had to include all stakeholders in the development process, even those who felt that their former positions as the engineers or implementers of the racist system would give them a more prominent place in the new process due to reconciliations. Everyone was invited and many of the Namibians who had been the victims of the previous system became what Dahlström (2002) calls the 'organic intellectuals' who carried the reform forward, while those who still represented the conservative views, the 'traditional intellectuals' went along reluctantly and even made efforts to move the reform process in a different direction. With the new Basic Education Teacher's Diploma (BETD) program in place after years of curriculum work, in-service education of teacher educators, new teacher education infrastructures, and innovative programmatic ideas that also created international recognition; the BETD program still needed further development to be consolidated and strongly based in its own philosophical and pedagogical context after more than ten years of reform efforts. However, around this time the donors, who had supported the development of the new national program, in particular Sweden, had started to scale down their support in the education sector. This created room for a different player to make its move, the World Bank, which all along since Namibia's independence had tried to enter centre stage in teacher education but which had been refused that position by the Minister of Education.

The result of the World Bank's move was an extensive sector program called *Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme* (ETSIP),

subtitled *Planning for a Learning Nation* and covering the period 2006 – 2011 in its first phase. The ETSIP was developed within the general development discourse formulated by the Namibian government as *Vision 2030*, namely that Namibia by 2030 “should join the ranks of high income countries and afford all its citizens a quality of life that is comparable to that of the developed world” as expressed in the rationale for ETSIP (2007, p. 1). Furthermore, the rationale also summarized the weaknesses in the education sector as being due to

(a) low quality and effectiveness as evidenced in low student learning outcomes; (b) low efficiency in the use of available resources; (c) persisting inequalities in the distribution of education inputs and outcomes; (d) low capacity for knowledge creation and application; and (e) doubtful development and market relevance. (ETSIP, 2007, p. 2)

The key purpose of ETSIP became to facilitate the transition of Namibia to a knowledge based economy by enhancing the education and training sector’s contribution to the attainment of strategic national goals (ETSIP, 2007).

Our tentative assessment of the framework set up by Vision 2030 and specifically the ETSIP sector program is that these general statements of intentions seem to be firmly anchored in the present hegemonic discourse of inclusion into the global framework set up by the World Bank and the neoliberal global policies. The educational framework that ETSIP is supposed to create illustrates clearly through its reference to outcomes, market relevance, and a knowledge based economy how education and training have been redefined beyond their educational parameters and become a means for another purpose, namely the economy and the market. As educators we believe that educational policy documents, as stated in the previous Namibian policy document *Toward Education for All* (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993) also known as the TEFA development brief, should outline a national philosophy of education that in its own right will guide the government’s policy elaborations in education, instead of setting up imaginary statements that imitate the twin forces of the global and neoliberal

inclusiveness of marketization and the present doublespeak of the EFA doctrines.

In the context of ETSIP and the continued exhortation to improve the 'quality' of teacher education in order to attain the aspirations of vision 2030, Namibia witnessed a radical U-turn in teacher education as the country abandoned its progressive teacher education program, the BETD, in favour of teacher education practices reminding of the 'fundamental pedagogics' (van Harmelen, 1997) that were being rooted out by the post-apartheid reforms. Underpinned by values of democracy, emancipatory pedagogy and reflective practice, the BETD was eulogized by even the most conservative global forces such as the World Bank as an exemplary innovative and progressive program (Craig, Kraft & du Plessis, 1998). However, the program's privileging of critical spaces that offered students opportunities to develop and adopt critical dispositions in relation to hegemonic interests made it unpalatable not only to conservative bureaucrats of the former apartheid regime but also to some previous leaders of the liberation struggle whose educational confusion and market concerns inhibited their appreciation of the program's critical pedagogies. Consequently, in 2008, the National Council on Higher Education (NCHE) commissioned a consultancy study to develop guidelines on teacher education reform, including curriculum and institutional development. The consultancy was awarded to a team that consisted of a total of five consultants, three of which came from the University of Namibia. With the University of Namibia, a long-time rival of the BETD program (Nyambe, 2001), dominating the Consultancy team, the proposed reform naturally advocated for the demise of the BETD and the subsequent drawing of the independent colleges of education into the university folds as subordinated peripheral campuses.

Following the consultancy study, the four colleges of education in Namibia were taken over by UNAM and the BETD program was replaced with the university B.Ed. degree starting January 2011. Compared to former colleges of education with their progressive teacher education orientations, the University of Namibia has not successfully disentangled itself from the traditional provisioning of teacher education that has tended to privilege behaviouristic, control and manipulative pedagogies

that are delivered through discrete portions such as history of education, philosophy of education, etc. Seen within a context that has disfavoured the BETD program on the basis of its critical and emancipatory tendencies, we argue that the current reform that has resulted into the phasing out of the BETD and the take-over of colleges by the University as regional campuses and the subsequent introduction of the university B.Ed. at these campuses, is consistent with the current global neo-liberal ambitions to dispel from teacher education programs any modes of pedagogy that seem to threaten neo-liberal capitalism. Hill (2003, p. 4) captures this practice when he observes that one of the key objectives of neoliberal capitalism in teacher education is:

...to ensure that modes of pedagogy that are antithetical to labor power production *do not and cannot exist*. In particular, it becomes clear, on this analysis, that the capitalist state will seek to destroy any forms of pedagogy *that attempt to educate students regarding their real predicament – to create an awareness of themselves as future labor-powers and to underpin this awareness with critical insight that seeks to underpin the smooth running of the social production of labor power* (emphasis, original)

We also observe that in keeping with the neo-liberal project of dispelling critical spaces from teacher education it was deliberate that this consultancy was given to a team that by and large had its orientations within the camp of the 'traditional intellectuals' foremost supportive to the former college for whites and the highly conservative cadre of academics. The expected consequences of this consultancy were obviously that the post-apartheid program that had made attempts to break with apartheid legacies would be replaced. Further to the neo-liberal agenda of obliterating critical avenues in teacher education, we also note that the pre-independence situation with second tier relations between colleges for blacks in the northern part of Namibia and the so-called academy in Windhoek is today reborn as regional faculty campuses under the direction of the Faculty of Education in Windhoek. Remembering what Samoff (2007, pp. 55-61) says about consultancy teams that operate under the umbrella of the donor discourses directed by the World Bank we take note that in such consultancies "what is regarded as important knowledge is likely to become more technical and

less humanistic and critical” and that whatever comes in the way for the global educational doctrines is also drawn into “a common framework for describing, categorizing, analyzing, and assessing education”.

We also locate the current absorption of colleges into UNAM as an integral part of the World Bank driven neo-liberal scheme across Africa, and other parts of the world, where the welfare approach to education provision has been aggressively discouraged by the Bank in favour of marketization approaches such as cost-sharing between higher education students and the state or outright commercialization. This form of “academic capitalism or entrepreneurialism”, as Wangenge-Ouma (2008, p. 223) terms it, is being advocated in the Namibian context by a World Bank report which prescribes higher education funding strategies such as: developing and expanding effective cost-sharing mechanisms, expanding private provision and accelerating the establishment of a training levy (Marope, 2005). It should be noted that the provision of teacher education through the BETD program was by and large pro-poor as it was accessible to many Namibians and underpinned by a welfare development paradigm where financing of teacher education was almost entirely the responsibility of the state. The move to have colleges taken over by the University is an elitist one, making teacher education affordable only by the well to do students who are capable of paying the high academic fees of the University. The high university fees as a deterring factor was demonstrated by the sudden drop in student applications on the newly introduced university B.Ed. degree program in 2011. Not even did the second advertisement lure prospective students to apply as the numbers still remained very low at the former colleges due to associated high fees on the side of the student in the cost sharing scheme. Furthermore, the present discourse on pre-service teacher education in Namibia is advertising an alternative to the B.Ed. program after a few years of operational failure.

Our conclusion at this point is that the BETD program was too hard a lesson for conservative academics to learn and for the political leadership to accept as a new way towards emancipation beyond the market. Therefore, conservative academics saw the possibility to reinstall the conservative order, when failing national policies made the politicians

fall back to the old trick of blaming education for a situation that was self-inflicted.

Continuing professional development for educators as a new arena in Namibia

In the face of neoliberal attempts to dispel critical spaces from teacher education, a new arena for critical educational struggle was opened in Namibia through the site based continuing professional development (CPD) of beginner and veteran teachers. The National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) whose central position in post-independence teacher education was weakened by the transfer of pre-service teacher education from colleges to UNAM was the main driver in this emerging arena of hope. We observe that the new front has the potential to offer counter-hegemonic spaces through which the neo-liberal damage on pre-service teachers can be mitigated.

Usually, within main-stream practices, teachers' professional development needs are determined externally and delivered to the teacher by external experts, an approach which stifles the development of the teacher's own professional confidence. Such disempowering CPD practices are a continuation of pre-service pedagogies that seek to create labour power with the appropriate dispositions supportive to the unrestrained global expansion of private capital.

On the contrary, the new CPD approach adopted by NIED draws upon bottom-up, participatory, school-based processes and uses empowering approaches such as action research and critical practitioner inquiry that accord teachers their long denied voice in the identification, planning and addressing of their own professional development needs (NIED, 2010). Through these critical arenas, attempts are being made to regain the teachers' lost confidence by casting new pedagogic images where they are seen as the experts in their own right who can participate meaningfully in their own professional development. Local structures such as schools and cluster centres are used to garner local expertise through communities of practice in order to facilitate CPD activities locally. CPD becomes more a matter of teachers deciding what to do with others or by themselves.

Through this paradigm, NIED has developed a two year induction and mentoring program for beginner teachers (NIED, 2010). While the content of the current program resemble the usual stuff in teacher education, this program provides an avenue for possible critical pedagogies in order to counteract the damage on new teachers by neoliberal pedagogies. Further to this, as an on-going, life long process in teachers' career, CPD has even a much greater potential to serve as a counter-hegemonic avenue as it engages teachers over a long period of time.

What are the possibilities for the future?

Earlier in this paper we indicated that influences on our present research perspective come from the scholastic work attached to concepts like problem representation (Bacchi, 2009), de-imperialization (Chen, 2010), southern theory (Connell, 2007), critical pedagogy of place (Gruenewald, 2003), and power and policy slippage (Husén & Mmuya, 2008).

Therefore, our research perspective is critical to the hegemonic neoliberal influences on educational practices and policies worldwide as they are represented in the three case studies above. We also believe that educational development at national levels must be firmly based in the social and cultural aspects of society to be able to act as humanistic alternatives to the present onslaughts on welfare systems worldwide that operate under the hegemonic power of financial capital, international donors and their corporate networks of influences to create supportive national middle classes that makes the machinery work, while the subaltern majority is dismissed as cheap labour or systemic deficits (Dinan & Miller, 2007). It is high time for critical educator to join forces and counteract the global assault on public education inflicted by marketization forces (Compton & Weiner, 2008; Ball, 2012; Katz & Rose, 2013).

The three examples of counter-hegemonic globalizations that we have presented are still in embryotic stages and call for further development and support to be able to become part of a new paradigm in education and to contribute to a counter-hegemonic research perspective from the

South. If allowed to develop into acknowledged educational practices these examples will also challenge what is today taken for granted namely to transform education into a narrow version of training suited for the global market and to replace it with more educative and humanistic practices suited for the public good of humanity.

ⁱ The 'Chicago Boys' was the characterization of the group of economists that implemented the neoliberal doctrines established by Milton Friedman as part of the Chicago School of Economics. See for example Chossudovsky (2003) and Klein (2007).

ⁱⁱ Available at <http://www.ei-ie.org/en/>

ⁱⁱⁱ TWN-Africa is the African branch of Third World Network. Further information at <http://twnafrica.org>

^{iv} The Forbes list is available at <http://bit.ly/hnZ5RP>

^v Further information on Tobin Taxes are found at www.tobintax.org.

^{vi} The concept 'policy ensemble' is from Ball (2006).

^{vii} For further readings on the development of teacher education in exile in Angola and after independence inside Namibia we recommend Zeichner & Dahlström (1999), Dahlström (2002), and Nyambe (2008).

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Lars Dahlström, Retired Associate Professor of Education, Department of Education, Umeå University, Sweden. He has worked extensively with teacher education, Critical Practitioner Inquiry (CPI), and research in the global South, lately in Lao PDR and Afghanistan. Homepage: www.globalsouthnetwork.org
Contact: ldahlstrom@telia.com

Dr John Nyambe is a Namibian teacher educator. He is currently the Director for the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Unit at the University of Namibia. His research interests are in critical and alternative paradigms in teacher education reform.

Contact: jnyambe@unam.na