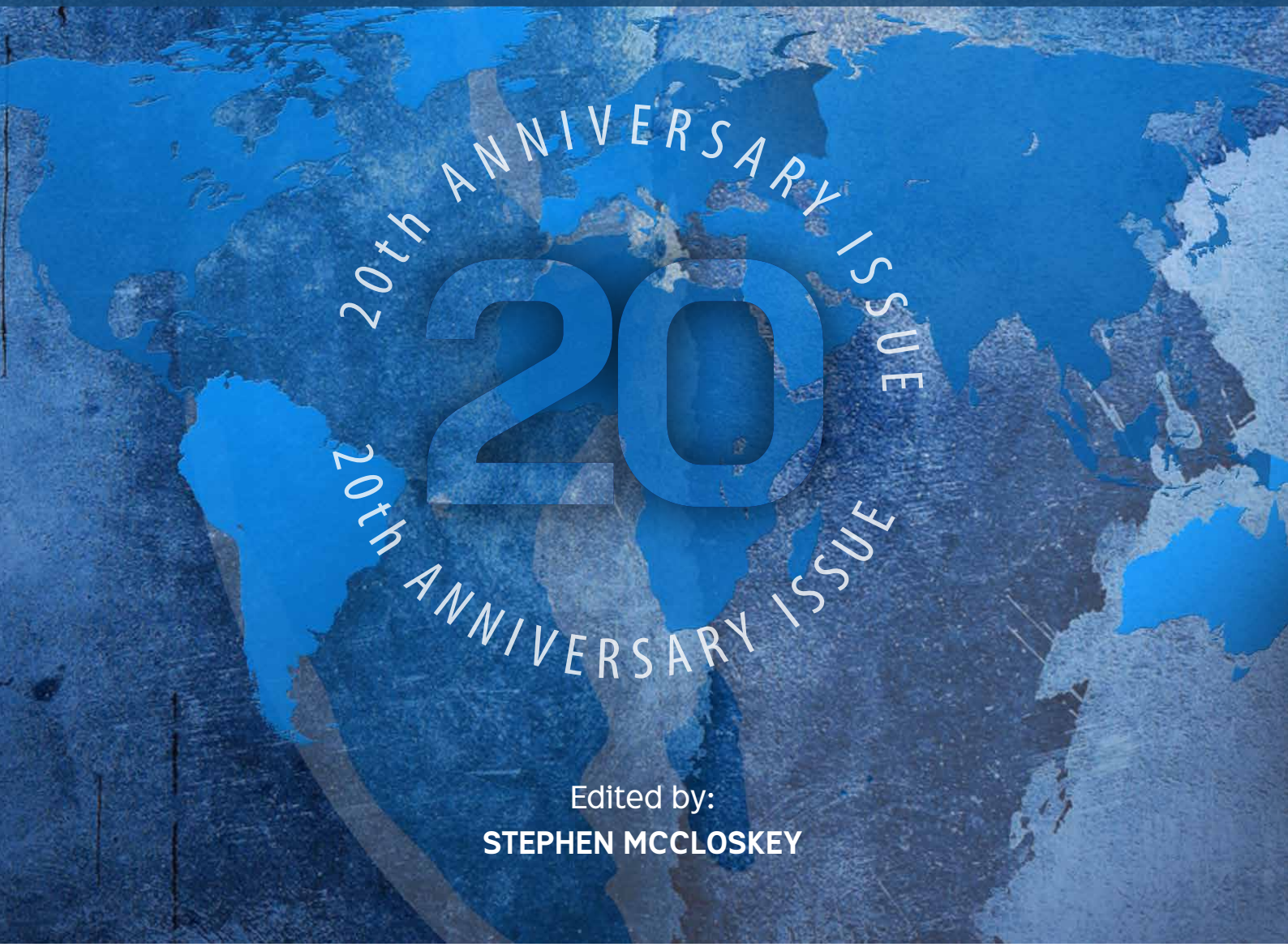
Policy and Practice
A Development Education Review

My 500 on "The Future of Development Education"

ISSN: 2053-4272



Edited by:
STEPHEN MCCLOSKEY

PUBLISHED BY THE CENTRE FOR GLOBAL EDUCATION AND FUNDED BY IRISH AID

CENTRE FOR GLOBAL EDUCATION

Irish Aid
Department of Foreign Affairs
An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha

ISSN: 1748-135X

Editor: Stephen McCloskey

Citation: McCloskey, S (ed.) (2025) 'My 500 on "The Future of Development Education"', Belfast: Centre for Global Education.

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This document has been published as part of a development education project funded by Irish Aid at the Department of Foreign Affairs. Irish Aid is the Government's overseas development programme which supports partners working in some of the world's poorest countries. Irish Aid also supports global citizenship and development education in Ireland to encourage learning and public engagement with global issues. The ideas, opinions and comments herein are entirely the responsibility of the Centre for Global Education and do not necessarily represent or reflect DFA policy.

Contents

Introduction

The Centre for Global Education's bi-annual, peer reviewed, open access journal *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review* celebrates its twentieth anniversary in 2025. To mark this important milestone for the journal, the Centre for Global Education circulated a special call for contributors to invite 500-word articles on "The Future of Development Education". The articles will be collectively published as a Viewpoint article as part of Issue 40 of *Policy and Practice* in Spring 2025, however, we also wanted to make them more widely available in advance of publication in the journal to stimulate debate on the future direction of the sector.

The articles submitted under this special call were limited to 500 words and authors were invited to write in free form without references although they had the option of hyperlinking text to evidence key points made in the articles. Authors were encouraged to submit punchy articles that made their points clearly and succinctly using plain language. The main instruction to authors through the call for contributors was that their articles must address an aspect of development education policy and / or practice and to consider the sector's future direction. Otherwise, authors were left to determine the focus of their articles in terms of educational sector, theme and argument. A limited word count forced authors to strip their articles down to core messages without the option for expansive exposition. This has resulted in excellent pieces that offer readers food for thought at a critical juncture for the development education sector.

Issue 39 of *Policy and Practice*, published in Autumn 2024 on the theme "Development Education Silences", produced an unprecedented number of published articles in one volume, many of which raised alarm at the sector's non-response to critical issues converging on our world including: the climate emergency, the genocide in the Gaza Strip, neoliberalism, class and inequality, and corporatisation. The central question raised by these articles is how can the sector move forward and reconnect with its radical orgins? Hopefully, the articles published in this special collection go some way toward answering this question.

I want to thank all of the authors who contributed to this special collection and Irish Aid, the funder of *Policy and Practice* over the past twenty years.

Stephen McCloskey,
Editor, Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review,
February 2025

Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review

Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review is a bi-annual, peer reviewed, open access journal which aims to enhance capacity in the development education (DE) sector locally and internationally by sharing good practice, supporting research and strengthening debate in DE. Over the past 19 years, 39 issues of the journal have been published on the journal's web platform: www.developmenteducationreview.com. Each issue of the journal is constructed around a theme chosen by an Editorial Group which also assists with the peer reviewing of articles. The strategic aims of the journal are to:

- Provide a space for practitioners to critically reflect on their practice;
- Discuss the main challenges faced by development education practitioners;
- Celebrate and promote good practice in development education;
- Debate the policy environment in which development education is delivered;
- Share new research in development education;
- Strengthen links between development education and related adjectival educations such as human rights and sustainable development.

In 2024, the *Policy and Practice* web site received 199,402 unique visits and 347,542 visits in total from the global North and South. The top 10 visitor countries to the web site on the basis of pages viewed from January to December 2024 were the following:

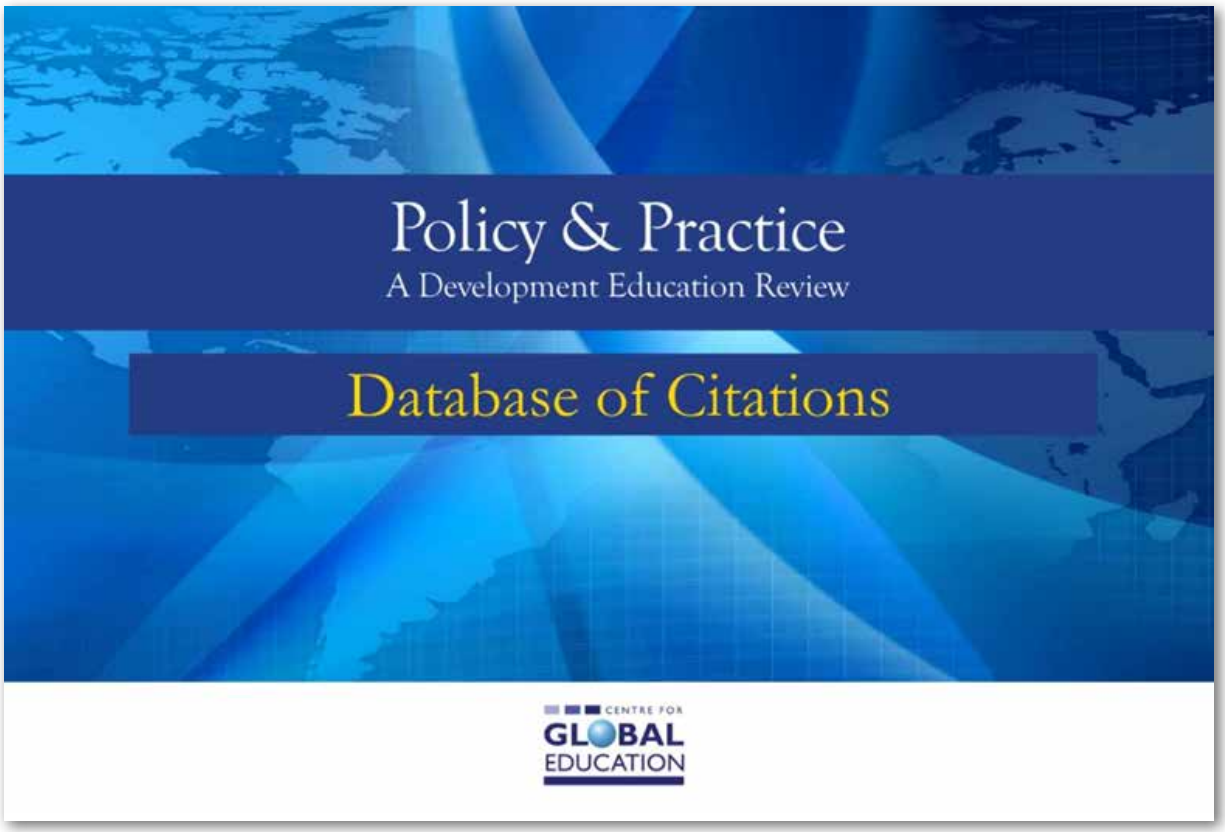
Countries	Number of Pages viewed
United States	195,145
Canada	38,976
Poland	44,964
China	28,160
Great Britain	28,260
Russian Federation	29,341
India	26,928
Philippines	12,842
Ireland	7,611
Seychelles	6,272

The journal content is disseminated by EBSCO which is a United States-based provider of research databases, e-journals, magazine subscriptions, e-books and discovery service to libraries of all kinds. This has supported the dissemination of journal content to academic institutions across the world. The journal has also been accepted by Scopus, an abstract and citation database launched in 2004 which covers nearly 36,377 titles

from approximately 11,678 publishers. The journal is also a publisher member of the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) which is 'a community-curated online directory that indexes and provides access to high quality, open access, peer-reviewed journals'. All of these journal directories enhance the promotion and dissemination of the journal and ensure its content supports teaching, learning and research.

Journal Citations

One of the qualitative methods used to evaluate the impact of the journal on research and practice involves monitoring the number of citations generated by *Policy and Practice* articles in other books and journals, and in articles published by *Policy and Practice* itself. The citation database was last updated in July 2024 and showed that a total of 5,275 citations had been generated by *Policy and Practice* articles of which 4,825 were in external journals and 450 were found in other *Policy and Practice* articles. This total represented an increase of 448 on November 2023. The citations have appeared in 761 journals and 373 books covering a range of academic disciplines and subject areas reflecting the multi-disciplinary nature of the journal's content. The research on citations also showed that *Policy and Practice* articles have been cited in 452 theses, dissertations and academic papers, which reflects the extent to which the journal is supporting new research in higher education. Citations were also found in 128 non-governmental organization publications which suggests that *Policy and Practice* has managed to sustain a strong level of readership in the NGO sector as well as academia. The *Policy and Practice* Citations Database is available here.



Development Education: Thinking Outside the Box

NEIL ALLDRED

Development education (DE) could begin to develop a much-needed new perspective by recognising some of the errors and silences of its past history. Dependency theory was posited by mainly Latin American economists and sociologists in the late 1960's and 70's but DE ignored its radical, challenging implications. Similarly, DE never really brought on board leading figures in academic and research economics, so while the neoliberal orthodoxy unleashed during the Reagan and Thatcher years grew ever bolder, we had no worked out alternatives that could help us map out more appropriate strategies to the outmoded idea of development.

Today, we have Modern Monetary Theory (MMT) which debunks much of the nonsense in orthodox economics, so we should be arguing now not for 'developmental' incrementalism but for radical global redistribution of wealth, assets and opportunities. Reparations have been paid out in other historical circumstances - to slave owners in the nineteenth century, or Germany's payments to both Israel and different Jewish communities, following the Second World War Holocaust, and Japan's payments in recognition of the treatment of 'comfort women' - so reparations, as redistribution of wealth from the global North to the global South, should be a major target of our praxis.

The United Nations' 196 member states and their citizens have no effective means of influencing decision-making and legislation that affects their lives, so a World Parliament is a necessity, along with a global open borders policy to allow people to share freedoms and opportunities without being victims of climate breakdown or petty nationalisms. Indeed, the climate crisis is an existential threat - to other species and to the planet itself, as well as to human beings - so focussing on a just transition to more equitable and sustainable behaviours and lifestyles should be a hallmark of forthcoming DE initiatives, syllabi and curricula. Most people in DE are familiar with the extremely modest progress made under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, 2000-2015) and that the subsequent endorsement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, 2015-2030) failed to recognise key requirements of both sustainability and equity. Surely there is here a key theme for DE work in the coming decades.

Degrowth - or, preferably, post-growth - is a theme that needs to be highlighted by the DE community in order to combat the reheated arguments espoused by most governments that economic growth is the be-all and end-all of human existence. Thoughtless economic growth on a finite planet will inevitably entail the end-all of human existence. System change, alternative strategies and a radical, combative championing of plausible options that will lead to planetary stability, social and economic equity, and global justice are what the sector needs to define and embrace.

'Development' has for too long been seen as measurable improvements to people's lives and livelihoods, but has been predicated on the unhelpful metric of GDP (gross domestic product), and implemented within a narrow perspective of neoliberal economics that suggests that wealthy people create jobs and prosperity, and that capitalism is the only appropriate framework to work within.

Time for change!

Neil Alldred spent half his career pursuing development initiatives in the global South, and the other half in Ireland where he researched, taught and critiqued development issues, practices and perspectives. Now fully retired, he is seeking new avenues of pensioner activity.

The Numbers Trap: Development Education as Solution to Development's Legacy of Inflated Beneficiary Metrics

BENEDICT ARKO

For decades, the international development sector has equated success with numbers, prioritising the sheer volume of people reached over the depth of impact. Reports celebrate thousands trained, millions assisted, and entire communities transformed. Yet behind these figures, the reality is often far less impressive. Many beneficiaries see little lasting change, while structural barriers to poverty remain unaddressed. This obsession with scale over substance is not new; it has shaped development practice since the mid-twentieth century when international aid efforts first expanded.

From 1960s modernisation to 1980s microfinance and today's digital initiatives, the same flawed approach persists. Governments and donors seek quick results, pushing agencies to prioritise outreach over lasting impact. A single training session is counted as a success, even if participants never apply the skills. Instead of fostering public engagement for social change, the focus is on fundraising through impressive but superficial statistics. Development education is needed to provide the citizenry with the skills, knowledge and understanding to support sustainable and meaningful change.

This numerical obsession has led to a development model that favours short-term visibility and revenue raising over real impact. The more people a programme can claim to have reached, the more successful it appears. As a result, interventions are designed to be broad but shallow, offering minimal engagement rather than deep, sustained support. Instead of meaningful transformation for a few, programmes focus on broad reach with little follow-up. The logic of scale drives decisions, shaping projects that are easy to quantify but difficult to sustain. Yet true development takes time. Livelihood interventions need time to show impact, yet short donor-driven cycles rarely allow for long-term follow-ups. Development education provides the skill sets needed to sustain real progress and also effectively assess the progress made.

Alongside the numbers game is a reliance on selective success stories, a practice that has been part of development narratives for decades. Reports highlight the exceptional cases - the farmer whose yield doubled or the entrepreneur who built a thriving business. These stories, while real, often obscure the reality that many others who received the same support saw little change. The failures and setbacks that define most development work remain largely invisible, creating a misleading sense of progress. Without a full picture, international development keeps repeating mistakes, prioritising appearances over real impact. International development needs development education that addresses poverty's root causes - neoliberal economics and market-driven demands - through a systemic approach.

If international development is to break free from this decades-old pattern, it must redefine success. Measuring impact should go beyond counting participants and instead focus on whether interventions lead to lasting improvements to people's lives. Programmes must invest in long-term tracking, following beneficiaries for years rather than months to understand real effects. The sector must also embrace honest reflection, shifting away from exaggerated numbers and curated success stories to a more transparent and evidence-driven approach. Until international development shifts from numbers to meaningful education, it will keep counting beneficiaries without truly helping them.

BENEDICT ARKO is a lecturer at the Department of Geography Education, University of Education, Winneba in Ghana. His research interests are in regional economic development, regional development planning, decentralised governance and mining, environment and livelihoods. He has a PhD in Development Geography from the Bayreuth International Graduate School for African Studies (BIGSAS) at the University of Bayreuth in Germany.

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Development Education's Roots in Interwar Liberal Internationalism and the Crisis of the Liberal Order

APRIL R. BICCUM

Critical Scholarship in development and global education has long indicated the colonial inflection of education aiming to contribute to poverty reduction that originates in the global North and imbricated by western epistemologies and metaphysics which are demonstrably part of the European colonial project. The policy and practice of development education (DE) has taken on these critiques and there have been productive moves to global South epistemologies and pedagogies.

At the same time, a recent publication by Global Education Network Europe (GENE) contains an article which acknowledges that global education in the United Kingdom (UK) does have colonial roots by virtue of its antecedents in the interwar Council for Education in World Citizenship (CEWC). Founded in 1939 to create distance from the League of Nations Union, the CEWC lasted decades after the war, increasingly turned its attention to inequality, racism and global development issues and folded only in the early 1980s because it was outcompeted by development education centres. The crisis we face in the global (neo)liberal order bears a striking resemblance to the circumstances that pertained in the interwar period. The time is ripe for development educators to assess this history in light of advances in scholarship in the areas of political science, international relations and international political economy.

In these fields there has been a growth industry in scholarship that re-examines continuities between the British imperial world order and the multi-lateral world order that emerged after the Second World War. The architects of the League of Nations and the League of Nations Union were part of a (at the time) new cohort of liberal imperialists who saw in the League of Nations an opportunity to resuscitate the British empire on more multi-lateral terms. Importantly, among these lobbyists and institution designers were avid educators, in both theory and practice, who elaborated a succinct role for an education in international relations in creating capacity among the public to participate in a more democratic foreign policy.

While I completely reject the patronising imperialism of these thinker/activists, there is something in this original formulation of education for world citizenship that development educators in contemporary times may want to return to. If DE is about global social justice in its fullest sense, then development educators need to have a better understanding of the international system, and an historical sense of the current crisis in the liberal international order. There needs to be more cross fertilisation between development educators and the discipline of political science. In addition to an understanding of our shared imperial history and a decolonial epistemology, recipients of DE need to have a sense of global 'real politique' if we are to educate for the capacity to resist the rise of global fascism. Development educators need also to have a greater historical sense of DE's connections to global education and it's roots in interwar liberal internationalism, because 2025 is strikingly similar in geopolitical terms to 1925.

April R. Biccum is a Senior Lecturer in International Relations in the School of Politics and International Relations, Australian National University.

The Future of Development Education: A Framework Based on Joanna Macy's Three Stories

ANNE M. DOLAN

Joanna Macy's work on transformative thinking and action is deeply rooted in her concept of the 'Three Stories of Our Time'. The story of *Business as Usual* reflects the dominant narrative of industrial growth, economic expansion, and technological progress. Macy's second story, *The Great Unravelling*, describes the breakdown of ecological, social, and economic systems. It is a narrative that acknowledges the severity of global crises, from climate change to rising inequality, and recognises the fragility of the systems underpinning contemporary life. The third story, *The Great Turning*, is the most hopeful and transformative of Macy's narratives. It describes a shift from a society based on exploitation and domination to one rooted in sustainability, justice, and interconnectedness. This story envisions a future where humans live in harmony with the Earth and with each other, guided by values of compassion, equity, and collective well-being.

For development education, *The Great Turning* offers a roadmap for transformative change. It challenges educators to go beyond raising awareness of global issues and actively engage learners in the co-creation of solutions. This involves reimagining curricula, pedagogies, and institutional practices to align with the principles of ecological sustainability, social justice, and participatory democracy. One of the key aspects of *The Great Turning* in education is the emphasis on collective action. Learners are not only encouraged to think critically but also to act courageously. For instance, schools and universities can integrate community-based projects that address real-world challenges, such as developing local food systems, advocating for policy changes, or designing renewable energy initiatives. By engaging directly with their communities, students develop a sense of agency and responsibility as global citizens.

While Macy's 'Three Stories' are distinct, they are not mutually exclusive. In fact, the future of development education lies in the ability to integrate these narratives in a way that acknowledges the complexities of our world while offering pathways for hope and action.

- **Acknowledging Business as Usual**: Development education must critically examine the limitations of the current system and the importance of working to transform its underlying structures.

- **Confronting The Great Unravelling**: Educators must create spaces for honest dialogue about the crises we face, while also providing the tools and support needed to cope with the associated grief and anxiety. This involves integrating emotional and psychological dimensions into learning, recognising that addressing global challenges requires not only intellectual engagement but also emotional resilience.

- **Embracing The Great Turning**: Development education should prioritise transformative practices that empower learners to envision and create a just and sustainable future. This includes fostering creativity, collaboration, and systems thinking, as well as emphasising the values of empathy, solidarity, and stewardship.

Joanna Macy's 'Three Stories' offer a powerful framework for rethinking the future of development education. By moving beyond the narrow confines of *Business as Usual*, embracing the challenges of *The Great Unravelling*, and actively participating in *The Great Turning*, educators and learners alike can contribute to the creation of a more equitable and sustainable world.

Anne M. Dolan is an associate professor and lecturer in primary geography with the Department of Learning, Society and Religious Education in Mary Immaculate College, Ireland. She is the director of the M.Ed. in Education for Sustainability and Global Citizenship in Mary Immaculate College and author/editor of several books and resources including *Teaching the Sustainable Development Goals to Young Citizens: A focus on hope, respect, empathy and advocacy* (Routledge, 2024).

Reflections on Development Education and the New Primary Curriculum Framework in the Republic of Ireland

CLAIRE GLAVEY

The new Primary Curriculum Framework for the Republic of Ireland and the anticipated publication of finalised curriculum area specifications prompt reflection on how these curriculum changes may shape the future of development education (DE) in primary schools. The current Primary School Curriculum identifies 'the European and global dimensions' as one of fifteen key issues for primary education. Elements of DE are found in subject strands and strand units for history (Ireland, Europe and the world, 1960 to the present), geography (people and other lands; trade and development issues), science (environmental awareness and care) and social, personal and health education (developing citizenship; media education). Teacher agency and curriculum flexibility provide further opportunities for DE, for example in the selection of poetry, novels, music and art with social justice themes, and in the use of participatory methodologies which foster skills such as critical and creative thinking, empathy, reflection and cooperation.

The new curriculum demonstrates greater recognition of DE, with 'being an active citizen' one of seven key competencies set out to support children's development, the description of which closely aligns with many descriptions of DE. It includes, for example, helping children 'to question, critique, and understand what is happening in the world within a framework of human rights, equity, social justice, and sustainable development'. It is anticipated that the finalised specifications, along with professional development for teachers in the roll-out phase of the new curriculum will provide guidance on how each key competency can be woven through cross-curricular and subject-specific teaching and learning. For those working to support primary teachers to integrate DE across the curriculum, these changes provide a natural reflection point. The greater emphasis on citizenship as a core component of primary education is welcome and suggests more curriculum space to draw upon for DE. The prominence of teacher agency in the new curriculum provides more potential still.

In harnessing the opportunities provided by these curriculum changes, and to continue, expand and strengthen the engagement of primary schools with DE, learning can be gained from a recent national survey of 288 Irish primary teachers on the topic of global citizenship education (GCE). The commonly identified obstacle of insufficient time for GCE planning and teaching may be tackled by supporting curriculum planning at individual teacher and whole school levels, using examples of how to thematically integrate DE/GCE across the curriculum. The identified gap between teachers' much higher rating of the importance of GCE, compared to their rating of their own confidence, knowledge and pedagogical skills, suggests a need to actively foster teacher confidence. This can be done by supporting the development of teachers' knowledge and skills in DE/GCE and making explicit the links between the curriculum and GCE.

Specific topics for professional development may be found in the relatively low frequency of human rights and sustainability in teachers' own word descriptors of their understanding of GCE, and in the relatively low rating by teachers of their pedagogical skills in supporting pupils to engage in action. These findings show that there is work to be done on exploring the root causes of global issues and on supporting understanding of the interdependence and interconnectedness of frameworks, structures and issues that are core to DE.

Claire Glavey is an Education Officer with Global Village. She is a former primary school teacher with an M.Sc. in Development Studies and has worked on a range of human rights education and development education programmes at primary, post-primary and third-level.

A New Generation of 'Responsible Internationalists' are Crucial to the Future of Development Education

AIMEE HALEY

Development education within the higher education sector has traditionally promoted awareness-raising of inequalities in international development cooperation, and scholars have responded by drawing attention to coloniality in education partnerships and proposing transformative modes of collaboration. Such efforts are admirable but will become a concern of the past if international cooperation is halted. Powerful actors from the global North have begun emphasising higher education's responsibility for national interests and security over its social responsibility for global society. For example, in January 2025 the United States paused foreign aid, and between 2022 and 2024, the Swedish government halved funding for development aid and withdrew funding that was earmarked for development research. Calls from the European Commission for a policy-driven approach to 'responsible internationalisation' have also contributed to universities in the global North closing themselves off from international cooperation. These are dangerous developments as it puts responsibility for collaboration in teaching and research on the global South while those in the North ignore that cooperation is a necessity for addressing poverty, inequality, and injustice.

While the full consequences of these actions remain to be seen, the future of development education is dependent on a new generation of 'responsible internationalists' to combat these trends. Responsible internationalists are educators and scholars who understand the need for a nuanced approach to international development cooperation. They acknowledge that cooperation includes balancing a social responsibility for society with the practical realities of geopolitical strife.

Responsible internationalists are not limited to the higher education sector - they include educators at all levels, in communities, and workplaces. They are crucial to shaping public understanding and fostering critical engagement with global issues, and they are needed now more than ever. A recent report shows a decline in public understanding about the effectiveness of international development cooperation and whether it leads to a better world. Now is the time for responsible internationalists to step forward and counter misinformation and educate the public on the importance of international cooperation to tackling global challenges and the tangible benefits of development education.

Scholars must do more than publish about international cooperation; they must actively resist isolationist pressures within their universities that threaten its very essence. Young people between 18 and 29 years old are the demographic most eager to learn more about international development cooperation, making it impertive for university educators to support and nourish this curiosity. Consequently, scholars have a duty not only to equip the next generation of responsible internationalists with the competences needed to advocate for and participate in meaningful international cooperation, but they also have a duty to lead by example. Without this commitment, development education risks becoming obsolete and the progress made in addressing poverty, inequality, and injustice may be undone.

Aimee Haley is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Education and Special Education at the University of Gothenburg. She researches educational access, education-to-work transitions, and development education.

Development Education Needs Sharper Talons for Better Sustainability Approaches

JESSICA HARRISON

Development education (DE) needs to sharpen its talons and embrace a different kind of approach towards sustainability that is more critical. It is time for DE to release its grasp on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which serve to uphold our violent world systems that harm the environment and society. We are seeing wealthy men in positions of power gutting agencies that provide foreign aid and rolling back policies designed to help the world. This may only be the beginning of actions like these that will negatively impact most of the non-humans and humans on this planet resulting in further unsustainability and chaos.

DE already works to provide meaningful responses to issues such as genocide, racism, class inequalities and climate breakdown. It is undeniable that these are complex issues that go beyond knowing facts and information, and that real sustainable change is not going to occur if current harmful human actions continue as normal. Collectively, humans need to start recognising where responsibility for unsustainability lies and be better at being uncomfortable with these realisations. In response to this, DE should give less time to the SDGs and commit to sustainability approaches that encourage deeper criticality and dialogue.

A way to encourage more criticality for sustainability is to dedicate more time in educational spaces for learners to think, sit and reflect on how these complex issues make them feel. This offers opportunity for exploration on what they might be holding onto that could be more harmful than good for sustainable change for the planet. There is important work being done that DE may draw upon to help implement this deeper thinking approach. More opportunity for dialogue would deepen criticality as well by encouraging a collective approach to determining what sustainability can mean for non-humans and humans alike. If DE can facilitate more discussion around these issues, then it can support a wider understanding of the barriers to sustainable change and highlight how the SDGs themselves may act as barriers.

Deeper thinking and dialogue may already be happening in educational spaces. However, in the face of complex issues rather than leaving ten minutes at the end of a lesson or workshop for reflection time, these activities should be embedded and used to encourage people to learn and explore these challenges together.

To sharpen its talons, DE should commit to reducing its grasp on the SDGS and take a more focused and critical approach to sustainability issues. More time needs to be given to deeper thinking and dialogue that explore barriers to sustainable change, who or what is responsible and to embrace the discomfort of these complex issues. DE is rooted in principles of reflection and action for change, and this is needed now and for the future especially when it comes to sustainability challenges that threaten the environment and society.

Jessica Harrison (she/her) is a PhD Candidate in the Education Department at Maynooth University, Ireland. Her research interests are in sustainability education, teacher education, pedagogy, and social justice.

Children's Rights: A Foundation for Global Citizenship Education

GERRY JEFFERS

For many teachers there can be an uncomfortable mismatch between the ambitious narratives of development education (DE) / global citizenship education (GCE) and classroom realities. When research suggests that students understand GCE in multiple and contradictory ways and as a vague construct unrelated to their daily lives, the temptation to draw attention to the challenges is strong: low and marginalised status in schools; insufficient time, dependent on individual champions rather than a whole-school approach; inadequate teacher preparation/confidence/courage leading towards 'soft' activities such as 'fundraising, fasting and fun' rather than critique and activism including a tendency to avoid sensitive and controversial issues. In my experience as a teacher and a teacher-educator, many feel overwhelmed by the cultural and structural constraints. This in turn can lead to varied responses: defeatism, relative disengagement, lowering of expectations, increased determination to carry on, more intense engagement with issues and resources, and a strengthened motivation to change the culture of the school and even the system.

The key suggestion in this short piece is that a stronger GCE foundation for students in classrooms can be built by closer alignment of DE/GCE with children's rights. If, recalling John Dewey's contention that education is a process of living *now* and not a preparation for future living as well as Paulo Freire's focus on education as giving 'a voice to the voiceless', GCE that begins by treating those under 18 years of age as valued citizens and educating them about their rights, can become very relevant, engaging and of practical benefit.

The *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) offers one framework for such exploration. For example, realising differences between the rights to survival, to protection, to development and to participation can become a valuable schema for interrogating numerous issues. For example, for many students, Articles 3 (adults making decisions relating to children should do so in the best interests of the child) and 12 (children have the right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them) can be especially empowering. Furthermore, Laura Lundy's development of Article 12 that links voice, space, audience and agency can become a model for examining the situation of any marginalised, oppressed or under-represented group.

Conceptually, John Wall asserts that current understandings of global citizenship do not respond adequately to children's age and needs. His case for some re-imagining appears to have validity and could prompt a fresh starting point for GCE. The UNCRC is also a useful lens for schools to interrogate their policies and practices. Teachers sometimes find that a frank engagement with the Convention can become a surprising introduction to 'teaching controversial issues' as students pose questions about specific school practices! Indeed, the Teaching Council version of GCE as aiming to empower learners of all ages to assume active roles, both locally and globally, in building more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure societies, might be refined by stating that this can begin, using the UNCRC, to support students and teachers construct more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure schools.

Gerry Jeffers has worked as a teacher in Ireland and Kenya. He has also been a guidance counsellor, deputy principal, leader of the team involved in the national mainstreaming of Transition Year in the 1990s, and a lecturer and researcher in Education at Maynooth University. From 2013-2019 Gerry served as the independent chairperson of Ubuntu, a network of those in initial teaching education committed to integrating development education / global citizenship education into initial teacher education.

Disrupting Assumptions

SU-MING KHOO

My reflection begins with a sense of disrupted background assumptions, provoking fundamental questions about the global order and the purposes of learning. Our assumptions about 'critical thinking' reflect continued expectations about the forward directions of social progress. Following Freire, we expect critical reflection to lead to 'conscientisation', and mobilisation of social action against injustice and oppression. The large number of recent articles in Issue 39 of *Policy and Practice* exposed concerns about development and global education's non-response to many actual global issues. The question of silences pulled to the surface challenging questions about how our sector deals with the present (or not).

How can we embody the core ideals, approaches and aspirations of development and global citizenship education when citizenship and the global order seem to be melting into a chaotic vortex? Our field claims to offer an educational response to multidimensional global issues. Yet the present global scenario encompasses an existential crisis for the entire enterprise of education itself, from de-funding, financial crisis threatening entire sectors, to scholasticide as a face of genocide. How are critical development and global educators drawing on this present, and what futures can we point towards? How do we teach for positive change when the possibility of secure futures seems to be replaced by dread, a prospect of futureless futures?

Have we engaged sufficiently critically with the order that we take for granted, as well as the threats it currently faces? Most of us are still working with the assumption that the foundations of 'development', 'education', 'global' and 'citizenship' are holding. Yet the liberal international order that we assume to exist in the background is itself both outcome and cause of brutal imperial wars, conflict and repression. Imperial histories are revenant in current problems of genocide, invasion, occupation, protracted conflict, authoritarianism, nationalism, chauvinism, and attacks on rights and equality. Deepening global and national inequalities, disinformation and mistrust are adding to tensions and conflicts that replay violent pasts.

Education is constantly tasked to foster capacities in people to solve global problems that they didn't create. What can we learn from this basic paradox? Perhaps development and global citizenship education need to go further, moving beyond technical interests in teaching improvements, or fads like the SDGs, and beyond descriptive approaches, towards a broader critical interest in the purposes of learning in times of political, social and economic crisis, taking in broader understandings of what constitutes agency. Our theoretical assumptions imply that we are doing this, but our practices should follow suit, addressing concrete questions of what international 'development', education and globality are for, and how these relate to broad objectives of peace, cooperation, rights, and justice.

A broader take requires generative challenging conversations, not only between ourselves, the development and global citizenship education specialists, but with others educating in related fields such as sociology, politics, philosophy, environmental and development studies, to jointly debate the role of education as a space of critical thought and global diagnosis, to mobilise understanding, energy, hope and creativity in the face of multiple crises.

Su-ming Khoo is Associate Professor and Head of Sociology at the University of Galway, Ireland, and Visiting Professor in Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation (CriSHET) at Nelson Mandela University, South Africa (2022-2027). She researches, teaches and writes about human development, human rights, public goods, development alternatives, decoloniality, global activism and learning, higher education, and transdisciplinarity.

Let's End the Inertia

STEPHEN MCCLOSKEY

In 2002, Dóchas commissioned academics Michael Kenny and Siobhan O'Malley from NUI Maynooth to 'provide an overview and analysis of the current level of activity for development education (DE) in Ireland'. The research consultation involved no less than 115 organisations and sought to make strategic recommendations for enhancing the sector's strengths, addressing weaknesses and seizing opportunities. The research report reflected a sector that lacked strategic direction, enjoyed great diversity of practice but was unfocused, and struggled with over-worked staff and short-term funding. The report preceded, and undoubtedly fed into, the formation of a national network for development education and the sector has unquestionably benefited from the professional development, communications, and strategic focus offered by the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) since it was formed in 2004. The past twenty years has been a period of consolidation in the sector with the emergence of key sectoral leaders partnering with Irish Aid in the delivery of successive development education strategies. One suspects that this is the kind of scenario that Kenny and O'Malley envisaged for the sector.

But amid this strategic and organisational progression, the sector has forfeited much of the radical impulse and diverse practice captured by Kenny and O'Malley. In 2002, they found that 'over the years development education has matured, diversified and expanded to become a force of social justice and a foundation for the development of civic society'. Can we say as much today? Evidence of the sector's inertia is all around us. It has sat out the genocide in the Gaza Strip which it can't bring itself to call a genocide. It has largely ignored the systemic origins of poverty, injustice, privatisation and the consumerisation of society in neoliberal economics. It has ignored the mounting crises in Irish society including: 15,000 homeless citizens; rising levels of xenophobia and far-right activity; and 559,850 people living below the poverty line. All of this is in a country with tax receipts of €108 billion in 2024.

Joe Muray, the former Director of Action from Ireland (AfI), posed this question of development educators: 'Are you prepared to take the unpopular position, to make your education real?'. Too many in our sector are not willing to risk the discomfort that comes from challenging the inequities and injustices that envelop us locally and globally. Rather than supporting radical action for social change, development education strategic plans are straightjackets impeding invention, imagination and radicalism. I've been told that sectoral actions on Gaza need to fall within the parameters of development education but what is that if not a critical intervention in reality? The interpretation of education as an impediment, rather than a mainspring to radical action, is an indication of how far the sector has lost its bearings. If our sector is to have a meaningful future, it must show some agency and independence of spirit, chart its own path, build horizontal links, and start operating on the basis of social need rather than ploughing a depoliticised furrow comfortably detached from the frontlines of injustice.

Stephen McCloskey is Director of the Centre for Global Education and editor of *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review*.

The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: A Call to Return to Grassroots

ELIZABETH MEADE

It is difficult to try and plot a future course for development education (DE). In our current global context, it is often difficult to look towards the future with any sense of hope at all. We can no longer assume that *a* 'future' for humanity, even a dystopian one, is a certainty. The scales of the challenges we face are indeed massive. Oxfam have recently published their annual analysis of global economic inequality. It clearly demonstrates that the continuation of business as usual, the imposition of neoliberal globalisation and the many intricately connected systemic injustices that are historically woven into the very fabric of neoliberalism, continues to amplify obscene levels of global inequality.

The obscenity of our global predicament is perfectly illustrated in the spectacle of the current United States' (US) administration. In some perverse way perhaps there is a certain opportunity in the overt, unambiguous, boastful grandstanding of Trump and his circle of white male billionaires that surround him. The oligarchs are no longer pulling the strings from behind the curtain but have a prominent visible seat at the table. Trump, and his like that threaten to take power around the world, are burning the play book and abandoning the pretence of political democracy that has long been a smokescreen to cover the reality of who really holds global power. The veil has been dropped. The ugly truth that was always hiding in plain sight is coming out from behind the mask of decency, fairness and equity and exposing the true motivations of absolute power, greed and egotism. I suggest that in the midst of this nightmare lies an opportunity for DE.

Perhaps it is also time for DE to no longer play by the rules that have been set by those who benefit from them. Perhaps the future direction lies in a return to the past. In a return to the spirit of radical analysis and action, demonstrated in the work of Freire, from which the sector emerged. To community based, community inspired and community-led movements to address the many often seemingly unsurmountable challenges that mire the window through which we seek to see a better future. Angela Davis argued that grassroots activism is 'the most important ingredient of building radical movements'.

One factor that has hampered the potential of DE to mobilise such grassroots activism has been the mainstreaming of DE. The important analysis presented in *The Revolution will not be Funded: Beyond the Non-profit Industrial Complex* illustrates how rather than being a catalyst for radical change, states' facilitation of the non-profit sector added credence to the lie that the system is committed to the pursuit of a better future for all, whilst also depoliticising movements and blunting political goals and analysis. The future of DE must involve a return to movement building outside of the non-profit model.

In some respects, the worsening of global injustice demonstrated by the unconcealed support for genocide and ethnic cleansing, or the failure of states such as Ireland to take any meaningful action to try and suppress it, makes the work of DE easier, as the choice for or against social justice values and actions is made more blatant. No longer confused by false rhetoric that says otherwise, people can more easily see what they do not stand for. But capitalising on this potential clarity may also require that DE stands apart. Apart from the apparatus of the state that has served to curtail dissent.

Elizabeth Meade is a lecturer in Global Citizenship Education, Social Justice and Philosophy of Education in the Department of Education in Maynooth University. She is also a member of the Centre for Public Education and Pedagogy in Maynooth University.

How Can the Development Education Sector Re-connect with its Radical Roots?

CAROLINE MURPHY

This article asks how does the development education (DE) sector move forward and reconnect with the radical impulse central to Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, the dominant influence on our policy and practice? In an article for *Policy and Practice*, Eilish Dillon offered insights into how DE has shifted from its radical roots to a professionalised and depoliticised form, aligning with institutional and 'safe' reformist frameworks. This trajectory has distanced DE from the transformative pedagogies that once defined it, raising the questions: Why have we disconnected from DE's radical foundations? Is it acceptable to uphold political neutrality while settler-colonial violence, oppression, and ecological destruction unfold?

As we consider the reification of DE into a professionalised, institutionalised, and depoliticised system, we must recognise that this system is beyond reform. By remaining within it, we risk doing little more than softening the edges of injustice while leaving its core structures intact. This is evident, for example, in DE's alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While the SDGs promote reform, they fail to challenge the fundamental structures of colonialism, settler colonialism, resource extraction and ecological destruction. If we accept that the current system is beyond reform, then efforts to radicalise it from within may only sustain its oppressive structures. Instead, DE must seek approaches that do not merely work within the system but actively disinvest from it, making space for decolonial, land-based, and Indigenous-led pedagogies.

To facilitate this, DE should look to expand its theoretical and pedagogical positioning. While Freire's critical pedagogy is fundamental to DE, we must question whether it imposes limitations on our ability to imagine and enact transformative education. In fact, works like, Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought, critique Freirean pedagogy for assuming universal applicability and failing to address settler colonialism and Indigenous sovereignty. In Decolonization is not a Metaphor, and Decolonizing Education - Nourishing the Learning Spirit, we see how Freire's approach is limited by its focus on class-based analysis, neglecting land, identity, and colonial structures. Overall, the above-mentioned works emphasise a collective approach to educational practices intertwined with anti-colonialist, anti-capitalist, and anti-imperialist resistance, highlighting the need for a broader pedagogical framework that does not stop with Freire.

Hence, while this article asked: how does the DE sector move forward and reconnect with the radical impulse central to Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy? it is clear that, although Freire's pedagogy provides an important foundation, simply revisiting and reconnecting with his radical roots is insufficient for addressing today's systemic violence and oppression. Rather than looking solely to Freire, we must engage in a critical reimagining of DE's pedagogical approach. DE must embrace decolonial and Indigenous-led pedagogies that do not merely seek to reform existing systems but actively work to disinvest from them. Only by opening space for these approaches can DE foster an education that truly meets the needs of the oppressed and addresses the complex interconnections of settler-colonial violence, land and identity.

Caroline Murphy is CEO for Comhlámh, the Irish Association of International Development Workers and Volunteers. She has over 16 years' experience of working for organisations across the Irish international development sector in development education, research, policy, safeguarding and activism.

Development Education: Action for Peace, Justice and a Sustainable World

JOE MURRAY

The success or otherwise of development education (DE) in the future depends, I believe, on the extent to which it is no longer a separate 'sector' but becomes instead a partnership entity, collaborating with those working 'at the coalface': tackling poverty, climate change and resisting war and militarism. DE needs to emerge from its isolated silo and be part of the range of groups working towards the same goal of creating a peaceful and more equitable world. Action and campaigning should be a central element of DE otherwise it is in danger of becoming just words and theories, using the right language but making little or no real impact.

When I look back on more than four decades of involvement in DE, the most significant educational experiences over that time would most likely not be called DE at all: for example, the young workers in Dunnes Stores who took part in the inspirational anti-apartheid strike in 1984. When Mary Manning refused to handle 'the fruits of apartheid' she wasn't adhering to the principles of DE, she just saw an injustice and responded to it with her heart and her head and her feet. This was a prime example of linking local and global in a meaningful way. For the international non-governmental organisation, Action from Ireland (Afri), to be involved in supporting the strikers was not only a privilege but also a unique learning experience; real development education - and something that became a touchstone for how we worked from then on.

Then the people of Rossport in County Mayo, stood up to Shell when it was planning to lay a dangerous pipeline through the heart of their community. Afri had been involved in supporting the Ogoni in Nigeria and quickly saw the parallels with the situation in Rossport. Why were we one of the very few NGOs who made this connection and stood by the community – walking with them, protesting with them and organising our annual Hedge School together with the community? This community response was development education in practice: we clearly saw how power works, how the government used every agency of the state - the Gardai, the navy, the courts, the media to vilify and harass the community while standing shoulder to shoulder with a multinational corporation.

But for me, the biggest omission from the DE sector is its relative silence around issues of war, militarism and even genocide. How can we be relevant if we cannot speak out on such major issues as these? Surely, the DE sector should be arm in arm with the peace/anti-war movement but this is not the case. Many organisations work on the issue of climate change but militarism's contribution to this is rarely included. All the areas motivating DE are affected, even undermined, by the mentality, and the material waste and damage, of militarism. And there is almost total silence around our own government's policies on war and peace.

As I write this, the Irish government is in the process of framing legislation to dismantle the 'Triple Lock', which was enacted to guarantee that Irish troops can go overseas only on missions approved by the United Nations. This government is also continuing the process of developing a weapons' industry, also pursued by the previous government. Yet I would suspect that many people in DE wouldn't be aware that this is happening or, if they are, don't see any need to take a stand on the issue.

That our government's apparent abandonment of Ireland's role of peacekeeping and peace promotion - which emerged from our own experience of colonisation - and opting instead to join the former colonial powers and the world's leading war-makers, is not an issue of concern to everyone involved in education is a manifestation of a too prevalent 'play-it-safe' attitude. Unfortunately, government funding is a major factor in ensuring silence and quieting dissent but is there any point in our 'doing DE' if we are not standing up and speaking out on the most critical issues that face our country and our world?

Joe Murray has been involved with Afri since 1980 and became Coordinator in 1994. He stepped down in August 2024. He believes that DE is not the preserve of any particular group or entity and can sometimes be found, in its most powerful form in the most unlikely of places. This article is written from a personal perspective.

The Future is Vegetarianism: Development Education's Role in Radically Transforming the Food Industry

MARGARET NUGENT

Recently, Professor Leo Casey wrote about the banality of our collective response to climate change, and the need for a radical transformation of our values. Casey notes that 'properly structured, non-coercive dialogue can help people see other perspectives. In this way, it can be harnessed to promote collaboration and support a cohesive response to the climate challenge. Casey suggests 'A big advantage of transformative learning is that it changes our fundamental perspectives and therefore will always lead to changes in the way we act.

In partnering with progressive social movements, including ones supportive of vegetarianism, veganism and animal rights, a creative dynamic merger could emerge to transform practices within the food industry. The overall aim of radical transformation of the food industry is possible, but first a radical paradigmatic shift is needed in how we think about, teach about, and promote evidence based independent research across the food industry.

According to the UN

> "Understanding the impact of our food system on the planet is both an area for awareness and an important opportunity for mitigating climate change. Our food systems generate one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions, higher than the global aviation sector".

Switching to a plant-based diet can reduce an individual's annual carbon footprint by up to 2.1 tons with a vegan diet or up to 1.5 tons for vegetarians. The role of development education is to support the conceptualisation of radical emancipatory thinking that asserts animal rights within the capitalist, human rights trope. At a time of crisis, diet and food security requires critically reflective practices, and a pedagogy that intervenes, and cuts through the banality. Carnivorous consumption has and will decrease further. Linda McCartney of vegetarian food fame, predicted that by 2050, 95 percent of inhabitants would be vegetarian. Development education can help us to reimagine the food industry, and how we eat. An article in Old Moore's Almanac explores scientific approaches to protein production.

What about the farming and fishing industries, surely practices must radically change, in a way that secures and enhances farming and fishing livelihoods and the quality of life and wellbeing for animals, farmers fish and the fishing industry. The banality that Casey posited is painstakingly obvious, with widespread non-compliance of EU member states, including Ireland, with the ban on discarding fish. Equally important is the need to engage in non-coercive dialogue with populist theories that object to vegetarian values and goals. Those advocating for the culling of badgers for example. According to the Anglo Celt, 37,000 badgers have been culled nationally over the past three years. What impact is that having on the ecosystem, and what is the research evidence that supports such eradication?

Development education's role is to create a space for dialogue, developing an agreed language, a defining of what constitutes coercion and what constitutes non-coercion, within the human rights, animal rights, and food industry nexus. Until a curriculum emerges that is inclusive of and cognitive of all species, we remain in Plato's caves whilst the shadows of capitalism, carve up the planet.

Margaret Nugent is an academic, researcher and lecturer in the Department of Adult and Community Education, Maynooth University.

Scrolling for Change: How Social Media Can Shape the Future of Global Citizenship Education

ASHLEY WESTPHELING

As a youth-focused global citizenship education (GCE) practitioner, I was recently looking to expand our organisation's communications on projects in the global South and educate young people about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). I initially explored traditional educational methods, such as print resources distributed to teachers or a youth-friendly website. However, I soon came across a completely free platform that offered the ability to host original GCE-focused video content. This platform has recently become the single biggest news source among our target age group in the UK and provides unparalleled levels of cross-cultural connectivity and real-time engagement. It enables our Irish participants to connect with their peers worldwide. You might see where I'm going with this - the seemingly perfect platform that met all my educational needs was none other than TikTok.

Social media is not without its challenges, but it offers accessibility and reach that will ensure the continued relevance of GCE, particularly for youth audiences. At a time when young people have historically low levels of trust in mainstream media and are actively avoiding news altogether, social media allows us to engage them where they already spend increasing amounts of time. Interestingly, many young people cite social media as their preferred news source, particularly for its authenticity and diversity of voices.

The presence of GCE methodologies on social media has the potential to foster global dialogue, where marginalised voices contribute directly to discussions on poverty, environmental justice, and systemic inequality. Interactive features such as polls, live streams, and comment sections transform passive consumption into active participation. These tools enable educators to engage learners dynamically, sparking discussion. By amplifying voices from the global South and strengthening critical thinking skills, social media allows development education to reconnect with its radical roots in Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, emphasising dialogue, empowerment, and action.

Speaking of action, social media has often been criticised for promoting low-effort participation, also known as 'slacktivism'. However, recent movements such as Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, #EndSARS, and Ni Una Menos originated and spread widely through social media. This proves that while simply retweeting or sharing a post focused on global justice may be the first step, it can ignite a long journey of learning and unlearning about intersectional, globally connected issues that many young people might not otherwise encounter.

Utilising social media as an educational tool is not for the fainthearted. It presents challenges such as media literacy, safeguarding, digital divides, and algorithmic biases controlled by increasingly authoritarian tech oligarchs. However, refusing to bring our sector's expertise on the root causes of poverty, inequality, and injustice to the very space where so many young people spend their time is akin to insisting on handwriting texts instead of using the printing press - it severely limits reach and impact in an age of mass communication. In keeping with the radical impulse central to Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, educators must meet learners where they are, fostering dialogue and empowerment in the digital spaces where young people are already engaging with the world.

Ashley Westpheling is Global Citizenship Education Officer with Plan International Ireland.

CENTRE FOR GLOBAL EDUCATION

The Centre for Global Education (CGE) is a development non-governmental organisation that provides education services to increase awareness of international development issues. Its central remit is to promote education that challenges the underlying causes of poverty and inequality in the developing world and effect action toward social and economic justice.

The Centre equips individuals and organisations to understand the cultural, economic, social and political influences on our lives that result from our growing interdependence with other countries and societies. It also provides learners with the skills, values, knowledge and understanding necessary to facilitate action that will contribute to poverty eradication both locally and globally.

Centre for Global Education
9 University Street
Belfast
BT7 1FY

Tel:	(0044) 2890 241 879
E-mail:	info@centreforglobaleducation.com
Web Site:	www.centreforglobaleducation.com
Facebook:	www.facebook.com/centreforglobaleducation
X:	@CGEbelfast
E-Bulletin:	www.centreforglobaleducation.com/ebulletin