

Policy & Practice

A Development Education Review

Issue 39: Development Education Silences

ISSN: 1748-135X
Editor: Stephen McCloskey

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Editorial

THE PARADOX OF EDUCATIONAL SILENCES AND CACOPHONIES IN LIQUID MODERNITY

SHARON STEIN

Critical and de-/post-/anti-colonial scholars of education have long pointed out that silence within a field of inquiry is rarely a naturally occurring absence; it is rather a product of socially sanctioned discourses and practices that actively create and reproduce this silence. When she published ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ over 35 years ago, Gayatri Spivak (1988) compellingly argued that colonialism’s material, epistemic, and relational violences are not reproduced because the subaltern cannot or does not speak against these violences. Instead, these violences are reproduced because those of us who hold systemic power – including critical education scholars like myself located in the global North – refuse to actually hear and be moved by what the subaltern is saying. Even when we claim to be listening, we often unconsciously edit out what is unfamiliar or inconvenient, most of all that which implicates us in the violence that produces the divide between the powerful and the subaltern in the first place.

This issue (39) of *Policy and Practice* offers a rich contribution to ongoing dialogues about how silences are reproduced and naturalised in global and development education, and how we might not only make this silencing visible but also expand our collective response-ability – that is, our ability to respond to what is being silenced – in more accountable ways. The level of interest in these matters is evident in the significant number of article submissions received. Yet, as I read through each of this issue’s thoughtful contributions on silences in education, I was reminded that, paradoxically, we also find ourselves in a moment of increasing cacophony, where polarised perspectives compete for platform and audience. In one sense, ‘difficult knowledges’ continue to be ignored; in another sense, we are inhabiting an era of significant *noise*, rather

than silence per se. One way of thinking about this is as a characteristic of our wider context of 'liquid modernity', as theorised by Zygmunt Bauman (2000).

Silence in solid versus liquid modernity

Liquid modernity is characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. Compared to the 'solid modernity' that preceded it, in liquid modernity established institutions are unstable, intergenerational contracts are broken, information technologies change much faster than people can keep up or cope with, and the future is highly uncertain. Thanks to social media, we are overwhelmed by a constant stream of (mis-/dis-) information and intense emotions that are nearly impossible to meaningfully process, metabolise, and make sense of. It is, therefore, no surprise that many young people feel overwhelmed by grief, pain, anger, betrayal, and powerlessness, particularly when the immense suffering from wildfires, famines, and genocides being live-streamed to their smartphones is met with systemic indifference.

In our liquid context, there are also few compelling meta-narratives or stable epistemic authorities, and little possibility for enduring consensus, shared sensemaking, or even shared understandings of the meaning of a single word. On the one hand, this makes it more difficult to sustain the 'silences' that were common in solid modernity, as there is more epistemic space for alternative perspectives. However, liquid modernity has also fostered a condition in which everyone is encouraged to speak, and partly as a result, no one is listening to each other. While cacophony might be understood as the opposite of silence, the overall impact may be similar.

It is important to note that both solid and liquid modernity rest on a basic foundation of systemic colonial violence and unsustainability. This includes the extractive violence of global capital, the political violence of the nation-state, the epistemic violence of supposedly universal (Eurocentric) reason, and most foundationally, the relational violence of separating humans from nature, which has led to the naturalisation and normalisation of hierarchies and separations between species, human cultures, and knowledge systems (Stein et al., 2017). Yet despite a plethora of critical scholarship documenting these realities, modernity's constitutive social and ecological violences continue to be systemically denied.

Thus, while ‘speaking truth to power’ about this violence remains necessary, it is likely insufficient for the tasks of interrupting it and healing its enduring impacts. It is in this context that we see the waning relevance of the educational frames crafted in and for a different era, which includes not only mainstream educational frames but also the critical educational frames that many of us hold dear.

Educational responses to the polycrisis

Despite the many enduring silences around the harms of modernity’s colonial foundations, they are becoming harder and harder to deny. In the shift from solid to liquid modernity, the grounds beneath these foundations are shifting, becoming more like a swamp than solid earth. This destabilisation is amplified by overlapping social, political, ecological, financial, and psychological crises – what some call the ‘polycrisis’. Arguably, this destabilisation not only threatens the continuity of modernity but has also been *caused* by modernity itself and its inherently violent and unsustainable foundations. We are reaching both the limits of our finite planet and of a system that could never fulfil the shiny promises it offered except for a small portion of the Earth’s inhabitants at the expense of all other living beings. This means that our role as educators might be less about revealing difficult truths and more about supporting people to face, filter, and process the difficult truths that are presenting themselves, without becoming overwhelmed, immobilised, or seeking quick fixes, solutions, or alternatives.

If we consider the polycrisis alongside the current liquid iteration of modernity, the collapse of shared common sense and a sense of guaranteed futurity has created a vacuum that offers both significant risk and precarious possibility. The risk arises because those who are overwhelmed by these multiple moving layers of complexity and uncertainty may be desperate to hold on to anything that feels solid and secure, flattening reality into a more neat, coherent, and manageable narrative about what is and should be, and then vehemently defending that narrative against perceived threats. Yet generative possibility also arises in such moments because often it is only once we can no longer feasibly continue with ‘business as usual’ that we open ourselves up to genuinely different possibilities.

As the articles in this issue make clear, it is evident to most critical scholars and practitioners working in the realm of global and development education that the prevailing social and economic system offers little possibility for a more equitable and ecologically balanced future – and from the perspective of some, perhaps little possibility of a future at all. Both silences about the inherent violence of this system and silences about this system’s inherent limits on a finite planet are the focus of the contributions to this special issue.

Educational silences and the war on Gaza

Many of the contributors draw particular attention to the systemic silencing of educational conversations about Israel’s ongoing and unrelenting military assault on the people of Gaza and about the longer history of overlapping imperialisms in the region. Su-ming Khoo notes that ‘silence is an outcome, a symptom, as well as a root cause of oppression and injustice’, pointing to the silences around intensifying threats to the autonomy and fiscal health of public higher education and its service to the public good. More specifically, she critiques the sanctioned institutional silences around the ongoing attacks on Palestinians and the destruction of their schools and universities. In response to these silences, Khoo calls for an approach to education that supports learners to make sense of the connections between various dimensions of our current polycrisis and interrupts fatalistic narratives that foreclose upon the desirability and viability of other possibilities for education and existence.

Barbara O’Toole observes that as development education became a more formal element of initial teacher education, it was reframed as global citizenship education. She reflects on the paradoxes of this shift, arguing that radical ideas were incorporated into institutions in depoliticised ways. In particular, she notes that despite growing engagement with decolonial theories, the practical implications of these theories largely remain sidelined. O’Toole questions why many global citizenship/development educators have remained silent about the war on Gaza and suggests that in doing so, they have abdicated their educational responsibilities. Henry Giroux, too, connects the theme of this issue to Gaza, critically examining universities’ responses to student solidarity encampments. He links many of these responses to larger historical, political, economic, and cultural contexts, specifically the enduring racial politics of disposability and police

violence, and the intensified militarisation of society and neoliberal corporatisation of higher education over the past several decades. Giroux argues that the student protests are not only an articulation of support for Palestine, they are also an effort:

“to reclaim higher education as a site of democratisation, a public good, and a crucial civic institution where student voices can be heard, and where the dynamics of critical thinking, dialogue, informed judgment and dissent can take place without fear of repression”.

Finally, Caroline Murphy observes that watching the ‘non-response’ of the development education sector to the war on Gaza has deepened her sense that existing systems and institutions are not broken but rather inherently violent and unsustainable, and therefore ‘beyond reform’ (Andreotti et al., 2015). She suggests development educators must be attentive to these difficult truths, and rethink our pedagogies in ways that ‘ensure we are equipped with affective, relational, and critical capacities to confront our own complicity in systems of harm’. Despite the strong desire of many students to talk about and try to make sense of the violence currently unfolding in Palestine and Israel, many educators feel unprepared to address this violence or the intensity of complex emotions surrounding it. In this moment, as the brokenness of our relationships is laid so clearly bare, educators have a responsibility to support learners to process the grief, dread and despair that many are holding, and to approach education with an intention to interrupt the cycles of violence we have inherited.

Educational silences and enduring inequities

Several contributors to this issue address how global and development education can address the root causes and contemporary drivers of inequity, linking this in varied ways to the reproduction of systemic silences. Mostafa Gamal, Simon Hoult, and Kieran Taylor go to the heart of the matter, identifying how education continues to presume all global citizens are White, Western, and liberal, thereby silencing those who do not fit these categories and naturalising their subjugation. Drawing on Sylvia Wynter’s work, they note that this figure of the global citizen aligns with a particular ‘genre’ of being human (‘Man’), which positions itself as universal and by implication, positions those outside of this genre as either sub-

or non-human. The authors map the discourses and absences of global citizenship education, observing how the prevalence of celebratory narratives curtails engagement with the systemic inequities that shape global social relations. To interrupt these silences and violences, they call on educators to reckon with ‘our collective implication in buttressing whiteness and the ensuing silences and erasures of the Other’.

Like O’Toole, Jen Simpson examines the implications of the mainstreaming of critical discourses in education, in her case, social justice. Simpson concludes, ‘We need educators to be braver, to face and explore their vulnerabilities and have agency and criticality to initiate change’. Specifically, she suggests that for pedagogies of discomfort to be transformative, there must be ‘a balance between constructive emotional engagement and critical thinking’.

Stephen McCloskey approaches educational inequity by analysing resurgent interest in the novel *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*. The book, now reaching its 110-year anniversary, is about the systemic causes of poverty among the working class in Edwardian England. McCloskey makes a call for development education to address enduring silences around ‘the violent social and economic relations created by capitalism’, specifically class inequity. He also draws attention to the scapegoat narratives that tend to proliferate when poverty and austerity rise and their systemic causes are invisibilised and attributed to racialised ‘others’.

In their article, Ivan Tokheim, Espen Søreide Dyngeland, Solvejg Jobst, and Jan Skrobaneck focus more broadly on the enduring inequities of education related to access, uptake and completion in the European context. Based on their study of the challenges of implementing more equitable educational practices, they argue for a need to foster more ‘participation, self-determination and solidarity in both formal and non-formal educational environments’. Meanwhile, Ricardo Römheld reflects on the new national educational standards in Germany, identifying them as a missed opportunity to institutionalise social and ecological justice in foreign language education. He questions the purpose of standards that reaffirm more functional approaches to education and prioritise the imparting of

skills that are not accompanied by deeper engagement with questions of equity, ethics, and global responsibility.

Focusing on the Irish context, Eilish Dillon examines the extent to which critical global education and education for sustainable development are (or are not) being deeply integrated into higher education (HE) policy, instruction, research, institutional culture, and more. Drawing on conversations with other educators in Ireland, she observes that 'broader neoliberal, business-driven and skills-oriented HE policies' limit the space for critical perspectives. She advocates for a more comprehensive critical mapping of current practices and initiatives in the sector.

Simon Eten Angyagre brings critical attention to how unequal power, extractive relations, and colonial politics of knowledge are reproduced through teaching and research partnerships between Western universities and those in the global South. Drawing on a review of research projects at University College London, he concludes that most efforts to interrupt these power relations and decolonise international partnerships are driven by individual academics rather than by the transformation of the institutional structures and processes that reproduce inequity.

In their piece, Brigid Golden and Vicky Donnelly address the psychological implications of teaching 'difficult knowledge' through global education. They also consider the contradiction embedded in the assumption that teachers will help students transform an unequal, unsustainable world despite having limited social power and resources to support this work. While wary of naïve calls for hope, they find inspiration in examples of educational experiments that 'require educators to commit to being open to discomfort, to imagine alternatives, to embrace uncomfortable and strong emotional responses, and to consider responsibility and proximity to justice issues'.

Finally, Karl Wheatley focuses on the failure of development education to critically address the limits of the planet. He notes that for centuries, the dominant form of development has been focused on the expansion of industrialised capitalism, which is premised on 'exploiting people, exploiting

nature, and looting from the future'. In the face of the growing realities of ecological breakdown, Wheatly laments that:

“because [development education] still embodies so much of the worldview of the society it critiques (i.e., anthropocentrism, the myth of sustainable growth), development educators generally stop short of calling for the fundamental transformation of modern civilisation that is needed for humans to have any decent future at all”.

Each of these pieces reminds us that, despite the lofty aspirations and admirable ethical principles of challenging inequity that drive many of us to work in the field of development and global education, realising these aspirations and principles in practice is exceedingly challenging and complex. This is not only because we occupy institutional contexts characterised by political polarisation, economic neoliberalisation, and enduring racialisation, but also because the field of development/global education has been shaped by the same systems that reproduce inequity.

Education Beyond Description and Prescription

At this moment of increasing ecological destabilisation, intensifying political conflict, and growing social inequality, educators face a difficult question: what kind of education could break through both the enduring sanctioned silences around systemic violence and the intensifying cacophony of competing perspectives seeking epistemic and moral authority?

There are many possible answers to this question, but it is increasingly clear that the kind of education we previously had is losing its relevance and impact in the context of both liquid modernity and our current polycrisis. Filling silences with our critiques may also no longer be sufficient in a moment characterised by significant noise. It is unlikely we will all collectively agree about the nature of the problems we face, let alone how we might address them. Thus, we might need to move beyond the common critical formula of offering a universalising and totalising description of reality (including describing what is absent or being silenced), and an accompanying prescription for what should be done. This is not to say that these kinds of critiques are unimportant as one

element of the wider process of social and systemic change, but rather to ask what other kinds of critiques and educational interventions are needed.

We will likely need to experiment with modes of educational critique and practice that can prepare people to navigate hyper-complexity, polysemy, polarisation, and constantly shifting social and epistemic landscapes with emotional steadiness, intellectual discernment, and relational rigour. This is not about telling people what to do or how to think, but rather creating the conditions through which they can experience an uncoercive rearrangement of harmful desires (Spivak, 2004) and the activation of intergenerational and interspecies responsibility.

Finally, as several authors in this issue observe, as educators we should approach our critical work in ways that also implicate ourselves in the critique. Even the most critical corners of global and development education are shaped by modernity and its colonial foundations. When we only direct our critiques outward and externalise the challenges we face, attributing them to bad actors or the abstract system ‘out there’, we silence how this system also lives inside of us and our scholarship. If we do not turn the critical gaze inward, we will likely overlook how we are also contributing to the very challenges we seek to address (GTDF, 2022).

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Focus

DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION AND THE SCANDAL OF THE HUMAN: THE GRAMMAR OF SILENCE AND ERASURE

MOSTAFA GAMAL, SIMON HOULT AND KIERAN TAYLOR

Abstract: A common aim of global citizenship education (hereafter GCE) is to enable students to focus on shared contemporary matters of significant global concern. Despite such an important aim, we argue that the dominant assumption of the global citizen as White, Western and liberal (perceived as universal) within global citizenship education produces harmful silences and erasures which marginalise the Other. This article is presented in four sections. We begin by articulating some of the silences and erasures that are enacted by curricula and policy practices of GCE by adopting a social cartography (Paulston, 2009) as a heuristic to map various orientations to global citizenship education. In doing so, we highlight its inherent silences, tensions and contradictions. A second section addresses some of the key sites in which mainstream approaches to GCE enact silences and absences by their sole focus on soft, rather than critical, approaches to global citizenship education (Andreotti, 2006), where the liberal subject is regarded as *the* global citizen with a consequent muting of the experience of the Other. In the third section, we draw on Wynter's work on the historicisation of what it means to be human. Wynter's concept of 'Man' (2003), as a genre of being human (White, Western and Imperial), enables us to excavate violence regarding other modes of being human within global citizenship curricula practices and discourses. A final section unpacks some of the ways in which we, as three teacher educators, respond to these silences and erasures in global citizenship curricula practices and policies.

Key words: Global Citizenship Education; Silence; Human; Violence; Liberalism.

“We are fighting human animals and will act accordingly”

Yoav Gallant, Israel’s Minister of Defence (International Court of Justice, 2023: 60).

“No, I don’t care. Show me the pictures of coffins, show me bodies floating in water, play violins and show me skinny people looking sad. I don’t care. Make no mistake, these immigrants are like cockroaches” Katie Hopkins (Jones, 2015).

An oft-invoked aim of development education/global citizenship education (hereafter GCE) is to enable students to engage in studies that respond to the urgency of the contemporary global crises we are collectively experiencing: climate degradation, human rights violations, racial and ethnic conflict and forced displacement, to name just a few. Despite this aim and with the exception of some strands of critical global citizenship (e.g. Pashby, 2015; Stein, Andreotti and Suša, 2019; Gamal and Swanson, 2018; Khoo and Jørgensen, 2021), the status of the global citizen (student, pupil) is exclusively conceived of as ‘the autonomous and European citizen of the liberal nation-state’ who:

“must work to encourage a liberal democratic notion of justice on a global scale by ‘expanding’ or ‘extending’ or ‘adding’ their sense of responsibility and obligation to others through the local to national to global community” (Pashby, 2011: 430).

In centring this European (universal) subject, what is elided is an account of the technologies of dispossession, deprivation and subjugation of the Others of global citizenship (Gamal and Swanson, 2018): those whose humanity has been/is being called into question and who are marked for harm. Concomitantly, these practices which violently structure the others into the ‘zone of the nonbeing’ (Fanon, 1986: 10) not only constitute an ontological crisis at the heart of development education, but also work to erase the violence, coercion, desire and affective economies involved in a ‘history of injury that has yet to cease happening’ (Hartman, 1997: 772). In this article, we build on the insight of Roitman (2014: 8) that crisis and critique are intertwined, by articulating the ways in which GCE, through its celebratory narratives, forecloses discussion of how its

Others are locked into a ‘belatedness in becoming human enough in relation to the ideal (White) humanist subject’ (Yusoff, 2018: 42). As a key manifestation of our current Eurocentric crisis, this ‘cultivated silence’ (Hartman, 1997: 11) offers us the opportunity to not only centre the violence, erasure, denial and evasion embedded in creating the Others of global citizenship, but also to ask questions such as ‘where are we, what is going on, what went wrong, how we can get out of here.’ (Cordero, 2017: 1).

We develop our argument by articulating some of the silences and erasures that are enacted by curricula and policy practices of GCE. Building on the work of Pashby et al. (2020), the first section adopts social cartography (Paulston, 2009) as a heuristic to map out the different orientations of GCE, but also to highlight the silences, tensions and contradictions inherent in GCE discourses. A second section addresses some of the key sites in which mainstream approaches to GCE enact silences and absences. In this section, we argue that the focus on the liberal subject as *the* global citizen erases and mutes the experience of others. In the third section, we turn to the work of Sylvia Wynter (2003), especially her historicisation of what it means to be human. As a heuristic device Wynter’s concept of ‘Man’, as a genre of being human (White, Western and Imperial), enables us to excavate erasures and silences about other modes of being human within global citizenship curricula practices and discourses. A final section outlines some of the ways in which we, as three teacher educators, respond to the silences and erasures in global citizenship curricula practices and policies.

Global citizenship education

Over the last few decades, GCE has emerged as a ‘goal of schooling in many countries’ (Oxley and Morris, 2013: 30), a main referent in pedagogical and curricular discourses and practices, and a policy focus in international agendas. Its incorporation into the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015) attests to the centrality of GCE in fostering a range of attributes in students to encourage global connectedness and global responsibility. Under goal 4.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, GCE is said to promote ‘sustainable development, sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, and appreciation of

cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development' (UN, 2015: 17).

Despite its wide adoption in both policy and educational practices, GCE remains a contested concept that is open to a multitude of interpretations. As an 'empty signifier' (Pais and Costa, 2020: 3), GCE has been taken up within curricula and policy discourses in multiple ways and often made to serve conflicting agendas. Dill (2013: 4) articulates two orientations of GCE. Firstly, as a form of 'global consciousness' GCE aims at fostering 'an awareness of other perspectives, a vision of oneself as part of a global community of humanity as a whole, and a moral conscience to act for the good of the world' (Ibid.). Secondly, and simultaneously, GCE is conceived as a set of global competencies that enable students to compete in a global employment market. Similarly, Swanson and Pashby (2016: 184) note a 'dual agenda' which underpins GCE: the development of 'skills and dispositions for participating in the global economy' and 'the development of citizens who contribute to a more socially-just world'. However, whilst these orientations are 'often conflated [and] contradictory', dismissing GCE as a flawed concept forecloses generative possibilities (Ibid.). As Swanson and Gamal (2021: 456) argue, 'viewing contradiction at the heart of GCE as a "productive tension", rather than "flaw" ...may offer the necessary vector in prizing open new windows to hopeful, alternative futures'. That is to say, these contradictions and tensions force us to attend to the implications of the privileging of participation in a global economy and the cultivation of global consciousness as initial conditions of global citizenship. As we will argue below, such privileging invariably entrenches Eurocentricity and a depoliticised, individualistic and benevolent conception of global citizenship (Jefferess, 2008) that reproduces harmful beliefs and practices towards the Other.

There are a number of attempts to map out and classify the ways in which GCE is theorised (Oxley and Morris, 2013; Andreotti, 2006; Gaudelli, 2009; Pashby et al., 2020). We focus on the work of Pashby et al. (2020: 160) as they highlight 'what exists, but also the overlooked tensions, assumptions, and edges of discussions within a field or overlapping fields'. Using social cartography (Paulson, 2009) as a heuristic device, Pashby et al. (2020: 160) provide a mapping of the various discursive orientations of GCE, areas of overlap, connotations and

tensions between these orientations as well as the ‘significant absences’ and erasures. Pashby et al. (2020) identify three major discursive orientations of GCE: neoliberal, liberal and critical. They also identify the interfaces between these orientations.

Interfaces here index ‘spaces of ambivalence’ that ‘signal underlying communality across two or more orientations’ (Pashby et al., 2020: 146). Common interfaces are: neoliberal-liberal, liberal-critical, neoliberal-critical, and all three (neoliberal-liberal-critical) (Ibid.). The neoliberal discursive orientation frames GCE in terms of human capital development. Education is seen as a means of ensuring national competitiveness by equipping students with ‘global competencies’ to enable them to secure employment in a competitive global market. In short ‘learning about and engaging with the world is valued as a line on one’s c.v’ (Ibid.: 151). The liberal orientation sees GCE as concerned with developing in the student a set of universal values. This is premised on the view of an underlying shared humanity that is sustained by universal notions of self, morality and society (Gaudelli, 2009). Andreotti (2006) refers to this orientation as a ‘soft’ as opposed to ‘critical’ GCE, that is based on ‘the notion of a common humanity and single, Eurocentric view of progress where global justice issues are framed and responded to from within a Western, Global North status quo’ (Pashby et al., 2020: 151). Within the critical orientation, however, GCE acknowledges and addresses social injustices and interfaces with liberal and neoliberal orientations. All in all, this orientation names attempts to ‘critique current power structures, modernisation, western exploitation and violence’ (Ibid.: 153).

Silences, absences and exclusions

The previous section outlines the social cartography of GCE but is limited to outlining the broader contours of its different discursive orientations (for a discussion of this typology see e.g. Andreotti, Stein, Pashby and Nicolson, 2016). It does, however, orient our thinking to two related issues. The first is that global citizenship is a contested concept and has generated a number of critiques. The second is that it alerts us to the question of the absences and associated silences. Broadly speaking, much of the critique of the concept of global citizenship centres around its normative and instrumental orientations that articulate ‘a particular vision of a “better future” entrenched in a set of norms and values about perceived

political, economic and cultural conditions and the possible futures these might permit' (Marshall, 2011: 414). Its appeal to a universal notion of democracy, freedom, rights and justice forecloses the possibility of 'ethical, responsible ways of seeing, knowing and relating to others "in context"' (Andreotti, 2010b: 239). This is because global citizenship enacts fundamental exclusions.

As Isin and Nyers (2014: 4) argue, 'citizenship is not just a name for membership, but a title or a rank that separates, excludes and hierarchizes'. There are a number of other critiques levelled at the concept of GCE (see Stein et al., 2019; Tarozi and Torres, 2018; Pashby et al., 2020; Pais and Costa, 2020), however, of immediate relevance to us is the Eurocentricity of the concept. As Falk (2006: 6 in Lee, 2014: 76) notes, 'discourse on citizenship... remains an essentially Western experience' that derives most of its theoretical impetus from a liberal tradition that is firmly embedded in 'Westernised political and institutional structure' (Ibid.). Concomitantly, GCE remains 'contaminated' and complicit in 'whiteness/Westernness...owing to the historical, material and structural entrenchment of citizenship in the liberal world view' (Ibid.). What emerges from this critique is the need to historicise and account for the locality from which the global citizen, as a category, is constituted politically. To argue that the concept of global citizenship is heavily inflicted with Eurocentrism, foregrounds the notion that it is 'inescapably racialized and thoroughly contaminated by the civilizing engineering of whiteness/Westernness' (Ibid.: 80). Whiteness here refers to:

"structural formations of racial domination tied to European colonialism which continue to be inscribed across all aspects of social life, mediating understanding of self, relations with others, work, within institutions, and ideas of the nation" (Sriprakash et al., 2022: 4).

Except for some strands of critical GCE, mainstream or 'soft' approaches to global citizenship tend to invoke an apolitical and individualistic understanding of it. In doing so they obfuscate, silence and erase the ways in which coloniality continues to structure GCE. Soft GCE (Andreotti, 2006) aims at strengthening existing relationships between people and countries. To solve global issues, it puts an emphasis on individual responsibility and advocates market-driven approaches, or social justice initiatives as solutions. GCE here is seen as 'as a

redemptive educational solution to global problems’ (Estelles and Fischman, 2021: 223). This soft notion of GCE, as Andreotti (2006: 1) argues, positions students as ‘saviours’ for other countries and people, and this conceals hierarchies of global power and their consequences. Students may ‘project their beliefs and myths as universal and reproduce power relations and violence similar to those in colonial times’ (Ibid.) at epistemic and ontological levels.

A key site of the absences enacted by mainstream approaches to GCE is that in their focus on the liberal subject as *the* global citizen, they erase and mute the experience of others. The notion of citizenship is not a neutral designation that references membership to a community, but that, as Isin and Nyers (2014: 1) argue, ‘carries an already assumed conception of politics, culture, spatiality, temporality, and sociality’. In extending the notion of national citizenship, as articulated by Marshall (1950), into the global realm, other ‘political subjects’ (Isin and Nyers, 2014: 1) are invisibilised. For Marshall (1950), citizenship consists of a set of rights: civil, political and social. However, as Isin and Nyers (2014:8) argue if ‘citizenship is fundamentally about political struggles over the capacity to constitute ourselves as a political subject’, performing and enacting these rights remain highly differentiated globally. Balarin’s questions are relevant here:

“What about [global] citizens who are only so at a formal level, but who do not really enjoy the benefits of having citizenship rights, nor exert many of the responsibilities that are supposed to follow from these? How do they relate to the global citizenship agenda?” (2011: 358).

Consequently, in centring the experience of the White, Western, liberal subject as *the* global citizen, two interrelated issues emerge. Firstly, that global citizenship curricular practices and discourses exclude the Other by limiting global citizenship to a liberal subject. Thus, foregrounding the possibility of interrogating the notion of global citizenship by asking whose experience is, and is not, included. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it throws into sharp relief the inherent violence against those who are excluded. Taken together, these silences and acts of silencing the experiences of those excluded from the category of the global citizen, can be mapped out on specific sites in which difference is violently structured into a ‘zone of nonbeing’ (Fanon, 1986: 10). As

Bhattacharyya (2024: ix) avers, we are witnessing ‘an enlargement of practices of exclusions and containment’ as well as ‘ongoing processes of rendering other human expandable’ (Ibid.: x). However, in focussing on the experience of the liberal subject as *the* global citizen, GCE forecloses the possibility of engaging with the ‘limits of a modern/colonial imaginary’ that reproduces and further entrenches ‘narrow imaginaries of global justice, responsibility and change’ (Ibid.). In other words, the celebratory and mainstream notions of GCE erase the ‘systemic, historical and ongoing colonial and racial violence’ (Ibid.: 161) as the very conditions of producing the liberal global citizen. Here the Other is erased through an absence that has been discussed by Spivak (1999) in her critique of early Enlightenment philosophers.

There are a number of sites that illustrate the silences and modalities of violence which are occluded from discussions on GCE. These sites illustrate practices that prevent a staging of global citizenship by Others who are immobilised and denied the official standing to participate in it. Through a global and historical articulation of sites such as policing, bordering, waste-landing and reproductive control, Danewid (2023: 26) foregrounds the ‘violence, terror, subjugation and coercive exploitation’ that were ‘meted out...to populations across the globe’ (Anievas and Nisancioglu, 2015: 278, cited in Danewid, 2023: 26) that are often written out of accounts of global citizenship. For example, most GCE models declare their aim to inculcate a global consciousness in students by enabling them to develop an understanding of their relationship with other cultures. However, as Eybers (2020: 2) avers, ‘Africans cannot do so without acknowledging that their relationships with much of the globe has been characterized by exploitation, inequality, under-development, and global racism’.

An understanding of the tyrannical structures and practices (such as extractivism, marginalisation and coloniality) of global citizenship seem to be absent in the celebratory account of GCE. This investment in silence is evidenced by the practice of bordering (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019). Borders are not physical structures that exist at the exteriority of a territory, but rather as Brah (2022: 51) argues, borders ‘are simultaneously meaning-making and meaning-carrying formations’ as they enact histories of colonial control of movement, practices of stigmatisation and discrimination. In some cases, the question of border,

Bhattacharyya (2024: 102) argues, ‘becomes a question about who lives and who dies’. The Mediterranean Sea is an example of the ‘necropolitics’ (Mbembe, 2003), ‘governing migration through death’ (Squire, 2017) and the politics of organised abandonment (Gilmore, 2007) that target particular populations and criminalise solidarity with these populations.

The sites of silences and modalities of violence collectively help us understand some of the ways celebratory narratives of global citizenship ‘conceal [their] role in the destruction of worlds and their modes of caring and sharing, wherein those who were made noncitizens dwelled...’ (Azoulay, 2019: 19). At the same time and against a background of raising nativism, xenophobia, racism and anti-immigrant practices, the modalities of state violence continue to produce, define, exclude and criminalise certain ‘abject’ subjects. To paraphrase Beltran (2020), global citizenship becomes a practice of cruelty. The global citizen who is interpellated in celebratory discourses does not come into being without bracketing its Other’s experience of violence, expulsions and abandonment. Such a silence on the ‘racialised performance of (neo) colonial violence’ (Bhattacharyya, 2024: 84) produces the liberal, global citizen as an active agent. It simultaneously produces the ‘constitutive outsiders’ as inhuman or human animals, evidenced by the quotes at the beginning of this article. In the next section, we address this silence in global citizenship curricular and policy discourse on the ‘ongoing struggle over the meaning of the *human*’ (Snaza and Singh, 2021: 5, italics in original).

Becoming/being human

Schools and curricula are nation-state projects that are involved in the production of ‘responsible citizens, efficient workers and good consumers’ (Snaza, 2019: 131). These function as a ‘humanizing assemblage’ (Ibid.) and the ways in which schools, national curricula and by extension GCE, were formed in the crucible of empire and colonialism. The selectivity of western education systems and their curricula deliberately erases the Other. Wynter (2003: 141) theorising helps us understand this as she urges us to see schools as sites for ‘producing Man and its unhuman, non-human and less- than- human others’. Wynter (2003) argues that the Western concept of ‘Man’ is based on European colonisation, racialisation and dehumanisation of the Africans and other people encountered by Europeans.

In particular, Wynter argues that becoming human is shaped by a range of discourses and practices which frame what it means to be human at a particular historical epoch and place. Wynter (2003) traces the development of the European genres that come to dominate our understanding and relegated other modes of being to the realm of the inhuman and less- than-human. Reflecting on the work of Wynter, Snaza (2019: 131) argues that ‘Western imperialist projects ... institute[d] one specific genre of the human on the whole of the Earth’s peoples. She calls this imperialist, white, Western, masculinist, heterosexist version of the human “Man”’.

Man, as a mode of being human, Wynter (2003) argues, emerged in a European context through a series of stages. Man1 (homo politicus) emerged as break away from medieval theocracy and became more pronounced with the emergence of the Enlightenment. Accordingly, Man1 as a genre of being human named a category of people endowed with the capacity of reason. However, as noted by Truman (2019: 3), in heralding a break from theocracy and ushering in ‘the modern rational world’, the context of the emergence of Man1 is suffused by colonality. Truman avers that although the rise of humanism was celebrated for ‘the untethering [of] Man from medieval thought, [it] flourished through a practice of Othering’ (Ibid.). It also harboured a dark side: ‘the trans-Atlantic slave trade and settler colonialism around the world’ (Ibid.). Man2’s emergence coincided with the rise of capitalism and the Darwinian theory of natural selection. Darwin, for Wynter, further entrenched the view that ‘less developed’ people are closer to animals than Victorian Englishmen. Taken together, these ideas defined what it means to be human. As Wynter (2003: 260) explains, this ‘Western bourgeois’ version of Man, ‘overrepresents itself as if it were the human itself’. Such an unstable position created by this overreaching and subjugation of the Other, resonates with Bhabha’s notion of the distorted post-Enlightenment man whom he describes as being:

“tethered to, not confronted by, his dark reflection, the shadow of colonised man, that splits his presence, distorts his outline, breaches his boundaries, repeats his action at a distance, disturbs and divides the very time of his being” (Bhabha, 1986: xxvii).

Despite these shifts in what it means to be human, ‘what remains constant as the benchmark of normalcy in Man is his Whiteness’ (Truman, 2019: 3). To Wynter, the coloniality of being is sustained by Eurocentric judicial-political orders that have (re)produced the figure of the ‘White European “Man” as a rational, masterful, civilized being...as it were the human itself’ (Odysseos, 2017: 454) despite its hidden instability. In particular, as Zembylas (2022: 339) notes, Wynter’s theorisation of the genres of Man – from medieval man to Man1 and Man2 – are not:

“only deeply entrenched in the colonial project, but have also contributed to the sedimentation of racial differences that normalized whiteness and designated black, brown and indigenous subjects as *Others*, excluding them from the prevailing and privileged category of ‘the human’”.

Following Wynter, using the human/Man as a heuristic not only underscores the historical and contextual contingency of the category of the human, but also invites us to grapple with ‘new ways of being human’ that are not defined by Whiteness (Snaza, 2019: 129). Simultaneously, it offers us the opportunity to reflect on the ways in which celebratory discourses of GCE reproduce, universalise and normalise the figure of the human (Man) by erasing other forms of being human. Consequently, as Erasmus (2020: 48) notes, the European figuration of Man becomes ‘the master and savior of all and everyone’. Saviourism becomes a telos and ‘a manifestation of this history of whiteness’ (Jefferess, 2021: 424). Saviourism here indexes the many ways in which the (useful, but somewhat simplistic terms), global ‘North’ defines the global ‘South’ ‘as (having) a problem’ within which ‘the global citizen...is constructed as the solution to that problem’ and that ‘it is the saviour who has the power to delineate these roles and this relation’ (Ibid). Whilst the inferiorisation of the Other, including excluding it from the category of the human, has been one of the strategies of justifying colonialism (Wynter, 2003), what emerges from Wynter’s intervention is that becoming *human* needs to be understood within the context of the histories of racialised violence. This also entails excavating the silences and the omissions of these violences in global citizenship discourses and curricular practices.

Crisis and critique are intertwined (Roitman, 2014: 8). Against the background of the ‘scandal of the human’ (Dillon, 1998: 31), the rise of far-right politics intensifies the ‘hostile environment’, creating the very conditions for sustained assaults on those who are deemed not to belong. The associated silence in global citizenship discourses and curricula practice provokes the Fanonian question: ‘How do we extricate ourselves’ from this? (Fanon, 1986: 3). In the following section, we offer some reflection, by way of an affirmative critique, on how as three teacher educators we respond to some of the tensions, silences and erasure inherent in the celebratory approaches to GCE.

The implicated subject

As a starting point, the historical legacies of colonialism, including its taxonomies of the human and the less-than human, not only haunt (in the Derridean sense of the word) our classrooms and lecture halls but circulate in our institutional strategies and policies. Such a legacy, enhanced by contemporary globalisation, provides the context in which we work and educate student teachers. This, as Bhambra, Gebrial and Nisancioglu (2018: 5) argue, is a key site in which ‘colonial intellectuals developed theories of racism, popularised discourses that bolstered support for colonial endeavours and provided ethical and intellectual grounds for the dispossession, oppression and domination of colonised subjects’. How mainstream and celebratory discourses of GCE sustain and further entrenches coloniality is evident in GCE as an institutional goal of Internationalisation of Higher Education (Khoo, 2014; Stein, 2017).

The internationalisation of higher education in the global ‘North’ has been reputed to foster global citizenship. However, as a range of critical scholars of internationalisation argue, internationalisation ‘maintains its commitment to the colonial episteme’ and the myth ‘colonial difference’ (Meghji, 2021: 22). For example, Shahjahan and Edwards (2022) argue that internationalisation shapes future aspirations of students from the global ‘South’ by further entrenching the ‘seductive working’ of the colonial university (Zembylas, 2021: 953). A key aspect of this aspiration is whiteness. Study abroad programmes are said to potentially enable students from the global ‘South’ to acquire a ‘global subjectivity’, and in so doing they ‘pursue aspirations that normalises Whiteness’ (Shahjahan and

Edwards, 2022: 750). There are hopeful signs of study abroad from the global ‘North’ to the global ‘South’ provoking a realisation of privilege and exposure of the apparently universal as Eurocentric (Hoult, 2017), however, such outcomes are understandably rare given worldviews are built over a lifetime (Finney and Orr, 1995).

As teacher educators, we are therefore implicated in reproducing the curricula of Man, that simultaneously normalise certain ways of knowing, feeling and inhabiting the world, and erase/silence the ontological and epistemic violence against others whose humanity is being contested. In our context, we are surrounded by policy and media discourses that endlessly invoke the putative threat the Other poses to national security, community cohesion and imagined national values. Such demonic repetitions rely for their effectiveness on a range of tropes. Chief amongst these is the trope of the ‘animal’. There is a considerable amount of literature that attends to the animalisation of the Other, especially black people (Hartman, 1997; Jackson, 2020) and associated demonic repetitions invoked here. These portrayals are redolent of Bhabha’s (2004) ‘ambivalence’ and the psychological processes that produce racism (Hook, 2012). However, it is not simply a question of dehumanisation: i.e. denying humanity of the Other, but rather as Jackson (2020: 3) avers in the case of black people, this is:

“not ...black ‘exclusion’ or ‘denied humanity’ but [it is] the violent imposition and appropriation – inclusion and recognition – of black(ened) humanity in the interest of plasticizing that very humanity, whereby ‘the animal’ is one but not the only form blackness is thought to encompass”.

Appropriating this insight of the ‘plasticising’ of the humanity of black people, as teacher educators we invite a reckoning with our collective implication in buttressing whiteness and the ensuing silences and erasures of the Other. To be an implicated subject, Rothberg (2019: 48) argues:

“is to occupy a particular type of subject position in a history of injustice or structure of inequality – a history or structure one may enter, like an

immigrant, long after the injustice at issue has been initiated or, like a beneficiary of global capitalism, far from its epicenter of exploitation”.

The concept of the ‘implicated subject’ helps to bridge the gap between ‘individualising responsibility’ and ‘thinking institutionally’ (Bryan, 2021: 338). It enables a deeper understanding of ‘the myriad ways in which personal, micro-level actions are deeply enmeshed in wider structures of injustice and inequality’ that perpetuate Eurocentrism and its attendant violence (Ibid.). This concept enables us to move from dualist approaches to undoing harmful effects that privilege either personal actions or macro level, universal practices. It foregrounds instead a deeper understanding of the multiple ways in which individual actions both sustain and are entangled with structural conditions. This equally involves a process of unlearning and disinvesting ‘from the inherited material, intellectual, and affective economies that frame our shared meanings and collective desires, and learn to invest in other forms of feeling, knowing, being, wanting and relating’ (Stein, 2019: 679).

Global citizenship curricula and discourses are performative practices, they constitute political subjectivities, construct and validate ways of knowing and being and exclude other modes of knowing. The process of unlearning requires more than an epistemological shift in our student teachers’ understanding of their world. Rather, this needs to be articulated as an ‘ethic-onto-epistemic’ project (Barad, 2007). Unlearning as a process of understanding power, privilege and epistemic violence is a key part of Spivak’s contribution to education (Andreotti, 2007). Andreotti (2007: 230) furthers this via her own pedagogic framework that highlighted the importance of ‘learning to unlearn’, ‘learning to listen’, ‘learning to learn’, and ‘learning to reach out’. Two associated pedagogic features emerge from our reflections and theory: the significance of dialogue and of reflexivity. Firstly, there is a crucial need to be ‘hyper-reflexive’, built on Spivak’s need for us to be ‘scrupulously vigilant in relation to [our] complicities’ (Ibid.: 74). Secondly, dialogue benefits when it draws on Freire’s (2005: 111) talking ‘with’ rather than ‘to’ students and a pedagogy of ‘kindredness’ and ‘coexistence’ (De Lissoyov, 2010: 279) associated with Freirean principles of love and respect for the Other.

Conclusions

Engaging our student teachers in global citizenship silences and exclusions is an ‘ethic-onto-epistemic’ project (Barad, 2007). Attuning our student teachers to their implications in (re)producing colonial frames that structure their worldview is a necessary epistemological gesture that requires, as Spivak argues, a process of unlearning. At the same time, this opens up the space in our curricular practices for our student teachers to consider the ways in which their sense of self is entangled with the Other. In contrast to the dominant ‘colonial difference’ (Mignolo, 2002) that postulates and sustains the ‘myth that...the colonized were somehow different from (and inferior) to the “West”’ (Meghji, 2021:21), addressing the silences and erasures in GCE would occasion a shift in our student teachers’ ways of being in the world. Further, by reframing the Self (the liberal global citizen) as inextricably entangled with the Other, what is foregrounded is an ethical orientation of being in the world. Being here is conceived of as ‘co-existence’ (Nancy, 2000: 43). Rather than starting with distinct entities such as self/other, Nancy reconfigures being as always ‘being-with’ (Ibid: 84):

“[F]rom the very beginning, then, ‘we’ are with one another, not as points gathered together, or as a togetherness that is divided up, but as a being-with-one-another. Being-with is exactly this: that Being, or rather that to be neither gathers itself as a resultant commune of beings nor shares itself out as their common substance” (Ibid: 96).

This resonates strongly with a critical approach to GCE and where knowledge is contextual and provisional, rather than universal and fixed akin to the learning spaces of Andreotti (2010a). As such our practice requires that we critically engage our students in interrogating the epistemic frames that we operate with in order to interrupt the historical and on-going violence and harm. The interrelatedness of ethics, knowing and being holds the promise of enabling our student teachers to inhabit the world differently. This is because it centres this denial of relationality and unsettles the notion of the Eurocentric liberal subject as *the* global citizen. In suggesting an ethico-onto-epistemological frame as a way of engaging with the silences and erasures from the dominant imaginary of Man, we are aware of the difficulties, tensions and ethical conundrums we face. As teacher educators, the key question for us is how to move ahead when our

attempts to reconfigure and unsettle the Eurocentric liberal global citizen are met with denial and silence? Faced with this incapacitating despair, Solnit (2016: xii) urges us to think that '[H]ope locates itself in the premises that we don't know what will happen and that the spaciousness of uncertainty is room to act'. We take heed of Tomlinson and Lepsitz's advice that '...centrally important to the success of our scholarly endeavors is knowing the work we want our work to do, taking responsibility for the world we are creating through our endeavors, for the ways of being in the world that we are modelling and creating' (2013:9-10 in García Peña, 2022: 69). We share García Peña's (2022: 90) view that we ought to teach our students '... to identify the silences...to ask about the silences...to notice the absences and the omission...And it is those silences that we truly need to understand about our collective human experience'. The silence around the notion of who is human remains an urgent task for us as teacher educators.

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REGRETTABLE SILENCES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS IN DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

KARL F. WHEATLEY

Abstract: This article suggests that regrettable silences in development education (DE) on key issues of social justice and sustainability largely result from four unresolved issues. First, there is ongoing conflation of different meanings of ‘development’, but the most common meaning of development conflicts with development toward critical consciousness, greater justice, and sustainability. Second, the dominant form of human development usually involves exploitation of other people, species, and ecosystems, and this may elicit uncomfortable cognitive dissonance for development educators. Third, DE is not well-grounded in the Earth’s biophysical limits or in what those limits imply for the directions future development must take. Specifically, modern civilisation is a self-terminating system that must be replaced. Fourth, much of DE is linked to the United Nations’ (UN) 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which steer us away from sustainability and do not resolve vast and toxic inequality. Given these issues, it is understandable that DE often appears to be stuck tinkering around the margins of an unhealthy, unfair, and unsustainable civilisation. By merging time-tested Indigenous worldviews with science regarding the Earth’s limits and the basic needs of life, future directions for development education are proposed to help humanity create a healthy, just, and sustainable civilisation.

Key words: Development Education; Global Metacrisis; Ecological Overshoot; Social Justice; Educational Policy; Education for Sustainability.

Introduction

“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends” (Luther King Jr., 1968).

We live at the most consequential time in human history, a time in which the health of ecosystems and societies is unravelling at a terrifying rate, and leading scientists repeatedly warn that we must transform society or face catastrophic

ecological and societal breakdown (Fletcher et al., 2024; IPCC, 2022). However, elected officials have proposed no plans that even come close to stabilising the climate or healing ecosystems and societies. Exasperated and scared by this situation, former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon warned that our model for civilisation is a 'global suicide pact'. Within that context, this issue of *Policy and Practice* was prompted by regrettable silences from development educators about urgent ecological and societal crises. This article proposes four possible reasons for those silences and suggests new directions for humanity and development education.

Issue one: conflicting meanings of development

Two sharply contrasting meanings of development pulled humanity and development education in contradictory directions. First, the 'development-as-industrialisation' connotation of development meant for countries to become more like wealthy industrialised capitalist nations. That entailed replacing the life-oriented and interdependent worldviews of Indigenous people with mechanistic and atomistic ideas from western civilisation, shifting from rural agrarian societies to industrialised, capitalist, and urban ones, disconnecting from nature, creating more man-made structures and objects, adopting factory-style farming, perpetual growth of populations and economies, and greater integration of national economies with the global economy. Second, the 'development-as-moral-enlightenment-and-action' connotation meant development in terms of critical consciousness, greater social justice, plus ecological awareness and sustainability.

Many development educators may assume that development as industrialisation will improve conditions for people in 'developing' countries because they have seen the remarkable improvements in living standards achieved by wealthy nations. However, some development educators may be unaware of the terrible injustices and staggering ecological destruction that made those developments possible. For example, Daly, Regan, and Regan (2015) outlined multiple definitions of DE, including some sharply critical of the developed world and others that emphasise more economic development, but saw no conflicts among them. They concluded, 'what is obvious from [other] descriptions and those above is that there is very little disagreement' (Daly, Regan, and Regan, 2015: n.p.). I respectfully disagree: across the various definitions of development

education from 1975 onward are two totally incompatible visions for human civilisation.

Where does this leave development educators? For many, it produces confusion. On the one hand, they live in societies that loudly assert that development-as-industrialisation is the royal road to progress and poverty reduction. On the other hand, many can see or sense that such industrial development is pushing the world toward ecological and societal breakdown. Indeed, it is a tragic irony that industrial development and the spread of the western worldview steadily wiped out the cultures who practiced the sustainability and greater equality that development educators aim to promote. Because they work in a field that straddles flatly contradictory visions of development, development educators may understandably get tongue-tied when faced with issues like the burning of fossil fuels. Yes, fossil fuels were instrumental in creating modern civilisation, and they dramatically increased standards of living in wealthy nations, but burning them badly hurt other people, species, and ecosystems, and is putting the future of life on Earth at risk. So, what stand should a development educator take on fossil fuels? Clearly, curing problematic silences first requires sorting out what types of development we are for, against, and why. And until we do that, we also have no idea what type of global citizens DE should be developing.

Issue two: The dominant form of ‘development’ has always been exploitative

The dominant form of development over the last 300 years has been the expansion of industrialised capitalism. However, despite the benefits it provided to many people, industrialised capitalism has always and everywhere grown itself larger by exploiting people, exploiting nature, and looting from the future.

To get capitalism rolling, self-sufficient peasants were pushed off the land and into dependence on wage labour in cities by ‘land enclosure’ laws that were essentially rich people using their political clout to steal land from peasants then force them to work in dirty and dangerous factories or other wage labour jobs to survive (Hickel, 2018). Also, throughout its history, capitalism grew itself larger by using slave labour or very low-cost labour, often working under dreadful

conditions. Of course, capitalism also arose during centuries of brutal colonialist exploitation, often occurring at gunpoint, as rich nations used their military power to dominate over one hundred poorer countries and milk their natural resources and labour to enrich themselves (Blum, 2008; Hobson, 2018; Hudson, 2021). Next, although the global South provides most of the raw materials and labour to run the global economy, the vast majority of profits go to global North nations (Ibid.). Even today, the rules of the global economy are written by wealthy nations of the global North, allowing them to use trade gimmicks to essentially loot the global South of \$2.0 trillion a year or more (Ibid., 2018: 213). Even within wealthy nations, venture capitalists, private equity firms, and neoliberal politicians are rapidly squeezing as much money out of average families as they can by cutting jobs, reducing worker benefits, privatising government functions, plus buying up the things we need (housing, medicine) and jacking up prices on them (Baradaran, 2024).

Throughout the history of industrialised capitalism, more economic growth was also only made possible by plundering the Earth of its natural resources, killing off staggering numbers of sentient living beings, steadily poisoning the planet, degrading ecosystems, and now rapidly warming the Earth and disrupting its climate (Klein, 2015). Unfortunately, the degree of ecological destruction we caused is so extensive that the health and resilience of the ecosystems that all life depends on is rapidly deteriorating (Brondizio et al., 2019; Kolbert, 2014) and we are heading toward catastrophic ecological breakdown.

Overall, modern civilisation works like a giant looting mechanism that exploits people and the Earth while depleting the prospects for all future generations of our Earth family, and it mostly benefits the richest 20 percent of people living right now (WWF, 2010). Thus, regrettable silences in DE become more understandable once we realise that to speak out clearly about today's crises, we must move beyond critiquing individual racists or greedy CEOs and instead suggest replacing an economic and political system that most of us benefitted from enormously. However, discovering that our own privilege was created through injustices and ecological harms that we strongly oppose leaves many people flummoxed and tongue-tied. Thus, to be able to speak out forcefully about the status quo without feeling like hypocrites, development educators in wealthy

countries must simultaneously work to dismantle the systems and economic inequalities on which our own resource-intensive lifestyles depend.

Issue three: development education is divorced from the Earth's biophysical limits

To speak wisely and assertively about justice, one must know what distribution of the Earth's resources is fair but knowing that requires understanding sustainable levels of consumption and wastes. However, public policy, education, and development education are almost totally divorced from Earth's biophysical limits. For example, how frequently do we read in DE or education more broadly of the Earth's sustainable carrying capacity, ecological overshoot, or nine planetary boundaries? Critically, lacking knowledge of the Earth's biophysical limits leaves DE in the dark about what is possible or fair for more than eight billion people and millions of species sharing one small planet.

The most dangerous silence in development education is almost total silence about humanity's vast ecological overshoot – a topic that should be a cornerstone of all education in the future. All living things are kept alive by the ecosystems that sustain them. However, humanity's collective ecological footprint is currently overshooting the Earth's sustainable carrying capacity by more than 70 per cent per year (Global Footprint Network, 2024). Critically, the larger and more 'developed' our economies and societies grow, the faster we destroy the web of life that all our lives depend on. Fixing this ecological overshoot will require more than replacing neoliberalism or ending greenwashing; it will require a total metamorphosis of our civilisation and lives. Critically for DE, ending ecological overshoot requires abandoning the dominant form of 'development' in the world today.

Issue four: fatal flaws in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Despite containing inspiring goals and targets, the SDG framework (United Nations, 2015) isn't grounded in the Earth's biophysical limits or the social realities needed to achieve justice and sustainability. Let's examine two fatal flaws of the SDGs.

Especially when used by those in power, ‘development’ usually means more industrialisation and economic growth, which requires more energy and more material throughput than would zero economic growth or de-growth. Thus, as typically used, economic development increases ecological overshoot, leaving us further from sustainability. Therefore, for a civilisation already overshooting the Earth’s sustainable carrying capacity by 70 per cent, ‘sustainable development’ is an unscientific oxymoron. This ticking time bomb at the heart of the UN framework has been noted by others (Kagawa and Selby, 2015), but much of DE is still linked to the SDGs. Even worse, the ecological damage caused by worsening ecological overshoot fall most heavily on the poor and disadvantaged (Robinson, 2019), so further development as economic expansion or industrialisation is not just ecologically destructive, it is arguably the main force increasing injustice globally.

Furthermore, although the SDGs aim to remediate extreme poverty, they ignore the fact that economic inequality is the central driver of a wide range of individual and social dysfunctions, plus political corruption (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010). More broadly, because capitalism consistently creates toxic levels of inequality (Piketty, 2014) and increases ecological destruction, replacing industrialised capitalism would be a main feature of any policy that is serious about sustainability and social justice.

Because the SDGs don’t address the root causes of either injustice or ecological crises, development educators who organise their work around the SDGs can unwittingly get trapped in perpetuating a global system that is inherently unjust and unsustainable while trying to create laudable but modest benefits for people or the planet. To speak out forcefully and effectively about the crises and injustices we face, development educators must transcend the vision for a growing industrialised civilisation that the United Nations and its SDGs promote.

Development education is still trapped in the wrong world

Within this unhealthy, unfair, and unsustainable civilisation, DE engages in the heroic work of addressing injustice and exploitation while critiquing neoliberalism, fascism, and empire (Giroux, 2022). To a lesser extent, but still

praiseworthy, DE has addressed the climate crisis (Mallon, 2015), educating for sustainability (Kirby, 2012; Liston and Devitt, 2020), plus calling out ‘greenwashing’ by corporations, nations, and NGOs (King, Regan and Roche, 2023). However, reflecting Audre Lorde’s (1984: 110) wisdom that ‘the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house’, development educators have been struggling to promote justice and sustainability from within a dominance- and exploitation-oriented civilisation that can never deliver either. Critically, because DE still embodies so much of the worldview of the society it critiques (i.e., anthropocentrism, the myth of sustainable growth), development educators generally stop short of calling for the fundamental transformation of modern civilisation that is needed for humans to have any decent future at all. We might call this a meta-silence about the global metacrisis, and it is illustrated well by the fact that none of twelve principles in IDEA’s 2023 Code of Conduct (Irish Development Education Association, 2024) focus squarely on sustainability. Although modern civilisation is doomed to end, the key question now is whether that will involve catastrophic, chaotic collapse or a planned and more orderly metamorphosis into new forms of human societies. That’s where development educators can really help.

Implications for development education

For development educators to ‘tackle the root causes of injustice and inequality, globally and locally to create a more just and sustainable future for everyone’ (Irish Development Education Association, 2024), DE must be re-oriented around a new vision for human civilisation, one grounded in the Earth’s limits and the laws of nature. Until DE embodies a scientifically plausible vision for humanity’s future, even its passionate and incisive critiques of the current world order (Giroux, 2022; McCloskey, 2022) can easily be dismissed as impractical because, in the infamous words of Margaret Thatcher, ‘there is no alternative’ to industrialised capitalist civilisation (Berlinski, 2011). Rather, it is only by demonstrating why a highly industrialised and capitalist civilisation cannot work – and what the alternative is – that we can convince people to make the changes needed to escape the injustices and ecocide of business-as-usual. I suggest below some needed changes in DE’s mission, curricula, and teaching methods, and describe some thorny challenges development educators will face.

Transforming education's mission

Education in wealthy nations largely focuses on developing marketable jobs skills to expand the same industrialised capitalist economy that is pushing the world toward collapse. To heal societies and ecosystems and thus secure a decent future, education at every grade must shift toward teaching students about the nature and causes of this global metacrisis, and the profound changes needed to achieve the softest landing possible. Along the way, education must develop *LifeGuards* – graduates with the wisdom, love, values, skills, passion, courage, and persistence needed to heal societies and ecosystems (Wheatley, 2024).

Healthy whole child development, especially the consistent satisfaction of students' basic physical and psychological needs

Promoting healthy whole child development is critical both because we value it highly and because unhealthy people cannot create a healthy society or protect the wellbeing of the global web of life. More specifically, research reveals that basic needs satisfaction has two profound benefits for healing societies and ecosystems. First, decades of research reveals that consistent satisfaction of basic needs is linked to better physical and mental health, deeper learning, better job performance, and more satisfying relationships (Ryan and Deci, 2017). Second, research reveals that children whose basic psychological needs were not consistently met in childhood tend to grow up to be adults who prioritise compensatory *extrinsic life goals* such as wealth, possessions, competitive status, and beauty (Kasser, 2002). In sharp contrast, children whose basic needs were consistently met in childhood are more likely to grow up to prioritise *intrinsic life goals* such as relationships, learning, caring for others or the environment (Ibid.). Thus, consistent basic needs satisfaction or thwarting in childhood primes people to either become the kind of adults who oppose or support the policies and practices needed to care well for other people and the planet (Ibid.).

The scope, scale, and causes of the global metacrisis

Students must learn that our economies, societies, and very lives are totally dependent on a stable climate, healthy ecosystems, and biodiversity, but humans are rapidly destroying the web of life in multiple ways simultaneously. Far beyond the climate crisis, humanity's ecological overshoot is the root cause of all the ecological crises we face. Ecological overshoot means we are depleting natural

resources faster than they can be regenerated, degrading ecosystems faster than they can regenerate, killing off living things faster than they can repopulate, polluting the planet faster than it can de-toxify itself, and emitting greenhouse gases much faster than they break down. The numbers are staggering: In addition to our 70 per cent ecological overshoot, humans are warming the planet more than 20 times faster than it usually warms when coming out of an ice age and increasing global carbon dioxide levels 9-10 times faster than before the worst mass extinction in the Earth's history.

Our vast ecological overshoot has also pushed the world beyond the 'safe operating space for humanity' for six of the Earth's nine major planetary boundaries (Richardson et al., 2023): land system change, biosphere integrity, climate change, freshwater change, novel entities (e.g., pesticides), and biogeochemical flows (i.e., excess nitrogen and phosphorus). Because all life on Earth is dependent on ecosystems that support it, if we remain in such vast ecological overshoot, worsening deterioration of ecosystems and the societies and species they support is inevitable. There are thousands of ways in which ecological overshoot causes the web of life to unravel. For starters, rapid man-made global warming causes more intense and destructive heat waves, droughts, precipitation events, and forest fires (Büntgen, et al., 2021). These then cause more crop failures and livestock deaths which can trigger more civil unrest and cause refugee numbers to swell. Chemical and plastic pollution increase disease and infertility among humans and wildlife alike (Morrison et al., 2022). Global warming can aggravate over 270 human pathogenic diseases (Mora et al., 2022) and is causing roughly half of the Earth's species to migrate to cooler environments (Pecl et al., 2017). Those migrations then disrupt the mix of species within ecosystems and the complex interdependencies that make ecosystems function well. Put bluntly, the longer we stay in overshoot, the more people will die prematurely, and the more species will become extinct.

The changes needed in our habits and systems to heal ecosystems and societies

As Raworth (2017) explained – and everyone must learn – to heal societies and ecosystems, we must meet everyone's basic needs equitably while bringing humanity's collective ecological footprint down to well within the Earth's

maximum sustainable carrying capacity. Achieving those goals requires almost unimaginable changes. We must teach students that to end ecological overshoot and thus prevent worsening breakdown of ecosystems, our food supply, and societies, we must dramatically shrink the global economy. Why? The size of the global economy is tightly connected to how much energy and materials we use, and those are in turn tightly tied to the amount of ecological destruction we cause (Rees, 2023). Thus, a larger Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increases overshoot but ending ecological overshoot requires shrinking GDP by roughly 55 per cent. Activities in which students compare personal and national ecological footprints to what is sustainable are not just eye-opening for students, they seem to be essential in helping students transcend single crisis thinking to realise the enormous scope of the needed transformation of society.

Students must learn that because the vast majority of ecological destruction was caused by the richest 20 per cent of people on Earth, right sizing the economy to end overshoot will require individuals in wealthy nations to shrink their consumption and wastes by a staggering 60-99 per cent. For example, the richest 10 per cent of people produce 50 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions while the poorest 50 per cent of people are just responsible for 8 per cent of global emissions (Oxfam, 2023). Similarly, the wealthiest 20 per cent of people are responsible for roughly 80 per cent of the world's annual consumption of resources (and resulting wastes) while the poorest 20 per cent are only responsible for 1.3 per cent (WWF, 2010). Because the vast majority of humanity's ecological footprint comes from just 1.6 billion people in highly industrialised nations, the only humane way to get out of ecological overshoot and thus prevent worsening ecological and societal breakdown is to shrink and de-industrialise wealthy economies (Dietz and O'Neill, 2013) while their citizens adopt much simpler lifestyles (Merkel, 2003).

To stop driving the web of life toward collapse via pollution, we also must sharply reduce use of man-made chemicals and plastics and shift toward making things using natural, biodegradable, or infinitely recyclable materials such as wood, glass, and aluminium. Humans have produced over 200,000 industrial, agricultural, and medical chemicals, almost none of which are ever tested for long-term safety. Among these are chemicals that promote obesity, diabetes, heart

disease, cancers, neurological diseases, and reproductive problems and genetic abnormalities (Bergman, et al., 2013). We also blanketed the planet with plastics and microplastics, including those linked to asthma, lung cancer, birth defects, and infertility (Swan, 2021). Disturbingly, many chemicals and microplastics now fall in the rain and snow and they are found in our food, drink, and even the bodies of newborn babies (Environmental Working Group, 2005). Thus, to avoid killing ourselves and the rest of our Earth family, we must phase out thousands of toxic chemicals and plastics and return to using natural materials and chemicals.

We also must teach students about the urgent need for smaller, less industrialised, more localised, circular, and agrarian economies oriented around caring for the whole web of life (Dietz and O'Neill, 2013; Norberg-Hodge, 2019); simpler and lower-tech lifestyles with more manual labour; diets dominated by whole plant foods (Poore and Nemecek, 2018); organic agroecology; mass transportation but far less travel; walkable cities; phasing out or replacing thousands of products, chemicals, and industrial processes that are simply too eco-destructive; dramatically-lower inequality; legal systems that prioritise the wellbeing of the web of life over private property (Boyd, 2017); a much smaller global population; and a return to more growing your own food plus mutual aid networks.

A more caring, holistic, and life-oriented worldview

To become *Life*Guards, graduates need to develop a worldview that is profoundly different from that promoted by western civilisation (Wheatley, 2024). For example, the story of separation, anthropocentrism, radical individualism, competitive hedonism, narrow short-term thinking, and cold indifference to the plight of other people and species must be replaced with recognition of our deep interdependence, kinship, 'me-and-we' thinking, cooperation and self-restraint, long-term systems thinking, and empathy and love for other people and species. Critics may call such changes unrealistic. However, unless we want catastrophic collapse, *there is no alternative* to this 'Life Mindset' because this is the only worldview compatible with creating a healthy, just, and sustainable civilisation. Furthermore, just such a worldview has long guided many individuals and cultures, including Indigenous groups who lived in the same place sustainably for

millennia (Mitchell, 2019; also see Alldred, 2016 and Haugen, 2022 for similar views of development among Africans).

Teaching methods

To heal ecosystems and societies, we need teaching methods that simultaneously meet children's basic psychological needs while promoting healthy whole-child development, wisdom regarding the global metacrisis, and the values, skills, and character needed to help manage it. The research is clear that the teaching methods that are superior for meeting children's basic psychological needs while promoting healthy whole-child development include play, project-based learning, free voluntary reading, place-based education, democratic education, and other transdisciplinary teaching methods (e.g. Wheatley, 2015). Also, our teaching should focus on studying concrete societal and ecological problems/crises and the healthiest responses humans can make to them.

Challenges in transforming DE to focus on healing the web of life

There are thorny intellectual, emotional, logistical, and political/financial obstacles to transforming DE to focus on the global metacrisis. Regarding intellectual obstacles, it can take years for teachers or their students to construct an adequate understanding of the global metacrisis. Also, it is difficult to grasp the urgency of the metacrisis when I can look out the window of my suburban home and things don't look that different than they did last year or even thirty years ago. The human mind struggles to take seriously such a slowly unfolding emergency, so students need lots of experiences with analysing the trajectories of slowly worsening problems. Furthermore, students need to learn to debunk myths that downplay how bad things are or that wildly exaggerate the efficacy of available solutions. Another huge step in people's developing understanding is getting beyond the point of thinking in terms of siloed solutions to isolated crises (e.g. renewable energy for the climate crisis) and realising that all the crises are just symptoms of one larger predicament, and the nature of that predicament means that only lower-tech societies and much simpler lives are sustainable. Practicing systems thinking from the earliest grades onward is needed to help students develop this big picture understanding of the world's complex systems.

The biggest emotional obstacles are students and teachers not wanting to think about such tough issues (Bracken and Bryan, 2010) and especially not wanting to face the fact that modern civilisation is in its terminal phase (Afzaal, 2023). Even many leading climate experts and activists have failed to face the fact that even if we solved the climate crisis tomorrow, we would still be heading toward collapse because we are destroying the web of life in multiple ways simultaneously. Surveys show that large majorities of young people are incredibly worried about the future (Hickman et al., 2021), so this creates an opening to explore these challenging issues. However, many teachers often don't want to teach this content because it is so sad and painful. Indeed, I have often felt that way. However, in my experience as a teacher educator, when teachers realise the severity and urgency of the global metacrisis and realise that we must face the bad news now to give students a brighter tomorrow, that makes them more willing to teach this content.

The logistical obstacles to teaching about the global metacrisis and the needed metamorphosis of civilisation include the need to train teachers in this content and teachers finding time to teach about this. Because our minds were colonised by the logic of factory-style schooling (Wheatley, 2015), many teachers don't grasp that you can teach all the basic academics a 10-year-old needs while studying rainforests, inequality, or healthier farming methods. Nevertheless, to make space for what matters most, educators must review their bloated lists of educational objectives and discard most objectives that are not directly relevant to preventing catastrophic collapse or healing the web of life. This is what matters most.

The political and financial obstacles are enormous. Our elected leaders haven't come close to admitting the true nature of the global metacrisis so there's no political support for teaching students about the coming end of this civilisation or the changes we must make. As a result, there's little funding for such education. This will change gradually, but development educators must realise that teaching students the real truth about what humanity faces must often be an unsanctioned activity for now. However, haven't bending the rules, civil disobedience, and unsanctioned truth-telling always been critical for the success of significant social movements?

There is urgent and noble work for development educators to do: deconstructing the paradigm underlying modern civilisation, developing the critical consciousness DE has long been known for, and promoting the development of a different form of civilisation – a healthy, just, and sustainable one. Once they realise that this is the only path down which humanity can have a decent future, I am very hopeful that development educators will speak out loudly about caring well for all members of our wonderful Earth Family.

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ARE WE ALL SITTING UNCOMFORTABLY? UNLEARNING THE STORIES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

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Abstract: Social justice is a widely used term across many sectors, societies, and ideologies and has become a buzzword for positive intentions towards tackling inequity or inequality (Atkins and Duckworth, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 2023). However, it is also a slippery concept which could be easily misinterpreted, or the complexities lost in the effort to respond, ultimately leading people to lose ‘sight of the big picture and the injustice that prevails’ (Ladson-Billings, 2023: 3). Equitable education systems are fundamental and potentially powerful vehicles to achieve a socially just world (Atkins and Duckworth, 2019) though this article questions the validity of any such claims of our current schooling in the United Kingdom (UK) and draws together argumentation for authentic change.

The article explores the multifaceted, sometimes misinterpreted, concepts and realities of social justice specifically within educational contexts and the implications for authentic action and change in these spaces. It will re-visit, re-evaluate and further investigate the potential of ‘discomfort’ as a catalyst for change within educator professional learning which aims at transformation of the status quo. Adding to this discourse is the consideration of emotion within this learning process and the innovative power of humour to humanise and engage with challenging issues. Drawing on current literature and reflecting back to my previous work, this article aims to dare myself, and others in the field, to personally rediscover discomfort as a powerful means for transformative change and engender authentic action.

Key words: Social Justice Mentality; Discomfort; Pedagogy; Transformative Professional Development; Equity.

Introduction

Social Justice is a slippery concept which can be easily misrepresented or enacted by both individuals and society. However, with countries experiencing a growing

political and social divergence and increasing socio-economic gaps the calls for fundamental social justice have been amplified (Bourn, 2021; Blum and Hunt, 2023). Indeed, in the UK there is an ongoing and urgent call for an authentic examination of social justice in relation to schooling (Gandolfi and Mills, 2023; Ball and Collet-Sabe, 2021), and to question the reality of UK governments' commitment to social justice beyond political rhetoric.

After seven years, one global pandemic, four British Prime Ministers and eight Education Ministers (at the time of writing), two general elections, ongoing international conflicts and protests for social justice in the UK, this article will revisit and extend the central discussions of my article for Issue 25 of *Policy and Practice* (Simpson, 2017). The article challenged the misinterpretation of charity mentality as social justice and explored the potential of a new approach to re-framing understandings of and action for social justice in educational contexts. This article will reflect further on the 'potential of discomfort' as a realistic means to engender action or change against the backdrop of an education sector, in a post-pandemic world, where educators are over-worked and with an ever-growing range of responsibilities beyond teaching for which they are held accountable. To engage these educators in challenging professional development which actively undermines fundamental assumptions about their role in social injustice, seems almost impossible or even cruel. However, by drawing on a range of literature this article will explore its potential and reason why it is still necessary to drive forward social justice, not just for educators but for us, as global education practitioners also.

The tale of two concepts – social justice and charity mentality

The concept of justice is one which has been well explored and debated over time with early written evidence originating from ancient Greek philosophies which implies justice as moral conduct or as Plato's *The Republic* (1955) argues either a 'virtue or knowledge' (see Atkins and Duckworth, 2019: 20). Aristotle described the 'moral state' as an individual balance between knowing what is just and acting justly for the benefit of all, which leads to social justice (Ibid.: 20). This description is similar to that held by other world philosophies and global religions which also promote a general sense of moral responsibility for 'charitable giving and advocacy on the part of the poor' (Ibid.: 21) and others in the community.

Modern framings of social justice draw on these foundations though often incorporate other virtues such as participation, democracy, equality and fairness for both the benefit of the individual and society (see Akta , 2021: 3-4). These multifaceted notions of social justice feature across our law making, social consciousness and educational aims and values (Atkins and Duckworth, 2019: 22). On the surface this sense of the ‘common good’ as social justice is simple and positive, however, on greater scrutiny, its meaning is still ambiguous, and its interpretation can differ across sectors of society or discipline (Ibid.: 3). In fact, I would suggest that, in many situations, social justice has been prey to historical misrepresentation or appropriation as a predominantly charitable or moral endeavour and that this ideology does not adequately represent the true nature or potential of social justice. Instead, it better represents a charity mentality approach to social action embodied by the reactionary ‘impulse to help’ those less fortunate without critically engaging in the reasons behind the injustice that necessitates the need nor reflect on our role within that injustice (Bryan, 2013: 1).

The arguments against a charitable or philanthropic approach to social justice can be drawn as far back as J S Mill in the 1860s who reasoned against the forms of what Zembylas (2021) describes as ‘sentimental kindness’ (in Blum et al., 2021: 775) rather than educating understanding of the fundamental causes of poverty or injustice. The avoidance of critical self and social reflection has enabled societies, especially those in the global North, the privilege of ‘sanctioned ignorance’ (Andreotti, 2006: 44). Where a predominate discourse of sentimentality (Blum et al., 2021), attractively re-packaged for modern audiences via ‘Children in Need’ or ‘Live Aid’, perpetuates the mythology of pity for the oppressed and passivity of the ‘saviour’ whose position of privilege actively relies on the continuation of marginalisation and injustice. This dynamic ensures the preservation of a colonial conceptualisation of the world, a metaphorical ‘smokescreen’ which prevents critical engagement whilst perpetuating this ‘myth’ of the powerful ‘North’ as responsible ‘good guys’ (Simpson, 2017). Furthermore, I would argue that this ‘othering’ is not limited to the global, indeed a charity mentality can negatively influence our perceptions of the ‘other’ within our own society, local community and even our classrooms.

At this point, I would offer a potential alternative framing for social justice, specifically in education, which attempts to embody the commonalities of other definitions whilst anchoring it in context as a pedagogy. A social justice **mentality** is a practice in critical thinking and questioning rooted in a commitment to equity which results in ethical action and challenges the status quo. This aligns with Griffiths' (2003) assertion that social justice is a verb with the 'imperative for action...to enact...and be doing social justice' (Atkins and Duckworth, 2019: 41). Its very existence in the lexicon is dynamic, in order to actively respond to current contexts, individual and collective needs to achieve equity. This resonates with the notion that social justice is less a theory and more of a journey without a complete map and therefore subject to change (Ibid.: 36). Similarly, pedagogy is reflexive and, when utilised effectively, can challenge injustices and enable personal and social change.

Socially just education – a tall tale?

Education freedom fighters like Paulo Freire believed that education could affect social change by 'giving voice to the voiceless, and power to those considered disposable' but that it had to take risks and engage in the 'struggle' against neoliberalism, capitalism and authoritarianism (Giroux, 2021: 115-116). Biddulph (2021: 220) highlights the negative impact of neoliberalism on the running of schools where 'children are commodities. Teachers are factory workers' as schools become increasingly marketised with intensified pressure for performativity to policy over professional autonomy. This shift to an 'accountability agenda' (Ibid.: 222) restricts educators' ability to enact their own professionalism; to question authority, and themselves, and act based on their own experience, knowledge or skills. Thus, ultimately limiting the democratic and emancipatory potential of education (Biesta, 2017).

Additionally, Atkins and Duckworth (2019: 23) argue that the normalisation of neoliberal social frameworks has created a social construct of individuals as either a benefit or deficit to society. This dichotomy replicates the charitable giving or action for the 'deficient' as the norm without considering the 'existence of systemic and structural failures which confine people...constrain individual agency and replicate social class and other social inequities' (Atkins, 2009: 144). Indeed, there is an imperative to highlight the role of historic, and

current, social systems that perpetuate inequitable practices and ensure the continuation of discrimination. This includes education and formal schooling which may, unwittingly, embody these practices and actually be a fundamental part of the problem (Towers and Maguire, 2023: 19). Freire (1970) introduced the argument against the ‘banking model’ of teaching which enables education systems to systematically oppress students by replicating knowledge and worldviews designed by their oppressors (Gillett-Swan and Brodie-McKenzie, 2023: 228).

Atkins and Duckworth (2019: 6) highlight the influence of an English school system constructed to differentiate by social class whilst, for some Asian or African contexts, schools impose ‘cultural or societal norms’ which limit access to an (equal) education for some groups. These structures ensure a fundamentally inequitable education system globally, nationally and locally (Stuart 2022: 342) regardless of the rhetoric generated around ‘universal’ access to education as equality. Indeed, the concept of ‘equality’ is regularly woven into the social justice narrative though, I agree with Atkins and Duckworth (2019) on the need to move away from basic interpretations of equality as ‘sameness’ for whose sameness are we replicating? We should be wary of how ‘sameness’ is recognised or represented to avoid a ‘worlding the world as the West’ (Spivak, 1990 cited in Andreotti, 2006: 69) or placing views of the privileged above those of a wider, multilayered society. Instead, we should embrace the deeper and more complex ideologies of fairness and equity which are inseparable to social justice (Atkins and Duckworth, 2019).

Equitable education is underpinned by authentic social justice and therefore requires, as suggested by Nancy Fraser (2008), the three R’s (cultural) Recognition and (political) Representation alongside (economic) Redistribution as an ideal. It could be argued that until young people are *recognised* as ‘key stakeholders in the learning process’ (Ferguson, Hanreddy, and Draxton, 2011: 57) and able to *represent* themselves within the system there cannot be a truly socially just education system. Furthermore, in England, economic disparities reveal themselves through varied educational achievements and so-called ‘quality grading’ by Ofsted which seem entrenched and beyond simple *redistribution* which further supports the claim by Ball and Collet-Sabe (2021) that education

in England is systematically unjust. A system that has been repeatedly promoted as a 'sensible and necessary building block of modern life' rather than acknowledging it for what it is: 'badly designed and processual unfair' (Ibid.: 2).

As argued previously, the foundations of formal education were not built on the ideal of equity but created and framed by colonial and imperialistic values based on notions of 'sameness' in relation to those in 'power'. Moreover, Towers and Maguire (2023) argue that educators, and those who have engaged in formal schooling, have become institutionalised to the concept and processes of school effectiveness or the 'common sense strategies' utilised in schools such as testing or streaming (Ball and Collet-Sabe, 2021 in Ibid.: 18). Therefore, society maintains narrow parameters of criticality and questioning which enable the system to remain with minimal 'tweaks'. Monbiot (2018) suggests this is a result of a lack of alternatives to neoliberalism to engender change with Ledwith (2020) calling for the creation of new narratives and ideas to create novel, more socially just, education systems (see Walton, 2021: 518).

Whilst we wait to generate or find out more about these new narratives it is imperative to continue to find avenues and opportunities to further enhance authentic social justice where possible. Making distinctions between education for social justice and socially just education is significant here. It enables practitioners, researchers and policymakers to clarify their roles and responsibilities in driving changes (Akta , 2021; Atkins and Duckworth, 2019). This article positions education for social justice as the content and knowledge made explicit within a curriculum whilst socially just education as more implicit in nature and demonstrated through the ethos or pedagogy of the practitioner, or institution (Akta , 2021).

A key opportunity for education for social justice should be via the curriculum though Manyukhina (2022) challenges the current conceptualisation and design of the national curriculum for England which is not only prescriptive but lacks the capacity to develop an innate sense of learner agency. Instead, children are passive players of a curriculum which holds immense cultural capital and politically selected knowledge and reflects the 'interest of those in power' (Young, 2003: 554). This potential imbalance or prioritisation of certain

knowledge can favour certain groups or individuals and mirrors the practices inherent in colonisation and marginalisation which ultimately restricts wider social or knowledge development (hooks, 2009). Arguably, it is another example of a ‘smokescreen’ colonial framing of the world or non-critical charity mentality approach to curriculum making (Simpson, 2017).

Through a lack of authentic agency, broad curricula or opportunities to see the world differently, educational structures ‘reproduce marginalization’ (Atkins and Duckworth, 2019: 23) rather than act as an emancipatory or revolutionary vehicle for society. Teacher agency is also significant within this dynamic with evidence suggesting a new policy of re-positioning educators from enactors of policy to ‘agents of change in curriculum making’ (Priestly et al., 2019 in Biddulph, 2021: 222). However, teachers, as with all post-education adults, are a production of systemically inequitable structures built on foundations of social injustice and we must acknowledge the implications that has on their perception of education and ability to design and deliver a curriculum with authentic social justice at its core. Akta (2021) also questions the reality of creating and maintaining a socially just education which is highly dependent on the mentality and critical understanding of leaders within institutions, their fundamental ethos and how they support practitioners or learners to embody the principles and practices of social justice. If we aspire for fundamental change in and across education, whether in terms of curriculum, attitudes or leadership there is one approach which stands out as a potentially powerful conduit: professional learning.

Transforming the story of professional learning

There has been a ‘professionalising’ of professional development or learning (PDL) over the past few years in response to the drive for ‘developing high quality teaching’ to ‘narrow the disadvantage gap’ (EEF, 2021: 4). There is little argument against the logic of effective PDL and its impact on pupil outcomes or learning experiences though arguably there are issues around a generally data-driven, prescriptive or narrow-focused programme of development for practitioners and leaders. The same issues around the power dynamics and privileged viewpoints of curriculum-making can be made here. In addition, with school budgets reducing, PDL spending has dropped by 40 per cent since 2018 (Weston, 2022),

leaders and institutions must make difficult choices about where to spend their tightening finances to meet the accountability agenda set by Ofsted and DfE. Subsequently, interest in challenging and complex concepts such as social justice as PDL is likely to be overlooked in favour of subject-specific knowledge and classroom instruction (Teacher Tapp, 2024: 3, 12; Cordingley et al., 2018) or diluted into compliance issues such as safeguarding or challenging disadvantage. Indeed, literature suggests that opportunities for educators to engage in the concept of social justice during either ITE programmes or professional development are ‘generally inexistent or very superficial’ (Gandolfi and Mills, 2023: 575). That is not to say that there are no examples of social justice PDL widely available, which are well-designed or professionally delivered, but that it remains an add-on to the core educational offer, misunderstood as implicit in other agendas or perceived as too risky in light of DfE’s ‘political impartiality’ requirements (DfE, 2022).

Additionally, measuring the impact of PDL has been variable and only more recently linked to pupils’ learning experiences and outcomes rather than teacher practices (Cordingley and Hughes, 2021). The EEF Effective Professional Development guidance (2021) has notably raised the profile of PDL in terms of developing higher quality teaching and identified ‘mechanisms’ which make it potentially more effective. This is important for those delivering PDL with or for educators, as Jordao (2004: 22) suggests they are ‘especially resistant to change’ as a result of the development of habitual behaviours to which teachers are particularly prone (Webb and Sheeran, 2006). Sims et al. (2021) associate the nature of classrooms as stable environments with both repetitive and stressful aspects of the job which combine to build and reinforce habit formation and contribute to the ‘knowing-doing gap’ or limited impacts of PDL (Simpson, 2022: 13).

In response to these challenges, my previous research explored the efficacy of a transformative learning approach to PDL inspired by Jan Fook (2006) named the ‘learning to unlearn’ framework (Simpson, 2017). The design aimed to initiate an individualised process of critical reflection which actively encourages the educator to challenge deeply engrained assumptions of the world or ‘difficult knowledge’ (Britzman, 1998). This process of ‘unlearning’ engaged participants

in personal conflict in order to initiate a shift in their personal perspectives of the world and subsequently influence professional practice. This dynamic relationship between the personal and professional is a key aspect of PDL for transformation as each influence the others' understandings and practices (Khazem, 2018; Simpson, 2022, 2023). I acknowledge that the process can be challenging and uncomfortable for the participant, however, if we aim for true transformation towards an authentic social justice mentality, then discomfort is not only a natural part of the process but also a necessary one (Illeris, 2003; Zembylas, 2015; Simpson, 2022, 2023). Indeed, Béres and Fook (2020) highlight the emotional or responsive risks resulting from the critical reflection process; a process which make our ideas, values or concepts of the world vulnerable to question or challenge which as a result, risks disputing the foundations of our identity or ideologies. Yet, Freire challenged us, as educators and citizens to take risks, however, inconvenient the consequences (Giroux, 2021: 116). Cordingley et al. (2015: 6) identified the effectiveness of PDL which can 'challenge existing theories in a non-threatening way'; however, can we truly challenge ourselves whilst maintaining our own sense of comfort?

The parable of the potential of discomfort

The pedagogy of discomfort has been explored as a vehicle to engage in social justice education for the past few decades (Zembylas, 2015: 163) and described as a means to 'unsettle cherished beliefs about the world' and 'examine constructed self-images' (Ibid.: 163, 165). Similar to the intentions of the learning to unlearn framework (Simpson, 2017), this pedagogy takes participants out of their comfort zones to spaces of personal challenge, which could be considered somewhat threatening, especially when questioning individuals' privileged assumptions about the world and their role in it (Boler, 1999: 176 in Zembylas, 2015: 163). Equally, marginalised voices require support in these spaces to avoid the polarising positions of domination by more privileged views or incarnation as a vox populi (voice of the people). This poses a question for PDL practitioners and educators: is it possible to create ethically sound, 'safe', learning spaces to explore difficult knowledge or complex social issues and maintain a sense of comfort?

Firstly, the concept of 'safe spaces' for dialogue is one which is fundamentally flawed and predicated on the principles of privilege and power

(Zembylas, 2015; Chetty, 2018). Classrooms are especially influenced by power relations between teachers and pupils with additional complex dynamics between marginalised and privileged students which cannot be ‘sanitized’ into safety (Boler, 2004 in Zembylas, 2015: 165). Moreover, if we aim for transformation of beliefs, perceptions or practices we must acknowledge that this is unlikely without disruption or discomfort as spaces which are too ‘safe’ may lead to apolitical or non-critical ‘chat’ (Bullivant, 2020). As educators we must ‘let go of the desire for consensus as an ultimate goal’ (Newell-Jones and Colbourne, 2006: 17) and recognise that the world is ‘known, interpreted and experienced differently by different people’ (Khazem, 2018: 129). Without embracing the dissenting voices or engaging with those we do not agree with we can create what Chetty (2018) describes as a ‘pedagogy of politeness’ which enables the continuation of the status quo (see Drane and Higham, 2023: 172). Instead, we need *braver* spaces which embrace disagreement and challenge as essential parts of being a critically active and socially just citizen.

Secondly, it is important to remember that PDL practitioners merely create the brave spaces or opportunities for participants to explore their own discomfort, we do not ‘cause it’ (Blum et al., 2021: 767). Interestingly, this resonates with the criticisms levelled at my learning to unlearn approach to PDL and my own urge to apologise to participants for ‘freaking them out’ (Simpson, 2017: 95). Conceptually and professionally, I understood the design of the framework and the need for discomfort though, on a personal level, even I found myself uncomfortable placing educators in spaces of personal challenge. That being said, it is worth highlighting that, discomfort was utilised as only one stage in the learning to unlearn framework and the provocation was selected for its humorous angle. The injection of levity was a purposeful tactic as a powerful driver to subtly unsettle or disrupt accepted norms whilst diffusing the tensions through laughter. Research suggests that humour or dark comedy can provide a distinctly humanising and collective experience which holds intrinsic educational benefits (Zembylas, 2018: 303; Sachs and Dunbar, 2023). It can also inject ‘activation energy’ to depressive and difficult topics (Sachs and Dunbar, 2023) and boost morale and the capacity for inspiring ‘novel thinking about emotionally difficult situations’ (Zembylas, 2018: 305).

The emotionally charged nature of this work could be considered both a barrier or driver and perceptions of emotion within education and society is significant here. Ojala (2021: 42-43) highlights the tendency of neoliberal societies to reject negative feelings as counterproductive to the ‘grand plan’ of economic order. Additionally, the general privatisation of life in a neoliberal society has resulted in emotions viewed as more of an individual problem and responsibility (Ibid.: 43) which promotes those who can regulate emotions or comply with the dominant emotional hierarchy, what has been referred to as emotional imperialism (Zembylas, 2024).

Furthermore, a small-scale study by Ojala (2021: 44) indicated that, educators generally ‘disapprove of emotions as part of the learning process’. Interestingly, participants indicated value differences between emotions such as guilt, sadness or worry which were seen as significantly negative whilst feelings of anger or frustration, though also negative, were perceived as having more educational potential and motivational value (Ibid.: 45). Conversely, however, research indicates that worry can actually be a positive driver and linked to ‘engagement and high self-efficacy’ (see Ojala, 2021: 49). An argument to progress between these opposing perspectives would be to acknowledge the potential of emotions when young people, and adults are supported to understand, manage and utilise their emotions *constructively* rather than ‘hiding them under the rug’ in preference to empirical knowledge (see Bauman and Donskis, 2013; Ojala, 2021).

The key word being *constructively* as, similar to the criticisms of a charity mentality approach to social justice issues, the use of emotive reactors to engage with complex social issues is arguably too simplistic. A focus on sentiment or emotional response links to the knee-jerk reactionary impulse to help and can potentially ‘gloss over societal problems’ (Ojala, 2021: 42) rather than engage with a genuine interest in change. Another point of resistance for educators engaging in emotionally engaged learning may be the fear of overstepping the line into the personal rather than professional sphere and therefore shifting the power dynamics within the learning environment. This article has already argued the case for engaging the personal as part of transformative learning though it is worth

emphasising how emotions are integral to the process alongside critical reflection (Blum et al., 2021: 766).

Thus, we can conclude that discomfort, as a process of transformative learning, requires a balance between constructive emotional engagement and critical thinking. Moreover, I would suggest that discomfort is not enough on its own and should be built around a framework which includes a process of reconstruction with the purpose of engendering purposeful hope and agency of participants. This is built into the final stages of the learning to unlearn framework which was designed to support the re-framing and action planning to ensure the transformation process occurs in the longer term (Simpson, 2017). Ideally this should be a collaborative exercise to avoid the isolationism of neoliberal approaches and recognise the innate power of collective agency and solidarity in the face of institutional social injustice (see Ojala, 2021: 42; Giroux, 2021).

Conclusion

Education is not neutral, it does not exist in a political, economic nor social vacuum but has been built into the very fabric of modern society (Giroux and França, 2019). Therefore, it is not immune to the influences of neoliberalism or colonialism and there is a growing imperative that this must be acknowledged by educators and society, and we have a responsibility to respond to it. If we aim for a socially just world then we must engage our social justice mentality, dare to see the world differently, more honestly, and prepare to feel uncomfortable with what we see. The picture is not one of equity and, though complex, we all play our own small part within the inequitable systems and structures, especially in education. But there is hope. Education for social justice has the potential to 'nurture hope and optimism for social transformation' (Tarozzi, 2024: 2) and I propose that a critical social justice mentality has the pragmatism, rooted in pedagogy and educational ethos, to drive forward transformation of the dominant narratives and practices to achieve more equitable education systems (Atkins and Duckworth, 2019: 6). What are these next hopeful steps towards making this a reality? Ideally, any future government needs to honestly engage with and effectively enable educators to enact socially just education and explicitly plan for education for social justice. Similarly, we need educational institutions and

leaders to re-think their processes and practices, to root them in authentic social justice and create new strategies and approaches which embody equitable education.

Additionally, we need educators to be braver, to face and explore their vulnerabilities and have agency and criticality to initiate change. We need PDL practitioners to be braver in creating more uncomfortable spaces for unlearning and re-framing knowledge at the risk of participant revolt or apathy. Indeed, my own professional gaze falls upon future research around the potential of humour to explore difficult and uncomfortable issues which may inspire ‘novel thinking’ (Zembylas, 2018: 305) through laughter. Perhaps most significantly, we, as an educational sector, also need to be braver and take a step back to make space for learner agency in this dialogue. By opening up creative spaces for critical thinking and imagining novel or alternative futures we can, together, shift the dominant narratives of power in education to make way to write new ones.

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Perspectives

TOWARDS A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL MAPPING OF GLOBAL EDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN IRELAND

EILISH DILLON

Abstract: This article explores issues around mapping global education (GE) in higher education in the context of shifting global citizenship education, education for sustainable development and higher education policy in Ireland. Addressing the dimensions of such a mapping, it considers ‘what we know’ and ‘what we don’t know’ about GE, especially outside of initial teacher education. In so doing, it identifies questions, considerations and suggestions for further research if GE is to be meaningfully advanced in higher education in Ireland, North and South.

Key words: Global Education; Global Citizenship Education; Education for Sustainable Development; Higher Education; Higher Education Institutions.

Introduction

For many years now, embedding critical global education (GE) into higher education (HE) in Ireland has been the stuff of policy aspiration, isolated projects, different emphases and some frustration. Though aspects of what’s happening in GE in HE, including global citizenship education (GCE) and education for sustainable development (ESD), are well documented, aside from a few examples, little systematic research has been undertaken on GE in HE in Ireland, especially outside of initial teacher education (ITE) (Khoo, Healy and Coate, 2007; Cotter, 2021; Dillon and Gaynor, 2024; Grummell, 2024). Even where there have been attempts to map ESD provision in HE, unlike the recent mapping of GE in adult and community education supported by Saolta (Oberdorfer, Kearns and O’Halloran, 2022), these attempts have tended to focus either on sustainability ‘issues’ (Adams, Muslim Jameel and Goggins, 2023), policies (Shawe et al., 2019) or initiatives (Guiry et al., 2022). There has been limited focus, in mapping, on

pedagogy, on institutional culture and politics, or on overlaps with GCE, anti-racism education (ARE) or equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

Before exploring these issues further, it is important to note that I am using ‘global education’ here as an umbrella term to cover related educations such as DE, ARE, GCE, ESD and social justice education, akin to the intersectional, critical, active and transformative understanding of GE outlined in the Dublin Declaration (GENE, 2022). I often include the term ‘critical’ before GE in order to proactively highlight the critical pedagogical underpinnings of GE and the important influences of decoloniality and other global justice, equality, participatory and creative approaches on GE. As such, my focus here is not on content-based development studies, global learning or sustainability programmes. Nor is it only on programme provision itself, but rather on how critical GE is (or is not) integrated into HE in Ireland across policy, research, programme provision, co-curricular activities, institutional culture, and teaching and learning approaches.

I am writing this article from the premise that, while it is most certainly not the only challenge, a lack of systematic research on GE in HE in Ireland hampers the integration of critical GE in HE institutions. I argue that in order to bring GE more to the fore in HE policy, research and programme provision, a well-recognised necessity if HE is to play its role in education for transformation in the context of complex global challenges, we need to have a deeper and broader understanding of the field. As such, I tentatively outline some of ‘what we know’ and ‘what we don’t know’ when it comes to recent developments and the challenges related to integration of GE in higher education in Ireland, before setting out some issues for consideration in any future mapping of it. This article has been developed from a presentation made to the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) formal education working group in December 2023. As part of the preparation for that presentation, I informally consulted twelve educators I have worked with who are engaged in GE in HE in Ireland. Some responded to questions shared by email and I spoke to others in online interviews. I am grateful to them for sharing their views, which were very helpful, and some of which are referred to here.

Recent developments in GE in HE in Ireland

The Irish government has identified HE as important in its strategies on development and GCE over many years. In its 2021 GCE strategy, for example, its intention to ‘establish a new strategic partnership at an institutional level with the third level sector’ (Irish Aid, 2021: 22) is outlined. It goes on to say that:

“Irish Aid partners are already active in 23 of the 26 Higher Education Institutes in the State. To date, this support has been focused on the integration of global citizenship issues into student societies working with SUAS and the Union of Students in Ireland (USI). We have supported the integration of GCE into Initial Teacher Education at both primary and post-primary as well as a small number of other projects working with specific faculties” (Ibid.).

Identifying many ‘opportunities to engage leadership and management of HEIs [higher education institutions], as well as academic staff, to strengthen integration of GCE into all aspects of campus life, from curriculum reform to training of lecturers, to policies and research’, it promises that ‘in order to inform our approach, we will map current levels of integration of GCE in HEIs’ (Ibid.).

The short piece quoted above gives a strong indication of the main activity in GCE in HE in recent years. Examples include ITE partnership projects with Irish Aid such as the Development and Intercultural Education (DICE) primary education project and ‘Ubuntu’ (focused on secondary education), through the student engagement project, ‘Stand’. Other projects and initiatives include the ‘Praxis’ project at University College Cork (UCC), UCDVO’s (University College Dublin Volunteers Overseas) work around GCE and volunteering in University College Dublin (UCD), the Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education at Dublin City University (DCU), and the Proudly Made in Africa partnership with business schools, based at UCD. A significant milestone in the integration of GCE into ITE came with the inclusion of GCE as an essential component to teacher education in Ireland, as outlined in the Céim standards for ITE (Teaching Council, 2020). This has given strength and impetus to the work being undertaken to include GCE in ITE across many higher education institutions (HEIs). Apart from various GCE courses and activities in

ITE, other GCE or ESD courses are offered, mostly at postgraduate level. For example, there is a short postgraduate Certificate in GCE for educators at Maynooth University, an MEd in Education for Sustainability and Global Citizenship at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, and a level 9 ‘Creativity and Change’ course at Munster Technological University’s Crawford School of Art and Design. When it comes to research and publications, in addition to this journal, which celebrated its fifteenth anniversary in 2021, small ‘New Foundations’ grants for research on GCE were introduced in the last five years. These are funded by Irish Aid and administered through the Irish Research Council.

Beyond ITE where advances have been significant, and exceptions such as those noted above, the integration of GCE and ESD into formal curricula, policies or strategies in HE has been patchy, to say the least. Despite this, there is cautious welcome for the additional momentum offered by the latest ESD Strategy (Government of Ireland, 2022), which was jointly developed by the Departments of Education and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), with references to higher education peppered throughout, and the intention to map and monitor ESD in HE identified as necessary in its action plan. This has helped to focus attention within HEIs, at least to some extent, on ESD, alongside the now popular emphasis on training, learning and support for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). But do HEIs adequately integrate the critical pedagogical and global citizenship action dimensions emphasised in the GCE strategy (Irish Aid, 2021) in their advancement of sustainability, ESD or EDI? To what extent is this growing emphasis on sustainability and ESD in HE a help or a hindrance when it comes to understanding GE in HEIs? I address some of these questions below.

Challenges facing the integration of GE across HE

While there are multiple challenges facing the integration of GE across HE, in this section I explore some of these under three headings: the broader policy landscape; the institutional environment of HE, and different understandings and approaches to GE among those in HE.

Policy landscape

In terms of the influence of the broader policy and institutional environment, we have seen the advances in GCE and ESD policy development in Ireland and internationally (Irish Aid, 2021; Government of Ireland, 2022; GENE, 2022). At the same time, there are significant questions about how critical, transformative and deep the type of GE advanced through these policies actually is (Dillon, 2024), and even more questions about policy discourses more broadly. Even when policies are rhetorically radical and transformative, this is not always translated into practice or backed up by the necessary resources to ensure adequate implementation. The latest ESD strategy (Government of Ireland, 2022), for example, emphasises the intersecting social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainability, and its complementarities and synergies with GCE and other values-based educations. Drawing on the text of SDG 4.7, it also highlights the role of ESD in supporting active global citizenship, and it quotes UNESCO in its definition of ESD as ‘holistic and transformational and [encompassing] learning content and outcomes, pedagogy and the learning environment itself’ (Government of Ireland, 2022: 6). Despite this, the evidence for the systemic integration of intersectional ESD in HE in Ireland, which emphasises the multi-layered and multi-dimensional aspects of sustainability, beyond a disconnected prioritisation of the physical environment or of local and technical approaches to sustainability, remains weak. Most of us involved in HE have seen mixed attempts to promote sustainability, with some amazing projects and initiatives and some fairly superficial ones. In my own experience at Maynooth University, I have witnessed both an incredibly impressive Green Campus initiative and some accounting of ESD practice. While Maynooth University’s most recent strategic plan identifies the purpose of the university as being to ‘imagine and create better futures for all’ (Maynooth University, 2023: X), and EDI features strongly as does ‘research excellence’ around sustainability and climate change, at the same time there is no mention of ESD or GCE.

Even where university strategies do mention ESD or GCE, we don’t know much about the various approaches applied to them in HE in Ireland and/or the extent to which they reflect broader, critical and intersectional GE concerns. Where, for example, are anti-racism, global injustice or inequality concerns reflected in HE sustainability and ESD policies, research or programmes,

or are these framed separately under EDI? To what extent does EDI reflect individualised training and governance practices or does it address structural inequalities and embedded racism in HEIs? Do HEIs have laudable strategic plans but are these weakly or contradictorily implemented? These complex questions clearly require far more research.

Challenges related to policy discourses and their implementation are likely to be compounded by the changing HE policy landscape in Ireland, with a new Higher Education Authority Bill in 2022 and a National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 published in 2019 (DFHERIS, 2022). Among the many critiques of these policies, there is ongoing concern about the emphasis in wider education policy on skills and its impact on constructions of GCE (Bryan, 2024). We can see, for example, the predominance of a technical, individualised, market-oriented construction of skills reflected in the language of the DFHERIS 'Statement of Strategy: 2023-2025', which has as its first strategic goal to 'develop talent', the 'skills and knowledge required to succeed in the Irish economy of today and meet the needs of our stakeholders, employers and industry' (DFHERIS, 2002: 9). With just three mentions of 'global citizens' in the document, and even these framed in terms of the global workforce, global engagement is seen to be about 'position[ing] Ireland as a leading international location for researchers, students and post-graduates' (Ibid., 2023: 27). The emphasis in the Maynooth University strategy, for example, is on 'futures-focused skills' (Ibid., 2023: 17) and it mirrors national policy in its references to enterprise and commercialisation, while advancing internationalisation and societal impact. But there is no mention of global poverty, inequality, racism, injustice or the sustainable development goals (SDGs). This one example, no doubt mirrored across HE in Ireland, raises questions about the space for critical GE across HE and the effects of current framings of ESD and EDI on learners, on status quo economics and on systems of exploitation.

Similarly, there are different challenges in the policy landscape in Ireland, North and South. Gerard McCann and Stephen McCloskey (2024: 138) argue that:

“GE in the North has undergone a turbulent history and been subject to rounds of unpredictable government policy shifts. It has not received the recognition or the resources available in both the South of Ireland and Britain. The policy environment for GE in the North has also deteriorated in recent years”.

There are many efforts being made to support GCE in HE, especially in relation to ITE in the various colleges and through partnerships with the Centre for Global Development and the UNESCO Centre at Ulster University, which is engaged in promoting citizenship education. Gerard McCann highlights that:

“we have been trying to bring a global aspect into CE for decades now but struggle with funders and institutions who feel it should primarily be about peace building in the North. Very important, but we do need the outward looking GCE perspective also. The questions really need a substantial piece of research in the North. It would take a couple of months to audit what is happening with various themes related to GCE, e.g., who is covering human rights, concepts of democracy, migration policy, gender and citizenship, indeed competing concepts of citizenship, etc... a group of hardy souls are working towards a major project mapping GCE in the North” [Email correspondence, 2023].

The higher education system

At the same time as the GE and HE policy landscapes are changing and challenging in Ireland, so too is the institutional landscape in and around higher education. With the creation of new technological universities, there is growing complexity in an already fragmented sector. This has contributed to more competition for students and for government and external funding. We have also seen an increased focus in policy on applied, skills-related learning for enterprise and integration into the global capitalist economy and the growing influence of neoliberal individualism on HE around the world. This is no less the case in Ireland with the commercialisation of universities and of their international agendas, turning universities into businesses with the emphasis increasingly on ‘turning out’ employable workers (Dillon and Gaynor, 2024). As such, the HE

system is challenging and often counter to transformative and critical approaches to GE. Giroux (2009: 670) has argued, for example, that:

“instead of being a space of critical dialogue, analysis, and interpretation, [HE] is increasingly defined as a space of consumption where ideas are validated in instrumental terms and valued for their success in attracting corporate and government funding”.

To what extent can this type of HE support critical thinking and analysis of the political, socio-cultural and economic dimensions of global inequality, poverty, injustice and racism? Does it support students to be or become globally active critical citizens who are not just ‘engaged’ or ‘futures-oriented’ individuals but who can act collectively and politically for justice and equality for all (see the Dublin Declaration, GENE 2022)? This ‘competitive-edge’ higher education has become evident in the tendency towards tick-box counting of SDG achievements for university self-promotion and rankings, in a race for research funding, in the growing ‘publish or perish’ focus on promotion over quality teaching involving small classes with meaningful participation (Grummell, 2024), and in an emphasis on solutions-based rather than critical sustainability initiatives in HE (innovation often valued over analysis or politics). At the same time, tick-box compliance sits side by side in universities with some meaningful, radical and transformative teaching and learning initiatives. Despite the opportunities for criticality brought by the SDGs, the space for GE in this changing institutional context, and for the critical pedagogies related to it, remains unclear (and arguably increasingly limited), especially when HEIs are influenced by broader neoliberal, business-driven and skills-oriented HE policies.

Furthermore, the structure and institutionalization of HE in Ireland has long presented a challenge to the integration of GE. With faculties, schools, departments, programmes, modules and lecturers often siloed and unaware of what each other is doing, integration of policy streams across institutions, and the sector as a whole, is notoriously difficult. Attempts to integrate GE have often resulted in a series of individual-led initiatives which last as long as the person involved retains the funding or energy for the work. Historically, these have often tended to be based around international volunteering and fundraising with

different types of initiatives often associated with different faculties, e.g., volunteering with ITE or medical schools, environmental education in schools of geography, and human rights in law schools.

Research on more recent experiences of trying to integrate GE into HE has identified many institutional-level challenges. Gertrude Cotter's research (2021) on the critical and comprehensive Praxis project in UCC, for example, has highlighted how difficult a process it is to try to integrate a critical pedagogy approach to DE into HE across disciplines. 'At the same time', she suggests in an interview, 'there are many champions of DE across the university, who bring critical perspectives, but academics are very busy and they are trying to do so much'. These challenges are also identified in Guiry et al.'s (2022: 1) report on workshops held at UCC 'to identify and explore common areas of need, concern and ethos for ESD at HEIs in Ireland'. Specifically, they identify four key themes which characterize the challenges facing ESD in HE in Ireland: lack of knowledge and skills among staff, including of the complex and disparate structures and processes within HEIs which act as a barrier to the promotion of ESD; time constraints; the lack of funding and resources – e.g., they argue that 'the integration of ESD into further and higher level education is not a straightforward endeavour. The absence of sufficient financial, academic, administrative, and technical resources is a significant obstacle to achieving ESD goals' (Ibid., 2022: 21); and engagement – the challenge of engaging staff and students and of supporting them to make connections between ESD and student concerns and needs, for example, including future employability.

Understandings of, and approaches to, GE

When it comes to supporting the integration of critical GE into HE, a central issue is around the understandings of and approaches to GE applied. Is ESD seen as something other and different to GCE, for example? Is the approach to ESD adopted one that is technical, environmentally-heavy or one which emphasises the intersection of the social, economic and political dimensions of sustainability? Gertrude Cotter, for example, explains some of these related to understandings of development education (DE):

“while some are very dedicated to trying to realise critical and meaningful DE, a lot of other staff in HE have a misunderstanding of what DE is. For some it’s about ‘going on the streets and marching’. For others, it’s what students do in their spare time, but it is not seen to have any relevance for their subjects or the curriculum. Another challenge within the university setting is the ‘white saviour mentality’ where DE is reduced to, or misinterpreted for, aid, volunteering or skills development in the global South. These challenges permeate staff engagement, programme integration and research” [Interview, 2023].

Other educators involved in GCE in HE that I interviewed mentioned the confusion over what GCE is and how it relates to ESD, human rights education (HRE), social justice education etc. ‘There is an abundance of GCE content being delivered but the facilitators/educators maybe aren’t even aware that they are contributing to the GCE field’ [Declan Markey, Maynooth University, Interview, 2023]. Another highlights that:

“the terminology and the fragmentation in what was known as development education is challenging. Some colleagues tell me that they are doing ESD not GCE, or that they are working on global youth work, DE, challenge-based learning about climate change or work on the SDGs. They do not link that with GCE. While I acknowledge the nuances and the differences, increasingly I feel that GCE is being restricted in people’s minds to programmes / projects supported by Irish Aid. I would also suggest that colleagues involved in ESD initiatives or other programmes related to awareness raising / responding to the SDG have little if any understanding of GCE and certainly do not know the overlap and synergies” [Paul Keating, Technological University of the Shannon [TUS], Email Correspondence, 2023].

Confusion over understandings of GE and how one adjectival education relations to another is compounded by deep-rooted assumptions, by shifts in global HE policy trends and emphases, as well as by the institutional tendencies of competition and discipline silos. We have also seen, for example, with GE in other sectors of education that more is not necessarily better. GE often remains

rooted in an outmoded ‘us’ versus ‘them’ dichotomy supported by culturally embedded ethnocentrism and coloniality, which fails to acknowledge and challenge the interlinkages, dependencies and violence of global structures (Stein et al., 2022). Is that the same for ESD or for GE more broadly in HE? To what extent do ESD, GCE or EDI take account of the politics of inequality at the heart of resource use and extractivism? Do they inform or challenge? Another challenge with understandings of GE in HE is the tendency to assume that GE is either only relevant for ITE, only manageable through student-engagement activities, or only measurable through the ‘content’ of modules or programmes. What about discourses of GE in broader institutional policies, research priorities and co-curricular student engagement? While some of what’s happening in GE in HE no doubt reflects critical and alternative perspectives, which support active critique of, engagement with, and challenging existing paradigms, as we have seen, such criticality is often thwarted by the policy and institutional constraints of HE itself.

Conclusion: towards a mapping of GE in HE

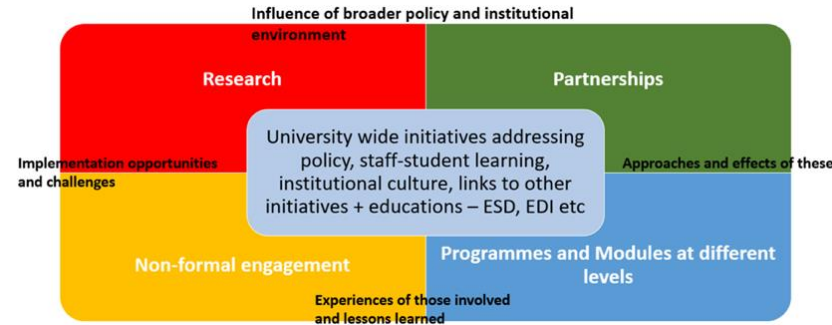
The discussion of recent developments in GE in Ireland, and of the challenges to integrating it into HE (above), highlight the complexity of the field and of the task of trying to map it in order to advance it further. This is even more so the case when one considers the variety of approaches to mapping already being used in the field. Cotter’s research (2021) on the Praxis project in UCC, for example, highlights the value of participatory action research approaches to research in this area and of the insight that participant experience adds to content analysis of programme or policy content. Adams, Muslim Jameel and Goggins (2023) apply a mixed method approach in comparing staff responses to those of a content scan of 222 SDG ‘crucial keywords’ in module learning outcomes in order to measure the extent to which ESD is currently embedded in the engineering curriculum at the University of Galway. Oberdorfer et al.’s (2022: 43) mapping of GC in adult and community education (ACE) in Ireland appears to be quite straightforward in that it is based on a survey and tries to address three questions: ‘What GCE activity are ACE providers engaged in in terms of location, size, reach and GCE focus?’, ‘Who are these providers working with and how?’ (Ibid.: 44) and what does the mapping signal for the future in terms of resources etc.? At the same time, its discussion of the policy and institutional context offers useful background

and its discussion of various projects and activities in the field provides useful insight into current practice.

While there is merit in all of these approaches, the discussion above points to the importance of mapping GE in HE in a way which takes account of the challenges presented by the policy and institutional landscapes within and related to HE and how these impact on understandings and discourses of and approaches to GE in these contexts. This means focusing not only on ‘issues’ or on what programmes are in place (or not) but on how GE (including ESD, GCE, ARE and DE) is (or is not) integrated across HEI policies, structures, research and non-formal engagement. It also requires an exploration of how these educations intersect (or do not), and how (and whether) GE is reflected in pedagogical practice, EDI policies and processes, or in institutional cultures.

At the same time, deciding on what should be included or excluded is essential in any mapping of a field. This is particularly so when one considers that maps are only really useful when they are clear and when they cut through confusion rather than compounding it. In an attempt to do that, while suggesting that any mapping of GE in HE in Ireland should highlight its relationships and intersectionality within and between GCE, ESD, ARE and EDI, for example, the discussion above suggests that a mapping of GE in HE might include the following dimensions (see Figure 1, below):

Figure 1. A Multi-Dimensional Framework for Mapping GE in HE



This figure shows the importance of any mapping of GE in HE including what's happening in GCE, ESD, ARE, EDI or any GE-related practices in HEIs in research, partnerships, non-formal engagement and programmes and modules at different levels. It also includes university-wide initiatives which address policy, staff-student learning, institutional culture, and links to other initiatives and educations, e.g., ESD, EDI etc. In relation to each of the above, it would be important to understand: the policy context shaping GE in HE at international, national and institutional levels; implementation opportunities and challenges; the different approaches being applied and the effects of them; and the experiences of those involved and any lessons which can be learned from them.

A mapping of this kind would be very complex and time-consuming, but it would help us to get a much better sense of what's happening in GE in HE in Ireland and any potential synergies with other critical educations or initiatives. In order to bring it to fruition, it would also need resources and support, perhaps as an IDEA-led Irish Aid funded project which brings together GE facilitators in HEIs in Ireland, North and South, who would contribute to the development of this work. Without getting a better sense of what's happening, or not, in GE in HE in Ireland, it is likely that GE will remain largely confined to ITE and isolated projects rather than as a deeply integrated and critical reality.

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DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION AND DECOLONISING INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: INSIGHTS FROM THE 'CULTURES OF DECOLONISATION AT UCL' RESEARCH PROJECT

SIMON ETEN ANGYAGRE

Abstract: The focus of development education (DE) has historically been centred on awareness raising about the inequalities inherent in international development cooperation, as well as the development efforts facilitated by third sector actors. One of the key sites for such development cooperation is higher education, where universities engage in teaching and research partnerships. However, such partnerships, particularly between Western universities and those based in the global South are known to bear colonial dimensions as they are often characterised by power imbalances and extractive modes of engagement. The author draws from an internal review project undertaken at University College London (UCL) to underscore the significance of decolonising international partnerships in higher education within the framework of equality and mutuality. The author observes that, while there are many innovations to decolonise teaching and research in universities in the UK, these are mostly the initiative of individual academics, without any structural efforts to embed decolonisation in an institutional ethos. Given the Freirean roots of DE and its affinity to post-coloniality, the author sees a role for the field in drawing attention to the colonality in academic partnerships in higher education and calling for the legitimisation of decolonisation in the policy and practice of the sector.

Key words: Cultures of Decolonisation; Development Education; Higher Education; Academic Partnerships; Freire; Research.

Introduction

Since its emergence in the 1960s as a response to the political decolonisation movement, some of the central arguments of DE have been built on insights from decoloniality and post-coloniality (Andreotti, 2006; Bourn, 2008; 2020). The field is also inspired by Freirean critical pedagogy; an educational approach for examining and addressing the development ideologies within which global and

international development cooperation is conducted (Bourn, 2014; Dillon, 2018; McCloskey, 2022). Drawing on these critical theoretical traditions, DE has grown into a distinct pedagogical field for raising awareness of global injustice, often centred around North-South relations, with a focus on addressing the marginalisation of communities and groups in both the global North and South (Andreotti, 2006). Over time, four main discourses emerged from the policy and practice of DE, including value-based and solidarity approaches, as well as the development-as-charity model and the approach centred on development cooperation (Dillon, 2018; Fiedler et al., 2011). These different DE discourses have also brought about shifts in language, with a gravitation towards the ‘global’, and the adoption of terminologies such as ‘global citizenship’, ‘global education’ and the ‘global dimension’ (Bourn, 2015). In these shifts, there are attempts to move away from disempowering language around ‘developing countries’ and the ‘global North-South’ binary to a recognition of globalisation, the interconnectedness it facilitates and the need to prepare learners to critically engage with the global structures that underpin unjust systems around the world (Dillon, 2018).

The shift towards the global notwithstanding, criticality in the way global issues are addressed in DE remains a key concern. Dillon (2018), for example, notes that in the context of Ireland, the shift from binary North-South discourses to a ‘global’ paradigm has not necessarily resulted in more critical approaches, given that such change in language has not been reflected in DE practice in that context. A key concern in calls for criticality in the linguistic categories of DE is to foreground empowering representations of less economically developed countries (LEDCs) and marginalised communities, as well as recognise the cultural agency of these countries/groups. As such, much of the criticality expected in DE is geared towards addressing Eurocentrism, cultural subordination and the universalist assumptions that underlie dominant development narratives (Andreotti, 2006). In this respect, there is a growing tide against the dominant narratives of development which have held sway in the West for many decades. In the cognate field of development studies, for example, there are calls for hegemonic conceptions and approaches to studying international development to be decolonised (Kothari et al., 2023; Develtere, Van Ongevalle, and Huyse, 2021; Kapoor, 2023; Kim, 2023; Richards, 2014; Sen, 2023; Sultana, 2019).

Considering partnerships in research in higher education as an essential component of international development cooperation, this article engages with the topic of decolonising research in higher education in the UK context, drawing on an internal review conducted at UCL. The article briefly reviews some of the debates on decolonising international partnerships in higher education. This is followed by an overview of the ‘Cultures of Decolonisation at UCL’ research project, including two case studies from the project which are showcased as examples of decolonising research in practice. Some of the key themes that emerged from the project are also discussed.

Decolonisation and international partnerships in higher education

Academic partnerships and collaborations constitute a key component of development cooperation given that such collaborations are instrumental for addressing global challenges. These partnerships also come with the supposed advantage of strengthening the provision of higher education in the global South; a mechanism for accelerating economic growth, socio-political development, and modernisation, all linked to the global knowledge economy (Waham et al., 2023; World Bank, 2000). Even for countries in the global North, development cooperation in higher education is, among other things, viewed as an indirect approach to tackling some of the socio-political issues in those contexts. For example, the European Union’s Development Cooperation policy recognises support to higher education in LEDCs as one way for addressing migration and asylum from these countries (Greco, 2023). The aforementioned considerations notwithstanding, the rationale and approaches that drive development cooperation have been called into question within different theoretical frameworks, including, dependency theory, development theory and world systems theory (Teffer, 2014).

The ideas that underpin dependency theory, for example, provide a strong basis for decolonising academic collaborations in higher education in LEDCs (Heleta and Chasi, 2023; Ocholla, 2020). Partnerships in higher education between the global North and South go back to the colonial era, when the first modern universities in LEDCs were established as extensions of universities in the colonial metropolises (Teffer, 2014; Woldegiorgis, 2020). In

many ways, these universities have evolved in the intervening years after the wave of political independence in the 1960s, linked to internal socio-economic and political factors, but also owing to the forces of globalisation. However, given that these universities were moulded from the Western university archetype, their academic structures, knowledge paradigms, disciplines and languages of instruction are still in the most part Western, and based on Western higher education traditions. The impact of this is a continuous dependence and mimicking of Western higher education practices, with little or no Indigenous innovations to make higher education in these contexts locally and culturally relevant. Academic collaborations between the global North and the South in contemporary times are known to reinforce the Eurocentrism that originated from colonialism, as they are characterised by various forms of inequalities, and evince colonial patterns of power and extractive ways of engagement (Chetty, Gibson and Reilly, 2024). A decolonial approach to international academic partnerships is therefore one that disrupts these colonial forms of engagement and recognises the agency and right of self-determination of partners in the South.

The ‘Cultures of Decolonisation at UCL’ research project

The ‘Cultures of Decolonisation at UCL’ research project was an initiative of the Cultural Understanding Working Group of the UCL Grand Challenges, a unit within the university set up to promote interdisciplinary research and engagement for addressing national and global issues. The ‘Cultures of Decolonisation at UCL’ project was undertaken to map decolonisation efforts at UCL and to assess the extent to which the institution’s norms and practices support decolonising research. Researchers shared their views and case studies on research they undertook to investigate issues that impact marginalised communities and groups in society, whilst also addressing questions on paternalistic research attitudes and extractive research cultures in universities in the North, including addressing power imbalances in international research collaborations.

Participants in the project included 46 academics, twelve professional staff, and eight doctoral students who participated in in-depth interviews. The approach to recruiting participants for the research was open-ended as the aim was to invite any persons involved in or offering support to decolonising research projects within UCL to share their views and experiences. As such, an open call

was sent through UCL communication channels to register to participate in the research. The open-ended approach allowed for individuals with different perspectives and experiences on decolonising research to participate in the interviews. Interviews were held online, with the aid of interview guides developed by the researchers with members of the project's steering committee. In addition to the in-depth interviews, nine academics and eleven students responded to two separate online surveys.

Case studies on decolonising research projects

This section outlines brief overviews of two decolonising research projects which are presented as case studies. These were shared by some participants to demonstrate how they approach decolonisation in their research practice.

Case study one: Gender Responsive Resilience and Intersectionality in Policy and Practice (GRRIPP)

The Gender Responsive Resilience and Intersectionality in Policy and Practice (GRRIPP) (n.d.) project was implemented by a group of researchers at the UCL Institute of Risk and Disaster Reduction, together with university partners and civil society organisations in the global South. The project centres principles of intersectionality to address the social inequalities faced by women and girls. GRRIPP is described as a global collaboration and a knowledge exchange project. It is grounded in the recognition that too often humanitarian and development programmes have 'gender equality' as a 'value added' aspect of projects rather than as a central goal. In addition, too few organisations engage with how overlapping aspects of discrimination, such as gender, race, and class interact and exacerbate development challenges for women and girls. These challenges increase in situations of urban-based disasters and conflict, where pre-crisis resilience may be low. GRRIPP brings together partners from Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), southern Africa, south Asia, and the UK to disrupt mainstream development discussions on gender. The project is developed around four overarching themes: resilience, intersectionality, critical theory, and infrastructure. The themes related to intersectionality and critical theory are directly related to a decolonising research framework.

The GRRIPP project was guided by a decolonial ethos, including a critical reassessment of power relationships between and within countries, communities, and social relations more generally. The structure of management is flat and horizontal, and all the partners follow a code of conduct that ensures a diverse, fair, and safe working environment. Through this approach, the GRRIPP aims to foster an international collaboration that brings to the forefront initiatives from the global South. With this change of focus and methods, the project aims to contribute to renewing theory, and to the implementation of better policies and practices in the fields of gender-responsive disaster risk reduction, climate change action and development.

Intersectionality is adopted in the project as a research approach for examining the root causes of discrimination and inequalities at the intersection of social identities. Through this, the project examines and questions existing 'hierarchies' and 'categories' to better support a focus on power relations and imbalances that have historically undermined equal opportunities for all. Using an intersectional approach to the research helps question how knowledge is produced and embedded within specific epistemic communities and cultures of knowledge.

Case study two: Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality (KNOW)

The Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality (KNOW) project (n.d.) is a large-scale research project implemented by a consortium of higher education institutions and community-based organisations in the global North and South, with the UCL Faculty of Built Environment as one of the consortium members. The project was designed as a response to growing inequalities in cities globally, with implementation focused around six working packages, including: city knowledge co-production; comparative inquiry for urban equality; ethics of research practice; translating research into practice; multiplying translocal learning in higher education and expanding UK Official Development Assistance research capacity.

One of the key objectives of the project was to co-produce knowledge to activate transformations towards urban equality in selected cities in the global South. This was undertaken with a focus on redistributive and integrated actions

to address prosperity, resilience, and extreme poverty. The project was also focused on building and strengthening research capacity in selected Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries and the UK to tackle the challenges and opportunities of vulnerable urban communities through partnerships with equivalence between networks and organisations of the poor, government, the private sector, and academia. A third objective that underpinned the project implementation was the co-creation of responsive Urban Learning Hubs in target countries. They were aimed at co-producing relevant knowledge for the analysis, planning, monitoring, and comparison of city progress towards national and global goals on urban equality, in particular, the SDGs and the Habitat III New Urban Agenda.

Though the project did not explicitly identify its goals, strategies, and outcomes as decolonising, it employed language affiliated with decolonising approaches, including transformative research, knowledge co-production, partnerships with equivalence, capacity building/strengthening and urban equality. Decolonial approaches could be seen in the project's emphasis on participatory and collaborative interventions for co-producing urban design towards addressing inequality. In deploying these co-production processes, the project also aimed to develop the capacity of institutional partners based mostly in the global South and enhanced the institutional capacities of local actors to advance an urban equality agenda in their individual localities.

A key novelty in the project that aligned well with decolonising research is the concept of partnerships of equivalence which underscores the significance of horizontal relationships in research and the need to pay attention to the power dynamics that play out in co-production processes. In interviews, there was the understanding from a UCL researcher that an important consideration that underlies the notion of partnerships with equivalence in the KNOW project is that 'equality' is not framed as 'sameness' but valuing the unique contribution that each actor can bring to the research process. Additionally, an extended innovation in the KNOW project was a Doctoral Training Course developed around the principle of co-producing research. The course was titled 'Co-producing Doctoral Urban Research in the Global South'. One of the stated aims of the course was to mobilise urban equality and epistemic justice as critical

lenses for engaging with urban development challenges for the diverse student body in UK universities. The course also provided the space for a critical discussion about the theory and practice of knowledge co-production as well as generate a supportive co-learning environment for students to reflect on the current or potential contributions of knowledge co-production to their doctoral research. And more broadly, contribute to the development of a UK Urban Learning Hub which brings together urban researchers who engage with issues of knowledge co-production and urban equality.

As indicated from the outset, the two case studies presented were shared during the ‘Cultures of Decolonisation at UCL’ research to demonstrate how decolonising research is undertaken in practice. The case studies highlight some tenets and values that should underpin decoloniality in international research projects that involve collaborations between partners in the global North and South. In the following section, there is a discussion on some of the key themes that emerged from the project based on analysis of the interview and survey data, as well as a consideration of case studies.

Key themes emerging from the project

We identified several themes relating to decolonising research in the context of international academic partnerships, research ethics and funding and support for research in the global South. Our interviews with UCL academics showed that although the explicit language of decolonisation is seldom used, many researchers guide their practice with principles and values that fall within a decolonising framework. These include practices that centre on co-production, relationship-building, and capacity development, equitable participation in research, and promoting intersectionality in research. A related issue that many participants spoke about is the interface between decolonisation and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) activities in universities. Many participants felt that the work of EDI committees was key to promoting a decolonisation agenda. But they also called for decolonisation to go beyond the conventional EDI framework, as it poses wider questions of power, and knowledge construction and production.

The research also revealed principles of practice that guide the way decolonial research is undertaken. Whilst some principles aim to promote critical

reflexivity and a critique of traditional research assumptions, others require researchers to be guided by values of reciprocity and respect for self-determination for the groups and communities they research. There are also decolonial principles that require researchers to embrace other(ed) ways of knowing, whilst also engaging in transformative praxis. Some research approaches and principles are more naturally aligned with decolonial research practice; these include co-production, co-creation and capacity strengthening and development. For example, Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodologies are noted as decolonising because they move away from deficit approaches that view researched communities as ‘objects’ to be studied, and towards valuing communities as equal collaborators and partners in the research process.

Decolonising research ethics

One of the key areas for undertaking decolonising research is through ethical frameworks for research. As such, many participants thought that the research ethics review process at UCL should be an appropriate platform to encourage academics and doctoral students to use decolonial methodologies and approaches in their research. In terms of examples of ethical research practices that fall within decolonising methodologies and approaches, participants called for ethics review processes to demand that researchers: challenge the assumptions related to sole ownership over their research relative to co-ownership with researched communities/groups; articulate how their research will benefit researched communities; ask whether researched communities see and want the benefits often ascribed to research projects; and articulate their positionality and subjectivity in the research they undertake. There were suggestions for these elements to be included and strengthened in the ethics review processes at UCL.

Pertaining to the fitness for purpose of the research ethics review processes at UCL, and whether these align with decolonising research methodologies, some researchers pointed out problematic elements in the ethics review processes in some faculties that appear to be (neo)colonial. A specific case cited is the Informed Consent provisions in the British Educational Research Association (BERA) ethical guidelines for research with children, which were considered to be Eurocentric and not flexible enough to accommodate the socio-cultural norms of non-Western societies. The issues and tensions that pertain to

the application of Western research ethical codes such as those developed by BERA and the American Educational Research Association (AERA) to non-western contexts are discussed in much detail by Shamim and Qureshi (2013).

Funding and support of research and teaching on the global South

At the time of our interviews, participants indicated that the national funding landscape for research was for the most part not conducive for decolonising research, given the lack of funding for research with a social justice focus and research funding inequalities in the UK higher education sector (Rivas, Raymond-Beckles and Simpson, 2021). Within UCL, participants in the project cited bureaucracy involved in managing research projects that involve partnerships and collaborations with researchers in global South contexts. This includes due diligence requirements, especially at the post-award phase of research project implementation. These requirements are not flexible enough to contain uncertainties that often accompany partnership research projects based in the global South.

Additionally, there were concerns that teaching and research on certain regions of the world appear not to be prioritised, and as such were under-resourced and not given the required attention. Specific cases cited were of MSc and MA programmes in African Studies, for example, which had not yet begun because of under-resourcing. This is reflected in the lack of institutional support available at UCL for research centres whose research focus is on regions such as the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia. Though there are many research centres that focus on different regions of the world, including regions in the global South, there was a call for UCL to offer more support to these centres – to strengthen their research portfolios and enable them to undertake more collaborative work with institutions in the South. The relevance of such collaborative work lies in the capacity strengthening and development it offers institutions in the global South as demonstrated in the partnership of equivalence model featured in one of the case studies.

Conclusion

One of the key challenges to promoting a decolonial approach to international engagement in research is the lack of institutional buy-in from universities, which is essential for embedding a decolonisation agenda in institutional policies and ethos (Shain et al., 2021). The ‘Cultures of Decolonisation at UCL’ project shows that, by far, a decolonising research agenda in universities is spearheaded by individual academics within their research activities. However, at the institutional level, there remain obstacles relating to bureaucracies in research management regimes that do not allow for research partnership and collaborations to take on a decolonising turn.

The ‘Cultures of Decolonisation at UCL’ report therefore raises broader questions about the ways decolonising principles can be embedded in research, support services for research and doctoral training in universities. At UCL, to continue these conversations, the UCL Grand Challenges instituted the Cultures of Decolonisation Special Initiative Funding that funded projects that take forward themes from the report. An institution-wide forum was held to disseminate findings from the report. In addition, engagement sessions were convened with EDI committees in selected faculties to discuss aspects of the report that address the activities of the committees. It is anticipated that these efforts will contribute to gradually opening up space within institutional set-ups across the university for pursuing the transformative goals of decolonisation.

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THE SOUND OF CURRICULAR SILENCE: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF GERMANY'S FOREIGN LANGUAGE CURRICULUM

RICARDO RÖMHILD

Abstract: When, in 2023, the latest version of the national educational standards (KMK, 2023a) was published in Germany, policymakers had a real chance to cement the social aims of education, such as sustainable development, social justice, and global citizenship, in foreign language education once and for all. They did not seize this opportunity. Instead, the new guidelines promote language education that is aimed at the development of functional communicative skills, devoid of social aims; and the question remains, functional skills to what end? The document's silence on the potential of language education for global development speaks volumes, but there has not been critical engagement with the new curriculum yet, which is bound to influence language teaching and learning in Germany in the years to come.

This Perspectives article critically reviews the latest version of the national guidelines against the background of two central questions: first, what are the goals of language education? This question highlights the relationship between language, communication, and being/acting in the world for a better future for all. It invites a potential argument for a stronger positioning of language education in line with the overarching efforts for education for sustainable development and global citizenship. And, second, why is it important to reflect social aims in curricula for modern foreign languages? This question highlights the significance of a balance between functionality and criticality in language education. Embedded in this question is an argument for the progressive cultivation of sustainability, social justice, and global citizenship in the foreign language classroom starting from the very beginning of language education. While the focus of this contribution is on German educational standards, the discussion yields generalisable implications for foreign language education in other contexts.

Key words: Education for Sustainable Development; Education Policy; Foreign Language Education; Germany; Social Justice.

Introduction: missed opportunities

In 2023, the *Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education* in Germany (*Kultusministerkonferenz* in German; KMK) published an updated version of the educational standards for the first foreign language (English/French) for years five to nine/ten at German secondary schools (that is, for pupils generally aged ten to sixteen) (KMK, 2023a). This move came almost twenty years after the publication of the document's original version in 2004. Policymakers had the opportunity to cement the social aims of education, such as sustainable development, social justice, and global citizenship, in foreign language education once and for all. They had the opportunity to balance functionality, that is the development of functional communicative skills and literacies, with criticality, or the cultivation of critical literacies essential for learners to contribute to meaningful change in the world. The update provided a chance to reposition foreign language education in Germany in line with the United Nations' (2015) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), particularly with SDG 4.7, which specifies what constitutes quality education in the twenty-first century. It provided the chance to re-orientate impactful, nation-wide guiding policy documents along existing KMK guidelines on sustainable development, such as the *Curriculum Framework Education for Sustainable Development* for modern foreign languages (KMK, 2017), which were designed to translate UNESCO's Agenda 2030 into classroom practice in Germany.

These opportunities were missed. Instead, the updated educational standards (KMK, 2023a) make no mention at all of sustainability, development education, human rights education, global citizenship, or any of the social aims of education as spelled out by SDG 4.7. Fully aware of this fact, KMK (2023b) explained this decision in a supplementary paper on how to implement educational standards in Germany's sixteen federal states and in schools. The relevant paragraph reads:

“Overarching educational objectives such as possible subject-specific contributions to democracy education or comparable agreements of the

Standing Conference were not explicitly included in the formulation of the subject-specific standards – apart from **specific links immanent to the subject**, for example in the STEM subjects, with regard to education for sustainable development. This is primarily due to the fact that the standards are limited to the **central subject competences** to be developed. As mentioned at the beginning, the objectives of media education and education in the digital world were taken into account in an appropriate manner for the subject, where possible and **if based on subject-specific didactic foundations**. The action plan of the relevant strategy [...] were the guiding reference documents” (KMK, 2023b: 6; author’s translation; emphasis added).

This contribution departs from both the fact that the social aims of foreign language education were deliberately left out of the updated standards as well as the explanation given for this decision by the policymakers. In particular, this discussion is sparked by formulations such as ‘specific links immanent to the subject’ (*fachimmanent*, in German), the idea of ‘central subject competences’ in the languages, and the implied notion that there is a lack of didactical/conceptual foundation when it comes to ESD.

Against the background of Kwauk and Iyengar’s (2021) identification of major roadblocks to quality education in times of sustainability and development crises, which includes a lack of systemic support for teachers, for instance by policy and curriculum, this article discusses two main implications of KMK’s silence on social aims for the state and the future of education for sustainable development (ESD) in foreign language education in Germany. Firstly, that these decisions were made on false assumptions about the current state of foreign language education research and practice and are indicative of a perception of school subjects as siloed rather than integrated vis-a-vis the overarching project of education for sustainable development and global citizenship. Secondly, that these decisions send the wrong signals moving forward, among other things as regards the relationship between functionality and criticality in language education as well as the ‘elitarisation’ (see, e.g., Ventsel and Struchkova, 2015, who use the term when discussing language and identity) of sustainability and development education in the foreign languages in Germany.

Decisions made on false assumptions

To better understand KMK's silence on ESD in the updated educational standards and to project its future implications for the teaching and learning of foreign languages in Germany, it is necessary to focus on the arguments provided in the supplement paper (KMK, 2023b). The relevant passage (as quoted in length above) contains at least two noteworthy aspects that offer hints as to the why the standards remain silent on ESD. First, there seems to be a perceived lack of immanence of questions around sustainability, sustainable development, social justice, and global citizenship in the foreign language subjects. Second, the supplementary paper implies a lack of foundation – be it theoretical, conceptual, didactical, empirical, or methodological – when it comes to researching and practicing ESD in foreign language subjects. This section addresses these aspects.

ESD for language education – language education for ESD

By referring to the STEM subjects as examples of high degrees of subject immanence, the updated educational standards follow a line of thought observable in numerous policy guidelines, curricula, and textbooks: sustainability is primarily a matter of the natural sciences. In Germany, each of the sixteen federal states is in charge of their own education systems. The national educational standards are important guiding documents which provide orientation for the individual state legislators, school developers, curriculum designers, and educators. While some states have embedded ESD in their foreign language curricula, such as Saxony-Anhalt (MSB Sachsen-Anhalt, 2022), others have published guidelines for ESD that exclude the languages, such as North Rhine-Westphalia (MSB NRW, 2019), Germany's most populous state. Arguably, this inconsistency is fuelled by KMK's decision not to mention ESD in the national guidelines. By questioning just how immanent to the language subjects ESD really is, KMK seems to support the view that sustainability, sustainable development, the environment, social justice, and global citizenship may be regarded as peripheral rather than central to foreign language education. This impression is supported by the observation that sustainability, the environment, and global development are often merely dealt with as one topic among many in a curriculum for foreign languages and in respective textbooks. In this way, sustainability as a topic caters to the more 'central competence areas' of foreign language education, such as learning to speak

and write about the environment (including the acquisition of vocabulary and other communicative means). In other words, the question asked here is *what can sustainability/the environment do for language education?*

However, as Gabaudan (2022: 528) noted when looking at ESD in the foreign language curriculum in higher education:

“ESD is an educational change agenda grounded in transformative learning and critical pedagogy. It can be understood as a lens that enables us to look critically at how the world is and to envision how it might be. Indeed, it equips us to deliver that vision”.

Importantly, dialogue, listening, and learning to argue and resolve conflicts peacefully by communication are key to this (Mesa, 2023: 35). Thus, another question should be asked, too: *what can language education contribute to the project of education for sustainable development and global citizenship?* If this perspective manifested in curricula and policy guidelines, it would mean a re-orientation of foreign language education towards the merits (and necessity, one could argue) of being multi-/plurilingual in an increasingly complex and interconnected world rather than towards functional command of a language devoid of social purpose.

If we look at the intersections between ESD and foreign language education through this lens, it quickly becomes apparent that there is indeed an inherent link, a high degree of subject immanence in the language subjects, particularly of questions surrounding social justice, socio-environmental justice, human and children’s rights, cultural diversity, and global citizenship. The exploration of this inherent link has been the focus of a growing number of studies in recent years in the German context (Küchler, 2014, 2021; Surkamp, 2022a; Römhild, 2023).

A perceived lack of didactical foundation

The fact that calls for a more integrated view of foreign language education and ESD have grown louder in recent years also serves to refute the implied criticism that there has not been a sufficient (or indeed existing) scientific, didactical

foundation for ESD in the foreign language education context. This is true both nationally and internationally. Internationally, it is helpful to search for studies on the link between language education and certain aspects listed in SDG 4.7 as part of what constitutes quality education to find an emergent, highly active and interdisciplinary field of study. These studies reveal manifold points of contact between foreign language education and related disciplines, such as, for instance, social justice (Ortaçtepe Hart, 2023), global citizenship education (Lütge, Merse and Rauschert, 2022), critical literacy (Misiaszek, Misiaszek and Iftekhar, 2022) or *buen vivir* / well-being (Büter, 2016). Studies explicitly focusing on the intersection of ESD and language (education) can be found in the field of *ecolinguistics* (Fill and Penz, 2018; Stibbe, 2021; Micalay-Hurtado and Poole, 2022) or in notions such as Eco-ELT (Saiful, 2020) and education for sustainable development (Jodoin and Singer, 2019; Römhild, Siepmann and Bruns, 2023).

Nationally, research into foreign language education and its relationship with ESD looks back at years of activity, with Küchler calling for conceptual frameworks back in 2014 (Küchler, 2014: 23). Since then, multiple studies have tackled this issue (Küchler, 2016, 2021; Bartosch, 2019, 2021; Surkamp 2022a; Hoydis, Bartosch and Gurr, 2023). Surkamp (2022b: 35), for instance, put forth a model for the integration of ESD-related learning objectives in the English language classroom, which translates the central competence areas specified by the *Curriculum Framework Education for Sustainable Development* (KMK, 2017) to the areas of linguistic/communicative, literary, cultural, and reflective learning.

In short, there is no lack of didactical foundation for the integration of ESD and language education in Germany. To the contrary, the field is highly active and keeps growing. However, while it is possible that a lack of science communication has led policymakers to believe that there were no concepts for them to use, a more surprising oversight is that KMK have published their own guidelines (KMK, 2017) in accordance with UNESCO documents and chose to ignore these. In 2017, KMK published a foreign language-specific *Curriculum Framework Education for Sustainable Development* (Ibid.). This document specifies competence areas, learning objects, and sub-goals for foreign language education that is embedded in and oriented towards ESD. The document also contains example tasks that showcase how to implement ESD-informed language

education in practice. It is directly informed by UNESCO's ESD programme and could have provided an excellent platform for the inclusion of ESD in the updated educational standards of 2023. It is important to note that the framework is far from perfect. For instance, Heidt and Freitag-Hild (2023) discussed its reproduction of neoliberal and neo-colonial thinking patterns against a background of critical global citizenship (Andreotti, 2006) and suggested improvements to the sample material. However, compared to the updated standards' silence on the matter and their deliberate omission of ESD, the curriculum framework may be regarded as a major step forward or, put differently, the updated educational standards are a major step backwards.

From silos to integration

In sum, the two aspects discussed in this section hint at a perception of ESD and foreign language education as not necessarily linked. This perspective is indicative of a siloed understanding of (sustainable development) education rather than an integrated one. If foreign language education, with its focus on literatures, cultures, and communication can indeed contribute to the project of ESD as 'an educational change agenda grounded in transformative learning and critical pedagogy', as Gabaudan (2022: 528) noted, silo mentality needs to be overcome. There are instruments in place in Germany to support a shift towards a more integrated understanding of school subjects in the face of the overarching educational agenda provided by ESD. The *Curriculum Framework* helps embed language learning into the wider project of learning to live together peacefully and sustainably; it helps educators, scholars, and policymakers ask questions about the contribution of languages to the transformation towards sustainability and global citizenship. The fact that this idea of education can be implemented in praxis is supported by reports from schools that orientate their entire curriculum towards ESD (Schultz and Blom, 2023). An important step towards this goal, however, is for policymakers to send the right signals through guidance documents and policies.

Sending the wrong signals

Publishing national education standards is a political process involving a large number of representatives from politics and education. In the case of Germany with its federal system, this includes representatives from the sixteen states. The

necessity for compromise is evident and inevitable. As such, discussing reasons for the deliberate silence on social aims in the updated version without the provision of explicit arguments can only be speculative to a certain extent. However, this decision now constitutes new realities. This section discusses two signals in particular, which may have a lasting impact on foreign language education in lower secondary schools in Germany. The first signal sent by the updated educational standards concerns a (missing) balance between functionality and criticality in foreign language education. The second signal concerns a growing sense of elitism in Germany's tiered educational system, with sustainability seemingly being an issue only for the most academic track of education.

Ever since the very first iteration of the educational standards was published in 2003/2004 (KMK, 2003; 2004), they have drawn criticism pointing out that functionality was favoured over criticality (Bausch et al., 2003, 2005; Zydariß, 2005; De Florio-Hansen, 2008, 62; Rössler, 2008; Zydariß, 2008: 14, 30; Grimm, Meyer and Volkmann, 2015: 13; John et al., 2020: 12; Volkmann, 2020: 33). The main argument was and remains that the standards predominantly focus on functional competence-oriented language education and assessment, which works to the detriment of cultural, content-oriented, and critical aspects of learning foreign languages. In other words, social aims of foreign language education are sidelined, whereas functional communicative competence areas, such as speaking, reading, writing, and listening are regarded as central (this is mirrored in KMK's explanation as quoted in the introduction).

However, functionality is not the opposite of criticality, they are two sides of the same coin. Examples from the context of peace education illustrate how social aims can be embedded and achieved through functional-communicative approaches in the language classroom. For instance, Takkaç Tulgar (2017) argued that education for peace may be implemented in the foreign language classroom through the use of literary texts, thus integrating literary, aesthetic, communicative, and social learning. Yastibas (2021) found that peace education can be implemented as early as primary school by way of learning vocabulary in contexts relevant to peace and violence-prevention, including topics like 'Friends', 'In the classroom', or 'At the playground'. Examples like these are plentiful, and they

show that even in a thematically rather open, competence-oriented curriculum, it is possible to learn a foreign language on a functional level while, at the same time, engaging with the pressing issues of our times through the language.

The second signal sent by KMK may turn out to be particularly damaging in societal dimensions, especially in a country like Germany, which suffers some of the worst levels of inequality in its educational system amongst industrialised nations (OECD, 2023). To understand the implications better, it is necessary to contextualise the policy document within Germany's tiered educational system. KMK's revised educational standards (KMK, 2023a) guide foreign language education in lower secondary education (*Sekundarstufe I*, in German). After primary school (years one to four), every child in Germany attends lower secondary schools from year five to year nine or ten (depending on the federal state). Graduating lower secondary allows young people to leave school and apply for apprenticeships. Alternatively, and if their academic performance qualifies them, they may choose to attend higher secondary school (*Sekundarstufe II*, in German) for another two to three years (again, depending on the federal state). Higher secondary prepares young adults for the *Abitur* (equivalent to A-levels), Germany's highest school exit exam, which qualifies them for university access.

The current educational standards for foreign languages in higher secondary education in Germany (KMK, 2014) also do not explicitly mention ESD or even sustainability. However, in their preamble, they do refer to elements that could be included under the umbrella term of ESD, such as human rights (Ibid.: 20). Accordingly, the sixteen federal states' curricula for foreign languages also tend to mention value orientations that would be counted as ESD-relevant explicitly in their preambles (Scheunpflug et al., 2023). A closer examination of the competence descriptors in these curricula quickly reveals that the inclusion of these aspects in the preambles may often be regarded as paying lip service to sustainability issues, and the way these are incorporated in the curricula have been found to be highly problematic (Ibid.: 71, 72). Nevertheless, they at least signal to educators that social aims are an inherent part of language education in Germany and worth pursuing. Staying silent on ESD in the policy guidelines for lower secondary foreign language education suggests that ESD is a matter for the

elite, only for those pursuing the most academically oriented track of education in Germany, which leads towards university studies.

Conclusion: silence creates realities

It is important to note that silence on education for sustainable development, global citizenship, human rights, and the other elements of SDG 4.7 does not automatically mean that these will not be part of any foreign language classroom in Germany. The ultimate decision on how to design lessons, which educational philosophies to follow and what topics to cover lies with the teachers. However, it does not seem fair to place all responsibility on individual teachers and their perceptions of what is important and significant. Being silent on ESD in education standards constitutes problematic realities. While teachers may ultimately work against this curricular silence, it has also been found that the national standards provide extremely powerful guidance, with the policy suggestions spelled out there trickling down through the system, from the national level into the federal states' curricula, which strongly inform textbook design. Textbooks, in turn, are one of the most significant factors in designing lessons in lower secondary classrooms (Bonnet and Hericks, 2014: 93).

As ESD is not mentioned in the national educational standards, it will likely remain just one topic among many in Germany's foreign language curricula (often in year 10 or above) rather than become an actual underlying education philosophy and paradigm. Thus, Germany's recently updated educational standards are a prime example of a political roadblock (Kwauk and Iyengar, 2021: 8), stopping foreign language education from unfolding its unique contributing potential to the project of education for sustainability and global citizenship.

However, there is hope. The relationship between language, communication, and being/acting in the world for a better future for all is becoming increasingly prominent in theory and practice. With this growing interest, more and more voices have emerged calling for a stronger positioning of foreign language education policy in line with the overarching efforts for education for sustainable development and global citizenship. These voices highlight the need for an approach towards foreign language learning which balances functionality and criticality, and which integrates communicative and social aims.

Undoubtedly, the coming years will yield more opportunities to make meaningful changes and reflect these changes in policies and guidance documents, but these will have to be seized.

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CHALLENGES FACED IN PIONEERING PRACTICES TACKLING EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITIES IN EUROPE

IVAN TOKHEIM, ESPEN SØREIDE DYNGELAND, SOLVEJG JOBST AND JAN SKROBANEK

Abstract: One of the most significant aspects of increased inequalities in society are those pertaining to educational inequality, or disparities related to access, uptake and completion of education. Of decisive interest in this context are challenges and dilemmas facing practices which try to tackle or mitigate educational inequalities. Although research on the topic has developed considerably in the last two decades, there is still a lack of research looking at concrete practice from an internationally comparative perspective. Through qualitative practice research, including problem-centred expert interviews, focus groups and guided tours, we have investigated the challenges and dilemmas which obstruct the implementation, development and day-to-day activities of educational practices.

We introduce this article by providing our theoretical perspectives on educational equality and its necessary pre-conditions. We argue in favour of a much more emancipatory educational practice in the sense of a Freire-inspired ideal of fostering participation, self-determination and solidarity in both formal and non-formal educational environments. These theoretical considerations are then related to concrete practices, whereby we focus on the perspectives of stakeholders and educational practitioners involved such as teachers, social workers, non-formal educators or coaches. Based on our empirical material we move on to reflect on challenges and dilemmas faced in such practices. We systematise these cross-national challenges into seven categories which we have labelled ‘The seven Ps’, namely: Politics, Placement, Partnerships, Provision, Personnel, Parents, and Participants. We conclude by explaining why this framework should be applicable to development education, arguing how these categories may serve as a cautionary framework for developing pioneering practices striving for social justice across the global community.

Key words: Educational Inequality; Educational Practice; Alternative Education; Comparative Research; Practice-Research.

Introduction

Background

Social inequality inhibits economic growth, concentrates power, reduces trust in the state and between citizens in society, and increases tensions that often lead to social conflict. Increased social inequality also has an impact on physical and mental health and even life expectancy (Goldblatt et al., 2023). Looking at current developments, it is clear that income equality, net income and social benefits have declined in several European countries since 2008 (Mascherini and Litardi, 2019) and that child poverty in particular is increasing rapidly (Goldblatt et al., 2023).

One of the most crucial and lasting facets of increasing inequality in society is educational inequality, which encompasses inequalities in access to education, participation in education, educational qualifications and throughout the life of the learner (Farrel, 1999: 159). However, schools still serve as an instrument for social reproduction (Bourdieu, 2018) and circumstantial factors like parents' education and socioeconomic status still have significant bearings on children's academic performance (Nordahl and Nordahl, 2023). Voices getting louder are calling for a flexibilisation of educational institutions and a strengthening of the cooperation between policy-makers, educational institutions, local community actors and social services, in order to provide children and young adults with an educational programme that is suitable for them, regardless of their social, cultural or economic background. Thereupon it may be possible to reverse the trend of increased inequality that has characterised both European and international societies in recent years (Mascherini and Litardi, 2019; Nordahl and Nordahl, 2023).

Between 2021 and 2024, the Horizon 2020 project 'PIONEERED' has been doing just that – investigating alternative educational practices aiming to ensure the uptake and completion of education for children and young people across Europe. Through a collaboration between thirteen research institutions across nine European countries, PIONEERED uncovered a range of pioneering

educational practices with an outspoken ambition and distinct potential for reducing educational inequalities across Europe. Despite variations in governance, socioeconomics, educational ideology and stratification of learners in the PIONEERED participating countries, there are a striking number of commonalities. As the PIONEERED research reveals, practices that appear most successful in reducing inequalities are those that guarantee both individual support and recognition of personal and cultural identity and are based on an inclusive organisational structure, facilitated by predictable transitions between school levels/social domains and inter-professional educational collaboration (Tokheim et al., 2023).

However, the findings also indicate that these egalitarian educational practices are faced with similar challenges. With this article, we aim to break the silence on the societal barriers and challenges faced in pioneering practices tackling educational inequalities across Europe. We do so by giving a voice to practitioners with experience in working with children and youth in vulnerable conditions. Before we do this, we outline the central concepts of our research.

Pioneering practices combating educational inequality

Educational inequality occurs when access to, participation, and potential for success in education are unevenly distributed based on certain characteristics. This can manifest itself in enrolment, academic outcomes, and treatment within the education system. Educational inequalities are often studied using large-scale, international assessment studies (such as TIMSS/PISA), with respect to factors pertaining to economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) and various other intersectional characteristics. However, it has been reasoned several times over how such assessment studies, and the way the Western neoliberal education system is organised around competitiveness, stratification, and commodification of knowledge, often leads to the reproduction of power structures and consequential inequalities in education (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1971; Jobst and Skrobanek, 2024).

To combat the cycle of social reproduction, liberating practices are needed that change the system of oppressive ideologies and hierarchies in the sense of Freire (2000) and make room for consciousness and critical intervention

(*conscientização*) as well as participation, self-determination and solidarity (Klafki, 1999; Tokheim et al., 2024). In this sense, educational inequality is not perceived exclusively in terms of quantifiable indicators, but rather as a temporal, embedded, interlaced and interactive process (Yasunaga, 2014; Benz, Seiler and Erzinger, 2021; Council of Europe, 2023). One alternative answer to the problem of educational inequality is an increasing European presence of what we call pioneering practices. In this context, pioneering practices (PP) mean social organisations employing innovative strategies to mitigate educational inequalities. This entails solving social problems, empowering vulnerable groups, and/or improving capabilities and social relations in both formal, non-formal and informal educational settings. Such organisational structures may be *top-down* – formed and supervised through political/administrative legislature, or conversely, *bottom-up* – formed and run through grass roots initiatives at the local level (Jensen, Skrobánek and Nagy, 2021). In this article, we use the term *stakeholders* (Friedman and Miles, 2006; Preskill and Jones, 2009; Boaz et al., 2018), referring to all parties concerned with the implementation, development and administration of, as well as additional requirements *for* and *of* PPs. The term *practitioner* is further used to describe those working directly with or at the PPs.

Their foci vary between all educational levels from early childhood education and care (ECEC) to higher education; from local to regional, to national levels; with learning happening in formal, non-formal and informal spaces; and since the practices are spread across several European countries with differing socioeconomic and cultural dispositions, PPs will pose different answers to similar questions. Further, while these PPs are all grounded in the European context, we believe the lessons learned from them are also relevant to an extended global context, and their shared goal of reducing educational inequalities closely align with the principals of the Code of Good Practice for development Education (IDEA, 2023). As such, PPs may be considered as tools for practitioners of development education.

Challenges within education

This article focuses on challenges to PPs (during implementation or maintenance), either sporadically or continuously, compromising their day-to-day activities and flow of operations. Here, ‘challenges’ are conceptualised as ‘hindering factors that

limit, delay or even prevent pioneering practices from implementing and realising strategies to mitigate educational inequality' (Tokheim et al., 2023: 5). Following research on the pedagogical profession, we assume that pioneering practices, like all pedagogical action, are characterised by contradictory processes that are inherent to professional practice (Schütze, 1996; Helsper, 2002: 84; Jobst, 2010). Associated with this are paradoxes, unsolvable basic problems (Schütze, 2000: 89) or 'constitutive antinomies' (Helsper, 2002: 84). The antinomies are expressed at various levels of society. Contradictory demands for action can be rooted in the education system and educational ideology of a particular society, such as the pedagogical requirement to treat everyone equally (universalism) and at the same time to recognise the individual person and their needs in each case (particularism). Such socially anchored contradictions manifest themselves as dilemmas on the immediate level of action and interaction, and characterise the specific pedagogical culture there, e.g. on the one hand, teachers have to be paternalistic, while on the other hand, have to maintain the goal of promoting children's participation (Jobst et al., 2022: 14).

By focusing on challenges faced in pioneering practices to address educational inequalities in Europe, we aim to contribute to a cross-national understanding of potential barriers to the implementation of egalitarian educational practices. Identifying potential barriers and challenges will help practitioners and stakeholders to better implement, develop and manage PPs across Europe. By being conscious of common challenges and dilemmas, pioneering practitioners, including development education professionals, may be one step ahead of potential hazards and strengthen their efforts in increasing access to and completion of education.

Methodological frames

The Horizon 2020-project PIONEERED investigated twenty educational practices across nine European countries: Finland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Spain and Switzerland, including thirteen research institutions. This variety of national traditions, political currents and socioeconomic standings makes the task of comparing and triangulating results a multi-faceted and complex task. For analysing such rich material we utilised inductive semantic thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) for identifying the

levels of patterned responses within a qualitative dataset. By applying this analysis, results were drawn from an inquiry regarding a predetermined theme of challenges and dilemmas within the PPs, rather than attempting to identify an underlying theme more latent between the lines and more open to interpretation. In this sense results were primarily data driven – hence inductive – and not made to fit into a pre-existing coding framework (Ibid.: 83). Our analysis followed the six phases of analysis framework proposed by Braun and Clark (Ibid.: 87) for searching, reviewing and defining/naming types of challenges.

In this context we assumed that the same types of challenges materialise in a range of national contexts despite various forms of governance and educational values indicating a ubiquity of the challenges uncovered in the analysis.

Partners in the research team employed three distinct methods of data collection for each of the twenty PPs, summarised in Table 1:

Table 1: strategies of data collection used for the twenty practices in the PIONEERED project

Amount	Method	Informants	Length (min)	Analytical focus
1-4	Individual interviews	1	90-150	Expert knowledge
1	Guided tour	1-3	30-60	Situated/Practical knowledge
1	Focus group interview	5-8	90-150	Collective/habituated knowledge

The individual interviews were semi-structured in shape and problem-centred in nature, exploring the histories, resources, development, implementation and organisation of each respective PP through the perspectives of experts – representatives with specific knowledge acquired through extensive work, with pioneering practice(s). The interview questions were informed by a Topic Guide employed by all partner countries for increased reliability controlling for different contexts. The guided tour was an ethnographical display of the physical location of each practice, with tactile, auditive and visual impressions from the daily operations of each PP, documented by dictaphone and camera. The focus group interviews included networks of stakeholders working in conjunction with each practice, but not necessarily on-site or as closely as experts. The questions for the focus group were based on preliminary findings from the individual interviews/guided tour as well as previous stakeholder interviews conducted in the early mapping phase of the PIONEERED project. The researchers were specifically instructed to dedicate part of the interview to exploring potential challenges and dilemmas faced in each practice.

All informants were given an information sheet in advance of the interview procedures, summarising the project and clarifying the participants’

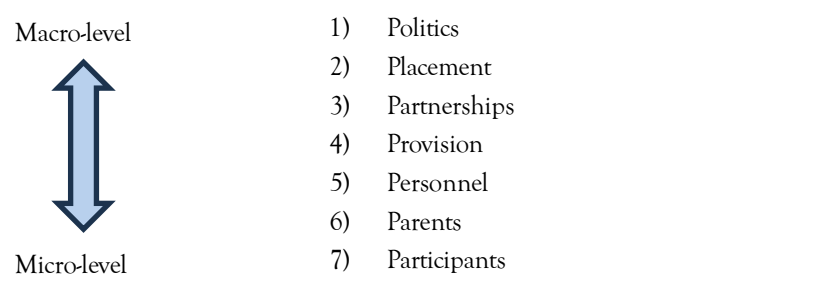
rights. Participation was voluntary, and all data were cleared of any personally identifiable characteristics. The data material was stored on local servers secured with multi-step verification, appertaining to the respective research institutions. The project has received approval from all respective national data management agencies in all partner countries.

All interviews were transcribed back-to-back by researchers in the respective PIONEERED partner countries. All researchers who participated in data collection were well versed in the language and familiar with the educational policies, economic constraints and social patterns within their respective communities. The collective data were used to devise a set of five-page 'sketches'. These sketches (N=20) were uploaded into NVivo (QSR International 1.5.1) where we conducted our data analysis.

Results

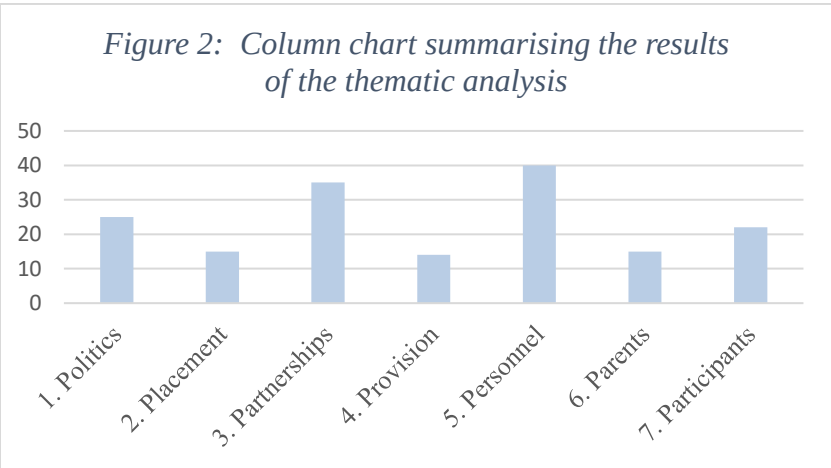
As one could expect, different terminologies were employed in the sketches (problems, struggles, rifts, frictions etc.) for addressing challenges in tackling and mitigating educational inequality through pioneering practices. Henceforth, they were all labelled as 'challenges'. A total of 166 quotations were used as the basis for the thematic analysis. The list of challenges was read several times and different categorisations were tried and discussed in the research team. We decided on an ordering grounded in a multi-level (micro/meso/macro) analytical frame ordered on a spectrum from conditional macro-level factors, down to individual micro-level factors. In the end, this resulted in seven categories considered the most comprehensive, non-overlapping option (see Figure 1). The categories are based on the formulations of the different practitioners and stakeholders from the PPs.

Figure 1: The seven Ps – Categories of challenges faced in pioneering practices



The PP representatives were mixed in their coverage of different challenges, ranging from zero to thirty-two concrete descriptions of different challenges. Results are summarised in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Column chart summarizing the results of the thematic analysis



Each category is considered in closer detail below.

Politics entails the interference of current active policies, legislation or informal processes that hinder the practice in their day-to-day operations. This

may take on many forms, such as scepticism from policy- and/or decision -makers in implementing policies for pioneering practices. Some practices may have been supposed to be implemented to support pioneering practices, but bureaucratic hurdles or unclear roles in implementation lead to practice trailing behind policy. Another example is how different policies may materialise differently at the meso-level, e.g. in that although legislated at the state-level, a certain policy may enact differently in different municipalities/counties/regions.

Placement refers to the challenges that arise from the practices' concrete spatial, natural and cultural facilities available to the beneficiaries and leaders of the pioneering practice. Within our data, there are challenges presented such as cases situated in urban landscapes not having adequate access to playgrounds, forested or green areas. On the other hand, some practices are situated in rural areas, which means less accessibility to learning facilities and social spaces often collaborating with PPs, such as museums, theatres, gymnasiums and swimming pools. Furthermore, it may relate to cultural or societal factors such as negative attitudes towards certain groups of people pertaining to ethnicity, cultural background, religion etc. being highly centred in a particular area. In line with this, placement also entails a demographic element, in the sense that the target group for a certain pioneering practice may at times be oversaturated in relation to the amount of people in need of the practice. In this sense, challenges relating to placement can also be deemed temporally bound.

Partnerships between pioneering practitioners and their collaborators present various kinds of challenges. Some problems arise from a lack of internal cooperation and/or understanding. Some of our cases can be considered partly or highly integrated with the traditional educational system in which the practice operates. In some of these cases, practitioners report reluctance or scepticism towards progressive elements, methods or content within the pioneering practice, stemming from the teachers and leaders within the traditional educational system. Some also report a lack of cooperation and partnerships within the practice itself between instructors, teachers or social workers. Other practices highlight a lack of external partners to cooperate with (which in part can be seen in relation to their placement, as explicated above), such as local businesses, NGOs or research

institutes. Some also report an unwanted level of dependency on, or involvement from, different partners, due to reliance on political influence and funding.

Provision refers to difficulties in securing financial sustainability, which materialises in multiple ways. Some report challenges pertaining to the long-term operation of the pioneering practices such as consumer goods (e.g. curriculum supplies, food, clothes, gasoline, wages). Some highlight larger one-time expenses such as large-scale purchases (equipment) or upgrades and renovations to physical facilities.

Personnel is the most prevalent code, observed in sixteen of the twenty case sketches, with forty separate interview sections addressing this issue. This includes unwanted shortages, changes or turnovers in staff, which can cause problems for ongoing continuity and relationship building with participants. Another problem related to personnel is the type of competence needed in working with participants that are already in a disadvantaged position. In combination with the dependence on specialised personnel, the need for an adequate number of personnel (with the necessary competence) is also highlighted. One case especially underpins that when working within a pioneering practice, practitioners need more than the bare minimum of working capacity – they need a surplus. This implies that not only must a pioneering practice have a sufficient number of competent teachers/instructors to operate, but it must also have additional staff, to allow for the practitioners to thrive and to counteract burnout and an overburdened staff.

Parents are described by some as a challenge in the sense that the pioneering practices find a fruitful relationship with the parents, guardians or other caretakers of the participants/pupils, as a key aspect in counteracting educational inequalities, yet some practices struggle with communicating or collaborating with parents. This may be due to linguistic barriers, lack of engagement, fear of stigmatisation, or differences in norms and customs.

Participants are children, pupils, students or adults attending the pioneering practices. In our data material, they range from pre-school age, until the age of twenty-nine. Many of the hindering factors pertaining to participants

are the same as those pertaining to the parents. They include getting into contact with the appropriate target-group, conveying the intentions of the pioneering practice, and achieving uptake into the practice. Again, these factors may be because of linguistic, cultural or social barriers such as fear of stigmatisation. Once reached, there is also the issue of keeping the participants sufficiently engaged within the practices. One paradox identified in multiple cases is that the participants which stand the most to gain from attending the practice, are often the ones most likely to either not attend, or prematurely drop out.

It is important to emphasise that these last two categories should not be interpreted to mean that parents and participants are the challenges per se. Rather, it is about interpersonal factors such as difficulties in communication and sustaining two-way engagement. The problems do not lie in the target group concerned, but often in the socially anchored asymmetrical power dynamics that characterise this interaction (Freire, 2000).

Discussion

The identified challenges related to Politics, Placement, Partnerships, Provision, Personnel, Parents and Participants can be traced back, among other things, to the fact that worldwide neoliberal trends are influencing educational policy and practice in Europe. This is evident not only within the formal education system, but also in alternative educational practices that are considered egalitarian and pioneering.

The education sector is thus increasingly becoming an instrument of domination, which goes hand in hand with a shift to the right in large parts of the world (Giroux, 2022) – including Europe, as shown by the 2024 EU election. This raises the question whether emancipatory education, referred to as global education, development education, or intercultural education, can contribute to minimising educational inequality. In a sense, our study confirms that PPs, and by extension, the DE sector, has major challenges in not being able to tackle the ‘root causes’ of the socio-economic issues presented by the neoliberal paradigm (Fricke, 2022). However, we also see ways out of this dilemma. Based on the above considerations, we draw the following conclusions with regard to the

potential of DE to realise its fundamental aim of combating inequality, oppression and injustice in society.

Firstly, development education practice is itself trapped in structural constraints that it strives to overcome. The multilevel perspective proposed by the seven Ps elucidates the manner in which macro-level factors, such as ideological and political, may affect educational practices down to the micro level, and conversely, how small, independent practices working from the bottom-up can influence entire educational landscapes despite the competitive currents that threaten the prospects for equitable education. The entanglement of pioneering practices in social power structures is also expressed in the paradox that those participants in most need of the PPs are least likely to attend and finish the alternative provision. Our analysis shows that access to pioneering practices requires stronger systematic and directed support for those who do not have a voice. The culture of silence that Freire (2000) denounced in relation to banking concepts in the education system, and which prevents emancipatory practice, also appears to have a central role in the alternative practices analysed in this article.

Secondly, the exploration and further problematisation of educational challenges from the perspective of the practitioners themselves enable the formation of a cross-system perspective, which is of crucial importance for a 'transformative consciousness' (Jobst and Skrobanek, 2024). This again calls to mind the Freirean concept of *conscientização*, showing how critical awareness and personal empowerment can, and should occur at the very practice level, in order to understand and reduce the presence of educational inequalities. In times of increasing social tensions and inequalities, it can be assumed that contradictions in educational practice, and thus in the experiences of practitioners, are also on the rise. Despite the concerns raised by Fricke (2022), we find that through pioneering educational practice, practitioners, participants, and parents are given the opportunity to become aware of the existence of such contradictions, i.e. unearthing the structural roots of inequality and oppression. The contradictions experienced make people aware of 'the connection between everyday educational practices and institutional, political and economic conditions', questioning their immutability (Jobst and Skrobanek 2024: 380).

The seven problems identified in this study relate not only to the ‘usual suspects’ that hinder any positive emancipatory practice, such as limited time, insufficient access to suitable staff and their culmination in the interests of right-wing contemporary politics (Waddington, 2009; Giroux, 2022; Henderson and O’Neill, 2011). They also refer to contradictions in a society, which are to be understood as liquid, i.e. contradictory in the sense that ‘reproduction of order’ and rigidity is enforced by neoliberal economic structures (Jobst and Skrobanek, 2024). There are several examples of such contradictions impeding the emancipatory power of development education. Gaynor (2010) argued that while the number of, and diversity among students in higher education is growing, the prioritisation of development education in the same sector is going down. Kaimacuata (2010: 63) further highlighted the necessity of engaging teachers with activities and approaches employed in development education, and the ‘low priority given to global education within the education system’. As such, we should remember that the actions of individuals and their surrounding structures, are ‘relational, temporal, contingent and open – likewise, Freire always argued and practised with his educational approach’ (Jobst and Skrobanek, 2024: 376).

Conclusion

In this paper, we have identified seven typologies of challenges, which are prominent for practitioners and stakeholders from widely different contexts, with a common aim of reducing educational inequalities. As both a strength and a weakness; our interviews were conducted in the native language within each partner country, by researchers with intimate knowledge of the educational system and educational inequality within the local context. This led to several layers of interpretation between the PPs and this final article. Another limitation is the non-inclusion of the beneficiary perspective (participants within the PPs). Future studies should seek to document the direct experiences made by the beneficiaries of development education, in order to map the effectiveness of such initiatives, and more importantly amplify the voices of those negatively encumbered by ‘the lottery of birth’.

Still, these results should be considered useful to proponents of development education to guide pioneering practices across the global community in working toward social justice in educational settings. With sufficient planning,

funding, collaboration and adaption, many of these challenges may be manageable or even preventable. The first step to tackling such challenges are to identify them, and better yet, to be able to identify them before they arise. That is precisely what we hope this framework might be used for – as a tool for politicians, NGOs and education professionals trying to create equitable and socially responsible educational opportunities.

Note: This research was supported by the Horizon-2020 research project PIONEERED; Grant no. 101004392.

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Viewpoint

DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION AND PALESTINE: CONFRONTING THE NON-RESPONSE

CAROLINE MURPHY

Over these past nine months, like many development educators, I have been reflecting on the role of development education in relation to responding to the ‘plausible genocide’ against the people of Gaza and the wider violent oppression inflicted on the people of Palestine by the Israeli occupation (International Court of Justice, 2024: 13). In one sense, I have been reflecting on development education as pedagogy and the effectiveness of this for educating, politicising, and mobilising the public to act. In another sense, I have been reflecting on the development education sector as a community of practice and whether it has effectively organised and mobilised a whole of sector response to the ‘plausible genocide’.

This article will address the above by firstly considering the pedagogical roots of development education and whether these roots remain central to practice, or if the positioning of development education has become, perhaps unintentionally, complicit in systems of harm, violence and oppression leading to an ineffective or ‘non-response’ to the ‘plausible genocide’. Secondly, the article will consider the sector as a community of practice and ask whether it has become depoliticised from its radical foundations and reified into a system where it is ‘safe’ and more ‘comfortable’ to be collectively silent and non-responsive during periods of extreme settler-colonial violence and oppression, such as the current ‘plausible genocide’.

Development education, at its roots, is firmly located in critical pedagogy.

“At the very least, critical pedagogy proposes that education is a form of political intervention in the world and is capable of creating the possibilities for social transformation. Rather than viewing teaching as

a technical practice, critical pedagogy, in the broadest terms, is a moral and political practice premised on the assumption that learning is not about processing received knowledge but about actually transforming it as part of a more expansive struggle for individual rights and social justice” (Giroux and Paul, 2023: 165).

The critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire (1973) is considered fundamental to the roots of development education, where ‘action and reflection, theory and practice come together in what Freire calls praxis’ (Swartz, 1998: 168), an intersection that provides the impetus for human agency that will directly intervene for change. The assumption is that such agency is humanised, politicised, and mobilised to seek systemic transformation for social justice. In this respect, it would be reasonable to expect that development education would have crafted pedagogical interventions that make visible settler colonialism, colonialism, neoliberalism, Zionism and systems of domination and exploitation that fuel violence, racism, ecological breakdown, and white supremacy which we see manifested in the unfolding ‘plausible genocide’ against the people of Palestine. It would be expected that in its practice, development education is overtly political and radical with an educated and mobilised public working to take back power from the global elite through disinvesting and disengaging from structures and systems that exist to maintain the function of the current, unjust, and extremely violent global economic system. Freire himself stated that:

“Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world” (Freire, 2000: 34).

Indeed, it has been argued that development education has become reified into a system which serves the function of the current dominant economic paradigm which maintains the interests of the global colonial and settler-colonial powers. Although development education may function as ‘critique’ of the current system, promoting active citizenship and critical thinking which seek

‘radical reform’, it has failed to challenge the legitimacy of the system in itself, therefore leaving the system intact and uncontested. Indeed ‘radical reform’ models are critical in their nature, aiming to ensure ‘modernity’s violence is recognised as something systemic to be addressed by re-structuring social relations at multiple levels’ (Andreotti et al., 2015: 26). However, these models work from the assumption that the system, as it stands, can be transformed to become more equal and fairer through a level restructuring and reform. The system itself remains dominant. Nowhere is this more evident than in the positioning of development education practice within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In short, whilst the SDGs seek reform, they leave intact the system of colonialism, settler colonialism, extraction, arms trade, resource depletion, growth, Zionism, and neoliberal systems of exploitation, violence, and harm. As McCloskey put it, ‘clinging to the SDGs is unlikely to alter the neoliberal trajectory on which we are set toward more social fragmentation and political authoritarianism’ (McCloskey, 2019: 152).

Indeed, political authoritarianism is explicitly apparent as armed police officers descend upon student encampments to arrest young people for demanding Israeli boycotts, divestments, and sanctions in solidarity with the people of Palestine (Gonsalves, 2024). It is also apparent in the push towards the criminalisation of Palestinian activism and the rise in motions across Europe and the United States (US) calling for the banning of the chant ‘from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free’ (Staff, 2024; EJ Press, 2024). This is indicative of government agendas to weaponise antisemitism to silence and censor opposition to dominant Zionist, settler-colonial, and colonial rule. As Jewish Voice for Peace has stated:

“conflating antisemitism with opposition to the Israeli government’s policies or ideology is especially dangerous right now. Supporters of Palestinian rights are losing their jobs, being doxed, and harassed online, being attacked physically, and facing congressional censure for trying to save lives. But the Israeli government, U.S. government, and anti-Palestinian organisations run concerted campaigns to redefine and misstate the meaning of antisemitism, aiming to falsely conflate it with criticisms of Israel or Zionism. They do this so the Israeli government

can avoid accountability for its policies and actions that violate Palestinian human rights” (Jewish Voice for Peace, 2024).

So, how then should we as development educators respond to this persistent cycle of violence, genocide, and political authoritarianism? How should we position our development education interventions, and where do our responsibilities lie? It seems increasingly more obvious that positioning our work against ‘radical reform’ models of intervention, such as those premised on the SDGs, are futile. It seems that such models serve to maintain ‘business-as-usual’, and do little to disrupt, agitate and disinvest from the dominant systems of violence, harm, and ecological destruction. We, as development educators, must pay close attention to all the evidence in front of us. We must admit that the system is broken, violent, unsustainable, harmful, and cannot be fixed through reform. The system is ‘beyond reform’ (Andreotti et al., 2015), and we have a responsibility to disinvest from this broken system. We must abandon pedagogical interventions that seek reform through ‘feel-good’ solutions which only serve to maintain the function of a violent system. We must cultivate the courage to face the discomfort that the system, as it stands, cannot be adapted, and we must be prepared to face the uncertainty, complexity, and grief that this might bring about. We must look to pedagogies rooted in ‘difficult knowledge’, ‘the implicated self’, ‘eco-centric education’, and ‘indigeneity education’ to ensure we are equipped with affective, relational, and critical capacities to confront our own complicity in systems of harm and to help us hospice new ways of being.

We, as development educators, must open our eyes to all of the above. We can no longer ‘look away’ and continue to be non-responsive to this broken and violent system. If we continue to seek ‘radical reform’ through our pedagogies then we must admit that we are complicit in normalising colonial, settler-colonial, neoliberal and Zionist dominance, and violence.

In fact, in relation to the current ‘plausible genocide’ on the people of Palestine, we should be exposing reality ‘as it is’, rather than continuing with broader development education thematic interventions which pursue ‘wishful thinking’ or ‘quick fix actions’ rooted in reform thinking for the current system. In true solidarity with the people of Palestine, we should be making visible that

the system is ‘beyond reform’, and we should be educating on ‘colonialism’, ‘settler colonialism’, ‘Zionism’, ‘ethnic cleansing’, ‘apartheid’, ‘orientalism’ and ‘genocide’. We should be emphasising how Palestine is currently the epicentre of the unjust, violent global system that fuels poverty, inequality, racism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and ecological destruction. If we fail to unearth the system ‘as it is’, then we will have failed to fulfil our ethical obligations to challenge the hegemonic violent system, and we will have ultimately sided with the oppressor i.e. the Israeli-US-European settler-colonial and genocidal axis. In this respect, it cannot be claimed that our complicity is ‘unintentional’, as we cannot claim that ‘we did not know’, or ‘we did not understand’ the extent of this brutal and inhumane barbarism which seeks to maintain and grow its global dominance of people and their land.

Furthermore, as a wider development education sector, if we become increasingly complicit and continue to position our work within models of reform, then what does this mean for us in relation to the authenticity of our practice? Does this mean our practice has become depoliticised from its radical roots? As Audrey Bryan asked in 2011, has the mainstreaming of development education through government funding and policy support resulted in a ‘de-clawing’ of a sector ‘stripped of its radical underpinnings’ (Bryan, 2011 in Khoo and McCloskey, 2015: 6)? It would be reasonable to assume that during a violent and ‘plausible genocide’, the development education sector would have responded through actively calling for a ceasefire, demanding government sanctions, demanding an end to arming Israel, supporting boycotts and divestment, and getting behind the groundswell of public solidarity by joining protests across the island of Ireland. However, despite development education being theoretically aligned with the oppressed, the sector has failed as a ‘unified community of practice’ to harness its resources to ‘call out’ the genocide and back public engagement to push for stronger action from our government.

In short, as a sector there has been silence and a non-response to the genocide. For example, the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) is the national network for development education in Ireland and a leading voice for the sector. With over 120 members, 80 of which are organisational members, it represents organisations working in primary education, post-primary education,

adult and community education, youth education, and higher education (IDEA, 2023). IDEA, however, has yet to be a leading voice for the sector in relation to harnessing a collective and radical response to the genocide.

By January 2024, three months into the genocide against the people of Palestine, three IDEA member organisations, Comhlámh, *Siolta Chroí*, and the Centre for Global Education, met to discuss the non-response from IDEA and the wider sector as a whole. Subsequently, a series of online seminars were organised, of which sixty-two individual development educators attended. All educators were affiliated with IDEA as members. IDEA staff also attended the seminars. There was a general consensus that the sector should be responding politically through lobbying the government, calling for a ceasefire, supporting solidarity protests, promoting the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) movement (BDS, 2024), making the sector apartheid-free, deepening our understanding of Zionism, settler colonialism and Palestine, and connecting with voices from Palestine so that we can listen, learn, and act with integrity and true solidarity. There was a call for IDEA to lead the sector in such actions as a national network and collective voice. IDEA agreed that this was something it would consider as part of its wider strategic planning for the future, but for the foreseeable future, it would act as a focal point for members to share tools and resources which might be useful for teaching.

Nonetheless, in relation to the above seminars, the sixty-two development educators agreed that it was important to write to the Tánaiste, Micheál Martin, to express horror at the unfolding genocide on the people of Gaza, and to urge the Irish government to send a clear message by breaking off all trade with Israel, including military research, weapons production, and the development of Ireland's weapons industry. The government was also urged not to attend the White House or meet the Biden administration during the St Patrick's Day celebrations. It was expressed that adopting a 'business-as-usual' approach to relations with the US government is unacceptable in the context of US complicity in Israel's genocidal attacks on Gaza (Fernández, 2024). The government was further urged to join proceedings with South Africa by supporting its case against Israel before the International Court of Justice (International Court of Justice, 2024). It was stated that by supporting South

Africa, Ireland would be sending a clear message that it is firmly on the side of international law, international humanitarian law and the United Nations' Charter. It was added that it would also extend solidarity and support to the Palestinians suffering grievous human rights abuses, indiscriminate violence, and appalling privations in Gaza.

Since the letter was not led by IDEA as a national network, the sixty-two development educators agreed to approach their employers to request if they could sign on behalf of their organisation, and if not, then they would sign as individual freelance educators without disclosing the name of their organisation. Of the sixty-two who signed the letter to Micheál Martin, only ten organisations were disclosed. Here, if anywhere, highlights the need for a sectoral response led by IDEA. Perhaps, then, more organisations would be likely to add their name to such endeavours.

Looking at the sector as a whole then, can it be said that it has become depoliticised from its radical foundations and reified into a system where it is 'safe' and more 'comfortable' to be collectively silent and non-responsive during periods of extreme settler-colonial violence and oppression, such as the current 'plausible genocide'? What might lie behind the collective non-response of the sector in relation to supporting the people of Palestine? These are questions that we should be delving into as a sector. We must confront the abhorrent 'ease' at which the sector has failed to be mobilised to support the people of Palestine. We must confront the reason as to why the sector has not been led in releasing a statement to, at the very least, call for a ceasefire. We must confront why the sector, as a whole, is not getting behind public protests and showing up on the streets of Ireland in solidarity with Palestine. If, as development educators, we are not vocalising our abhorrence at the genocidal assault on the people of Palestine, and if we are not debating the structures and systems upholding the occupation and system of apartheid, then we must openly face up to the fact that we are complicit in this system of violent oppression. It has never been clearer that there is a link between Euro-American power, the Zionist project, and the settler-colonial imperialist violence which is infused with racism, Islamophobia, and the ultimate dehumanisation of the people of Palestine. As a development education sector

and community of practice, we should be ‘loud’ in calling this out and taking direct action for change.

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RESPONSE TO *POLICY AND PRACTICE* CALL ON DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION SILENCES: REFLECTIONS ON A PEDAGOGY OF NON-SILENCE – RESISTING THE POLITICS OF HOPELESSNESS

SU-MING KHOO

Abstract: This Viewpoint article responds to the *Policy and Practice* Call for Contributors on ‘Development Education Silences’, briefly considering how silence may be a root cause as well as a symptom or effect. It brings the sociology of ignorance to consider the broader context of financialised higher education. The discussion reflects on silences surrounding Palestine, connecting silencing of neoliberal restructuring and climate crisis, following on from a silenced pandemic. Pointing to the central arguments emerging at the high-level 2022 Transforming Education Summit, the discussion links problems of silences and silencing *in* and *through* education to the silencing *of* critical questions about education’s fundamental purposes, and how it is to be funded. Silencing may lead to moral injury as contradictions mount amidst a global order in a state of disintegration. The article returns to embrace Freire’s pedagogies of oppression, freedom and hope, to critically counter emerging threats from silenced inaction and its political correlate, liberal fatalism.

Key words: Higher Education; Ignorance; Moral Injury; Paulo Freire; Liberal Fatalism.

Introduction

I was going to stay silent, despite numbering amongst the *Policy and Practice* Editorial Board members who suggested that this journal might discuss the theme of ‘silences’, but felt compelled to explore how the problem of silences and being too busy to write about them seemed to be connected. Academic overwork is silencing. I decided to write this short article to think through what being silent (or perhaps silenced) on silences means, while telling myself off for taking the time to write this. Most academics face similar problems of simply having too much work to do; teaching, placating ever-ramifying administrative demands, wrangling learning technology, responding to sector-wide problems of

recruitment, enrolment, student attendance, engagement, results and feedback, creating new courses to meet administrative and marketing demands, redesigning or replacing courses terminated on administrative grounds, grading, offering feedback, moderating grades; applying for research grants; reporting, evidencing and justifying every initiative and expense, administering research grants, conducting research, writing, disseminating research, attempting to get reimbursed for work expenses, the list goes on and on, against an invisible adversary – a constraining envelope of fiscal austerity and menacing, but ever-changing, chaotically inconsistent, and poorly articulated threats. Deadlines loom hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, creating an overwhelming sense of urgency and anxiety. Work is pervaded by time poverty, running out of time, while the horizon of expectation is suffused by a sense of dread going all the way down, a sense of futureless futures (Goldberg, 2021).

‘It’s not you...’: silences and bad feelings

Silence is an outcome, a symptom, as well as a root cause of oppression and injustice. Silences in development, in education, and the silencing of development and education are topics that I have been writing and researching about for many years, drawing on the sociology of ignorances, silences and non-knowledges (Proctor and Schiebinger, 2008; Gross and McGoe, 2022) and the philosophical and political exploration of epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007), epistemic erasure and epistemic violence (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). I have read, written and thought about these problems of absences, silences, denial and non-knowledge, yet remain baffled by my own and my peers’ and superiors’ inability to resist serious assaults on our profession, interests, institutions and the interests of our students and wider publics. The entire life world of many universities seems to be alternating between slow suffocation and sudden, large-scale closures and layoffs (Armstrong, 2024). Why have academics failed to mobilise the considerable academic and epistemic resources available to them, to resist serious threats to our own lives and livelihoods, professions, colleagues, students and friends?

A recent blog by a UK-based history professor (O’Hara, 2024) offered sympathy for a sector that is running down its social capital. Higher education and its staff have become ‘sweated assets’, under constant financial pressures to

‘do more with less’. O’Hara tells us to ‘[r]emember, first, foremost and above all: it’s not you. It’s them. Don’t feel bad. You’ve not failed. You’ve been failed’. Several years ago, a doctorate candidate tearfully asked me, their supervisor, if academia was going to end. Taken aback, I replied along the lines of ‘of course not, academia has been there in some shape or form for a thousand years, it will survive, *though perhaps not in its present form*’. Nevertheless, O’Hara’s admission that perhaps we cannot stay on top of an exponentially increasing mountain of work that is not only thankless, but increasingly under pressures of suspicion and blame, chimed strongly. Questions of how higher education should be financed have been perennially raised, but never satisfactorily answered. An over-financialised, but under-financed sector must ‘sweat its assets’, forcing its workers to be ‘constantly whacking our own creativity, and capacity for ideas, against the brick wall of funders’ and employers’ indifference’ (Ibid.).

The 2022 high-level conference on Transforming Education Summit (TES) (United Nations, 2022a) pointed out the major ongoing global silence concerning how to finance education. 97 percent of educational financing comes from domestic sources, yet policy attention focuses on the tiny fraction of external funding, donors and philanthropy (Archer, 2023; Armstrong, 2024; UNESCO, 2023). The TES Discussion Paper on Financing (United Nations, 2022b) highlighted an urgent need for a transformative financing agenda, addressing debt relief, restructuring, and cancellation; progressive taxation; reversing austerity constraints on public sector wage costs; changing the paradigm to view education as public investment, not private consumption; and building strategic dialogues between finance, education and other ministries (Archer, 2023).

The spectre of moral injury

The silencing and failure to countenance high-stakes issues of financing, purpose, survival and transformation results in educational institutions adopting an essentially hollow linguistic approach to the objectives of equity, inclusion, respect, consultation and engagement. The actual policies and practices in the contemporary sector must continue to work in a bad faith manner, through top-down imposition of financialisation and its fixes. This barging ahead often results in ‘things being done very badly’, as O’Hara admits, while institutions continue to boast that the highest standards are being adhered to. This contradiction makes

the university a site of constant moral injury, where it becomes genuinely difficult to keep a sense of purpose and morality intact, though O'Hara hopes that academia's moral injuries are 'perhaps mild'. Moral injury is a form of psychic trauma, mental pain associated with wrongdoing, a 'sin-sickness' (Pederson, 2021). Moral injury occurs when someone or an authority openly condemns one kind of bad behaviour (usually implied to be abstract, or far away), while ignoring, condoning or putting up with other forms of horrible behaviour (usually inescapably concrete and closer to home).

Paul and Haddad (2022) point to the COVID-19 pandemic as a unique moment to examine the role of ignorance and non-knowledge, turning a blind eye to historical lessons, bracketing out alternatives, over-relying on quantifiable knowledge, and actively concealing, delaying, and not sharing knowledge, with grave and deadly consequences. Governments and educational institutions' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020-22 arguably normalised forms of moral injury that were far from mild. Institutional orders to 'get back to normal' and dispense with preventative measures implicated staff and students, but also silenced our involvement in causing considerable avoidable illness, injury and excess deaths. Moral injury is the result of privileging university revenues over people's health and safety, and treating more medically vulnerable students and staff as disposable.

Searching for hope in the shadows of genocide

So far, most of the problems of silencing discussed concern affective burdens, emotional and psychic harms and bad feelings of being 'isolated, disliked, frustrated and alone' (O'Hara, 2024). But how do such feelings connect to silencing and inaction? One of the ways is by the routinised normalisation of hopelessness. Reflecting on the challenges of social and political transformation facing South Africa after apartheid, the poet Seamus Heaney remarked that hope is not merely optimism that things will turn out for the best. Heaney's hope is like 'development' (Khoo, 2015), thinking towards and striving for 'a farther shore', '... hope is something that is there to be worked for, is worth working for, and can work' (Johnson, 2002).

The Call for Contributors rejects unreflexive educational 'action for

action's sake', reminding us that education is important because it plays an essential role in enabling the emergence of consciousness, leading to critical interventions in reality. Writing only about feelings, about effects on our affect, de-centres and marginalises the role of education as critical praxis that brings reflection towards action. This silencing of the praxiological dimension of education bundles together silencing as symptom, silencing as effect and silencing as root cause. At this moment a great amount of effort seems to be going into silencing education, from censorship, to dis-invitations, to suspensions, and large-scale cuts and redundancies. This silencing feeds into passivity under the pressures of domination. The affective burdens of dread and feelings of powerlessness lead to an inability, even a refusal, to empower ourselves as learners to become conscious, as subjective beings, who can be empowered to act in the interests of self and collective liberation in the face of existential crises, in both our immediate workplaces and in the larger world order.

I cannot help reflecting upon half a year of teaching about global development, human rights and public activism, overshadowed by Hamas' incursions into Southern Israel on October 7th, 2023, kidnapping and killing 1200 civilians, followed by Israel's retaliatory intensification of brutal occupation in Palestine to genocidal proportions. The United Nations Special Rapporteur, Francesca Albanese, reported five months after the Hamas attack (Albanese, 2024) that Israel was continuing to perpetrate an 'incalculable collective trauma which will be experienced for generations to come'. More than 33,000 Palestinians have been killed, including more than 14,500 children. Over 12,000 more are presumed dead and 75,000 injured, many with life-changing mutilations (Reliefweb, 2024). Seventy percent of Gaza's residential areas have been destroyed and eighty percent of Gaza's population has been forcibly displaced. Thousands have been detained and systematically subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment, while the incredibly shocking targeting of hospitals, humanitarian assistance and aid workers added unimaginable atrocities on top of intentional mass starvation and dehydration. As the case brought by South Africa to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) detailed, the genocide escalating after 7 October was not a new crisis, but an intensification of Israel's 75-year historical imposition of apartheid rule, 56-year occupation, and 16-year blockade of the Gaza Strip (ICJ, 2023).

Drawing on experiences of scholars teaching in the United States (US), Sayigh (2022) documents the continuities between the denial and silencing about Palestine through colonial appropriation, landscape transformation, censorship, memocide, and processes of schooling. Reflecting on Sayigh's criticism of 'schooling' and silencing through distorted fears of 'antisemitic' labelling, educational silencing can be observed to be happening formally, by deliberate omission and distortion, or as part of a wider 'informal curriculum', creating a generalised atmosphere of silencing, that comes in the wake of the 'weaponized hopelessness'. Such hopelessness is not new, but a fresh instantiation of the hopelessness inaugurated by the chilling of criticism, and how this impacts the inability to speak up and act against climate change (Johnston, 2023), or increasing racism and border violence against migrants.

The experience of teaching about human rights as if they should exist, amidst ghastly daily reminders that that they do not, induces a sense of hopelessness, failure and pointlessness. It is as if salvatory clauses do not exist to save the human rights and the international order from forces of disorder and inhumanity, as killing and destruction continue with blatant impunity. My university issued a brief, unspecific statement calling for peace ten days after the Hamas actions. This led to four months of dialogue with students and staff, after which a longer official statement was issued on 8th February 2024. This more substantial statement acknowledged a sense of solidarity as a community of scholars and students, decrying the destruction of Gaza's universities. It named the Israeli forces' killing of students and academics 'particularly grievous', and called for an immediate end to killings, accountability for criminal actions, as well as undertaking to 'review' relationships with Israel (University of Galway, 2024). More top-down attempts to coordinate a response across academic institutions have been meagre, ambivalent and lacking in coherence (see Letter to the Presidents of all Irish Universities on the situation in Gaza, 2024). These attempts have been in contrast with broad civic protest coalitions beyond the walls of academia, which have consistently and effectively organised mass demonstrations in many cities across the world, have been calling for immediate ceasefire, economic and academic boycotts of Israel, and have been continuously mobilising practical forms of solidarity and assistance.

The silence of neoliberalism vs the pedagogy of freedom

Every aspect of the Call for Contributors points to the central relevance and importance of Paulo Freire's pedagogy of oppression (Freire, 2000a [1970]) and pedagogy of hope. What sits in-between Freire's account of the pedagogy of oppression and its return in the form of a pedagogy of hope is the pedagogy of freedom (Freire, 2000b [1996]). 'Pedagogy of Freedom' is a meditation on a life-long and career-wide question, of what education and becoming a teacher are about, what a 'progressive' education aims to do, and what education presents as a horizon for individual and collective thought and action. The starting point of the pedagogy of oppression is a fulsome rejection of the 'banking' approach to education, premised on an impoverished educational view of education as an individualistic project of 'human capital' – 'to turn women and men into automatons – the very negation of their ontological vocation to be more fully human' (Freire, 2000a [1970]: 74). Instantiations of 'human capital' remain complicit in their own domestication and negate their 'ontological vocation', to search for, and engage critical curiosity in a struggle towards liberation. Hope (Freire, 2014 [1992]: 81) is an orientation towards not only internal and individual change, but to external and collective forms of self-actualisation through dialogue and relationships with others. It is a relational and collective project that rejects indoctrination and instrumentalisation. Collective emancipation is about dreams and there can be no dreams without hope.

The Call asks contributors to address silences concerning neoliberal economics and ideology, bearing in mind the Centre for Global Education and Financial Justice Ireland's report on neoliberalism as responsible for system-wide 'root causes' of poverty, inequality and injustice, and failures of the international development and development education sectors to address such 'root causes' (Fricke, 2022). Why do these key sectors remain largely silent on neoliberalism? On the side of the public, Meade (2024) suggests that 'neoliberalism' stands in for people's dissatisfaction with mainstream politics but cannot easily be identified as a 'root cause' of problems. Lacking a root cause analysis, people turn to far right rhetoric and disinformation for alternative explanations. From the academic side, neoliberalism is no longer perceived as having scholarly relevance. Many academic disciplines reject 'neoliberalism' as vague, misleading, irrelevant or no

longer interesting, a term not worth discussing. If I mention ‘neoliberalism’ in an academic article, there is a good chance that peer reviewers will question it, or even reject the entire article. Neoliberalism’s deregulatory and free market policies are no longer considered to be ideologically powerful, as politics turns towards economically nationalist rhetoric, the politics of militarism, xenophobia and aggressive border policing.

New realities of global financialisation, polarising inequalities, and corporate capture cannot be attributed to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund’s (IMF’s) original policy prescriptions, or different technical interpretations of the ‘Washington Consensus’ (Williamson, 2008). Neoliberalism’s macroeconomic policy prescriptions have become passé, as market freedom has given way to new, dysfunctional spirits of financialisation. Economic protectionism is creating its own problems in the wake of Brexit, Trumpism, and the rise of reactionary politics and mainstreaming of the far-right. Against the silences surrounding neoliberalism, we might return to Freire’s critique in the ‘Pedagogy of Freedom’ (Freire, 2000b [1996]). Freire does not denounce neoliberalism as deregulation or macroeconomic policies. What Freire demands is ‘a permanently critical perspective’ on what he describes as neoliberalism’s ‘scourge’ – ‘its cynical fatalism and its inflexible negation of the right to dream differently, to dream of utopia’ (Ibid.: 2). Assuming that neoliberalism disappears when it gets thought of as theoretically passé silences a critique of its scourge, accepting cynical fatalism in place of critical freedom and hope.

At the heart of Freire’s critique is the banking model’s assumption that learners’ minds are empty, lacking intellectual wealth that can be a source of learning for others. Hope is the sense that a different kind of education is worth working for, that comes from ‘opening up to the thinking of others’ (Freire, 2014 [1992]: 110). A mind empty of others is also a mind emptied for othering and the convenience of scapegoating. The rise and emboldening of the far-right requires an educational project that is capable of redressing cynical fatalism with wider understandings of the root causes of poverty and its spread. This educational project needs to make connections between economic and social polarisation, and find ways to make sense of racist and xenophobic targeting,

scapegoating and ill-treatment of foreigners, migrants and displaced people by diverse political forces and governments.

Conclusion – against liberal fatalism in the (un-declared) Anthropocene

The ‘Anthropocene’ is a concept that had galvanised the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to demand a new era of greater solidarity (UNDP, 2022). Then, in 2024, the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) surprisingly un-declared the Anthropocene concept, arguing that it did not constitute a new geological epoch (Witze, 2024). This surprise announcement merely served to underline the importance of the Anthropocene as a social, economic, and political concept, if not a geological one, describing an age where concerted change is needed if humanity is to survive the breaching of environmental ‘safe operating space’ (Rockström et al., 2009). Global governance has proved to be extraordinarily ineffective in balancing corporate interests and business-as-usual tendencies against urgent demands for climate justice, and climate-related environmental loss and damages. At the mid-point of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it seems more urgent than ever to drive longer-term, broader transformations of the global environmental-social contract, taking in the interests of the future generations in inheriting a livable world.

But these goals evince a sense of the dread about futureless futures as global governance appears to have reached an all-time low point. The UN Charter and Universal Declaration of Human Rights imply the existence of a social and international order, in which state and non-state parties cooperate and uphold duties to conserve and not destroy that order. Article 30, the salvatory clause, completes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by stating that the rights set out in the preceding 29 articles must not be destroyed. Yet today, this order seems to be in tatters, as genocide continues with impunity, human rights are trashed and even the most basic prohibitions in international law are openly traduced. Development education and global learning have constituted non-prestigious, but hardily perennial characteristics of my own educational practice over the past three decades, but now I find myself speaking about education and learning to an international development sector amidst an existential crisis.

After two decades of drifting towards humanitarianism, the worlds of development and education now face a grim prospect from what might be described as liberal fatalism, which follows in the wake of pandemic silences of ignorance, complacency and inaction (Paul and Haddad, 2022). Liberalism implies the promotion of formal freedom and rationality, leaving substantive and normative questions of what education is and what learning is for largely undisclosed. Liberal fatalism operates a ‘politics of impossibility’, effecting politics through claims of incapacity. It is a form of strategic ignorance that delays decisions and interventions, while allowing inaction to narrow political possibilities. Liberal fatalism is likely to become an increasingly prominent strategy of governments, when facing crises and challenges such as pandemics and climate change (Bacevic and McGoey, 2024: 178). Liberal fatalism’s silences of denialism and policy narrowing are likely to deepen inequalities and racist and classist harm (Bardon, 2019). Liberal fatalism is a political epistemology that contributes to a complex of denial, evasion and untruth, undermining the public good, understood as a triangular concordance of democratic deliberation, equitable enjoyment of basic goods, and public benefit (Khoo, 2014). The public needs a responsible exercise of academic and educational autonomy and freedom (Khoo, 2023) to counter government and institutional failures to prevent avoidable public harm. However, the enactment of liberal fatalism within, and through, public higher education’s quotidian work, for example, through widespread organisational avoidance of responsibilities to minimise avoidable health harms from COVID-19 and other infections. Its failures to call out public health silences and other silences around the dereliction of the international order, incipient genocide, or neoliberal inequalities and injustices are likely to undermine higher education’s longer-term capacities to exercise public epistemic responsibility.

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STUDENT PROTESTS AND THE CORPORATISATION AND MILITARISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

HENRY A. GIROUX

The long-simmering crisis over Israel's genocide of Palestinians has reached a breaking point. Campus protests in solidarity with Gaza have erupted across North America, spanning at least 45 US states, Canada, and Mexico. Similar demonstrations have surged across Europe, including Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Additionally, expressions of moral outrage and solidarity have erupted in states across Central and South America, such as Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, and Cuba, as well as in Asia (including India, Indonesia, and Japan), the Middle East (including Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Yemen), Africa (including Tunisia), Australia, New Zealand and beyond. Many faculties have protested alongside their students, and on 8 May 2024 a group of professors at The New School in New York City erected the US's first faculty encampment in solidarity with Gaza, signaling the growing momentum of the movement.

Meanwhile 'Hands Off Rafah' rallies have drawn thousands into the streets, while a global day of mass protest took place on 11 May (Aljazeera, 2024). No longer ripped from history, decontextualised, banished from public discourse, and relegated to the sphere of silent questions and neglected connections, the horrors Palestinians have faced and are facing are writ large in all their brutality (Lyamlahy, 2019). Politics, collective agency and mass student resistance are being reimagined as supposedly democratic societies across the globe embrace fascist responses to mass resistance. In the midst of the current protest movement, the historical, political, economic and cultural framing mechanisms that connect the current repression on campuses and the struggle for Palestinian rights have become more visible. What has also become more visible is the long history of the politics of disposability, a rising culture of violence against those considered other, and the transformation of higher education into an adjunct of corporate power.

What must be extremely threatening to the far right and corporate media alike is that student protesters and their allies are clear about the connections between the issues of academic freedom, police violence, colonialism and human rights that they are raising – they are refusing to let these issues be separated in a fragmented, isolated, ahistorical and indivisible fashion. In the manner of German Jewish philosopher Walter Benjamin, the student protests are blasting ‘open the continuum of history’, rethinking it with fire (Clowes Huneke, 2022). While the issues of academic freedom, Palestinian rights, and the scourge of militarism and war are crucial issues for the students, they are not disconnected from the blight of neoliberalism and racialised state violence as fundamental elements of oppression (Hylton, 2024). Hence, what the protests signify in the broader sense are new insights, new framing mechanisms, and a critical interrogation of history in order to avoid the protests and their call for a radical democracy from being spectacularised, depoliticised and torn from the history.

With the outbreak of Israel’s war on Gaza, students are courageously protesting the indiscriminate and massive killing of women, children and civilians by the Israeli government - with more than 35,000 killed thus far (Middle East Monitor, 2024). The student protests have called for a permanent ceasefire, recognition of a secure state for the Palestinian people, and for universities to disinvest from industries that produce weapons of war, particularly for Israel. The protests have struck a nerve and awakened the need for rethinking the role of higher education in a time of tyranny and war. University administrators, liberal and far right politicians, the corporate media, and right-wing billionaires have responded by disingenuously condemning the protests as ‘antisemitic, claiming that the protests are the work of “outside agitators”’, and those in charge have suppressed student resistance with militarised force (Zirin, 2024). This is generally the same group that challenges the claim that fascism poses a serious threat to America. As Alberto Toscano argues, what unites politicians from both political parties, cold war ideologues, and billionaires is an affirmation of ‘America’s commitment to Israeli impunity in the face of protest and public opinion, largely through bad-faith accusations of antisemitism exploited by far-right politicians’ (Toscano, 2024).

The charge of rampant antisemitism on campuses today has been challenged by a number of accounts, stating that the incidents of threatening behaviour towards Jewish students are relatively isolated and ‘more likely to appear at parallel protests by non-students outside the campus’ (McGreal, 2024). Furthermore, accounts from Northeastern University allege that during demonstrations pro-Israel demonstrators shouted, ‘virulent antisemitic slurs, including “kill the Jews”’ (Olmstead, 2024). Meanwhile, at the University of California at Los Angeles, masked pro-Israeli nationalists attacked pro-Palestinian encampments, wielding metal poles and striking protesters with wooden planks, and other objects (Swaine et al., 2024). Shockingly, the police stood by for close to three hours, passively observing as the assault escalated into violence. Regrettably, these attacks by pro-Israel nationalists seldom receive attention in the mainstream press.

While it appears that the charge of antisemitism has been weaponised, any violence against Jewish students and Muslim students is unacceptable and cannot be justified in the name of free speech (Benedict, 2024). Frederick Lawrence, the former Brandeis President, rightly argues that while safety is essential for campuses, particularly in protecting students, its fundamental goal is to protect free expression, and that security involving police should be a last resort. He adds, ‘provoking people, challenging people, asking difficult questions, making people uncomfortable, that’s part of the price of living in a democracy, if you will... You are not entitled to be intellectually safe. You are entitled to be physically safe’ (Goodman, 2024).

The claim of rampant antisemitism on campuses appears in many instances to be largely exaggerated and used for political purposes (Solomon, 2024; Perlstein, 2024). In fact, it appears to be part of the usual self-righteous, smug, and repressive strategy of diversion and blame. But there are deeper forces at work in the ideological and militarised responses by most of the universities where the campus protests are taking place. University presidents under pressure from powerful far-right politicians and billionaires are increasingly relying upon the police to deal with acts of civil disobedience by student protesters who have set up campus tents in opposition to ‘the U.S.-backed Israeli military offensive in Gaza’ (Dickinson, 2024). As of 8 May 2024, over 2,400 students have been

arrested by police (O’Kruk, Boschma, and Robinson, 2024). Students as well as faculty have been assaulted by the police, zip-tied, hauled into buses, and criminally charged for standing up for their beliefs.

As Tim Dickinson points out in *Rolling Stone*, it is alarming to see ‘rooftop snipers and militarized police subduing protesters’ (Ibid). He further notes:

“The behavior of law enforcement has - once again - shined a stark spotlight on police brutality and disregard for First Amendment rights protecting freedom of assembly, speech, and the press. As cops have gone ham on protesters, and engaged in dubious mass-arrests, they’ve also roughed up journalists and even smashed college professors to the ground” (Ibid).

This type of indiscriminate violence against peacefully protesting students and faculty echoes what one would expect in outright fascist regimes. Historian Rick Perlstein astutely observes that military-like responses to campus protests today would have been unimaginable in the 1960s. He highlights some of the most egregious abuses against faculty members, underscoring their significance. He writes:

“At the University of Wisconsin, a balding, bespectacled professor face down, two cops pinning his left arm sharply behind his back, and a disabled professor getting her dress torn and suffering internal damage from police strangulation. The 65-year-old former head of Dartmouth’s Jewish studies program who dared scream ‘What are you doing?’ at cops being taken down with a wrestling move that also left her with an arm wrenched behind her back. Then a second cop arriving to keep her pinned as a third looks on blithely, rifle at the ready. (She was suspended by her university for her trouble). At Washington University in St. Louis, a 65-year-old professor, a Quaker, was told by his doctor he was ‘lucky to be alive’ after absorbing a flying tackle from a very large officer for the sin of filming cops with his cellphone, then being dragged to a

nearby patch of grass, writhing, then to a police van, where he fell limp” (Perlstein, 2024).

These violent arrests serve as a stark reminder of the authoritarian undercurrents tying together the unrest on campuses and the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza. These events compel us to recognise the broader political forces at play, bridging local acts of violence with global conflicts, urging for a deeper understanding and active engagement to address both the symptoms and root causes of such violence. Much of the response to the protests is an attempt to punish students for addressing what one might call one of the crucial moral and political issues of our time: freedom for Palestinians to determine their own political fate. At the same time, the repression signals to students that when free speech begins to hold power accountable, there are severe consequences, extending from suspensions, expulsions, loss of future job opportunities and even to potential arrest.

In this case, it becomes clear that the basic values often attributed to higher education as a social good - extending from teaching students how to be critical, informed, socially responsible, compassionate and engaged citizens - are viewed with disdain and subordinated to the repressive values and notions of learning aligned with the corporate university. These include viewing the world through a normalised template of market values, embracing a cutthroat notion of competitiveness, defining the worth of a degree through commercial interests, disdaining any mode of learning not tied to future financial gain, and disregarding connections between knowledge from larger social issues. This is a pedagogy of capitalist cloning buttressed by the threat of state terrorism.

In light of the student protests and the repressive response, the university’s reactionary neoliberal values and the pedagogical practices that enforce them have revealed the hollowness of the university’s claim to free speech and academic freedom. The protests also underscore the extent to which higher education has been corporatised and militarised. It is important not to forget, as the South African Nobel prize winner in literature, JM Coetzee points out, that powerful corporate elites have little regard for higher education as a critical institution and public good and ‘reconceive of themselves as managers of national

economies who want to turn universities into training schools equipping young people with the skills required by a modern economy' (Coetzee, 2013). Moreover, this attack on higher education is not only ideological but also, as we see with the campus protests, relies on the repressive militaristic institutions of the punishing state. What is often missed in progressive analyses of the protest movements is the interconnection between the corporatisation of higher education and the current efforts to militarise it through outright suppression by the police and other forces of state repression.

There is a long history of increasing neoliberal influence on higher education, its alliance with the military-industrial complex, and its willingness to accept vast amounts of financial support from corporations serving defence industries. In fact, as I noted in 2007 when I published *The University in Chains: Confronting the Military-Industrial-Academic Complex*, former President Dwight Eisenhower's famous critique of the military-industrial complex originally included the term 'military-industrial-academic complex' - the latter term he was persuaded to drop before his Farewell Address to the Nation on 17 January 1961 (Giroux, 2007). Since Eisenhower's speech, especially in the aftermath of the 9/11 attack, the US has become increasingly militarised and policed. On the domestic front, police violence has escalated dramatically, especially with the relentless killing of Black and Brown people, the most notorious and public examples including the murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. At the same time, higher education has increasingly aligned itself with the national security state, becoming a site of commerce, research for the Pentagon and a training ground for staffing innumerable intelligence agencies.

Since the 1970s, a form of predatory neoliberal capitalism has waged war on the welfare state, public sphere and the common good. The new mode of governance argues that the market should govern the economy and all aspects of society. It concentrates wealth in the hands of a financial elite and elevates untrammelled self-interest, unchecked individualism, deregulation, and privatisation as the governing principles of society. Under neoliberalism, everything is for sale, and the only obligation of citizenship is consumerism. We live in an age when economic activity is divorced from social costs, while policies that produce racial cleansing, militarism, and staggering levels of inequality have

become the organising features of everyday life. Largely defined as a workstation for training global workers and increasingly in need of funding, higher education, as John Armitage writes in *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, easily assumed the role of a 'hypermodern militarized knowledge factory' (Armitage, 2005: 221). As public schools increasingly model themselves after prisons, becoming shooting galleries due to the prevalence of guns and military weapons in the US, higher education further boosted its unholy alliance with the defence and intelligence industries, which largely served dominant state, military and corporate interests.

Under an austerity-driven neoliberal project, education has defaulted on its willingness to cultivate critical citizens essential for a democratic public sphere. In a broader perspective, education is increasingly seen as a target for suppression, not only by the far right but also by both political parties. Their aim is to reduce it to a mere appendage of the corporate and defence industries while imposing pedagogies of repression and conformity. The current assault on higher education exemplifies how market values erode the public good and destroy any viable sense of higher education as a democratic public sphere. Operated as a business, higher education prioritises profits over fostering an education that nurtures an informed and creative citizenry, forsakes democracy as a guiding principle, and reshapes higher education through what Wendy Brown in *Public Servants: Art and the Crisis of the Common Good*, describes as 'vulgar forms of marketization' (Brown, 2016).

Defunded and corporatised, many institutions of higher education have been all too willing to make the culture of business the business of education. This transformation has corrupted their mission, making them all the more susceptible to aligning themselves with anti-democratic forces of militarisation. Actions by universities to stifle student protests and employ oppressive elements of the national security state must be understood against this backdrop. Viewed as guardians of the market, as vehicles to produce compliant workers for the neoliberal order, these institutions transform into right-wing indoctrination centres, they establish such educational institutions that play a formidable role in the ongoing militarisation of US society. Hence, it should come as no surprise that, in the face of campus protests, school administrators were all too willing to

stifle dissent and employ the police to shut down peaceful protests. The merging of neoliberalism, militarism, and a politics of indoctrination poses a dire threat to higher education, academic freedom and democracy itself.

What must not be forgotten is that the campus protests signify more than a struggle for Palestinian rights and freedom; they also represent a fight to reclaim higher education as a site of democratisation, a public good, and a crucial civic institution where student voices can be heard, and where the dynamics of critical thinking, dialogue, informed judgment and dissent can take place without fear of repression. Solidarity encampments globally also serve as poignant reminders of the pervasive influence of authoritarianism, prompting a critical examination of the multifaceted crises that imperil our world. These encampments not only symbolise unity in the face of oppression but also signify a collective awakening to the interconnected web of violence perpetuated by entrenched authoritarian systems, which are inexorably 'bringing our world to a breaking point' (Toscano, 2024).

It is worth remembering Martin Luther King, Jr.'s words composed in 1963 in which he stated: 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.... We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly' (King, Jr., 1963). In the spirit of King's impassioned words, higher education offers a crucial civic space for dialogue, critique, historical memory, the affirmation of mutuality and social responsibility. It is a space where the death of those deemed disposable can be both made visible and challenged, where the stories of the ungrievable can be told, and where politics and pedagogy converge to form a practice of moral witnessing and empowerment. Indeed, student protesters on numerous campuses worldwide have pushed colleges to consider divesting from Israel and companies that support the war in Gaza (Thakker, 2024). Colleges such as Trinity College in Dublin, Brown University and University of California, Riverside in the US have either moved towards divestment or are actively contemplating it (Kwai and O'Loughlin, 2024). These actions stem from the persistent actions and bravery of students and faculty who have put their bodies on the line in order to gain a measure of justice from the university. As crucial as these gains are, the fight for Palestinian freedom cannot be separated from the challenge of building

a multiracial working-class movement struggling against neoliberal capitalism, confronting the militarisation of higher education, and beating back an emerging fascist politics both at home and abroad.

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THE SILENCES OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: A CONCEPT FIT FOR PURPOSE?

BARBARA O'TOOLE

Abstract: This article proposes that incorporation of global citizenship education (GCE) into higher education in Ireland has been a double-edged sword. GCE, previously known as development education (DE) is now included as a core element of initial teacher education (ITE); this recognition has been widely hailed as a positive step. It has placed GCE firmly on the map of teacher preparation programmes. However, this article argues that absorption of DE into the academy as 'GCE' may have contributed to diluting its critical edge. Nowhere has this been clearer than in the context of the war on Gaza. When GCE educators in the higher education sector were most needed to shed light on historical contexts to this conflict, there was mostly silence. When GCE educators were most needed to provide safe spaces for learning, there was mainly absence.

This article questions the place of GCE in the formal sector, specifically in ITE. It examines some paradoxes and contradictions within the field, such as the growing discourse around decoloniality against a lack of deep understanding about what such a concept might mean in theory and praxis. It discusses the confused messages which these contradictions and paradoxes must present to students. It also points to shafts of light in the sector, with pushback against depoliticisation and deradicalisation becoming more evident in recent months, as the voices of global citizenship educators in ITE have become stronger and more focused in speaking out about genocide, scholasticide and epistemicide in Gaza.

Key words: Global Citizenship Education; Initial Teacher Education; War on Gaza; Decoloniality; The Development and Intercultural Education (DICE) Project.

Introduction

This article proposes that the relatively recent incorporation of development education into higher education in Ireland as global citizenship education (GCE)

has been a double-edged sword. On the one hand it has given recognition to a field that typically occupied the borderlands of formal education and has brought it into mainstream curricula and programmes. The inclusion of GCE as a core element of initial teacher education (ITE) by the Teaching Council in 2020, for example, was widely hailed as a positive step. It placed GCE firmly on the map of teacher preparation programmes, with the result that every student teacher in the country now attends modules focused on equity and justice. The Teaching Council states that GCE ‘aims to empower learners of all ages to assume active roles, both locally and globally, in building more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure societies’ (Teaching Council, 2020: 4), and that it includes ‘Education for Sustainable Development; Wellbeing (personal and community); Social Justice, Interculturalism’ (Ibid.: 14). GCE is now a central element of teacher education in Ireland, with an examination of social justice, equity, and human rights at the core of student learning.

However, rather than unequivocally celebrating this inclusion, this article proposes that the mainstreaming of development education into higher education as GCE has continued a process of diluting its radical edge and may in fact have accelerated its neutralising as a questioning and critical force in Irish education. Consequently, it is essential that those of us active in the higher education sector interrogate our work and question any gaps between our purported global justice stance and the realities of the messages we communicate (or not) in our praxis. In 2011, Issue 12 of this journal was devoted to the theme of the ‘professionalisation and deradicalisation of development education’, with authors pointing to the de-politicisation of the field at that time due to a myriad of factors within the neoliberal political project, and the potential consequences of this process. Some of the questions that were then asked of development education are particularly relevant today, almost fourteen years later, now that GCE has become formally adopted ‘as the operational context for sector activities’ (Cannon, 2023: 13) and is now the dominant discourse in education, including in ITE. The questions that need to be asked include: what has the ‘mainstreaming’ of GCE within education meant for the radical origins of the field? Has it been ‘de-clawed’ (Bryan, 2011), in other words, stripped of its original Freirean development education foundations? What are the implications

of retaining a politically detached stance on crucial issues that the sector is ideally positioned to respond to (Ibid.).?

Silences and absences

This latter question is especially pertinent in the light of the ongoing war on Gaza, arguably the most pressing global justice issue of our time. Nowhere has the neutralising and de-politicising of GCE in higher education been clearer than in institutional silences around Gaza, particularly in the weeks after 7 October 2023. At a time when global citizenship educators were most needed to shed light on historical contexts for the conflict, there was silence. When global educators were needed to provide safe spaces for learning and discussion, there were absences. These silences and absences were not neutral, nor were they benign in their impact. On 25 December 2023, Reverend Munther Isaac stated in his Christmas message from Palestine (Isaac, 2023):

“We are tormented by the silence of the world.... The hypocrisy and racism of the western world is transparent and appalling... To our European friends, I never ever want to hear you lecture us on human rights or international law again”.

2024 saw increased numbers of people speaking out about the war on Gaza, with student protests in particular gathering momentum and affecting change. Likewise, individual staff members, particularly those in *Academics for Palestine* (2024a), a network of academics ‘set up to help create awareness about issues relating to higher education in Palestine and to build the campaign in Ireland for the academic boycott of Israel’, were active across mainstream and social media. However, at an institutional level there was mostly ‘neutrality’, in other words, silence. This article proposes that, given the muted responses to the war on Gaza in higher education, rather than celebrating the mainstreaming of GCE, we should be gravely concerned. Why did global citizenship educators not lead the way to ‘educate, educate, educate’, as Fatin Al-Tamimi, chairperson of the Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC) urged us to do at a Centre for Global Education / Comhlámh webinar in February 2024 (CGE and Comhlámh, 2024). Is the concept and practice of GCE fit for purpose in the light of its slow and belated response to paving the way for students and staff in higher education

institutes (HEIs) to learn about the genocide, scholasticide and epistemicide in Gaza (International Court of Justice, 2024)? If the mainstreaming of GCE is indeed at the root of this problem, can the field ever recover from this body-blow to its credibility: of criticality (within certain limits), human rights (conditional on geography), decoloniality (as an abstraction rather than as meaningful action)? Has GCE in HEIs already and permanently severed its connection to its critical and radical past?

The remainder of this article questions the place of GCE in the higher education sector, specifically in ITE. It examines some of the paradoxes and contradictions within the field, such as a growing discourse around decoloniality against a lack of deep understanding about what such a concept might mean in theory and in praxis. It ponders the confused messages which these contradictions and paradoxes must present to students. It also points to shafts of light in the sector, with pushback against de-politicisation and deradicalisation becoming more evident in recent months, as the voices of global citizenship educators in ITE have become stronger, more united and more focused. These signs offer hope that global justice education can work to counter official policies of neutrality that have been the evident in the majority of HEIs in Ireland. It offers hope that GCE can add its voice to civil society outrage in the face of a genocide that in March 2024 had already claimed the deaths of over 30,000 Palestinians, including over 13,000 children, with 80 per cent of the population forcibly displaced: 'The incalculable collective trauma will be experienced for generations to come' (Albanese, 2024: 1).

This article is written from the perspective of my experience in primary ITE in Ireland, where I have worked for twenty years. During that time, I have been closely involved with the Development Education and Intercultural Education (DICE) Project (DICE, 2024), funded by Irish Aid at the Department of Foreign Affairs, which contributes towards 'DICE lecturing' posts in the four State-funded primary ITE sites: Marino Institute of Education, Dublin City University Institute of Education, Mary Immaculate College, and the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education in Maynooth University. These lecturing posts constitute the DICE network. Over the last two decades I

have been DICE project coordinator, a member of the management committee, and most recently a DICE lecturer.

It is important to state that I deplore the Hamas killings of 7 October 2023 and am not a supporter of Hamas. My call for global citizenship educators to raise awareness about the war on Gaza is not to condone the October atrocity; rather it is to emphasise the need to educate about global power structures that have enabled genocide to take place in full view of the world, the disproportionality of the Israeli response, the devastating impact of collective punishment on a captive population, and the historical context that lies behind the occupation of Palestine. Furthermore, the concept of academic freedom is at the core of the views put forward in this article, drawing from Hodgins and Mannix-McNamara (2021: 12), who state that academic freedom can be understood as:

“the free exchange of ideas through the rights of scholars to pursue research and teaching outside the control of powerful interest groups, including the freedom to pursue subjects based on intellectual interest, without control or censorship”.

Finally, although I welcome the recognition of GCE as a core element of ITE because it ensures that all student teachers receive input on equity and justice in the form of mandatory modules and some specialist electives, the stance that I hold in relation to GCE is largely a ‘sceptical’ one (Cannon, 2023). I see GCE as ‘a depoliticised concept which lacks the critical edge needed to achieve the kinds of changes necessary in our current global context, and is... supportive of existing dominant systems, such as neoliberalism and Eurocentricity’ (Ibid.: 20). In fact, the concept that I believe comes closest to capturing the radical edge required for this work is ‘global justice education’, which in a 2020 publication was described as combining “global learning” with “social justice education”, in that it actively seeks to highlight intersectionalities between education about the wider world... with a critical intercultural education in which race is foregrounded and analysed’ (O’Toole, Joseph and Nyaluke, 2020: 11) and which is carried out through a critical and decolonial theoretical lens.

However, this is not simply a re-run of the adjectival debate; the concern is about the potential impact on critical education about global justice matters now that GCE has become part of the mainstream. Regardless of the conceptual language used, or whether critical voices have been muted or muzzled, the important issue is that change must take place to ensure the credibility of the work in the future. Individual global citizenship educators must seek out allies and must move forward together in educating about the genocide, epistemicide and scholasticide of the Palestinian people, along with educating about other injustices across the world. The only way to do this is through the solidarity of networking and by taking an interrogative lens to praxis.

Interrogating praxis

Starting with the latter, i.e. interrogating praxis, an irony of GCE's largely muted response to the genocide in Gaza has been the increased discourse around decoloniality in HELs in Ireland in recent years. Using the term decoloniality in mainstream academia could in itself be perceived as a contradiction in terms. The body of work underpinning decoloniality draws from the writings of radical scholars; for example, Quijano (2007), Mignolo (2000, 2018), and Walsh (2018), beginning in South America in the 1990s and since then taken up by activists and academics around the world. At its core is a transformative agenda. As Walsh states:

“It implies the recognition and undoing of the hierarchical structures of race, gender, heteropatriarchy, and class that continue to control life, knowledge, spirituality, and thought, structures that are clearly intertwined with and constitutive of global capitalism and Western modernity” (2018: 17).

The ‘decolonial turn’ thus requires a great deal more than simply reviewing and amending module reading lists. On overwhelmingly white and settled campuses in Ireland, it calls upon educators to dive deeply into their positionality and praxis; it requires them to begin the work of dismantling their own white privilege and to develop their racial literacy (McGuirk, 2024). It necessitates educators to call out silences and absences and to stand in solidarity with Palestinians in the face of their potential annihilation within a project of

settler colonialism. At the very least it requires a focus on Palestine in educational content. Yet the widespread use of the concept of decoloniality in higher education suggests that its transformative underpinnings and potential have become blurred and muffled as it journeys more widely into the neoliberal HEI. The ‘undoing’ that Walsh refers to, above, is in danger of being completely overlooked. Indeed, the observations of Fúnez-Flores, Díaz Beltran and Jupp (2022: 3) are particularly prescient; they state that ‘the modern/colonial structure of the neoliberal academy will commodify and reproduce even that which is intended to be subversive and unsettling’. Attempting to dismantle the master’s house with tools that have been co-opted by the master and re-shaped into blunter instruments will come to naught (Lorde, 1984). Discussions about decoloniality, in a context of silence about genocide, are empty and meaningless, and ultimately serve to negate the concept itself and render it devoid of meaning.

This article is being written against the backdrop of the Irish government’s recent recognition, along with Norway and Spain, of the State of Palestine, joining another 143 countries who also recognise Palestine. Now that this move has taken place, and as support for Palestine has itself become ‘mainstreamed’, campuses will hopefully become more favourable spaces for educating about the issues. However, the silences of the last academic year will leave their mark, not least on students. Many campuses have hung flags and banners or held vigils in solidarity with people in conflict situations, including the war in Ukraine. When war began in Gaza in late 2023 there were no flags or banners or vigils. The message about the relative valuing of human life was communicated very clearly.

In my teaching, students had an opportunity to learn about Palestine in GCE lectures through the input of Trócaire development education officers who shared materials from the *Tree of Justice* on the Trócaire website, including showing the film: *Exploring Global Justice*, which contains a segment on Palestine (Trócaire, 2023). Student teachers also asked for lecturer guidance with placement concerns; if they had children from Palestine in their classes, many of them were unsure how to answer any questions they might be asked. Attempts at ‘neutrality’ across HEI campuses in Ireland may have eschewed the real-life

issues taking place in the world outside, but student teachers did not have the luxury of turning a blind eye.

The DICE Project

When I began working with DICE in 2004, there was an advisory committee composed of representatives from the non-formal sector, including non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs), alongside representatives from the formal sector (there was also a management committee for day-to-day matters, which was located in the host college). While there were tensions and misunderstandings at times on the advisory committee, most of that was creative tension; there were opportunities to look at matters from fresh perspectives and to work jointly on global justice initiatives and on designing classroom materials. The advisory committee was disbanded in the late 2000s, to be replaced by a management committee of senior academics in the ITE sites, with an independent chair. That structure was then disbanded in 2020 and the heads of the colleges/schools of teacher education became the management committee for the project. Links with the NGDO sector have thus become rather more tenuous over the years and are now in the remit of individual lecturers rather than being formalised through project structures. From the vantage point of two decades of involvement, I can acknowledge the benefits that the current structure affords: DICE now has formal recognition as a key component of ITE and is no longer on the margins of higher education. This is consolidated by the inclusion of GCE in the *Céim* document of 2020 (Teaching Council, 2020), recognising the central role of education about social justice and equity. However, there are also drawbacks. As the mainstreaming of GCE is more or less complete, it is plausible that this process has contributed to its commodification and accelerated its depoliticisation.

A potential hope for GCE, including and especially the DICE Project, is to return it to the criticality of its past through increased collaboration with NGDOs, and through amplifying the voices and work of colleagues in and from the global South. DICE needs to try to maintain its position as a key component of ITE, whilst returning to the borderlands of its origins in order to build on and consolidate its critical edge. This requires living with the tension of simultaneously holding a number of paradoxes and contradictions, such as being

‘in’ but not ‘of’ the academy. This is a challenging proposition, yet I believe it is essential to the credibility and ongoing work of the project. The DICE Project issued statements of solidarity with Gaza on three occasions in April 2024, and an online declaration on social media in May 2024. Two statements were issued at continuing professional development (CPD) seminars on anti-racism in ITE, held at Maynooth University and DCU (McGuirk and Titley, 2024), followed by an event to mark twenty years of the DICE Project, held in April 2024 in the Department of Foreign Affairs, Iveagh House, Dublin. At this event, Aoife Titley, DICE lecturer at Maynooth University, and a former DICE coordinator, read a statement of solidarity with Gaza. It is included here in full (Titley, 2024, on behalf of DICE lecturer network), because it captures the spirit of comradeship and solidarity that GCE needs to espouse, and because it brings critical voices into the heart of the formal sector:

“So, when we think of our values, we think of that intersection point of the personal, the professional and the political. And that brings us to an issue that is very close to the heart of the DICE network at the moment.

As we sit in this beautiful ballroom in Iveagh House this evening, in our well-funded positions, it is hard not to recognise that the privilege and safety we have in our own teaching and learning institutions does not ring true for our Palestinian colleagues, who are currently enduring genocide, epistemicide and scholasticide.

It is important to acknowledge, that at this stage, every single university campus in Gaza has been partially or totally destroyed by Israel’s bombardment from the air and controlled explosions from the ground. This deliberate targeting of Gaza’s educational infrastructure is an attack on the creation of knowledge and the cultural heritage of the country and will have educational ramifications for generations to come.

As the rules of modern warfare are being re-written in front of our eyes, and in the words of United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, as Gaza is becoming a graveyard for children (United Nations,

2023), it is a timely reminder for those of us working in global education, why we do the work that we do. GCE gives us the tools to make sense of the world. To bring the world into our classrooms and to support our learners in navigating a new global reality rife with crises and complexities. We agree with Academics for Palestine when they say that the war in Palestine is a defining moral issue of our time (Academics for Palestine, 2024b). And for so many of our institutions and universities to be effectively silent on this, it makes us even more grateful to have this GCE space where we can meaningfully explore some of the themes of GCE in this context, such as interdependence, critical reflection and informed action. Solidarity is a verb”.

Moving forward

On 22 May 2024, Caoimhe de Barra, the chief executive officer (CEO) of Irish development agency Trócaire, stated that while Ireland’s recognition of Palestine is very welcome, ‘it will only serve as a symbolic gesture unless it is accompanied by decisive action by Ireland and other member states to help Palestinians realise this right to self-determination’ (Trócaire, 2024). She reiterated the need for a permanent ceasefire: ‘this is critical to end the untold misery, death and suffering that hundreds of thousands of innocent Palestinians have endured for over seven months’ (Ibid.).

Just as the Irish government’s recognition of the State of Palestine is not a final destination, nor is DICE’s public declaration of solidarity. Further action needs to be taken in the next academic year to educate colleagues and students about the issues at hand. Global justice education, and specifically DICE in the ITE sector, has a responsibility to illuminate the dark spaces of oppression and injustice. It is, therefore, worth considering a return to the ‘advisory group’ model of the 2000s, where educators and activists in the non-formal and formal sectors could come together to share ideas on practice. Such a group could run concurrently with the existing management structure. The expertise of colleagues in NGOs could inform the work of the DICE network, and vice versa; groups of allies could support each other’s endeavours. There is strength in numbers. Also, DICE needs to adopt a ‘Janus’-type approach to its activity; in other words, to hold its place in the mainstream of the formal sector but to keep part of its gaze

permanently and critically focused on the frontline of global justice education. Together with colleagues in the NGDO sector, DICE needs to accelerate its work in bringing an interrogative lens to global crises, including Gaza, so that it can continue to ‘educate, educate, educate’.

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IS HOPE ENOUGH? NAVIGATING THE COMPLEXITIES AND COMPETING PRESSURES OF ACTION AND GLOBAL JUSTICE IN EDUCATION

BRIGHID GOLDEN AND VICKY DONNELLY

Abstract: Global citizenship education (GCE) aspires to meet complex and contested global challenges within systems built on violence, exploitation and extractivism. This article comments on the silence surrounding the toll that this can take on educators working to meet the impossible task of making the world fairer, more just, more equitable, and sustainable for all. While the goals of GCE are themselves challenging and problematic, the content involved can also give rise to trauma. This article discusses the challenge of engaging with ‘difficult knowledge’ as an educator aiming to facilitate a space which honours the complexities inherent in global justice, while also being mindful of the psychological safety of all those involved in the learning space. The ‘call to action’ is often proposed as a mitigating factor to address the potential harm inherent in GCE. While recognising the possible transformative impact which engaging in action can have, it is crucial to also comment on the contradiction of seeking to build a ‘fair’, ‘just’ or ‘sustainable’ world within the neoliberal and capitalist societies which have themselves given rise to existential threats. Yet, we find hope in examples of GCE practitioners engaging with these multiple challenges in their daily practice, and in the development of frameworks and pedagogies that open educational spaces to consider and build as yet unimagined alternatives.

Key words: Global Citizenship Education; Taking Action; Vicarious Trauma; Difficult Knowledge; Neoliberalism.

This article aims to consider the silence surrounding the psychological pressure and toll which follows from engaging in an educational approach, variously known as development education (DE), global education (GE), and global citizenship education (GCE), which is often cited as aiming to take action towards a fairer, more just, equitable, and sustainable world for everyone (Council of Europe, 2002; GENE, 2022a; Irish Aid, 2021) and which necessitates engagement with traumatising topics. The aim of this article is not to offer a

critique of GCE or a deterrent for engaging in GCE work, but to advocate for time spent reflexively, for sufficient supports for educators, and for strategies for self-protection and collective care within a challenging and pressurised field. We believe that there is a need to consider the multiple challenges of the ‘action dimension’ of GCE, and the constraints of ‘taking action’ in the context of neoliberal orthodoxies that determine from the outset the constraints and targets of actions emerging from GCE.

While there is an ever-evolving bank of research, theory and policy which explores strategies for supporting learners to grapple with the complexity, and often despair, inherent within GCE, there is much less available around the impact for educators themselves. As educators, we are exposed to pressure and at risk of indirect, or ‘vicarious’ trauma when working to meet the goals of GCE. Vicarious trauma is recognised as a risk factor for clinicians, support workers, educators and others, that may emerge from ongoing exposure to the details of traumatic stories and reports, even if one has not experienced the trauma directly oneself (Pearlman and Mac Ian, 1995). As such, indirect trauma can be a component of preparing to teach about injustice, of facilitating our learner’s navigation of controversial and heavy topics, and of engaging with the call to action within GCE. This article aims to uncover and comment on this silence, highlighting the toll which this work can take on educators.

Acknowledging that this work does not take place in isolation, and that the potential harm for individuals is just one component of this silence, we also aim to look beyond these potential harms, to consider the impact of the deeper silences and evasions that exist around the economic, political, and social system that gives rise to the profound inequalities and ecological disasters that GCE aims to address by raising awareness, fostering skills and nurturing values to ‘take action’. Additionally, we raise related concerns about the potentially traumatising effects for GCE practitioners operating within the constraints of neoliberalism’s double bind: that of addressing immense ‘global’ challenges produced by a system that is also defined by atomisation, individualism, and isolation.

The ‘goal’ of GCE

GCE, and its many related fields, places a strong focus on improving the world around us for all. Indeed, the definition within the ‘Dublin Declaration’ states that this field of education ‘empowers people to understand, imagine, hope and act to bring about a world of social and climate justice, peace, solidarity, equity and equality, planetary sustainability, and international understanding’ (GENE, 2022b: 3). Furthermore, the identity of a ‘global citizen’ is one imbued with a sense of responsibility to take an ‘active role’ (Oxfam, 2015) in the building of this better, fairer, more sustainable world. If the goal of GCE is to make the world a better place, then the implication is that it is the responsibility of the educator to make this happen, or at least play a significant role in creating the conditions for their students to become ‘change-makers’. This is a daunting expectation and a significant challenge to place at the feet of any educator. While it can be acknowledged that no single educator is expected to change or ‘fix’ all of the world’s problems, there remains an insinuation, within mainstream definitions, that this should be the end goal of the work of GCE practitioners. While worthy, the aspirations of GCE as a field could be considered impossible, and so the pressure that it places on educators to meet this unreachable goal is an unfair burden.

In creating what is, in reality, an impossible aspiration, we further question the role that GCE might play in masking the contradiction of seeking to build a ‘fair’ ‘just’ or ‘sustainable’ world within the very neoliberal political and economic systems that give rise to social and environmental existential threats. And how, in placing the responsibility for action on educators, old colonial tropes of the ‘White man’s burden’ may find new expression in the practice of GCE.

GCE ‘topics’

The goals of GCE are not only problematic, but engaging in GCE necessitates exploration of what can only be considered as traumatising topics. While there does not exist a definitive curriculum for GCE in any educational sphere, there is a collective agreement that GCE includes an exploration of topics related to justice such as gender, poverty, forced migration, human rights, climate change, and others. The knowledge set within GCE is sometimes referred to as ‘difficult

knowledge', a term coined by Britzman (1998) to denote the process of engaging with what makes us uncomfortable (Dadvand, Cahill and Zembylas, 2022). Engaging with difficult knowledge in education is inescapably intertwined with trauma, including exposure to the trauma of others, or unearthing personal and collective trauma. As Bryan (2020) highlights, difficult knowledge is not only difficult in the extent to which learners must grapple with complex and contested knowledge, but is also difficult in a psycho-affective sense. Crucially, it must be acknowledged that these traumas are experienced differently by people from dominant and marginalised groups, which adds an additional layer that educators may not always recognise or address, and therefore may struggle to support within the education space whether with learners, between colleagues, or within the wider school community. Engaging with difficult knowledge relates not only to the traumatic nature of the knowledge itself, but also the 'learning encounters that are cognitively, psychologically and emotionally destabilising for the learner' (Ibid.: 15). This article posits that the destabilising impact of engaging with traumatising knowledge also extends to the educator facilitating that space for and with learners.

Acknowledgement of poverty as a form of structural violence - as opposed to the 'soft' GCE approach (Andreotti, 2006) that presents poverty as an unfortunate fact of life - is often described as a shocking, and even traumatic experience by teachers and student-teachers when they first engage with critical GCE. Far from being 'natural' or inevitable, poverty is political. It is frequently the product of overt violence, war and conflict, but more often produced through the banality of policies and regulations such as those governing trade, the imposition of odious debt, or the wholesale diversion of tax revenue away from the public purse and into private corporate pockets (Adekeye and Donnelly, 2023). Fanon (2004: 54) pointed to colonial violence that included, 'Deportation, massacres, forced labor, and slavery [as] the primary methods used by capitalism to increase its gold and diamond reserves, and establish its wealth and power'. However, while direct colonial rule may have ended (in most, but still not all places) the ongoing exploitation of the global South continues through neo-colonial means, including through the application of financial power by former colonisers to impoverish 'developing countries' (Nkrumah, 1965; Andrews, 2021; Hickel et al, 2022). Whether we recognise and acknowledge it or not, to teach about 'poverty' is to describe the legacy and ongoing consequences of structural

violence and deeply entrenched colonial abuses in which the oppression of women and racialised groups, and the transgression of the Earth's boundaries are all permitted, and even required, to maintain endless economic growth for the benefit of the very few.

Instead, we are often taught, and then go on to teach others, that poverty is an unfortunate fact of life (such as the outcome of an unfortunate climate or poor land), or the result of some deficit on the part of the poor (lack of education, for example), and where the burden falls on the 'lucky' ones to right the wrongs of the world. Andreotti (2006) cautions that teaching about poverty in these ahistoric and apolitical terms will necessarily reproduce the status quo, and in that sense, educators run the risk of bolstering systems that inflict profound trauma and suffering on billions of people around the world. There is a potential for harm both in preparation for and teaching about injustice as educators rarely have robust support structures or frameworks to draw on as they engage in these processes. It is a complex task for educators to navigate this space in safe, age-appropriate ways which honour the complexity of the topics, while simultaneously being mindful of the psychological safety of all those involved in the learning process. Furthermore, this challenge can be compounded by the risk of trauma to the teacher, as the facilitator of difficult knowledge in the education space.

Complexities of context

The challenges listed so far are intensified for educators, both in the practical contexts in which GCE work takes place, which are subjected to the same neoliberal pressures of ever-increasing productivity with ever dwindling supports, as well as in their daily lives, which for many younger teachers in particular, is characterised by ever greater struggles to secure their basic needs for housing, energy, and food. It is common for educators in all sectors to find themselves with limited time and space to work with students on GCE topics. Many educators find themselves fighting for a slot on a programme or module, or engaging in intensive recruitment for participants. This can result in limited time to prepare, pause, think, and feel our way through the emotions involved in GCE work before needing to jump into facilitation and supporting others. When we get time with learners, it is often too short for them to reflect, placing additional pressure on educators to facilitate a space to navigate emotional responses in

responsible, meaningful ways. This pressurised context for teaching and learning - which is itself, arguably, also a product of neoliberal policies - can put additional pressure back on educators to demonstrate what goals they have managed to achieve within a one- or two-hour session, and how those goals stack up against the ambitious aims of GCE itself.

While many challenges remain across a range of sectors to access sufficient time to engage authentically with GCE, the reality is that within formal education, strides are being made in mainstreaming GCE work. This is a result hard-fought-for and rightfully celebrated, with achievements such as the inclusion of GCE as a core element of initial teacher education programmes within The Teaching Council Céim's (2020) standards for initial teacher education, and the inclusion of 'being an active citizen' as a core competency within the new primary curriculum framework (NCCA, 2023). However, in its mainstreaming we face additional challenges. We must consider what potential harm could be done to (and potentially by) well-meaning, but under-resourced, and under-trained educators aiming to bring global justice topics into classrooms, and meet the goal of making the world a fairer, more just place for all. Without giving sufficient time to reflexivity, self-awareness, further education, and training, and ensuring strategies to protect educators' psychological safety are in place, we may risk losing potential GCE champions to burn out and despair before they have a chance to blossom and develop.

Indeed, there may be an additional need for reflexivity amongst the teaching community given that in the Irish context over ninety-eight per cent of new entrants to teaching in Ireland identify as White, Irish and settled (Keane, Heinz and McDaid, 2023) and in excess of ninety per cent of entrants into initial teacher education identify as Roman Catholic, which is ten per cent higher than the general population (Heinz and Keane, 2018). Consequently, an uncritical foregrounding of protection from psychological pain must be considered carefully to avoid promoting a pedagogy that cushions and evades questions of systemic power and privilege, in which they may be invested. A willingness, and even an expectation, that discomfort will inevitably be a part of any educational process with such lofty ambitions as GCE could be considered a prerequisite for being a 'global teacher'. However, we wish to make it clear that we are neither calling for

educators to toughen themselves to face these challenges, nor to suggest that more time, resources, spaces for reflection, and training would, in themselves, function as correctives for the deeper challenge of educating to ‘change the world’. We are interested in the potential harms caused to educators and to learners, on whom GCE confers responsibility to ‘change the world’, and how these harms might be discussed and addressed.

What is the underlying message to educators, and to learners, when the most urgent challenges facing humanity, and other beings, are pushed onto those with the least power to address them? In this ‘upside down world’, teachers working with young people are obligated (but not resourced in any meaningful way) to tackle urgent problems such as mounting far-right racism, the crisis of forced migration, or runaway climate change. In this way, GCE’s ambitious ‘action dimension’ may be mobilised by those in power to evade responsibility for action by dispersing that responsibility to ‘everyone’ - after all, we are all global citizens with responsibility to change the world. This undoubtedly carries with it the risk of cognitive dissonance that stems from observing the feigned helplessness of those in (decidedly well-resourced) national and global leadership roles, in their abdication of responsibility to address existential threats to educators and children.

The potential traumas described above do not stem solely from close encounters with difficult knowledge about the world as it is, nor is the problem only about being under-resourced to do so. Acknowledgment that these inequalities are expressions and forms of actual violence is a necessary element in confronting the lack of awareness that Dabiri (2021) addresses. Any approach to global education that imparts/conveys knowledge about global poverty as a ‘just so’ story, without exploring the levers and ruthless mechanisms by which that poverty is created and inflicted, further reifies and compounds global inequalities. To teach against this system - or even to name the system - is a confrontation with power, and carries with it a range of risks to the educator, from isolation, to burnout, to attacks. Addressing these contextual obstacles, challenges and limitations is not an argument against GCE, but rather a necessary process in realising the radically transformative potential of GCE.

A comment on action as a mitigating strategy

The call to action is a core component of GCE for good reason. This field aims not just to observe the world, but to be part of the solutions to the challenges we face. A common argument for mitigating the potential harm caused by engaging in GCE is the call to action. Engaging with action can support learners struggling with despair to be proactive and use their knowledge, skills, social capital, and energy to contribute to change. What is rarely discussed however, is the pressure implied within this task. It can feel overwhelmingly intimidating. While acknowledging that the implication is not that this is an individual responsibility, the pressure on individual educators to explore solutions to complex, contested challenges in the isolation of their own teaching and learning spaces remains a daunting requirement of GCE.

Crucially, a further layer of potential trauma for teachers and learners alike may stem from the unspoken but nonetheless powerful assertion that ‘actions’ will be limited to reforms of the existing neoliberal capitalist system, despite that system being responsible for existential threats. Although we acknowledge the importance and potential benefits of GCE’s ‘action dimension’, to educators and learners alike, consideration is surely also needed of the kinds of action being undertaken, and on what terms. First and foremost, any sense of genuine hope will be short-lived, if our visions for change are limited to reforms of a system that is built on inequality and consumption of the Earth’s ‘resources’ (Andreotti and Suša, 2018). However, imagining alternatives is, in itself, a profoundly daunting prospect. In fact, even recognising the possibility of such imaginings is constrained. Neoliberalism promotes internalisation of the message that ‘There Is No Alternative’, and so, as Emma Dabiri (2021: 138) points out, the ‘grave danger’ of today’s activism is precisely the lack of awareness that the terms of engagement for change, operate within the very frameworks of white supremacy, Eurocentric logic, and colonialism ‘that we need to dissolve’. The stifling of educators’ freedom and agency to hold space in the classroom to imagine worlds and counter-hegemonic ways of being can be observed in the often-violent backlash even against the most modest acknowledgement of human flourishing beyond the strictly policed gender binary.

Furthermore, with its emphasis on individualism, neoliberalism favours feel-good narratives about the impact that ‘just one person’ can have on issues as complex as poverty or climate change, but the elevation of the ‘power of one’ also carries with it the dangers of isolation, and the potential for exhaustion and burnout. There are numerous examples within the GCE community of initiatives to counter this with ongoing and concerted efforts to promote whole-school approaches and to build communities of practice, and these are going some way to support educators and GCE practitioners to combat isolation and to share and build on their collective practice.

Further mitigation strategies

Many strategies and programmes have been designed to support educators to navigate these uncomfortable spaces. Although rarely designed to support the educator themselves, the silence to which this article speaks, they can offer suggestions and starting points for educators feeling overwhelmed or intimidated by many of the competing pressures outlined in this article. The following are just some examples of attempts to mitigate the inherent pressures within GCE.

The ‘Educating the Heart’ initiative from Children in Crossfire uses cognitively-based compassion training to offer avenues for building the ‘emotional capacity to work for change, without giving in to despair, anger, or burnout’ (Murphy et al., 2014: 64). Alternatively, affective pedagogies advocate for ‘embracing – rather than glossing over’ the range of emotions involved in engaging with difficult knowledge (Bryan, 2020). The toolkit for affective pedagogies presented by Bryan (Ibid.) emphasises the need to position learners, and we propose also educators, as ‘implicated subjects’ to enable criticality and reflexivity around proximity to, and responsibility for climate related harm. We argue that this toolkit could be extended to also support educators engaging with other injustices encountered through GCE. Other examples include Freire’s idea of ‘critical hope’ or Giroux’s conceptualisation of ‘educated hope’, both of which are drawn on by Bourn and Tarozzi (2023) in their edited book, *A Pedagogy of Hope for Global Social Justice*. In the introduction, Tarozzi (2023: 2) implores us to consider how we can ensure education is imbued with hope in order to ‘think otherwise and to lay the foundations for a new transformative pedagogy’. While earlier in this article we cautioned against simplistic hope, the

pedagogy proposed here is one grounded in collective liberation, deeply rooted in a critical transformative stance, and unapologetically political.

Additionally, the EarthCARE Global Justice framework considers how teaching, learning, and action might venture beyond reform of the current systems, and seek ‘to expand possibilities in terms of what we consider to be real, ideal, legible and relevant’ (Andreotti and Suša, 2018: 3). Finally, the Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures Collective (Andreotti et al., 2020) developed the ‘Global (Citizenship) Education Otherwise’ study guide for educators working on global citizenship education in Europe. This guide offers a variety of cartographies, pedagogical experiments, and frameworks to compare amongst other themes, ‘different theories of change and orientations of hope’ (Andreotti et al., 2021: 7), and a series of group-study questions venturing off the path of the familiar towards consideration of the ‘difficulties/ impossibilities’ of imagining and reimagining otherwise.

While no pedagogy or programme can offer all the answers within an inherently broken system, those outlined here each offer their own opportunities for hopeful reflection. These examples invariably require educators to commit to being open to discomfort, to imagine alternatives, to embrace uncomfortable and strong emotional responses, and to consider responsibility and proximity to justice issues.

Conclusions

This article has aimed to draw attention to and comment on the silences around the trauma and competing pressures which can often underpin GCE and impact both on its practical implementation and on its potential impact for society. The complexities and pressures that this article has aimed to shed light on are daunting and often overwhelming both for us as individual educators, and collectively as a sector aiming to navigate them. Yet, it may be that by shifting into those (potentially) uncomfortable spaces, that educators get to experience a more meaningful antidote to overwhelm and doom, in that the possibility of taking action to tackle the foundational beliefs of neoliberalism - individualism, competition, self-interest and a lack of care for people or the earth - creates hope for alternatives grounded in collective liberation and planetary survival.

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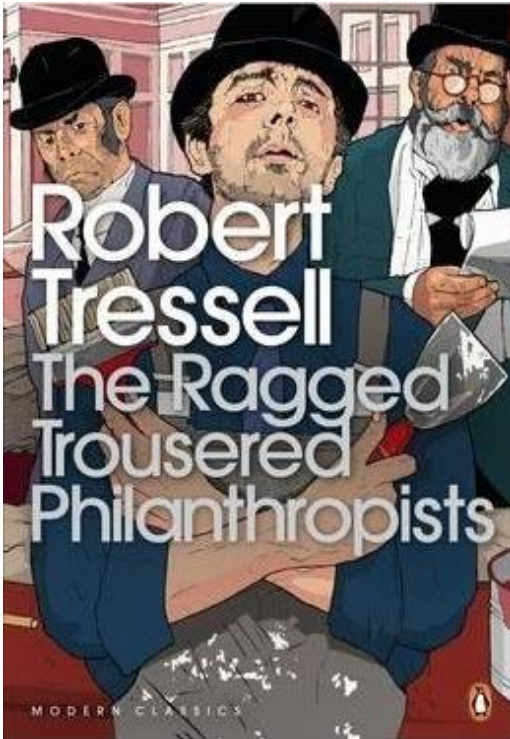
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“AN EPIC PORTRAIT OF WORKING-CLASS EXISTENCE” REMINDS US THAT CLASS IS A NEGLECTED ISSUE IN DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

STEPHEN MCCLOSKEY



On 12 May 2024, Dublin hosted a festival celebrating a remarkable novel published more than a century ago and written by an author who died in anonymity without seeing his magnum opus in print. The Robert Tressell Festival is an annual gathering organised by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) to celebrate and debate *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* (Tressell, 2004 [1914]), a novel first published in an abridged version in 1914 and not published in full until 1955. President Michael D. Higgins was among the political and trade union representatives who addressed the festival in

2024 and described the novel as ‘an epic portrait of working-class existence in the throes of imperialism’ (ICTU, 2024). Although it has a working-class setting in the Edwardian period (1901-10), it depicts societal characteristics that have become all too common today: an all-consuming individualism, the ‘othering’ of migrants, the de-skilling and casualisation of labour, extreme poverty, and the loss of self-esteem, confidence and agency caused by unemployment. Its enduring

relevance down the ages is because it wrestles with themes and social ills that remain unresolved and hotly debated, particularly the unjust social and economic relations created by capitalism and how they are addressed. Tressell's novel is concerned with the systemic causes of poverty and makes a bold and impassioned case for a 'Co-operative Commonwealth', a society based on equity, inclusion and opportunity for all. It reminds us that class inequality is a strikingly neglected issue in the development education sector despite its much-vaunted aim 'to tackle the root causes of injustice and inequality' (IDEA, 2024).

Who was Robert Tressell?

Robert Tressell lived a short but eventful life that is poured into the characters and plot of his book. He was born in Dublin in 1870 the illegitimate son of Samuel Croker, a police inspector, but adopted the name Noonan after his mother Mary. An able student who received a good education, Noonan was also a talented sign-writer, an occupation practiced in his novel by the passionate and articulate socialist Frank Owen. By 1890, he had left the family home and moved to Liverpool but fell into crime before emigrating to Cape Town where he commenced working as a painter/decorator. In South Africa, he became politically active as a trade union organiser and official of the Independent Labour Party. He also married and had a daughter, Kathleen, but the marriage failed and he returned to England with his daughter to work as a decorator in Hastings, named Mugsborough in the novel. Noonan started writing *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* after he settled in Hastings and adopted the pseudonym Tressell – named after the decorating tool – to avoid rejection of the book because of his political activities.

The novel was completed in 1910 but was rejected by three publishers, probably because the manuscript was written in longhand. Noonan's health collapsed from tuberculosis the following year while he tried to arrange passage to Canada for himself and Kathleen. He died alone in February 1911 and was buried in a pauper's grave. He did not live to see the enduring and inspiring impact his novel had on working people. When it was finally published in 1914 due to the persistence of Kathleen, the First World War dented its impact but during the 1926 General Strike it became known as the 'Painter's Bible' (Hunt, 2014: xxvi) and was admired by another fellow-traveller with the oppressed,

George Orwell, who described it as ‘a book that everyone should read’ (ICTU, 2024). It was even credited with Labour’s success in the 1945 general election (Brenton, 2011). The characters and story clearly resonated with working-class readers who recognised its authenticity and supported its call for social justice.

The philanthropists

The workers in the novel are described as ‘philanthropists’ because they give the value of their labour to their employers. They are painters and decorators ‘sweating’ for a company called Rushton and Co, working on a cavernous Victorian house dubbed by the workers as ‘the cave’. This is an allusion to Plato’s ‘Allegory of the Cave’ (Plato, 2016: 1), in which captives chained in a cavern ‘do not yet realize that there is more to reality than the shadows they see against the wall’. For Tressell, the workers in his novel were also captives trapped by their wilful ignorance and refusal to contemplate any form of alternative to the system that blighted their lives. The philanthropists ‘were ready and willing to oppose with ignorant ridicule or brutal force any man who was foolish or quixotic enough to try to explain to them the details of what he thought was a better way’ (Tressell, 2004: 247). The novel brilliantly captures how economic subjugation and extreme poverty drains away the worker’s self-esteem and capacity for collective or individual action. Their ‘passivity’ has denied them understanding of the structural conditions that underpin their domination (Freire, 1996: 76).

Tressell creates fully developed characters in the composition of the workforce casually hired by Rushton and Co to decorate ‘the cave’. They include the socialist Frank Owen, named after the nineteenth century Welsh socialist, Robert Owen, and most likely modelled on Tressell himself. Some of the names are perhaps a little too ‘on the nose’ such as the foreman, Alf Crass, forever ridiculing and dismissing his peers, and his acolyte, the religious hypocrite Jack Slyme. The fifteen-year-old apprentice, Bert White is ‘bound’ into three years’ service by his mother in the hope that he will learn a trade but is mercilessly exploited by the devious general manager, Hunter, nicknamed Nimrod by the workers. The veteran Jack Linden, at the end of his productive value to the employer, is finally dismissed and consigned to the poor house with his daughter, Jenny, forced into the spare room of another worker. The novel neither sentimentalises the lives of the workers nor spares us the horrors of their marginal

existence without decent housing, clothing, food, education or income. One of the workers succumbs to alcohol as a balm to the realities of life and another darkly ruminates on taking the lives of his family and himself rather than subject them to the continuing privations of life. All of the workers live in fear of the 'slaughter'; temporary or permanent dismissal when a job is complete or Winter arrives.

Despite Owen's best efforts, there is a lack of solidarity among the workers who consider a misfortune to befall a colleague, such as a work injury, as an opportunity for themselves to either take a job or secure their own. One sentence seems to anticipate the cold individualism of neoliberalism:

"In order to succeed in the world it was necessary to be brutal, selfish and unfeeling: to push others aside and to take advantage of their misfortunes: to undersell and crush out one's competitors by fair means or foul; to consider one's own interests first in every case, absolutely regardless of the wellbeing of others" (Tressell, 2004: 95).

This results in the perspicacious Owen falling into despondency as he contemplates 'the great barriers and ramparts of invisible ignorance, apathy and self-contempt which will have to be broken down before the system of society of which they are the defences, can be swept away' (Ibid.: 459).

The great money trick

During one of their regular lunchtime discussions, the workers turned their minds to the causes of poverty. Idleness, drunkenness, mechanisation, landlordism, famine, and over-production were all proposed as causes of poverty (Ibid.: 180) but Owen believed the answer lay in 'private monopoly' of the earth's natural resources. To demonstrate the point, he delivered a lecture, 'the great money trick', that amounted to Marx's labour theory of surplus value (Ibid.: 244-262). He used slices of bread to represent natural resources turned into commodities by the workers and three knives as symbols of mechanisation and the means of production. Rather than receive the full value of their labour invested in the commodities, the workers receive money which is worth a fraction of their labour, while the capitalist who did none of the work, consumes most of the profits. The

workers who ‘could not eat, drink or wear the useless money’ are forced to spend it on the ‘necessaries’ they need for life which they have produced and which are owned by the capitalist (Ibid.: 258). Moreover, the workers are maintained in such impoverished conditions that they are forced to accept the capitalist’s terms of employment knowing that the alternative is to join the ranks of the unemployed (surplus labour) ready at a moment’s notice to take their job at any cost.

Like so many workers today, the philanthropists accepted the current system ‘as an established, incontrovertible fact that the existing state of things is immutable’ (Ibid.: 248). And with that in mind, another lunchtime lecture in a chapter titled ‘The Great Oration’ charts the history of wage slavery from feudalism to early capitalism (Ibid.: 580-632). Unlike *The Communist Manifesto* (Marx and Engels, 1967 [1848]) in which Marx and Engels kept a judicious silence on the impact that their work would have on the world, Tressell sets out a vision for a ‘Co-operative Commonwealth’ based on a socialist economic system of equitable distribution (Tressell, 2004: 591). The lecture is delivered by the mysterious George Barrington, who we later discover is from a wealthy family and has immersed himself in the working-class to learn more about their condition. He is possibly modelled on Friedrich Engels, another scion of the bourgeoisie who championed the cause of the proletariat. In setting out the case for the state ownership of the means of production, Barrington says ‘It is surely justifiable for the state to do for the benefit of the whole people that which the capitalists are already doing for the profit of a few shareholders’ (Ibid.: 602). He calls for a state landlord to ensure that citizens have adequate shelter and live without want and rejects the sticking plaster of charitable giving.

“While charity soothes the symptoms it ignores the disease, which is – the PRIVATE OWNERSHIP of the means of producing the necessities of life, and the restriction of production, by a few selfish individuals for their own profit” (Ibid.: 598).

Barrington instead calls for a Co-operative Commonwealth ‘in which the benefits and pleasures conferred upon mankind by science and civilisation will be enjoyed equally by all’ (Ibid.: 608). The ‘Great Oration’ is a tour de force which merits close attention by readers today as we continue to live in a world in which many

essential services and rights remain aspirations.

Weberian alienation

The book is a rich seam of many other issues closely related to working-class domestic life and labour. Chief among these is the idea of ‘scamping’ or cutting corners by reducing the number of coats and literally painting over structural weaknesses long enough to get the job done and receive payment. The men are denied pleasure from pride in their labour as they are forever harassed by Hunter/Nimrod to finish the job with the least amount of preparation and materials, in the shortest period of time. President Higgins finds that this ‘capitalist work ethic... epitomises the general evolution to a Weberian alienation within industrial society’ (ICTU, 2024). The book is also full of vivid and powerful descriptions of the workers’ domestic lives with their wives often burdened with the impossible task of making their paltry income cover basic necessities. Mary Linden, Nora Owen and Ruth Easton are continually working at home, caring for neighbours and children, and providing mutual support. When the men are laid off, their families fall into rental arrears and struggle to access food on ‘tick’. Life becomes a perpetual struggle even when the workers are in full employment as their paltry wages fail to match even the most basic needs. Meanwhile, we observe the political machinations of the local council dominated and controlled by the same capitalists that are ‘sweating’ workers and using municipal contracts and money to advance their business interests. They are abetted by the local press - *The Daily Obscurer*, *Weekly Ananias* and *Daily Chloroform* - which keep their readers submerged in ignorance and compliance. A farcical election between Tories and Liberals is fought between two sides of the same ideological coin during which the workers are entreated to ‘work hard in order that the Grand Old Flag might be carried to victory’ (Ibid.: 667).

Conclusion

In an introduction to *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, Tristram Hunt finds that ‘The cold fury, the call to arms is what draws in reader after reader down the generations (Hunt, 2004: xxiv). The book has an undimmed ‘rumbling volcanic anger at the embedded structures of inequality along with their willing collaborators’. It’s unsurprising that in the age of the foodbank, rising homelessness (Holland, 2024) and a cost-of-living crisis that Tressell’s novel

remains a cultural touchstone. In 2010, the playwright Howard Brenton adapted *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* for the stage with performances mounted at the Liverpool Everyman Theatre and the Chichester theatre festival. The timing of the revival was no doubt triggered by the 2008 global financial crisis when capitalism took its biggest fall since the Great Depression. Reflecting on the book's generational pull of new readers, Brenton (2011) suggested 'that everything is different but nothing has changed. We too are enmeshed in a feckless and dangerous capitalist system'.

Thirteen years on from this assessment and poverty levels in Britain are close to pre-pandemic levels with one in five people (22 per cent of the population) living in poverty, including 4.2 million children (JRF, 2024: 6). And in 2023-24, the Trussell Trust foodbank network in the UK distributed 3.12 million emergency food parcels, the highest number it has ever distributed in a single year (The Trussell Trust, 2024). Poverty is not only rising but deepening with nearly four million people living in destitution meaning that they 'cannot afford to meet their most basic physical needs to stay warm, dry, clean and fed' (JRF, 2024: 9). But rather than address the root cause of endemic poverty in the chaotic, crisis-prone neoliberal economic system embraced so recklessly in the brief but disastrous premiership of Liz Truss (Beckett, 2022), immigration has repeatedly been used as the straw man of politics that is blamed for all our social ills (Jones, 2016). This is one of the reasons why development education must end its silence on class as a leading determinant of disadvantage and cause of blighted, wasted lives. In the first half of the twentieth century, Jack London (2014 [1903]) and George Orwell (1974 [1937]) immersed themselves in working-class life and reported from the coalface of poverty – literally in the case of Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* (Ibid.). Where are the chroniclers of working-class life today willing to re-introduce class into the debate on poverty? And when will development educators recognise that an awakening of class consciousness is a vital step in supporting learners' action toward poverty eradication? Reading *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* will go a long way toward igniting that class awakening.

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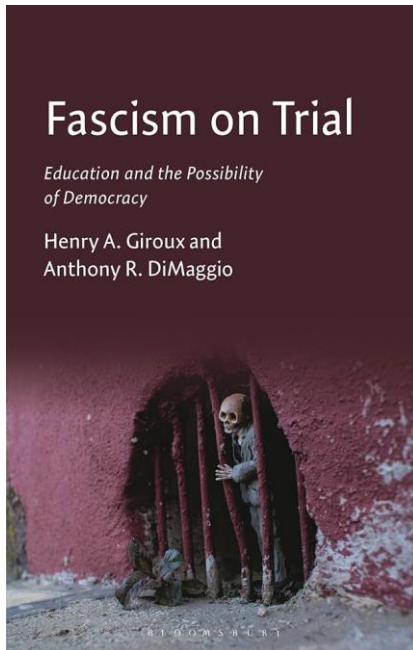
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Resource reviews

FASCISM ON TRIAL: EDUCATION AND THE POSSIBILITY OF DEMOCRACY

ELIZABETH MEADE

Henry A. Giroux and Anthony R. DiMaggio (2024) *Fascism on Trial: Education and the Possibility of Democracy*, Bloomsbury, London and New York: Bloomsbury.



This is an important book for a pivotal time. Not only because of the run up to the presidential election in the United States in November 2024 but also because of the growth of the far right around the world, and the consequent threat of fascism. It is a must read for anyone wanting to understand the current state of American politics, and the many levels and multiple institutional frameworks that are displaying fascist tendencies, beyond the personality of Trump alone. Although the book is a reflection on the United States (US), and as such mainly targets an American audience, it is of relevance to a global readership as educators the world over stand to gain from understanding how the continued

growth of extreme politics further weakens democracy and risks sliding into all out fascism.

Henry Giroux is one of the most important critical educators and cultural theorists of our time. His work has repeatedly shown the power of education to shape the future and the crucial need for education to be at the centre of politics. At a time when many academics are shying away from addressing controversial counter-hegemonic discourses, resultant from the infiltration of neoliberal logics into third level education, Giroux has for decades now been willing to place his head above the parapet. For this most recent publication, *Fascism on Trial: Education and the Possibility of Democracy*, Giroux has teamed up with the political scientist Anthony R. DiMaggio whose *Rising Fascism in America: It Can Happen Here* (2022) explored how fascism infiltrated American politics.

Although there is little need to add to the accumulated evidence presented in the book to support the premise that the US is in real danger of descending into fascism, there have been many worrying developments since the publication of the text that provide further support to the authors' stance. With a long list to choose from, some of the most disturbing examples are threats of civil war in the event of a loss for Trump proclaimed at the Republican national convention (Tait, 2024), renewed calls of election fraud despite no evidence to support such claims, and Trump's declaration to Christian nationalist supporters that they won't have to vote again in the future as 'It'll be fixed' (Vargas, 2024). Perhaps the most frightening development was the ruling by the Supreme Court on presidential immunity, providing freedom to presidents to commit crimes provided they act within their 'constitutional authority' (Serwer, 2024). A move that Giroux himself described as permission to Trump to 'become a domestic terrorist' (Giroux, 2024a).

Fascism is an emotive term that is not always used consistently and transparently in political discourse, despite the use of the term by all sides of the political spectrum. Writing in 2018 on Trump's presidential term in office, Fintan O'Toole cautioned that we need to be careful of casually using the term fascism but that we also must not hide from it 'when it is so clearly on the horizon' (O'Toole, 2018). The authors of this text provide a helpful sketch of their understanding of fascism in relation to the present context in the US, listing features such as authoritarianism, nativism, white supremacy, anti-intellectualism

and a politics of disposability, resentment and victimhood (Giroux and DiMaggio, 2024). Throughout the text they engage with an array of literature, and close analysis of contemporary empirical examples, to further expand on their understanding of fascism and help the reader locate such tendencies in the contemporary moment.

Writing in relation to contemporary times, several authors have moved away from providing a set definition of fascism that may confine our understanding to particular historical moments and precise mechanisms of a monolithic authoritarian state (Stanley, 2018; Toscano, 2023; Giroux and DiMaggio, 2024). A more fluid approach can help us to understand how fascist tendencies are alive and thriving without necessarily having to emulate the classical fascism of Mussolini's Italy, Hitler's Germany and Franco's Spain. This approach presents fascism as a political, social and ideological process that can take different forms in different contexts. Giroux and DiMaggio see fascism as a 'recurrent and infinitely flexible phenomenon' (Giroux and DiMaggio, 2024: 103).

Giroux and DiMaggio show the importance of culture as an educational force, and how the right-wing polarisation of the media in America has supported the growth of fascism. Taking advantage of a void in critical historical consciousness, the mainstream media facilitates the growth of false memory that mourns a fabricated past that in truth served only the privileged few and criminalised or annihilated many other ways of life. This point is echoed in the work of Stanley (2018), who similarly reasoned that fascists call for a return to a mythic and glorious past. This is why the preservation of memory is one of the antidotes to fascism (Giroux and DiMaggio, 2024; Stanley, 2018). However, protection of memories, particularly those of the oppressed and the marginalised, relies on a culture of critical education and historical conscientisation.

It is no accident that the contemporary far right in the US are so consumed by education, schooling and curriculum (Giroux and DiMaggio, 2024). They understand its power. It is imperative that both schooling and wider education, through cultural and civic modes of pedagogy, create an environment that supports critical reflection, fosters the development of civic virtues and increases the capacity to question hegemonic discourse, identify bias and bigotry

and situate the current moment in the long arc of history. The authors point out that critical education is indispensable in countering the rise of the far right. However, drawing from the work of Zembylas (2021), I would add that an engagement with pedagogies of emotion and affect complement this in the cultivation of non-fascist communities and publics.

Although the Trumpification of the Republican Party is central to the analysis in the book, the authors importantly avoid the risk of attributing the rise of fascism in the US too closely to the spectacle of Trump. At various points throughout the text the vital connection between fascism and the trajectory of American history is excellently foregrounded. As the authors rightly claim, ‘the roots of such violence and the politics that inform it lie deep in American history and its machinery of elimination and terminal exclusion’ (Giroux and DiMaggio, 2024: 138). An additional resource to help to further understand the intimate connection between colonialism, white supremacy and capitalism is Alberto Toscano’s (2023) *Late Fascism: Race, Capitalism and the Politics of Crisis*. Toscano supports the authors’ assessment of the current political climate in the US, summarising the situation as ‘a continuation of a sort of white settler, patriarchal form of privilege and violence that has a lot of historical continuity’ (Tyson, Krabbe and Toscano, 2024: 7). Giroux and DiMaggio constantly remind us that the failure of American schooling, and wider cultural pedagogies, to adequately address the long dark history of mass slavery, white supremacy, and the genocide of the indigenous population at the foundation of the US, greatly reduces the capacity of the public to understand systemic racism and critique dominant white Christian nationalist discourses, cultural myths and conspiracy theories. The lack of historical memory is particularly important in the American context given this history.

One of the most important features of the book is the analysis of how colonial capitalism, currently neoliberalism, intersects with and enables the growth of fascism. The authors use the term ‘neoliberal fascism’ to describe our increasingly authoritarian present (Giroux and DiMaggio, 2024: 114). The authors show how through increasing inequality and precarity, capitalism, suffering from a legitimisation crisis, ‘needed a new ideology to sustain itself’ (Ibid.: 209). ‘Neoliberalism capitalism, even as it is going through a major crisis, has

morphed into a fascist politics that is embraced and proclaimed openly through a language and set of policies that are rooted in U.S. history and culture' (Ibid.: 81). Far from seeing liberal democracy as the antithesis of fascism, Toscano too argues that anti-fascism is not compatible with liberal democracy. He demonstrates that 'to speak of fascism is to speak of capitalism, and that anti-fascism should necessarily be anti-capitalist' (Gordillo, 2024). The authors importantly stress that the Democrats are just as much bastions of neoliberalism as the Republicans (Giroux and DiMaggio, 2024).

Back in 2018, O'Toole characterised Trump's presidency as pre-fascism, a trial run for what was to come through the normalising of unspeakable cruelty, in particular against racialised and minoritised communities (O'Toole, 2018). Extending his analysis to the actions of the wider far right in Europe, O'Toole wrote that 'millions and millions of Europeans and Americans are learning to think the unthinkable' and accept the unacceptable. Who would have imagined at that time that the normalisation of extreme violence could go as far as reaching genocide fatigue? The ongoing annihilation of the Palestinian people in Gaza shows the connection between colonial capitalism, white supremacy and the fascistic normalisation of obscene levels of death and destruction. Giroux recently wrote, '[t]he morally reprehensible killing of children in Gaza is part of a larger problem that haunts the modern period: the merging of colonialism and neoliberal capitalism' (Giroux, 2024b: 123). It is important to remember that the illegal occupation of Palestine, continued apartheid, and now ongoing genocide has been, and continues to be, facilitated and supported by both the Democratic and Republican administrations, alongside liberal leaders of Canada and Europe. As tempting as it may be to singularly focus on the emergence of Trump, and other authoritarian leaders like him the world over, we need to remember that business as usual is deeply problematic and itself reveals fascistic drives for power.

The Democratic Party have long sought to subdue progressive power within the party. A win for the Democrats in November 2024 will not bring about a fairer, more just, egalitarian society, as the US will continue to be plagued by long standing white supremacy, militarisation, gun violence, mass incarceration, and gross inequality. However, defeating Trump is a necessary step in the right direction. If the conservative Heritage Foundation's Project 2025

(Leingang, 2024) is any indication as to what a second Trump presidency would entail, certainly a win for Trump would turn the tides further in the direction of fascism, and given the unfortunate global reach of US power, make the long road to a better future for all further out of sight.

But we ought not to settle for a lesser evil and be radical in our commitment to the belief in a better world for all. This important text stresses that need and provides hope in that possibility, pointing to the types of solutions that are needed to counter the rise of fascism. The authors mention social movements that offer us hope, such as the Black Lives Matter movement. We could add to this the recent historic pro-Palestine student protests across university campuses in the US. There have also been important moments of hope internationally, like the recent success of the strategic alliance of the political left in France through the formation of the New Popular Front in opposition to the rising popularity of the far right National Rally. Let us all hope, as the authors do, for the prioritisation of critical education as a public good in combating fascist politics and ideology and a ground swell of grassroots activism that mobilises communities in the fight for a radical anti-capitalist future.

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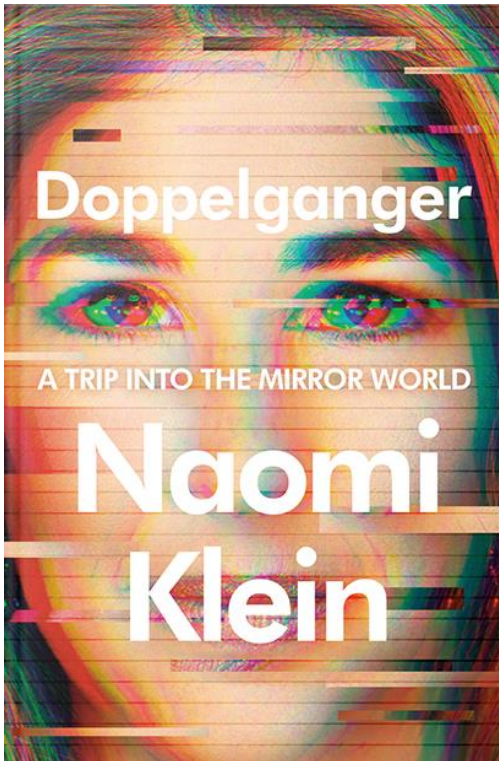
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DOPPELGANGER: A TRIP INTO THE MIRROR WORLD

STEPHEN MCCLOSKEY

Naomi Klein (2023) *Doppelganger: A Trip into the Mirror World*, London: Allen Lane.



Naomi Klein has authored groundbreaking, revelatory books about globalisation, corporate power and neoliberalism. They have addressed, with insight, the systemic causes of inequality, extreme wealth accumulation and abuses of political power that have characterised the past fifty years of neoliberalism. In *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies* (2000), Klein reported on how the rapid free trade acceleration triggered by globalisation was accompanied by value chains of production in which multinational corporate leaders became more aggressively engaged in marketing their brands than

producing their products. The outsourcing of production to low wage and low tax export processing zones in the global South resulted in high levels of labour exploitation from which corporate head offices washed their hands while reaping lucrative profit margins.

Perhaps even more influential for international development practitioners was Klein's *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2008) in which she described 'how neoliberal economic hegemony had been birthed by the systematic exploitation of large-scale shocks' (Klein, 2023: 52). From the United States' (US)-backed coup that overthrew Chile's socialist president, Salvador Allende, in 1973 onward, Klein exposed how the disorientation caused by traumatic shocks and disasters such as the 2003 illegal and disastrous US invasion of Iraq, and Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2004, provided cover for the rapid introduction of market-driven 'reforms'. And, in *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs the Climate* (2015), Klein captured the urgency of the climate emergency caused largely by an unrestrained market economy laying waste to the natural environment. She persuasively argued for a green new deal that not only rejected free market fundamentalism but reimaged an economy that repaired broken democracies and social inequalities, and realigned our relationship with the natural environment based on respect and sustainability rather than extraction.

In her latest book, *Doppelganger*, Klein sees a clear thread between each of her works which are 'about the ravages of expanding market logics and corporate power, with the blast zone growing ever larger' (Klein, 2023: 52). *Doppelganger* is not an easy title to categorise for booksellers and librarians. It is part autobiography/memoir, would certainly slot into economics, politics and sociology, and has significant commentary on social media and surveillance capitalism, and epidemiology. It is also peppered with cultural and historical references to 'doubles', particularly online profiles, which we have actively cultivated to share private actions in a way that can be mined for corporate aggrandisement. But central to Klein's book is another double to whom she became entwined by others. The 'other Naomi', Naomi Wolf, is the feminist author of *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women* (Wolf, 1990), and a former celebrated liberal whom a younger Klein had admired and interviewed. Following a public humiliation in a BBC interview that trashed the research underpinning her new book, Wolf's stock quickly collapsed as her book was pulped and she became professionally marginalised. She put these reverses down to groundless conspiracies just as the COVID-19 pandemic began

to take hold and was seized upon by the far-right to advance conspiratorial hoaxes about vaccines and restrictions designed to limit the spread of the virus.

The ‘Mirror World’

Riding a tide of public discontent about restrictions and vaccines, Wolf created a web platform called the DailyClout to host her blogs and videos, and started referring to herself as a ‘tech CEO’. She also became a fellow traveler of Steve Bannon, the former campaign manager for Donald Trump and ‘now a full-time propagandist for authoritarian and neofascist movements from Italy to Brazil’ (Klein, 2023: 58). Wolf became a regular contributor to Bannon’s popular podcast, *War Room*, and other far-right platforms propagating frightening and unproven theories about the side effects of taking vaccines, the threats posed to civil liberties and democracy by lockdowns, with the vaccine passports deemed nothing short of ‘slavery forever’ (Ibid.: 123). Klein describes the conspiracy bubble created by Bannon, Wolf and others as the ‘Mirror World’ populated by a mix of the QAnon hard-right, health sub-cultures, businesses threatened by shutdowns, concerned parents and neo-Nazis. What gave the ‘Mirror World’ plausibility for followers of Bannon and Wolf was that there was ‘always some truth mixed in with the lies’ (Ibid.: 175). Klein acknowledges that the COVID-19 verification apps were ‘unwisely referred’ to as ‘passports’ (Ibid.: 77) and were grist to the mill of Wolf’s ceaseless conveyor belt of wild accusations: public health measures are ‘sterilizing us, killing our babies, tracking our every move, turning children into affectless drones, overthrowing the U.S. constitution, eroding the power of the West’ (Ibid.: 32). Wolf did this while appropriating the language of the Black civil rights movement, denouncing COVID-19 public health measures as a power grab and vault toward authoritarianism. The hard reality was that a quarter of a million American deaths from COVID-19 would have been preventable had there been a wider take-up of the vaccine (Ibid.: 120), and ‘disaster doppelgangers’ (Ibid.: 107) like Bannon and Wolf helped undermine what was already a deeply flawed government response to tackling the virus.

Ignoring root causes of inequality

So, not only was Naomi Klein’s online identity being merged by many with the ‘other Naomi’, but a fake ‘Mirror World’ of COVID-19 conspiracy theories succeeded in drawing public ire away from the economic policies that allowed the

virus to claim so many preventable deaths in the US. While public anger was elevated by right-wing online influencers at the effects of neoliberal policies and the inadequate response to the virus from a hollowed-out state, these same voices rarely pointed to the economic sources of social and class inequalities. A ‘viral underclass’ of poor, frontline workers mostly from Black and minority communities were cruelly exposed to the virus, and denied government support to stay on salary and work from home (Ibid.: 82). ‘[T]he burden of pandemic response was shifted from the collective to the individual’, argues Klein, ‘all in the name of getting back to business as usual’ (Ibid.: 81). And globally, Bill Gates – that celebrated stalwart of philanthropy – defended the use of World Trade Organisation (WTO) intellectual property rights that enabled big pharmaceutical corporations to use patents to prevent sharing life-saving vaccines with the global South (Ibid.: 39). While governments committed trillions of taxpayers’ money to rescue corporations struggling during lockdowns, workers were laid off in large numbers and billionaire wealth rocketed (Ibid.: 225).

Klein asks some searching questions about the political left during the pandemic: did it do enough to challenge the conspiracies emanating from the ‘Mirror World’? Did it agitate enough to have patent waivers enforced at the WTO to ensure that everyone received the vaccine while citizens in the global North had already received two or three doses? Did it do enough to protect the rights (and lives) of frontline workers when they risked everything to sustain healthcare, transport, food distribution and retail? Has the left done enough to expose what Klein calls the shadow lands (Ibid.: 238)? They are the ‘zones of hyper-exploitation, human containment, and ecosystem poisoning that are not glitches in the system but have always been integral parts of what makes our world run’ (Ibid.: 236). Does the left work hard enough at building alliances with people who are not in our movements? (Ibid.: 126).

Development education’s doppelganger

Many of the questions posed by Klein of the political left could equally be directed at the development education (DE) sector, which has, as its rationale, addressing the root causes of poverty and inequality, and supporting action toward positive social change. Is the DE sector doing enough to build alliances with civil society organisations that share our values and goals to challenge the toxic far-right

rhetoric that is becoming increasingly prevalent in Ireland and across the world? (Meade, 2024). ‘It’s highly strategic to pick up the resonant issues that your opponents have carelessly left unattended,’ argues Klein (2023: 126), suggesting that during the pandemic the liberal left did not do enough to challenge the lies coming from the conspiratorial right. ‘[M]any liberals and progressives opted to defend the status quo measures, despite the fact that we could, and should, have done much more’ (Ibid.: 121).

The development education sector in Ireland and elsewhere is arguably today a doppelganger of its former radical self by ignoring the inequality created by oligarchic wealth, the threats to democracy posed by techno-capitalism, the mortgaging of our natural environment by fossil fuel multinationals, and the cruelty visited on the most vulnerable amongst us by austerity. How much of this is not known by the development education sector and currently ignored by practitioners and policy-makers? To what extent has development education acknowledged historical injustices caused by settler colonialism including the theft of people and land, and the eradication of Indigenous peoples? As a sector with its radical origins in the global South governed by an impulse toward tackling injustice wherever it exists, we know that ‘true solidarity with the oppressed means fighting at their side to transform the objective reality which has made them “beings for another”’ (Freire, 1996: 31). Where has our solidarity been evident in the struggle against neoliberalism, austerity, racism, the rise of the far-right and oligarchic wealth accumulation?

For the most part, the development education has looked away or wilfully ignored these converging crises enveloping our world (Fricke, 2022; Bryan and Mochizuki, 2023; Meade, 2024; McCloskey, 2022). And, this extends to the six month Israeli war on Gaza in regard to which Francesca Albanese (2024: 1), the United Nations Special Rapporteur for the Occupied Palestinian Territories, concludes in her latest report ‘that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the threshold indicating Israel’s commission of genocide is met’. It took our national development education network five months from the start of Israel’s war on Gaza to organise its first event on the crisis and it was titled ‘We Need to *Talk About Gaza*’ (my italics: IDEA, 2024). There has been no advance on that to date (10 April): no statement calling for a ceasefire; no exhortation to participate

in national demonstrations to end the war; no government advocacy work; and no solidarity extended to Palestinians either in Ireland or in Gaza and the West Bank. I thought of this dreadful litany of inaction when reading this sentence in *Doppelganger*: ‘one of the hardest habits of thought to shake is the reflex to look away, to not see what is in front of us, and to not know what we know’ (Klein, 2023: 274).

Jewish radicalism

Much of the final section of *Doppelganger* is devoted to Jewish identity, attitudes to antisemitism and the founding of the state of Israel, and a strong tradition of Jewish intellectual radicalism and action. The Jewish Labour Bund, for example, was a socialist party formed at the end of the nineteenth century with thousands of members, mostly concentrated in Ukraine and Poland, and committed to the principle of *doi'kayt* (hereness) which argued that rather than flee to a ‘far-off Jewish homeland’ Jews should ‘stay here – and make here better’ (Ibid.: 287). The Bundists regularly debated and mocked the ‘thereness’ of Zionists holding fast to the belief that ‘Jews would be free when everyone was free, and not by building what amounted to a militarized ghetto on Palestinian land’ (Ibid.: 291).

Klein also shares the inspiring socialist experiment of ‘Red Vienna’, which from 1919-1934 under the control of the Social Democratic Workers’ Party of Austria, became ‘a laboratory for socialist and humanist policies, a haven for secularists and Jewish intellectuals inside a country dominated by conservative Catholic politicians’ (Ibid.: 206-07). A radical socialist programme resulted in the housing of 200,000 working-class people, the creation of universal welfare programmes, and provision of child-centred health, welfare and social services (Ibid.). Many of these welfare programmes were led by socialist Julius Tandler, who said: ‘He who builds children palaces tears down prison walls’ (Ibid.: 208). When the Nazis seized power, they appropriated these services for themselves as ‘sinister doppelgangers’ (Ibid.: 210) but, for Klein, the Jewish Bund and Red Vienna represent inspiring exemplars of ‘alternative ways of resisting and living’ (Ibid.: 337). They were flowerings of democratic socialism and examples of what unity and solidarity among working classes can achieve.

Doppelganger was published before the six-month war on Gaza but

Israel is described in the book as a ‘doppelganger of the colonial project, specifically settler colonialism’ which is why Zionism was strongly opposed by the Jewish Bund (Ibid.: 299). It is a colonial process that requires ‘active unseeing’ by Israel’s settlers. In fact, *Doppelganger* argues that many of the dangerous personal and political doubles examined in the book share one thing in common; they are ‘all ways of not seeing’ (Ibid.: 322). There are no easy answers presented here to the troubling deception and fear spread by the ‘Mirror World’ but Klein argues ‘only unity among members of the working classes - regardless of race, ethnicity, gender or religion - will ever stand a chance of winning a fairer world’ (Ibid.: 289). With a critical pedagogy designed to demythicise the world and challenge stereotypes, development education is better placed than most pedagogies to resist the spread of populism and disinformation. But this first requires that the sector stops averting its gaze from the social and economic crises assailing our world.

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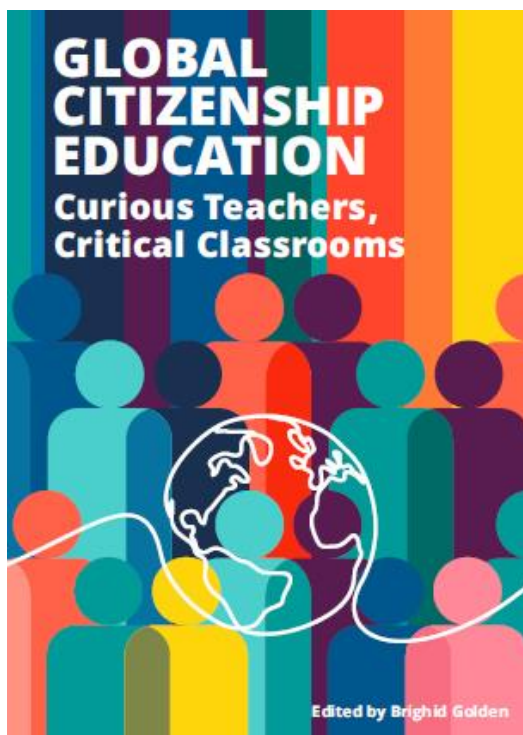
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GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: CURIOUS TEACHERS, CRITICAL CLASSROOMS

SIMON BRENNAN

Brigid Golden (2023) *Global Citizenship Education: Curious Teachers, Critical Classrooms*, Dublin and Limerick: The DICE Project and Irish Aid.



Over ten years in the making, *Global Citizenship Education: Curious Teachers, Critical Classrooms* is envisaged by its co-author and editor, Brigid Golden, as an accessible starting point for students and teachers to critically engage in global citizenship education (GCE). Golden is an experienced educator in development education, having initially worked as a primary school teacher and then for the past decade as a lecturer in initial teacher education (ITE). As such, she readily acknowledges the importance of developing strategies that support

critical engagement with a subject rich in complexity, controversy and contentious issues. The book is an ambitious one, as Golden aims to integrate the knowledge, expertise and praxis of various voices working within the Irish context, and though it was written with the Irish education system in mind, it has universal

appeal. While GCE academics and educators will undoubtedly find value in the book, it is targeted at primary school teachers, and builds on previous publications such as *Teaching for Social Justice and Sustainable Development Across the Primary Curriculum* (Kavanagh, Waldron and Mallon, 2021), by explicitly outlining pedagogical approaches to use in relation to GCE.

The book, accessible as a free online resource, comprises forty-one chapters across three sections with contributions made by twenty-four authors, from both traditional academic and non-academic backgrounds. There is a comprehensive eight-page glossary of key terminology, as well as appendices and links to useful websites and videos accompanying each chapter. Statistics are used sparingly but very effectively throughout the book to highlight specific realities. Dave Redden of Avid Design deserves credit for his exceptional work on the book's design, which captivates readers with its vivid and colourfully crafted visuals, making each page a visual delight.

Part I provides background knowledge on essential concepts in GCE such as critical thinking, anti-racism, interculturalism and action. In this section, Golden presents GCE, an umbrella term encompassing fields such as intercultural education, education for sustainability, and human rights education, as a pervasive educational approach committed to global social justice, equity, and human rights. Referencing Andreotti (2006), Golden argues that the move from a 'soft' to a more 'critical' engagement with GCE, necessitates a critically reflective process focusing not just on the acquisition of knowledge, but developing the values, attitudes and skills necessary for active citizenship. In the tradition of critical pedagogy, Golden views teaching as a powerful form of activism and believes that early integration of GCE in education is crucial for creating a just and sustainable world. Consequently, the central message outlined in this section of the book, emphasises the imperative for educators to adopt a critical perspective in their approach to GCE.

Part II explores different dimensions of global inequality, examining its underlying causes and the societal frameworks perpetuating it. It champions collective responsibility through education and collaboration to address all forms of inequality. A compelling discussion on structural inequality examines systemic

causes of global poverty, including colonialism, neoliberal globalisation, exploitative trade, and environmental degradation. Additional chapters critique Western-centric human rights education for not addressing deep societal inequalities and highlight challenges in implementing and monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals. The subsequent chapter advocates for solidarity and justice over pity and charity to tackle global poverty. The concept of citizenship is then explored with an emphasis on inclusive education that reconciles global and national identities, while migration is discussed with a focus on empathy and human rights within Ireland's context. The plight of Irish Travellers is detailed, exposing health disparities, discrimination, educational disadvantages, and poor living conditions experienced by this ethnic minority. Gender issues are then examined from biological and societal perspectives, emphasising the importance of promoting equality and understanding of diverse gender identities.

In the chapter on sustainability, a strong case is made to embrace the circular bioeconomy and learn from indigenous practices that prioritise circularity and ecological harmony to resolve the inherent contradiction between economic growth and sustainability in a neoliberal context. Using cocoa as a case study, the imbalanced value chains between the global North and South are critically outlined in the chapter on trade justice. The chapter on climate justice reminds us that those least responsible for greenhouse gas emissions often bear the brunt of their impact, and it calls for collective action that prioritises the needs and rights of those most affected. The final chapter on conflict underlines the importance of educational and communal approaches to conflict resolution and the collective responsibility of societies and governments in promoting peaceful coexistence.

A hallmark of a critical pedagogy approach is the emphasis on learners taking ownership of their education, making it more personally meaningful and contextually relevant (Shor and Freire, 1987). Part III of the book, with keen sensitivity to the modern demands placed on primary school teachers, outlines practical methodologies and resources to promote critical engagement with GCE, while continually encouraging teachers to develop their own resources tailored to their unique classroom environments. In the spirit of Maxine Greene (1995), class novels, picture books, images and videos are recommended as resources that

can cultivate empathy and stimulate critically reflective discussions on complex topics. Harnessing the power of the arts is also proposed as a medium for students to imagine future worlds.

The book is bursting with ideas and practical suggestions, and it could easily have been split into two volumes – one for theory and one for practical methodology, much like Peter Worley’s recent series *Corrupting Youth* (2021a and b). This might have compromised Golden’s aim, however, to ‘present in one place, in an accessible manner’ what she believes to be the ‘most important considerations’ (Golden, 2023: i) for developing one’s approach to GCE. Examining diverse perspectives is fundamental to GCE, and Golden deserves commendation for uniting a wide array of voices for a common purpose. While the book’s multitude of perspectives is undoubtedly a strength, the diverse writing styles and approaches unavoidably result in some inconsistency in tone. For example, there are chapters on the topics of human rights, citizenship, climate justice and reflection, that are disappointingly light on both content and argument and leave the reader wanting more. These contrast markedly with chapters discussing critical thinking, anti-racism and structural inequality that will offer a genuinely eye-opening experience for readers, especially teachers who believe they are already engaging in best practice. That being said, while specific chapters lack critical depth or sufficient detail when compared to others, all chapters contain multiple hyperlinks to resources and videos for those seeking further information or guidance, demonstrating the meticulous editorial work behind the book.

Certain authors are unapologetically forthright in advocating for specific actions regarding GCE and provide a decisive list of dos and don’ts, leaving no room for ambiguity. This didactic approach is incompatible with the spirit of the book and somewhat ironic considering the same authors finish their chapter with the observation that, ‘we can’t learn anything if we insist that we already know everything’ (Halfaoui and Donnelly, 2023: 122). While this instructive stance may resonate with readers seeking clear guidance to navigate the complexities of GCE, others might favour the less prescriptive but equally insightful approach taken by the book’s additional authors.

In sum, this book successfully balances theory and practice, providing actionable ideas and valuable insights into the various facets of GCE. It aims to impact the heart, head and hands of its readers who will most likely use it as a freely accessible resource to dip into for inspiration and practical guidance. Ultimately, this book should be regarded as an important addition to the literature in this area, significantly empowering curious teachers to approach GCE with a more critical perspective.

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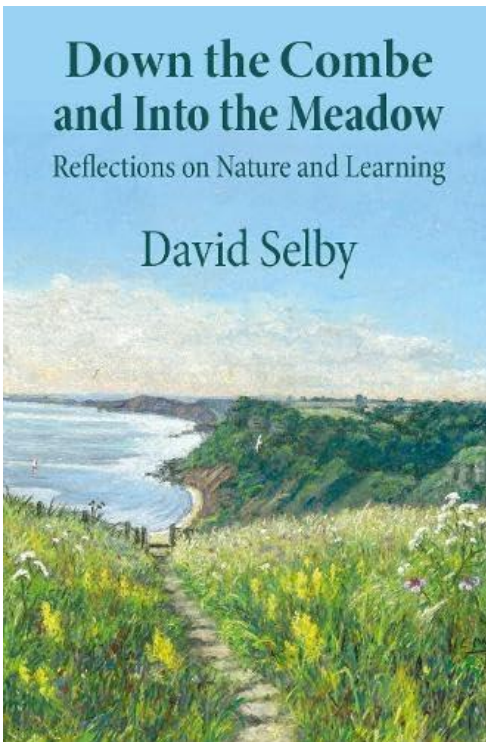
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DOWN THE COMBE AND INTO THE MEADOW: REFLECTIONS ON NATURE AND LEARNING

ANNE M. DOLAN

David Selby (2024) *Down the Combe and Into the Meadow: Reflections on Nature and Learning*, Devon: Blue Poppy Publishing.



As a young teacher my development education bible was *Global Teacher, Global Learner*. Written by David Selby (together with Graham Pike) in 1988, this classic handbook for teachers explores and develops the theory and practice of global education, as well as offering an extensive range of practical activities for primary and post primary teachers. Throughout my career, I have been guided by the stellar work of David Selby. Two of his recent publications, written with longstanding collaborator Fumiyo Kagawa, critically examine the educational response to a world facing unprecedented challenges:

Education and Climate Change (Kagawa and Selby, 2010) and the groundbreaking collection, *Sustainability Frontiers: Critical and Transformative Voices from the Borderlands of Sustainability Education* (Selby and Kagawa, 2015).

David's current focus is on aspects of transformative environmental education, notably nature-embedded learning, place-based learning, rewilding learning and biodiversity learning. His most recent publication *Down the Combe and Into the Meadow: Reflections on Nature and Learning* (Selby, 2024) does not disappoint. It provides the reader with a stunning, virtual field trip to a secluded coastal valley, Western Combe, situated on the Jurassic Coast of East Devon, England. Written in an engaging diary style, the author explores aspects of East Devon's natural history over twelve chapters, one for every month of the year. A wide range of current nature-related themes and issues are covered across the twelve chapters. Each chapter expands a focus on the local place to an in-depth analysis of a nature related issue of global significance allied with reflections on implications for our living and learning. Issues addressed include human disconnect from the natural world, climate breakdown, rewilding, biodiversity loss and confronting environmental despair. The writing is richly descriptive of the natural world and further enhanced by some 138 stunningly beautiful photographs of landscape, flora and fauna including 51 images by award winning nature photographer David White.

The book begins with reflections on place-based connectivity to the natural world and how this shapes our identity and world view. Chapter two explores day to day disconnections from the natural world and how this disconnect reduces our drive to cherish and protect nature. In chapter three, Selby takes a critical look at the efforts to address environmental issues through the prism of 'education for sustainability'. He argues that the dry language of 'sustainable development' and 'sustainability' devoid of wondrous images and miracles of the natural world are ultimately failing to foster an appreciation for our local place. Chapter four explores locally based nature-based learning responses to climate breakdown. Chapters five and six contemplate respectively, rewilding and biodiversity loss and their place within nature learning. Selby explores the idea of 'transformative learning' in chapter seven introducing the more radically holistic concept of 'metamorphic learning' in chapter eight which looks at coastal places as venues for nature learning. Chapter nine focuses on nature friendly farming and chapter ten looks at the migration of the species and the impact of climate breakdown. Chapter eleven explores themes of loss and hope where the concept of 'authentic hope' is elaborated. The final chapter

examines how rituals, rites and celebrations can foster a new and deeper relationship with nature.

This beautifully written book provides the reader with an exquisite sensory experience of biodiversity, nature and place. Short extracts from nature poetry and sonnets frame each chapter reminding the reader of the threats facing our natural environment. For instance, in chapter ten, Selby quotes a verse from Jenny Justice's 'Field Guide to Birds' (2019):

“It should not read like
A diary of loss
A mystery of disappearance
A Where's Waldo of what's left
And yet flipping through this field guide to birds
With its beauty, simplicity, organisation, optimism
I can't help but feel the grief and ask the question
What can we do when this who's who of birds is
A slimmer and slimmer volume
Every year”.

The book creates a seamless tapestry between personal experiences, childhood memories, local expertise, literature, folklore, poetry, nature connections and a deep love of place. The book is sprinkled with beautiful references to English literature such as Laurie Lee's (1959) childhood autobiography, *Cider with Rosie* and Shakespeare's (n.d.) *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Selby's encounters with place and experiences of place attachment are augmented by references to poetry from among others William Wordsworth, Patrick Kavanagh and John Agard. This is complemented with robust scientific knowledge from well-respected commentators and environmentalists such as Rachel Carson, Robert MacFarlane and Dara McNulty. The book is informed by the most up to date nature science and contemporary theories from the fields of biology, geography, history, sustainability, politics and international frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Selby writes beautifully about the power of the senses and the importance of engaging all of the senses not just the dominant sense of sight. Selby calls for us to experience the natural world through our blended senses. We need to bypass our dominant cognitive functions and learn to live and learn holistically with nature by involving body and soul. Essentially, we must learn to behold. According to Selby (2024:17) the immersive practice of beholding ‘involves assuming a state of multi-sensory awareness, attentive observation and curiosity, receptivity to detail and sustained focusing’. Selby’s love letter to his local place explores:

“symbolic ways of relating to nature that draw upon a mix of aesthetic, cultural, poetic, bodily, emotional, spiritual and contemplative potential that, in tandem with cognitive ways of knowing, can give place deeper meaningfulness in our lives” (Selby, 2024: 27).

The importance of being able to name aspects of flora and fauna is discussed in detail. Selby’s own nature knowledge was enhanced by his treasured and much thumbed pocket-sized set of Observer Books about British Birds, Wild Flowers, Butterflies, Trees and Shrubs, Animals, Grasses and Common Fungi. Selby worries about increased evidence of ‘nature deficit disorder’ (Louv, 2008) or a disconnection from local places experienced by young people due to lack of engagement, prolonged periods of time spent on mobile devices and perceptions of health and safety. Parents and teachers can learn much about the value of spending quality time in the outdoors.

Selby illustrates the concepts of a special place, place attachment and place-based learning through a focus on his much-loved place Western Combe. According to Selby:

“places can inspire and affirm. We can go into a place and feel an immediate sense of connection with what are called *genius loci*, the spirit of place, and the *anima loci*, the soul of place, as manifest in both the animate and the inanimate within all that surrounds us” (2024: 24).

However, Selby reminds us that the quality of our encounters with place is determined by what we bring to the experience, through our attentiveness, openness and appreciation for the sheer wonder of nature.

Biodiversity, short for biological diversity refers to the variety of all living things on Earth, from genes and species to ecosystems and the valuable functions they perform including sustaining the well-being of humans. Biodiversity is needed for our basic needs including food, drinking water, fuel, shelter and medicine. Ecosystems provide vital services such as pollination, seed dispersal, climate regulation, water purification, and nutrient recycling. Biodiversity underpins the functioning of our ecosystems, yet is being lost at unprecedented rates. To halt or reverse biodiversity loss, it is critical to understand the complex interdependences between biodiversity, climate change and the ultimate survival of the human species. As we face a global biodiversity crisis that threatens the future of many species and habitats, access to texts which celebrate nature have never been more important. Through a page-by-page celebration of nature, this book includes detailed engagements with flora and fauna including the otter and kingfisher in chapter two, daffodils and cowslips in chapter three, butterflies in chapter four, bluebells and beavers in chapter five, bats in chapter nine and barn owls in chapter eleven, many of which are illustrated with award winning photography.

This book makes a powerfully significant contribution to the case for conservation and restoration of the natural world. This beautiful book, enhanced by folded artist drawn maps, is a treasure trove for nature lovers as well as essential reading for teachers and students of environmental topics. As an educator, I look forward to sharing this book with students in an effort to celebrate local places and to revive place attachment through ‘attentive, multi-sensorial and immersive engagement with local nature’ (Selby, 2024:27). This is a must read for all those interested in nature and the environment and is an ideal gift for friends and family. As a reviewer, I cannot adequately convey the captivating attention to detail and wonder of nature which lies between the covers of this wonderful publication. Therefore, I conclude with Selby’s (2024: 226-227) description of Autumn documented on 3 October 2018:

“The warm sun bathes our faces on what has turned into a summerlike afternoon. Autumn is at the gate but not yet gaining full admittance. Leaves are rustling and shrivelling, yellowing and falling, some trees almost denuded, but there is still the feeling abroad that ‘warm days will never cease’. The earthy smells of Autumn have yet to percolate the land. We need the rain to finally wash away the summer. In the warmth of the day, ivy (*Hedera helix*) is showing in flower, its yellow green umbels with their heady smell of honey and their rich nectar readying to become the last chance café for myriad bees, hornets, hoverflies, wasps and butterflies”.

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