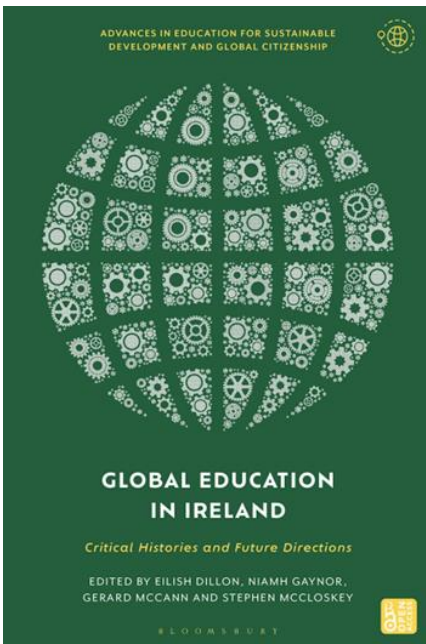


GLOBAL EDUCATION IN IRELAND: CRITICAL HISTORIES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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The publication of *Global Education in Ireland: Critical Histories and Future Directions* marks a significant, much needed and timely contribution to the field of global education in Ireland. This is not simply a book *about* global education. It is written by those who have walked in this quite complex field as educators and activists, developing practice, contesting dominant narratives, and helping to define global education as a bottom-up, critically oriented endeavour. There is a distinctive authenticity to the volume, one that feels particularly necessary in a period marked by intersecting political, economic, social, and environmental crises.

The voices of those who helped to create and sustain the sector are present throughout the volume, voices marked by long-term commitment, ethical seriousness, radical care and a refusal to separate education from struggle. The book offers both clarity and provocation. It does not set out to celebrate the expansion or institutional visibility of the field, though these developments are acknowledged. Instead, it pauses to ask more difficult questions about how global education in Ireland has been shaped, constrained, and reimagined over time. In doing so, it brings together a compelling, accessible, and radically hopeful range of perspectives from practitioners, educators, activists, organisations, and schools who have collectively shaped the field.

The volume also functions as a form of collective memory work. Through critical reflection, historical documentation, and practitioner perspectives, it traces the evolution of global education in Ireland across decades of ideological contestation, pedagogical experimentation, and shifting funding and policy environments. Crucially, it interrogates the foundations on which the field has been built, including its entanglements with colonial histories, international development narratives, and state funding regimes. The result is a textured, multi-voiced collection that will be of value both to long-standing practitioners and to those newly entering the field. The stated purpose of the book is twofold: first, to trace the historical development of global education on the island of Ireland; and second, to consider its future trajectories through a critical and reflexive lens. This dual purpose is realised through five thematic parts: changing contexts and terms; philosophical and pedagogical influences; situating Irish practice internationally; curriculum developments; and future directions. Each section is introduced through an editorial overview that situates the chapters that follow, combining analytical contributions with practice-based case studies.

One of the book's most valuable contributions is its sustained effort to situate global education within wider historical and political contexts. Several chapters explore the emergence of development education in Ireland through solidarity activism, missionary networks, liberation theology, and adult education movements in the 1960s and 1970s. These early initiatives were often shaped by Ireland's own experiences of colonialism, emigration, and poverty, and informed by international events such as decolonisation and the Vietnam War.

Importantly, the authors avoid romanticising these origins. The limitations of early approaches, particularly their tendency to reproduce charity-based framings and unequal power relations, are addressed with honesty and critical care. The volume also offers a thoughtful analysis of how the language and framing of the field have shifted over time. Chapters by Michael Doorly, Aoife Titley and Elaine Nevin examine the movement from development education to global citizenship education and education for sustainable development, highlighting how each framing carries distinct assumptions, priorities, and political risks. These debates are not treated as merely semantic. Rather, the authors demonstrate how terminological shifts reflect deeper tensions around depoliticisation, instrumentalisation, and the dilution of critical praxis. This analysis is particularly relevant at a time when global education is increasingly framed in terms of skills acquisition and behavioural change, often at the expense of structural critique or collective action.

A recurring concern throughout the volume is the growing institutionalisation of global education and the role of the state, particularly Irish Aid, in shaping the field's direction. The question of whether state funding enables or constrains critical pedagogy is explored with nuance. Several contributors caution against the risk of alignment with government policy agendas that may prioritise soft power, branding, or public relations over social justice and systemic change. At the same time, the enabling role of state support in expanding the reach, legitimacy, and sustainability of global education initiatives is acknowledged. Rather than offering a binary judgement, the book invites readers to grapple with these tensions and to consider how a critical edge might be maintained within increasingly institutionalised settings.

Pedagogy is a central thread throughout the collection, particularly in chapters focusing on community education, youth work, higher education, and teacher education. Drawing on traditions of critical pedagogy and participatory learning, contributors emphasise approaches that are dialogical, reflexive, and grounded in lived experience. Several chapters challenge superficial engagements with global issues - such as awareness-raising without action, or empathy without analysis - and instead argue for pedagogies that embrace complexity, discomfort, and relationality. From a pedagogical perspective, the strongest chapters are those

that position global education as an unsettling practice, demanding reflexivity not only from learners, but from educators and institutions. I found the inclusion of a range of case studies across community, youth, and higher education contexts to be very helpful and enriching. Collectively, the case studies included in the volume show how creative, arts-based, activist, dialogical, and participatory methodologies, alongside critical policy analysis and community-engaged learning, are being used to move beyond surface-level engagement and foster deeper, more critical forms of learning.

The volume also pays close attention to questions of voice, representation, and knowledge production. Issues of who speaks, whose knowledge is valued, and whose experiences are marginalised are addressed directly, with several chapters highlighting the exclusion of migrant perspectives, global South epistemologies, and grassroots activists from dominant narratives of global education. The final section on decolonising global education is particularly compelling, moving beyond rhetorical commitments to ask what it would mean in practice to centre critical race theory, lived experience, and alternative worldviews within Irish educational discourse. At its strongest, the book models a form of scholarship that is collaborative, situated, and ethically grounded.

As with many edited collections, the volume is uneven in places, a point that the editors themselves explicitly acknowledge in framing the book as neither comprehensive nor definitive. The authors acknowledge it represents a snapshot of debates, tensions, and practices, not a settled or closed field. Some chapters revisit familiar critiques without substantially extending them, reflecting a wider challenge within the field where critical language is well established, but strategic pathways for action remain underdeveloped. While the volume points to emerging challenges such as digitalisation, climate anxiety, and ideological backlash, these issues are not always explored in depth. The editors are also transparent about the partial nature of the perspectives represented, noting the continued under-representation of community-led, migrant-led, and global South epistemologies within Irish global education discourse. Read in this light, these limitations do not detract from the book's overall contribution, but rather reinforce its invitation to ongoing critical reflection and future work.

In conclusion, *Global Education in Ireland: Critical Histories and Future Directions* is a landmark publication for the field. It succeeds in holding critique and care in productive tension, offering a volume that is reflexive without being self-indulgent and rigorous without becoming detached from practice. By documenting debates, tensions, and shifts over time, it resists the growing risk of historical amnesia in a field that has become increasingly professionalised and policy-facing. For readers of *Policy and Practice*, the book offers both affirmation and challenge. It affirms the intellectual seriousness, ethical commitments, and pedagogical creativity that have long characterised global education on the island of Ireland. At the same time, it challenges educators, researchers, and funders to reflect critically on their own assumptions, complicities, and institutional locations. This is particularly important in contexts where global education is increasingly mainstreamed, but where its critical edge risks being diluted or depoliticised.

Ultimately, this volume reminds us that global education is not simply about responding to issues ‘out there’, nor about keeping pace with changing terminology or policy frameworks. It is about how we choose to teach, learn, organise, and act in the face of injustice. In an era of overlapping crises and educational uncertainty, this book functions both as a mirror and a provocation, inviting the field to remember where it has come from, while asking difficult questions about where it is going, and who it is for.

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