

Editorial

CREATING NEW ECONOMIC PARADIGMS: THE ROLE OF DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

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Introduction

Development education (DE) has always operated on the interface between the local and the global. The primary beneficiaries of DE practice are largely located in local education sectors, formal and informal, with the content of education programmes mostly focusing on global issues. However, recent discourse in development education has signalled a growing concern in the sector that practitioners should be questioning the development process at home as well as interrogating social justice and equality issues overseas. Mags Liddy, for instance, has suggested that:

“[W]e as the development education sector need to think of the local connections in our messages. Much of the focus of development education remains on the global level, relating to Africa or Asia. While the global perspective is essential to development education, the local connections need to be named and strengthened” (2012: 5).

This shifting focus in development education thinking has undoubtedly been influenced by the global financial crisis in 2008 and the subsequent, spectacular collapse of the Irish ‘Celtic Tiger’ economy (*Irish Times*, 28 November 2010). Issue 12 of *Policy and Practice* questioned why the development non-governmental sector largely absented itself from the debate on Ireland’s loss of economic sovereignty and failed to address the consequences of the International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) role in brokering an €85 billion loan to the Irish economy (McCloskey, 2011; Storey, 2011). Storey argued that development organisations missed an opportunity to bring their knowledge of structural adjustment in the global South to public awareness work in Ireland. He also suggested that they missed an opportunity to learn *from* the global South ‘especially with respect to innovative strategies of resistance to economic austerity’ (2010).

This issue of the journal aims to add to this debate on the local/global interface in DE and the sector’s specific role in response to the current

economic downturn by considering the contribution that it can make in facilitating a public dialogue on alternative economic paradigms of development that are sustainable and equitable. The global financial crisis has shaken fundamental beliefs in the neoliberal model of growth that has been rampantly ascendant since the end of the Cold War. For example, the former Chair of the United States Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan, admitted ‘that he had put too much faith in the self-correcting power of free markets and had failed to anticipate the self-destructive power of wanton mortgage lending’. He added, ‘I have found a flaw [in my ideology]. I don’t know how permanent or significant it is. But I’ve been very distressed by that fact’ (*New York Times*, 2008). If there are doubts in the efficacy of the neoliberal model from an ideologue at the heart of the financial system then, surely, now is the time to reflect upon alternative economic paradigms rather than contrive to resume ‘business as usual’.

This article will consider the background to the Irish financial crisis and how the turmoil since 2008 has manifested itself in rising poverty levels and increasing social inequality in Ireland. It will assess the globally influenced interventions of the left in response to the crisis and outline how the articles in this issue of *Policy and Practice* contribute to the debate on creating alternatives to the neoliberal model of development.

Background to the Financial Crisis

From 1993 to 2007, Ireland was the international exemplar of economic success fuelled by corporate inward investment attracted by low tax rates and a well educated workforce producing commodities for exports in sunrise sectors like information technology (IT) and pharmaceuticals. As Kirby suggests, the boom years ‘saw employment expand dramatically, and average living standards rise to some of the highest levels in the European Union’ (2011: 1). Ireland had seemingly accomplished a dramatic transition from a closed, protectionist and stagnant economy in the post-independence period to an open, buoyant and liberalised economy in the 1990s (McCann, 2011). From the 1920s through to the boom years in the 1990s, Ireland experienced regular cycles of high unemployment and emigration with an economy largely dependent on agriculture and declining sunset industries like textiles. As McCabe suggests:

“Up until the 1980s, cattle was to Ireland what the car industry was to Detroit and, although the Irish Free State gained partial independence in 1922, its economy, via the cattle industry, remained intertwined with that of the UK” (2011: 11).

From the 1950s onward, Ireland moved toward a strategy of attracting inward investment as a substitute for indigenous industry with a view toward broadening its export market beyond Britain. When Ireland joined the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973 it became a more profitable destination for overseas corporations as a bridgehead into the expanding European market. But it was largely the strategic targeting of leading corporate players in high-technology sunrise industries by the Industrial Development Agency (IDA) Ireland in the 1980s that galvanised inward investment (MacSharry and White, 2000). The IDA provided an attractive package of incentives to corporations that included: a corporate tax rate of 12.5 percent which helped to undercut European rivals for investment; generous government grants for locating in Ireland; a well educated and English-speaking workforce which appealed to firms from the US, the source of most of the new investment; and the provision of new education programmes designed to train the skilled personnel needed by the new investors (Ibid).

However, even at the peak of the boom a critical literature emerged that challenged the sustainability and benefits of Ireland's new economic strategy (Allen, 2003; Kirby, 2002; O'Hearn, 1998). Kirby and Murphy identified three key weaknesses in the Celtic Tiger model. First, the approach to capital accumulation in the Irish model did not result from 'capabilities developed within the economy' but was rather based on adapting to the needs of corporate investors. State economic policy failed, therefore, to 'build resilient capacity in the Irish economy' and mostly supported capital accumulation by foreign firms which repatriated most of their profits. Second, the Celtic Tiger model generated weak links between the 'productive economy and investment in social services'. Although a lot of attention was drawn to increases in living standards and job opportunities, for many the boom years were characterised by 'increases in relative poverty and in inequality'. And a third weakness concerned the ineffectiveness of the Irish state in the area of welfare and regulation which saw priority given 'to the maximisation of competitiveness and profitability over investment in the welfare of society' (Kirby and Murphy, 2011: 75-77). These weaknesses in the Irish model contributed to the financial crisis that enveloped Ireland in 2008 and was triggered by an unravelling of the financial sector in the United States to which it was so intertwined.

The depth of the 2008 financial crisis in the US was revealed by the collapse of Lehman Brothers investment bank, one of the country's biggest financial institutions, which went into bankruptcy and was 'allowed to fail' by the Federal Reserve (*Business Spectator*, 2008). An investigation launched by

the US government into the causes of the 2008 crisis titled the *Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission* (FCIC, 2011) found evidence of:

“widespread failures in financial regulation, dramatic breakdowns in corporate governance, excessive borrowing and risk-taking by households and Wall Street; policy makers who were ill-prepared for the crisis; and systemic breaches in accountability and ethics at all levels”.

In a financial sector continually and obsessively consumed with placating and ensuring the wellbeing of ‘the markets’ which are often described in terms approximating the ethereal and treated accordingly with god-like reverence, the report was quite candid as to where the blame lay for the crisis:

“The crisis was the result of human action and inaction, not of Mother Nature or computer models gone haywire. The captains of finance and the public stewards of our financial system ignored warnings and failed to question, understand, and manage evolving risks within a system essential to the well-being of the American public” (FCIC, 2011: xvii).

For development educators interpreting the events surrounding the crisis as part of their learning programmes, it is important to emphasise the human hand behind the financial collapse and the importance of asserting developmental needs over the financial sector rather than capital dictating the terms of human development. Within the neoliberal model of development, government intervention in the economy is minimised, public services privatised and regulation of the business sector reduced. It was mostly the deregulation of the US financial sector that resulted in the 2008 economic crisis and in turn created a contagion of instability in the global financial sector. Given Ireland’s dependence on US corporate investment and trading in financial services, the crisis inevitably impacted severely on an Irish economy experiencing banking problems of its own. The next section considers how the crisis impacted on Ireland.

The Irish Financial Crisis

In identifying the key factors that underpinned the financial crisis in Ireland, McCabe suggests:

“The State’s role as a conduit for international finance; as a tax haven for both domestic and foreign enterprise; the promotion of construction and land speculation as entrepreneurship, and the

development of services to exporters rather than the development of actual exports – these were the deep-seated problems that exacerbated the crisis in Ireland” (2011: 163).

David Begg, General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), succinctly described Ireland’s new economic position: ‘we were the poster child for globalisation. Now we are the poster child for austerity’ (*Guardian*, 27 November 2011). Ireland’s newfound commitment to austerity followed a government agreement in 2010 with the International Monetary Fund and European Central Bank for an €85 billion loan to recapitalise its banks (*Irish Times*, 11 November 2010). This loan aroused enormous public anger both at the loss of economic sovereignty concomitant with such hefty dependence on international financial institutions and the belt-tightening expected from the tax payer to divert large sums of public money into repaying what was mostly private debt. Anglo Irish Bank, in particular, became synonymous with the casino capitalism that contributed to Ireland’s economic collapse. Although rebranded the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation (IBRC), Anglo’s debt looks set to become an enduring drain on the public finances with the Fine Gael-Labour coalition government elected in 2011 having recommitted the state to paying €3 billion a year for at least a decade to pay off the cost of the bank’s collapse (*Irish Times*, 2 March 2012).

Unsurprisingly, Ireland’s economic collapse has generated a publishing snowstorm of texts attempting to satisfy the public’s anger and questions as to how a ‘poster child’ of neoliberalism could become the European Union’s model of austerity. We have had books on: Fianna Fáil’s role in the crisis as the dominant force in Irish politics since shortly after the civil war in the 1920s to 2011 (Leahy, 2009); the bankers and ‘how they brought Ireland to its knees’ (Ross, 2009); the ‘wasters’ described as those who ‘squander your taxes on white elephant projects, international junkets and favours for their mates – and how they get away with it’ (Ross and Webb, 2010); political and financial corruption (O’Toole, 2010); a book entirely on Anglo Irish Bank, subtitled ‘inside the bank that broke Ireland’ (Carswell, 2011); the crisis in an historical perspective (McCabe, 2011; McCann, 2011); and then texts taking a more rounded view of the future and suggesting how we might move forward into a different kind of Republic (Kirby and Murphy, 2011; O’Toole, 2010).

Despite the profound levels of political and economic mismanagement outlined by this burgeoning literature on Ireland’s economic crisis, the biggest winner in the 2011 general election was Fine Gael, a centre-right party that

pledged to adhere to the Fianna Fáil programme of austerity and debt repayment. While Fine Gael has sought to renegotiate the terms of the loan from the IMF-ECB it did not offer, and has not delivered, a significantly divergent view of how to manage the crisis. Nor has the new government sought to steer the economy away from its dependence on investment from overseas firms. Indeed, the Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister), Eamon Gilmore, has been determinedly warding off efforts by France and Germany to introduce tax co-ordination in the EU arguing that Ireland's position on corporation tax at 12.5 percent was 'soundly based' and 'we are determined to defend that position' (*Irish Times*, 20 January 2012).

The political and economic situation in Ireland post-election therefore remains markedly similar to that which prevailed under the last government. Consequently, the social welfare situation in Ireland continues to deteriorate and that is what we turn to in the next section.

Social and Economic Inequality

The European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland (EAPNI) found that even during the Celtic Tiger years 'the number of people experiencing poverty remained persistent' and the poverty gap has continued to widen as the recession has started to bite. A recent EAPNI document (February 2011) showed that the top 1 percent of the Irish population held 20 percent of the wealth, the top 2 percent controlled 30 percent and the top 5 percent disposed of 40 percent of private assets. This statistic is borne out by a report from Merrill Lynch, the wealth management division of Bank of America, which found that the number of millionaires in Ireland peaked at 20,400 in 2007, a figure which fell by more than 4,000 in 2008, but increased again to 18,100 in 2009 (*Irish Independent*, 22 June 2010).

The most commonly used measurement of income inequality in the European Union is the Gini Co-efficient which varies between 0 representing complete equality and 100, indicating complete inequality. In 2009, the Gini Co-efficient for Ireland was 29.9 percent which indicated greater levels of social inequality than experienced in Slovenia (23.4) and Slovakia (23.7). But perhaps a more worrying indicator of inequality in Ireland is the distribution of income within the country as measured by the income quintile share ratio. This indicator assesses the ratio of the total income received by the 20 percent of the country's population with the highest income against that received by the 20 percent with the lowest income. As with the Gini Co-efficient, the higher the ratio the greater is the level of income inequality in the country assessed (EAPNI 2012). In 2010, Ireland had a quintile share ratio of 5.3 percent, which is: in

the top five of the EU's twenty-seven states; higher than the EU average of 4.6 percent; and a marked increase on the total for 2009 at 4.2 percent – all indications of a trend toward greater income inequality as the recession and public expenditure cuts deepen (Eurostat, March 2012).

There is a similar narrative emerging from statistics on the percentage of people or households considered to be at risk of poverty when their income is less than the EU threshold which is set at 60 percent of median income. In Ireland in 2010, the percentage of 'people at risk of poverty or social exclusion' was 29.9 percent, which is well above the EU average of 20.4 percent and a marked increase on the 2007 figure of 23.1 percent (Ibid). A report from the Center for Economic and Social Rights (2012) has assessed how these statistics have translated into a weakening of social and economic rights in Ireland:

“A poorly managed recession, followed by a series of austerity budgets characterized by retrogressive cuts to social spending and an aversion to tax increases have markedly undermined the rights to education, health, housing, work and an adequate standard of living. Poverty levels are rising fast, just as Ireland's already struggling health and education sectors are being stripped of their resources” (CESR, 2012: 4).

The report adds that 'the most vulnerable populations, such as women, children, Travellers, migrants, older persons and the disabled, are suffering the human rights impacts of the crisis disproportionately' (Ibid).

Another, more traditional indicator of social and economic inertia in Ireland is emigration and a total of 40,200 Irish citizens emigrated in the year to April 2011, a substantial increase on the figure for 2009-10 (27,700) and 2008-09 (18,400) (*Irish Times*, 29 December 2011). While the decision to emigrate can often be taken out of choice rather than necessity, the correlation between rising unemployment and emigration should not be ignored and, by the end of 2011, Irish unemployment stood at 14.4 percent, an increase of 30,200 (*Irish Times*, 12 December 2011). The next section considers some globally inspired interventions in the economic crisis in Ireland and around the world before proposing possible future interventions on the part of development education.

How the Global Influenced the Local

The wave of popular demonstrations and new social movements that have challenged the old authoritarian order of several states in North Africa and the Middle-East, dubbed the 'Arab Spring', have inspired popular responses to the

economic crisis in the global North. The most prominent and international of these responses is the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement which established a camp in Zuccotti Park in New York's Wall Street district to protest against the perceived greed and corruption in the banking sector, believed by the protestors to be a key factor underpinning the financial crisis. The rallying call of the protestors is 'we are the 99% [of the population] that will no longer tolerate the greed and corruption of the 1%'. The connection with the Arab Spring is made explicit: 'We are using the revolutionary Arab Spring tactic to achieve our ends and encourage the use of nonviolence to maximize the safety of all participants' (Occupy Wall Street, March 2012).

Occupy Wall Street in turn inspired the organisation of similar camps in other parts of the US and Europe, including outside St Paul's Cathedral in London and in front of the Central Bank on Dame Street Dublin. In a speech to the Occupy Movement, the activist and author Naomi Klein said:

"Only when you stay put can you grow roots. This is crucial. It is a fact of the information age that too many movements spring up like beautiful flowers but quickly die off. It's because they don't have roots. And they don't have long term plans for how they are going to sustain themselves. So when storms come, they get washed away" (*The Nation*, 6 October 2011).

Klein was possibly referring to previous mobilisations of the left like the World Social Forum which 'developed as a response of the growing international movement to neoliberal globalisation and the effects of neoliberal economic policies being pursued in most countries' (WSF India). The Forum was first held in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2001 and although the venue sometimes moved to other cities, it was always held in the global South. Although it generated thoughtful actions and meaningful learning, the Forum was annually timebound to five or six days and had obvious limitations as a vehicle for challenging globalisation.

The Occupy movement by contrast attempted to organise permanent camps to support awareness raising activities like marches, leafleting, non-violent direct actions and lectures. However, when the storms came the camps were washed away in Zuccotti Park, St. Paul's and at Dame Street as official state authorities in each jurisdiction removed the protestors. At Dame Street just twenty people remained in the camp (*Irish Times*, 17 March 2012) when it was dismantled, raising questions as to its capacity to become a means toward the kind of mobilisation and change needed in response to Ireland's widening

poverty gap. It suggests that rather than creating new communities, the best means of effecting meaningful and permanent change is within existing communities at the most acute end of neoliberal policies. Tactically, the Occupy movement was divided on this point – to build agency within the camp or move out into communities. It would seem that the latter strategy may have produced more meaningful outcomes. In either case, the apparent collapse of Occupy should provoke reflection and discussion on how best to create paradigm change outside mainstream political structures.

Ireland's Debt Crisis

Another local response to Ireland's new economic reality was a debt audit inspired by the practice of Ecuador which established a Debt Audit Commission in 2007 and subsequently allowed the government to write down its debt substantially in 2008 (Jubilee Debt Campaign, September 2007). In September 2011, the University of Limerick published *An Audit of Irish Debt* (Garvey, Killian and Shaw) that set out to quantify the scale of Irish debt 'for which the Irish state has direct or indirect liability' (Ibid: i). The audit's overall conclusion was that:

“[T]he bulk of Irish government debt has arisen directly from the banking crisis, the decision in September 2008 to rescue all of the Irish banks, and the subsequent ELG (Eligible Liabilities Guarantee) and ELA (Emergency Liquidity Assistance) operations” (Ibid: vi).

The audit described the issuing of promissory notes by the government to repay the debt of Anglo Irish Bank and Irish Nationwide Bank as a 'liability, similar to an IOU' (Ibid: v).

The audit subsequently informed the establishment of a campaign called Debt Justice Action (DJA) calling for the suspension of all further repayments of debt incurred by Anglo Irish and Irish Nationwide Building Society as a first step towards renegotiation and write down of this debt. The campaign estimates that repayments to Anglo Irish Bank could total €47.9 billion by 2031, a sum to be levied on the Irish taxpayer as a result of the government's blanket bank guarantee. The campaign argues that this debt was incurred on the back of reckless lending practices by private banks that fulfil no positive role in Irish society. Debt Justice Ireland calculates that 'Over 2% of GDP will be drained out of the State each year up to 2023 to make the promissory note repayments – this will be through an additional €3 billion to €4 billion of fiscal tightening' (Anglo: Not our Debt, 2012: 5).

The Debt Justice Action campaign has been supported by faith, community, development, human rights and academic organisations although, notably, there is limited support from leading trade unions and development agencies. While there is a compelling logic to the campaign's objectives and immense public concern at the ramifications of the bank guarantee for public services, many leading civil society organisations have hesitated to openly challenge the government's position on the promissory notes. This begs the obvious question as to why civil society is not seizing this opportunity to engage the public in an awareness raising exercise and advocacy campaign to write down the debt.

In reflecting on the role of civil society as an effective agency of change, Kirby and Murphy suggest that the practice of social partnership since the late 1980s has drawn state, business and social organisations into collaborative initiatives aimed at tackling acute social problems. However, some of those who have participated in these initiatives have grown frustrated with their limitations and lack of agency. Kirby and Murphy assess the effects of social partnership this way:

“Twenty years of social partnership, therefore, have shown its success in facilitating, not the emergence of an activist civil society able to move public policy towards the achievements of its goals, but, rather, the taming of civil society, the severe restriction of its sphere of activity, the effective silencing of alternatives to the dominant neoliberal policy paradigm, and the development of a stultifying narrow consensus that has allowed elites to inflict severe damage on Irish society with few critical voices being raised” (2011: 38).

Given Ireland's current economic plight, the stakes for Irish society could hardly be higher and the need to find a voice never more urgent. The draining of the public purse to repay massive loans to insolvent banks which economics Professor Morgan Kelly suggests were ‘purely conduits for property speculation’ (*Guardian*, 24 January 2012) will blight Irish society for generations to come. In the next section we consider the role that development education can play in helping to mobilise civil society and fostering the emergence of new economic paradigms.

The Role of Development Education

A recent Trócaire report identifying future trends in international development suggested that ‘Power and politics are central to the work of INGOs [international non-governmental organisations] at home and abroad’ (2011: 63).

It added that INGOs ‘need to engage more directly with the political implications of their work in the countries where they operate’ (Ibid). This is particularly the case in Ireland where development organisations have been reluctant to engage with political issues in the domestic arena beyond the issue of overseas development aid. Similarly, development educators for the most part have been largely focused in their practice on international development issues rather than attempting to link the local to the global or vice versa. Yet, there are immense pedagogical benefits to be derived from linking the local to the global as Liddy suggests:

“highlighting local and global links reinforces learning as this makes our learning applicable to our own context not just to different countries, and can make global connections across communities that go far beyond mere awareness raising” (2012: 5).

By using education to illuminate the global resonances in our local communities, development education can enable learners to understand more fully the international issues that influence all our lives. For example, it is difficult, if not impossible, to fully explain the financial crisis in Ireland without placing it in an international context and outlining the global economic forces that contributed to the country’s economic demise.

Issue 12 of *Policy and Practice* posed the question: ‘What are the implications of retaining a politically detached stance on crucial policy issues that the sector is ideally positioned to respond to?’ (Bryan, 2011). The emergence of the Debt Justice Action campaign and completion of a debt audit suggest that there are development organisations and individuals in Ireland prepared to engage with domestic policy issues on which they have both credibility and expertise based on their work in the global South. Development educators have contributed to the public awareness raising work that has been part of the debt justice initiative. However, they now need to more formally engage in education activities that can enhance public economic literacy on the issues surrounding the debt crisis and provide a learning environment that can debate alternatives to the neoliberal model of development that has so clearly derailed the global economy.

One of the consequences of the global crisis has been a raised level of public knowledge and engagement with economic issues in Ireland. This can be augmented with development education courses, seminars, workshops and debates on economic models that are informed by practice in the global South and the needs of communities in Ireland. Development educators need to be

conversant in the needs of those who have been marginalised and disempowered by Ireland's recent economic trajectory. This means relating global issues to the realities of people's lives in local communities and agreeing new models of development rather than imposing solutions. This issue of *Policy and Practice* is offered as a contribution to the process of stimulating debate on how we navigate our way toward an economy governed by the needs of its people rather than the needs of capital.

Issue 14

The three Focus articles in this issue of *Policy and Practice* have distinctive yet complementary approaches to paradigm change in the local and global economy. As an author and academic who has written extensively on the Celtic Tiger, globalisation and Latin America, Peadar Kirby considers the readiness of education to address the challenges presented by the current crisis and the need for social transformation. He looks beyond the mainstream narrative of the crisis that limits its source to the recklessness of a deregulated banking sector to consider 'the deeper structural issues that the crisis reveals'. These issues include the role that our consumer society and personal indebtedness played in causing the crisis, something largely ignored by the reform agendas in the countries affected. They also include the role of energy in 'creating the model of financial and highly indebted capitalism' that helped spark the current crisis. Rising oil prices are set to pose policy-makers with the unpalatable decision to either 'reduce the amount of money in circulation to maintain its energy-purchasing power or else reduce dependence on oil-based energy'. Either way, this analysis challenges the assumption 'that things are going to return to a state of continuing improvement before too long'.

Kirby discusses the limitations to paradigm change within our mainstream education system:

“[B]y and large, our forms of education are failing society as they remain far too subservient to the dominant paradigm and therefore are unable to provide the critical space to begin incubating a new social paradigm.”

And yet he believes that education 'has always produced challenges to the dominant orthodoxies and been a space for inculcating alternatives to the "common sense" of the era'. A region that appears to have succeeded in this regard is Latin America where governments have come to power committed to paradigm change and education has contributed to this process. The article considers some of the tensions that have emerged in the process of contested

power between new paradigms and the old neoliberal model, particularly in the ‘relationship between human activities and environmental sustainability’. The article concludes by challenging development education ‘to expand its horizons and become a space for debate and new thinking’ as we consider the paradigm options confronting Irish society.

The second Focus article, by Nessa Ní Chasaide, the Director of Debt and Development Coalition Ireland (DDCI), reflects on how her organisation responded to the reality of Ireland’s new status as a highly indebted country that had fallen into the clutches of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). While DDCI had hitherto focused on debt justice issues in the global South, the article describes how the organisation felt that it could not retain credibility in educating people in Ireland on Southern debt issues without taking a position on Ireland’s debt crisis. However, the decision was not taken before consultation with DDCI’s members on this shift in the organisation’s remit or before it helped commission an independent audit of Irish debt. The audit’s findings outlined the extent of Ireland’s financial liabilities arising from the debt crisis and questioned its legitimacy, prompting DDCI members to endorse the organisation’s engagement in education and campaigning on Ireland’s debt.

Importantly, DDCI has not abandoned its work on debt in the global South but has rather brought a Southern perspective into its development education work on Irish debt. This has included supporting the establishment of a new Debt Justice Action group to engage the public on Ireland’s debt crisis based on lessons from the global South. Ní Chasaide suggests that DDCI’s development education work on Irish debt ‘has demonstrated that sharing lessons from the global South has resulted in important new working relationships between local and global justice groups, and in concrete education and campaigning actions in Ireland’.

The third Focus article discusses another important facet of the global economy, the power of transnational corporations which in some cases exceeds that of national governments. Andy Egan considers the extent to which development education organisations have addressed corporate power and practice in their learning activities. His article reflects on research with development education centres (DECs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) on their practice in this area and considers the opportunities and constraints for greater development education engagement. His research found that ‘there is an absence of literature that explicitly considers the issue of corporate power within DE, and only a relatively small body of work that addresses the issue indirectly’. Egan’s suggests that given the radical origins of

development education in the pedagogy of Paulo Freire and its commitment to social justice issues, the role of corporate power in our everyday lives should be part of its natural terrain. The article considers how and why controversial issues are sometimes mediated out of mainstream education practice and helpfully proposes a development education framework for critical literacy on corporate power to strengthen learning in this area.

Latin America is perhaps the one region at present from which we can draw both inspiration and learning given its engagement in paradigm change and contesting of the traditional neoliberal model of development. In her Perspectives article, Patricia Muñoz Cabrera reports on feminist alternatives to neoliberalism in Latin America under the auspices of Women in Development Europe (WIDE). Muñoz Cabrera presents eight case studies documenting the experiences of a diverse range of women's organisations across the continent. These case studies show how women have challenged the 'financialisation' of their economies that has exacerbated social polarisation and competition. The case studies have drawn inspiration from the *Buen Vivir* paradigm which 'is rooted in indigenous epistemology and bears a strong relation with the emancipatory struggles fought by indigenous peoples since the Spanish conquest'. The case studies will interest all development educators interested in exploring economic models that 'are based on values such as respect for nature, dialogue between cultures, and human dignity'.

The Irish development organisation, Comhlámh, has been actively engaged in development education activities for many years, particularly in the area of economic justice, which is the focus of a Perspectives article by Ruth Doggett and Fleachta Phelan, who work for Comhlámh in the area of policy, advocacy and education. The article argues that development education has a role to play in 'supporting people in Ireland to debate and discuss alternative economic paradigms, and to use our democratic voice and take action to bring about change'. In addition to debating the importance of trade justice the article outlines some forthcoming opportunities in the policy landscape both locally and globally for education and action. The article suggests that:

"This policy environment clearly provides the development education sector with a role to support the making of local-global links, and joining the dots between public debates around economic approaches, policies and orthodoxies here in Ireland and those in the global South."

Linking the local and global is also a prominent theme of the Perspectives article by Alan Hayes and Eimear McNally which ‘examines some challenges and opportunities that the Occupy movement by its very presence raises for us as development educators’. Development education shares with the Occupy a commitment to global learning, critical awareness, social justice and public action. The article asks if development educators could strengthen their practice by adopting the more linear approach to learning prevalent in the self-organising model used by Occupy? The article encourages new thinking in the light of the progressive social movements that have responded to the global financial crisis.

While the theme of this issue has been preoccupied with global connections of an economic nature, Anna Bernacka offers us a Perspectives article that focuses on cultural links mediated through the translation process. Her article suggests that ‘rather than merely supplanting one form of words for another, the translator has the capacity to enhance our understanding of development issues and indigenous cultures by mediating ideas across cultural and national boundaries’. Using case studies from India and South Africa, Bernacka suggests how translation has brought wider understanding to ‘rich indigenous cultures’ and can play a positive unifying role between the global North and South.

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