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**Book review**

Book review: *Global Learning and International Development in the Age of Neoliberalism*, by Stephen McCloskey

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Submission date: 30 November 2021; Acceptance date: 16 January 2022; Publication date: 8 June 2022

**How to cite**

Hanley, N. (2022) 'Book review: *Global Learning and International Development in the Age of Neoliberalism*, by Stephen McCloskey'. *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning*, 14 (1), 12–14. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14324/IJDEGL.14.1.02>.

**Peer review**

This article has been through editorial review.

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*International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning* is a peer-reviewed open-access journal.

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London: Routledge, 2021, 200 pp., ISBNs: 978-0367-68159-3 (pbk); 978-0367-46754-8 (hbk); 978-1003-03085-0 (ebk)

Since the 2010s, global events, including the refugee crises, climate change and recently COVID-19, have been great challenges for the international development sector. In *Global Learning and International Development in the Age of Neoliberalism*, McCloskey explores these problems presented to the sector through the contextual lens of global learning. He argues that neoliberalism, specifically the pro-growth neoliberal model of development, is the core reason why the international development sector is in crisis. Thus, for McCloskey, re-embracing radical development education practice can help to build capacity to challenge the extreme levels of inequality created by neoliberalism.

The book is organised into three sections. The opening chapter sketches the context of the discussion. It guides the reader through the book, introducing some examples of global crises, the main concepts of development education, international development and neoliberalism. It also introduces the concept of 'fairy tales of development' (10). Through this idea, McCloskey critically questions the existing approaches within the development sector that are underpinned by the broken neoliberal economic model.

Entitled 'Development education and transformation', Part 1 presents a wide range of perspectives within the development education sector and related 'adjectival education' (47) that share common aims, objectives, goals, approaches and even vocabulary (Chapter 4). McCloskey critically discusses how development education is implemented and what challenges it faces within a neoliberal context. Here, the author outlines the origins of the sector, highlighting the significant influence of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1996) within development education (Chapter 2). McCloskey suggests that Freire's transformative educational methodology and critical pedagogical approach remains relevant in addressing current issues, such as populism and fake news. He argues that re-embracing the critical elements of the pedagogical approach and incorporating the central concept of praxis in development education would enhance action outcomes in response to social and economic injustice (Chapter 3). Using a four-year project in Northern Ireland, McCloskey demonstrates the possibilities of integrating a global learning programme into school development plans and discusses the importance of development education focused on solidarity-based and not charitable approaches (Chapter 5).

The main focus of Part 2 is on the definition of neoliberalism, and it examines the relationship between international development, development education and neoliberalism. McCloskey describes how neoliberalism accelerates inequality (Chapter 6) and has contributed to the rise of populist nationalism (and consequently the rise in racism, Islamophobia and discrimination) across the world (Chapter 7). He argues that adopting 'the radical, participative, empowering and action-oriented development education is needed to resist the rise of populist nationalism' (93). He also encourages the international development sector to rethink its development model towards a more sustainable and equitable basis. In doing so, the author draws an example from Latin America (Chapter 8) discussing the concept of *buen vivir* ('good living') as one of the alternative models with the concept of de-growth. This case is intended to explain the potential of alternative models to challenge the orthodoxy of neoliberalism. However, more examples within different geographical locations and cultural contexts are needed here to build a more robust contribution to this discussion.

In Part 3, McCloskey continues exploring the policy and practice environment for development education and international development. He discusses the limitations of overseas aid and why it is largely ineffective in fighting poverty and promoting development within developing countries (Chapter 10). Here, the role of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is considered in more depth (Chapter 11). McCloskey refers to the SDGs as a 'fairy tale of development' (10), and in this chapter he goes on to argue that the fundamental fault of the SDGs is rooted in the 'neoliberal alignment of development as economic growth rather than an exogenous problem such as a lack of development finance' (144). Finally, the author argues that neoliberalism is 'a deeply racist economic system' (151) which should be addressed by international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and development educators in their practice.

The book presents various development projects and initiatives that enrich debate on the main challenges within the development sector. In the beginning of the book, McCloskey acknowledges the work of front-line workers. However, the voices of those who constantly provide support, not only during the pandemic but in the daily field work of humanitarian and development aid organisations, are not widely included in the discussion. Moreover, perhaps due to the book's purpose of presenting an overview rather than a detailed in-depth analysis, McCloskey chooses to present only examples of major actors as collective representatives of international development and development education sectors at governmental and policy levels. Nevertheless, examples of individual grass-roots organisations working

within local communities and marginalised groups whose role within the sector was underestimated would have contributed further to the discussion both in the Global North and Global South.

The book ends with a chapter where McCloskey summarises the discussion by suggesting a new paradigm of development focusing on a bottom-up, participative approach to policymaking. He argues that it has the potential to address the crises and make meaningful progress towards sustainability and poverty eradication, as it is based on the needs of poor, marginalised and voiceless people, rather than constantly following the agenda of donors and governments. The chapter also offers some actions for INGOs and development educators based on the discussions within the book. Some of these are quite radical solutions which might not be achievable for those who are working on the front line of this crisis. Others, such as debt cancellation (see Jubilee Debt Campaign, 2006, 2021) and reconnection with development education (see Bourn, 2020), are contributing to ongoing debate. Nevertheless, McCloskey's thought-provoking ideas could become a conversation point and a catalyst for change which might make a positive contribution to the international development sector.

Overall, the book offers a different perspective on today's debates about the main challenges within the field of international development and the development education sector. It engages with a wide range of cases and actors to support the critical discussion, and it raises important concerns and questions within the development sector.

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