



A Resource for Higher Education Educators

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TRANSCRIPTION

Programme 7: Development Education

Guests: Laura Power, Dr Su Ming Khoo and Eric Ehigie

Gertrude Cotter (GC):



You are listening to Community Radio Youghal 104 FM. My name is Gertrude Cotter, and you are listening to the Global Hub, the program that deals with social justice issues at home and abroad. You are very welcome to the program. This program is the first in a series of eight programs which documents the history of development and global citizenship education in Ireland. The Global Hub is funded by Trócaire, the International Development Agency. But it must be said that

Trócaire has not influenced the editorial position of any of these programs. Trócaire has a long-standing development education program, and they have funded the Global Hub since 2015.

Through funding different groups like Community Radio Youghal, they help us all to educate ourselves about complex global social, economic, political, and environmental issues. There is a very strong activist and academic tradition in Ireland whereby people in all walks of life, sometimes in a paid capacity, sometimes not, bring attention to and take action on global justice issues. This series of programs aims to tell the story of this tradition in Ireland through the voices of some of those who have formed and continue to work in this area. Some might have been involved in an activist capacity, some as teachers in primary, secondary, or preschool, some as academics, lecturers, and researchers at third level. Some might work in the statutory sector, for instance, in Irish Aid, the statutory agency that funds much of the work in the sector in Ireland. Some work in the youth, community, and voluntary sector.

Development education is referred to by many names, so it can be very confusing. For instance, in this series, you will hear the terms development education, global learning, global education, or global citizenship education, and other terminology as well. But no matter what terminology people use here, they all have a similar agenda: educating for a just and sustainable world. Keeping this as our central focus, we can now hear about the development of the ideas around development education or global citizenship education in Ireland through the voices of those who have contributed and continue to contribute to its development.

This series of eight programs paints a picture of a particular slice of Irish life with personal and professional stories that need to be told. It is particularly important to capture the earlier history of development education in Ireland, since we did not have the kind of communication we have today. Back then, we didn't have the internet, we didn't have recordings from Zoom and Teams and Skype, and so on. Indeed, it must be said that we did have radio, and I am happy to recognize the enduring power of radio to tell powerful stories, and particularly the power of community radio to include and reach out to hear our voices in a democratic way.

My thanks to Community Radio Youghal for facilitating this series of shows, and I acknowledge the work of Tom O'Keefe and Paul Daly in patiently editing these programs. We will look at the development of development education in Ireland through the decades, starting in the 1950s and coming up to the present day.

GC:



With me now, I have Vicky Donnelly, somebody, I think, who has been very seminal as well and led the way, really, in thinking and practice in this country. Vicky Donnelly is from the Galway One World Centre, and that's another organization that works in development, education, and solidarity work. First of all, Vicky, you're very, very welcome to The Global Hub.

Vicky Donnelly (VD):

Thanks so much, Gertrude, and very humbled by that introduction.

GC:

Well deserved. Because really, over the many years that I've known you, I have found your work to be so inspirational, genuinely, and I think you know that's genuine. When I say that, you know you've done an awful lot. There are people who have, over the years, contributed hugely in terms of the thinking and the practice of development education. And so, I'm delighted that you could make it.

So, Vicky, as you know, we're doing a series of programs on the history of development education in Ireland. But I'm also asking people to start off with their own personal journey and early influences. If it's okay with you, could you take us back to your own personal journey and some of your early influences?

VD:

For sure. I was one of those very idealistic teenagers or young people, even probably before my teens. I was a member of Amnesty International, Greenpeace, and against animal cruelty—a lot of things that kind of got my attention at the time. And the possibility... I mean, we talk about it now, that another world is possible, but I was very inspired and invigorated by campaigns like that, which saw structural changes and challenges to injustices. So, they were certainly there in my early years.

Maybe as well, the fact that my family was seen as a bit unconventional. My parents were separated, my mum was lesbian. There were unconventional elements when you're, you know, in the local convent school. So, I kind of stood out, and that feeling of being an outsider was something I was very familiar with, and that maybe still resonates.

GC:

That's interesting. Yeah, that is interesting that you've noticed a lot of people that engage strongly in this kind of work have those formative experiences that stay with you, but in a very positive way as well. And the empathy, I suppose, and solidarity that comes from understanding that feeling of being outside. So, when you came in, I presume, I don't know, as a teenager or whatever, Amnesty International and Greenpeace were some of the first areas that sparked your imagination, right?

VD:

They were, and in maybe ways that were less obvious. For big chunks of my childhood, I was brought up by my grandmother who, without ever applying that label for herself, was most definitely a kind of prototype feminist. She was a woman who worked, not just raising children and raising us, her grandchildren, but she ran the shop and was very involved in her community. And so, I think there was lots there.

The shop itself was quite international. It was unusual for its time in Ireland; it sold fresh fruit and fresh vegetables, which attracted people from lots of different countries. There'd be customers from Lebanon, Palestine, and I remember a doctor from Sudan. They would come in looking for flavours of home. So, all those little things, maybe, were interesting.

GC:

So, these are some of the issues and experiences that shaped your early interest in this line of work. When did you first get involved more formally from a work perspective? I see that the Galway One World Centre was established in 1992. Was that when you got involved?

VD:

No, it was later than that. I was living abroad for a few years, and when I came home, I moved to Galway. That was in 1996, and I was initially involved with the Galway One World Center as a volunteer. There was a conference, a collaboration with a Dóchas conference on women and work, with amazing people like Anne Byrne and Heike Bornhagen, who was the coordinator at the time. I was part of the volunteer group that helped organize the conference, and then they advertised for an education worker. I applied and started there in the beginning of 1997.

GC:

So, you're very much involved with the Galway One World Centre since then. I remember there were a few One World Centres around Ireland. Do you know how they came about?

VD:

I'm not entirely sure how they came about. I've always assumed that they had a similar creation story to Galway, which was a group of returned volunteers or people who had worked overseas in development. Certainly, in Galway, we had the likes of Sean Canny, who's still very involved, and people like Rose Treloar Brock, a South African woman living in Ireland. These were critical perspectives trying to look beyond charity lenses and engage differently. There were many centres: Tullamore, Portlaoise, Kilkenny, Kerry, Sligo, Limerick, and more.

GC:

I'd love to look into that a bit more—what happened to these centres. Anyway, when you first started at the Galway One World Centre, what were some of the major issues at the time?

VD:

One of the big issues was racism, which remains a really important perspective in the work we've been doing. I started in 1997, coincidentally the European Year Against Racism. From the beginning, there were links between racism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, neoliberal exploitation, and how racism legitimizes or obscures forms of exploitation.

So that was always important. Through that first conference, I met Sharon Murphy, who is Black Irish, an incredibly talented singer-songwriter, diversity worker, and anti-racism activist. She's now my colleague at the Galway One World Centre, but at that time, she massively influenced my thinking about the links between racism and colonialism.

We also had strong connections with the Galway Traveller Movement, working with people like Kathleen Sweeney, Ellen Mongan, and Patsy Sweeney. Patsy eventually became a colleague at the One World Centre. Around that time, they organized some excellent training by bringing over a trainer from South Africa named Basil Manning, who had returned from exile to help the new government develop an anti-racism strategy. Manning, along with Ashok Gory and Wendy Davis, facilitated important workshops for us, helping us think about racism as a form of oppression rather than just a matter of manners or political correctness. We still use that conceptual framework to this day.

GC:

I remember that work well. It was very impactful and resonated with many groups. You mentioned the development education sector earlier. How did your anti-racism work relate to the broader development education community?

VD:

We've always worked with a wide range of groups, and anti-racism has been central to that work. However, discussions around racism within the development education sector were sometimes ambiguous. Irish Aid, for example, would sometimes hesitate to fund anti-racism work, viewing it as a local issue rather than a global one. We had to have many conversations about how racism is tied to global systems of exploitation and oppression. Eventually, they were open to the discussion, but it highlighted a tendency in the sector to separate local anti-racism work from global justice work. For us, they were always inseparable.

GC:

You've mentioned several critical influences on your work, from anti-racism to structural inequality. Another area that comes to mind when I think of your work is the influence of Brazilian academic Vanessa Andreotti. Would you tell us how she has shaped your thinking?

VD:

Vanessa Andreotti has been hugely influential. Her work on decolonial perspectives, looking at structures and unmasking the mechanisms that create and maintain poverty, is crucial. She emphasizes the need to understand historical and political forces that sustain inequality. She's a central figure in the Global Teachers Award, a course we run for teachers and student teachers. Her work challenges us to think critically about the role of education in either maintaining the status quo or challenging it. If we present poverty and inequality without interrogating the forces that create and perpetuate them, we risk reinforcing those systems.

Her work, along with people like Su-Ming Khoo at NUIG, has deeply enriched the thinking in Ireland around development education.

GC:

I completely agree. Vanessa's work has provided a much-needed postcolonial critique of development education. Her analysis aligns with Paulo Freire's idea of education as action plus reflection. It brings that criticality to the fore. And I must mention that Steven McCloskey's Policy & Practice journal has also been a key space for those kinds of critical discussions.

VD:

Absolutely. Steven McCloskey has done fantastic work in creating a platform for those voices. His journal really asks us to consider the role of neoliberalism in the work we do. Is education helping young people to compete better in a system that is inherently unequal, or is it challenging those systems? Those questions have always been central to our work at the Galway One World Centre.

GC:

I understand that I asked you to choose a piece of music to play on the show. Could you introduce the song you've chosen?

VD:

Yes! I thought a lot about this, but I've chosen a song by my colleague, Sharon Murphy. The song is called Grace Dark One, and it's about her African great-grandmother. It's a beautiful tribute to her heritage and a powerful reminder of the connections between personal identity and global history, especially in the context of racism and colonialism. It's a deeply moving song, and I hope your listeners enjoy it.

GC:

Thank you so much, Vicky, for your contribution to today's show and for all your work over the years. We'll now play Grace Dark One by Sharon Murphy. Thank you again for being with us.

(Clip of Grace Dark One by Sharon Murphy plays)

GC:



With me now is John. John, you've been involved in the development of educational toolkits for addressing climate change. Could you tell us about your recent work and its launch?

John Barimo (JB):

Yes, Gertrude. We recently launched an educational toolkit aimed at helping institutions of higher learning in Ireland and beyond. At the launch, we had participants not only from Ireland but also from England, Finland, Italy, Germany, and even as far away as Colombia, Brazil, and Ecuador. It was

amazing to see the level of interest globally. The resources are open-source, so people can adapt and use them in any way they see fit.

GC:

That's incredible. Are you finding that educators are receptive to these tools?

JB:

Yes, very much so. We did a lot of background research, including interviews with students to find out what they wanted from the toolkit. They want to be informed about climate issues and, more importantly, they want to know what actions they can take. There's a real hunger for this kind of knowledge right now, especially among young people. But I do worry about whether the long-term commitment will be there. We've been in this fight for decades, and change can be slow. I hope young people stick with it, even when things don't happen as quickly as they'd like.

GC:

That's a good point. The expectation of quick results can be a challenge, especially with something as complex as climate change. But I agree—there does seem to be a critical mass now, especially among students. It's important to remember that real transformation often takes years, even if it seems to happen suddenly.

JB:

Exactly. It may seem like change happens overnight, but often it's the result of decades of work. The challenge is to maintain that momentum and commitment.

GC:

So, as we wrap up this part of the conversation, would you like to introduce a piece of music that's meaningful to you?

JB:

Yes, I'd love to. I'd like to play *Grace Dark One* by Sharon Murphy, a song that ties into my connection with nature and sustainability. It speaks to our interconnectedness with the natural world and reminds us of the roots we all share.

(Clip of Grace Dark One by Sharon Murphy plays)

GC:



With me now is Valerie Molay, the Climate Justice Project Officer with the Development Education team at the National Youth Council of Ireland. Valerie, thank you for joining us today.

Valerie Molay (VM): Thank you for having me, Gertrude.

GC:

So, Valerie, could you start by telling us a bit about the National Youth Council's work in development education, or as you now call it, global youth work?

VM:

Yes, we recently rebranded our development education work as global youth work because we found that it resonated better with youth workers. The term "development education" sometimes made people feel like it was something distant or foreign, whereas "global youth work" helps youth workers understand that it's about connecting young people to global issues. We raise awareness about how a young person in Ireland is connected to a young person in Malawi or elsewhere, and how global issues like inequality, climate change, and poverty affect everyone.

Our work involves producing educational resources, running training programs for youth workers, and creating spaces for young people to discuss these big issues. One of our key initiatives is One World Week, where we pick a theme each year and develop resources and events around it. This year's theme is global identity, and tomorrow we have an event where a group of young people from Cork, who call themselves the Sustainability Club, will be interviewing Ireland's Ambassador to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason, about what global identity means to her and what it means for Ireland at the UN.

GC:

That sounds fantastic. How do you define "global identity," and how can young people develop one?

VM:

That's a great question, and it's something I've thought about a lot in my own life. I was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo, but I moved to Ireland when I was very young. I remember the first time I realized that being a Black girl meant something in this society—it wasn't just a part of who I was, but something that society interpreted in a specific way. That understanding shaped my whole journey. Developing a global identity, for me, has been about recognizing those layers of identity—being both Congolese and Irish—and understanding how I fit into the global community.

It's also about encouraging young people to understand the interconnectedness of our world. A global identity means recognizing that what happens in one part of the world affects us all, and that we have a shared responsibility to address global challenges like inequality and climate change.

GC:

It's fascinating to hear about your personal experience with identity. You mentioned earlier the second generation of immigrants in Ireland, and I wonder how you see that generation navigating these issues. Are they more politically engaged?

VM:

Absolutely. I think the second generation is much more politicized, partly because they're growing up in a more interconnected world. But I also think it's a generational thing—young people today are more aware of social justice issues because they're so visible now. Climate change, inequality, and systemic racism can't be ignored, and young people are demanding change. I see this in the work we do at the Youth Council, especially when we run workshops on climate justice.

For example, we recently held a workshop with young people from disadvantaged communities, including the Traveller community. One young person said they felt like climate change wasn't an issue they were "supposed" to care about because it's often framed as something for the elite or well-educated. That comment really resonated with me because it reminded me of my own experience of being a Black girl in school and feeling like my voice wasn't supposed to matter on certain issues.

GC:

That's such a powerful insight. It shows how important it is to create spaces where young people can engage with these issues. It's been amazing hearing about the work you're doing. Before we wrap up, is there anything else you'd like to add, or any final thoughts on where we go from here?

VM:

I think the most important thing is to continue creating spaces for young people to engage with these issues and to support them in understanding the world around them. They are the future leaders, and if we can equip them with the tools to think critically and act compassionately, they will create the change we need. It's about building solidarity and providing opportunities for them to shape the future they want to see.

GC:

What a great way to end our conversation. Valerie, thank you so much for your time and for all the work you're doing. It's been an absolute pleasure to have you on the program.

VM:

Thank you so much for having me, Gertrude. It's been a pleasure.