

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

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### Abstract

This opening chapter outlines the background and focus of this book and conceptualises our key terms, such as ‘international development’ and ‘crises’. This chapter explains that by examining the relationship between education and international sustainable development in the context of crises, this book aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role that education can play in international development and how international developments can shape education. The structure of this book is outlined as well at the end of the chapter.

*Keywords:* Education; international; sustainable development; crises; glocal; global

### 1.1 Background

This book aims to analyse the role that education plays in international development and how international developments shape education. This ambition is achieved through examining the relationship between education and international sustainable development in the under-explored context of crises.

Different traditions of sociological scholarly thought have appealed to the idea of an often mutually shaping relationship between education and societal development. A plethora of renowned thinkers from different temporal contexts

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**Education and Sustainable Development in the Context of Crises:  
International Case Studies of Transformational Change, 3–7**



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around the globe have mentioned such a relationship. One example is Freire's (1970) powerful theorisation of the two scenarios of societal development and the role of education in this. In the first scenario, education is used to sustain an oppressive structure in which citizens are raised as passive recipients of the order that is imposed on them by the oppressors. In the second scenario, education serves as a liberating tool for bringing up critical thinkers who are enabled to seek ways to transform the society for the better. In both scenarios, there is a strong relationship between the nature of an education system and what happens in the wider society. In another example, Sen's seminal work on the Capability Approach highlights that human development and well-being could be measured and compared internationally only when considering the opportunities or, in other terms, freedoms that people have, and education should be one of such basic freedoms of every person (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007). The last example places an emphasis on education and the international, bringing us closer to the focus of this book.

Given the above theorisation of the role that education plays in international development and how international developments shape education makes it unsurprising that a number of theoretical and empirical studies on this topic have already been published. Their key foci include analysing internationalisation as a key contextual factor in developing education which, in result, is becoming more and more international (e.g., Cambridge & Thompson, 2004); discussing the role of education in the development of countries – for example, those below the top 50 in the annual publication of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report (Harber, 2014); problematising the relationship between education and national development as (not) always positive and present (e.g., Chabbot & Ramirez, 2000); and analysing education as a tool for fostering global citizenship, seen as a driver of positive change internationally (e.g., Mannion et al., 2016) and, more recently, also as a driver of international sustainable development (e.g., Jimenez et al., 2017). Education for sustainable development (ESD) has emerged as a 'buzzword' in recent relevant scholarship (Meland, 2022, p. 792). While ESD does uncover many nuances of the much-needed work that education can facilitate in achieving sustainable development, at the same time, it misses out on the focus on the role of contextual factors in the uneven sustainable development pattern around the world. Education may contribute to sustaining some of such disparities in the practices. Understanding and exploring the two-way relationship between education and international (sustainable) development, as explained more below, can help education institutions truly become vehicles of transformational change in the wider community.

## 1.2 The Focus of This Book

While all the above-cited sources are essential to provide an important account of the links between education and international development, they also evidence an apparent gap in our knowledge regarding this matter from a particular perspective of crises that have become an integral feature of global development. This broad gap is addressed in this book, while exploring the relationship between education and international development.

So, what does *international development* mean? It is a debated terrain. All the above-cited scholars have pointed out the evolving and complex nature of this concept. Harber (2014), for instance, acknowledges how pre-world-wars' vision of development that was associated with improvement altered predominantly after World War II (WWII). The world already clearly divided itself into industrialised countries and poorer countries, with the former being expected to help the latter in their economic progress. More recent 'social indicators' of development (e.g., health, education, well-being, environment) became more sophisticated, having 'put people at the centre' of development (Harber, 2014, p. 12). Our definition of *international development* in this book is informed by such a vision of international development focused on human development, albeit in the context of the aim of the sustainable development of our planet, as advocated in the recent Human Development Report 2021–2022 of the UNDP (2022). The report places the 'focus on the quality of relationships connecting people and planet' and also acknowledges the need to develop 'capacities to navigate uncertain futures', given the ever-emerging crises (UNDP, 2022, p. 60). In this book, we are concerned specifically with *international sustainable development*. The mere phrasing of this term to include the emphasis on sustainability aligns our discussion with the overarching aim of the United Nations' 'orchestration' of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) to resolve the issues that the planet is facing and improve lives globally (Kushnir & Nunes, 2022, p. 3). We pursue this alignment with the SDGs with the undeniable recognition of the crisis context in which international sustainable development has been facilitated.

Crises are complex interrelated phenomena, and sociologists have struggled for decades to arrive at a generally accepted explanation of what *crises* mean (Boin et al., 2020; McCormick, 1978). Nevertheless, all attempts in the recent decades to understand the phenomenon of crises with reference to international development, such as in McCormick (1978) and Boin et al. (2020), share the following commonalities: crises are a set of interrelated factors that disturb the normal operation of people, organisations, their relationships, resources, etc., and crises are integral to the process of change. The world has witnessed a plethora of various crises recently, including the development of post-truth politics, based on raising populism and fake news (Ylä-Anttila, 2018) such as in the phenomenon of 'Trumpism' in the United States (e.g., Miah, 2022). Other examples of crises include wars such as in Syria and Ukraine (Freire, 2022), persisting infringement on the rights of marginalised groups such as in the case of women under the Taliban rule in Afghanistan (Singh, 2022), climate change contributing to wildfires and droughts globally and even famine in east Africa (Warsame et al., 2022), as well as the Covid pandemic that has shaken the world on all fronts (e.g., economic) (Boin et al., 2020). The increasing 'glocalisation' – the interconnectedness between the global and the local contexts (Roudometof, 2016, p. 391) – indicates a (potential) growing interrelatedness between global and local crises.

There is, therefore, the need to explore the relationship between education and international sustainable development in the context of crises, which constitutes the focus of this book. Crises, such as economic crises, political crises, and natural disasters, can have a major impact on education systems and on the ability of education to contribute to development. By examining this relationship in the

context of crises, this book aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role that education can play in international development and how international developments can shape education. This understanding is crucial for those researching and teaching education and sustainability issues in higher education in order to inspire solutions and contribute to positive change in the face of crises.

This book presents a collection of analyses that explore various aspects of the relationship between education and international sustainable development, with a particular attention to various overlapping global and/or local recent or current crises.

The originality of the focus of this book is threefold. First, it locates the discussion of the interconnection between education and international sustainable development in the context that has not been the focus of related literature – the context of crises that are an integral feature of global development. Second, Part II of this book analyses three unique country case studies from a non-Western context (Iraq, Somalia, and South Korea), which showcase how the relationship between education and international sustainable development has been evolving in a range of different crises in these national contexts. The final part of this book proposes two unique avenues of moving towards addressing the world's interconnected crises through education in the ambition to facilitate international sustainable development.

### 1.3 Book Structure

Following this introductory chapter, this book develops in four parts. Part I includes a key theoretical Chapter 2 which conceptualises the international phenomenon of crises. Part II of this book comprises Chapters 3–5 which present three unique country case studies, namely Iraq, Somalia, and South Korea, on education and international sustainable development in times of crises. Part III includes Chapter 6 which discusses migration crises in relation to education as an illustration of the context of crises in the international domain. The final part of this book – Part IV – includes two chapters that discuss potential solutions to the world's crises through education. Chapter 7 focuses on the role of the 'communicative action' of the participants of the teaching and learning process, while Chapter 8 evokes the role of 'the individual' in the international sustainable development through pursuing the inner development goals. The final concluding Chapter 9 provides closure to the debates presented in this book.

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