

**Dissertation Title:** From Development Education to Global Learning: Exploring Conceptualisations of Theory and Practice Amongst Practitioners in DECs in England

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## Abstract

This research explores how Development Education and Global Learning (DEGL) is conceptualised and informed by theory in the context of practitioners working in Development Education Centres (DECs) in England. Whilst the literature exploring DEGL has grown significantly in recent years, very little of this has focused specifically on the perspective of practitioners. Furthermore, a perception prevails that practice remains under-theorised and lacks a coherent conceptual base, contributing to ongoing marginalisation of DECs.

Informed by Critical Grounded Theory, the research analyses data obtained through a series of focus groups. These were designed to engage practitioners in a process of collaborative reflexivity which involved them overtly in the process of interpreting data and the implications for their work. Findings highlight the way practitioners conceptualise DEGL as a process of enabling change at individual level, with the potential for transformative and wider social change. This reflects the shift towards process-orientated and pedagogical approaches seen in the literature. It also reveals a complex interplay of tensions between personal motivations and values, theoretical influences and the social, political and discursive contexts in which DECs' operate.

More significantly, by exploring the emphasis on DEGL as a practice and, drawing on wider literature on professional practice knowledge, evidence was found of practitioners engaging with DEGL through embodied

and knowing practice. This challenged assumptions about a theory-practice divide and opened up new insights into the ways theory can support growing evidence of more coherent alignment between theory, critical pedagogy and practice.

Drawing these insights together, it was possible to see how DEC's might realise their potential as catalysts for change across the organisational and contextual spaces for their work. However, this also depends upon developing their practice and its relationship with knowledge, and their collective capacity, through a community of practice.

**Keywords:** *Development Education; Global Learning; Development Education Centres; Pedagogical; Embodied; Knowing Practice.*

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