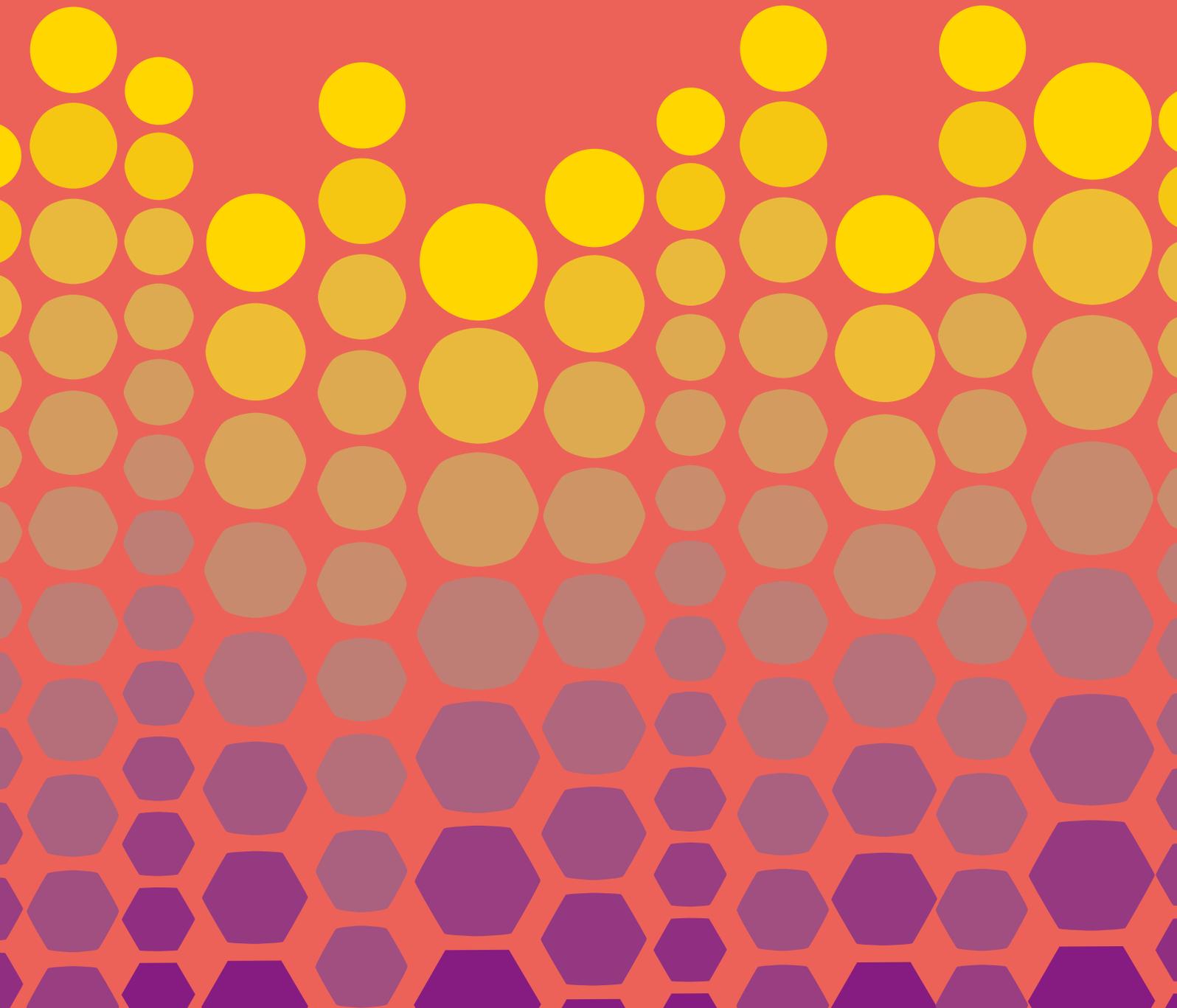


DISCUSSION PAPER | 2024



GLOBAL LEARNING FOR RADICAL CHANGE

Education and the great socio-ecological and
economic transformation





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FOREWORD

We are living in turbulent times: the imperial way of living, especially by the people in the Global North is placing a burden on our planet that is clearly intolerable: environmental disasters are becoming more common, the gap between the haves and have-nots is constantly widening, while conflict and a hunger for power are erupting into vicious wars. It will take new approaches to manage these challenges, and we will have to reconsider – even unlearn and realign – our current mindsets and behavioural patterns. The call for socio-ecological and economic transformation is becoming increasingly clamorous. But what might this mean and what can we do – as educational practitioners – to contribute to this process?

Over recent months, the Working Group for Global Learning at VENRO has taken a thorough look at what educational practice can and should be in the context of social, ecological and economic transformation. At a conference in summer 2023, we discussed various approaches and different perspectives concerning the link between education and transformation and considered how transformative learning could be implemented. It became clear in this context that ‘business as usual’ would hardly be viable. Faced with the current issues and challenges, the familiar and practised (global) economic approaches and political instruments seem impotent and misguided. The changes must be radical, so fundamental. No longer can we spend our time treating symptoms. We must now get to the root of the problems and change the prevalent structures. Transformation that aims to establish global justice and ensure a good life for everyone can only succeed if we all – individually, as members of society and political systems and as (global) citizens – embark on this journey together. We are all called upon to reflect on our mindsets, interpretations and actions and to question which elements of what we know and aspire to that have brought the world into this perilous

state we must unlearn and rethink. This will also involve opening up to each other and listening to everyone’s voice. We must let go of hegemonic perceptions and listen to those whose knowledge (and wisdom) has been marginalised and disregarded for too long.

The VENRO Working Group for Global Learning is publishing this discussion paper as a contribution to the discussion and to the question of transformative movements from the perspective of educational work. Our wish is to embark on a journey, to get involved and to move steadily towards the utopia of an equitable global community. It is our conviction that this change can be driven to a considerable extent by educational processes and work that is geared towards transformation. We seek to engage with people who perceive and illuminate learning and education for a social, ecological and economic transformation from their different perspectives – and will do so openly, inquisitively and joyfully. The Working Group for Global Learning sees this discussion paper as a step forward in its process of deliberations, which began even before 2014 and produced earlier VENRO publications on transformative learning in 2014 and 2018. We have investigated the question of which forms and approaches can contribute to viable political, critical and emancipatory education work. It is our wish to consciously refrain from using the term ‘development policy’. This is because the discourse about who defines ‘development’ and the associated, often hegemonic understanding of the term are inherent to the questions we explore in this publication.

The paper begins with contributions by educational practitioners from the North and South who describe their perception of transformation and their role in the process. Following their views is an article by Klaus Seitz, who sheds light on the

historical development of current educational concepts and categorises for us when and where the transformative aspiration emerged within education.

In the first part, we explore the question of what we mean precisely when we speak of transformation and which visions for the future this entails. Uchita de Zoysa takes a critical look at the suitability of the SDGs as a vision for the future and provides a mid-term review of the 2030 Agenda. Claudia Gimena Roa Avendaño embarks with us on a journey into the Amazon rainforests and shows what we can learn from the wisdom of indigenous women. The article by the Futures Probes Collective presents a futurology method that can be used to develop visions of what might lie ahead, while Jan Siegmeier illuminates the fraught relationship between economic growth and sustainability.

In the second part, we explore the implementation of transformative education and learning processes in practice. Hanna Butterer dedicates her article to the management of conflicts and explains what we can learn from political education. Nilda Inkermann describes four dimensions that educational practitioners can use to classify Global Learning from a transformative viewpoint. Mirja Buckbesch investigates the issue of how a holistic, transformative ap-

proach can be applied successfully in institutions. Germanwatch, Verband Entwicklungspolitik Niedersachsen, VENRO and Konzeptwerk Neue Ökonomie outline how they put transformative learning into practice.

Finally, the third part examines the extent to which political activism and educational work can or even should belong together. Thomas Hohn discusses whether political activism in educational work will remain merely a wish or can actually become a reality. Johanna Fincke advocates closer ties between educational work and campaigning, while Joseph Kenson Sakala describes how he naturally combines activism and educational work in his own professional life.

We owe a debt of gratitude to everyone who contributed to this publication. It is our hope that the discussion paper will stimulate, enrich and advance the discourse and practice of education in the interests of social, ecological and economic transformation and look forward to continuing to engage with you.

Enjoy the read!

Gundula Büker and Sigrun Landes

Chairs of the VENRO Working Group for Global Learning

Gundula Büker

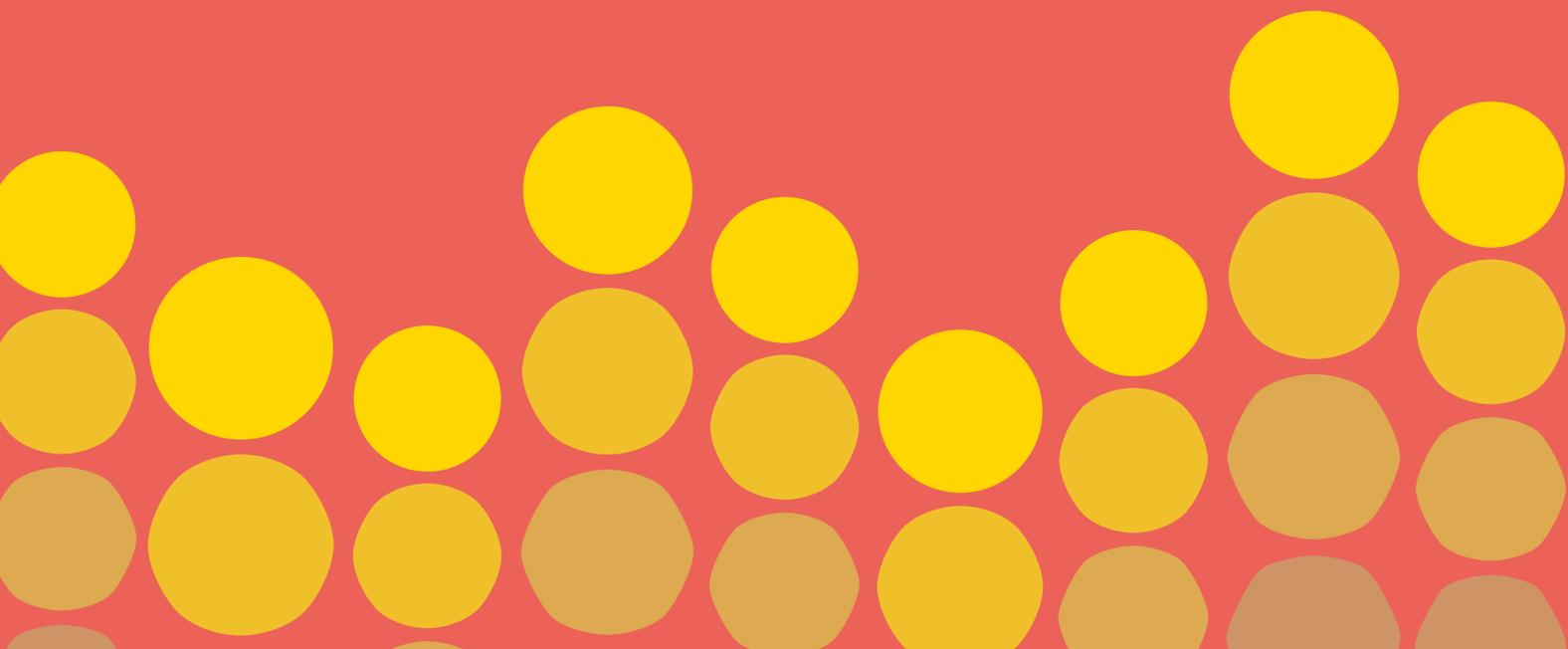


Sigrun Landes





EDUCATION AND TRANSFORMATION – AN INTRODUCTION



HOW EDUCATION CAN HELP US TO CREATE THE ‘IDEAL WORLD’

An interview with education practitioners from South Africa, Chile and Germany

The interview was conducted by Julia Wältring, Verband Entwicklungspolitik Niedersachsen (VEN e. V).

How does the ideal world for future generations look like from your perspective?

Jorge: I believe in a future with generations that respect the rights of nature and the dignity of people, regardless of their origin. I imagine people who learn the language of mother earth and live in gratitude and with society. I joyfully understand us as part of a greater whole that embraces us. Each one of us can find their best version of a conscious human being by developing spiritual, economic, educational, and health prevention practices, to aspire to and achieve a good live.

Nomatlou: We need efficient and creative youth who can manage to deal with global issues. Young people who can tolerate and accept differences across the world, such as cultural beliefs and religions. They are active on the ground to promote a healthy development of the world. They constantly advocate for their thoughts and beliefs on humanitarian and environmental issues. Leaders and decision-makers need to learn from these young people and their modern ways to handle the world’s pressing issues, such as the environmental crisis and social inequality.

Sarah: In my imagination, the world for future generations is a world with peace, justice and a balanced eco-system. Everyone should have the same chances and rights, regardless of e.g. gen-

der or origin. Access to quality education and the chance to build on one’s own talents are essential. In an ideal world, everyone has the possibility to engage in decision-making processes. Voices from marginalised people are heard. People are working together around the world to find solutions instead of building borders and starting wars. And people are living in harmony with nature.

How do we get there? What knowledge and capabilities are necessary in order to design this ideal world?

Nomatlou: The younger generation has proven that it can educate the world on how to be caring, creative, efficient workers and how to give back to the community at the same time. They are the seeds for a fruitful future. We must be open to learn from each other and to look up to each other. Networking and partnership are key. We should create courageous programmes that engage with scholars, researchers, policy advisors, implementers and civil society to bring research-based insights to political decision-makers. To do so, we could for example address the Global Solutions Initiative with our messages. It is a network of world-renowned think tanks that propose policy responses to major global problems to the G20, the G7 and other global governance structures.

Sarah: I think people need knowledge on different levels. I agree with Nomatlou that learning from each other is an important point. Global partnerships can support that. People need to know about

the problems and their global interrelations. Some might learn about a problem like climate change or existing injustice, others might rather feel and experience it in their own lives. Both can lead to the point that they feel that something is going wrong. Then, people have to learn to question things and to change perspectives. Skills of self-reflection are crucial, as they support critical thinking. Finally, people need to know their rights, to make use of them. They need to know how to become active.

Jorge: Concepts of ancestral languages and their practical application in daily life can guide us here. We need to understand the language of nature. Ancestral concepts teach us to set the care for Mother Earth as a priority. Mother Earth provides us with all the necessary resources to survive. Mother Earth even helps us to regenerate the damage we cause. The problem is that it does not recover at the same speed of our damage. Today – in times of crisis – we can recycle these concepts to extract their deep meaning and to apply it at local level. Concepts such as solidarity, community work, exchange of knowledge and products without monetary intermediation can be key in a world of growing economic and, above all, spiritual crisis.

How do you understand your role as an educational activist in this process?

Nomatlou: The concept of transformation is not yet well integrated in higher education institutions. In order to enable education to play a key role in transformation, we have to reconsider our educational approaches, to transform our teaching methods and contexts, and to increase the emphasis on sustainability in curricula. My role is to challenge the school system to accommodate everyone by providing relevant skills, giving young people opportunities to participate and act together. My primary focus is to facilitate real transformative learning by developing procedures and environments that empower everyone in the school community. I work with young people, particularly those who are

imaginative, to help them comprehend rather than solve problems. I want to foster a sense of teamwork and cooperation among students.

Sarah: The role of education in the transformation process is to bring everyone on board. Education can make the need for a transformation visible. However, I think the role of education is also to show good examples and encourage people to change something. Change is not always easy and for some it relates insecurity and fear. We do not know where the transformation process is leading to and we have to live with many contradictions and challenges on the way. Similar to Nomatlou, I see my role in facilitating. By asking questions, I provoke critical thinking and reflection. With my educational work, I would like to encourage and empower people to become active and I hope to accompany them a bit in the transformation process. I offer space for exchange and for learning from each other and supporting each other – on the local but also on a global level. I connect people and try to make different examples and perspectives visible. For instance, we built the global network Learn2Change in 2015. It enriches me both personally and professionally.

The Learn2Change-Global Network of Educational Activists

The Learn2Change network connects educational activists worldwide. It deals with the role of education in social change processes. In the network, education activists around the world can exchange methods and approaches in their educational work and learn from each other. It was founded in 2014 and started its work in 2015 with a summer academy at which civil society activists from 19 different countries came together. Since then, regular online and offline events taken place. Further information on the network can be found at www.learn2change-network.org

Jorge: Our role as activists is to show children, youth, adults and all the actors in the educational process that there are new ways to take on the challenges that come our way in different aspects of life. Education can be an efficient vehicle for the liberation of the human being. I agree with Sarah that both local and global levels are important. We need to promote a quality education with cultural relevance, that addresses the real problems of local contexts while also referring to global interrelations. On the local level, I support the creation of different types of cooperatives. Through the educational curriculum at school, we seek to teach about aspects of environmental care. We want to inspire children and the community in general to value the importance of the rights of nature and the respect for the dignity of nature and people, which we derive from the old generations. On the global level, I seek to inform about the local, alternative groups that develop activities of economic, educational, cultural and religious liberation. With the combination of both levels, we can promote the search for good living and generate an efficient response to the climatic urgency and the spiritual crisis of Western civilization.

Given the multiple crises in the world, transformation is needed immediately. Educational learning processes are mostly long-term processes. How do you deal with this discrepancy in your daily work?

Jorge: Our work tries to be as practical as possible: We generate activities that both teach about the respect for nature and directly translate into actions of care. It is important to include not only the students but their whole families and communities. That is why our work aims to extend to families. We generate space for economic devel-

opment, we promote the planting of native trees, organic crops and the use of natural pollinators. By doing so, we support to generate products that benefit all living beings in the territory.

Sarah: I can strongly relate to that. In my understanding, education connects with the indication of ways to become active. It is not (only) about studying content, but a main part of my educational work is to provoke reflection and to think about one's own scope for action. Nevertheless, the discrepancy that you mention is real. In some moments, I ask myself if I should invest my energy into concrete activism rather than education. However, I still believe that education is very important for the transformation process, even though I might not see fast results. To deal with this insecurity and discrepancy, I try to work on the same things for myself that I also try to 'teach', namely resilience and learning to live with dilemma.

Nomatlou: For me education is power, skills development is power. I think that transformation can start as an individual learning process. I believe that charity begins at home and can continue to operate as a magnetic force, connecting the efforts of people from the local and national to the global levels. Participation and ownership are important aspects. If people feel like they helped to shape the overall vision for our future, they will participate more in creating this future and they will start to share the vision with others. I believe that it takes a village to raise a child. We can only do it together. We have to reach out to people in a language they understand and we have to make people feel they are useful parts of the transformation process.



Nomatlou Mahlangou is an arts educator, motivational speaker, moderator, facilitator and choreographer from South Africa. She took up community art development in her early 20ties to address poverty and crime rates among young people, whose lives are influenced by political tensions in rural areas, informal settlements and townships. She helps to strengthen the community and promote sustainable development through art. In 2001, she founded her own organization called Golden Youth Club in the dusty road of Winterveldt. Today, the organisation has more than 150 members who do arts, SDG education and skills development. It creates jobs for women, youth and people living with disabilities. Noma is a member of the international Learn2Change network of educational activists.



Jorge Huichalaf is a primary school teacher, a community expert in the rights of nature and a cooperative manager in economics and agroecology from Chile. He is president of the Educational Co-operation Koyam. From 2017 to 2021 he was president of the Cooperativa de Ahorro y Crédito Endógena Mapuche Kúme Mogen a savings and credit cooperative which gives access to financing and thus to self-determined economic development to the inhabitants of the Mapuche areas in Chile. He holds a master degree in education and is founding member of the international Learn2Change network of educational activists.



Sarah Laustroer is active in global learning, education for sustainable development and transformative learning. She works for the VNB (Verein Niedersächsischer Bildungsinitiativen), an adult education organization in Germany. She works with (young) adults and education multipliers mainly on topics of sustainability and participation. Exchanging with partners from the Global South, integrating different perspectives and reflecting one's own thoughts and actions are central aspects for her understanding of education. Since 2015, she coordinates the “Learn2Change – Global Network of Educational Activists” at the VNB.

SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION AS AN EDUCATIONAL TASK

The origin and future of transformative educational concepts

Klaus Seitz

It does not come as a surprise that in an age in which we face multiple crises, significant hopes are placed in education. A new way of learning should mobilise the innovative potential within people and show the world how to escape the dead-end street of its disastrous development. Even within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), education is perceived as key to sustainable global development and a lever for long overdue eco-social transformation. The sections of civil society that are committed to development policy did not become the driving force behind this kind of transformative education just recently. Many VENRO member organisations have long been involved in development-related educational work. Within this context, their pedagogical practice builds on the concepts of Global Learning (GL) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

VENRO explicitly connected this civil society education commitment to transformation processes, even before ‘transformation’ became a ubiquitous buzzword. For example, a VENRO paper marking the launch of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development in 2005 stated: “Education for Sustainable Development cannot be limited to imparting knowledge and skills about sustainability; rather, it is education aimed at social change, it is education for transformation that focuses on individual changes in attitude and behaviour as well as structural and institutional reforms.”¹ A year before the SDGs were adopted,

the title of the VENRO paper on the outcome of this UN Decade (2014) defined ‘Global Learning’ in programmatic terms to mean “transformative Education for Sustainable Development”.²

‘Transformative education’ and ‘transformative learning’ have since become iridescent and guiding concepts by which the various approaches seeking pedagogical answers to the development problems of global society can be classified. This article outlines some of the lines of tradition that are nourishing the current discourse.

Transformative learning means education with a formative mandate

The assertion that education is tasked with a formative mandate that aims not only at personal development but also but at the development of society is not without controversy. In the critical debate on ESD and GL, it is impossible not to hear the warnings against instrumentalising education along the lines of ‘starry-eyed idealism’.³ It is important to note, however, that the connections between human education and social well-being are deeply engrained in our modern understanding of education. Even Johann Amos Comenius (1592–1670), the pioneer of modern educational theory, was convinced that the purpose of education is to improve the circumstances under which we live: “For if all people were taught about the universe from the beginning, they

¹ VENRO e.V. 2005

² VENRO e.V. 2014

³ Cf. Christ/Sommer 2023

would all possess true wisdom and the world would be a place full of order, light and peace.”⁴

But this pedagogical optimism was predicated on universal access to high-quality education. And this condition is yet to be fulfilled, even now. However, the fact that we remain far removed from the aspirational order of global peace – despite the historically unprecedented expansion of education – does not mean that the optimistic vision espoused by Comenius is wrong. But there may be other good reasons to doubt the power of education as a driver for societal change.

With the institutionalisation of public education, countries around the world have made clear that education fulfils an indispensable function in modern society. And this is not limited merely to reproducing the prevailing social order. Instead and ideally, it places a focus on its in-built potential to renew society as well. The theologian and pedagogue Friedrich Schleiermacher summed up this ambivalent educational mandate almost 200 years ago: “Education should be structured in such a way that young people are equipped to engage with what they find, but also become empowered to embrace improvements as they arise.”⁵

In developmental education, development becomes the subject of pedagogical debate

The act of aligning education (also) with the challenges of future societal development is not something that was invented by modern development pedagogy alone. The principle is enshrined in numerous older educational traditions, albeit under different names. However, it was not until the late 1970s that development pedagogy addressed development as an explicit subject of pedagogical

debate. Adding to this is the aim to shed light on the global scope of this complex in the face of worldwide development crises: “Development pedagogy seeks to respond with educational means to problems that possess a universal dimension encompassing the entire global community.”⁶ It then becomes clear that education is involved in the emergence of undesirable global developments and can also contribute to their management. Of equal significance is the fact that the methodology of development education was not conceived on the academic drawing board of educational science. It is instead the product of reflection on the educational practices embraced by the development action group movement. Arbeitskreis Dritte Welt Reutlingen was the first publisher of the Zeitschrift für Entwicklungspädagogik (ZEP), which was founded in 1978. The working group has provided committed teachers with educational materials for lessons on development policy issues since the 1960s.

The term ‘development education’ has been in use since the late 1950s. Initially it was endorsed primarily by church and other non-state actors and accompanied by the establishment of development policy as a political field of action. It follows, therefore, that both of these areas are children of the Cold War. At the time, the principal tasks of development education were to engender understanding in the general public and induce support for the development policy commitments undertaken by the state, churches and non-governmental aid organisations.⁷ But the timidity with which schools were opened to global development issues was due primarily to ‘pressure from the street’, as Wolfgang Hug, the historian and educationalist, conceded in 1969: “The compulsion to teach about the Third World does not come from the curricula.

4 Comenius 1991, p. 16

5 Schleiermacher 1957, p. 31

6 Tremel 1983, p. 6

7 Seitz 1993

It comes from the students, the young generation, from people who have experienced our world in its global dimension.”⁸ Internationalism of the student movement ensured furthermore that previous modernisation-theoretical and paternalistic notions of development policy were challenged by approaches in development-related education that were both critical of the prevailing ideology and emancipatory.

Global Learning quits with paternalistic perceptions of development policy

A theory and practice of Global Learning emerged within the development education community with the end of the Cold War and the burgeoning debate on globalisation. On the one hand, this involved a shift in the subject area compared to development education until then: away from development issues along the North-South divide and towards the development crisis in global society. On the other hand, Global Learning adopted a new and holistic understanding of education that was rooted in action. The foundations had already been laid by a pedagogical discussion in the United States during the 1970s, so much earlier than in Germany. The New York educationalist Robert G. Hanvey penned one of the earliest concepts for a form of ‘Global Education’. Published initially in 1976 and inspired also by “Limits of Growth”, the first study by the⁹, Club of Rome, his essay “An Attainable Global Perspective” argued in favour of enshrining a “global perspective” in education.¹⁰ Entitled “Schooling and Citizenship in a Global Age”, Lee Anderson presented the first study in 1979 that derived the need for a refocus of education based on an analysis of globalisation processes.¹¹ Schule für

eine Welt – a Swiss forum and civil society initiative – adapted the competences for Global Citizenship that Lee put forward to create a catalogue entitled “Learning Objectives for One World”, which was first published in 1985. In doing so, it introduced the debate about Global Learning to the German-speaking world as well.¹²

The call for a “global approach to education” was put forward as early as 1974 in the ground-breaking UNESCO recommendation ‘concerning education for international understanding and co-operation and world peace, and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms’.¹³ A process of embracing thoughts and actions within a global context should not be implemented primarily in the form of additional learning material, but as a coherent learning principle. An international and intercultural perspective and a global perspective can be applied to any educational subject. It is therefore reasonable to say:

Global Learning means teaching the horizons of the world.

Global Learning is an approach that enables the grasp of local circumstances as they relate to a global context and that empowers actors to reconcile local action with global challenges.

In turn, this builds on the Global Citizenship Education (GCED) programme, which the then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon proclaimed in 2012 as one of the three priorities of his Global Education First initiative. GCE was then incorporated in SDG 4.7, along with Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), human rights education, peace

8 Hug 1969, p. 272

9 Hanvey 1976

10 Meadows et al. 1972

11 Anderson 1979

12 Forum Schule 1989

13 UNESCO 1974

education and education for gender equality and cultural diversity, among others.

Education for Sustainable Development is strengthened by the SDG

Of the education concepts enshrined in SDG 4.7 that are designed to promote realisation of the SDG and address the human right to quality education, it is primarily GCED and ESD that are currently at the centre of international education programmes. In this context, their respective advocates are vying for the claim to provide an umbrella beneath which the majority of development-based disciplines can assemble. Of them, it seems clear that ESD has achieved the greatest progress towards implementation. This is particularly true in Germany as well. Status reports prepared as part of ESD monitoring indicate that, on average, at least one mention of the concerns of ESD and also ‘ESD-related areas’ (such as the clearly subordinate Global Learning) are found on every page of the curricula and education policy documents in the federal states.

At international level, the material impulses for ESD are rooted in Agenda 21, which was adopted by UNESCO 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. Chapter 36 reaffirms the reorientation of education towards the guiding principle of sustainable development. Signatories agreed on a sweeping campaign to raise public awareness in order to help “strengthen attitudes, values and actions that are compatible with sustainable development”. The UN Decade of ESD 2005–2014, the subsequent UNESCO Global Action Programme and the current ESD for 2030 decade emphatically call for the prioritisation of ESD in education policy.

Within this context, the spectrum of ESD approaches is just as diverse as development education or GL had been before. It ranges from instrumental approaches, which are primarily aimed at imparting knowledge and attitudes in relation to politically prescribed values and behaviours for a sustainable

way of life, and emancipatory approaches, which adopt perceptions of a sustainable world itself as the subject of critical reflection and are intended to enable self-determination and self-efficacy in a transforming world. As Paul Vare and William Scott demonstrated in 2007, these approaches can also be perceived as complementary and not necessarily as rivals.¹⁴

Emancipatory transformative learning seeks to induce individual and social change

The emancipatory approach to ESD has much in common with transformative learning, the main focus of this publication. But even this debate, which might succeed all previous lines of development education, has a history with numerous ramifications. The American educationalist Jack Mezirow, who died in 2014, had already been working on a transformative learning theory since the 1970s, which provides a detailed description of the changes in individual perspectives on meaning and habitual frameworks. While his work mainly addressed transformations in the mental infrastructure of learning (adult) individuals, the debate around the need for ecological and social transformation places a focus on transforming society. In Germany, it was largely initiated by the report entitled “World in Transition” by the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU).¹⁵ It proposed that the social learning and search process that this would require should be structured by transformative education.

However, in their comprehensive analysis of the already extensive English-language literature on transformative learning, a Swedish team of research-

¹⁴ Vare/Scott 2007

¹⁵ WBGU 2011

chers complains of “a tendency towards an individualistic, cognitivist, optimistic, and harmonious picture of learning for sustainable development”¹⁶. Hence it is hardly surprising that the programme of ‘transgressive learning’¹⁷ already contains proposals that raise the bar and pin hopes on disruptive change and experimental action for transformation towards sustainability that deliberately pushes the boundaries.

It seems unlikely that the last word of pedagogical reflection has been spoken on the precise capacity of education to improve the circumstances in which we live. But it has become evident in the short learning history of development education that shaping a global society that is rooted in sustainability and solidarity will require social learning processes that exceed by far the scope of what can be taught and learnt in educational institutions.



Klaus Seitz is an educational scientist. He has held a variety of positions in development cooperation, development journalism and research and teaching and has been head of the policy department at Bread for the World for the past 16 years. He chaired the VENRO Education Working Group from 1996 to 1998 and was Deputy Chairman of the VENRO Executive Board from 2013 to 2017.

16 Boström et al. 2018

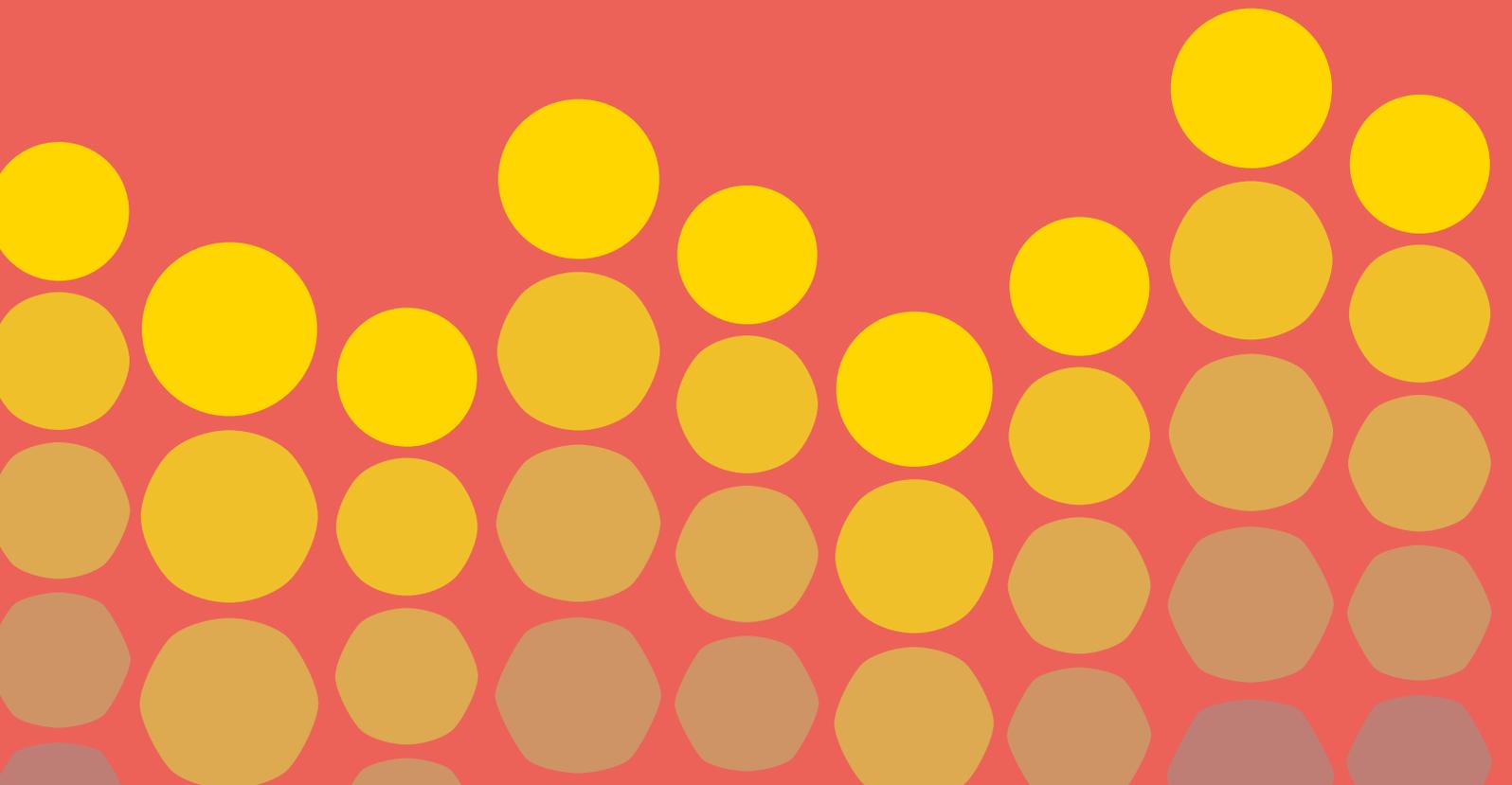
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WHICH
TRANSFORMATION DO
WE ACTUALLY MEAN?
VISIONS FOR A
SUSTAINABLE FUTURE



SUSTAINABILITY IN A CRISIS

A critical assessment halfway through the 2030 Agenda and what we need now

Uchita de Zoysa

Looking back on decades of multiple crises, it is apparent that they affect our food, fuel, energy, health and debt systems leading to disaster and conflicts worldwide. Concurrently, when we look back on decades of international agreements for climate action, sustainable development, human rights, and peace we have not been able to find an adequate and effective way to change our business-as-usual with which we are destroying our our eco-system.

Acknowledging the cascading and connected crises at the beginning of 2023, the World Economic Forum demanded a new descriptor to define the scale of the problems of the world. Due to the interplay between the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the energy, cost-of-living and climate crises, a ‘Polycrisis’ has been finally declared. Analysts speak of a polycrisis when crises in multiple global systems become causally entangled in ways that significantly degrade humanity’s prospects.¹

Did we have to wait and ignore warnings for decades to acknowledge finally this polycrisis? Did we have to wait until the financial systems that had failed humanity for a long time, had finally failed openly? Now even those who have protected and continue to protect a predatory economic and financial system have finally acknowledged that global problems are intertwined. We must start re-

designing our way forward. There is a lot more to do than what those responsible for the polycrisis are saying! The sustainability of the earth is in a crisis, and we are still trying to negotiate our way out rather than making radical transformations.

Why the SDGs are failing

The 6th Assessment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which was recently published, outlines that climate change will increase in all regions of the globe over the coming decades even if the 1.5°C target of global warming is met.² Science has been very clear and constantly warned that there will be increasing heat waves, longer warm seasons, and shorter cold seasons. At the mid-way point on the way to 2030, the Global Sustainable Development Report was published in 2023 with a preliminary assessment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).³

The report shows that only about 12% of roughly 140 targets that have been analysed are on track. Further, around 50% are moderately or severely off track and some 30% have either seen no movement or regressed below the 2015 baseline. Without urgent course correction and acceleration, humanity will face prolonged periods of crisis and uncertainty that are triggered by and reinforce poverty,

¹ Lawrence et al. 2022

² IPCC 2023

³ United Nations 2023

inequality, hunger, disease, conflict, and disaster. At the global level, the central principle of the SDGs to 'leave no one behind' is at significant risk. The promises of the SDGs are fading, and with them the hope and rights of current and future generations are dwindling.

The promises made by leaders on the so-called last chance to save the earth in 1992 did not contain any political commitment. Hence, the 'Agenda 21' failed. Political leaders and their policy representatives who agreed on the 2030 Agenda that called for transforming our world are again failing and leaving the world in peril. Some reasons for this failure are part of the systemic problems that ail this world:

- A lack of **policy coherence** prevents proper mainstreaming of the SDGs across national policy frameworks that are still crudely skewed towards economic growth instead of wellbeing.
- A lack of **institutional coherence** hinders proper integration between economic, social and environmental policies. This leads to conflicting and contradictory political and policy decisions that impede the progress of sustainable development.
- A lack of **sustainable development budgeting** and **financing architecture** prevents actual commitment to transformation. Meanwhile expenditure on war and corrupt practices of trade continues to soar.
- A lack of **stakeholder engagement** is compromising the central principle of 'leaving no one behind'. An exclusive group holds the power to govern and inherently excludes the public from decision making.
- The lack of **monitoring, evaluation, follow-up and reporting** on the SDGs is excused with a lack of data. At the same time, **data democracy** is ignored by the official statistical systems. This

prevents honest stocktaking, transparency and accountability.

Until the existing political-policy-business nexus continues to defy the global agreements for a transformation, sustainability will be in an eternal crisis. We need a fundamental shift in commitment, solidarity, financing and action to put the world on a better path. And we need this shift now!

A just transition requires firm commitment to climate sustainability financing

The 'Summit for a New Global Financing Pact' convened in Paris in June 2023 raised the central question for a just transition: How can we finance both the fight against poverty and the fight against climate change? The summit claims to have achieved the two objectives of 1) mobilising \$100 billion in support of a green transition in the countries of the Global South by 2023 and 2) reallocating \$100 billion in Special Drawing Rights (SDR) to these countries. The World Bank and other multilateral development banks made further promises, including \$200 billion in additional loans within five years, the introduction of a standard debt suspension clause for borrowing countries in the event of natural disasters, and encouraging private sector investment in the Global South's green transition. With growth in the renewable energy and transport sectors, climate financing has increased at 7% on an annual basis reaching USD 665 billion in 2020.

However, this will not make ends meet.

Despite global climate finance flows steadily increasing in the past decade, current investment levels still fall significantly short of the estimated needs. Given the magnitude of the polycrisis and the challenges to achieve the SDGs, much more is needed. According to the 2021 OECD Global Outlook, 90 out of 122 so-called developing countries are now in economic recession. This is

the highest number at any time since the Second World War. Extreme poverty is on the rise for the first time in over two decades. Even before COVID-19, SDG financing for countries of the Global South was falling short with an estimated annual gap of 2.5 trillion dollars. OECD states that the annual SDG financing gap in countries of the Global South has increased by about 70% to 3.9 trillion in 2020.⁴

The global financial architecture needs to be reformed and redesigned in order to increase funding from billions to trillions. A new financing architecture for a sustainable world is long due. Small incremental approaches will not help a just transition. Like nations, the multilateral development banks and other international financial mechanisms must be in line with and committed to implementing the UNFCCC Paris Agreement and building transformational financial mechanisms to further the SDG pathways of the 2030 Agenda.

The reality is that individual nations will be facing different globally induced breakdown scenarios. They will have to adopt alternative strategies during their transition to prosperity and sustainability. This requires flexibility. When international financing mechanisms fail to respond adequately, the responsibility for transformation remains within the nation states. It becomes vital for the countries of the Global South to mobilise domestic resources. They need to step away from multilateral and bilateral borrowing mentality. Further, they have to reorganise the resource flows by redesigning policy frameworks and institutional structures towards facilitating a circular economy. They have to recalibrate their approach to ecosystem services and innovative financing towards facilitating prosperity for all.

In order to do so, countries need to:

- establish a **resource governance** that regulates and manages resource flows within the tiers of governance, national-provincial-local. It also has to promote the self-governance of resources by non-state actors including international, private, civil society, community and individuals.
- build **resource relationships** that organise how the flow of resources through investment and financing transpires between different stakeholders and actors.
- implement mechanisms of **resource regeneration** that manage how resources are invested and harvested within the ecosystem for inter-generational equity.

We need to adopt strategies for sustainable economies that go beyond growth

Countries, especially those with natural resources, must focus on reorienting their production and consumption patterns. Only by protecting biodiversity, using resources sustainably, conserving ecosystems, and promoting an inclusive, equitable, and circular economy can we advance the regeneration of planetary resources and achieve sustainable development. Economic modeling that builds on ecosystem services is important for this. Adopting a circular economy and moving away from purely growth-motivated development will also help to counteract increasing debt, persistent poverty and social deprivation, and low resilience to disasters. Unlike the linear economy, which follows the extraction-use-disposal logic of resources, the circular economy organises resources more sustainably. Both the use of new raw materials and the generation of waste are minimised.

⁴ OECD 2022

In a world where climate is a challenge, the resilience of consumption and production systems cannot be strengthened without considering biophysical limits, ecosystem service dynamics, social equity, sufficiency, etc. This is another area where the circular economy makes a contribution.

A closer look on SDG 4.7 Education for Sustainable Development

A system-wide, holistic and coherent strategy is far from being implemented. Few countries have made the transition to carbon-negative or carbon-neutral industries. Few countries have replaced growth- and profit-driven economies and fully transitioned to sustainable economies, for example, by adopting a circular economy based on ecosystem services. Few countries have demonstrated their commitment to financing climate resilience and transitioning to sustainable development, despite knowing that the entire world is at risk. The lack of progress in making policies coherent towards sustainable development shows a lack of the right attitude and ability to contribute to change. SDG 4.7 Education for Sustainable Development plays an important role here.

SDG 4.7 calls for all learners to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development by 2030. Education must therefore:

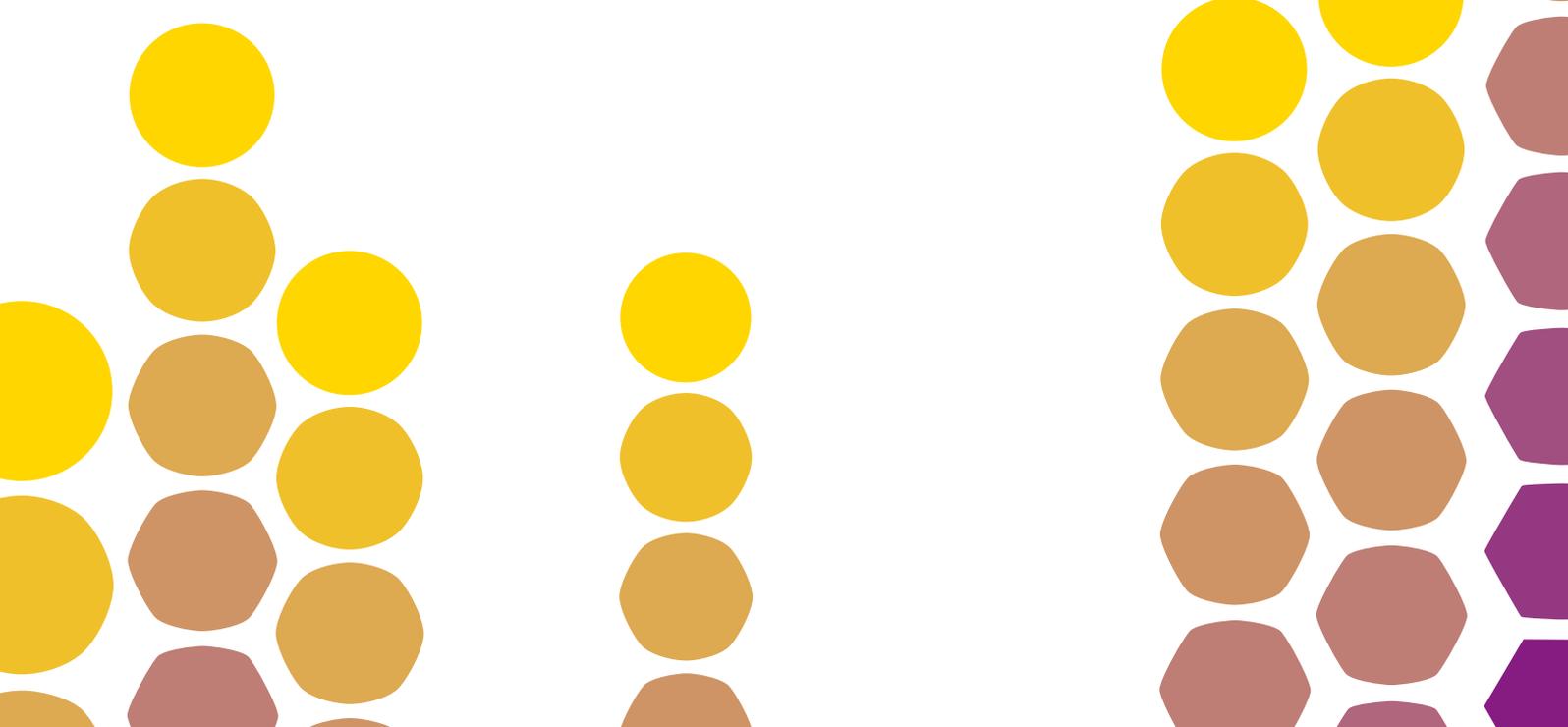
- provide an understanding of biophysical limits and limited capacities of our planet from the youngest age.
- educate leaders at all levels and in all sectors who are able to make decisions based on the common good and think systemically to achieve holistic, coherent outcomes

- promote skills to build sustainable consumption and production systems
- harness the goodness of all people to care for all living things and ecosystems for a better world

We need a new narrative on people's planetary futures

For many decades, scientists have warned that anthropogenic climate change could destroy the earth's systems to a point of no return. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how vulnerable the prevailing socio-economic systems are to collapse. Much thought was given to a 'new normal'. Briefly, people seemed to be aware of the need to adapt our habits to the new conditions. Unfortunately, the thought of a 'new normal' lasted only as long as the threat of the pandemic was present. Since then, poverty is on the rise again, new wars have broken the peace, climate change is advancing, sovereign debt is worsening, and the world is no better off than it was before 2015. Given the lack of political commitment to transformation and the low financial commitment of nations to address the threats of climate change, the challenge of a sustainable world is growing. Knowing that the SDGs are not achievable by 2030, the discourse on a new transformative agenda has already begun. If the world is to be led forward to a sustainable model of prosperity, radical change is needed now! If our transformative journey is to begin, we must develop a new narrative about the future of people on this planet! Such a collective, global narrative must guide the political and bureaucratic strategies for sustainable development! For this we need a „Movement for People's Planetary Future“!

Uchita de Zoysa is a thinker, author, strategist for the local to global climate sustainability transformation with over 30 years of experience working in the public, private, and civil society sectors. He represented Sri Lanka during 2016 and 2017 as the Chief Negotiator for the UN SDG Process in his capacity as Ministerial Advisor on Sustainable Development. In 2018 he established the Sri Lanka Stakeholder SDG Platform and is the Chief Architect of the SDG Transformation Lab, Chairman of Global Sustainability Solutions (GLOSS), Executive Director of Centre for Environment and Development (CED). He is the Author of 'It Has to be Climate Sustainability', Lead Author of the publication 'LOCALISING THE TRANSFORMATION IN THE NEW NORMAL: A Domestic Resource Mobilization Framework for Sustainable Development Goals in Sri Lanka' and the Chief Editor of the 'Independent Peoples Reviews on the SDGs' including the 'Voluntary Peoples Review on the SDGs'.



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EDUCATION OF WISE WOMEN

Understanding the Amazon rainforest and the feeling of Pacha Mama

Claudia Gimena Roa Avendaño

The text was written in Spanish and translated into English by the editors of this publication.

Western education directs the parameters of transformation from a very different perspective than non-Western cultures. Non-Western cultures do not resign themselves to follow the path of homogeneity. Instead, they look for ways to revive their own languages, paths and decisions. These diverse cultural forms opt for other languages and rebel against structures that are not theirs but those of others. Therefore, when I talk about transformation, I will refer in this paper to an educational approach that differs from the formal one. I refer to a story that shows that education can be focused on feeling the calls of Pacha Mama more strongly, following the teachings of nature and the women who are its guardians.

To contextualize this story, I will refer to an event that happened on May 1, 2023, in the Colombian Amazon: in a plane crash, three girls and a boy were lost. Their names are Lesly Jacobo Bonbaire, 13 years old, Solecni Ranoque Mucutuy, 9 years old, Tien Noriel Ranoque Mucutuy, 4 years old, and Cristian Neryman Ranoque Mucutuy, one year old. Contrary to what many thought, they managed to get out alive. After 40 days, groups of indigenous people and members of the Colombian army rescued them. This story will be remembered by the world. It was carried by numerous newspapers in many countries.

The children come from the people of the Munina murui or uitoto, which according to the Indige-

nous Organization of Colombia means: „children of tobacco, coca and sweet yucca“. The education of these children was mainly the role of their grandmother, a wise woman from the indigenous territory of Araracuara. The education the children received from their grandmother was essential for survival when they were lost in the jungle. They knew about cultural practices of how to get into contact with nature itself to help them stay alive and strong. From the beginning, the grandmother was sure that the strength of Pacha Mama – of Mother Earth, of the Common House, whatever words we want to use – would help the children to return. In her interviews, she always maintained that indigenous women are warriors and repeatedly performed rituals so that the spirits of the jungle would come to their assistance.

The education the grandmother gave her granddaughter Lesly was conveyed, as expressed by journalist Juan Diego Quesada in his article of June 10, 2023, in the newspaper *El País*: „as a daughter of that environment, she knows the secrets of the jungle. She knows how to be guided by the sun’s rays that filter through the trees, recognise the paths that are passable, the broken branches, the edible mushrooms, according to an uncle of the minor“.¹ And indeed, it was demonstrated that, to survive the jungle or the manigua, it is necessary to be educated in it, in the food, in the perceptible and imperceptible traces.

¹ Quesada 2023



What we can learn from this story is to look beyond our own educational concepts. We need to observe the learning of languages, of other consciousnesses, of other forms that are not those that are taught in schools, in institutions, but that are given in life in nature. We cannot conceive education without the power of women, or without understanding spaces that are vital to our survival. The experience of the children who got lost in the rainforest shows us that education is important for everyday life. In this case, the classroom was the rainforest. The notebooks and pens were the skills to survive in this environment. The teachers were an elder woman and the secrets of the rainforest.

Although being lost in the rainforest is a quite unique situation, the story teaches us things which are also valid for any other situation, such as

education in an urban context. It relates to our daily life and how to be able to sustain ourselves on this planet. Education as such needs to be rooted in the different forms of how we relate to nature, as social groups who believe that we need to be part of movements and campaigns to resolve the climate crisis, to recover biodiversity, and a common language to defend environmental rights to nature. Receiving an education with a profound appreciation for nature should be encouraged, even before learning how to count or reciting the alphabet. This is part of the reason why I celebrate the recent triumph of social movements and democracy to limit resource extraction in Ecuador, where a majority “voted in a historic referendum to halt the development of all new oilwells in the Yasuní national park in the Amazon, one of the most biodiverse regions on the planet”.²

2 Collyns 2023





For many years, **Claudia Gimena Roa Avendaño** has been developing popular education with local communities in rural and urban areas of Colombia, South America. Alongside the team of Fundaexpresión, she has promoted „Buenvivir“, as a philosophical concept that relates to the protection of sustainable livelihoods and the Pacha Mama, within the Andean and the Amazon region. She has been involved in numerous publications, festivals, exhibitions and workshops with peasant and indigenous groups, and completed research and educational exchanges in various countries of Latin America, Europe and North America.

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APPROACHING TRANSFORMATION WITH METHODS OF FUTUROLOGY

Futures Probes

What precisely can and should transformation look like? And what about the future we envisage and are looking to shape together?

These are core issues that futurologists investigate, for which an immense variety of different approaches and methods have been developed over recent decades. Educational practitioners can draw on these methods of futurology. They can use them to support learners and students to develop visions for a sustainable and globally just future. They can also use them for themselves to become aware of the future which their educational work should promote. Scenario methods are one example.

What are scenarios?

Scenarios describe alternative future situations and shed light on what must happen for them to be achieved. Common features of good scenarios include coherency and comprehensibility for outsiders. They relate to a clearly defined period of time, for instance the year 2045. Scenarios may differ not only in their form of visualisation – from texts or images to films or plays – but above all in their function: they are able to stimulate fresh mindsets and approaches by making connections visible. In addition, they can provide knowledge as a form of orientation. They can also be used as means of communication, for instance by elucidating which steps would be necessary to achieve a vision of the future. Broadly speaking, scenarios also provide a firm basis to expand our range of options – and hence our strategic considerations in relation to future actions. This means that scenarios challenge us to

depart from our traditional thought patterns and to consider new, alternative approaches and what we must do to achieve our goals.

How are scenarios developed?

The first step in larger scenario processes is to collect relevant factors that might influence future developments in a structured form. They are then broken down into their individually possible (although still uncertain from a current perspective) development paths.

An example: the ‘social standing of teachers’ is identified as a relevant factor. This factor may develop in a variety of directions. Potential directions include:

- A** Teachers are perceived around the world as the most important professional group, even ahead of doctors, and are salaried accordingly.
- B** Although teachers enjoy excellent social standing, their job is perceived as more of an inner calling and is rarely rewarded financially..
- C** People only become teachers if they have no other options.

Initial sketches of scenarios can then be prepared once the most relevant influential factors have been collected and broken down into their respective development paths. Building on the premise that each scenario must be inherently coherent, the individual development paths of the various

influential factors are combined. We see an example of this in Figure 1.

The main benefit we can draw from scenarios when attempting to drive transformation in the context of education is the ability to identify potential blind spots and develop new ideas. This does not necessarily require a complex, large-scale scenario process. Future development paths and corresponding options to take action can also be developed and, above all, discussed in a small and rather playful format, for example with the help of a 2x2 scenario matrix.

Playful futurology with a 2x2 matrix

Twelve participants were given the opportunity to try their hands at this kind of scenario ma-

trix during a two-hour workshop at the “Global Learning for radical change? – Education as a key or obstruction to the great transformation?” symposium on 14 June 2023 in Münster. Divided into groups of three, the participants each selected two influencing factors from a prepared set (including ‘EU development’, ‘mental health’ and ‘digitalisation of the working world’) and then determined two opposing development paths. Using a 2x2 scenario matrix, these two influencing factors and their two possible future trajectories were placed on an X- and Y-axis. Participants were then able to outline four future scenarios based on the individual combinations. The groups were told to consider and find a name for the potential consequences of all four scenarios. They were then asked: “What would education look like in each of the four scenarios?”

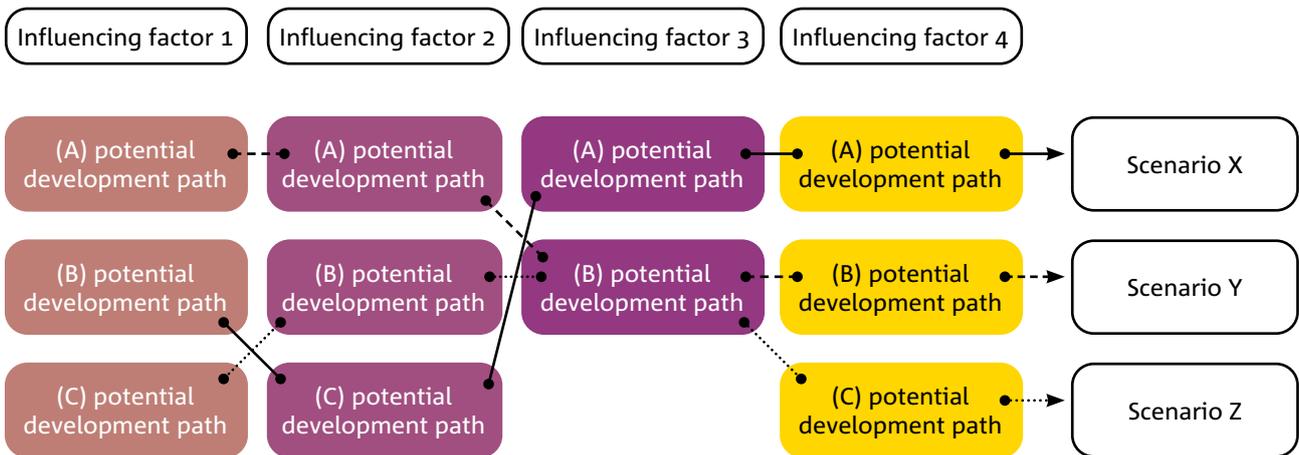
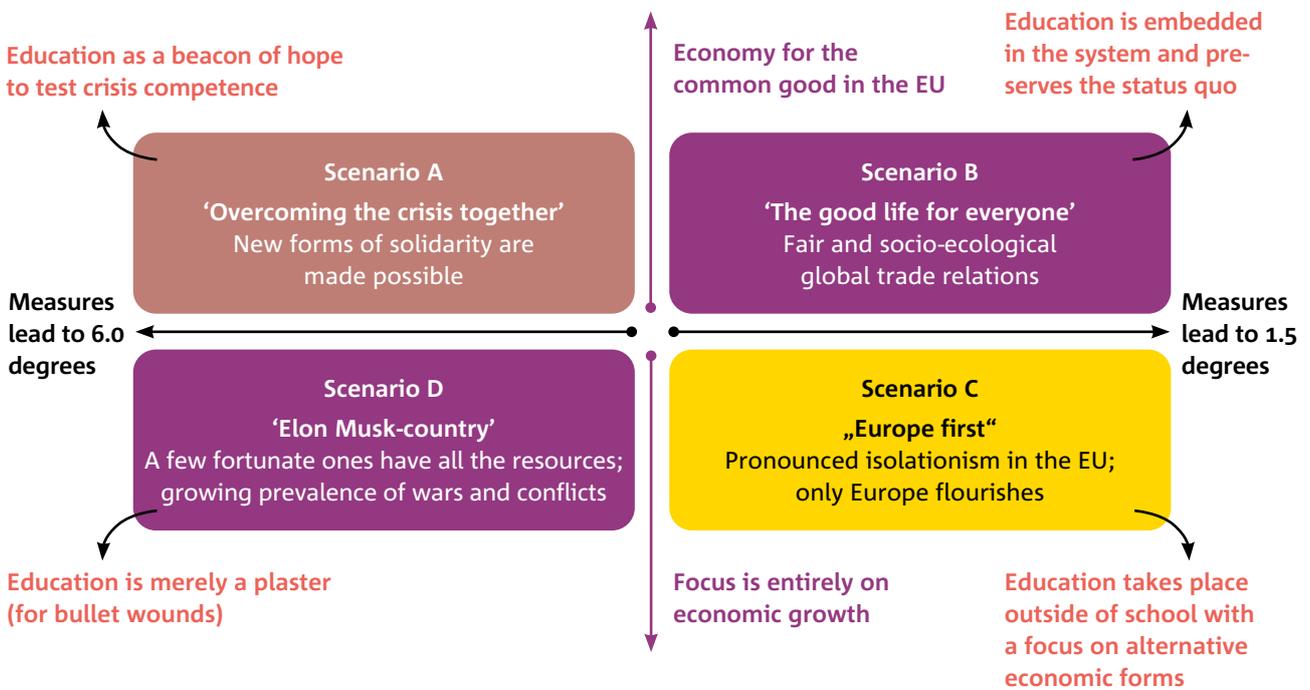


Fig. 1: Sketched scenario with influential factors (diagram by Futures Probes)

Figure 2 outlines the selected influencing factors and development paths by one of the four groups as well as the results of their discussions.

A rather simple tool such as the 2x2 scenario matrix does not necessarily permit the mapping of long-term and intricately detailed strategic processes. But this kind of matrix can nevertheless

convey an initial impression of how complex future developments may be. It is a quick and playful way to outline relevant questions, potential blind spots and perhaps even fresh ideas. In turn, these can be used as an important starting point for group discussions about which of the many possible futures actually seems desirable and which transformation we may actively seek to shape.



Y-axis | Influencing factor: Development of the EU
 X-axis | Influencing factor: Measures to combat the climate crisis

Fig. 2: Results of group work with the scenario method (diagram by Futures Probes) (p. 24)



Futures Probes is a futuring collective with offices in Berlin and on Tenerife. Since 2020, the four founders – Elena Artiles Leyes, Lilith Boettcher, Katrina Günther and Gina Strecker – have worked on enhancing future literacy in their roles as futurologists, strategic designers and process facilitators. Aside from inspirational thoughts and methodological training, this places a particular focus on long-term co-conception and support of creative and participative projects relating to shaping the future. In doing so, their main concern is encapsulated in the question: “Which future do we want to design?”



ARE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY AT ODDS?

From conflicting goals to synergies

Dr. Jan Siegmeier

Many visions of the future – from the UN 2030 Agenda to national, city and NGO strategies and corporate mission statements – have one key thing in common, at first glance at least: they should all be sustainable. Usually this means approaches or at least the intention to reconcile one's own goals, actions and economic activities especially with the pressing ecological and social challenges. But the term 'sustainability' has become somewhat diluted in the interests of gaining broader acceptance: it now stands for a distinctly heterogeneous set of approaches and target systems with frequently obscure mutual connections. As a result, it often masks conflicts concerning the correct goals and methods, instead of providing guidance on their resolution. Economic growth is occasionally heralded as a means of achieving social and ecological goals. However, it is clear that the focus should instead be placed on a more complex set of targeted measures and frameworks, in which general economic growth plays a rather subordinate role. There are familiar approaches that work, although the progress they achieve is slow. One opportunity might be to shift some focus to measures that produce synergies for social and ecological goals as well as direct (e.g. health) benefits for individuals. This would be an apt way to bring positive visions to life and ensure their ongoing development within society as a whole.

Economic growth is not a goal of sustainable development in its own right

The call for sustainability first emerged primarily as a radical ecological criticism of economic growth.¹ Equating development with economic growth was heavily criticised for social reasons as well. Critics pointed to the negative consequences and unresolved problems and demanded the focus be switched instead to the fight against poverty, unemployment and inequality.²

Nevertheless, ecological viability, so the preservation of our natural resources, fundamental social goals and economic growth are often placed on the same level under the term of 'sustainable development'. But doing so neglects to provide a clear distinction between the means and the ends. One example of this would be the UN 2030 Agenda³ with the SDG 7, 8 and 9. It was prompted most likely, partly at least, by the desire to integrate environmental and development policy processes into primarily economic priorities and in doing so to enable consensus between as many countries as possible.⁴ Another example is the frequently encountered, simplistic 'Three Pillar Model' of sustainability.⁵ It is unclear whether the various

1 Meadows et al. 1972

2 Hirsch 1976

3 UN – United Nations 2015

4 Kloke-Lesch 2022

5 Purvis et al. 2019

goals can be reconciled and, if necessary, how they should be weighted in relation to each other.

It follows, therefore, that sustainable development concepts partially incorporate the original criticism levelled at the prevailing growth paradigm. In doing so they degrade ecology and social concerns to the status of marginal conditions of a putatively new growth model – or simply redefine economic growth as a means of solving ecological and social crises and no longer a problem in itself.⁶ For most people, economic growth is not a goal in its own right, but merely a means by which other goals are achieved, such as combating poverty. It is therefore hardly surprising that the three-pillar model, for example, provokes normative controversies about ‘the right’ sustainability goals and potential conflicts between goals, which distract from the urgent discussion about which means should actually be chosen.

General economic growth is not automatically ‘social’

As things stand, there is no country that has even come close to achieving the 17 SDGs enshrined in the 2030 Agenda.⁷ One might therefore ask whether strengthening economic growth should then be apportioned a particular priority as at least a suitable means of fulfilling the SDG (beyond SDG 8.1)? But this strategy actually glosses over the crucial questions.

Economic growth is politically popular as an instrument for achieving social goals such as less poverty, good jobs, healthcare or education. This builds on the assumption that the availability of more funds overall would serve to defuse distribution conflicts. Often this assumption will be accompanied by the argument that the poorest in society would benefit most from growth. However,

this is an inefficient strategy that we cannot afford in view of resource scarcity and the worsening climate, biodiversity and pollution crises. After all, only a small proportion of the additional economic output will come to the benefit of these social goals unless additional conditions are imposed.

This is clearly illustrated by the impact of economic growth on poverty. Industrialised countries and some large emerging economies such as China, Russia, India, South Africa and Indonesia have experienced in places a sharp rise in the concentration of income over the last 40 years.⁸ However, the extent to which rising average incomes affect poverty decreases significantly if the income itself is distributed unequally.⁹ (Absolute) poverty has actually stagnated in industrial countries over the same period.¹⁰ Primarily, therefore, there is a disproportionate rise in consumption and prosperity among those who already have a lot, and less so among those with limited resources. The widening relative inequality is also a social problem, as the proportion of poorer people contributing to the economy and public life – which is largely organised according to economic principles – continues to shrink. It is a question of social participation, status and power(lessness).

So the primary concern should be to stimulate suitable economic (and public sector) development and install social systems funded by tax revenues in a way that would enable a growth in prosperity among poorer sections of the population, along with the widespread promotion of education and health. Targeted measures are often more suitable means of achieving these ends than the generalised promotion of growth. And this will certainly remain true for as long as the economy as a whole has not yet been stripped of its significant environmental impact and consumption of resources, also

6 Ebd.

7 UN – United Nations 2022

8 Cerra et al. 2021

9 Bergstrom 2020

10 Cerra et al. 2021

because air and water pollution, noise and climate change have a particularly dire affect on poorer population groups.

‘Green growth’ and the decommissioning of dirty capital stock

‘Green growth’ and green innovation are frequently cited as suitable means of achieving environmental goals. But these factors represent merely the most ‘convenient’ parts of the necessary transformative measures and are inadequate on their own. We must also dismantle sections of the economy responsible for the greatest emissions and comply with the guidelines for our ecosystems, which also apply to green economic activity.

Targeted innovations and investments in technologies with low emissions and resource consumption are undoubtedly necessary, are being promoted increasingly and are taking place. Photovoltaic systems, wind energy, electromobility and heat pumps are good examples, which are becoming far more affordable and widespread.¹¹ Investments in green public services, for example in the transport sector, are also necessary, but are being adopted tentatively in some areas. It follows, therefore, that these investments and services cannot be viewed as complimentary measures and must actually replace dirty technologies. This means that emission-intensive capital stocks (power plants, industrial plants, vehicles, heating systems and more) must be decommissioned at an early date. Moreover, we will need greater social innovation on the consumer side, for instance more shared and active mobility. And finally, even greener technologies cannot grow indefinitely. Regardless of whether they replace, for example, fossil fuels with renewable resources or are particularly energy-efficient, they will still need raw materials and space. To the detriment of natural ecosystems.

The convenient promotion of certain technologies along the lines of ‘green growth’ must therefore be accompanied by inconvenient replacement and limitation in order to stimulate a sufficiently effective impact on the environment. This will include, for example, the abolition of subsidies that harm the environment, the introduction of high prices for greenhouse gases, other emissions and pollution, as well as – if necessary – strict rules and even bans. Bad investments and new lock-ins must be avoided at all costs.

Simply shrinking the economy or stagnation is not a solution, either

Strategies that are adopted to achieve sustainability goals should therefore avoid a preoccupation with overall economic growth. Instead they must place a greater focus on putting targeted economic measures in place for disadvantaged sections of the population and on creating consistent frameworks for the economy. Its growth (or otherwise) would be less important, as long as the social and ecological goals are achieved.¹²

There have long been calls for this kind of approach, and there has even been progress in some areas: the English economist Arthur Cecil Pigou proposed the taxation of “negative externalities” as early as 1920, environmental and climate economics have long been established, the EU and numerous countries have introduced CO₂ prices, for example, and environmental legislation is being tightened in many places. But progress has been too slow and inadequate to counter the persistent and, more recently, rising poverty levels¹³ or the urgency of existential environmental crises. Political and, in some cases, social resistance make the introduction of more effective measures a difficult and laborious process.

11 IPCC – Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2022; IEA – International Energy Agency 2022

12 van den Bergh 2017; Mattauch et al. 2019

13 UN – United Nations 2022

This is frustrating for many who can barely imagine how the market economy can be ‘tamed and augmented’ – despite the absence of any consistent efforts thus far – and who have hence developed a fundamental distrust of market-based approaches.

So might it perhaps be necessary to resort to more radical means and ‘shrink the economy’ or at least allow it to stagnate? However contradictory it may seem at first glance, these supposedly simple approaches make a similar mistake to those that focus on growth: they define economic growth as the central aspect and merely add a different premise instead of focusing on the side effects and secondary conditions that are actually more important. Moreover, shrinking the economy in the pursuit of positive environmental and social impacts would probably be even more difficult to manage than the packages of measures and framework conditions outlined above.¹⁴

We need a fundamental strategic shift that emphasises positive visions, tangible benefits and synergies

Whichever way we look at it, we will need complex approaches to improve complex ecological and social systems. A fundamental shift in strategy is often advisable in order to make real progress: firstly, we should develop positive, coherent visions of the future for society as a whole, instead of defending incremental changes to the status quo as minor and barely threatening – which would once again focus attention on the supposed conflicts between objectives and risks. Secondly,

the measures we develop for implementation should primarily produce synergies and provide direct benefits that are noticeable for individual members of society (aside from contributing to seemingly abstract environmental and justice goals). They should be fair and rooted in solidarity, meaning that everyone shares the costs and risks of necessary changes, with stronger groups supporting the weaker ones. Remarkably, many people in Germany significantly underestimate the general willingness to take action to promote the energy and transport transition. In actual fact, large sections of the population would welcome more predictive planning and improved coordination by the state, accompanied by social justice in which targeted assistance is offered to those who are most in need.¹⁵ Anyone interested in more specific synergistic measures is invited to read the WBGU publications. They outline examples that simultaneously promote health and the environment in the areas of nutrition, exercise and housing.¹⁶ Also endorsed are ‘multi-benefit strategies’ for land and biomass utilisation that contribute to climate protection, the conservation of biodiversity, nutrition and resources.¹⁷

The development of measures and objectives in this context should always be iterative, i.e. follow a step-by-step process: However pressing a crisis may be, it remains true that conditions can only be transformed successfully in a search process that involves all of society.¹⁸

¹⁴ Mattauch et al. 2019

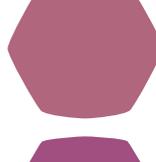
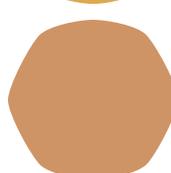
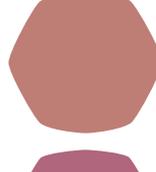
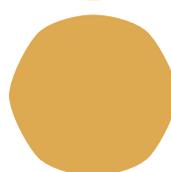
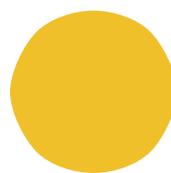
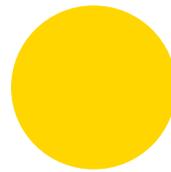
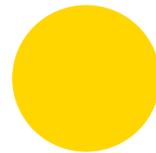
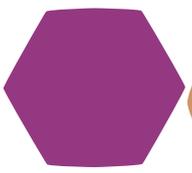
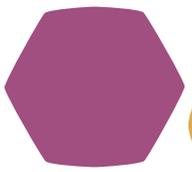
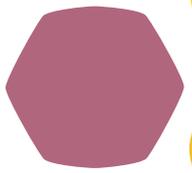
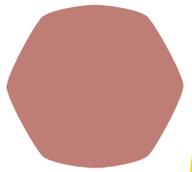
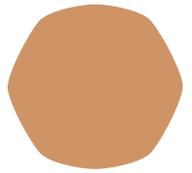
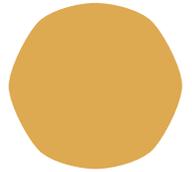
¹⁵ Wolf et al. 2023

¹⁶ WBGU – German Advisory Council on Global Change 2023

¹⁷ WBGU – German Advisory Council on Global Change 2020

¹⁸ WBGU – German Advisory Council on Global Change 2011

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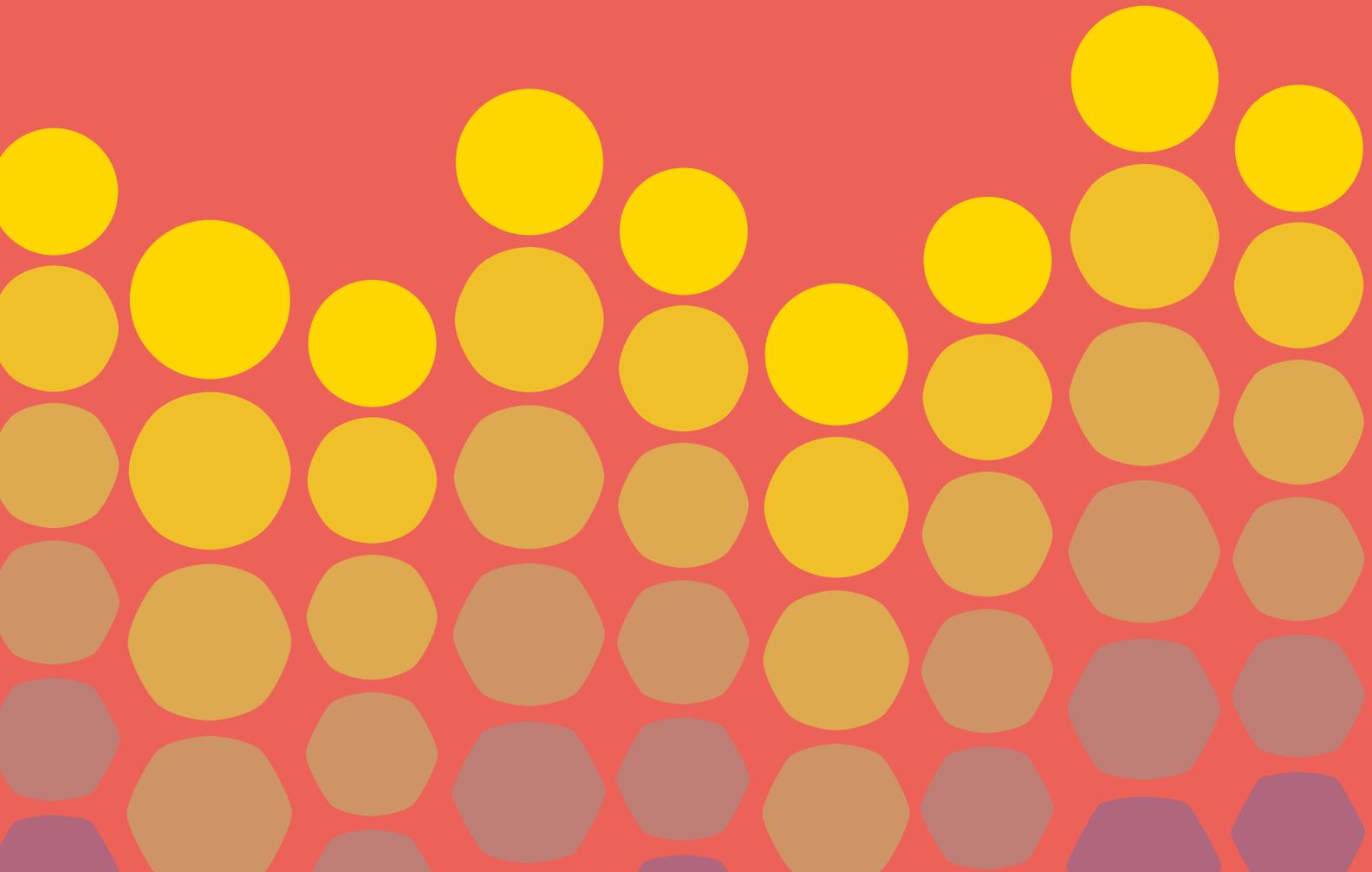
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HOW DOES LEARNING BECOME TRANSFORMATIVE? APPROACHES AND IDEAS FOR GLOBAL LEARNING



FROM SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION TO POLITICAL CONFLICT

An outline of conflict-orientated Education for Sustainable Development

Hanna Butterer

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has become increasingly integrated and institutionalised in the formal, non-formal and informal learning landscape over the past 30 years. From its inception, ESD has built on the guiding principle of sustainable development as a global policy, a concept that was introduced by the United Nations and is currently promoted in the 2030 Agenda and its codified 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). SDG 4.7 states “that all learners [should] acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development”, which means that ESD is primarily aimed at the individual. Building on deficits, the focus is on changing behaviours, attitudes and consumption patterns as a means of contributing to more sustainable lifestyles in unsustainable circumstances.¹ Accordingly, “proposed solutions centre primarily on social and individual strategies for action, for example against climate change, environmental pollution, global inequality, etc., [...], while the level of structural policy is largely disregarded.”²

At present, discourses on education policy in relation to ESD are dominated in particular by the ‘Decade of Action’, which was launched by the United Nations in 2020: a decade that is intended for ambitious measures to actually achieve the SDG by 2030. Demands placed in ESD are also being tightened in this context. Encouraging transformative action is highlighted as a central task of ESD. Moreover, ESD is ascribed a transformative “key role” in the successful implementation of all 17 SDGs.³ In this regard, solutions are sought first and foremost in “individualised attributions of responsibility”:⁴ for example, the current #ESD2030 Roadmap states that “fundamental changes required for a sustainable future start with individuals and their change of behaviour, attitude and lifestyle, while the contextual factors and institutional support provide an enabling environment and can bulwark individual contributions.”⁵

1 Pelzel/Butterer 2022, p. 89

2 Wohnig 2021, p. 25

3 UNESCO 2021, p. 68

4 Eis 2022, p. 198

5 UNESCO 2021, p. 6

Transformative ESD must focus on structural causes and the conflictual nature of sustainability, society and education

Structural causes of unsustainable circumstances and the political dimensions of everyday practices often continue to play a marginal role in the ESD discourse. This applies, for example, to the close connections between consumption and social class. This is problematic on the one hand, as the environmentally conscious middle and upper classes tend to have a larger ecological footprint anyway. On the other it is because “not everyone [...] has the same economic and socio-cultural capital to make equitable decisions for or against certain consumer goods. Differentiating between ‘better’ and ‘worse’ consumers merely reinforces resentments that are rooted in classism.”⁶

In regard to the overall social optimism of the sustainability discourse, the sociologist Ingolfur Blühdorn emphasises that action must build on a thorough understanding of the social context. It will otherwise produce nothing more than a certain optimism, a sense of promoting a good cause, or might even become a “stabilising factor in the unsustainable order we are seeking to transform.”⁷ This also reflects the problem of a “fixation on learners as private consumers”⁸, which frequently will hint at a ‘save the world mentality’ through quick and individual solutions, without leading “to structural transformation in respect of the [...] criticised conditions”⁹.

If the claim to transformation inscribed in ESD is to be taken seriously, we must reflect critically on the guiding perspective of sustainable development

as a global policy against the backdrop of “structural dependencies, exploitation and oppression that are manifest in history and remain in effect today”, which are often marginalised in the sustainability discourse. This reflection must also extend to the personal involvement of teachers and learners in these relations of power and dominance.¹⁰ Conflictual questions about classism, but also neo-colonialism and (hetero)sexism, must be asked as well.

ESD can harness the political didactic principle of conflict orientation

Critical-emancipatory political education perceives prevailing structures as edifices that can be criticised and changed. This comes with the goal of teaching skills to learners that help in the analysis of political and social conflicts. Educational institutions have a tendency to shy away from conflict. In contrast, social, political and economic conflicts are seen as positive in political education and viewed as objects in educational processes.¹¹ ESD can build on this fact at content level by integrating the conflictual nature of the sustainability concept and by making the associated contradictions the subject of educational processes.¹²

With reference to didactic approaches to political education, Mandy Singer-Brodowski and Jorrit Holst describe how learning through conflict also gives ESD the opportunity to “neither harmonise contradictions through a focus on consensus nor negate conflicting objectives through a pragmatic focus on action” in learning processes.¹³

In doing so, it soon becomes clear that conflict exists not only within and between the now variously

6 Danielzik 2013, p. 31

7 Blühdorn 2023, p. 164

8 Danielzik 2013, p. 31

9 Ibid., p. 31

10 Butterer/Lingenfelder/Pelzel 2023, p. 118

11 Blasche/Wohnig 2023, p. 276

12 Cf. Overwien 2015

13 Singer et al. 2022, S. 114

defined visions of a sustainable future, but also between them and the actual capacity or willingness to put these visions into practice in political reality.

As far back as the early 1970s, the political educationalist Hermann Giesecke described how conflicts are based on social contradictions and are therefore more than just ‘differences of opinion’¹⁴: “The analysis of a conflict from a political perspective means asking political questions about the conflict itself.”¹⁵ He refers in this context to political categories such as power, law, interest, solidarity, co-determination, ideology or historicity. In terms of critical-emancipatory political education, it would hence be inadequate to “simply depict different social and political positions or juxtapose them arbitrarily, for example in discussions of the pros and cons or in talk shows”.¹⁶ An intersectional analysis is necessary to acquire a better understanding of the complexity and depth of the conflicts and ultimately to develop a capability for change. This means that overlapping power relations and their simultaneity must both be taken into account.

Taking a conflict-orientated approach to ESD also means investigating the conflictual nature of the educational approach itself. Steffen Hamborg emphasises that it is not primarily the shortcomings or deficits of ESD, but rather “it being too much of a good thing that leaves Education for Sustainable Development open to criticism”.¹⁷ It is important to reflect in this regard on where ESD might itself present an obstacle to socio-ecological transformation “in thematic, normative and impact-optimistic terms”, for example when “ability formulae [...] [conceal] the factual and object-related analysis”.¹⁸

Critical conflict orientation: from conflict orientation to political action

The political didactic principle of critical conflict orientation can help to avoid shifting the responsibility for the transformation processes that are increasingly called for onto individuals and their behaviour. Instead, the content of the current sustainability discourse is returned to the political domain by focusing on a structural analysis of conflicts.¹⁹ However, critical conflict orientation does not end with the analysis of social conditions, but can, in conjunction with a subject and action orientation, enable “experiences of real political action”.²⁰ This creates space once a judgement has been formed to “act within the conflict as a social subject along the lines of social intervention and co-determination”.²¹ ESD can use this space to (help) change and shape notions of sustainable development by means of individual and collective action.

14 Giesecke 1976, p. 143

15 Ibid., p. 160

16 Lösch 2019, p. 25

17 Hamborg 2023, p. 153

18 Ebd., p. 158

19 Wohnig 2021, p. 39.

20 Blasche/Wohnig 2023, p. 283. In der zweiten Auflage des Handbuchs „Kritische politische Bildung“ gibt der Beitrag von Ralph Blasche und Alexander Wohnig einen Überblick über die Konzeption der kritischen Konfliktorientierung.

21 Ibid.



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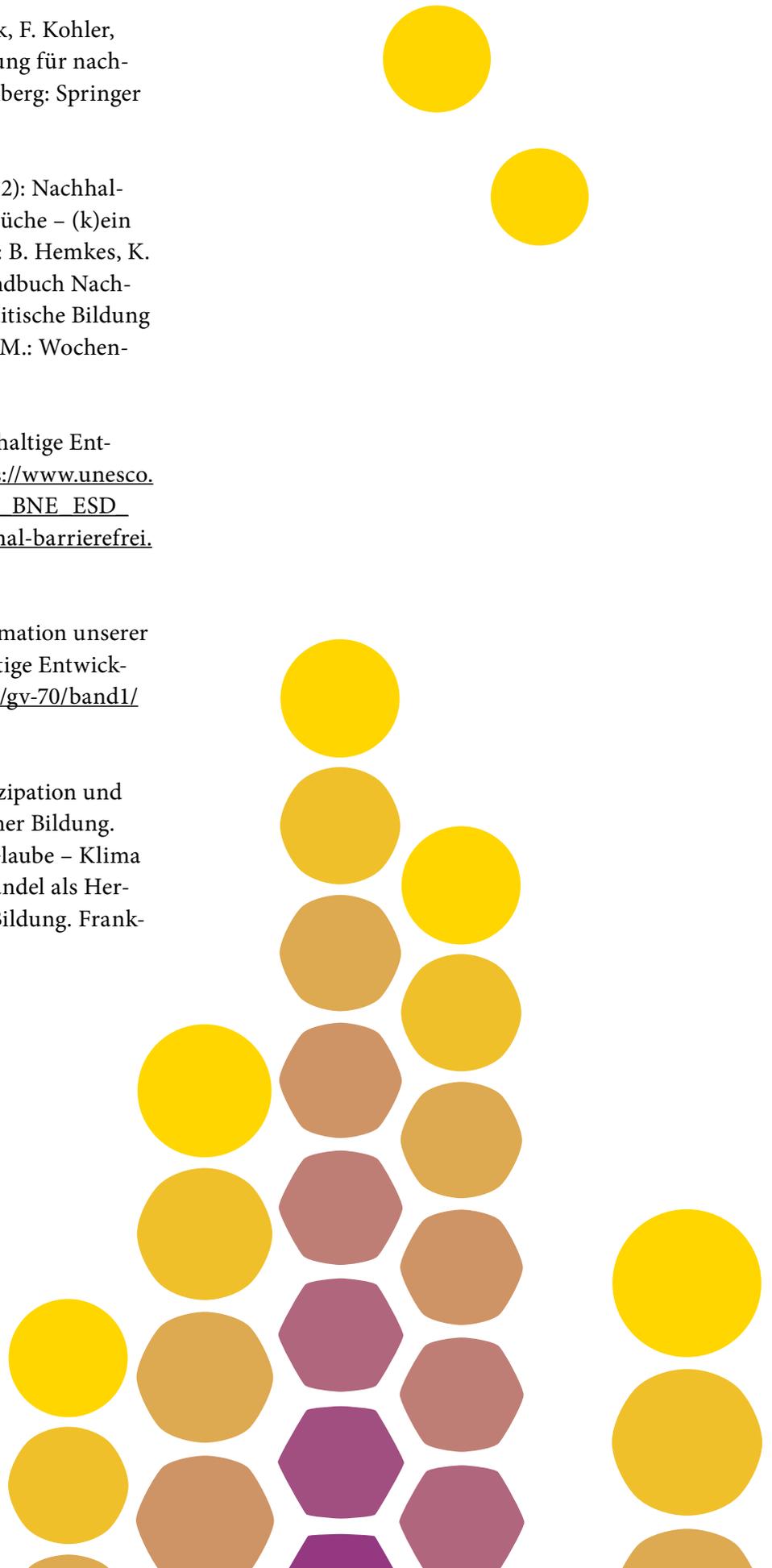
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LEARNING TO SHAPE TRANSFORMATION

With the ‘handprint’ of Germanwatch

Marie Heitfeld

The handprint is a concept that education professionals can use to identify specific opportunities for positive change. The handprint is defined as the counterpart to the footprint, which shows the negative balance of our own lifestyles. By contrast, the handprint indicates what good we can do to embed social and ecological sustainability in the long term.

The Handprint is focused on structural change. After all, we cannot wait for each individual to change their personal behaviour in social structures in which sustainability is usually more expensive and complex. Instead, the ESD team from Germanwatch shows how colleagues and neighbours, board members and managing directors, students and pupils can make sustainable food, mobility and energy cheaper and more accessible in their immediate vicinities – by effectively changing the framework conditions: how can we shape structures in our social club, religious community, school, university, workplace, neighbourhood, city or municipality or even in our federal state so that sustainability becomes the new standard? How can we use our commitment to initiate such changes and make them permanent?

These courses of actions that are geared at structural change appeal to people to whom, in the face of global crises, suggestions concerning our footprints increasingly seem like a drop in the ocean. The idea of the handprint can create agency and engender fresh hope, allowing an expectation of effectiveness and motivation for action to emerge from resignation and impotence.

Germanwatch organises handprint workshops, strategy days, seminars, accompanying programmes, tools and materials. Participants can use these resources to learn (1.) how to create the handprint perspective; (2.) how to develop approaches to identify their own handprint; (3.) how to strategically plan their own handprint projects; and (4.) how to build practical skills for effective sustainability management and to organise their own handprint projects.

The ESD team at Germanwatch has translated its experience with the handprint concept into materials, tools and multiplier training courses for other educational actors and hence made it universally accessible. These resources include, for example:

- the [Handel-O-Mat](#) as a low-threshold, playful introduction,
- the [Handabdruck-Test](#) which was developed in cooperation with Brot für die Welt, with very specific ideas for action to take that suit a person’s environment and interests,
- the [Handabdruck-Do-It-Guides](#) with encouraging examples of handprint projects, and
- the [Aktionsposter](#) with strategic tips and check lists for handprint activities
- the [Handabdruck-Methodensammlung](#).

The [Handprint-Hub](#) contains a set of theoretical publications, practical materials and current debates relating to transformative education and commitment. The materials are currently only available in German. Germanwatch plans to translate them into English. Keep posted via their [website](#).

Marie Heitfeld has worked for Germanwatch since 2018. As a psychologist, her projects explore the theoretical and practical question of how transformative educational processes can inspire and empower people to change their mindsets and behaviour, and above to make an effective socio-political commitment to a sustainable society. To do so, she develops concepts, methods and materials for educational work and accompanies groups in their engagement. The ongoing development and preparation of the handprint concept and ensuring its accessibility for other educational actors are among the other focal points of her work. Moreover, she advocates a more action-based approach to ESD at state and federal policy level and conducts research into non-formal education (most recently Institut Futur, Freie Universität Berlin) and questions of political psychology (currently University of Wuppertal).



GLOBAL LEARNING IN TRANSITION

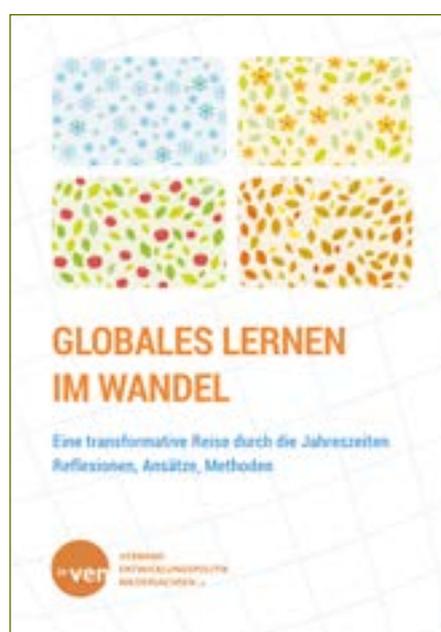
A transformative journey through the seasons by Verband Entwicklungspolitik Niedersachsen (VEN e.V.)

Julia Wältring

Transformative learning requires unusual perspectives, new methodologies and inspirational approaches. We ventured out into nature to see what we might find. It is our assumption that one of the several underlying causes of the global crises lies in the separation of humans from nature. We must restore comprehensibility and tangibility to our relationships with, and connections to, our environment. Natural processes such as the Central European passage of seasons can support this learning process. These age-old cyclic systems provide orientation, especially in times of crisis, and call to mind the fundamental rules of life.

The seasonal model can turn transformative learning into a holistic approach. Transformation processes must play out at various levels – namely the individual, communal, social and structural levels. In the seasonal model, each of these levels is symbolised by a season; educational approaches and methods are included as integral parts. This also reveals the necessarily interwoven nature of all seasons and hence all transformation levels as well. It lays the foundation for a conscious perception of transformation and our personal roles in the process.

- **Individual level:** Holding still, quieting down and listening are the qualities that usher in the winter season. Turbulent events can overwhelm us and make us feel helpless in the face of endless projects. When this happens, it makes sense to leave our rational logic behind for a moment and reach out to these other qualities of life. They offer space to take stock of our lives and ask questions about what really matters. This



sense of ‘no longer knowing (what to do)’ can challenge us and, at the same time, inspire fresh ideas. It is important to reach a clear understanding of where we stand in order to acquire a wider perception of the connections between personal and societal change.

- **Communal level:** A spirit of optimism and fresh spring energy symbolise the first bold steps towards putting the insights we gained from winter reflection into practice. What counts now is to try out new things and take the paths less trodden. Niche projects, experimental spaces, alternative living and working concepts are examples of small-scale changes in action. This applies equally to educational work: experimentation, open-ended projects, prolonged learning

and group processes and decolonial (un)learning are just a few of the possibilities for future educational work with a potentially greater impact.

- **Societal level:** The abundance and force of summer is the time for networking, collaborative action and political commitment to consider society from a different perspective and shape it accordingly. Aside from critical reflection at personal and experimentation at communal level, social change must also be built on far-reaching strategic implementation in practice. Doing so unleashes an incredible potential for change. Questions about the nature of relationships and cohesion have their place here.

- **Structural level:** Ultimately, social change requires a transformation of institutional, political, economic and social structures. The autumn harvest season symbolises the conclusion and the lasting effectiveness of what we have achieved. It is there that we ask questions about system change and the levers required for this process.

The handout on the seasonal model is available in German on the VEN e. V. website as a [PDF document](#).

Julia Wältring has been involved in Global Learning for a good 20 years and has been a One World Specialist Promoter for Global Learning at Verband Entwicklungspolitik Niedersachsen e.V since 2020. She views the process of designing content-related foundations and structural frameworks for profound learning processes at an individual and societal level as a real calling for future educational work. To answer this calling, she builds networks well beyond her own professional field and embraces unusual approaches to learning processes. She is a member of the international Learn2Change network. VEN e. V. is one of the 16 One World state networks that use education, counselling and networking to strengthen the structural work of One World at local level, promote civil society engagement for global justice and intervene in politics and public debates.



GLOBAL EDUCATION (IN) TRANSFORMATION

Relations of power and dominance in the education and knowledge system¹

Nilda Inkermann

Global Learning has become established as an educational concept and pedagogical response to global challenges and problems since the 1990s. The relevance of Global Learning was further reinforced within the framework of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Indeed, the new ESD for 2030 programme even places education at the heart of the 2030 Agenda and ascribes it a key role for implementation of the SDG. Its aim within educational contexts is to find a response to various global crisis diagnoses – also called multiple crises² – which are addressed as climate crises, economic and financial (market) crises, migration crises and democracy crises.

Actors within civil society, including NGOs, associations and initiatives in the field of Global Learning claim that their educational work will contribute to social transformation processes. This self-perception has become even stronger since the 1992 World Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro.³ At the same time, it is not possible to

infer any statement on the relationship between Global Learning as a programme and its transformative practice merely by defining conceptual priorities and claims.

My dissertation examines the correlations between Global Learning and social transformation efforts and necessities. The issue of how Global Learning is translated into practice was one of the focal points of my research. How do global education actors from outside the school system perceive current global challenges and transformation processes within society and how are they reflected in practical terms in their educational work? I conducted guided interviews in order to obtain answers to these questions and acquire empirical insights.

My research builds on an approach from within hegemonic stability theory. In relation to my research, this means asking how education underpins, reproduces and transforms power relations. Drawing on this knowledge, it is then possible to derive impulses and starting points for the question of how education and the system in which it takes place must change in order to contribute to emancipatory transformation processes throughout society as a whole.

¹ This article is based on the findings of my dissertation project: Inkermann, Nilda (2023/i.E.): Global education (in) transformation An analysis of the transformation understandings of educational actors in Global Learning, inspired by hegemonic stability theory, Frankfurt/M: Wochenschau Verlag.

² Bader 2011

³ Seitz 2017, p. 161

The perspective of hegemonic stability theory

Viewing the issues from the perspective of hegemony stability theory helps to understand that a simple dichotomy between powerful and marginalised groups does not exist. Power relations are instead far more multi-layered and complex. The hegemonic stability theory perspective reveals how imperial production practices and lifestyles are frequently associated with structural compulsions and active consensus. This can be illustrated using the example of ‘driving a car’: a person deciding to take their car in order to get from A to B – perhaps because there are too few buses – acts on the basis of passive consensus. This is because the person chooses their car merely because other mobility forms – in this case buses – are structurally less available. Active consensus would be if the person decides to drive by car for reasons of convenience or because they appreciate it as a status symbol. In this case, the person is focusing on the benefits of travelling by car and not the negative consequences associated with this form of mobility. Passive and active consensus overlap in some areas. The example elucidates furthermore how normal and self-evident – i.e. hegemonic – personal transport is as a form of mobility and how it influences everyday life and behaviours.

Four dimensions can be used to structure the relationship between Global Learning and transformation

The theoretical and empirical findings on the link between education and transformation can be broken down into four dimensions: Global learning towards, for, as and in transformation. These four dimensions reveal how differently the actors within Global Learning understand and interpret transformation and how it is put into practice in their work.

The systematisation follows on from the distinction between education for and as sustainable development⁴ and expands its scope to include the dimensions of *towards* and *in*.

Educational actors can use the establishment of a system with four dimensions to reflect on their own work within education. It helps educational actors to ask structured questions of how their work can make a contribution in the context of transformation processes and hence consider current educational activities. Moreover, they can use the dimensions also for the strategic planning of future educational activities. The dimensions make visible furthermore how and to what extent the power structures influence the way in which educational activities are designed.

- **Global Learning *towards* transformation:** The dimension of Global Learning towards transformation focusses on transformation as the subject matter of Global Learning. In the interviews that I conducted with educational actors in Global Learning, respondents addressed very different contents of transformation, which already reveal their varying perceptions of the term itself. Their understandings differ of what will and should be transformed, *by whom*, *why* and *how*. The content chosen for educational activities also depends on the structural framework conditions. Funding programmes or cooperation partners may enable or exclude certain content areas, learning subjects and issues relating to social transformation.
- **Global Learning *as* transformation:** The ‘as dimension’ relates to the methodological and didactic design of educational programmes. Which paths of social change are proposed and embarked on to (help) shape transformation processes by the way educational content is taught? Is it already clear at the beginning of the educational programme what should be trans-

4 Singer-Brodowski 2016

formed and how, or are participants involved in designing the programmes and developing scenarios for the future of society? In this context, transformation processes are associated with varying understandings of the subject – who is addressed as an actor and in which role should subjects recognise, evaluate and act? Moreover, transformation actors are assigned different roles within social change. The decision on how educational content is taught methodically and didactically also depends on resources and power relations. For which educational methods are financial, temporal, spatial and human resources made available?

- **Global Learning *in* transformation:** The dimension of Global Learning *in* transformation describes how the field of Global Learning itself is embedded within global political developments and subject to processes of social transformation. Global Learning is itself part of the social infrastructure perpetuating the status quo and obstructing transformative change. What matters here is whether and to what extent educational actors reflect on their own educational practice in Global Learning and what space they create for these reflection processes. It becomes clear on the one hand that Global Learning is a problem and starting point for transformation and on the other a context in which transformation processes that (should) impact society are initiated.
- **Global Learning *for* transformation:** the objectives of transformation. Which objectives should be achieved by (helping to) shape and change society? Objectives may also refer to self-change. In this case they are called ‘subject-related objectives’. But they may also refer to social change, in which case they are ‘system-related objectives’. The ‘for’ dimension addresses the question of which objectives Global Learning pursues in relation to subjects and society and which political and normative notions of transformation they build on.

The role that education plays in the transformation hinges on how educational actors perceive the addressees of their educational work and (critically) include structural framework conditions.

In the following, I would like to use specific findings to describe the dimension of Global Learning for transformation in more detail. Learning and educational goals enshrined in Global Learning make the addressees, i.e. learners within the educational concept, personally responsible for contributing to a more equitable world. To this end, efforts are made to encourage addressees to change their behaviour. Subject formation becomes the starting point for general social transformation processes. This goes hand in hand with subject-orientation in the educational practices of Global Learning. In other words, the methodical-didactic methods are also oriented towards the addressees of the educational programme, referred to in the following as the ‘subjects’. The interests, experiences, skills and attitudes of the participants are used as points of reference to make them aware, reflect on, question and change their everyday actions in the educational programmes. In this context, the role that subjects play in relation to educational work and transformation can be understood in different ways. I was able to infer two tendencies of subject understanding from the interviews I conducted as part of my research.

- The *mono-dimensional understanding* of the subject is reflected in the fact that learners are addressed using prefabricated ideas and solutions, which they are then supposed to put into practice in particular roles – for example as citizens, employees or consumers. Passive learners are ascribed subject positions as they are not directly involved in the development of objec-

tives, but are ‘merely’ expected to put them into practice. This is associated with the idea that objectives can be achieved in a linear fashion and the learners respond rationally and compliantly. Learners should acquire certain skills that enable them to change their actions and behaviour and in doing so contribute to social change.

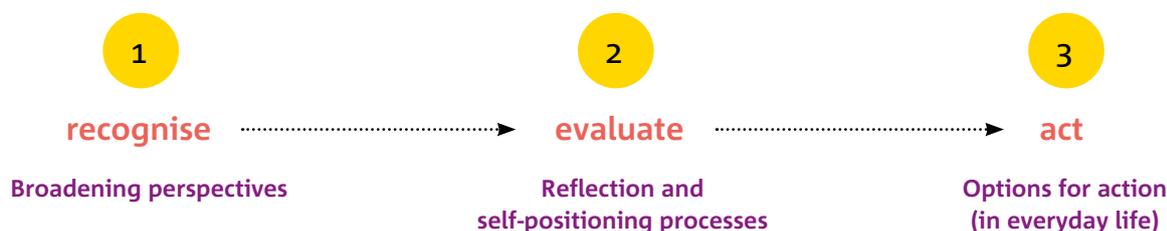


Fig. 1: Linear, additive understanding of educational goals in Global Learning¹

- The *multidimensional understanding* of the subject includes the extent to which learners are affected by economic, political, legal and cultural influences and constraints. Behaviour is perceived as contradictory and obstinate, not as rational and compliant. Education is unable to influence the behaviour of learners in a direct and linear

fashion. This scenario requires a different approach to educational work. Education is perceived as an open-ended search process in which learners participate and are involved. Various individual and collective options for action are presented with uncertain outcome, in which the participants play a decisive role.

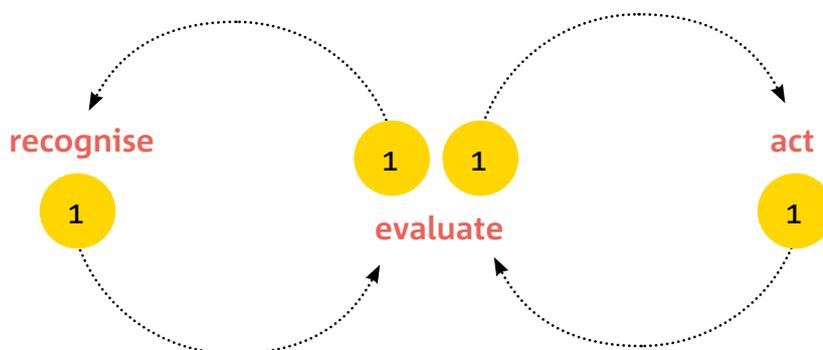


Fig. 2: Circular understanding of educational goals in Global Learning²

¹ Inkermann 2023/i. E.

² Ibid.

Structural framework conditions are also relevant when objectives are formulated. International frameworks such as the SDGs formulate global objectives that should then be implemented in Global Learning educational programmes. Educational actors handle these frameworks in different ways. I identified two tendencies in my work:

- In a *consensual, mono-dimensional understanding of transformation*, educational actors believe that the role of their educational work is to implement transformation objectives defined by structural framework conditions. The contents and objectives of Global Learning are conveyed to the target audience within this prescribed field. Perceiving transformation in this way goes hand in hand with a mono-dimensional understanding of the subject.

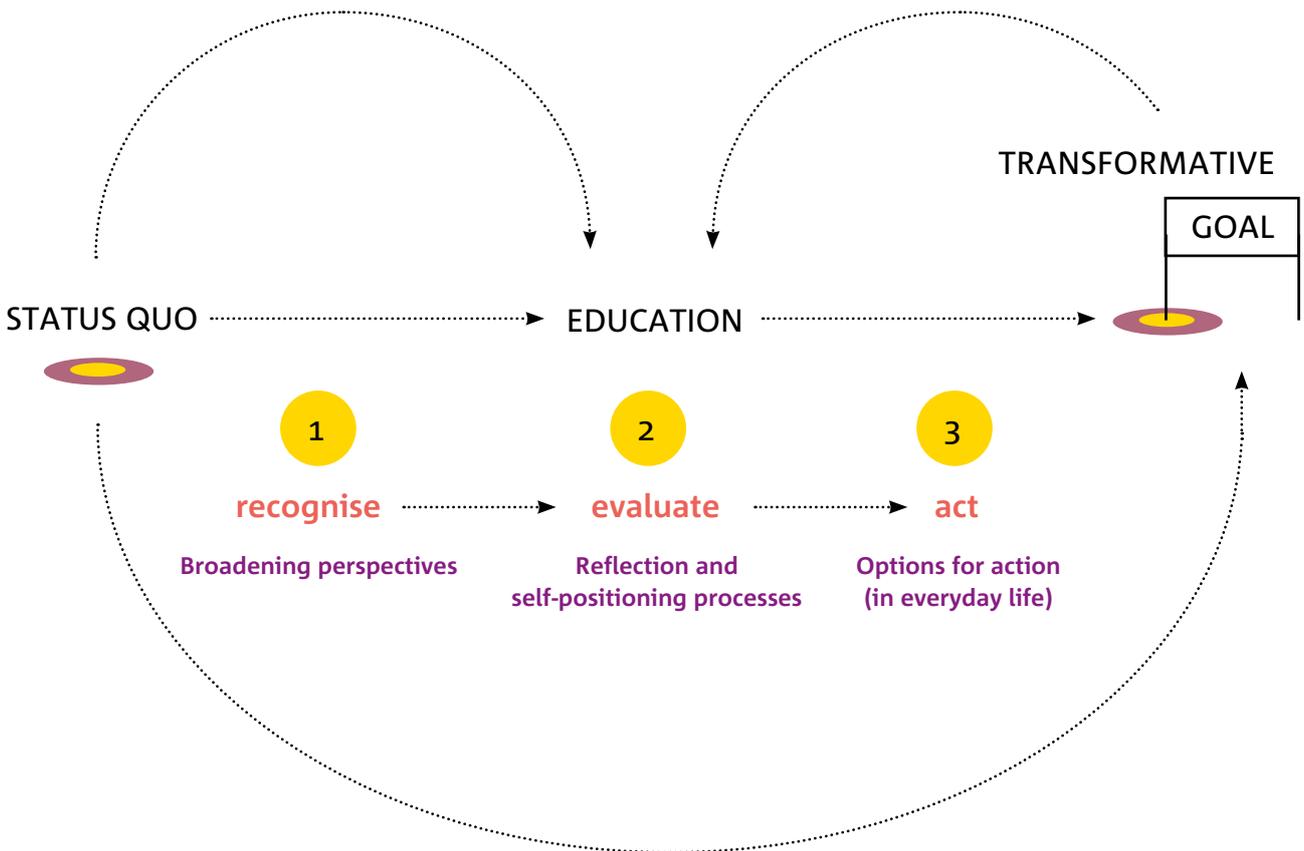


Fig. 3: The role of education in the mono-dimensional understanding of transformation³

³ Ibid.

- A *conflictual, multidimensional understanding of transformation* takes into account the competing understandings of transformation with heterogeneous objectives for social change. Figure 4 illustrates this kind of transformation understanding. The arrows indicate how transformation objectives are embedded within (social, political)

conflicts of interest and interpretation. Global Learning is tasked with critically addressing these competing transformation objectives. This perception of transformation often goes hand in hand with multidimensional understanding of the subject.

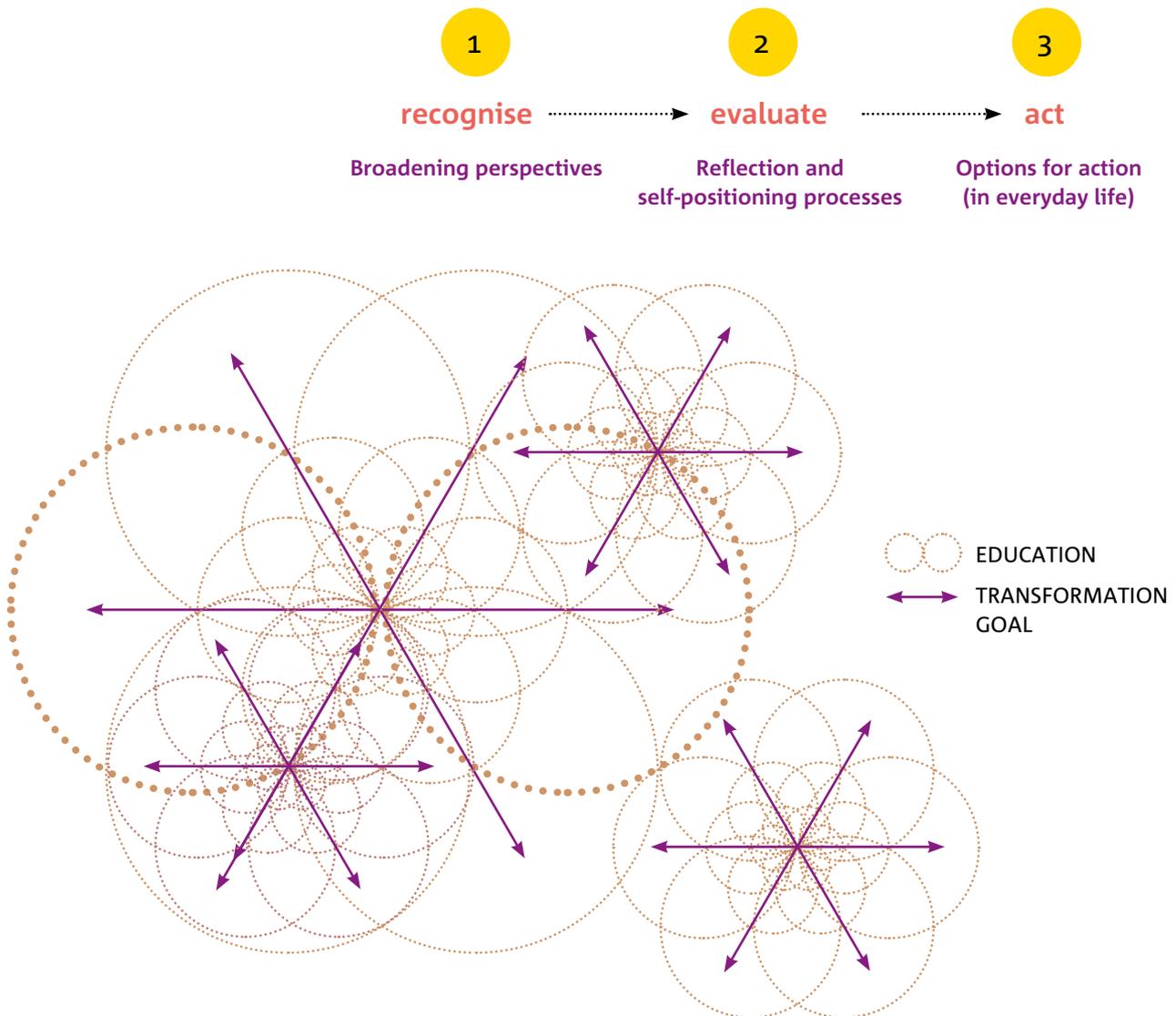


Fig. 4: The role of education in the multidimensional understanding of transformation⁴

⁴ Ibid.

Some educational actors who tend to embrace a multidimensional understanding of transformation criticise that Global Learning is placed in the service of political regulations and programmes. Education is then functionally instrumentalised in the interests of transformation objectives defined at political level, whereby social power and dominance structures are stabilised through (inter)national programmes and funding and only rarely called into question. Global Learning for transformation takes place within a political framework that makes it more difficult to adopt a multidimensional understanding of the subject.

Transformative Global Learning must address framework structures and not merely the contents and methods

The findings of my research permit the following conclusions in order to strengthen transformative

– defined as radical and emancipatory – Global Learning:

Educational work that sees itself as socio-ecologically transformative or that aims to contribute to socio-ecological transformation must focus not only on its content and methods. Instead, greater consideration must be given to structural framework conditions and institutional circumstances. Transformative educational work must critically address and rethink these framework conditions and work towards changing and re-establishing them.

For change to take place, the prevailing circumstances – lifestyles and production practices – must also be transformed. And for circumstances to change, Global Learning must not focus on them as the sole subject and must instead perceive itself as part of these circumstances and deal with the inbuilt conflicts.



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THE VENRO QUALITY CRITERIA AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING AND EDUCATION PROCESSES IN PRACTICE¹

Gundula Büker, Nilda Inkermann, Sigrun Landes, Stephanie Stiegel and Lara Fedorchenko

In her research, Nilda Inkermann describes how transformative learning and education processes in educational practice can be perceived based on four dimensions.² Her systematisation of learning towards, as, in and for transformation shows that it is important for educational practitioners to consider different aspects of educational work if they wish to contribute to social transformation processes. Educational practitioners should not focus on content (*towards*) alone. Instead they should also (*critically*) analyse the didactic-methodological design (*as*), the objectives (*for*) and the framework conditions and socio-political contexts (*in*) of Global Learning.

What does this mean specifically for educational practice? How can practitioners initiate transformative learning and educational processes that take all four dimensions into account?

What are the VENRO quality criteria for development education?

It is worth taking a look at the [VENRO quality criteria for development education](#), in order to translate the insight from Nilda Inkermann's research into practice. The VENRO quality criteria help educational practitioners to implement high-quality education. Divided into four chapters, the publication provides educational practitioners with support in (1) planning and organisation, (2) content and (3) the mediation process of educational programmes. Furthermore, chapter 4 of the VENRO quality criteria deals specifically with educational programmes in cooperation with school partners and offers an example of how the general criteria from chapters 1 to 3 can be applied to a specific area of education. The quality criteria were developed in 2012 as a collaborative effort by numerous educational actors from civil society and educational institutions. Discourse within the world of education has evolved significantly over the last ten years, so the quality criteria were thoroughly revised and republished in 2021. In particular, the new edition incorporated aspects of power criticism and post-colonial perspectives, along with the findings of the study [“Quality and Impact in Global Education”](#).

¹ Discussions on the VENRO quality criteria as an instrument for transformative learning began at a symposium in June 2023 and were subsequently deepened based on the research findings produced by Nilda Inkermann. This article contains the results of these discussions.

² Cf. Nilda Inkermann's article in this publication, p. 48-55.

The quality criteria are not intended as a check list. Education is an element of social and political negotiation processes, of power relations and current discourses. Educational practitioners are therefore called upon to continuously scrutinise and critically reflect on their own educational work. The quality criteria can provide important inspiration and orientation in this regard. By inverse logic, this means that the quality criteria themselves must be subject to repeated (critical) scrutiny and categorised in the context of current discourse. We approached the issue of which contribution the quality criteria can make in the context of the debate on transformative learning and educational processes with this in mind. In our view, this dialogue belongs to a larger process of considering the quality criteria from a variety of perspectives, including power criticism and postcolonialism.

How can the quality criteria help to initiate transformative learning and educational processes?

Originally, the quality criteria were not developed explicitly to measure transformative learning and educational processes. But they offer nonetheless many reference points indicating what educational practitioners can do to make their work transformative. They are a useful instrument for translating transformative approaches into practice. They indicate the aspects that educational practitioners need to consider and which questions they must ask themselves if they wish to stimulate transformative learning and educational processes.

If we base our considerations on the categorisation of learning towards, as, in and for transformation described by Nilda Inkermann in the earlier article, we will find references in the criteria for all four dimensions in which transformative learning and educational processes can be initiated. Our [prezi presentaton](#) provides a detailed impression

of how the quality criteria can be assigned to the four dimensions. Many of the quality criteria are found in more than one dimension. Significant parallels are noticeable in the 'for' and 'as' dimensions of transformation in particular. This is because (learning) objectives and methodological and didactic teaching methods are intrinsically linked in a holistic understanding of education. For example, we see this especially in the quality criterion of 'Practical experience and self-efficacy'. In the dimension of design, it can be perceived as a methodological-didactic means of creating space for experimentation within the educational programme. However, it may also become an educational goal in the dimension of transformation objectives (for), determining how they can help to shape society from a political perspective in the everyday lives of active citizens.

The [prezi presentaton](#) also includes aspects that were not previously depicted in the quality criteria. For example, a 'Tolerance of ambiguity', so the ability to cope with equivocal situations and contradictory behaviour, had not previously been addressed as an educational objective in the criteria. This stands as proof that the quality criteria require continuous reflection over the course of the discourse, also with different thematic perspectives.

This [prezi presentaton](#) does not claim to be complete and does not attempt to map all aspects of transformative learning and educational processes. Its purpose is to stimulate thought and to convey ideas of how the quality criteria might help to stimulate progress in transformative learning processes. Educational practitioners who wish to put transformative learning and educational processes into practice can therefore draw on the quality criteria as a tool for planning and reflection.

SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION IN THE ORGANISATION

The Whole Institution Approach as a puzzle piece to building a sustainable society

Mirja Buckbesch

The previous articles have made clear that an all-encompassing transformation of our society is necessary to enable a sustainable and more socially equitable future. When we speak of the great transformation, we do not mean one that is uniform on a grand scale. Instead it is the aggregate product of many individual, smaller transformation processes that play out simultaneously across various subsystems and hence produce general, large-scale transformation.¹ It is therefore important that everyone participates in this transformation and in doing so contributes to changing our economic systems and lifestyles. This does not refer to individuals alone and extends instead, in a vital capacity, to organisations and institutions from the public sector, business community and civil society as well. It is particularly important that organisations acting as advocacy specialists, multipliers and educators in the field of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) align themselves institutionally with sustainability criteria. In order to communicate ESD authentically we need to implement its values in our organisations in line with the principle of 'practising what we preach'. This transformative process of sustainable organisational development is known as the Whole Institution Approach (WIA).

Sustainable organisational development – the Whole Institution Approach

The Whole Institution Approach (WIA) aims to gradually embed sustainability in all parts of an organisation. For the WIA to be implemented successfully, it is important that organisations perceive themselves as learners in regard to their core values and employees. A learning organisation is in a constant state of flux and adaptation in order to find the optimum alignment with internal and external requirements. It achieves this state by developing specific problem-solving skills and agencies.² Here, also, the principle applies that the transformation process plays out within the organisation as a series of smaller sub-processes that take place simultaneously or one after the other. Step for step, this drives a greater systemic change.

Holistic, sustainable organisational development must consider the many challenges underlying the intricate concept of sustainability. Sustainable development according to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) means more than just adopting a climate friendly approach that preserves natural resources. It also demands that we align ourselves with the criteria of social and economic justice and participation.

1 Göpel/Remig 2014

2 Cf. Liebsch 2011

What does this mean specifically for the implementation of the Whole Institution Approach?

Since 2021, DVV International has been supporting twelve further education institutions from seven countries in the process of sustainable organisational development as part of the International ESD Alliances project funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). The project focuses on the question of how to design this kind of process and which areas of the organisations can be made more sustainable to comply with the Whole Institution Approach. The project has yielded interesting findings that will benefit other (educational) organisations seeking to implement the WIA in their structures. In the following section, we describe how the process for WIA implementation within the organisations was designed and coordinated. Moreover, it outlines key fields of action that provide orientation for aligning the content of the transformation process.

The Whole Institution Approach – a model process

The WIA adheres to the principle of Learning Organisations.³ This means that efforts towards continuous development of the organisation represent a vital aspect of the WIA. It also includes constant reflection at individual and organisational level. It is important to design the process in a participative form. Core teams were therefore established in each partner organisation of the International ESD Alliances project to manage the process. These teams were made up of employees from different areas of the organisation and were tasked with coordinating the process. Additional colleagues and/or cooperation partners are brought in as required for individual tasks or

extended workshops. The underlying objective was to strike a balance between the need to maximise participation in the process and the demands of day-to-day work in which there is rarely enough time for additional tasks.

In a first step, the overall or core team within the organisations defines a vision for a sustainable organisational development process. The actual work packages needed to fulfil the vision are then derived on this basis. Developing the vision as a shared task (on a small scale for the team and a larger one to guide the organisation) is an important principle within the concept of a Learning Organisation. Shared visions engender meaning and encourage creativity and a willingness to experiment, as well as inspiring courage among employees. They create space for new courses of action and mindsets.⁴ All of these aspects stimulate the transformation process towards greater sustainability.

The core teams meet regularly to control the process. They evaluate the work packages as the process proceeds and make adjustments where necessary. Sourcing support from an external process facilitator is worthwhile in both the initiation phase – when the vision and work packages are defined – and to accompany the downstream organisational development process. An external facilitator can also help to identify meaningful new questions, to define clear objectives and to encourage everyone involved to return repeatedly to the issue of organisational development. Last but not least, it can assist in the perception of ‘unsuccessful’ work stages not as ‘failure’, but as a learning experience and an opportunity to embrace a new direction.

3 Cf. Serge 2011

4 Serge 2011

Four fields of action offer orientation

The International ESD Alliances project defined four fields of action to help structure the objectives and work packages. They are designed specifically for educational organisations and intended to embed ESD within the organisation as a cross-cutting issue: the educational programme, the teaching and learning environment or workplace, management and networking and advocacy work.⁵

An educational institution's **programme** is its core business. Embedding ESD within this educational programme is a key factor in teaching sustainability issues and enabling learners to take action in the interests of social transformation. In order to develop educational programmes in line with ESD, new topics and content must be integrated and a variety of teaching and learning methods and didactic principles incorporated into the existing programme as a cross-cutting issue. In addition, this enables the programme to address new target audiences and to strengthen participation among the stakeholders.

The **teaching and learning environment or workplace** represents the educational organisation's physical framework. An organisation seeking to implement ESD in the learning and working environment must evaluate current processes and then realign them according to sustainability criteria. Procurement, infrastructure and facility management are among the relevant areas here. In addition to questions of ecological and fair procurement, there is another focus on mobility and accessibility. Doing so encourages sociability and work in an open and inclusive space. The ongoing development of the teaching/learning environment or the workplace in line with sustainability criteria creates a perception of the organisation as an authentic and positive example in the minds of both employees and citizens.

How the organisation is **managed** is relevant to the WIA in many ways. Internal structures and processes must be subjected to a detailed analysis in order to implement the numerous facets of sustainability in an authentic way. Here the focus is on issues such as transparency, participation, values and communication. Relevant issues that may be addressed at this point include, for example, an organisation's mission statement, communication structures, equality issues or a reassessment of employee and learner participation. The aim is to build an organisation that provides a place for employees and stakeholders where participation, anti-discrimination, diversity and openness are upheld as living principles. The various issues addressed by the SDGs provide a low-threshold frame of reference to approach (not only) this field of action and communicate clearly that sustainability means more than just environmental protection.

Networking and advocacy make up the fourth field of action. Social transformation is not a one-person show and can only be achieved collectively. Networks and collaborations can act as catalysts to enshrine ESD within social discourse. Institutions can exploit their role in established networks and strategically position the topic of sustainability. Public relations is another important aspect of WIA. Organisations should improve the visibility of their efforts and communicate success stories in line with the motto "Do good and talk about it". Publicising the process of breaking new ground as a Learning Organisation is a good way to motivate others and demonstrate that more sustainable organisations can act authentically.

We all share the responsibility to make our world viable going forward. This gives us the opportunity to initiate and implement change processes in the present. The only way to drive the huge machinery needed for the great transformation is if everything runs like clockwork.

5 Cf. Buckbesch/Heinen 2023

The sociologist **Mirja Buckbesch** works for the International Cooperation of the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V. (DVV), the German Adult Education Association. Previously in charge of the Global Learning in Adult Education Centres project, she has been joint leader of the International ESD Alliances project since 2021. The project promotes implementation of the Whole Institution Approach at selected adult education institutions in five countries. Lessons learned are analysed and are scheduled for publication in 2024. Before joining DVV International, Mirja Buckbesch worked in the field of development education for the One World Network NRW and in the area of peace and conflict transformation, among others.



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PRACTISING WHAT WE PREACH!

Konzeptwerk Neue Ökonomie as a prime example of the Whole Institution Approach

Christoph Sanders

As a conceptual organisation and laboratory for new economic ideas, the enquiries we receive address issues even beyond requests for substantive contributions to socio-ecological transformations or educational work. Our way of working together and the structures of our organisation represent forms of living transformation that attract attention.

Konzeptwerk is a grassroots, non-profit organisation that for over ten years has prioritised a number of issues to encourage solidarity for everyone, along with fair and sustainable lifestyles and production practices. In addition to publications and public relations, we organise (major) events on critical political education, which we host ourselves. We have always placed a focus on the area of ESD and Global Learning and call for a strong concept of sustainability as a priority model. This model states: our lifestyles and the organisation of economies should serve the needs of everyone and are limited by planetary boundaries. In reality, though, we fall a long way short of fulfilling this premise. On the contrary, the continuing and serious exploitation of humans and non-humans is inextricably linked to various forms of discrimination. Our wish is to use our know how as best we can to eliminate these unjust circumstances and fulfil the goal of establishing lifestyles and production practices that are informed by the principle of solidarity. This also means that our work structures at Konzeptwerk must be designed accordingly.

Konzeptwerk permits all employees on 20 hours or more to select their own work times. This policy is

intended to ensure that everyone can manage resources efficiently, care for dependants and engage in other political or cultural activities in addition to wage labour. People are allowed to take breaks.

At Konzeptwerk, we offer needs-based payment as best we can. This is determined each year in a structured and collaborative process that is transparent for everyone and in which we may consider criteria that would both increase and decrease salaries. We have introduced a voluntary inheritance levy and collective members disclose both their own standing and financial situation transparently to each other.

Konzeptwerk does not fund air travel for its employees. Even the funding we receive is spent on air travel in very rare and justified exceptions. These refer mainly to persons invited from the Global South. Our Green Office is primarily equipped with second hand devices and furnishings. We use sustainable banks and commission only sustainable print shops. Outsourced services (payroll office, for example) are obtained according to similar procedures. We order office supplies from green and fair-trade companies. We mainly cook vegan, seasonal, organic food and purchase bulk goods from wholesalers. Our electricity comes from green cooperatives.

Our publications are freely accessible if possible. We use open source software. We are careful not to accept money from organisations that are associated with non-ecological, undemocratic or unsocial production methods.

Konzeptwerk has always been critical of power in its work. Everyone at the office shares the tasks of cooking and cleaning. We make decisions based on consensus and rotate responsible roles. The only formalised hierarchical structure is between long-standing members of the collective and new persons. New persons wishing to remain with Konzeptwerk must join the collective after 18 months at the latest. Since around 2016, we have explicitly begun an extensive and lively power-critical process with external support. All areas of the organisation were scrutinised at the beginning of this process. We have developed suitable indicators to review whether power-critical structures are established in all areas. Since then, we have worked on achieving and adapting our goals. There is still much to be done and we keep coming up against (financial, emotional, temporal) limits. But this intersectional process has already achieved a lot, also in line with the Whole Institution Approach:

- besides individual training opportunities, we have priority courses for all employees on various forms of discrimination.
- We have established sensitisation spaces on Critical Whiteness in which all white employees take part.
- At Konzeptwerk, there are empowerment spaces for BIPOC¹ and queer² persons.

1 BIPOC stands for 'Black, Indigenous, People of Colour'. The acronym is one of the self-designations used by persons who do not identify as 'white' or are not perceived as such by others and therefore experience certain forms of discrimination.

2 Queer can be used as an umbrella term for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. People who define their identity beyond categories such as 'man' and 'woman' or 'heterosexual' and 'lesbian'/'gay' frequently use the term to describe themselves.

- There are communication spaces for people who are not members of the collective, as well as for parents and persons whose first language is not German.
- We regularly convene focus groups to submit proposals on how areas of the conceptual framework that are viewed as particularly relevant can be reformed in line with the power-critical process.
- We have created a contact structure for experiences of discrimination at Konzeptwerk and use questionnaires to evaluate the entire process annually.
- We promote our feedback culture. We organise a three-day retreat in the Leipzig region every six months. All persons pick what we call 'emo-buddies'.
- New persons receive structured onboarding. Clear procedures and responsibilities are defined for this process.
- We use our events to strengthen perspectives that are insufficiently visible and cooperate regularly with suitable initiatives in this area. We often organise multilingual services, childcare and awareness structures at our events (if required). We are careful to be sensitive to discrimination at our events and in our job advertisements. We are gradually introducing barrier-free forms in our external communication.
- We are part of the Transparent Civil Society Initiative.

For more information about how we work and on the above aspects, visit our website at [Konzeptwerk Neue Ökonomie](#).



Christoph Sanders has been working at Konzeptwerk for many years on critical-emancipatory ESD and Global Learning. In addition to workshops, seminars and training courses, he designs learning and meeting spaces in his project management and conference organisation. He sits on various relevant committees, has a keen interest in social relationships with nature and is a regular author of articles.







HOW IS EDUCATIONAL WORK RELATED TO POLITICAL ACTIVISM? IMPLEMENTING AND EMBODYING TRANSFORMATION



POLITICAL ACTIVISM AND EDUCATION

Desire and reality

Thomas Hohn

„Big change looks impossible when you start, and inevitable when you finish.“

Bob Hunter

It is inevitable that education should be made fit for the future. The world is becoming increasingly complex; the challenges are now bigger and the need for action more urgent. We cannot simply wait and see when faced with the climate crisis, species extinction, wars, human rights violations, the erosion of democracy and poverty.

Education will play a vital role in the necessary transformation. A study by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research identified ‘education’ as one of six positive tipping factors within society that might mitigate the effects of climate change by 2050.¹ But what should viable education look like? Which capabilities and skills need to be taught in this context? In the 21st century, it is no longer sufficient for education just to convey information that is learned off by heart and then reproduced. It is essential instead that knowledge precipitates action. In doing so, viable education addresses sustainable developments in the social, ecological, political, economic and cultural dimensions.

Education that works towards a transformation for more sustainability, peace and humanity can only be achieved if the opportunity exists for learners to play an active role in shaping the world. For this aspiration to become reality, learners must find opportunities to become involved and participate effectively. This kind of education then becomes living democracy. Within democracies, individuals are expected to participate actively, as the state cannot guarantee its objectives and values alone. Based on this premise, political activism then means the practice and exercise of fundamental rights. It is a commitment to people, to the world we inhabit and to the beings with whom we share this planet. Political activism scrutinises the way systems currently are functioning, does not merely make demands but also seeks to increase the likelihood of implementation.² This requires more than just token participation or projects that act as a symbolic fig leaf. Schools should be creative spaces where students are empowered to help shape a climate-friendly, equitable and peaceful world in a resilient democracy. It is therefore essential to provide leeway in education that enables real political commitment. So what can be done to bring ‘becoming politically active’ and education, especially in its formal sense, together? Which role does ‘political activism’ play within education? What potential might it unleash? And where are the limits?

1 Otto 2020

2 Bals 2002, p. 11

Education for Sustainable Development can establish meaningful connections between political activism and education

The concept of Education for Sustainable Development provides a compass for necessary change. It is the connecting link to merge political activism with education in a purposeful way. Back in 2017, the federal and state governments adopted the National Action Plan on ESD, which was developed in collaboration with the scientific community and civil society. The ESD concept should promote the necessary cultural change for sustainable development in society. ESD is therefore not ‘nice-to-have’ or an ‘add-on’: all education is transformative. Adopted by the UN General Assembly in November 2019, the UNESCO ESD 2030 programme connects the expectations that UN member states place in education with implementation of the SDGs in regard to both timing and content. ESD 2030 represents an even stronger response to the multiple crises and challenges of our world and places a clear focus on causality. The strategic goal of ESD 2030 is to continue developing the ESD concept in the interests of implementing the SDGs. Decision-makers at various levels and in all areas of society are therefore always a direct or indirect target group.

Perceiving education in all its facets as a more political area presents immense opportunities for transformation. People become empowered to participate in shaping their societies and futures, not only in the long term. Experiences of self-efficacy also have a direct effect at the moment of political participation. Viewed in this way, education assigns us a role as co-creators. Children and young people in particular are the opportunity to contribute actively to democracy and not just in the distant future once they have completed their education. Instead, political participation becomes an integral part of education itself, with repercussions on the current political and social developments. The crises we are facing present challenges affecting all of society, which schools must also

address. “This introduces political thinking and, in particular, political action into the discourse of school education”, state Greenpeace education expert Katarina Roncevic and head teacher Micha Pallesche in their article on activism and ESD in schools.³ The interplay between educational work and political activism is not merely conceivable, but also necessary. This is also made clear in the ESD 2030 concept: “ESD in action is citizenship in action”⁴ und „People have to be empowered to engage directly in the political process and advocate [...]“.⁵

There are nonetheless limits to political activism in educational work. The Beutelsbach Consensus is a clear guiding principle for political education especially in formal teaching.⁶ Essentially it states that the prohibition of overpowering the pupil and the requirement to treat controversial subjects as controversial must be maintained and that learners must be enabled to analyse a political situation relative to their own interests and to respond on this basis. Despite frequent statements to the contrary, the words ‘neutral’ or ‘neutrality’ do not feature in the Beutelsbach Consensus. It deals instead with presenting social debates and engaging in their controversial discussion. The views of the teacher are of equal importance as the beliefs of the learners. This is also the guiding principle for political action and activism in the context of education.⁷ “Education for Sustainable Development can address this [...] tense relationship between schools and activism – defined as a form of political participation – by promoting the ability to shape and, in particular, to act, and at the same time offer an educational response to create spaces for critical discourse and participation in schools.”⁸

3 Roncevic/Pallesche 2021

4 UNESCO 2021, p. 18

5 Ebd., p. 58

6 Wehling 1977

7 Siehe Overwien 2021

8 Roncevic/Pallesche 2021

Political reality does not do justice to the transformative aspiration of ESD

That's how it should be, at least. But putting it into practice is far more difficult:

firstly because the education system in Germany fails to exploit its potential and is plagued by crisis anyway. However unlikely it seems that anyone would deny that education needs to become viable, decision-makers are responding with remarkable sluggishness, even astonishing cognitive dissonance, in view of the effects of global crises that are painfully noticeable already. There is a lack of prioritisation, coherence and commitment. For all the melliferous political proclamations, inadequate implementation leaves all efforts and any commitment bereft of tangible impact. This is true of both the integration of education in general and often in relation to the personal commitment of individuals on the ground. Firstly, financial investment is woefully inadequate to enable this kind of process within the education system. Secondly, its implementation could only be successful with a clear compass. But there are considerable gaps in this regard. In a joint publication, VENRO, the German Federal Youth Council and the Alliance for Future Education have taken a critical look at the Federal Government's report on ESD and found that the situation for the school sector can, in essence, be transferred to all other areas of education: "[...] the goal of enabling all learners to act in the spirit of sustainable development by 2030 is currently being missed by a wide margin. [...] Contrary to reports from the federal and state governments, one thing is clear: ESD is by no means sufficiently embedded – neither in quantitative terms in its breadth nor qualitatively in regard to its depth. [...] ESD still only features in isolated, unconnected areas of the curricula in many federal states and frequently only in subjects that lend themselves well. There is no consistent, systematic embedding. Its implementation in teacher training is failing and there is a paucity of ESD in examination tasks. Although two thirds of

all teachers consider it important to integrate ESD, there are hardly any developments and progress is far too sluggish overall."⁹

Politics must fulfil their responsibility. Their goal must be to equip citizens to shape necessary transformation processes, respond appropriately to changes in life circumstances and to face up to challenges in a spirit of self-efficacy. In the interests of providing basic services and building resilience within society, it is crucial that melliferous proclamations are translated into convincing, binding implementation.

Political activism is entitled to be inconvenient in a democratic system

Political activism is welcome and important in a democratic system so that a transformative political process of this kind can succeed. As stated earlier, political activism asks critical questions, makes demands and seeks to increase the likelihood of implementation.¹⁰ Protest is one form of activism and also a human right in this context. The right to protest is enshrined in Articles 19 and 20 in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 that address freedom of assembly, association and expression. It is also codified in law in Articles 10 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights and guaranteed in Germany by Article 8 of the Basic Law. The Black Lives Matter protests, the #MeToo movement and Fridays For Future are examples of how important protest movements are and the impact they can have (see also ↘ www.amnesty-international.de). Protest is entitled to be inconvenient. The Federal Constitutional Court has confirmed this fact unequivocally. "It often needs to be inconvenient in order to be impactful. This is confirmed by the achievements of the environmental and climate movement over

9 Bündnis Zukunftsbildung/VENRO/DBJR 2022, p. 8

10 Siehe Bals 2002, p. 11

recent decades, which have improved the protection of our livelihoods¹¹, states Martin Kaiser, Executive Director of Greenpeace Germany.

Civil society practice demonstrates how education and activism can be combined

But how precisely can political activism and education be combined? Numerous civil society organisations such as Oxfam, Amnesty International, Stiftung Bildung, Germanwatch and Greenpeace, but also many smaller organisations, citizens' initiatives and local associations show how this goal can be achieved. They combine activism and education in their daily work. A good example of what similar initiatives can achieve is the commitment to education as part of the „Verein(t) für gute Kita und Schule“ incentive award by Stiftung Bildung. As an organisation, Germanwatch builds on the handprint concept and is prioritising in its work the issue of how education can inspire and empower people to become involved. This focuses on forms of commitment that address structural questions and seek to induce change. Greenpeace has launched the „Schools for Earth“ project, which has been honoured by the German UNESCO Commission and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, and which joins with students to accompany schools on their journey towards climate neutrality. Included in the project are a wide variety of modules, starting with a carbon footprint calculator for schools to effective participation frameworks for children and young people and a firm integration of the Whole Institution Approach. Implementation of this programme at the Ernst Reuter School in Karlsruhe shows, for example, “that schools can certainly introduce possibilities for students to engage in activism, show commitment and provide

spaces for these aspects to be integrated and developed in subject areas.”¹² This specific example makes clear that ESD plays a key role in bringing activism and education together. Within this context, methodological and didactic diversity and interdisciplinary approaches strengthen the school development processes. Activism often takes place outside of school. But ESD 2030 stands as a prime example of how significant it is to enable activism also and especially within formal education as well. To achieve this aim, it is helpful if the prevailing structural organisation at the school opens up to change processes and becomes more flexible, as we see in the Ernst Reuter School and the team around headmaster Michael Pallesche. By doing so, the process of coordinating and negotiating with actors in the school context can also succeed, even when challenges require resolution, for instance if learning processes lead to a qualification and are compulsory. The experience gained by the Ernst Reuter School points furthermore to the vital role that the school board plays in transforming the educational institution.

It is essential that education changes and becomes more political in view of the urgency with which we humans must respond to the crises. Strengthening the necessary competencies – in particular self-efficacy in shaping competences – is a basic requirement in order to deliver education meaningfully. The current situation shows that a fresh focus must be placed on education in order to concentrate more strongly on resilience and the necessary courses of action in an increasingly complex world with its growing uncertainties. It follows, therefore, that while political activism can crucially enrich educational work, it still must be given the necessary space.

11 <https://presseportal.greenpeace.de/226391-greenpeace-zu-hausdurchsuchungen-bei-der-letzten-generation>

12 Roncevic/Pallesche 2021, p. 25





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DISSOLVE BOUNDARIES

Advocating a stronger link between Global Learning and campaigning in the context of multiple crises

Johanna Fincke

Educational and campaign work in the context of development policy have the same overarching goal: inducing fundamental change in current political and societal conditions in the interests of global

justice. Nonetheless, the textbooks would have us believe that they apply completely different, almost contradictory methods and approaches, as the following table shows:

Global Learning/transformative education	Campaigning
searching	clear goal
self-reflective	linear
comprehensive	reduced/specific/persuasive
discussed using patterns of thought, emotions and actions	easily understandable and explainable messages
basic structures (values/norms) are called into question	demand must be realistic/promising/effective
change in perceptions of oneself and the world	goal appears possible/feasible
multidimensional	mono-dimensional
recognise, reflect	strengthen agency
long-term, permanent	limited in time, clear end
reconcile/find common ground	mobilise a wider audience/polarising messages
focus on the individual/subject	focus on structures/decision-makers
inspire/motivate	assert/mobilise

While educational work aims to raise awareness, impart knowledge and empower people, the purpose of campaigning is to achieve specific goals and bring about defined changes in politics and society. But although they adopt different approaches, it is clear that successful campaigning is only possible if it builds on an upstream or simultaneous phase of imparting knowledge and education. The success of

the N campaign for a Supply Chain Due Diligence Act, for example, is partly due to the fact that many NGOs have spent decades developing and organising talks, workshops, materials and educational events on the responsibility that German companies have to protect against human rights violations in their supply chains. There are, at the same time, many good examples in which there was no clear delimitation

between campaigning and educational work. Among them is the [Clean Clothes Campaign](#), which has been highly successful by combining both areas in its methodical and conceptual approaches.

Given the multiple crises at global level and the urgent need for socio-ecological transformation, it has become more important than ever before to dispense with the often contrived and exaggerated separation of campaigning and educational methodologies. In practice, both approaches must be connected more strongly and open up conceptually in order to achieve the necessary structural and societal changes for greater global justice.

More campaigns within education

Concepts of educational work in the context of development policy have always embraced change and sought to modernise their principles. Nevertheless, the theoretical and practical distinction between Global Learning and development campaigning within educational work persists tenaciously.

At larger NGOs, there are usually completely different departments and persons responsible either for education or campaigning. Funding bodies from the public sector, among them the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), have deemed the use of clear and targeted campaigning aimed at decision-makers or companies as ineligible for funding under the Development Education Funding Programme (FEB). Focused campaigns with clear demands, for example against human rights violations in supply chains, do not feature in development education work.

It is important to perceive Global Learning in terms of critical and emancipatory educational work in order to forge links between education and campaigning. The prohibition of overwhelming pupils, enshrined in the Beutelsbach Consensus on Political Education over 60 years ago, is an important point of reference for Global Learning.

It was the subject of controversial debate and fleshed out in the Frankfurt Declaration. What matters above all is to avoid misinterpreting the prohibition of overpowering pupils as a requirement to maintain neutrality.

That would be unsatisfactory on several levels.

Firstly, it would overlook the fact that the simple act of confronting the condition of the world, which is most certainly a part of Global Learning, is in itself overwhelming. Although not overwhelming in the meaning of the Beutelsbach Consensus, is most certainly is due to the mere existence of droughts, drowning refugees, the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, hunger, waste and overconsumption – and this list could be continued indefinitely. It is overwhelming to hear of these multiple crises, reflect on them and ultimately be motivated to take action.

Secondly, this understanding is based on the assumption that education, by its very nature, is something good, pure and free – or at least something neutral. This obscures the fact that educational work (including Global Learning) is an intrinsic part of the world and its power structures. Structures in which we live and learn are not neutral. Neither are teachers. The world we inhabit permeated by post-colonial notions and dominance-based practices, along with capitalist assumptions and basic structures such as meritocracy and individualisation. Lesson content is a reflection of current conditions which are inhumane and damage the climate and environment. Neither is the environment in which learning takes place neutral: from migrants who clean schools, to the precarious employment of part-time workers serving lunch and the pineapples picked by low-wage workers and then served in the school canteen in winter. Education and the environment in which it plays out are never neutral, nor should they raise this claim.

Education can and must – when faced with multiple crises – be partisan, as neutrality means

‘business as usual’, a concept that has no future. Teachers and trainers in educational events are certainly allowed to express their own opinions. Educational programmes are allowed to pursue normative objectives. It is important that these opinions are declared as such and made transparent, and that learners are encouraged to engage in controversial debate and form their own opinions independently. If educational work is perceived as a deeply contested field that is permeated by power structures – and if transparency is boldly embraced in dealings with all audiences – clear, purposeful and above all political campaigns can become part of development education.

Never before has our awareness of global grievances and the disastrous consequences of our imperial lifestyles been as great as it is today. Yet nonetheless, the ‘mind-behaviour gap’ seems particularly pronounced at the same time. Educational work seeks to inspire recognition, reflection and empowerment, to equip learners with skills and tools so that they can contribute to personal and social change. But the issue of whether and in how acquired knowledge, skills and competences lead to collective and political action can only be influenced to a limited extent and remains a highly personal process.

All too often, the ideally linear principle of Global Learning, namely ‘Recognise – Evaluate – Act’, gets bogged down in the recognition and evaluation phases. Only with a touch of good fortune does it translate into individual action at a low level (buying fair organic products, for example), but still remains far removed from collective political activism. This can be deeply frustrating for learners. While they recognise the opportunities to change their own behaviours. The task at hand seems so immense at structural level that they ultimately remain paralysed. This has many reasons with complex causes. But there is no doubt that

the leap from evaluation to action is the most difficult of all. Among other things, it requires specific experience, good examples and role models in the form of bold commitment – on a collective and not just individual level. For example, organisational competence is more likely to evolve if teachers lead by example with reflected political positions and socio-political commitment.

To create positive experiences of engagement, it is important that actions are easy to implement, accessible and, above all, promising. Campaigning can step in at this point. It provides opportunities to take action at political-structural level and delivers low-threshold accessibility. These are key criteria for ‘classic’ NGO campaigns that address numerous relevant topics in the area of human rights, so a wide range of potential campaign-based teaching content already exists to provide insight into the wide diversity of potential engagement. Framed specifically, this can mean that current and certainly controversial campaigns can be presented with each area of teaching, which students can then discuss and even join if the interest is there. This is an important facet to give novices some initial experience. Doing so would strengthen political activism, engagement and self-efficacy in the face of ubiquitous misery and despondency. For this to happen, educational work must adopt a clear commitment to a set of values in line with the Basic Law and the protection of human rights and must uphold furthermore the principle of engaging in controversial debate of controversial matters. This approach would also contribute to greater politicisation within development education – away from individual reflection and action and towards collective activism and the urgently needed structural changes. In addition to the focus on individual competencies, this can be used to train political participation skills and the ability to actively influence policy.

More education in campaigns

Education has capabilities – to highlight controversies, contradictions and complexities, recognise deep systemic causes, endure and stimulate debate – that most traditional campaigns do not share. Campaigning is inevitably about reduction. Most development policy campaigns will have a clear goal, a clear time frame and will often exploit power structures. They submit to the logics of marketing and strategy of a system that they are actually seeking to fight. Campaigns attempt to be purposeful and promising and to mobilise the masses. They rarely address the ‘big picture’, as a campaign’s central concern of a campaign should be explainable within a limited time frame. Furthermore, their claim should create the impression that the underlying problem can essentially be resolved. This solution must be communicable in clear and simple messages. The people addressed by the campaign must have the feeling that they can make a difference, so the problem must touch them emotionally. In a nutshell: complexity rarely sits well with a textbook campaign.

It follows, therefore, that the urgently necessary transformation must build on campaigns that are bold enough to make fundamental demands that convey a vision of ‘what happens next’. They must call into question the formative assumptions and structures of the economic system and must reconsider their own focus on the system itself. Applying critical thinking to reconsider one’s own working style and mindset in the context of campaigns and to examine how campaigns can be designed more reflexively and inclusively in order to make value-based demands not only as part of the campaign, but for campaigners to embody these values themselves.

For this to happen, it is important for the campaigning to incorporate experiences from educational work, to be bold enough to address complexities and contradictions and develop visionary campaigns that (can) nevertheless succeed. The campaign calling for expropriation of corporate property developers in Berlin is a good example. Combining campaign activities with educational elements and units can be valuable as well.

Summary

For fundamental socio-ecological transformation to succeed, campaigning and educational work must go hand in hand and supposed dichotomies must be resolved. Commitment to a globally equitable transformation would benefit from closer cooperation between practitioners within education and campaigning. Educational work can lend substance to campaigning by making the complex interrelationships, systemic causes and backgrounds visible and tangible. In turn, campaigning provides educational work with the calls to action it urgently needs in order to close the mind-behaviour gap. Campaigns should be accepted as an element of education and used boldly. But they both must change for this to succeed. Educational work must embrace a clear value orientation in a critical and courageous process; while campaign work must engage with complexities, contradictions and uncertainties. To achieve these aims, funding bodies from the public sector such as FEB must recognise that the supposed neutrality and balance they demand from educational work merely perpetuates current relations of power and exploitation.



Johanna Fincke is a graduate of political science and has been Head of Campaigning and Education at the Romero Initiative (CIR) in Münster since 2018. In this role, she supports CIR campaigns on human rights in supply chains and climate justice, represents CIR in various alliances such as the CorA Network for Corporate Responsibility and is in charge of sourcing funds through national and international project applications to various donors. In addition to her work for CIR, she volunteers in the area of communal and alternative living and co-founded the first tenement syndicate project in Münster.



ACTIVISM AND EDUCATION ARE TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

An experience report on community socio-economic transformation in Malawi

Joseph Kenson Sakala

The interplay between education and activism is a critical area. We can use it carefully and innovatively in order to maximise the change we seek to induce. I have worked with grass roots rural communities across Malawi and beyond. They are heavily affected by climate change and various anthropogenic environmental devastations. A majority of them are directly affected by devastating weather patterns that are largely induced by mankind. Working with these communities showed me the critical role that education plays to effectively and successfully implement activities that address the community's climate related struggles. For the past 15 years, I have applied

various concepts of formal and informal education. My work integrates grass roots, indigenous or local knowledge that stems from the experience of the people directly involved in our interventions.

It is imperative that activism is inspired by authentic knowledge that does not only consist of theoretical understanding but rather is rooted in and corresponds to the practical realities on the ground of the areas of focus. Nowadays, many organisations aim to transform our societies and communities to be more resilient to emerging global issues including climate change.



A Workshop on Interventions to enhance Climate Resilience and Pushing for Renewable Energy

However, not all interventions turn out successful in the end. I have learned two things from my experience with grass roots rural communities that are working as critical catalysts and show how crucial it is to combine education with political activism: 1) community knowledge is relevant and 2) activities have to take the political context into account

The Community Centered Approach and the importance of grass roots knowledge systems

I recall a situation in 2012, when my colleagues and I embarked an awareness campaign and workshops on ending deforestation, which was increasing in the area. Although my team was fully inspired to promote afforestation, we were not successful in integrating the grass roots communities to take an active role in the interventions and activities being organised. After reflecting on the reasons why the communities did not adopt our initiative, we understood one thing: if you do not clearly understand the situation in the communities, it will be difficult to stimulate change. It becomes challenging to get relevant stakeholders on board and even more difficult to transfer

knowledge and skills to the people on the ground, for example farmers in my context. In the following, I will refer to what we call the 'Community Centered Approach', in which our knowledge is harnessed to influence change that is informed by the grass roots needs and context.

As a climate and environmental activist, I am usually tempted to solve community challenges by using my scientific knowledge. However, this is a weak approach concerning grass roots participation. The problem is that we would rely on assumptions from outside the communities, which might not be well informed about the realities on the ground. The Community Centered Approach recognises our ability to influence change effectively when we manage to create room for community participation. Positioning the people from the communities at the center of our activities will lead to the desired change that we all thirst to see. Education plays a very critical role in transforming our societies when it resonates both around scientific and indigenous knowledge systems. Education enhances the relevance of our work by making it easier for people on the grass roots level to understand fully the concept and direction of our interventions.



Community Empowerment on Climate Resilience

A journalist once asked me what cemented my work and approaches. I answered that my knowledge stems from diverse education systems. They inspire and influence my choice of approaches and methods. The diverse education systems also help me to widen my understanding of the climate crisis in general. In my work, it has become quite a tradition to complement scientific knowledge and grass roots, indigenous knowledge systems that add value to our scientific approaches.

True transformation needs to take into account the political context of change

In the course of my work, I realised that knowledge and understanding of the local context alone does not complete the transformation. The political landscape also plays a critical role. It is able to provide a conducive or at least supportive environment. However, the political context can also have negative impacts on our work. I remember many times, when we experienced how conflicting policies eventually compromised the attainability of our interventions and goals.

One such experience happened with our Climate Resilience and Justice interventions. Some of these interventions promoted ecological farming in communities. Ecological farming requires consistency and some degree of uniformity in the chemical composition of the soil. The problem was that the communities were directly situated next to others that relied heavily on chemical farming. The policies did not protect ecological farming practices. There was no coherence and coordination across the different government policies. On the one hand there is the ministry of environment and on the other hand there are the ministries of agriculture, mining, and finance with conflicting policies. If their policies do not complement each other and do not fully correspond to the living realities of the communities, it affects our work on the ground negatively. In this situation, it was critical for us to harmonise and coordinate diverse efforts

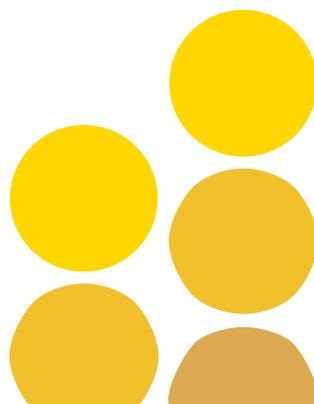
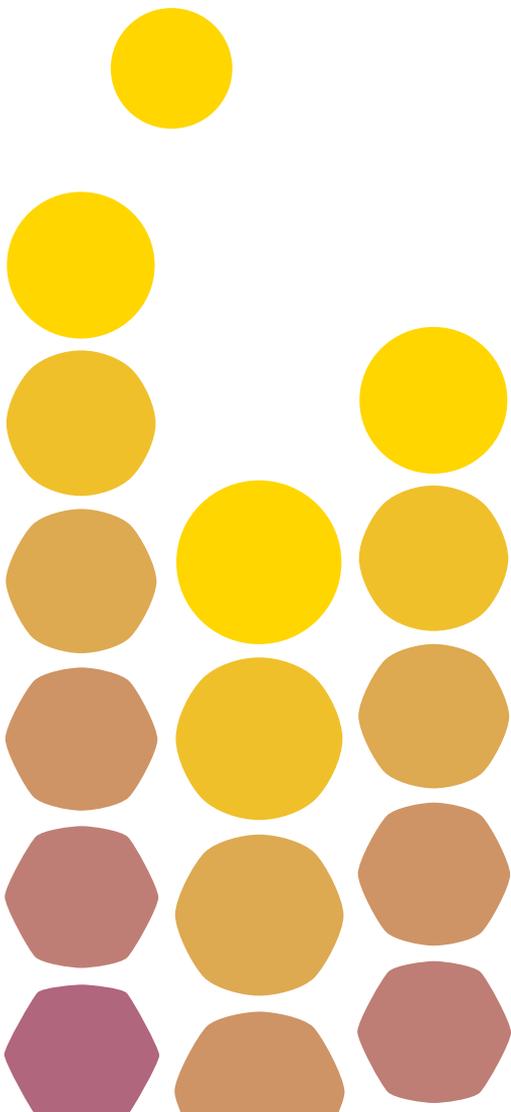
and projects so that we maximise the outcome. We needed to engage with the policy frameworks and provisions within the agriculture and environmental sector in order to create a supporting environment for ecological farming. We needed to become active and address the political decision-makers to inspire change in the political frameworks in order to create a conducive working environment for us and those coming ahead of us.

It is vital that political activism is guided by well researched knowledge and principles that understand and appreciate the reality on grass root level. Political activism that is well guided by authentic knowledge is a key driver in nurturing sustainable development across diverse society sectors. In my work, we provide environmental and climate education to rural communities affected by climate change with the objective of building their capacity to understand and enhance their resilience towards the continual devastating climate shocks being experienced in Malawi, as coupled with the increasing cyclones and droughts frequencies.





Joseph Kenson Sakala is a passionate environment and climate activist, Working at promoting climate resilience in climate-vulnerable communities and capitalising on local and global spaces in advocating for leaving fossil fuels in the ground and climate justice in a just transition. For the past years he has devoted his efforts working on community frontline engagement, managing projects and campaigns around climate change. He has a B.Sc. in Environmental Science from the University of Malawi among other qualifications related to his work, he is currently the founder and Executive Director for YSD Malawi, an environmental organisation and he also represents Malawi across several global organisations and networks such as the African Coal Network, LINGO. eV (Germany), Learn-to-Change Network (Germany), Afrika Youth Movement, Plant-for-the-Planet and others where he has helped to push forward the climate agenda.



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Z

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VENRO's central goal is to construct a just globalisation, with a special emphasis on eradicating global inequality and poverty. The organisation is committed to implementing human rights and conserving natural resources.

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