

4.18 Global Citizenship Education and Sustainability: overcoming contradictions, tensions, rhetoric, and ‘flaws’

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Location Maths Building, Room 106

Theme Climate and Sustainability Education

Presentation Type Symposium

Chair Dalene Swanson

68 Global Citizenship Education and Sustainability: overcoming contradictions, tensions, rhetoric, and ‘flaws’.

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Abstract

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and Sustainable Development Education (SDE) are key advocacies of Target 4.7 of the UN SDGs, yet remain marginalised in national school and university curricula in the UK. When they do appear in educational vision statements and curricula, they are superficial at best or neoliberalised or largely dismissed at worst. Undoubtedly, if we are to address the critical global challenges we currently face, we need a GCE and SDE/Learning for Sustainability (Lfs) at the heart of curricula for young people that foregrounds proper engagement with communities, a plurality of knowledges, including indigenous knowledges, fosters critical consciousness and provides agentifying possibilities of transformative learning. Further, we argue: the ‘flaws’/contradictions within GCE and SDE/Lfs should be embraced as ‘productive tensions’, rather than dismissed.

Convenor: Prof Dalene Swanson

Discussant: Prof Doug Bourn

Paper 1: Working the tensions and contradictions of/between global citizenship education/learning for sustainability: toward hopeful, alternative futures. (Dalene Swanson and Mostafa Gamal)

Under globalisation, to be a ‘global citizen’ is to be a subject of capital. Like Janus, a subject of this neoliberal world order is to be both inwardly-gazing subject of the nation state and outwardly-gazing subject of global capital. ‘Global citizenship’ (GC) carries the inherent contradiction of Janus, looking both inwards and outwards and carrying borders as shadows. Nevertheless, viewing contradiction at the heart of GC as ‘productive tension’, rather than ‘flaw’, may offer important openings. Recognition of various ‘distancing strategies’ deployed within Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and Learning for Sustainability (Lfs), and revealing the tensions and contradictions between-and-within GCE and Lfs, (as in Scotland’s CfE) is critical in overcoming their overdetermination as instruments of state social, national and economic ambitions. The implications for education of the critical embrace of contradiction at the heart of GC needs attention toward the imperative of mobilising Critical GCE to enact possibilities of radically hopeful futures.

Paper 2: Our Shared World: Evidence of engagement in global citizenship and sustainable development themes in schools in England. (Doug Bourn and Jenny Hatley)

A network of over 200 NGOs in England have been lobbying UK government to put Target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals at the heart of the school curriculum. This paper outlines the evidence gathered for this Network on the ways in which existing evidence and research demonstrates ways in which global citizenship and sustainable development can be seen as encouraging debates about the purpose of education, its wider social role, and promote social change. A feature of the paper will be the evidence gained from a number of schools in England that make reference to the importance of equipping their pupils to be active global citizens and to relate this to areas such as climate change and the environment more widely.

Paper 3: Global Citizenship and Borderland Learning (Katherine Wimpenny)

SDGs challenge universities to adopt teaching and learning strategies that empower learners to assume active roles and proactively contribute to a more just, peaceful, inclusive, secure, and sustainable world (UNESCO,

2019). Bhagwan (2017) encourages institutions to go beyond the more superficial practices of community outreach and to embrace concepts of academic-community cocreation. This paper will focus on cross-border learning spaces where diverse stakeholder perspectives and discourses can meet. Particular attention will be on Global Citizenship models/frameworks that involve mutually beneficial partnerships between education and communities (e.g., civic society organizations, social movements), in ways in which surfaced wisdom held within communities is valued and integrated into teaching and learning (Benneworth et al., 2018). Focus on the term “border” refers not only to geo-political borders, but also the territorial borders linked to research knowledge versus indigenous and societal knowledge (Le Grange, 2018).

Paper 4: Universities, GCE and sustainability: all in the public good or opportunistic rhetoric? (Sally Findlow)

Recent amplification of both sustainability and ‘global citizenship education’ rhetorics is increasingly accompanied by their conflation, especially at the level of higher education, where ‘sustainable citizenship’ is displacing Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) or Education for Sustainability (EfS). While this conflation makes ideological sense, it misses the sort of joined up thinking that would do justice to the separate principles of public good education, EfS or GCE, much less their integration. As many have asked: “Why is the message not getting through?” This paper examines, through analysing one UK university’s attempts to claim ‘sustainability’ credentials, ways in which these agendas and discourses are compatible, productive or achievable. It finds conceptual discontinuities in and between the rhetorics, seeing these as symptomatic of a sector in crisis, torn between commitment to shifting political messages and performative pressures, prohibiting real commitment to either cause.

References

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Paper submission type

Symposium

Themes

Climate and Sustainability Education

Second Theme

Social Justice