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Education for sustainability

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Discussion Research ID	DPR-2026-1067
Year	2020
Field	Social Sciences
DOI	10.1108/ijshe-04-2019-0152
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Licence	CC-BY
Original source	International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education
Permanent link	https://discussionpublishers.com/research/21c1ca0a-8a49-4103-ae61-66e7a2467154
Publisher	Discussion Publishers discussionpublishers.com

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Cite as: Christine Wamsler (2020). Education for sustainability. Discussion Publishers, DPR-2026-1067.

Abstract

Purpose Current approaches to sustainability science and education focus on (assessing and addressing) the external world of ecosystems, wider socio-economic structures, technology and governance dynamics. A major shortcoming of such approaches is the neglect of inner dimensions and capacities (which constrains education for sustainability as an end), and a limited capacity to facilitate reflection on the cognitive and socio-emotional processes underpinning peoples learning, everyday life choices and decision-taking (which constrains education for sustainability as a means). More integral approaches and pedagogies are urgently needed. The purpose of this paper is to advance related knowledge. Design/methodology/approach This paper provides a reflexive case study of the development of an innovative course on Sustainability and Inner Transformation and associated interventions in the form of a practice lab and weekly councils. Findings The paper elaborates on the connections between sustainability and inner transformation in education, offers insights into the process of adapting contemplative interventions to sustainability education and concludes with some reflections on challenges, lessons learnt and future work needed to support more integral approaches. The findings show that inner dimensions and transformation can be a vehicle for critical, improved education for sustainability and how this can be achieved in practice. Originality/value It is only recently that the concept of the inner or personal (sphere of) transformation has received growing attention in sustainability science and education. Despite this interest, such new conceptualizations and heuristics have, to date, not been systematically connected to education for sustainability (neither as an end nor means). The paper presents a critical, reflexive case, which advances related knowledge. It sets a precedent, which other universities/training institutions could follow or learn from.

Keywords: sustainability education, personal transformation, integral pedagogy, critical education, university

Full text

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