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TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION, GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. AN EXPLORATION.

DOSSIER by the Advisory Board
“Transformative Education | Global Citizenship Education”
of the Austrian Commission for UNESCO

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Transformative Education, Global Citizenship Education
and Education for Sustainable Development.
An Exploration.

*“Basically we are always educating for a world
that is or is becoming out of joint.”*

Hannah Arendt

*“Transformative learning for people and the planet
is a necessity for our survival
and that of future generations. The time to learn
and act for our planet is now.”*

UNESCO’s Berlin Declaration
on Education for Sustainable Development, May 2021

*“A world that has something to say to us can come alive in education.
Education thus primarily refers to receptivity, sensitivity, and affectability,
a risky openness [...] that makes us sensitive
to the contingencies, fragility, and vulnerability of our world.”*

Käte Meyer-Drawe

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INTRODUCTION

The term *transformative education* (or *transformative learning* TL) has become increasingly significant for UNESCO in recent years (UNESCO 2021a). The bi-annual global UNESCO forums¹ as well as new types of events held specifically on this topic, such as the 2022 *Transforming Education UN/UNESCO Summit*², highlight this importance. Against this backdrop, the Austrian Commission for UNESCO established the Advisory Board on “Transformative Education/Global Citizenship Education” (TE/GCED) in 2017. This terminology is also becoming more widespread in academic discourse, whereby reference is often, but not exclusively, made to education for sustainable development (ESD) in the German-speaking world, while the *TE–ESD–GCED* conceptual triangle usually forms the basis for UNESCO. The purpose of this paper is to clarify these terms and demonstrate the links between them. Moreover, it aims to shed light on both the educational policy and overall political contexts which form the background for the current discussion concerning and surrounding these concepts.

Since the text is relatively extensive so as to reflect the inherent complexity of the subject matter, each chapter and some sub-chapters include summaries (conclusions), which are highlighted using a larger font and a coloured background. Reading these summaries provides a preliminary insight into the topic, although they are clearly not intended as a substitute for studying the entire text.

Transformative education is a new way of asking an old question: the question concerning the potential change for individuals brought about by learning and education and the effectiveness of pedagogical action in achieving social change. This question alone reveals fundamental pedagogical dilemmas: how are learning and education understood? What is the relationship between personal learning and educational processes and societal demands and conditions?

¹ While the initial forums (Bangkok and Paris) were titled “UNESCO Forum on Global Citizenship Education”, the third forum (Ottawa) was incorporated into “The UNESCO Week for Peace and Sustainable Development: The Role of Education” with a dual focus on GCED and ESD. The fourth forum (Hanoi) was named “UNESCO Forum for Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Education”, while the fifth forum, which took place online in 2021, was titled “UNESCO Forum on Transformative Education for Sustainable Development, Global Citizenship and Health and Well-being”. See also: <https://en.unesco.org/news/five-questions-transformative-education>.

² See, for example: <https://www.sdg4education2030.org/transforming-education-summit-september-2022>, <https://en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation/transforming-education-summit>, <https://mailchi.mp/bd4ccc2b8206/infoletter-1-transforming-education-summit-5634251?e=6b107ccfe5>, <https://www.un.org/en/transforming-education-summit>.

What role do pedagogical services and intervention play in this complex process? Is the effectiveness of pedagogical action an unsubstantiated hope or can it be empirically proven? Is the postulate of effectiveness not incompatible with the postulate of the learners' freedom? Does education not always involve the exercise of power over those who are to be educated and, conversely, does the Humboldtian educational ideal of self-education, based on an elitist understanding, not place the entire responsibility on the individuals who educate themselves, free of purpose, for their own well-being and that of society? On the other hand, is it not true that every society must ensure its own reproduction through the intervention of education? Is it possible to achieve self-empowerment through education? How can the balancing act between these poles succeed? And how are learning and education related to each other? Are they separate processes or intertwined aspects of one and the same activity? Are learning and education to be understood as autonomous achievements or as social steering of the individual? Transformative education and transformative learning label this issue in their own way and thereby create room for discussion. However, if transformative education and transformative learning are considered to be magic formula, they also conceal the issues behind the terms and deprive them of the necessary critical examination that is required on a consistent basis. This article attempts such examination by clarifying the respective conceptual approaches.

1. SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION AS THE DUTY OF OUR GENERATION

At present, there is considerable mention in the social sciences and in politically engaged civil society of *The Great Transformation* (sometimes also called *The Great Transition*). Drawing on Karl Polanyi, who used the term in 1944 to describe the great transformation of the English or Western social order in his book bearing the same name, a new great transformation is called for, mainly, but not exclusively, in order to cope with the ecological crisis. This change, provided it remains broadly formulated, has a clear and widely shared direction, namely “the task of a socio-ecological transformation with the aim of moving into a post-fossil economy” (Seitz 2014, p. 17³). The SDGs adopted by the UN, for example, are summarised in *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015). Additionally, the main report by the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU) from 2011, titled *World in Transition - A Social Contract for Sustainability*, has also made the term extremely popular in the German-speaking world. This transformation’s key terms are *future viability* and *sustainability*.

The term *transformation* expresses the desire for fundamental social change as well as the conviction that this is feasible. However, opinions are highly controversial concerning what this entails.

The most important conflicting goals in this regard are described in economics and the social sciences as “weak/strong” sustainability. “The key concept of weak sustainability is optimisation—the neoclassical concept of allocating scarce resources in the best way possible” (Novy et al. 2020, p. 27). The question of the causes and costs of environmental damage and the consequence of economic action follows the polluter pays principle and the principle of optimisation in the

weak sustainability model, focusing above all on technological solutions. Nature is viewed as a resource (capital).

On the other hand, strong sustainability is “based upon the system of integration, not interchangeability: the economy is a subsystem, embedded in the biophysical sphere. Strong sustainability assumes that economic and social life is based on irreplaceable, interwoven ecosystems that must be preserved. Economic activity is confronted with ecological limits” (ibid., p. 28). Nature is not a pool of resources, but “a complex ecosystem that provides human society with vital functions and services” (ibid., p. 29). The intrinsic value of nature is a qualitative difference to nature as capital. Capital can be reproduced and restored, whereas the destruction of nature is often irreversible. Strong sustainability therefore also draws on the precautionary principle.

This also raises the issue of maintaining or overcoming a capitalist-oriented economy with its strong tendency towards permanent growth. Positions that continue to be growth-oriented, yet have arisen in recognition of ecological and social issues, are in contrast with growth-critical positions which assume that it is not feasible to reduce the consumption of resources without profound systemic change that challenges the “imperial mode of living” (Brand/Wissen 2017) and the capitalist economic and social order. Accordingly, degrowth or post-growth economic movements start with targeted shrinkage processes:

Shrinking in the Global North is a commitment to climate justice and a responsibility towards the economies of the Global South. However, there may be a

³If no official English translation was available, German quotes were translated into English by the translator. This applies to the entire publication.

trend towards further growth in selected areas of activity such as renewable energy as well as the education and health sectors, and certain world regions such as sub-Saharan countries. Degrowth seeks to manage the shift away from economic growth and imperial lifestyles in a way that enhances human well-being and promotes climate justice. This cannot be achieved by making individual sacrifices, but instead requires a new mode of production and a shift towards a way of living based on solidarity, which is not organised at the expense of others (Novy et al. 2020, p. 148).

In this respect, bringing about a transformation is *also* the task of education:

In the course of the international political debate, it became increasingly clear that the indispensable transformation into a sustainable global society requires a global process of insight and education in order to subjectively anchor the changes to consciousness, attitudes, and behaviour deemed necessary in all people worldwide. [...] As a political discourse, sustainability is thus a reaction to a fundamental crisis in the relationship between nature and culture and is to be understood as the programme of a global transformation into a sustainable world society, in which education and science are allocated a decisive role (Kehren 2017, p. 63).

Many authors in the fields of education and politics who use the term transformation today are referring to Antonio Gramsci's Marxist theory from the inter-war period. For him, transformation meant a radical change of consciousness within the oppressed classes, without which a change of political structures would be unimaginable. Since without achieving "ideological hegemony", as the bourgeoisie had succeeded in doing, fundamental political change would be impossible (cf. e.g., summarised in de Nardis/Caruso 2011). The political challenge thus simultaneously becomes an educational challenge—without, however, putting these two areas on an equal footing.

Transformation is clearly set apart from other notions of change, particularly **reform and revolution**. **Reform** evokes the opportunity for change within existing

structures without the need for fundamental change. **Revolution**, on the other hand, which involves a radical yet usually rapid, forcible change that seeks to do away with the status quo, neither ordinarily distinguishes between what needs to be preserved and what needs to be changed, nor does it embody the idea of a preceding and concurrent socio-cultural change. The idea of transformation stands in contrast to this, combining conservation **and** change and viewing the status quo as the starting point for transformation. Transformation is also the guiding idea of **metamorphosis**, introduced as a term in the social sciences by the French sociologist and philosopher Edgar Morin. Metamorphosis means a change in physical form, i.e., the assumption of entirely new functions. For example, plants' basic organs enabled them to advance into different habitats and create today's biodiversity. Morin suggests

that the concept of metamorphosis is richer than that of revolution. While its renewing radicality is retained, this is combined with preservation (of life, cultures, and the legacy of the thoughts and wisdom of humanity). One can neither predict its modalities nor its forms: each step is followed by a new creation. Just like historic society, creator of the city, the state, social classes, writing, cosmic deities, magnificent buildings, and great works of art were unimaginable to the people of the archaic hunter-gatherer societies, we cannot yet imagine a global society that would emerge from a metamorphosis (Morin 2012, p. 34).

In his book **Homeland Earth** (1999), Morin described the necessity and potential of such metamorphosis in order to escape the current polycrisis. A further interesting and important contribution is made by the publication **Great Transition: The Promise and Lure of the Times Ahead** (Raskin et al. 2002). It argues that fundamental change is required and that this must take place very soon—as there is otherwise a threat of much more serious damage to our planet's human life—without, however, committing to a specific strategy and an ideal blueprint for the future. The motto "many possible futures" is used to describe a way of thinking in scenarios that seeks to combine "utopia and pragmatism".

The approaches to transformation/transition/metamorphosis presented here are united by the insight that there can be no one-size-fits-all ideology that provides a solution for everyone and everything once and for all. A pluralistic collective search, which also includes fiercely controversial opinions, is necessary in order to come up with viable alternatives to the existing status quo. Klaus Seitz indicates: “The social search process is open-ended and relies on broad participation and the innovative potential of people” (Seitz 2014, p.19). For the real issue is the question of which concrete steps can be taken to reach the great (and distant) goal. Both aspects must always be kept in mind—the next step and the distant vision. The American feminist and peace educator Betty A. Reardon also draws attention to this:

Utopian visions do not thrive in the absence of practical actions, but practical actions cannot be transformational unless they are imbedded in a holistically conceived vision (Reardon 2014, p. 83).

In the event of a social search process, rather than a political transformation according to an ideological blueprint or a change ordered from above, it is clear that learning and education play a crucial role. The better educated—in a comprehensive and emancipatory sense—the population is, and the more individuals engage with fellow human beings and the world in order to learn, the greater the chance that ‘the social search process’ will also be successful and (political-economic-cultural) obstacles can be overcome. Edgar Morin proposed the term “cognitive democracy” in this context to point out that today’s fragmentation of knowledge hardly enables people to gain an overall view of social developments and their own role within them:

The expropriation of knowledge, very inadequately compensated by media vulgarisation, constitutes a key historical problem of cognitive democracy. The continuation of the present techno-scientific process - a blind process that escapes consciousness and the will of scientists themselves - leads to a sharp decline in democracy (Morin 2012, p. 175, emphasis in original).

CONCLUSION:

The term *Great Transformation* (less often: transition or metamorphosis) has entered into public discourse and the goal of a socio-ecological turnaround, at least in its most general form, has been accepted and supported in broad circles. This is also linked to the idea of a profound cultural change and shift in consciousness. However, determining the exact meaning of the *Great Transformation* leaves vast scope for interpretation. There is a broad range of ideas about what should be transformed and how this should be achieved. The discussion or political dispute on this topic is unavoidable and inconclusive. Concrete suggestions, such as the UN's SDGs, are seen by some as too far-reaching and by others as completely inadequate. The debates surrounding the exact content of a *Great Transformation* also have an impact on the educational concepts that are understood to be transformative. In global citizenship education, for example, this debate resurfaces as the opposite of "soft" and "critical" GCED (cf. Andreotti 2006), and in ESD as the opposite of what is traditional and the "emancipatory form of ESD" (Singer-Brodowski 2016a, p. 132).

Another line of discourse in the debate surrounding the *Great Transformation* that has received too little attention to date emerges when social-ecological transformation and postcolonialism are brought together (Ashcroft 2017, Chakrabarty 2009 and 2012, Dürbeck 2020, Ferdinand 2019). Using keywords such as *decolonial ecology* (écologie décoloniale) and *postcolonial ecocriticism*, the Western universalism and Eurocentrism of many transformation concepts are criticised without bypassing the ecological challenge or abandoning the idea of transformation. These positions are also of great relevance for transformative educational practices.

2. PEDAGOGY BETWEEN SOCIETAL TARGETS AND LEARNER AUTONOMY

2.1 Pedagogy as one of many practices—an attempt to establish its position

An important prerequisite for the exploration of pedagogical potential is the understanding of its limits. On the one hand, educational activities, lessons at school, and educational opportunities throughout life are usually motivated, if not inspired, by the idea that they can contribute to improving the living conditions of individuals and society. Simultaneously, such expectations can easily turn into feelings of frustration and helplessness if they are not, or only partially, fulfilled (cf. Peterlini 2018, p. 94; cf. Gärtner 2020, p. 9).

Within the interaction of those practices that occur with and form human beings, Dietrich Benner sees education *ideally* in a non-hierarchical relationship with the practices of politics, economics, religion, ethics, and aesthetics (Benner 2012, p. 108). The task of education must therefore be to transform the demands of other practices on people into pedagogically legitimate influences (ibid.). In view of the dominance of economics and politics (as well as religion, depending on historical and geopolitical circumstances), pedagogy faces a dual challenge.

On the one hand, the subject of pedagogy is socialised and subject to social orders (which would need to be changed); on the other hand, in the European understanding of education, “it is always the individual” (Parin 1999, p. 170) with whom the interaction should take place. In addition to working with individuals on their learning and educational processes, a kind of duty to protect the subjects of education is inseparably linked to this at the societal level, in that pedagogy focuses on the demands made on the subject by other practices and how these can be made educationally justifiable, changed, or even rejected.

Yet how can we define what is pedagogically legitimate? For Heinrich Kupffer and the anti-pedagogical movement, any goal for pedagogical work, regardless of its intention, is problematic, even if it concerns learning democracy (cf. Kupffer 1984, p. 15). The issue is that a normative guideline also structures pedagogical action and forces the subject of pedagogy to submit to the desired goal, thus functionalising education and viewing the subject of education “as ‘unfinished’ and as a manipulable being without its own justified will” (Sinhart-Pallin/Stahlmann 2000, p. 10).

A way out only presents itself if we do not begin with the idea of *how* the subjects should be at the end of the educational or learning process, i.e., with the ideal and norm to be fulfilled, but with the subjects of education themselves in their searching and becoming, between limitations and potentials. This orientation towards the process of learning and education can, as will be explained in the following sections, also be used to justify and legitimise pedagogical attitudes towards other practices. This is because they are based on the experiences, needs, as well as learning and educational processes of the pedagogical subject and they also raise objections to target requirements for this subject.

CONCLUSION:

Pedagogy can be viewed as one practice among others, which thus stands and positions itself in processes of negotiation with the approaches of other practices concerning the subject of pedagogy. The translation of the demands of economics, politics, religion, ethics, and aesthetics into pedagogically legitimate demands also raises the question of how this pedagogical legitimacy can be justified. Normative target requirements for education, learning, and educational goals are problematic because the determining authority is not a foregone conclusion, even within pedagogy, and pedagogy is not immune to placing the subject under manipulative constraints. One issue is that pedagogy—at least in Benner’s model—can mean both educational action and its scientific reflection and theoretical systematisation, just as the practice of politics refers to citizens, civil society, parties, and institutions. The processes of negotiation thus take place both within and between the practices, with an open outcome: those who can make normative determinations can be answered, at least in part, with a change of perspective from the setting of goals for learning and education to the learning and educational processes themselves. While pedagogy cannot replace politics, this does not constitute alleviation from pedagogical responsibility, as Franz Hamburger (2010) reverses his own axiom in a later reflection: politics should not replace pedagogy either; it should not be deprived of its scope and must fulfil its tasks within its limitations and represent them in dealings with the practices. This inevitably makes pedagogy, as a practice of upbringing, learning, and education, also political.

2.2 Learning and education as potentials with personal and societal facilitations and limitations

Learning and education are sometimes used synonymously, sometimes complementarily, yet also often in contrast. In fact, they can describe widely divergent processes of appropriation of and engagement with the world and knowledge, or they can blend into one another, depending on how they are individually defined. The difficulty of separating or combining the terms becomes even more complex because both are ambiguous and sometimes vague in themselves, but they are often narrowed down to what they are intended to be functional for in different discourses. Simultaneously, while partly competing and partly united, they have both also encountered difficulties as a result of the “proliferation of the concept of competence” (Peterlini 2016a, p. 39), which, according to Schratz, is spreading like a “gospel” (Schratz 2012, p. 17) in educational discourses and even more so in school and educational policy practice. Within the understanding of learning and/or education as a competence, there is a clear expectation to sharpen the two older concepts and slot them into a paradigm of feasibility and efficiency. This undermines the very idea of education. It is precisely this question regarding the extent to which the results of learning and educational processes can be managed (and measured) that also determines how they can be used for the necessity of transformation in the first place. Learning and education, understood as trainable competences, become the promise of “rapid mastery of upcoming problems in society” (ibid.), which presupposes, however, that from a normative position it is possible to prescribe what and how something is learned, on which subject, and how people can form or be formed. The dilemma arises from the fact that learning and education, understood as emancipatory responses of people to the world and knowledge, should be resistant to such expectations, and should even subversively undermine them.

The discrepancy between education as emancipation and functionalisation also extends to the “contem-

porary learning industry” (Peterlini 2016b, p. 22), as the dominant educational discourses can be called in reference to the critique of the “culture industry” by Horkheimer/Adorno (1969).

Their expectation of salvation is countered by the sober findings on the “technology deficit of education and pedagogy” (Luhmann/Schorr 1982) as well as the evident experiences of decades of pedagogical efforts towards environmental and/or peace education (cf. Kuckartz 1998; Reheis 2016, p. 34). According to Waldenfels (2009, p. 32), we “place the success of our own actions in the hands of others” in pedagogical action. In the behaviouristic paradigm of cause and effect, stimulus-response has more or less been preserved in all further developments of didactic approaches. This is countered by pedagogical approaches that also attempt to understand learning in its experiential character (cf. Waldenfels 2004, p. 66). Whether learning is the addition of something new, the unlearning of the familiar, or viewed as “re-learning” (Meyer-Drawe 1986), it is always learning that, as an experience (Meyer-Drawe 2010, p. 6), changes the learner’s scope of knowledge and understanding, i.e., it is transformative in itself. Such an understanding of learning as an educational experience (cf. Schratz-Schwarz-Westfall-Greiter 2012) combines the concepts of learning and education within the subject experiencing and gaining experience.

It is precisely this genuinely transformative feature of such learning that poses the dilemma that it can neither be controlled by an autonomously conceived subject nor imposed from the outside—regardless of the didactic tricks used. Experiences can neither be determined nor imposed; they happen and surprise those involved as well as those affected by them. The process of learning and education, readily thought of as merely gratifying and easy, can also be painful and unsettling according to such a pathic understanding. Learning always involves negativity (Xu 2009, p. 8); the familiar, the known, the accustomed must ultimately be transcended and sometimes even abandoned in order to learn something new, to learn something additional, to unlearn something, or to relearn something,

without the new, still unfamiliar, and unknown already being a given and firmly established. Thus, the process itself crosses the abyss of “no-more” and “not-yet” (cf. Meyer-Drawe 2012, p. 32). This is true even if the newness consists of an improvement in circumstances, for example, if people in therapeutic settings first have to learn to be lovable—the familiar not being loved is the known that has somehow been lived with, even if badly; being loved is an unknown that first has to be painstakingly learned and trusted. We know the world and its unrest, its economic adjustments to the way we live and the world we live in, as well as its inequality and injustice, but we do not yet know the “good life for everyone”.

Here, pedagogy, if it does not wish to surrender, must embrace a utopian design, such as the one suggested by Ivan Illich involving us learning to transform the “tools” (which he also understands to include social structures and institutions) in their deep structure: “The crisis can be solved only if we learn to invert the present deep structure of tools” (Illich 1973, p. 12). This indicates a shift in focus from teaching the good life to relearning how to use the “tools”, which is even more strikingly expressed in Emery and Purser’s (1996, p. 97) group dynamics approach: “Democracy cannot be taught, it only can be learned.”

This confronts the pedagogical concepts of how transformation can be facilitated or at least accompanied with a need for clarification that is often ignored.

CONCLUSION:

Learning and education can be combined in an understanding of learning as an educational experience. Since experiences can neither be determined from the outset by learners nor by teachers, this gives rise to the issue of the principal open-endedness of any pedagogical action, diagnosed by the systems theory as a “technology deficit” of pedagogy. Accepting the limits of the art of pedagogy reveals the perspectives of transformative education beyond normative requirements and didactic overconfidence.

2.3 The limits of education and the potentials of self-activity and receptivity

Between a pedagogical impetus that believes in causality and the resigned helplessness as to how learning and education can be achieved at all, lies a realistic assessment of the limits of pedagogical action as well as the pedagogical subjects' conceptions of themselves. According to the systems theory, this refers to the impossibility to control the output of the information acquired by the operationally closed, autopoietically functioning system of the learners (cf. Luhmann 1993, p. 158f.). However well prepared the didactic or pedagogical input may be, its processing in the learners' black box is beyond their reach, so the output remains unpredictable. Moreover, for Siegfried Bernfeld (2000, p.123) and others, even control over the input is not so straightforward. For him, the limits of education reside not only in the specificity of the pedagogical subjects and their conditionality due to social, cultural, and economic circumstances, but also in the limits of the pedagogical staff themselves, who can never be fully aware of their own actions. The fact that learning and education can neither be accomplished by an autonomous subject alone, nor can they be taught or imposed on a heteronomous subject from the outside with guaranteed results, also presents the potential for a double negation of the neither-nor: learning and education can neither be understood simply as autonomous acts, nor are they processes that can be determined by others, rather: as real people, we find our own ways by reacting to those situations and circumstances *in which* we are simultaneously entangled. Even if people cannot freely determine what happens to them and what they respond to, they do find room for manoeuvre in the way in which they respond (cf. Waldenfels 2008, p. 94). In learning and education, it is thus relevant to deal with the concrete biographical and situational constitution, state of mind, and life and learning practice of the stakeholders in their demands and resistance, potential and conditioning. Such an understanding relieves the pedagogical practice of the pressure of feasibility by recognising and acknowledging its limita-

tions in favour of a clearly muted claim to be the sole cure. It also imposes the duty not to measure learners according to a predefined goal, but to take them seriously in their involvement in life situations, traditions of thought, resistance and potential, and hopes and fears. Pedagogical attention turns away from the normatively determined goal and instead towards the learning and educational processes themselves. This requires every pedagogical setting to be open to learners' narratives about their experiences as well as to learning and educational spaces in which experiences can be made and exchanged as fearlessly as possible, whereby the goals of learning are not predetermined but explored and negotiated in a participatory manner.

Implementation does not require a new didactic approach; it requires a change of perspective: from hierarchical to de-hierarchised educational structures and knowledge and questions of what is right and what is wrong, to enabling and questioning concrete experiences, an openness to the experiences of others, and reflecting together on shared or divergent experiences. According to John Dewey, learning does not occur through learning experiences made, but by reflectively going back to the issue or situation that caused the experience to be made. Adorno's (1970) conclusion that education after Auschwitz is only conceivable as a challenge to critical self-reflection supplements the restriction of pedagogy to the call to independent activity, which Humboldt (1980 [1913]) had already postulated as one of the two principles of pedagogical action. The second principle, which tends to be forgotten, is what Humboldt calls receptivity. The phenomenological educationalist Käte Meyer-Drawe also refers to this as "being receptive to the world" and to the crises of our present (Meyer-Drawe 2018, pp. 38-42), in the sense of becoming sensitive to others, to the unfamiliar, and to the consequences of our actions. The orientation towards allowing experiences to happen and valuing them as learning almost inevitably removes asymmetries, enables empowerment processes, and promotes receptivity to the world and others, which might be described as empathy in modern terms. This would eliminate the normative trap of setting educational goals in advance and achieving

them in any way possible: learning and education, which are experienced and critically reflected upon as entering into a relationship with and confronting both one's own concrete life situations and those of

others, as well as with the concrete realities in one's own and the larger world with an attitude of receptivity, do not predefine a goal, but develop it in the process of learning and education.

CONCLUSION:

Normative requirements for transformative learning and education can be replaced by a pedagogy that invites and challenges people to relate to their concrete living conditions and the impacts thereof—small and large, local and global. Self-activity and receptivity, both principles of Humboldt's vision of education, require testing environments in which teaching and learning hierarchies are flattened so that experiences can be gained free of fear and (self-) critically reflected upon: "This is about nothing less than overcoming the very distance that separates people from the consequences of their actions and enables that unconscious, alienated action that marks the beginning of the destruction of others and oneself. Learning as an experience that (is) reflected upon one's own actions is the necessary step towards being reconnected with oneself and the world" (Peterlini 2018, p. 101). The fact that empathy itself becomes a normative principle can also be perceived as an inherent ambivalence in this approach. In this case, enabling a relationship between teachers and learners, between learners and knowledge content, between people and the world would also be a normative requirement. What happens in this gap, however, is beyond the reach of pedagogy. This is based on trust that the formation of a relationship overcomes any indifference—termed *coldness* by Adorno—that permits destruction and denies change.

Notwithstanding these aporias and dilemmas, emancipatory pedagogy strives to contribute to social transformation in its own way. It is inevitable that the contradictions and questions that come to light in this section will recur in a more concrete form in the individual "political pedagogies".

3. SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION AND EMANCIPATORY PEDAGOGY

3.1 The concept of transformative education

At first, one is tempted to reject the term **transformative education** as a superfluous pleonasm. After all, does the idea of education—especially the German word **Bildung**—not aim to achieve fundamental change? Is it not (unexamined!) common sense that education is not limited to the transmission of knowledge and values, but also aims to change the attitudes of learners (compared to previous generations) and transform society as a whole?

Nevertheless, proposals for specific education targeted towards social change and subsequently also terms such as **transformative education**, **transformational education**, and the like have become widely established, with good reason. Not all education is aimed at qualitative changes to social conditions, and most education systems are dedicated to preserving and reproducing the status quo. Yet not all transformative pedagogues always use the term transformative. However, the concepts of **Pedagogy of the Oppressed** (Paulo Freire 1973) or **Radical Pedagogy** (Henry A. Giroux 1983), **Peace Education** in the spirit of Betty A. Reardon (1988), **Empowering Education. Critical Teaching for Social Change** (Ira Shor 1992), and also **Teaching to transgress. Education as the practice of freedom** by bell hooks (1994) are not only undoubtedly transformative, but also use this term. Reardon summarises this basic idea of a Great Transformation, beyond the realms of education and the learner as an individual as follows:

[...] the basic direction for educational development should be toward embracing the possibilities of human transformation that is both urgently needed and possible (Reardon 1988, p. 74).

Brazilian educator Frei Betto also emphasises the importance of human imagination and willpower in bringing about social change:

Human beings need dreams, need utopia and there is no ideology, no system that can stop this force. Dostoyevski was right when he said 'The most powerful weapon of a human being is his [sic] conscience' and this nobody can destroy.... I think that it is a matter of time before we witness the eruption of a world movement to rescue utopias (Betto 1999, p. 45, quoted according to Mayo 2003, p. 42).

This critical pedagogy distinguishes itself from static educational concepts in that it does not limit itself to passing on knowledge and skills so that learners can find their way (economically, socially, politically, personally) in society, rather it seeks to enable learners to change and reshape society. It is thereby important to observe the dialectic between tradition and renewal, as described in the classic manner by Hannah Arendt:

Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it, and by the same token save it from that ruin which except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and the young, would be inevitable. And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world (Arendt 2006, p. 193).

Emancipatory education or **liberating education** does not see learners as recipients of knowledge and world

views, but as active participants with personal responsibility. As such, there is (at least programmatic) unity between the goals of education and its ways and methods. This was classically implemented in the pedagogy of Paulo Freire, which became the model and inspiration for many progressive political pedagogies.

Paulo Freire begins with a sharp critique of traditional educational systems, which—according to his terminology—adhere to a bankers’ concept that views students as “vessels” to be filled with the capital of knowledge. Education is understood as the accumulation of knowledge capital as social capital, as today’s buzzwords go. It presents itself as politically neutral or indifferent and models the educational process as a vendor-customer relationship. Much of Freire’s criticism is even more relevant in present-day Europe than it was during his lifetime, as the neoliberal transformation of education has progressed decisively since then. Freire’s opinion on the idea of non-political, neutral education is congenially reflected in the preface to the German edition of his magnum opus *Pädagogik der Unterdrückten* (Pedagogy of the Oppressed):

There is none other than a political pedagogy, and the more a pedagogy sees itself as apolitical, the more dangerous its political, domination-stabilising effects are. Whether the educator pursues politics, whether his [sic] efforts have a political effect, is not a matter for him [sic] to decide. It can only be a question of which policy an educator adopts, that of the oppressor or that of the oppressed (Freire 1973, p. 17).

Freire’s “problem-posing method” consists of beginning with the (adult) learner’s life situation, addressing the questions and issues they have expressed and, in a process called **decoding**, helping them to gain a more complex understanding of their own situation, as well as discussing strategies for change. This has been called a “pedagogy of the situation, or better: situation potentials” (Gerhardt 2004, p. 19). The aim

is to gradually develop critical consciousness, which Freire refers to as conscientizacao, the process of raising consciousness. This is perceived as a permanent dialogue between teachers and learners that leaves no side untouched or unchanged.

Liberation pedagogues can [...] prepare people for situations of social upheaval. [...] However, political action itself is not a pedagogical act (Gerhardt 2004, p. 20).

Freire conceives this upheaval to be a liberation that does not produce a new system of domination itself, because it relies on “the oppressed who, through self-liberation, can also liberate their oppressors” (Freire 1973, p. 43). This addresses a society-wide perspective that goes far beyond the representation of individual concerns and interests that are often observed today and can easily be pitted against the interests of others.

Although Freire’s pedagogy has repeatedly encountered opposition and criticism⁴, it has inspired entire generations of educators in their work over the years. American peace educator and feminist Betty A. Reardon is among them. Echoing Freire, she programmatically states: “[...] the basic direction for educational development should be toward embracing the possibilities of human transformation that is both urgently needed and possible” (Reardon 1988, S. 74). Reardon breaks down this argument as follows:

- Emancipatory education is based on the conviction that people are able to free themselves from their prison of restrictive thoughts and can thereby also develop the skills to change adverse and inhibiting structures.
- This change is feasible because people who have experienced an inner change can also change outer conditions, which are created by humankind, for the better:

⁴Coben (1998) thus accuses Freire of having betrayed his own theory on many points.

Although we are profoundly influenced psychologically and socially by the structures, it is ourselves who create and can change them. It is the successful pursuit of the inner struggle... [which] I believe constitutes the central transformational task (Reardon 1985, pp. 4-5).

- An essential element of this inner change is a change to world views and behaviour so as to approach political transformation with a cosmopolitan ethos. This is both an individual and a collective process. For Reardon, it manifests itself in the guiding principle of a desired **culture of peace** that is meant to replace the prevailing **culture of violence**. This is to be understood as an upheaval of historic magnitude. Her argument naturally also applies to other pedagogies:

[...] the general purpose of peace education, as I understand it, is to promote the development of an authentic planetary consciousness that will enable us to function as global citizens and to transform the present human condition by changing the social structures and the patterns of thought that have created it. This transformational imperative must, in my view, be at the center of peace education. It is important to emphasize that transformation, in this context, means a profound global cultural change that affects ways of thinking, world views, values, behaviors, relationships, and the structures that make up our public order. It implies a change in the human consciousness and in human society of a dimension far greater than any other that has taken place since the emergence of the nation-state system, and perhaps since the emergence of human settlements (Reardon 1988, p. x).

- From this perspective, the distinction between the personal and the political becomes obsolete: one must consider the two dimensions of the **Great Transformation**—the political and the pedagogical:

If we sincerely seek to practice the politics of transformation, we must acknowledge that personal values have political significance, that the transformational role permits no distinction between private and public norms and behaviors, and their ethical content (Reardon/Snauwaert 2014, p. 23).

However, beyond this formula, opinions differ on how the connection between insights gained through pedagogy and political action might look or be demonstrated empirically (cf. Emde/Jakubczyk/Kappes/Overwien 2017), arguably not only due to a lack of theoretical models, but also due to a lack of empirical data. What appears to be unproblematic in Freire's approach, since he directly addresses those whom he considers to be the **agents of change**, i.e. "the oppressed", becomes more problematic as soon as this pedagogy addresses a general audience and is also subjected to the logics of state educational policy. Klaus Seitz comments on this as follows:

The focus of pedagogy is thus also more strongly placed upon collective, latent, and non-intentional learning processes, upon the question of 'how societies learn', which has only been rudimentarily researched in educational science to date but has recently received fresh attention in research on transformation (Seitz 2014, p. 16).

In view of the goal of achieving society-wide transformation, the question arises concerning the extent to which such emancipatory education is possible at all within the structures of the society to be transformed. Can this change also be prepared within or can it only be prepared outside of state education systems? Fundamental debates continue to flare up on this topic, and it is often claimed that progressive pedagogy can only be achieved outside of the system.⁵ The most convincing position from our perspective, however, is that of Peter Mayo, who clearly states: "[...] people can educate, learn, and work collectively for change outside and within institutions, state controlled and nongovernmental" (Mayo 2003, p. 43). He justifies

⁵ See Wintersteiner 2010b and 2011 for more on this debate in the context of peace education.

this by demonstrating that it is the only way to confront tensions within society and establish counter-hegemonic positions:

Engaging critically and dialectically with the logic of the system implies a readiness to live with the tension to which I have just referred. Such an engagement is born out of a conviction that the system and its institutions are not monolithic entities but offer spaces wherein these struggles can occur. In keeping with an unmistakably Gramscian conception of social transformation, one obtains the conviction that domi-

nant forms of thought and practice can be challenged in the vast and amorphous arena of struggle that is burgherliche [sic] gesellschaft (civil society) (Mayo 2003, p. 43).

Nevertheless, this fundamental scrutiny of emancipatory pedagogy within the state education system, which emerges again and again, seems to be particularly important for all those who work predominantly in this field, in order to prevent them from adapting too easily to the dominating logics of these systems.

CONCLUSION:

From the perspective of pedagogies that are considered to be emancipatory, the terms transformation/social change/global cultural change and the like refer primarily to a radical cultural change that affects both social structures and the ways people, and thus learners, see and think. The common theme in these pedagogies is identified by Peter Mayo as “a counterhegemonic approach to teaching/learning” (Mayo 2003, p. 45).

This change is considered to be elementary and of historic significance. The basis is the assessment that although this change is indispensable (for ecological, political, economic, and cultural reasons), it is actually possible.

Education should enable this transformation by aiming to change consciousness on the one hand, and by teaching the skills to work on social change in a practical and political manner on the other. The connection between the *pedagogical task*—education—and the *political task*—transformation—constantly remains in the foreground thanks to attempts to find a link (using the concept of the culture of peace, for example) which theoretically models the relationship between personal and societal change. Admittedly, this connection only ever remains fundamental or casual. The question of “how societies learn” is asked but not answered sufficiently, or more precisely: it is usually not even asked in sufficiently concrete terms.

There are various answers to the question of how education is to accomplish this task in concrete pedagogical terms, most of which remain in the programmatic sphere, refer little to established learning theories, and are rarely supported by empirical evidence. A theory of transformative learning is not being developed. However, it can be maintained: “For the idea of transformative education [...] there are enough points of departure and past experiences in the traditions of global learning, development education, and ‘education for sustainable development’ that we can build upon” (Seitz 2014, p. 15).

3.2 Transformative education: Mezirow and the aftermath

As the previous chapter demonstrates, the *idea of transformative education* has been applied in this and similar forms for quite some time and has also been given a relatively clear socio-political orientation. However, it has not been substantiated sufficiently from a theoretical point of view and a general pedagogical theory has not been derived from it.

US adult educator, Jack Mezirow, developed a theoretically sound concept of *transformative learning* (TL) in the 1970s. With reference to Freire, Habermas, and Gould, Mezirow defined TL as learning that entails a qualitative shift in the learners' worldview, including 'meaning perspectives', 'frames of reference', and 'habits of mind' (Mezirow 1990). Daniela Lehner provides the following summary:

Jack Mezirow, developmental psychologist and adult educator, describes transformative learning as becoming aware of, reflecting on, as well as expanding and changing one's own meaning perspectives and frames of reference. These frameworks or perspectives can be personal, psychological, social, cultural, linguistic, epistemic, or ontological. [...] It is particularly those experiences that transcend or thwart what we already know and do not fit into our given meaning perspectives that contain transformative potential. A transformation of perspectives can occur through experiences of crisis, 'disorienting dilemmas' [...]. Experiences of dilemmas can challenge our previous frameworks of self-understanding and understanding of the world and make us realise the impact social structures have on our own lives (Lehner 2020).

Mezirow thus focuses on learning that does not only bring about an increase in knowledge, but also (a) sustainably steers thinking in new directions, and (b) brings about a transformation of our cognitive mental structures, whereby (c) we come to a new understanding of ourselves and our living environment, which (d)

often also manifests itself in a new type of practice. In contrast to the frequent accusation that he did not have the political dimension of TL in mind, other authors emphasise that he certainly did, at least in the early days, as indicated by his reference to Freire and Habermas (Cranton/Taylor 2012).

The term *transformative learning* as defined by Mezirow has flourished and become an influential guiding concept in pedagogy, not only in the USA but also in Europe (cf. Hoggan 2016). His clear orientation towards personal change in learners, which can be applied in virtually any field of pedagogy, quickly made the term quite attractive. A vast amount of literature has now been written on the subject; there are handbooks, anthologies, a journal of its own, and countless contributions to the debate. In this context, we restrict ourselves to Mezirow himself and some of the critics who have constructively developed his concept.

Mezirow's fundamental idea is generally supported today, although criticism of his concrete concept did emerge in the early days. Above all, his restriction to the learners' cognitive changes is criticised as being one-sided. Theresa Millman (2013) made a productive proposal to combine Mezirow's theory with Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus: the habitus, as the internalisation and incorporation of worldviews and the rules of our social world, controls our behaviour without us generally being aware of it, but it can be changed and modified through conscious reflection. Transformative learning that also includes the habitus is therefore transformative to a far greater extent.⁶

Only a few further lines of argumentation that the authors consider to be particularly important will be discussed at this point. Not only does Knud Illeris criticise Mezirow, but he also criticises the entire TL discourse for its lack of connection to learning theories (Illeris 2014b). Drawing on Piaget, he distinguishes between "learning as the addition of new knowledge, skills and other possibilities, and learning as change or restructuring of already acquired

⁶ There is much more literature on this topic, e.g., Nairn/Chambers/Thompson/McGarry/Chambers 2012, as well as references in Mayo 2003.

content or structures” (ibid., p. 579), also known as **accommodation**. TL differs from “learning by addition (assimilation)” and is therefore a form of **accommodation** because on top of adding new knowledge, it is greater and different because it aims towards a qualitative change to the learners’ worldview that goes beyond the cognitive level. He thus differentiates between **ordinary accommodation** (someone understands things in a new way) and **transformative accommodation** (someone changes their basic understanding and behaviour in certain situations) (ibid.). In his critical elaboration of Mezirow’s concept, which he also faults for being limited to “the mainly cognitive mental structures which fundamentally organise our understanding of ourselves and our life world” (ibid., pp. 573-574), Illeris comes to the following extended definition:

The concept of transformative learning comprises all learning which implies changes in the identity of the learner (Illeris 2014a, p. 40).

He justifies the concept of **identity**, which he deems to be of central importance, by stating that it is a term “which includes all mental dimensions (the cognitive, the emotional and the social)” (Illeris 2014b, p. 576), and that it builds a bridge between individuals and society, without which learning as well as social life would be unthinkable: “[...] psychologically the individual is nothing on his or her own, but only by virtue of the social relations in which she or he is involved. [...] The psycho-social identity has become the central connection between the individual and the social, and it is constantly challenged” (Illeris 2014b, pp. 578-579).

However, by defining TL in relation to identity, the individuality of TL is maintained at the same time as the social and collective influences on identity are taken into account: they are strongly emphasized, described and discussed in contemporary sociological approaches to the development and understanding of identity. So this proposed definition of TL certainly opens the path to a deeper understanding of today’s

interaction between the individual and the social and collective (ibid., p. 583).

This expansion of transformation to include the entire personality of the learner is an important extension to the term. Chad Hoggan (2016) goes one step further. Based on an empirical study of the use of the term in US academia, he reveals that what is understood as transformative learning and how it takes place varies widely and is by no means limited to new intellectual insights. It ranges from worldviews to complex thinking, and from social action to spirituality. Like Illeris, he criticises Mezirow’s TL for being cognitively limited and recalls that the author originally used the term **perspective transformation** for the phenomena he describes. He proposes to continue using the original term for Mezirow’s understanding of TL, but to conceive of TL itself as a metatheory to accommodate different approaches. His proposed definition reads:

I propose that transformative learning refers to processes that result in significant and irreversible changes in the way a person experiences, conceptualises and interacts with the world (Hoggan 2016, p. 77).

He thus largely agrees with Illeris, even if he uses different terminology. It is striking that both authors, who emphasise the social role of learning, do not pay attention to the question of how such learning impacts on society. Transformative learning aimed at social transformation seems to be only one of many options for them. Brookfield’s approach, which seeks to understand Mezirow’s “meaning perspectives” as individual in their cultural-social context (Brookfield 2000), should therefore also be included. TL is thus far less of an individual endeavour than assumed. “Therefore, in the context of transformative learning processes, it is crucial to make the implicit structures of power and interpretation in societies as well in the respective institutional setting of the current learning environment the subject of reflection” (Singer-Brodowski 2016b, p. 15).

CONCLUSION:

The concept of transformative learning has intensified the attention given to the psychological basis for human change and thus also the possibilities for educational intervention and has provided the impetus for numerous practical activities as well as research that has greatly enhanced our knowledge of how educational transformation works. The now widely accepted broad concept of transformation defines TL as qualitatively special learning that entails a significant change of personality in its social context. This enables a wide variety of pedagogies to plug into the concept and enrich it with their own approaches. However, the connection between personal and social change postulated in emancipatory pedagogies is often overlooked:

Here [according to Mezirow], however, the focus is not on the transformation of societies, but on the transformation of individual systems of meaning. However, such a theory of biographical learning can also be made valuable for transformative education in the sense outlined here (Seitz 2017, p. 11).

This does not mean that the term transformative learning is therefore unsuitable in radically emancipatory pedagogy, but rather that it needs to be refined for this purpose.

It is important to note that the concept of TL was explicitly developed for adult education, with many authors emphasising its distinction from school pedagogy (e.g., Cranton/Taylor 2012). Regardless of this and without further discussion or comment, at least in the German-speaking world, the TL concept is applied to the education provided to children and young people within state school systems, i.e., without further reflection on what adaptations would need to be made.

4. TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING AS EMANCIPATORY LEARNING: EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (ESD) AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION (GCED)

Transformative learning has now found its way into many pedagogies, especially into global learning/global citizenship education and education for sustainable development in German-speaking countries, as well as into peace education (besides Reardon, e.g., also Wintersteiner 2010a and Jenkins 2016) and others (cf. Lang-Wojtasik 2019). This creates better conditions for implementing TL as a whole within political pedagogies. One of the basic assumptions of this text is that this can only succeed overall if the individual pedagogies see themselves as part of an emancipatory pedagogy as a whole. The common goal of **comprehensively understood** transformative learning can thereby serve as a link, since based on the above balance sheet, the task, in our opinion, is to incorporate the achievements of TL and connect them with the intentions of emancipatory pedagogies. On the one hand, this means the continuation of theoretical work, which primarily focuses on exploring the connection between political and pedagogical transformation. On the other hand, it means specifically addressing the respective educational context, e.g., school education, without losing sight of the overall context.

The concepts of GCED and ESD will therefore be discussed, with a focus on their genesis and key contents as well as on major controversies. In light of the extensive and now barely surmountable broad debate surrounding both terms—a sign of the vitality of these concepts—this characterisation can only be succinct and perhaps somewhat simplistic. In a further step, the differences, similarities, and convergences between the two key

concepts will be discussed. There are more of the latter than one might expect because both education for sustainable development and global learning and global citizenship education are geared, to varying degrees, towards the guiding principle of sustainability—both as an object and as a goal of the educational concept. However, since the academic discussion on the one hand and the implementation of education policy on the other can take quite different paths, the embedding of ESD and GCED within the Austrian education system will also be discussed. In a further sub-chapter, ESD and GCED will be compared with each other as well as with the perspectives and criteria identified in the theoretical part, and their transformative potential will be examined.

All of these political pedagogies have emerged or evolved in multiple settings—in academic debates, within pedagogical efforts by civil society organisations, as well as at transnational education policy institutions such as the UN, UNESCO, UNICEF, etc., and, seemingly to a lesser extent and only in response to all of these initiatives, within the work of national education authorities. Wide-ranging interests thus play a role when it comes to definitions and particularly to concrete educational programmes. This entails negotiation processes that sometimes trigger fierce controversies, as international documents such as the SDGs (and many others) ultimately have a major influence on national educational policies. Beyond the pluralism of academic discussion, the final versions are thus also influenced by lobby groups, nation-state objectives, and the results of international negotiations.

4.1 ESD: history, definitions and discourses, implementation, and evaluation

EMERGENCE

Like some related pedagogies, ESD emerged or was at least popularised in a political context. In 1987, the Brundtland Commission, set up by the UN World Commission on Environment and Development, presented its *Our common future*⁷ report, which outlined the guiding principle of sustainable development for the first time. The view already held at that time was that it is about both combating poverty in the so-called developing countries and a matter of their development opportunities as well as shaping the global economy and models of prosperity in harmony with ecological limits. This is a “historical caesura” due to the link between environmental and development issues, on the one hand because the “overcoming of the devastating social and ecological crises of an asymmetrical world order is explicitly defined as a task of the global political community” (Kehren 2017, p. 61). On the other hand, the propagation of intra and intergenerational justice was linked to the hope of being able to “stop the ongoing destruction of livelihoods and contribute to greater prosperity for all” (ibid.). The report was further developed at the World Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (1992), where *Agenda 21*⁸ was adopted. Upon the publication of *Agenda 21* (UN, 1992), the focus shifted from environmental education to the broader concept of education for sustainable development (ESD), thus away from environmental protection and towards a balance between environmental and social aspects (McKeown/Hopkins, 2003). In contrast to environmental education, ESD is based on the three-pillar model—ecology, economy, and social issues. Culture is added as a fourth dimension in some publications (cf. e.g., Stoltenberg 2009, 2011, 2013).

DEFINITIONS AND DISCOURSES

The definition provided by Leicht, Heiss, and Byun (2018, p. 7) summarises this understanding of ESD:

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is commonly understood as education that encourages changes in knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to enable a more sustainable and just society for all. ESD aims to empower and equip current and future generations to meet their needs using a balanced and integrated approach to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

While international steps have been taken towards ESD since 1992, the discourse is far from being free of scrutiny. In this context, both the term sustainability and the concept of sustainable development are subject to criticism.

One of the fundamental issues with this concept is the differing understanding of sustainability. The continuum thus extends from *sustainability* as a clearly defined goal with concrete measures through to sustainability as a regulative idea that can serve as a guiding principle for educational processes (cf. Rauch 2004; Rauch/Steiner 2013a and 2013b).

The idea of *sustainable development* has been criticised for several reasons. Stables and Scott argue that this is a “paradoxical compound policy slogan” (Stables/Scott 2002, p.42) that combines two controversial principles, namely endless economic growth, and sustainable use of natural resources (e.g., Jabareen 2008; Washington 2015), making sustainable development an “oxymoron” (Kopnina 2012; Washington 2015). Current economic development patterns did not address the roots of social inequalities, leading to further environmental degradation (e.g., Rees 2010; Washington 2015) rather than embracing the common wellbeing of people and ecosystems as the core of sustainability (e.g., Crist 2008; Kopnina 2012; Washington 2015).

⁷ https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Brundtland_Report

⁸ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf>

“Even though sustainability has gained a hegemonic status as a social model and new system of justification over the past 30 years, the way in which it is understood and relevant to action has constantly changed in response to changing experiences and issues” (Brand 2021, p. 194). Despite all the changes, there is, according to Karl-Werner Brand, “a broad consensus that in key issues including climate change, loss of biodiversity, soil degradation, a shortage of drinking water, and the increasing pollution of the oceans, as well as within the context of social inequalities and the threat to freedom and human rights, the development trends that exacerbate problems continue to have an almost uninterrupted effect. This feeds vigorous criticism of ‘sustainable non-sustainability’ in ecologically and socially committed circles and strengthens the call for a ‘Great Transformation’” (ibid., p. 195). Brand refers to demands to abandon the concept of sustainability or sustainable development as a social model because the model is too closely linked to outdated ecological ideas of stability and outmoded economic growth concepts or, according to Blühdorn’s vehement criticism (e.g., Blühdorn 2020), only nurtures “societal self-illusion” (Brand 2021, p. 195) that sustainability is being pursued, although any sustainability activities are limited to pure simulation. Likewise, Jickling and Wals state:

Education reflects, amongst other things, an acquisition of knowledge and understanding – whether received and/or socially constructed, critical and imaginative reflection, and an impulse to act on the seemingly impossible. It also means thinking and doing things that haven’t been done before. When seen this way, why should we be satisfied with aiming for the perceived, and by now somewhat tired, ‘wisdom’ of sustainable development when more powerful ideas are needed? (Jickling/Wals 2012, p. 51).

If these considerations are applied, an alternative term might be **education for planetary citizenship** (PCED). Simultaneously, it should be noted that even within

what is referred to here as ESD, there is a wide range of approaches, each with its own traditions. Recently, attempts have been made to do justice to this diversity using the guiding term **environmental and sustainability education** (ESE) and to develop a terminology that encompasses all approaches at the same time.⁹

Another point of criticism that affects all political pedagogies is the contradiction between the normative content and emancipatory claim of ESD discussed in Chapter 2. In this context, Vare and Scott (2007) distinguish between two approaches to ESD, which they call ESD 1 and ESD 2. While ESD 1 follows a more normative concept, with clear learning objectives and an emphasis on learning for sustainable development, ESD 2 sees itself as an emancipatory approach that focuses on critical thinking and addressing dilemmas. Learning itself becomes sustainable development, as Scott and Gough suggest: “By learning throughout our lives we equip ourselves to choose most advantageously as the future unfolds. This would not bring about sustainable development. Rather, it would be evidence that sustainable development was happening” (Scott/Gough 2003, p.147).

Despite all of these criticisms, ESD is strongly rooted in educational policy—in UN documents as well as in national education programmes, including in Austria. Ultimately, this is a pedagogical response to one of the most urgent global problems of all. Therefore, according to this argument, there are many good reasons to retain the well-established concept of sustainability, to take advantage of its incorporation within international documents and, at the same time, to critically renew it.

INTEGRATION IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

ESD has long been embedded in the educational policies of the UN and UNESCO.¹⁰ One example of this is the **UN Decade of ESD** (2005-2014) under the leadership

⁹ For a concise account of this diversity, see: <https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/ese/About/Definitions.html>. Also see Sauvé 2005.

¹⁰ <https://www.unesco.org/en/education/sustainable-development>

of UNESCO, which was concluded at the 2014 **World Conference on ESD**. This was followed by the **Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development** in the years 2015 to 2019¹¹ and then by the **current ESD for 2030** programme (UNESCO 2020). This emphasises the relationship between the climate crisis and loss of biodiversity and the concept of ESD. The introduction states: “Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) was born from the need for education to address growing sustainability challenges” (ibid., p. iii). Finally, the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals in the **2030 Agenda** are of particular relevance. The importance of ESD is also highlighted by the fact that Target 4.7 of the **2030 Agenda** emphasises sustainable development or education for sustainable development in a specific manner by referring to it several times:

By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development” (our emphasis) (UN 2015).

ESD is also relatively well-established in the education system in Austria.¹² Science, numerous NGOs, and, of course, the work of the Austrian Commission for UNESCO make a contribution to this in addition to the efforts of the Ministry of Education. As early as in 1995, the so-called ÖKOLOG school programme was established in Austria based on **UN-Agenda 21**, as a foundation for education for sustainability and school development in Austrian schools. In 2004, the inter-ministerial ESD platform was created at the Federal Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Technol-

ogy (BMBWF) to facilitate the exchange of information and coordination between the school, university, and research sectors. In 2008, the **Austrian Education Strategy for Sustainable Development** was drafted after a comprehensive consultation process and submitted to the Council of Ministers for approval.¹³ Since then, numerous empirical studies and other research have been commissioned and handouts, competence models, and quality criteria have been developed, including the policy paper **Education for Sustainable Development in Teacher Education New** (Steiner/Rauch 2013). In 2014, this was followed by the **Policy Decree on Environmental Education for Sustainable Development** (BMBF 2014). The university network UniNetZ, founded to implement the 17 development goals of the **2030 Agenda** in the academic sector, is also primarily dedicated to ESD in the field of education. Its importance can also be gauged from the fact that the new curricula for primary and middle schools as well as general secondary schools mention ESD as an **overarching theme** (environmental education and sustainable development), as the existing teaching principles are now referred to. In addition, “competences for sustainable development” are named as an essential educational goal, for the promotion of which education for sustainable development, political education with global citizenship education, peace education, and human rights education are cited (BMBWF 2022, p. 16).¹⁴ Thus, a clear prioritisation is expressed with ESD as the guiding concept, to which other political pedagogies are somewhat subordinate. The question arises as to whether this might also lead to a narrowing of the concept of ESD itself.

In its didactic design, ESD adopts many pedagogical principles that are probably contained in all political pedagogies in a similar way: self-activity, participation, critical thinking, whole institution approach, action research, etc.

¹¹ https://www.unesco.at/fileadmin/Redaktion/Publikationen/Publikations-Dokumente/2015_Roadmap_en.pdf

¹² <https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/schule/schulpraxis/ba/bine.html> (available only in german)

¹³ https://www.unesco.at/fileadmin/user_upload/bine_strategie_18299-1.pdf (available only in german)

¹⁴ Also see the final versions of the curricula at (available only in german): https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/schule/schulrecht/erk/lp_neu_begut/lp_vs_ss_ms_ahs_ua.html

CRITICAL APPRAISAL

The terms sustainability and sustainable development are, despite or perhaps even due to their great popularity, also subject to strong criticism. ESD attempts to react to this criticism and incorporate objections and new aspects into its concept without, of course, changing the guiding principles. However, this gives rise to certain ambivalences, which are revisited in the section “Critique of sustainability—planetary citizenship”.

Thus, the sustainability discourse has partially shifted to a “transformation” discourse, not only since the adoption of the global *Agenda 2030*. This shift was driven by the dynamics of addressing climate change (youth, science) and certainly by the perception of multiple, interconnected crisis phenomena. However, the description alone does not imply a change. As the criticism of the SDGs and their conflicting goals surrounding the growth paradigm and growth dynamics demonstrates, the basic questions remain the same. However, transformation as a term refers more strongly to the need for change and transition. This creates movement in the ESD community and thus also increases the potential for ESD and GCED to grow closer together (see section 4.3 below).

4.2 GCED: history, definitions and discourses, implementation, and evaluation

EMERGENCE

The term *global citizenship education (GCED)* or *education for global citizenship*, which has long been in use in the English-speaking world, has only been seen as an independent educational concept in the German-speaking world in more recent years. This terminology has gained ground in Austria since the initiative of the former UN Secretary-General (Ban Ki-moon 2012) and the Klagenfurt GCED study programme (see below), which was launched during the same period. The term GCED is increasingly being merged with the term *global learning*, which is better established in the scientific and pedagogical community.

In the face of globalisation, which is affecting and reshaping all areas of life, GCED’s concern is not only to address so-called global issues (climate change, starvation, wars), but also to discover the global dimension of *all* topics (e.g., world literature, global history, global ethics, etc.). It involves a change of perspective, i.e., primarily not to include GCED as additional teaching content, but to create a new paradigm for political education and education itself with the help of GCED.

DEFINITIONS AND DISCOURSES

Global citizenship education—like political education—is used as an *umbrella term* that can encompass a variety of pedagogical approaches (e.g., Oxley/Morris 2013 or Gaudelli 2016). The *Maastricht Declaration* of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, which defines *global education as global citizenship education*, is influential in this respect:

Global Education is education that opens people’s eyes and minds to the realities of the world, and awakens them to bring about a world of greater justice, equity and human rights for all. Global Education is understood to encompass Development Education, Human Rights Education, Education for Sustainability, Education for Peace and Conflict Prevention and Intercultural Education; being the global dimensions of Education for Citizenship (O’Loughlin/Wegimont 2003).

The subsequent document, the *European Declaration on Global Education to 2050*, adopted in 2022 in Dublin, describes it as follows:

Global Education is education that enables people to reflect critically on the world and their place in it; to open their eyes, hearts and minds to the reality of the world at local and global level. It empowers people to understand, imagine, hope and act to bring about a world of social and climate justice, peace, solidarity, equity and equality, planetary sustainability, and international understanding. It involves respect for human rights and diversity, inclusion, and a decent life for all, now and into the future.

Global Education encompasses a broad range of educational provision: formal, non-formal and informal; life-long and life-wide. We consider it essential to the transformative power of, and the transformation of, education (GENE 2022).

Subsequently, as in the Maastricht Declaration, only much more comprehensive, related, or congruent concepts are mentioned. There is greater emphasis than in the 2002 document on critical thinking, active action as far as pedagogy is concerned, and planetary sustainability in relation to content.

The smallest common denominator is probably the definition of a global citizen by the British NGO Oxfam, i.e., “an understanding of how the world works economically, politically, socially, culturally, technologically and environmentally” and “willing to act to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place” (Oxfam 1997). Broadly speaking, this means knowledge and awareness of the complexity of a world undergoing globalisation and an ethical stance that makes social justice its guiding principle. However, this general description is still open to the most diverse political and ideological orientations within GCED, as well as to the most varied topical priorities.

The differences within GCED can mainly be traced back to (a) the implication associated with the concept of globality, (b) what is understood by citizenship, and finally (c) the understanding of pedagogy this is based upon. Taking this into account, at least three forms of GCED can be distinguished between—initially, an uncritical, *neo-imperial GCED* that propagates a “cosmopolitanism of the fittest” (Mignolo 2011, p. 256). Furthermore, Vanessa Andreotti (2006) differentiates between “soft” and “critical” GCED. It is a distinction within the spectrum that claims entitlement to global justice. The two approaches differ in that one considers itself more as *education of the global citizen*

and the other rather as *education for global citizenship*, i.e., the first approach focuses on the individual who is to develop the moral qualities of a responsible global citizen (“individual cosmopolitanism”), while the second focuses on the social structures that need to be changed in order for global citizenship to become a real option at all (“structural cosmopolitanism” or “thick cosmopolitanism”) (Dobson 2006). At first, one might be inclined to simply argue in favour of a synthesis of the two approaches, since any political education, while aiming to influence the development and fulfilment of each individual, must also never disregard the basic conditions that favour or hinder this fulfilment. However, the comparison is neither individually nor structurally coincidental, but expresses different ideological and political concepts, as well as divergent assumptions about the causes and characteristics of an unjust world order and strategies to overcome them. The first approach, Andreotti argues, appeals to the morality of individuals in the Global North to develop fairer relations with the Global South, citing the interdependence and global interconnectedness of humankind. However, according to Andreotti’s criticism, this does not question the unequal (paternalistic) power relations and even strengthens the myth of Western superiority (which is also echoed in the German-speaking community; see Aktion Dritte Welt 2012, for example). The second approach, on the other hand, does not refer to subjective morality, but to justice as a normative instance that would need to be enforced politically. This would involve addressing unequal power relations, deconstructing the myth of Western superiority, and developing new political structures. Although both approaches claim to be *transformative*, the former develops strategies for personal change, while the latter also focuses on the transformation of society as a whole. Since then, Andreotti has developed a post-colonial and indigenous variant of GCED beyond the critical version (Andreotti/de Souza 2012 and Andreotti/Stein et al. 2019).¹⁵

¹⁵ <https://decolonialfutures.net/portfolio/global-citizenship-education-otherwise/>

Some of the general characteristics of a critical GCED demonstrate certain ambivalences:

- GCED does not merely deal with global facts and globality but strives to overcome “methodological nationalism” (Beck 1997, p. 115), a way of thinking that makes the nation the benchmark and starting point for each investigation and each pedagogy.
- The goal of GCED is not merely to “achieve a better understanding of the world”, but to establish global justice as the norm in political action and to expand the realm of politics and democracy on a global scale. Yet it must be clear that what is understood to be global justice in each case is subject to permanent democratic dispute.
- GCED considers global citizenship to be a “status” which all people are entitled to by virtue of being human, and yet must accept the fact that “global citizenship” has neither been established as a right nor a legal form. It seeks to educate global citizens, but they can only fully develop once global citizenship exists as a status. GCED thus harbours a utopia, but one that is also an instrument for exposing social, economic, and political inequalities as a scandal on a global scale, thus moving closer to its goals. Global citizenship is achieved as a result of political action.
- GCED casts a critical eye on social inequalities on a global scale, yet it is equally concerned with the local dimension of all issues. Without denying the difficulties Western states face in dealing with mass migration, for example, it also addresses the frequently overlooked global dimension of the issue.
- GCED sees it as its task to begin with a critique of the (national) way of thinking, knowledge production, and social structure. It can only justifiably claim to take a global perspective if it draws on input from decolonial discourses, which themselves, however, often do not argue at a global level. GCED must therefore begin to perceive and question the relativity of the scientific and pedagogical foundations upon which it is based.

Criticism of GCED is directed towards certain versions of the concept (in defence of others) on the one hand, but also towards certain foundations of GCED as a whole on the other. The accusation of it being too normative and thus hindering the emancipation of learners was discussed above. The objection that the concept is utopian (in a bad sense) is more serious. Above all, it ignores the fact that global citizenship in the narrower, juridical-political sense does not exist in reality, since democracies are still national and will remain so for the foreseeable future—and without democracy, there can be no (global) citizenship. There is also the accusation, which is sometimes made of ESD, that it is preparing to impose the salvation of the world upon children.

With this in mind, global citizenship education also sees itself as a local and concrete approach to education. This means addressing the national and regional structural issues that confront global citizenship as a world responsibility and thus making people aware of them. Learners should be given the opportunity to understand the global dimensions of individual and political action at a local level and also to comprehend them in the context of experiential learning. Finally, the dominant national definitions (limitations) of citizenship, life practices, solidarity, and empathy are also normative. Criticism of the normative approach of global citizenship could thus also be reflected back upon these national ways of thinking, acting, and feeling that are contributing to the current existential crises for humankind.

If interpreted “strongly”, GCED is an “umbrella term” that is also capable of integrating other political pedagogies. It does not see itself merely as the global dimension of all political education, but as the contemporary formulation for political education par excellence. For any political education, even if it primarily refers to the democracy of a nation state, must inevitably include the global or glocal dimension of its activity.

GCED does not merely assert a factual connection between the various “political pedagogies”, but also strives to integrate global learning, political and intercultural education, peace education, human rights education, education for sustainable development, etc. Nevertheless, while respecting the specificity of each approach, GCED presents itself as a catalyst for the development of an integrative perspective.

This has resulted in efforts to integrate GCED and ESD, especially in the English-speaking world (see below), although it should be noted that GCED has far less support in education systems than ESD does.

INTEGRATION WITHIN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The adoption of the concept by the UN and UNESCO was a milestone for the international attention of global citizenship education beyond the English-speaking world. Inspired by the Global Education First Initiative launched by the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon (2012), UNESCO has made this topic a “strategic area” of its work in education, has published concepts (UNESCO 2014) and materials, and has organised a UNESCO Forum on Global Citizenship Education every two years since 2013. It considers GCED to be a “conceptual shift” in its work and positions it within the context of the key focus areas of human rights education, peace education, and sustainable development (<https://en.unesco.org/themes/gced>). It is probably also down to the efforts of the UN Secretary-General and UNESCO that GCED was included in the Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs) and explicitly mentioned in Target 4.7 (UN 2015). This, in turn, conditions UNESCO’s work, which is now heavily focused on the testability of GCED to gain visibility and a place in SDG monitoring and evaluations. Inevitably, this also goes hand in hand with a slight narrowing of the definition of GCED.

In German-speaking countries, on the other hand, GCED has only slowly found its way into the education system, especially in the wake of the SDGs. Global citizenship is noted in some parts of the German **Orientation Framework for Global Development Education** (Schreiber/Siege 2016), although global citizenship education is not mentioned as a term. Austria has seen an upswing in recent years, thanks to the efforts of the Austrian Commission for UNESCO and the three-year Master’s programme (advanced training) in Global Citizenship Education, which has been running since 2012 at the University of Klagenfurt (Wintersteiner/Grobbauer 2019), as well as the recently established UNESCO Chair on Global Citizenship Education, Culture of Diversity and Peace (also at the University of Klagenfurt). GCED has been firmly established as an “educational principle” of teacher training in the Southeast Education Network. Finally, the presence of the Ban Ki-moon Centre for Global Citizens in Vienna contributes to a broader acceptance of the concept—beyond the educational sphere.

CRITICAL APPRAISAL

In contrast to human rights education, peace education, and ESD, GCED does not focus on a specific social issue or topic but incorporates the global perspective or the perspective of global justice into all topics. GCED thus focuses on the dimension of the (global and glocal) political implementation of social issues. GCED can therefore be adapted to all political pedagogies. This provides the link to transformative education, although it is important to consider the different political philosophies mentioned above as well as the various resulting political strategies within the spectrum of GCED.

4.3 The transformative content of GCED and ESD

This concluding sub-chapter first compares GCED and ESD, examining convergences and differences. Before addressing their potential for transformative learning, it is necessary to revisit the concept of sustainability and alternative approaches. It concludes with a catalogue of criteria that can be applied not only to ESD and GCED, but to all transformative political pedagogies.

CONVERGENCES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GCED AND ESD

The brief comparison of ESD and GCED above revealed that the two concepts have many similarities and overlaps. However, they are often perceived as separate or even conflicting issues. This isolated approach, however, does not enable the exploitation of the transformative potential of both pedagogies. An attempt will therefore be made to focus on their convergences and to understand the two pedagogies as complementary, without neglecting their differences.

Some differences lack substantive or scientific grounds. In a 2006 article on the German debate, Annette Scheunpflug and Barbara Asbrand revealed that although the two pedagogies have criticised each other from the very beginning for neglecting sustainability and global justice, there is also competition for funding behind this dispute (Scheunpflug/Asbrand 2006). They also note that the two concepts have stimulated each other and led to their respective evolution. In contrast to a competitive attitude, they advocate cooperation in empirical research and more intense intellectual exchange. German education researchers Gregor Lang-Wojtasik and Selina Schönborn also argue this:

Thanks to its roots in global citizenship education (Trembl 2011) and systematic connections to political education (Wintersteiner et al. 2015), GCED provides sustainable links to future-proof ESD (Lang-Wojtasik 2020a) (Lang-Wojtasik/Schönborn 2020, p. 4).

This gives rise to the insight that the ESD spectrum is too narrow for truly transformative education, and that the entire range of political pedagogies understood as being transformative is required (as outlined in Target 4.7 of the SDGs, for example). Singer-Brodowski (2016b, p. 13) also draws attention to the interconnectedness of ESD and GCED when she discusses “education for sustainable development (ESD) and learning for global citizenship as key objectives” of the UN’s *2030 Agenda*.

This spirit of collaboration seems to be much more developed in the English-speaking world, where there is an extensive range of literature that seeks to unite both concerns (e.g., Bourn 2005; Sund/Öhman 2011; Sarabhai 2013; Bennell 2015; Dower 2015; Ellis 2015; Bamber et al. 2016). UNESCO also sees the two concepts as interlinked, given their joint conferences and programmatic statements: “Both ESD and GCED empower learners to develop the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes they need to contribute to a more inclusive, just, peaceful and sustainable world” (UNESCO 2019, S. 3). However, in the UNESCO documents it mostly remains a postulate of similarities without going into analytical depth.

How can the complementarity of ESD and GCED be understood? The strength of ESD, in a critical version, is that it has the potential to provide an overall concept of socio-ecological transformation (which naturally includes economics, politics, and culture). Understood in this way, the term sustainability calls for radical change. However, many approaches stick to the original, growth-oriented concept of sustainable development in the narrow sense, entirely in line with neoliberal political strategies. The strength of GCED, however, lies in its ability to draw attention to the need for political change and political engagement, beyond the national level and into the global societal level. Yet there are also stances within the GCED spectrum that focus on moral rather than political engagement and do not envisage radical transformations. It is therefore evident that critical approaches within ESD and GCED connect with each other by involving other critical approaches. Slogans such as *Education for Environmental*

Citizenship¹⁶ or **ecological citizenship** (Dobson 2003) are indicative of this direction. The regular national “Welt-WeitWissen” congresses in Germany, which have been run as the “Congress on Global Learning and Education for Sustainable Development” since 2014, prove that this cooperation can indeed work well.¹⁷ The connection may become even more obvious when considering that not only does well-understood sustainability need (global) citizenship for its implementation, but that, conversely, (global) citizenship is also concretised and increased in relevance by the sustainability discourse:

Green thinking has impacted on our understandings of citizenship in at least three different ways. First, environmental concerns have entered our understanding of the rights we enjoy as citizens. Second, the enhanced level of global awareness associated with ecological thinking has helped to broaden our understanding of the potential scope of citizenship. Third, emergent ecological concerns have added fuel to a complex debate about the responsibilities that attach to citizenship (Dean 2001, p. 491).

Transformative learning, understood as the connection between individual and societal transformation, would probably be the prerequisite for, as well as the consequence of, the harmonisation of ESD and GCED. It is therefore only logical that the Journal of International Education Research and Development Education (ZEP) addresses both sustainability and GCED in its thematic edition on transformative education (ZEP 2016). If education for sustainable development is understood as socially transformative, it is reasonable to see global citizenship as an inherent educational goal of ESD, which helps to develop political competences to work towards societal transformation. Conversely, in the sense of future viability, sustainability has always been an important driving force and one of the key goals of global citizenship education. This is where ESD comes into play. The phrasing of the VENRO discussion paper (2014) **Global Learning as Transformative Education for Sustainable Development** reflects this connection. Admittedly, sustainability is not the

only goal of GCED; it includes a number of concerns advocated by individual political pedagogies, including all those also mentioned in Target 4.7 of the UN’s **2030 Agenda**.

CRITIQUE OF SUSTAINABILITY— PLANETARY CITIZENSHIP

The discourse on sustainability has permanently changed the way we think. “Just ten years ago, sustainability was seen as fanatical green thinking, but now we understand that it is a necessity,” suggests Finnish social pedagogue Arto O. Salonen (Löf 2021). The need for social transformation is much clearer to us today. However, the term is ambiguous and open, and particularly in the definition of **sustainable development**, it also favours interpretations that maintain the system and think they can forego real transformation. Its ambiguity has made sustainability popular, arguably often at the expense of critical content. This is why debates about a socio-ecological transformation continue to encounter this term. German educator Yvonne Kehren summarises the problematic nature of the guiding principle of sustainability:

What starts as a fundamental critique of the causes of the symptoms of crisis in an economic system based on permanent growth, however, renders this very critique unrecognisable in a process of modernisation that conforms to the system. In the face of globalisation, the reorientation of economic activity towards the fight against global poverty, which is demanded by sustainability, is exhausted in a positively appealing ideology of modernisation that is one-sidedly directed towards technological innovations. The social crises are thus marginalised in the socio-political and economic debate. As a result of internationally consensual political processes, sustainability takes on a character of compromise which, due to the differing political and economic interests and power relations, has not only dissolved various positions of critique from developmental, indigenous, and feminist perspectives, but also the contradictions of global capitalisation itself. As a result of reflection and simultaneously a redemp-

¹⁶ <https://enec-cost.eu/our-approach/education-for-environmental-citizenship/>

¹⁷ <https://www.weltweitwissen.net/>

tive guiding idea in light of contradictions within global capitalism, the guiding principle of sustainability aims to achieve a non-contradictory definition of the relationship between ecological, economic, social, and political aspects and concerns (Kehren 2017, S. 62f.).

This can be clearly seen in key documents in the sustainability debate—on the one hand, in the 2011 report *Gesellschaftsvertrag für eine Große Transformation* (Social Contract for a Great Transformation) by the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU 2011), and on the other hand in the UN's **2030 Agenda**, titled *Transforming our world* (UN 2015). The significance of these documents resides in the fact that from the authoritative perspective—the German Government or the UN Member States—the path towards a sustainable economy and way of life is being paved. This is of enormous importance and presents great opportunities for critical discourse. However, neither document provides a comprehensive, coherent concept of radical change. The WBGU report provides a broad definition of the concept of transformation in ecological terms, but only a narrow definition in economic and political terms. The **UN-Agenda** remains vague in many respects, but also seeks to bring an ecological orientation and the paradigm of an economy based on permanent growth under one roof.

This problem also affects pedagogy, especially **education for sustainable development**. The strategy of critical educators is to restore critical content to the concept by associating it with transformative learning. To mark the start of the decade of “Education for Sustainable Development 2005 - 2014”, VENRO, the German umbrella organisation for development and humanitarian non-governmental organisations, addressed the link between education and transformation:

Education for sustainable development cannot be limited to teaching knowledge and skills about sustainability; rather, it is education aimed towards social change, it is education for transformation, which focuses on individual changes in attitudes and behaviour as well as structural and institutional reforms (VENRO 2005, quoted from Seitz 2017, p. 9).

This transformation cannot merely take place nationally but must be tackled globally. A further VENRO publication (2014) therefore explicitly deals with “global learning as transformative education for sustainable development”, as the title reads. In his essay **Transformation and Education**, Klaus Seitz, a leading VENRO expert, focuses on bringing the streams of discourse from UNESCO and UN organisations, which employ the concept of transformation, in line with transformative learning according to Mezirow. He asserts that TL, like any pedagogical practice, is first committed to the development of the learners' personalities. However, according to Seitz,

transformative education's stakeholders also need to consider how individual learning experiences translate into collective social learning processes that ultimately shape the epochal course. Historic research on transformations can highlight the central role that unconventional, alternative learning experiences, which emerge in societal niches, play in constructive social upheaval (Seitz 2017, p. 9).

However, according to Singer-Brodowski, the results for this decade are rather ambivalent. The successes of the UN decade of “Education for Sustainable Development” (2005-2014) were often achieved at the cost of a loss of substance:

Many of the educational offers related to ESD do address sustainability issues in their ecological, economic, social, and cultural dimensions as well as their interactions, yet in essence they focus too little on the reflection of dominant non-sustainable everyday ideologies [... thus] the increasing political institutionalisation of ESD has simultaneously diminished radical and critical elements within the ESD debate and a tendency towards the adaptation of neo-liberal educational and sustainability discourses can be observed (Singer-Brodowski 2016b, p. 13).

Referring to Freire, she understands “transformative education as education for emancipation” (Singer-Brodowski 2016a, p. 133). She regards this as a possible correction to what she sees as the flattening of the discourse on ESD.

Regardless of whether the term sustainability is thus to be abandoned or whether an attempt is made to actually think of it in transformative terms so that it becomes another expression for proper global justice, the decisive factor is the realisation that justice must now also include non-human living beings and the biosphere as a whole. The French philosopher Michel Serres described this idea using a beautiful image:

Aimer nos deux pères, naturel et humain, le sol et le prochain ; aimer l'humanité, notre mère humaine, et notre naturelle mère, la Terre. Impossible de séparer ces deux fois deux lois sous peine de haine (Serres 1992, p. 83).¹⁸

If the transformation that lies ahead of us is conceived both comprehensively instead of anthropocentrically and politically instead of only technocratically, concepts such as *ecological citizenship* (Dobson 2003) or *planetary citizenship* (Gadotti 2017) and educational goals such as *education for ecological citizenship* or *education for planetary citizenship* (PCED) become implicit.

The concept of *planetary citizenship* is gaining ground everywhere, not least in connection with the discourse on the Anthropocene, as new publications such as *Planetary Politics* (Marsili 2021) and *Planetary Thinking* (Hanusch/Leggewie/Meyer 2021) demonstrate. *Education for planetary citizenship* is also increasingly widespread in this context (Thompson 2001; Henderson/Ikeda 2004; Ednir/Macedo 2011; Walker 2016). Arto O. Salonen, member of the Finnish Expert Panel for Sustainable Development, explains the planetary approach:

More than ever before, the stability of the founda-

tion of life depends on humans. Mass consumption, increasingly individualistic lifestyles and population growth have turned the planetary approach into a necessity. The sphere of impact people have today is not only global, but also brings together human and non-human aspects of reality (Quoted from Löff 2021).

Education for planetary citizenship has already made it into academic curricula in Brazil as a synthesis of Edgar Morin's ecological-political pedagogy, postcolonial thinking, and a reformulation of global citizenship (Moraes 2017 and Moraes/E. Moraes Arraut/J. Moraes Arraut 2021). In the German-speaking world, the term is used in the *Heimatland Erde Manifesto* (2021) by the peace study centre ASPR (more recently: ACP) in Stadtschlaining, Austria, to distinguish between "globalisation of solidarity based on global responsibility and manifested in *global citizenship*" and "*planetary citizenship*", which is understood to mean "the extension of solidarity to non-human life, without which human life would also be unthinkable".¹⁹

However, the question of whether it is more appropriate to understand *education for planetary citizenship* as a reformulation of *education for sustainable development* and thus settle on the double term *education for planetary citizenship/education for global citizenship*, or to understand *education for planetary citizenship* as an umbrella term that encompasses both ESD and GCED, will not be resolved here.

In any case, the term *education for planetary citizenship* addresses the transformative character of education, even in a socio-political sense, with a clarity that other terms may lack.

¹⁸ "Let us love our two fathers, natural and human, soil and neighbour; let us love humanity, our human mother, and our natural mother, the Earth. It is impossible, under the penalty of hatred, to separate these laws of two."

¹⁹ https://www.aspr.ac.at/fileadmin/Pictures/Homeland_earth/Manifest-Homeland-Earth-EN.pdf

CONCLUSION:

ESD and GCED are two important concepts that provide pedagogical answers to major societal questions. In order to use them in the context of transformative learning, they should be understood to be complementary, whereby it is essential to deal with the concept of sustainability in a fundamentally critical way. The concept of planetary citizenship also lends itself to this context. However, the application of transformative learning to GCED and ESD should not be seen as an issue that has already been solved, but as a task that lies ahead. Far from having an answer to all questions, the value of transformative learning as a concept is to ask the right questions and, at least in the way it is taken up by political pedagogies, to draw attention to the need for multiple transformations.

As with all political pedagogies, there is a fundamental contradiction between openness as a pedagogical claim and norm orientation as a political claim, as discussed in Chapter 2. This contradiction can only be dealt with again and again by means of participation that is as broad as possible.

The work of educators cannot be limited to pedagogical work in the narrower sense; it must also reflect on the objectives and subjective prerequisites of the work of educators and also consider the goals that go beyond education. This means scrutinising the existing education system, and consequently also working with all educational initiatives outside of the system, as these often provide innovations; in other words, working from the niches, but not settling in these niches. It also means reflecting critically on oneself as an educator and being aware of the need to “transform” oneself; and finally, it means contacting and exchanging with political movements that are working towards the goal of socio-ecological transformation.

Important aspects that can only be alluded to in this text, yet not adequately portrayed, include the transformation of learning itself, the critical reflection of knowledge transmission, and knowledge content. One of the starting points for transformative learning and education is the critique of traditional knowledge transfer. It is not simply about imparting knowledge, but also about knowledge of knowledge. Annette Scheunpflug, for example, points out the elementary nature of the ability to distinguish between an “empirically sound theory versus an individual assumption” (Scheunpflug 2019, p. 70). With similar intensions, the French Initiative *Collectif École changer de cap*²⁰ also included among its *Treize transformations nécessaires et possibles...*²¹, the 13 proposals for the transformation of schools, the item “Éduquer au sens de la complexité et à l’esprit de la science”, i.e., educate the spirit of complexity and science. This idea is even more systematically expressed in Edgar Morin’s book *Seven complex lessons in education for the future*, written for UNESCO (Morin 2001). The following thoughts are particularly important in our context: knowledge should not be considered to be a “ready-made tool” (Morin 2001, p. 12), but the paths and aberrations of knowledge need to be taught; the errors of reason as well as paradigmatic blindness (due to unquestioned axioms and ideologies) need to be taken into account in the transmission of knowledge and their existence needs to be taught. In terms of content, it is a matter of comprehensive knowledge “capable of grasping global and fundamental problems and integrating partial and local knowledge therein” (ibid.). The division of knowledge into individual disciplines must be countered by an integrative view, connecting all fields of knowledge to form an overall picture. Ultimately, it is a goal to teach “earthly identity” (ibid., p. 41ff.), which is more than cosmopolitan solidarity, as it also includes the ecological consciousness of the community of destiny with the biosphere’s living beings (ibid., p. 87ff.). In this sense, transformative learning is also learning with increased complexity.

²⁰ <https://www.ecolechangerdecap.net/spip.php?page=sommaire&lang=en>

²¹ <https://www.ecolechangerdecap.net/spip.php?page=sommaire&lang=en>

CRITERIA FOR TRANSFORMATIVE POLITICAL PEDAGOGIES

This paper does not aim to present the didactics of transformative learning or ESD and GCED. To conclude, however, a number of critical questions will be posed regarding ESD, GCED, and other political pedagogies based on the pedagogical, educational, and political reflections in this dossier. They can serve as a yardstick for their transformative quality:

- Are learning and education developed exclusively on the basis of normative guidelines or is learning understood as learners' process that is accompanied by pedagogy?
- Are educators making themselves aware of and transparent about the ambivalence between the normative approaches which are inherent, and thus unavoidable, in the education system and the openness of learning and educational processes to results (both as an ideal and as a reality)? Is this critically reflected upon, and does this transform teaching itself?
- Does the development of learning and education in its experiential character involve the understanding of knowledge and educational opportunities that are as de-hierarchised and participatory as possible, in which people can relate to their concrete living conditions and their effects?
- Is the link between transformative learning and learning for a socio-ecological transformation made conceptually explicit and maintained in practice?
- Is one's own pedagogical concept, be it ESD, GCED, or another, understood as a developing concept that is open to new scientific findings, critical objections, and postcolonial and critical arguments vis-à-vis Western pedagogy, which thus constantly grows in complexity, clarity, and concreteness?
- Is the connection between the specific pedagogical approach and the overall context of all transformative pedagogies consciously perceived and practically established?
- Does the respective pedagogy take a reflective and critical standpoint towards the structural preconditions of its own work?
- Does the respective pedagogical approach also see itself as transformative with regard to the attitudes and practices of its pedagogues?
- Are both the catalogue of goals and the respective didactic methods geared towards emancipation and agency—in other words, towards the prerequisites that enable transformative learning to take place?

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