

BOOK REVIEWS

Schooling for Sustainable Development in Africa

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Edited by Heila Lotz-Sisitka, Overson Shumba, Justin Lupele and Di Wilmot, Springer, 2017

This is the seventh book in an eight part series titled *Schooling for Sustainable Development* and provides a broad suite of perspectives, approaches, pedagogies, curriculum, desired competences, engagement strategies and case studies of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in an African context. In 2015, the United Nations launched the 2030 agenda for sustainable development with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 4 *Quality Education* itself is key to achieving the 2030 agenda, the other 16 goals and the global challenges these goals seek to address (Holmes et al., *under review*). In this collection of studies, Lotz-Sisitka et al. (2017) bring together 30 leading researchers, practitioners and educators to showcase the diversity of approaches to ESD in Southern Africa.

There are strong themes of transformation, innovation and change through the book with many chapters highlighting the need for radical shifts in how education is structured and delivered across levels with a strong focus on secondary schooling, in sustainability, environment and development fields. Two of the editors of the book, Lotz-Sisitka and Lupele, open in Chapter 1 by outlining the African context in which ESD emerges. They argue that SDG 4 and the ‘quality lifelong education’ it aims to provide for everyone ‘remains poorly defined on the African continent’ (p.5). This emphasises the entrenched impacts of colonisation on African peoples, knowledge systems and environments including poverty, inequality and the ongoing exploitation of natural resources (Lotz-Sisitka & Lupele, 2017). These consequences of European imperialism continue to remain embedded within globally mainstreamed approaches to ESD. Consequently, in Chapter 1 the authors emphasise the importance of grounding sustainability and environmental education within locally relevant and real-world contexts and in ways that foster and make space for traditional and Indigenous knowledges and ways of being to be centralised practices and foci. Along with social justice, these themes remain consistent threads throughout the book’s 20 chapters. Chapter 1 also highlights the problems with the concept of ESD and the authors state ‘we would normally prefer to use ESE (environment and sustainability education) . . . [as] notions of development under neo-liberalism and globalisation [can have] performative impacts on societies in the Global South’ (p.3). While the authors highlight their opposition to the term ESD, it appears they decide to use it so as to align with the series’ theme. Regardless of their choice of terminology, the chapter further emphasises the western-colonial nature of the dominant modes of sustainable development and their influence on important concepts within environmental and sustainability education.

The book is divided into four parts: Part I – *Orientation to Education for Sustainable Development, Schools in Africa and Learning Processes*. This part provides the contextual grounding for the book, as discussed above, and delves into the situational aspects of social-ecological systems (Chapter 2) on ESD and ESE and the emerging trends in the African curriculum landscape (Chapter 3) against a backdrop of grand societal challenges such as climate change, waste and biodiversity loss.

Part II – *Curriculum Innovations: Teaching, Learning and Assessment* – of the book dives more deeply into the transformative examples of ESD/ESE that are being created, tested and evaluated across Southern Africa, in countries like Zambia, Namibia, Mauritius and South Africa. A strong combination of themes in this section is localised around Afrocentric cultures

(Chapter 6), perspectives and heritage (Chapter 5) and within experiential and problem-based learning models. Several chapters also apply such complex social-ecological concepts and phenomenon within disciplines such as Geography (Chapter 7), Biology (Chapter 8) and water management (Chapter 9), all critical areas for future generations within and outside of educational fields to understand and address.

Part III – *Integrated Approaches to Education for Sustainable Development in Schools* – looks at fostering more interdisciplinary, cross-sectoral and community-inclusive approaches to ESD in African schools. This section shows the breadth of research that exists in regard to the importance of integrating particular educational materials, activities and pedagogies within real-world and localised contexts on the African continent so as to encourage student (Chapter 12) and teacher, community (Chapter 12), and other external stakeholder participation (Chapter 13) within learning processes and practices.

Part IV – *Teachers and Teacher Education* – focuses on the critical, yet often neglected space of supporting, nurturing and guiding ESD teachers through programmes of professional development and training (Cotterell, Hales, Arcodia, & Ferreira, 2019; Zamora-Polo & Sanchez-Martin, 2019). With more than seven chapters, Part IV makes up more than one-third of the book and provides a range of studies focusing on teacher training and development across disciplines such as science (Chapter 14) and biodiversity (Chapter 15), and on methods (Chapter 16), pedagogies (Chapter 17) and teacher networks and communities (Chapter 19). The final chapter of the section and the book (Ch.20) by Urenje, Brunner and Petersen discusses the development of an innovative online training programme for ESD teachers known as *Fundisana Online*.

This book is aimed at connecting African teachers and educators through collaborative research into novel, creative and inclusive ESD. It provides useful understandings of the local contexts where schools and educational institutions find themselves situated, in Southern African states. It is an important resource for education departments across the Global South and particularly across the African continent. It also provides educators within civil society and private sector organisations with a lens to understand what kind of leading edge opportunities exist to build the skills and competences of the future, against a context of the UN SDGs.

I'm an environmental, sustainability and climate change educator, researcher and communicator with a strong interest in super-wicked problems, grand challenges and the SDGs, and have spent months studying, living, travelling and volunteering in Southern Africa during my undergraduate degree. I found this book refreshing and inspiring. The editors and authors provide a range of critical perspectives and approaches to ESD including Indigenous, Afrocentric and student-centric approaches which are important critiques of Eurocentric and mainstream sustainable development discourses. It is this focus on decolonising the ESD landscape in Southern Africa that to me is a critical step in ensuring education can drive society towards achieving the 2030 sustainable development agenda. I found this collection of research, practice and case studies particularly interesting and important in a time when we all need to be fostering more sustainable, equitable, regenerative and nourishing lives in the face of unprecedented social, environmental, economic and political change.

References

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Oli is a Research Officer at RMIT's Centre for Urban Research (CUR), joining the university in August 2019. Oli is RMIT's RA on a new ARC Discovery Project on environmental justice being conducted between RMIT, Sydney University and ANU. Oli previously was involved in two interdisciplinary projects with Professor Lauren Rickards and A/prof Wendy Steele on research impact and the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs) and is a member of the Climate Change Transformations (CCT) program at CUR.

Oli is deeply engaged with the climate movement in Australia and the Pacific with organisations like Climate for Change and Climates (Directing since the end of 2019) and has been integral in both organisations' establishment and growth over the last four years.

Oli has a double bachelor's degree in Arts (International Studies) and Science (Geology) from Monash University and a Master of Environment (Climate Change) from the University of Melbourne. He has worked for a range of NGOs on Climate Change, Biodiversity Conservation, Sustainable Development and Environmental Education across Australia, South Africa, Brazil, the USA and Fiji. He has published social-ecological systems research on blue carbon (mangroves and seagrasses) and community-based approaches to sustainable coastal resource management and climate adaptation in the South Pacific region. He has presented this research at the 2019 Victorian Biodiversity Conference in Melbourne, on public radio and podcasts and has produced several related outputs including a summary report that was translated into Fijian. He is currently co-authoring research on conservation and climate issues related to Giant Sequoias (Redwoods) in Yosemite, California, in collaboration between the University of California (UC) Merced, the US National Park Service and Yosemite Conservancy, and has several other papers *in press*.

A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety: How to Keep your Cool on a Warming Planet

Sarah Jaquette Ray, *A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety: How to Keep your Cool on a Warming Planet*, Oakland, California, University of California Press, 2020.

Reviewed by Blanche Verlie, Sydney Environment Institute, University of Sydney.

Sarah Jaquette Ray's *A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety* offers itself as an 'existential toolkit' for the 'climate generation.' This book makes an overdue and very welcome contribution to the world, where the mental health impacts and cascading losses that climate change generates are increasing rapidly. It synthesises a range of psychological theory, personal experience, Buddhist philosophy and activist self-care wisdom. This is organised into a series of strategies that can help people of any age to play the long game of fighting for climate justice.

As a 'field guide,' this is not an exhaustive book on climate anxiety or how to cope with it — although I am sure no such book could exist, given the complexity of the issue. Rather, *A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety* offers integral entry points. Ray normalises the diversity of emotional experiences people can face when encountering climate change, validates and advocates engaging with them and offers a range of self-care and action-oriented guidance for helping respond to them. While it alone can't promise to help everyone 'keep their cool on a warming planet' all the time, it certainly provides an important range of wisdom, in the form of personal anecdotes, reflections, research and theory, and direct advice, for those who are struggling to manage feelings of overwhelm and resignation.

This is one of the first books filling what we might awkwardly call the climate-focused 'self-help' genre (for others, see e.g., Grose, 2020; Salamon & Gage, 2020), a market that is likely to expand rapidly. While the broader literature on eco-anxiety is dominated by psychological approaches, Ray is an intersectional feminist environmental educator, which means this book makes a critical intervention, and one that is likely to ensure it stands out for years to come. Connecting diverse social movements such as those for racial justice and prison abolition to climate change, and drawing on queer theory, environmental humanities and a rigorous critique of colonial capitalism ensures that Ray's version of climate self-care avoids the de-politicised,