

## **Finalized Proposal (Onsite Panel)**

### **Title**

Fostering knowledge-driven transformation in times of uncertainty: Collaborative research in education

### **Panel Summary**

This panel will highlight cross-cutting enablers of knowledge-driven transformations with particular reference to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Global Citizenship Education (GCED). Both concepts are promoted in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

As the world is facing a broad set of emerging technological, social, political, and environmental disruptions, research and science are increasingly called upon to support policy decision-making globally and locally towards the shared goals of sustainable development and universal peace. Yet, it can be argued that, to some extent, research and scientific developments have been complicit in the various sustainability challenges we now experience. Looking forward, how can equitable, just, and inclusive knowledge creation that is capable to confront such challenges be fostered in these uncertain times? How can new knowledge be co-created and respectfully and appropriately integrated into the learning and knowledge generation of future generations?

It is widely hoped that higher education systems and institutions will play an important role in mobilizing expertise, knowledge generation, and knowledge transfer for addressing complex and interdependent challenges. Higher education goes beyond science, technology, and innovation as currently called for in many global and national action plans. How will these hoped-for contributions to societal transformation today and in the future translate into higher education's mandate for teaching, research, and community engagement? What are the implications for the renewal of higher education and its governance?

Panelists from various academic backgrounds and world regions will draw on their research and experience to highlight the importance of:

- (1) developing new knowledge following transdisciplinary approaches;
- (2) co-creating knowledge in equitable ways and including multiple ways of knowing;
- (3) meaningfully advancing research-policy interface dialogues;
- (4) the responsibility of academia for promoting public awareness and understanding for the sustainability challenges of today and tomorrow.

Each of the 4 panel members, two of whom hold UNESCO Chairs, have successfully influenced global policies through their research and they will share perspectives and experiences that illustrate how to include global policy frameworks and normative instruments into future research in meaningful ways, thematically focusing on ESD and GCED:

1. Envisioning a world-wide research agenda to renew the futures of education.
2. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) - a key enabler for sustainable futures? Perspectives from research and policy 1992-2024.
3. How distinctive are conceptions of global citizenship in Asian education systems? Emergent concepts in the intended curriculum of 20 Asian and Pacific countries.
4. The Role of Universities' collaboration and network in development of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) for enhancing interdisciplinary education and research from the Asian Perspective.

Following the panel presentations, there will be sufficient time for engagement with questions, comments, and broader reflections from the audience relating to the futures of knowledge and research in order to identify (1) the challenges that networked-based and transdisciplinary education and research might pose to individual researchers, (2) new ideas for solutions and guidance that might be needed to advance the co-creation of new, transdisciplinary knowledge at all levels, and (3) ways of neutral and non-partisan involvement with policy processes relevant in all fields of research in a complex, continuously changing and often politicized world.

After the XVIII WCCES, speakers aim to summarize the conversation in a think piece or visionary paper (short paper, 3000 words, [World Voices Nexus: The WCCES Chronicle](#)), covering the input from UNESCO and UNESCO Chairs as well as the discussion with the audience to present ideas for the future role of collaborative, transdisciplinary research and the contribution of new knowledge for global policymaking and implementation. In closing this panel session, a respondent will discuss the four presentations from a cross-cultural perspective towards fostering sustainable life skills in education.

#### **Moderators:**

**Sobhi Tawil**, PhD, Director, Future of Learning and Innovation Division, UNESCO. Email: [s.tawil@unesco.org](mailto:s.tawil@unesco.org).

Dr. Sobhi Tawil leads the Future of Learning and Innovation Division at UNESCO where his work focuses on the futures of education, the digital transformation of education, and global policy analysis. Earlier research investigated educational change in North Africa, citizenship education, as well as issues related to education, conflict, and social cohesion.

If the panel is hosted as a hybrid event, online moderation can be added: **Keith Holmes**, PhD Programme Specialist, Future of Learning and Innovation Division, UNESCO. Email: [k.holmes@unesco.org](mailto:k.holmes@unesco.org).

Dr Keith Holmes is a Programme Specialist in UNESCO's Future of Learning and Innovation Division. Keith is currently involved in a range of education research and foresight activities, especially on the futures of higher education. He is Research Coordinator of the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme, an inter-university cooperation programme comprising nearly 1000 UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks in 120 countries.

#### **Proposed panelists**

**PANELIST 1: Elena Toukan**, PhD, Research Specialist, Futures of Learning and Innovation, Education Sector, UNESCO, Headquarters, France. Email: [e.toukan@unesco.org](mailto:e.toukan@unesco.org).

**Title of presentation:** Envisioning a world-wide research agenda to renew futures of education.

As part of its flagship report, UNESCO's International Commission on the Futures of Education raises a call for collaborative research and innovation about education for reimagining just, equitable and

sustainable shared futures. “Like education itself,” the report states, “research and innovation are public goods and processes that have key roles to play in catalyzing a new social contract for education” (p.120, UNESCO 2021). The vision of this research agenda is wide-ranging and multifaceted. It involves a future-oriented, planet-wide learning process on the shared futures of humanity and the planet, involving all concerned with education – including students, teachers, schools, academics, communities, policymakers, and more. It draws from diverse forms of knowledge and perspectives, and from a conceptual framework that sees their insights as complementary rather than exclusionary and adversarial. Education for sustainable development (ESD) and global citizenship education (GCED) can both contribute to such a research agenda, while also being informed by it. The purpose of this presentation, then, is to first analyze the objectives and nature of such world-wide research agenda according to the International Commission, and second, to consider how it opens the invitation for ESD, GCED and other fields of education to be able to contribute to knowledge about the transformation of education for the interconnected futures of humanity and the planet. Dr. Elena Toukan is a Research Specialist with the Futures of Learning and Innovation at UNESCO.

**Reference document:**

UNESCO. (2021). Reimagining our futures together: a new social contract for education. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379707>

**PANELIST 2: Charles Hopkins**, PhD. UNESCO Chair in Reorienting Education towards Sustainability, York University, Canada, SDG 4 Global Focal Point for Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development Cluster, International Association of Universities (IAU). Email: [chopkins@edu.yorku.ca](mailto:chopkins@edu.yorku.ca).

**Title of presentation:** Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) - a key enabler for sustainable futures? Perspectives from research and policy 1992-2024.

Charles Hopkins holds the UNESCO Chair in Reorienting Education towards Sustainability at York University in Toronto, Canada. This Chair, established in 1999, was the first to focus on ESD as an essential concept for quality education and to position sustainability as a purpose of education. Hopkins' Chair coordinates two global ESD research networks, the International Network of Teacher Education Institutions and the #IndigenousESD, conducting global research projects. Having been engaged with sustainability since the development of the UN-accepted concept in the 1980s, Hopkins has a proven track record of research on ESD in formal education systems and regarding lifelong learning in the community. Hopkins will elaborate on the broad understanding of ESD as a key enabler of sustainable development and has contributed to research and policy instruments, sharing the diversity of perspectives on higher education. In his presentation covering highlights from published and new, yet unpublished papers, he will address key points that have developed over time, advocating for holistic ways of dealing with sustainability challenges with ESD at the core in formal education and when learning with and from the community. His segment will also speak to the development of ESD since its original emergence in Agenda 21 to its newer role where in combination with GCED as a central element of both development planning and as a major element in quality education at all levels.

**Reference documents:**

Hopkins, C. & Kohl, K. (2021). Aligning Higher Education's Promise of Well-Being with Sustainability as a Purpose of Education. In: van't Land, H., Corcoran, A. & Iancu, D. (eds). *The Promise of Higher Education - Essays in Honour of 70 Years of IAU*. Springer Publishing.

Hopkins, C., Kohl, K., Didham, R. J., Razak, D., Sanusi, Z. A., Vilela, M. (2024). *Envisioning Leadership for Tomorrow's Collective Well-being*. PROSPECTS. 54 (1). Springer.

Hopkins, C., Michelsen, G. Salíte, I, Siegmund, A., Wagner, D., Yokoi, A., Fischer, D., Kohl, K. Razak, D. Tilleczek, K. Sustainability as a purpose on the path of learning. In: UNESCO. *Humanistic Futures of Learning. Perspectives from UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks*. 58-62. UNESCO.

**PANELIST 3: Aaron Benavot**, PhD, Professor of Global Education Policy, University at Albany-SUNY, United States. Email: [abenavot@albany.edu](mailto:abenavot@albany.edu).

**Title of presentation:** How distinctive are conceptions of global citizenship in Asian education systems? Emergent concepts in the intended curriculum of 20 Asian and Pacific countries

As humanity confronts multiple crises – environmental, economic, demographic and political – and considers uncertain futures, many international agencies point to the critical role of education in fostering worldviews that transcend national boundaries and emphasize shared transnational understandings and concerns (e.g. UN Global Education First Initiative in 2012; SDG Target 4.7 in 2015). This fascination with global citizenship education (GCED) is not only apparent in international declarations and UN/UNESCO sponsored programs, but also in scholarly treatises (Sant et al 2018; Akkari & Maleq 2020; Wiksten 2021; Alviar-Martin & Baoldon 2021; Aboagye & Nombuso 2021). That said, current approaches to GCED are typically rooted in Western perspectives, focusing on state-citizen relations, global interconnectedness, and intercultural understanding. By contrast, notions of global citizenship in many Asian societies draw on different assumptions and first principles, often rooted in moral education, international mindedness, and cosmopolitanism. In fact, many Asian countries prioritize the notion of “self-cultivation” as a pathway to actively engaging in the world.

In this paper I report on an analysis of 160 official curriculum documents -- mainly, subject syllabi and national curriculum frameworks -- pertaining to lower secondary education in 20 Asian and Pacific countries. Through a careful review, categorization, and coding of these documents I report preliminary evidence of distinctive Asian conceptions of global citizenship in school curricula, drawing on concepts like “self-cultivation” “strong communities” and “people-society-nature relations” as well as cultural and religious values from Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, and Islam. The prevalence of such concepts in the curriculum has important implications for the implementation of GCED in diverse cultural contexts.

**Reference documents:**

Aboagye, E., & S. Nombuso, S. (eds.) (2021) *Global Citizenship Education: Challenges and Successes*. University of Toronto Press.

Alviar-Martin, T., & M. Baoldon, M. (eds.). (2021). *Research on Global Citizenship Education in Asia: Conceptions, perceptions, and practice*. Information Age Publishing.

Edda Sant, E., Davies, I., Pashby, K., & Schultz, L. (2018). *Global Citizenship Education: A critical introduction to key concepts and debates*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Wiksten, S. (2021). *Centering Global Citizenship Education in the Public Sphere*. Routledge.

Akkari, A. and K. Maleq, Eds. (2020) [Global Citizenship Education: Critical and International Perspectives](#). Springer Nature.

**PANELIST 4: Miki Sugimura**, PhD, UNESCO Chair on Education for Human Dignity, Peace and Sustainability, Faculty of Human Sciences, Sophia University, Japan. Email: [miki-s@sophia.ac.jp](mailto:miki-s@sophia.ac.jp).

**Title of presentation:** The Role of Universities' collaboration and network in development of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) for enhancing interdisciplinary education and research from the Asian Perspective.

The purpose of this presentation is to examine the significance of the role of universities' collaboration and network in the development of ESD for enhancing interdisciplinary education and research for knowledge transformation. ESD is a key enabler for transforming education mentioned in the UNESCO 1974 Revised Recommendations and the Future of Education Report. The interdisciplinary element of educational research is essential here, and university collaboration and networking are an important platform to make this possible. This presentation analyzes the significance and challenges of the ESD network developed by Sophia University, the new UNESCO Chair on Education for Human Dignity, Peace, and Sustainability from an Asian perspective. In the Asia Pacific Region, in addition to cooperation based on agreements among universities, there is educational cooperation among regional communities such as ASEAN and SAARC, as well as research cooperation linking the Asia-Pacific region such as Promotion of Sustainability in Postgraduate Education and Research (ProSPER.Net). Those education and research activities related to sustainability are being developed, and interdisciplinary research and learning are focused there. The important thing is that the individual universities are trying to share their resources and develop interdisciplinary learning across borders, while taking advantage of the unique educational and research activities of each university. The activities of the UNESCO Chairs also support such collaboration. Although there are operational challenges and mechanisms to ensure mutual compatibility and commonality, the development of such networks can contribute to formation of a knowledge platform in the future.

### **Responding to all panelist presentations**

**RESPONDENT: Sylvia van de Bunt**, PhD, UNESCO Chair in Cross-Cultural Sustainability, Department of Management and Organization of the School of Business and Economics of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Email: [s.vande.bunt@vu.nl](mailto:s.vande.bunt@vu.nl).

In closing this session, Sylvia van de Bunt, UNESCO Chair in Cross-Cultural Sustainability, will respond to the four presentations from a cross-cultural perspective of fostering sustainable life skills in education. Dilemma reconciliation, peace building, inclusive knowledge thinking, historical awareness from different viewpoints, and servant-leadership are only a few of the life skills enhancing sustainable communities. For education, to better meet the challenges of today and tomorrow: be the change!