

A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR EDUCATION

How does Handprint CARE contribute to a new social contract in primary education?

This Teacher Education Handbook is developed to inform a Handprint CARE approach to ESD in primary education settings. The formative research on this approach was undertaken through a series of collaborative initiatives with teachers and teacher educators (O'Donoghue, Misser & Snow, 2021). This deliberative research helped clarify a transformative re-alignment of teaching and learning towards a more culturally situated, inclusive and action-oriented approach to subject teaching. The intention was to develop a practical guide to key pedagogical transformations for inclusion of ESD in classroom teaching. This involves subtle but significant expansions in conventional school subject teaching towards an action learning approach.

Clarifying a new social contract for **Re-imagining our futures together** (UNESCO 2021)

"Two vital processes underpin education:

- the **acquisition of knowledge** as part of the common heritage of humanity,
- the collective **creation of new knowledge** and new possible futures."

(UNESCO, 2021p.149)



- **Pedagogy needs to be expanded** around an ethic of **cooperation and solidarity**.
- Pedagogy must foster empathy and compassion in work together to transform ourselves and our world.
- Learning develops through **co-engaged relationships between teachers, students, and available knowledge**.
- Learning extends student relationships and an **ethic of care and shared responsibility** within a common world.
- Pedagogy activates **transformative learning encounters** around realities that exist and can be built together. (p.147)

Figure 2: Important pedagogical dimensions for a new social contract for education (Adapted, UNESCO 2021)

Such an action-learning expansion in subject teaching has many of the key features of a new social contract for education as proposed by UNESCO (2021). This social contract is centred on knowledge-led action learning. The questions reflected in Figure 2 signify key pedagogical processes outlined by UNESCO for ESD as a learning journey towards:

Co-operation and solidarity that reflects empathy and compassion within co-engaged learning relations between teachers, students and knowledge that activates an ethic of care and shared responsibility developing into a transformative learning encounter towards a more just and sustainable future.

In our work, we noted how classroom teachers could activate key steps towards a new social contract as a transformative re-alignment of education from within. In exploring how better education might be achieved, we realised that we do not necessarily have to scale back the curriculum but rather need to work towards more engaged and action-orientated learning. This reorientation is reflected in how:

A Handprint CARE approach can be realised (Chapter 2)
In ethics-led collaborative learning (Chapter 3)
Activated through real-world, true stories (Chapter 4)
with an expansion of subject pedagogy (Chapter 5)
using the SDGs for informing learner-led, action learning (Chapter 6)
through knowledge acquisition for participatory learning (Chapter 7)
towards the development of ESD competences (Chapter 8)
for evaluative learning and assessment (Chapter 9)
towards planning together to live more just and sustainable lifestyles (Chapter 10).

An Action Learning Approach to ESD

Active learning is generated in learning environments where institution-wide approaches (Whole School – Whole Institution) and preferably community-wide approaches (School in Community) are used. In this Handbook, the active learning perspective which was proposed by O'Donoghue et al. (2018) is followed, which points out that in active learning, critical perspectives on knowledge and their use in the local context must be generated through participation from a situated perspective. A key aspect here is not only participatory learning as a reflective social process, but also the centrality of the learner's reflective agency. Students' action includes the ability to develop skills to use their knowledge to generate change, in collaboration with other people who are interested in bringing the change.

Handprint CARE materials are public domain resources that are well suited for use in a wide range of teacher education and teacher networks that are active globally. Many of these are taking up work to clarify the attributes of a new social contract for education. We would encourage users of this Handprint CARE resource to join and contribute to this change through a wide range of transformative learning networks that are informed by key concepts like:

- Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)
- Sustainability Education
- Global Citizenship Education for Sustainability (GC4ESD)
- Global Learning
- Environment and Sustainability Education (ESE).

All these bring unique perspectives to a Handprint CARE approach in primary education. We have primarily explored the inclusion of ESD as a transformative learning imperative. This informs learning-led processes of change in school-in-community initiatives. An expanded approach develops the agency of young learners working together for the common good.

Concluding Insights

UNESCO (2021) has proposed a new social contract for education which is centred on knowledge-led action learning. Key pedagogical processes outlined by UNESCO for ESD include co-operation, compassion, an ethic of care and shared responsibility in transformative learning encounters towards more just and sustainable futures. This Handprint CARE resource can help teachers to work with ESD to contribute to the change proposed through this contract.

References

O'Donoghue, R., Taylor, R.J., and Venter, V. (2018) How are Learning and Training Environments Transforming with ESD? In A. Leicht, J. Heiss and W.J. Byun (Eds.), *Issues and Trends in Education for Sustainable Development*. UNESCO: Paris. pp. 111-131

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