



# Meeting the UN's Sustainable Development Goals in Initial Teacher Education in the UK: Progress and Opportunities

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## Report of a seminar held on Friday 10 March 2017 in Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh

### 1. Background

In September 2015, 193 countries across the world, including the UK, agreed the UN's [Sustainable Development Goals](#). They set a challenge for every country to tackle poverty, inequality, climate change and sustainable development with Education, and learning as a central component. **SDG 4** is specifically about education through all aspects of life, and target 4.7 relates to teacher education.

In this context the purpose of the seminar, was for key teacher educators in UK ITE institutions to:

- Share progress on Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship( ESD/GC) in Initial teacher education (ITE) in Scotland, Wales, Ireland and England
- Connect with ITE practitioners across UK and identify synergies
- Identify opportunities for possible future advocacy and research collaboration

Andrea Bullivant, Director of [Teacher Education for Equity and Sustainability Network](#) (TEESNet) and Betsy King, Development Manager of Scotland's UN Regional Centre of Expertise in ESD [Learning for Sustainability Scotland](#) welcomed participants from across the UK (Appendix 2). The seminar was an opportunity to progress discussions at TEESNet's 2016 conference '[Measuring what's Valuable or Valuing what's measurable?](#)' and consider the [General Teaching Council for Scotland](#) work with ITE institutions in Scotland and Learning for Sustainability Scotland. .

### 2. The Global and local Context for ESD and GC in ITE

Professor Pete Higgins, University of Edinburgh and Scotland's representative on the [UNESCO Re-orientating Teacher Education towards Sustainable Development Network](#) set out the past and current global and Scottish context for Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESD/GC) in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) <http://wp.me/p3K4qf-y3>.

Following discussions focussed on the need to ensure that the underpinning values of ESD/GC were at the core of all ITE courses and programmes , avoiding the integration of ESD/GC being seen as a 'tick-box' exercise. This was felt to be the responsibility of all academics, not just for individual champions in institutions. Suggestions for achieving this included: making links to the Research Excellence Framework; building on the initiatives of champions in every programme and working across all curriculum areas.

### 3. Sharing Progress on ESD/GC in the UK regions

Andrea Bullivant shared the findings of TEESNet audit of UK Higher Education Institutions involved in teacher education carried out in February 2017 [here](#), comparing the findings with those of a 2011 survey<sup>1</sup> ( Hunt et al) and building on research on comparative policy across the UK (2016 Bamber et Al)<sup>2</sup> .

The following small group discussions reflected on participants' experiences in their institutions and considered emerging themes. Notes from each group can be found in Appendix 3.

Plenary discussion recognized the main emerging themes as:

- Providing greater clarity in the terminology used, and to bring together ESD and GC;
- Recognising the importance of linking the aspirations of the Education Goal 4 in the UN SDGs with the current agendas of policy makers across the UK;
- Considering Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development as a continuum, with teachers as potential agents of change;
- Infusing subject based courses with the values, skills and knowledge of ESD/GC to prepare young people for an uncertain future;
- Providing opportunities for teacher educators to network and share approaches.

### 4. UNESCO 2017: Teacher Education, ESD and GC

Dr Doug Bourn, Director of [Development Education Research Centre](#), UCL Institute of Education shared the preliminary findings of the UNESCO commissioned research on Teacher Education, ESD and GC [here](#).

This recent research aimed to identify: the common ways of preparing teachers in the areas of ESD /GC; the best methodology to monitor the GCED and ESD-related training of teachers, particularly at the level of initial teacher education (ITE) from a comparative perspective; available evidence base on the extent to which ESD and GC are included in ITE and materials in different countries, as well as CPD programmes; the most emphasized GCED and ESD-related issues in teacher training around the world; the best mechanisms to improve GCED and ESD-related teacher education and the prospects (given the current situation and the available evidence) that systems will meet the 4.7 target in relation to teacher education by 2030?

A draft summary of findings can be found in Appendix 4.

The following discussion considered the need to address 'Quality' in education, and what this might mean. The need to engage with deeper issues and questions and new approaches to teaching and learning was seen as key with quality depending on context. There was an opportunity to use 'champions' to broaden engagement with ESD/GC as there is evidence that peer to peer learning is extremely effective. A cascade approach from policy to practice with real stakeholder engagement would bring about the transformative change required. The need for UNESCO to focus on improving quality through working with teacher educators was seen as key.

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<sup>1</sup> Hunt et al 2011 Taking Stock: A Report from the UK Teacher Education Network for Sustainable Development (ESD)/ Global Citizenship (GC) Survey on Provision for ESD/GC in Initial Teacher Education

<sup>2</sup> Bamber, P. et al (2016) A comparative review of policy and practice for Education for Sustainable Development / Global Citizenship in teacher education across the 4 nations of the UK. Journal of Management in Education, 30 (3) pp. 112-120

## **5. Conclusions: Identifying Opportunities for Making Progress**

Participants considered the key opportunities to make progress to be

- **Raising the profile of SDG4 in ITE**
- **Engaging a broader audience with approaches and language**
- **Developing a Framework for Supporting Educators**
- **Finding opportunities for collaboration and research**

Brief notes of the discussions on these areas can be found in Appendix 5

## APPENDIX 1 Seminar Programme

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**10 -10.30**

### **Registration**

10.30

### **The Global and local Context for ESD and GC in ITE**

Prof. Pete Higgins, University of Edinburgh and Scotland's representative on the UNESCO Re-orientating Teacher Education towards Sustainable Development Network

### **Sharing progress** on ESD/GC in ITE in all the UK regions

Findings of TEESNet UK research

Group discussions and plenary

**12.30**

### **Lunch**

1.30

### **UNESCO Report 2017 : Teacher Education, ESD and GC**

Dr Doug Bourn, Director of Development Education Research Centre, UCL Institute of Education

### **Identifying Opportunities for Making Progress**

Small group discussions

Plenary

**3.30**

### **ENDS**

## APPENDIX 2 Seminar Participants

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Aiydh Aljeddani	University of Exeter
Clive Belgeonne	Sheffield Hallam University
Doug Bourn	Development Education Research Centre
Andrea Bullivant	TEESNet
Donald-Gray	University of Aberdeen
Justin Dillon	University of Bristol
Ellen Doherty	The General Teaching Council for Scotland
Ria Dunkley	University of Glasgow/ formerly University of Cardiff
Anna Grindle	Global Learning Programme (Northern Ireland)
Peter Higgins	University of Edinburgh
Ronald Johnston	MGIEP/ UNESCO
Elena Lengthorn	University of Worcester
Clare McAlister	University of Strathclyde
Gerard McCann	St Mary's University College, Belfast
Steve Rawlinson	Geographical Association
M Mahruf C Shohel	Aberystwyth University
Ivor Sutherland	The Gordon Cook Foundation
Tanya Wisely	International Development Education Association of Scotland (IDEAS)
Betsy King	Learning for Sustainability Scotland

## APPENDIX 3 Group Discussions: Emerging Themes

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### GROUP 1

- Lack of commonality in regions and shifting political landscapes
- Sustainability agenda less than 10 years ago in all but Scotland
- Not connecting well enough with key influencers in Teacher Education who are unaware and maybe sceptical of this agenda.
- Need to share its importance and impacts

#### Own experiences

- Wales likely shift of ITE from universities to schools. How can ESD/GC fit into the current curriculum?
- ESD/GC is not on the current ITE radar in England. All driven by the Inspection system
- Northern Ireland little has changed in the past 20 years as a core of civil servants are gatekeepers
- Need for a pedagogical framework to underpin ESD/GC

#### Emerging Issues:

- Importance of the REF to ESD/GC in Teaching Standards
- There is a need for the knowledge, skills, values and perspectives to prepare young people for an uncertain future
- ESD/GC needs to infuse undergraduate courses and be linked to subject areas

### GROUP 2

- Expertise versus capacity building
- Teacher recruitment and retention
- The impact of CPD for existing workforce
- The key role of NGOs in bringing in the real-life dimension
- The role of Quality Assurance

### GROUP 3

- What more radical ways of thinking about education and pedagogy are there?
- Are ESD and citizenship two sides of the same coin?
- Need to share the importance of ESD/GC with opinion formers in education
- Issues of enquiry based learning
- A pedagogical framework is needed
- School leaders (OFSTED etc) as well as trainees
- Language and responsibilities
- Secondary knowledge for the greater good

### GROUP 4

- Judge a system by its practice not its policy
- Some very good practice exists in schools, but there is variation
- Secondary task – allegiances, linked to Identity/identities
- Practice what you preach

- Eco-pedagogy – make the invisible visible, the unknown known and engage with credibility and curiosity. Promote connections and ensure progression
- Citizenship = learning for sustainability

## APPENDIX 4 UNESCO Background Paper: Summary

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### A REVIEW OF EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Douglas Bourn, Frances Hunt and Phil Bamber  
2017

#### SUMMARY

Teacher education can make an important contribution to raising understanding of Sustainable Development Goals within education. Education for sustainable development (ESD) and global citizenship education (GCED), human rights, peace and inter-cultural understanding can be seen within a range of courses for the initial training and continuing professional development of teachers. However, in many instances they are seen as optional extras to core courses.

There is a tendency in many countries for ESD and GCED to be promoted within teacher education along parallel lines. To maximise impact, there is a need for these initiatives to come more closely together.

ESD and GCED approaches tend to promote a social constructivist approach to teaching and learning. This can present major challenges to securing broader support because it is counter to dominant approaches to the training and education of teachers.

Civil society organisations and policy-makers outside of education have tended to have a major influence in determining the practices of ESD and GCED within teacher education.

To measure progress, indicators need to be developed that make connections between ESD and GCED and current themes within education such as global competencies, cultural understanding and moral and social purpose of teaching.

Networks, be they national, regional or international, can play an important role in sharing expertise and influencing policy-makers.

## APPENDIX 5 Group discussions: Opportunities for Making Progress

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### Raising the profile of SDG4 in ITE

- Process of module/course change.
- Need to influence senior managers to ensure integration
- Need advocacy to influence the system in HE
- Research links are needed
- Question 'What's relevant in the world that should be in my course'? needed to be posed to find a way in

### Engaging a broader audience with approaches and language

- OFSTED criteria; CPD; Curriculum content
- Language is a problem. Still struggling with the terminology of sustainability
- Resistance in schools to labels
- Is it 'values'?
- Does the term 'Green' put people off?
- Building projects and partnerships
- Long term process and not stand alone
- Differing training methods- a barrier?
- Singapore model?
- Use real life themes eg foodbanks

#### **Developing a Framework for Supporting Educators**

- This should include the principles/values underpinning ESD/GC
- Build on existing resources
- Produce a generic tool, there are existing examples eg GTCS tool
- Research stimulus?

#### **Opportunities for collaboration/research**

- Measuring the impact on ITE students across UK
- Funding via links with business (eg UKSSD?), EuropAid, TEESNet members