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Editorial

Sustainable Development in Early Childhood Care and Education (SDECCE)

John Siraj-Blatchford and Valerie Huggins

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has suggested that 2015 may be the most important year since the founding of the UN seventy years ago. The third UN Conference on Financing for Development will be convened in Addis Ababa in July, the UN Summit on Sustainable Development in New York in September, where the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), that are set to replace and build on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), will be agreed, and then there is the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris in December. A reorientation of international efforts is taking place to address the common challenges to sustainability that are being caused by environmental degradation and climate change, biodiversity loss, the disruption and insecurities caused by natural disasters, conflict, and deep economic and social inequalities. Nicholas Stern, a Former World bank chief economist and UK government economic advisor, has described Climate Change as the 'greatest market failure in history', and he has estimated that in the absence of radical intervention, it could reduce global GDP by 20% by 2050 (cited in Sauven, 2015). Education for Sustainable Development is seen as fundamentally important in addressing these problems. As Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO has argued:

"Education is the most powerful path to sustainability. Economic and technological solutions, political regulations or financial incentives are not enough. We need a fundamental change in the way we think and act (Bokova, 2012)"

Early Childhood Education has been recognised as a significant contributor to ESD (UNESCO, 2014). It is in the early years that many fundamental attitudes towards the environment, towards consumption and waste, and towards fairness and social justice are formed. Yet as we have come to the end of the UN Decade for Sustainable Development (2005-2014), and the MDGs (2000-2015), it is timely to reflect on how ESD has been promoted in ECCE settings in the UK, and what might be the priorities for future development. It provides an opportunity to rethink some of our existing taken-for-granted practices, to consider them in light of our increasingly diverse communities and make them

explicitly underpinned by a discourse of sustainability. This may even lead us to a revision of the fundamental purpose of ECCE for our communities.

Sustainable Development is widely understood as a form of development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland, 1987). Sustainable Development may therefore be considered to represent an attempt to provide equity with, to, and for, future generations. This recognition serves to highlight the crucial role that might be played by early childhood professionals. As soon as we recognise that the world population group with the greatest stake in the future are children, that it is their future that depends upon ESD, then the matter becomes a citizenship issue and a question of rights. If we consider ourselves to be professional advocates for young children then we may also accept a special responsibility to promote the subject.

Curriculum debate and controversies are often concerned with questions regarding 'whose' knowledge is to be prioritised, and such considerations inevitably bring us to question the overall aims of education. From a conservative perspective these have typically been related to perceived economic requirements to improve the labour market and to make the country more competitive in terms of international trade. From a radically different perspective, parents and educators have often considered the child's freedom of individual self-expression to be the primary concern. For most of us in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) the most appropriate curriculum lies somewhere between these two extremes, with an emphasis upon providing holistic support for every child to achieve a fulfilling and successful life.. This begs the question of what future social, economic and environmental context we envisage children being fulfilled and successful within. In drawing together the papers in this edition of the journal we are arguing that ECCE has a dual role to play: in supporting the unique child, and in contributing towards the development of a more sustainable economic, environmental and social world. To do this, we need to engage in the debate about what a 'good life' is, and how we are preparing children for it. This will involve us in making choices about the most appropriate curriculum content and pedagogy. There is unlikely to be unanimity, particularly as some members of the local community, including practitioners, will want to hold on to certain practices, but we may need to challenge these, as well as be willing to accept and learn from cultural traditions that individual members of the community bring. The challenge for ECCE practitioners is that at times they may need to take a stand and this may bring them into conflict with others. Having a vision for the setting of promoting a 'good life', underpinned by the principles and strands of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), can help to resolve such tricky issues.

Sustainable Development in Early Childhood Care and Education (SDECCE)

The most fundamental principle informing the pedagogy of ESD in Early Childhood Education is that Young Children have the right to be consulted 'in all matters that affect' them (Article 12 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child). Sustainable Development is essentially concerned with the future, and it is young children who have the greatest stake as citizens in that future. As Hart (1997) suggested, and Davies (2005) and others have shown, Young children are already competent, active agents and they are both capable, and required by circumstance, to engage with complex environmental and social issues that affect their lives.

A series of international meetings held in Gothenburg in 2008 resulted in the development of a set of specific recommendations (SWEDESD, 2008) for Education for Sustainable Development in Early Childhood Education:

ACCESS FOR ALL TO A PROCESS OF LIFELONG LEARNING, recognising that the very provision of early childhood education that is the most pressing ESD issue in many countries around the world.
GENDER, highlighting the important contributions of women, and the need to improve the provisions of education for girls.
LEARNING FOR CHANGE, recognising that children are potential agents for change, and often influence their families and grandparents to change towards more sustainable thinking and behaviours
NETWORKS, ARENAS AND PARTNERSHIPS, the need to document and share successful practices.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO STRENGTHEN ESD ACROSS ALL, stressing the urgent need for capacity building
ESD IN CURRICULUM, promoting more integrated curriculum approaches.
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN PRACTICE, the critical importance of all preschool individuals and settings examining their own 'ecological footprints'.

In terms of specific preschool pedagogy the guidance also highlighted the need for:

- *Building upon the everyday experience of children*
- *Curriculum integration and creativity*

- *Intergenerational problem solving and solution seeking*
- *Promotion of intercultural understanding and recognition of interdependency*
- *Involvement of the wider community*
- *Active citizenship in the early years*
- *The creation of cultures of sustainability*

These are very similar to the conclusions reached in the Partnership for Education and Research about Responsible Living initiative (PERL, 2011) where they identify the core life skills needed for all ages which include the ability to:

• **reflect** on the purpose of life and on our personal and collective needs and actions
• **take responsibility** for one's own betterment and for the advancement of society as a whole
• **consult** in the public and private discourse on the nature, purpose and choices involved in human development
• **be creative** in envisioning and constructing alternative solutions to challenges
• **collaborate** with others through continual questioning, learning and taking action
• commit **to both short and long-term goals.**

(PERL, 2011)

What is required is therefore something along the lines of Freirean Praxis for children to be encouraged to reflect and take action upon the world in order to transform it (Freire, 1974).

In recent years much work has been done around the world to develop early childhood ESD and young children in our preschools are increasingly encouraged to develop an emergent awareness of the nature and value of sustainable development. Strong foundations are being laid and positive dispositions are being developed towards the subject. In many of the most celebrated and successful pre-primary settings the transition from this early years play-based education to the more formal educational model of the school is supported through the development of small group project and topic work. Some of the most sophisticated of these approaches involve the children working together with the teacher in ESD collaborative problem solving enquiries and topic work. But this remains marginal to mainstream practice.

The SDECCE curriculum has three key components: environmental education, social/cultural education and economic education. Where problem solving enquiries are conducted these

three areas are combined to provide the basis for appropriately holistic solutions. There have long been elements of these subjects addressed in ECCE settings, but now we need to consider each of them specifically in the work that we do, and also to bring them together to explore the connections and commonalities in a way that is meaningful and relevant to the children's lives. It is when children are young that their views, attitudes and beliefs are most shaped by those around them, so ECCE has a key role to play in promoting and demonstrating sustainability in everyday practices and everyday lives. Some practitioners have been concerned that this might lead to a 'gloom and doom' agenda, but here we argue for a much more optimistic perspective where we see SDECCE as a means by which we can begin to create a more positive and fulfilling future for young children.

One major shift needed is that many practitioners currently see the Sustainable Development in terms of environmental education alone. Children in the UK have enjoyed a long history of engaging in a wide range of activities related to the environmental aspect of SDECCE, undertaking specific projects on recycling, for example, or creating a garden. These have increasingly included the 7 Rs of sustainable living: Refuse (don't buy it if you don't need it); Reduce; Repair, Reuse, Recycle, Respect and Reflect. Yet they often neglect any mention of wider environmental concerns, such energy saving, water conservation for example, and yet these offer ideal opportunities for practitioners to make the global links that will develop the children's understanding of their place in the wider world, and their responsibilities within it.

The social/cultural dimension of SDECCE, underpins much of the everyday practice in settings. It is implicit in the way we encourage children to relate to each other, manage conflict and appreciate diversity. However, it is often not recognised as a part of the sustainability agenda, even though it has potential to impact both at local and global levels. The economic aspect of SDECCE is the area that is often the most difficult to promote in ECCE settings. Practitioners often consider the children too young to understand financial matters, or do not see the relevance of it, and they may also be concerned to avoid any controversy or difficulty that it may lead to, given the disparities of wealth in our communities and the prevailing discourse of consumerism. However, while it is unrealistic and inappropriate to expect young children to challenge unsustainable lifestyles, e.g. of their own family, it is important to recognise that they do at times comment on, or even put pressure on, the family over particular lifestyle issues. Young children have often been successful in the past in encouraging more effective waste sorting and have even been known to convince a parent to give up smoking. As with other aspects of SDECCE, carefully planned project work based on relevant real-life experiences works well. Setting up fundraising for new

equipment or shopping around for best price for the ingredients for cake-making are good examples. Alongside this is needed an explicit ethos of thrift, the constant challenging of over-consumption and waste, commenting on value for money, resistance to advertising and peer pressure, e.g. present buying for birthdays and special occasions, and encouraging the children to come to the setting dressed in working clothes rather than their best, to avoid unnecessary damage and unnecessary expenditure. Many of these themes are taken up in the papers included in this edition of the journal.

In their 'Pedagogy of Love' article, Alice and Paul Warwick draw on their considerable expertise in Early Years Education and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to advocate a pedagogy of hope for young children. They argue powerfully that early years practitioners have a leading role in equipping children to live sustainable and caring lives, both in the present and in their futures. Using a six-dimensional butterfly model, Alice and Paul identify the centrality of values in ESD, such as care and compassion towards each other and the planet. They link this to the Early Years Foundation Stage framework, demonstrating that ESD is not an addition to our current provision, but a reorientation of what we currently do well in our settings. Alice and Paul suggest a playful approach to SDECCE, underpinned by optimistic and appreciative activities, that encourage us to tackle what may be potentially difficult and depressing sustainability topics, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, in a way that builds on children's natural curiosity and sense of wonder of their world, and gives them ways to make a positive difference. They provide practical examples and a case study of a school to illustrate this approach and show us how to reorientate our pedagogy to place ECE for Sustainable Development at the heart of what we do.

In our 'Thinking global and acting local, and thinking local and acting global: Sustainable Development in Early Childhood Care and Education' paper, we identify the value and importance, of entering into international school links and partnerships, as well as potential pitfalls and dangers. We argue that the development of global citizenship and solidarity has become a priority in supporting SDECCE.

Coltman, Whitebread and Siraj-Blatchford's paper: 'ESD, Enterprise, and the development of social entrepreneurs in the Early Years' provides guidance and examples of the kind of projects that are being carried out with young children to develop their knowledge and understanding on the economy. A few years ago, proposals were put forward to introduce more economics education, and especially education about credit, to children from the age of five onwards. There is a wide consensus that this is an area of the curriculum that has been neglected even if there are different motivations for this awareness. In this paper the projects show that the capabilities of children in early childhood are often underestimated.

Luff, Miles and Wangui's report on a project concerned with Bat Conservation in the UK and Kenya provides an illustration of the OMEP UK-Kenya preschool partnership that is referred to in the previous paper. The project was typical of an integrated topic approach to an ESD theme that was applied across the full curriculum of the preschools. This is followed by Jan Georgeson's article on 'Leading for Sustainability', in which she considers the key aspects of resources, curriculum and people in promoting an ethos of sustainability in Early Years settings. She places the emphasis on the principles of sustainability in terms of an ethics of care and social responsibility. When considering sustainable resourcing, Jan identifies some potential conflicts that can arise between good early years practice and sustainability, such as free-flow play and energy conservation. These are excellent examples of issues that can promote critical discussion with the children and the practitioners, leading to changes in taken for granted behaviours and in everyone taking reasonability for sustainability. As early years practitioners, we all spend a lot of time supporting children in taking turns, in encouraging them to share and be fair to each other. Jan highlights the way this links to the key principles of sustainability – sufficiency, fairness and consideration. It illustrates again that aspects of Education for Sustainable Development are already embedded in our early years settings, but are not recognized as such. Reorienting our ethos and practice in such fundamental ways requires sustainable leadership and Jan demonstrates in this article how the principles of sustainability need to underpin staff relationships and professional development. She makes the significant point that leaders have a responsibility to develop the early years workforce not just for their local community but as global citizens and campaigners for children's rights internationally. She acknowledges that developing such an ethos of sustainability can take time and effort from all involved, but it will bring benefits to the children and the practitioners, both now and in the future.

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Thinking Global and Acting Local, and Thinking Local and Acting Global: Sustainable Development in Early Childhood Care and Education

John Siraj-Blatchford and Valerie Huggins

In the 1960s and 1970s it was common to talk about "Thinking *global*, and acting *local*. That was a time when the environmental problems we were facing were all around us...air and water pollution, unsustainable land fill practices, industrial effluent. There has been progress, but increasingly governments around the world have become more aware of much bigger threats, like that of climate change, which require international cooperation and collaboration at a level we have never known before. Today we need to educate children to understand global interdependency and we need to promote an education for global citizenship. The situation is such that even if everyone in the Minority World of northern Europe and the UK, and even the USA, quickly became carbon neutral, and we stopped adding to global warming it would already be too late for us on our own to avoid the natural feedback systems that can accelerate the warming effects. We are not, in fact, making very good progress towards the target reductions that have been recommended by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPPC) to reduce the likelihood of these feedback effects happening. Our future security now depends on working together, it depends upon us setting a better example to the rest of the world, and showing solidarity with other nations that are already bearing the brunt of the global effects. The level of scientific consensus is actually quite remarkable. Governments around the world are taking action, sometimes, and increasingly, at significant cost to short term economic growth.

In the circumstances, “Thinking global and acting local” is no longer sufficient, ESD needs to promote global citizenship and solidarity. Being a citizen means accepting the rights and responsibilities of being a member of a community. In some settings around the world more than others, teachers are aware of their responsibility to the diversity in the local community around them. In far fewer so far, this caring for the community extends to humanity as a whole, to global diversity, and the needs of the Earth as a whole. Yet our recognition of global interdependence is profoundly important in collectively dealing with the environmental and biological challenges that we face. Arguably, such a promotion of global citizenship presents the most significant ongoing challenge to early childhood education. We need to be thinking local and acting globally as well as thinking globally and acting locally.

One way that we have been trying to achieve this in practice has been in creating learning partnerships between children, students and practitioners in the UK and in sub-saharan Africa. Some of these are part of the British Council 'Connecting Classrooms' initiative (British Council 2014) and some are supported by OMEP, but either way, we have learnt that there are significant challenges for all involved.

One example of this work has been the Exeter Ethiopia Link in Devon which supports up to 20 school links with settings in Nekemte in Ethiopia. Originally involving mainly primary children, the introduction of O grade schooling for children aged 4-6 in Ethiopia is now giving the schools involved a focus on Early Education. Another project has been the World Organisation for Early Childhood (OMEP) partnership between a similar number of preschools in East Dorset and in Kenya. One of the most significant difficulties with such initiatives has often been that there have been unchallenged assumptions made that they will be of benefit for everyone involved, a taken-for-granted notion that they are a good thing, based on notions of cultural supremacy from the UK participants, and an opportunity for obtaining money and material resources from the Ethiopian and Kenyan perspective.

There are clearly different concerns about sustainability in the two communities. In the Majority World context of Ethiopia and Kenya, the focus of survival and sustainability is short-term, the emphasis is on access to basic education, health-care, nutrition and sanitation, while for us in the over-developed world it is on how to develop what we have without compromising further the needs of the children of the future. 'Sustainability' is an ever-evolving concept but issues of inequity apply in all communities. If you employ the sustainability lens/approach to curriculum in the same way, the communities in the two countries will learn different things, and thus ESD reveals the inadequacy of the conceptual construction of the Connecting Classrooms which seems to imply that both sides will learn and benefit in a similar way, simply learning about each other.

A key voice in this debate, Vanesa Andreotti (2011:147) has argued that school links of this kind have the potential to:
"'provide an exciting and highly motivating opportunity to enable learners to engage ethically and productively with complex and interdependent processes that shape global/local contexts, identities and struggles for justice today and to build global solidarity."

But they have to be undertaken using a critical approach. Andreotti characterises this postcolonial perspective in terms of a debate that:

- problematises the representation of the Third World (*sic*) and the issues of power, voice and cultural subordination/supremacy
- questions notions of development and visions of reality that are imposed as universal
- recognises the violence of colonialism and its effects, but also acknowledges its productive outcomes
- questions Eurocentrism, charity and 'benevolence'
- also questions issues of identity, belonging and representation, and the romanticism (*sic*) of the South. (Andreotti 2006a:3)

Postcolonial theory argues that we substantially create who we are by defining who we are not. The inevitable recognition of difference resulting from European/Western exploration and colonisation led to Minority World ideas, values and customs being projected as superior to those of the Majority World (Bennett 2009) and so to the notion of a 'civilising' mission on the part of the Minority World, a notion still seen in the underlying discourses of global education in the National Curriculum (DfES 2005) and in the Global Link programme (DfID 2011), as well as in much media coverage of events in the Majority World. It has also led to the very common perception that countries and people in the Majority World are essentially inadequate and incompetent, so encouraging a response based upon intervention, aid and the attempt to impose Minority World practices. Andreotti goes on to argue that there are several dangers to such well-meaning initiatives and that they can have unintended consequences if embarked upon uncritically. The first is that such links too easily promote a limited multicultural approach based on a limited knowledge of customs and cultural artefacts, thus emphasising the surface differences between peoples, rather than an intercultural and postcolonial one with its focus on our shared humanity and the flow of ideas between and among cultural groups (Cantle, 2012). They can also reinforce stereotypes through the uncritical celebration of diversity and a patronising attitude from the North to the South. What has been needed has been for the UK schools to be prompted to undertake a rigorous and continuous self-critique on North/South power, Western supremacy and the origins of inequalities in labour and resources and ethnocentric benevolence. This begs the question of how this can be done in Early Childhood settings in a way that is meaningful and relevant for young children. A third danger is that the UK practitioners want to 'harvest' the cultural resources of the Ethiopian and Kenyan settings in order to enhance their curriculum and gain an international award and the approval of Ofsted. In doing so, the teachers 'romanticise' aspects of Ethiopian/Kenyan culture that are appealing, in a 'saris and samosas', tip of the cultural iceberg way. They also expect these aspects to stay rooted in

the past, without a recognition of the changing and ever-evolving nature of cultures, for example, . most Ethiopians and Kenyans now wear Western clothes rather than traditional dress. The partnerships have to avoid cultural nostalgia and the projection of inaccurate images when they teach about similarities as well as cultural differences. In return for this 'local' culture, the English schools have typically offered aid, and a 'globalised' culture and language, which by implication, is often expected to replace indigenous culture in the long term. This tendency is made more powerful by the understandable appeal, especially to young Ethiopians and Kenyans, of the global culture, which holds out the possibilities of wider opportunities, and greater wealth.

The ESD agenda can present practitioners a way of working in an ethical and productive way through offering a challenging and critical pedagogy, and the North/South partnerships can provide safe spaces for collaborative enquiry. There are certainly challenges to be recognised on both sides of the partnership to this way of promoting the pillars of ESD. One is that it requires a critical examination of both the Western and the African construction of knowledge, beliefs and values, when often the Western knowledge is privileged and the African marginalised. The issues of inequalities in wealth and in power relationships must be recognised when linking settings in the UK and in Africa. The British Council (2014) is very clear in its guidelines that the Connecting Classrooms initiative is about cultural exchange and sharing experiences for mutual benefit. We would argue that the motives of such a link need to be clearly negotiated from the outset. This may involve challenging many preconceptions and assumptions, particularly if the partnership involves a setting from a Majority World low-income community.

With the Nekemte-Exeter link, the sharing of cultural experiences is at the heart of the project. Such an approach is constantly under pressure from both sides. Once the practitioners in the UK become aware of the lack of resources and basic facilities, such as toilets, in their link school, they often initiate fund-raising events. This could be critiqued as an extension of the colonial responsibility to "help", leading to an increased self-worth and increased respect within their own communities for their charitable benevolence. But could it be interpreted in a positive way through the lens of sustainability? One partner in the link provides some finance for the other to make their lives more sustainable through improved health. The receiving community contributes labour and local expertise to the project. The same happens with providing spring capping. The children in Ethiopia gain considerably by not having to spend so much time and energy collecting water and improved health, while the English children learn about their responsibilities towards water being a world resource, that is precious and they need to use it sparingly and reuse when possible. It opens up the

potential for the Ethiopian children to critique the overconsumption that can occur when water comes freely out of a tap in everyone's homes, and to challenge their aspirations for a Western lifestyle, which will compromise the future of their local environment. This one example highlights the complexity of the global/local processes that can be critiqued, even by very young children through such shared projects.

In the case of the UK-Kenyan preschools the partnership is focused on the sharing of ESD curriculum resources. Communication between the preschools was initially carried out directly using text messaging and occasionally email (where available). But each pair of preschools has also been provided with a secure (password protected) web page and the English preschools are being encouraged to provide some help to their partners in getting online. The OMEP partnership project team in the UK and Kenya provide all the preschools with practical ideas on how they can support their partners and they circulate information on joint projects e.g. http://www.globalhandwashingday.org.uk/ and other ESD themes and projects. The UK preschools benefit significantly from the illustrations of innovative recycling and the reuse of resources that they draw from Kenya, the Kenyan preschools have so far gained most significantly in terms of their introduction to new pedagogical models and resources.

The potential problem of encouraging culturally chauvinist and patronising attitudes through charitable giving on the one hand, and in fostering attitudes of dependency on the other were addressed from the start. The partnerships were developed with a view to achieving social, economic and environmental sustainability through 'carbon partnerships' where both parties support each other in achieving convergence in their environmental impact (measured through carbon emissions) to achieve their 'fair earth share' within global limits. Many resources are now available to support schools and other institutions in accounting for their carbon footprints, and in the UK and in many other nations a Government Minister has been appointed to provide leadership and direction in encouraging such efforts. Preschools seeking to reduce their footprint need to look at many different aspects of their lives e.g. their energy use, their use of transport, food, waste, what they buy, potential for recycling etc. The partnerships provide a means by which the children and wider preschool community can compare their situation to those commonly experienced in Africa.

The UK and Kenyan partners are therefore encouraged to provide mutual support to their partners by:

- *Providing support in sustaining and developing the preschool provision*
- *Developing resources and curriculum*
- *Reducing (where appropriate) carbon footprints*
- *Sharing knowledge and ideas*
- *Listening and learning from each other*
- *Gaining strength from the knowledge shared concerns*
- *Fund raising (when appropriate) for JUSTICE* ***rather than CHARITY***

The Carbon Partners model turn the idea of fundraising “out of kindness” around by showing that, based on carbon usage, the school in the global North might initially be considered to be providing compensation to their partner school!

Yet another danger of school linking is that the giving of material resources from UK to the Ethiopian and Kenyan settings can be seen as privileging Western knowledge and pedagogy through these cultural symbols, with the English teachers perceiving their African partners as deficient/inferior in their approaches because of their lack of resources, reflecting Bhabha’s moral imperative to ‘improve’ the Other as a civilising mission. School links if seen in this way can become an affirmation of Minority World privilege and a call for action (Andreotti 2011). These messages are easily transmitted through to the children and can lead to the replication of unhelpful stereotypes and practices, based on the discourses of aid. But it is often not sufficiently appreciated that these discourses can have negative effects upon the recipients, reinforcing their self-definition as victims of colonialism who are ‘entitled’ to compensation, a stance which can weaken their responsibility and willingness to make more use of the increasing wealth and resources of their own country and continent. How can this be counteracted? One way is that resources donated by the English teachers are critically evaluated, in open and equal dialogue, in terms of their suitability for the Ethiopian or Kenyan contexts and then replicated using locally sourced materials. In Devon, many settings use mini whiteboards and marker pens for early literacy. The teachers in Nekemte could see the potential for supporting exploratory marketing, especially with very limited

access to paper and pens. A local group of carpenters with disabilities was commissioned to make hundreds of mini-blackboards. This is now developing into a sustainable business as they are making a range of resources for mathematics too. This is sustainable and not reliant upon a continuous supply of donations.

It seems clear that if such initiatives as Connecting Classrooms are to promote ESD they must involve stronger and more critical examination of current taken-for-grated approaches. The conceptual framework that we find useful to support this work is Andreotti's critical literacy (Andreotti & Warwick 2007). Drawing on the work of Spivak, she puts forward a 4 stage model (Andreotti 2011). It starts with the fundamental process of **learning to unlearn** where we become aware of our own views and perspectives, of their dangers and limitations, recognising that they come from our own contexts. This allows a deeper recognition that although we are different from others in our own contexts, we share much in common. An example of this is a Journey to School Project carried out by the children in a school in Devon and one in Nekemte in Ethiopia.

The children in each of the schools started the Project by sharing their experiences of their journey from home with each other in their own class, using a mix of photographs, drawings and talking. In Devon, the school was in a large village on the edge of a city. The children had quite short journeys, mostly by car as the parents dropped them off on their way into work, with some children walking accompanied by their parents. The partner school in Nekemte was in a rural area several kilometres from the town. All the children walked but the distances varied. They walked with the other children and very few were accompanied by their parents.

The next stage, **learning to listen**, involved the children in making comparisons of experiences within their own community, considering the benefits and disadvantages of their choice of transport. Using the concept of carbon footprint the teachers encouraged the children to consider the environmental impact of their journey.
The children then **learned to learn** from the perspectives of others through the exchange of letters, drawings and scribed photos on the topic of My Journey to School from the linked school. The teachers encouraged the children to consider the journeys through a sustainability lens and they then reconsidered their own experiences.
Andreotti's next step is being able to reach out and take this new understanding about the economic, environment and social impact of their journeys to consider other ways of behaving, and this may involve challenging the taken the granted ways of doing things. This can be tricky, when in England the families may have choices not open to those in Ethiopia,

such as using a car or walking, but the English children can consider their journey in terms of environmental friendliness and the impact of their families' choices on people elsewhere in the world.

Having undertaken this curriculum project, the children move on to another, with the Devon school and the Nekemte school taking in turns to identify the topic and engage in another cycle. As Andreotti (2011:230) notes "once one has learnt to reach out in one context, one is ready to start a new cycle of unlearning, listening, learning and reaching out again at another level." Another aspect of the cycle is the interaction with the families of the children and this may lead to conflict, if the practitioners in the setting are challenging the actions and beliefs of the parents.

Using a critical literacy approach to ESD will ensure that the children will be able to learn about different perspectives of complex global/local processes such as recycling and consider the implications of their own beliefs and actions. They will start to make responsible and conscious choices in the way they behave and start to form ethical and caring relationships with people in their own community and beyond (Andreotti 2011).

The promotion of intercultural capabilities, such as empathy, curiosity and respect (Barrett, 2013), has to be central to the professional development of practitioners in order to counteract the dangers of linked projects and to ensure that they are beneficial to all.
In our area, teacher education, we see the need to reorient our existing pedagogical approaches to ECE to explicitly include the 3 pillars of sustainability in all aspects of our work. We must underpin this with an ethos of interculturalism and the development of practitioners' intercultural capabilities. In practice this means both embedding a culture of sustainability in our everyday routines and behaviours and offering opportunities for project-based work on sustainability topics that will provoke young children into critical discussion, problem solving and systemic thinking.

To do the former, practitioners must adopt a whole-setting approach based on the principles of sustainability. Daily practices, such as recycling, saving energy and water, and giving them a voice in decision-making the setting, such as in circle time, will show young children that they can make a difference within the scope of their lives. For the latter, the project-based approach (Ji & Stumcke 2014), practitioners must consider specific activities that will for example provide intercultural encounters.

In this article our intention has not been prescriptive in telling you what should be thought or believed, our intention has been to raise greater awareness of the benefits and limitations, even dangers, of international partnerships. From our experiences, we are hoping to open up sites of dialogue and spaces for reflection for you to choose to take these ideas forward in a way that fits for your community.

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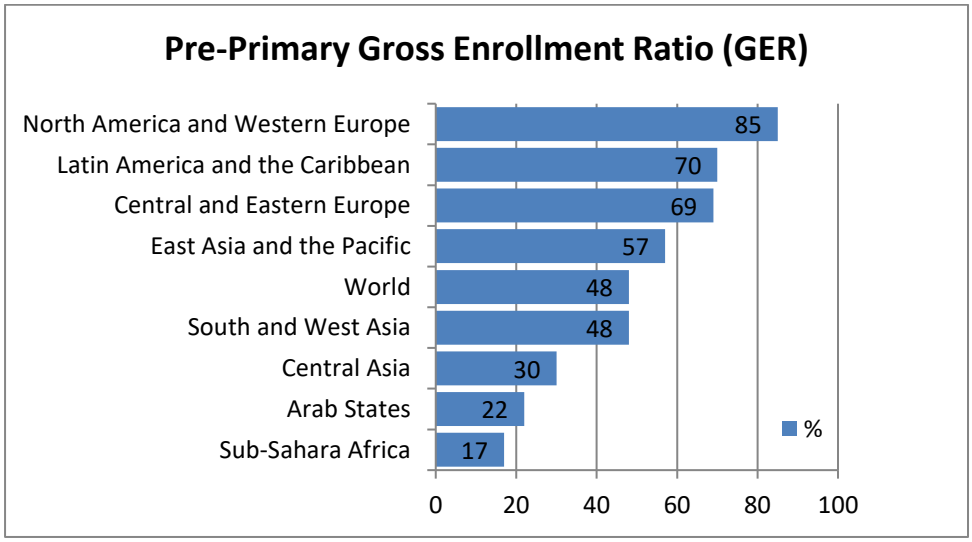
EPILOGUE: The way forward

John Siraj-Blatchford

We have come to the end of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) (UNESCO 2005), yet, when asked recently, half the students who were surveyed on entering a PGCE course have told us they had never heard of Education for Sustainable Development. Many leading figures in ECCE have published work on Sustainable Development in Early Childhood Care and Education (SDECCE), such as Siraj-Blatchford et al (2012) and Davis (2014). They argue that the holistic, interdisciplinary nature of ECCE, with its focus on learning through real-life experiences and community involvement, is not only ideally placed to promote SDECCE, but has a moral responsibility to do so, because it is in the early years that our values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours are developed. And yet, when we look at the documents and policies that frame our work in ECCE in England, such as the EYFS guidance, Development Matters and the EYITT standards, there is no mention of 'sustainability'. The result is that the SDECCE field is currently largely made up of isolated, even if highly committed, individuals working alone in their settings to promote mainly environmental education (Davis and Elliott, 2014). This is no longer acceptable. The arguments for a concerted, holistic approach have been set out since the turn of the century and more and more evidence of good practice is now emerging (Davis 2015). The new UNESCO Global Action Programme (GAP) in Education for Sustainable Development (UNESCO 2013), along with the new Sustainable Development Goals, will drive forward this agenda, particularly within ECE.

At an international level the top priority must be to address the issue of child mortality, health, poverty and access to ECCE. Economics research has shown that children are highly responsive to educational interventions in the early childhood period and policy makers are increasingly listening. Cunha and Heckman (2007) have provided a cumulative model of the production of human capital that suggests significant investments of time and effort by parents and professional educators and carers from birth onwards support some children significantly in the development of their cognitive and socio-emotional skills. These investments, in terms of early attachment, stimulation and communicative interaction (Sapolsky 2004; Knudsen et al 2006, Siraj-Blatchford, 2008, 2009) have also been shown to have a long-term impact on children's future learning performance at school. Sadly, due to an accident of birth, where children have been born into poverty these investments are never made. 6.6 million children under age five died in 2012, and more than half of these early child deaths were due to conditions that could be prevented or treated with access to simple,

affordable interventions (WHO, 2013). Young children are particularly vulnerable and in need of protection, 58% of all the deaths of under 5 year olds are caused by infectious diseases. Research suggests that for maximum impact, early education programmes should include health and family support, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), and nutrition/feeding provisions where necessary. Similarly, all health and feeding programmes should include provisions to support children's early learning and development. This 'joined up thinking' perspective is explicitly referred to in UNESCO's (2011b) Summary of Progress Towards Education for All, prepared for the Tenth Meeting of the High-Level Group on Education for all in Jomtien. In many countries around the world preschool and other centre-based child care programs that serve disadvantaged communities have already moved beyond providing integrated approaches that link child care with early learning towards the provision of much wider support for children and families, and the enrichment of children's home learning environments. As Britto and Ulkuer (2012) put it; "evidence shows that such intersectional coordination has generated some positive results, such as improved public awareness of ECCE, and increased use of comprehensive services". Major initiatives have included Sure Start Centres (UK) and Head Start Centres (USA) (Adams and Rohacek 2002, Halfon, et al., 2009). Yet gaining access to ECCE remain a major problem in many countries as UNESCO statistics testify:

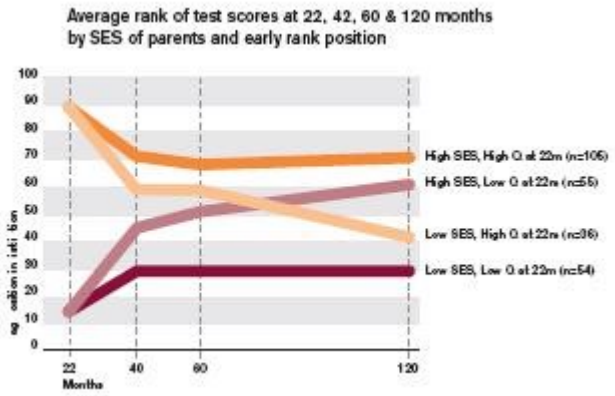


(UNESCO, 2012, 193/209 Countries http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/GED%20Documents%20C/GED-2012-Complete-Web3.pdf)

At a national level, despite some notable progress before 2010, it seems that faced with an economic downturn, of all age groups, it has been young children who have been recently targeted to carry the brunt of economic austerity measures. It is important for us to recognise

and promote greater public awareness of the fact that this as a highly retrogressive step in terms of sustainable development. From the very start of their term in office, the 2010 Coalition Government instructed civil servants that the phrase; 'Every Child Matters' should no longer be referred to (Puffet, 2010). So it seems that some children are now considered by the government to matter more others. Reductions have been made in the direct financial support provided for children, and cuts have been made in funding for childcare and early education despite a rising population of young children. As Picket et al (2014) have shown, it is ultimately only by reducing the income gap between the rich and the poor that we can be freed from the greed and averice of conspicuous consumption, it will only be when we reduce inequality that we can increase well-being and sustainability. We need to break the vicious cycles that reproduce family poverty across generations. Yet as Stewart and Obolenska (2015) have shown, Sure Start children's centres have taken the biggest hit, with a cut in funding of 33% between 2009-10 and 2012-13. Childcare subsidies have also been reduced for low-income parents, and support for professional development for childcare workers (the Graduate Leader Fund) has been abolished. Many Local Authorities and Centre management teams have made heroic efforts to keep services going but it is difficult to see how provisions can be maintained with a further series of 'austerity' cuts expected as this edition of the journal goes to print.

Arguably, Feinstein (2003) provided one of the strongest empirical justifications for the *Every Child Matters* agenda. His research, drew upon 2,457 children in the 1970 Birth Cohort Survey (BCS), and was largely supported by the EPPE (Sylva et al, 2012) evidence as well. It shows that the effects of poverty on children's long term educational achievement are apparent before they reach the nursery school. Feinstein showed that at the age of 22 months, children in the lowest quartile of cognitive development from higher family income groups caught up with, and went on to overtake children who were performing much higher than they were at 22 months from the lowest income groups (See Figure 3). The analysis showed that having a low cognitive test score at 22 months did not determine a child's future underachievement unless the child had low income parents as well. It was also found that children from poor families with top quartile cognitive scores at 22 months fell behind highthe children from high income



families who had low quartile cognitive scores at 22 months. While children from poor families are less likely to have high cognitive scores: "… even if they do they are very likely to lose this early advantage" (p30)

Family background has been shown to play a major role in determining the continued development of children's ability in many other studies. But Feinstein has shown that children from low income families who show promising early signs of cognitive development, fail to succeed in education due to an accident of birth, because they have been born into a low income family. Social justice clearly demands that there should be intervention, and the evidence shows that high quality early childhood education has been shown to provide an effective strategy (Sylva, et al 2010). Yet there are radical theorists (Gerwitz, 2001, Burke, 2006) who have been critical of such policies because they are perceived as presenting a 'deficit' view of disadvantaged families and/or as 'blaming the victims' for their underachievement. However, as Siraj-Blatchford (2010) has argued, this kind of deconstruction may be seen as idealistic, or even self-indulgent. Resistance to social injustice and inequality provides a means of confronting and undermining the dominant structures of inequality. Another popular criticism in the media cites family and early childhood education as examples of an overprotective 'nanny state' that interferes with personal choice. Yet failure to intervene due to complacency might well be considered passive complicity.

Postmodern writers have also argued against the provision of compensatory education on the somewhat paradoxical grounds that the essential 'truth' of cultural relativity leaves any definition of 'quality' in early childhood education meaningless. The problem with this is that this may lead policy makers to deny the legitimacy of policy interventions that might be considered to be seeking to target 'cultures of poverty'. Here, the cultural respect and protectionism that is rightfully owed to sustained and sustainable indigenous world cultures is sometimes applied uncritically to fundamentally dysfunctional cultural contexts. Research has increasingly documented the fact that families that escape poverty are atypical of their neighbours in terms of the expectations and aspirations they have for their children. Abject poverty and low expectations are not a natural condition, and the social and cultural assumptions and behaviours of those coping in such circumstances must be engaged with, as a necessary part of the process of socio-economic reconstruction. Within every impoverished community there are commonly held narrative assumptions that people live by, some of these lead to positive outcomes and should be nourished but they shouldn't be romanticised as sustainable cultures. Romanticism, and delusions about a self-sufficient and sustainable past, often seen through rose tinted spectacles, may be a very real problem for

ESD. In adopting social interventionist approaches such as SureStart we shouldn't fear being accused of 'blaming the victims', we should recognise that the cultural dysfunctions that we are engaging with are the direct consequence of our historical failure to address the issue of poverty. Of course this is not to say that we shouldn't be conscious of the fact that there are other dangers, most significantly the danger that intervention policies may be influenced unduly by the prejudices, attitudes, and beliefs, of cultural outsiders. Policy makers must be careful to ensure that the cultural engagement is genuine and that families are empowered by the knowledge of those around them who have succeeded in breaking out of the vicious cycle. Poverty eradication policies that fail to address cultural issues will inevitably foster greater dependency.

It is instructive in this context to consider that despite its early beginnings over a Century ago as a family intervention, health visiting has become established as an entirely acceptable universal provision. According to Garrett (2006) health visits were first introduced by volunteers from the Ladies' Sanitary Reform Association of Manchester and Salford in 1862 and taken over by the Manchester Medical Officer of Health in 1890. Health visiting is now accepted by the public and it seems reasonable to assume that other family interventions that may appear questionable today might be considered entirely acceptable in the future. When we consider the aspirations of Every Child Matters in this light then we might consider the possibility of a redefinition of the 'healthy' child to include all of what Ramey and Ramey (2000) have referred to as the 'psychosocial developmental priming mechanisms' of the home learning environment. Recent developments and perspectives in neuroscience may support these processes in the development of wider public perceptions of the constitution of children's 'health'. **Sustainable Development in Early Childhood Care and Education (SDECCE) provides both a foundational rationale and a justification for reestablishing this perspective.**

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