



Call for papers

Special issue: *Reorienting early childhood education for sustainability in initial teacher education*

A call for papers for a special issue of the [Australian Journal of Teacher Education](#) on the need to reorient early childhood education for sustainability in initial teacher education.

Special issue editors:

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Background

The embedding of education for sustainability (EfS) into initial teacher education (ITE) is a recognised strategy for building new teachers' capacity to prepare future citizens to manage critical sustainability challenges like climate change, deforestation, pollution, social and cultural justice, and access to clean water and housing. Unless pre-service early childhood teachers develop the necessary understanding, skills, values and dispositions required for the management of such sustainability challenges, it is unlikely that they, in turn, will be able to prepare the children they teach. Building the capacity of educators to address sustainability issues and more effectively deliver EfS was declared as one of the five priority action areas of the UNESCO Roadmap for implementing a Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2014), and is supported by the UNESCO Chair in Reorienting Education towards Sustainability (York University, n.d.). Further, UNESCO (2014) recognises that early childhood education (ECE) has powerful potential to play a significant role in "preparing present and future citizens and in aiding societies to make the necessary transitions to sustainability" (p. 70). Most recently, the importance of sustainability capable citizens has been internationally recognised through the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4, target 4.7, that by 2030 all learners will have the necessary knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development (UNESCO, 2019).

Early childhood is a critical phase for developing values, attitudes, behaviours, skills and habits that may be reflected throughout life (Samuelsson & Kaga, 2008; Weldemariam & Wals, 2020). This is especially significant to EfS, which aims for learners to develop the

necessary foundational knowledge, capabilities, and dispositions to respond to complex sustainability issues (Evans et al., 2017). Children are grossly disadvantaged and critically impacted by the diverse effects of unsustainable practices such as poverty, lack of access to clean water, pollution, overcrowding, and more. Young children have a profound ability and right to contribute to sustainable solutions, particularly within their own communities in accordance with the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) (1989). A recent report by the World Health Organisation (WHO), UNICEF and the Lancet Commission (WHO-UNICEF, 2020) argues that the sustainability crisis needs to be addressed with a special focus on improving the lives of children. Therefore, early childhood educators have a critical role to play in equipping children with lifelong capacities for sustainability throughout the early phase of life through, for example, education based on arts and crafts (Furu, 2019).

How teacher educators take up EfS is critically important, particularly under current coronavirus disease pandemic conditions where traditional modes of teaching are being challenged by new technologies and different interactive platforms for teaching and learning. Providing opportunities for children's active participation is a key part of supporting their resilience during the pandemic as well as during the mounting sustainability crises (Heikkilä et al., 2020). EfS is complex and involves much more than adding another curriculum component (Sterling, 2001). Fundamentally, paradigm shifts are needed to foster new ways of engaging within teacher education (Elliott et al., 2017). This calls for a socially transformative process capable of reconfiguring the thinking and actions of educators and the learners they teach. Such an approach promotes respect, mutuality, connectedness, and interdependence, and consequently fosters ways to 'act together' for a sustainable world (Elliott, 2017). Yet, a massive 'research hole' in early childhood education for sustainability (Davis & Davis, 2020), limits the capacity for a research-informed approach capable of robustly building early childhood teacher educators' capacity. The limited research available identifies that further studies are needed on ways to enhance early childhood pre-service teachers' sustainability knowledge and skills, especially to build their capacity to be transformative agents and motivators for change, once they graduate (Ärlemalm-Hagsér, 2017). This special issue directly responds to this call in an attempt to address such research gaps.

Focus of papers

This call for papers is seeking manuscripts that address one or more of the following themes: Early childhood teacher educators or pre-service teachers' understandings of EfS; EfS subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge within early childhood initial teacher education (ITE); Early childhood teacher education experiences with EfS during practicum and academic subjects; interdisciplinary or cross disciplinary approaches of EfS in early childhood ITE; the design, implementation and/or evaluation of early childhood EfS subjects and programs within ITE.

We welcome various kinds of manuscripts, including empirical, theoretical, methodological, speculative, innovative, transformative and transgressive forms of addressing EfS matters within early childhood ITE.

The editors welcome a wider set of themes not included in this proposal that addresses the interrelationship between early childhood education and EfS. Please contact one of

this special issue's editorial team members if you have any questions or ideas you would like to discuss.

Submission instructions and timeline

- Working titles and abstracts of up to 500 words should be submitted to the special issue lead editor via email (neus.evans@jcu.edu.au) by 31 March, 2021.
- Authors notified of preliminary acceptance or non-acceptance by end of April, 2021.
- Full papers (6000-8000 words) due to editors by 30 August, 2021.
- Reviewed papers returned to authors end of October 2021.
- Completed papers (6000-8000 words) due to editors by 15 January, 2022.

About the journal

The purpose of the Australian Journal of Teacher Education is to enhance the quality of teacher education through the publication of research reports, learned points of view and commentaries. The Australian Journal of Teacher Education (AJTE) is indexed in the Web of Science, Scopus, and A+Education. SCImago ranks the AJTE in the 2nd top Quartile for education journals in the world, 328 out of 914 international journals. For more information about the journal, article types and the peer-review process, please see the journal's website at: <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/>.

About the editors

Sule Alici, Lecturer in Elementary and Early Childhood Education Department, Faculty of Education, Kirsehir Ahi Evran University, Kirsehir, Turkey

Sule has a background in teaching and researching early childhood education and sustainability since 2010. Especially after 2015, she has started to undertake research, design and training targeting education for sustainability in early childhood pre-and in-service teacher education. In creating this work, Sule has utilized alternative teaching approaches and theories such as creative drama, critical media literacy, Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory, and critical theory. Moreover, she is a part of community service projects that support both pre-service and in-service teachers' understanding of sustainability and links to sustainability issues such as climate change and human rights and democracy.

Neus (Snowy) Evans, Senior Lecturer in Education, College of Arts, Society and Education, James Cook University, Nguma-bada - Cairns campus, Australia.

Snowy's research background lies at the intersection of sustainability education, pedagogy, schools and initial teacher education. Snowy's current research interests and activities overlap with her teaching in the areas of professional practice, including pedagogy and curriculum, within pre-service teacher education. She's particularly interested in the juncture between teacher professional practice and sustainability education theory and practice within new materialist theories.

Ann-Christin Furu, project researcher, Faculty of Education and Welfare Studies, Åbo Akademi University, Finland

Ann-Christin has more than 20 years of experience in Finnish teacher education. She has a background as lecturer and researcher in the relational and communicative aspects of teaching and learning and a deep interest for relational ontology in sustainability education. Currently, her research is directed towards multimodal storytelling and nature contact as pathways to strengthening resilience among children as well as staff in ECEC. She collaborates with policy makers, researchers and practitioners in the promotion of sustainable organizational cultures within ECEC.

Debra Harwood, Professor, Early Childhood Education, Brock University, St. Catharines Ontario, Canada

Debra's background in teaching and researching early childhood education curricula and pedagogies spans a 20-year history in Canada. Her most recent research interest examines the ways in which curricula and pedagogies transform within outdoor educational models and the opportunities provoked for embedding EfS. Additionally, Debra designs curricula for pre-service ECE teacher education, recently creating a required ECEfS course within the ECE program at her institution.

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