

Panel B. Ethics and the Political Economy of Education for a Sustainable Future

Chair and Discussant : Emeritus Professor W. John Morgan, Fellow of Learned Society of Wales and Council Member).

Dr Jane Davidson

Title: “How do we educate for an uncertain future?”

The presentation links to themes of the UNESCO “Rethinking Education” report.

Abstract:

Traditionally we have educated for the economy; but should not education be for personal fulfilment, fostering a love of learning and a deeper understanding the world? Should we not support young people in discovering what they enjoy and are good at - and who they want to be in life? How then do we train, encourage and support teachers and schools in responding to these different needs? My vision for education and lifelong learning is that Wales should become internationally renowned as a Learning Country: a place which puts learners' interests first; offers wider access and opportunities for all; aspires to excellence across the board; and which will not settle for second best in making lifelong learning a reality. This requires a learning revolution and brave political leadership - moving from learning to the test to learning to learn; from shallow learning to deep learning; from vertical learning to horizontal learning; from content to competences and where learning and relearning continues beyond formal education and training systems. We must therefore envisage new approaches to education and skills development that capitalize on the full potential of all learning settings and aspire to create critical thinkers and creative problem solvers who are enabled to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future. Are we brave enough to do so?

Dr Esther Muddiman

Title: How might family relationships contribute to a fairer, more sustainable society?

The presentation links to the section on ‘creativity, cultural innovation and youth’ in Chapter one, and the four pillars of education described in Chapter two of the UNESCO “Rethinking Education” report.

Abstract:

While some see the family as the cornerstone of civil society, others position it firmly outside the public realm. This presentation focusses on the role of family in socialising or educating new generations to be ‘good citizens’ based on intergenerational research in Wales. It explores the (dis)continuity of values and behaviours between adolescents, their parents and grandparents. In exploring how young people reproduce, adapt or reject social values from previous generations, the presentation calls for a re-evaluation of the family home as a potential site of civil society engagement, as a space for learning to learn and learning to live together. Although women’s access to the public sphere has traditionally been restricted, our data show that relationships with mothers and grandmothers are particularly important in young peoples’ accounts of their civic participation. The presentation explores the various motivations and values described by families, the management of intergenerational ruptures. Finally, it asks how family influence interacts with formal education, peer groups and social media.

Professor Grigori Kliucharev

Title: A New Popular Education in Russia?

The presentation links to themes of the UNESCO ‘Rethinking Education’ report.

Abstract:

The presentation considers how social change and developments in civil society are occurring in Russia and the role played by a new popular education. The right to lifelong learning is guaranteed by the Russian state, as it was by the Soviet Union, where formal education, based on communist ideology, emphasized the needs of the state over the needs of individuals. In practice a wide range of educational needs, many of which relate to coping with changing economic, social, and technological circumstances are being met by non-governmental providers, including commercial companies, self-help groups, and community and neighbourhood clubs. We focus on how this new popular education is both an example of civil society and stimulates its further development. However, it is also part of a growing educational divide, where motivated, articulate people take advantage of new opportunities, while disadvantaged groups such as the unemployed and the rural poor continue to be excluded.

Professor Manuel Souto-Otero

Title: "International agencies and norm setting in educational policy: the case of the European Union".

The presentation links to Chapter 3 in the UNESCO "Rethinking education" report (particularly the first and final headings for that chapter).

Abstract:

"Now for almost a decade, the European semester has been a central part of the EU's governance framework. Initially a cycle of economic and fiscal coordination, its social profile has increased in recent years. The semester entails discussions of national economic and budgetary plans with European institutions, and an assessment of those plans by those institutions -the Commission and the Council. Based on that assessment, countries are issued with country specific recommendations for action in the following 12-18 months, which adapt priorities identified at EU level to the national level. The presentation reviews the nature of the country specific recommendations issued in education and training, and the degree of Member States' progress in relation to those. Finally, it discusses both strengths and paradoxes regarding country specific recommendations and the European Semester in education and training, with regards to the vision for education that they project, and as tools for international educational governance".

Ian White

Title: The fundamental purpose and ethical implications of the World Bank's education programme

This presentation links to Chapter 2 in the UNESCO “Rethinking Education” report

Abstract:

The World Bank Group (WBG) is the largest external financier of education in developing countries, from pre-primary and primary education all the way to higher education. Since 2000, it has invested close to \$50 billion in education in over 120 countries. Given the World Bank’s mandate, this work has generally emphasized a utilitarian vision of education, focused on the building of human capital as an investment for individuals and governments. In October, the WBG launched a global Human Capital Project – an accelerated effort to assess the progress countries have made in building human capital and help countries invest more – and more effectively – in their people. This is being promoted as the key to preparing workforces for the future, but also for creating more inclusive and equal societies.

This presentation will examine the WBG's most recent global education initiative and its framing of education, specifically how it relates to the Rethinking Education's emphasis on the need for an integrated approach to education based on renewed ethical and moral foundations.

General Discussion

Rethinking Education: Towards a Global Common Good (UNESCO 2015)

(<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002325/232555e.pdf>) identified education as the principal vehicle through which sustainability in all its forms is to be understood and achieved. This entails rethinking the ethical purpose of education, together with the political economy of its organization and finance if education is to be a conduit for the promotion of a common sustainable future.

Some key questions that may be considered during the Symposium are:

- i. What vision of education is required to deliver sustainable human and social development? This requires reconciling through dialogue historically rooted cultural and religious norms that often stand in contradiction to one another. How may such a dialogue be initiated and sustained? Should it be integral to educational philosophy and practice?
- ii. What understanding of sustainability is required beyond the: '...responsible action of individuals and societies towards a better future for all, locally and globally – one in which social justice and environmental stewardship guide socio-economic development. (p.20)?
- iii. How may this be financed and delivered given the new levels of complexity that have resulted in a more interconnected and interdependent world? What are the tensions and paradoxes, as well as new knowledge horizons that need to be considered?
- iv. Do such changes in the global structure require fundamentally different approaches to sustaining human well-being and flourishing?
- v. If a common educational vision is to be more than well-meaning utopianism, how may it be achieved and sustained? What model of practice does Wales offer that can support learning elsewhere?
- vi. How and where do ethical and moral considerations and dimensions fit in with the new approaches to education at all levels of engagement?