

Call for paper

Contribution to educational science for theory formation in the research field of 'Education for Sustainable Development' (working title)

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Editors

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Abstract

A multitude of crises (e.g. the crisis of democracy, the climate crisis) are currently being discussed, for which the term 'polycrisis' is increasingly being used. This term was reintroduced into public discourse by economic historian Adam Tooze (2022) and can be traced back to Edgar Morin and Anne-Brigitte Kern (1999). As a discipline, education has always been concerned with social conditions and the relationship between society and the individual, so it is directly affected by these crises and is also addressed politically as a 'crisis solver', as in the case of 'education for sustainable development' (ESD). (For a general critique of this claim, compare, for example, Proske, 2002). Since 1992, international education policy has pursued the approach of ESD, which aims to link the fields of ecology, economics and social issues in a comprehensive manner and thus address these issues not only individually but also in terms of their interconnections. The implementation of ESD programmes at different levels of education is required by education policy and its implementation is financially supported (compare, for example, Singer-Brodowski & Kminek 2023).

Based on this political desire, educational scientists have developed specific target competencies for ESD in applied research (e.g. de Haan, 2008; Rieckmann, 2022). Against this background, it seems appropriate to understand ESD primarily as a politically motivated campaign. In educational science, both this campaign and the question of ESD theory formation have been and continue to be the subject of highly controversial debates, both nationally and internationally, specifically (i) affirmative and (ii) negative.

(i) Some support this development because they see education and training as a key lever for

successfully addressing the problems mentioned. They also welcome the focus on skills, which could help the ESD concept to be implemented more successfully and be less indoctrinating (e.g. Rost, 2002).

(ii) Others felt that there was a lack of scientific distance from the political will and educational reflection on the concept, which is why the concept was considered indoctrinating (e.g. Jickling, 1992).

However, it is not entirely clear what exactly ESD entails. The educational concept is vaguely defined and has little theoretical underpinning. Some see ESD as an extension of traditional education to include solution-oriented, value-based and future-oriented judgement, decision-making and, where necessary, action. Others see it primarily as a change in mindsets. In general, the extent to which action should actually be considered a desirable goal is controversial.

Regardless of the controversy surrounding the theoretical definition and orientation of ESD, the issues addressed by the educational concept of ESD are not new to pedagogical and educational theory. This is true even if it is debatable whether the social problems addressed today are of a different nature and whether specific terms should be used to describe this change (see, for example, the controversial debates around the term 'Anthropocene'). The question of the relationship between humans and nature or the environment has already been addressed by the so-called (partly forgotten) classics of pedagogy. Thus, educational literature has already presented contributions to individual classics of pedagogy, reflecting on and analysing their concepts and reflections for the present, and thus the question of nature and the environment today. By classics, we also mean forgotten or unknown theorists who have shaped a pedagogical direction and raised fundamental questions about education and training.

Against this background, the planned volume aims to re-read and update classics of pedagogy. The following questions are particularly relevant for the contributions (respectively the abstracts to be submitted):

- (a) What are the theoretical assumptions and contributions to the nature of education, training and learning in the light of the socio-ecological (poly)crisis?
- (b) What are the implications for the definition of knowledge, skills or content?
- (c) Under which conditions (institutional, social, cultural and historical contexts) can or should education and learning take place, and why?
- (d) How are the subjects or actors in the educational process (e.g. teachers, students, parents as appropriate) and their roles, relationships and interactions conceptualised?

We kindly request that you submit **proposals (abstracts) of up to 5,000 characters** (including spaces, excluding references) along with information about the authors (name, institution,

research focus) **by 31 August 2025** to the following email address: anne.holfelder@uni-bamberg.de.

Feedback on the proposed contributions will be provided by the end of September 2025. If accepted, the final contribution must be submitted by the end of February 2026. The editors will review the contributions. We expect the volume to be published by the end of 2026 at the latest. We are aiming for open access publication.

If you have any questions, please contact anne.holfelder@uni-bamberg.de.

We look forward to receiving your contributions and are happy to answer any questions you may have.

The Editors:

Helge Kminek & Anne-Katrin Holfelder

Literature

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