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Learning and Sustainable Development

A Conceptual Review of International Literature on Education for Sustainable Development

Iida-Maria Koskela



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FOREWORD: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STARTS WITH EDUCATION

Without wide scale, holistic education, it is unlikely to achieve just transition towards sustainability.

Sustainability challenges of our time and those of the future strongly motivate us to create action which offers a basis for hope. To mobilise hope and action, knowledge on complexities and risks, capacities to develop visions for sustainable futures and competences to act and make the visions alive, are needed.

The United Nations' Agenda2030 provides a global vision for pathways towards sustainability. For sustainable development to occur, new types of knowledge and competences are needed to ensure that the pathways are as fair, legitimate and wise as possible. However, traditional formal education that focuses primarily on the individual scale is far too simple for achieving these knowledges and competences. Thus, education for sustainable development needs to be open by broadening from individual scale towards multi-scalar approach which combines individual, social and societal scale learning.

Such multi-scalar education for sustainability is the focus of this this publication, which is based on the Master's thesis of Iida-Maria Koskela: Learning for Sustainability in an Age of Wicked Problems: A Conceptual Review.

Leaning strongly on a theoretical analysis of current most relevant research on Education for Sustainable Development, Koskela conceptualizes how learning and education can contribute to more sustainable societies. She brings together perspectives relevant in education which occur in formal, non-formal and informal context and concludes the findings by arguing how individuals, communities, and all different societal actors need to engage in life-long learning processes to enable transformations towards a more sustainable world. In addition, she justifies the importance of reshaping the pedagogic means and the content of education if the societies are prepared to take up the major challenge of our era.

The findings and conclusions of this report are to open new innovative approaches. These call for development of aims, practices and evaluation procedures for education that combines individual, community and societal levels. Such new ambitious and innovative combinations are strongly needed to enable learning for just transformation towards sustainability. Some ongoing projects at Finnish Environment Institute, such as Urban and regional planning with the young generation - collective and inter-generational learning encouraging sustainability transformations (URGENT, funded by Academy of Finland), aim to respond to these needs and expand our practical and scientific understanding of learning at the core of sustainability transformations.

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ABSTRACT

Learning and Sustainable Development: A conceptual review of international literature on Education for Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development is a contested concept, yet some major transformations towards a more sustainable world must occur to ensure global wellbeing within planetary boundaries. The United Nations' Agenda2030 provides a global vision for pathways towards sustainability. For achieving its goals, learning and education are in a crucial role. This report is a conceptual literature review synthesising international and mainly peer-reviewed research on sustainable behaviour and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The aim is to explore what kinds of factors explain sustainable behaviour and how learning and education can further sustainability transformations.

There are several factors that explain commitment to sustainable behaviour, including demographic factors (such as age and gender), internal factors (for example nature connectedness and self-efficacy), as well as external factors (such as cultural and social norms). There seems to be a positive connection between education and sustainable behaviour, yet higher income may also result in adopting individual behaviours with a negative environmental impact. Moreover, it is typical that people's behaviours demonstrate a value-action, attitude-action, concern-action, or knowledge-action gap. The aim of ESD is to support developing the knowledges, skills, competencies and attitudes needed to live in an ecologically, socially and economically sustainable manner in the changing world. ESD has potential to drive sustainability transformations through providing meaningful learning experiences for people at all ages both in formal education from early childhood education to higher education and outside formal education systems in everyday life, at work, in communities and generally in the society. Pedagogical solutions that enable critical deliberation, experiential learning, authentic participation and multi-actor collaboration while maintaining hope seem to support implementing transformative ESD. However, individual learning experiences are undermined if the surrounding society does not support sustainable behaviour and sustainability transformations. Thus, the magnitude and urgency of the current local and global problems require a joint and continuous learning process, which involves all societal actors to collaboratively seek for sustainable solutions.

Keywords: Education for Sustainable Development, Sustainable Behaviour, Sustainability Transformations, Life-Long Learning, Social Learning, Transformative Learning

TIIVISTELMÄ

Oppiminen ja kestävä kehitys: Käsitteellinen katsaus kestäväen kehityksen kasvatuksen kansainväliseen kirjallisuuteen

Kestävä kehitys on kiistelty käsite, mutta varmaa on, että isoja kestävyysmurroksia tarvitaan, jotta globaali hyvinvointi voidaan varmistaa planeetan sietokyvyn rajoissa. Yhdistyneiden kansakuntien Agenda2030 tarjoaa globaalien vision ja suuntaviivat kohti kestävämpää maailmaa. Oppiminen ja koulutus ovat hyvin keskeisessä roolissa sen tavoitteiden saavuttamiseksi. Tämä raportti on käsitteellinen kirjallisuuskatsaus kansainvälisestä ja pääosin vertaisarvioidusta kestäväen elämäntavan ja kestäväen kehityksen kasvatuksen tutkimuksesta. Tavoitteena on selvittää, millaiset tekijät selittävät kestäväen elämäntapaa ja miten kasvatusta, koulutusta ja oppimista voivat edistää kestävyysmurroksia.

Tutkimusten mukaan kestäväen elämäntavan omaksumista selittävät useat demografiset tekijät (kuten henkilön ikä ja sukupuoli), sisäiset tekijät (esimerkiksi luontosuhde ja kokemus omista vaikuttamismahdollisuuksista), sekä ulkoiset tekijät (muun muassa kulttuuriset ja sosiaaliset normit). Koulutuksen ja kestäväen elämäntavan välillä vaikuttaa olevan positiivinen yhteys, mutta toisaalta suuremmat tulot usein johtavat suurempaan yksilön ympäristökuormitukseen. On myös tyypillistä, että ihmisten arvot, asenteet, huoli ja tietoisuus eivät aina näy heidän käytöksessään. Kestäväen kehityksen kasvatusta tavoitteena on edistää ihmisten tietoja, taitoja ja halua toimia ekologisesti, sosiaalisesti ja taloudellisesti kestäväällä tavalla muuttuvassa maailmassa. Kestäväen kehityksen kasvatusta voi olla merkittävässä roolissa kestävyysmurrosten mahdollistamisessa tarjoamalla merkityksellisiä oppimiskokemuksia kaikenikäisille ihmisille niin formaalissa kasvatuksessa varhaiskasvatuksesta korkeakouluopintoihin kuin virallisen koulutusjärjestelmän ulkopuolella arkielämässä ja töissä sekä yhteisöissä ja yhteiskunnassa toimien. Pedagogiset ratkaisut, jotka mahdollistavat kriittisen pohdinnan, kokemuksellisen oppimisen, aidon osallistumisen ja monialaisen yhteistyön sekä ylläpitävät positiivista tulevaisuudenkuvaa tukevat transformatiivista kestäväen kehityksen kasvatusta. Yksilöiden oppimiskokemukset eivät kuitenkaan riitä, mikäli ympäröivä yhteiskunta ei tue kestäväen elämäntapaa tai kestävyysmurroksia. Jotta isoihin ja kiireellisiin kestävyysaasteisiin voidaan löytää ratkaisuja, tarvitaan kaikkien yhteiskunnan osapuolten yhteinen ja jatkuva oppimisprosessi.

Asiasanat: Kestäväen kehityksen kasvatusta, kestävä elämäntapa, kestävyysmurrokset, elinikäinen oppiminen, sosiaalinen oppiminen, transformatiivinen oppiminen

SAMMANDRAG

Lärande och hållbar utveckling: En konceptuell översikt av internationell litteratur om utbildning för hållbar utveckling

Hållbar utveckling är ett kontroversiellt koncept, men det är tydligt att stora förändringar i hållbarhet behövs för att säkerställa globalt välbefinnande inom planetens gränser. Förenta nationernas Agenda 2030 ger en global vision och riktlinjer för en mer hållbar värld. För att uppnå dess mål är lärande och utbildning en avgörande roll. Denna rapport är en konceptuell litteraturoversikt som syntetiserar internationell och huvudsakligen referentgranskad forskning om hållbart beteende och utbildning för hållbar utveckling. Syftet är att utforska vilka typer av faktorer som förklarar hållbart beteende och hur utbildning och lärande kan bidra till hållbarhet.

Studier har visat att engagemang för hållbart beteende förklaras av ett antal demografiska faktorer (exempelvis ålder och kön), interna faktorer (exempelvis förhållande till naturen och upplevelse av självförmåga) och externa faktorer (inklusive kulturella och sociala normer). Det verkar finnas ett positivt samband mellan utbildning och hållbart beteende, men högre inkomst kan också leda till individuella beteenden med negativ miljöpåverkan. Det är också vanligt att människors beteende visar ett gap i värde-handling, attityd-handling, bekymmer-handling eller kunskap-handlings. Syftet med utbildning för hållbar utveckling är att stödja utvecklingen av kunskaper, färdigheter, kompetenser och attityder som krävs för att leva på ett ekologiskt, socialt och ekonomiskt hållbart sätt i en föränderlig värld. Utbildning för hållbar utveckling har potential att driva hållbar omvandling genom meningsfulla inlärningsupplevelser för människor i alla åldrar, både i formell utbildning från tidig barndom till högre utbildning och utanför de formella utbildningssystemen i vardagen, i arbetet, och i allmänhet i samhället. Pedagogiska lösningar som möjliggör kritisk reflektion, erfarenhetsinläring, autentiskt deltagande och samarbete med flera aktörer och som upprätthåller en positiv vision av framtiden verkar stödja transformativ utbildning för hållbar utveckling. Individernas inlärningsupplevelser räcker dock inte om det omgivande samhället inte stöder en hållbar livsstil och transformationer mot hållbarhet. För att hitta lösningar på de stora och brådskande hållbarhetsutmaningarna behövs det en gemensam och kontinuerlig inlärningsprocess för alla parter i samhället.

Nyckelord: Utbildning för hållbar utveckling, hållbart beteende, hållbarhet omvandling, livslångt lärande, socialt lärande, transformativt lärande

CONTENTS

1 Introduction	9
1.1 Research Background	9
1.2 Importance of Research Topic	11
1.3 Research Questions	12
1.4 Research Methods and Materials	13
1.5 Structure of the report	14
2 Sustainable Behaviour and its Determinants	17
2.1 Demographic, Internal and External Factors Influencing Individuals' Behaviours	17
2.2 Childhood and Sustainable Behaviour	20
3 Education for Sustainable Development	23
3.1 Defining Education for Sustainable Development	23
3.2 Learning Theories and Pedagogical Approaches in ESD	26
3.2.1 Critical Pedagogy	26
3.2.2 Experiential and Outdoor Learning	27
3.2.3 Action Competence Approach and Place-Based Education	29
3.2.4 Transformative Learning	30
3.2.5 Social Learning	31
4 ESD in Formal, Non-Formal and Informal Contexts	35
4.1 Implementing ESD in Formal Education	35
4.2 ESD in Non-Formal Learning Contexts	37
4.3 Informal Learning for Sustainability	39
5 Conclusions and Discussion	43
5.1 Summary of the Main Findings	43
5.2 Individuals, Communities and Societies Driving Sustainability Transformations	45



1 Introduction

Sustainable Development (SD) is a concept that has been widely used and promoted internationally for several decades. One of the most known definitions of SD is introduced in the Brundtland Report as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

The aim of this report is to conceptualise how learning and education are connected to SD and how they can contribute to more sustainable societies. It is based on a Master’s Thesis ‘Learning for Sustainability in an Age of Wicked Problems: A Conceptual Review (Koskela, 2019) conducted at the University of Oulu. In the following sub-chapters, the importance of the chosen topic will be argued and a brief overview of the research background will be presented. Also, the research questions, research methods and the structure of this report will be introduced.

1.1 Research Background

The world is facing several global problems, such as loss of biodiversity and climate change, which have already led to severe ecological, social and economic problems (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 2018; World Wide Fund (WWF), 2018). These problems are beyond complex and often referred to as ‘wicked problems’ (e.g. Andersson & Törnberg, 2018; Peters, 2017; Tomkinson, 2011; Waddock, 2013). This means that they encompass ambiguous and large webs of interactions that they are hard or impossible to define precisely and there are no clear answers to them, only better or worse attempts to formulate solutions (Andersson & Törnberg, 2018; Peters, 2017).

Sustainability itself is a wicked problem (Waddock, 2013). Thus, there are no clear answers to what SD means in practical terms and how the world can reach a sustainable state. Neither is there ubiquitous definition for SD (Hopwood, Mellor & O’Brien, 2005; Mebratu, 1998). On the contrary, SD is a fluid concept and what is sustainable changes constantly when new information emerges and contexts change (Wals, 2010). As the word ‘sustainable’ implies, ‘sustaining’ is at the core of SD but what to sustain and what to give in, and furthermore, who makes this decision, remain debatable (Martin & Morris, 2009, p. 160). Even though some consensus about SD encompassing environmental, social and economic dimensions exists, in practical situations all three of them are rarely considered equally (Gupta & Vegelin, 2016; Hopwood et al., 2005; Mebratu, 1998). Moreover, the word ‘development’ has been contested by several scholars because it may imply an uncritical view of economic growth and technology progress (Wolff, Sjöblom, Hofman-Bergholm & Palmberg, 2017, p. 2).

In 2015, the United Nations (UN) launched Agenda2030, an extensive agenda for international development including 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets that are aimed to be achieved by 2030. The Agenda2030 strives to guide all stakeholders globally to “take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path” (UN, 2015, n.p.). The SDGs provide a more tangible, holistic and integrated agenda for SD than any previous development agendas (Blanc, 2015). Yet, they have been criticised for being overly anthropocentric (Kopnina, 2017). Also, some of the Agenda’s goals and targets are perceived as contradictory, and stressing the significance of economic growth in reaching the goals may lead to continuing in the current, inherently unsustainable path (Brissett & Mitter, 2017; Gupta and Vegelin, 2016; Kopnina, 2017). Also, not all relevant links between the SDGs are made explicit in the agenda (Blanc, 2015). Despite the criticism, the Agenda2030 is a globally shared vision, which is to be endorsed by all nations (UN, 2015). As a shared vision for SD is urgently needed (Mebratu, 1998), it is reasonable to assume

that while recognising its deficiencies, the common benchmarks for SD are presented in the Agenda2030. Even though it only reaches until 2030 and is thus a rather short-term agenda for SD, the scientific community seems to agree that for avoiding the gloomiest consequences of the current unsustainable state of the world, decisions and actions taken during the next few years are determinative (IPCC, 2018; WWF, 2018).

Conventional scientific tools and approaches may be inadequate for both formulating questions and providing answers to wicked sustainability problems (Miller, 2013; Welpi, et al. 2003, Kasemir & Jaeger, 2003). As Bettencourt and Kaur (2011) argue, “the concept of sustainable development has acquired a global cultural and social dimension that vastly transcends the traditional boundaries of a scientific field” (p. 19544). Sustainability science is a fairly new research field, which has rapidly grown in the number of authors and publications during the past few decades (Bettencourt & Kaur, 2011). It is a maturing field with no clear structure or methodology but it seems to endorse transdisciplinary, holistic, solution-oriented and participatory research methods (Doran, Golden & Turner, 2017; Kläy, Zimmermann & Schneider, 2015; Miller, 2013; Wittmayer & Schäpke, 2014). Inter- and transdisciplinary research from a systemic perspective is crucial for understanding the complexity and interconnectedness of sustainability issues, for supporting more integrated policy-making, and for achieving the SDGs (Imaz & Sheinbaum, 2017; Blanc, 2015). In Agenda2030, science is mostly perceived to advance the realisation of SDGs through technology transfer and innovation (Imaz & Sheinbaum, 2017). However, social sciences, humanities, and other disciplinary areas can greatly contribute to understanding the causes of the current unsustainable path and opportunities for change (ibid.).

There are synergies between educational science and sustainability science and together they can create solutions to some of the most pressing local and global problems (Barth & Michelsen, 2013). Barth and Michelsen (2013) argue that the interaction between the fields can occur in two ways. In the ‘outside-in’ approach, sustainability discourse influences educational science by prompting deliberation about the purpose of education, learning contents and pedagogical choices. This is evident in the emergence of new educational fields, such as Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) (ibid.). On the other hand, the ‘inside-out’ approach discloses how sustainability science can benefit from incorporating perspectives from educational science (ibid.). As Barth and Michelsen (2013) describe this, “educational science may offer unique theories and methodological approaches to the study of individual and social learning processes that are to lead to a more sustainable future” (p. 105). This report explores how education and learning at all levels of society can promote and drive sustainability transformations elaborating both on the ‘outside-in’ and ‘inside-out’ approaches (Barth & Michelsen, 2013).

In addition to ESD, there are several other concepts of education that aim to further sustainability, such as education for sustainability (e.g. Huckle, 1996), learning for sustainability (e.g. Paulus, 2016), sustainability education (e.g. Wals, 2010), sustainable education (e.g. Sterling, 2011a), and climate change education (e.g. Cantell, Tolppanen, Aarnio-Linnanvuori & Lehtonen, 2019). Despite some differences in their emphases, they all promote education, which aims to ensure that learners are able to function in today’s rapidly changing world fostering sustainability. ESD also shares many characteristics with Environmental Education (EE) in terms of contents and pedagogies (Eilam & Trop, 2011). Nevertheless, Sterling (2011a) argues that ESD covers more topic areas than EE and could be used to describe all initiatives, which promote education for change, such as global citizenship education and intercultural education (pp. 30-31). In this report, research on ESD, EE, and fields with similar goals and pedagogies are reviewed. However, as ESD seems to be the most widely used terminology in academic and grey literature, it is mainly used in this report for clarity and cohesion.

A rapidly growing number of ESD and EE research has been published during the past decades (Ardoin, Bowers, Wyman Roth & Holthuis, 2018; Barth & Thomas, 2012). Studies on ESD and EE programmes often display positive outcomes, such as increased environmental awareness and changes in attitudes (Ardoin et al., 2018). However, it is typical that people’s behaviours demonstrate a value-action, attitude-action, concern-action, or knowledge-action gap (Binder & Blankenberg, 2017; Salonen

& Åhlberg, 2012; Tam & Chan, 2017; Velasco & Harder, 2014). Hence, transformative ESD programmes should not only raise participants' awareness of the topics at question or focus on learners' attitudes but be holistic and increase participants' action competence (Caiman & Lundegård, 2013; Hedefalk et al., 2015; Mogensen & Nielsen, 2001; Mogensen & Schnack, 2010).

However, examining EE programmes' outcomes is difficult and there is little empirical evidence on what makes an EE programme successful and why (Stern, Powell & Hill., 2014), a notion which arguably applies also to research concerning ESD. It is easier to measure cognitive learning and level of knowledge than behavioural impacts, thus most research on ESD and EE examines changes in participants' knowledge or attitudes (Ardoin et al., 2018; O'Flaherty & Liddy, 2018; Stern et al., 2014). Nevertheless, this type of research does not capture the multifaceted nature of ESD, and there is a shortage of empirical research concerning the behavioural impacts and evidence disclosing how ESD interventions empower learners to become active change agents (Ardoin et al., 2018; O'Flaherty & Liddy, 2018). Regardless of the shortcomings, some conclusions about ESD and how it can empower learners to drive sustainability transformations are made in this report drawing on the currently available scholarly literature.

There are several synthesising reviews concerning ESD and related fields. Examples of these are O'Flaherty and Diddy's (2018) review on the impact of development education and ESD interventions with participants from primary to tertiary levels of education; Ardoin's et al. (2018) review on K-12 students' EE programmes' outcomes; Bourn, Hunt & Bamber's (2017) review of ESD and global citizenship education in teacher education; Aikens, McKenzie and Vaughter's (2016) review on environmental and sustainability education policy research; Stern's et al. (2014) review on young people's EE programme's outcomes; and Hedefalk, Almqvist and Östman's (2015) review on ESD in early childhood education. Being a conceptual review, this report examines ESD and sustainable behaviour in a more flexible and comprehensive manner introducing also new ideas (Kennedy, 2007).

In this report, elements that are influential for sustainable behaviour are scrutinised acknowledging that education is only one factor determining it. ESD is examined in different contexts and forms, and the pedagogies and learning theories that are elaborated on can be adjusted to ESD with participants from all ages and backgrounds, yet it is crucial to consider the local context and culture, participants' needs and prior experiences, as well as age-sensitiveness. As contextual factors greatly shape individuals' everyday behaviours (Gadenne et al., 2011; Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Varela-Candamio et al., 2018), and profound changes at personal and community levels are slow to result (Fischer et al., 2012), focusing only on individuals' learning experiences cannot provide sufficient answers to how a large-scale societal shift towards sustainability can occur (Barth & Michelsen, 2013). Therefore, this report takes a stance for a more collective approach by introducing a model that suggests what kinds of roles and responsibilities individuals, communities and societies can have in driving sustainability transformations acknowledging that learning at all these levels is needed for enabling sustainability transformations.

1.2 Importance of Research Topic

The current state of the world demands urgent, remarkable changes in dominant values, behaviours, lifestyles and the ways in which societies function to ensure that life-sustaining conditions on this planet are maintained and a peaceful and sustainable future can be secured (e.g. Hofman, 2015; Tang, 2017; Wals, Mochizuki & Leicht, 2017; WWF, 2018). Education is closely linked with all SDGs and none of them can be achieved without quality education (Bengtsson, Barakat & Muttarak, 2018; Bokova, 2016; Sachs, 2016). The SDG4 focuses on quality education and one of its targets is that by 2030 "all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development" (UN, 2015, n.p.). Securing that education is accessible for all and attaining the targets of SDG4 are crucial steps for responding to the severe and complex issues that concern the whole globe (Bokova, 2016; Sachs, 2016). However,

simply attending school does not guarantee learning. Globally, about 60% of children and adolescents are not learning the basic skills in literacy and numeracy even though most of these children are in school (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2017, pp. 2, 14). Furthermore, not all education fosters sustainability nor is helpful for realising the SDGs (Bengtsson et al., 2018, p. 15; Brissett & Mitter, 2017; Orr, 2004, p. 5; Sterling, 2011a, p. 27).

Jickling and Wals argue that economic growth is often prioritised over other aspects of SD, and they are concerned about educating people for this kind of SD, which abides by global forces of neoliberalism (2008). Neoliberal societies foster consumerism, competitiveness and individualism, which are neither sustainable nor successful in promoting happiness (Brissett & Mitter, 2017, pp. 183-184; Salonen & Åhlberg, 2012, p. 21). Furthermore, according to critics, neoliberal education reinforces inequalities (Portera & Grant, 2017, p. x). Emphasising cognitive and abstract learning, quantifiable learning outcomes, and educating for economic growth undermine the value of developing systems thinking, critical thinking and negotiation skills, as well as skills needed for cultivating functional democracies and for fostering peace in diverse societies (Portera & Grant, 2017, p. x; Nussbaum, 2010, pp. 48, 77; Strachan, 2009, p. 84). Therefore, what education is like, what are its goals, and how it is implemented are crucial questions (Brissett & Mitter, 2017).

Furthermore, fostering sustainability in formal education is not enough in building a more sustainable world but also non-formal, informal and life-long learning are needed (Barth, Lang, Luthardt and Vilsmaier, 2017). To ensure that sustainability is understood and actions to promote it are taken by everyone during the next years and decades, significant learning must occur at all levels of societies (Barth & Michelsen, 2013). Regardless of decades of advocacy by the UN, UNESCO, and various other institutions and scholars, ESD has not yet generated remarkable progress towards taking action for SD (Sterling 2011a, p. 31). Thus, waiting a more sustainable world to be built gradually once new generations grow up is not a sufficient approach but rapid and major changes in societies and lifestyles must take place now (IPCC, 2018; WWF, 2018). Even though childhood and behaviour patterns learnt during it have a major impact on sustainable behaviour (Chawla, 1999; Davies et al., 2009; Evans, Otto & Kaiser, 2018; Kos, Jerman, Anžlovar & Torkar, 2016) and children and young people can contribute to a more sustainable world, learning must occur amongst people at all ages including all societal sectors and stakeholders (Barth & Michelsen, 2013; Dlouhá, Barton, Janousková & Dlouhý, 2013; Sol, Beer & Wals, 2013; Wals, 2011). Without this, individual attempts to behave sustainably are unlikely to turn into systemic changes.

1.3 Research Questions

The aim of this report is to explore how transformations towards SD can be enabled through individual, community-based and societal learning. The potential that education has in promoting sustainability is contemplated by examining factors that influence sustainable behaviour. Different models of ESD and pedagogical approaches and educational theories that facilitate learning for sustainability are studied in order to understand how education can be organised to respond to the urgent global problems.

This review examines ESD holistically acknowledging that learning always occurs in a social context. In ESD research, it is typical to focus on individuals' learning and competencies (Barth & Michelsen, 2013; Chawla & Cushing, 2007). However, in this review, ESD is considered more broadly as an approach to education and learning, which can further sustainability transformations by providing both individual and collective learning experiences for children, young people, adults and different societal actors.

The research questions are:

- Which factors influence individuals' sustainable behaviour based on empirical research and review articles?

- What kind of discourses and empirical evidence is there in academic literature concerning the nature, learning theories, pedagogies and implementation of ESD?

Furthermore, in the discussion part, individuals, communities and societies' potential roles and responsibilities in furthering sustainability transformations are pondered with the aim to illustrate how learning and collaboration at all levels of society are crucial for enabling sustainability transformations.

1.4 Research Methods and Materials

This report is a conceptual literature review, which allows certain flexibility in the literature search and in composing the review (Kennedy, 2007). Using an interdisciplinary approach and reviewing relevant literature from several fields is a necessity in research concerning sustainability (Imaz & Sheinbaum, 2017; Blanc, 2015). Therefore, this report intends to provide a comprehensive, yet not exhaustive, overview of how learning and education can contribute to a more sustainable world synthesising research on pro-environmental and sustainable behaviour, educational science, ESD, sustainability science, and environmental policy. This study is not a systematic review and only outlines an overview of sustainable behaviour and its determinants as well as ESD and its nature, pedagogies and implementation.

Most of the sources cited here are peer-reviewed articles from international journals, thus they have been almost exclusively written in English. Empirical, theoretical and philosophical literature as well as systematic reviews and synthesising articles are examined in order to provide a holistic understanding of the discussed topics. However, as there is a lot of ESD literature that addresses the topic at a philosophical level rather than referring to robust empirical research, some of the assumptions and arguments in this report are based mainly on philosophical and theoretical academic literature. This report discusses contemporary issues and new research from the chosen fields emerge continuously, thus studies from recent years are in particular utilised. However, some older publications that have significantly influenced the field and later research are also reviewed.

UN and its sub-organisations promote SD through for example international agreements, implementation guidelines and follow-up and review publications, which have served as incentives for incorporating ESD in national educational policies (Aikens et al., 2016, p. 342). Thus, some UN and UNESCO documents and background papers are also cited in this report. Furthermore, a few books and book chapters from authors who are distinguished in their fields are discussed.

Even though the aim is to provide a general view of how learning can facilitate sustainability transformations, many of the articles used have been written by Western academics and the selected point of view and arguments likely reflect a Western worldview. However, examples and case studies from all around the world have been included to provide a broader and less biased understanding of the topic.

The literature search has been done thematically focusing on key concepts such as ESD, environmental education, pedagogies in ESD, sustainable behaviour, and pro-environmental behaviour using three electronic databases: ScienceDirect, University of Oulu online library catalogue and Google Scholar. Also, some articles have been found through investigating references from already found materials, a method recommended by Randolph (2009). The materials have been selected based on their relevance to the focus of this report loosely referring to the saturation principle (Saunders et al., 2017). Moreover, an effort has been made to include materials with diverse views. Altogether 124 articles, books and publications have been reviewed in order to answer the research questions. 114 of them have been published between 2010 and 2019 and 10 of them before 2010, the oldest articles being from 1996. The selected materials have been classified into five groups and the distribution is presented below (Figure 1).

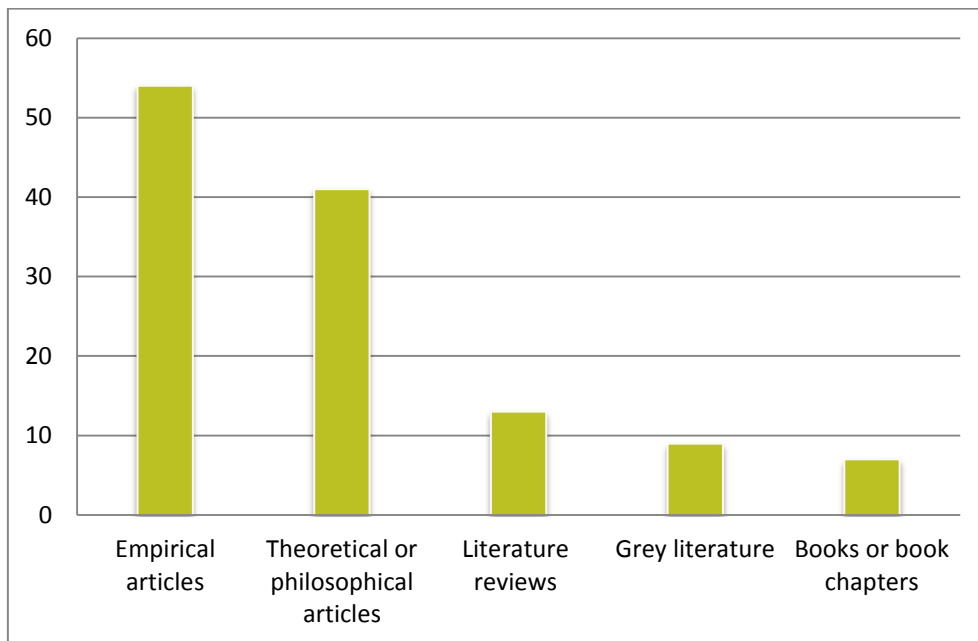


Figure 1. Classification of the Materials (n=124).

1.5 Structure of the report

This report consists of five chapters and several sub-chapters. Chapter two answers to the first research question by examining what sustainable behaviour is and what kinds of factors explain it. Also, the significance of childhood for sustainable behaviour is discussed here. Chapters three and four aim to answer to the second research question. The nature of ESD as well as learning theories and pedagogical approaches that are suggested to facilitate learning for sustainability are reviewed in chapter three referring both to philosophical and empirical literature. Some remarks about ESD in formal, informal and non-formal contexts are made in chapter four. In chapter five, Conclusions and Discussion, the main findings of this study are summarised. Moreover, this chapter aims to illustrate what kinds of roles and responsibilities individuals, communities and societies can have in furthering SD.



2 Sustainable Behaviour and its Determinants

SD is an ambiguous concept and there are many uncertainties concerning what is sustainable and what is not (Wals & Lenglet, 2016, p. 52). Therefore, there is no univocal set of standards for a sustainable lifestyle. Nevertheless, sustainable behaviour and factors that explain why some people seem to behave more sustainably than others are questions that interest many researchers.

In this chapter, reviews and empirical case studies that focus on sustainable behaviour and its determinants are examined. In particular, demographic, internal and external factors, which anticipate sustainable behaviour, are explored. Furthermore, the second sub-chapter elaborates on childhood experiences and their connection to sustainable behaviour.

2.1 Demographic, Internal and External Factors Influencing Individuals' Behaviours

Sustainable behaviour encompasses both pro-environmental and pro-social behaviour, however, pro-environmental behaviour and sustainable behaviour are often used interchangeably (Tapia-Fonllem, Corral-Verdugo, Fraijo-Sing & Durón-Ramos, 2013). Drawing on previous research, Tapia-Fonllem et al. (2013) propose that sustainable behaviour is deliberate, solution-oriented and anticipatory, although sometimes goals that are non-related to sustainability may also result in sustainable behaviour (Gifford & Nilsson, 2014). Moreover, pro-ecological, frugal, altruistic and equitable behaviours are all elements of sustainable behaviour (Tapia-Fonllem et al.). Commitment to sustainable behaviour is a complex sum of multiple factors and cannot be fully disclosed in the light of current research (Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). Even though there is a connection between tendencies to act in a pro-environmental and pro-social manner (Salonen & Bardy, 2017; Tapia-Fonllem et al., 2013), sustainable behaviour in one situation does not automatically imply acting consistently in another situation (Roczen, Kaiser, Bogner & Wilson, 2014). This further complicates evaluating incentives for sustainable behaviour (ibid.).

Nevertheless, a lot of empirical research has been conducted with the intention to understand pro-environmental and sustainable behaviour, and there are several systematic reviews that draw on these results aiming to provide a model for sustainable or pro-environmental behavior and their antecedents (e.g. Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Tapia-Fonllem et al., 2013; Varela-Candamio, Novo-Corti & García-Álvarez, 2018). The theory of planned behavior, norm activation theory, and values-beliefs-norms theory are often utilised in literature to elucidate pro-environmental behaviour (Sawitri, Hadiyanto & Hadi, 2015). Pro-environmental behaviour can also be approached from the perspective of social-cognitive theory (Sawitri et al., 2015). Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) investigate several prominent frameworks concerning pro-environmental behaviour and conclude that demographic, internal and external factors all have an impact on pro-environmental behaviour.

In regard to demographic factors, older people, women, and people who live in rural areas or in larger households seem to behave more pro-environmentally, although there are major differences between individuals (Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Meyer, 2015; Otto & Kaiser, 2014; Vicente-Molina, Fernández-Sáinz & Izagirre-Olaizola, 2013). Disabled and retired people also display more pro-environmental behaviours perhaps due to having more discretionary time (Meyer, 2015, p. 114), which is detected to influence sustainable consumption patterns in a study conducted in Australia (Chai, Brad-

ley & Reser, 2015). There are studies which support the notion that learning and education enhance pro-environmental behaviour (Meyer, 2015; Otto & Kaiser, 2014; Vicente-Molina et al., 2013; Welsch & Kühling, 2010). Based on an analysis of two Eurobarometer surveys and by contrasting the data with educational reforms executed in Europe, Meyer (2015) argues that education has a causal effect on increased pro-environmental behaviour. Post and Meng's (2018) analysis of the World Value Survey's results with data from 50 countries confirms that the higher level of education, the more likely participants report commitment to pro-environmental behaviour.

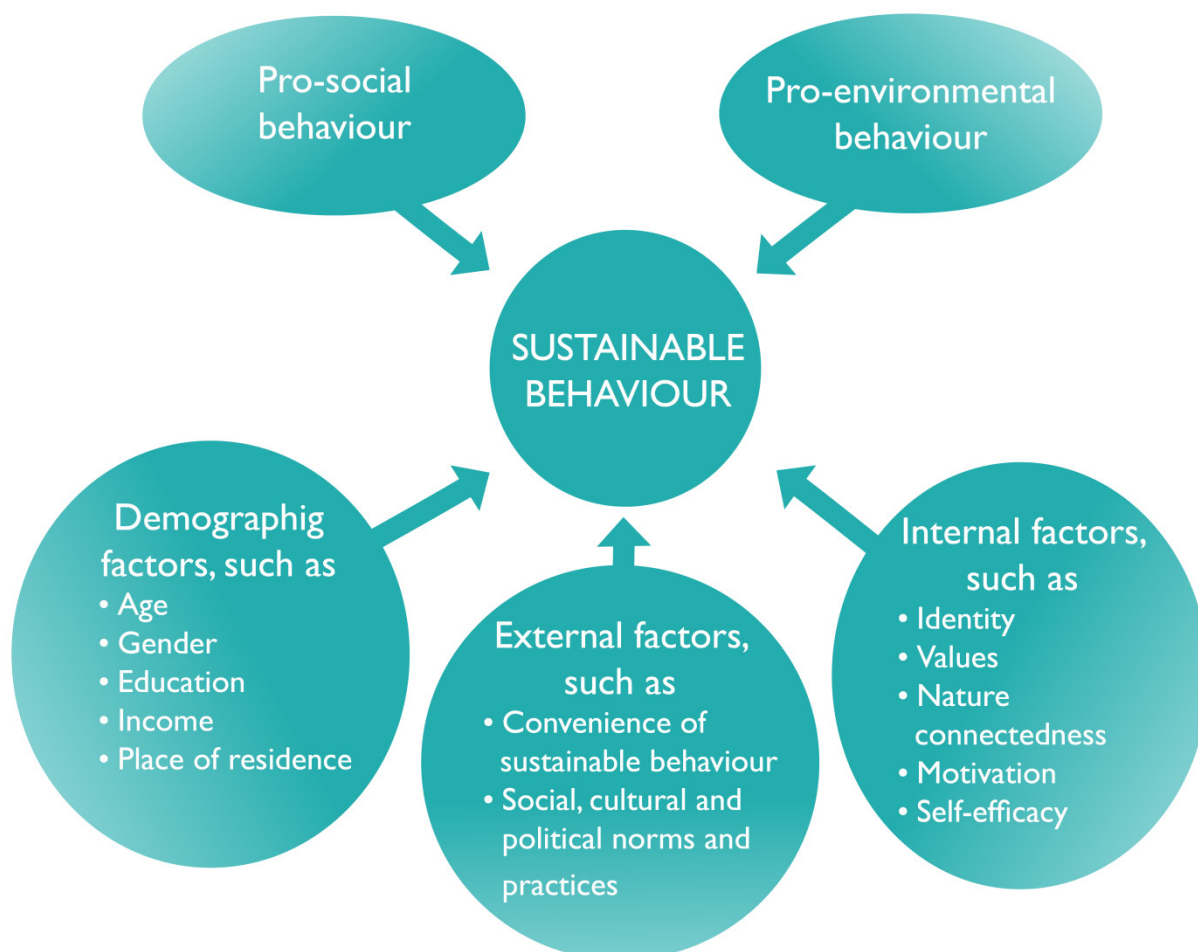


Figure 2. Sustainable behaviour is influenced by multiple factors.

However, there are some factors that hinder the effectiveness of raising environmental awareness through cognitive and abstract learning: destructive environmental changes are not easily perceived, the problems are very complex, and the negative consequences often appear with a delay (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). Furthermore, more education is associated with higher income (Meyer, 2015). Economic wealth can either encourage or discourage pro-environmental behaviour depending on the situation (Gadenne, Sharma, Kerr & Smith, 2011; Otto, Neaman, Richards & Marió, 2016), yet people with higher income generally consume more (Bengtsson et al, 2018, p. 58).

Concerning internal factors, research reveals several variables that are connected to pro-environmental behaviour. Some personality traits, such as agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness and extraversion correlate with voluntarily pro-environmental behaviour (Terrier, Kim & Fernandez, 2016). Emotions also influence it (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Tapia-Fonnlém et al., 2013). When confronting something negative, complex or worrisome, people tend to exhibit defense mechanisms such as denial or apathy, which, in the case of severe sustainability problems, stop them from acting or

searching for solutions (Coelho, Pereira, Cruz, Simoes & Barata, 2017; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). Positive affect, in other words personal evaluation of positive emotions such as joy and enthusiasm, diminishes this effect (Coelho et al., 2017). On the other hand, negative emotions, such as indignation due to ecological destruction, may also elicit sustainable behaviour (Tapia-Fonnllem et al., 2013).

In particular, positive emotions towards nature play a role in explaining commitment to sustainable behaviour (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Martin & Czellar, 2017; Restall & Conrad, 2015; Otto & Pensini, 2017; Roczen et al., 2014). Martin and Czellar (2017) conducted several studies in the United States and Europe with adult and student participants and conclude that connectedness to nature correlates with biospheric values, which, in turn, are related to sustainable behaviour. In Roczen's et al. (2014) study with German secondary school students, attitude towards nature explains ecological behaviour more than environmental knowledge. Similar results are found also in Otto and Pensini's (2017) research with primary school children, which studies the impact of a nature-based environmental education programme. Environmental awareness seems to have only a moderate effect on sustainable behaviour (Wals, 2011), however, having basic knowledge is essential for being able to choose and create sustainable alternatives and solutions (Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). Furthermore, even though attitudes and sustainable behaviour are linked, attitudes do not directly shape people's behaviours (Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Varela-Candamio et al., 2018; Vicente-Molina et al., 2013).

Motivation, a sense of self-efficacy, and perceived responsibility are also essential elements of sustainable behaviour (Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Varela-Candamio et al., 2018). In regard to motivation, especially altruistic and intrinsic motivations, which are influenced by values, seem to anticipate commitment to sustainable behaviour (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Taberero & Hernández, 2011; Tapia-Fonnllem et al., 2013; Vicente-Molina et al., 2013). Feeling capable of having a positive impact is crucial for being motivated to act in pro-environmental and pro-social manners (Sawitri et al., 2015; Schutte & Bhullar, 2017; Taberero & Hernández, 2011; Vicente-Molina et al., 2013). Self-efficacy, motivation to act sustainably and perceived self-control are significantly related to self-reported sustainable behaviours in Schutte and Bhullar's (2017) case study with adult participants from Australia and the United States. In Juárez-Nájera, Rivera-Martínez & Hafkamp's (2010) case study with a German and a Mexican higher education institution, ascribed responsibility is identified as one of the most significant factors that explains sustainable behaviour.

Moreover, a strong environmental self-identity is connected to sustainable behaviour (Carfora, Caso, Sparks & Conner, 2017), which may be due to a sense of moral obligation to act sustainably (Werff, Steg & Keizer, 2013). Yet, even people with strongest environmental self-image do not necessarily act pro-environmentally in all occasions (Binder & Blankenberg, 2017). Indeed, it is typical that people's behaviours demonstrate a value-action, attitude-action, concern-action, or knowledge-action gap (Binder & Blankenberg, 2017; Salonen & Åhlberg, 2012; Tam & Chan, 2017; Velasco & Harder, 2014). Acting against what is known to be 'good' is typical when people do not feel a personal sense of responsibility (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 43). Therefore, Salonen & Bardy (2017) propose that global and intergenerational responsibilities are some of the main components of sustainable behaviour, which should be endorsed through education.

However, both the individual and the situation influence decision-making and determine what kinds of actions are taken (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 43; Sawitri et al., 2015). Usually, the easier and the more convenient the pro-environmental action is, the more likely people commit it (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Vicente-Molina et al., 2013). There are several external factors that influence individual's sustainable behaviour, including institutional, social, cultural and political norms and practices (Gadenne et al., 2011; Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Varela-Candamio et al., 2018). Countries where "distrust, belief in external control, and present orientation" are prevailing phenomena, people tend to demonstrate less pro-environmental behaviours regardless of their level of environmental concern (Tam & Chan, 2017, p. 213). Vicente-Molina et al. (2013) compare pro-environmental behaviour

in emerging and developing countries the results confirming that people behave differently due to cultural and structural differences. Yet, no country displays pro-environmental behaviour in all studied sectors, which suggests a need for improving contextual factors both in emerging and developed countries (Vicente-Molina et al., 2013). Indeed, it is crucial that contextual factors support making sustainable choices, otherwise sustainable values, attitudes and knowledge may not translate into sustainable behaviour (Salonen & Åhlberg, 2012; Velasco & Harder, 2014). As Varela-Candamio et al. (2018) state, pro-environmental behaviour is a “shared responsibility of public authorities, citizens, and industry” (p. 1573).

2.2 Childhood and Sustainable Behaviour

As discussed, human behaviour is shaped both by genetic factors, the environment, and internal factors such as values and attitudes (Schunk, 2012, p. 4). Behaviours form and change through learning, which can be defined as “an enduring change in behavior, or in the capacity to behave in a given fashion, which results from practice or other forms of experience” (Schunk, 2012, p. 3). Socialisation is the process through which people learn to behave in a socially acceptable way and develop their morality (Leidy & Parke, 2015; Schunk, 2012, p. 258). Leidy and Parke (2015) define socialisation as following: “socialisation is the process by which children acquire the values, standards of behavior, attitudes, and skills that are viewed as appropriate to the culture in which the child resides” (p. 866). Families play an important role in children’s socialisation but also other significant actors, such as school and teachers, peer groups, media and the surrounding society influence the socialisation process (Leidy & Parke, 2015; Nussbaum, 2010, pp. 38-39, 44-45; Schunk, 2012, p. 258).

Childhood is a crucial time period for the development of sustainable behaviours (Chawla, 1999; Davies et al., 2009; Evans, Otto & Kaiser, 2018; Kos et al., 2016). Respect towards oneself, others and the environment, as well as the basics of critical thinking are learnt during early childhood (Davies et al., 2009). Already at the age of 3, children can evaluate and morally judge harm done to the environment and to other people (Hahn & Garrett, 2017). Moreover, through appropriate instruction, 5-6-year-old children can accurately understand the scientific reasoning behind a pro-environmental behaviour (Kos et al., 2016). Nevertheless, it seems that the older the children are, the better their actions correspond with their sustainability attitudes (Collado, Evans & Sorrel, 2017).

Toddlers exhibit a large range of pro-social behaviours but also early forms of discrimination are detectable in groups of young children (Over, 2018). Family’s influence and the child-parent relationship are pivotal for the development of pro-social behaviours (Leidy & Parke, 2015; Spinrad & Gal, 2018). However, also group membership and social norms have an impact on the behaviours that children adopt (Over, 2018). Family and the values they hold also seem to be influential factors that explain environmental activism (ibid.). Evans’ et al. (2018) findings from a longitudinal study support these results. In their research, children were studied over a period of 12 years (starting at the age of 6), and the main predictors for pro-environmental behaviour as young adults include time spent outdoors as a child (which is detected to have a major impact on environmental concern later in life also in Chawla’s (1990) retrospective research on environmental activists’ life experiences), maternal education, and maternal pro-environmental behaviours and attitudes (Evans et al., 2018). However, according to Collado’s et al. (2017) study with 9-13-year-old children, it seems that indeed parental pro-environmental behaviour rather than their attitudes influence children’s pro-environmental behaviour.

However, the importance of education and schools for fostering sustainable behaviour should not be undermined, and quality education accessible for all is crucial for attaining any of the SDGs (Bengtsson et al., 2018, p. 161). Nussbaum (2010) illustrates the interplay between families and education as following:

“Schools are but one influence on the growing mind and heart of the child. Much of the work of overcoming narcissism and developing concern has to be done in families; and relationships in the peer culture also play a powerful role. Schools, however, can either reinforce or undermine the achievements of the family, good and bad. They can also shape the peer culture. What they provide, through their curricular content and their pedagogy, can greatly affect the developing child’s mind” (Nussbaum, 2010, pp. 44-45).

During adolescence and early adulthood, parents’ influence on sustainable behaviour decreases and peers and education become more influential (Collado et al., 2017; Chawla, 1998). However, Olsson and Gericke (2016) notice that Swedish adolescents display less sustainability-related knowledge and sustainable attitudes and behaviours than younger children (Olsson & Gericke, 2016). Furthermore, assessing the impact that a short environmental education programme has on children at different ages, Liefländer and Bogner (2014) conclude that environmental education might be more influential and easier to implement with younger children. As Samuelsson (2011) states, “the foundations for knowledge construction as well as for attitudes and values are established in the early years” (p. 115). Even though socialisation is an on-going process and learning occurs and changes behaviours throughout life, reinforcing sustainable behaviour from an early age on is easier than trying to change existing non-sustainable behaviour patterns later in life (Samuelsson, 2011). Thus, it is crucial that education supports learning for sustainability from early childhood education on (Macdonald, 2015; Samuelsson, 2011).



3 Education for Sustainable Development

There are several perceptions about what ESD is, how it can and should be implemented, and what kinds of learning theories and pedagogical approaches are helpful for its successful implementation.

In this chapter, ESD is first examined in the light of a dichotomy that several academics have communicated concerning its nature. Second, some learning theories and pedagogical approaches, which regularly seem to appear in ESD literature, namely critical pedagogy, experiential and outdoor learning, action competence and place-based education, transformative learning, and social learning are further elaborated on. However, due to the restraints in ESD research (see Ardoin et al., 2018; O’Flaherty & Liddy, 2018; Stern et al., 2014), the conclusions in this chapter draw largely on theoretical and philosophical literature, yet some empirical studies are also referred to.

3.1 Defining Education for Sustainable Development

Learning and education can occur either in formal, non-formal or informal settings. Drawing on Tudor’s (2013) definition of different forms of learning, formal education, including compulsory education, provides institutional learning with an established syllabus and formal forms of assessment leading to achieving a certificate (p. 822). Non-formal education takes place outside formal education systems and can be provided by for example community organisations, libraries or museums (ibid.). Like formal learning, non-formal learning is intentional and the activities are organised mainly for learning purposes (ibid.). Informal learning, on the other hand, is not structured learning but usually occurs unintentionally while engaging in everyday activities (ibid.; see Barth et al., 2017).

As concluded in the previous chapter, there is a link between education and sustainable behaviour, and education can foster learning for sustainability. Several UN agendas and initiatives stress education’s role in advancing SD (e.g. Agenda 21, UN, 1992; Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014, UN, 2005; Agenda2030, UN, 2015; Learning for Sustainable Development Goals – Learning Objectives, UNESCO, 2017). Nevertheless, how to unleash this potential in an influential and ethical way is a question several scholars have attempted to answer. Wals (2011) is critical towards perceiving education as a tool for a prescribed behaviour change “because doing so contradicts the essence of education” (pp. 178-179). This perception suggests that education has mainly instrumental value, which concretises when utilised for pursuing other goals (Bengtsson et al., 2018, p. 19; Sterling, 2011a, p. 25; Wals, 2011). On the contrary, according to the intrinsic view, education’s value is not dependent on the consequences it may result in but education itself is inherently valuable (Bengtsson et al., 2018, p. 19; Sterling, 2011a, p. 25).

Generally, education has at least four functions: socialisation, vocational, liberal and transformative functions (Sterling, 2011a, p. 25). The first two reflect mainly instrumental views whereas the liberal approach is more concerned about the intrinsic value of education by aiming to help individuals to achieve their fullest potential (Sterling, 2011a, pp. 25-26). The transformative function of education is both instrumental and intrinsic as it recognises that education can support “change for the better” but uses methods, which incline towards intrinsic education (Sterling, 2011a, p. 26). Bengtsson et al. (2018) argue that pursuing education “on its own terms” is crucial, and generic ‘good’ education rather than educational interventions with specific goals facilitates achieving the SDGs (pp. 19, 162). However, as many prevailing education systems are criticised for being outdated and for reinforcing neoliberal values and unsustainable behaviour patterns (Hofman, 2015; O’Brien & Howard, 2016; Sterling, 1996;

UNESCO, 2016), how to implement education that fosters SD instead of impeding it is a crucial question (Brissett & Mitter, 2017). Sterling (2011a) argues that all four functions of education should be present in education systems (p. 26). However, if education is to help learners to achieve their fullest potential while ensuring SD and peace, the liberal as well as transformative purposes must be placed more emphasis on (ibid.). According to Sterling's (2011a) educational paradigm, "education is about nurturing and realizing inherent potential, but also is acutely aware that we need to educate for sustainability, community and peace in a turbulent and rapidly changing world" (p. 26).

ESD is an internationally promoted educational construct, which "empowers learners to take informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society for present and future generations" (UNESCO, 2017, p. 7). According to UNESCO (2017), ESD is inseparable from quality education, and formal, informal and non-formal educational sectors as well as all educational stages should support learning for sustainability. However, despite being a more and more elaborated concept, there is no unanimous answer to what ESD is and what kinds of issues it addresses (Hofman, 2015; Mogensen & Schnack, 2010).

As Brissett and Mitter (2017) propose, in order to support the change indicated in the SDGs, education must place "issues of social and ecological justice at the heart of its objectives" (p. 201). Furthermore, it is crucial that learners understand the interactions and interdependencies between humans, environment and economics and are able to perceive the world and its phenomena in a systemic way (Capra & Luisi, 2014, p. xi; Salonen & Bardy, 2015). According to Salonen and Bardy's (2015) Ecosocial Approach to Education, responsibility (planetary and interpersonal), sufficiency (in terms of consumption and lifestyle choices), and participation (fostering collectivism, empathy, altruism and positive relationships with diverse people) are crucial aspects of education that helps to build a more sustainable world and ensure wellbeing for all (pp. 8-10). Nevertheless, a detailed and exhaustive universal curriculum for ESD cannot be established as a sustainable way of living is subject to time and location and sometimes unknown (Hofman, 2015; Sterling, 1996; Wals, 2011). Thus, ESD must be contextual, address both local and global sustainability problems, take into account the plurality of cultures and worldviews, and consider also traditional and minority knowledge (Hofman, 2015; Nasibulina, 2015; Risku-Norja, 2012, p. 13).

Several scholars describe a dichotomy concerning the nature and fundamental purpose of ESD. Sterling (2010) suggests that in the instrumental view of ESD, SD is regarded as a tangible goal that can be achieved through effective learning and prescribed learning outcomes. Intrinsic approach, on the other hand, focuses on the process of learning and creating quality learning situations (Sterling, 2010). Rather than aspiring to generate specific outcomes, the goal in the intrinsic ESD is to help learners to develop their independent and critical thinking skills as well as their adaptive capacity (ibid.).

Sterling's (2010) intrinsic and instrumental approaches are similar to Wals' (2011) instrumental and emancipatory views of ESD, Vare and Scott's (2007) ESD1 and ESD2, and Poeck and Vandenaabeele's (2012) learning for sustainable development and learning from sustainable development. In ESD2, SD itself is regarded as a continuous learning process with no end point because what is sustainable changes constantly (Vare & Scott, 2007). Rather than knowing the "correct" way of behaving now, people need to be capable of dealing with uncertainties and keep searching for better alternatives (ibid.). Wals (2011) adds that participatory, collaborative and dialogic processes are an essential part of SD, and emancipatory ESD fosters the competencies needed for engaging in these. These intrinsic and emancipatory views of ESD, which "acknowledge complexity, respectful dissensus, value conflicts, and uncertainty in the process of learning about sustainable development" can also be called pluralistic approaches to ESD (Ojala, 2013, p. 3).

In current research, education is mostly perceived to facilitate SD through developing learners' capabilities and competencies (Bengtsson et al., 2018, p. 13; Gokool-Ramdoos & Rumjaun, 2017). Hedefalk et al. (2015) review research articles (published between 1996 and 2013) about ESD in Early Childhood Education and identify a shift from fact-based sustainability education to ESD which bolsters

children's agency and action competence. UNESCO (2017) also promotes key competencies relevant for enabling the realisation of SDGs. These encompass behavioural and strategic competencies, which facilitate taking action and finding viable solution to sustainability problems in collaboration with diverse people; cognitive competencies with a special focus on critical, systems and futures thinking; ethical and reflective competencies, which include critical contemplation of values, norms and personal choices; and affective competencies, i.e. understanding and processing own feelings as well as developing empathy and sensitivity towards others (UNESCO, 2017, p. 10). These are to be developed in an age-appropriate way following the principles of life-long learning, of which importance is elaborated on in SDG4 (UNESCO, 2017; UN, 2015, n.p.).

Nevertheless, ESD approaches that aim to foster sustainability through developing individual's capacities are based on an anticipation that educated individuals want to embrace sustainability in their lives and voluntarily enact sustainable behaviours (Hofman, 2015; Wals, 2011). Kopnina (2012) is concerned about these approaches and argues that they may distract educators and learners from addressing the urgent need to stop the destructive global environmental change, which threatens the existence of the human kind. Yet, according to Wals (2011), the sense of urgency does not justify instrumental education, which could in fact lead to poorer learning outcomes in regard to sustainability action. Based on findings from two quantitative studies with Swedish primary and secondary pupils, Olsson & Gericke (2016) and Olsson, Gericke and Chan Rungden (2015) suggest that traditional transmissive teaching methods and instrumental view of ESD are insufficient for increasing children and adolescents' sustainability consciousness (knowingness, attitudes and behaviour in regard to SD) and call for adopting methods that are consistent with the intrinsic and emancipatory views of ESD. However, Sterling (2010) concludes that only if these both approaches to ESD are reconciled, ESD can effectively respond to the severe planetary crises (see Vare & Scott, 2007). Accepting the urgency and a need for behaviour change while boosting learners' resilience, participation,

UNESCO's Key Competencies for Sustainability

- **Systems thinking competency:** the abilities to recognize and understand relationships; to analyse complex systems; to think of how systems are embedded within different domains and different scales; and to deal with uncertainty.
 - **Anticipatory competency:** the abilities to understand and evaluate multiple futures – possible, probable and desirable; to create one's own visions for the future; to apply the precautionary principle; to assess the consequences of actions; and to deal with risks and changes.
 - **Normative competency:** the abilities to understand and reflect on the norms and values that underlie one's actions; and to negotiate sustainability values, principles, goals, and targets, in a context of conflicts of interests and trade-offs, uncertain knowledge and contradictions.
 - **Strategic competency:** the abilities to collectively develop and implement innovative actions that further sustainability at the local level and further afield.
 - **Collaboration competency:** the abilities to learn from others; to understand and respect the needs, perspectives and actions of others (empathy); to understand, relate to and be sensitive to others (empathic leadership); to deal with conflicts in a group; and to facilitate collaborative and participatory problem solving.
 - **Critical thinking competency:** the ability to question norms, practices and opinions; to reflect on own one's values, perceptions and actions; and to take a position in the sustainability discourse.
 - **Self-awareness competency:** the ability to reflect on one's own role in the local community and (global) society; to continually evaluate and further motivate one's actions; and to deal with one's feelings and desires.
- Integrated problem-solving competency: the overarching ability to apply different problem-solving frameworks to complex sustainability problems and develop viable, inclusive and equitable solution options that promote sustainable development, integrating the above-mentioned competences.

collaboration, competencies, creativity and critical and systemic thinking skills is central in ESD (Sterling, 2010).

All in all, ESD is an ambiguous concept and there are some tensions concerning its fundamental nature whether it being more intrinsic or instrumental. However, it seems that currently, quality ESD is considered to be a combination of relevant and contextual learning contents that promote competencies necessary for SD and for helping people to cope in today's rapidly changing world; appropriate pedagogical solutions; social and collaborative learning with multiple stakeholders; and a holistic and integrated way of viewing and interpreting the world (Ofei-Manu & Didham, 2018; see Sterling, 2011a; UNESCO, 2017). Even though it has some instrumental characteristics, it is not a separate learning intervention but can be perceived as an element, which underlies all education (Hicks, 2014; MacDonald, 2015; Orr, 2004; Sterling, 2011a; UNESCO, 2017).

3.2 Learning Theories and Pedagogical Approaches in ESD

Pedagogy can be defined as “the interactions between teachers, students and the learning environment and learning tasks” (Murphy, 2008, p. 35). Several pedagogical approaches are useful when implementing ESD. However, it seems that most traditional teacher-centred and fact-based methods cannot respond effectively to the complex nature and various learning targets of ESD (e.g. Hedefalk et al., 2015; Olsson et al., 2015; see UNESCO, 2017). According to UNESCO's (2012) Global Monitoring and Evaluation Survey answered by 216 respondents representing UNESCO member states, there has been a shift towards more progressive and transformative pedagogies in ESD (pp. 27-28). The most common methods for implementing ESD in different institutions in 102 countries are participatory, problem-based, interdisciplinary and critical thinking-based learning methods (UNESCO, 2012, p. 28). Many respondents pointed out that chosen learning activities are influenced by the group and their needs as well as by contextual factors, and ESD is often a combination of several teaching and learning methods (ibid.).

There are various other listings of pedagogical approaches typical in ESD. For example, Ofei-Manu and Didham (2018) identify “experiential learning theory, critical theory, critical praxis/pedagogy, problem-based learning, social learning, communities of practice, collaborative learning theory and cooperative inquiry, constructivism, systems thinking, integrative theory, and transformative learning” to be useful pedagogies in ESD (p. 1176). Wals (2011) states that “a whole range of forms of learning is emerging: transdisciplinary learning, transformative learning, anticipatory learning, collaborative learning and, indeed, social learning are just a few of those” (p. 180). All in all, it seems that learner-centred, collaborative methods that draw on critical and transformative pedagogy and support learners' agency are relevant in ESD (e.g. Mogensen & Schnack, 2010; Ofei-Manu & Didham, 2018; UNESCO, 2017, p. 7; Wals, 2011). Also, experiential learning in real-life contexts and nature-based activities are conducive to eliciting action competence and sustainable behaviour (e.g. O'Brien & Howard, 2016; Otto & Pensini, 2017; Villanen, 2014). Some approaches and educational theories that seem to be largely discussed in ESD literature are elaborated on next. They are presented in separate sub-chapters but it is important to note that they share many characteristics and are partly overlapping.

3.2.1 Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is an educational philosophy that draws on the work of Paulo Freire. Critical pedagogy empowers and liberates learners to be conscious critical thinkers who are aware of social injustices and unequal power structures and act upon them (Freire, 1996, p. 81). The roots of the current environmentally destructive development are largely structural (Wildemeersch, 2017). Brantmeier (2013) argues that in addition to power dynamics between humans, different groups, societies and nations, considering nature as an object and humans as separate from it creates imbalanced power structures

between humans and nature. In critical pedagogy, prevailing values, norms and power structures are critically examined and more just and sustainable alternatives are sought for (Freire, 1996, p. 92; Huckle, 1996, p. 106; Paulus, 2016). Hence, critical pedagogy is necessary for ESD, which empowers learners to think systemically, recognise the dominant socially and ecologically unsustainable patterns and structures, and take action for SD (Freire, 1996, p. 83; Gokool-Ramdoos & Rumjaun, 2017; Paulus, 2016).

Critical pedagogy is also concerned about what education is for and how it is implemented (Gokool-Ramdoos & Rumjaun, 2017; Paulus, 2016). Freire (1996) contests the “banking” concept of education, which he describes as “an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor” (p. 72). Instead of teachers transmitting knowledge that students passively assimilate, Freire (1996) calls for equal relationships between teachers and students, mutual inquiry about the world, and learners’ activity in the learning process (pp. 80, 83). Wildemeersch (2017) suggests that critical pedagogy that supports ESD can be defined “as the joint shaping of a (public) space, in which both teacher and student engage in a process of research and experiment, whereby the right outcome of the process is not known on beforehand, but verified when being realized” (p. 5). This aligns with the perception of ESD being ultimately about learning to deal with uncertainties and aspiring to find the best available solutions at the time and place in question (Vare & Scott, 2007).

Employing philosopher Hannah Arendt’s thoughts, Wildemeersch (2017) discusses the importance of “the presence of others for one’s identity development, but also for processes of emancipation and critical thinking” (p. 8). Collaboration with diverse people and encountering pluralistic values are helpful for constructing and re-thinking ideas and thought patterns, seeing them from multiple perspectives, and for triggering creativity (Hofman, 2015; Wals, 2011). Moreover, despite their physical locations, people are more and more interconnected, and daily interactions are increasingly heterogeneous (Portera & Grant, 2017, p. ix). Thus, learning to successfully interact and collaborate with people from a variety of cultural backgrounds are both essential and fruitful skills for SD (Hofman, 2015; Wals, 2011), as well as prerequisites for ensuring functional democracies (Nussbaum, 2010, pp. 77, 80). Furthermore, recognising and opposing hegemonies and culture-related power inequalities are crucial aspects of ESD and SD (Paulus, 2016; Polistina, 2009; Wals, 2010).

In critical pedagogy, dialogue is a central mean for learning and engaging with others (Freire, 1996, pp. 88-89). Dialogue is also regarded as a useful practice in intercultural encounters (Portera, 2017, p. 24). Dialogue is both reflection and action in which equal participants meet and “name the world” as well as engage in transforming it (Freire, 1996, pp. 88-89). It is not a predetermined act but open-ended and aims to finding agreement (Freire, 1996, p. 91; Nussbaum, 2010, p. 51). Furthermore, it is based on mutual respect, care and trust (Freire, 1996, p. 91; Nussbaum, 2010, p. 51). Nussbaum (2010) emphasises that dialogue and learning the skills of Socratic argument are essential in education (pp. 48-50). Without these, students do not learn to think for themselves and tend to form their opinions based on authorities and peer groups (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 50). On the contrary, by encouraging active participation and hearing everyone’s voice, people feel more accountable for their opinions (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 54).

3.2.2 Experiential and Outdoor Learning

Experiential learning is a constructivist learning theory influenced by Dewey, Lewin, Piaget and Kolb and associated with areas of psychology such as social, cognitive-developmental, humanistic, and positive psychologies (Mackenzie, Son & Hollenhorst, 2014; Miettinen, 2000). It is a learner-centred approach, which emphasises holistic learning, real-life experiences, reflection, and connecting theory and practice (Kolb & Kolb, 2012, n.p.; Miettinen, 2000; Nicol, 2014). Experiential learning is relevant both in adult education (Miettinen, 2000) and when educating children (Kos et al., 2016; Luff, 2018; Macdonald, 2015). Miettinen (2000) contemplates that “spontaneity, feeling, and deep individual insights

with the possibility of rational thought and reflection” make experiential learning an appealing approach to adult education (p. 70). Respectively, Kos et al. (2016) and Macdonald (2015) stress that children are active learners who learn best when experiential and holistic methods are used, thus “experiential learning is at the heart of early childhood education” (Luff, 2018, p. 448). Moreover, according to Reif and Grant (2010), experiential, engaging and participatory methods are often more successful at reaching all learners than traditional transmissive teaching methods.

Simple awareness raising is often unsuccessful in initiating more sustainable behaviours even when the benefits of the new behaviour are well reasoned (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). However, when experiencing something directly, the emerged attitudes are more likely to translate into behaviours (Rajcecki, 1982). Dewey (1957) emphasises the importance of active learning from authentic experiences (pp. 25, 27, 60-61). He regards schools as miniature societies, which should interact with the surrounding society and environments and function in a democratic way (Dewey, 1957, pp. 25, 63, 72-73). When learning is not restricted to school subjects and their boundaries, it becomes more holistic, interdisciplinary and meaningful (Dewey, 1957, pp. 41-42, 55, 86). Since SD is a concept that cannot be pursued in a traditional, disciplinary way and SDGs are inherently interconnected, interdisciplinary learning and fostering systems thinking are paramount in ESD (Annan-Diab & Molinari, 2017; Burns, Diamond-Vaught & Bauman, 2015; Sterling, 2010).

Tarrant and Thiele (2016) argue that Dewey’s pragmatic and experiential education paradigms are keystones for the present ESD approaches, and Luff (2018) confirms this notion in Early Childhood Education context. Furthermore, Dewey’s rationales “provide both a historical antecedent and still valid moral and practical justification for the development of sustainability skills” (Tarrant & Thiele, 2016, p. 63). Jeronen, Palmberg and Yli-Panula’s (2016) literature review on biology and sustainability education with primary, secondary, and teacher students encourages adopting these types of experiential, learner-centred methods and learning in real-life contexts. Also, in the studies that Stern et al. (2014) synthesise in their systemic review, experiential learning is often considered to account for the success of EE programmes.

Experiential learning in nature, in other words outdoor learning, allows learners to “experience the interdisciplinary nature of the real world through interactions with each other and the planet” (Dolan, 2016, p. 49). As discussed earlier, nature connectedness and positive experiences in nature seem to be significant antecedents for sustainable behaviour (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Collado, Corraliza, Staats & Ruiz, 2015; Martin & Czellar, 2017; Restall & Conrad, 2015; Otto & Pensini, 2017; Roczen et al., 2014). For example, in a study with Finnish secondary students, Uitto (2012) discovers a connection between regularly using outdoor spaces as a learning environment and students’ nature connectedness and pro-environmental attitudes. Furthermore, having a positive nature connection motivates people to learn how to live (ecologically) sustainably (Uitto, 2012). Therefore, it is important that learners are immersed in outdoor activities that allow them to connect with nature in a profound way (Burns et al., 2015; Hill & Brown, 2014; Navarro-Perez & Tidball, 2012).

Outdoor learning can have also several other learning outcomes that are important for fostering sustainability. For example, it can support the development of social and emotional competencies, interpersonal skills, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and cognitive skills (Jeronen et al., 2016; Kaivola, Laaksoharju & Rappe, 2012; Rickinson et al., 2004, p. 6). Paulus (2016) contends that outdoor learning improves group atmosphere and interaction, which respectively lead to “critical reflection and active participation” (p. 122). Those are crucial in ESD because they allow pluralist and intercultural learning through exchanging personal thoughts and worldviews (Paulus, 2016).

However, to make the outdoor experiences impactful, there are several issues to be considered, and the aforementioned benefits of outdoor learning do not result automatically (Leather, 2013; Lugg, 2007; Rickinson et al., 2004, p. 6). Design of the experience, the group, and pedagogical choices all have an influence on the learning outcomes (Jeronen et al., 2016; McCree, Cutting & Sherwin., 2018). Occasional and isolated outdoor experiences without continuity and reflexivity are less effective than regular

immersion in nature and expanding on these experiences (Christie, Higgins & McLaughlin, 2013; Nicol, 2014; Scrutton, 2015; Wals, 2010). Nature is not only the background in outdoor education but meaningful outdoor activities allow “learning in, about and for nature” (Luff, 2018, p. 450; see Dewey, 1957, pp. 72-73; Nicol, 2014; Paulus, 2016). Inclusive and participatory activities, getting hands-on experiences of biodiversity and scientific knowledge, engaging in value dialogues, pondering the human-environment relationship, and doing practical work such as gardening are examples of outdoor activities that can foster learning for sustainability (Kaivola, Laaksoharju & Rappe, 2012; Luff, 2018; Nicol, 2014; Paulus, 2016).

Place-responsive outdoor learning encourages learners to contemplate their role in “ecological, socio-cultural, and political places” as well as the connections and interdependencies between these (Paulus, 2016, p. 124). Furthermore, it facilitates forming a personal connection to a place, which may increase a sense of belonging and ascribed responsibility and elicit a will to care for the surrounding natural, built and social environments (Hill & Brown, 2014; Jeronen et al., 2016; Luff, 2018). Yet, it is essential that links are made between local and global issues regarding SD (Hofman, 2015; Risku-Norja, 2012, p. 13).

3.2.3 Action Competence Approach and Place-Based Education

People are more likely to take action for the environment if they feel that their actions have a meaning and they can make a change (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). As Caiman and Lundegård (2013) contend, empowering learners to feel that they are capable of having an impact in a democratic way is paramount in the current global situation. Indeed, one of the central aims in ESD is to encourage learners to act for change (Caiman & Lundegård, 2013; Hedefalk et al., 2015; UNESCO, 2017). Recently, there has been more research on action-oriented learning but it is common to promote action taking and agency by teaching facts (Chawla & Cushing, 2007; Hedefalk et al., 2015). However, according to empirical research, these types of normative and fact-based approaches in ESD do not seem to have long-term effects (Hedefalk et al., 2015). On the contrary, Chawla and Cushing’s (2007) research on children and young people’s environmental programmes reveals that most successful programmes incorporate authentic action and enacting change. Practicing participation, decision-making, action-taking and democracy should start already in early childhood education (Chawla & Cushing, 2007; Luff, 2018).

There are several educational ideals on how to promote learners’ agency (Caiman & Lundegård, 2013). Examples of these are action competence approach and place-based education. Action competence approach does not refer to a special attainable competence but is a more general educational ideal, which inclines towards the intrinsic views of ESD (Mogensen & Schnack, 2010). In this approach, the main goal is to empower learners to be conscious and active change agents (Mogensen & Nielsen, 2011; Mogensen & Schnack, 2010). The principles of critical pedagogy are employed when root causes of SD-related problems are scrutinised in critical, interdisciplinary and holistic ways (Mogensen & Schnack, 2010). Values and ethics are an integral part of action competence approach, and learners are encouraged to develop their moral thinking through engaging in real-world situations (Grice & Franck, 2017; Mogensen & Schnack, 2010). Respectively, the most important element is intentional and purposive action, which, in the case of formal education, responds to a real problem either at a school or a community level (Katsenou, Flogaitis & Liarakou, 2013; Mogensen & Schnack, 2010; Villanen, 2014, p. 42; see Dewey, 1957, pp. 60-61).

Real-life connections are a central aspect also in place-based education (Hofman, 2015; Villanen, 2014). Learning institutions should not be isolated from the other spheres of life but embrace learners’ various experiences and collaborate with different stakeholders (Dewey, 1957, pp. 72-73; Katsenou et al., 2013; UNESCO, 2017). Acknowledging the opportunities for formal, informal and non-formal learning that exist when collaborating with communities is essential in ESD (Katsenou et al., 2013; UNESCO, 2017). Out-of-school activities in nature and with the local community, as well as strength-

ening understanding and interest in the local place, are central components of formal place-based education (Hofman, 2015; Villanen, 2014, p. 45). Since public action is more influential than individual action in terms of bringing about change, Chawla & Cushing (2007) emphasise that learners must develop both their individual and collective competencies to be able to contribute on a larger scale.

In action-oriented approaches, age-appropriateness is an important factor to consider (Chawla & Cushing, 2007). The scale and context of the action need to be accommodated to the age and skills of the participants (*ibid.*). The problem identification and action should derive from learners' interests because this commits them to the projects and enables them to feel that they can truly have an impact on issues they find important (Chawla & Cushing, 2007; Hofman, 2015; Katsenou et al., 2013). Nevertheless, it is recommended to start practicing participation skills in everyday life contexts, for example in own classroom, and gradually extend it to the school level, community projects, and larger-scale participation (Chawla & Cushing, 2007; Samuelsson, 2011).

Furthermore, teachers need to be competent to implement action competence and place-based approaches to ensure that the experiences are educative and empowering (Katsenou et al., 2013; Hofman, 2015; Samuelsson, 2011). Teachers cannot be dominating in these processes because otherwise learners' participation is not authentic, which may lead to feelings of insecurity and passivity, as noticed in Katsenou's et al. (2013) participatory action research in a Greek school. Children and young people need experiences of being taken seriously and succeeding at least in some of their aspirations, which must be enabled by schools and their stakeholders (Chawla & Cushing, 2007; Katsenou et al., 2013). Nevertheless, in action-oriented learning, the action and quality learning should be prioritised over the project outcomes (Hofman, 2015). This should be communicated to the learners to show them their participation is valuable "while maintaining a realistic view of the modern world complexity and limitations" (Katsenou et al., 2013, p. 254; see Hofman, 2015).

3.2.4 Transformative Learning

Transformative learning is a constructivist adult learning theory originally developed by Mezirow. Its foundation is the notion that frames of references, in other words "the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences", largely influence people's thoughts, attitudes and behaviours (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5). These frames of references develop mainly through socialisation in childhood (Hoggan, 2016; Mezirow, 1997, p. 6). Transformative learning occurs when a conflicting issue cannot be interpreted through an existing frame of reference, and critical reflection leads to transforming the fixed thought patterns (Mezirow, 2012, p. 85; Mezirow, 1997, p. 7). This process is not only cognitive but involves also subject's feelings and actions (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5; O'Sullivan, 2012, p. 164). Reviewing 206 articles on transformative learning, Hoggan (2016) proposes extending the original understanding of transformative learning as a perspective transformation to cover "processes that result in significant and irreversible changes in the way a person experiences, conceptualises and interacts with the world" (p. 77).

Deep transformations in attitudes, values and behaviours are needed to impede and adapt to the perils of current the unsustainable state of the world (O'Sullivan, 2012, pp. 165, 176; Sharpe, 2016). Transformational learning can facilitate this learning by eliciting transformations in learner's worldview, self, epistemology, ontology, behaviour and capacity (Hoggan, 2016; see O'Sullivan, 2012; Sharpe, 2016; Sterling, 2011b). The theory shares some characteristics with action competence approach and critical pedagogy (Piasentin & Roberts, 2018; Sterling, 2011b), and critical reflection is at the heart of transformative learning (Taylor, 2007). Piasentin and Roberts (2018) argue that critically reflecting on the value systems that underlie the current socio-environmental problems both at individual and collective levels is the main incentive for transformations towards pro-sustainability. However, not any reflection leads to transformative learning but the type of reflection that ought to be fostered is premise reflection

(Taylor, 2007), which means questioning “the presuppositions underlying our knowledge” (Kreber, 2004, p. 31).

Transformative learning is not an easy process either for the teacher or the learner (Sterling, 2011b). In Taylor’s (2007) literature review concluding 40 studies, experiential and authentic learning, variety of learning activities, and adequate support are identified as the main ways of fostering transformative learning. The teacher must be attentive and sensitive to respond to the learners’ experiences during the different phases of transformative learning and to detect their “pedagogical entry points” or “state of readiness” (Sterling, 2011b, p. 27; Taylor, 2007, p. 187). Moreover, some support and instructions on how to translate the new perceptions into action are needed (Taylor, 2007). However, transformative learning is essentially a collaborative inquiry, and caring, trusting and warm relationships seem to be major contributors in the process (Ojala, 2017; Taylor, 2007). Emotions also play a crucial role in transformative learning (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Ojala, 2017; Sterling, 2011b; Taylor, 2007). As frames of references “provide us with a sense of stability, coherence, community and identity”, critically reflecting on them can be a painful experience (Mezirow, 2000, p. 18). Nevertheless, there is little research on how to evoke emotions that support transformative learning, especially while engaging in critical deliberation (*ibid.*). This is a crucial question that concerns ESD in general.

As discussed earlier, it is typical to employ defence mechanisms when confronting something negative, complex or worrisome (Coelho et al., 2017; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). As SD is inherently a complex concept which deals with alarming and urgent local and global problems, this challenge must be considered to avoid reinforcing a sense of hopelessness and helplessness (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). It is vital to foster hope and positive visions of future when engaging in critical deliberation and generally in ESD (Brantmeier, 2013; Freire, 1996, p. 91; Hicks, 2014, p. 109; Hofman, 2015; Ojala, 2017; Samuelsson, 2011; Villanen, 2014, p. 42). Chawla and Cushing (2007) suggest that collaboration with other people and a sense of collective competency can help to overcome the feelings of hopelessness. In Piasentin & Roberts’ (2018) study on a university course that addresses SD, positive examples of people who have engaged successfully in issues related to SD as well as addressing practical tools that help to foster SD help students to feel hopeful and motivate them to act. These are in conjunction with Ojala’s (2017) findings regarding hope and climate change. She argues that “by showing that another way of being is possible, by encouraging trustful relationships and by giving young people the opportunity to concretely work together for change”, transformative ESD is possible (p. 82).

3.2.5 Social Learning

Social learning theory, originally developed by Bandura, is a learning theory, which acknowledges that learning always takes places in a social context and emphasises the meaning of learning from others through observing and modelling (Bandura, 1977, pp. 5-6). Sol et al. (2013) define social learning “as an interactive and dynamic process in a multi-actor setting where knowledge is exchanged and where actors learn by interaction and co-create new knowledge in on-going interaction” (p. 37). New ways of being, thinking and living are urgently needed, and engaging in social learning processes with diverse people can trigger these changes and enable creating new types of solutions for example in local or scientific communities (Barth & Michelsen, 2013; Dlouhá et al., 2013; Sol et al., 2013; Wals, 2011). Furthermore, social cohesion and feeling of belonging to a community support finding purpose and greater meaning in enacting changes (Wals, 2011), which is essential for a large-scale societal commitment to sustainable behaviour. Even though social learning can occur either passively or actively (Glasser, 2007), the type of social learning, which centres around finding sustainable solutions, is intentional learning and always has an element of social action (Barth & Michelsen, 2013).

Examples of social learning with the aim of advancing sustainable decision-making are science-policy-society engagement and participatory decision-making processes, in which decisions are a result of collaboration and dialogue between scientists, citizens, policy-makers and other stakeholders, such as

private sector, NGOs and indigenous groups (Didham, Ofei-Manu & Nagareo, 2017; Sol et al., 2013; see Miller, 2013; Wittmayer & Schöpke, 2014). In addition to being beneficial in terms of finding just and creative solutions by bringing multiple actors together, social learning processes facilitate developing individual and collective competencies, which support furthering SD also in other occasions (Barth et al., 2017).

Universities and scientists can facilitate social learning processes and advance SD also at a practical level (Dlouhá et al., 2013; Miller, 2013, pp. 287-288; Wittmayer & Schöpke, 2014, pp. 485, 489). However, Wals (2011) argues that it is important that social learning experiences are organised in collaboration with the educational field. Yet, social learning does not need to occur in formal education (ibid.) or to be a teaching activity (Barth & Michelsen, 2013). Instead, Barth and Michelsen (2013) argue that educational science should contribute to social learning primarily through creating informal social learning environments .

Building on five empirical case studies about ESD in community settings in Asia, Didham et al. (2017) propose that the process of social learning involves the following stages: “reflective observation; vision forming; pragmatic testing; planning actions; implementation; and monitoring and evaluation” (p. 844). Similar to transformative learning, the process of social learning challenges both the facilitator and the participants as they need to be competent to “trigger and support a learning process powerful enough to realise transitions that require a change of values, corporate culture, lifestyle, and, ultimately, a whole system redesign” (Wals, 2011, p. 184). Diversity and pluralism of participants’ knowledge, values and opinions are essential for finding new ways of approaching complex issues instead of settling to business as usual solutions (Barth & Michelsen, 2013; Læssøe, 2010; Wals, 2011). However, too high level of dissonance without social belonging or cohesion may also hinder learning, thus the facilitator needs to be sensitive to participants’ comfort zones (Wals, 2011). As discussed in regard to critical pedagogy, authentic dialogue is an important means for learning and engaging with pluralist of views and it requires a respectful, trustful and caring environment (Freire, 1996, pp. 88-89). This also applies to social learning, in which “empathy or a willingness to open up to and sympathise with ‘otherness’ and/or the other” are central aspects (Wals, 2011, pp. 182-183). Social dynamics play an important role in social learning, and regardless of participants’ diverse opinions and values, mutual trust and respect and all parties’ commitment to the process must be present, and participants’ ability and willingness to ponder issues from multiple perspectives can lead to shared reframing, which is also a crucial element in social learning (Sol et al., 2013).



4 ESD in Formal, Non-Formal and Informal Contexts

”As a unique educational concept, ESD is an area of educational practice that both makes a significant contribution at all of the different levels of formal education and also acknowledges the relevance of non-formal as well as informal education” (Barth & Michelsen, 2013, p. 106).

The following sub-chapters focus on how ESD can be organised in formal, non-formal and informal learning settings. Furthermore, some relevant features and concerns in regard to ESD in these different forms of learning are discussed. Distinguishing between the three forms of learning is not straightforward. Therefore, the way these sub-chapters are constructed is only referential and the contents in one may apply also to other forms of learning. In the context of ESD, it seems that learning activities are often a combination of formal, non-formal and informal learning, which is an asset as it enables holistic learning that crosses traditional boundaries (UNESCO, 2012, p. 58; Wals et al., 2017).

Even though the arguments in the following sub-chapters aim at wide applicability, it is important to acknowledge that different countries and regions have vastly differing starting points and resources for implementing ESD. For example, Ongevalle, Petegam, Deprez and Chimbodza’s (2011) case study from Zimbabwe describes how incorporating EE in teacher education “in a context of deep crisis” caused by socio-economic problems and environmental vulnerability is problematic and project sustainability and funding are insecure (p. 434). A critical remark is made here that even though ESD is crucial everywhere, the contextual factors greatly influence how it can be organised in formal, non-formal and informal contexts in different parts of the world and what kinds of challenges emerge. Moreover, the learning needs in different regions vary vastly, thus local actors make a significant contribution to adjusting ESD to the local needs.

4.1 Implementing ESD in Formal Education

Formal education is the most scalable type of education as it reaches essentially all children and young people in high-income countries and an increasing number of children and young people in lower income countries (UNESCO, 2019, pp. 122-124). Thus, fostering sustainability in mainstream education can crucially contribute to a more sustainable world (e.g. Saloranta, 2017, p. 223). As discussed in the previous chapter, ESD from early childhood on can support learning the skills needed in today’s rapidly changing world, promote nature connectedness and sustainable behaviour as well as empower learners to act for change. Furthermore, higher education is an important platform for learning about, creating, and sharing sustainable solutions (Bangay, 2016; Karatzoglou, 2013). Synthesising research from 18 countries, Laurie et al. (2016) argue that ESD can improve the overall quality of education in terms of enriched curricula, connecting schools with their local communities, innovative teaching and learning methods, supporting students to be more prepared for an uncertain future, and possibly by resulting in increased academic performance. Nevertheless, more robust empirical evidence is needed to confirm these research results (Laurie et al., 2018).

In formal education, a formal curriculum and syllabus are implemented (Tudor, 2013, p. 822). As mentioned earlier, there is no universally established curriculum for ESD but instead, the learning contents are proposed to be contextual and reflect local issues, which are then linked to global sustainability (Hofman, 2015; Risku-Norja, 2012, p. 13; Wals, 2010). Some guidelines for implementing ESD are presented in UNESCO’s (e.g. 2014c & 2017) documents, yet national and local actors decide how, if at

all, these are taken into consideration in educational policies and curricula (Bourn et al., 2017). Moreover, there are several perceptions about how, in practice, ESD should be embedded in formal education. For example, whether it should be a discipline on its own, a cross-curricular theme, or the basis for all education has been debated (e.g. Orr, 2004; Sterling, 2011a).

UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD, 2005-2014) "aimed at integrating the principles and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning, to encourage changes in knowledge, values and attitudes with the vision of enabling a more sustainable and just society for all" (UNESCO, 2014b, p. 5). The decade succeeded in raising global awareness about the need to incorporate ESD into educational policies and curricula (Pigozzi, 2010; UNESCO, 2014b, p. 6), which can be also noted in an increase of ESD policy research after the launch of the decade (Aikens et al., 2016). Furthermore, drawing on Karatzoglou's (2013) synthesis of 123 academic publications on ESD in higher education, it seems that universities are increasingly interested in integrating SD into their policies, curricula and practices. However, reviewing 215 research articles on ESD policy research, Aikens et al. (2016) conclude that incorporating ESD as a cross-cutting theme into national K-12 curricula has not so far been very successful in immersing sustainability.

Furthermore, even if national curricula enabled embedding ESD in formal education, its implementation is often determined by teachers' personal interest in the topic, and promoting a sustainable school culture is often overly dependent on individual teachers' attempts (Bourn et al., 2017; Jóhannesson, Norðdahl, Óskarsdóttir, Pálsdóttir and Pétursdóttir, 2011; Saloranta, 2017, p. 158). Yet, the whole institute approach is essential for truly embedding sustainability in formal education, which means that while deliberately implementing ESD, the whole institute, including its physical premises, and all stakeholders embrace sustainability in any actions taken (e.g. Goldman, Ayalon, Baum & Weiss, 2018; Saloranta, 2017, p. 215; UNESCO, 2017, p. 19).

Thus, it is crucial that, first, teachers have a holistic understanding of SD, second, they are competent to implement ESD in a pedagogically sound manner, and third, they have the resources and time needed for ESD because formal education has a myriad of competing learning objectives (Aikens et al., 2016; Bertschy, Künzli & Lehmann, 2013; Bourn et al., 2017; Gustafsson, Engström & Svenson, 2015; Saloranta, 2017, p. 224). Furthermore, school principals have a significant impact on creating a sustainable school culture, hence their contribution is also essential (Saloranta, 2017, p. 216).

Some empirical studies from Nordic countries reveal that teachers' personal and/or subject background has a significant impact on from which angle they approach SD, what they consider as their strengths and weaknesses in implementing SD, and what kinds of pedagogical strategies they choose to use in ESD (Borg, Gericke, Höglund & Bergman, 2012; Saloranta, 2017, p. 225; Uitto & Saloranta, 2017). To ensure that all teachers, despite their background, are competent to implement ESD in a holistic and interdisciplinary way, a sufficient response from initial and in-service teacher training institutions is needed (Bourn et al., 2017; Mulá et al., 2018). Therefore, teacher educators are in a critical role for ensuring that curricula and teaching methods prepare teachers to address complex sustainability phenomena in schools (Bourn et al., 2017; Mulá et al., 2018). This, of course, applies to any university staff who train future professionals (Mulá et al., 2018). According to a UNESCO commissioned review about ESD and global citizenship education in teacher education, SD has globally become a more acknowledged concept in teacher education (Bourn et al., 2017). However, ESD is not embedded in teacher training courses in a systematic way (*ibid.*). Furthermore, a survey study conducted by Sinakou, Boeve-de Pauw, Goossens and Van Petegem (2018) reveals that teacher educators from several continents do not have a holistic understanding of SD.

Despite an increased awareness of the importance of incorporating ESD into formal education, a lot remains to be done to mainstream ESD and to ensure that education systems foster SD rather than contribute to transmitting unsustainable values and practices (Bertschy et al., 2013; Brissett & Mitter, 2017; Huckle & Wals, 2015; Mulá et al., 2018). Huckle and Wals (2015) argue that DESD "failed to acknowledge or challenge neoliberalism as a hegemonic force blocking transitions towards genuine

sustainability” (p. 491). Furthermore, an example from Japan illustrates that even though ESD has been endorsed in Japanese policies since 2006, this has not resulted in the desired changes “deep enough to affect a values system” (Nagata, 2017, p. 30). Nagata (2017) argues that this is due to a traditional and results-oriented education system, which cannot effectively and dynamically promote ESD.

In fact, many experienced environmental and sustainability educators and academics such as Hicks (2014), Huckle and Wals (2015), Orr (2004) and Sterling (2011a) advocate a new type of an educational paradigm and changing the currently prevalent neoliberalist education model radically. Shallow interpretations of ESD are not sufficient but education systems should consider fostering sustainability as an inherent basis for any education (Hicks, 2014; Orr, 2004; Sterling, 2011a). Reforming education systems is a slow process, yet there is a limited time for doing it due to the current, risky development trends (Sterling, 2011a, p. 77). Moreover, there are several competing and sometimes contrasting interests in regard to formal education, which often lead to giving less priority to ESD both in primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education and in teacher training (Aikens et al., 2016; Bourn et al., 2017). It is crucial that decision-makers are involved in and committed to organising formal education in a way that embraces sustainability (Sterling, 2011a, p. 79; UNESCO, 2014b, p. 17). Having a clear vision of the purpose of education and clarifying the core values that underlay it are important aspects in this process (Sterling, 2011a). Moreover, facilitating teachers, teacher educators, and decision-makers’ learning about SD and ESD is critical for ensuring that they have a holistic understanding of these topics and they are able to foster learning for sustainability (Dyment et al., 2014; Laurie et al., 2018; Mulá et al., 2018; Sinakou et al., 2018; UNESCO, 2014b, p. 17).

4.2 ESD in Non-Formal Learning Contexts

Defining non-formal ESD univocally is difficult, however, it can for example refer to activities, which connect learning institutions with local communities, participatory decision-making processes (see 3.2.5. Social Learning), and learning activities facilitated by community organisations or learning centres (e.g. Barth et al., 2017; Didham et al., 2017; Sol et al., 2013; Zachariou & Symeou, 2008). Also, technology provides new means for building non-formal learning communities that engage in issues related to SD (Aguayo & Eames, 2017). According to UN DESD Final Report, non-formal ESD activities have become more common during DESD (UNESCO, 2014b, p. 17), and in several countries, NGOs play a crucial role in promoting ESD in teacher training (Bourn et al., 2017).

Being more flexible than formal education, non-formal education allows implementing ESD in a more holistic and interdisciplinary way and enables introducing creative teaching and learning methods and projects that are more difficult to implement in formal education (Tolppanen, Vartiainen, Ikävalko & Aksela, 2015; see Shohel & Howes, 2011). This is especially crucial in contexts in which the formal curriculum does not support ESD or formal education is not accessible to learners at all (Shohel & Howes., 2011; Wals et al., 2017). Furthermore, placing local community at the heart of ESD allows connecting several stakeholders and areas of expertise to jointly generate sustainability transformations, and accordingly enables implementing ESD based on the pedagogical principles, which are currently considered the most beneficial in academic literature (e.g. Zachariou & Symeou, 2008).

However, non-formal ESD programmes are often encumbered by unsteady funding (Akar, 2016; Wals et al., 2017). Moreover, the lack of evaluation methods for assessing the impact of ESD programmes, especially in terms of empowerment to take action for change, is a challenge for both research and practice also in non-formal ESD and impedes identifying and isolating factors that make the learning experiences impactful (O’Flaherty & Liddy 2018). Yet, some studies of non-formal ESD activities and their outcomes are introduced next elaborating on the aspects that the authors consider as important for the programmes’ success.

Aguilar (2018) reviews 73 articles of community-based ESD programmes and concludes that connecting learning with the local context and culture and addressing issues relevant in the specific com-

munity are beneficial especially for learning about social and cultural aspects of sustainability. Also, partnerships, communication and dialogue are regarded as valuable components in community-based ESD (ibid.). Wynveen's (2017) formative research with four organisational groups in a study community in Texas focuses on non-environmentally motivated individuals. The results suggest that emphasising all areas of sustainability and their interconnectedness, demonstrating how a sustainable lifestyle may be advantageous in the participant's individual situation, illustrating a sustainable lifestyle in a clear and easily adoptable way, and open dialogue are essential when endeavoring to initiate sustainable behavior (ibid.). Akar (2016) reviews 46 studies from all around the world, which examine extracurricular and non-formal learning activities with a focus on ESD or global citizenship education. In addition to the already mentioned factors, Akar (2016) concludes that including learners in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the learning activities is an important aspect in non-formal ESD (p. 31). Also, activities that engage the participants in artistic expression seem to be fruitful for learning for sustainability (ibid.).

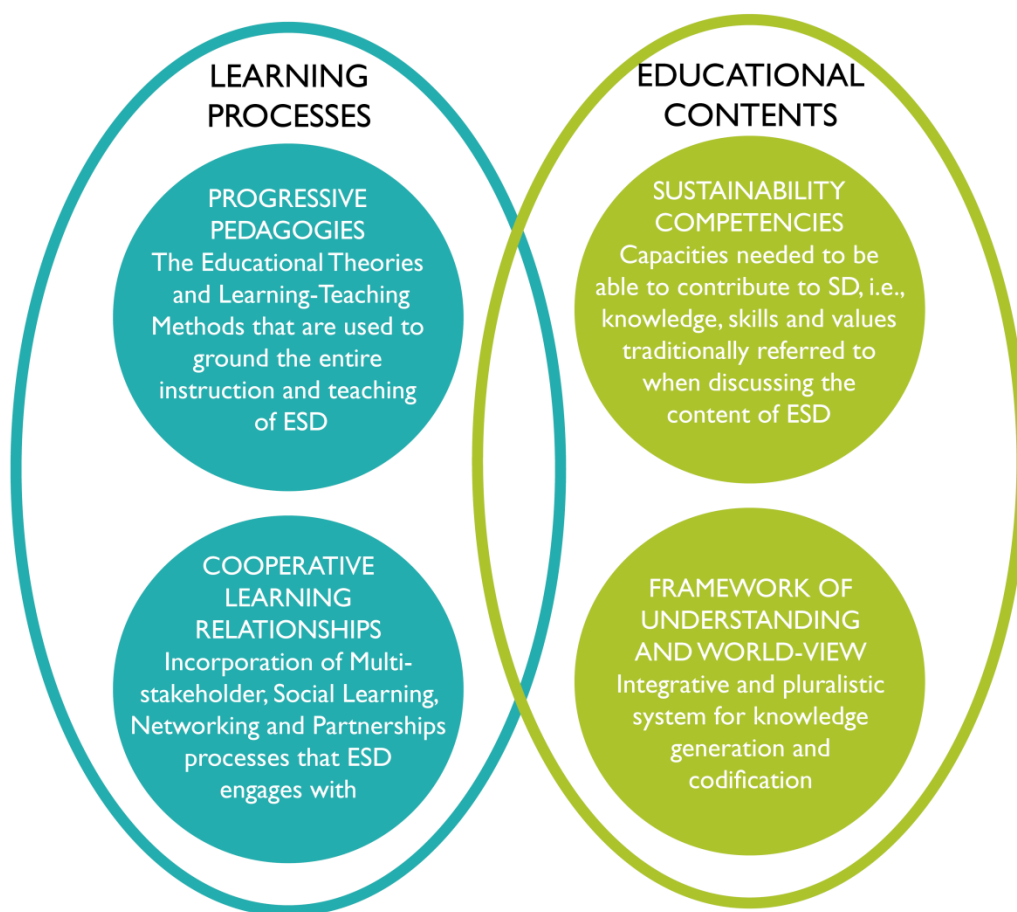


Figure 3. Sustainability Learning Performance Framework (modified from Ofei-Manu & Didham, 2018, p. 1181).

Building on an extensive literature review and three case studies of community-based ESD programmes in Asia, Ofei-Manu and Didham (2018) have developed a 'Sustainability Learning Performance Framework' (SLPF), which aims to be a holistic qualitative tool that introduces the essential elements of ESD. These are 1) learning process, including progressive pedagogies and cooperative learning relationships, and 2) educational contents, referring to sustainability competencies and a framework of understanding and world-view (Ofei-Manu & Didham, 2018, p. 1181). A more detailed list of the factors evaluated in regard to the different elements can be found in Ofei-Manu and Didham's

(2018) article. It is a promising tool for evaluating and scaling up non-formal ESD programmes. It can also be utilised in the context of formal education, for example in curriculum development, teacher training, and in developing a sustainable school culture and ESD learning activities (ibid.). However, the SLPF needs to be further tested and developed to ensure its accuracy and suitability to different contexts (Ofei-Manu & Didham, 2018).

4.3 Informal Learning for Sustainability

As discussed in regard to sustainable behaviour (chapter 2), several factors outside formal education influence human behaviour. For example, families, peers, media, and social and cultural norms are all prominent in the socialisation process (Leidy & Parke, 2015; Nussbaum, 2010, pp. 38-39, 44-45; Schunk, 2012). When learning occurs unintentionally in everyday contexts, it is called informal learning (Barth et al., 2017; Tudor, 2013, p. 822). According to UNESCO (2014a), "informal education results from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure, and is provided within families, religious organizations, community groups and traditional culture, as well as by news organizations, social media and various forms of entertainment" (p. 20). Tudor (2013) speculates that informal learning is very influential and most adult learning occurs informally (p. 822; see Barth et al., 2017). Therefore, the importance of informal ESD is emphasised by UNESCO and several authors (e.g. Barth et al., 2017; Barth & Michelsen, 2013; Gokool-Ramdoo & Rumjaun, 2017; UNESCO, 2017, p. 7; UNESCO, 2014b, p. 17; Wals et al., 2017).

A study from Varela-Candamio et al. (2018, p. 1573) suggests that informal environmental education in the form of public campaigns positively influences pro-environmental behaviour. Media and ICT provide plenty of informal learning opportunities, which may influence people's knowledge, attitudes or behaviour concerning sustainability (UNESCO, 2014a, p. 65). However, it is important to note that the connection between environmental awareness or attitudes and sustainable behaviour is ambiguous (Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Varela-Candamio et al., 2018; Wals, 2011). Generally, cultural norms and what is considered as socially acceptable can shape people's behaviours either to a more sustainable or unsustainable direction (Gadenne et al., 2011; Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Varela-Candamio et al., 2018). For example, Babutsidze and Chai's (2018) study with more than 3,000 Australian participants reveals that people tend to perform a similar amount of green-house gas mitigation measures as their neighbours, which suggests that regional social norms influence sustainable behaviour. Also, learning from role models and peers is conducive to responsible environmental behaviour (Chawla & Cushing, 2007). These studies reveal that social and cultural environments, which encourage sustainable lifestyles, are crucial platforms for informal ESD. However, the question of how to ensure that they foster sustainability by breaking the "vicious cycle, where formal institutions and existing consumption habits reinforce disincentives for citizens to actively pursue sustainability" remains (Fischer et al., 2012, p. 159).

Furthermore, as informal learning may occur anywhere, it is difficult to define when, where and how informal learning for sustainability takes place and how it can be facilitated. Furthermore, informal learning is not always distinguished from non-formal learning (Barth et al., 2017). Indeed, some of the aspects discussed in the previous sub-chapter may also apply to informal learning. For example, a social learning process, which brings together multiple actors can be considered either as informal or non-formal learning depending on its focus (see Barth et al., 2017; Herron & Mendiweso-Bendek, 2018). Moreover, if engaging in this type of collaboration is part of formal education, the learning experience blends all the three forms (see Wals et al., 2017). On the other hand, informal learning may also occur in formal settings. For example, Barth, Godemann, Rieckmann and Stoltenberg (2007) call for creating space for informal ESD in universities through enabling activities such as peer discussions and voluntary work. Informal learning can also drive organisational changes towards sustainability (Barth & Michelsen, 2013). In fact, according to the UN DESD Final Report, there has been promising development

in the private sector concerning companies' sustainability performance over the DESD partly due to informal, non-formal and, in some cases, formal learning (UNESCO, 2014a).

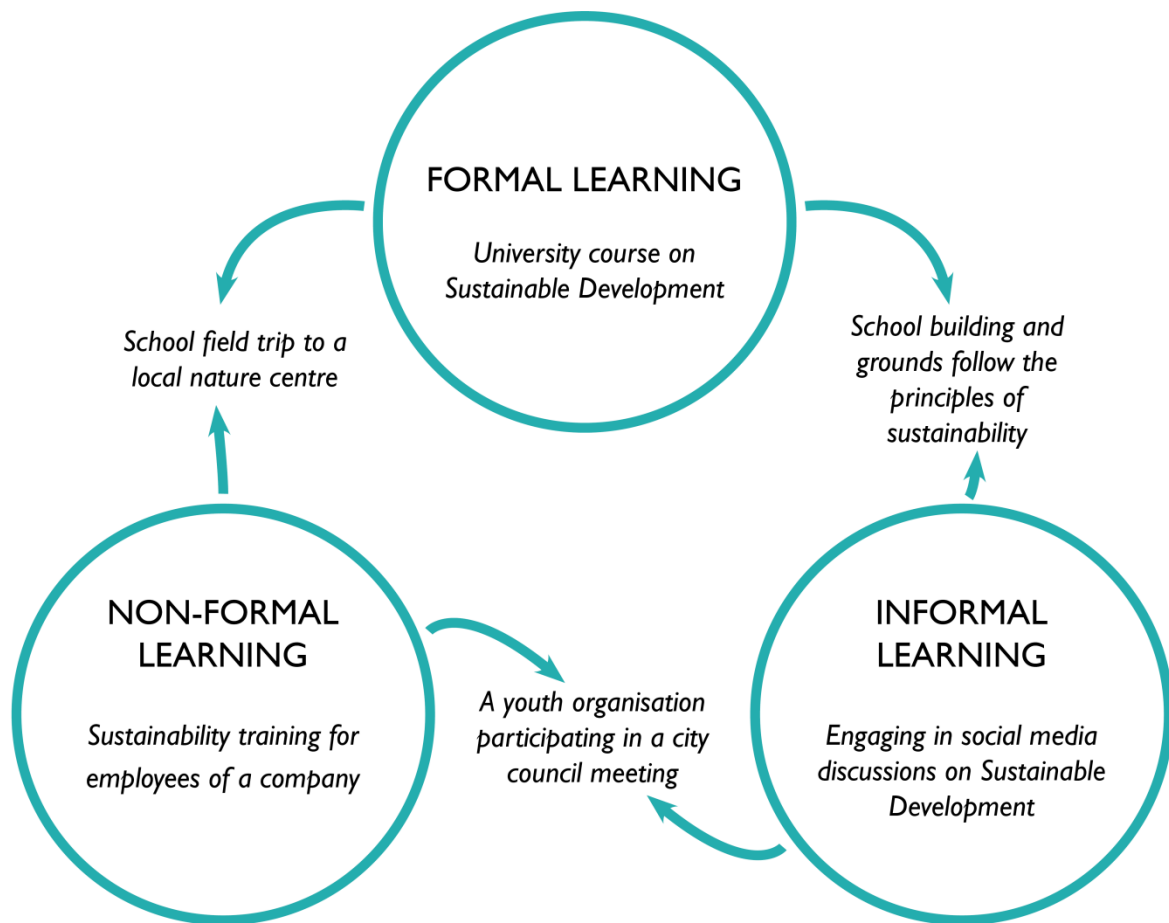


Figure 4. Examples of how learning for sustainability can take place in formal, non-formal and informal settings or in activities that blend different forms of learning.



5 Conclusions and Discussion

Democracy is an inherent part of SD, and a larger-scale societal engagement is needed in order to find best available solutions to wicked sustainability problems (Barth & Michelsen, 2013; Miller, 2013; Wals, 2011; Welpi et al., 2003).

In this final chapter, the main findings of this study are summarised. As the research questions are broad and there is a vast amount of research relevant to both of the questions, this study answers them on the basis of the selected materials. In the second sub-chapter, a model ‘Individuals, Communities and Societies Learning to Enable Sustainability Transformations’, is introduced suggesting one approach to perceiving how pathways towards sustainability can be facilitated through learning and engagement of all societal actors.

5.1 Summary of the Main Findings

Pro-environmental and sustainable behaviours are complex phenomena, which have been studied from multiple perspectives during the past decades (e.g. Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Tapia-Fonnlém et al., 2013; Varela-Candamio et al., 2018). Nevertheless, in the light of current scientific understanding, commitment to sustainable behaviour and its determinants cannot fully be explained (Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). Research reveals that demographic, internal and external factors all have an impact on pro-environmental behaviour (Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). Socialisation processes through which people learn the values and norms of their social and cultural environments (such as families, peer groups, communities or societies) have a significant impact on sustainable behaviour and taking action for sustainability (e.g. Chawla, 1998; Chawla, 1990; Collado et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2018; Over, 2018). Moreover, there seems to be a link between nature connectedness and sustainable behaviour (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Martin & Czellar, 2017; Restall & Conrad, 2015; Otto & Pensini, 2017; Roczen et al., 2014).

Even though the connection between education, especially in terms of raising awareness, and sustainable behaviour is ambiguous (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Wals, 2011), education is crucial for achieving the SDGs and can support building competencies, which are necessary for a sustainable future (Bengtsson et al., 2018; Sterling, 2010; Wals, 2011). Thus, it is critical to ensure that education is accessible for everyone and improve its overall quality worldwide (see UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2017). This evidently requires investments and resources. Yet, education should not be perceived as an instrument for behaviour change but quality education should be valued intrinsically (Bengtsson et al., 2018, pp. 19, 162). Nevertheless, education can also support transmitting unsustainable values and lifestyles, a criticism that in particular seems to apply to neoliberal education (Hofman, 2015; O’Brien & Howard, 2016; Sterling, 1996; UNESCO, 2016, pp. 11, 162; Villanen, 2014). Therefore, ensuring that education fosters sustainability is critical.

Sustainability science has led to the emergence of a new educational field, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) (Barth & Michelsen, 2013). ESD is an educational concept, which has initially been promoted by the UN and UNESCO but which has become a fairly established field of research and practice during the past decades. There is debate concerning the nature of ESD whether it being more instrumental or intrinsic, however, some scholars suggest that integrating these both approaches is essential (Sterling, 2010; Vare & Scott, 2007). Even though ESD can be implemented for example as courses or community-based programmes, it is not considered to be a separate learning intervention. On

the contrary, ESD is suggested to be a foundation for any education (Hicks, 2014; MacDonald, 2015; Orr, 2004; Sterling, 2011a; UNESCO, 2017). Yet, as there are countless interests concerning education, many of them being contradictory, ensuring that education contributes to a more sustainable world on a broad enough scale is difficult and requires a system-wide response from educational institutions, organisations, teachers, principals, administrators, learners, and decision-makers.

Some useful pedagogies that are often discussed in ESD literature include critical pedagogy, experiential and outdoor learning, action competence approach and place-based education, transformative learning, and social learning. They can be applied in ESD taking into account the learning goals and the age and needs of the participants. Furthermore, commitment of the whole institute or school community is of great importance for delivering quality ESD and for showing an example of sustainable living for the learners (Goldman et al., 2018; Saloranta, 2017, p. 215). However, even though there is more and more research on ESD pedagogies and practices, it is difficult to research what factors determine the success of ESD programmes and how ESD can empower learners to take action for change (O’Flaherty & Liddy, 2018; see Stern et al., 2014). Thus, many of the conclusions about purposeful pedagogical methods are based on philosophical and theoretical literature. More research that focuses on the behavioural and long-term outcomes of ESD and utilises innovative research methods is needed to confirm what kinds of pedagogical methods are most suitable for transformative ESD.

As learning is not restricted to formal education, ESD concerns both formal, non-formal and informal educational contexts (Barth et al., 2017; UNESCO, 2017). It is becoming more common to blend these forms of learning through for example community-based learning experiences that include participants from schools, organisations, business world, and/or public authorities (UNESCO, 2012, p. 58; Wals et al., 2017). People at all ages need to learn, on the one hand, to ensure large and fast enough sustainability transformations at individual and collective levels and both in public and private sectors, and, on the other hand, to support people and societies’ resilience and capacity to adjust to a world that is inevitably changing. Thus, life-long learning is pivotal (Arbuthnott 2009; Didham et al., 2017; Wals, 2011).

ESD alone has limited potential to drive sustainability transformations if the society and its norms, structures and institutions do not immerse sustainability (Arbuthnott, 2009; Sterling, 2011a; see Gadenne et al., 2011; Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Varela-Candamio et al., 2018). In Velasco and Harder’s (2014) exploratory study with data from several continents, the findings suggest that even a pedagogically successful course on sustainable development may not create transferable learning outcomes if the institutional context does not support or enable sustainable behaviour. In this kind of a scenario, it is typical that a gap between individual’s values and actions remains (ibid.). Moreover, even though individuals’ choices matter, without commitment from masses, these behaviours have usually a small impact on sustainability on a global scale (Saloranta, 2017, p. 85).

Therefore, ESD implemented only within schools and targeted at individuals and their private behaviours cannot initiate large-scale transformations. On the contrary, the magnitude and urgency of the current local and global problems require a joint and continuous learning process, which involves all societal actors to collaboratively seek for more sustainable alternatives and new ways of ensuring social wellbeing within planetary boundaries (Didham et al., 2017; Wals, 2011). Building on the main findings of this study, a model of how learning at all levels of society is needed for sustainability transformations is introduced next.

5.2 Individuals, Communities and Societies Driving Sustainability Transformations

The following model ‘Individuals, Communities and Societies Learning to Enable Sustainability Transformations’ (Figure 5) illustrates how individuals, communities, and all different societal actors need to engage in life-long learning processes to enable transformations towards a more sustainable world. The model also proposes what kinds of roles and responsibilities individuals, communities and societal actors can have in the joint process of furthering sustainability transformations. There is constant interaction between the three levels and they cannot be univocally distinguished from each other, therefore they are presented inside the same oval. The introduced model is a simplified representation and does not for example explicitly include the crucial level of global collaboration. In this interconnected and globalised world, all societal actors introduced in the model work globally or are at least very much influenced by global circumstances and events. This applies also to individuals and communities. Moreover, global agreements and benchmarks are crucial for ensuring fair and just development. However, this model’s societal level does not refer only to countries or national solutions but it can also imply larger entities, such as the European Union or the UN.

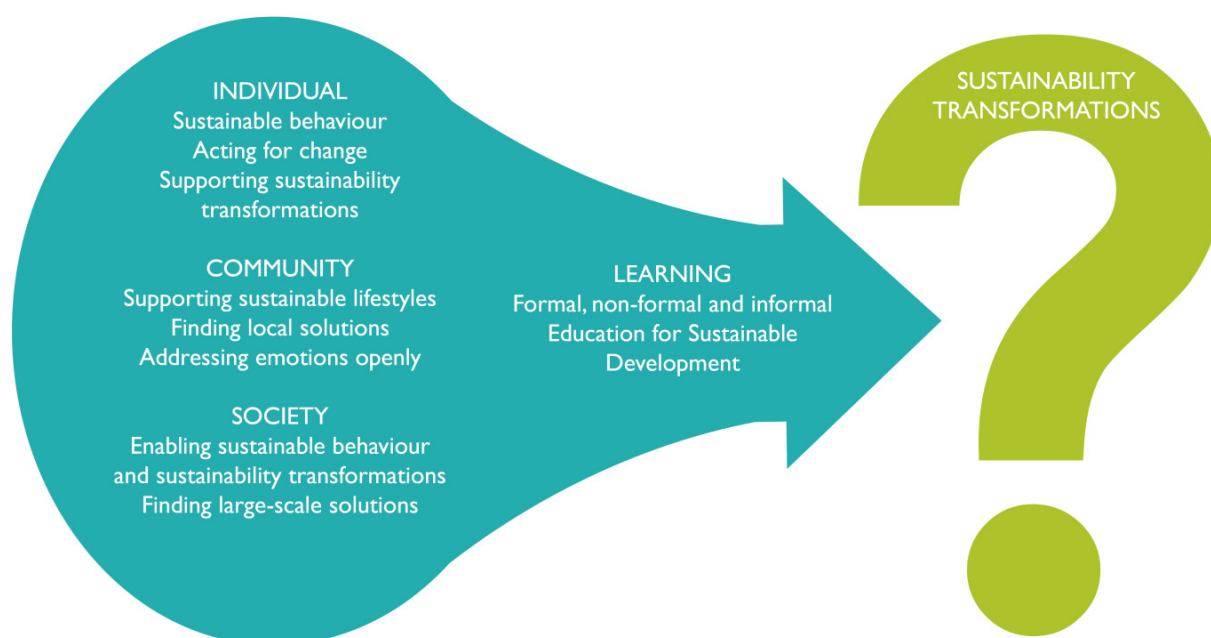


Figure 5. A model of individuals, communities and societies learning to enable sustainability transformations

Terminology of sustainability transformations is used in the model to emphasise that there is no static state of SD. On the contrary, SD and pathways towards it are highly contextual, and what is sustainable remains uncertain and needs to be repeatedly discovered (Miller, 2013, p. 288; Wals, 2011, p. 183; Welpi et al., 2003, pp. 23-24). Thus, sustainability transformations are symbolised with a question mark. However, what is certainly known is that major transformations must occur globally to ensure that the global community can function peacefully and justly while facing some major challenges, such as exponential population growth, diminishing natural resources, rapidly changing lifestyles, biodiversity loss, and climate change (e.g. IPCC, 2018; Tang, 2017, p. 1; Wals et al., 2017, p. 783; WWF, 2018). Individual, communal and societal levels all need to participate in furthering these transformations, and,

as underlined in this report, learning is central for finding more sustainable alternatives to the current, inherently unsustainable paradigms (e.g. Barth & Michelsen, 2013; Didham et al., 2017).

ESD implemented in a pedagogically sensible manner in formal, non-formal and informal contexts can encourage sustainable behaviour, bolster learners' competencies, and empower taking action for change (Barth & Michelsen, 2013; Mogensen & Schnack, 2010; Ofei-Manu & Didham, 2018; Sterling, 2010). Barth and Michelsen (2013) note that ESD often focuses on individuals and their personal growth into responsible human beings who can and want to promote sustainability. Individual behaviours and attempts to bring about change are positively essential for SD (Chawla & Cushing, 2007). A recent example of how an individual can take action for change and generate an international movement is embodied in Greta Thunberg, a 16-year-old Swede, whose school strike has gained lots of attention worldwide and encouraged young people globally to demand greater efforts for climate change mitigation. However, to ensure large-scale sustainability transformations, it is necessary that ESD also focuses on communities and societies, hence ensuring life-long learning opportunities for everyone, including decision-makers, is crucial (Arbuthnott 2009; Didham et al., 2017; Wals, 2011; see Chawla and Cushing, 2007).

As discussed in the previous chapters, ESD pedagogies emphasise the meaning of community, collaboration and social learning. Building a learning community, which allows individuals to critically contemplate the underlying roots of unsustainability, cultural norms and values, as well as their own actions is paramount for sustainability transformations (e.g. Barth & Michelsen, 2013; Dlouhá et al., 2013; Piasentin & Roberts, 2018; Sol et al., 2013; Wals, 2011). Furthermore, social norms are an important factor to consider in relation to SD, and individuals' sustainable behaviour can be encouraged through social approval by groups and communities (Arbuthnott, 2009; see Babutsidze & Chai, 2018). Also, as discussed earlier, social cohesion and feeling of belonging to a community supports finding purpose and greater meaning in enacting changes (Wals, 2011). In his book about eco-anxiety, Pihkala (2017) stresses that for maintaining wellbeing, it is crucial to collectively share emotions that the current state of the world evokes (pp. 16, 220-223). This is essential also in terms of hindering coping mechanisms such as denial, apathy or passivity caused by the enormity of wicked problems (Pihkala, 2017). Openly sharing emotions with other people and accepting the distress that exists due to environmental, social and economic crises are important steps towards empowerment to take action (Pihkala, 2017, pp. 16-17). Pihkala's (2017) arguments are consistent with Chawla and Cushing's (2007) and Ojala's (2017) findings about the meaning of collaboratively working together with others to avoid a sense of hopelessness.

Local and community-based endeavours are central for furthering SD, and many decisions concerning sustainability management are done at a regional level (Mebratu, 1998; Sol et al., 2013). However, Mebratu (1998) argues that "their impact in shaping 'our common future' on a more sustainable basis seems to be minimal when measured against the enormity of the global environmental challenges" (p. 494). Thus, in addition to local action, larger-scale solutions to SD must be sought for and endorsed on a societal or international level. If societies and their policies do not support SD, individual and communal level attempts to foster it cannot reach their fullest potential either (Sterling, 2011a, p. 32; Velasco & Harder 2014). However, policies and their success are largely dependent on the acceptance from publics, thus public support for policies that aim to further sustainability is pivotal (Welpi et al., 2003). This illustrates how learning processes and transformations need to occur simultaneously at all levels of societies.

Different policy tools that can be used in driving sustainability transformations include for example legislation, taxation, regulations and financial benefits, which, in addition to public sector and citizens, concern the private sector (Arbuthnott, 2009; Lehner, Mont & Heiskanen, 2016). Societies and institutions can also employ some behaviour change strategies to facilitate making sustainable choices (Arbuthnott, 2009; Lehner, Mont & Heiskanen, 2016). As touched upon earlier, behaviour change is a complex process and people do not always act according to available knowledge or their own values,

thus it is important that sustainable behaviour is convenient and advantageous (Arbuthnott, 2009; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Vicente-Molina et al., 2013). There are some strategies that aim to engender desired behaviours utilising people's cognitive biases, such as nudging and boosting (Schubert, 2017). These types of behaviour change strategies that target a specific behaviour may be useful in some cases, for example when aiming to reduce the use of cars by influencing the availability and cost of parking spaces (Arbuthnott, 2009). Nevertheless, caution is needed when utilising them because they can be perceived to violate personal autonomy and pose a risk to democracy (Lehner, Mont & Heiskanen, 2016).

Democracy is often considered as an inherent part of SD, and decision-making processes that support equity, participation and multi-stakeholder involvement are crucial for finding just and sustainable solutions (Mielke, Vermaßen, Ellenbeck, Milan & Jaeger, 2016; Miller, 2013; Wals, 2010; Welpi et al., 2003). There are no absolute truths or a flawless plan to respond to the problems of unsustainability, thus decision-making, even if applying scientific knowledge, is based on uncertainties (Miller, 2013; Wals, 2011; Welpi et al., 2003). A large-scale science-policy-society engagement is needed to ensure that complex phenomena are approached with best available, just and creative solutions (Barth & Michelsen, 2013; Welpi et al., 2003). Therefore, decision-making and learning processes that engage multiple stakeholders, such as citizens, businesses, NGOs, indigenous people, and scientists, are central for driving sustainability transformations (Didham et al., 2017; Mielke et al., 2016; Miller, 2013).

Empowerment through formal, non-formal and informal learning supports meaningful societal engagement and facilitates recognising contextual perspectives and finding creative and applicable bottom-up solutions (Gregory & Atkins, 2018; Herron & Mendiweso-Bendek, 2018). Moreover, as discussed in relation to social learning and non-formal ESD, cross-sectoral collaboration is both a way of collaboratively finding sustainable solutions and an important learning opportunity for the participants (Barth et al., 2017; Zachariou & Symeou, 2008). For example, Growing Up in Cities initiative demonstrates that youth participation in local decision-making can be successful both in terms of learning and urban planning if authentic collaboration between different stakeholders is facilitated (Chawla 2001). For authentic participation and inclusion, it is crucial to embrace the principles of critical pedagogy, transformative learning and social learning by acknowledging pluralism of values and interests while engaging in a respectful dialogue and being open to premise reflection (see Freire, 1996, pp. 88-89; Ojala, 2013; Taylor, 2007; Wals, 2011). Also, social institutions must be constructed in a way that they support intercultural dialogue and counter structural disadvantages and power inequalities (Barrett, 2017; Bash, 2012).

As the global community is dealing with wicked problems, many of which urgently require radical changes in the way societies, governments, businesses and individuals function, it is crucial to find ways to maintain hope and positive visions of the future (Brantmeier, 2013; Freire, 1996, p. 91; Hicks, 2014, p. 109; Hofman, 2015; Ojala, 2017; Samuelsson, 2011; Villanen, 2014, p. 42). Therefore, discourse concerning SD should not only focus on contrasting what to sustain and what to give in. On the contrary, living sustainably can have several positive impacts on people's lives whereas living in an unsustainable manner does not guarantee happiness or wellbeing even for the wealthiest nations. Naish (2009) argues that several societies impose people with the values of consumerism resulting in a never-ending desire of 'more' (p. 25). However, there is dissatisfaction and a rapidly increased number of mental health issues and stress-related diseases in societies based on consumerism (Maiteny, 2009, p. 179; Naish, 2009, p. 25). Simultaneously, billions of people live in poverty and material wellbeing is distributed in an extremely unequal way (United Nations, 2015). Therefore, finding a balance between basic needs and wealth, on the one hand, and meaningful life within planetary boundaries, on the other hand, in an equal and just manner is imperative for global wellbeing.

There can be both negative and positive tipping points in the striving for sustainability. Lenton and Williams (2013) ponder whether a global tipping point affecting the whole Earth endangering its living systems is possible or if such a tipping point has already been crossed. However, this report argues that

learning and education can support achieving a positive tipping point and gaining significant momentum for scaling up actions towards sustainability. Education is not a panacea for wicked problems, yet learning is at the heart of finding sustainable solutions and new ways of being and living in the rapidly changing world. All in all, as Barth and Michelsen (2013) state, "transition to sustainability is -- a process of social learning in its broadest sense" (p. 103).

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