

Education for Sustainable Futures: Global Citizenship and the Earth Charter

edited by **Douglas Bourn, Namrata Sharma, and Mirian Vilela**
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An overview

The foreword of the book written by **Steven Rockefeller**, Earth Charter Commissioner, who led the Earth Charter drafting committee, offers a reflection on the past and current global situation and challenges as well as an overview of the history of the Earth Charter, affirming that “the Earth Charter identifies inescapable moral and spiritual challenges and remains a force for positive change.” He then highlights the importance of education for the whole person indicating that “this volume... should also be viewed in the context of the growing contemporary movement in support of education of the whole person – mind, body, and spirit. And argues that education experiences with the Earth Charter should be aligned with the idea of “education for the whole person, heart and spirit as well as mind and body.”

Chapter 1, by **Douglas Bourn, Mirian Vilela and Namrata Sharma**, offers an introduction to the volume. In it we can find some reflections on the challenges and opportunities of the current times which are exacerbated by a lack of awareness, significant apathy or widespread lack of interest. The authors indicate that since its launch, 25 years ago, the Earth Charter has become “an important reference point” and ... “has served as a valuable educational instrument to raise awareness, clarify and examine the values and principles underlying the sustainability challenge and to inspire action. They outline the aims of the volume, such as showcase the ways in which the Earth Charter can inform, inspire and influence approaches within education that promote a just, sustainable and peaceful world. And offer a brief overview of each chapter.

Chapter 2, co-authored by **Mirian Vilela and Sam Crowell**, explores existing global efforts to reorient education to address the challenges of current times and how the Earth Charter can contribute to a new educational imperative that prepares the ground for an ecological civilization and an Earth-Centered planetary consciousness. Three related metaphors are introduced that point to new directions for education: Preparing the Ground, Weaving a Tapestry, and Writing a New Story. The chapter describes an Earth Charter Pedagogy that can be a response to an educational movement that nurtures the values and actions needed to co-create an Ecological Civilization.

Chapter 3, co-authored by **Daniela Carvalho and Rose Marie Inojosa**, focuses on the contribution of Earth Charter Pillar IV: Democracy, Non-Violence, and Peace and its relationship with education for sustainable development. It offers a reflection on the meaning of coexistence and the challenges of coexistence in a democratic environment, seeking to demonstrate how democracy is both impacted by and impacts the culture of peace and non-violence, as well as education. The chapter also briefly shares some experiences in Brazil on education for sustainable development grounded in the Earth Charter, aiming to demonstrate its potential in fostering democratic and peaceful coexistence.

Chapter 4, co-authored by **Silvia Elizabeth Moraes, Josefina Moraes Arraut, Eduardo Moraes Arraut, and Pedro Rogério** provides examples of their research and teaching experiences across different Brazilian higher education institutions, showcasing how the Earth Charter principles can serve as inspiration for curriculum across different knowledge areas for the development of a planetary consciousness. They emphasise the role of sciences, arts and humanities in education for a sustainable

future that preserves traditional knowledge and spiritual wisdom in all cultures. And argue that to develop a planetary consciousness, all areas of knowledge and institutions must work hand in hand on our way forward.

Chapter 5, authored by **Mostafa Gamal**, argues for the need to reimagine the Earth Charter as an ethico-political document and to look at it through the lens of critical global citizenship. The chapter questions some of the key assumptions which underpin the Earth Charter such as the notion of “one humanity,” “development,” “sustainability” arguing that “thinking in terms of universal humanity remains both “troubled and troubling.”

Chapter 6, co-authored by **Alicia Jimenez and Laura Engel**, discuss the relevance of the Charter to policies and the implementation of the UNESCO-led initiatives of ESD and GCE for the enhancement of quality education worldwide. The chapter focuses on UNESCO’s work in developing two major global education initiatives: Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Global Citizenship Education (GCED). The authors argue that the Earth Charter is a critical resource to more coherently merge GCED and ESD, which is crucial to the provision and enhancement of quality education worldwide.

Chapter 7, co-authored by **Mukirae Njihia, Damaris Kariuki, and Wilson Mutuma**, explores the extent to which ESD and GCED are integrated in the Kenyatta University (in Kenya) curriculum as well as other campus activities with a view to ascertain how this has impacted on sustainability consciousness as enshrined in the Earth Charter. They found out that more students need to be exposed to ESD and GCED learning; and that ESD and GCED have not been adequately integrated across different university course disciplines and recommend universities to enhance efforts to mainstream ESD and GCED in the curriculum and adopt practical initiatives.

Chapter 8, authored by **Ma Shuang**, explores the linkages between traditional Chinese philosophical concepts and the Earth Charter arguing for the relevance of these values orientations for education for sustainable development and global citizenship as well as the efforts to move towards an ecological civilization. She argues for working from the synergies of these various approaches as the result would be far greater.

Chapter 9, authored by **Namrata Sharma**, makes linkages between education for sustainability and global citizenship, the Earth Charter, and value-creating global citizenship education with relevance for ethical, intercultural, and justice-based approaches to environmental and sustainability education across formal and non-formal learning spaces. It builds on her previously published works centered around the question: How do we address teaching for sustainability and global citizenship based on alternative paradigms? And where she proposed a value-creating global citizenship education as a pedagogical approach.

Chapter 10, authored by **Tamy Kobashikawa**, offers an overview and insights of the experience of Soka Amazon Institute, a non-governmental organization (NGO) located in Manaus, Brazil that utilizes the Earth Charter as an educational instrument within its activities for sustainability and global citizenship.

Chapter 11, authored by **Hiroko Tomioka**, examines the characteristics of value-creating education and considers the commonalities with the Earth Charter from the perspective of global citizenship education. It introduces the philosophical and theoretical background of value-creating education developed by Japanese educators Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871-1944), Josei Toda (1900-1958), and Daisaku Ikeda (1928-2023), as well as the spirit of Soka University in Japan, focused on global citizenship. The chapter also discusses the potential for value-creating education to contribute to

global citizenship education and on the importance of fostering ethical perspectives in higher education, emphasizing the need to draw inspiration from the Earth Charter.

Chapter 12, co-authored by **Ana Belén García Varela and Alejandro Iborra Cuéllar**, reflects on the importance of teacher training as a cornerstone for transforming education, and to reach the Sustainable Development Goals. It provides practical examples of how to develop competencies in university teacher education from value-creating education to training educators in the face of contemporary complexities. It is focused on their experience at the University of Alcalá in Spain teaching the subject Education for Happiness, where the Earth Charter is used. The aim is to inspire students to reflect on their future role in society and their responsibility towards their community.

Chapter 13, by **Michiyo Kakegawa**, reflects on Soka University in Japan approach of value creating and global citizenship aiming at inspiring students to contribute to society. She examines theoretical concepts of environment and social justice, the Earth Charter, and value-creation approach to education and their relationship. And shares the experience of a seminar class/course on environmental economics and development economics at the Faculty of Economics, Soka University, under which students not only study the knowledge of these subjects, but also gain the ability to take actions towards building a sustainable society. For instance, as the result of student-based research, a bike-sharing system was created at the university.

Chapter 14, by **Natalya Hanley**, reflects on the role of empathy-based pedagogical approach (EBPA) and critical pedagogy and its linkages with the Earth Charter to promote justice, sustainability, and peace. It includes a discussion of the findings of a three-year research study such as the argument that incorporating empathetic listening, engagement, and discussion in education has proven essential in fostering an understanding that extends beyond local viewpoints to embrace global contexts. It ends by suggesting that “To fully understand the role of empathy within value-based GCE and Earth Charter, further research study is required with the broader range of educational institutions in secondary and higher education settings.”

Chapter 15, by **Qudsia Kalsoom**, discusses intersections between ESD and The Earth Charter and suggests that ESD can occur as a transformative educational practice if it is informed by the principles of The Earth Charter. The chapter also suggests that The Earth Charter should be used as a framework for teacher education architecture (including programme standards, curricula, teaching standards, and hidden curricula) to promote ESD-practices at pedagogical and institutional levels. It offers a perspective of teacher education practice in Pakistan.

Chapter 16, by **Akpezi Ogbuigwe, Adesuwa Vanessa Agbedahin, and Joe Macharia**, explores the concept of a "just transition" through the lenses of the Earth Charter. It addresses key aspects of climate change, its socioeconomic impacts, and the need for a just transition within the context of Africa. The chapter concludes with insights into how embracing the Earth Charter can guide toward educating for a harmonious co-existence with the environment while fostering international climate justice, social equity, and sustainable development and futures.

Chapter 17, by **Alexis Stones** builds on the critical pedagogy proposed by Freire and hooks and draws on research around museum-based practice as a teacher educator working with pre-service teachers in England over the last fifteen years to promote peace education in relation to artworks in galleries and museums. It offers reflections of experiences of working with pre-service primary school teachers and links the significance of this work for the Earth Charter’s commitment to the pillar of Democracy, Non-Violence and Peace.

Chapter 18, by **Waverli Maia Matarazzo-Neuberger and María de los Ángeles Vilches-Norat**, explores examples of achieving transformation through a transdisciplinary approach that incorporates experiential and project-based learning, reflection, dialogue, creativity, immersion in nature, and ecological perspectives. It uses the metaphor of a rhizome – an underground stem that grows horizontally and intertwines with its environment – to discuss the importance of learning within both the visible and hidden realms, while sharing their individual teaching experiences within higher education in Brazil and Puerto Rico inspired by the Earth Charter.

Chapter 19, by **Kartikeya V Sarabhai, Dr. Prithi Nambiar and Meena A.S.**, offers an overview of their long-term engagement and work at the Center for Environment Education in India with environment education, climate change education and education for sustainability inspired by a confluence of values from the Earth Charter and Indian spiritual ideals. Among other things the process of changing the national curriculum to make Environment Education compulsory for all students and writing textbooks on that, which will have a component on ethical values for sustainability for 10th grade is mentioned.

Chapter 20, by **Carla Sabbatini**, shares the work carried out by their UNESCO Chair on Education for Sustainability and Global Citizenship at their university: Universidad de San Andrés, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The chapter offers an idea of the work they have done in advising, and guiding education institutions in embracing the process of implementing education for sustainability and global citizenship inspired by the Earth Charter. It also offers some reflections on challenges faced at the institutional level. It ends with a proposal (based on their experience and the literature review) of some steps to consider when working towards cultural shift in organizational culture.

Chapter 21, by **Douglas Bourn**, outlines how a range of international policy initiatives, from the Sustainable Development Goals to UNESCO's Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development in 2023, and the European Declaration on Global Education to 2050 ('Dublin Declaration') pose the need for a different approach to education.

The chapter notes that the Charter and the subsequent policy initiatives provide the openings for providing different models of education that challenge dominant neo-liberal orthodoxies and encouraging more transformative approaches to learning. It ends arguing that "In taking forward these new international policy initiatives, the Earth Charter can be a continual source of reference and encouraging a new way of thinking."

The volume concludes with the editor's reflections on the challenges of current times and how new approaches to education can help address them. It also presents suggestions for future research on the Earth Charter and global citizenship for a more sustainable world.