Personal approaches toward sustainability – a new agenda for environmental and sustainability education (ESE)

Pascal Frank

18th February 2021, online
A paradoxical evolution

- ESE globally introduced into all levels of education
- Knowledge on sustainability-related problems increased
- Perceived importance of sustainability increased

- Sustainability-related challenges have intensified
- Individual behaviors have not changed
- Individuals who express sustainability-related values do not act accordingly

BMU & UBA, 2019; Grund & Brock, 2019
Kleinhückelkotten & Moser, 2016; GCA, 2019
A narrow focus

Nature & ecosystems

Socio-economic structures

Technology

Governance dynamics

Reflect, Analyze, Evaluate, Assess, Negotiate, Design, Plan, …

Parodi & Tamm, 2018; Yves et al., 2019; Brundiers et al., 2020; Wamsler, 2020
The neglect of inner worlds

- Bodily sensations
- Emotions
- Needs
- Sensory experiences
- Worldviews & beliefs
- Personal values
- Personal well-being
- Inner literacy

Parodi & Tamm, 2018; Yves et al., 2019; Brundiers et al., 2020; Wamsler, 2020
ESE and the personal sphere of transformation

Personal sphere of transformation (O’Brien, 2018)

Abson et al., 2017
Personal approaches toward ESE

Holistic experience

Intrapersonal competence

Inner transformation
Experiencing (un-)sustainability

Inner manifestations of (un-)sustainability

The individual as change agent

Inner sustainability

Experiencing (un-)sustainability

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Holistic experience

Intrapersonal competence

Inner transformation

Climate change anxiety $\rightarrow$ suppression of related information

Emotional resilience

Mindsets for sustainability

Facing climate change while fully feeling the threats associated with it
Holistic experience → Intrapersonal competence → Inner transformation

Climate change anxiety → suppression of related information

Emotional resilience for sustainability

Facing climate change while fully feeling the threats associated with it
Personal approaches toward ESE might be the missing link for unleashing ESE’s potential to contribute to a more sustainable future.

Inner worlds constitute the personal sphere of transformation, which is considered the deepest leverage point for a sustainability transformation.

So far only scattered approaches in practice (Murray, 2011; Brundiers & Wiek, 2017; Stanszus et al., 2017; Frank & Stanszus, 2019; Wamsler, 2020).

New bridges for inter- and transdisciplinary research (psychology / psychotherapy; contemplative science and practice; medicine...
Questions, critique, collaboration? Get in touch!

Pascal Frank
Pascal.frank@leuphana.de
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Pascal_Frank