

CONCLUSION

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This idea of the book – *Promoting Transformative Practices for Sustainability in Early Childhood Education and Care: Cultivating Critical, Participatory and Emancipatory Educational Approaches* – derived from EECERA Sustainability in Early Childhood Education Special Interest Group (SIG)’s attempts to reach many academicians, teachers and practitioners who are interested in sustainability but not sure how to start sustainability transformation firstly in their local environment with the support of children families and community members. Therefore, we embark on sharing some praxis from different countries with the contribution of researchers having different academic and research backgrounds and experiences and maturity from junior to senior in the various countries (such as Australia, Italy, Sweden and Türkiye) in the world. In this way, readers could explore multiple countries’ policies related to sustainability while reading the chapters on countries’ sustainability practices. Moreover, the audiences could discover not only practices on children but also families, teachers and pre-service teachers in ECE. We believe that this discovery gives them sparking points for their future research, education and practices. In this chapter, we share the analysis and outcomes of all chapters. As the editors, we complete the chapter by presenting the highlights of the chapters to the audience.

Background of the Book

United Nations Climate Change Conference of Parties 28 (COP 28), once more, pays attention to climate change as a global society’s widespread apprehension, and each country should deal with climate change effectively to keep the 1.50C goal (United Nations, 2023). In other words, time is critical for every person, especially young children, and their worlds need much more focus to enhance their lives

(WHO-UNICEF, 2020). At this juncture, highlighted in the introduction chapter, *Promoting Transformative Practices for Sustainability in Early Childhood Education and Care: Cultivating Critical, Participatory and Emancipatory Educational Approaches* has the purpose of taking professionals' attention to the power and transformative potential of ECEfS practices to start the sustainability transformation through critical, participatory and emancipatory approaches.

To elucidate how this book's idea derived, in the introduction part, we presented a brief outlook on the literature on the importance of early years for EfS practices and how EfS emerged and its development process in ECE, EfS theoretical background and methodologies especially the whole school approach, systems thinking, action research, Indigenous knowledge and cultural praxis, the role of teacher education and the challenges and opportunities of EfS and key recommendations (e.g. learning for change, curriculum development) to overcome the challenges.

Davis (2009) conducted the first review study to describe the research on ECEfS. Although after her review study, significant improvements in the quality and quantity of the studies on ECEfS have been seen, Somerville and Williams (2015), Hedefalk, Almqvist and Östman (2015), Bascopé, Perasso and Reiss (2019) and Guler Yildiz et al. (2021) indicated that ECEfS still needs a research foundation and critique. Further, Bascopé, Perasso and Reiss (2019) highlighted that more studies on children's empowerment and agency are required since children have a huge potential for changing and transforming the world into a more sustainable place. Via this book, we also aim to share successful stories on comprehension and practices of ECEfS programmes and strategies (Ferreira & Davis, 2015), practitioners could utilise these stories as good practice exemplars to construct a more robust EfS instead of 'patchwork quilt' (Elliott, 2006, p. 1).

Moreover, we appreciate declaring this book came through EECERA Sustainability in Early Childhood Education SIG's attempts to reach many academicians, teachers and practitioners who are interested in sustainability but not sure how to start sustainability transformation firstly in their local environment with the support of children families and community members. As Sustainability in Early Childhood Education SIG co-convenors and members, we established the EECERA Sustainability SIG Position Statement in 2023 to take researchers', teachers', practitioners', policy makers' and school managers' attention to the 'globally transformative agenda' composed by The UN Global Action Programme (GAP) and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) (UNESCO, 2017). To promote this agenda, the SIG has purposes to:

- Create a space for critical dialogues and collaborative research about sustainability in early childhood education;
- Develop synergies between participants from a wide range of professional and scientific contexts; and,
- Provide an academic and rigorous forum at European and international levels to develop and disseminate high-quality research on sustainability in early childhood education (p. 2).

All these inputs helped us to determine the content of the book, and we shared the book flyer via social media and e-mails to find the possible authors. Initially, 16 authors confirmed to make a contribution with a chapter to the book; however, some authors withdrew due to unexpected conditions (e.g. health issues). Even though we, editors, were exposed to challenges throughout this journey, now we have completed the book with seven significant chapters from seven countries. We desire to share the outputs of the chapters for the literature, although we are aware that each researcher, teacher and practitioner has different perspectives from ours. This also contributes to establishing ‘critical dialogues and collaborative research’.

The Outputs

The analysis of the chapters indicates that a great majority of the chapters addressed SDGs, especially highlighting SDG 4 Quality Education and its targets while some of them (such as Alici and Hirst et al.) made connections to other SDGs (e.g. SDG 3, 5 and 12 and their targets). Mindfulness and children’s health were also placed in the chapters. We also noticed that all chapters emphasised that ECEfS practices could not focus on just environmental sustainability but also encompass social, cultural, economic and political pillars of sustainability. Based on this perspective, the authors shaped their studies’ theoretical background, methodology and implementations covering the other pillars except the environmental pillar. For instance, Jørgensen et al. criticised the Danish ECE curriculum for only supporting children’s outdoor experiences.

Moreover, in each chapter, you can also explore each country’s – where the research was conducted – policies related to sustainability, ECEfS, ECE curriculum and ECE teacher education policy. Throughout the chapters, you can perceive each country’s strong and weak sides of the policy, and discover how the policy on sustainability and ECEfS development occurs, which factors and conditions are effective while shaping countries’ policy, where our research place, and if any effect is there, what are our research’s impacts on policy? On the other hand, if you look at another perspective, which parameters provoke us to plan, design and conduct these studies?

When we scrutinise the chapters in the light of climate change and the climate crisis in the world, which precautions could be to diminish the effect of the climate crisis and climate change as one of the leading environmental researchers, David Orr, highlighted that ‘the crisis [of sustainability] cannot be solved by the same kind of education that has helped create the problems’ (1994, p. 83) so we enhance alternative ones to the current ones. This could be possible by looking at another perspective, which means, critical theory. Therefore, we see that while composing their studies, the authors turn their faces to critical theory and alternative perspectives, i.e. systems thinking and alternative approach, e.g. whole school approach. Looking through critical theory, each study focuses on different target groups from children to teachers, giving importance to inclusiveness with distinctive approaches,

i.e. mosaic approach (Hirst et al.,) and whole centre approach (Ärlemalm-Hagsér & Elliott) methodologies, such as case study (Engdahl, et al.), PAR (Dovigo) and UREs based CPAR (Alici). These methodologies are supported by different data collection methods, such as photovoice (Hirst, et al., Dovigo) and mapping (Jørgensen et al.) and various implementations, such as sensory garden (Dovigo) children's books and bilingualism (Hirst, et. al.). Two chapters (Ärlemalm-Hagsér & Elliott and Hirst et al.) compared two different countries' ECEfS implementations via presenting cases. Moreover, some authors made inferences based on their research. For example, Ärlemalm-Hagsér and Elliott initially set out to investigate the Whole School Approach (WSA). However, in light of their research findings—along with insights from the literature on transformational leadership and the eight characteristics of an effective school organisation for sustainability proposed by Verhelst et al. (2022)—they re-tailored the WSA for early childhood education centres, developing what they termed the Whole Centre Approach (WCA).

Key Takeaways

As Scott and Gough (2004) emphasised, 'there is no absolute answer to the question of what is an appropriate pedagogical approach to learning' in the context of sustainable development (p. 75). Thus, the audiences who read the chapters can receive different takeaways based on their interests, needs and educational and practical background on ECEfs. However, as editors, we anticipated that audiences

- To discover each country's different perspectives and prerequisites related to ECEfS.
- To explore every country's weak and strong sides of ECEfS policies.
- To examine how ECEfS policies and researchers' background and the place shape the research or the research shape the policy.
- To describe which methodology(ies) are more suitable for their context.
- To become aware of how the other pillars of sustainability (such as social, cultural, and political) except environmental targeting various SDGs integrate into research and practices.
- To compare the authors' and their sparking points for their research and practice for lighting their roads.
- To inquire how to combat climate change issues based on SDGs by using systems thinking and action research.

Although we expected the above-mentioned, audiences' ethnographical insights and diverse experiences as researchers, educators and practitioners they can take different key points with themselves. Nonetheless, as Evans et al (2022) underlined the 'differences among the [researchers] highlight the importance of acting versus waiting for consensus' (p. 8). We having different educational and research backgrounds hope to encourage your exploration of sustainability to illuminate your road for future research, implementation and practices.

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