

## Chapter 9

# Conclusion

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### Abstract

This concluding chapter summarises and discusses some of the key messages from the chapters in this book. Careful consideration of the terms introduced, defined and refined in this book (e.g., crises) is made, along with the contexts in which such refined definitions may be especially useful for research, scholarship and practice in higher education. The points of intersections among this book's chapters and the authors' arguments are also highlighted in this chapter.

*Keywords:* Education; international; sustainable development; crises; glocal; global

This edited volume set out to explore and discuss education and international sustainable development in the context of crises. The most significant points the contributing authors have raised relate to the strong connection and synergetic impact that the collaboration between education and international sustainable development can create and the diverse ways in which 'crises' can be defined and experienced across different educational and cultural contexts. All the chapters highlight the importance of contextualisation of education and, in particular, raising awareness for sustainable development, in order to better prepare students for the present as well as future crises. In this final chapter, I will revisit some of the unique messages from individual chapters as well as discuss some common themes that recur despite the diversity of the contexts.

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**Education and Sustainable Development in the Context of Crises:  
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As [Boin et al. \(2020\)](#) have claimed, a crisis leads to a disruption in the normal operations, and we saw education having to deal with such crises during the pandemic in the recent years. Student expectations, delivery of teaching and assessment modes were only the most obvious of the changes that came with the pandemic, meaning that through this period, significant efforts to maintain academic standards and quality were observed. Furthermore, there were plenty of other socio-political events that occurred during and following the pandemic – such as the war in Ukraine and Gaza and instances of extreme weather events fuelled by climate change that exerted combined pressure on education institutions and educators.

As the authors of Chapter 2 call to our attention, quality education is one of the 17 United Nations' (UN) sustainable development goals (SDGs), and this goal carries much weight in the sense that it intersects with other SDGs such as reduced inequality, sustainable cities and communities, good health and well-being and many more. While there is a universal drive towards improving education, the challenges in regions with social and political instabilities are apparent ([Agbedahin, 2019](#)). Along with Chapter 2, all other chapters in this book outlined some of these challenges and also presented current projects as well as potential future solutions to tackling these challenges.

Importantly, this book also presented how higher education institutions outside of the typical so-called WEIRD – that is Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich and Democratic – countries coped with and adapted to the changes and challenges of these years. For some of the challenges that an international campus faces and the need for a better intercultural communication in Iraq. Working at an American institution within Iraq (the American University of Iraq Sulaimani), staff reported challenges posed by both the differences in cultural values and communication style in trying to deliver and manage effective education to students enrolled in such an institution. At the same time, however, the authors demonstrated how scholars at this international campus were actively promoting sustainable goals, especially by raising awareness, instigating policy discussions and building capacity with regard to their students and teachers.

Similarly, we read about school leadership in Somalia in the midst of the armed conflict that has affected the country and schools in Chapter 4. The authors present critical insights and research findings on primary school headteachers' experience through the challenging times. While the external, uncontrollable crises posed significant difficulties, headteachers' skills and resilience helped reduce some of their impact and led to better education for the students. The authors also suggest efficacy and especially collective efficacy (e.g., [DeWitt, 2017](#)) as a potential adaptive mechanism that can help improve school climate. This idea echoes [Capone et al. \(2019\)](#) who found collective efficacy to help reduce burden and stress in schoolteachers.

Chapter 6 discusses migration as one of the key themes of the UN SDGs and the need for higher education to consider both the reasons for migration and its implications for education. With globalisation and especially the crises one faces in their culture of origin, we see a huge amount of migration happening around the globe, and this suggests that higher education institutions need to understand

the trends and changes and adapt flexibly and openly to identify opportunities as well for educators and students alike, which the authors highlight as an important step towards sustainable development.

Chapter 7 highlights the need to expand and improve education for global citizenship. In facing the global crises and the uncertainties that accompany these crises, students can be better prepared if education helped them to form a clearer sense of identity and agency. The author suggests that the contextualisation of communicative acts and, in particular, the introduction of so-called learning life-worlds can help achieve this goal, finding her methods to have worked well with a group of students in Hong Kong.

Chapter 8 discusses the important interplay between the macro-level, external goals (as listed in UN SDGs), and the micro-level, internal goals (Inner Development Goals or individual actor's own setting of and capacity building towards goals). The author argues that it is a better idea to start from the individual to effect these goals if one realises that the systems are built upon individuals' perceptions, beliefs and actual behaviours, and that this would lead to better outcomes in tackling the global challenges.

Our book has raised an important point about the role of higher education in today's fast-changing world. For instance, Chapters 3 and 5 concur in that the objective of international higher education in times of crisis should be to train students to be community leaders as well as agents of change. The authors argue that higher education institutions carry the responsibility to equip the next generation to be fully aware of the local and global issues, to be independent thinkers so that they have the capacity to tackle the crises that affect themselves and their local community and be able to lead on solutions.

This book has appealed to be an interesting concept of glocalism, which combines the processes of localisation and globalisation. As is pointed out in Chapter 2, it is recognised that the locality and the crises it faces often mirror those of the global world, and also that in today's world, both are closely intertwined with one another. This recognition that global and local issues are closely interconnected, thus giving shape to crises in specific ways across different contexts, also highlights the need for international education and its contribution towards sustainable development.

The COVID-19 pandemic was such an example in which the crises higher education institutions faced affected the global world (e.g., mode of teaching had to be transformed according to the lockdown rules). These crises also hit local regions in ways that were more specific (e.g., in South Korea, this led to a further polarisation of resources dividing the capital city region from the rest of the country). The authors' suggestion for tackling these issues in Chapter 5 was to educate and empower university students in such a way that they embrace sustainable development both regionally and globally.

Across the chapters, there is a unanimous message that we need to pay more attention to the interconnectedness among the concepts, actors and levels of agents that may seem disparate and loosely related. The best way to tackle the 'crises' may be that we recognise the role of education in raising awareness, training and empowering the young generation so that they can be active agents of

international sustainable development. In this book, we have seen discussions that connect the global and the local issues and how they impact on the global community. We have also witnessed both the divisions between and the interplay of impact originating from the external circumstances, the systems and the actors, as well as regions and countries coming together and having a bigger influence on one another in today's world of globalisation and resulting international mobility. This book has highlighted the importance of re-thinking education across various policy levels and countries, recognising its role in training people to be able to manage and survive various crises in the present as well as the future. Another important message from this book, leading from all of these conclusions, may be that, as self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012) and the Inner Development Goals (2021) suggest, we focus on building resilience by way of increasing the sense of agency, developing the internal strength and capacity that prepares one against the external challenges. Finally, we see that a clear identity, for both education institution and students, is what will foster their resilience and adaptability.

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