

2023-12-01

## Special Issue - Editorial

Cormac H. MacMahon  
*Technological University Dublin*, cormac.mcmahon@tudublin.ie

Philippe Lemarchand  
*Technological University Dublin*, philippe.lemarchand@tudublin.ie

Lucia Morales  
*Technological University Dublin*, lucia.morales@tudublin.ie

Jon-Hans Coetzer  
*UNITAR*, jon-hans.coetzer@unitar.org

Follow this and additional works at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijap>

### Recommended Citation

MacMahon, Cormac H.; Lemarchand, Philippe; Morales, Lucia; and Coetzer, Jon-Hans (2023) "Special Issue - Editorial," *Irish Journal of Academic Practice*: Vol. 11: Iss. 2, Article 1.  
Available at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijap/vol11/iss2/1>

Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

# **Editorial: Education for Sustainable Development: Pedagogical Innovations Empowering Transformation towards a Resilient and Regenerative Future**

Cormac MacMahon<sup>1</sup>, Lucía Morales<sup>1</sup>, Philippe Lemarchand<sup>1</sup>, Jon-Hans Coetzer<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Technological University Dublin (IRELAND)

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)

## **Introduction**

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) envision a future of social justice and economic prosperity within environmental limits, with education as a catalyst for transformation. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is premised on learning being repurposed from one with a primarily economic focus to one encompassing global citizenship, social responsibility and environmental stewardship. SDG 4.7 mandates higher education institutions to prepare graduates for this renewed purpose and is measured by the extent to which ESD is mainstreamed in higher education. In line with this repurposing, we issued a call for original research articles, reviews, commentaries and reflections for a special issue of the Irish Journal of Academic Practice (IJAP) at Technological University Dublin, aimed at capturing pedagogical innovations, underpinning institutional strategy and capacity building across higher education, which are contributing to SDG 4.7. The call sought articles that share lessons learned from emergent practices in ESD as well as contrasting views on the future direction of academic scholarship and professional practice, across the disciplines, in this field. The importance of pedagogy as a driver of change that enables the transformation of education is vital as we are facing fast-evolving socio-economic and environmental systems defined by their complexity. We argue on the need to offer a learner-centred experience that embraces the value of connecting with research activities that are vital as we seek to equip our learners with the skills and competencies that support the transition from Industry 4.0 to 5.0 Hence, the special issue encompassed a range of thematic areas listed in Table 1.

In some respects, these thematic areas, some might argue, encompass a broad and loosely defined knowledge base. Yet, as is evident from Bianchi et al. (2022) listing of sustainability competencies, ESD is as much defined by its set of underpinning values as it is by any disciplinary knowledge. In many respects, the epistemological basis for

sustainability is still forming. The sustainability sciences are evolving rapidly, from the first inclinations that burning fossil fuels cause global warming (Arrhenius,1896) to the latest understanding of the socio-ecological challenges we face in keeping the Earth system within a safe operating space whilst pursuing a more equitable distribution of natural resources (Rammelt et al., 2023). This rapid evolution in knowledge is happening to such an extent that understanding appears to unfold in real-time. Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge that the Sustainability agenda is not limited to the green energy transition and that the United Nations 2030 Agenda provides a holistic compass that, while being various ambitious and subject to significant implementation constraints, offers guidelines on the need to take action towards the development of more inclusive and diverse socio-economic models.

**Table1: Thematic Areas of Call for Papers**

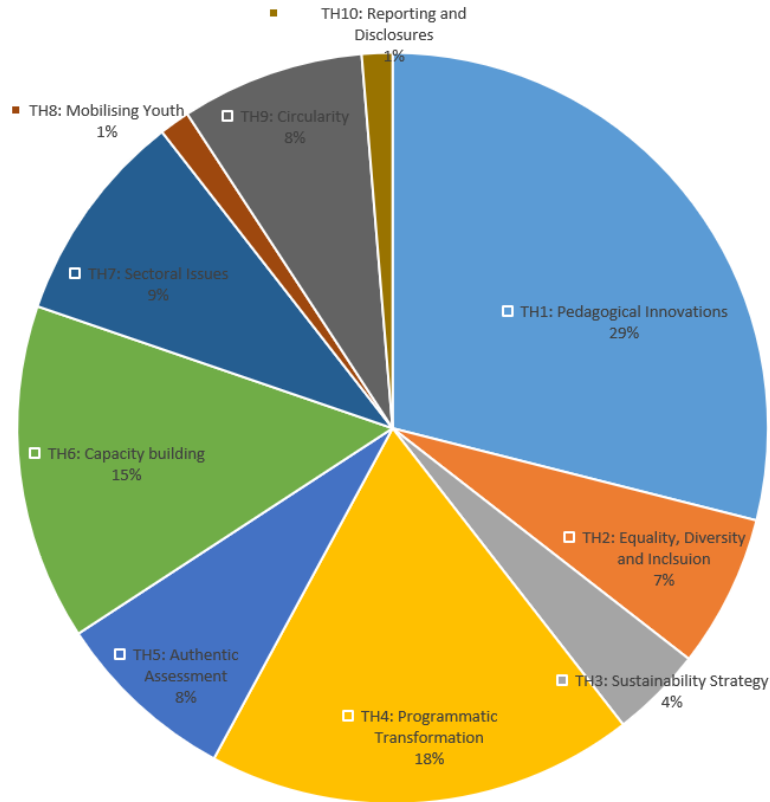
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>
TH <sub>1</sub>	pedagogical innovations for SDG 4.7
TH <sub>2</sub>	embedding equality, diversity and inclusion for learner success
TH <sub>3</sub>	sustainability strategy in higher education – what does it look like, and how is it manifested in our emerging education models?
TH <sub>4</sub>	programmatic transformation - approaches to embedding the SDGs in the curriculum, authentic assessment for sustainable development
TH <sub>5</sub>	authentic assessment for sustainable development
TH <sub>6</sub>	building capacity - competencies for, professional development of, and communities of practice amongst educators for sustainability
TH <sub>7</sub>	emergent sectoral and disciplinary issues in ESD
TH <sub>8</sub>	mobilising young people - promoting behavioural change, activism and responsible citizenship through education experiences
TH <sub>9</sub>	integrating circular principles in higher education and its implications for curriculum design, pedagogy, resource allocation and organising.
TH <sub>10</sub>	framing sustainability as super wicked problems and interdisciplinary approaches to solving complex sustainability challenges.
TH <sub>11</sub>	sustainability reporting and disclosures ~ navigating the complex sustainability intelligence landscape in higher education.

The Irish Journal of Academic Practice (IJAP) was first published in 2011 and has since published circa 140 articles by authors worldwide, supporting many early-stage educational researchers in developing their academic writing skills. IJAP articles are published under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial Share Alike license.

With no paywall, articles can be accessed openly and anonymously. We suspect that the editors did not arrive at a title for the journal by accident either, with much of its scholarship rooted in classroom practices. We are particularly grateful to the editors of the journal, Roisin Donnelly, Claire McAvinia and Kevin O'Rourke, for allowing IJAP to be the vehicle for disseminating the scholarship of this particular call, which was motivated, to a large extent, by the enormous energy in learning, teaching and assessment practices evident in pivoting the education provision towards a higher purpose, enshrined in SDG 4.7. Likewise, we are also grateful for the collaborative arrangements and leadership of Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) in supporting this enterprise. Both institutions have embraced the SDGs in their strategic orientations and, as evidenced in contributions to this call, mobilised their educations and learners to respond to the transformational challenges.

### **Contributions to this Call**

There were over 35 article submissions by 61 authors from 8 countries in response to the call. Although not all themes were covered by submissions, broadly construed that there was good thematic coverage, which emphasised programmatic transformation, pedagogical innovation and capacity building (Figure 1). Indeed, the priorities of these submissions reflect the ESD emerging policy framework at institutional, national and international levels (e.g. Government of Ireland, 2022; TU Dublin, 2019; USDSN, 2017, 2020)



**Figure 1: Thematic Alignment by Submission**

As with all IJAP editions, our peer review process was designed to ensure a sufficient level of scrutiny merited by the level of scholarship and academic integrity required of the journal. We are, therefore, very appreciative of the efforts of all reviewers in providing constructive feedback. A total of 11 articles were accepted for this first volume, with a second volume expected later in 2024.

## References

- Arrhenius, S. (1896). XXXI. On the influence of carbonic acid in the air upon the temperature of the ground. *The London, Edinburgh, and Dublin Philosophical Magazine and Journal of Science*, 41(251), 237-276.
- Bianchi, G., Pisiotis, U., & Cabrera Giraldez, M. (2022). *GreenComp: The European sustainability competence framework* (No. JRC128040). Joint Research Centre (Seville site).
- Government of Ireland (2023). *ESD to 2030: Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development*. Available online at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/02952d-national-strategy-on-education-for-sustainable-development-in-irelan/> (Accessed 23 January 2024)
- Rammelt, C. F., Gupta, J., Liverman, D., Scholtens, J., Ciobanu, D., Abrams, J. F., ... & Zimm, C. (2023). Impacts of meeting minimum access on critical earth systems amidst the Great Inequality. *Nature Sustainability*, 6(2), 212-221.
- TU Dublin (2019). *Realising Infinite Possibilities. Strategic Intent 2030*. Technological University Dublin. Available online at: <https://www.tudublin.ie/media/website/explore/about-the-university/equality-and-diversity/TU-Dublin-Strategic-Intent-2030.pdf> (Accessed 23 January 2024)
- UNSDN. (2017). *Getting Started with the SDGs in Universities: A Guide for Universities, Higher Education Institutions and the Academic Sector*. SDSN Australia / Pacific. Available online at: <https://resources.unsdsn.org/getting-started-with-the-sdgs-in-universities> (Accessed 23 January 2024)
- UNSDSN (2020). *Accelerating Education for the SDGs in Universities: A Guide for Universities, Colleges, and Tertiary and Higher Education Institutions*. SDSN Australia / Pacific

# Irish Journal of Academic Practice

