

# Editorial Introduction

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This issue of the FECUN journal explores two themes: ‘Reimagining interdependence’ and ‘Peace and Conflict,’ each closely tied to our understanding of the futures of education, culture, and nature. In this first round of published contributions (see below), we will focus on the theme ‘Reimagining interdependence.’ This theme invites a rethinking of the intricate connections between humans, nature, and the various systems we inhabit. Drawing inspiration from diverse global perspectives, the contributions related to this theme emphasize the need for a holistic approach to education that integrates ecological sustainability, cultural richness, and social well-being, reflecting the interconnectedness of all aspects of life on Earth without being blind to the challenges such interconnectedness and interdependence might pose. On the other hand, the theme of peace and conflict, the focus of the next publication round in this issue, examines the roles education, culture, and nature play in fostering harmony or at least more peaceful disagreements in a conflicted world. By addressing the roots of conflict and fostering a culture of peace, including a reflected notion of peace, education can become a powerful tool in building more resilient and (at least more) harmonious societies.

We introduce the idea that contributions will be released in ‘Rounds’ to ensure a continuous content stream of articles and align with the order in which we receive contributions. As mentioned, this first round of contributions relates to the theme ‘Reimagining Interdependence.’ The subsequent rounds are scheduled for publication in August, with a potential third round in October. The second round will contain contributions to the second theme, ‘Peace and Conflict.’ The editorial introduction will continuously be updated for each round.

The first round, related to the theme of ‘Reimagining Interdependence’ in relation to the futures of Education, Culture, and Nature, contains an academic essay and four articles. The contributions underscore the need to shift toward holistic, value-based education paradigms. The contributions reflect a broader critique of traditional metrics and methodologies and discuss various possibilities and challenges concerning relating the idea of interdependence to education, culture, and nature, both locally and globally.

His Excellency, HE Thakur S. Powdyel, is a former Minister of Education in Bhutan, a globally renowned educational thinker, recipient of the International Gusi Peace Prize and the Global Education Award, and the keynote speaker at the FECUN 2023 online conference ‘Reimagining Interdependence.’ Powdyel, however, is also the architect behind Bhutan's Green School program, and he presents in his essay, titled "Bhutan's Unique Development Paradigm: The Green School Model of Restorative Learning," the vision of the Green Schools as deeply embedded in the interdependences of education, culture, and nature. The Green School Model can be seen as an educational vision of Bhutan's Gross National Happiness (GNH) framework, and Powdyel's discourse aligns with the idea of reimagining interdependence as he, from the GNH perspective, challenges the conventional GDP-centric development model and develops a new

perspective on the role and aim of education. The model emphasizes a holistic approach to education and human development that integrates eight essential elements: Nature, Society, Culture, Intellect, Academics, Aesthetics, Spirituality, and Ethics. The so-called 'Sherig Mandala' encapsulates this dynamic interdependence, urging a harmonious coexistence where education is a vehicle for sustainable development and societal well-being. In reimagining our collective futures, this model might serve as a possible contextual framing that prioritizes the interconnectedness of all aspects of life.

The four peer-reviewed articles published in this round likewise, in various ways, explore the possibilities and challenges of integrating the concept of interdependence with considerations concerning the futures of education, culture, and nature.

Karen Bjerg Petersen's article, "Reimagining Education? Reflections on the Bhutan Baccalaureate and Nel Noddings' Concepts of Happiness, Education, and Ethics of Care," intertwines the global discourse on holistic education with the Bhutanese emphasis on happiness and care. Petersen critiques the narrow focus on skills and competency in neoliberal education systems, advocating for a broader, value-based approach that mirrors the principles of Gross National Happiness. The Bhutan Baccalaureate's emphasis on cerebral, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual development resonates with Noddings' vision of integrating care and happiness into education. This alignment underscores the notion of interdependence, suggesting that true educational success lies in nurturing interconnected human development aspects that contribute to personal and societal harmony. However, Bjerg Petersen also discusses possible challenges for this new Baccalaureate, which must be considered.

Michael Penzold's analysis in "Resistance in Education: An Empirical Approach to a Pedagogically Relevant Concept," drawing from Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of Liberation, explores the multifaceted nature of resistance as both a personal and collective endeavor. Through empirical studies with student teachers, Penzold reveals resistance as a dynamic and emotionally charged concept essential for fostering critical thinking and autonomy. This perspective aligns with the broader theme of reimagining interdependence, where resistance becomes crucial in navigating and transforming oppressive structures within educational and societal contexts. Penzold emphasizes the interconnectedness of individual agency and collective well-being by advocating for resistance as an important educational theme.

Randy and Kent Schroeder's exploration, "Where is the Coastline? Interdependence and Scale," uses the metaphor of a coastline to illustrate the fluid boundaries of educational and environmental paradigms. They argue that understanding the complexities of interdependence requires a nuanced appreciation of scale, where local actions have global repercussions and vice versa. This metaphorical coastline reflects the theme of reimagining interdependence by highlighting the interconnectedness inherent in our ecological and educational systems. The Schroeders exemplify their considerations by relating to the dynamics and tensions between Bhutan's GNH-inspired environmental policy and the situation on the ground, challenging readers to rethink fixed notions of boundaries and advocating for a more fluid and interconnected approach to addressing both local and more global challenges. This perspective is crucial for reimagining our futures together, recognizing that contextual framings must be flexible and inclusive to accommodate diverse environmental (and educational) realities.

Michal Pilgaard, Maja Melballe Jensen, and Jeanette Baagø, in their article "Designing an Online Learning Platform for Supporting Education for Sustainable Development," present a forward-thinking approach to integrating sustainable development into educational frameworks through an innovative online learning platform. This platform, designed with user-cen-

tric principles and interactive content, aims to foster a deep understanding of sustainable development principles. The authors advocate for a transformative educational experience that transcends traditional classroom boundaries by leveraging digital technologies. This initiative emphasizes the intricate dynamic between generic concepts such as education for sustainable development and their contextualization, as well as culturally promoting applied and experiential learning that aligns with the broader goals of interdependence and sustainable development. The platform represents a dynamic intersection of technology, education, and environmental consciousness, highlighting the interconnectedness necessary for addressing contemporary global challenges.

Through reflective analysis and empirical inquiry, these articles advocate for environmental and educational models that prioritize comprehensive well-being, ethical relationships, and the cultivation of critical resistance. The integrative approaches offer a nuanced perspective on the future of education, emphasizing the need for interconnected, adaptive, and sustainable educational practices. By reimagining our futures together, this issue highlights the importance of contextual framings that honor the pluralistic nature of the broad spectrum of global challenges and opportunities in relation to Sustainable Development.