

Spring Campus, March 30 – April 3, 2020

Workshop: “Higher Education for Sustainability in Turbulent Times”, March 31 – April 1, 2020

Organized by Prof. Dr. Inka Bormann, Dr. Mandy Singer-Brodowski, Nora Große (Freie Universität Berlin) and Prof. Robert VanWynsberghe (University of British Columbia)

Abstract

The recent student movements calling for climate justice have arguably created new opportunities and requirements for an inclusive and empowering Higher Education for Sustainable Development (HESD). Firstly, as more students aim to understand complex sustainability challenges, potential strategies and solutions, HESD may require innovative approaches to respond to their heterogeneous backgrounds, competencies and needs. In this context, e-learning and blended learning may allow more flexible learning adapted to students’ individual and social realities.

Secondly, sustainability activism and digitization may require a critical reflection of HESD educators’ and students’ roles and necessary skills. Educators play a vital role in enabling transformative learning processes, thereby supporting and empowering students as individual and collective sustainability actors – not only cognitively, but also emotionally and socially. Yet, how should HESD educators respond to questions of normativity, ideology and emotions like climate anxiety in the classroom? Which personal and professional skills are necessary to foster students’ competencies and self-efficacy, and through which training formats can HESD educators acquire these?

Finally, transdisciplinary approaches may address students’ aim to make concrete, meaningful societal changes in cooperation with non-academic partners. This includes a wide spectrum of activities, ranging from research- to project-based cooperation, bilateral to multi-stakeholder- and community-based partnerships. Which course programs, formats and practices can foster successful, long-term transdisciplinary learning processes and projects, and which challenges are they confronted with?

This workshop aims to share and discuss innovative formats in HESD and learning in the context of global sustainability and digital transformations. In light of the above-mentioned questions, the workshop focuses on three promising approaches – **blended learning, transformative learning and transdisciplinary learning** – their respective potentials, challenges and strategies for implementation, including case studies and best practices.

Spring Campus, March 30 – April 3, 2020

Contributions may address but are not limited to the following questions:

Blended learning:

- What are the potentials and benefits of university blended learning formats and courses for students and teachers? Which concrete formats and best practices exist in the context of sustainability?
- How are teachers and students trained or supported in the design, implementation and use of blended learning formats? How do they evaluate these formats?
- Which challenges and obstacles exist in designing, implementing, spreading and reaping the benefits from blended learning formats and courses?

Transformative learning:

- Which transformative learning processes occur when university students and educators deal with sustainability problems?
- Which learning environments are necessary to empower students in the context of controversial, normative and increasingly emotional sustainability discussions?
- Which competencies and skills do university educators need in this context and which training formats/best practices exist to professionalize HESD teachers accordingly?

Transdisciplinary learning:

- Which processes and methods can help develop a common language and understanding between different stakeholders involved in transdisciplinary projects? How can potentially diverging interests and motivations be balanced out?
- How can long-term commitment from students and project partners be fostered for a successful project implementation and continuation? How can effective knowledge-transfer be assured? What are potential models of financing?

Call for Contributions

Workshop participants should contribute to the workshop by sending an abstract of the research project they would like to present – including abstracts about new conceptual ideas or empirical research projects. Please send your abstracts (500-900 words) to **nora.grosse@fu-berlin.de** until **10 February 2020**. During the workshop, projects can either be introduced in a short presentation (15 minutes with 10 minutes discussion afterwards) or as part of a poster presentation session, which is recommended, especially, for PhD students. The workshop will take place at the annual Spring Campus Conference of the University Alliance for Sustainability. For further information on the conference, please see: <https://www.fu-berlin.de/en/sites/spring-campus/index.html>