

## SDGs and Global Citizenship Education

Shigeru Aoyagi

Thank you very much. Professor Suzuki, the President of Soka University; Dr Tashiro, Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of Soka University; distinguished speakers, Professor Galison and Professor Fuji and Professor Odari. Distinguished faculties and researchers, good morning to you all.

It's my great honor to be here to join you at this first international symposium on the Global Citizenship Education. I think this symposium is a kind of testament to the strong commitment of Soka University to promote the Global Citizenship Education as well as reaffirming the power of education to address the global challenges.

Today's presentation, my title is SDGs and Global Citizenship Education. As you know, this is a kind of symbolic badge of SDGs representing 17 colors of the different roles. This was given by President Suzuki. Thank you so much. Yesterday I saw his badge when I met him first and I realized I forgot this. I intended to bring this badge for the symposium, but I left this in my house. Thank you so much, President Suzuki.

Today I will discuss GCED, Global Citizenship Education, and its contribution to addressing global challenges and to transforming our society, and I will share my views on how the philosophy of John Dewey continues to shape the concept of education in 21st century, although I am not an expert on this work. Professor Galison, Professor Fuji, elaborated the relevance of his thought today's world and it was so impressive. Thank you so much for your presentation.

There are four parts of my presentation. The first, I will discuss the global and regional challenges we face in the world today. Then second, I will introduce global education

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response on Sustainable Development Goal 4, with special emphasis on SDG 4.7, including historical development of GCED and ESD, Education for Sustainable Development, and touch upon the interactions between the philosophies of John Dewey and GCED. Third, I will present some innovative global and regional responses to GCED carried out by UNESCO and its partners. In concluding, we will review the vision statement from the recent transform education summit, in short TES, which was touched upon by Dr. Tashiro in his remarks. Then finally, I will discuss how Dewey's philosophies are still valid in the 21st century as we reimagine education and the potential, the way forward.

### **1. The global and regional challenges we face today**

Let's take a quick look at some of the critical issues that we are facing today and where we are stance at this moment. Our world is currently facing unprecedented challenges. These challenges disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, exacerbate existing inequalities, and expose people and nature, the planet, into danger.

We have still growing populations. The population has grown from one billion about 200 years ago to almost eight billion today, and it will increase up to nine billion by 2050. This causes a big pressure on the people and nature on the planet in many senses. We face the growing risk of more frequent pandemics, poverty, and vast economic disparities.

We also face climate change, mass loss of biodiversity, and natural disasters. As recent flood and record heat waves worldwide have amply demonstrated, the effects and fallout of climate change can be staggering. For example, in our region alone, the UN Secretary General describes the recent floods in Pakistan as climate change of an unprecedented scale. With the floods in Pakistan more than 1,300 lives have been lost and tens of millions of people are now homeless. Moreover, education and learning has been interrupted for an estimated 3.5 million children.

On other fronts, human induced violence and conflicts, such as the war in Ukraine, are hardly abating.

Let us take a moment of reflection. These diverse natural and human induced challenges are complex and interrelated, as we listened to the previous two lectures, and must be addressed now by us all for the future of our children and nature. We should make every

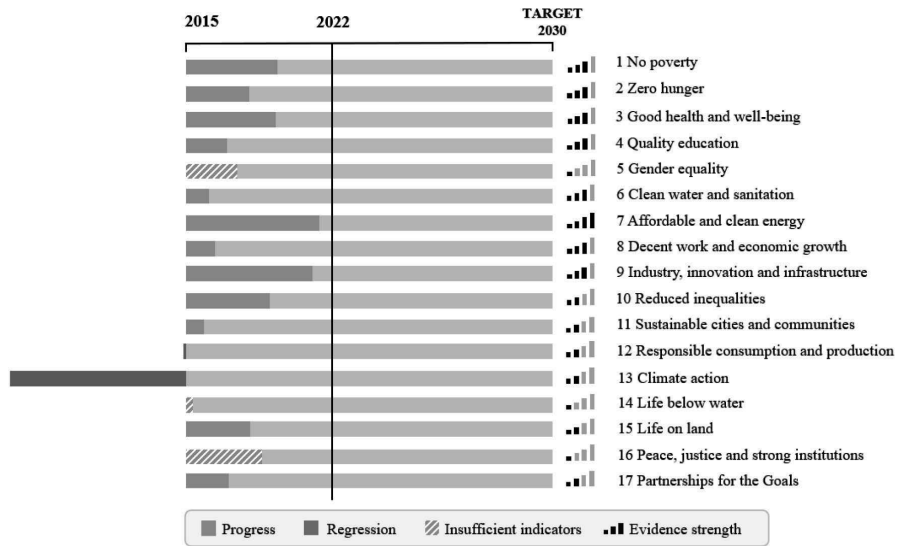
possible effort to change our own mindset, attitudes, and habits and behaviors to begin with.

Now, let's look at where we are now in terms of Agenda 2030 in Asia and the Pacific. The Asia-Pacific forum on sustainable development 2022 was held by UN ESCAP in March of this year in Bangkok, where SDG progress in the region was examined. The theme of the forum was building back better from COVID-19, while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 agenda in the region. The forum provided the space for an in-depth review of the following cluster of goals, namely SDG 4 on education, 5 on gender, 14 on life the water, 15 on life on land, and 17, partnerships, which is a common thread to other 16 SDGs. UNESCO Bangkok office, my office, was responsible for the SDG 4 recording, and for organizing its roundtable.

The SDGs' progress report for Asia-Pacific, which was discussed in the forum, illustrates how much progress has been made in our region to achieve the 17 SDGs through which we can address the challenges we face today. According to the report, the estimated year to achieve the SDGs in our region at current pace is 2065, far beyond our current target. Progress towards SDGs in the region has slowed as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change have exacerbated development challenges. At the current rate of change none of the 17 SDGs will be achieved in the region by 2030, except that only east and northeast Asia is on track towards no poverty of Goal 1, and industry innovation and infrastructure of Goal 9.

This graph shows more explicitly where the region stands on the 17 SDGs. The center vertical line shows the expected achievement towards 2022, this year, and blue bars record to the progress. The most promising Goals are SDG 7 on energy, and 9 on industry, and we also see some progress on SDG 1 on poverty, 3 on health, and 10 on inequalities. But the pace of the progress is slow or stagnant. And there has been little or no progress on Goal 4, on education, 5 on gender, 6 on clean water, 8 on decent work, 11 on sustainable cities, and 14 on life below water. Notably, the region has regressed on Goal 13 on climate change, and 12 on consumption and production, which very much to do with the current world, and our big challenge in weather, pollution, and other very serious matters. And all in all, the region is not on track, and achieving the remaining targets requires urgent and rapid acceleration of progress or the reversal of negative trends.

## SDGs and Global Citizenship Education



**Source: Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2022**

The COVID-19 pandemic is threatening the case of development gains and throwing progress on SDGs even further off track. In terms of SDG 4 on education, COVID-19 disrupted education of about 800 million children in the region, according to the report, and school closures lasted for different durations across the region, ranging from approximately one month in Japan to 18 months in Bangladesh and the Philippines. An estimated 10 million learners from the region are at risk of not returning to schools or universities once they reopen. To get back on track to achieve SDG 4 educational expenditures must be increased from 4 to 6 percent of GDP, and 15 to 20 percent of total public expenditure. It is really, really challenge figures.

Let us take a moment of reflection. As we grasp that the global and regional challenges we are experiencing today, let me share a quote from Dewey. “The interaction of knowledge and skills with experience is key to learning.” From your own perspective, let us take a moment to reflect on what we can learn from Dewey’s philosophy to reimagine education and to address some of the global challenges we are facing today.

I know you are from different kind of positions and perspectives, different countries, but we are now facing our common varied challenges in the world. So, from your perspective what you can bring to address these issues, and what we can learn now from the philosophy of Dewey. That is the kind of things we have to collectively reflect during the symposium.

## 2. Global education response on Sustainable Development Goal 4

Part Two of my presentation focuses on SDG 4 on education, and significance of SDG 4.7. Let's first revisit SDG 4, which ensures quality education for all. In general, SDG 4 is widely recognized to be at the heart of sustainable development and essential to the success of all the 17 goals. SDG 4 aims to ensure quality of educational access and broaden and deepen education to people of all ages through lifelong learning, spanning formal, non-formal, and informal settings. Education plays a fundamental role in developing the knowledge, competencies, and attitudes to address local and global challenges, and attain Agenda 2030 for the future we want.

Now, SDG 4.7. This target only, unlike others in SDG 4, refers to the contents of education. The other nine targets mainly address access and the modality of education. The SDG 4.7 aims to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a cultural peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity, and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

The global citizenship education, or GCED, is part and parcel of target 4.7. UNESCO considers that GCED itself aims to empower learners of all ages to assume active role both locally and globally, and in building more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, and secular societies. And GCED is based upon the three domains of learning: cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral. Cognitive learning generates knowledge and thinking skills necessary to better understand the world and its complexities. Socio-emotional learning links values, attitudes, and social skills that enable learners to develop effectively, psycho-socially, and physically, and to enable them to live together with others respectfully and peacefully. And behavioral learning addresses conduct, performance, practical application, and engagement of learners. They are interlinked and integrated into learning and the learning process.

I will now explore some of the interactions between how GCED has developed over the decades and the pragmatic educational philosophy of Dewey. Dewey called for education to be grounded in the personal experiences of the students and her or his community. He viewed learning as a highly social activity that transpired through direct living rather than abstract or remote references. According to Dewey, educational institutions should use the everyday experiences of students as the starting point and an input for pedagogic action, and schools

and classrooms should be representative of real-life situation, allowing children to participate in learning activities with flexibility in a variety of social settings. This concept continues to be very relevant today and resonates as priorities in the UNESCO report on reimagining education, and the evolving discourse on global citizenship education. I will touch upon later on this report.

Our concept of GCED and ESD have progressed over the decades. Let us first look at the historical development of GCED. We see Dewey's reflections on human neutrality and the overcoming differences in the world are woven into the evolving narrative of GCED today. UNESCO's efforts in GCED are grounded in its own constitution established in 1945, which aims to build peace in the minds of men and women. The concept draws on key principles and targets from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The recommendation concerning education for international understanding, cooperation, and peace, and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, which was adopted in 1974, and the World Program for Human Rights Education, which started in 2005, shaped the current discussion of GCED. And more recently GCED was articulated in the Education 2030 agenda and framework for action, notably SDG 4.7 in 2015.

Alongside global effort to transform the role of ESD started in the 1970s and gained global traction at Rio Earth Summit in 1992. The key milestones for how ESD has evolved are the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, and the UN Decade of ESD, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2002, and the Global Action Program on ESD, which went from 2005 to 2014. More recently, in 2019 UNESCO's general conference adopted ESD for 2030. And in May last year the Berlin declaration on ESD was adopted, document to ensure involvement of and climate action as a core curriculum component.

Why GCED and ESD developed through parallel process over a decade? Several global instrument, agendas, and forum have articulated the interdependencies between the two, which is very important for our discussion today as well. And they think two of them should be integrated for social transformation in coming days. To see how do this philosophy shape GCED, as it evolved as a concept and approach, let's look at SDG 4 and its current discourse.

Transformative education, which is being promoted by UNESCO now, is a broader and integrated concept to help change SDG 4.7, thereby contributing to advancing the other SDGs. ESD, GCED, and Education for Health and Wellbeing are all central to achieving SDG

4.7, and the current discussion is moving towards transformative education to open the way for innovation in education today. Transformative education involves the teaching and learning geared to motivate and empower learners to make informed decisions and actions to address ever-changing challenges at individual, community, and global levels. UNESCO has advocated for the transformative power of education, guided by the 1974 recommendation, currently being revised, and more recently Sustainable Development Goal target 4.7.

There is a gap, however, what exists on paper and what the fact happens on the ground. What is the current progress towards SDG 4.7 in Asia-Pacific region? According to a study conducted in the region in 27 countries in 2017, many of the national policies and curricula reflect concepts related to ESD and GCED to varying degrees in the region. In particular, concepts such as environmental sustainability, good health and wellbeing, and human rights are widely addressed, including wide level of national commitment towards the attainment of knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to this concept. However, there are other topics that are underrepresented, such as economic sustainability, gender equality and, more seriously, a culture of peace and non-violence.

### **3. Innovative global and regional responses to GCED carried out by UNESCO and its partners**

In this Part Three I will introduce some of innovative practices on SDG 4.7 promotion at UNESCO and its partners, which are also related to Dewey's principles on how education prepares learning for real life.

Let me briefly touch upon Together for Peace, a recent and ongoing UNESCO Bangkok initiative. T4P introduces the concept of positive peace as a transnational development characterized not only by the absence of conflict but the flourishing of justice, equity, and equality for everyone. T4P seeks to catalyze the public, especially students and teachers, to become agents for championing positive peace. T4P comprises a multi-faceted approach to educational, pedagogical, and community-based programs through priority actions already being applied throughout the Asia-Pacific. Principles of action are inclusiveness, intersectorality, partnership, and evidence-based. Initially it's founded in partnerships to build peace, the coordinated effort of member states and civil society.

UNESCO collaborate across previous Asia-Pacific Center for Education for

International Understanding, or APCEIU, a UNESCO Category 2 center in the Republic of Korea. Initially APCEIU are closely related to Dewey's philosophies of linking learning to daily living. APCEIU practically aims to develop teacher capacity to nurture the global citizens. The Asia-Pacific Teacher Exchange for Global Education is a bilateral teacher exchange program between the Republic of Korea and seven Asia-Pacific countries. Selected by the ministry of education of the respective home country, exchange teachers are placed at host school to teach in collaboration with host schoolteachers to experience different educational systems and cultures, to share ideas and concerns on education and pedagogy, and to promote mutual understanding.

Next let us look at an example from the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development in New Delhi, which is UNESCO Category center institution. The institute's flagship project, Global Citizenship, aims to achieve the goal of sustainable and peaceful societies through a digital curriculum on GCED, focusing on development of social and emotional learning, in short, SEL. The GCED curriculum is targeted at students of 12 to 14 years across genders and in different countries and is designed in a way that it relies on self-learning and is self-paced. In addition, it is designed to connect the concepts of GCED curriculum to the real world.

Now, what might be the way forward? In this regard I first want to highlight the UNESCO Reimagining our Futures Together report, which I mentioned earlier, as well as the UN, the United Nations Secretary General's vision statement at the Transforming Education Summit held in New York last month. Together these guiding instruments lay the paving stones for the way forward for the SDG 4.7 implementation and attainment. The evolving concepts and practices of transformative education, which I just discussed in UNESCO's programs and activities, resonate with Dewey's thinking and are featured as a core aspect for reimagining the future of education. As we look ahead, the report advocates GCED or, more broadly, transformative education as vital to redefining our relations with one another, and also with our planet and environment, in living together peacefully and sustainably.

Transformative education is central to achieving this vision. Dewey explained this almost 100 years ago when he said, "If we teach today's students as we taught yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow."

The significance of SDG 4 features prominently at the TES held in New York this



September. The UN Secretary General, Guterres, the vision statement, refers to the Futures of Education report and mentions it as a turning-point for rethinking the purpose and content of education to shape sustainable and peaceful future for us all. A key message pertaining to SDG 4.7 is to prepare learners to fulfill their responsibilities to societies and to be active and responsive, responsible citizens in their own communities, countries, and in the world. To this end, knowledge, skills, values, and action for just and sustainable economies and societies was declared critical to empower learners to achieve the SDGs and the goal of leaving no one behind.

Dewey's thinking that education should prepare learners for daily living is most relevant today and reflected in policy discussions at TES some 122 years after its publication. Let me share an important message from the vision statement, namely, "A truly transformative education should build on what communities, families, parents, and children treasure the most, and respond to local, national, and global needs, cultures, and capacities." With these words in mind, a key recommendation is that research should place an emphasis on the importance and relevance of building solidarity and developing higher-level thinking skills for real-life applications, as well as follow students' interests when planning for instruction. This will lead to developing learners who are critical thinkers and significant positive contributors to their local communities and to society as they mature into adult citizens, and this is an essential character trait of a global citizen.

Since the conception of transformative education is important but rather new, we need to have work more in terms of determining its full definition, advocating and raising public awareness, mainstreaming in policy and strategy, integrating in curriculum and learning materials, developing teacher training, and identifying indicators to assess progress. In order to complete such a wide scope of works with step-by-step consensus building, the engagement of the research community, higher education institution, is critically important. The research community, including universities, can play a significant and indispensable role in leading the current discourse on transformative education through conducting research and development, analyzing emerging issues and trends, producing data and evidence, and enhancing partnerships and collaboration.

#### 4. Four action areas for Soka University and its partners

I'm coming to the last two slides. Having gone through the global challenges and SDG progress, a brief history of GCED and ESD, the current discourse of transformative education and Dewey's thoughts and, given that, the engagement of research communities increasing importance to promote transformative education with a view to accelerating the progress of SDGs, I would like to suggest in closing four action areas for Soka University and its partners, and the wider partners, to be positively engaged in advancement of 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

**Action area 1:**

**Contribution to the current discourse on Transformative Education**

**Action area 2:**

**Participation in regional/global workshops, meetings and conferences concerning SDG 4.7 (e.g. Asia-Pacific Regional GCED Network Webinar, Transforming education for a sustainable Asia Pacific region)**

**Action area 3:**

**Enhancement of collaboration with research institutes and academic networks at regional and global levels (e.g. MGIEP, APCEIU, NISEM)**

**Action area 4:**

**Engagement in regional/global initiatives in advancing SDG 4.7 (e.g. *Together for Peace*, T4P)**

Action area 1 will be contribution to the current discourse on transformative education. It would be good to bring the experiences and good practices and stimulate the discussion on transformative education with the scientific evidence and solutions needed to address the challenges for all the SDGs.

Action area 2 will be participation in regional and global workshop meetings and conferences concerning SDG 4.7. For example, the Asia-Pacific regional GCED networking webinar will be held next month, and more globally the bigger event Transforming Education for a Sustainable Asia-Pacific Region will be held February next year in Bali in Indonesia. If you could participate in these events and conference that will be very good contribution towards the global debate and discourse.

Action area 3 will be enhancement of collaboration with research institutes and academic networks at regional and global levels, such as MGIEP that, as I explained, the UNESCO Category 1 institute in New Delhi, and APCEIU in the Republic of Korea, and NISEM and CASEL, et cetera, et cetera.

There are quite a few institutes and academic networks to address the issues around SDG 4.7. For instance, as you may know, NISEM, an academic group on networking to integrate SDG target 4.7 and sell skills into educational materials, are actively participating in the fifth UNESCO forum on transformative education. Enhancing collaboration with such international academic networks will surely enrich your work and your partners' work.

Action area 4 will be engagement in regional/global initiatives in advancing SDG 4.7. One of UNESCO Bangkok priority initiative, Together for Peace, which is supported by Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, brings partners together for building positive peace through education. T4P is informed by discourse around SDG 4.7 and transformative education. Building and sustaining a positive peace in the region requires a holistic approach to resolving and redressing unjust structures, social, political, cultural, and economic actors to build stability, prosperity, harmony, and progress through soft power, such as education.

These are the kind of suggestions I would make in this symposium for your consideration. Now, with this I will conclude my keynote and thank you very much for your attention, and I would like to welcome your involvement in UNESCO's forthcoming initiatives and the conferences and discussions to achieve Agenda 2030. Once again, thank you very much.