FECUN - Tanzania conference

Reimagining Education for Self-Reliance (ESR) in the context of Futures of Education, Culture, and Nature

Concept Note for the FECUN conference 2024
Hybrid conference, 3-4 October 2024



This is the concept note for the FECUN Tanzania conference, a conference in the FECUN conference series. The hybrid conference (onsite in Tanzania and online) takes place October 3-4, 2024. The theme of the conference is:

'Reimagining Education for Self-Reliance (ESR) in the context of

Futures of Education, Culture, and Nature.'

Conference website

The theme and the subthemes of the conference are in line with one of the main ideas of the FECUN conference series, inspired by views of education, culture, and nature from a

particular ‘place’ on planet Earth; in 2024 Tanzania. At the same time, the theme and the subthemes are developed to function as an inspiration for contributions worldwide.

You can, in what follows, read more on FECUN, the FECUN conference series, and the Tanzanian inspiration for developing the theme and ideas behind the conference. You are also presented for considerations regarding how the conference theme can be related to worldwide concerns regarding education, culture, and nature in the interconnected world of the Anthropocene and the idea of Sustainable Development. Finally, you will hear more about the subthemes of the conference.

FECUN and the FECUN conference series

The conference is a conference in the FECUN conference series, a part of the FECUN project (FECUN is an abbreviation of Futures of Education, Culture, and Nature).

The FECUN project is inspired by UNESCO's Futures of Education project. This project focuses on establishing a new global infrastructure of education, which connects education with the notion of 'commons' and the idea of creating a new social contract for education that can repair injustices while transforming our visions and images of our futures together.

FECUN more specifically focuses on 1) the entanglements between education, culture, and nature (including issues related to sustainable development), 2) the global biodiversity of knowledge and presence related to these entanglements; and 3) how various forms and types of education (academia, applied science, polytechnic, and vocational education, arts and craft), as well as civil society and arts, might relate to these entanglements.

FECUN conference series

The FECUN conference series is a series of international conferences held at various places and online; the format for the conferences is either hybrid (on-location and online) or virtual (online). The 2024 conference is a hybrid conference, meaning that it take place onsite, at Mkwawa University College of Education, Iringa, Tanzania, and online, via Zoom and Zoom Events.

Each conference theme is inspired by a particular context and place on planet Earth, in 2024 Tanzania. At the same time, the conference theme should function as an inspiration for reflection on the idea of FECUN for people beyond the local context, both worldwide and in other contexts around the world. The aim is to continuously reflect on our various futures (and traditions) of education, culture, and nature, concerning sustainable

development and the Anthropocene, focusing on implications for culture and various forms and types of education.

For more information on the FECUN project, the conference series, and other activities in the FECUN project, see the FECUN website www.fecun.net

The Conference theme and subthemes in the Tanzanian context and worldwide

The theme of the Tanzania conference is:

'Reimagining Education for Self-Reliance (ESR) in the context of Futures of Education, Culture, and Nature.'

This theme is closely related to the Tanzania context of education, culture, and nature and can also function as an inspiration for reflecting FECUN themes worldwide.

The Tanzanian inspiration for the conference theme

Tanzania is one of the East African countries with diverse nature, culture, and history. Tanzania is a country in East Africa within the African Great Lakes region. According to the 2022 national census, Tanzania has a population of nearly 62 million making it the most populous country located entirely south of the equator.

Tanzania is a former British colony which attained its independence in 1961. At the time of independence, Tanzania, then Tanganyika, inherited a colonial education system which was full of defects, including geographical disparities, gender inequalities, and racial segregation. The independent government passed the Education Act of 1962 to regulate the provision of education in order to address the defects of the colonial education system.

In 1967 Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, the first President of the United Republic of Tanzania announced Education for Self-Reliance (ESR) as a policy guiding educational practices in the country. Tanzania's development goals and strategies were based on the policy of socialism and self-reliance enshrined in Nyerere's Arusha Declaration of 1967. Nyerere regarded ESR as an appropriate and rational educational alternative for Tanzania and many Third World countries. Among the fundamental principles of ESR was the use of education as a tool for liberation from the colonial mentality of being oppressed through developing an enquiring mind among students and making education more relevant by attempting to 'africanize' the

curriculum content. Between 1967 and 1978, the government took several steps to legalize actions taken as a result of the Arusha Declaration and Education for Self-Reliance (ESR). The education sector has taken a new shape and transformations, which have been translated into curriculum reforms and innovations. The 55 years of the Arusha declaration call for a reflection on the relevance of the ESR today.

The conference theme in a worldwide context

ESR as an educational paradigm is interesting, however, not only in the Tanzanian context but also internationally. Not only has it historically been an important idea in the discourse of postcolonial education and has, as such, been discussed both approvingly and critically, but it is also interesting in the context of UNESCO's new flagship project, 'Futures of Education.' This project points to a new way of thinking about global education by talking about the many futures of educational traditions. These futures of education should not be mainstreamed into one abstract universal idea of education but instead be reimagined *together* in a new global educational 'infrastructure with no center.' Therefore, a starting point for such a reimagination of global education is the various contextual, political, cultural, and even spiritual ideas of education on planet Earth; the reimagination aims to reflect contextual futures internally and in an inspirational interplay between each other. In this context, ESR is one such contextual starting point, and indeed, a very interesting one because of its history and the themes it opens in educational discourse. Some themes that fruitfully can be reflected in this perspective are: curriculum reforms; education and marginalization; gender and education; multicultural and intercultural education and issues; practical, theoretical, and engaged education (head, heart, and hands); liberation and education, what is liberation, and how can it be related to education; self-reliance and education, how can ESR be related to climate and biodiversity crisis and the broader issue of sustainable development; and last but not least, can ESR be of inspiration in reflections on how to develop a just, solidary, and inspirational transformation of educational traditions and futures. Below, you will find some thoughts on each of these subthemes.

Subthemes of the conferences:

The conference has the following subthemes:

Subtheme 1: Reimagining Education for Self-Reliance and Curriculum Reforms and Innovations

This subtheme addresses issues of curriculum reforms and innovations taking place globally. Curriculum reforms have been a recurrent issue in the past two decades. Curriculum reforms

have been presented as a major means for improving students' educational outcomes and attainment. This conference will unpack existing ideologies that inform current education policies in Tanzania and beyond and will engage the participants in a dialogue around the various philosophies that are driving curriculum reforms and innovations. It examines questions related to what the next generation should learn, why, and how. This theme will cover curriculum theories and trends, the politicization of curriculum making, the teaching, learning and assessment.

Subtheme 2: Reimagining Education for Self-Reliance and education of the marginalized

Inequality in educational opportunities has emerged as a major issue globally. It has also become pertinent, as the increasing influence of globalization has jeopardized educational opportunities for the marginalized. Although the provision of basic education in most countries is the responsibility of the State, experience shows that, over the years, the role of the State as the main provider of educational services has reduced owing to privatization and commercialization of education leading to a denial of education for the marginalized groups. Various studies have pointed out that the children from socially and economically deprived communities hardly get any chance to get a minimum level of education and most of them are working children. There is a general agreement about the segment of society that is not attending school and they belong to the minority, urban poor and people living in remote rural areas.

Subtheme 3: Reimagining ESR and Gender

This subtheme focuses on, inter alia, gender and parenting, gender and education, gender and power, gender and science, and gender and globalization. Gender inequality exists globally despite substantive efforts by governments to promote equity in their social policies. Women now have equitable access to education at all levels of education; however, in other aspects of education, such as completion and transition, the concentration of women in gender-stereotyped subjects and programs remains as other forms of inequity perpetuating oppressive gender relations. According to Nyerere (1967), education provided must encourage the development in each citizen of three things: an enquiring mind, an ability to learn from what others do and reject or adapt to their own needs, and a basic confidence in their own positions as free and equal members of the society, who value others and is valued by them for what he or she does rather than only for what is obtained.

Subtheme 4: Reimagining ESR, Multicultural and Intercultural Education

This sub-theme focuses on the theoretical perspectives and conceptualizations of multicultural and intercultural education and explores possibilities to broaden and deepen our understanding of the views, identity, and diversity issues. Researchers will present papers that situate intercultural and multicultural education policies and practices within multiple layers of global-local contexts, whereby discursive practices regarding multicultural and intercultural education will be elaborated. By constructively challenging and providing new insights into evolving linguistic and epistemic models for multicultural and intercultural education, this subtheme hopes to contribute to international collaborative efforts to open up new possibilities for intercultural/multicultural education. Most nation-states and societies throughout the world are characterized by cultural, ethnic, and language diversity. One of the important goals of multicultural and intercultural education is to help students from all cultural and social groups, including mainstream groups, to develop democratic racial and ethnic attitudes so that they can function effectively in culturally diverse democratic societies.

Subtheme 5: Reimagining ESR and integration of 'Head, Heart, and Hands' (3H Model) in various forms and types of education

The 3H model proposes that any effective teaching or learning activities should embed the Head as essentially responsible for imparting knowledge, the Heart that inculcates in an individual the values and a sense of appreciation, and the Hands component that encourages active involvement during teaching and learning activities. Nyerere's ESR policy calls for a method of learning by doing. The practical method recommended is not only to aim at manual labor, but such learning by doing must be directed towards a productive, constructive, or creative end, which should lead to solving society's problems. The ESR system of education in Tanzania aimed to equip learners with knowledge, skills, and attitudes for tackling societal problems and preparing the youth for work. Nyerere reiterated that education at all levels should be relevant to the community in which a learner lives.

Subtheme 6: ESR, the idea of powerful knowledge, and liberation through education

As mentioned, Education for Self-reliance is an idea that was closely related to overcoming colonial heritage in the educational system, focusing on the idea of an 'African socialism' based on 'solidarity' *Ujamaa* and the development of self-reliance. This subtheme brings ESR in contact with other ideas discussed in educational theory. The idea of 'powerful knowledge' distinct from 'knowledge of the powerful' emphasizes and analyzes how various forms of knowledge at different levels can play an emancipatory role when unbound from the ties to

'knowledge of the powerful' (Young & Muller). Is it possible that ESR and the idea of powerful knowledge fruitfully could inspire each other 1) at various levels of education (ISCED, International Standard Classification of Education), 2) regarding different forms of knowledge in education, 3) in various cultural, political, and economic contexts? Other ideas that might be interesting to compare and contrast regarding the understanding of liberation in education and of the human person, and the challenges and possibilities related to these questions, could be the Capability approach in education (Sen et al.), and Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire).

Subtheme 7: ESR, Education for Sustainable Development, Education in the Anthropocene, Eco-literacy, and Global Citizenship Education

How is ESR to be understood in the context of the intense interest in the role of education regarding the challenges related to climate change, sustainable development, and the ideas of Critical Zones of Life, and the Anthropocene/Capitalocene? The tension between the global environmental crisis and the uneven distribution of both the causes and effects of this crisis raise severe issues regarding *justice* in relation to politics, economics, and education. Further, can various notions of Critical global citizenship education and ESD (Education for Sustainable Education) fruitfully be inspired by the ideas of solidarity and the development of self-reliance in ESR, and how can this be related to various forms of human and non-human agency?

Subtheme 8: ESR, STEM and STEAM education

This subtheme focuses on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and how to link ESR and STEM education with sustainable development. One of the ESR policies emphasizes individual independence resulting from education. Through STEM, the emphasis will be on science education, innovation, problem-solving, and critical thinking. The subtheme calls for papers linking ESR and science, ESR and technology, ESR and Engineering, ESR and Mathematics, and cross-disciplinary STEM education with ESR for development. Also, papers focusing on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics) education are welcome under this subtheme.

Subtheme 9: Educational traditions, culture, and nature and humanistic futures studies

UNESCO's Futures of Education project attempts to inspire the institutionalization of a new global education infrastructure focusing on education as a common social good without implying a one-size-fits-all all solution regarding education. Various educational traditions will have various futures, which should be reimagined together to paraphrase UNESCO's flagship report, 'Reimagination our Futures Together.' This, however, raises the question regarding how 'we' are to reflect on the various educational paradigms in light of what in humanistic

futures studies has been termed as probable, preferred, possible, participatory, and integrated futures (Gidley)? This question relates both to how the educational paradigms in themselves in *self-reliant ways* relate to their future and how we are to conceive and establish *solidarity* in the future relations between educational paradigms (the infrastructure of global education). What kind of institutionalization does it imply to develop preferred, possible, and participatory relations in and between educational paradigms, locally and globally, and in theory and practice?

Organizers and contact information.

This FECUN conference is a collaboration between Mkwawa University College of Education, Iringa, Tanzania, and VIA University College, Denmark. The onsite part of the conference takes place at Mkwawa University College of Education, a constituent college of the University of Dar es Salaam. The online part of the conference takes place over Zoom and Zoom Events.

Inquiries

Please do not hesitate to write us if you have any questions or comments regarding the FECUN 2024 Tanzania Conference at fecun@via.dk

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