

What is a 21st century
university education for?
*Critique and visioning
using the lens of
Sustainability*

Andrew Reeves and Ian Coleman

DMU Learning and Teaching
Conference, February 5th 2021

Session Aims



Provide a space to critically explore the purpose of universities in the 21st century



Introduce key concepts from Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to inform this discussion



Signpost support available from the DMU ESD project

Format:

1. Short lecture provocations (10 mins)
2. Individual reflection (10 mins)
3. Plenary discussion (20 mins)
4. Wrap-up and signposting (5 mins)

Introduce yourself in the chat window.

What brought you to this session?

Provocation 1: What are universities for?

'Universities Minister Michelle Donelan says students and taxpayers needed to get value from their "investment".'

'But university leaders say there can be other forms of social and personal "value" from higher education, as well as measurements of graduate earnings.'

"Young people are being pressured to go to university without any consideration given to whether the experience will be positive or if they'll be equipped to pursue the career they want," he said.'

Biggest earners and biggest losers from degrees

By Sean Coughlan
BBC News family and education correspondent

🕒 29 February 2020



<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-51676530>

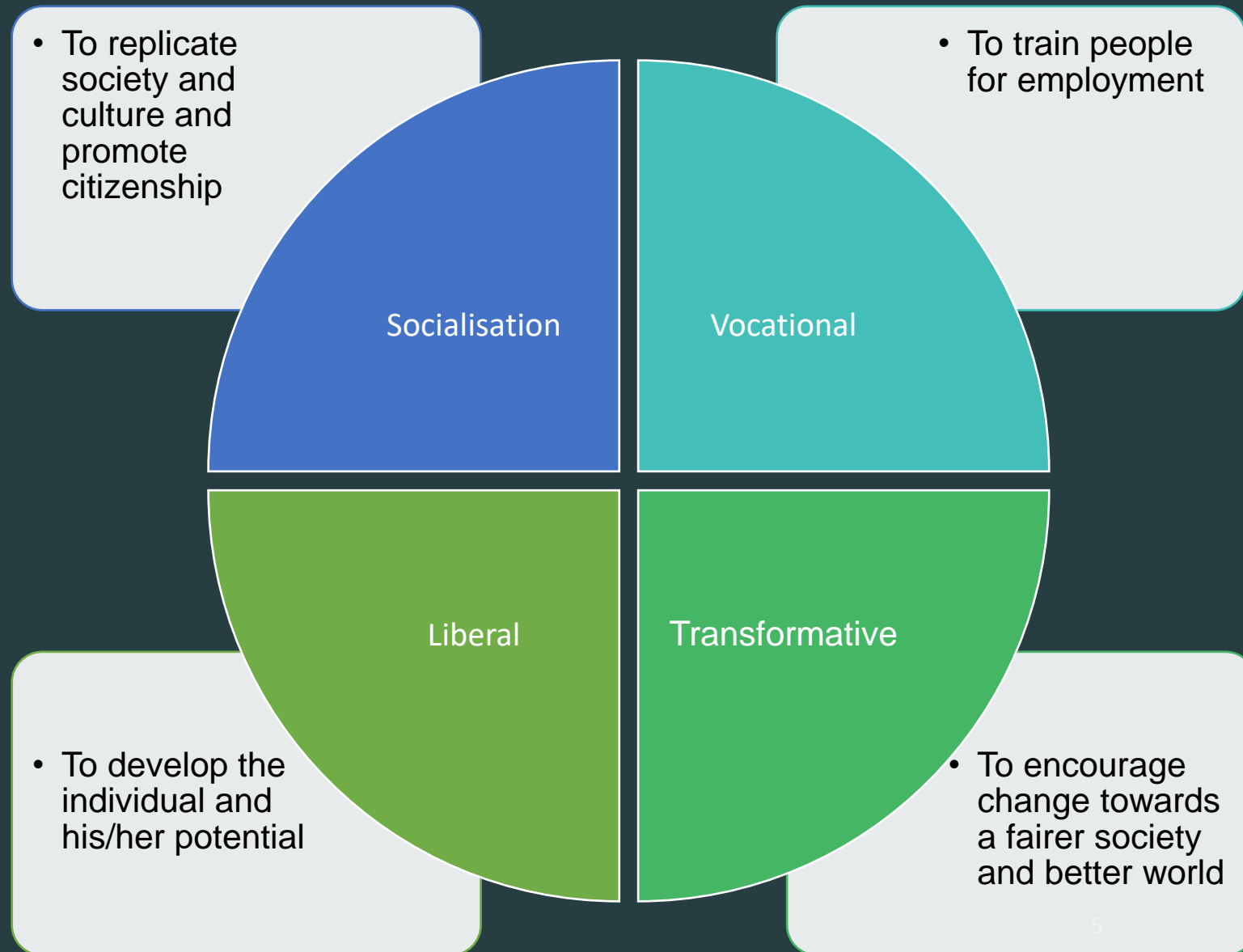


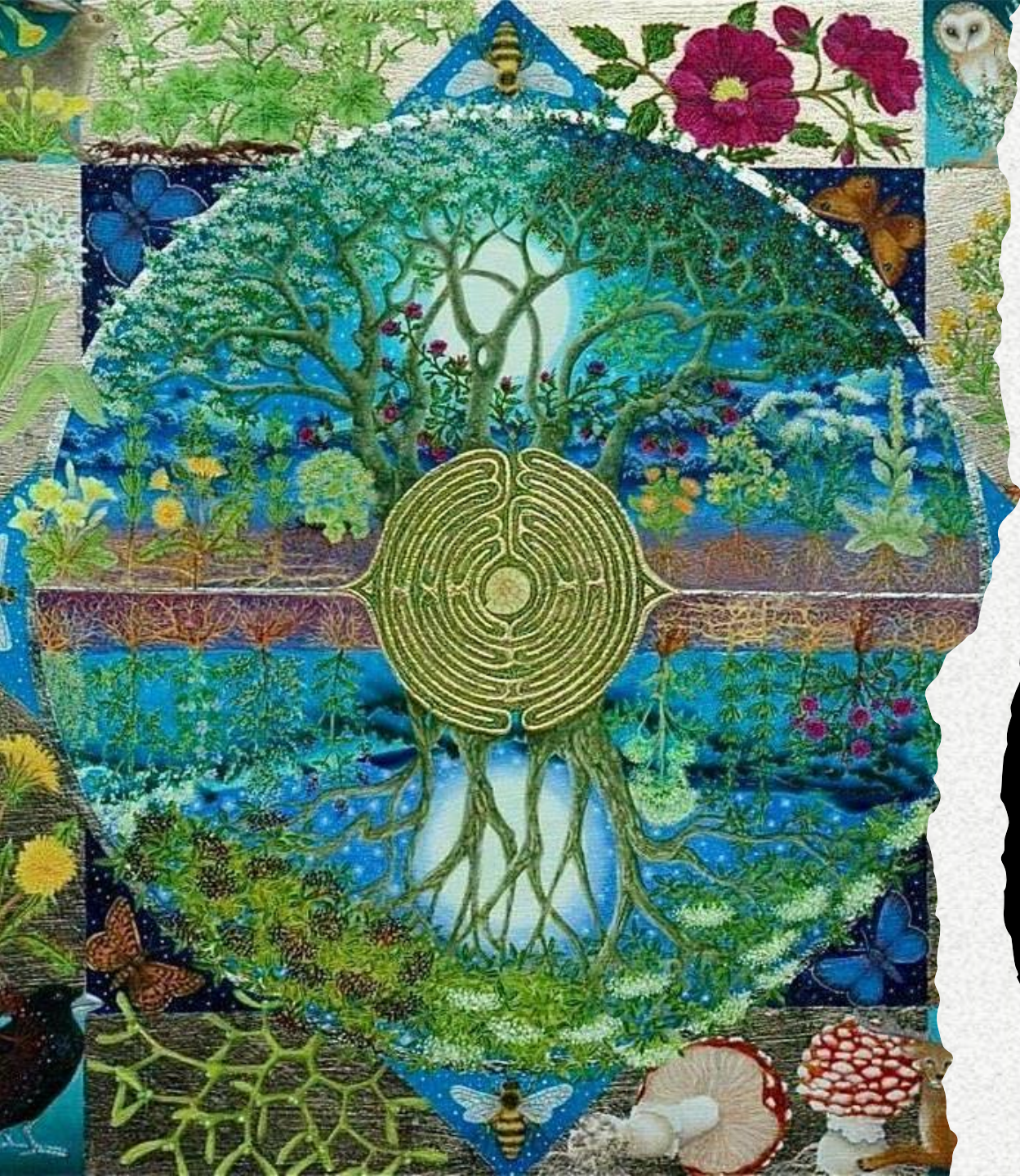
We are increasingly asking if what people learn is truly relevant to their lives, if what they learn helps to ensure the survival of our planet. Education for Sustainable Development can provide the knowledge, awareness and action that empower people to transform themselves and transform societies.

- Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO

Four functions in tension¹

- Education as a means-to-an-end vs education as a social good in itself
- ESD focusses more strongly on the liberal and transformative functions
- Where do you stand through your values and practice?
 - What about UK HE?
 - Or DMU?





The Trap of Pragmatism

For many, the trap of pragmatism prevents us from holding vision of a better world – one that is saner, more humane, just, loving and peaceful.

Provocation 2:

Education is the designer of our systems of the future. It creates our **purposes**, our **interactions**, and the **measures** and **values** of our **actions**. It is important that education recognizes itself as a systems designer, not just as a way of equipping people with skills for employment.

- Anupam Seraph



Image courtesy of Mark Hathaway

Group Discussion

What is the purpose of HE in working towards a sustainable future?

1. Write a short first-draft statement, then post in chat window (when we say “go”)
2. Hear more from some contributors
3. Compare and contrast... can we achieve a consensus view?

What is the purpose of HE in working towards a sustainable future?

Education for Sustainable Development at DMU

- Information, case studies, resources:
<https://esdg.our.dmu.ac.uk>
- Coming up:
 - SDG Teach-in (Feb 22 to Mar 5)
 - Intro to ESD (Feb 17)
- Contact
 - Andrew Reeves
(areeves@dmu.ac.uk)
 - Ian Coleman
(ian.coleman@dmu.ac.uk)

“We will equip students and staff with an understanding of **the challenges of sustainability and sustainable development**, and will approach learning, teaching and assessment mindful of the **opportunities to contribute locally and globally** to the public good and environmental futures as well as of our impact on a resource-limited world.”

DMU University Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy, 2018

Education for Sustainable Development at DMU: Appendix

Education for Sustainable Development

Holistic learning (Head, Heart and Hands) for the common good



Understanding Sustainability:

What is '(un)sustainable', society's challenges, possible solutions, linked to discipline...



Transformational Experiences:

Inspiration, indignation, collective action, achievement...



Taking Action:

Volunteering, projects, placements, making a difference...



Competencies to Act:

Motivation, self-confidence, values, big-picture thinking, group-working skills...

At Programme Level

Key issues to consider:

- 1. Learning Outcomes:** Engagement with sustainability or the SDGs reflected in one or more assessments in core modules
- 2. Pedagogy:** Experiential learning activities addressing real-world problems on campus or in wider community
- 3. Co-curricular links:** Linkages to community events, trips, volunteering, student societies (e.g. 'Enactus', 'Map the System')

Support available on <https://esdg.our.dmu.ac.uk> – case studies, introduction to ESD guidance (e.g. QAA/HEA) and one-page planning toolkits (e.g. “Ten Ingredients”)

Accessible Next Steps

- 'Ten Ingredients' tool can be used to plan for 2020/21
 - Identify strengths, small-scale changes, long-term aspirations
 - ESD Team can go through this with you
- Take part in the SDG Teach-in
 - 22nd February 5th March 2021
 - Make a link to the Sustainable Development Goals in a taught session that week
- Follow @SustainableDMU on social media
- Join ESD Forum
 - Quarterly meetings and email list
 - Email Andrew Reeves areeves@dmu.ac.uk

Support and Resources

- About Sustainability and ESD
 - <https://esdg.our.dmu.ac.uk/about/introducing-esdg/>
- DMU Case Studies
 - <https://esdg.our.dmu.ac.uk/staff/case-studies/>
- One-page planning toolkits
 - <https://esdg.our.dmu.ac.uk/staff/planning-toolkits/>

The screenshot shows a website page with a dark blue header containing the title "Education for the Sustainable Development Goals at DMU" in white cursive. Below the header is a navigation menu with links: HOME, BLOG, ABOUT, PROJECTS, FOR STAFF, FOR STUDENTS, and CONTACT. The main content area has a white background with a large heading "Learning for the Public Good". Below this heading is a paragraph of text: "De Montfort University is committed to making a big difference to the Sustainable Development agenda, by using the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a focus for our teaching, research...". To the right of the text is a grid of 17 colorful icons representing the SDGs. On the far right, there is a sidebar with two sections: "RECENT POSTS" and "LATEST NEWS". The "RECENT POSTS" section lists four items with green arrows: "Welcome to the DMU Eco Café", "Results: 2020 SDG Teach-In", "£2000 in SeeD Grants awarded", and "Green Tips". The "LATEST NEWS" section shows a tweet from @SustainableDMU.

Education for the Sustainable Development Goals at DMU

HOME / BLOG / ABOUT / PROJECTS / FOR STAFF / FOR STUDENTS / CONTACT

Learning for the Public Good

De Montfort University is committed to making a big difference to the Sustainable Development agenda, by using the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a focus for our teaching, research...

1 NO POVERTY 2 ZERO HUNGER 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING 4 QUALITY EDUCATION 5 GENDER EQUALITY 6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION 7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH 9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION 13 CLIMATE ACTION 14 LIFE BELOW WATER 15 LIFE ON LAND 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR GOAL ACHIEVEMENT

THE GLOBAL GOALS

RECENT POSTS

- » Welcome to the DMU Eco Café
- » Results: 2020 SDG Teach-In
- » £2000 in SeeD Grants awarded
- » Green Tips
- » We think we can do more...do you?

LATEST NEWS

Tweets by @SustainableDMU

Sustainable DMU Retweeted

DMU_Volunteering @DmuVolunteering