Embracing the Uncertainty of our Futures: From Reforming to Transforming Education

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# Fundamental questions matter!!!

Youth Engagement Matters!!!

- **53%** of the world's population is **under 30**. In the Sub-Saharan Africa, under 30s amount to **70%** of its population.

- Youths should be **knowledge-holders & partners** of social transformation and futures-making.

- **"Treasure the young, trust the elder."** --- indigenous wisdom

- It is imperative to **engage young people in co-creating futures.**

3 Research Stories

1. Co-Creative Education – Engaging Children

2. Imagining Futures of Education – Youth as Researchers

3. Youth Holistic Well-Being – Teachers as Researchers
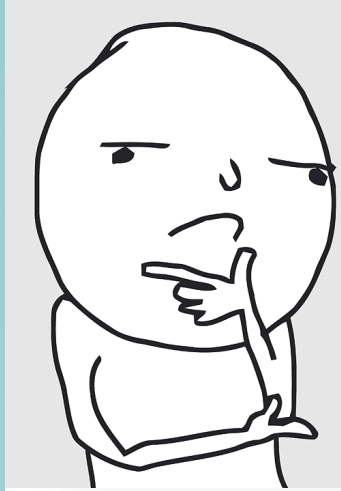
3 Questions

- What does it mean to be educated in the 21st century?
- What kinds of education/future are desirable?
- How does educational ecosystem nurture a community of belonging and support well-being of all

1. The New School
Co-Creative Education

Q1: What does it mean to be educated in the 21st century?

To be educated is marked by characteristics of people who are capable of pursuing a good and worthwhile life with others (persons, nature and the spirit).

- Not a utilitarian notion, but an eudaemonic one,

- Not an individualistic, but a holistic relational vision of human flourishing which including the thriving of our world.

What does it mean to be educated?

epistemological qualities, e.g. curiosity, openness, listening, dialogue, inquiry, and holding differences;

relational qualities, e.g. friendship, attune-ment, presence;

active qualities, e.g. playfulness, taking initiatives, creativity, and responsibility.

Caring (1)
A core quality of educated persons

- A sense of direction in life activities
- A critical awareness of what is valuable
- Understanding of what has wider social meaningfulness

Caring (2)

- Determines our passionate dedication to things that matter, for oneself, others, world & life.

- Requires NO reward-punishment as a motivational factor for learning.

- Is the opposite of apathy and indifference.

- Enables children to focus on activities that they recognise as worthwhile, e.g. reading, playing, doing projects, or just hanging out with friends;

- Invites active response to other's needs with empathy, respect, and responsibility;

- Is a commitment to fostering well-being and flourishing of all, our own included.

Education as Conversation

an endless unrehearsed (intellectual) adventure in which, in imagination, we enter into a variety of modes of understanding the world and ourselves. … an initiation into the art of this conversation between the generations of mankind … and learn to distinguish their different modes of utterance, and to acquire the habits appropriate to this conversational relationship …

--- Oakeshott, M. (1933). *Experience and its Modes,* Cambridge University Press

Relational practice forms the backbone of the New School pedagogy.

- The contents of learning are co-identified with the children, guided by their curiosity and thirst for learning.

- Mixed-aged classes, resembling a family, where children are co-dependent and mutually supportive.

- Dialogic classrooms

- Project-based learning

- Children documenting learning journeys

- Teachers as learners, guides, mentors,

Other practices of a caring community

- The daily **lunch served** by children and adults;

- The weekly **friendship afternoons** when homeschooled children join the New School workshops run by parents and volunteers when the staff meet for planning;

- The termly **school fairs** for parents to meet with each other and with other community stakeholders to discuss about education in the school

- The yearly Spring whole school **camping trip** in the woods, when children learn to immerse themselves in nature, and in communion with other beings

- The annual **New School Thinking conference** when educational thinkers and practitioners will dialogue about critical questions in education

- The end of year **project exhibition** to celebrate learning & achievement,

- The **mid-summer picnic** when the entire community gather to show appreciation and express gratitude for such togetherness

2: Beyond the Tyranny of Testing
Youth-Led Research,
Imagining Educational Futures

Q2: What kinds of education/future are desirable?

Students as researchers

four-fold typology on students' role in educational research:

(1) Students as Data Source,

(2) Students as active Respondents,

(3) Students as co-researchers, and

(4) Students as Researchers.

(Fielding, 2001)

Student-led research findings

- Education must move beyond a tyranny of testing.

- Students learn in spite of schooling not because of it.

- Relational process is central to learning during adolescence.

What kinds of learning experience are desirable ?

- Personalised not standardised learning,
- Evaluation & feedback not testing,
- Co-Creative curriculum contents
- Collaborative learning

learning as 'becoming more'

"*For us, learning is an important part of our well-being, especially when we learn together, with friends ... we can feel really engaged. When learning is collaborative, it can make us feel that we are becoming more, we are growing.*"

How would future education better support their learning and well-being?

- Learning spaces designed with, by and for students
  - "we want to feel respected, valued … Spaces that make us feel that we matter!"
- Teaching as mentoring, guiding, modelling and unconditional 'love'
  - "Teachers will have time to know us better, and they would help us more when we are stuck, or we don't know how to make progress."
- Responsibility not accountability.
- Involving wider community

Global Listening Initiative

- Fair and equal access to learning resources, such as online learning spaces, digital technology, computer devices, and good bandwidth
- Teachers' having capacities to teach through the online and digital media
- **integrating environmental awareness** into all aspects of education.

3. Teachers as Researchers
Building Community of Belonging

Q3: How does educational ecosystem nurture a community of belonging and support well-being of all?

Alternative Centre for Education (ACE): Action Research

- Noting disconnection between the different spaces/systems their students are located

- Recognising Fragmented support

Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory

- Becoming aware of interaction amongst environment(s) in which attachment, relationships, and well-being occur.

- Placing youth at the center of nested systems that interact and exert influences on one another.

Action research

- Building a community of belonging that affirms each person's intrinsic value and that offers love, care, nurturing, tailored to each child's needs.

Community of belonging

Home visits

Breakfast conversations

Circle time

One-to-one mentoring and guidance

Teachers' professional learning sessions

'Normal' was never good enough!'

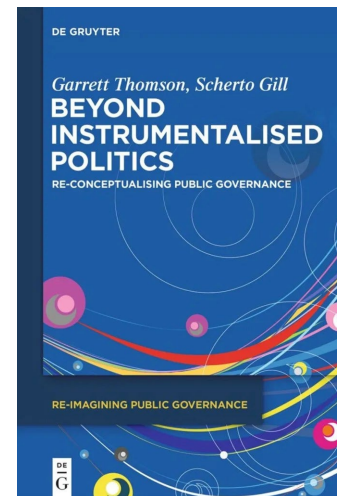*"Young people are on the frontlines of the struggle to build a better future for all."*
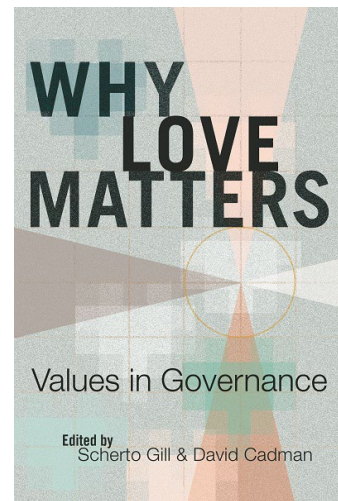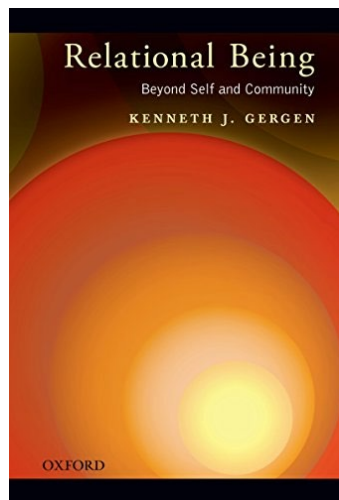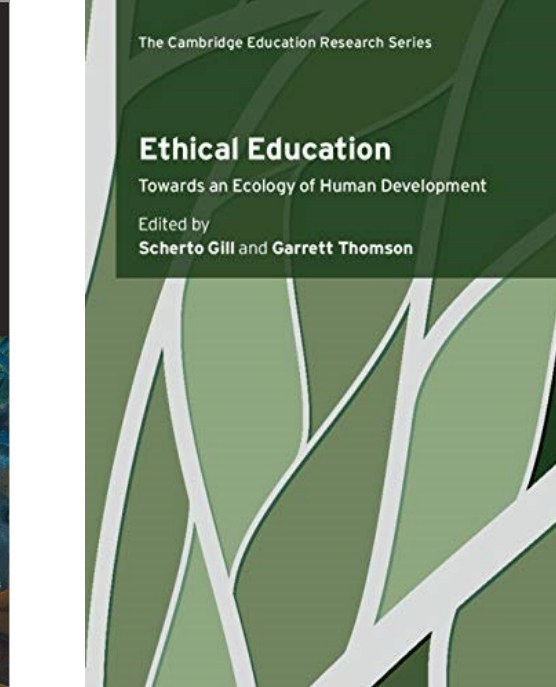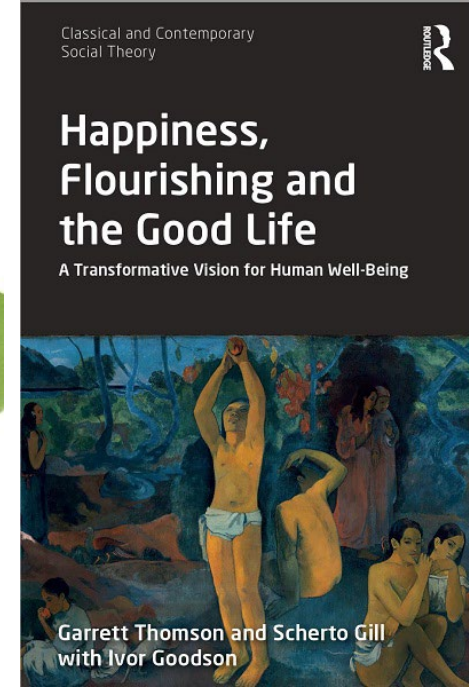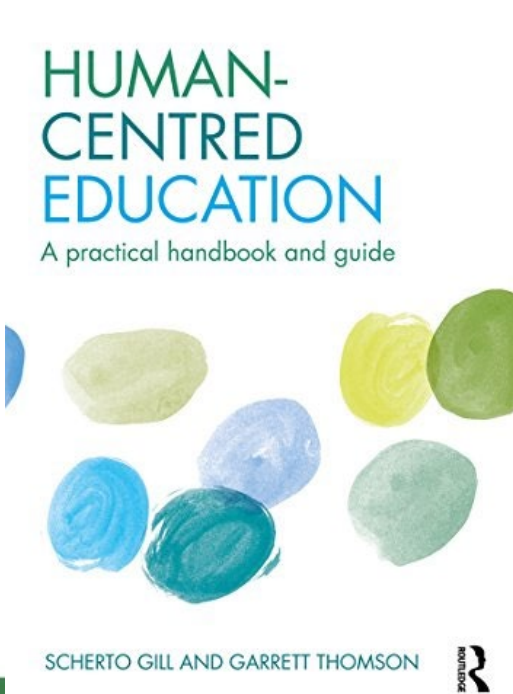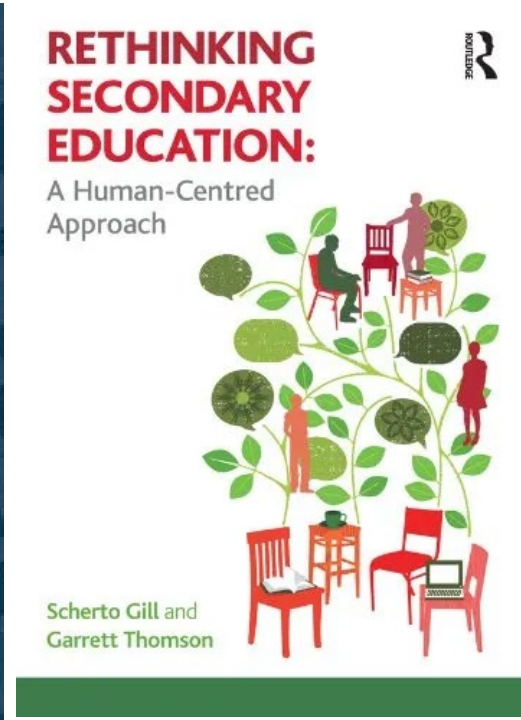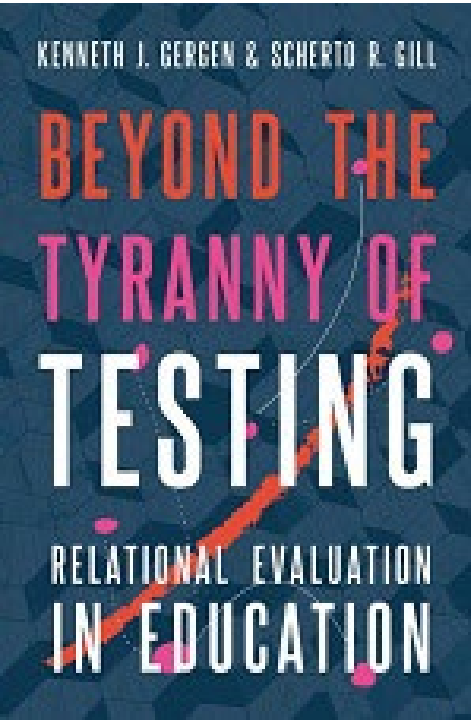
— António Guterres, UN Secretary-General

"Children will never accept a return to 'normal' after the pandemic because 'normal' was never good enough."

— Henrietta H. Fore, Executive Director of UNICEF

What does future mean?

KENNETH J. GERGEN & SCHERTO R. GILL

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RE-CONCEPTUALISING PUBLIC GOVERNANCE

RE-IMAGINING PUBLIC GOVERNANCE

LEST WE LOSE LOVE

REDISCOVERING THE CORE OF WESTERN CULTURE

SCHERTO R. GILL

"*But wherever they go, and whatever happens to them on the way, in that enchanted place on the top of the Forest a little boy and his Bear will always be playing.*"

--- A. A. Milne