

Teaching for Relevance in Changing and Challenging Times

LEARNING AS CONNECTION



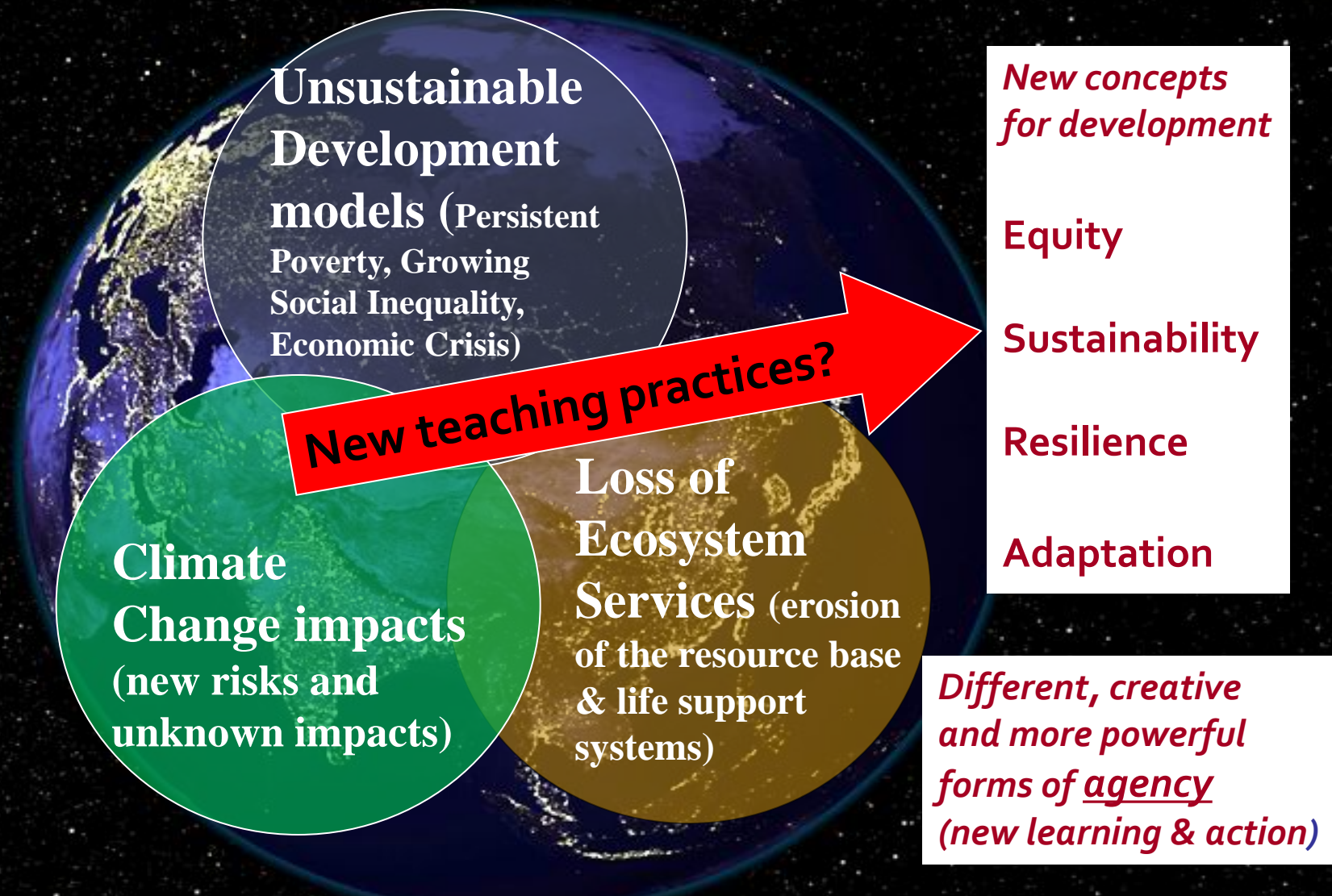
RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

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Background

Education in Changing and Challenging Times...




The challenges are increasingly more complex, and difficult to reconcile –
Are current conceptions of educational Quality adequate?

Purposes of education are changing

A short history ...

- Education and the industrial revolution and the modernisation process (17th-21st century): *Education for economic development*
- Education and the expansion of democracy and human rights (19th- 21st century): *Education for All*
- Education and capacity to deal with unsustainable models of human development and rapidly changing and challenging times (late 20th / 21st century): *Education for Sustainable Development*




UNESCO
Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture


60
1945 2005

Policy Dialogue 1


Education and the Search for a Sustainable Future



Since the start of human existence people have lived with each other (society), used and shared goods and services (economy) and have been supported by natural resources and life support systems (environment). With industrial and technological development in the last three centuries, lifestyles, communications, production systems and consumption patterns have changed rapidly. The challenge for humanity today is to transform its development path. This involves addressing interrelated issues such as poverty (economy), social inequality, peace and health risks (society), natural resource depletion, biodiversity loss and global climate change (environment).



Sustainable Development has gained credence in international policy making as a strategy to re-orient development thinking and practice towards a sustainable future, with benefits for present and future generations. It requires governments and people everywhere to maintain viable economies that benefit the whole society while ensuring adequate protection of the environment. The aim is a sustainable future for all.




Education has been identified as an important social strategy for the realisation of a sustainable future. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) recognizes that it is impossible to achieve sustainable development without appropriate education, training and public awareness for all sectors of society. Resolution 57/245 was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2002 to declare 2005-2014 a Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), signalling global commitment to ESD.

How ESD contributes to a sustainable future

Through its focus on society, economy, environment and culture, ESD seeks to enable people to develop the knowledge, skills and action competence needed to create and sustain a viable and equitable future for humans and other forms of life on the planet.

- ESD re-orientes the aims and purpose of education and training
- ESD brings a new values focus to education, training and public awareness
- ESD improves the quality of education and learning

To reach all sectors of society, ESD needs to be integrated into the entire education, training and public awareness system at national, regional and local levels.



DECADE OF EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
2005-2014

Policy Dialogue 1: ESD and Development Policy

SADC ESD Research Network Concerns

- Children in school, but not understanding their teachers & teachers not understanding what to teach
- Parents perceiving education to be irrelevant to life conditions and challenges
- Rewards of education are 'delayed' and uncertain (youth & graduate unemployment)
- Large numbers (60-80%) of children are 'falling between the cracks' : not being educated for what is required for 'high skill economy' or for how to cope with / get out of poverty, unemployment and risk
- An increasingly divided system privileging the 'have's' while the world around is getting more complex, uncertain, challenging and unsustainable



SHOULD WE
RETHINK
Relevance in
relation to
Quality in
Education?



Teaching for relevance ...

Conceptions of Learning and Quality



Our First Question: How to understand educational quality and relevance

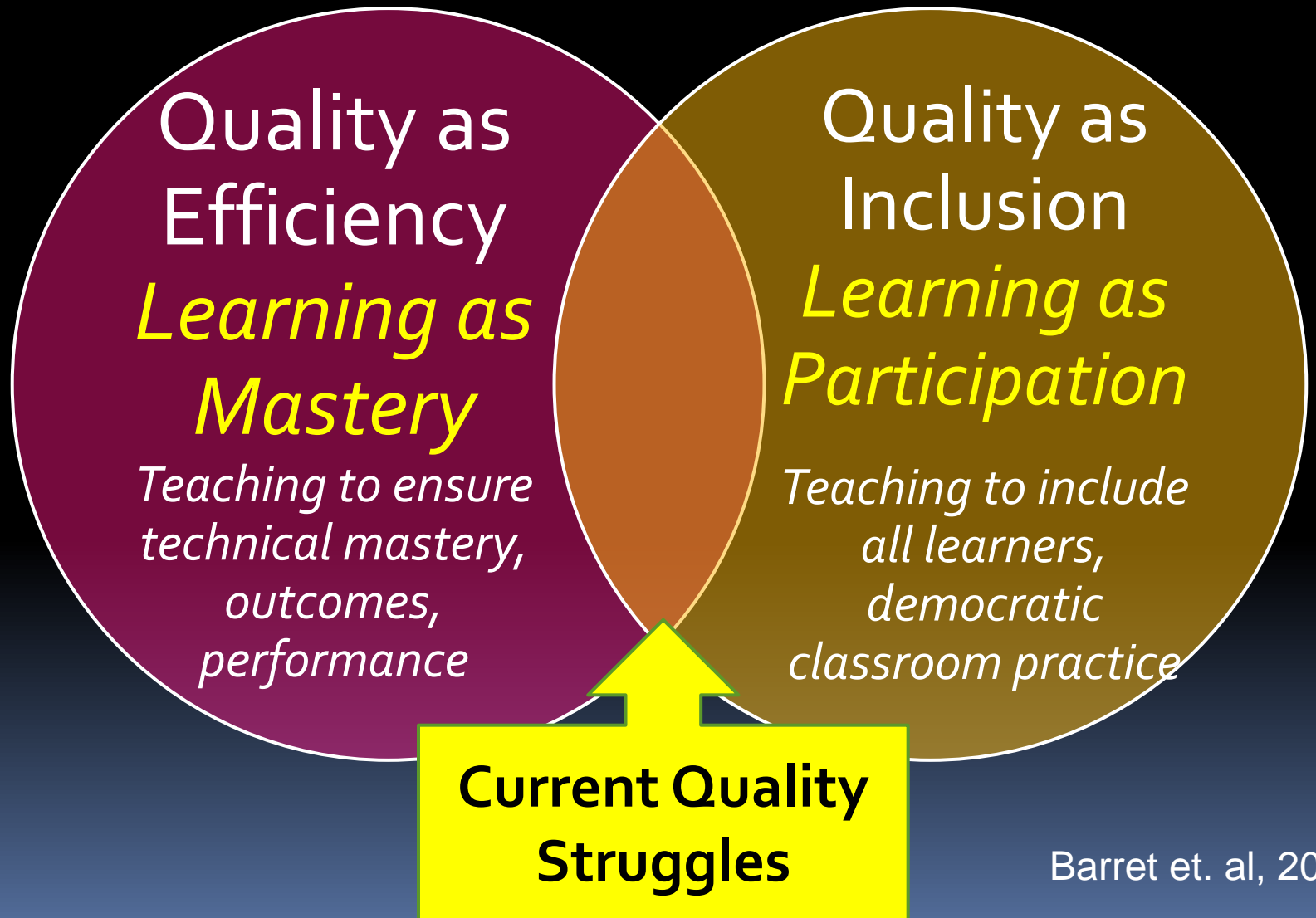
- **Conceptions of quality** - how are educational policy makers, teachers, learners and communities thinking about quality
- **Conceptions of relevance** – to learner, to community, to society, to economy, to environment, to changing context, to future ...
- What happens when one juxtaposes quality and relevance ... Does the concept of quality change?

Our research (2007-2010)

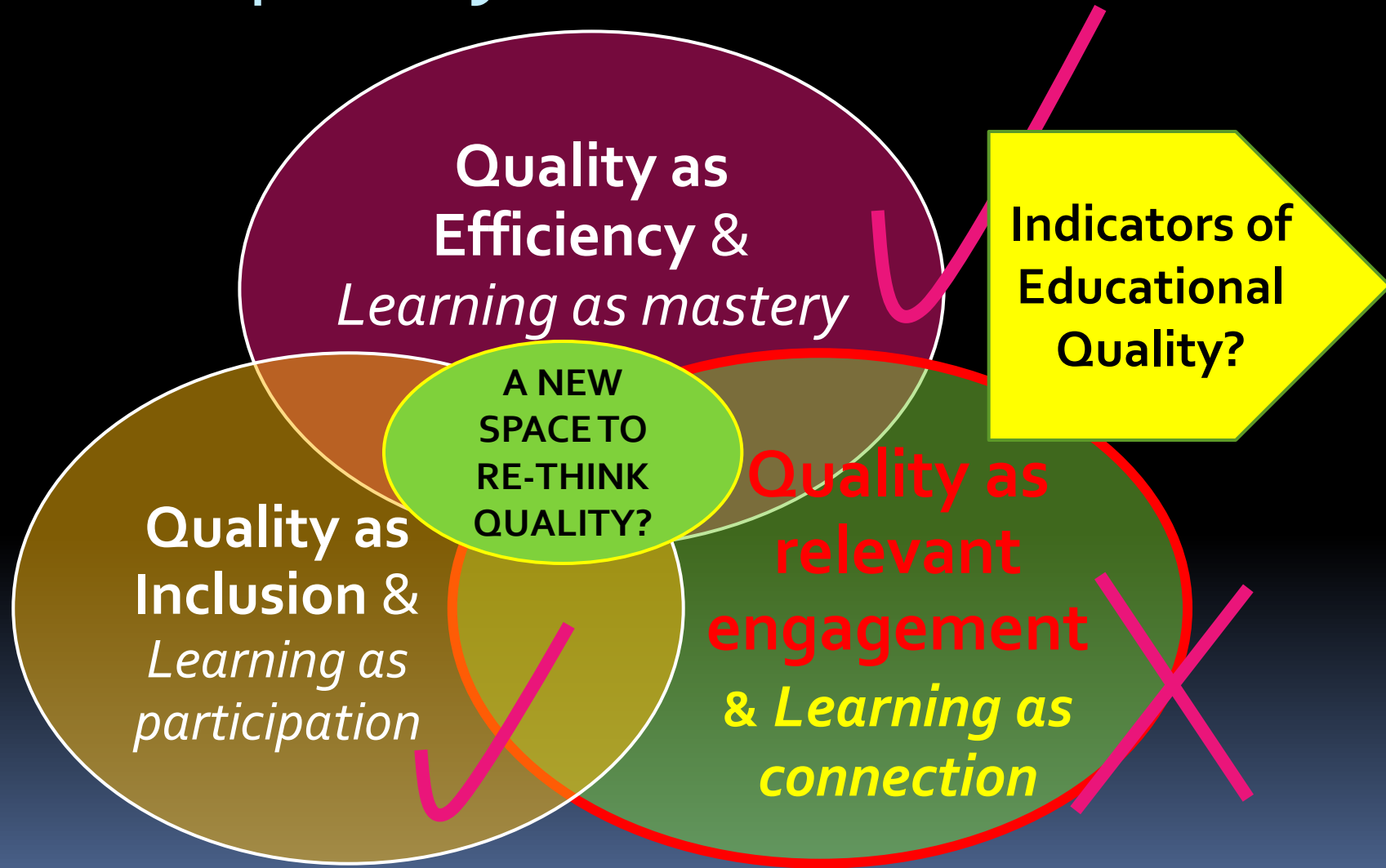
Finding in 1st phase: Efficiency, mastery, inclusion and participation are dominant discourses about quality from educational arena ...

In parent, learner and community discourses about quality we found a stronger emphasis on relevance to context, culture, future, livelihood opportunities & jobs, socio-economic realities, socio-ecological changes

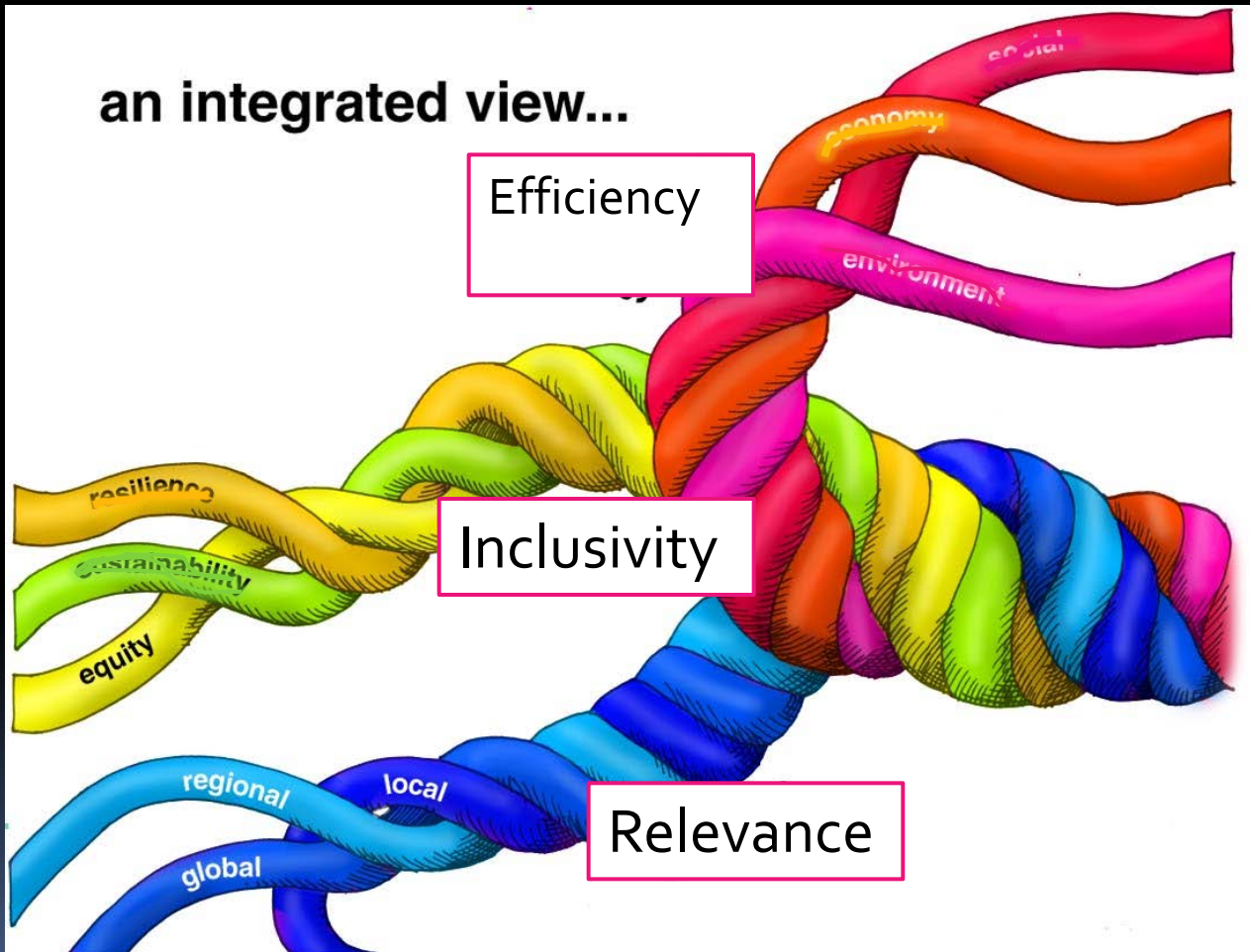
Dominant Conceptions of Quality



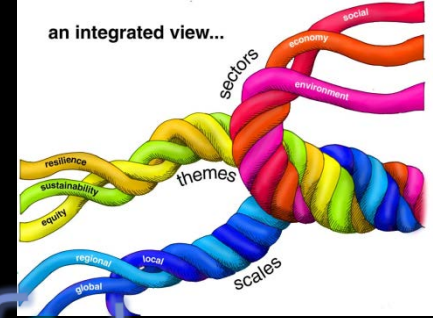
An expanded framework for thinking about quality education??



Quality is like a rope ...



Quality as
relevant
engagement
& *Learning as
connection*



Learning as Connection

*Teaching for **relevance** ...*

Quality as relevant engagement ...

Some examples of learning as connection & teaching for relevance



Soil Scientists
Agricultural
Extension
Officers

Citizenship

Life Skills

World of Work

Futures

Values



Sustainability
Equity
Adaptation
Resilience



Water plant operators
Water quality scientists



Learning as Connection develops

- Life Skills
- Citizenship
- Values and Ethics
- Understandings of the society-environment-economy relation
- Understandings of the world of work
- Future's vision & critical and creative thinking
- Capability to act and make choices



*It requires mastery of subject knowledge and skills, and inclusivity, **building on and extending current dominant concepts of quality***



Implications for Teacher Education Policy and Practice

Learning as Connection can be practiced in Teacher Education (new TE practices)



Enquiry based and deliberative

Solution seeking
Creative, critical thinking

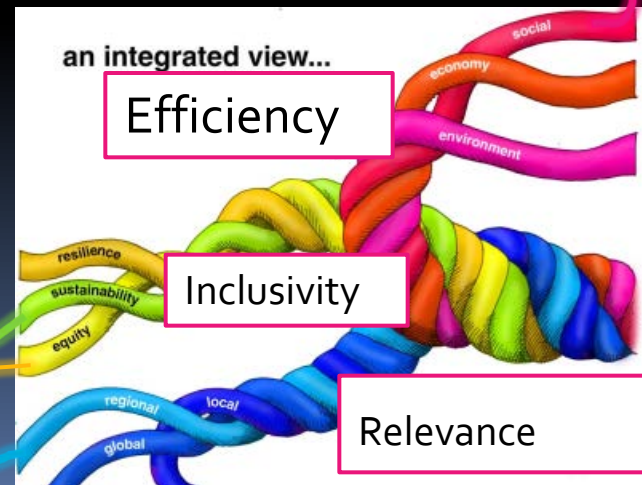
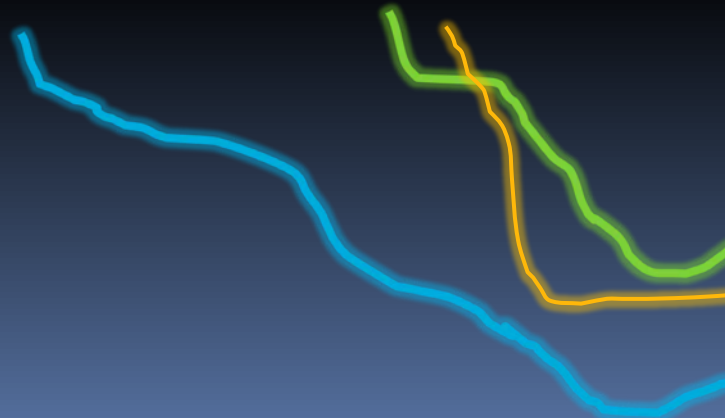
Knowledge and practice questions



Policy Dialogue: If I were a TE policy maker ...



I would encourage or require every teacher to examine at least three conceptions of educational quality in all three or four years of their initial training, and in-service TE thereafter: **efficiency; inclusion; relevance.**





- I would ask all TE students to demonstrate and critically discuss and examine how these conceptions of quality shape teaching theory and practice – but most importantly, I would challenge them to develop teaching practices that bring these three conceptions of quality together.



- **I would build this understanding of educational quality into TE Norms and Standards, and assess this as a key component of all TE curriculum (i.e. I would make engagement with concepts of quality a foundation of all TE)**

- I would elevate **'relevance'** to have the same status as 'efficiency' and 'inclusion' in education systems



- I would **revise or develop indicators of quality**, to be inclusive of relevance, and learning as connection.
- Only then would I include **specific courses** such as Life Skills / Career Guidance / ESD etc. in TE to give further strength to the quality rope

Some innovative work in this regard is being done under the banner of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development in countries around the world and in many EFA quality education initiatives.

A UNESCO International ESD TE Network exists, where many of these approaches are being pioneered. Sub-regional networks also exist but need extending, and policy and research support .

(see www.unesco.org/desd)



“The responsibility of the educator is a responsibility for what is to come, without full knowledge of what is to come”

(Biersta, 2006 148)



This requires teacher education policies that strengthen 'learning as connection' and continuously focus teachers' attention on the dynamic concept and practice of relevance ... [as well as concepts of efficiency and inclusion ...]

**Thank
you!**

