

Workshop Report: Climate Just Pedagogy – what lessons have we learned?

PIMA www.pimanetwork.com

“As nature is destroyed so are our livelihoods”, so said a participant in the virtual workshop on *Climate just pedagogy*, held on 2 March 2022. There was acknowledgement that the climate catastrophe, devastating war and conflict most recently in Ukraine, health pandemics, food insecurity, and economic uncertainties, impact the majority of people and the environment, and they are all interrelated. With recurrent intensified climate events, yet no apparent sense of urgency in many regions, the participatory workshop set out to deepen the dialogue and educational actions, based on participants experiences from various geographical regions. 94 people from diverse countries registered.

PIMA, in collaboration with the Canadian Association for Studies in Adult Education (CASAE), Adult Learning Australia (ALA), Standing Conference on University Teaching and Research in Education of Adults (SCUTREA), and MOJA, co-hosted the workshop: *Climate pedagogy: what have we learned?* It was part of the PIMA series of Climate Justice and Adult Learning and Education (ALE) events. It used as a common reference text, the special edition of the PIMA Bulletin 39 (Nov '21) which can be found at www.pimanetwork.com. It captures climate justice themes and gives examples of adult learning and education (ALE).

Dialogue amongst participants in breakout rooms was the centre piece where experiences of ‘climate just (or unjust) pedagogy’ were shared. People also spoke about what inspires them to do this work. Snapshots of a few examples will give a feel for the wide range of issues touched upon:

- (i) A network of universities in the North are working with African smallholder farmers to research policy relating to climate change – this example highlighted the institutional sticking points to bring about the deep changes that are required – institutional imperatives got in the way and diluted the collective purpose;
- (ii) Participation in climate justice social movements, their campaigns and protests, was a profound learning experience – climate just pedagogy is inside the movements;
- (iii) A major drought in one city showed up the deep divisions in the experiences across social classes – poor and working-class communities were not the central focus of the authorities’ attention. This was a lost opportunity to further climate justice which needs to focus primarily on those most in need;
- (iv) Devastating cyclones which regularly pound some countries in southern Africa leading to destruction of homes, fields and infrastructure, raise difficult questions for climate just pedagogy – what is possible? The people who contribute least to the climate catastrophe pay the heaviest price. Part of the pedagogy is to educate about the systemic problems which require fundamental global change – it is also to lobby governments to assist adaptation to changing conditions and to demand reparations from the countries which are causing the devastation. These all require collective action;
- (iv) Work with indigenous communities on climate change and adaptation on a small Canadian island, focuses on food security, availability of clean water, changes in farming practices – it’s hard as people’s personal suffering is so connected to macro crises – the imperative is to shift world views to ones which understand all life forms to be in relation to one another;

(v) Autonomous grassroots communities are claiming justice through, for example, occupation of land for food, housing and energy – these actions challenge educators to rethink what is ‘legal’ and ‘illegal’ – governments are not providing service so communities are doing it for themselves.

Arising from feedback from the groups and plenary discussion, prominent threads were identified for further consideration:

1. Changing roles of adult educators

Many adult educators are used to working with bounded groups within a ‘learning space’ or ‘classroom’. Issues relating to climate justice are wide ranging spreading across disciplines, spaces and levels. They are working with multiple scales of influence with politicians, administrators, scientists, lawyers, workers. Adult educators could find themselves having to facilitate conversations amongst powerful role players. They could also find themselves in the midst of strikes and protest actions – with the inaction of so many national and international authorities and the climate catastrophe that is here, more rebellious actions may be called for. There are blurred lines around personal and professional roles as we engage others around kitchen tables, in communities, in institutions – wherever we are can be a ‘pedagogical moment’ for climate justice.

2. Centrality of context

The context will determine the contours and form of climate just pedagogy. Livelihoods are a pervasive concern for most people and therefore for adult learners – how these connect to nature is key. As nature is destroyed so are livelihoods – this has classed, raced and gendered dimensions with certain people destroying much more than others. How we position ourselves as educators will shape our approaches – who are we working with? Who is listening? To whom are we listening?

3. Pedagogical spaces are broadening

Climate just pedagogy can occur in formal institutions like schools, colleges, universities; through movements’ campaigns and protests; at workplaces; through mainstream and social media; at community learning centres and within autonomous community groups. All of these spaces are threaded through with inequalities, for example, access to data. In all these spaces solidarity is with the majority who are poor and marginalised.

4. Valuing Nature

A critical fault line for climate justice is humans’ relationship to nature – how do we as educators establish an orientation which is ‘more than human’? How do so many poor and working-class people re-orientate their relationships with/to the natural environment? They often inhabit barren places which have no trees, or natural beauty. They don’t have opportunities to be in spaces which ‘help them breath again’ – something middle classes often take for granted. How can educators enable possibilities for exposure to the natural environment? How can this concern be made a priority at scale?

The final question posed in plenary was: *How do we raise climate justice as a priority for adult education?* Time was limited for the discussion. Two key ideas were offered from micro and macro perspectives:

(i) the people most affected by the climate catastrophe should lead the building and co-construction of knowledge about climate justice. It was felt that the power to bring about change lies within communities, working in solidarity with allies.

(ii) with CONFINTEA VII occurring in June 2022, the opportunity to help shape the Marrakesh Framework so that it prioritises climate justice was identified for intervention. Participants were encouraged to link with national and regional consultative processes towards the meeting.

In closing, it was clear that powerful people who are most invested in the status quo are not going to provide leadership to achieve the targets to sustain life on the planet. Adult educators as part of civil society, as citizens and professionals, engage wherever we are – where both our rage and playfulness can bring hope to individuals and communities through story-telling, through creativity and arts-based approaches, through acting with our hands, heads and hearts.

The current context of war and conflict, with the latest war between Russia and Ukraine, works against climate justice. Educators and advocates for climate justice stand for peace.

Jane Burt, Astrid von Kotze, Shirley Walters

PIMA Climate Justice and ALE Workshop Organising Group

Appendix

Resources shared during the workshop (and beyond):

<https://www.mojafrica.net/en/resource/what-has-a-polar-bear-got-to-do-with-me-why-respecting-and-saving-the-environment-is-justice-issue-which-affects-us-all>. This is an activist e-booklet which can be found on MOJA platform: “What has a polar bear got to do with me? Why respecting and saving the environment is a justice issue which affects us all”.

<https://www.groundwork.org.za/reports.php> Unpacking climate change. Background notes to the climate catastrophe

<https://safcei.org/the-faith-and-moral-call-to-agra/>

<https://www.spottedfawnproductions.com> - inspiring and generative, linking colonial oppression and extraction, art and survival

<https://trainings.350.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Climate-Resistance-Handbook-PDF.pdf>

www.earthday.org/climate-civic-camp-toolkit

<https://womin.africa/the-future-must-be-ecofeminist/>

<https://160g7a3snaig2i1r662yjd5r-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/Plastic-Pollution-Teach-In-Toolkit.pdf>

The Cartoon Introduction to Climate Change Revised Edition.

https://islandpress.org/books/cartoon-introduction-climate-change-revised-edition?gclid=CjwKCAiAyPyQBhB6EiwAFUuakgR8dxWZCAwUhhFBR6L0DkvW861xylw0EnN8YyyRmxG7zJNNe4Md_xoCFmAQAvD_BwE

Job One for Humanity. What is climate change and global warming and how does it affect us
https://www.joboneforhumanity.org/global_warming?gclid=CjwKCAiAyPyQBhB6EiwAFUuakhqDJqyMNLeWP1aLcADUOHI6NN4AqJvV45YGXWbnitn3V667avzthRoCrX4QAvD_BwE

15 March 2022

www.pimanetwork.com

