**ESCALATE**

**First report on project**

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**Institution:** University of Brighton

**Project Title:** COASTAL: Curriculum Outcomes, And Sustainable Teaching, Assessment, Learning.

**Overview**

The project aims to identify, share and encourage the uptake of successful models and strategies for embedding sustainable development into the HE curriculum and addresses learning outcomes, assessment and learning and teaching practices.

The project looks to investigate

* The criteria, definitions, examples and models of effective and sustainable development in the HE curriculum
* How HE student SD learning outcomes can be achieved, expressed and embedded through different disciplines and across disciplines, and via community and volunteering opportunities
* How effective models of SD learning can be shared locally and with the HE sectors

**Activity undertaken thus far**

These encompass 3 components as follows (and are all ongoing)

1. Desk-based research

* Of existing ESD literature to gather together effective examples and models of embedding SD in the curriculum, learning, teaching, assessment and community outreach in local, national and international contexts. Includes papers, references, links, summaries, case studies and literature reviews. The particular focus is on the pedagogy employed.
* Telephone and face to face interviews with staff across the faculties of the University of Brighton to collate examples of good practice in relation to ESD. In addition, good practice identified in other universities, sourced through the literature and email groups such as through EAUC are being compiled.

2. Internal dissemination

* Two community of practice (ESD Interest Group) meetings have been held through which the aims and progress of the project were shared with interested staff and ideas for further improvement considered. These were in addition to a meeting of the Learning and Teaching Forum. Discussions have centred on how teaching staff are integrating, or are intending to integrate, sustainable development considerations into their curricula.
* An Education for Sustainable Development ‘Community’ has been established within the University of Brighton Intra-net. The resources detailed under (1) have been filed, small summaries compiled and this has been piloted across a small number of staff. This is intended to ‘go live’ and be made accessible to the rest of the university mid-way through the project.

3. Development of new case materials

* A number of video recordings have been made of current examples of education for sustainable development activities within the University of Brighton (where students are involved in role play, action learning etc). These have been identified from a number of different disciplinary contexts.
* Interviews have also been conducted with staff and students involved in this learning and teaching. Some of these have been recorded and videoed for the purpose of further analysis and dissemination (see future activities below).

Two focus groups with students exposed to ESD activities have been conducted towards exploring the impact on student learning

**Assessment of progress**

Progress on the project was slower than expected through this initial period due to the unexpected withdrawal of the identified research officer to conduct their own fieldwork abroad. They were replaced but it took a short while for the replacement RO to take control of the project- this is now successfully underway.

However, it was also evident through the activities detailed under (1) and (2) above, that a sharper focus to the research would also enable it to make a more valuable contribution to the progress of embedding SD in the curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment within the University of Brighton and to further national learning in this field.

The enhanced focus for the project centres around the identification of ESD examples across the disciplines but with an emphasis on pedagogy employed. In addition, dissemination of these examples, it is believed, would be more effective through a range of outlets, and in particular, the development of a wiki-based, interactive web-based platform in addition to the traditional text based report.

It is envisaged that this type of dissemination format will be more effective in engaging lecturers in ESD than just a written report. It will be an opportunity for lecturers to see ESD in action in their own discipline, each example accompanied by sound bites from the students and lecturers involved, explaining how it worked and how it impacted upon the students.

This enhanced focus has led to a new methodology within the project relying considerably more on

* the collection and creation of video clips and photographs of examples of Education for Sustainable Development and
* the collection and creation of recorded interviews with staff and students who were involved in the videoed examples of ESD.

These audio and visual records will be used both as hard data and as dissemination tools within this project, whilst also forming the basis for the future creation of an interactive, multimedia wiki-based website for which University of Brighton and further resources will be sourced. As many disciplines as possible will be represented on this website, each with a number of visual and audio vignettes illustrating the range of pedagogic learning and teaching styles that can support the effective implementation of ESD. Particular focus will be given to community and volunteering examples.

As a result of this new dimension to the project, the Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges have asked to make some formal links with the work we are doing, and are prepared to assist us in identifying examples and resources and in disseminating the findings. They have invited us to attend a national ESD Swap-Shop in which lecturers from all over the country who have conducted successful ESD will come to share their approaches and to learn from each other. Attendees will write up their ESD case studies and submit them to be compiled into a paper publication. It is envisaged that our role in this event will be to make audio and visual recordings of the attendee’s thoughts and reflections on their case studies**.** These recordings will be edited and compiled to create a multimedia version of the paper publication.They will also be used as to hard date to be analysed for the final report to Escalate.

**Defining ESD**

**The understanding of ESD that we have started out with for this project is in line with the UNESCO definition of ESD, a definition guiding the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development:**

***‘Education for sustainable development is about learning to:******- respect, value and preserve the achievements of the past;******- appreciate the wonders and the peoples of the Earth;******- live in a world where all people have sufficient food for a healthy and productive life;******- assess, care for and restore the state of our Planet;******- create and enjoy a better, safer, more just world;******- be caring citizens who exercise their rights and responsibilities locally, nationally and globally.’***

**UNESCO expand on this definition further, including the types of pedagogies, dimensions and skills that should be involved in ESD:**

***ESD is fundamentally about values, with respect at the centre: respect for others, including those of present and future generations, for difference and diversity, for the environment, for the resources of the planet we inhabit. Education enables us to understand ourselves and others and our links with the wider natural and social environment, and this understanding serves as a durable basis for building respect. Along with a sense of justice, responsibility, exploration and dialogue, ESD aims to move us to adopting behaviours and practices which enable all to live a full life without being deprived of basics.******ESD mirrors the concern for education of high quality, demonstrating characteristics: such as:******- Interdisciplinary and holistic: learning for sustainable development embedded in the whole curriculum, not as a separate subject;*** ***- Values-driven: sharing the values and principles underpinning sustainable development;*** ***- Critical thinking and problem solving: leading to confidence in addressing the dilemmas and challenges of sustainable development;*** ***- Multi-method: word, art, drama, debate, experience, … different pedagogies which model the processes;*** ***- Participatory decision-making: learners participate in decisions on how they are to learn;*** ***- Locally relevant: addressing local as well as global issues, and using the language(s) which learners most commonly use.***

**However, this definition is very broad, and in searching for case studies and arranging interviews, we are open to investigating examples that seems to cover any combination of the dimensions and skills listed above.**

**Summary of emergent findings**

**Definitions** Through interviews with lecturers engaging in ESD,a range of definitions have emerged in relation to the term ‘sustainability’ and ‘sustainable development’ which mirrors the national picture (Robinson and Shallcross 2006) from individual sustainability (mental health) to issues of sustainable theory/practice interaction to environmental concerns. It is intended that this project works towards a cross university debate and clarification around these terms.

**Criteria** From initial analysis of data there appears a consensus of opinion that, whatever the definition, effective ESD involves a three way interrelationship between theory, experiential learning and personal reflection

Experiential learning

Theory

Personal reflection

These interrelated areas are part of a wider recognition that ‘both formal and informal education are indispensable to changing peoples attitudes’ (Quarrie 1991 p 221). Furthermore, it seems that for teaching to be considered ESD, it must explore the cross over between the social, environmental and economic dimensions of the given discipline. Thus ESD is expressed both in terms of approach to learning and teaching, and as focus or content.

**Examples and models of ESD**

Based loosely on the UNESCO definition of ESD, Case studies are being investigated across all disciplines, covering a range of pedagogic styles.

Case study 1: Role play exploring project management and community consultation for a fictional geological drilling project

Early work suggests that students find the use of role play and case study-based learning can be an effective approach to ESD, particularly with regards to the requirements of their potential future employers. The demands of employers are increasingly focused on graduates’ ability to consider and deal with multiple real-world factors, environmental, social and economic. An understanding of the narrow discipline alone is no longer enough. Interviews with students suggested a variety of experience. For example, one response was

‘I wish we had had this module earlier on in the course! This kind of insight into the professional world would have been really useful to mention in my recent job applications’

However, another student complained that this module was ‘a complete waste of time’ due to the fact that the learning would be of no use to their final year exams. This suggests that modules like this are always going to be difficult to establish and run if they are not supported by the exam boards. During an interview with the lecturer of this module, he mentioned that ‘often students can’t see the point in this module whilst they are doing it, but tell me later that it has been really useful for their work, post university’

Case study 2: Modules that support a deep approach to learning – Education/Design technology

In this case study the lecturer outlined a new module, introduced this year, to support a module specifically aimed at environmental sustainable development . In previous years on the DT course module 2 required students to design a product with particular reference to environmental issues ( refuse, reuse, reduce, recycle or repair). However assessments revealed that students were not engaging with the task on a deep level and were ‘ticking the boxes’ in order to meet the assessment criteria. To address this new module 1 requires students to assess and identify their own learning needs and take action to address those needs. This has had the impact of encouraging students to take responsibility for and engage with their learning on a deep level. It is hoped that the development of these skills will support the effective embedding of issues of ESD when students tackle module two.

It is intended to interview students when they have completed both modules to analyse the impact on their ESD learning.

Case study 3 – Modules that support community engagement

The Community University Partnership Programme (CUPP) at the university runs a generic module over a range of disciplines including health, Biology/pharmaceuticals, geography and environment, languages and Social Sciences. The module requires students to undertake a period of volunteering in a community organisation in a mutual exchange of skills and knowledge. The placement facilitates students’ identification and matching of their skills to their chosen or anticipated career/employment path. This experience is seen to support students’ reflections around their values and broaden their experience of the diversity of society and the complexity of social/political and economic organisation. This opportunity for experiential learning is recognised to be a key ingredient in the ESD agenda (UNESCO 2004 in Robinson and Shallcross 2006).

Student s within the school of environment have been directly involved in projects relating to the environment (such as support for the RSPB in a local protection area) and as such are also having a direct experience with the environmental strand of ESD. Future plans include taking video footage/photographic stills of these projects to use as a promotional resource both across the disciplines involved and the university at large.

Again it is intended to interview students when they have completed their placement to assess and analysis the impact on students awareness of ESD issues.

**Next Steps**

* Continue collecting and recording video clips and interviews with staff and students here at University of Brighton ensuring all disciplines covered
* Visits to be made to other universities for the purpose of recording ESD teaching and learning initiatives and interviewing relevant staff and students.

Pursue collaboration with EAUC through which further case studies, examples and video clips will be identified nationally and internationally via their partnership with a number of American Universities

We are continuing to plan appropriate dissemination.

The project team:

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**Bibliography**

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