

REFLECTIONS ON PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract- The main purpose of this paper is to explore sustainability studies through the lens of the next generation of thinkers, students on a social studies degree module. Reflections from theory to practice and reflective diaries are outputs from this module in contexts in which learning sustainable practices can be developed through innovative methods rather than those that have been practiced since time immemorial. By exploring students' evidence that engagement in a critical reflective process with module content and pedagogy that critically analyzes influential models. A variety of opportunities for sustainability practices and transformative learning can be enabled.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Reflections, professional education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) empowers learners of all ages with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to address the interconnected global challenges we are facing, including climate change, environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, poverty and inequality.

Education for Sustainable Development allows every human being to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future. Education for Sustainable Development means including key sustainable development issues into teaching and learning; for example, climate change, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, poverty reduction, and sustainable consumption.

It also requires participatory teaching and learning methods that motivate and empower learners to change their behaviour and take action for sustainable development. Education for Sustainable Development consequently promotes competencies like critical thinking, imagining future scenarios and making decisions in a collaborative way. Education for Sustainable Development requires far-reaching changes in the way education is often practised today.

ESD is an abbreviation for Education for Sustainable Development. Today, the world is facing a variety of problems caused by human development activities such as climate change, biodiversity losses, resource depletion and the expansion of poverty. ESD comprises learning and educational activities that aim to develop alternative values and transformative actions that lead to problem-solving and to realize a sustainable society by taking the initiative to accept these problems of modern society as our own and tackling the problems in our immediate environment (think globally, act locally) in order to ensure that human beings are able to secure an abundant life for future generations. In short, ESD is education that fosters the builders of a sustainable society.



Fig. 1.1 Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

2. PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES IN ESD

There is no 'correct' pedagogy for sustainability education, but there is a broad consensus that it requires a shift towards active, participative, and experiential learning methods that engage the learner and make a real difference to their understanding, thinking and ability to act.

We've identified five pedagogic elements that cover a host of pedagogical approaches or methods that staff at Plymouth might use to bring these elements into the learning environment.

2.1 Critical Reflection

Including the more traditional lecture, but also newer approaches such as reflexive accounts, learning journals, and discussion groups.

2.2 Systemic Thinking and Analysis

The use of real-world case studies and critical incidents, project-based learning, stimulus activities, and the use of the campus as a learning resource.

2.3 Participatory Learning

With emphasis on group or peer learning, developing dialogue, experiential learning, action research/learning to act, and developing case studies with local community groups and business

2.4 Thinking Creatively for Future Scenarios

By using role play, real-world inquiry, futures visioning, problem-based learning, and providing space for emergence.

2.5 Collaborative Learning

Including contributions from guest speakers, work-based learning, interdisciplinary/ multidisciplinary working, and collaborative learning and co-inquiry.

3. ROLE OF EDUCATION IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Good quality education is an essential tool for achieving a more sustainable world. This was emphasised at the UN World Summit in Johannesburg in 2002 where the reorientation of current education systems was outlined as key to sustainable development. Education for sustainable development (ESD) promotes the development of the knowledge, skills, understanding, values and actions required to create a sustainable world, which ensures environmental protection and conservation, promotes social equity and encourages economic sustainability. The concept of ESD developed largely from environmental education, which has sought to develop the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviours in people to care for their environment. The aim of ESD is to enable people to make decisions and carry out actions to improve our quality of life without compromising the planet. It also aims to integrate the values inherent in sustainable development into all aspects and levels of learning.

There are a number of key themes in ESD and while the dominant focus is on environmental concerns, it also addresses themes such as poverty alleviation, citizenship, peace, ethics, responsibility in local and global contexts, democracy and governance, justice, human rights, gender equality, corporate responsibility, natural resource management and biological diversity. It is generally accepted that certain characteristics are important for the successful implementation of ESD, reflecting the equal importance of both the learning process and the outcomes of the education process (adapted from 'UN Decade of Sustainable Development' UNESCO Nairobi Cluster, 2006).

ESD should:

- Be embedded in the curriculum in an interdisciplinary and holistic manner, allowing for a whole-institution approach to policy making.
- Share the values and principles that underpin sustainable development.
- Promote critical thinking, problem solving and action, all of which develop confidence in addressing the challenges to sustainable development.
- Employ a variety of educational methods, such as literature, art, drama and debate to illustrate the processes.
- Allow learners to participate in decision-making on the design and content of educational programmes.
- Address local as well as global issues, and avoid jargon-ridden language and terms.
- Look to the future, ensuring that the content has a long-term perspective and uses medium and long-term planning.

CONCLUSION

An overview of ESD shows that the quality of programmes and work delivered is of a very high level. Moreover, the diversity of programmes offered at present provides a good basis for any action plan on education for sustainable development and useful opportunities for inter-sectoral collaboration on common issues and areas. The debate about the relationship between ESD, EE and DE looks set to continue but in the short-term these education sectors need to network, share their practice and learn from each other.

Each of the groups involved in the campaign may be drawn from different sectors and have different reasons for affiliating, but are working together for a common good. The climate change campaign could serve as a model of good practice for environment, development and sustainable development educators in how they can work together in a network for the pursuit of shared goals. Innovation and new projects in ESD and across all related education sectors need to be encouraged and developed to engage civil society groups in actions toward a sustainable world.

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