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# **Climbing the ESD Pyramids: An Exploration of the Context for Sustainable Business Education**



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**Director of the ESRC Centre for Business Relationships, Accountability, Sustainability  
and Society (BRASS)**

## About the BRASS Centre

In 2001, Cardiff University won £3.1 million in research funds from the Economic and Social Research Council to develop a Research Centre for Business Relationships, Accountability, Sustainability and Society (BRASS). The Centre is a joint venture between the University's Schools of Business, City & Regional Planning and Law. It brings together the three Schools' existing research expertise on issues of sustainability, business ethics, company law, corporate reporting and business communication.

The Centre started work in October 2001 under the leadership of Professor Ken Peattie of the Business School, Professor Terry Marsden of the Department of City and Regional Planning and Professor Bob Lee of the Law School. The funding of the Centre covers an initial five-year period, but this should just mark the beginning of BRASS' contribution to creating more sustainable and responsible businesses locally, nationally and globally.

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# **Climbing the ESD pyramids: an exploration of the context for sustainable business education**

## **Introduction**

Developing a more sustainable society will depend upon people being willing and able to relate to sustainable development (SD) when purchasing, consuming, investing, managing, working and voting. This makes “*How well do people understand the concept of ‘sustainability’?*” a vitally important question. A 1995 study conducted by researchers from Lancaster University (MacNaughten *et. al.*, 1995) revealed that:

*“People generally are unfamiliar with the idea of ‘sustainability’ in its environmental sense. But once they understand it, they appear to identify positively with its values and priorities.”*

This finding was perhaps surprising, as well as disappointing, coming eight years after the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987) had apparently brought the concept of sustainability into the mainstream of political and social debate. Similar findings from Plant (1998) revealed that people remained generally unable to articulate what sustainability was.

Such findings mean that a great deal of emphasis has been placed on education as a key to the development of more sustainable societies. In some cases this has perhaps lapsed into over-emphasis. As Jucker (2002) points out, there is a danger that an emphasis on education becomes a substitute for changing other elements of society and its currently unsustainable nature, and it places the onus for solving the difficult problems that progress towards sustainability involves, onto a generation of children that did not actually cause them.

Within the debate about Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), business education has been identified as a vital component, not least because of the role that business activity has had in creating past environmental and social problems. Solving those problems will require businesses to contribute to their solutions, through new products, new production processes and new more responsible and environmentally efficient methods of delivering value to stakeholders. Unless SD is integrated across all aspects of business education, we will not create the generation of managers, investment managers and corporate buyers that

will be needed to both effect and accept the necessary innovations and changes that substantive progress towards sustainability will entail.

An academic debate has emerged concerning how business education both should, and can, embrace ESD. This debate has included issues relating to the business school curriculum (Holt, 2002), the research agenda for business schools (Gladwin, et al. 1995), and the management and operation of business schools (Holt, 2002). One problem with the debate about business education and sustainability is that much of it is abstracted from the broader educational context in terms of students' educational experiences before they reach their Business School of choice, and the wider world beyond their Business School's walls.

This paper seeks to contribute to the debate about ESD for business, by considering the broader educational context within which Business Schools operate, and the implications for business education of many of the challenges that are faced by educators seeking to embrace SD, at all levels and across disciplines.

### **Project objectives, context and methodology**

The findings presented here originate from a wider EU-funded sustainable regions initiative, and a project focused on building a region's sustainability knowledge base, in the context of Wales. Two of this project's key aims were:

- To better understand sources of sustainability knowledge and awareness within Wales by “*mapping*” the different sources, and exploring the relationships between them
- To analyse ESD initiatives within formal education at all levels, with particular reference to:
  - the integration of available teaching resources into curriculum planning and teaching delivery
  - progression in ESD, as learners move through formal education
  - the relationship between sustainability within the curriculum and sustainability in the operations and management of schools and colleges
  - the role of teacher training

Wales is an interesting region in which to conduct such research because, since the 1998 *Government of Wales Act*, the Welsh Assembly Government has had a duty to promote SD in all aspects of its work. This duty has put Wales at the forefront of seeking to integrate SD into policy making in areas such as education. To assist them in this task, the Assembly Government has formed an ESD Advisory Panel, which includes representatives from schools and universities, educational inspection and advisory services, NGOs with ESD expertise and local authorities. The Panel has a remit that extends beyond formal education, to consider all aspects of learning about SD, and in addition to providing policy advice, it is actively involved in funding and developing ESD research and practical projects, and promoting best practice.

Despite the emphasis on SD within government, Wales also faces a challenge in terms of developing SD awareness amongst its population. By 2002, amidst the excitement generated by the Johannesburg summit, it would be easy to assume that the sustainability message would have finally penetrated society. However, a 2002 survey by the Consumer Council of Wales (Bibbings, 2003) revealed that:

- 70% of Welsh consumers did not understand what SD means
- 5% believed that it related to construction
- 18% believed it to be an economic term
- Those aged 35 to 54 were slightly more likely to understand what it means than younger or older consumers
- Even among the best-informed professionals and skilled white-collar workers (those in social classes ABC1), only 40% were familiar with SD.

This paper reflects key findings and insights derived from an interview programme with key Welsh ESD stakeholders which included educators (SD specialist and non-specialists, and head teachers); members of NGOs with an interest in ESD; educational support services (from both the statutory and voluntary sectors); local government officials responsible for education; Regional (Welsh Assembly) Government officers responsible for SD; and a range of other relevant stakeholders. Interviews combined a set of standard questions with more wide-ranging discussion based on stakeholders' interests and experience. They were typically sixty to ninety minutes in duration and were taped and transcribed for analysis. The main

mechanism for identifying interviewees was via the ESD Advisory Panel to the Assembly Government, who acted as interviewees, and provided suggestions for further potential interviewees.

The findings presented below aim to present some of the consensus views that emerged from the interviews. Although the findings partly reflect the nature and structure of education within Wales, the broader lessons should apply to regions anywhere within Europe and beyond, even if the specifics of age groups, courses or educational structure will vary. The perspectives presented here should help to provide a better understanding of the context for business education, and about some of the challenges that will be involved in making it more sustainability orientated.

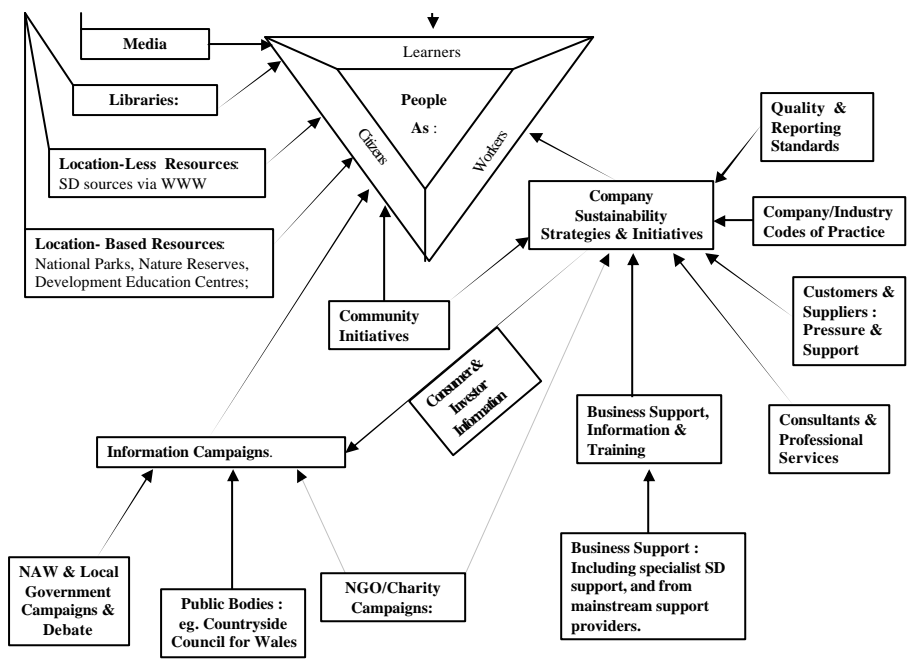
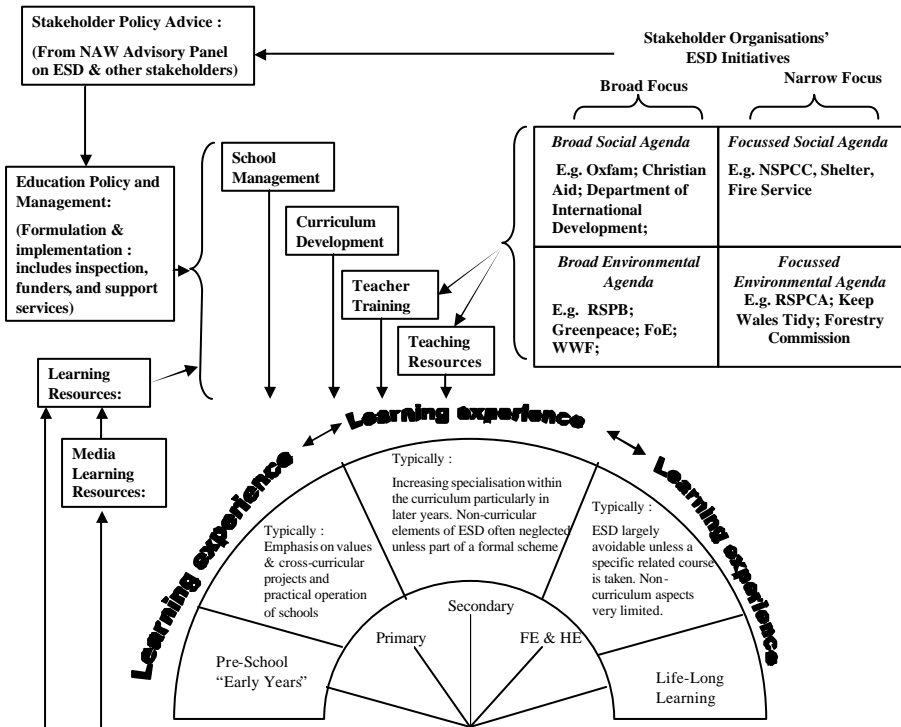
Many of the issues that were raised during the stakeholder interviews simply provided reinforcement for the findings from previous research concerning:

- Conceptions and misconceptions of SD within education (see, for example, Leal Filho, 2000; Wals and Jickling, 2002)
- The opportunities for integrating environmental management practices and systems within educational establishments (see, for example, Herremans and Allwright, 2000; Noeke, 2000; Sharp, 2002)
- Identifying and overcoming barriers to the “greening” of either the curriculum (Davis, *et al.*, 2003; Thomas, 2004) or the campus (Dahle and Neumayer, 2001)
- The need to adopt a balanced view of sustainability that integrates the environmental, social and economic dimensions of the concept without one or other dominating (see, for example, Newport *et al.*, 2003)
- The importance of interdisciplinarity (Flint *et al.*, 2000).

This article seeks to focus more on those findings that either extend or complement our existing understanding of these issues.

### **Mapping sources of knowledge and awareness about SD**

SD awareness is usually discussed with reference to formal education, but there are many settings and stages in life during which we can learn about sustainability issues. One of this



**Figure 1. Mapping Sources of Sustainability Knowledge and Awareness in Wales.**

project's aims was to produce a "map" of the key sources of knowledge and awareness about SD. This was approached by using discussions with key ESD stakeholders to develop the map, and then to use the map as an aid to exploring issues relating to ESD in a further round of interviews.

A simplified version of the resultant "map" is presented in Figure 1. Although this diagram contains more arrows and boxes than a national archery contest, it is not intended to bewilder, but instead to demonstrate the complexity involved when considering the development of a sustainability knowledge base for a region (for a simpler and more abstract model which embodies many of the same principles, see Holt *et al.*, 1999).

At its centre, the map envisages three "roles" in which people can gain knowledge and awareness about SD:

- As **learners**: within the formal learning process, including schools, tertiary education and also through life-long learning (Pre-school learning is included within this role for simplicity, and to reflect growing interest in SD in "Early Years" provision)
- As **workers**: since sustainability may feature in peoples' working lives through training, or if issues of environmental sustainability, corporate social responsibility or community involvement form part of their employer's strategic agenda or policies
- As **citizens**: since sustainability knowledge and awareness can develop within individuals' private lives from media coverage, political debate, or through the efforts of community or campaigning groups.

Although drawing such distinctions can be helpful for the purpose of analysis and discussion, they should not be interpreted too rigidly. The workplace can be an important source of learning for many, and citizens who are also parents are quite likely to learn from educational materials aimed at their children. What is important in developing the sustainability knowledge base is to utilise all the available channels. This was expressed in *Learning To Last: The Government's Sustainable Development Education Strategy For England*, from England's SD Education Panel (SDEP, 2003). This highlighted the need for a coherent strategy on ESD and stressed that:

*“The challenge is to win hearts and minds and to motivate people to take personal action. This will not happen without mobilising channels of informal communication, including the media, youth and trade associations, non-governmental organisations of all kinds, museums, libraries, galleries, the arts, sports and many more. What is needed is a positive vision reinforced by a simple, consistent message expressed in plain language.”*

For the purposes of this paper, the bulk of the discussion is focussed on the northern territories of the map, on ESD and formal learning. This reflects its crucial role in promoting the future understanding and awareness of sustainability within regions such as Wales. It should also be remembered however, that formal education is not the sole answer (see Jucker, 2002). However good it is, in the short-term, ESD within our schools and colleges will only reach one generation at a time.

The model identifies four key components of education, which influence peoples’ ESD learning experience at all levels:

- Curriculum development and delivery, particularly in terms of the national curriculum for ESD in schools
- Educator training, both in-service and through teacher training colleges
- Education resources, including materials provided through the education system and those from external organisations. Within the map these have been categorised according to whether the focus is primarily social or environmental, and whether they cover a broad or narrow agenda
- The management of educational establishments, since this can play an important part in reinforcing learning about ESD.

These four elements are all in turn strongly influenced by education policy from government and its implementation through agencies such as Local Education Authorities (LEAs), funding bodies, inspection service providers and support services.

During the project interviews, ESD stakeholders found the map presented in Figure 1 useful to discuss and refer to, partly because it served to highlight the complexities involved in developing a sustainability knowledge base. It also proved a useful framework around which to structure discussions about the role of individual stakeholders in contributing to ESD, and

their perceptions of the key issues involved in its development. The following points reflect some of the issues that emerged from those discussions:

### **Progression in education: the ESD pyramid**

As Figure 1 indicates, the nature of ESD changes as a learner progresses through education. In primary schools that adopt ESD, it is typically broad and cross-curricular with an emphasis on projects that span across several subject areas, and with SD principles integrated into the life and management of the school. In secondary education ESD tends to be more concentrated within particular parts of the curriculum (for example with environmental issues viewed as “belonging” to geography and biodiversity issues ‘*belonging*’ in biology). ESD also may be concentrated in particular school years, for example “Year 9” (13/14 age group) before GCSE work commences. Secondary schools are also less likely to integrate SD principles throughout the life of the school, which is reflected in the higher uptake of sustainability related schemes such as Eco-Schools (in which, for example, Welsh primary schools outnumber secondary schools by 5 to 1). In secondary schools, several characteristics were seen as hampering ESD’s development, including:

- their greater size makes them more complex organisations to apply sustainability principles within
- their emphasis on testing and qualifications
- their emphasis on the curriculum and the boundaries between subjects, and the tendency to have teachers who are subject specialists and used to thinking within disciplines rather than across them
- interests among the older age group of children which tend to work against greater engagement with sustainability (not least of which is an emerging interest in the opposite sex!).

In tertiary education, this tendency for ESD to be captured within particular elements of the curriculum goes further. The importance of Universities for ESD is widely acknowledged:

*“Universities educate most of the people who develop and manage society’s institutions. For this reason, universities bear profound responsibilities to increase the awareness, knowledge, technologies, and tools to create an environmentally sustainable future”* (Tailloires Declaration, UPFS 1995).

This logic was embodied in the 1993 Toyne Report (DFE, 1993), which sought to promote sustainability within the management of British universities and its integration into the curriculum for every discipline. Despite the good intentions of the report to integrate sustainability into all subject areas, most undergraduates can still escape exposure to it unless they choose a subject such as environmental science, or an option such as development economics. The philosophical strength of the Toyne report, that SD was relevant to all, may also have been a practical and political weakness. It allowed those responsible for the disciplines offering the most scope for progress, particularly those in business education, to downplay its relevance through criticism of the worth and feasibility of integrating sustainability into the curriculum for Music, Art and Language departments.

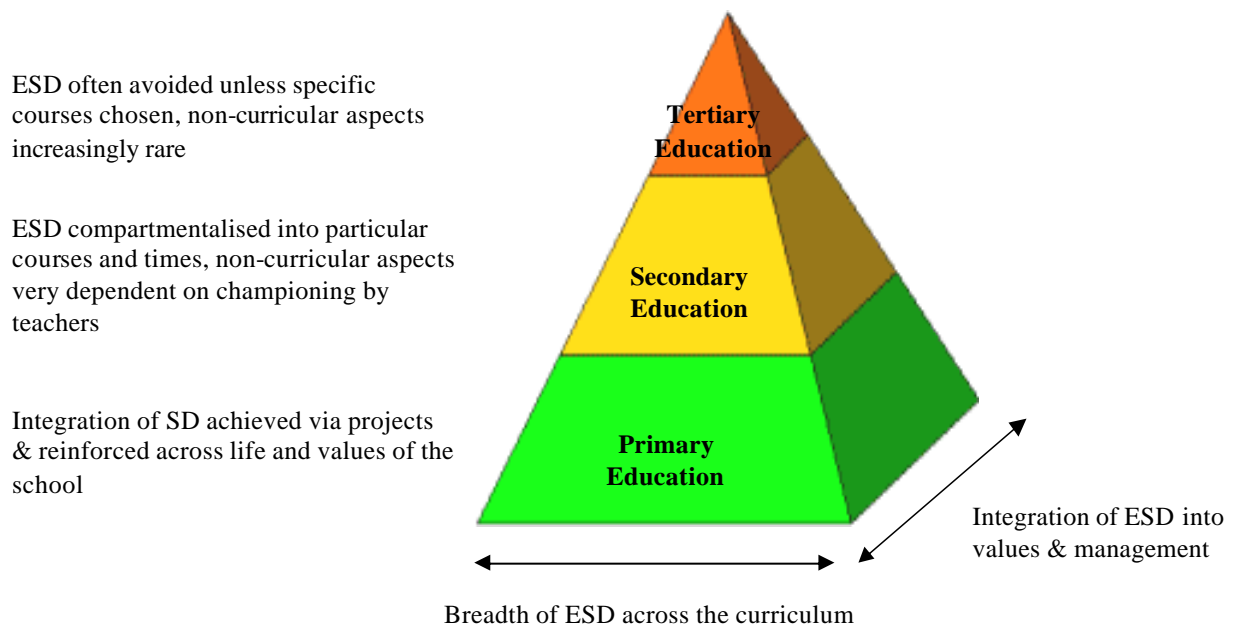
There are certain disciplines, particularly within Business Schools, where integration of SD principles into the curriculum could make a significant contribution to developing a more sustainable society. Progress would become easier if the teaching of business and management, economics, accountancy and social policy produced a generation of managers, economists, professional investors, accountants and policy makers who understand sustainability. Sadly, in practice, University Departments such as Business Schools have mostly been slow to integrate sustainability into their teaching (Coopey, 2001). The *Review of the Toyne Report* (SCAA, 1996) commented on "*considerable indifference*" within higher education and found that

*"Hardly any progress has been made in respect of curriculum 'greening'".*

Ironically as a person progresses through the education system towards citizenship and employment, the consideration of sustainability issues in their education tends to dissipate rather than intensify. This situation is reflected in the pyramid model in Figure 2, which represents the journey through formal education as an experience in which the breadth of SD coverage within the curriculum, and the degree to which it is integrated into the management and values of the educational environment tends to narrow as learners progress. This does not mean that the pyramid reflects all learners' experience. All interviewees were able to name secondary schools and university courses and departments that were superb examples of good practice in the greening of the curriculum or the campus, both in Wales and beyond. However, such good practice represented the exception further up the pyramid, not the rule.

For most of education, the pyramid model was viewed as generally representative. One implication of this pyramid for Business Schools operating in the tertiary sector, is that their ability to embrace ESD will depend to a considerable extent on the foundation laid down in the primary and secondary sectors in educating their pupils about sustainability.

**Figure 2. The ESD Pyramid**



### **Reshaping the pyramid: integrating SD into education**

The challenge for those in education is to “*broaden*” the top of the pyramid, so that ESD does not become increasingly provided only to certain learners or reflected only in certain elements of the curriculum or extra-curricular life. Business education offers considerable scope to contribute to this broadening process, given the relevance of sustainability concerns for businesses and the importance of business in both creating and addressing those concerns. However, reshaping the pyramid so that SD is better integrated into tertiary education generally, and business education specifically, is a significant challenge. Two dimensions of the challenge involved in integrating SD issues into tertiary business education were highlighted by Peattie (1994). Each mirrors problems that businesses face in responding to sustainability concerns related to their products, production systems or business strategies. The first was a tendency towards “*end-of-pipe*” teaching, in which sustainability issues are “*bolted-on*” to conventional courses without the nature of the rest of the course, or other

elements of the curriculum, being reconsidered from a sustainability perspective. For those involved in ESD teaching or SD research, this phenomenon will be familiar from the invitations to contribute a “*Guest lecture*” to a lecture course (typically the seventeenth or eighteenth in a series of twenty). This reflects the concept of sustainability as a topic to be slotted into the curriculum instead of thinking about ESD as an approach to education. It also mirrors the tendency of businesses to often “*bolt-on*” pollution reduction measures onto conventional production technologies rather than seeking to redesign them to reduce pollution at source.

To illustrate the “*end-of-pipe*” phenomenon in relation to the discipline of marketing, business school courses at present will typically address sustainability by teaching about environmental concern as one element of the marketing environment, one influence on consumer behaviour, and environmental excellence as one potential source of competitive advantage as a marketing strategy. In such circumstances, the core concepts of the marketing discipline remain untouched. A sustainable development perspective on marketing (see for example Fuller, 1999; Peattie, 1999) requires a number of basic marketing concepts to be rethought including:

- The definition of product, since environmental concerns make the means and consequences of production a potential influence on customer satisfaction, and therefore conceptually a part of an extended product concept
- Market structures, since extended producer responsibility regulations and recycling turn conventional “*left-to-right*” supply chains into supply loops in which customers have a dual role as used product suppliers
- Concepts of satisfaction, to accommodate non-purchase, “downshifting” and product maintenance, repair and reuse as potential sources of consumer satisfaction
- Impacts on “non-consumers”: conventionally the impacts that production, marketing and consumption have on “non-consumers” are treated as “*externalities*” and excluded from market transactions and therefore from marketing (one example is car safety, which is expressed entirely in terms of the safety of the consumer, the driver. A 5285 lb Bentley Continental GT is a very safe car to drive, but not to interact with as a pedestrian or cyclist). An SD perspective on marketing requires consideration of the impacts of production and consumption on a wider range of stakeholders, and also on future generations of stakeholders.

Given the need to rethinking that an SD perspective brings, it is hardly surprising that marketing academics prefer to bolt some consideration of environmental issues onto the subject, but otherwise retain a status quo based on neo-classical economics that treats any inconvenient and unsustainable consequences of their discipline as externalities that are effectively somebody else's problem.

The second and related challenge reflects the business concept of "*Best available technology, not entailing excessive cost*" (BATNEEC), which is enshrined within both UK and European environmental law. This concept allows businesses to plead "*excessive cost*" as a means to avoid having to use the best environmental technologies available within their industry. Education suffers from its own form of BATNEEC principle, which entails delivering the "*best available teaching, not entailing excessive change*". In the context of UK education an academic BATNEEC approach is entirely understandable. The last ten years has witnessed a ceaseless succession of changes to the education system, particularly in secondary schools, that has left teachers and those in education support and inspection desperate for some degree of stability and continuity. This has led to initiatives promoting ESD to stress the degree to which radical change is not required. For example,

*"No radical overhaul of educational values, learning mechanisms, or core objectives is required to provide learning which facilitates sustainable development. In fact, ESD is likely to reinforce and promote key learning objectives and offers a new and invigorating way of approaching existing curricula and thinking about the world around us."* (EAC, 2003)

This is perhaps wishful thinking. We know that the way that society has approached knowledge, technology and the environment in the past has created unsustainable development. Although education is nearly always proposed as a key solution to sustainability problems, it is also part of the problem. As Orr (1994) reminds us:

*"It is worth noting that (the destruction of the planet) is not the work of ignorant people. Rather, it is largely the results of work by people with BAs, BScs, LLBs, MBAs, and PhDs".*

Jucker (2002) points out that education is still shaped by an academic tradition that assumes that the general socio-economic status quo, although generally understood to be unsustainable in the long term, will largely be maintained. Without a more radical agenda for change,

delivering ESD that helps to move us genuinely closer to sustainability will be difficult to achieve. Few in education seem to have an appetite for such radical change, or a belief that it is realistic to pursue.

The response of interviewees to the question of how much change was required in education was interesting. Almost all of them believed that to make substantive progress towards a sustainable society, significant changes to the way we approach education would be necessary. Almost all of them also believed that the degree of change necessary was presently politically, economically and practically impossible. It was a classic head and heart dilemma. Most respondents agreed with Jucker's (2002) logic about the need to embrace radical change in education, but also with his rather beautifully phrased warning:

*“that to assume that a bit of nature watching, critical discourse and enlightened teaching will alter the current power structures and that those in power will let that happen without any attempt to defend their privileges does, if anything, just prove the political illiteracy of those proposing these things”.*

In the short term, perhaps the key to significantly enhancing ESD is not to position it as an issue that requires extensive change, but to ensure that it is a core component which is integrated into the many other educational changes that are ongoing and planned. At present the changes to ‘*Early years*’ provision and the replacement of Key Stage 1 with the new *Foundation Curriculum* is a major set of changes in the primary sector. In the secondary sector, the provision for 14-19 year olds is also undergoing radical changes. These include a shift in the balance between traditional academic and more vocational courses, making the PSE curriculum compulsory and the development of new forms of educational partnerships. The ‘*Learning the Sustainability Lesson*’ report (EAC, 2003) stresses that the current round of educational changes represent a ‘*tide that must be caught*’, in terms of seizing opportunities to integrate education and SD. The same logic applies in the tertiary sector. In the short term, it would be surprising if many business schools showed a willingness to radically change their curriculum and approach to management to fully embrace SD. At the same time, changes within Business Schools that reflect increasing concern in the business world over issues of globalisation, CSR, corporate governance and business ethics, all provide opportunities to promote and integrate SD issues.

## **Climbing the pyramid: key influences on learners' progress**

In discussing the educational experiences of learners as they move through the educational system with interviewees, a wide range of issues were considered, but three stood out in terms of the frequency they arose and the strength and diversity of the opinions that were expressed:

### 1. Testing: a controversial topic

Progress through UK education at all levels is defined by, and often dependent on, testing. Testing in relation to ESD proved to be a controversial subject in terms of the quantity, nature and timing of assessments. The perceived reality within education at all levels is that students and staff have learnt to focus their energies on what is assessed. Those who support testing for elements of ESD, see it as a vital way to signal its importance to both students and staff. Henze (2000), with reference to teacher training at University, suggests that

*“it seems to be necessary to make sustainability themes compulsory in examinations.”*

Critics of testing and qualifications for ESD understand the communication benefit of testing, but point out the difficulties and negative consequences that might also arise. An emphasis on testing is seen as reinforcing an ‘*education about SD*’ approach, centring on acquiring and testing knowledge. It is more difficult to assess ‘*education for SD*’ in terms of students’ learning critical thinking skills, communications abilities, and development of their personal values and sense of empathy and responsibility. Many of these aspects of ESD will only truly be tested outside of school, in terms of how students live their lives. Therefore critics highlight the problems of devising meaningful tests. Another concern about testing relates to subjects like global citizenship, where stakeholders were concerned that a school-child who performed poorly in an assessment would assume that this made them a ‘*bad citizen*’.

### 2. Teachers: the importance of educating the educators

Integrating SD into education at all levels, and within any region, will require education and training for educators. For new school teachers this comes through initial teacher education and training (ITET), which in the UK is delivered either through a three-year B.Ed. degree, or a one-year Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE). Training of new teachers in ESD

will ultimately improve the capacity of the education system to embrace and promote ESD in the long-term. In the short-term, it is also important to reach existing staff through in-service training days.

A recent review of Welsh Teacher Training Colleges found that colleges varied in the degree to which they had attempted to integrate sustainability into their own ITET curriculum, and that there had been relatively little progress in integrating sustainability principles into teacher training beyond trying to impart knowledge about it to teachers. Most colleges were reliant on external specialists acting as “*guest speakers*” to cover SD issues.

A key problem in teacher training is that promoting SD can be perceived as just one of several new demands that need to be accommodated into an already packed curriculum. This is particularly acute with PGCE courses. Due to the emphasis on training within schools, the teaching time in which teachers are themselves learning away from their schools, can amount to only 12 weeks out of a 32-week course. One suggested solution to this problem is to develop on-line and interactive self-study materials on sustainability to educate trainee teachers. Such materials could also be used to support ESD for business school educators in tertiary education, who rarely receive any support, encouragement or training to enable them to integrate SD principles within the courses they deliver.

### 3. Information: its translation into knowledge

One apparently promising development in sustainability education is the growth in the resources and information available to support those who teach. However, many stakeholders felt that the current approach to the creation of educational materials is characterised by a great deal of duplication, insufficient matching of resources to educational needs, and often a failure to connect the resources provided with the teachers who need them. Many different examples were provided. In schools, head teachers could point to large volumes of materials that would accumulate in their offices, and which they did not have the time to assess, to judge their quality, appropriate level, and relevant place in the curriculum. There were examples of ESD software that could not be reliably uploaded onto school or college networks and so went unused, and problems experienced by NGO campaigns to mail materials to educators due to inaccurate postal databases.

There were other problems related to the provision of teaching materials. Stakeholders were often concerned about the role that educational materials can play in promoting particular agendas. It is widely recognised that whether an organisation is a business, a trade body, an arm of government or a campaigning group, in developing an educational resource, it will do so to meet its own objectives. The partiality of many resources can be used to educational advantage. Very aware educators were perfectly able to juxtapose materials representing opposing camps (for example an oil company and a campaigning organisation like Greenpeace) for discussion by students. Less aware or less experienced educators may tend to use only a single source to cover a particular issue. A problem for schools and colleges that were struggling to get to grips with the ESD agenda was that their response could become driven by the availability of materials. A professionally produced set of resources could be seized upon as “*the answer*” to teaching SD issues, regardless of its breadth and the agenda that lay behind its production. Another issue was the degree to which educational materials from organisations were actually planned around the learning needs of students and the teaching needs of educators, rather than around the communication or campaigning needs of the information provider. Although materials would typically come with a curriculum map, this was often judged to be inadequate and not sufficiently backed up by the type of detailed lesson plans and teaching notes provided by the best materials.

There are several different approaches that could be adopted to deal with the danger of “*information overload*” which faces educators seeking to access material to develop and support ESD:

- **Do nothing**, on the basis that the best resources to support ESD will emerge if diversity and initiative are encouraged
- **Signpost**, to guide educators towards what is available. An innovative Welsh project that tackled this issue is *a Virtual Directory*, commissioned by the ESD panel and produced in association with Oxfam and the RSPB
- “**Kitemark**”, using a quality standard for ESD education materials. This is a controversial idea, which poses many questions about who should provide the quality assurance and what criteria will be used
- **Combine** group resources into “themed” packs. Examples of this particular approach have been emerging within Wales. Keep Wales Tidy has collated a pack of materials

relating to waste. Oxfam have produced a catalogue ‘*Resources for Schools*’ which combines their own materials with others from Christian Aid, Amnesty International and the Development Education Centres

- **Become interactive.** Another approach guiding educators is to collate the feedback from the educators themselves. A further planned development of the *Virtual Directory* will allow teachers to post feedback on resources, much as purchasers using e-commerce sites such as Amazon can
- **Co-ordinate.** The production of ESD educational resources is often driven by the funding requirements linked to many sustainability projects. One opportunity to reduce the duplication within ESD resources might be to develop a strategic framework of resource needs. Organisations bidding for funds for sustainability projects could then be steered by funders towards under-supported areas in terms of ESD materials.

Educators are faced with a greater array of ESD policy advice and guidance, and related on-line and on-paper teaching resources, than ever before. Ultimately however, most educators depended on some form of face-to-face support to help them to navigate and use these resources.

### **Reinforcing the pyramid: internal, external and personal relevance**

Another common theme within the project interviews was the importance of the lessons of ESD being reinforced by learners’ broader experience of education and life. Often this was expressed in terms of “*relevance*” and there were three dimensions to it:

#### 1. The internal dimension: sustainable management in education

Delivering ESD in practice needs to go far beyond the curriculum. If students are taught about the importance of SD principles in a classroom or lecture theatre, but then witness these being ignored or contradicted in how their school or college operates, the lesson about sustainability is unlikely to be heeded or learnt. Embracing ESD poses a challenge to integrate its principles into all aspects of management and life at schools and colleges. In terms of promoting ESD within schools and colleges, examples of good practice tend to share two defining

characteristics:

- Someone who acts as a champion for ESD. This may be the head teacher of a school, a member of staff from an ESD-related area such as Geography, or simply a staff member with a real enthusiasm for the issue. In secondary schools in particular, the active support of head teachers was seen as crucial for many forms of ESD initiatives to succeed.
- Membership of a scheme to support the adoption of environmental management. There has been considerable exploration of the opportunities to use some form of environmental management systems (EMS) within schools and colleges. Within Schools schemes such as Eco-Schools have been a long-standing success, and in Wales there were new similar localised schemes emerging which blended environmental management principles with key elements from the “*Healthy Schools*” initiative and global citizenship programmes. In tertiary education, there are many examples of institutions adopting EMS that other institutions can learn from (see, for example, Noeke, 2000).

## 2. The external dimension: linking to the world beyond education

A very important dimension of ESD is the extent to which it helps to inform and shape peoples’ later lives. Perhaps the greatest danger is that what is learnt about sustainability is regarded like history or algebra, important perhaps, but not relevant to peoples’ everyday lives, unless they follow a related career. Most stakeholders felt that there were insufficient links forged between the world of work and business, and peoples’ experience of ESD. Making sustainability something that people associate with the worlds of work and citizenship, as much as the world of education, is an important challenge. Within Business Schools, this could be tackled in a number of ways. Using case studies and guest speakers from companies who demonstrate the practical application of SD principles is one method. Another is ensuring that the business education that people benefit from is not limited to consideration of the industrialised consumer economies which may house the majority of the world’s business schools, but only represents around 20 % of its population. The reality of life in the majority world poses important questions about the ethics and sustainability of the consumer lifestyle, which business school students should not avoid.

### 3. The personal dimension: making ESD “personally relevant”

One strength of ESD in Britain is that it has sought to put sustainability in its proper global context. This is particularly true in Wales, through the integration of ESD and Global Citizenship education. However, amongst those delivering and supporting ESD in practice, there were concerns expressed that the emphasis on the global dimensions of sustainability had acted to overshadow its local applicability.

In areas of research relating to sustainability, such as attempts to encourage more responsible consumer behaviour, the issue of “*perceived personal relevance*” is one of the only consistent and significant influences on peoples’ behaviour (Peattie, 1999). Although people may express concern about the sustainability of the environment, the community and the state of society, they are only likely to change their behaviour when they perceive these issues in terms of **our** environment, **our** community and **our** society. This is not to argue against teaching about global environmental problems, and the global problems of poverty and development. It is a question of creating a balance and connecting these global, and potentially abstract sounding, issues to the local level and to peoples’ lives.

The challenge in connecting to the local dimensions of ESD is that good resources to support such education may not exist. Some school teachers highlighted the irony that it was simple to engage students in concerns about the threat to the Amazonian rainforest, yet local threatened forestry resources were never visited or studied by local schools. For teachers there was a clear demand for high quality teaching materials to support ESD that related to places and resources in their locality. This could be achieved by local libraries collating and housing relevant materials, which could then be accessed by local schools. Some very simple methods can be used to highlight the local and personal relevance of SD. Emory University in America have produced a campus self-guided walking tour that communicates to students about environmental issues, campus history, health, natural beauty and quality of life. This aims to educate students about these issues and to build a sense of community and of place (Bartlett, 2002). Similarly, Crompton *et al.* (2002) describe EcoCal, a tool capable of creating a personal ecological footprint which students can use to calculate the ecological impacts of their own lifestyles.

## Education “for” or “about” SD?

An intriguing difference amongst interviewees related to how they viewed ESD itself. There were essentially two schools of thought, one emphasising the need to educate people about SD, and the other emphasising the need to develop values, attitudes and skills which would enable them to live more sustainable lives. Both elements are contained in the following explanation of ESD :

*"Education for sustainable development is about the learning needed to maintain and improve our quality of life and the quality of life of generations to come. It is about equipping individuals, communities, groups, businesses and government to live and act sustainably; as well as giving them an understanding of the environmental, social and economic issues involved. It is about preparing for the world in which we will live in the next century, and making sure that we are not found wanting". (DETR, 1999).*

There were some interviewees who gave equal emphasis to both elements, but most tended see one or the other as the pre-eminent educational need.

In considering the overall impact and value of ESD, it is important to put it back in the context of the total range of sources of knowledge and awareness about ESD included within Figure 1. The benefits of providing “*education for SD*” which gives people the values, attitudes and skills to go out and contribute to the development of a more sustainable society are unquestionable. What is less certain, is whether we are complementing it sufficiently with “*education about SD*” to give people a clear understanding of what sustainability is, what its components are, and what its relationship is to how they live. Another problem with an over-emphasis on “*education for SD*” is that it can act as a substitute for necessary change to the curriculum. It is relatively tempting for educators to highlight the contribution their course makes to developing critical thinking, communication skills and empathy and decide that they are effectively “*doing their bit*” for ESD.

One subject for discussion with all ESD stakeholders was the extent to which a consistent message about SD as a coherent, if multi-faceted, whole was being communicated to people. The unanimous answer was that at present, it is not. SD was perceived as being presented to people in different ways at different times by a range of organisations. Sometimes it appeared to relate to the environment, sometimes it related to jobs, sometimes to communities and

sometimes it was about other countries and the future. A metaphor for this situation is that the SD concept is like a pyramid, it has distinctly different “*faces*”, and the proportions of each face that are visible will depend upon the angle it is viewed from. From above, all three are equally represented, while from ground level only one may be visible. What needs to be communicated to people is a coherent vision of SD as a whole, so that they become familiar with the interconnection of the three “*dimensions*”, so that when one is visible, there is still awareness of the connection to the other two.

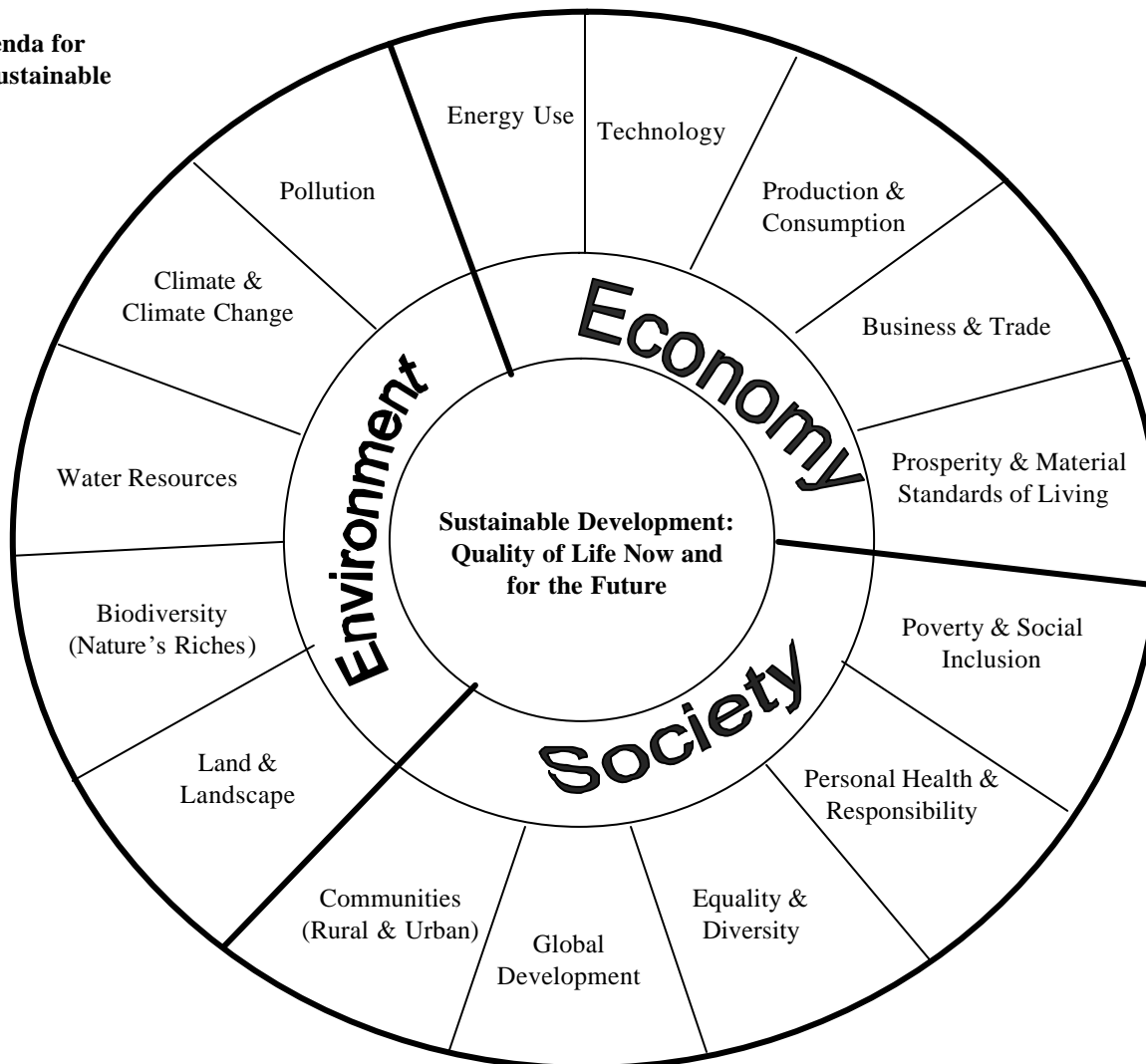
Various suggestions were made for encouraging this consistent and connected awareness of sustainability. One suggestion, which proved controversial, was seeking to use “*branding*” techniques to achieve the social marketing of sustainability within society. Many stakeholders recognised the potential power of branding, while others thought it was impossible to apply effectively to as complex a concept as sustainability. Another was to produce a simple map of sustainability issues that could be used consistently across educational, economic and citizenship contexts. This could help to reinforce the concept of sustainability as including economic, social and environmental dimensions even when the specific issues under discussion related to only one of them. A suggested example of such a map is shown in Figure 3.

## **Conclusion**

The year 2005 marks the beginning of the United Nations’ “*Decade of Education for Sustainable Development*”. Within the UK, and within business education in particular, if we are to end that decade with a population that generally understands what SD is, we will need to make considerably better progress than during the last decade. Although there has been strong central support for ESD values amongst local, regional and national government, in implementation, ESD has suffered the type of “*value-action gap*” that has hindered other elements of social and environmental policy (Blake, 1999). Ultimately most stakeholders felt that policy makers will need to go further in terms of investment in ESD, statutory provision for ESD in educational planning and inspection, and in co-ordinating many different elements of policy to reinforce the ESD message.

**Figure 3.**

**Visualising an Agenda for Learning About Sustainable Development**



The top of the ESD pyramid needs to be broadened, and Business Schools need to play a leading role in this process. Ideally, the sort of total across-the-curriculum approach envisaged in the Toyne report, or in Jucker's (2002) vision of SD as “*a transdisciplinary core of all education*” would transform the pyramid into a cube. In practice, and in the short term, perhaps a more realistic ambition is to see departments in tertiary education teaching business, economics and other key social sciences broadening the top of the pyramid to become more Mexican and less Egyptian in style.

For learners to benefit from ESD, their progress through the whole educational system needs to consistently reinforce the importance of SD principles and their relevance to the world and lives of students beyond the classroom. As they progress, a consistent vision of what SD is needs to accompany them, so that in addition to developing skills and values that are important for SD, they acquire the motivation to apply them and a knowledge of the basic issues within the SD agenda.

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