

Stepping Up in Sustainability 2012-13

Truro and Penwith College Case Study



Title of project	Leading to Learn and Learning to Lead	
Lead partner organisation name and address	Truro and Penwith College College Road Truro TR1 3XX	
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1. Aims of the project	<p>The two high level themes for this project were <i>Leadership and Capacity Building</i> and <i>Teaching and Learning</i>. The <i>Sustaining Our Future Framework</i> themes that relate to this were; ‘<i>build common understanding of what sustainable development is about, what it means for the sector and why the sector should collectively respond to it</i>’, and secondly ‘<i>to establish a common set of themes for action</i>’.</p> <p>Both of these aims were also in line with the Rio + 20 conference whose focus was on the implementation of sustainable practices.</p> <p>This project has definitely moved towards building a common understanding of what sustainable development is for a wider variety of people. The importance of education as a vehicle to transmit this information has really come to the forefront of this project as it has developed. From the strategic to the practical the materials emerging from this project are clearly capable of helping to establish a common set of themes for action for managers, teaching staff and ultimately students.</p>	
2. Situation: Identify the situation or issue that faced you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My degree and PhD are both centred on nature and the environment. On a personal level I believe that society has a collective responsibility to look after the environment locally, regionally, nationally and globally. My current teaching role as a lecturer on the Post Compulsory PGCE/Cert Ed and as Team Leader for Higher Education has shown me that not only is education the vehicle for disseminating sustainability values it is also really important to achieve common goals with those directing strategy and those involved in practice. Given that at this moment in time education is driven by an assessment and qualification culture, it is should be a collective educational responsibility to ensure that the movers and shakers of the future are leaving their educational experience with more than a qualification. Thus the driver for this project was to raise awareness of the importance of embedding sustainability 	

practices into the culture of the College and in teaching practices.

- I wanted to change the learning experience of a student and to get lecturers and managers to review how their own beliefs and thinking in relation to sustainability influences the students they teach. Individual choices that educators make are not separate to the learning that a student does. Thus how you choose to teach, the examples you use, and the methods employed are a critical and integral part of a student's learning.
- The ability to bid for the LSIS Stepping up Sustainability fund to enable my ideas to be realised through this project has given me leverage within my institution to begin to make small changes and look at winning over hearts and minds. The credibility of this project has added weight and legitimacy to the project proposal.
- I am a passionate advocate of sustainability and see the learning process as a vehicle through which to widen awareness and enthuse and motivate students to action. Albeit a small action.
- Developing and maintaining a focus on the themes that resonate through sustainable development practices is not easy. It is likely that this will be an ongoing challenge for many years to come but unless people take the opportunities when they arise and continue to fly the flag for a future that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable people's attention will take the line of least resistance. The strapline for Rio +20 'Is the future we want'. As educators of future leaders we have a responsibility to ensure students emerge from their educational experience with more than just a qualification.

3. Task: Define the outcomes you needed to achieve

- At the outset of the project I intended working with my senior management team to look at embedding Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) across teaching and learning at the College from a strategic perspective using the College Teaching and Learning Policy and through the lesson observation process and the associated grading criteria. This would mean that ESD was written into College policy and used at a practice level. I did manage to get ESD to be included in the teaching and learning policy of the college and as an indicator to look for through the observation process. As a spin off from the initial workshop with the Senior Management Team the College have set-up a sustainability working group that will meet 3 times a year with sustainability champions from across each department. This was an unintended consequence but a welcome one.

The second aim was to embed ESD across curriculum development and teaching and learning at the College through the observation process. Although a number of teaching observations were carried out and some aspects of the lessons videoed using ipads for instant feedback, this element of the project was less successful. Dr Jenny Blunden and I found it difficult to try and redirect a lesson towards sustainability case studies and thinking once it had been delivered. So although we could provide feedback it was difficult to follow up and see what was happening as a result of the feedback. It soon became apparent after 10 lessons that post lesson feedback although useful would not have the impact that we had hoped.

I was then invited by the AoC Sustainability Group SW to do a presentation on my project. The first meeting in November was cancelled due to poor weather whilst the second meeting went ahead at Cannington College near Bridgwater in January. The presentation was really well received and I had requests for a copy of the materials to be used further afield for a workshop with college Governors. Following this presentation I held my dissemination event in February in the ispace at Marjons and although the attendance was low those that did attend found the workshop to be incredibly useful. I finally delivered a similar workshop to teaching staff at my college on our staff development day in March. This workshop was equally well received. More recently I have adapted this workshop as a tutorial session for our HE students and this was also well received.

The main outcomes of the project:

- 1) ESD written into the Teaching and Learning Policy of the

College

- 2) A number of workshops developed with materials for senior managers, practitioners and for students
- 3) The development of a college wide 'Sustainability group' with curriculum area sustainability champions
- 4) 10 Teaching Observations carried out that included some video snippets

The direct intention of this project was to embed the thinking and ethos of ESD into the College culture from a strategic perspective and from a practical teaching perspective. It was hoped that through building a common understanding of what sustainability is about **and** what it means for the sector that the leaders of education would embed changes to support the development of a common set of themes for action. The development of the Sustainability Group is a major step change and will see the College move towards a common approach to ESD. The workshop materials will be a useful dissemination tool that can be shared but would need to be delivered by someone who has the credibility and ethos to encourage the embedding of ESD in teaching and thinking.

In terms of the teaching and learning policy this could be shared and if providers are developing new policy's they could be encouraged to embed ESD in their criteria.

The teaching observations proved more problematic and as stated above although useful feedback was given the timing of redelivering the lesson the following year made the activity less productive.

The workshop on reflecting on ESD in practice worked well and for anyone taking these ideas forward I would suggest that staff development days are a good opportunity to work with staff to consider how they can embed ESD values and thinking in their teaching.

4. Actions that you took in order to achieve your plan, and your approach

Stage 1 – workshop with Senior Management Team

I began this project in September 2012. My first activity was to do a workshop with the College Senior Management Team (SMT) based on the work of Paul Murray 'The Sustainable Self' (2012). The workshop was designed to encourage the SMT to reflect on their own values and beliefs in relation to issues of sustainability and to consider how this then influenced, or not, their personal and professional lives. The expectations from the SMT in relation to the workshop were interesting as what I delivered and what they expected were two different things. Their expectation was that I would provide examples on how to embed Education for Sustainable Development in teaching and learning at the College. The actual workshop encouraged them to reflect on their own values in relation to sustainability and how they use these values in their everyday work and thus steer the culture of the College. The positive result to emerge from this workshop was the setting up of a College wide 'Sustainability Group' with sustainability champions from each area.

Stage 2 – Teaching Observations

Throughout the whole project 10 teaching observations were carried out by myself and Dr Jenny Blunden with staff across the College from a range of departments and at a range of levels. Some of the observations were partially videoed to help with feedback and discussion following the observation. However, in terms of embedding sustainable practices through the observation and feedback process the lesson observations were not successful. Trying to embed something new post a lesson didn't work, however, the video snippets provided some really good talking points in the feedback session particularly around student behaviour. This was an unintended consequence. In the feedback at the end of each lesson observation staff were given guidance on how they could have changed their lesson either through teaching method or case study material to embed ESD themes. While this was really useful most teachers would not be doing the same lesson for at least another year, so it soon became clear that it would be difficult to gauge any meaningful change using the lesson observation process. On reflection embedding ESD works better prior to a lesson rather than post lesson. The lesson learnt from this exercise would be to work with staff to show them how to embed ESD in lesson planning or teaching. In total 10 teaching observations were carried out, 4 vocational areas, 4 in A Level and 2 at a higher level on foundation degrees.

Stage 3 – presentation to AoC Sustainability Group

In November I was invited to deliver a presentation on my project findings to the AoC Sustainability Group SW in Weymouth, this meeting was cancelled and rearranged for January at Cannington College in Bridgwater. The presentation was exceptionally well received with positive feedback. As a conclusion to the presentation I asked everyone to think of one thing they would do differently following my presentation in relation to sustainable practices. Everyone contributed, one person was going to try and waste less food (personal), another was going to send their staff to attend my dissemination workshop at Marjon's (professional). I made the presentation interactive so that everyone was included and their thinking formed part of the presentation. This interactivity and the inclusion of the audience in evaluating their values was becoming a major theme of the project.

Stage 4 – Dissemination Workshop

The dissemination workshop took place in the ispace at Marjons in Plymouth. Although there were only 8 attendees the session went very well and feedback was incredibly positive. The workshop consisted of two sessions, morning and afternoon. The morning session was delivered by me and looked at an overview of the project and encouraged all participants to evaluate their own understanding of education for sustainable development. There was a presentation followed by an activity with ESD posters and postcards. The afternoon session was delivered by Dr Jenny Blunden and was a presentation followed by a discussion and another activity involving participants selecting a postcard image and making a choice of doing something differently that related to sustainability either on a personal level or on a professional level.

At the end of the session the feedback was done using post-it notes and participants were asked, what was most useful thing about the session? What was the least useful about the session? And if they could change one thing about the session what would it be and why? Responses included: most useful were the interactive cards and group discussions, less useful – nothing the session was 'fantastic' and lastly what would you change, nothing, but it would be useful to have more actual examples of how to embed sustainable practices through a variety of teaching strategies.

Stage 5 – Education for Sustainable Development staff development workshop

In March an abbreviated version of the dissemination workshop was delivered by myself and Dr Jenny Blunden to teaching staff at the College on our staff development day. We had approximately 6 attendees as it was optional and staff have a vast number of workshops to choose from. The session was once again interactive and used the cards and self-reflection with the participants to initiate discussion and feedback. As with the first workshop feedback from the participants was extremely positive and they particularly enjoyed the activity with the postcards.

Feedback from staff included:

- 1) *"The most interesting aspect for me was learning more about Sustainability and how it relates to teaching and learning eg values. What I really enjoyed was listening to the comments and ideas of the other group members on the subject."*
- 2) *"I already have recommended the workshop to colleagues. The most useful aspect initially is how we can make a difference to our teaching and learning, within our organisation. Embedding it into our curriculum or even just by having an increased awareness, focus of the bigger picture inside and outside our own institution."*
- 3) *"I really liked the activity provided, the visual imagery had real impact. This is a workshop that staff could attend and attend again. Allowing for development and personal/ professional growth".*

As can be seen from the feedback, staff at this workshop really appreciated the content, structure and style of delivery.

Stage 6 – workshop with Sports Students

Following the successful workshop at the staff development day I was invited in to talk to a group of sports students in their tutorial session on issues of sustainability. The session was only for 40 minutes, so I tailored the previous workshop to a shortened session applicable to students. Once again I used the students own understanding of sustainability to generate discussion and used the postcards to get them to think about what they could do differently. In terms of feedback I didn't have a chance to do an evaluation but the sustainability statements the student made included: *'Be fit when I'm older, don't have to spend money on illness', better education with people's diets'* and *'adopt a child from Mozambique'*. All of which show that the students were thinking about what sustainability meant to them.

Project overview

Throughout the project and after each activity Dr Jenny Blunden and myself sat together and reviewed what we had achieved. What went well, what didn't, what could we have done differently and why? With each iteration of the workshop refinements were made and images were added. The project set out to embed ESD through institutional strategy and through teaching practice and has achieved this. Nevertheless, the more exciting outcomes from this project are around the awareness raising in staff (Management and Teaching) and students of how sustainability issues can and do impact everything we do in life at a personal and professional level. The refinement of the teaching materials and the teaching and learning strategies around their delivery have become more potent, more thought provoking and more relevant to a range of individuals. At the end of each workshop with staff and students I have asked participants to select a postcard and write on the back an activity relating to sustainability that they will change in their lives for the future. The postcards were returned to me at the end of each session. After three months I will scan the postcards and return them to participants to remind them of what they said they would do.

The resources from this project should be transferable to a range of different practices and the key messages that need to accompany the delivery of the materials;

- 1) always make the images and materials you choose for the workshop relevant to the audience
- 2) always make the workshop interactive, involve participants from the beginning in their own learning and reflecting on their own values
- 3) value the experience of your audience whether managers, teachers or students
- 4) use contemporary information that is relevant to the time and place of delivery
- 5) provide an activity at the end that engages the participants in making a promise to change something
- 6) ensure participants evaluate their own personal and professional perspectives on sustainability as often these can vary but all are equally valid

Conclusion

The changes that have happened throughout this project have occurred as a matter of reflection on practice. I now feel there is a method and process here that could be used with a whole range of different participants to raise awareness and to change practices in relation to embedding sustainable practices in personal and

	<p>professional lives. At the outset the project was focused on the strategic level and the practice level to <i>‘build common understanding of what sustainable development is about, what it means for the sector and why the sector should collectively respond to it’</i>, and <i>‘to establish a common set of themes for action’</i>. What has become apparent as the project has unfolded is that it is not the establishment of a common set of themes that will help build a shared understanding of sustainability. Rather, it is providing managers, lecturers and students an opportunity to explore their own values and beliefs around sustainability through challenging their perceptions and understanding of sustainability from both a personal and professional level.</p>
5. Results that you obtained	<p>Set out below are the actual results achieved by the project, plus the additional activities that have occurred due to feedback and through request. The results of this project were qualitative in nature and have been measured through feedback and statements of commitment to change by staff and students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This project has had a wider reach than was first intended by being delivered to the AoC Sustainability Group SW • It has reached 8 senior managers, over 16 teaching staff from at least four different institutions and interacted directly with 14 students. • Education for Sustainable Development is now written into the Teaching and Learning Policy for the College • 10 teaching observations were carried out along with feedback and a number of short video clips • The project has stimulated organisational change and improvement by introducing a new cross College ‘Sustainability Group’ with sustainability champions has been set up • A workshop with Senior Management Team has been successfully delivered • A dissemination workshop has been delivered • A presentation to AoC SW Sustainability Group has been successfully delivered • A workshop to College staff on embedding sustainable practices in teaching and learning has been successfully delivered • An abbreviated version of the materials has been successfully delivered to students as a tutorial session • The longitudinal evidence required to identify behaviour, culture, thinking or attitude change cannot be measured in the timescale of this project, however, the postcard activity and the promises made by participants could provide evidence in the future. • At the start of this project the focus was on strategic change and teaching and learning. As the project progressed it became clear

	<p>that the work done with staff could also be delivered to students through a tutorial process. So the benefits of the project have become extended.</p> <p>Feedback on postcards</p> <p>Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - remember to always switch projector off at the wall - reduce amount of super market shopping – buy more local produce - cycle more - buy more local resources - work harder in my teaching to raise awareness in students of sustainability issues - reduce personal mileage - find more opportunities in my job to embed personal and social values in my work with students - incorporate more student led activities in my teaching <p>Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - carshare to college - reduce amount of electricity used - only have one child - take better care of my phone so I don't need to replace it as often - Teach my son the value of money and how not to waste food etc.
<p>6. What made the project a success? What were the key ingredients?</p>	<p>The main difference for this project was beginning with support from the Senior Management Team at the College. I had not tried to address embedding sustainability issues into college culture nor teaching and learning prior to this project, although previously I had done a small project around teaching observations. The funding and kudos of the project has supported me in achieving the aims and objectives.</p> <p>Dr Sarah Shobbrook and Dr Jenny Blunden both have a clear grasp and understanding of ESD. We teach it as a topic on the PGCE/Cert Ed and have backgrounds relating to nature, the environment and sustainable development from our PhDs. We are both passionate advocates and are enthusiastic about sustainability and have a clear grasp of how it can help support teaching and learning and make for an enriched learning experience for the student. If people wish to pick up the workshops and deliver them it is important to have a clear understanding of what the workshop is about and what you are trying to achieve. It is also important to tailor the presentation to the audience. Some aspects can be generic but if you have selected your own images and put in your own case studies it is easier to achieve</p>

	<p>your aim. Anyone adopting these materials needs to be aware that they are delivered through critical discussion and debate and therefore you need to ensure that you are confident enough for participants to challenge you on all aspects of the presentation. If the staff workshop is delivered on a regular basis it could have the potential eventually to change the cultural character of teaching and learning at the College.</p>
<p>7. What would you say were the most important things you learned from this project, which you will take forward as an individual or as an organisation in your sustainability journey?</p>	<p>At the outset of the project I wanted to look at how ESD could be embedded from a strategic perspective, and through the medium of lesson observations, and by association teaching and learning. What has become apparent as this project has developed is that getting people to understand themselves and some of the major issues around sustainability is much more important. Therefore the most significant learning taken from this project is the importance of encouraging people to reflect on their own values and beliefs in relation to education for sustainable development. This reflective process allows people to understand how their own values and understanding of sustainable issues actually impacts on, or influences, both the personal and professional aspects of their life. Thus whether you are a senior manager, a lecturer or a student what you do, and how you think can make a difference and does influence who you are and what decisions you make. The success of this project is recognising that through interactive workshops and the use of appropriate learning activities it is possible to get people involved from all areas of education.</p> <p>If I were to repeat this project I would still start with the workshop with SMT as it lends credibility to disseminating the activities and ideas further. As a result of this project I will make sure an ESD workshop is made available to staff at each staff development day.</p>

8. Any resources or tools produced by the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main benefits from this project emerged from the workshops and associated presentations and these are included along with appropriate hand-outs and images • The presentations can be adapted to be used as interactive teaching activities as with students or with staff • Images and photographs used as postcards and as a basis of discussion and for feedback and commitment statements to sustainability • Links to websites and useful resources are included in the presentations 		
9. Total costs of the project	LSIS funding £10,000	Match funding	Total funding £10,000

