

Sustainable Development Education Panel First Annual Report 1998,

Annex 4 - Submission to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority,

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Education for sustainable development is not new. It has roots in environmental education, which has evolved since the 1960s, and in development education which first emerged in the 1970s, and also links with a number of related approaches to education which stress relevance to personal, social, economic and environmental change. In the past decade these approaches have increasingly found commonality under the label of 'education for sustainable development' and there is a strengthening consensus about the meaning and implications of this approach for education as a whole.

The mandate for education for sustainable development is extensive, and includes numerous ministerial statements over the last ten years, a joint DfEE and DoE conference in 1995, **the 'Government Strategy for Environmental Education' 1996**, and the recent establishment of the Panel for Education for Sustainable Development as well as the Development Awareness Working Group. **Further, the government's commitment to sustainable development is manifest in the current revision of the Sustainable Development Strategy** and the recent Department for International Development White Paper 'Eliminating World Poverty'.

Internationally, the government is a signatory of Agenda 21 of the 1992 UNCED conference, which stated that 'education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address sustainable development issues' (Chapter 36, Agenda 21, UNCED, 1992) and is party to the process of international monitoring of the implementation of Agenda 21.

At school level, both environmental education and development education have enjoyed some support from statutory agencies, for example SCAA's Teaching Environmental Matters Through the National Curriculum (1996). (p.2)

...B: Rational and Definitions

RATIONALE

The rationale for the effective inclusion and integration of education for sustainable development into the school curriculum follows:

- Consensus - there is an emerging consensus amongst public, government and business on the need to move with some urgency towards more sustainable lifestyles if future generations are to enjoy quality of life.
- Understanding - all people are directly affected by sustainable development issues but while awareness of these issues is high, the general level of understanding of these issues and of their significance and relevance is poor .
- **Policy - while education has long been recognised as a key instrument for achieving participative citizenship in relation to sustainable development, policies that support practical educational change in this regard have been largely absent.**
- Entitlement - **all pupils need to be equipped with the knowledge, values and skills in the area of citizenship and sustainable development that will allow them to participate as full members of society and work towards solutions to sustainable development problems and issues.**
- Effective education - education for sustainable development can motivate teachers and pupils resulting in effective teaching and learning which meets many established educational goals.

DEFINITION

Education for sustainable development implies a quality of change in educational thinking and practice that is not simple to capture in a single definition. This characteristic is **reflected in the number and variety of definitions that have emerged in recent years both in the UK and internationally.** (p. 4)

...C: Key Concepts of Sustainable Development

Sustainable development concerns a wide range of interrelated issues which may be approached through the following **seven principles or dimensions.** **The first concerns the interdependent nature of the world.** This gives rise to the need for a participative response through the exercise of citizenship and stewardship, which is the theme of the second concept.

The third through to sixth concepts cover further key dimensions of sustainable development, leading to **the seventh** which, as a logical consequence of those that precede, **is concerned with the limits of knowledge and exercise of the precautionary principle.**

1. Interdependence - of society, economy and the natural environment, from local to global
2. Citizenship and stewardship - rights and responsibilities, participation, and cooperation
3. Needs and rights of future generations
4. Diversity - cultural, social, economic and biological
5. Quality of life, equity and justice
6. Sustainable change - development and carrying capacity

7. Uncertainty, and precaution in action

...D: Generic Learning Outcomes

...It should be noted at the outset that this document takes as a first principle that **the achievement of the outcomes of education for sustainable development is a function of the whole curriculum and thus requires engagement of all subjects.** **It also assumes an impact on whole school development, including whole school ethos, curriculum, pedagogy, organisation and community links, emphasising participation, coherence and consistency within and between these aspects.** (p.5)

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...By the end of KS 2 pupils should:

7. **Uncertainty, and precaution in action** understand that people have different views on sustainability issues and these may often be in conflict; be able to listen carefully to arguments and weigh evidence carefully. (p. 9)

By the end of KS 3 pupils should:

1. Interdependence be aware of the global context within which trade, industry and consumption patterns operate; **understand how and why different countries and transnational economic groups have the power to influence social change** and the use of the environment from the local to global level;

...6. **Sustainable change understand the idea of sustainable consumption at individual and national levels**, including the emerging concepts of ecological footprint and environmental space; understand the difference between management of renewable and non-renewable resources, including the application of concepts such as sustainable yield, efficiency and sufficiency; **understand the basic differences and tensions between economic growth and broader concepts of development designed to increase human welfare and potential**;

7. **Uncertainty, and precaution** in action have an informed and positive sense of the urgency and challenges of sustainability; know how different cultures and belief systems influence how the environment and resources are viewed; know how different economic and political forces determine how resources are managed. (p. 10)

By the end of KS 4 pupils should:

1. Interdependence **be aware of the role of advertising, product innovation and popular culture in promoting different lifestyles** and be able to critically consider choices and alternatives in the context of defining needs and wants; **evaluate the benefits and drawbacks of the application of scientific and technological developments for individuals, communities and environments in relation to sustainable development**

...5. Quality of life, equity and justice **have a clear understanding of the role individuals can play in contributing to greater social justice and equity**, and be willing to participate in this process; **understand why social justice is an essential part of sustainable development**

6. Sustainable change be able to question decisions, practices and processes which affect sustainable development issues and investigate alternatives; **know how different sectors of society in the UK and elsewhere, including business, government, local authorities, NGOs and community groups are responding to the challenge of sustainable development including Local Agenda 21 work; be able to discuss alternative forms of scientific, technological, economic, political and social futures in the light of sustainability.**

7. Uncertainty, and precaution in action be able to think critically, systemically and creatively about sustainable development issues, solutions and alternatives, through study of examples; **understand that there are a range of possible pathways to more sustainable lifestyles and be willing participants in efforts to realise more sustainable futures through life-long learning and informed action; understand the value and use of the precautionary principle in personal, social, economic, scientific and technological decision-making in the light of uncertainty**. (pp. 11-12)

By the end of 16-19 phase pupils should:

1. Interdependence understand the extent to which the globalization of trade and finance is contributing to the wealth gap; **be able to critically evaluate the role of science and technology in the resolution of environmental and sustainable development issues**

2. Citizenship and stewardship understand the variety of ways in which individuals and groups can actively participate in the promotion of sustainable development, and the implications this has for the social and economic operation of communities; **understand basic ethical positions and tensions regarding extending rights to nature and to future generations**

3. Needs and rights of future generations...**understand that it is not possible to predict future needs with precision, but that it is necessary and important to be aware of their implications for present action; have a critical and informed understanding of the tools and techniques available to assist sustainable consumption including eco-labelling, sustainability indicators, and green consumer guides;**

...5. Quality of life, equity and justice...**understand the concept of social capital and how this relates to equity, sustainability and the cohesion of communities and society;...be familiar with emerging initiatives to promote equity and justice such as fair trading and ethical investment, and the role of pressure groups in promoting social and economic change;**

6. Sustainable change be able to envision and **critically assess alternative scientific, technological, economic, political and social futures in the light of their**

relative sustainability; understand the difference between a linear economy based on non-renewable resources and a cyclical economy based on renewables...understand a number of routes towards sustainability including regulation, incentives, adjustments to market prices to include social and environmental costs such as ecotaxation, and technological and resource efficiency;

7. **Uncertainty, and precaution** in action be able to apply critical thinking to sustainable development issues, including examination of assumptions, power and vested interests, and exploring alternatives; be able to apply systems and creative thinking to sustainable development issues and problems, including discerning complexity, pattern, context, relationship and feedback between factors; **understand the concept of cultural change in the shift from the certainties of the modern age to the uncertainties of the postmodern age, and what opportunities this may afford for realising a more sustainable society;** be aware of the **implications of sustainable development** for all areas of their future lives, and as appropriate, their chosen area of academic, vocational or professional interest.” (p. 13)