

Developing a UK Teacher Education Network in Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship

The UK ITE ESD/GC Network was established in July 2007 with funding from ESCalate, WWF-UK and the TDA. Here Sally Inman, Maggie Rogers and Ros Wade tell us about the importance such a network has in supporting the work of teacher educators.

The challenges of the 21st century are immense and teacher educators have a key role to play in addressing these. The UK Teacher Education Network in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Global Citizenship (GC) brings together educators who are committed to doing just this through a learning community of practice, research and advocacy. A strong commitment to the values of social justice and environmental stewardship has long been a basis for the work of educators. These values underpin this network of teacher educators today. Within this context, the role of education is to help learners make sense of the world, to participate fully in it and to help to shape it by developing their full potential. ESD

and GC provide the conceptual frameworks which facilitate this in today's complex world.

ESD and GC have different origins and represent different pathways, and some would say they also represent different constituencies. ESD is often thought to have developed out of environmental education (EE) and GC out of development education (DE), but as with all these kind of generalisations, the picture is actually much more complex than that. Whatever the differences between ESD and GC we believe that bringing them together in the network gives us the potential to support and develop a vibrant movement for change in educational culture.

ESD and GC are now recognised as an essential part of school curricula across the UK countries. However, in England the standards built into ITE make no explicit mention of the need for new teachers to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes in relation to these critical areas¹. In contrast the Standards and guidance for new teachers in Wales make specific references to education for sustainable development and global citizenship so as to enable new teachers to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to promote the ESD/GC now embedded in the Welsh curriculum (see useful links). ►

¹ A group of ITE tutors and NGOs committed to embedding ESD/GC within ITE have worked together to develop a set of contextual questions which enable tutors and students to think about the global dimension of the Professional Standards (Development Education project 2008).



The lead international agency in this field, UNESCO, has a useful description of ESD-related processes as involving:

- Future thinking: actively involves stakeholders in creating and enacting an alternative future
- Critical thinking: helps individuals access the appropriateness and assumptions of current decisions and actions
- Systems thinking: understanding and promoting holistic change
- Participation: engaging all in sustainability issues and actions (UNESCO 2007)

If these processes are to underpin education, including teacher education, across the UK, then a change of culture is needed. In England especially we need to move away from a culture of compliance, league tables and testing. In particular, there need to be more opportunities for working across different disciplines, bringing together the natural and social sciences to try to address the very

serious problems presented by climate change, poverty and inequality. One key challenge for ESD and GC is to find and use theoretical frameworks which enable “the acknowledgement of wider ways of knowing – in ways which open up greater possibilities in the re-conceptualisation of socially and ecologically appropriate development processes” (Janse van Rensburg, 1999 p.18).

In the last five years, since the start of the UN Decade for ESD in 2005, teacher education networks have been springing up all over the world to take on these challenges. These include the Baltic and Black Sea Teacher Education Network, The North American Network and at an international level, the UNESCO Teacher Education Network which has produced guidance and case studies of good practice². The UK network was set up in 2007 and has already

grown significantly, with Higher Education institutions represented from across the UK together with a number of leading NGOs in this field, such as WWF-UK, Oxfam and the Development Education Association. The network has been supported by the University Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET), the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) and by ESCalate. The management of the network is undertaken by the Centre for Cross Curricular Initiatives (CCCI) at London South Bank University and this is overseen by a steering group comprising key players from the four UK countries.

The UK network has two central aims:

- To develop a UK wide community of practice in ESD/GC and Teacher Education (TE) through which good practice can be shared and disseminated and further development can be initiated and developed across the sector.
- In the longer term to contribute to embedding ESD/GC in UK TE institutions in relation to ethos, curriculum content, learning and teaching and assessment.

We have developed a range of strategies to meet these aims. These include the development of regional networks and groups across the UK; the holding of two

² The UK TE ESD/GC Network is affiliated to the UNESCO Teacher Education Network.

³ For details of the network and the 2010 conference see www.lsbu.ac.uk/ccci or email hatta@lsbu.ac.uk.

UK conferences; the use of the website to disseminate events, research, network conference proceedings etc; meetings with educational bodies in England including the TDA and the Department for Children, Schools and Families and making links with international networks engaged in the same area of work. We have recently begun an audit of ESD/GC across all UK TE providers.

Since we began in 2007 we have been committed to developing a radical practice underpinned by theory. Our 2010 conference, Education of Hope: the impact of ESD/GC on the well being of teachers and young people, continues this approach and focuses on the impact of ESD/GC in relation to notions of hope and despair. Central to the discussions that will take place during the conference will be the words of Raymond Williams when he says:

“To be truly radical is to make hope possible rather than despair convincing”
(Raymond Williams quoted by George Monbiot).

Monbiot added
“Believe me I’m trying, but at the moment hope is hard to come by” (Monbiot 2009).

The network is one way in which we in ITE can develop a community of practice in which we can support each other to make hope more possible³.

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References

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- Fien, J. (1993) *Education for the Environment: Critical Curriculum Theorising and Environmental Education*. Geelong: Deakin University Press. [Online] Available at: (www.multilingual-matters.net/irgee/008/0140/irgee0080140.pdf). [Accessed 06/01/09]
- Janse van Rensburg, E. (1999) *Strands Weaving Southern African Dreams of Development, Education and Sustainability*. The Development Education Journal, 5 (2).
- Monbiot, G. *The Guardian*, Monday 30 November 2009
- Orr, D. (2004) *Education, the Environment and the Human Prospect*. Washington DC: Island Press.
- UNESCO (2007) *Introductory note on ESD – DESD Monitoring & Evaluation Framework*, UNESCO, Paris
- Useful links**
<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/090902guidanceresourcesustainabledevelopmenten.pdf>
http://www1.lsbu.ac.uk/ccci/uk_ite_network/



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Maggie has co-organised the UK ITE Network for ESD/GC since its launch in 2007. Maggie has taught design and technology in ITE for many years and has published extensively on ESD/GC within Design and Technology ITE provision.



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Ros Wade has been the Director of the Education for Sustainability Programme, London South Bank University (LSBU) since 1998. Ros was formerly in charge of ITE for Oxfam Education. She is a Reader in Education for Sustainability, and Associate Director of CCCI. Ros is Acting Coordinator for the newly awarded UN London Regional Centre of Expertise in ESD.