The Whole Institution Approach

Teaching, Learning and Research for Sustainability and Responsible Living

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The whole institution approach

"ESD is not only about teaching sustainable development and adding new content to courses.

Schools and universities should [...] orient all their processes towards principles of sustainability.

For ESD to be more effective, the educational institution as a whole has to be transformed.

Such a whole-institution approach [...] involves rethinking the curriculum, campus operations, organizational culture, student participation, leadership and management, community relationships and research.

In this way, the institution itself functions as a role model for the learners."

• Rieckmann et al, 2017

The WIA Flower (Wals & Mathie, 2022)

Sustainability teaching, learning and research

- **About** S: teaching, explaining, exploring and researching S concepts and challenges (e.g. the climate crisis, CO2 emissions or the Sustainable Development Goals)

- **For** S: advocating, inspiring, promoting S thinking, practice and action by students and researchers

- **With** S: incorporating, adapting, using S elements in actual teaching, learning and research practice

- **In** S: position subject matter (e.g. science, social studies, humanities) as part of sustainable systems

- **Through S**: use S as framework for teaching/learning/researching the subject matter, fostering interdisciplinary learning

Curriculum
Design,
Content,
Assessment

Methods of sustainability-based teaching, learning and research

- Collaborative learning/research
- Exploratory learning/research
- Experiential learning/research
- Project-based learning
- Small group learning
- Participatory action research
- Student-centered learning
- Student-led learning/research
- Critical and creative thinking

Pedagogy & learning
New/alternative learning processes and learning environments

Operations and management: opportunities for collaborative sustainability learning/research

- Buildings and construction: sustainable design appropriate for teaching, learning and research; construction materials; differential waste collection and disposal; sustainable procurement

- Energy: renewable vs fossil-based energy for heating, laboratories, transport

- Transport & mobility: walking, biking public transport, electric vehicles

- Food services: lowering CO_2 footprint; vegetarian and vegan meals; own ecological food gardens; local sourcing; reducing food waste

- Student services: health and psychological support

- Governance: student and staff participation in democratic decision making

- Encouraging students' initiatives, programs and projects

Institutional practices
Experimenting with and learning from creating sustainability on location

Sustainability-related professional development of all university staff, at all levels

- Managers, teachers and instructors, researchers

- Administrative and support staff for teaching and research

- Operational staff for infrastructure, construction and maintenance, transport, food services, student services, internal and external communications

Capacity building
Continued professional development of all staff

Connecting with S issues and challenges at the community level

- The community as laboratory
- Exploring and researching community concerns and needs
- (Participatory) Action Research
- Translating S research results for implementation/action at community level

Community connections
School-society interface

Sustainability strategy and leadership

- Leadership: University leadership at all levels setting the tone and the example
- Coordinating S office, with budget
- Formulating and communicating vision and strategy – by students and staff
- Dedicated S budgets for all faculties, departments and offices
- Dedicated campaigns and competitions (for special S grants)
- Governance: student and staff participation in democratic decision making

Vision, ethos, leadership & coordination

International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development 2024-2033

Thank you!