Towards a Common Understanding and Development of Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC)

A position paper from the Welsh HE Institutional ESDGC Group – November 2010

Purpose of this document

This paper presents a snapshot of the current position of Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) in the Higher Education sector in Wales. It has been developed by the Welsh Institutional HE ESDGC Group which brings together representatives from all Welsh HEIs and further education colleges delivering HE provision. It links to the UK Higher Education Academy ESD Project, the Wales Regional Centre of Expertise in ESDGC and has members from the Welsh Funding Council (HEFCW) and the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG). Its terms of reference and the role of its members as ESDGC Champions can be found in the appendix to this document.

This paper can be used as a briefing paper for HE staff and students, those involved in strategic planning, those wishing to embed practices which support ESDGC principles and for a wider audience to develop an understanding of the role that Higher Education can play in education for sustainable development and global citizenship.

A major concern for the Welsh institutional ESDGC network is keeping abreast of the numerous initiatives and developments that fall within the compass of ESDGC. This is coupled with a sense that it is difficult for colleagues within their home institutions to appreciate and embrace the full scope of ESDGC. In response, this document is an attempt by the ESDGC network to present a succinct and as far as possible, jargon-free, holistic view of ESDGC. The document is aimed at all categories of staff and students within an HE institution.

Policy context for ESDGC in HE in Wales

UNESCO (1997) identified that the global crisis facing humanity is a cultural crisis for it is culture that drives our whole systems of beliefs, values, attitudes, customs, institutions and social relations. Dominant cultures of the world currently drive the education agenda for sustainability and global citizenship. In much of the discourse this has resulted in a narrowing of the holistic perpective of sustainability and global citizenship to correlate with the values, beliefs and social ideologies of these dominant cultures. As such in the Western world our education system is working within the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) 2005-2014. Policy supporting this initiative acknowledges that *'Universities must function as places of research and learning for sustainable development'*. This aspiration is complemented within the UK's 2005 sustainable development strategy *Securing the Future: delivering UK sustainable development strategy*. This policy maintains that *'sustainable development principles must lie at the core of the education system, such that schools, colleges, and universities become showcases of sustainable development among the communities they serve'*. In Wales, attempts are being made, however, to maintain a more holistic approach to education for sustainability by reinforcing the importance of culture in this change process. To do this, global citizenship

has been made a visible and integral foundation of the change process, subsequently enhancing the UK-wide ESD policy by providing the platform for the necessary critical examination of our cultural systems and ideology which underpin this policy.

Wales is one of the few countries in the world to have governmental policy regarding education for sustainable development and global citizenship (ESDGC) and the Welsh Assembly Government published its strategy in 2006 as '*Education for Sustainable development and Global Citizenship – a strategy for action'*. The policy introduced an action plan for 2006-09 and this has been renewed recently with a plan covering 2010-2014. Delivery of the policy and action plan is co-ordinated by an ESDGC champion for Wales working within the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS). To address the action plan and take forward the policy HEFCW established the Welsh institutional ESDGC network group and asked each institution to nominate an ESDGC Champion. Since its inception in 2008 the ESDGC network, which has representatives from all the HE institutions in Wales, has held regular meetings in a number of institutions to provide updates on progress towards Assembly Government ESDGC goals, to exchange ideas and good practice, and to carry out a curriculum review and analysis. The last was one of the key actions of the Assembly Government action plan which required '*HEIs to undertake a self-analysis of where ESDGC is being taught within their institution and where it could be further incorporated'*.

In May 2009 the Welsh Assembly Government published *One Wales One Planet*, *the Sustainable Development Scheme of the Welsh Assembly Government*. This comprehensive policy document provides a context for all institutions in Wales including higher education.

In November 2009, *For Our Future: The 21st Century HE Strategy Plan for Wales* was launched by the DCELLS Minister, Leighton Andrews. This policy document contains reference to the cultural and civic role of higher education and its part in promoting social justice. These sentiments link directly to the global citizenship aspects of ESDGC and provide a clear set of responsibilities for higher education which resonate strongly with the developing work of the sector linked to ESDGC.

The Action Plan for ESDGC (REF) suggest five themes for ESDGC:

1. The links between society, economy and environment and between our lives and those of people throughout the world;
2. The needs and rights of both present and future generations;
3. The relationship between power, resources and humen rights;
4. The local and global implications of everything we do; and
5. The actions that individuals and organisations can take in responding to local and global issues.

In all sectors of education including higher education, WAG recommends that ESDGC continues to be delivered through:

1. Leadership;
2. Learning and teaching;
3. Practice within an HEI;

4. Partnership and community working; and
5. Research.

Definitions and the language of ESDGC

The Welsh Assembly Government ESDGC policy reflects the UN Brundtland commission 1987 report definition of sustainable development as '*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*'. This report recognises three components: environmental, economic and social sustainability. The first two components cover the common understanding that sustainable development is largely about 'green' approaches to economic development. The last component captures the much broader theme of the impact of sustainable development, or lack of it, on societies. The inclusion of global citizenship by the Welsh Assembly Government in its ESD policy acknowledges the importance of social sustainability.

In recent years within the HE sector in the UK there has generally seen a focus on sustainability through environmental or green aspects of the ESDGC agenda stimulated partly by student opinion (e.g. for fair trade procurement), funding initiatives (e.g. to develop environmental management systems) and through commitment to environmental schemes (e.g. Green Dragon, Eco Campus, ISO 14001).

Hawkes (2001) reasoned that culture is the fourth pillar of sustainability, the glue that holds the social, environmental and economic pillars steadfast, a position firmly supported by Oxfam (2006) who extend it to include the link between global citizenship and political systems. Due to the omnipresence of culture to the education for sustainability (and sustainable development) process, a single definition of global citizenship is elusive and contradictory to its diverse and all encompassing nature. However, a summary provided by Stevenson (2003) may serve to elaborate the essence of global or cultural citizenship for the purpose of this report.

> "Questions of citizenship are not well served by a renewed faith in the market, science or technology. A re-sensitised relationship with questions of risk, culture and nature depends upon deeper forms of democratic engagement, and a more explicit concern to uncover the different cultural narratives of environmental concern and connection" (Ibid p. 92).

Generally the focus on global citizenship in HE has been more diffuse and perhaps less transparent to a majority of staff and students. A contributing factor may be the lack of a clear and widely accepted definition of global citizenship. Welsh HE institutions are certainly addressing aspects of global citizenship and social sustainability with missions that promote social justice, equality, involvement with local communities and internationalisation. For example, social aspects of sustainability and citizenship are key features of schemes and approaches to widening access in many Welsh institutions. Through their widening access work Welsh HE institutions see education as fundamental to the regeneration of communities in deprived areas.

At present the Welsh institutional ESDGC network recognises that as a totality there is a considerable amount of work within an institution that falls beneath the umbrella of ESDGC. The problem is one of institutional recognition of the complete scope and impact of this work

and the gaining of full credit for a diverse set of activities working towards a common goal. It is not a simple task. For example, how do you capture and portray in a coherent fashion the ESDGC outcomes of curriculum development, approaches to teaching, access to higher education, internationalisation, stimulation of local communities and economy, and the introduction and management of environmentally sustainable operating systems?

Institutional commitment and ESDGC

ESDGC in strategic thinking

At present Welsh HE institutions do not produce specific documentation outlining an ESDGC strategy or policy, although specific reference to ESDGC may be found in some policy or strategy documents. The Welsh institutional ESDGC network sees an opportunity for institutions to consider ESDGC matters in much of the strategic thinking of institutions. Commonly this will only entail making more explicit ESDGC activities and developments that are currently implicit. For example, the link between internationalisation and global citizenship could be highlighted, or reference made in learning and teaching strategies as to how they address ESDGC, or explanation of how an institution's procurement methods and environmental management systems address ESDGC. A short overarching statement of institutional commitment and intent could demonstrate to an external audience, including the Welsh Assembly Government, the considerable effort and resource devoted to ESDGC.

Leadership for ESDGC

Institutions have appointed ESDGC champions and usually these persons are part of the institution's senior management structure and have ESDGC as part of a much larger portfolio of responsibilities. Typically within an institution the ESDGC champion is supported by a small number of highly enthusiastic and committed staff driving forward the ESDGC agenda. Again such staff can only commit a small amount of their time either on a formal or informal basis. The Welsh institutional ESDGC network sees this as a fundamental limiting factor on progressing the ESDGC agenda within institutions and across the HE sector in Wales. Given the list of activities and responsibilities shown below the question is whether this can delivered effectively with largely part-time and informal arrangements.

1. Represent the HEI on the Welsh Institutional ESDGC Group and support that group's terms of reference.*
2. Advise and where appropriate lead on the promotion and co-ordination of ESDGC activities within the institution, working with senior management within the context of institutional strategic planning.
3. Delegate responsibilities for ESDGC in accord with institutional organisational culture.
4. Support a holistic approach to ESDGC within their organisation (e.g. in curriculum development and design, environmental management systems, sustainable procurement, carbon management, training for staff etc.).
5. Provide a link to national (Wales) initiatives and the Welsh Assembly Government ESDGC Action Plan for Higher Education.
6. Provide institutional input to national ESDGC initiatives.
7. Disseminate ESDGC good and effective practice within their institution and beyond.
8. Advise and support HE staff and students in raising awareness of ESDGC and related institutional goals and aspirations.

9. Consult with student representatives on the promotion of ESDGC initiatives and activities.
10. Link with and where appropriate support local community ESDGC activities.

*Further Education colleges with higher education provision can nominate a representative to undertake this role on behalf of their own representative organisation or for the FE sector.

The Welsh institutional ESDGC network believes that a modest commitment of extra resources would greatly benefit the progress of ESDGC in the HE sector. This commitment could be little more than a larger formalisation of current ESDGC arrangements with allocation of staff time and giving current *ad hoc* groups a location within the management and governance structures of the institution. The network would point out that the substantive work on ESDGC takes place at the 'grass-roots' level within an institution and what is sought here is improved leadership, promotion and co-ordination of ESDGC activities.

ESDGC and the academic mission

Recently Welsh institutions have made considerable progress in assessing the breadth and depth of ESDGC within the curriculum. Indeed it can be argued that Welsh institutions are the leaders in the UK in understanding the extent of ESDGC in the curriculum. Having completed a curriculum audit of ESDGC Welsh institutions are now piloting a baseline approach. This will allow institutions to assess their current commitment to ESDGC and to measure progress from that baseline.

In carrying forward the curriculum audit the network was able to identify an important area for development: raising staff awareness of ESDGC and confidence in delivering ESDGC in the curriculum. Generally in the more 'traditional' area of environmental and economic sustainable development there is a good understanding of how this relates to ESDGC. There is a greater lack of awareness of ESDGC links where the curriculum deals with social sustainability and global citizenship. It would appear that a significant proportion of staff and students do not recognise or appreciate the ESDGC links to, for example, social justice and cohesion. A debate within and beyond the HE sector on the concept of global citizenship would help to clarify thinking. This is important because some of the later Assembly Government strategy documents such as *For Our Future* introduce the near parallel concept of the HE institution as a 'corporate citizen' or refer to 'active' citizens within a sustainable local community.

Generally the task would appear to be not so much about the introduction of ESDGC into the curriculum but to recognise links to ESDGC and to make these more explicit to students. The ESDGC network would suggest that focused activity around ESDGC using existing staff development budgets could meet the need. In addition staff could be encouraged to conduct pedagogic research centred on ESDGC links within the curriculum.

In the broader arena of research there is a case for asking staff and students to consider how their research may assist the promotion and development of ESDGC. Given the very broad spectrum of ESDGC the expectation is that virtually all research will have some linkage or impact. In gathering information from staff and students institutions are likely to be in a position to make powerful statements on how their research is having an influence and impact on ESDGC at regional, national and international levels.

ESDGC and students

The situation with students is similar to that of staff with a small number of committed and enthusiastic students taking forward the ESDGC agenda. Initiatives led by the Students' Union are very effective and many institutions, through student encouragement, have gained eco-awards (e.g. Green Gown). Overall students are committed to ESDGC and it is a case of sustaining and developing this commitment through collaboration with the Students' Union and other representative bodies.

Students will benefit from a more explicit focus on ESDGC in the curriculum though the likelihood is that their experience of ESDGC could remain fragmented given the modular nature of most programmes. There is a strong case for encouraging students to construct an integrated and comprehensive understanding of ESDGC and this could be achieved through requirements for PDP portfolios or other career preparation and development exercises. In this area careers services as well as academic staff could play an important role.

ESDGC and operational matters

Although the Welsh institutional ESDGC network has primarily concerned itself with academic developments, it has also considered developments relating to estates management, student accommodation and sustainable and ethical procurement. The basic premise for the network is that you cannot teach good practice in ESDGC if your own house is not in order. Students would lose confidence in an institution that promoted ESDGC but did not operate in a manner consistent with good ESDGC practice. In a number of meetings members of the network have benefited from hearing about inspiring initiatives, for example, on local procurement or how an institution is using is environmental management system to support research by postgraduate students. With regard to environmental management systems the network is aware of institutions following the specifications and requirements of ISO 14001 and signing up for complementary systems and awards such as Green Dragon and Eco Campus. The network sees an opportunity to develop synergies between the EMS adopted by institutions and its academic activities and portfolio.

ESDGC and the local and regional communities

Through widening access activities Welsh universities are working with local communities and schools to strengthen social inclusion and cohesion. Staff working on widening access initiatives are commonly on fixed-term contracts and can feel isolated from the broader academic activity of an institution. Considering widening access within the spectrum of ESDGC would bring a larger grouping of staff together and have the potential to show in a clearer light how the institution is addressing the fuzzy area of social sustainability and citizenship. This approach would show how HE institutions support sustainable local communities and through widening access and community-based programmes help to form 'active' citizens.

Institutions also make a considerable contribution to the local and regional economies most obviously through providing local employment and procurement and also through third mission activities and development of enterprise and entrepreneurship. In more rural locations the HE institution will be one of the major employers and carry a responsibility for sustaining the community. Here there is a case for an institution to demonstrate how it acts as a responsible 'corporate citizen'.

Of course this is a field that can lead to tension and conflict with local communities. In an increasingly competitive world the survival of HE institutions is closely linked to growth of capacity. Increases in student numbers and new building can invoke local opposition and a way of countering this is to show through ESDGC activity how the institution is committed to supporting and nurturing strong and sustainable local communities.

A framework for promoting ESDGC

The Welsh institutional ESDGC network recognises the autonomy of individual institutions and so the following framework is offered as a guide for developing an holistic and cohesive approach to ESDGC. The intention is that such an approach will demonstrate to the Welsh Assembly Government, other external bodies and the local communities the considerable resource and effort expended by Welsh HE institutions in pursuing ESDGC goals.

1. Provide a short prospectus that gives a holistic picture of how the institution addresses ESDGC. The document to be in a style and language that is accessible to staff, students, the local community and external agencies.
2. Through internal and external debate establish a better understanding of what is meant by global citizenship and how this relates to the concept of the HE institution as a 'corporate citizen'.
3. Review the role of the ESDGC champion to define better the responsibilities and to ensure that there is sufficient time and support for the champion to carry out the role effectively.
4. Consider formalising the work of informal and *ad hoc* groups to improve communication on ESDGC matters, to give ESDGC a 'voice' within the governance and management of the institution, and to demonstrate institutional commitment to ESDGC.
5. Review institutional strategies and policies (e.g. learning and teaching strategies, staff development policy, widening access plans, Welsh medium policy) with the aim of including, where appropriate, reference to ESDGC.
6. Consider how institutional operations and services (e.g. procurement, environmental management, careers advice and guidance) can link to academic aspects of ESDGC to give a picture of how the institution is progressing across the full spectrum of ESDGC.
7. Devote an appropriate portion of staff development resources to raising awareness of ESDGC and supporting initiatives (e.g. pedagogic research) to enhance learning and teaching of ESDGC.
8. Review how students acquire knowledge and understanding of ESDGC through the span of their life cycle at the institution (induction-study-examination-graduation-career choice). Explore how working with the Students' Union and student representatives can enhance the student understanding and commitment to ESDGC.
9. Consider how the institution might gain information on how it is supporting ESDGC through research, third mission activities, enterprise and work with local communities.

The current, rather fragmented nature of institutional approaches to ESDGC means that institutions are failing to get full acknowledgement of their work within local communities, and with local and national government. In adopting an approach along the lines outlined above the Welsh institutional ESDGC network believes that institutions will be able to present a

much more comprehensive picture of their ESDGC activities and gain the recognition and reward they deserve.

Links and resources

Hawkes, J. (2001). The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability: Culture's essential role in public planning. Victoria, Common Ground Publishing Pty. Ltd.

Stevenson, N. (2003). Cultural Citizenship. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

One Wales One Planet

http://wales.gov.uk/topics/sustainabledevelopment/publications/onewalesoneplanet/?lang=en

For Our Future

http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/091125hedocen.pdf

HEA Welsh Curriculum Audit

http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/aboutus/wales/ESDGC_Wales_June_2009.pdf

Locke , Kemp S., Humphris , (2009). "Sustainable Development in Higher Education: A review of the literature and practice." Higher Education Academy Education for Sustainable Development Project e-Newsletter Volume 2, Issue 4

http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/sustainability/esd_enews_2_4.pdf

SQW Analysis of Good Practice in Welsh HEIs - slides from 2009 ESDGC Conference

http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/news/events/2009%20Events/SQW%20Presentation.pdf

Can't find link to electronic version of document, but maybe the slides are enough to give an overview anyway?

Review of ESD in HE in Scotland

http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/teachingandlearning/alldisplay?type=projects&newid=esd/esd_SFCreview08&site=york

Link takes you to a summary with link to full report.

HEFCE's Strategic Review of Sustainable Development in HE in England

http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2008/rd03_08/

Different formats can be downloaded from link.