

South West Learning for Sustainability Coalition

Thought for the update:

July 2018 Update

Is there a role for scaffolding in ESD? Mairi Stewart Kershaw

I posed this challenge to the Coalition meeting in December 2017, as another means of critiquing our practice.

Having just watched an engaging Coalition input, presented by a young man with both a guitar and puppet orangutan on his shoulder, I asked myself 'how would this lesson be received in a *'normal'* secondary school science lesson'. Outside agencies inspire students and generate compelling learning experiences - but do they trigger the deep and critical learning sought of ESD?

Many of us work hard to engage our classes with abstract and complex issues like global warming, catalytic converters or composting; we're often met by a sea of blank faces. While David Attenborough's pioneering 'Blue Planet' series is revolutionising our attitude toward plastics; in reality this remains one of the more complex sections of some chemistry syllabi yet the answers given by students in tests often indicate a shallowness of understanding, an inability to transfer classroom learning into other contexts.

Enter **scaffolding**: a variety of instructional techniques used to move students progressively toward stronger understanding, and ultimately greater independence, in the learning process. Teachers provide temporary support and then incrementally remove the strategies when they are no longer needed. This idea is not new, and research into ways to use scaffolds in institutional settings abound: information organisers like Venn diagrams/flow charts/mnemonics; cue cards; mind maps; examples; explanations; hints; prompts and pre-prepared question cards are all part and parcel of our pedagogical tool kit.

More sophisticated scaffolds might involve modelling advanced solutions, presenting exemplary work, generating visual scaffolding, co-creating instructional goals and so on.

'Theoretical issues in education are not settled by definitions', and the way is clear to interpret and utilise the tool as fits your setting.

In December, the Coalition Board may not have agreed that long stemmed wooden flowers can be labelled with name tags to extend understanding of plant hormones and the idea that such tall, skinny, 'foolish rice seedlings' are pivotal to effective GM, and by extension, to feeding the underdeveloped world is at best contentious; but the scaffolding process is worth a second glance – if you are involved in ESD.

2004 - The social and technological dimensions of scaffolding and related theoretical concepts for learning, education and human activity. – the journal of learning sciences . 13(3) , 423-451.

2002 – Using scaffolding instruction to optimize learning. Martha Larkin, ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education Arlington. VA.

[Send us your 100 word thought!](#)

The bigger picture

Measuring Up – How the UK is performing on the UN Sustainable Development Goals

<https://www.ukssd.co.uk/measuringup>

Launched on 2nd July, this report to UK government by UKSSD (UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development), the report recommends that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) be given the priority accorded their predecessor, the MDGs. It makes for interesting reading, 'providing all stakeholders with a means of identifying their role and the opportunities open to them', while identifying that everyone cannot do everything.

The projected sharp increase in UK poverty over the next few years presents a challenge to us all, while the stark reminder that 'failure to meet the environmental goal of the SDGs will totally undermine all others – Life on Land' takes us to the heart of this new global consensus to effect development while respecting planetary boundaries. The heat is on.

A Rounder Sense of Purpose: Framework of Competences for Educators of Sustainable Development

The latest SW Coalition meeting on 30th May was hosted by the University of Gloucestershire (UoG). The main focus of the event was to introduce the outputs of a project called 'A Rounder Sense of Purpose' (RSP). This was led by Paul Vare and Rick Millican, of UoG's School of Education, who explained how the project grew out of a desire to improve an earlier framework of educator competences. That was the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) framework designed in 2011 to help teachers understand what it means to be an educator for sustainable development.

Although the UNECE competence are clearly defined, they are difficult to put into practice because (a) there are so many of them (39 in total!); (b) some are rather abstract and (c) they are not easily applied to all teaching contexts. UoG therefore led a successful bid for funding from the EU's Erasmus+ programme to refine the UNECE competences in order to develop a practical, useable set.

Project partners are Frederick University (Cyprus), the Hungarian Research Teachers' Association (Hungary), the Italian Association for Sustainability Science (Italy), Duurzame PABO (The Netherlands) and Tallinn University (Estonia). The project is from December 2015 to July 2018.

The 25 participants at the 30th May event came from schools, local and national charities and further and higher education. Participants were invited to comment on the new RSP framework and consider how it might be used in their various contexts. Ideas received included suggestions to integrate the RSP competences into existing frameworks such as the Teaching Standards and other teachers' schemes such as those run by Oxfam and the British Council. It could also be offered as an award for both a teachers and schools or even as a free online course. Some participants felt that certain competences were core to learning for sustainability while others seemed more general. It was also noted how the whole framework made much more sense after reading through all the learning outcomes.

There is not enough space here to share the model in its entirety as each of the twelve competences in the framework (Fig. 1) are further sub-divided into learning outcomes (three per competence). Project partners decided not to break this down further into skills, values, knowledge, etc. for two reasons: Firstly, this would atomise learning into discreet components that appear meaningless in the context of sustainable development (and undermines the idea of holistic thinking that underpins sustainability); secondly, there is no Europe-wide agreed format for such qualifications, instead each nation uses its own qualification template which itemises different attributes for assessment purposes. Defining the award to a greater level of detail would therefore make it *more* difficult to apply it across Europe.

Rather than a detailed breakdown of attributes, the RSP framework provides a set of 'underpinning components' linked to the learning outcomes that in turn relate to the twelve educator competences. The forthcoming RSP website also suggests training activities that can help develop the learning outcomes.

At the University of Gloucestershire the RSP competences have been piloted with second year (Level 5) Education students; other partners have piloted them at Level 4 and Level 7 (Masters). At any given level there are three stages, which might be defined as 'degrees of engagement and development'. The first of these stages is simply an acceptable level of participation in the training programme, the second stage calls for a demonstration of applying the competences practically, while to achieve the third stage the student must demonstrate how they have tried to facilitate change in others or within their work setting.

The RSP team hope that the framework will be accessed by people all over Europe; to help this happen a second phase of the project is due to start in September 2018. One of the first things to be done will be to present the RSP framework to the OECD secretariat in Paris – this could be big. Remember where you saw it first!

<i>Thinking Holistically</i>	<i>Envisioning Change</i>	<i>Achieving Transformation</i>
<i>Integration:</i>		
Systems The educator helps learners to develop an understanding of the world as an interconnected whole and to look for connections across social and natural worlds and consider the consequences of our actions.	Futures The educator helps learners to explore alternative possibilities for the future and to use these to consider how our behaviours might need to change.	Participation The educator contributes towards system level changes that will help sustainable development and develops their learners' ability to do the same.
<i>Involvement:</i>		
Attentiveness The educator alerts learners to fundamentally unsustainable aspects of our society and the way it is developing and conveys the urgent need for change.	Empathy The educator is considerate of the emotional impact of the learning process on their learners and develops their self-awareness and awareness of others develops their learners' ability to do the same.	Engagement The educator works responsively and inclusively with others, remaining aware of their personal beliefs and values and develops their learners' ability to do the same.
<i>Practice:</i>		
Transdisciplinarity The educator acts collaboratively both within and outside of their own discipline, role, perspectives and values and develops their learners' ability to do the same.	Innovation The educator takes a flexible and creative approach using real world contexts wherever possible and encourages creativity within their learners.	Action The educator takes action in a proactive, considered and systematic manner and develops their learners' ability to do the same.
<i>Reflection:</i>		
Criticality The educator critically evaluates the relevance and reliability of assertions, sources, models and theories and develops their learners' ability to do the same.	Responsibility The educator acts transparently and accepts personal responsibility for their work and develops their learners' ability to do the same.	Decisiveness The educator acts in a cautious and timely manner even in situations of uncertainty and develops their learners' ability to do the same.

Fig 1: The RSP Competences

Note: Website under construction; ready by end of July. For comments or information contact Paul Vare: pvare@glos.ac.uk

Courses & events

GREEN BOOK GROUP Tuesday, 4 September, 2018.

6:30pm -8:00pm.

Room 002, Babbage Building, Plymouth University. Free event. Open to all. E-mail menzalan@blueyonder.co.uk

**Book : The New Wild: Why invasive species will be nature's salvation
by Fred Pearce**

Come along and take part in the discussion with Guest Expert, Dr Alison Smith, Lead Community Scientist, Plantlife.

"I wholly agree with Fred Pearce's argument...Life is dynamic. Species do not belong in a planet-sized zoo. We should let Gaia evolve" - James Lovelock

Veteran environmental writer Fred Pearce used to think of invasive species as evil interlopers spoiling pristine "natural" ecosystems. Most conservationists would agree. but what if traditional ecology is wrong.

In "The New Wild", Fred Pearce rediscovers what conservation should really be about. He explores ecosystems old and new - from Pacific islands to the Australian outback to the Thames estuary - and reveals that our ideas about "the balance of nature" are now seriously outdated. In an era of climate change and widespread damage, the dynamism of alien species and the novel ecosystems they can create can help nature to regenerate. Embracing the new wild is our best chance for the future.

Jobs

Seaton Jurassic Learning and Participation Officer

Devon Wildlife Trust, Seaton, Devon

£21,500 - £22,500 with Duty Manager supplement plus 5% pension

Paid • Full Time • Permanent

www.devonwildlifetrust.org

Closing date: Sunday, 29th July 2018

Field Studies Instructor

PGL Travel, Osmington Bay, Weymouth

£13,607 - £14,592 pa pro rata + accommodation & meals

Paid • Full Time • Fixed Term Contract

www.pgl.co.uk/jobs melanie.germaney@pgl.co.uk

Closing date: Tuesday, 14th August 2018

Programme Manager (Communities Prepared)

Groundwork South, Flexible location, Southern England (ideally Bristol)

£29,341 - £34,518 pa

Paid • Full Time • Fixed Term Contract

www.groundwork.org.uk/Sites/south

Closing date: Tuesday, 7th August 2018

Your contributions are welcome

*Share your ESD related work with interested colleagues across the region.
A paragraph of no more than 50 words with an image (if applicable) and contact details
and a link for further information is ideal.*



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