

Green and academic literacies: embedding sustainability into learning development practice

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Presentation abstract

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), an internationally understood educational concept, 'equips learners across all disciplines with the knowledge, skills, attributes and values required to pursue sustainable visions of the future' (Advanced HE, n.d.). The potential for learning development (LD) to contribute IN this endeavour by embedding green literacy into LD practice while supporting students to develop their academic literacies is a longstanding professional interest of the author. There is broad agreement that effective ESD necessitates supporting students to develop self-reflection, systematic thinking, problem solving and collaborative learning skills, some of the key competencies that LD seeks to foster.

This mini keynote briefly presented the nature, scope, and purpose of the author's work in embedding ESD within their LD practice. It aimed to provoke a discussion about the potential of LD to contribute to the ESD agenda within higher education by, for example, participating in departmental, faculty or institution-wide Climate Themed Learning events or by integrating ESD into regular LD practice. It also aimed to encourage information and ideas exchange, and a consideration about the formation of an ALDinHE Education for Sustainable Development Community of Practice.

Keywords: education for sustainability; sustainable development goals; green literacy.

Community response

This mini keynote presentation explored three fundamental questions related to the involvement of learning developers in education for sustainable development initiatives in UK higher education (HE).

The first question aimed to define the role of learning development in the trans-disciplinary field of education for sustainability. This discussion explored synergies with other professional services, including those providing academic skills support, and with different subject specific areas.

Next, the mini keynote queried the possible link between key academic skills areas such as academic literacy and critical thinking, and major sustainability themes.

Finally, the discussion focussed on the scope for co-production, co-operation, and engagement in embedding sustainability in the learning development practice of the attendees' specific HE institutions.

Image 1. Thinking about the future green jobs and the related skills students need to develop (copyright free image).



A great deal of interest from the audience was shown in this mini keynote presentation. Some attendees reflected on their experience, and hopes for the future embedding of sustainability in their learning development practice:

An interesting and engaging keynote that generated a lot of discussion and ideas around the table. It was clear from these discussions that the position of LDers (vis-à-vis, for example, the design of curricula or institutional policymaking) had a real bearing on what could be achieved when it came to embedding sustainability. It

would be fascinating to see, over the coming years, more concrete examples of how LDers were achieving this (including, perhaps, how barriers have been encountered and overcome) in their own practice.

It is hoped that a community of LD practitioners who develop cross- and trans-disciplinary initiatives for education for sustainable development will be established in the near future.

Image 2. Copyright free photo by Li-An Lim on Unsplash.



Author's reflection

Thank you to everyone who took part in the discussions round the table. Interesting and helpful insights and examples of similar practice were offered (such as connecting learning development practice to a range of authentic experiences, not necessarily climate and ecology related) and information about institutional sustainability related initiatives, including climate learning days and staff carbon literacy training opportunities was shared. In addition, interest was expressed in the formation of an ALDinHE Sustainability in Learning Development Community of Practice (COP).

Like the colleague above, I look forward to seeing how this area of practice develops and grows. Learning development's contribution to climate education has significant potential, I believe. The skills we support students to develop such as recognising logical fallacies, assimilating information, and reflecting critically underpin the competencies required for the green jobs of the future and the confidence to be active global citizens.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to all the contributors who shared their reflections and enriched our insight into this conference presentation and its impact on the audience.

The author did not use generative AI technologies in the creation of this manuscript.

References

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Author details

Rhiannon Parry Thompson is a learning development tutor in a Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty where she engages with students in curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular settings. Rhiannon established and for eight years ran an international students' book club. With two learning development colleagues, Rhiannon organised a symposium on storytelling for learning developers and, for students, workshops involving the use of artifacts and stories to bring their research to life. Rhiannon's learning development practice includes embedding sustainability into materials production and teaching. Amongst Rhiannon's sustainability related research interests are the co-occurrence of linguistic, cultural and biodiversity loss and solutions.

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