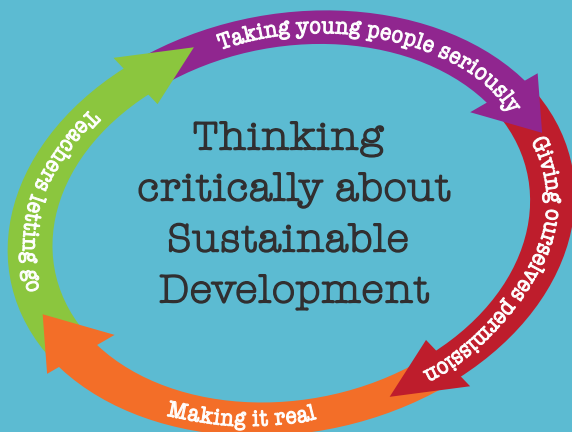




Schools, but not as we know them?

~ Professor Bill Scott

“Although the institution of schools will likely survive, it will not be as we now know them”

Professor William Scott is the Director at the Centre for Research in Education and the Environment at the University of Bath.

His ideas about the need to build learners' capacity to think critically about sustainable development issues served as a key stimulus for Tide~'s Bill Scott *Learning as sustainable development* Challenge. This led to a series of exploratory projects, a seminar and conference, and a discussion paper from the Tide~ network.

Bill's new think piece, ***Schools, but not as we know them?*** synthesises some of his thoughts arising from the projects and activities engaged in the Challenge, and offers a fresh challenge to the network about the role and nature of schools in responding to sustainable development.

The piece is based around four main inter-related themes:

Taking young people seriously

Giving ourselves permission

Making it real

Teachers letting go

The final section, ***Education for altered circumstances*** examines “what an appropriate vision for a sustainable school might look like, and how we might set about realising it.” Finally, it looks again at the question of “how schools might evolve in the face of external change.”

Schools, but not as we know them?

Introduction

The question mark in the title is meant to be significant; it is certainly ambiguous, as it might relate to our continuing experience of schools, to the very idea of schools themselves – or to both.

It does seem inevitable for the foreseeable future that the social institutions that we know as schools will endure in the sense that there will be programmes of study, young people to follow them, places where this takes place, teachers to guide that process, and the means of trying to assess and evaluate quality, success and progress. Indeed, the very idea of a *sustainable* school embodies this confidence that the institution of the school will survive. Although there has been a slow increase in home schooling, Illich's (1972) ideas around deschooling society seem as far away as ever for the vast majority of young people. Indeed, with the increase in possible modes and styles of management through specialist schools, academies and the like, and ideas for greater parental involvement and responsibility in running schools, the idea of a building, a curriculum, a teacher workforce, an Ofsted, schemes of work, school dinners, etc, remains robust. Whether all this has the inner solidity of the Great Pyramid of Giza, or the internal fault lines of the Berlin Wall remains to be seen. In dwelling on such matters, however, it is well to note the point about Illich made by Ken Webster and Craig Johnson (2009: 127) in *Sense & Sustainability: educating for a low carbon world*:

Today's ubiquitous information technologies ... mean that major obstacles to Ivan Illich's 1972 aspirations for a 'good education system'ⁱ are now dissolving.

Well, perhaps, but the DCSF's (2008: 30) *21st Century Schools: a world-class education for every child*, reinforces the idea of our on-going dependence on schools:

Contributing to stronger, more sustainable communities is not just about the services schools can provide to the local community, but also about their ethos and values and providing teaching and learning that will equip today's young people for life in an increasingly interconnected world. Meanwhile, sustainable schools set an example of careful management and global awareness, so that children and their families are educated and enabled to live in a world with limited resources and a changing climate.

But the idea of the *sustainable school* goes beyond this as Prime Minister Blair's ringing rhetoric (2004) makes clear:

Sustainable development will not just be a subject in the classroom: it will be in its bricks and mortar and the way the school uses and even generates its own power. Our students won't just be told about sustainable development, they will see and work within it: a living, learning place in which to explore what a sustainable lifestyle means.

There's no ambiguity in any of this about the idea of the school as a place with students and teachers within it, or about the importance of exploring, and contributing to, sustainability, though as will become clear, there is considerable uncertainty about what all this might come to mean in practice.

The government's target is that all English schools will be sustainable by 2020. Although it is not yet clear what this will actually have to mean in practice, it does suggest that the sustainability of a school, as an entity, needs to be a key element – an idea to which Ken Webster and Craig Johnson (2009) add substance and challenge with their description of a fully sustainable school as 'eco-restorative'. For the government (DfES, 2006:3), a key sustainable schools' focus is that of the institution's becoming a model for activity in the community:

"The government has reaffirmed its commitment to sustainable development. ... Schools ... are invited to become models of sustainable development for their communities ... turning issues like climate change, global justice and local quality of life into engaging learning opportunities for pupils – and a focus for action among the whole school community."

A key element in the sustainable schools initiative is an integration of vision and activities across curriculum, campus and community, where there are positive outcomes across all sectors in relation to both learning and social action (Scott, 2008).

The continuation of the institution of the school seems assured in the short-to-medium term, although it also seems probable that there will be evolution in both its form and function because of external social change. In what follows, it is the learning that accrues from schools and schooling with sustainability in mind, that is the main focus, along with what needs to change if this is to be enhanced. This is explored further under four headings: *Taking young people seriously*; *Giving ourselves permission*; *Making it real*; and *Teachers letting go*. A final section examines what an appropriate vision for a sustainable school might look like and how we might set about realising it, and looks again at how schools might co-evolve with a shifting external context.

Taking young people seriously

I hope I think about things as much as I ask my children to think about them. I hope I question as much as they do, because seeing the world through the eyes of the children who are growing into it, and giving them the opportunity to develop critical skills to deal with the way that the world is changing, is the most important thing an educator can do.

Lezli Howarth, Chandos Primary School

The recent book, *Environmental Learning: insights from research into the student experience* (Rickinson et al., 2009: 80), contains this extraordinary statement:

“... discussions about what counts as relevant to particular contexts, or around where environmental learning takes place, should pay close attention to the learner perspective, and avoid assumptions that views held by teachers and other educators outside of the learning context will be shared by those engaged in the learning process itself.”

Of course, it is only extraordinary in that this needs saying at all, given what we know about the essential role of the learner in their own learning, and noting all the recent policy emphasis around listening to studentsⁱⁱ. The Diversity and Citizenship Curriculum Review (DfES, 2007) recommended that schools should have mechanisms in place to ensure that the student voice is heard and acted upon through forums, school councils, questionnaires, etc, linking this to participation and consultation, and to the school's approach to community cohesion. This is essentially a citizenship argument, whereas the Rickinson point is about interactions between teachers and students (ie about learning) much more broadly, and about the need to take young people's existing understanding, interests, and motivations into account during such interactions.

Both, of course, are needed in a sustainable school – if young people are to be at the centre of discussions as learners and active participants, and are to be taken seriously. In this sense, the Rickinson book is particularly helpful because of its clear-headed focus on the slippery notion of relevance, and because of its focus on supporting young people's own developing understanding, so that when they need to make decisions about as yet unknown situations they have the skills, knowledge and confidence to do so.

Some of these points have been accepted within DCSF. For example, the recent proposals for a new primary curriculumⁱⁱⁱ promoted greater flexibility to tailor learning to young people's needs, interests and aspirations, and advocated play-based and more active learning approaches so that a wide range of outcomes are possible, particularly through young people taking responsibility and taking initiative. DCSF also advocates a vision of care^{iv} for sustainable schools which encompasses: care for oneself, care for each other (across cultures, distances and time), and care for the environment (both far and near). However, sometimes taking care of young people means exposing them to difficult ideas and valuing them as trusted partners in a shared learning journey, to which they bring both valuable experience and expertise.

A recent report published by DCSF (Barratt Hacking *et al.*, 2010) argued that when schools take young people's community knowledge and their desire for a better local quality of life seriously, this helps them see the value of school. The report noted that research for the ESRC found that when schools play a role in community development, and when they incorporate students' everyday experience and local community concerns within the curriculum, young people's engagement, motivation and learning are enhanced. This research also showed that engaging in discussions within school generates a more positive and empowered outlook. For example, the Cambridge Primary Review's Community Soundings report (Alexander, 2009: 198) noted that:

pessimism turned to hope when [young people] felt that they had the power to act. ... the children who were most confident that climate change might not overwhelm them were those whose schools had decided to replace unfocussed fear by factual information and practical strategies for energy reduction and sustainability.

Similarly, the DCSF report noted that the environment is a consistent theme in young people's concerns about the future, and shows that enabling young people to develop a sense of agency through involvement in collaborative and constructive action helps them engage in their learning and feel more hopeful.

But who mandates the focus on environment, development and sustainability – and who can give permission? Despite the English school curriculum's clear imperatives^v,

The school curriculum should ... help them to be responsible and caring citizens capable of contributing to the development of a just society. ... develop their awareness and understanding of, and respect for, the environments in which they live, and secure their commitment to sustainable development at a personal, local, national and global level. ...

... schools have not always taken much notice of them, as the very need for a sustainable schools initiative illustrates, and its slow and patchy development confirms. It is this issue of permission that we turn to next.

Giving ourselves permission

We want to have a say in how our world is run, to make people aware of... what is going on in our world and how they can help us to change it... we want children to grow up respecting their community and each other."

Year 8 student, quoted in Barratt Hacking et al. (2010)

Although it is rather unfashionable to talk of curriculum in its proper sense these days, when it is *schemes of work, programmes of study and learning outcomes* that seem to focus attention, it is worth recalling that the idea of curriculum should not be conflated with any of these, because this is to confuse what is taught with *why* it's taught, and *how* what is taught is agreed. Curriculum is a reflection of how we think about the social purposes of education. If we think one way, we will have a certain kind of curriculum; if we think differently, the curriculum itself will be markedly altered. What was taught in grammar and secondary modern school was different because those schools had sharply differentiated social purposes, and our primary and secondary schools are still distinct for the same reason.

Inevitably, the determination and realisation of a curriculum is always, one way or another, a selection from culture. Lawton (1975: 6-7)^{vi} put it like this:

Certain aspects of our way of life, certain kinds of knowledge, certain attitudes and values are regarded as so important that their transmission to the next generation is not left to chance in our society but is entrusted to specially-trained professionals (teachers) in elaborate and expensive institutions (schools).

Clearly, wise societies choose carefully and re-think their choices from time to time, especially when faced with social, economic, or more existential challenges. The need for sustainable development, and in particular the urgency of responding to significant climate change, is thought by many to be such a point of choice and change.

Indeed, the sustainable schools initiative might well be understood as the DCSF, and government more widely, making such a choice. Perhaps. It would be more convincing, however, were the entire DCSF to be obviously whole-heartedly behind it. As has been argued recently (Scott, 2010), the tensions in government between dominant processes of moulding society to fit the status quo and its received wisdoms, and the enabling of a critique of beliefs and assumptions which aids the creation of new ways of thinking, are very real. As Scott notes, whilst a small unit within the DCSF is doing the latter, much of the DCSF is focused on the former, resulting in an almost bi-polar climate within which institutions are struggling to evolve into *sustainable schools* ^{vii}.

In the absence of that whole-heartedness, schools continue to have a responsibility for making this selection from culture for themselves and their communities – for deciding to shift away from a focus on business as usual. This involves, as the sustainable schools initiative, and recent work from the National College (Birney and Reed, 2009) acknowledges, a revisioning process which asks anew what the purpose of schools needs to be. This is the journey that the schools involved with this project are undertaking – having given themselves permission to start.

At some point in such deliberations, a decision is inevitably made about whether change is to be tokenistic or serious. Where it is whole-hearted and serious, a new set of questions emerge. Useful starting points are to ask: [i] how do we build learners' capacity to think critically about sustainability?; [ii] how do we build the capacity of teachers to support this?; and how do we change the nature of leadership to support [i] & [ii]? These issues are not, of course, as separate as is suggested here.

The current, fragmented policy framework, which includes the Children's Plan, Every Child Matters, community cohesion, learning outside the classroom, healthy schools, etc., although providing many opportunities to develop young people's experience creatively, are all grounded in status quo assumptions. Thus, although such opportunities rather inevitably form a background to our thinking as we consider what the young people with whom we work might be encouraged to learn, and how this might be most effectively experienced, we continually need to bring thinking about sustainability to bear as young people's experiences are planned. There are many different models which might be useful when rethinking the student's experience of school. What this looks like in practice will be negotiated within individual schools, building on strengths, addressing weaknesses and responding to particular circumstances. This may mean rethinking the role of the teacher in learning experiences, perhaps playing the role of facilitator, provocateur, or learner, as appropriate.

School leaders play an important role in creating the right environment of challenge and trust to empower staff to take responsibility and innovate, to take educational risks, to understand and respond to change in the realities of the wider world. It is this issue that we turn to next.

Making it real

"The idea of a 'thinking journey'... a drip feed of very deep learning for children ... and adults"

Elaine Huntington, Headteacher, Honeybourne First School

UNESCO has set out a number of what it sees as key characteristics of an education that seriously addresses sustainability (ie, ESD):

ESD is fundamentally about values, with respect at the centre: respect for others, including those of present and future generations, for difference and diversity, for the environment, for the resources of the planet we inhabit. It mirrors the concern for education of high quality, in that it is: interdisciplinary and holistic;

- values-driven;
- fostering of critical thinking and problem solving;
- multi-method;
- participatory;
- applicable to daily life, whether personal or professional;
- locally relevant in terms of context.

These are widely accepted, and well supported by research evidence that shows that an approach which engages young people, addressing real issues which impact on their lives, will lead to increased motivation and curiosity, and deeper, more meaningful learning experiences. For example, Shallcross *et al.* (2007) found that when environment-related work involves issues of direct interest to young people, such as the school's physical environment, this helps them engage in their learning; and a recent DCSF (2010) report argued that involving young people in discussions, decision-making and action about how the school and community responds to sustainability, provides a firm foundation for future social participation.

The UNESCO characteristics relate to how the approach to, and process of, teaching focused on sustainability can be conceptualised; they do not, of course, relate specifically to sustainability itself ^{viii}. As such, other ways of thinking about that are needed, in particular, how we can think about sustainability as a means of organising formal and in-formal learning programmes, and interconnecting these with initiatives focused on environmental and social improvement, as envisaged in the sustainable schools initiative.

Sustainability, of course, is not an idea that can just be treated as a theoretical topic which can be taught by assimilating facts or understanding theories, important though these are; neither does it involve activity where learning is seen as a series of pre-determined changes in behaviour, significant though changes in how we live will be. However, it is a topic that is characterized by both ideas and action, and their inter-linking, and in order to explore the issues thoroughly, a way of thinking about sustainability is needed.

The seven key characteristics of sustainable development set out in the Holland Report ^{ix} are one means of doing this. These are:

Interdependence

Understanding how people, the environment and the economy are inextricably linked at all scales from local to global.

Citizenship & Stewardship

A sense of responsibility for personal and group actions, and an awareness of their likely impact on natural and human communities, both locally and globally.

Needs & rights of future generations

Appreciation that the quality of life of future generations is endangered or enhanced by actions we take now.

Diversity

Respecting and valuing both human diversity – cultural, social and economic – and biodiversity.

Quality of life

Appreciating why equity and justice are essential to sustainability and that basic needs are vital everywhere in the world.

Sustainable change

Understanding that resources are finite and that this has implications for people's lifestyles, and for economic and political priorities.

Uncertainty & precaution in action

Appreciating that there are a range of possible approaches to sustainability and that situations are constantly changing, indicating a need for critical thinking and lifelong learning.

Although these ideas were briefly taken up by QCA in the early 1990s, they were not pursued as a means of organising or mapping ESD activity, despite work within the Government's sustainable development education panel which established multiple learning outcomes across the key stages for all the characteristics. Nor were they built on when DCSF developed the sustainable schools initiative with its eight doorways^x. They remain, however, a valid framework for critical and creative thinking and represent a set of learning areas, which might be used to organise overlapping programmes of study^{xi}. They can also be seen as complementing the sustainable schools initiative's doorways as ways to think about sustainability across community, curriculum and campus, and to ask – if not fully answer – serious questions such as the following:

- What are the most significant sustainable development issues facing the world / country / local community / school / young people?
- What can young people engage with in school (and how), in order to develop the knowledge and skills to engage in the wider world?
- Who sets the learning agenda, and measures success?

The key concepts from the Holland Report encompass big ideas which young people are ready and willing to engage with. But to do this they need contexts where their voices will be heard, where they can make relevant decisions, and can have opportunities to think for themselves. This may mean that activities such as recycling or buying organic food are not promoted, but are subjected to critical scrutiny as a valuable part of the learning process (accepting, of course, that behaviours such as increased recycling may well result). Schools can provide a safe and structured environment for young people to find out about the world and explore their values, allowing them to develop their interests and capability, and engage fully with sustainable development, but only if teachers have the courage to let go of the reins, or at least slacken their grip. It is this issue that we turn to next.

Teachers letting go

Teachers need to let go and learn with the children ... because children love to teach teachers

John Rhymer, Bishop's Wood Centre

Many aspects of sustainability are controversial: even policies such as *Fair Trade*, recycling, renewable energy, and development aid do not appear completely obvious, once you delve beneath the surface of the issues and begin to ask questions. See, for example, Vare & Scott (2008) in relation to *Fair Trade*, and Webster & Johnson (2009) in relation to sustainability more widely. Consideration of such real-world issues, reflecting different perspectives based on ethics, values, emotions and desires leads to passionate debate because many young people have commendably strong opinions about the world around them (and what's wrong with it). This can be difficult for unprepared teachers, as the Rickinson (2009) book illustrates through its revealing *vignettes* of young people's skillful management of their pedagogic encounters with teachers.

In *New World's Rising*, Andy Stables (2010) argues that it is the development of skills of critical thinking, dialogue and debate that schools need to focus on, as this will provide the basis for life-long, citizenly engagement with crucial social issues – and life-long learning. Stables argues that, whilst openness to the real public debate in schools is crucial, to a large extent it is only the making of real-life decisions that

most fully enables, in an iterative, developmental manner, the capacity for exercising this responsible citizenship. This seems a very persuasive reason to enable students to practise such real-life, decision-making *in* schools, particularly within a citizenship / sustainability framing. Of course, opening up controversial topics, letting learners decide priorities and organising learning differently, requires careful planning, a sensitive approach, and a willingness to take some risks. This is how the concept of *action competence* is described and has been implemented in Danish schools for several decades (Jensen & Schnak, 1997).

The benefits, however, can be extensive as young people recognise such real-world topics as meaningful and significant for their lives. For example, the recent DCSF publication (Barratt Hacking *et al.*, 2010) argues that:

when schools provide opportunities for young people to discuss and respond to significant issues that are important to them, this helps the acquisition of confidence and skills (both social and analytical) to support active citizenship.

The report also notes strong evidence that young people care about the quality of their local communities and environments ... [and] that young people want to have a voice and contribute to local improvement yet they perceive few opportunities to do so.

In a similar vein, Ofsted (2009) found that schools' focus on sustainability had a wide range of positive consequences, capturing the interest of young people because they could see its relevance to their own lives and futures, with evidence of increase in knowledge and understanding of the importance of leading more sustainable lives.

Uncertainty, risk and necessity are recurring themes in such real-world approaches, and we are all challenged to think about what they mean in a school context. The following suggest themselves as starting points:

- nobody has all of the answers – not even teachers;
- sometimes the teachers will be the learners;
- taking well thought through educational risks is scary but valuable;
- what we know now isn't necessarily what we will need to know in the future;
- let learners' interests lead the learning;
- question ourselves and our colleagues;
- develop knowledge-getting skills;
- value all learning experiences – not just those that happen in the classroom;
- help young people explore controversial issues in an open-minded way;
- use a range of different approaches to teaching and learning;
- trust colleagues to do things differently, and different things.

There is value in recognising *all* of the above, and building on them, for example,

... through student learning that [i] integrates academic, practical and ethical concerns, [ii] acknowledges the significance of the issues to all humanity, now and in the future, [iii] recognises different perspectives on problems and what might now be done, [iv] understands the complexities and uncertainties in data, and [v] appreciates the argument for caring and involvement at a personal / social level,

... through greater awareness by governors, leaders, teachers and students of how what the school does might lead to: a more integrated consideration of issues, energy, resource and cost savings, the creation of buildings and grounds that can model sustainability and act as positive teaching resources, and enhanced student involvement in decision-making,

... and through increased community involvement in all aspects of school life, the opening up of the school for community use, and its inspiration for ways of more sustainable living – with the recognition that ‘community’ is now more appropriately seen at the global level, given our mutual interdependence and shared problems (Scott, 2008: 62-63).

The recent report from DCSF (Barratt Hacking *et al.*, 2010) urges schools to give young people different perspectives on issues and information about uncertainties. This helps them appreciate the complexity of sustainability, the role that values play in making decisions about what to do, and the importance of learning. It notes that a recent Ofsted (2010) report on Citizenship described as “outstanding” work carried out by Year 5 students who discussed both positive and negative consequences of particular approaches to sustainability, grappled with complex questions such as whether recycling necessarily reduced consumption and the impact that re-using may have on the manufacturing economy. Similarly, research reported in Rickinson *et al.* (2009), brings learners and their experiences to the fore, and illustrates how skilled teaching can build on young people’s own views and interests in order to enhance understanding, while Percy-Smith (2009) reported that by using action based forms of learning, young people were able to examine issues more effectively, understand the complexities of their real world contexts, and consequently develop effective intervention strategies.

The final section examines what an appropriate vision for a sustainable school might look like, and how we might set about realising it, and then looks again at the question of how schools might evolve in the face of external change.

Educating for altered circumstances

In what has gone before, this paper has proposed that what young people bring to their learning needs to be taken more seriously, that schools and teachers need greater confidence to innovate and address existentially significant issues, that schools need to focus on real issues that are meaningful to learners and their lives, and that learning needs to be a more prominent focus, and more learner-centred. This case has been argued, not only because it seems necessary to do this if we are to address the challenges and uncertainties of sustainability, but also because this sort of a shift is needed if schools are to become more effective learning contexts for everyone, as both national policy, and the sustainable schools initiative demand.

Sense & Sustainability (Webster & Johnson, 2009) critiques both western education’s tight relationship with extant social systems, and those systems themselves, and advances a “closed loop notion” view of sustainability. *Sense & Sustainability* sees the biosphere (“nature”) as both capital and teacher. This is a view which sees the functioning of eco-systems as templates for human living, embodied (literally and metaphorically) in the ‘cradle to cradle’ notion of waste = resource, as William McDonough puts it:

Eco-effectiveness seeks to design industrial systems that emulate the healthy abundance of nature. The central principle of eco-effectiveness is that waste equals food.

Building on Webster’s earlier work (2004), a key idea is that of the ‘eco-restorative school’ which might produce more energy than is used and enhance biodiversity and social capital. In the short-term, this idea is meant as an heuristic that will both stimulate and enable development with constant improvement / adaptation to change both within and outwith the school’s immediate community. This is an arresting idea that seems fully appropriate, and leads to questions such as: what do we need to do now to begin (or continue) to develop this idea of an eco-restorative school, and gradually turn it into reality?

Learning, of course, is key, and Webster & Johnson are right to stress that ideas need to be held “lightly enough to be superseded or abandoned in due course” and to urge “the clarification of thinking which promotes ever more sustainability” (p.131), all of which augurs well for open-minded and open-ended learning. Towards the end of the book they argue that:

“It is a citizenship question first, and not a consumer one. The balance of work in schools and colleges needs reviewing so that it is also more about ‘systems and citizenship’ and less about ‘me and consumerism’” (p. 145).

In doing this, they seem fully in tune with the Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2009) which, in its suggested 12 core educational aims that schools might pursue, includes

“to develop children’s understanding of humanity’s dependence for well-being and survival on equitable relationships between individuals, groups, communities and nations, and on a sustainable relationship with the natural world, and help children move from understanding to positive action in order that they can make a difference and *know that they have the power to do so*” (p 198, italics added).

It follows that learning how to learn is not itself sufficient; rather, learning how to interact with others (people and institutions) and how to collaborate and be effective would seem crucial, as would learning how to create (and resist) change, in school, in the family, and more widely, as, for example, Stables (2010) and Jensen & Schnack (1997) argue from their quite different perspectives. Thus, this is a citizenship agenda.

Of course, our circumstances are not only altered in that we need to face up to sustainability; they are also vastly changed in relation to what it is now possible to do in the world. Because of this, the means of exercising citizenship is changing through new ways of communicating and accessing information, as are some whole industries such as music and the news media, in ways that make their futures unpredictable, but always more decentred, opened up, networked and democratic. It could well be that this rapidly-changing, technologically-mediated, external context will facilitate an unforeseeable change to schools and schooling where a tendency to institutional monoculture^{xii} will be enriched and diversified through external possibilities as communicating costs fall, hardware portability and flexibility increase, and bandwidth and computing power rise. Despite rising costs of energy, and perhaps of money as well and hence everything they power, this might well create opportunities for novel schooling experiments which have greater flexibility, better connection with experience in and through the community, and which meet the widespread need for the sorts of approach this paper is arguing for. This takes us back to Webster & Johnson on Illich, which is where we began.

As Paul Vare has noted:^{xiii} this points to a core attribute (or competence) that all who would be educators could usefully have: the ability to build positive relationships with those cast in the role of learners. This will include an understanding of the perceptions of learners both before, during and after ‘lessons’, and the courage to be open to whatever we may hear. Young learners will always develop their own strategies to cope with whatever and however they are taught, and so attempting to ‘teach’ sustainability without these crucial relationship-building skills, and a fair degree of humility, is likely to be counter-productive in terms of developing an engaged citizenry. On the other hand, fostering positive relationships with learners, facilitating engagements with other individuals, themes and communities beyond the learners’ immediate experience, and all the while remaining open to (and learning from) the novel interpretations that different learners will put on these encounters, is to model some of the critical dispositions that are perhaps our best hope of realising a more sustainable society.

The ethics that underpin the approach of both the Cambridge Primary Review and *Sense and Sustainability*, and in a different sense, inform the use of new technologies, are ones of trust, participation and openness, and reflect values and moral purposes designed to empower young people to manage life and find new meaning in the 21st century. We are, however, faced with only an incomplete guide for the journey, merely an existential compass, the promise of rough tracks and dead ends, and a large degree of uncertainty.

But this idea of an education for altered circumstances is key, as is the vision of an eco-restorative school. Taken together, although the institution of schools will likely survive, it will not be as we now know them – and a good thing too.

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- Webster K & Johnson C (2009) *Sense and Sustainability: educating for a low carbon world*. TerraPreta.

Endnotes

- i Illich said that such a system would have three purposes:
 - provide access, whenever needed, to resources for those who want to learn
 - bring together all who want to share knowledge with those who want to learn
 - enable all who want to present an issue or challenge to the public to do so
- ii Student voice: http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/research/themes/pupil_voice/
<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/Communitycohesion/communitycohesionresourcepack/ethos/voice/>
- iii See: <http://www.qcda.gov.uk/curriculum/35.aspx>, or pages from the Rose Review <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/primarycurriculumreview/index.shtml> [checked July 2010]
- iv DCSF: <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-01044-2008.pdf>
- v QCDA: <http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/key-stages-1-and-2/Values-aims-and-purposes/index.aspx>
[Checked, June 2010].
- vi Curriculum:
[http://books.google.com/books?id=vsk9AAAAIAAJ&pg=PA7&lpg=PA7&dq=a+selection+from+culture+\(Lawton&source=bl&ots=JA78FJhEjn&sig=TR6CNE-Rp9_Fh6acYYQDfHz50I0&hl=en&ei=A0F0S5z7BJWY0gSW5fymCQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CAsQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=a%20selection%20from%20culture%20\(Lawton&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=vsk9AAAAIAAJ&pg=PA7&lpg=PA7&dq=a+selection+from+culture+(Lawton&source=bl&ots=JA78FJhEjn&sig=TR6CNE-Rp9_Fh6acYYQDfHz50I0&hl=en&ei=A0F0S5z7BJWY0gSW5fymCQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CAsQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=a%20selection%20from%20culture%20(Lawton&f=false) [Checked, June 2010].
- vii Scott argues that the sustainable schools unit within the DCSF recognises this tension, and that one way it manages it is by stressing (and looking for evidence) that sustainable schools need to continue to be judged, in part at least, in relation to status quo (eg, 'school improvement') outcomes.
- viii They relate just as well to *Health Education*, for example, and many would see them as just characteristics of a good education.
- ix <http://www.tidec.org/Tidetalk/papers/The%20Holland%20Report.html> [Checked, June 2010]
- x It is, at the very best, arguable that these key concepts have a superior fit with sustainability than do the DCSF's eight doorways, though the latter, inevitably, have a good fit with other aspects of DCSF policy – which is seen (by DCSF and others) to give them purchase and credibility in the eyes of teachers and school leaders.
- xi In February, 2010, the Education and Training Inspectorate in Northern Ireland published: *Effective Practice in Education for Sustainable Development in a Sample of Primary, Post-primary and Special Schools in Northern Ireland*, based on visits to 25 schools, questionnaires to 58 additional schools, and discussions with representative stakeholders. The report uses the 7 key concepts that originated in the work of the government sustainable development education panel SDEP (1998), although it repeats the error first made by QCA by terming these key concepts of ESD. In the original SDEP work they were unambiguously key concepts of *sustainable development*.
- xii I am grateful to Ken Webster for this phrase, and for other insights too numerous to mention.
- xiii This paragraph draws on a personal communication; March 2010.
- xiv This is one of a number of brief publications that set out 'top tips' for sustainable schools. See http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/sustainableschools/about/about_detail.cfm?levelselected=3&id=213 for details of publications on: biodiversity, food & catering, sustainable purchasing, the global dimension, school travel, reducing waste, and reducing energy & water use. In addition, this URL gives access to guides for school governors and bursars. NB, 'Evidence of Impact of Sustainable Schools' was written for DCSF by the University of Bath's *Centre for Research in Education and the Environment*. [Checked, June 2010].