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University of Plymouth

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Pedagogic Research and Teaching Innovation (PRTI) Award

Final Report 2017

Name of key contact (project leader): Dr. Paul Warwick

Department: Centre for Sustainable Futures, Teaching and Learning Support

Names of other staff involved: Dr. Wendy Miller

Title of project: Longitudinal Study of Sustainably Educated Graduates

Type of project: Case Study and Action Research

Keywords: Sustainable Education, Employability, Students as Partners

Aims of project:

- To identify and track a cohort of students as they graduate from Plymouth University, and who have experienced a 'maximal' sustainability education, to monitor their life futures.
- To gain a deeper understanding of the employment and citizenship impact of UoP's sustainability education work beyond the time-span of studying at Plymouth and beyond the more traditional snapshot evaluations of outcomes and student experience through course feedback processes.
- To acquire the benefit of alumni 'hindsight' perspectives on the sustainability education experienced at Plymouth. The aim is for their perspectives to inform the future visioning of the sustainability education strategy at Plymouth and inform work to develop more active and participatory ESD pedagogies.

Background/context to project:

The development of participatory and active learning pedagogies in Education for Sustainable Development is seen as crucial in order to develop critical creative citizens and resilient professionals able to transition towards more sustainable futures. Increasingly, ESD in HE is framed as being concerned with developing a range of competencies in students crossing disciplinary boundaries and covering knowledge, skills, dispositions, values and attitudes. Whilst capturing numerous examples of good practice in ESD, the UN Decade for ESD monitoring and evaluation work has provided little in the way of longitudinal insight into what happens to the sustainably educated beyond their time at university. It is intended that this research project will add a new dimension to Plymouth University's international profile as a leading HEI in both sustainability education and ESD research as it seeks to address this gap.

Methods used: Focus Groups, Interviews, Creative Workshops

Results: Twenty graduates from a range of disciplinary backgrounds have been recruited onto this project with an ongoing commitment to meet as an alumni group on an annual basis.

These participants have helped shape the University's Plymouth Compass; a framework of attributes that recognises the importance of learning, employability, sustainable citizenship and personal well-being dimensions to HE.

Participants have helped to revise and co-run the University's Students as Partners Sustainability Education mechanism named the Future Leaders Programme.

Participants have helped to create a new national initiative 'The Sustainable University Summit' where in the first summit (Nov 2016) seven HEI's participated with teams of staff and students as partners.

Associated publications:

Warwick, P. (2016) 'An integrated leadership model for leading education for sustainability in higher education and the vital role of students as change agents' *Management in Education* Vol 30, No. 3 2016 pp105-111

Dissemination:

Warwick, P., Robinson, Z., Bourne, J. & Simes, E. The Sustainable University Summit – pursuing quality education with students as partners. EAUC Annual Conference Lancaster March 2017

Warwick, P. Students as leaders of educational change. BERA, Leeds UK 13-15 Sept 2016

Warwick P., Manning, J. & Slaughter, O. Leadership towards the sustainable university. EAUC Annual Conference, Bristol, UK 25-26 May 2016

Warwick, P. & Manning, R. Future Leaders – Students' experiences of making a difference through an innovative sustainability education programme. International Symposium -Learning From the Sharp End Implications for Sustainability in Higher Education. Bristol University, UK. 9th September 2015