

The Role of the Arts in ESD Ecologically Sustainable Development
Thesis topic by Bon Darlington

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12 AUG 2003

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

To
The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage.

Thank you for permitting us to make a late submission regarding the "Inquiry into employment in the environment sector"

Terms of reference:

- The future potential growth, including barriers and opportunities for growth, of environmental goods and services and impact on employment;
- Current status and future requirements for an appropriately skilled workforce;

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable environmental management requires a balance of both science and art to be successful. What is the role of the Arts in Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD)?

A major barrier to growth is the low level of sustainable practices by people. Major employment areas for goods and services is to do with sustainable practices.

Are there any specific topics in Environmental Education for sustainable practices presently taught at the University level?

Current topics at University seem to reflect an emphasis on environment as a system external to people. Subject choices for Environmental Studies are often better called Environmental Sciences and revolve around Geography and Biology with the addition of Economics. It appears that the current climate is sadly lacking input from the Humanities. The Humanities explores peoples' attitudes towards their place, their connection to their environment.

There is a perception that once a person obtains a Degree, that person then has an opportunity for further teaching and learning outside of their specific field. However the core values of further learning can be missed; skills can be wasted and knowledge not applied if people's work takes them into areas unstudied in their disciplines of learning.

There appears to be a substantial number of people with qualifications in Engineering, Science and Social Science trying to educate a community. Education is a mindset predominantly based in the Humanities.

Science may not save us but people will, if they are educated in an inclusive manner.

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People are the heart of the problem and the heart of the solution; hence using familiar methods of communication and skilled educators can hasten learning about sustainable management of our environs.

A familiar method of human communication is the Arts: performing, visual and literary. Its effectiveness can be measured by looking at the power of the advertising and media industries in our society.

The Role of the Arts in Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD)

ABSTRACT:

ESD depends on people's behaviour. Behaviour is influenced by knowledge and attitudes. The link between behaviour and attitudes/knowledge is not clear-cut. Is there a way for the arts to influence behaviour by affecting attitudes and/or knowledge? How do people connect to their environment? Does exposure to the Arts change those connections? It is my contention that appropriately applied arts-based projects (in the environmental employment sector) result in a culture of sustainability: informed use and care of the environment. In a general framework of knowledge, attitudes and behaviour, I seek to demonstrate the relationship between music, feelings and behaviour while exploring what it is that motivates people towards sustainable living patterns.

The Arts - Definition

Art has a role in how humans see the world.

Art is something that **people** do. It is a human skill.

Art: Etymological root – to **join**, Art engenders a state of intimacy and communion with the activity at hand. Art penetrates and heighten the senses.

In practical application, the Arts include:

- Visual arts.
- Performing arts.
- Literary arts.
- Continuum of communication technology.

Artists throw themselves into the moment so as to engage the senses. In the performing arts, artists bring a **place** to life. Artists explore both internal and external landscapes for people. That is to say: artists provide, not only a means of representation of reality but also, a vehicle for expression in human societies.

ESD - Definition

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Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) is a goal, presently in the form of various policies at international, national and local levels. ESD policies are often mission statements and specific plans. A global example of a mission statement is the Kyoto Protocol for greenhouse gases. In South Australia, Water Catchment Management plans are local examples of specific (bio-regional) ESD plans.

The Arts' role in ESD plans provides for dissemination of information about environmental issues and knowledge. The Arts act as a mode of communication for environmental education. Comparative Education Review; May 2000 sees environmental education as being in demand from the evidence of international conferences from the 1970's on.

Environmental Education

"The goal of environmental education is to develop a world population that is aware of and concerned about the environment and its associated problems and which has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivations and commitments to work individually and collectively towards solutions of current problems and the prevention of new ones."
Unesco, "The Belgrade Charter", Connect (1976);p.1.

One theoretical base of environmental education in ESD plans is that knowledge helps to determine human attitudes which helps to determine human behaviour. An advertising Agency Brief for Watercare (a SA environmental campaign) states that there is a "...strong need to raise water education and awareness which will lead to behavioural change".

The view of many technologists in ESD planning is that knowledge brings about behavioural change.

The (behavioural) psychological view suggests that people's attitudes determine their behaviour.

Recent findings in psychology, cognitive science and market research suggest that there is not a clear cut causal link between people's attitudes/beliefs and behaviour, i.e. people do not always do as they say.

The premise of the links between knowledge, attitudes and behaviour underpins the advertising industry but does not necessarily gel with pedagogic theories of learning.

"The main focus of environmental education programs has been to change environmental behaviour through increasing environmental knowledge." p.1.

Environmental education and attitudes: Emotions and beliefs are what is needed *Environment and Behavior*, Thousand Oaks, Sep. 2000; Julie Anne Pooley; Moira O'Connor. Sage Publications, Inc. Sep 2000.

Results from this study suggest that *"The current reliance on environmental knowledge may be hindering the aim of environmental education."* p.5.

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ESD policies have difficulties in achieving sustainable practices in communities.
"Awareness alone does not convert to effective and sustained behaviour change."
Patawalonga Catchment Water Management Plan *Draft for Consultation*, Section 3.2, page 45.

Responsible Environmental Behaviour (REB)

The goal for **people** in ESD plans is to **know** how, **believe** in and **act** for sustainability. The aim of community involvement in ESD plans is to engender and promote Responsible Environmental Behaviour (REB). What is it (besides legislation) that motivates people towards REB?

Readings in Behavioral Psychology suggest that there are various reasons why people do the right thing; the most obvious being perceived benefits. Perceived benefits can be economic, social and cultural. People will probably aim to sustain if it costs less and/or is socially and culturally appropriate.

Environmental Literacy

"The creation of an environmentally literate citizenry is the ultimate goal of environmental education." Teaching for Environmental Literacy Heldref Publications Sept/Oct 2000.

To be literate is to be able to read, decode information and apply it.

Successfully environmentally literate people apply knowledge and skills in their daily habits to sustain their surroundings.

Visible changes in human attitudes and actions towards our surroundings can be seen globally. This change is encapsulated in the familiar suggestion that we Think Globally and Act Locally. The popularity of the **Greens** political movement is another example of these changes. There is an undeniable global renaissance or rethink recently about how people connect to their environment.

How do people connect to their environment?

Does exposure to the Arts change those connections?

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ECO-Music

Humans have an interdependent and complex relationship with their environment.
"The human environment is a world of places." Placeways- A Theory of the human environment. E.V Walter. Uni. Of North Carolina Press 1988

People need places to live and everyone lives in a water catchment place.

ECO-Music

*"The whole synthesis of located experience – including what we imagine as well as the sights, stories, feelings and concepts – gives us the sense of **place**."* Ibid Placeways

The crucial human question of identity, of 'Where do I belong?' is being asked when we consider **people's** sense of **place**.

I have tried to affect **people's** knowledge, attitudes and behaviour about their place since 1991 in that I write Eco-Music, songs with powerful messages of sustainability with a particular emphasis on water. Anecdotally, I am told that Eco-Music touches people's hearts and gives them a strong sense of connection to their surroundings.

One of the main messages in ECO-Music is that everyone lives in a water catchment place. The songs in Eco-Music provide a highlight of interest and an example of a powerful and effective tool of communication. Here is a list of Eco-Music song titles and their messages:

- *Laughing in Australia..... Water Cycle.*
- *Crying for the Canoe Tree..... People's attitudes. Quiet and wild land.*
- *You're Very deep Today..... Tree felling.*
- *Wetlands..... Riparian zone repair.*
- *The Elements..... Sustainability.*
- *International Power..... People & Place.*
- *Love on the Side of the Road..... Gutters.*

ECO-Music Written by Bon Darlington

State Of Environment (SOE)

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The Australian SOE June 2002 Report concludes: *“Every single Australian has an impact on the environment and we are all responsible for its future.”*

Whether or not **people**'s beliefs and feelings help to determine their attitudes that then may determine their behaviour; human actions inevitably and definitely impact on the physical world. People are part of this global system and our effect on the planet increases as population and resource demands grow.

There is no doubt that people are hungry for action and positive progress in regard to the present state of our environment.

Does Arts have a role in ESD?
Thesis topic by:

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Qualifications & Associations

2003 Study in progress: Masters of Arts (by research) in Geog. Pop. & Environmental Management. Flinders University.

2002 Australians Greens SA.

2000 Stormwater Champion of Adelaide. **1990** Teacher's Registration Board.

1989 Diploma of Education.

1981 Bachelor of Arts – Honours (2A) in English Literature.

The Role of the Arts in ESD

Readings for this paper are from diverse areas of knowledge including:

- Education
- Hydrology
- Linguistics
- Communication theory
- Psychology (developmental and behavioural)
- Philosophy (Expression and aesthetic theory)
- Social and Physical Sciences.

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