

model deep reflection about teaching and learning or do you model a reactive, compliant approach. Is there a place for research and development in your school? Do your teachers take advantage of opportunities for study and research? Eg The DfEE's Best Practice Research Scholarships.

**The dispositional** The state of mind and attitudes of people. Closely related to Daniel Goleman's work on Emotional Intelligence. How do you create an institution where people are open-minded, problem solving, long-term thinkers who are interested in seeking answers and shaping the future? Is yours a Mindful School or are 'they' out to get you?

We are at a point in education where there seems to be a shift of emphasis taking place, from imposed curricula and inspection systems towards school self review and the professional development of teachers. Let us take, and make opportunities to do that which is important in education; to develop the art of teaching in the light of the growing science of learning.

*Mel Rockett is a Senior Adviser in Northumberland. He would like to stress that this article is based on the work of many teachers in Northumberland schools*

---

# Primary Education for Sustainable Development

---

**John Huckle**

---

*The school curriculum ... should secure commitment to sustainable development at a personal, national and global level.*

(From the statement of values and aims in *Curriculum 2000*)

## Telling stories

Primary school teachers with an interest in environmental and development education usually have their own favourite stories for use in the classroom. Such stories as *Dear Greenpeace*, (Simon James), *Window* (Jeannie Baker), *Oi, Get Off My Train* (John Burningham), or *I Want One* (Dennis Reader) generally convey a message about our relationship with the rest of nature. My own favourite story, *The Lorax* (Dr Seuss) caused controversy when it was first published in the USA back in the 1960s. Some of you will know that it tells of the exploitation of Truffula Trees by Once-lers against the advice of the Lorax. The Once-lers use Truffula tufts to manufacture Thneeds that can meet all people's needs. They are so successful at 'biggering' production that they eventually destroy the Truffula forests and their wildlife and have to move on. Just

one old Once-ler is left with one Truffula Seed that he gives to a young boy in the hope that he will be able to grow a forest that will be harvested in a more sustainable way.

While such stories are often told in primary schools, their teachers perhaps give too little attention to the big stories they tell to children every day through the taught and hidden curricula. What are children learning about the society they live in, the ways in which it is developing, and how it might develop more sustainably? What big stories about the present and future should teachers be exploring with them at a time when the Government requires primary schools to make more provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and lay the foundations of global citizenship?

This article will begin to answer these questions by suggesting that sustainable development is the big story that schools should now be telling their pupils and communities. In addition to providing children with hope and purpose to their lives, it allows teachers and others to adopt a more realistic view of educational reform and standards; to make



improvements in the quality of teaching and learning; and create more healthy schools. The sustainable development story is about how modern development has separated or alienated people from one another and the rest of nature and how this separation encourages forms of development that cannot last. That part of the story is scary. The more optimistic part, and the one to emphasise with children, is about how awareness of alienation and ecological limits, together with the use of appropriate technologies and forms of social organization, can reconnect us with nature and redirect development along more sustainable paths. The Real World Coalition is one group seeking to draw attention to this narrative.

### Sustainable development

Before this year's general election the Real World Coalition, an alliance of 25 leading organisations campaigning nationally and globally on environmental sustainability, social justice, poverty eradication, peace and security, and democratic renewal, published *From Here to Sustainability* (Christie & Warburton, 2001). This criticised politicians for failing to address real issues of public concern and failing to tell a big story that would engage and inspire the electorate. It identified a series of interlocking problems associated with current forms of development or modernisation and proposed a radical agenda of reforms in national and international politics and economic policy that would restore a shared sense of purpose to individuals and societies.

*Current forms of development are economically, ecologically, socially, culturally and personally unsustainable*

The Coalition's analysis suggests that while we continue to accumulate manufactured capital, or grow the economy, we are doing this at the expense of ecological, human, and social and organisational capital. As rich corporations, governments and individuals accumulate wealth, the processes that produce and distribute this wealth destroy resources and services provided by ecological systems; leave the majority of the world's people in a state of poverty or underdevelopment; and undermine social systems that provide people with mutual aid and support.

The result is a series of gaps between the promise and reality of modernisation that relate to quality of life, environment, poverty, development, democracy, and security. Increased production and consumption fails to translate into greater well-being, the conservation of natural resources and services, the

meeting of everyone's basic needs, greater equality between rich and poor countries, more accountable forms of governance, and reduced violence and risk. Current forms of development are economically, ecologically, socially, culturally and personally unsustainable. While they have brought considerable benefits to many, they fail to deliver jobs and wealth to all; destroy critical ecological capital or biodiversity; create social inequality and exclusion; erode cultural diversity; and create physical and mental ill health. While politicians may acknowledge the associated problems, their behaviour reveals a significant gap for despite stated ambitions, sustainable development remains marginal to mainstream politics. The Coalition reviews New Labour's record in its first term and gives it the kind of mixed report that will be echoed in my discussion of its educational reforms below.

### Governance

The story of sustainable development is that we do have the technologies (tools and ideas) to live more sustainably with one another and the rest of nature, but current forms of social organisation or governance prevent us from doing this. We could move to a 'lasting value economy', based on a low carbon/low waste, high value/high innovation strategy. We could end poverty and social exclusion at home and abroad through appropriate forms of redistribution and investment. We could promote sustainability in the global economic system through regulation of transnational companies and markets. We could reduce or eliminate the arms trade and adopt measures to promote positive rather than negative security. We could restore and improve the quantity and quality of ecological, human, and social and organisational capital with appropriate machines, laws, institutions, values and ideas (appropriate technologies) ... What we lack is democratic forms of governance that hold decision makers to account and allow our common interest in sustainable development to find expression (Fig 1).

*The Real World Coalition suggests that good governance results from well functioning and accountable institutions*

The Commission on Global Governance describes governance as:

*... the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process, through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and co-operative action may be taken. It includes formal institutions and regimes empowered to enforce*



*compliance, as well as informal arrangements that people and institutions either have agreed to or perceive to be in their interest. (CGG, 1995, p2)*

Governance operates at all levels from the local to the global and its agents include not only governments and intergovernmental institutions, but also non-governmental organisations, workers' and citizens' movements, transnational corporations, and the mass media. A wide range of actors are involved in any one area of governance and the widening and deepening of globalisation, together with the growth of organisations and institutions seeking to shape its

#### What chance global democracy?

- In July 2001 the leaders of the eight G8 nations (USA, UK, France, Germany, Japan, Canada, Italy and Russia) met in Genoa surrounded by security to protect them from anti-globalisation protestors. They represent just 13% of the world's population but exercise considerable power over world events.
- They were all elected to pursue domestic imperatives: their global role is simply a byproduct of their national mandate. The decisions they make are haphazard and ephemeral. In 2000 they agreed the Kyoto protocol on climate change and sought to strengthen the anti-ballistic missile treaty. After President Bush came to power in the USA both were in danger of being lost.
- Of the eight G8 leaders meeting in Genoa in July 2001, one seized the presidency of his country after losing the election. Another was pursuing a genocidal war in an annexed republic. A third was facing allegations of corruption. A fourth, the summit's host, has been convicted of illegal party financing, bribery and false accounting. The major theme of the summit was 'promoting democracy'.

Source: 'How to rule the world', George Monbiot, *The Guardian*, 17.7.01

Fig 1

processes and outcomes, makes effective global governance a key priority. This would take an integrated and systemic approach to issues; build on effective decision-making at local, national and regional levels; and develop networks of institutions and processes that enable global actors to develop joint policies and practices on issues of common concern.

Governance makes use of markets and market instruments as well as laws, regulations and planning. Its mechanisms should be inclusive, participatory and democratic with principles such as subsidiarity allowing decisions to be taken as close as possible to the level at which they can be effectively implemented. Governance subjects the rule of arbitrary power (economic, political, cultural or military) to the rule of law and improves the capacity for the peaceful resolution of disputes. The Real World Coalition suggests that good governance results from well functioning and accountable institutions (economic, political, judicial, educational, etc) that citizens regard as legitimate and worthy of support. Such institutions allow them to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and empower them as critical and active citizens.

#### Children's health

Before turning to the scope for telling the story of sustainable development and addressing the need for good governance within the primary school curriculum, we should relate the Real World Coalition's message to the lives of primary school children and current educational reforms. Consumerism offers limited and ultimately unsatisfactory compensation or distraction to individuals alienated by modern forms of development. While the children of the 'contented majority' consume more than ever, their televisions, computers, fashion clothing, 'fast food' and overseas holidays, may not bring them greater happiness or foster their physical and mental development. Fewer children have the opportunity to make things from or with nature (art and craft, outdoor play and discovery); fewer know where the products and services that sustain them come from or where their waste goes: fewer realise the true costs of these products and services to human and non-human nature elsewhere in the world; fewer experience love and support from an extended community of relatives and friends; and fewer are in touch with their inner feelings, needs and emotions. Current forms of unsustainable development separate children from the rest of human and non-human nature and from their own natures. By failing to sustain ecological, human and social and organisational capital they also render children's lives less healthy and more prone to risk.

Such risks as asthma due to poor air quality, hyperactivity due to food additives, anxiety due to family breakdown, or stress due to bullying or racism, affect all children but are particularly common amongst the poor and socially excluded. Poor children lack the fashion clothing, electronic toys, foreign holidays, and birthday parties at fast food restaurants, that their peers and mainstream culture increasingly



associate with identity and worth. They are at the sharp end of the erosion of ecological, human and social and organisational capital, experiencing the most severe impacts of pollution, social exclusion and community breakdown.

### Primary school reform

While children's alienation from nature is a primary cause of emotional ill health and classroom misbehaviour, recent reform of primary schooling has rendered it less relevant to children's needs. Whereas the progressive primary practice, that took root in the 1960s, sought to integrate school subjects and link school knowledge to the everyday knowledge of home and community, the national curriculum introduced in the late 1980s places more emphasis on single subjects, discourages curriculum integration, and discounts local knowledge. Integrated studies, or topic work, as practised in primary classrooms, did often lack rigour and relevance, but national curriculum subjects seem even less likely to provide children with a basic understanding of the social use of nature and the need for sustainable development.

*... reformed practice is more teacher centred, more didactic, and more accountable to externally imposed standards and measures of effectiveness*

Following the report of the Panel for Education for Sustainable Development in 1998 (Sterling, 1998), such development was given a higher profile in the geography programme of study (Fig 2) but this subject has subsequently lost time and status in many primary schools due to changed testing and inspection regimes.

Whereas progressive primary education encouraged democratic classrooms, learning through play and enquiry, and school self-management, reformed practice is more teacher centred, more didactic, and more accountable to externally imposed standards and measures of effectiveness. Such reforms mean that primary schools are less likely to develop the knowledge, skills and values that prompt early commitment to good governance. By setting school against school and pupil against pupil, eroding that degree of democratic governance provided by such institutions as the local education authority, and giving an as yet ill defined role to the private sector, they encourage selfishness and individualism and further erode the social and organisational capital that enables us to care for one another and the rest of nature.

### Geography and sustainable development in the national curriculum

The introductory statement on the importance of geography suggests that it is a focus within the curriculum for understanding and resolving issues about the environment and sustainable development.

At KS1 pupils should be taught to:

- recognise how the environment may be improved and sustained [for example, by restricting the number of cars].

At KS2 pupils should be taught to:

- recognise how and why people may seek to manage environments sustainably, and to identify opportunities for their own involvement [for example, taking part in a local conservation project].

Fig 2

### PSHE and Citizenship Education

No social processes are without their contradictions. By the mid 1990s educational reforms designed to raise 'standards' and make young people more competitive workers in the global economy were seen by many to be failing to socialise the same young people as responsible citizens. Not only were many displaying antisocial behaviour but many also had no knowledge or interest in conventional politics and could see little point in voting. Following the marginalisation and almost total neglect of its cross-curricula themes, the original national curriculum was now seen to provide an inadequate social education. At the same time the Government had signed up to European and international agreements to promote education for sustainable development in schools with the result that there was renewed attention to environmental and development education.

A New Labour Government retained the overall thrust of Conservative education policy but reduced the subject content of this curriculum to make room for new initiatives. The recommendations of the Panel for Education for Sustainable Development included citizenship and stewardship as one of seven key concepts to be explored at each key stage, but its recommendations were less appealing to a Secretary of State with a background in political education than those of the Advisory Group on Citizenship. Elements of the Panel's recommendations were incorporated into the revised geography national curriculum, the framework for PSHE and citizenship education, and



recommendations on developing a global dimension in the school curriculum.

The framework for PSHE and citizenship at KS 1 & 2 (QCA, 2000) emphasises *'the development of social and moral responsibility, community involvement and some basic aspects of political literacy, for example, knowing what democracy is and about the basic institutions that support it locally and nationally'*. One of its aims is helping children deal with risk and meet the challenges of life now and in the future. Political literacy is given less weight than it is at KS 3 & 4 but all four of the interrelated sections (Fig 3), within which pupils are to develop knowledge, skills and understanding, lend themselves to a practical and theoretical consideration of good governance as it relates to sustainable development. Schools are encouraged to be flexible and innovative in their approach and while examples are given of the contributions of subjects to PSHE and citizenship education, the provision of discrete curriculum time is also encouraged. There is sound advice on whole school approaches, the school environment, relationships and organisation, and teaching and learning, but few clues as to what 'knowing what democracy is' entails; what rights should accompany what social and moral responsibilities; what communities beyond the local community schools and pupils should become involved with; or what limits to democracy within the existing world order might be introduced.

**The Framework for PSHE and Citizenship at KS 1 & 2 requires knowledge, skills and understanding to be taught in four interrelated sections:**

1. Developing confidence and responsibility and making the most of their abilities
2. Preparing to play an active role as citizens
3. Developing a healthy, safer lifestyle
4. Developing good relationships and respecting the differences between people.

Fig 3

Primary education for sustainable development should require pupils to begin to develop a practical and theoretical understanding of governance at local, national, European and global levels as it affects all aspects of their lives (environmental, economic, political, social, and cultural). Governance is far wider than government and social literacy (Arthur et al, 2000) far wider than political literacy that concerns itself only with the politics of local and nation states and intergovernmental institutions. Pupils should be

introduced to power and decision making in families, schools, factories and offices, community groups, and town halls, before moving to such settings as national and European parliaments, head offices of transnational corporations and international agencies, and global campaigns based in civil society. Their lessons should examine the extent to which the institutions and mechanisms of governance are participatory and democratic. Are those affected by the decisions able to influence outcomes? What rights and responsibilities do citizens have with respect to such agents? Do the institutions that shape our lives function well and deserve our support? Are they accountable? Do they empower us as critical and active citizens who can realise our common interest in sustainable development?

### *Governance is far wider than government and social literacy*

A tall order for five to eleven year olds? Perhaps it largely depends on how it is done. Many of children's interests and concerns can be linked to agents of governance at different levels and greater attention to power and governance is the key to providing a more realistic PSHE that balances attention to the child's need to develop *healthy, safer lifestyles* (see Fig 3) with the need for forms of governance that are more likely to promote such lifestyles. Education to promote safe and healthy diets, for example, is likely to be more effective if the child understands something of the economic, political and cultural processes shaping the food industry and the campaigns by non-governmental organisations to regulate this industry and its advertising. Primary school children are unlikely to read *Fast Food Nation* (Schlosser, 2001) or visit the Adbuster's website ([www.adbusters.org](http://www.adbusters.org)), but their teachers can use such resources to make their lessons on food more realistic and link them to the story of sustainable development.

### **The Global Dimension**

Teachers who find the framework for PSHE and citizenship education disappointing as a vehicle for primary education for sustainable development, can draw some extra ideas and support from *Developing a global dimension in the school curriculum* (DFID, DfEE et al, 2000). This makes the case for education that helps young people recognise their role and responsibilities as members of the global community and recommends that all parts of the curriculum, including PSHE and citizenship, should include a global dimension. It suggests that seven key concepts lie at the core of learning about global issues



(citizenship, sustainable development, social justice, values and perceptions, diversity, interdependence, conflict resolution, and human rights) and outlines a progression of pupils' awareness and understanding over the key stages (Fig 4). Again there are illustrations of what subjects might contribute, short case studies of good practice, and attention to such wider issues as whole-school policy, school linking, and community links.

#### Developing a global dimension in the school curriculum

##### At KS1 pupils

- begin to develop a sense of their own worth and the worth of others
- develop a sense of themselves as part of a wider world and gain awareness of a range of different cultures and places
- learn that all humanity shares the same basic needs but that there are differences in how these needs are met.

##### At KS2 pupils

- develop their understanding beyond their own experience and build up their knowledge of the wider world and of the different societies and cultures
- learn about the similarities and differences between people and places around the world and about disparities in the world
- develop their sense of social justice and moral responsibility
- begin to understand that their own choices can affect global issues as well as local ones.

Fig 4

Like the framework for PHSE and citizenship education, the recommendations on developing a global dimension could be more helpful to teachers. They might offer some explanations of why *'economies around the world are more than ever interdependent on both trade with, and investment from, other countries'*; why *'one in five of the world's population still lives in extreme poverty'*; or whether it is possible to reconcile *'a healthy and just democracy, a productive economy, and sustainable development'* in the kind of undemocratic world outlined in Fig 1. What exactly is involved in *'understanding how people, places and environments are all inextricably interrelated and that events have repercussions on a global scale'* (the concept of interdependence) and are not global relations best described as exploitative rather than interdependent?

Can one really be a global citizen (citizenship) if there are no effective world government or parliament, and what institutions and mechanisms might really promote global governance (conflict resolution)? The recommendations offer little by way of analysis and so mask their own politics and that of different agents telling different stories about globalisation, global futures and global governance. There is a rather idealistic emphasis on culture and values at the expense of economics and politics, and few glimpses of the radical democratisation of the world order than may be necessary if we are to realise sustainable development with social justice (Hutton & Giddens, 2001).

#### Healthy Schools

New curriculum requirements and recommendations clearly raise yet more contradictions. Many primary teachers may need courses of further professional development if they are to fully recognise and transcend these contradictions, but meanwhile there is much that they can do (Fig 5). Take for example the National Healthy School Standard that offers *'an integrated whole-school process so that schools, working with local partners and agencies, can develop and promote PSHE and citizenship, including drug education, emotional health, healthy eating, physical activity, safety, and sex and relationship education'*. All schools are to be encouraged to develop programmes towards this standard by March 2002 and this is an ideal opportunity to set whole-school policy and development within the context of the sustainable development story.

#### *New curriculum requirements and recommendations clearly raise yet more contradictions*

As we have seen this can offer explanations of why we live more alienated and unhealthy lives and what may be necessary to restore health to our bodies, our environment and our communities. It deals with real causes and solutions rather than temporary palliatives, offers teachers and parents more worthwhile criteria for assessing school effectiveness, and can improve the quality of teaching and learning by anchoring more of the curriculum in issues that are relevant to children's present and future lives.

#### *It deals with real causes and solutions rather than temporary palliatives*

It is time for a sequel to *The Lorax* set in a Truffula forest in the future. In this story Once-lers



will have returned but will now recognise the true value of Truffula tufts. They will have replaced private production based on 'bigginger' production by socialised production based on meeting everyone's needs in sustainable ways. They and the forest will be enjoying healthier lives... and the children who listen to the two stories will draw their own conclusions.

*Priority actions for teachers seeking to educate for sustainable development*

**Obtain resources and ideas** from the agencies and organisations listed in the guidance documents on PSHE and citizenship education, and developing a global dimension in the curriculum. Your local Development Education Centre can also provide resources and ideas ([www.dea.org.uk](http://www.dea.org.uk), [www.globaldimension.org.uk](http://www.globaldimension.org.uk)).

**Make links** with the Local Agenda 21 officer or planning department in your local borough, county or city council. Find out what your local government is doing to promote sustainable development locally and globally and how your school can become involved. Make similar links with firms and community groups.

**Encourage children's participation** using the ideas in Hart (1997) and Adams & Ingham (1998).

**Try to free some time** from school routines to read about how the world works and how it might be changed. Spend more time with the quality press, the *New Internationalist* magazine, current affairs programmes on the television, and relevant internet sites ([www.oneworld.org](http://www.oneworld.org)). Use your developing knowledge to evaluate the recommended content of the national curriculum. Does it reflect the world as it actually is? Does it enable children to envision a more sustainable world?

**Consider taking a course** of further professional development in education for sustainability (see for example [www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/](http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/) and [www.sbu.ac.uk/fhss/eede](http://www.sbu.ac.uk/fhss/eede)). Share what you learn with your colleagues.

Fig 5

*John Huckle is a tutor on South Bank University's MSc/PgDip programme in education for sustainability. He is a consultant to the World Wide Fund for Nature in the UK and China and the co-editor with Stephen Sterling of Education for Sustainability (Earthscan, 1996). John can be contacted at [john@huckle.org.uk](mailto:john@huckle.org.uk) or via <http://john.huckle.org.uk>*

## References

- Adams E, and Ingham S, (1998) *Changing Places, Children's Participation in Environmental Planning*, London: The Children's Society
- Arthur J, Davison J, and Stow W, (2000) *Social Literacy, Citizenship Education and the National Curriculum*, London: Routledge/Falmer
- Christie I, and Warburton, D, (2001) *From Here to Sustainability*, London: Earthscan
- CGC (Commission on Global Governance), (1995) *Our Global Neighbourhood*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- DFID (Department for International Development), DfEE (Department for Education and Employment), QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority), DEA (Development Education Association) and The Central Bureau (2000) *Developing a global dimension in the school curriculum*, London: DFID/DfEE/QCA/DEA/Central Bureau
- Hart R A, (1997) *Children's Participation, the theory and practice of involving young citizens in community development and environmental care*, London: Earthscan
- Hutton W, and Giddens A, (eds) *On The Edge: Living with Global Capitalism*, London: Vintage
- Schlosser E, (2001) *Fast Food Nation*, London: Penguin Books
- Sterling S, (ed) (1998) *Education for Sustainable Development in the Schools Sector*, Reading: Council for Environmental Education and Development Education Association
- QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority), (2000) *Framework for PSHE and citizenship at KS 1 & 2*, London: QCA