

Analysis of Views on the Development of Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Policy in Wales

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Abstract

This paper is concerned with the development of the strategy for Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) in Wales. It is based on semi-structured interviews with key participants in the policy development process and explores the different drivers, views, approaches and attitudes which led to ESDGC being adopted in its present form. It explores how participants from a variety of organisations with very different aims came together to develop ESDGC and how this fits with various models of constructivist learning, including communities of practice and activity theory. It concludes that there were a range of drivers involved in the process, for instance the Welsh Assembly Government's constitutional commitment to sustainability, the drive and enthusiasm of key individuals, the sharing and subsequent modification of different perspectives, the influence of research into the views of teachers, and a generally conducive *zeitgeist*.

Keywords

sustainable development, global citizenship, constructivist learning, values and attitudes, activity theory.

Introduction

The development of Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) in schools in Wales is an interesting case study in policy development. ESDGC is currently a cross-cutting theme in the revised learner-centred and skills-based National Curriculum for Wales (DCELLS, 2008a). It is a topic covered in school inspection (Estyn, 2006b), and schools are expected to develop it through all areas of school life (DCELLS, 2008b). However, this has not always been so. ESDGC in schools in Wales has gone through a rather long period of development. Its implementation has come about as a result of a combination of factors including government policy, lobbying, curriculum reform and the development of a support

network. It is particularly interesting in that it has incorporated education for both sustainable development and global citizenship in one policy.

In an earlier paper on this theme, we describe the stages of ESDGC development in detail (Bennell and Norcliffe, 2010). This second paper focuses on a study which aims to answer two key research questions:

- a) What were the drivers and processes behind the development of ESDGC policy in Wales?
- b) How does ESDGC development in Wales fit with constructivist models of change?

Through semi-structured interviews with key players in the development process, the study aims to explore their hopes and expectations as well as the processes and conflicts which took place during the evolution of ESDGC. The interviews reveal a story of determination, opportunism, a newly devolved government wishing to make its mark, individuals with the ability to inspire others, competing aims, and teamwork. Finally, it seeks to discuss the process in terms of several models of constructivist learning.

There have been many initiatives in the UK to promote global perspectives and sustainable development in schooling. Hicks (2003) and Osborn Jones (1994) provide reviews of developments in global education and environmental education and the move towards sustainable development, respectively. Bourn (2008) discusses the role of development education in the light of the merging of policy initiatives around ESD and global citizenship in England. What most of these initiatives have in common is that, rather than emphasizing knowledge, importance is placed on developing attitudes, values and skills so that a critical understanding of how the world works can be discovered rather than learned. Breitling, Mayer and Mogesen (2005) note how effective such approaches are in helping students both to confront challenges and to clarify their own values.

Educational change of all kinds has been subject to many academic studies, too numerous to list here. However, at policy level several key mechanisms have been suggested which explain how change happens. These include leadership with vision and risk-taking (Fullan, 1997; Breitling, Mayer and Mogesen, 2005), policy implementation (Heater, 2004), the role of key players and policy entrepreneurs (Mintrom and Vergari, 1998), communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Thorpe, 2004) and Activity Theory (Engeström and Young, 2001; Russell, 2002; Bjorke, 2004). Scott and Gough (2003), in proposing that there is a need to rethink the way in which society is conceived in relation to the non-human world, summarise the complicated context in which change occurs:

As we have seen, learning always takes place within a pre-existing but often dynamic context of power-relations, rules, expectations, historical narratives and perceptions of group and individual interests, which affect not only what learners learn but what they think it is important to learn and why. (2003:111)

However it is not just change but the type of change which is seen to be important in relation to ESDGC. Sterling (1996, 2001, 2004) has argued that educational change 'can be piecemeal' leaving dominant norms still in place (2004:71). He discusses Argyris and Schön's (1996) single and double loop learning and compares this to other models of learning such as 'first order' and 'second order' from Ison and Russell (2000) and 'accommodative' and 'reformatory' (Sterling, 2001). He points to a third level of learning, 'transformative', which involves a change of worldview and ethos towards a participatory ecological post-modern worldview which is appropriate to the deepest systemic nature of the world. This transformative level compares with Scott and Gough's (2003) Type Three theory. Type One theories of learning assume that 'environmental problems can be solved through appropriate social and environmental measures' (Scott and Gough 2003:111). Type Two theories of learning assume that 'social problems understood; social and environmental solutions understood' (Scott and Gough 2003:113). Type Three theories on the other hand 'see the problem as one of finding appropriate ways forward in a context of social and environmental *co-evolution*' (Scott and Gough 2003:111). This type of theory deals with the complexity of relations between environmental, social, political and economic factors and the different ways of viewing these relationships. These themes will be discussed later in relation to the development of ESDGC in Wales.

Summary of ESDGC development in Wales

In 1999, the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) came into being with a constitutional commitment to consider sustainable development in all its activities. Within the Curriculum Council for Wales there were already advocates for including global issues and sustainable development in schools, and these themes became embedded in the framework for Personal and Social Education (ACCAC, 2000) and in several curriculum subjects.

In 2000, a non-affiliated, like-minded group of people from organisations such as Oxfam, the RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds), *Cyfanfyd* (The Development Education Association for Wales) the Environmental Education Council for Wales, and the network of Welsh Development Education Centres came together to form an initiative called 'Education for the Future'. This group lobbied the Welsh Assembly Government for even greater inclusion of themes related to education for sustainable development and global citizenship in the curriculum. This led to the Welsh Assembly Government setting up an Education for Sustainable Development Panel as a sub-panel within its Sustainable Development Panel. It also set up a Global Citizenship Working Group, convened jointly with the Department for International Development. Members of these two groups came from organisations with different aims and objectives, effectively from different communities of practice. While some were primarily concerned with global injustice, others were focused on

nurturing understanding, respect and care for the environment. A third influence came from educationalists concerned with providing effective educational opportunities for pupils. What all of these individuals and groups had in common was a desire to help children understand the interconnections between places and issues in the world today. The publication of the first ESDGC document (ACCAC, 2002) was the first sign that the two types of education (Sustainable Development Education and Global Citizenship Education) would be considered together in Wales. In 2004 the two advisory groups were merged to form the ESDGC Panel and an ESDGC Champion was appointed to develop a new strategy.

The changes implemented by this ESDGC Panel have had major implications not only for schools, but for all sectors of education in Wales. In the schools sector key guidance documents were produced, including *Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship; Why, What, How* (ACCAC, 2002); *Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship: A Strategy for Action* (DELLS, 2006) and *Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship: A Common Understanding for Schools* (DCELLS, 2008b). ESDGC has impacted on, and been affected by, the revised national curriculum, and also affected the ways in which schools work from day to day.

This research study was designed to find out more about the way in which these changes came about, and particularly how a group of people from very different organisations worked together to enable the changes to take place.

Methodology

The research was conducted by the two authors and used semi-structured interviews with participants in the policy development process. The selection criteria were that those interviewed would:

- all have a School or Initial Teacher Education brief;
- have been a member of the Global Citizenship Working Group, the ESD Advisory panel, the ESDGC Panel, or have been heavily involved in the development of ESDGC, and would include:
 - the Welsh Assembly Government ESDGC Champion;
 - those who have continually been members of both early and later groups;
 - some who were only members of the early groups, namely the Global Citizenship Working Group or the ESD Advisory panel;
 - all members of the current ESDGC panel with a school or Initial Teacher Education and Training brief;
 - representatives who work for Welsh Assembly Government, non-governmental organisations, Local Education Authorities and Estyn, the HM Inspectorate in Wales;

- at least one non-panel member who was commissioned to develop the ESDGC strategy;
- several of those who contributed to the ESDGC strategy and to the consultation process around developing the ‘Common Understanding’ (DCELLS, 2008b) guidance document.

The interviewees numbered fifteen in total. All were adults, a mixture of males (seven) and females (eight) in the age range 35-60. Fourteen interviews were carried out through the medium of English and one through the medium of Welsh. All but one was carried out face to face in the interviewee’s place of work; the final one was completed by phone as the person involved had moved away from Wales. Each interview lasted approximately an hour, was recorded on an electronic recording device, and then later transcribed by the researchers.

Analysis

Twelve interview question headings were used as major categories or nodes and the relevant data from each interview was collected under these headings, regardless of where it occurred in the interview. The two authors then each separately highlighted sub-categories in the text, a total of fifty-two being initially identified. The authors then met to discuss and agree on these categories and reduced them to twelve major and twelve minor categories (see Appendix i). All of the data was then manually coded into these categories and an analysis made of the findings.

Findings

Reasons for involvement

It was clear that all those involved in the development of ESDGC were committed to the process, but their pathways into this involvement were very different. For some, their involvement arose because they took on a specific job, working for NGOs such as RSPB or Oxfam, or took on a new post in the Welsh Assembly Government and its related agencies. A number were already working in education, many with a geography or science background. Most had had an interest in ESDGC issues for many years and for some this has been a lifelong commitment. As one NGO respondent noted:

‘[I] can’t really remember not being. My concern started with particularly a concern about global poverty. I was reading about this before going on VSO which was in secondary school.

How do the initial group come together in the first place?

The desire for a focus on the connections between the issues and topics of sustainable development and global citizenship led early developments. Some of the members of the Environmental Education Council for Wales felt that the new international focus on sustainable development was not being sufficiently developed in

Wales, with environmental education still much to the fore. Similarly, some interviewees working within development education were exploring ways to draw attention to the global dimension in sustainable development. Several exploratory conversations about the commonalities led to the formation of the like-minded, non-affiliated group 'Education for the Future'. Another respondent from one of the NGOs commented:

'It really was a short period, just pulling people together and it was done on goodwill, with no money and can we all just sign at the bottom?'

'One of the things that cemented it was finding projects that Oxfam and RSPB could join in on that exemplified what it was and that's how we came to produce Making a Difference [Brinn et al, 2001] and that was how we showed other people what it was about. It was sort of a physical expression of our discussions.'

Hopes and expectations

The interviewees were also asked about their initial hopes and expectations. Interestingly, the fact that the respondents came via different pathways does not seem to have produced different expectations of the process or reactions to it. A number of them were concerned about the direction of education in Wales in general. This comment from an Education advisor is typical:

'Back in 1989, 1990 the National Curriculum was drowning out all the good things about education. It was drowning out a holistic approach to education. When I understood that ESDGC was being brought forward in Wales I saw that as an opportunity to reclaim some of that ground, and the kind of things that I think are important in education.'

Specifically, many of those interviewed appeared to be seeking a broader and more holistic approach to education that prepares students for the future, education that makes a difference (e.g. Oxfam 1997). This was the central issue for many of those connected with this process. In the new Welsh Assembly Government they found people willing to listen. The focus of education in Wales was changing from its close association with the curriculum in England, with ongoing discussion of school league tables and formalised testing at 7, 11 and 14 (these were later abolished) and moving towards one of co-operation, collaboration, skills and citizenship (ACCAC, 2000). It was the view of several of the respondents that these differences from the English system can be overemphasised, but that they do exist and are a result of the Ministers and civil servants in the Welsh Assembly Government actually listening to teachers and educational lobbyists. This brought a feeling of optimism, and hopes were high, as one LEA advisor commented: *'My hope is that the world would be transformed.'*

Influences and drivers

On the question of why ESDGC policy was perceived as developing successfully in Wales, the respondents identified a range of reasons and were clear about the major influences and drivers. One of the key drivers identified was that a commitment to sustainability was embedded in the constitution of the Welsh Assembly Government from the outset¹. Wales was the first country to do this and the effects were significant because every policy that comes before the Welsh Assembly Government has to demonstrate to a greater or lesser extent that it is sustainable. As one respondent from within the Welsh Assembly Government stated:

'There was a tacit acceptance across the Assembly and in education particularly that sustainability had to be factored into people's personal and corporate agendas, and whilst initially you weren't exactly pushing at open doors, you were certainly pushing at doors that did eventually open.'

Attention was also drawn to the role of specific individuals in encouraging this process, for example the then-Education Minister, Jane Davidson:

'... when she came in as minister, with her personal background and experience, with her passions it created space for NGOs like Oxfam or RSPB and a few others who were cognisant of that to be able to present a place where Wales could be distinctly different.'

Not only did the Welsh Assembly Government have sustainability as a feature of its constitution, but the very fact of its existence gave scope for NGOs and others to have an influence. Richardson (2002) remarks on the growing frequency with which interest groups exploit the opportunities presented by a policy process that is increasingly characterized by multiple opportunity structures. The foundation of the Welsh Assembly Government generated precisely such an opportunity, and it was quickly seized by NGOs such as Amnesty International, Oxfam and the RSPB. One NGO respondent put it succinctly: *'I think that Wales is too small to be able to hide a number of educational issues as might happen in England.'*

In addition to Jane Davidson, a number of other key individuals from NGOs, ACCAC (the Curriculum and Assessment Authority), Estyn, and other organisations who made a significant contribution early in the process. Two respondents, one from an NGO and another from ACCAC, referred to this influence using the metaphor of a virus. As one of them stated:

'I've been doing some work recently looking at change management and one of the analogies that comes up is that of a virus. You get a few people together who've become infected and who then infect everybody else, and when I read about that I thought 'I can see how that's happened here.'

The role of the ESDGC Champion, seconded from RSPB, was also recognised as being of particular importance, especially given her personal attributes including

skills, enthusiasm and tenacity: *'She had the skills to bring people together in a non-threatening way.'*

Other drivers identified included, for example, the commitment of the NGOs generally and the availability of funding from the Department for International Development via the Enabling Effective Support Initiative. This was a UK Government initiative to support teachers in schools in terms of ideas and resources, and in Wales it has been used to support ESDGC (Pitts, 2009).

Reflections on the composition of the panels

Many respondents admitted that the initial appointments to the early panels and to the new ESDGC Panel were somewhat arbitrary, but acknowledged that they later became more strategic. Panel members and some non-panel members were fairly positive about this process and about the mix of people involved from both the voluntary and statutory sectors. Others were aware of adjustments that had taken place. As one respondent from the WAG stated:

'Yes, I suppose the initial ESD group, in hindsight the membership could have been more representative and somewhat broader to reflect the various sectional interests that exist, but that's part of the iterative process. We reconstituted it then when we embraced global citizenship both to embrace global citizenship interest but also to give us the opportunity to refocus the ESD side.'

A number of non-panel members expressed reservations about the composition of the panels, however: *'Well I don't know who chose them or who made those decisions, because it's not a representative group'*. There was also concern about both specific issues and specific groups being neglected on the ESDGC Panel. There was reference, for instance, to the lack of Black and Minority Ethnic representation, as well as to the lack of both advisory teachers or practising teachers who it was felt could have made a significant contribution to the process². At the same time, there was awareness that attempts had been made to get a good mix of people.

Tensions surrounding trying to bring ESD and EGC together

One of the problems, and possible benefits, concerning the composition of the panel was the range of different groups who sought to influence the process. Although all of those interviewed welcomed the bringing together of EGC and ESD on the grounds that it made it difficult for people generally and teachers in particular to ignore one or other of the dimensions, they did recognise that tensions did, and do still, exist. Some saw these tensions as a result of misunderstandings, while others put it down to people not sufficiently understanding the issues:

'We think it's extremely sad that people see tensions in dealing with them because we see that we can't talk about development issues without talking about climate change and the degradation of the natural environment and vice versa.'

Partisanship was also perceived to have played a part. One respondent (from an environmental organisation) stated:

'I was quite shocked to discover that some environmental organisations just didn't want to have anything to do with it and just wanted to carry on in the way they were. They really did see things in a very narrow way.'

There was an initial assumption by many of those involved, that simply bringing together development education and environmental education would produce an integrated policy, but this was not always the case. What appears to be anomalous is that, for many people the question of attitudes and how to change them is central to ESDGC and related educations (Huckle, 2006). It is interesting, therefore, that some of those involved in the process of putting this together were seen to be unable to do this.

Whilst most of the people involved came together in the early phases willing to share their ideas in the spirit of communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Thorpe, 2002), others were perceived to not fully engage. Some also perceived these problems as a product of turf wars with associated competition over funding. One respondent from an NGO stated:

'I think in the early days that [some organisations] thought this is an opportunity for us to become THE scheme that delivers ESDGC and so there was ... quite a lot of tension early on as people competed for pole position almost.'

Comments on developing ESDGC Common Understanding: Guidance for Teachers in Wales (DCELLS, 2008b)

This document contains guidance, expected outcomes, examples of practice and auditing materials. It approaches ESDGC through four areas: Commitment and Leadership, Learning and Teaching, School Management, Partnerships and Community, and Research and Monitoring. Learning and Teaching is in turn approached through seven themes: Wealth and Poverty, Identity and Culture, Choices and Decisions, Health, the Natural Environment, Consumption and Waste, and Climate Change.

Respondents were asked to give their opinions on why this document had been presented in its current form. Most of the respondents felt that there had been a real need to develop guidance that made clear precisely what ESDGC deals with. This had been supported by the findings of a baseline survey of ESDGC, carried out on behalf of Estyn, which showed a significant disparity of delivery throughout Wales and also that:

'Teachers and LEA advisers do not have a clear and consistent understanding of the definition and purpose of ESDGC as a broad area of learning that encompasses both issues of sustainability and citizenship at a global scale.' (Estyn, 2006a:7)

In the original ESDGC document (ACCAC, 2002), ESDGC was based around nine key concepts: Interdependence, Citizenship and Stewardship, Needs and Rights, Diversity, Sustainable Change, Quality of Life, Uncertainty and Precaution, Values and Perceptions, and Conflict. Some involved with ESDGC argued that teachers were struggling with both the operation and communication of such complex concepts, and that ESDGC would be more successful if teachers were encouraged to use other themes, such as wealth and poverty and climate change. There were major arguments about this. Some argued that the concepts were well understood and that schools and LEAs were already successfully using them. In addition, similar concepts had been used for some time in World Studies (Steiner and Hicks, 1993), Global Education (Pike and Selby, 1988, 1998) and Development Education (DfEE, 2000, DfES, 2005) as important tools for planning curriculum work. Others argued that the reason teachers 'lacked a clear view of what ESDGC is about' was that the concepts were too far removed from classroom practice. Many agreed with the respondent who said: *'I feel the key concepts put people off... very worthy and all that but it wasn't a good communication tool for teachers.'* Indeed the survey carried out on behalf of Estyn found that:

'Those teachers who are familiar with the concepts do not feel that they are helpful in getting to grips with ESDGC. They find it difficult to establish either the connection between the definition of ESDGC and the concepts or how to use the concepts to organise ESDGC work and activities.'
(Estyn, 2006a:7)

In the end it seemed it was views on the value of the themes and Estyn's evidence against concepts which influenced the ESDGC panel's decision to change from concepts to themes

As far as the process of developing the Common Understanding was concerned, whilst the respondents were aware that no process is ever going to be perfect, some were very positive. A WAG civil servant commented: *'I think the way that the Common Understanding was developed is a cracking case study of how things should be done.'*

Some from the NGOs were positive about specific aspects:

'As far as the Common Understanding is concerned we really liked the first draft of it – it was different to all the other documents we had seen.'

On the more general process of developing ESDGC policy, most were aware of problems, and, whilst not referring specifically to the idea of communities of practice, one respondent from within the WAG was clearly articulating the basic concept:

'Having developed strategic documents over many years, and increasingly with the advent of the assembly in the last 10 or 11 years. Sometimes, it can be quite a challenging process. I think the particular challenges as far as ESDGC has been concerned is the plethora of interests involved and sometimes the conflicting or ostensibly conflicting agendas of the groups involved, so it was possibly initially

difficult getting consensus ... But I think that by simply through the demonstration that all these groups can go together as a jigsaw and that may be an advantage to them, I think has helped ... This process has helped rationalise provision and has helped create a structure across Wales that is more fit for purpose.'

There were, however, also criticisms of the process. A number of the respondents felt that insufficient resources were allocated to it, and that other priorities of the Welsh Assembly Government, even within education, were allocated significantly greater resources. So, for example, teachers were less involved in the process because the money was not there to free up their time. In addition, some felt frustration at the length of time the process took, and a number of the non-panel members felt what they perceived as an apparent lack of interest in, or acknowledgement of, responses.

Despite there seeming to be a fairly wide consultation process through the ten regional ESDGC Fora, which include teachers, LEA advisers and NGOs, though the issue was still raised of the lack of sufficient involvement of teachers and education advisory teams. Some saw it as a top-down process in which the views of those outside the panels were not well acknowledged: *'I think the whole process could be a little more open and a little less heavy handed.'* Some were even more blunt: *'The consultation and involvement hasn't worked'*. In contrast, those on the panel thought that it had worked well.

Comments on achievements

Having noted these criticisms of the process, however, all the respondents were pleased with the achievements. *'Well, I think it's been a tremendous achievement.'* *'think it's fantastic, I love it. I love the fact that it exists.'* *'We can't really ask for much more than having it there in the curriculum... yeah I think we have come a long way.'*

There was also genuine pleasure at the fact that it was in schools, that the teachers had clear guidance, that the Schools Inspectorate, Estyn, was fully involved, and that, in the words of one correspondent: *'it gives people ammunition.'* There was an acceptance that the Common Understanding was not perfect and that there is still a long way to go, but many felt that the Welsh Assembly Government had put down a marker, a 'line in the sand'. As a member of the WAG put it:

'The mindset change is one the most important things to happen ... I think encouragingly you are now seeing a generation emerging for who this (climate change) is now a key issue and it's not simply an add on for them ... for this emerging generation it will just be natural, like breathing.'

Respondents were particularly pleased that there was a focus on whole school operation and not just on the curriculum. This was seen as vital. Many of the respondents pointed out that teachers talking about sustainability and citizenship would be of little value if neither were practised by the teacher or by the school itself.

That was why a focus on democracy and sustainability in the school was so important. Many of the respondents saw this as a possible turning point in the way people thought and acted. An independent educational advisor stated that

'Well, in places where it is really taken on board you can already see that it is having a huge impact on school life, and you know the whole ethos and way of working can be dramatically changed by the adoption of this strategy.'

This is a key issue. The respondents were all of the view that changing the *zeitgeist* is absolutely necessary. That this can happen has been demonstrated in the last fifty years with significant changes in attitudes to racism, women and latterly homosexuality, and resultant changes in behaviour as predicted by the theory of reflective modernism (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991, 1994; Lash, 1994; and Lash and Urry, 1994). Huckle, commenting on this, argues that 'the more societies are modernized the more people acquire the ability to reflect on social conditions and change them as a result' (1996:113). Many felt that they were running with the tide, particularly with the new emphasis on skills in the Welsh curriculum (DCELLS, 2008a).

Respondents were, however, clear that not all of the change that has happened is down to the ESDGC policy. Some were aware of wider influences on the global stage such as concerns about climate change and terrorism. As has been noted by Scott and Gough:

'Learning happens quite independently of the actions of teachers and policy makers, because of a whole range of external factors, including economic policy, social policy, the context of civil society and so on.' (2003:41)

Another positive aspect in Wales, which was not to do with the Panel, is that Wales has abolished SATS testing and so freed up time for other approaches. This last point was seen as very significant because, as an LEA advisor put it:

'One of the current positive forces is teachers, because some teachers are absolutely brilliant and they really care about these things.'

Thoughts on the future of ESDGC in Wales

The respondents were also positive about the future direction of ESDGC. The commitment of the Welsh Assembly Government to sustainability was seen as central. As a Welsh civil servant stated:

'The statutory requirement on sustainability will be key. We have had all sorts of people from all over the world visiting Wales. This is something they always comment on – the foresight of the people who created the Welsh Assembly.'

There are also other forces at work. Cyfanfyd and the NGOs generally are still pressing the agenda, for example, and many of the advisory teachers in schools and Initial Teacher Training institutions have taken it on board. There was concern about the availability of future funding from both the Welsh Assembly Government and the Department for International Development's Enabling Effective Support

fund, but there were also interesting views on the challenges posed by this. An LEA advisor commenting on this, said:

'I think there's a fine balancing act because there are a lot of problems associated with the economic downturn and unemployment, all those sorts of issues, but it clearly presents an opportunity to say we can't go back to what we were doing before because that's what's driven us to the un-sustainability we find ourselves in.'

They also noted that ESDGC is a focus for the inspection process (Estyn 2006b) and, therefore, always on the agenda of head teachers.

'I think that Wales is just about still in the vanguard, because we are a small nation; it is easier for us to do such things here. And people were still intent on driving it forward.'

Others pointed to the drivers that could be utilized. These include the fact that the Welsh Assembly Government has made ESDGC one of its top ten overall priorities. They also pointed to opportunities in the Welsh Baccalaureate and the World Development 'A' level and the opportunity that now exists with the inception of the skills framework, especially the focus on thinking skills. As an NGO respondent put it

'It could be massive. ESDGC wants to climb into bed with that skills framework and say 'eh up, if you want to talk about thinking and building active learning into your school and move away from didactic level, particularly at secondary school then ESDGC is a means to do that!'

Discussion

It appears that the processes of ESDGC development have generally followed the system change continuum suggested by Anderson (1993), but with some feedback loops. First, there was vision, and public and political support. Secondly, an initial common language was published in the early ESDGC document in Wales (ACCAC, 2002). Thirdly, a national plan for all levels of education was developed in the ESDGC Strategy (DCELLS, 2006). Finally, in a feedback loop, the common language was re-examined and redefined and published in the ESDGC Common Understanding (DCELLS, 2008b). In an ongoing reflection on progress, the national strategy was also revisited in 2008 and republished (DCELLS 2008e). This process also illustrates the theory of reflexive modernism noted above.

This paper has pointed to several reasons for the mode of development of ESDGC in schools in Wales: the setting up of the Welsh Assembly Government itself which allowed access for a range of NGOs and other organisations into policy preparation; the Welsh Assembly Government's constitutional commitment to sustainability; the involvement of key individuals who drove the process forward; the debate between groups with different viewpoints; and the *zeitgeist* which was conducive to this

approach. The general consensus among those interviewed for the research is of satisfaction with the current state of ESDGC, although the process of change has not been without tensions.

The role of key players was regarded by all respondents as particularly important. Mintrom and Vergari (1998) refer to 'policy entrepreneurs' who guide the process of policy change, from new policy ideas to legislation. In the first stages policy entrepreneurs engage in policy networks where they meet others with similar interests, consolidate their ideas and build a set of arguments for what they are trying to promote. They establish standing and trust, listen carefully to what is happening in the policy area and think strategically about how to insert their ideas into this area. In doing so, they become integrated into government, or other key policy networks, where 'their' policy proposals are listened to and developed. In the second stage the focus moves from novelty to serious questioning of reliance and viability, including critiquing by other interest groups from outside the main consultation team. The forming of the ESD, EGC and ESDGC Panels and subsequent policy developments fit well with these findings, i.e. members of initially separate interest groups engaging in discussion and finding common aims, the inclusion of sustainable development in the Welsh Assembly Government policy as a key 'hook', the development of 'standing' that enabled their voices to be heard, their inclusion in the setting up of the panel, the appointment of one of the original lobbyists as ESDGC Champion, and the subsequent consultation, and conflict, with other interest groups.

The role of the combination of viewpoints and characters, where individuals from an initially disparate range of organisations, or communities of practice, came together to develop the policy was perceived as another very important factor. The interaction of these individuals reflects a general constructivist effort where views are shared, challenged, reflected upon and sometimes modified. These interactions can be viewed through the lens of communities of practice or 'groups that interact to achieve a shared purpose or enterprise' (Thorpe, 2004:132), as well as Activity Theory. Activity Theory is more concerned with highlighting the mechanisms which lead to change and is more goal-directed. Bjørke describes the difference between the two:

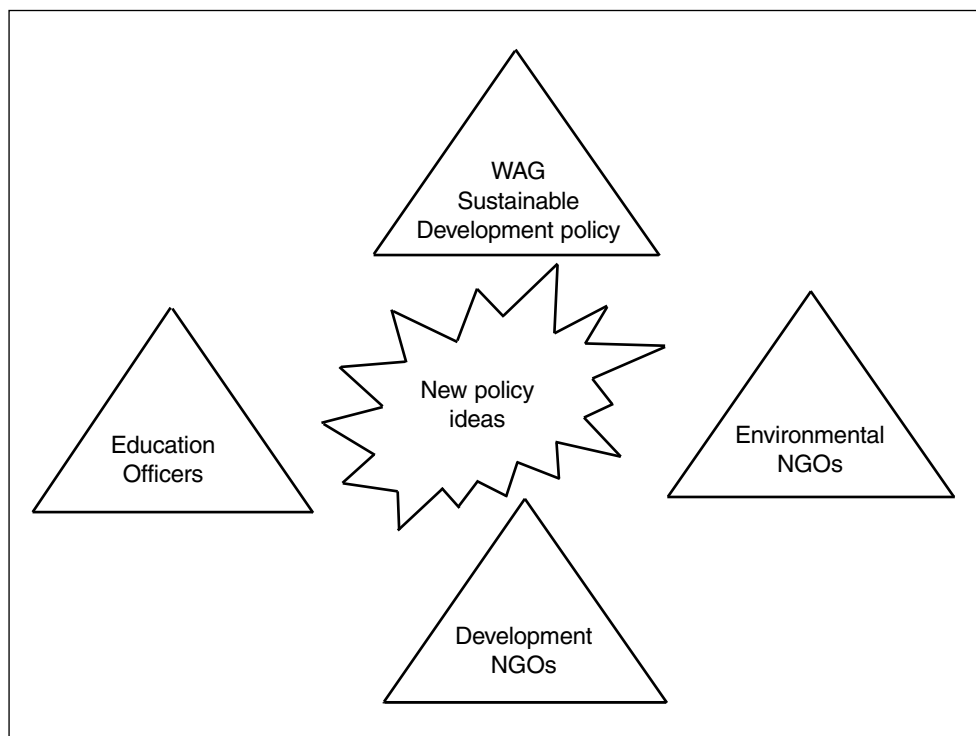
'Communities of Practice' focus on relations between the participants while 'Activity Theory' emphasises goal-directed activities mediated by cultural tools and analysing contradictions and problems.' (2004:1)

Engeström (1992) used Vygotsky's basic mediational triangle to explain systems which are aiming for a specific product but in which all elements are constantly changing. In an activity system a 'community' works with 'tools', 'rules' and 'division of labour' with the 'subject' and aims for an 'objective' (see Figure 1). The tools carry with them the historical remains of their development and influence the nature of interaction between members of the community.

Within the ESDGC developments in Wales, the first interaction of the members of the different groups, with their very different backgrounds could be seen as communities of practice coming together, discussing aims, and comparing and challenging, values, to form a new community of practice, the group 'Education for the Future'. They did not know exactly where their activities would lead, but sensed a common direction.

The Welsh Assembly Government, the ESD panel, the Global Citizenship Working Group, and the early stages of the combined ESDGC Panel appear to have had characteristics of separate activity systems, each with particular, but different, goals at which to aim. Their meeting, with the conflict of values that had to be dealt with, and their subsequent metamorphosis into a fully functioning, more strategic ESDGC Panel could be described in terms of several activity systems meeting. Russell (2002) describes this as third level activity theory where groups: 'engage in discussion and debate and reflection then learning beyond what was possible within a single activity system becomes possible' (Figure 2), similar to Engestrom's 'expansive learning'. Commonalities and areas of conflict were discussed and there was, for some, a modifying of views, a re-negotiation of meaning. What was happening in the process appears to be an example of what Argyris and Schön, refer to as

Figure 1: Groups in the early stages of ESDGC development as depicted by Level 3 Activity Theory after Russell (2002).

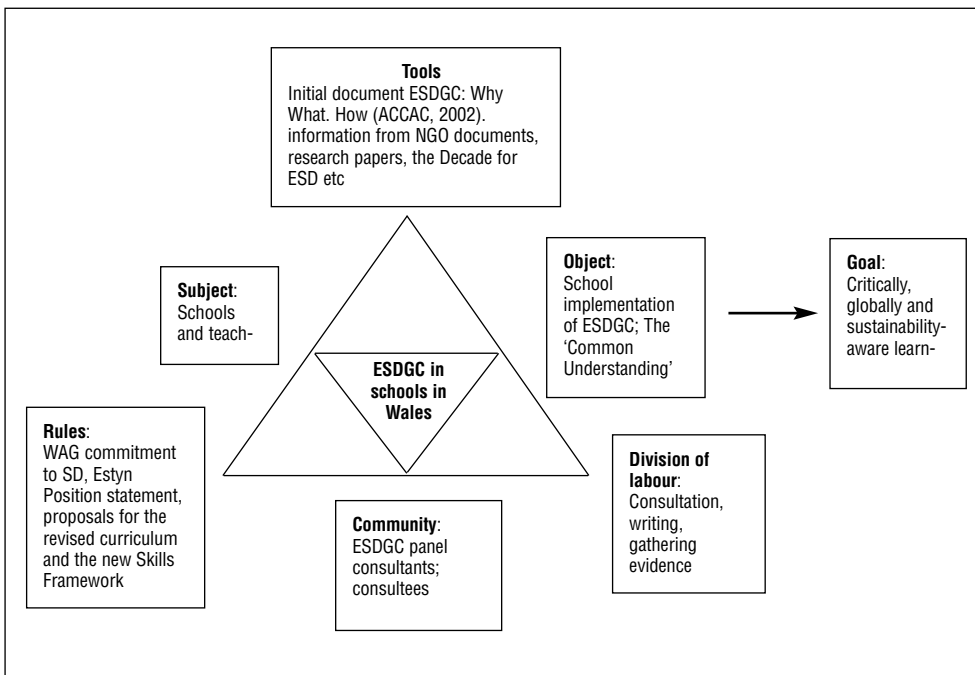


double loop learning with ‘learning that results in a change in the values of theory-in-use, as well as in its strategies and assumptions’ (1996:18-25, reprinted in Scott and Gough, 2004:65).

There were certainly changes in working practice within the groups represented on the Panel. Eco-Schools for example, introduced a theme of ‘global citizenship’ to its previously more sustainability-oriented schools’ programme³. Others, such as Oxfam, by working with the RSPB, began to place more emphasis on the environmental aspects of development issues (Brinn *et al*, 2001).

The later stages of the ESDGC Panel, when most members were in agreement about the general direction of development, could perhaps be better described as one (second level) activity system in (Engeström, 1987). In this case the rules would be the Welsh Assembly Government commitment to sustainable development, the suggestions in the Estyn ESDGC Position statement (Estyn, 2006), the proposals for the revised curriculum and the new Skills framework (DCELLS, 2008d). The tools would include the initial ESDGC document (ACCAC, 2002), information from NGO documents, books and research papers on the topics and the Decade for ESD etc) (Figure 2). There were still disagreements, especially during the consultation process but these were argued out to arrive at the ESDGC Common Understanding document (DCELLS, 2008b).

Figure 2: The later stages of the WAG ESDGC panel represented by Activity Theory



Even this, however, is not seen as the ultimate goal. That will occur when all schools have ESDGC fully-integrated and learners are completely engaged. It is likely that it will be some time before the goal of producing critically, globally and sustainability-aware learners is reached. If this stage is reached then we will have arrived at a further level of learning beyond Type Two theories (Scott and Gough, 2003) and double loop learning (Argyris and Schön, 1998) to Scott and Gough's Type Three theory or what Sterling describes as 'transformative learning', 'third level learning' or 'education as sustainability' which involves 'a change in worldview ethos towards a participatory ecological post-modern worldview which is appropriate to the deeply systemic nature of the world' (2001:70).

Conclusions

In conclusion, the development of Welsh Assembly Government ESDGC policy has occurred in several stages and involved many players. There is a general consensus that the current ESDGC Common Understanding (DCELLS, 2008b) is a very positive move in the right direction. This is certainly reflected in the views of the Panel members with their appraisal of the outcomes as 'remarkable', 'tremendous' and 'fantastic'. It is likely that differences in the opinions of panel members and those in other organisations will continue to feed and enrich discussion on the continuing development of ESDGC in the coming years. This should be welcomed as a healthy situation and a sign of wide engagement in the process. The views discovered in this study show that ESDGC has the potential to be a significant development, not only within education, but in the wider society in Wales. Although there are concerns, particularly about the financial situation, there is a general belief that this policy will continue and develop. It will be interesting to see if and how this happens.

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Notes

- 1 See The Government of Wales Act 1998 http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1998/ukpga_19980038_en_9#pt5-pb6-11g121.
- 2 The reason for the latter is a funding issue; schools have to be compensated if teachers are taken out to attend meetings.
- 3 See <http://www.eco-schools.org.uk/nine-topics/global-perspectives.aspx>.

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Appendix 1: Question headings for the interviews

<p>HOPES AND EXPECTATIONS</p> <p>Strategy/Policy</p> <p>Wider purpose of education</p> <p>Prepare for future</p> <p>Actions – Make a difference</p> <p>Promote issues</p> <p>REFLECTIONS ON PANEL MAKE-UP</p> <p>Role</p> <p>Representation</p> <p>Effectiveness</p> <p>WHY HAS IT DEVELOPED IN THIS WAY?</p> <p>Key players</p> <p>Strategy/policy</p> <p>MAJOR INFLUENCES AND DRIVERS</p> <p>TENSIONS</p>	<p>THE PROCESS?</p> <p>ACHIEVED?</p> <p>BEST THINGS</p> <p>IMPACT ON EDUCATION AS A WHOLE</p> <p>POSSIBLE POSITIVE FORCES FOR THE FUTURE OF ESDGC</p> <p>POSSIBLE NEGATIVE FORCES OR OBSTACLES</p> <p>HOW DO YOU SEE IT PROGRESSING</p> <p>Wales</p> <p>UK</p>
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