Inspiring Future Generations to Care About Future Generations:

*Educating for sustainability and sustainable futures in English universities*

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“We invite researchers, scholars, students and administrators from the global higher education community, to contribute their perspectives and insights on the ways in which higher education internationally is responding to economic, social, political and cultural stimuli, and re-defining and re-asserting its nature and purpose... ...to inspire future generations of both learners and academics...”

Ethical?

Environmental?

Sustainability and Sustainable Development?
"Our vision is for universities to be widely recognised as leaders in society's efforts to achieve sustainability - through the skills and attitudes that students gain and put into practice, through research and knowledge exchange, and through their own business management."

(HEFCE, 2014)
Conceptualizing Sustainability in HE

- Formal Curriculum & ESD
- Sustainability in Higher Education
- Institutional Culture, Strategy & Policy
- Community Engagement & Outreach
- Campus, Env Management & Greening
- Research
- Informal Curriculum & The Student Experience
What is Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and why is it important?

**Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)** is the process of equipping students with the knowledge and understanding, skills and attributes needed to work and live in a way that safeguards environmental, social and economic wellbeing, both in the present and for future generations.

Working with students to encourage them to...

- consider what the concept of global citizenship and environmental stewardship means in the context of their own discipline and in their future professional and personal lives;
- think about issues of social justice, ethics and wellbeing, and how these relate to ecological and economic factors;
- develop a future-facing outlook; learning to think about the consequences of actions, and how systems and societies can be adapted to ensure sustainable futures.

(QAA 2014)
What is Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and why is it important cont.?

- Much more than just the environmental issues..
- Not about 'telling people what to think’
- Providing the space for critical thinking around current paradigms, practices and assumptions
- ‘Sustainability lens’
- ‘Personal sustainability ethic'
The Marketisation of English Higher Education

- Neoliberalism and New Public Management
- Universities more business-like and managerialist
- Proliferation of accountability, quality assurance and audit processes
- Competition between HEIs for research funds
- More competitive and individualistic environments between academic staff
- More emphasis on skills development, ‘graduate attributes’ and student employability

CRITIQUE
- Antithetical to the purpose and responsibilities of HE
- Criticised for upholding private interests
- Trade offs with social, environmental, ethical, democratic and anti-corporate values
Aim of Doctoral Research

To explore the ideological and the practical relationship between Neoliberalism, Marketization and Managerialism, and Sustainability and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) agendas within the English Higher Education sector over the past decade (2005 – 2015).
Research Design and Methodology

Case Studies/Cross-Sectional

Case Study Types
- English Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)
- Higher Education Organisations/Bodies

Chosen Case Studies
- 8 HEIs - Russell Group; Research Led; Post 92; New
- HEFCE, HEA, QAA, NUS + Key Informants

Data Collection Methods
- 56 Semi-Structured Interviews
- Documentary Analysis

Strategic and Corporate Plans, Sustainability and ESD Policies
1. The role and influence of HEFCE, REF, HEA, QAA, NUS on sustainability and ESD agendas

2. Education for the public good within the neoliberal university – paradox or possibility? Critical education and pedagogy.

3. Transformative, paradigm changing, whole systems responses to sustainability – is this necessary? Achievable?

4. The political framing of higher education in the UK, the knowledge economy, the ‘higher skills system’

5. Higher education funding mechanisms, tuition fees, student consumers and employability

6. The impact of quality-related research funding on sustainability and ESD research.
Thank You
Questions?

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