

Chapter 7

Developing an Undergraduate Module on Climate Change, Social Justice, and Sustainability: Learning from the Designing Process

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ABSTRACT

This chapter is based on researchers' experience of developing an undergraduate module (Level 4) in collaboration with students and colleagues supported by a curriculum investigation grant from the British Educational Research Association (BERA). It presents a research-led module development initiative that was designed to engage and empower students by making them the co-creators of the curriculum which promotes practical examples of education towards sustainable development. This project utilised participatory research to promote teacher's agency and student's voices, empowering them as partners in co-creating the curriculum. The project aimed to foster teaching and learning that enables institutions and individuals to make informed choices that impact on individuals and communities to develop practice that promotes sustainability. This chapter reflects on the process of developing the module and learning from the process, outlining future directions for embedding climate change mitigation and adaptation issues across different disciplines.

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INTRODUCTION

Climate change has become one of the highest-priority global challenges threatening mankind, with a level of threat that could be argued as existential (IPCC, 2022; MIT, 2021). The issues of social justice and sustainability have never been more profound than at the current time, and each of these concerns, when woven together, will have a significant impact on the future of the planet (Greenpeace, 2023). The changing climate has become one of the leading issues for young people across the world as they fight to raise awareness of the growing impact it has on everyday lives, both now and increasingly in the future (UNFCCC, 2013). It is crucial to empower the next generation of learners, the leaders of tomorrow, with a comprehensive understanding of the implications of the current trajectory of changes in climate on the planet, along with the potential solutions and mitigations for addressing these growing challenges. In this context, educational institutions can play a pivotal role in nurturing informed, compassionate, and proactive individuals who can drive positive change (FCDO, 2022). This project was an opportunity to stimulate and maintain the momentum developed in this area across The Bedford College Group (TBCG). By embracing sustainability and incorporating it into the curriculum, educational institutions can play a crucial role in creating a more sustainable and responsible future (Holst, 2022).

CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT

The Bedford College Group and University Centre is a prestigious educational institution and a prominent leader in the UK's further education (FE) landscape. Renowned for its excellence and its wide educational scope, it stands as one of the largest further education colleges in the country, serving as a catalyst for learning and personal development. It is also recognised regionally and nationally for its work on sustainable futures (TBCG, 2021).

Encompassing a diverse array of specialised colleges, including those dedicated to Agriculture, Animal Sciences, and Motor Sport, The Bedford College Group offers a comprehensive and dynamic educational experience. The Group's Higher Education (HE) offer is supported by University Centre status, with the institution being the largest college-based provider of HE in the South Midlands. The College aims to empower students to pursue their academic aspirations and reach new heights in their chosen fields whilst working in an organisation that has sustainability as a central pillar of its approach. The Group is driven by a passion for developing knowledge, innovation, and skills and its range of specialist campuses employ educators who are dedicated to nurturing students' talents and preparing them for

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