A pedagogy of hope, change and future action: working towards sustainability learning outcomes

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Why presenting at SoTL?

Exchanging thoughts and ideas

Getting feedback in order to develop this further:
• Within education/courses
• To participate in ”The 6th Development Conference for Swedish Engineering Education” (Chalmers, November)
Political Economy for Environmental Planners (AG2142)

Elective course in first year (second cycle, 7.5 hp).

The course focuses on familiarising the students with the fields of politics and economy.

The main purpose is to prepare them for work that involves promoting a more sustainable society.

Autumn 2016: 17 students

Mainly master program and exchange students

Multicultural: Sweden, Bangladesh, Greece, Canada/Sudan, France/Germany, Palestine, USA, Sierra Leone, Mexico, (+Danish/Estonian/Tunisian)
Issues in focus

**Universities** have an **important role** to play in the transition towards a more sustainable future.

Presenting experience from attempts to incorporate different elements of **pedagogics and teaching activities** aiming at promoting:

- more profound changes in mindsets
- a sense of hope
- action-taking
Planned and evolving learning activities

Some things was intentionally planned:
• Discussions in seminars and in lectures
  - fostering an open and safe class room climate
  - different perspectives
  - practical examples from around the world
• Final lecture: “The Way Forward”
  - Watch a movie and discuss in a constructive and positive way how we can move forward

Other things came into being during the process/course:
• Seminar on the concept of “development”
  - What can be done and who should/could act?
  - Small steps of action taking
• Changed final movie
  - focusing on examples of individuals and small groups of people taking action
  - small step reflective task + discussion
"Climate is changing. Instead of showing all the worst that can happen, this documentary focuses on the people suggesting solutions and their actions."
Methods

- Action research
- Course evaluation – integrated new questions
- Meeting with course representatives
- Focus group
Preliminary results indicate...

... that the course design promoted and enhanced the students’ **awareness** and **thinking** of sustainability

... that the students’ **personal commitment** and **action taking** in relation to sustainability was positively affected
Question: Which were the most important factors that contributed to your learning (incl. changing attitudes/beliefs)?

“The **nice atmosphere** in the class and the **discussions** we had together.”

“**Learning from my peers** in the **seminars**, and **listening to their perspectives** about the things we were studying.”

“The **contribution from students** from **all over the world** and where **some problems** I usually **just see on paper** are **REAL**.”

“**Multidisciplinary** groups help us develop negotiation skills”

“The **movies** we have watched. The first was **an eye-opener** regarding the evils of corporations and Demain was different as it showed what will happen **if everyone actually takes steps** towards a more sustainable world.”
Question: Have the course activities helped you achieve the intended learning outcomes?

“The seminars and the handouts are a very relevant way to learn in my opinion.

I liked every time we had the chance to be active, to debate, to think and put words on our thoughts.”
Question: Any other suggestion and comments?

“The course was overall quite an interesting one, especially for me, coming from a purely technical background.

It was eye opening in many different ways as well.

It was also a course where different points of views were presented with no conflict and everyone's thoughts were accepted, respected and taken seriously.”
13. Have your awareness of and/or thinking around sustainability changed as a result of the learning activities in the course?

Scale: from 1 - Not at all to 6 - Yes, very

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Medelvärde (för siffer-svar): 4.58

12 av 18 har svarat (66%)
Question: Have your awareness of and/or thinking around sustainability changed as a result of the learning activities in the course?

“It became even stronger but I was already in my mind!”

“I have always been interested in issues like environmental justice, developing countries, but this class definitely increased my awareness”

“I have been working on sustainability for 2-3 years now so”
14. Have your personal commitment and action taking in relation to sustainability (shaping a more sustainable future) changed as a result of the learning activities in the course?

Scale: from 1 - Not at all to 6 - Yes, very

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Medelvärde (för siffer-svar): 4.64

11 av 18 har svarat (61%)
“I would say that Åsa and you succeeding in bringing hope in the PEEP course but also awareness and empowerment:

We are now aware that action must be taken and that we can be part of this movement.”

(mail from Student of PEEP2016, Feb 2017, in response to the focus group invitation)
A student initiative to continue promoting small step action-taking
Questions?