Towards *Eco-friendly Communities* and Sustainability:
A study of a government environmental education programme

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Research Project Report submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Teaching and Learning

Christchurch College of Education

November 2004
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Abstract

This qualitative case study reports on how the NSW Department of Environment & Conservation and the Local Community Services Association, developed and delivered community education promoting sustainability. The Eco-friendly Communities programme is critically examined to determine whether it aligned with key objectives of the United Nations Agenda 21, Chapter 36, and the NSW state government's Learning for Sustainability education plan. The study also investigated whether the adult education delivered was effective in terms of meeting established principles. Interviews and document analysis were used because the writer sought to understand in depth how the partnership worked and which adult education pedagogies were employed. Six core issues are discussed. These are the contested term 'sustainability', social, economic and environmental connections, the lack of integration across sectors, models for delivering ESD, differences between ESD and EE and the value of social marketing as a tool for educators. This study provides a community education model capable of being transferred to other sectors, and examines the themes of leadership/direction, involvement and integration. Most importantly, it shows how an education programme can be structured to facilitate social change at three levels - individual, organisational and community while still meeting wider objectives.
1. Introduction

Context and background to the study

The context for the research described here is the explicit inclusion of sustainable development in community education. The study investigated the programme, *Eco-Friendly Communities*, an initiative of a partnership formed by the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) and the Local Community Services Association (LCSA), the body which represents neighbourhood and community centres (see structure of partnership, Appendix i). The programme, funded by DEC, aimed to help people change to sustainable living and working practices.

The LCSA’s functions are to advocate for members, work towards social justice and provide resources and support. People use the centres to gain access to emergency, welfare and information services. They are from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and about eighty-five percent are women.

The environmental partnership between the two organisations was tentatively formed when female community educators from DEC attended a women’s network meeting. They saw the value of a community-based approach using women’s networks as a vehicle for social change.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the credibility of *Eco-friendly Communities* in that it actually delivered environmental education that was aligned with key objectives of the United Nations
Agenda 21, Chapter 36, and the principles of the NSW Environmental Education Plan 2002-05, Learning for Sustainability.

As my professional background includes policy development and training, I also wanted to investigate what adult pedagogies were used and whether they aligned with recognised practices. This learning would assist with ideas for the future. I chose this particular study because the Eco-friendly Communities programme was the first of its kind to be sponsored by DEC. As I required more knowledge about how education for sustainable development is delivered, it was an appropriate study as my work involves researching and writing strategic plans for environmental communication and community education. Currently, my work focuses on the environmental issues of the twenty-first century - management of waste, recycling, water and energy conservation, air pollution and bio diversity. It was important to me to know what issues the Eco-friendly Communities programme addressed and whether it could be used by other organisations e.g. local government.

The main environmental management tools used by DEC are compliance with statutory regulations, economic incentives and social marketing. Community education has been a minor tool in the mix. Therefore, the study is significant in that it evaluates the efforts of a government department and a NGO (non-government organization) to bring education for sustainable development to small communities. From this kind of study, we can learn more about environmental partnerships and approaches to environmental education.

Agenda 21, adopted by leaders at the Earth Summit meeting in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, is still strongly relevant to the twenty-first century. It was affirmed again in Johannesburg at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002:

Agenda 21 remains a global action programme which encourages nations to adopt strategies for sustainable development which are inclusive of all sectors in society. The Agenda recognises the importance of local action, integrated decision making and community involvement. http://www.deh.gov.au/

At regional level, the NSW Government Environmental Education Plan 2002-2005 - Learning for Sustainability, is of particular significance to government departments as it provides a blueprint for all state agencies to provide integrated environmental education to build the capacity of communities.

The three themes that both documents share are direction, involvement and integration, and the matrix shown on page 25 draws these together in the evaluative framework for this study.
Further, to evaluate the design of the adult education, the study draws on Jane Vella’s 12 principles\(^1\) for effective adult learning (Vella, 2002). The focus is on whether the program delivered effective adult learning, rather than community development, because this was more important to me professionally.

The study draws on literature from the subject areas of education for sustainability (ESD), environmental education (EE), adult education pedagogies, qualitative research and social marketing.

In the next section, an explanation of why this evaluative framework has been established is given along with discussion of the key debates arising from the literature review.

2. Review of the Literature

The literature was selected to further my understanding of how well the term sustainability was understood in general, and what relevant models and tools a community educator could use to present the topic to adults.

The terms ‘sustainability’ and ‘sustainable development’ are used interchangeably in this study. The key themes that emerged from the literature were the contestability of the term ‘sustainability’, the connections between economic, social and environmental dimensions and lack of integration across sectors, models for delivering ESD,

\(^{1}\) See Page 25
differences between ESD and EE and social marketing as a tool for educators.

A “simple” definition of social marketing is “...the application of the principles and tools of marketing to achieve socially desirable goals, that is, benefits for society as a whole rather than for profit or other organisational goals” (Kolter and Zaltman, as cited in Donovan and Henley, 2003 p.5).

**Evalutative Framework**

Agenda 21, Chapter 36 was chosen to evaluate this study because the three cross-sectional themes of “Education, Public Awareness, Training” are considered by the United Nations Council for Sustainable Development to be “...both relevant to the implementation of the whole of Agenda 21 and indispensable for achieving sustainable development...”


The six principles of the NSW Environmental Education Plan 2002-2005 *Learning for Sustainability* are indicators for the ‘whole-of-government’ approach to sustainability required by the NSW State Government.

A third, separate, evaluative indicator is Vella’s 12 adult education principles. These principles, “...have been proven to work under diverse and sometimes extraordinarily difficult conditions” (Vella, 2000, p.3), provide a theoretical perspective that is congruent with my approach to
adult education – holistic, integrated and with opportunities for dialogue.

As the literature review revealed no research studies for teaching sustainability in community education this study will be of interest to community educators who wish to develop their work in this field.

Two similar studies were analysed. The first, a Tasmanian project by McDonnell and Todd in 1997, entitled "Reducing Wood-smoke Through Community Education", provided some similarity to Eco Friendly Communities in that they asked community groups to be responsible for disseminating information to the public on how to use wood heaters correctly to reduce pollution. Initially, groups were provided with an information kit and a twenty minute briefing. The community groups’ willingness to take on this campaign role was measured on a quantified scale of 1 – 5 (enthusiasm, participation and response). The first two indicators were measured after the initial meeting. Later, McDonnell and Todd conducted a telephone survey to measure response (i.e. the success of groups) after the literature had been delivered.

The purpose of the study was to see how community groups distributed and promoted the information. Their two main conclusions were that group members may not have been confident about transmitting the information in the kits; and the leadership characteristics of some facilitators proved to be an important factor in gaining desired results. This is a useful project because it highlights the importance of gaining people’s involvement from the outset through
good communication and making sure they are confident about process.

Summers, Corney and Childs (2003) conducted a primary school research study on issues that arose when teaching sustainable development in classrooms. They designed a theoretical framework for evaluation purposes based on seven dimensions, sourced from a report linked to the revised UK National Curriculum for the year 2000. These included interdependence, citizenship and stewardship, needs and rights of future generations, diversity, quality of life, equity and justice, caring capacity and uncertainty and precaution in action. The design of the study included videotaping of interviews. Three interviews with primary teachers were conducted at the stages of planning, pre-teaching and post teaching. The transcripts were not verified by the interviewees, but by the team of researchers.

In both cases, there the evaluation frameworks were linked to relevant documents or policy decisions which provided contextualisation for the research. The three main differences in design between these two studies and Eco friendly Communities is that they were larger, involved a team of researchers who made decisions about the material collected and both conducted formative and summative evaluations during their projects.
Sustainability Concepts

The literature around 'sustainability' and 'sustainable development' debate reveals no consensus on the definition of these words. It is described as "...a highly problematic ... open to a variety of interpretations..." by Bonnett (2002, p.9), and as "complex and contested" by Summers et al., (2003, p.328). "There is no sign of any ultimate consensus emerging...this does not mean that it is pointless...to continue with it" (Gough, 2002, p.61).

The issue of contestability in the definition of sustainability is relevant to the study because for some people "being able to attach some meaning to the concept, even if only implicitly, is essential to doing their jobs" (Gough, 2002, p.62).

The United Nations sets the international scene with the often quoted definition in the Brundtland Report 1987, (as cited in Fricker, 1998) "...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (p.2). However, findings in research conducted by Gil-Perez, Vilches and Edwards (2003) found that the Brundtland definition "...has obtained wide consensus, although sometimes this consensus is purely formal and obscures serious misunderstandings as, for instance, interpreting 'sustainable development' as a 'sustained growth', which is, of course, the opposite" (p.43).

"The beauty in our inability to define sustainability means that we cannot prescribe it. The future may then unfold according to our
visions and abilities provided we recognize the global limits” (Fricker, 1998, p.3). This powerful statement holds before us the uncertainty of the future, yet places confidence in humankind to find solutions for the global challenges ahead.

Holliday, Schmidheiny and Watts (2002, p.13) believe that sustainable development is partly about social justice. They critically assert that there are six reasons why the concept of sustainable development has never “caught on” to become a mainstream campaign. These include lack of ownership by environmental groups because it was imposed; it’s “too green”; ...“emphasis on the future instead of the present”; governments are unable to integrate and act on it in a whole of government approach; academics tend not to like it “because it cannot be the property of no single discipline”; “lack of public excitement for the concept – they may regard the term as meaning ‘static’.”

In summarizing the above issues, it could be argued that the lack of agreement on the terms “sustainable development” and “sustainability” has implications for education and training because of the extremely wide ranging content. Both within educational institutions and in the community, there needs to be a strategy that encourages learning and understanding about the effects the demands of affluent societies make and ever-growing consumerism - the core of the sustainability debate.

In the following section, various models for delivering education for sustainability are analysed.
Models for implementing sustainability

There are various models for implementing sustainability to achieve social transformation. A useful one is the triple foci of education, research and practice. UNEP (2003) gives an overview:

Education helps in building awareness among the target audience, primarily using knowledge and information as its resources. Research helps in the assessment of the environment, using a number of problem issues as starting points. Practice helps in developing the appropriate action, using a number of skills and expertise for the purpose (p.5).

Another model is provided by O’Donoghue, (as cited in Fien, 2001) which provides a systemic or holistic view of sustainability incorporating democracy, peace, development and conservation. Both these models provide practical frameworks for the educator.

The ‘sustainability triad’ (See Figure 1 below) also provides a model that can be used across sectors and disciplines. Gough (2002) argues that this is useful model and that division into these parts “correspond quite closely to other organizational divisions in society” (p.63).

Figure 1: The Sustainability Triad.

The triad also provides flexibility in allowing for local, national or global discussion or action. For example, a community group in discussing social values, could engage in dialogue about unemployment on a national and global basis, and then approach their local council with ideas on how to engage young unemployed people in projects that care for the environment. The benefit of using the triad as illustrated by this example is that it improves leadership, helps people to develop a broader perspective and initiate change.

Using the triad would also address a concern highlighted by a New Zealand Parliamentary Commissioner’s report (2004) on learning and education for sustainability:

Where environmental education has taken place, connections between environmental issues and social, cultural and economic concerns have seldom been made. The underlying causes of environmental problems are rarely being addressed. A major focus has been on changing individual behaviours, instead of changing the systems that perpetuate unsustainable practices (p.1).

Another strength of using the triad is that it allows the teacher to use a values-centred approach to discuss issues of relevance to the everyday lives of the learners. This means that real connections between learners and the wider debate can be facilitated.

*Partnerships and Adult Education*

At a strategic level, another model is the use of environmental partnerships to facilitate environmental teaching and learning. This is
an important model because of the potential influence of networks and the opportunity for social change that it creates.

In the international arena, partnerships to promote sustainable development, was recognised by the United Nations General Assembly which in Resolution 58/129 in December 2003 which stated, "Partnerships for sustainable development, as voluntary multi-stakeholder initiatives, contribute to the implementation of Agenda 21... and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) ...”


Palmer and Birch (2003,) make some important points in discussing education for sustainability as provided by NGO’s. They state that NGO’s "...have a key role to play in influencing policy and decision making. This role would be very greatly strengthened if well coordinated strategy and policy emanates from partnerships and collaboration among providers of education” (p.447).

In their research of what the network of UK Wildlife Trusts are doing to make biodiversity relevant to people, they identified partnerships as one of the top five best practices i.e. local level partnerships. While local knowledge and contacts were key strengths of the Trusts, weak internal communication across their nationwide network and the lack of clear educational strategy proved to be significant shortcomings. Palmer and Birch said that "...national coherence in and direction for educational strategy is essential if the organization is to succeed in making real impact on the national and international stage" (p.458).
This finding of Palmer and Birch highlights the importance of good internal ‘partnerships’ – between the national body and its local network and between management and staff. An overarching educational strategy would not take away the local strengths, but rather reinforce them by ensuring a whole-of-Wildlife Trust approach, coherent reporting of progress and best use of resources.

In adult education, Vella (2002) addresses the partnership between the teacher and the learner with a focus on dialogue. Clear roles, teamwork, engagement in small groups or teams and accountability are important components of Vella’s approach. It is difficult to find criticism of Vella who has fifty years’ experience as a global adult educator and combines her training of people in communities with Friere’s liberation education. According to Rushbrook (2002, p.1180) “Vella’s twelve principles are built on the assumption that the most effective adult learning occurs through the dialogical relationship formed between teacher and learner.”

This is also borne out in research conducted by Hesselink, van Kempen and Wals (2000) who provide examples of good practice of education for sustainable development (ESD). This includes social learning, sharing knowledge, active engagement, and consensus building. All of this, of course, requires effective dialogue. These link strongly to Jane Vella’s principles as these practices ensure equality – a quality which shows respect in partnerships.
It is significant that Vella's work links with that of the Brazilian educational Paulo Freire, as he developed theoretical innovations which play an important part of adult education. Freire, (as cited by Vella 2002, p.20) stated: "Only the student can name the moment of the death of the professor." By this he alludes to the need for equal partnership between the professor and the learner, because without searching, difference or confrontation, "the dialogue is dead in the water" (Vella, p.20). According to Heaney (n.d. p.2) "liberatory education is mutually supported learning for empowerment...Its process is dialogical, affirming the mutual and coequal roles of teachers and learners..."

In this context, getting adults to take action on what they are learning is part of taking a step towards social change. Vella (2002) refers to "praxis as doing with built in reflection" (p.14).

Critical reflection is a key pedagogy of Mezirow. He states, (as cited in Fidishun, n.d., p.1), "reflective learning involves assessment or reassessment of assumptions" and "reflective learning becomes transformative whenever assumptions or premises are found to be distorting, inauthentic or otherwise invalid."

http://www.mtsu.edu/~itconf/proceed00/fidishun.htm

Equality through partnership builds trust, inherent in that is respect which means that good dialogue can take place to build ideas. I believe if these first two elements are present, then the learner is able to use the opportunity for reflection productively and confidently to make a conscious decision for social change.
Principles for adult education and learning

Key Theme

Constructivism, a major strand of theory which involves learners actively using their own knowledge, has various aspects. Some are mental challenges, conversation and collaborative activities and the use of real-life experiences.

There are various theories that fall under the banner of ‘constructivism’ and Allen, Kilvington and Horn (2002) state “they all have a similar view of learners as being actively engaged in the process of integrating new experiences and information with existing concepts” (p.17). As a learner-centred strategy, constructivism provides challenges to adult educators and learners in that dialogue and authentic learning tasks can be readily facilitated by relating to the learners’ interests.

In considering adult pedagogies for the design of education for ESD, Vella does not directly address this as such, however, the main connections here are found in the use of dialogue, prioritising and local decision-making. The need for consultation with the learners at the beginning of the design process is the key to designing a successful program. This ensures that participants will find relevance in the learning and are able to relate it to their work or life, and in turn this facilitates a better result.

Key Debates

The literature review raised two key debates that are central to the delivery of education and training. In this section, the difference
between EE and ESD is discussed, as is the use of social marketing as a tool for behavioural change.

Although sometimes used interchangeably, there are different definitions for environmental education (EE) and education for sustainable development (ESD). UNESCO’s definition of EE is: “...the process of disseminating knowledge and developing skills, for bringing about desired changes in behaviours, values and lifestyles....”

http://www.unesco.org/education/

The definition used in the Eco-friendly Communities project for ESD is also UNESCO’s – “the promotion of values and ethics through education at different levels in order to make an impact on people's lifestyles and behaviour and help to build a sustainable future.”

http://www.unesco.org/education/esd/index.shtml

Research conducted by Hesselink et al. (2000) reveals various views educators have of both ESD and EE:

Many view ESD as the next generation of EE, which includes issues of ethics, equity and new ways of thinking and learning. Others say ...there is no need to do away with EE as an umbrella. Again, others...argue that ESD is more comprehensive than EE by including issues of development, North-South relationships, cultural diversity, social and environmental equity (p.12).

Scott (2000, p.2) believes that "sustainable development is a learning process through which we can (if we choose) learn to build our capacity to live more sustainably." He places little emphasis on teaching for two
reasons. Scott believes that most of this learning will take place beyond the education system and that we don’t know yet “…what needs to be taught – except, perhaps, how to learn” (p.2).

Barraza, Duque-Aristizabal and Rebolledo (2003) in exploring differences between EE and ESD claim that “some environmental educators may be alarmed to see ESD on the educational agenda because they have trouble envisioning what a sustainable lifestyle, society, or world would look like” (p.126). Environmental educators are also challenged by Dillon (2003) who questions why in the past, they have “relatively ignored learning theories” (p.224). Similarly, Sterling, (as cited in Barraza et al., 2003) raises the question of what changes there should be in education and learning if “sustainability requires fundamental changes in different areas of life and human organisation”. (p.351).

The above points show the different relationships between EE and ESD and the differences of opinion. Whether ESD is part of EE or vice versa, ESD is a progression from environmental education, has stronger links with futures thinking, and links with other fields and dimensions in contrast to EE which focuses on the natural environment.

Fien (2001) believes that “education for sustainability is ultimately about education and capacity building and only secondly about environmental problem-solving” (p.19). Some environmental transgressions, however, demand meeting immediate challenges. In NSW for example the critical shortage of water and the need for
conservation requires consumer behavioural change. It may be that finite definitions of the terms will never emerge as it is not possible to predict future social, economic and environmental impacts.

Social Marketing
An underlying principle of Agenda 21 is the need for behaviours that enable people to live in a sustainable manner. Allen et al. (2002) state that their research “suggests that approaches to facilitate behaviour change are most effective when used to enhance constructivist or learner-centred instructional strategies because they emphasise interactivity and learner control and engagement” (p.17).

To change behaviour is difficult. According to Rogers, (as cited in Hicks and Bord, 2001) “in order to feel empowered students need to be able to envision positive scenarios for the future and to learn about success stories in which individuals and groups have clearly made a difference” (p.416).

There are various environmental management tools to assist behaviour change. McKenzie-Mohr (1999, pp.7-16) states that “campaigns that rely solely on providing information often have little or no effect on behaviour”; and in discussing social marketing advocates “gaining a commitment from an individual ...to try a new activity” and that “...we are most likely to change some behaviours in response to direct appeals or social support from others.”
Gayford (2003), in reviewing McKenzie Mohr and Smith's book *Fostering Sustainable Behaviour* (1999) states that "the technique of community-based social marketing is essentially a manipulative one..."; and with reference to social marketing as an educational tool - "there seems little that is educational here" (p.277).

**Researcher's position and shape of study**

The researcher believes that the strategic direction for ESD is to provide forums for people to engage in dialogue about the future. A holistic, values-centred approach, using the sustainability triad, will encourage the connection of ideas and allow wide ranging discussion. ESD that provides relevant opportunities for people to take action at individual, community and organisational levels by working on real problems, will help change behaviours. The researcher's vision for ESD is to build a sustainable society by using futures workshops and dialogue to develop values, skills, knowledge, new attitudes and behaviours. My approach can be justified by the value-related issues raised in the literature, the connection ESD has with futures thinking and evidence that suggests that capacity building of any community empowers people to take appropriate action.

A qualitative case study approach was adopted for the investigation because the researcher wished to become intimately aware of the detail involved in the development of the project - from conception to delivery. Patton (1987) states: "Qualitative methods permit...study...in depth and detail" (p.9).
The next section discusses the challenge that the study addresses, the role of the community educators and the research questions.

3. **Research Questions**

How to deliver the sustainability message to individuals in the community to effect social change remains a critical question today. In NSW the State Government is confronted with the environmental and infrastructural problems of a growing population. The latest government social research (Who Cares about the Environment in 2003? p.3.) states that “Sydney’s population is growing by more than 50,000 people a year.”

The first research question was: **How do community educators responsible for implementing the Eco-friendly Communities programme deliver the United Nations key objectives for environmental education?**

This question was asked because as there had been no similar programs of this nature delivered by DEC, I needed to establish whether the programme had credibility and quality in its delivery. Implicit in this was the thought that such a programme, if effective, could be replicated for other sectors. The importance of using the Agenda 21, Chapter 36, as an evaluative framework along with the six principles contained in the NSW State Government’s Environmental Education Plan (2002-
2005) would, if appropriate, provide a strong case for replication of the Program in other sectors.

The second research question was: How do community educators encourage people's ongoing commitment to change to sustainable ways of living?

The affluent society and ever-growing consumerism are at the core of the environmental crisis so the educational challenge is not only to raise awareness, but also to change behaviours that threaten the environment. This question addresses how the community educators approached the challenge of behavioural change, what tactics they adopted and whether the delivery was adequate. This will help develop the body of knowledge on what motivates people to change behaviours.

The methodology section will explain the design of the study, provide a matrix of the evaluation framework, address case studies similar to Eco Friendly Communities program and identify differences in design. There is also an explanation of the setting and participants, the procedures, and ethical considerations.
4. Methodology

Design

The evaluative nature of the research questions, lend themselves to collection of qualitative case data.

"In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon with some real-life context" (Yin, 1994, p.1).

Criticism has been made of case studies as a method of qualitative research design and three common concerns have been expressed - lack of rigor, inability to provide generalisation, time and size. (Yin, 1994). While the case study approach offers great flexibility, to be effective in terms of contributing to the body of knowledge around a particular discipline, it does require answers to the "how" and "why" questions so that the transformative potential of the study can be communicated.

Answers to the 'how' questions will be provided by adding a third column to the matrix shown below. These key indicators are grouped under the themes of direction, involvement and integration.

Jane Vella's 12 principles for effective adult learning will be assessed on the findings to determine whether the principles were used or if opportunities for use were provided. Another column with these results will be shown.
### Evaluative Framework Eco friendly Communities Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>United Nations Agenda 21, Chapter 36</th>
<th>NSW Govt. Education Plan 2002-2005 Learning for Sustainability Six Principles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direction</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reorientating education towards sustainable development - Chapter 36.4 (b) “Achieve environmental and development awareness in all sectors of society…”</td>
<td>- Assisting the community to move towards sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Involvement</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Increasing public awareness and understanding | Chapter 36.9 Parts (a), (b), (c):  
- Devolving authority  
- Accountability and resources at most appropriate level  
- Local responsibility and control | - Environmental education is relevant to all aspects of our lives lifelong learning process;  
- Promotes social change through initiatives of individuals and organizations. |
| **Integration**                      |                                                                                 |
| Promoting Training - Chapter 36.13 (a), (b), (d) | - Education is integrated with other environmental management tools;  
- Acknowledges complex connections  
- Continual improvement is at the basis of all planning, delivery and evaluation of environmental education. |

#### Evaluative Framework – Vella’s 12 Principles for Effective Adult Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Learning needs and resources assessment. Taking the first step in dialogue</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Learning with ideas, feeling and actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Safety. Creating a safe environment for learning</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Immediacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sound relationships using the power of friendship</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Assuming (new) roles for dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sequence and reinforcement supporting their learning</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Teamwork – celebrate learning together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Praxis: Turning practice into action and reflection</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Engagement and learning actively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Learners as decision makers. Harnessing the power through self respect</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Vella, J. Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach (1994, pp.3-27).*
Eco Friendly Communities setting and participants

Five community educators, who were wholly responsible for initiating, designing and delivering the program, participated in the study. All were located in Sydney. Three were employed by DEC and two employed by LCSA. Four of the interviewees were mature educators and one person a recent graduate.

Initially, the five participants were contacted by letter with a copy of the research proposal and consent form attached. This was followed up with a telephone call to gain each individual’s approval to participate. Appointments were made for individual interviews which were conducted in settings, convenient for interviewees. One was held in an office on the premises of Local Community Services Association. Two interviews were held in offices at DEC and two in a quiet corner of a coffee shop near DEC. The interviews were carried out during a two-month period (February-March 2004).

Procedures

Before conducting the interviews, I considered questions raised by the literature review and prepared an interview guide that listed a set of questions to be explored. It basically acted as a checklist to ensure people were asked for the same information. According to Rath (n.d.) “a key skill in all qualitative research is to remain flexible within the interaction of the interview process” (p.3). The reason for this is that flexibility will allow the interviewer to make the most of opportunities or situations which may arise and keep in tune with the interviewees’ directions - often an indicator of not only key interest areas of the
interviewee, but also areas which they may feel passionate about. (Rath).

The questions tested at the first interview (Appendix ii), were found to be inadequate. It was quickly recognised that there was value in having at least part of the interview time in unstructured conversation. I did not re-interview the first person. The prepared questions became a guide for conversation.

At the interviews, notes were taken. Each interview was of up to 1.5 hours duration, one being two-hours long. Notes were written up soon after each interview and the detailed transcriptions emailed to interviewees who undertook, at the time of their face-to-face interview, to check the validity of the notes and make any necessary changes.

When direct quotations from the participants are used, they mirror a guide for decision-making provided Miles and Huberman (as cited in Oka & Shaw, 2000). Their simple decision rule is “two confirmations and no contradiction” (p.9). I used this rule to compare transcripts.

Initially, the data from interviews was analysed for concepts to make sense of each interviewee’s perspective. After the initial analytical reading of interviewee transcripts, to assist conceptualisation and typology, a two-column matrix (see Figure 2) was set up following an idea from Oka and Shaw (2000, p.11). It allowed both the concepts and corresponding quotations to be analysed in a way which allowed reporting on the main issues.
Figure 2: An Example of a Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All parents</td>
<td>“Having children with the same diseases makes our psychological distance much smaller.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We are like relatives. Parents who have children with the same diseases won’t cut their relations ... even if they had quarrels.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not alone</td>
<td>“Knowing the existence of this group, I was relieved. I felt, oh, I am not alone.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Thinking that I am alone and knowing that somebody is feeling like!”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Oya-no-Ka, as cited in Oka and Shaw 2000, p.11).

Patton (1987) states that: “It is ... important that the analyst not pretend that all findings are equally credible” (p.163). Therefore, the creation of this matrix also assisted validity and reliability. Document analysis was used, where relevant, to match verbal claims of the interviewees. The documents played an explicit role as they provided a way to evaluate the activities of the partners in the study.

In the two similar case studies mentioned earlier, McDonnell and Todd (1997) also used a form of categorization to record activities of community groups. They created four levels to determine effectiveness in dissemination of information. They made this judgment on what they were told by community groups. In contrast, Summers et al., (2003) analysed data, then provided a summary sheet for each full transcript of interviews. They stated that the validity of data “depended upon acceptance of pooled judgment” (p.333).

Ethical considerations

The small number of participants in the research investigation required sensitivity by the researcher to any ethical or personal issues that arose. All participants were advised that their confidentiality and anonymity
would be preserved and they could withdraw from the project at any time. All signed the consent form attached to the letter requesting their participation.

It was recognised before interviewing started, that because the programme is relatively new and ongoing, confidence and trust must be upheld. Therefore, it was considered necessary to reflect, and conduct the research, on the five ethical principles as outlined by Tolich and Davidson (1999, no page no.). These were - "do no harm, voluntary participation, informed consent, avoid deceit; confidentiality and anonymity" (for the participants).

Prior to the research project being undertaken, I was working in the same building as two people in the study and became acquainted through discussions on media management issues. It was through this contact that I learned of the Eco Friendly Communities programme. I was conscious of some internal tension.

In the next section I present the findings of my study and this is presented in five areas, namely: the aims and outcomes of the program, the partnership, the community educators' views on sustainability, their professional and/or personal motivation, and adult education, pedagogies described in the five step implementation and description of the education kit.
5. Findings

The overall aim of the *Eco friendly Communities* program was to increase the knowledge and understanding of people so they could work together to identify ways of living and working sustainably.

The program outcomes were that people who attended would have a better understanding of ways of living and working sustainably; be aware of environmental issues such as waste, water, energy, chemicals, biodiversity and air pollution and what could be done about them; and would know how to get involved in community environmental projects. The main process to achieve this was by way of action learning.

The aims of the organizations were different. The LCSA wanted more adult education classes in their centres and the educators from DEC wanted to prove to decision makers that community education was a legitimate environmental management tool. The LCSA aim was partially achieved with 25 percent of their centres participating in the Program. At the time of writing DEC was still thinking about whether they would go ahead with further community education programs on sustainability.

The department allocated $80,000 for the programme to be distributed to centres to develop small projects, after they had attended a training session. This funding was regarded by community educators as being an important local motivator.
Partnership

The partners reported that in developing the programme they worked well together, each having agreed, identified roles early in the project. The government partners established a steering committee (which played a minimal role), developed the proposal for funding, helped with the material and advice, and assisted with the development of the evaluation framework and external publicity.

The LCSA partners used their knowledge of what would be acceptable within centres, initial internal publicity and communication around the programme, administration of grants, primary development of the education kit and reporting to Department. Both partners were involved in developing and critiquing the educational kit and delivering the workshops. The programme was delivered using train-the-trainer workshops (attended by 100 people in ten LCSA regions) and an educational kit.

At the development stage, community educators felt it would be beneficial for centres to form partnerships with local government and local environmental groups in their districts. A section in the programme's educational kit “How to be part of an Eco-Friendly community” was devoted to developing community partnerships.

Sustainable Development

In discussing definitions of sustainability, two of the community educators said that people they spoke to did not see any need to spend
time debating the meaning of "sustainable development" and "sustainability" – it was seen to be a rather tired debate. These two community educators said that as mothers and former school teachers they believed that "...it's part of the way younger people think ... there's an understanding and fundamental appreciation of sustainability which is part of this generation of young people."

Community educators did not see the economic dimension of the sustainability triad as separate from the social as the community centres' core work is in the social dimension. The people who attend centres are no strangers to unemployment, inequality and economic hardship.

Those interviewed said that their challenge was to help learners see how they can contribute to problem solving. In the words of one community educator: "The way the system is set up is difficult to change. We have to tackle the underlying issues but this makes it seem too big...so it's best to go for small projects."

Community educators saw the biggest challenge to sustainable living as the consumer society. As one community educator said: "We live in a consumer society...we shop, eat and spend too much." Two community educators believed that the spiritual dimension was missing in society and this accounted for the individualistic lifestyle woven around the work-and-spend cycle. This philosophical position is implicit in the Eco-friendly Communities programme. The partners found that the values of the community centres were congruent with
what they were trying to achieve in terms of sustainable living. They found “…people worked to support each other and are interested in community development, not rampant individualism….”

Not all of the community educators involved in the Eco-friendly Communities programme had a vision for ESD. One person said “…there is no blueprint for what a sustainable society would look like.” Another believed that the vision for ESD focuses on “processes for developing capacity building and social learning rather than any classic model.” Yet another interviewee said that her vision was that “community educators would be in charge of their own resources… so that social, economic and environmental sustainability could work in balance.” A feminist perspective was to “empower women globally so that they have control of resources and are then able to better care for their children’s future.”

Motivation

During interviews community educators gave their individual reasons for giving their energy, commitment and support to the programme. All were committed environmentalists, however, some of the professional and personal motivators identified during the interviews were:

(i) “A gap in the target market receiving education for sustainable development.”

(ii) “Mass media campaigns were not supported by active community education.” This was a DEC perspective because they had not initiating community education for
sustainability. The Department’s emphasis had been on social marketing.

(iii) "Feminist interests" and the view that "women’s networks are an underused resource in delivering education for sustainable living and working." Four of the community educators said that this was an issue, and that there was a failure by male decision makers to recognize this.

(iv) The need to meet an organizational social objective to "further develop adult education as a community service for those who did not support institutionalized education."

(v) "An opportunity for mentoring for professional development" – to help a new staffer gain experience.

Adult Education

One community educator said that there “is a notion that environmental educators tend to tell people the right answer, whereas what you really need is an approach that makes people think about why they are doing it.....” Therefore, “the workshop was designed to get people talking about what they do”; “The principles of behaviour change are important. There is the idea that people are more likely to act if it’s relevant to their lives.”

The main vehicle for facilitating the learning was the ‘learning circle’ – a collaboration structure which provides for focussed discussion and has action outcomes. In the sessions people were given the opportunity to
reflect on individual values and consider their current environmental behaviour and reasons for it.

There was comment made by participants regarding the use of social marketing tools, without education. Participants said that while advertising was important in raising awareness, community education was essential to ensure behavioural change. They said: “Advertising in isolation does not achieve results and in itself is not a sustainable method of raising awareness.” Another view was: “Advertising is politically expedient and advertising only won’t work. Community change occurs when people are approached personally by people they know.” The DEC educators contacted the local news media in each of the regions they visited in NSW for interviews with radio and press.

*Adult Education Pedagogies - Five Steps of Programme Implementation*

The early consultative stage provided the community educators with three main facts. Firstly, that there was “acceptance and enthusiasm” for the project in ten regions; secondly, that there was “no shortage of local ideas for action”; and finally that because centre staff were already overloaded, the programme needed to be “easy to implement.”

**Step One**

Essentially, this was the consultation stage between the partners. During interviews it transpired that direct consideration of the UN objectives and the NSW government education plan was not something which all of the participants “sat down and thought about.” All were
aware of these frameworks. "It's part of my background." Only two consulted the documents.

Step Two
The second step was to develop course content and the educational kit. The kit took three months to develop and five sections and themes were used:

1. How to be an Eco-friendly centre (organisational change)
2. How to encourage Eco-friendly people (individual change)
3. How to be part of an Eco-friendly community (community change)
4. Evaluation forms, environmental directory and available grants
5. Literature and information on environmental impact areas.

http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au

1. "How to be an eco-friendly Centre."
The first section provided four activities for participants. A draft policy statement; an environmental assessment of the centre's current impact on the environment in terms of waste, energy, water, chemicals and other issues such as biodiversity and air quality; a draft environmental management plan; and a draft letter seeking sponsorship from local businesses. This created the opportunity for participants to discuss consumerism (although this may not arise, as it is not an implicit value in the package).

The section shows use of the recognised social marketing technique of using public commitment for social change. The material provides a step-by-step approach to development, and allows for
choices. It addresses the economic dimension in the sustainability triad by getting participants to consider cost savings in the centre in each of the environmental impact areas. The social dimension can be addressed through facilitating discussion of whether sponsorship should be sought for further funding to improve standards. The environmental dimension is covered by the very nature of the programme. Noteworthy is the further information which is provided on all topics through inclusion of web URLs in all sections.

2: 'How to encourage eco-friendly people'

This section addresses individual behaviour change in the environmental impact areas of waste, energy, water, chemicals and other issues such as biodiversity and air quality, using action guides.

The facilitator may start by providing global environmental facts, followed by the introduction of the issue - key facts are provided. Then follows the completion of a questionnaire which prompts participants to think about what they are currently doing and the quality of their 'environmentally friendly' behaviour. This is followed by a group discussion and the opportunity to share ideas.

The facilitator can then lead the discussion on what else could be done and asking participant to make a commitment to change - e.g. install reduced-flow shower heads in the bathroom, or worm farming as a way of composting. Each section is detailed, easy to read and adaptable to even the most inexperienced facilitator.
3: 'How to be part of an eco-friendly community'

This section addresses group involvement. The aim is to encourage people to get their neighbourhood centre involved in partnerships with local government, environmental groups or in their local community. The examples provided are specifically aimed at environmental issues and projects, however, there is no reason why this guide could not be used for social justice projects. The section is well presented and provides basic information to help people get started.

4. Resources

This section provides resources for evaluation of the kit, a prompt for listing people contacted and partnerships formed during the programme and the opportunity for story telling. The comprehensive directory provides easy identification of organisations where funding might be acquired. Designed to be a helpful section for both community educators and people in the centres, it also shows the complex connections in the environmental sector.

5: Resource materials

This includes posters, flyers, brochures and home guides to environmentally behaviours to support the programme's messages. This is helpful social marketing material which could be used by centres in a variety of ways to create greater awareness and it is a thoughtful inclusion in the kit.
Step Three
This step delivered training in ten regions for 100 people. The community educators said that: "The whole project just affirmed my belief in people who work in these communities..."; "Where we were able to, local government environmental officers were engaged and invited. They were very interested and supportive – and they are looking for things to support their work"; "...we found people to be very enthusiastic."

Step Four
This step did not materialise until the program was halfway through regional training. The DEC community educators came up with the idea and sought funding through their department of up to $5,000 for each region. Participating centres were able to apply, along with a written project proposal for a small grant to get their selected projects started.

Step Five
The formal evaluation of the programme has yet to be conducted.

The findings which align with Agenda 21, Chapter 36 and the six principles of the NSW Government’s Education Plan for Sustainability are highlighted in the matrix below. For Vella’s principles – see page 59.
## Evaluation Framework for Eco-friendly Communities Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>United Nations Agenda 21, Chapter 36</th>
<th>NSW Plan Six Principles</th>
<th>How the Eco-friendly Communities Program Delivered:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Working with an NGO and their network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reorientating education towards sustainable development –</td>
<td>Assisting the community to move towards sustainability</td>
<td>• Gaining management commitment to environmental management policy and plans provided role model for centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 36.4 (b) “Achieve environmental and development awareness in all sectors of society...”</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Delivering a model of training to assist living and working sustainably</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Motivating ten regions in NSW to set up 74 small projects providing leadership through training and small grants (see project list page 49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Generating publicity in the news media in various regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Providing literature for public dissemination by participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Involvement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Gaining local agreement that environmental management plans would be written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing public awareness and understanding -</td>
<td>Environmental education is relevant to all aspects of our lives...lifelong learning process</td>
<td>• Engaging local people in dialogue and reflection about living and working sustainably in their centre and getting people to decide what they could do personally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 36.9 Parts (a), (b), (c):</td>
<td>Promotes social change through initiatives of individuals and organizations</td>
<td>• Designing an Education kit to allow adults to discuss relevant topics of their choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Devolving authority</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Providing small grants for seeding local projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Accountability</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Training people on how to engage with others in their community to effect social change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Local responsibility and control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integration</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Training accessible to attend without charge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting Training - Chapter 36.13 (a), (b), (c), (d)</td>
<td>Education is integrated with other environmental management tools; Complex connections Continual improvement is at the basis of all planning, delivery and evaluation of environmental education</td>
<td>• Training provided to staff so they could assist with delivering sustainability education to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training opportunities, regardless of social status, age, gender, race or religion; Flexible and adaptable workforce; Environment and human ecological considerations are integrated at all managerial levels</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Establishing environmental management plans with management of the NSW headquarters and local centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Providing economic incentives for small projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Using social marketing techniques and pamphlets and posters provided in education kit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Providing environmental management plans and evaluation tools for continuous improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Directory provided in the Educational Kit showing the diversity of organisations involved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In the next section all the findings are discussed in relation to the two research questions, the sustainability debate, and the value of social marketing and NGO partnerships.

6. Discussion

(a) The evaluation matrix with the main focus areas of Chapter 36 – Education, Public Awareness and Training - linked to the six principles contained in the NSW Education Plan, shows how the community educators delivered. More than ten tactics are identified which essentially align with the themes of both documents – direction, involvement and integration (see page 40).

Direction

In terms of direction, the first step of formalising the program through top management commitment was significant. Getting LCSA to write a policy statement and prepare head office environmental management plans provided a role model for the regional centres. This demonstrates the use of one social marketing technique - public commitment to achieve social change.

The partners had clearly defined roles from the outset and identifying common values was important for meeting each partner’s aims. NGO’s and local government are strategically placed to be one of the most influential organisations in providing direction for informal education for sustainable development. Palmer and Birch (2003) believe “the world’s most successful programmes of education for sustainability in
the 21st century will be those in which the formal and informal elements of education are supported alongside each other in a coherent framework" (p.459). This infers that organisations like LCSA and government can play a successful role in mutually supporting each other. It will require leaders who are able to help others develop their decision making and capacity to take action.

Involvement

Components of involvement provided by the evaluative framework include local responsibility, accountability, relevancy and social change. The environmental policy statement and plans provided for social changes to be made. It was also a management tool for accountability as it was a pre-requisite for successful project funding. Involvement was achieved by allowing participants to make their own decisions for social action. This resulted in 70 applications for project funding (see p.46). This projects demonstrate how people propose to change their behaviour to working and living more sustainably.

The Eco friendly Communities program did not substantiate five of the six points made by Holliday et al., (2002, p.13) outlined on page 11 of this paper, on why sustainability campaigns fail. Interviewees said that people throughout NSW readily and enthusiastically picked up the concept of sustainability, and this is demonstrated by the number of project funding applications. Programme proposals reveal that people saw sustainability in ecological terms and developed ideas which were easy to implement. Some identified economic benefits and others developed projects which were in themselves 'sustainable', e.g.
providing interest free loans. Far from being static, the concept was seen as a way forward to provide greater benefits for their communities. The researcher believes that the ongoing debate on what sustainability means is healthy in itself, because it allows public opinion and knowledge to be tested and grow.

Integration

While the literature (Palmer and Birch, 2003; Dillon, 2003; NZ Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, 2004; Barraza, et al., 2003) shows there is still a long way to get to get integration into all sectors of society, the lack of definition for ‘sustainability’ in no way inhibits the ability of those whose job requires them to get results.

The Program’s practical steps showed alignment with the main components of integration - providing training opportunities, use of various environmental management tools and continual improvement. By integrating the program into its activities, LCSA meet its aim of providing more adult education in its centres for its diverse membership many of whom were “disenchanted with formal learning establishments.” Continual improvement was provided for by the evaluation forms in the kit and the suggested review of the environmental management plans (with forms provided) after six months. This means that environmental and human ecological can be developed at all levels as further ideas emerge.
(b) The second research question of how the community educators encourage people’s ongoing commitment to change to sustainable ways of living can be assessed by the centres’ commitment to policy statements and environmental management plans and number of projects initiated after the programme had been delivered (see p.46). From 100 people who participated in the training, it is conservatively estimated that around 1,400 people have been involved to date in over 70 environmentally friendly projects (20 persons per project). The multiplier effect has been encouraged by allowing choice of projects.

Secondly, LCSA communicated internally to all centres within the network. Attendance was voluntary. Palmer and Birch (2003) refer to “the need to achieve an effective balance between national strategy and direction and enabling local autonomy and initiatives which respond to local needs and build upon the all-important local sense of ownership” (p.458). Local ownership is clearly of the utmost importance for involvement. The Program only achieved at 25 percent response. A follow-up survey would provide more information on why centres participated.

The question of encouraging people to change behaviour also raises the debate around whether community-based social marketing is a manipulative tool (Gayford). In this study it can be examined on two levels – organisational and individual. Commitment at both levels was sought. Gaining both organisational and personal commitment to policy statements and environmental plans was obtained, without coercion, at the peak body level and was optional for regional centres.
However, when the small grants were offered by DEC at a later stage in the program, (and this was a genuine afterthought by two of the community educators) commitment to both policy and plans was required before funding was agreed to by DEC decision makers. It could be fairly said that this was not manipulative, but rather, provided accountability for the use of public money. Choice and voluntary participation were still present.

The third evaluation around the quality of adult education using Vella’s principles\(^2\) showed that the Education Kit provided opportunity for each principle to be achieved.

The program also provided the opportunity to envision the future and for storytelling – two pedagogies advocated by Rogers, (as cited in Hicks and Bord, 2001, p.416). It encouraged learners “to construct their own understanding” of environmental issues and decide for themselves within the framework of their daily lives, what they needed to change (Barraza et al., p.349).

It could be fairly said that the program’s pedagogy for sustainable development was - as advocated by Barraza et al., (2003) - “based on constructive, transformative and participatory approaches” (p.351). Individual development through dialogue, reflection and participatory learning processes encourages individuals to reassess their knowledge.

The program provided the opportunity for links to be made between

\(^2\) Appendix iii, p.59
the environment and sustainable development through social, economic and environmental dialogue. In this case, using women’s networks was a key factor in developing the program at regional level and their involvement in decision-making processes consolidated the education as resulting actions took issues to a level beyond awareness.

**Figure 3: NSW Regions involved in Eco friendly Communities Program, number of successful funding applications and types of projects in each region**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Broad Description of Projects</th>
<th>No. of Centres involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>No interest loan scheme to fund environmental projects; Recycling water</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Energy efficient light bulbs, community garden, school environmental competition x 2, calico bags for shoppers on community transport bus, reducing chemical use in centre, growing edible plants organically, easy composting</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Reduce use of chemical cleaners in centres, purchasing micro fibre products</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Change to recycled paper, Eco friendly disposal of paper recycled copy paper; (shredding used for composting and packing), reduce energy consumption by purchase energy efficient light globes</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Recruit volunteers to promote green practice, purchase energy efficient light bulbs</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Community Garden</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Community Garden</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Food forest, volunteer training, furniture restoration, centre redevelopment, staff workshop, calico bags x 2; water seminar</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Develop environmental management plan, community gardens, workshop information sessions to reduce chemical use and plastic bags, reducing waste</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Environmental workshops</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Over 70 projects</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: LCSA Project Applications for Funding, 2003.*
7. Review of the Study’s Shortcomings

The study is limited in that there is yet to be formal evaluation of the programme in the regions. This is a small research project, however, in replicating the study, it would be valuable to have direct contact with neighbourhood and community centres. Community educators who participated in the research were conscious (and cautious) that formal evaluation had yet to happen.

During the course of this study, there were five major learning points for the researcher. Firstly, the need to design a relevant and credible evaluation framework linked to policy documents or issues. Secondly, the importance of understanding the actual roles of each interviewee prior to the interview taking place so that the quality of questions could be improved. With all participants coming from different positions, it was initially difficult to make sense of data. The critical importance of being able to organise data to ensure easier analysis is appreciated.

The researcher has gained a greater appreciation of education for sustainable development and this knowledge will benefit future involvement in environmental planning. Finally, attention to detail and taking time for reflection is a critical part of research.

7. Conclusions

For an organisation to deliver sustainability, ‘self interest’ is a starting point. However, finding partners that have congruence in values and understanding of each other’s needs was a formula for this successful partnership. Fragmentation and individualism are not part of
delivering successful ESD. True success depends on development of a sense of community and collaboration between sectors. The values-centred approach has great merit. Facilitating and encouraging exploration at a personal level of positive values that show respect for the environment has transformational potential.

Margaret Mead (n.d.) said: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it’s the only thing that ever has” http://www.quoteworld.org.
This bold statement infers that thoughtful, committed people have the power to effect change.

The issue, however, will always be whether such people are motivated enough to take action. The participants in the Eco-Friendly Communities programme showed their commitment to action in initiating small projects designed to assist sustainable development. In doing so they are beginning to create a critical mass which will spread further into their communities. The question of whether actions at community level make a difference globally remains unanswered, as the global debate centres on the need to change capitalist systems and structures. However, where forums such as those provided by the Eco-friendly Communities programme are available for public discourse and action learning, small steps can be made towards a sustainable future.

Nancy King
8. Bibliography


1. Appendices

(i) Department of Environment and Conservation and the Local Community Services Association structure used for Eco-friendly Communities Programme relevant to this research project

(ii) Set Questions for interviews

(iii) Vella’s 12 Principles for Effective Adult Learning
Appendix i

Structure used for Eco-friendly Communities Programme relevant to this research project.
Appendix ii - Set Questions for interviews (Guidelines)

Main question:

1. How do community educators responsible for implementing the Eco-friendly Communities Programme deliver the United Nations key objectives for environmental education?

What did the programme set out to do?
What teaching and learning theories were used?
What did you think about these theories? Were they appropriate?
Did you consider Agenda 21, Chapter 36 when you designed the program?
What about the NSW state government education plan? (DEC only)
What framework did you use?
What is your thinking regarding current environmental issues and educational practice?
What social and economic factors influenced people involved in the Eco-friendly Communities programme?

Main Question:

2. How do community educators encourage people's ongoing commitment to change to sustainable ways of living?

What vision do you have (if any) about education for sustainable development?
What adult learning principles were applied?
How were people encouraged to make a commitment to ongoing action to achieve sustainable behaviour?
Was the project a worthwhile activity given the rationale for sustainable communities?
What comments to you have regarding:

- Outcomes
- Content
- Delivery

How did you evaluate the programme? How do you think the programme could be improved?
What communication strategies were used to engage people?
### Appendix iii-
**Evaluative Framework – Vella’s 12 Principles for Effective Adult Teaching**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Eco-friendly Community programme provided opportunities for using principles by:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 Learning needs and resources assessment. Taking the first step in dialogue | Consultation  
Steering Group  
Project Partners  
LCSA Conference  
Workshops |
| 2 Safety. Creating a safe environment for learning | Familiar setting with known people  
Learning Circles ensures equality, listening |
| 3 Sound relationships using the power of friendship | Women’s networks; Community Centre networks; Partners equality;  
Familiar people |
| 4 Sequence and reinforcement supporting their learning | Environmental Management Plan (EMP) provided role model  
Structured approach through action learning guides; Small grants; Choice of projects; Reflection; Evaluation |
| 5 Praxis: Turning practice into action and reflection | EMP; Project Applications;  
Reflection as part of training |
| 6 Learners as decision makers. Harnessing the power through self respect | Choice of projects for funding  
Autonomy of the centres |
| 7 Learning with ideas, feeling and actions – using the whole person | Startling statistics provided to stimulate dialogue; Questions posed by the Education kit sought ideas and feelings; Action learning,  |
| 8 Immediacy - Teaching what is really useful to learners | Socio-economic ideas contained in Education kit applicable immediately eg reducing energy use |
| 9 Assuming (new) roles for dialogue | Use of open ended questions – structured in Education Kit |
| 10 Teamwork – celebrate learning together | Small groups 5-15 |
| 11 Engagement and learning actively | Dialogue, Action learning. Number of resulting projects |
| 12 Accountability – “knowing how they know they know.” | Writing their own policy statement, assessing environmental impact on centres, writing EMPS; Commitment to change behaviour; Evaluation forms in Education Kit; Small grants applications; Behaviour changes in centres |

*Source: Vella, J. Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach (1994, pp.3-27).*
This statement is to confirm that this paper was researched and written by Nancy King.

Date: 30 November 2004
Signed: Nancy King.