

Can We Create a Sustainable Approach to Pedagogy?

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UBC Sustainability Documents

Major Documents: 1997, 2005

Considered policy texts

“...intended to shape and guide UBC’s current policy agenda and are legacies of its 1997 Sustainability Development Policy”

Timmerman & Metcalfe, 2009, p. 48

Implementation and Transition into “Sustainable Pedagogy”

“ the goals and strategies are too general and thus potentially difficult to implement: the contained language is ambiguous and terms are left undefined: both lack an explicit focus on curricula and classroom interaction”

Timmerman & Metcalfe, 2009, p.59

UBC Faculty of Education

Challenges given to the Faculty:

“Plan for sustainability by creating structural,
predictable approaches”

That

“Create outstanding learning experiences
“efficiently”

Personal Disconnect

- Definition of “sustainability”
- Nature of the problem presented
- Cultural context of a university

Definition of Sustainability

“forms of progress that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs”

World Commission on Environment and Development
[Brundtland Commission] , 2002

Constitution of the Iroquois Nations

#28

In all of your deliberations in the Confederate Council, in your efforts at law making, in all your official acts, self interest shall be cast into oblivion. Cast not over your shoulder behind you the warnings of the nephews and nieces should they chide you for any error or wrong you may do, but return to the way of the Great Law which is just and right. Look and listen for the welfare of the whole people and have always in view not only the present but also the coming generations, even those whose faces are yet beneath the surface of the ground – the unborn of the future Nation.

Summary

“In every deliberation, we must consider the impact on the seventh generation... even if it requires having skin as thick as the bark of a pine.”

Nature of the Problem Presented

- Ill-structured

“Plan for sustainability by creating structural,
predictable approaches”

That

“Create outstanding learning experiences
“efficiently”

Nature of the Problem Presented

- Deals with People and Social Policies

“Social problem are never solved. At best they are only re-solved – over and over again”

Rittle & Webber, 1973, p.160

Wicked Problems

Wicked problems often crop up when organizations have to face constant change or unprecedented challenges. They occur in a social context, the greater the disagreement among stakeholders, the more wicked the problem. In fact, it's the social complexity of wicked problems as much as their technical difficulties that make them tough to manage.

Camillus, 2008, p.100

Cultural Context of a University

- Strict business model
- Bureaucratic structure
- Generally a “top down” approach to policy
- Fairly rigid reward structure
- Response from an Associate Dean when shown the ten traits for wicked problems: “oh yes – exactly. This really fits...but the plan needs to be in place by June.”

Ten Traits for Wicked Problems

1. There is no definite formulation of a wicked problem.
2. Wicked problems have no stopping rules.
3. Solutions to wicked problems are not true or false, but better or worse.
4. There is no immediate or ultimate test of a solution to a wicked problem.
5. Every solution to a wicked problem is a “one shot operation” because there is no opportunity to learn by trial and error.

From Rittel & Webber (1973)

6. Wicked problems do not have an exhaustively describable set of potential solutions.
7. Every wicked problem is unique.
8. Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another wicked problem.
9. The causes of a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways.
10. With wicked problems, the planner has no right to be wrong.

Questions

- What does sustainability mean in this context?
- Is a sustainable structure with such broad outcomes possible?
- Is “sustainable” the appropriate word? Maybe, “long term”?
- What are the dynamics inherent within the problem?
- Can the goals of creating sustainable structures and predictable outcomes be attained?