
Preface

Due to its scope and spectrum, sustainable development is a theme which is both interdisciplinary in nature, and flexible in respect of its usefulness and applications. An integrative approach to sustainability, i.e., an approach that combines aspects of several schools of thought, several methods and tools, is therefore very useful not only in respect of teaching but also in research as well, yielding results that monolithic approaches could not possibly achieve. The potential of integrative approaches is threefold:

- First, it caters for a wide range of techniques which foster learning, not only in respect of environmental elements, but also in terms of social issues, economic matters and political influences, which are known to permeate the sustainability debate.
- Second, integrative approaches entail the use of various techniques, from usual classroom discussions, but also fieldwork and the use of e-learning, hence fostering a broader understanding of what sustainable development is and means.
- Third, integrative approaches take into consideration the needs and requirements of various stakeholders, being in a position to lead to action which do not ignore people's backgrounds, abilities and needs.

But even though integrative approaches to sustainability are characterized by a wide range of applications, their use is at present is rather limited. Part of the problem lies on the fact that most publications on sustainability tend to have a focus on individual matters (e.g. curriculum improvements, campus greening, etc.) and less on cross-cutting issues. Therefore, this publication has been conceived. It is an attempt to address a gap in the literature, at the same time that it shows, in practice, how integrative approaches work.

The book "Integrative Approaches to Sustainable Development at University Level: Making the Links" showcases different means, tools and initiatives, which illustrate how integrative approaches to sustainable development may help to bring the main messages across. Consisting of case studies, descriptions of practical experiences and empirical analyses, the book demonstrates how efficient integrative approaches to sustainability can be, at the same time that it documents and promotes some of the excellent work being undertaken, around the world, on this emerging area. The book is structured around two main parts:

Part I is about *Contextualising Integration*, which includes teaching and learning approaches aimed at the successful integration of sustainability issues in higher education systems, referring to the use of e-learning, campus engagement, sustainability delivery and reporting. It also includes matters related to indicators, and elements of transition and curriculum integration.

Part II of the book refers to *Convergent Approaches*, outlining examples of training programme, curriculum innovation and organisational changes, and including simulations and appraisals of problems and barriers, with examples of good practice.

This book is a further volume of the new “World Sustainable Development Book Series” and contains some of the papers presented at the “World Symposium on Sustainability in Higher Education” (WSSD-U-2014) held in Manchester, UK, on 3–5 September 2014. We want to thank the authors for sharing their work, their know-how and their expertise to a world audience, and hope the many experiences amassed in this book will help to support the work of sustainability lecturers, researchers and students working in this very important field.

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