

CLIENT: SEEd

Barriers and motivators for adopting sustainability programmes in schools

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Following survey and desk based research into schools' attitudes and approaches to sustainability, SEEd wished to explore four key questions in more depth via a series of three focus groups: secondary leaders, primary leaders and practitioners. These three panels were convened to comprise participants who were not involved in EE/ESD projects in schools and who were from a wide geographical spread.

What environmental and sustainability programmes or initiatives the respondents have heard of?

Levels of awareness were low, other than for eco-schools, though understanding of this initiative was not high. Both school leaders and teachers limit their consideration of EE/ESD to recycling and energy saving, though interest and enthusiasm for environmental is high.

There is clear potential to develop existing interests through a series of awareness-raising activities. Schools could be persuaded by seeing the benefits to other schools which are active in this area.

How do the respondents and/or their school select programmes or initiatives?

A common pattern is for a member of staff to become enthused about an initiative by attending a course or another event where he or she has seen the initiative in action.

Alternatively, the school council may put forward ideas suggested by pupils. School leaders are perhaps the most common source of ideas for new initiatives, and appear to be the most common source for those which are ultimately adopted.

The idea is then presented to the senior leadership team who are likely to reach the decision following initial consultations with staff.

A project team is then put together, or a lead individual selected, then, most commonly the initiative is trialled in school.

Trials are evaluated by an ad-hoc method, in the main, but schools consider the effect on the children to be of paramount importance. Effects which are considered likely to impact on school performance are given priority, but there is scope for giving added weight to impacts on other, perhaps less measurable, aspects of school. For example development of children as responsible citizens, or improvements to the school culture - these may contribute to the school's Self Evaluation Framework documentation and therefore used as evidence for school improvement.

Pupils, parents and governors are rarely consulted formally about the possible introduction of new initiatives, though Pupil Voice consultations are becoming more common. Also primary schools depend more heavily on the support provided by parents and governors and are more likely to involve them at an earlier stage than do secondaries.

What do respondents as a school/individual need to get started in EE or ESD?

There is clearly personal interest from teachers and schools would welcome initiatives provided they were not over-burdening. This is an advantage over a great many initiatives, where there is inertia borne of current initiative overload.

The main problem is that there are already a great many initiatives which the school is forced to prioritise because of the current school performance and monitoring regimes.

While teachers are confident about the prospect of low level environmental initiatives, they are not confident about the idea of educating for sustainability. CPD would be welcome in this regard; however the most pressing need is for experiences which demonstrate to schools the value of participation. Ideally this would be aimed at school leaders.

Some curriculum subject areas are suitable as vehicles, but there appears little scope to affect taught content, although there are some practices which could be adopted as awareness-raising components: for example environmental impact analysis as part of evaluation activities.

Teaching materials are not required as a means of introducing EE of ESD into schools.

Funding, eg for environmental competitions, would be welcome.

What do respondents think EE or ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) would do for their school?

Encouraging children to become better global citizens is an obvious benefit for schools, though this is not high on schools' priorities.

Participation would provide the school with good PR for recruiting pupils, but this is a small motivator for schools, particularly successful ones, which are those most likely to have "room" for such involvements.

Unfortunately, levels of understanding about what sustainability means results in teachers and leaders finding great difficulty in anticipating an answer to this question.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Aims and objectives

SEEd (the former CEE) is conducting a teachers' needs survey as part of its launch process. Having already completed a desktop review of all environmental and sustainability surveys and research in recent years, SEEd wished to explore in more depth four key questions:

1. What environmental and sustainability programmes or initiatives the respondents have heard of?
2. How do the respondents and/or their school select programmes or initiatives?
3. What do respondents as a school/individual need to get started in EE or ESD?
4. What do respondents think EE or ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) would do for their school?

The research profiles were to find mainstream schools and teachers not yet engaged in EE or ESD in a major way, a good geographical spread, differing levels of responsibility and inclusion of both the primary and secondary sector.

Methodology

SEEd suggested focus groups as an appropriate methodology and Schoolzone agreed that this would be a good format through which to explore the above issues in depth.

SEEd's research paper arising out of the desktop exercise makes it clear that factors such as a whole school approach, involvement of students and a broad understanding of sustainability across the curriculum are key success factors.

Identified barriers to involvement include:

- Time and money
- Lack of priority
- Knowledge gap
- Lack of training
- Initiative overload

Taking these issues into account three focus group discussions were conducted as follows:

1. Secondary senior leadership team (SLT) members
2. Primary senior leadership team members
3. Classroom teachers across various subject specialisms

These groups all comprised 6 - 8 individuals across a good geographical and socio-economic spread.

Recruitment ensured that schools already substantially involved in initiatives such as eco-schools were not invited to take part.

A core script was developed with the client to explore the four key questions identified above under "research aims and objectives" and then adapted for each group to pull out key issues for them.

SLT members (primary and secondary) were asked to provide depth regarding the "whole school approach" providing information with regard to their attitudes/motivators and exploring their needs in overcoming some of the key barriers identified above to changing whole school outlooks.

The classroom teacher group script contextualised how the SLT approach impacts on the approach at the practitioner level and across the curriculum in order to drive "critical mass" across the school.

Online Focus Groups

Schoolzone recommend the use of online focus groups for a number of practical project delivery reasons;

- Timescale
- Participation of SLT members
- Requirement for geographical spread
- Facility for anonymous observation by clients

The 'virtual' focus groups were delivered via an online meeting room, facilitated by two mediators, one for voice and one for text responses.

2 The decision-making process in schools

2.1 Introduction of new ideas

Initiatives may be instigated by staff members (and occasionally students) from any level in the school hierarchy, though those which are actually adopted tend to have been introduced by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

The idea for the initiative may result from a member of staff attending a CPD event, or LA meeting; it may arise from a personal enthusiasm or it may come as a result of requirements for Ofsted, the school development plan or other pressure.

Staff often come back from a course with a “toolkit” and then enthuse to colleagues about the potential benefits for the school. Individual, enthusiastic staff are vital when new initiatives are to be driven forward, particularly in primary schools.

External pressures clearly have added weight as they are often essentially unavoidable. At present, chief among pressures is the demand for constant improvement in school performance. This appears to dominate the decision-making process at many levels.

2.2 Initiation processes

Ideas for whole school initiatives are often considered first by the head teacher, who may discuss them informally with senior leaders and get some early feedback.

In secondary schools, usually there are formal SLT meetings and new initiatives are discussed at this level before decisions are made, then cascaded to other colleagues. In primaries this may be the head and deputy or subject coordinator (or equivalent). Some primary leaders also state that at times the headteacher simply pushes through the initiative and that this is appropriate in some cases.

The major consideration for undertaking any new initiative is the impact on the pupils and whether it will benefit them. This is often driven by the school improvement plan, particularly if a school is in special measures. This plan will have identified a series of priorities, often based on Ofsted action plans and modified during the intervening period by the school's SLT.

Costs are thought about carefully and new ideas are often piloted, for example with a small group of participants, or for a short period, then evaluated by the SLT.

Increasingly, the student voice is very much part of the decision-making process: either formally (for example via school councils), or informally through discussion in tutor time, for instance. However, these consultations are rarely seen as being significant in the initiation process -

except in occasional circumstances where a school council had identified a need.

Governors are involved at an early stage by some leaders, particularly if it is a major initiative, as it is seen as important in these circumstances to obtain their support early. In most cases however, senior leaders consider that governors need not be involved in decision-making processes, rather that they be kept informed via meetings. Governors most frequently act as a way of supporting in a relatively informal way, for example via a link governor.

In smaller schools, particularly primaries, decision-making processes place a high degree of reliance on knowledge of staff skills, interests and other commitments. In these environments, staff support is crucial and SLTs aim to identify a named leader for the initiative as a higher priority than in larger schools. Primary schools generally report a very high level of enthusiasm and skill among their staff and rarely feel that initiatives which have clear benefits would be poorly supported.

Some initiatives may rely on the availability of a small number of staff with a particular set of skills or expertise - this may drive schools to introduce these initiatives sooner than they might otherwise if they are worried about staff turnover. An example given during discussion with primary schools identified in particular the lack of ICT skills among staff: one school introduced a learning platform earlier than it might otherwise have done because there was a member of staff with the required ICT skills who might well leave in the near future.

3 Implementation of strategies

3.1 School improvement

Leaders of new initiatives are expected to present carefully their proposals and to justify ways in which the new idea supports the school improvement plan. An action plan is devised for implementation and this increasingly identifies ways in which it will be evaluated.

School improvement plans are used to drive new projects forward and if initiatives are linked to the school improvement plan (showing the ways in which they benefit the school, link to the budget, identify actions and staff and indicate ways in which they will be evaluated), then they will be more likely to be successful.

“ If it doesn't quite link with the school improvement plan then it really depends on budget and cost because most of our budget costing for school improvement is already engaged in the school improvement plan ... ”

Evaluation often involves monitoring the school performance and checking that pupils are enthusiastic about the project.

“ You can't argue with results and the enthusiasm of the children as well as the staff. ”

Performance may not be solely related to examination results, however. Schools are increasingly using a range of measures to evaluate initiatives, for example the effect on attendance and punctuality, or the gender balance in sets.

In some schools, teachers work closely with the School Council and get direct feedback from the children as to whether the initiative is working well. Where children come up with the ideas themselves it is reported that these strategies are effective, for example, a quiet area in the playground at lunchtime.

“ I tend to work closely with kids and the school council to identify what they want and what would be successful for them, so they feel they've got a bit of ownership in decision making across the school. ”

Schools feel pressure to achieve in certain areas, for example, in league tables and subjects that can be judged by results. Other benefits may be felt by schools in the longer term: often whole school initiatives in particular yield results only after a number of years and results are more difficult to measure.

“ as the workload increases as the year goes on and it is a very exam driven school, that sometimes those priorities get put to one side because, ultimately, the results are it, really. ”

These results may also be implicit rather than explicit, based on (reasonable) assumptions about benefits. For example, increased attendance of poorly motivated pupils would be assumed to be a desirable outcome, but may be difficult to define and would expect to have effects only after a longer period of time.

Where initiatives are more nebulous it is felt that it is important to assess the benefit to each child and then if clear benefits are seen staff, governors and parents will all come on board to help achieve success.

Primary schools don't tend to measure success by quantitative analysis but more by qualitative outcomes. Schools obviously are aware that Ofsted want to see that new initiatives are monitored and evaluated and therefore more formalised.

3.2 Implementation

The first practical step in implementation of the initiative action plan is usually to identify a leader (or team) to deliver it. These are usually chosen on the basis of either curriculum expertise or on the basis of responsibilities within the SLT. Alternatively, it may well be the enthusiastic member of staff who had tabled the idea in the first place.

Schools feel leaders are very important and if the leadership is strong then the initiative is more likely to be successful. Sometimes colleagues are additionally motivated by the need to take on a whole school initiative in order to fulfil the requirements of their CPD.

Staff have performance management targets and if these can be linked to implementing a new initiative then that is an effective way of driving new ideas forward.

3.3 Roll out

Primary leaders in particular consider that training is the key in actually implementing new strategies. It is

perhaps more important in this phase because of lower staff numbers and therefore relatively less combined expertise. The CPD can be effected through staff meetings, inset days and then peer teaching, particularly for aspects of delivering the curriculum.

Sharing the vision of the initiative across the whole school is an important next step. Where team leaders have clear targets in the school improvement plan, and these can be easily achieved and monitored, then new initiatives are more likely to be successful.

In many cases teachers feel like initiatives are imposed on them 'from on high'. In some cases where senior management decide to take on initiatives, teachers feel like many questions remain unanswered. If staff don't have a thorough understanding of aims and benefits of the initiative, and don't therefore 'believe' in it, it is difficult to roll out with students.

“ it gets to the point where you go, well, I've just been told to do it and a kid's not interested at that point and if they're not interested, you're not going to be interested either ”

Parents are often consulted at the roll out stage and, where possible, their opinions are taken into account. However, parental consultation is rarely incorporated into the actual decision-making process - it is usually for information purposes and is carried out on an informal basis. Primary schools appear to be more likely to use questionnaires and parents forums and to seek parental support. This is partly a cultural difference with secondary schools and partly a reflection of a greater need, primary schools having fewer resources upon which to draw.

The need for this sharing of vision is well understood by school leadership teams: the demands on staff are great and many teachers feel the burden of new initiatives, so it essential that these are well supported, particularly when the benefits are not immediately perceived.

For some initiatives, a culture shift is needed and there is an inherent understanding this has to happen over a period of time. This may involve selective recruitment, a programme of active CPD, or other series of measures planned and carefully monitored.

3.4 Barriers to adoption

Schools find it difficult to generalise about barriers to initiatives beyond "time" and "money" and these they qualify with some uncertainty.

Time restraints are perhaps more significant in smaller schools and in particular in primary schools. The perceived need to identify a key member of staff to lead the initiative is the significant factor, perhaps. While a secondary teacher might be able to benefit from scheduled regular non-contact time to help deliver a programme, primary teachers feel that teaching and

learning suffer from any discontinuity. This is particularly keenly felt at present as guaranteed planning, preparation and assessment time (PPA), while welcome, has already reduced regular contact time.

Time for CPD is another barrier, again particularly in primary schools, where the need appears to be more keenly felt and the problems attached to its provision (see above) more difficult to overcome.

All schools feel the burden of current initiatives to some extent and the barrier described as "time" appears to reflect the concern that there is already a large number of constraints which distract from the main aim of classroom teaching.

Money is obviously an issue, again for smaller schools, and even where a 2-3 year financial payback is achievable, schools are rarely able to contemplate investing to make savings. It is only in the past year that schools have been allowed three year budgets and there has been little incentive for longer term financial planning before now. Cultures may need to adjust to the new financial arrangements before there is any change in this regard.

Money generally equates to time in schools, particularly when considering introducing new initiatives, where the greatest demand is on staff time, when the arguments presented above become most relevant.

For initiatives which do not have an obvious potential benefit for teaching and learning (and hence performance) the twin barriers of time and money are often enough to prevent their uptake. In these cases a tide of opinion (often societal, rather than purely school-based) is required in order for the barriers to be breached.

Staff inertia, usually related to the existing burden of initiatives, is a third commonly perceived barrier - hence leadership and the need for a shared vision is paramount.

“ other Government initiatives that bombard us, like the APP, the new frameworks, you've got that kind of thing goes straight to the top of your list, then you've got your, there's stuff that's driven by school self evaluation, stuff that you know you need to improve on and it would come down, I know, for us, it has to stay quite low on the list because there's too many other things that we'd be pressurised to do. ”

It appears that a combination of these three factors acts to deter schools from adopting new strategies. Since the advent of the National Curriculum there have been a great many changes to content, assessment, monitoring practices, strategies (eg for literacy and numeracy) as well as the introduction of new subjects. PPA and the increase in the number and level of responsibility of support staff have increased in an attempt to support this, but schools do not necessarily feel that these developments go far enough. The prime interest of

teachers is in teaching and learning and they perceive that many initiatives simply get in the way of this.

“ as a teacher, I very often feel under-prepared, under-trained for another initiative to come along and it's sort of there it is, get on with it. ”

If the school improvement plan were a palimpsest, there are many initiatives which schools would be interested in taking on, but because they need to fit in with everything else that goes on in school certain things have to be given priority over others.

Often school initiatives are not adopted or fail because they are not followed up outside school. Teachers comment that the healthy schools initiative and the environment are two important issues that their school is currently doing very little about. These can be difficult things to carry forward in school, they say, because even if work is done in schools, it isn't necessarily taking place at home and in the community more widely.

“ that really is within the school and the school environment and that doesn't carry on outside school ”

For a school community-based initiative to be successful pupils need to understand what it is and how it will help them. It is also important to empower the students and give them a sense of responsibility in order to maintain their involvement.

“ My feeling is that you have to give the responsibility to the kids and the more you sort of empower them and hand the project over to them, obviously supervising it, the more involved they'll become. ”

4 Interest in EE and ESD

4.1 Levels of awareness

None of the schools in the study had an environmental or sustainability policy and the idea seemed to be novel to most participants.

As elsewhere in society, there is a relatively high degree of awareness of “the environment” as an issue in schools - most have some sort of recycling practices in place, in some case supported by their LAs. All appear to be aware of those practices which also have economic impact, such as energy saving measures. Some primary schools have a school garden where children can grow their own vegetables and they see these as being relevant to environmental education.

“

In our school garden area, at the moment, we don't have a lot because it's November but in the proper times of year we have, they grown their own vegetable, each class has got its own little vegetable plot and garden area and they grow their own vegetables and they get to eat them, etcetera.

”

Some schools report an interest in renewable resources such as using rain-water. School leaders prefer to use electronic systems, rather than using lots of paper, for example, the use of emails.

Sustainability is understood by teachers to mean a broader consideration of environmental issues. However, there is generally low awareness of specific school-based issues or those related to sustainability in general. The Tilbury and Wortman sustainability skills mean little to teachers, whether in the school context or generally, though there is some confluence with existing practices in schools, carried out without the banner of sustainability.

SLT leaders in both primary and secondary schools volunteered ‘eco-schools’ as an environment-related schools initiative which they were aware of, though participants had been selected from schools which were not actively involved in any such initiatives, so their understanding of what any such initiative might involve was slight.

4.2 Current practices

School staff who are most engaged with the concept of sustainability are those for whom it is a curriculum aspect, namely secondary geography teachers. For these subject specialists it is also likely to be of greater interest than for those for whom interests are more altruistic.

Primary schools may have visitors from various groups who come into school to talk about recycling and energy efficiency, or engage in related drama work, but this does not seem to be a permanent fixture in school calendars and is more to do with educating about sustainability rather than educating for it.

“

We have the Wild Waste Show in Oxfordshire which is a van that comes round to the school and parks in the car park and the children go in there and they do different sessions for the different age groups on issues like recycling and that's all free of charge.

”

Projects such as those involving external visitors are difficult to sustain: they are rarely enshrined in the curriculum and do not become incorporated into policy. Use of external agencies is difficult in this regard because continued availability is not guaranteed.

Primary children are very aware of all these issues and there is enthusiasm from them to join in with activities. Very young children seem to be particularly motivated by environmental issues.

“

Younger children have got the message to ‘reduce, re-use and recycle’, that's been instilled in them from a wide variety of people and they have got the message

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They enjoy being monitors, having the responsibility for being, for example, recycling monitors, light monitors, or compost monitors. The children enjoy having a special badge and having a sense of responsibility.

There appears to be growing interest in walking to school projects (such as the walking bus) in particular ones where there is some sort of reward for the individual children.

“

In our school, the motivator for the children is actually just being the monitors, so they can be the light monitors, we have recycling monitors, being a good old country school

”

Although participants had considered that their schools were not involved in environmental activities in school, teachers mentioned a range of projects which related to environmental issues, including recycling, building wind turbines, vegetable allotments, recycling computers, and breakfast meetings for staff interested in eco-projects. Teachers talk enthusiastically about the work that their school are doing in this regard.

“ we’ve done a lesson where we’ve explained how much it actually costs to recycle a computer or a games console as opposed to just shoving it in the bin ”

Leaders for sustainability projects may come from all parts of the school community, teachers become a sort of ‘champion’ for environmental issues within their department, whatever their other role in school is. These teachers then become role-models for other staff and pupils. Teachers think it important to be good role-models for the pupils in this respect, and to be seen to be recycling, not wasting energy and being careful with resources.

They consider that this organic uptake of initiatives, starting with enthusiastic and motivated members of staff or pupils is preferable to having policies forced upon them, though leaders accept that whole school adoption would be much more likely in the event that environmental considerations were incorporated into Ofsted inspections or other nationally monitoring strategies.

4.3 Motivations, responsibilities and priorities

One of the main motivators is that the sense of being a good citizen is a reward in itself. Teachers appear to be generally motivated to teach children that what you do on a local level can have a global impact.

Teachers feel that environmental concerns can be very easily covered in curriculum subjects such as geography and in whole school cross-curricular areas such as citizenship, this can then lead on to forward thinking discussions about sustainability. Leaders feel that all teachers have responsibility for teaching citizenship and for educating for sustainability.

“ it’s already there, it needs to be, it needs to be at the forefront rather than sitting at the back. ”

Sustainability is considered by schools as very difficult to measure and therefore it is not well monitored, except in a very general way. It does feature in some schools SEF (Self Evaluation Framework) documentation, illustrating ways in which the schools are dealing with environmental issues.

Schools do not have adequate transferable funding to support EE/ESD initiatives. If funding came ring-fenced for environmental issues it would be used for that but generally money is used to improve performance and to meet the needs of the pupils. Heads would welcome ring-fenced funding and would support this drive.

If asked by their SLT to take on an environmental initiative, teachers believe they would approach this

with enthusiasm because it is something that they personally care about and can be passionate about. Some think that a degree of incentive might be required to get everybody involved, however.

“ I’d feel good about it. I think this is about, you know, there’d be something that was, you know, interesting to me as well that I know you can get quite passionate about ”

“ you’ll be entered into a raffle and you can win a Waitrose voucher, suddenly all of the staff were interested ”

The key motivation has to be ‘imagining a better future’ rather than anything to do with exams and results.

Good PR for the school is also a key motivator to becoming involved. If a school was seen to be having a positive impact upon the community through their environmental strategy, this is likely to be impressive to parents and to Ofsted.

For the barriers to be overcome, teachers need to see that these policies can be flexible and taken on in different ways. One participant suggested that an information pack, with different examples of how other schools have taken it on with, for example, only a small budget, would be hugely encouraging.

4.4 Curriculum

Teachers regard environmental education as a very cross-curricular issue, and they are already teaching aspects of it in citizenship, PSHE, RE and science. There is a feeling, however, that it tends to take a bit of a ‘back seat’ and needs to be brought to the forefront to reflect its importance. One teacher commented that the way it is taught at the moment is quite ‘dry’ and therefore does not inspire a lot of interest in the pupils.

“ it does tend to be quite dry and I think it’s approaching it and getting the resources in place to actually make it come alive for them and make it interesting. ”

While schools are judged on “league tables” they feel rather pushed in one direction. But, with the introduction of a more flexible curriculum and the reduction in SATs heads feel that hopefully a more integrated curriculum can be delivered, including ESD.

They consider that EE/ESD could easily be identified in citizenship, in which case it would be delivered.

Teachers do not want to receive formulaic lesson plans to support delivery. Part of the enjoyment of teaching is being able to create your own plans and use resources creatively. Ideas and support for developing these in the ways in which teachers might individually prefer would be more welcome.

“

I would never turn down any resource that's handed my way because I can always still make it my own, so I would, I would be quite happy to see somebody else's approach, even if I look at it and say, well, I really wouldn't do it like that.

”

Primary leaders feel that most new initiatives are strongly tied into the curriculum so that time allocation is not so much of an issue, but with EE and ESD work at the moment, it is not seen as a priority by the Government and therefore not by schools.

Citizenship is becoming more important, particularly in secondary schools, and certainly young people see the environment and sustainability as very important. Leaders recognise the importance of educating early to help these young people develop good habits in, for example, recycling, but teachers feel that local authorities must be seen to be having excellent schemes to collect the paper otherwise encouraging the pupils is ineffective.

4.5 Potential

Secondary leaders say that if extra staff time was available they would use it to release a member of staff to recycle or set up other environmental projects. They also felt that time was needed in the curriculum to justify carrying out environmental work. Teachers are concerned about fitting everything in as it is.

Where clusters of schools work well together, it was felt that environmental concerns could be tackled collectively.

Leaders in secondary schools felt that staff should be able to deliver EE/ESD at the moment, but specific training may be needed, if only to boost confidence. Given their lack of understanding of the wider issues pertaining to sustainability however, this may be an optimistic viewpoint, or simply reflect a lack of any real ambition, other than to recycle and set up simple “green” good practices.

Teachers themselves state that they lack the confidence in their own knowledge about environmental issues to teach their pupils about it. Teachers like the idea of having case studies from other schools, so they can see immediately what planning is required and what the benefits will be. This could be in the form of written case studies, or online tutorials.

“

we could get one of those people to explain, not only what motivated them, but what they had to do to get it up and running to a sustainable level, I think that would give us ideas that we could then sort of twiddle with a little bit

”

Case studies would also help classroom teachers to be able to put the idea to their SLT more confidently.

“

this will work, here are the benefits, here's somebody else who's done it, this is why it works and this is why I feel we should do it

”

5 Policies into Practice

Some leaders don't currently feel a lot of support or enthusiasm from their LA on these issues. They also consider that local businesses don't have the resources to support partnership programs in the current climate. Some leaders do think they may be able to get their local business involved if it would help their PR, however.

The sort of complementary initiatives that are currently taking place are very often linked to 'Healthy schools', for example one school sources all its meat locally and it is organic. Environmental issues are often considered as part of other activities, for example as evaluation activities: in a technology unit the pupils had to build a battery operated race car and then think about the environmental aspects as part of their work. These initiatives are not necessarily embedded into policies, but could be uncovered via a school-wide audit of practices in order to inform the development of policies.

Leaders do think that evidence of impact is important and if you can show that you've raised your 'Value-added' by being part of an environmental programme then that would be beneficial to its success. One suggestion for measuring this was a pupil attitude survey as a good way to demonstrate that attitudes are changing. This would then be part of the school self-evaluation. Parents and pupils are also surveyed (about other issues) in some schools and then the survey is repeated in six months to see if there has been any impact. Heads thought this would work with environmental initiatives.

5.1 What would make schools take sustainability more seriously?

Suggestions from leaders for improving uptake in schools from leaders, included:

- If issues are included in the Action Plan then it's much more likely to happen.
- Outside speakers could be brought into school, so that the whole school all understands what sustainability is.
- It would be helpful if other schools could share what has worked for them.
- Any kind of award for the school, similar to those with 'Healthy Schools' - this then becomes good PR for the school.
- Heads also would want to have ongoing support from the 'experts' in this area so that they have a clear direction.
- A competition for schools may be a good incentive, so that a group of schools could all work at saving energy over a year, and then the one that had been the most successful wins a relevant prize.
- It is felt that good outside speakers are very important but also that poor speakers (to children) are not effective and can damage an incentive.
- Some Heads can see a benefit to having a 'sustainability day' (with outside support) with

the year 7's as part of the Key Stage 3 curriculum.

Teachers consider that pupils need a 'hands-on' approach to learning about the environment and sustainability, and it helps to be able to relate their own experiences with those around the world.

“ they were sort of in contact with some of the kids in Kenya who'd also sort of had problems due to the environment and somehow that made it, that kind of made the whole world smaller ”

The main reasons provided for not doing more, nor for having an environment policy included:

- Simply not a priority at the moment and unlikely to be without a strong Government initiative.
- Not judged on this, yet leaders feel that nothing changes until they are put under pressure to do it.

6 Summary thoughts from leaders and teachers

Secondary

Sustainability is a far wider concept than initially thought of simply in terms of recycling etc. Schools need further funding to do this work.

Schools need to look beyond the obvious and when making any new plans making sure they are sustainable.

This initiative is about the future and the education of our young people. It is crucial that we begin to develop this in an integrated way.

EE/ESD is very positive and leaders need to be enthusiastic about developing these initiatives.

A whole day of CPD would be a useful way forward, it would need to involve the whole school community.

Primary

Schools are keen to be involved, in rural areas particularly, but it is difficult to fit into the curriculum.

Walking to school is very successful and the children are rewarded for doing this. Energy surveys are also good to do and possibly doing some of the 'eco-schools'. Gardening clubs are very popular, as an after school provision.

Lots of heads are already keen to do recycling, garden clubs, environmental projects, walking to school, but as soon as it became a "form-filling" initiative and awards that need accrediting, then it would lose the community feel of these initiatives.

Headteachers feel positive about what they are doing and want to continue to develop these initiatives.

Where heads do a lot already at home they would like to do more at school but if it's not part of the curriculum or Ofsted demanding it, then it won't happen in school.

7 Recommendations

Above all schools need to be convinced of the worth of taking part in EE/ESD initiatives. At present there seem to be few very compelling arguments for schools to take part; at least few which impact on current performance and monitoring strategies. The pressure resulting from Ofsted inspection and league tables means that programmes of activity which impact on these are given very much higher priority in schools than those which do not do so convincingly.

Two levels of action are suggested by the findings of this consultation.

7.1 Policy level actions

7.1.1 Ofsted

Lobbying to have Ofsted incorporate relevant criteria into SEF inspections would, if successful, be a big motivator to schools to become involved. There appears to be some scope for this under the Every Child Matters agenda:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

7.1.2 QCA and examinations boards

A programme of identification of good practices such as those exemplified in section 4.2 could help develop a case for greater prominence of environmental issues in some specifications.

The confluence of skills for developing education for sustainability and some learning skills also has potential to allow greater prominence in syllabuses.

At present, skills are still a relatively small component of most exam courses, however forthcoming curriculum reforms are inkling more strongly in this direction. For example the changes to GCSE MFL in 2009 will see a much greater focus on skills, and current proposals for English and maths the following year, show similar suggestions.

Furthermore, the new Diplomas have a greater skills component and there are already pressures for this to be increased. A-level review in 2012 is also widely predicted to result in such developments.

7.2 School level actions

Local level initiatives seem to offer the greatest potential and primary schools are probably the best target audience.

7.2.1 Demonstrating the benefits

Awareness raising - especially of the ways in which other schools have benefited from participation - appears to be the prime need. This would be best achieved by face to face contact, however, this is very difficult to achieve as it requires a level of interest in the schools to allow staff members to attend.

A curriculum focus does not appear to offer any great attraction to schools, so it could be that teaching and learning assistants may be suitable target roles for face to face approaches as they are more easily released from classes. The findings of this report suggest that ideas introduced by a member of staff who is enthusiastic are likely to be considered, regardless of role.

Senior leaders are obviously the best target audience overall, given the findings that initiatives introduced by these members of staff are more likely to be adopted. Initial messaging to these leaders, with recommendations that events are open to any level of staff member (or indeed parent or governor) to attend may prove fruitful.

An alternative approach might be to use Teachers TV, or adopt their approach, of using short video clips, delivered online, to illustrate the benefits of participation, based on school case studies. These could then be disseminated via partner websites.

7.2.2 Offering incentives

Although it was not a main focus of this research, some suggestions were made by respondents about some activities which might work in schools. These included:

- A monitor scheme for pupils, with badges and packs
- A competition relating to environmental issues
- Collaborative working between clusters of schools
- School awards
- Energy surveys and energy saving initiatives
- Visiting experts perhaps via whole day activities for children
- Funding for training

7.3 Conclusion

Given the existing burdens on schools it appears that the courses of action most likely to have a real impact are those at national policy level. School level actions are likely only ever to be adopted by enthusiasts, in which case they will be difficult to maintain.

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