

Ecoversity: the University of Bradford applies Lancaster's theory to a whole-institution change initiative

From formal theory to real-world solutions

Research impact story



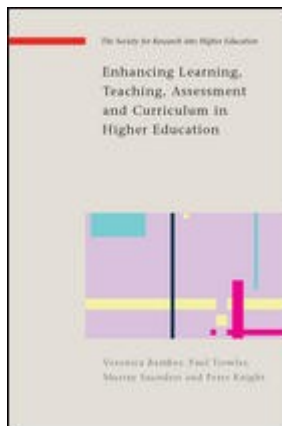
Launched in 2005, [Ecoversity](#) was the name given to Bradford's strategic programme for sustainable development. Through Ecoversity, Bradford university embarked on one of the largest whole-institution sustainable development and education-for-sustainable development curriculum change processes within the UK HE sector.

A constellation of features were addressed: campus regeneration; curriculum development; staff, student and wider community engagement and changed practices and processes - each influencing and supporting the others.



The development, delivery and achievements of Ecoversity and the education-for-sustainable development curriculum programme (2005-2011) have been described by its leader, Prof. Peter Hopkinson in various places (Hopkinson *et al.*, 2008; Hopkinson *et al.*, 2010; Hopkinson, 2010; Trowler, Hopkinson and Comerford Boyes, 2013).

How did Lancaster's sociocultural theory of change assist the Ecoversity programme?



Professors Peter Hopkinson and Peter James of Bradford University say in their 2013 chapter entitled "Whole Institutional Change towards sustainability universities":

"socio-cultural theory...proved helpful in understanding many of the early problems faced by Ecoversity, and in shaping subsequent actions...it can ...be applied without modification to consider change for sustainability within universities" (235-6)

They extensively cite [Enhancing Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Theory, Cases, Practices](#) (2009) by Bamber, Trowler, Saunders and Knight as strong influences in this, showing how the development of Ecoversity, and their leadership of the initiative, was founded on the principles set out there.

[Professor Paul Trowler](#) was invited by Professor Hopkinson to give a keynote at a conference on Ecoversity at Bradford; *Tomorrow's Sustainable Universities* (July 2010). The speech was later reviewed under the title [At Last Some Sense About Change](#).

References

Bamber, V., Trowler, P., Saunders, M. and Knight, P. (eds) (2009) [Enhancing Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Theory, Cases, Practices](#). Open University Press/SRHE.

(Prof. Roni Bamber is an alumna of our Doctoral Programme in Educational Research. The late Prof. Peter K. Knight was one of our colleagues. Profs Trowler and Saunders co-direct here@lancaster)

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Hopkinson, P., (2010) The Potential for Sustainable Development to Reshape University Culture And Action. *International Journal of Environment and Sustainable Development* 9, 4: 378-391.

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Trowler, P., Hopkinson, P. and Comerford Boyes, L. (2013) [Institutional Change Toward a Sustainability Agenda: How far can theory assist?](#) *Tertiary Education and Management*, 19, 4. 267-279.