

Extended exploratory stay at University of British Columbia

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From October 18th – November 2nd, 2015 I had the opportunity to undertake an extended exploratory stay at the University of British Columbia in order to learn more about sustainability on campus as well as about teaching and research with regard to issues of education for sustainability. I was supported by FUB with a travel grant. One of the more general focuses of my stay was to learn how and to what extent education for sustainable development is being implemented into curricula and how this process is being supported and tracked; this is what this report refers to in particular. Furthermore, I wanted to explore potential options for a collaborative development of teaching modules.

Because of the efforts made by the members of the Center of Interactive Research on Sustainability (<http://cirs.ubc.ca/>) to identifying research and teaching on sustainability issues on campus as well as to connecting colleagues who conduct research, teaching or other projects on education for sustainable development, it was easy to figure out staff and faculty. A researcher-database (<https://sustain.ubc.ca/research/find-researcher>) allows identifying colleagues with similar research interests and teaching topics. Besides, Jean Marcus PhD, who is the Associate Director of the Teaching, Learning and Research Office of the UBC Sustainability Initiative (<https://sustain.ubc.ca/our-commitment/ubc-sustainability-initiative>), kindly brought me into contact e.g. with Victoria Smith, Director of Communications and Community Engagement. It was no problem at all to arranging appointments with staff and faculty members, although some of them had not heard that much about the framework and intentions of the University Alliance for Sustainability. Colleagues enabled me to get a glance on their work and discuss on main principles of their approaches in education for sustainable development as well as to think about possible ways and issues of collaborative teaching and researching. Among specific content wise aspects, I would like to point out that I very much appreciated to learn more about

- I. How to make efforts in teaching and conducting research on sustainability more visible, i.e.
 - How staff and faculty with similar research and teaching topics are connected,
 - How the number of classes with sustainability contents is monitored as well as
 - How staff and faculty are invited to contribute to embedding sustainability into teaching.
- a) Members of the Teaching-, Research- and Learning-Office developed a set of key words, by which UBC's course catalogues are scanned in order to detect sustainability related classes. As this desk research is done every year, the office is capable of showing a continuous increase in the percentage of those classes, in which sustainable development is a content of their class-schedules (although only the titles of the respective classes are considered). Furthermore, efforts in developing and implementing a so-called 'sustainable pathway' are underway, addressed to freshmen from all departments.
- b) In order to assist in connecting people on campus with similar focus areas, the Teaching-, Learning- and Research-Office surveys the UBC's staff and faculty webpages. Upon their approval staff's and faculty's websites and contact data are included into in the aforementioned database.
- c) Among other duties, the Teaching-, Learning- and Research Office awards so-called 'sustainability- fellowships'. Applications from staff and faculty from all departments are appreciated. The fellowships are supposed to be a support in implementing sustainability into teaching or to review curricula in order to e.g. highlight issues of social or ecological sustainability. As the fellowships do not mean that faculty is exempted from teaching but

receives seed money, some departments recruit staff in order to rework or develop curricula and courses under the supervision of the sustainability fellows.

- II. The possibilities of creating and using the campus as a learning center. E.g., there are several gardens run by students, staff and faculty, such as he
 - d) 'Roots on the Roof'-gardening project (e.g. <http://www.landfood.ubc.ca/events/summersolstice-celebration-roots-on-the-roof-garden/>) located on top of the new constructed student union building and run by students of various departments, e.g. land and food systems and education. Students cultivate vegetables that they sell partly on self-organized markets at campus and partly to a restaurant located on campus. Contact: Dr. Susan Gerofsky from the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy.
 - e) UBC Farm (<http://cfe.educ.ubc.ca/ubc-orchard-garden/>) which is located at the south end of campus. Not only the farm is used by staff and faculty of diverse departments in order to do research e.g. on sustainable agriculture, conditions of growth and gain of plants etc.. There are also specific programs for school classes, e.g. the "Intergenerational Landed Learning program", run by faculty from the department of education (Stacy Friedman) including volunteers of the community. I was involved in a project day of a school class at the UBC Farm and had the chance to get to know the teacher's experiences with this kind of outdoor education. Contact: Stacy Friedman from the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy.
 - f) Orchard Garden (e.g. <http://cfe.educ.ubc.ca/ubc-orchard-garden/>), that is dedicated to understand sustainability and environmental education holistically, and that is also used for teaching mathematics vividly. Contact: Susan Gerofsky.
- III. far reaching initiatives in which staff and faculty interact with people from community, in order to spread conceptual knowledge into real world projects and vice versa, e.g. in initiatives that aim for extending the amount of outdoor education on campus and beyond are put into action in the landed learning project, to that school classes from Vancouver apply for. Contact: Stacy Friedman; Dr. Hartley Banack and Dr. Robert VanWhynesberghe from the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy and the Department of Educational Studies. Besides, students and staff from municipality administration are brought together at the so-called CityStudio, which aims at helping to develop and implement social innovations for sustainability (<http://citystudiovancouver.com>).
- IV. Apart from these selected and rather general impressions, the extended exploratory stay enabled me to connect with staff and faculty and at the end, first ideas aroused concerning a collaboratively developed, theory-based and action-oriented teaching project, in which students would be enabled to develop, realize and evaluate a real world project and to write a case studies on their experiences, that again might serve as an input for further classes and / or as a resource for case analysis on the transfer of education innovations. But this is yet to elaborate, among other things...