

Libby Grundy

Sir Neil Chalmers, Director of the Natural History Museum, wrote recently:

'How we generate enough wealth to enjoy a good quality of life; how we organise our society so that this quality is available to all; how we do so in a way that protects our wonderfully rich but fragile natural world are all things that, to a greater or lesser degree, are understood to be important. But learning about sustainable development is more than learning about economic development, social policy or environmental protection. It is a question of learning about how these three fundamental areas are intimately related.'

(Chalmers, 2003)

In the past year we have seen significant events in education for sustainable development. The draft strategy presented to Ministers by the Government's Sustainable Development Education Panel formed the basis of the DfES *Sustainable Development Action Plan for Education and Skills*, published last September.

The Council for Environmental Education (CEE) contributed to the work of the Panel, chaired by Sir Geoffrey Holland, and acted as adviser to the House of Commons Environmental Audit Select Committee whose report, *Learning the Sustainability Lesson* (July, 2003), also encouraged the DfES action plan.

The CEE was founded as a charity in 1968. Its work is currently funded by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the DfES. CEE is an 'umbrella' body in England, comprising 75 national member organisations, all of which have an established interest in or policy for education for sustainable development. National members include government agencies; profes-

sional bodies; subject associations such as ASE and the Geographical Association (see page 8); and others such as the Field Studies Council (see page 10). Visit www.cee.org.uk and click on CEE Network for a list of national members. CEE works on behalf of member organisations to influence policy and practice, and to increase the effectiveness of the sector.

Through policy development we aim to create a climate that supports members' interests. Recent successes include strengthening environmental and sustainable development issues in the National Curriculum, and strengthening the role of learning (not least in science) in the England Biodiversity Strategy. CEE is currently engaging with the review of the UK Sustainable Development Strategy and the proposals for the reform of 14-19 education.

CEE also takes a strategic role in developing practice by helping organisations work together and learn from each other. A working group, supported by Defra, DfES and National Grid Transco, is currently developing good practice guidelines for evaluation. Also, as a contribution to raising standards of educational resources, CEE member organisations have developed a code of practice for the production of resources that support education for sustainable development (CEE/DfEE/DETR, 1999).

The Code sets out ten principles, each supported by guidance statements and questions. For example, does the resource:

- link environmental, economic and social issues?
- distinguish between opinion and fact?
- state the interests of producers or sponsors?
- represent the needs and values of different groups?
- develop critical thinking, decision making and problem-solving skills?

Climate change

- state relevance to curricula or qualifications?
- state its purpose and target audience?
- minimise environmental impact in its production/distribution?

There is a wide variety of teaching and learning materials in this field and CEE maintains a database and reference library in Reading. The database, some of which is available online, helps teachers locate materials to support specific topics and key stages. It can also be used to analyse existing provision and inform the production of new materials.

Since the introduction of the revised National Curriculum in 2000, CEE has identified 225 new resources for schools, with 59 relevant to the science curriculum. Most are paper-based only, some are multi-packs, a few are stand-alone CD-ROMs, and a small number are stand-alone videos. The most targeted key stages are 2, 3 and 4, with few materials aimed at the foundation stage.

The topics for which the largest number of resources have been produced are global perspectives, citizenship, science and technology, farming/food, marine/water, animal welfare, school travel and transport, and waste/recycling. A list of materials for climate change is in preparation. To view existing resources lists, visit www.cee.org.uk, click on Information Centre and then go to Resources.

References

- CEE/DfEE/DETR (1999) *Supporting sustainable development through educational resources: a voluntary code of practice*.
- Chalmers N. In Scott W. and Gough S. (2003) *Sustainable Development and Learning: framing the issues*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

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