



The Story of Green School Bali: an Integral Narrative of Education for Sustainability

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Abstract

Green School opened in September 2008, a new international school ready to offer children different learning experiences. Set in a beautiful natural environment on a site of almost 10 hectares spanning both sides of the Ayung River in Sibang Kaja village, the school is made of bamboo with learning spaces open to the air.

Our approach to education reflects our worldview and consciousness [1]. School education has the capacity to act as a prime facilitator in individual and cultural evolution but is mostly stuck in an outdated industrial era worldview [2]. 'Education for sustainability' captures the emerging sense of a need for change. It offers a way forward if our visions and actions are bold enough. Green School has accepted the challenge. Its positive, futures based mission is about 'empowering global citizens and green innovators who are inspired to take responsibility for the sustainability of the world' [3].

'The notion that human consciousness is currently evolving, in such a way that we can consciously participate in this process, is an emergent theme in academic research' [4]. Green School recognizes this and has an unequivocal desire to dialogue with others on the world stage.

An integral narrative will offer perspectives on the experiences, behaviour, culture, and systems at play at Green School and more [5]. The story will blend the researcher's authorial voice of omniscient narrator with those of the story's protagonists [6]. The intention is to explore, synthesize and capture all facets of the school to share with others seeking brighter futures in education.

This biographical account of Green School's holistic approach told through the hearts and minds of its innovators and community will provide a provocative story: one that challenges our capacities to dream and then build our dream.



1. Introduction

'Education for sustainability' has become the catch cry for many changes to education and schooling. 'Being green' on some level and to varying degrees is now permeating facets of people's lives in developed and developing nations alike. Sustainability is on the world stage and while the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) draws to a close, the challenges to reappraise

and redesign how to live our lives into the future are only just beginning. We need new models for learning that help us and our communities evolve. This research aims to challenge educators to reconsider the role of a school in a community; one designed and better suited to 21st century post-industrial life.

The intention is to capture how education practitioner Alan Wagstaff's idealistic picture for a village community school called '*Three Springs*' [7], combined with entrepreneurial jewellery-maker John Hardy's inspiration to become Green School Bali. '*Three Springs*' offers a tantalizing vision of a village containing 'all the ecological, biological and sociological elements needed to promote a sustainable, holistic, and quality lifestyle' [8]. The school is the heart of this place, providing purpose for the three springs of 'commercial, cultural and residential provision' through intrinsic and intricate connections with the people, the 'craftspeople, artists, families and individuals', and the ongoings of their village, 'the workshops, homes, farms, and businesses' [9]. Here 'emotional, kinesthetic and spiritual intelligences, and beauty are prized' [10]. John and Cynthia Hardy, who were determined to build a different kind of school, had found a blue-print to help turn their dream into reality.

What can be learnt from the story of Green School that might inspire other educators to reappraise the still prevalent mechanistic and often alienating approaches to schooling and challenge them to revise the role, appearance and operation of schools?

2. Overview of Green School

Green School Bali opened in September 2008, a new school ready to offer children different learning experiences. Set in a beautiful natural environment on a site of almost 10 hectares spanning both sides of the Ayung River in Sibang Kaja village, the school is made of bamboo with learning spaces open to the air. Mud-brick, stone, and alang-alang grass are also incorporated in the blend of sustainable building materials. Self-reliance through biogas, solar power, and hydroelectric vortex energy generation as well as organic permaculture gardens and animal husbandry further exemplifies the embodiment of sustainability in the school's practices in clear alignment with its foundational principle of 'learning by doing'.

3. A Tour and more

Taking a tour, listening to descriptions, and asking questions, it is clear Green School is abundantly aware that it takes more than sustainable construction practices to make this school 'green'. The school has adopted a unique educational approach that incorporates three components or 'frames of learning': an integral frame; an instructional frame and an experiential frame. A Steiner or Waldorf educational influence is evident in the integral frame which consists of consecutive sessions of thematic lessons that integrate physical, intellectual, emotional, and intrapersonal or spiritual challenges. The instructional frame encompasses tailored proficiency lessons for written English, Mathematics and a language other than home language comprising specific learning outcomes, individual learning plans and checkups. Through the experiential frame students have a five-faceted immersion into practical experiences of: the performing, visual and tactile arts; environmental education; health and physical education; social skills; and enterprise education. These manifest in age-appropriate activities, by bringing experts into the classroom, through experiences of workplaces, participation in real world scenarios, and opportunities of making a contribution [11]. While intent, setting, infrastructure and educational approach are key elements through which sustainability is at play at Green School there is much more. A bevy of tangible and intangible assets are contributing, as what 'being green' really means continues to evolve at Green School. Capturing these facets to share with others is the challenge.

3. Narrative to convey the story

Human beings are storying creatures. Story-telling whether oral or written is the way people have been passing on the knowledge of their lived experience down the ages. 'We make sense of the world and the things that happen to us by constructing narratives to explain and interpret events both to



ourselves and to other people' [12]. Narrative provides a medium to highlight concerns and explore glimpses of solutions. My research will be a story connecting people of Green School and their stories. Considering entwined life stories within their historical or indeed evolutionary context offers a multifaceted exploration as 'in the crystallization process, the writer tells the same tale from different points of view' [13].

4. Integral Theory

Everything about Green School hinges on its name. It has not taken on this name lightly. In telling the story of Green School it is vital to consider how every facet of the school contributes to making it green. Only an integral view can do this.

'The word integral means comprehensive, inclusive, non-marginalizing, embracing. Integral approaches to any field attempt to be exactly that: to include as many perspectives, styles, and methodologies as possible within a coherent view of the topic. In a certain sense, integral approaches are "meta-paradigms," or ways to draw together an already existing number of separate paradigms into an interrelated network of approaches that are mutually enriching' [14]. Wilber reduced the multitude of systems, models, and approaches to research about human potential to a model that uses five elements - quadrants, stages, lines, states and types. This conceptual map is referred to by the acronym AQAL, short for 'all quadrants all levels etc'.

Adopting Wilber's integral theory with its **I, We, It, Its** ways of viewing any phenomenon (see Figure 1), allows us to capture how experiences, behaviour, culture, and systems can synthesize to offer a coherent and authentic approach to education for sustainability, one cognisant of the essential contribution of each of these to the overall achievement of purpose, and success.



Fig. 1. The Four Quadrants [15]

Awareness that each of these four views can be considered objectively and subjectively offers eight perspectives, or zones, that have attracted different types of research. These zones, with subjective perspectives presented inside the circles, are depicted with a summarizing research methodology in Figure 2.

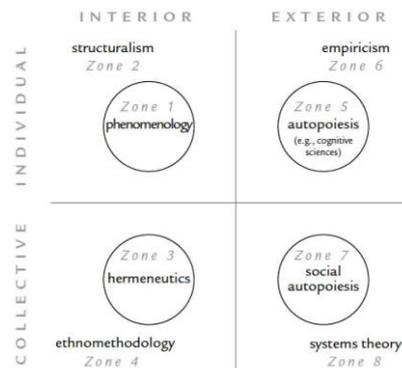


Fig. 2. The Eight Integral Perspectives [16]

Considering the eight perspectives together with examples of the other elements of integral theory which include all levels/stages/waves (of evolving consciousness), all lines (of developmental capacities), all states (of reality) and all types (of patterns) can offer a rich picture of Green School's approach. Adopting an integral treatise to capture this story is intended to highlight that 'education for sustainability' needs to be holistic if it is to achieve its mammoth task.

5. Storylines

These eight perspectives offer eight storylines, or lenses, through which people from Green School can focus their own 'being green' stories, be they subjective expressions or objective accounts of Green School experiences, culture, behaviour and systems. They provide opportunities to make contributions about: feelings; patterns of experience; being in the community; cultural networks; personal inner choices; activities; communication adaptation; and buildings, networks, technology and artefacts.

'Twelve ways of knowing' have been proposed by Esbjörn-Hargens as 'essential dimensions of an integral education' [17]. These phrases will be offered as prompts for contributors to consider when conveying their stories. Portraying the material gathered about Green School around these themes may help to offer others helpful suggestions for pursuing an integral approach to education for sustainability.

Upper Left (I) Educational Experiences <i>Contemplative Inquiry</i> <i>Critical Reflection</i> <i>Somatic Knowing</i> Integral Inquiry <i>Truthfulness</i>	Upper Right (It) Educational Behaviour <i>Skillful Action</i> <i>Practical Application</i> <i>Active Observation</i> Integral Action <i>Truth</i>
Lower Left (You, We) Educational Culture <i>Ethical Participation</i> <i>Perspectival Embrace</i> <i>Connective Encounters</i> Integral Participation <i>Justness</i>	Lower Right (Its) Educational Systems <i>Global Dynamism</i> <i>Social Sustainability</i> <i>Ecological Flourishing</i> Integral Dynamism <i>Functional Fit</i>

Fig. 3 The Twelve Ways of Knowing [17]

6. Evolving Consciousness

Considering 'education for sustainability' offers a special opportunity to question and re-evaluate our worldviews. It's easy to get caught up in one worldview and take the values associated with it as

given. But there are other possible worldviews. As we evolve, we may come to embrace those most fitting for the situations we face. One model of evolving consciousness called ‘*Spiral Dynamics*’ [18] maps and represents diverse worldviews, beliefs, and identities by eight colour-coded ‘*memes*’ or value systems. ‘Green’ is one of them and it is regarded as the launch-pad to higher realms.

7. The Future

Stories like this, of dreams envisioned and realized, help remind us that the futures of education can and should be different. Stories offer us the opportunities to imagine being other colours. Integrating green, as we seek to learn, and live sustainably, may lead us to them ...

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