

Teaching for Sustainability: an example from the Master Program in Biology

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In 2016 we started a Master Program in Ecology and Conservation Biology at the Biology Department at Karlstad University. Since the 1960s, the disciplines of Ecology and Conservation Biology have both been concerned with sustaining Earth's ecosystems and their inclusive biodiversity (see, e.g., Washington et al. 2017; Piccolo et al 2018). Ecology can be said to be the "original sustainability science" – it was ecologists who first recognized that Earth's life support systems were being endangered by anthropogenic activities (Rolston 2012). This led to the United Nation's 1972 Conference on The Human Environment in Stockholm, the first to recognize our global environmental crisis. Fast forward 50 years, and now the Swedish Government has declared that all universities must strive to do education for sustainable development, pursuing the 17 Sustainability Goals of Agenda 2030. But just what are we trying to sustain? Or develop? How will we teach for sustainability, or examine whether we have met our goals? (Kopnina 2012; Olsson et al. 2016). In this presentation I will describe how we address sustainability issues in two courses during the first term of the Master Program in Biology. I use this as a framework to demonstrate some ways in which teachers can relate their courses to the 17 UN Sustainability Goals.

References

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