

<b>Institution:</b> University of Gloucestershire		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UoA 23 - Education		
<b>Title of case study:</b> A Rounder Sense of Purpose: Developing educator competences in education for sustainable development		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2015 – 2018		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Dr Paul Vare	Senior Lecturer – Research	Sept 2013 – present day
Rick Millican	Senior Lecturer – Education	Sept 2008 – present day
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2017-2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N</b>		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>‘A Rounder Sense of Purpose’ (RSP) researched and validated a framework of educator competences in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Beyond influencing hundreds of individuals, strategic impacts include the adoption of the framework by Hungarian and Cypriot Governments within their compulsory teacher professional development programmes. The framework underpins accredited courses in The Netherlands, Italy and England plus training programmes covering Mediterranean states and the Caucuses. It is referenced by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe as a means by which Member States can identify learning outcomes in ESD. The project recently won a prestigious Green Gown Award in the Next Generation Learning and Skills category citing its international impact.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>‘A Rounder Sense of Purpose’ (RSP) adopted a participatory action research approach in order to define and develop an accessible competence framework for educators wishing to support Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The first research phase ran from December 2015 to July 2018 with a second phase running from October 2018 to August 2021. Funded by the European Union Erasmus+ programme, the total value of both phases is £660,457.</p> <p>The Phase One consortium, convened and led by the University of Gloucestershire, comprised the following members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Frederick University (Cyprus)</li> <li>- Tallinn University (Estonia)</li> <li>- Hungarian Research Teachers’ Association (Hungary)</li> <li>- Italian Association for Sustainability Science (Italy)</li> <li>- Duurzame PABO – a teacher education NGO (The Netherlands)</li> </ul> <p>Being a participatory research programme, a powerful impact had already been recorded among participating students and teachers during Phase One because of the way in which the framework successfully captured the variety of dimensions of ESD. All consortium members contributed to the main research output (Vare et al 2019) recording the process and its findings. By early 2021 this had been cited in 39 peer-reviewed publications.</p>		

The research itself began with literature reviews, including close scrutiny of an earlier competence framework, published in 2012 by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), which failed to gain widespread support because it had not been tested and therefore remained theoretical as well as overly complex. By contrast, RSP involved several rounds of structured consultation with teachers, NGOs, experts and Government officials, chiefly using a Delphi approach (i.e. facilitated reflections from a dispersed group of individuals with relevant expertise) to develop and validate the emerging model. This was followed by cycles of action research in which the model was tested with over 500 educators and student teachers in the six participating countries. In this way the research was bound to register an impact before it reached publication.

The resulting framework comprises twelve interrelated competences arranged under three headings:

Thinking Holistically: Systems; Attentiveness; Transdisciplinarity; Criticality  
 Envisioning Change: Futures; Empathy; Creativity; Responsibility  
 Achieving Transformation: Participation; Values; Action; Decisiveness

Each competence has three learning outcomes and several underpinning components. These are supported by tried and tested teaching activities largely reflecting a constructivist pedagogy. All of this is freely available on the website: [www.aroundersenseofpurpose.eu](http://www.aroundersenseofpurpose.eu)

Assessment techniques have also been piloted within the project such as self-reporting and peer assessment.

The project has moved into a second phase which focuses on publications with only minor adjustments to the model envisaged as testing continues. The following institutions have joined the Phase Two consortium:

- University of Vechta (Germany)
- Fundació per la Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Spain)
- HEP Vaud (Switzerland).

Further work in this phase means that the website now offers over 200 classroom activities that link the 12 RSP competences with the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals.

To date the RSP model has been applied in all phases of education as well as non-formal settings, it has been presented in over ten academic conferences (in each participating country and beyond) and has been presented to the steering group of OECD's Education 2030 programme. The citation accompanying the 2020 Green Gown Award cited the impact of this research both locally and internationally.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Being participatory research dates may appear recent relative to the impact being reported:

Vare P, Arro G, deHamer A, Del Gobbo G, deVries G, Farioli F, Kadji-Beltran C, Kangur M, Mayer M, Millican R, Nijdam C, Reti M & Zachariou A (2019) Devising a Competence-Based Training Program for Educators of Sustainable Development: Lessons Learned. *Sustainability*, 11(7), 1890; [doi:10.3390/su11071890](https://doi.org/10.3390/su11071890)  
 (Peer reviewed journal article describing the RSP process and outcomes with 39 citations by early 2021)

Vare P (2019) Beyond the 'green bling': Identifying contradictions encountered in school sustainability programmes and teachers' responses to them, *Environmental Education Research*, DOI: [10.1080/13504622.2019.1677859](https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2019.1677859)  
(Peer reviewed journal article presenting research that contributed to the RSP outcomes; included in the references listed on the RSP website).

Vare P (2018) 'A Rounder Sense of Purpose: developing and assessing competences for educators of sustainable development' in *Form@re*, 18:2 <http://dx.doi.org/10.13128/formare-23712> (Peer reviewed journal article published during Phase One of the project; 14 citations by early 2021).

Zachariou A, Kadji-Beltran C, Vare P & Millican R (2019) Professional Development and Sustainability in W. Leal Filho (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Sustainability in Higher Education*. Dordrecht: Springer. <http://eprints.glos.ac.uk/6740/>  
(Peer reviewed book chapter describing a professional development programme that piloted the RSP competences during Phase One of the project).

The RSP website: [www.aroundersenseofpurpose.eu](http://www.aroundersenseofpurpose.eu)

#### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Given the participatory nature of this research, impacts on individuals occurred during the research process. More strategically, RSP has provided a number of institutions – and formal education systems – with an accessible framework to guide the promotion and development of education for sustainable development (ESD). As a result of this impact the lead researcher, Paul Vare has been invited by the European Commission's Directorate-General Education and Culture to join a consultation on developing a conceptual framework for ESD to fulfil the educational aims of the European Green Deal. Throughout the research process itself, hundreds of teachers and non-formal educators have gained skills, knowledge and confidence in relation to their own ESD practice. Numbers in brackets (1) relate to corroborating testimonials/letters and other corroborating sources.

Cyprus: The RSP model has been adopted by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI) for teaching ESD to teachers and school principals with positive impacts on participants (Zachariou et al 2019). The Director of the CPI described RSP as "the most appropriate, concrete and friendly model that captures ESD competences in a holistic and unified way." CPI letter (1).

Hungary: The Ministry of Human Capacities has used the RSP framework as a model for developing teacher competences in ESD nationally since 2018, evidenced in a letter from the Ministry of Human Capacities inviting the Principle Investigator, Paul Vare, to be keynote speaker at their regional conference). (2)

Italy: Teachers and a group of non-formal educators participated in participatory RSP research-based courses; both reported highly positive impacts on their understanding and ESD practice. (3) The University of Florence piloted the RSP framework in its Degree Course in Science of Education and Training (Level 6) in 2017-18. Evidence of impact on one participant and their subsequent use of RSP in developing an Atlas of Intangible Heritage' is provided in a testimonial (4).

The Netherlands: In-service and pre-service teachers participated in Phase One RSP courses as part of the participatory research process. Data indicates a profound positive impact on those

who took part. A testimonial from Marnix Academie indicates how RSP has been used since the initial research (5).

England: At the University of Gloucestershire (UoG), an annual 13-week course for Education Level 5 students based entirely on RSP has been running since 2017.

This offers a certification scheme as part of students' Higher Education Achievement Record and follow-up research. As a result of this experience the UoG primary education team has committed to embedding RSP within their newly validated BEd Primary Education with Qualified Teacher Status at all levels. This provides a model for integrating learning for sustainability within a mainstream teacher education programme as evidenced by a letter from BEd Primary Course Leader at UoG (6).

Over 100 student teachers have elected to follow the RSP programme; the impact has been profound as evidenced by their reflective journals; analysis of 35 of these by Vare & Millican (forthcoming) highlights the following:

Increased depth of understanding:

'As an individual, I have developed new viewpoints based on discussing and involving myself...'  
'This course is having a huge impact on my overall knowledge and helping me to be more openminded regarding sustainability.'

Deeper levels of reflection:

'It is making me reconsider things that I do and look at where the things I wear/eat come from and the impact they could have had on the world.'

Positive behaviour change:

'Myself and other students have set up a 'green team' which involves us walking around the local area and removing any litter or tidying up...'

(All quotes from Level 5 student teachers)

The UNECE Region: The 55 Member States of the United Commission for Europe agreed a Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in 2005 accompanied by a set of indicators to help Member States monitor progress in implementing the Strategy. In the 2020 version of those indicators, the RSP framework is referenced as "a specific framework to identify learning outcomes in ESD". (7) This follows RSP being selected for presentation at The Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region, Geneva 2019.

Armenia: The RSP model was translated into Russian by the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Austria (BOKU) for use in teacher training workshops in 2019. It now features in a manual for university lecturers in the Caucasus Region with the entire framework reproduced in the appendix (8).

The Mediterranean region: In 2019 a new training tool (curriculum) was introduced for the European marine education project SEA4ALL; this is based exclusively on the RSP model with translations in Romanian and Greek (9).

RSP underpins a framework for assessing ESD in Level 7; piloted in London South Bank University, the University of the West Indies and UoG, it has been presented in Swansea, London and Kingston (Jamaica) (10).

Georgia: In April 2019 RSP Principle Investigator, Paul Vare, was invited to speak by the National Centre for Teacher Professional Development to lead a national workshop: 'Promoting Education for Sustainable Development through TVET in Georgia'; RSP has since been translated into Georgian.

Egypt: The RSP model underpins a two-year national training programme (2018-20) to introduce teachers to ESD. The Egyptian forum for ESD translated it into Arabic.

The European Union has cited RSP in its Working Document in preparation for a European Competence Framework on Education for Sustainability.

#### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- (1) Letter from the Director of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute. This is further corroborated by a book chapter based on research following RSP training programme led by Frederick University, Cyprus.
- (2) Details provided in an invitation letter from the Ministry of Human Capacities, State Secretariat for General Education, Budapest, Hungary.
- (3) Evaluation data from RSP course participants from the Italian Association of Sustainability Science.
- (4) Testimonial from a Researcher in Adult Education at University of Florence.
- (5) Testimonial from a lecturer of Marnix Academie TTC, Utrecht Netherlands.
- (6) Testimonial from University of Gloucestershire BEd Course leader – supported by anonymised reflections from trainee teachers who have followed the RSP programme.
- (7) Format for reporting on the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (2020–2030) [https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/esd/15th\\_Meeting\\_SC/Doc/Final\\_documents/2003093E.pdf](https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/esd/15th_Meeting_SC/Doc/Final_documents/2003093E.pdf) (see p.12).
- (8) Caucasus Region manual references RSP (pp33-34) and full RSP framework in Annex 2: [https://caucasust.boku.ac.at/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CaucaSusT-Manual-for-Lecturers\\_Implementing-a-TD-Case-Study-Course\\_final\\_web.pdf](https://caucasust.boku.ac.at/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CaucaSusT-Manual-for-Lecturers_Implementing-a-TD-Case-Study-Course_final_web.pdf) (Research cited on p.33; RSP framework presented on p.34) also available in Armenian and Georgian languages: <https://caucasust.boku.ac.at/en/home/>
- (9) The SEA4ALL Curriculum (Mediterranean Marine Pollution and Protection Programme); RSP is presented pp33-34.
- (10) Paper by LSBU/UoG/UWI research team submitted for review to the International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education March 2021 and awaiting reviewers' feedback (Impact of case study research evidence as cited on p.8)