

Universities at the heart of regional planning – education for sustainable development in the knowledge economy

Abstract

While a number of studies have explored campus planning and sustainability in higher education in the context of regional sustainable initiatives, little emphasis has been put into analyse education for sustainability across scale. In this article, we present an empirical analysis of education for sustainability related to the clean-tech industry in a regional context. A survey of the opinion of students at higher education institutions on sustainability was designed and conducted at a sample of higher education institutions in the Region Zealand, Denmark. The survey is supplemented with a discussion on the nexuses and linkages between business-, education-, environmental- and regional development plans. The results from the survey illustrate that students generally value sustainability competences and that they consider such competences important to possess in order to become attractive in future labour markets. By, relating student perception to regional planning, the study also highlights a mis-match between policy and (educational) practice. The findings from the survey and the discussion have implications for the traditional lack of coherence between policy areas relevant to sustainable development and argue for an urgent need for better coordination between business-, education-, environmental- and regional development plans.

Keywords: clean-tech industry, regional development, sustainability in higher education, energy- and environmental innovation, university policy, sustainable entrepreneurship

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