

# **Environmental Education at Higher Educational Institutions:**

## **New Wine in Old Wineskins?**



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# Higher Education Institutions as key actors in ESD promotion

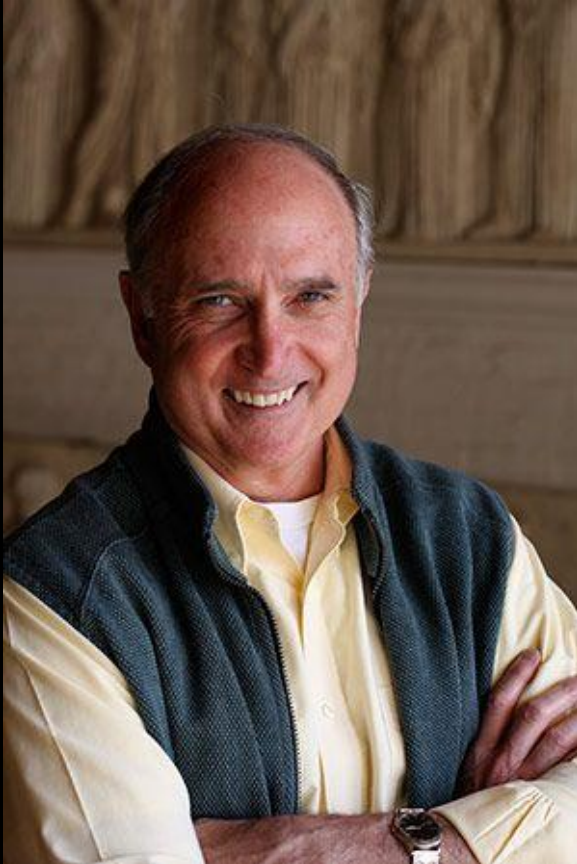
By providing opportunities for students to develop:

- the notion of global citizenship;
- a commitment towards environmental stewardship;
- a reflection about the interaction between issues of social justice, ethics, wellbeing and ecological and economic factors; and
- a commitment towards actively ensuring sustainable futures

as part of their training, specialisation, profession and personal life.

(Longhurst, 2014, p.5)

# Is the current system failing?



“If one listens carefully,  
it may even be possible to hear  
the Creation groan every year ...  
when another batch of smart,  
degree-holding, but ecologically  
illiterate, *Homo sapiens* who are  
eager to succeed are  
launched into the biosphere.”

David W. Orr (*Earth in Mind*, 1994, p.5)

## Malta's water resources very scarce and 'under severe stress'



Water fight during freshers' week

The scarcity, the association said, was due to Malta's small catchment area, an average annual rainfall of about 550mm, representative of a semi-arid climate, and a high population density.

"Over-exploitation of the groundwater reserves has taken place over decades and continues today well above the natural recharge by rainwater," the association said. Consequently, the water resource was diminishing and undergoing invasion by seawater. At the same time, the natural aquifers suffered nitrate pollution from fertilisers, leakage from the sewage network

## Too much construction



While new projects  
income is from

I recently spent  
was directly

For the entire  
7am to 6pm

When I booked  
which was

This is the  
much the noise but the rule

Architecture students' graduation celebrations

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problem was not so  
management and staff

# HEIs tend to respond to ESD needs by

- quickly defining issues (with traditional mental frameworks);
- selecting the expertise required from the staff cohort available; and
- structuring a learning programme (with the resources available).

Yet this is a short-term response to the educational and administrative challenges that ESD demands

# A whole-institution approach implies ...

- a shared vision and implementation plan involving all stakeholders;
- channelling resources to support this reorientation; and
- consolidating networks to promote collaboration
- a deeper change in
  - the various levels of decision-making,
  - traditional curricular structures; and
  - the complex nature of the educational system.

# When dealing with ESD ...

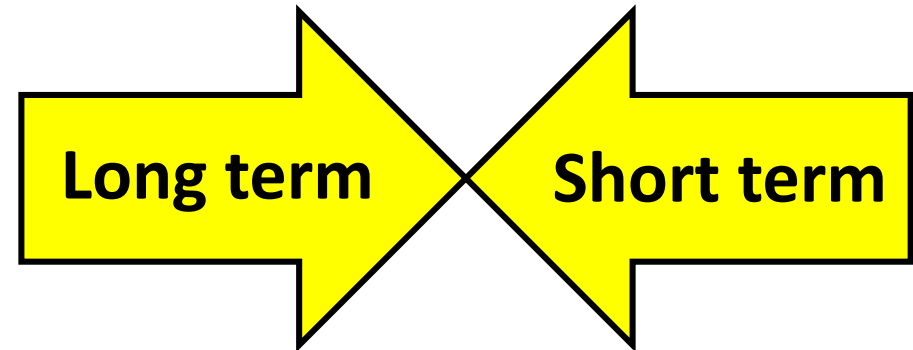
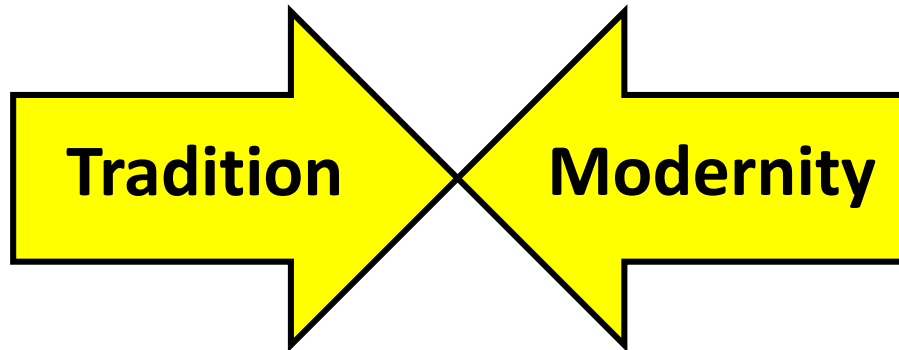
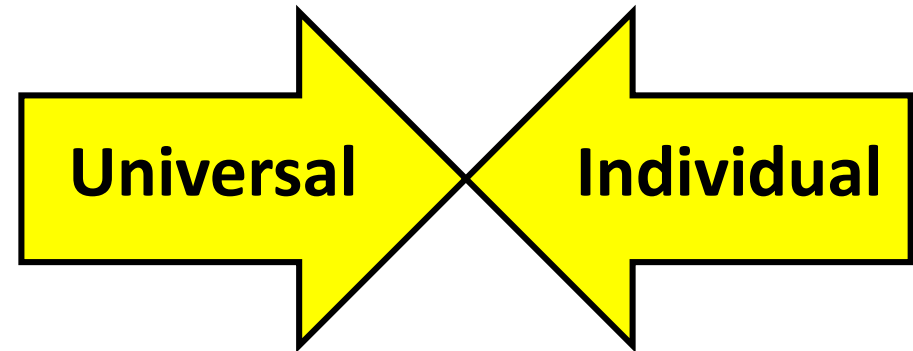
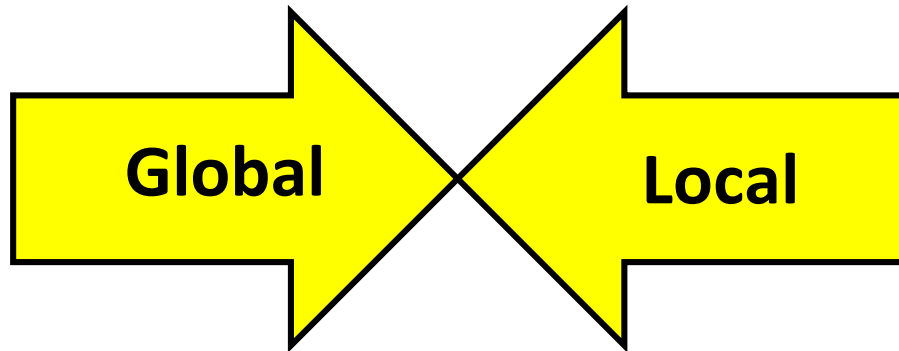
HEIs need to reflect and possibly rethink:

**What** they teach

**Why** they teach it

**How** they teach it

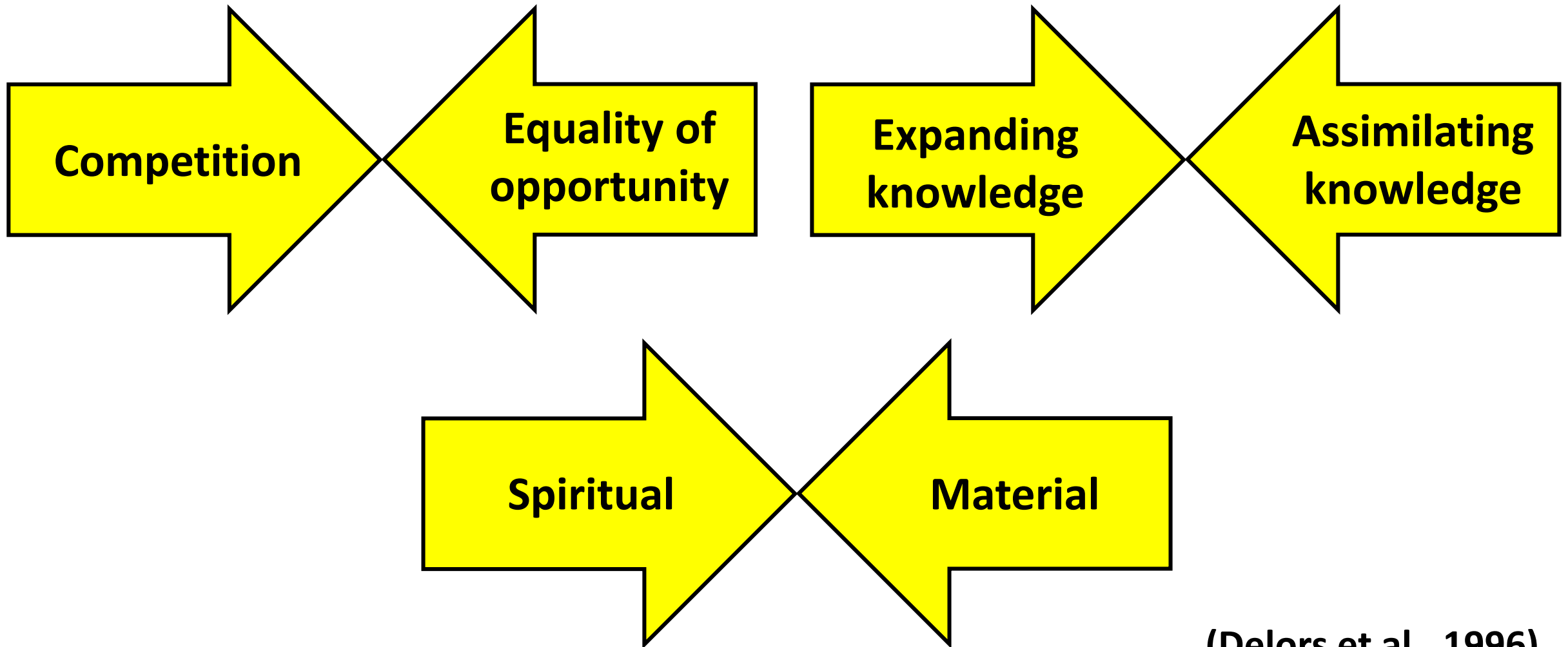
# Tensions central ESD programmes ...



(Delors et al., 1996)



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(Delors et al., 1996)

# Barriers for ESD programmes at HEIs

- Monodisciplinary organisational structures
- Competition between and within students, faculties, departments and universities
- Misdirected criteria for evaluating staff and student
- Too many priorities, unclear decision-making and hierarchical power structures

(Moore, 2005)

# Features promoting ESD in HEIs ...

- Less emphasis on rhetoric and more on finding ways of implementing the principles of ESD
- Developing contextualised culturally sensitive programmes rather than adopting ready-made off-the-shelf solutions
- Providing curricula that propose multi/interdisciplinary themes and analysis
- Developing competences and autonomous learning rather than just the transmission of knowledge

# Features promoting ESD in HEIs ...

- Increasing student participation in the design and assessment of the programme
- Greater engagement with nature as well as community spaces
- Featuring and critically reflecting on success stories and role models/examples
- The commitment of HEIs towards ESD is facilitated if coupled with political/legislative support.

**Thank You**