

Cross-Disciplinary Research and Education Post Copenhagen 2009

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ABSTRACT

The study of the environment and environmentalism in our universities too often fails to recognize its inherently trans-disciplinary nature. As we all know, beyond academia, environmental issues simultaneously encompass corporate, political, social, scientific, engineering, health, cultural, biological, legal and economic factors. This long list can indeed be readily expanded. Yet, in practice, if addressed at all, the issues of environmental research and education tend to be *departmentalized*, an outcome of what may be characterized as an historical, structural or administrative mindset. The rigidity of departmental bounds should be loosened as we move towards a convergence of disciplines and standardized universal education.

This paper will explore what I posit to be a challenge to our research institutions and teaching practices. There is clearly a need to teach our graduates the fundamentals of environmentalism and I suggest that this can be no better achieved than through teaching a range of environmental topics as extensions to existing curricula. Environmental history is rarely if ever taught yet in practice it could be used as a most effective medium for conveying to students the core issues that underpin the fundamental issues facing the global community in the 21st century.

The importance of a broad based inter-disciplinary approach to researching and teaching environmentalism, co-related to different academic disciplines, is an essential starting point. Environmentalism, as an aspect of corporate social responsibility, could be a core subject which can be utilized in virtually all graduate or undergraduate degree courses. The integration of environmental issues into all courses in this post-Copenhagen era is essential to any contemporary university curriculum.

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