

## Teaching about Green Careers

*The content of careers programmes can become dangerously narrow. Perennial topics such as CV writing and interview practice are not enough. Raising aspirations, improving social mobility, overcoming skills shortages and tackling youth unemployment and unemployability are huge and important challenges to be addressed through careers programmes, but they too are not enough. Careers education must also be about preparing young people for the changes in the labour market that we can already recognise. Globalisation, new technologies, the knowledge economy and sustainable economic development are mega-issues for careers work in schools. This briefing is about one of these - the green industrial revolution that is already underway. What are we doing to ensure that young people know how it will change the adult and working lives they have imagined for themselves? How do we teach them about green careers?*

'Green' is shorthand for anything that is concerned with protecting and making a positive difference to the environment; and it is closely related to ideas about ethical and sustainable development. Behaving in a 'green' way, whether you are an individual or an organisation, is both complex and difficult. So how can we help people who want and need to make green career decisions? Are they interested in working in one of the green industries such as renewable energy? Or are they just interested in working in the green end of an existing sector such as eco-tourism in the tourism industry? Or do they want to do the job they have in a more environmentally responsible way such as turning off unnecessary lights and walking or cycling to work?

Helping people to make these choices uses the same techniques careers practitioners have always used. Young people need to think about their skills, interests and values. They also need to investigate the rewards, risks, barriers and opportunities related to what they've got in mind so they can formulate goals and actions. Even then, they need to be prepared for the chaotic effects of life experiences and events that can make a big difference to what actually happens to them.

How do we incorporate all this into a green careers programme? Teaching about green careers is not just about replacing existing elements with new ones. With an awareness of the green agenda, how would you play *The Real Game* differently or re-think the way you organise a 'Careers Day'? Here are some stage by stage suggestions for teaching about green careers.

## Key Stage Three

Don't let previous learning go to waste! Y7 & 8 is a good time to build on the enthusiasm of pupils generated by their participation in exciting projects and initiatives in primary school. Reinforce the message that the greening of all careers is a global imperative for the future of humanity. So as well as looking at 'specific green jobs' (e.g. caring for nature jobs) it is important for all of us to work in greener ways. Ask pupils to brainstorm how they as learners can be green by example, e.g. print less to save paper, recycle as much as they can, don't keep computers running unnecessarily, turn off lights when leaving the room.

You'll find lots of resources on the internet to encourage people to adopt green routines in their everyday lives, e.g. The Co-operative Green Schools Revolution <http://www.co-operative.coop/green-schools-revolution/>

Widen the perspective to illustrate how companies are encouraging their staff to work in greener ways (e.g. green procurement, video-conferencing to cut down on travel) and how existing jobs are being re-framed (e.g. green medical practice, organic/green textiles and fashion, green waste management).

Ask individuals to make a list of their top three green skills and how they know, e.g.

- I'm good at cutting down on waste (e.g. I'm good at doing the weekly food shopping for my family)
- I'm good at making sure people follow regulations and procedures (e.g. I made a poster about saving energy)
- I'm good at calculations (e.g. I can work out the savings people make when they use less energy or make shorter journeys)
- I'm good at finding scientific and technological solutions to problems (e.g. I was part of a team which built a low carbon shower using solar energy).

Ask pupils to think about people who are concerned about their carbon footprint. When they are applying for a job, how will they know that they will be able to work in a green way? Pupils have to devise a scheme to kite-mark jobs that are green, i.e. they have to identify three criteria that they could use to judge whether a job has been designed especially so that it can be performed in a green way.

Green Award schemes recognise companies that have adopted green policies, e.g.:

Green Achiever Scheme

<http://www.greenachiever.co.uk/>

Best green companies

<http://www.greenbiz.com/>

Planning Awards (Planning for the Environment)

<http://www.greeneconomyawards.co.uk/>

IEMA Acorn Scheme

[http://www.iema.net/ems/acorn\\_scheme](http://www.iema.net/ems/acorn_scheme)

The 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games in London were billed as 'the greenest games ever'. Ask pupils to investigate this claim. How many green jobs were created? What technologies were used? Will the London Games have an enduring legacy as a green games?

## Key Stage Four

Ask pupils to investigate 'green jobs' initiatives in the local labour market.

Germany's nationwide retrofitting programme is creating 340,000 "green-collar" jobs and training for young people and providing valuable business for local craft workers. Renovations include fitting greener lighting systems, ventilation and boiler upgrades, as well as installing smart meters and solar panels.

Working in small groups, pupils choose a sector of industry to investigate and report back to the class on the ways that the sector is embracing green initiatives, e.g. green farming, eco-construction, manufacturing and production with less energy and less pollution, eco-tourism, green transport and logistics.

For a list of sector skills councils, go to:

<http://fisss.org/sector-skills-council/directory-of-sscs/>

Introduce pupils to the concept of 'corporate responsibility'. Then get them to find out the green credentials of leading companies such as supermarkets, petrol companies and high street banks that they are familiar with in their everyday lives.

Give each group of students a set of green jobs cards and use them for a series of card sort tasks, e.g.:

- Sort the cards into two piles headed 'We know what this job is about' and 'We don't know what this job is about'
- Sort the cards into 'Someone in our group knows a person who does this job' and 'We don't know anyone who does this job'
- Make two piles of cards – one headed 'This job is available locally' and the other 'This job is not available locally'
- Group these job cards into different categories of green jobs. (They might come up with protecting the environment, managing natural resources, producing energy, promoting green behaviour, providing green services to businesses).

Ideas for job cards:

Air quality inspector; Automotive engineer (electric car development); Beauty products sales assistant; Botanist; Climatologist; Conservationist; Countryside ranger; Ecologist; Environmental planner; Environmental scientist; Existing homes retrofitting project manager; Farmer (organic); Fish farm manager (organic); Forester; Geophysicist; Geothermal operations engineer; Green activist; Guerrilla gardener ([www.guerrillagardening.org](http://www.guerrillagardening.org)); Hydrologist; Industrial designer; Landscape architect; Lawyer (environmental law specialist); Microbiologist; Recycling operative; Sludge optimisation manager; Solar energy sales person; Supply chain and procurement specialist; Tourism development specialist; Water quality sampling officer; Wildlife rescue centre volunteer; Wind turbine technician; Zoologist.

## Post 16

Now is the time to engage older students in understanding the part that personal and shared values play in career choice and decision-making.

Career happiness and well-being are inextricably linked to:

- Doing work that has 'meaning' for you
- engaging in work that is congruent with your values
- feeling a shared connection with your work colleagues.

Ask students to think about which part of the green economy they could fit into.

Prompts include:

- What interests you?
- What skills have you got?
- What setting appeals to you, e.g, indoors/outdoors, in one place/travelling?
- What hours of work do you have in mind, e.g. part-time/full-time?
- What organisation would you like to work for?

Green Jobs

<http://www.greenjobs.co.uk>

business Green jobs

<http://www.businessgreenjobs.com>

Green Careers Guide

<http://www.greencareersguide.com>

Green Jobs Online

<http://www.greenjobsonline.co.uk>

Ask students to think about how they can get a 'competitive advantage' for the green course or job that they have got their heart set on, e.g. by volunteering, networking, wide reading.

Ask intending university students to look at the latest 'green university' rankings (<http://peopleandplanet.org/greenleague>). Would they be influenced in their choice of where to study by these rankings? Similarly, would it be important for them to choose a company to work for that had green credentials?

Arrange a discussion on green career topics, e.g.:

- Do students think that the concept of 'green careers' is moving from being a minority interest into the mainstream?
- Would you expect a careers adviser to tell you about the environmental impact of your career choices?
- "Be the change you want to see in the world" (Mahatma Gandhi). Do you agree?

Ask students to adopt a 'green' career identity and to tell the imagined story of what their careers would be like if they organised their working lives around green principles. Afterwards, get students to reflect on any part of their lives where they have a partial 'green identity', e.g. Do they share a commitment to green living with a parent or sibling?

This can lead on to interesting reflections about how we have different sides to ourselves that we show to different people; and that constructing a career is about forging a public or outward-facing identity even though it is only one of the many versions of ourselves that we would recognise and acknowledge.

Ask students to assess the environmental impact of a particular career path.

What are environmental pressure groups and futurologists saying about what careers will be like in the future? Ask students to make their own forecasts.

## Further information

Green Alliance (environmental think tank and pressure group)

<http://www.green-alliance.org.uk>

HM Government (2011). Enabling the transition to a green economy: Government and business working together (archived)

[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120823131012/http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/Horizontal\\_Services\\_files/Enabling\\_the\\_transition\\_to\\_a\\_Green\\_Economy\\_Main\\_D.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120823131012/http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/Horizontal_Services_files/Enabling_the_transition_to_a_Green_Economy_Main_D.pdf)

HM Government (2011). Skills for a green economy: A report on the evidence

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/s/11-1315-skills-for-a-green-economy>

*Green Careers for Dummies* – Carol McClelland (Wiley Publishing, 2010)

*Green Careers: Choosing work for a sustainable future* – Jim Cassio & Alice Rush (New Society Publishers, 2009)

Sustainable Development in Action – A curriculum planning guide for schools (QCA, 2009)

<http://www.globalfootprints.org/files/zones/teach/Key%20GL%20Documents/QCAsustainabilityinaction.pdf>

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