Evolution of an interactive online magazine for students, academics and expert practitioners to engage students in ESD

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Research Team

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Presentation contents

1. Research context – internal and external environments and short demonstration of the VLE

2. Success drivers and limiting factors

3. Insights into good practice for developers of ESD online magazines/ VLEs

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"We promote Sustainable Development and active community engagement… We have an important role in generating and applying knowledge for public benefit"

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STRATEGIC
PLAN
2013-18
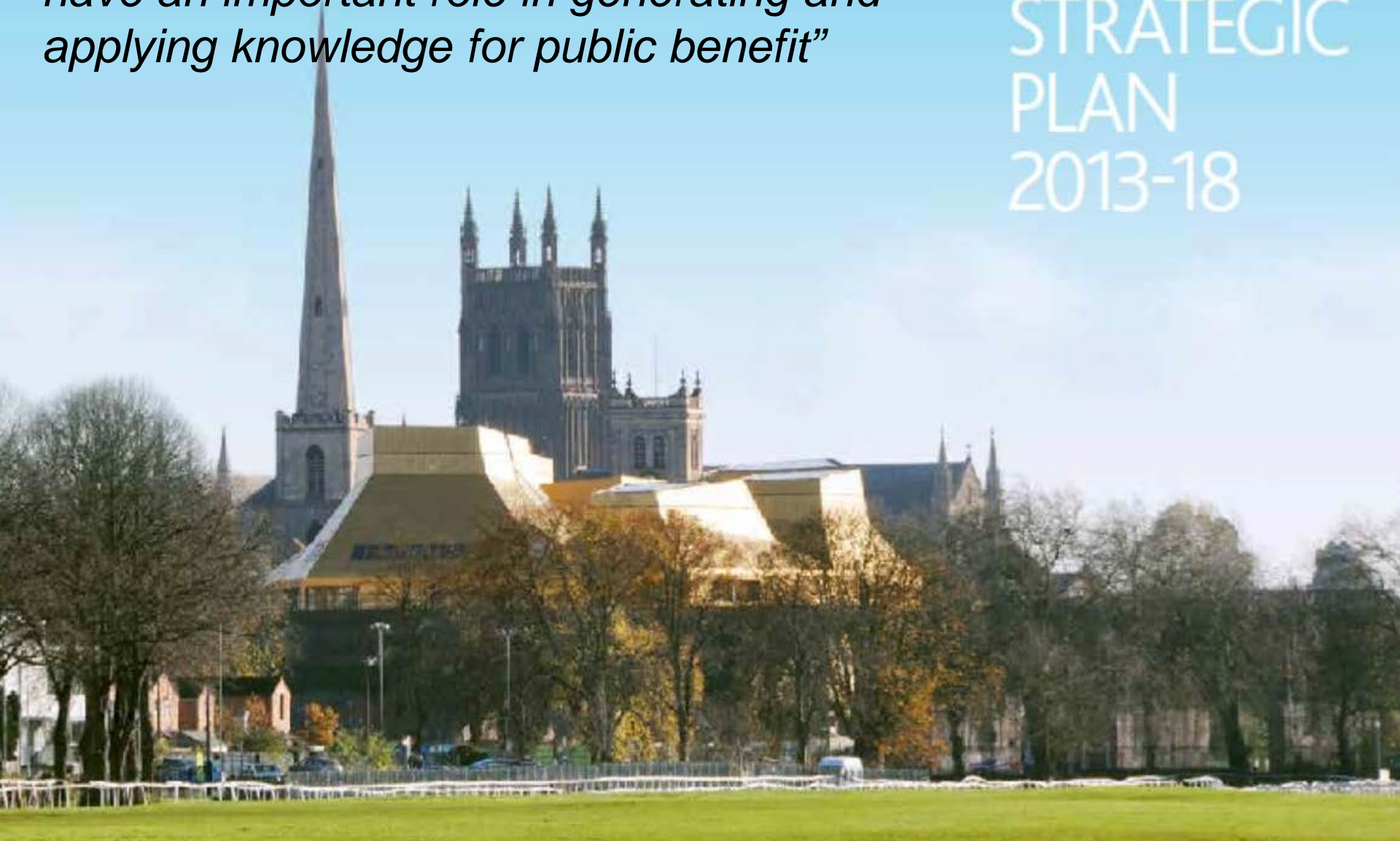
External context

- Urgent need to embed sustainability principles and practice across society (UN, 2016); HE offers a significant opportunity to drive this

  ➢ Students can be collaborators for change with influence on family/friends, campus, wider community and future work places

- Use of VLEs and technology enhanced learning in ESD has been gaining momentum

- Student expectations of gaining employability skills

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susthingsout.com

www.susthingsout.com

Aims:

- Deep learning for sustainability
- Critical thinking skills
- Peer-to-peer learning and support
- Tutor to student feedback
- Assist students to accept and participate in digital learning culture – bridge gap between social media and digital literacy
- Equip learners and tutors with enhanced digital proficiency

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Research outcomes:

- The analysis of the qualitative data identified 4 themes that influence the experiences of students and staff:

  - Pedagogic factors

  - Operational factors

  - Cultural factors

  - External factors

- 6 successes and 5 barriers identified within 4 themes

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Good practice: VLE successes

	Factors influencing student/staff experiences of susthingsout.com			
	Pedagogical	Operational	Cultural	External
Students engage in deep learning for ESD	✓			
Students develop critical thinking skills	✓			
Students engage in knowledge management within a community of learners (students, staff and expert practitioners)	✓			
Students develop competence over time with support and guidance		✓		
VLE drives a learning culture for ESD in which students develop a professional sustainability voice			✓	
VLE supports the students' expectations of an employability culture within Higher Education			✓	

Good practice: VLE successes

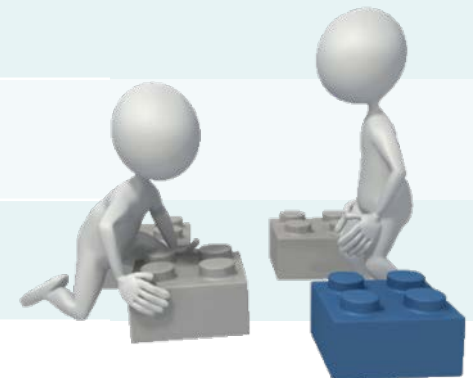|	Factors influencing student/staff experiences of susthingsout.com			
	Pedagogical	Operational	Cultural	External
Students engage in deep learning for ESD	✓			

" You… get the feedback from the lecturers and use that to develop your ideas"

1st year UG

Good practice: VLE successes

	Factors influencing student/staff experiences of susthingsout.com			
	Pedagogical	Operational	Cultural	External
Students develop critical thinking skills	✓			

"It's a nice friendly environment where you can informally comment on people's profiles and it's a nice interactive environment which can be used to enhance your learning."

2nd year UG

Good practice: VLE successes

	Factors influencing student/staff experiences of susthingsout.com			
	Pedagogical	Operational	Cultural	External
Students engage in knowledge management within a community of learners (students, staff and expert practitioners)	✓			

"We can all see people's opinions or you can then have a discussion or ask someone's advice. It gives you an opportunity to discuss things which you maybe couldn't in class."

2nd year UG

Good practice: VLE successes

	Factors influencing student/staff experiences of susthingsout.com			
	Pedagogical	Operational	Cultural	External
Students develop competence over time with support and guidance		✓		

"At the start no one seems very confident in what they're doing but after the first couple of weeks it changes."

1st year UG

Good practice: VLE successes

	Factors influencing student/staff experiences of susthingsout.com			
	Pedagogical	Operational	Cultural	External
VLE drives a learning culture for ESD in which students develop a professional sustainability voice			✓	

"It's also finding your own opinions on things… at the end of the course you can look back and see how our opinions have changed."

1st year UG

Good practice: VLE successes

	Factors influencing student/staff experiences of susthingsout.com			
	Pedagogical	Operational	Cultural	External
VLE supports the students' expectations of an employability culture within Higher Education			✓	

"I really like the idea of sitting in an interview and hyperlinking all our work"

2nd year UG

Barriers

Barrier	Factors influencing student/staff experiences of susthingsout.com			
	Pedagogical	Operational	Cultural	External
Limited recognition of purpose and intention of the VLE	✓			✓
Limited self confidence and self belief in use of the VLE	✓	✓		
Students as 'digital natives' – expectations from their social media environment			✓	
Perceptions of the VLE as a community of enquiry			✓	
Limited recognition of the VLE as an opportunity to demonstrate sustainable learning			✓	✓

Good practice: Development pathways

Barrier	Suggested development pathways
Limited recognition of purpose and intention of the VLE	- Establish expectations: ➢ Differentiate learning and information ➢ Quality and content of online interactions - Establish academic challenge to encourage engagement - Communicate peer-to-peer knowledge transfer and learning outcomes
Limited self confidence and self belief in use of the VLE	- Understand students' ability and willingness to engage with digital learning - Facilitate student interaction to generate learning experiences - Set expectations to manage boundary between specialist opinion and student creativity - Develop student skills to become co-creators - Maximize similarity with established social media - Training and continual communication of processes

Good practice: Development pathways

Barrier	Suggested development pathways
Students as 'digital natives' – expectations from their social media environment	• Understand the student experience • Establish learning outcomes to create boundary between formal and informal learning • Implement instant messaging function
Perceptions of the VLE as a community of enquiry	• Facilitate knowledge building and participatory engagement through mutual support, communication and collaborative learning • Develop reflective approaches through exploration of user generated content
Limited recognition of the VLE as an opportunity to demonstrate sustainable learning	• Engage participants with an individual and collective sense of responsibility • Develop aspects of the VLE to provide business needs/employability skills • Link to assessment to enhance participatory engagement

Conclusions

- The research suggests our VLE is successful but not without limitations driven by pedagogical, operational, cultural and external factors

- The key to a successful VLE is to:

  - ➢ Set expectations of both students and staff and continually reinforce them

  - ➢ Understand the student experience

  - ➢ Differentiate learning and information

  - ➢ Facilitate tutor and peer feedback

  - ➢ Link interaction to assessment

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