Space for sustainability? From curriculum to critical thinking in Australian tourism higher education

Andrea Ruth Boyle
Southern Cross University

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Space for Sustainability? From Curriculum to Critical Thinking in Australian Tourism Higher Education

Andrea Ruth Boyle

LLB (Hons), UWE
Grad Cert in Higher Education (Learning & Teaching), SCU

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Business and Tourism
Southern Cross University

August 2015
I certify that the work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text, and that the material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the University's rules, requirements, procedures and policy relating to my higher degree research award and to my thesis. I certify that I have complied with the rules, requirements, procedures and policy of the University (as they may be from time to time).

Name: Andrea Ruth Boyle

Signature:

Date: 21st August 2015
Abstract

Since the announcement of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development in 2004, the last ten years have seen significant interest in the role of sustainability in education. However, within higher education, it is not altogether clear how the principles of Education for Sustainability (EfS) ought to be applied. Progress on sustainability within curriculum development and teaching and learning practices generally lags behind a strong momentum by universities to undertake campus ‘greening’ initiatives. There appears to be little discussion around what being ‘sustainable’ actually means, what knowledge should inform it, and how it is best understood, learned and applied. The challenge facing tourism educators is how to embed sustainability within the curriculum and teaching. Few empirical studies have explicitly examined how Tourism, Hospitality and Events (TH&E) higher education engages with EfS. Further, the way that sustainability is understood by tourism educators is rarely captured in relevant academic discussions.

In light of these gaps, this study used qualitative, interpretive methodology to explore the emergence and presence of EfS within tourism university curricula and teaching practices. To begin with in stage 1, a web-based scoping study mapped evidence of sustainability by documenting the presence of sustainability education within 68 tourism, hospitality and events degree programs across 25 Australian universities. Overall the findings of the website analysis revealed that sustainability was poorly stated or inferred. When sustainability was explicitly stated, it tended to present as a ‘separated’ concept rather than as a holistic philosophy underpinning all curricula.

Then in stage 2, a total of 31 semi-structured interviews with tourism academics, involved with teaching or curriculum design of sustainability principles in tourism programs, explored what sustainability meant to them and how they integrated sustainability into their learning and teaching. Interpretive analysis of the interviews revealed ideological differences in terms of how sustainability was perceived, constructed and taught. A number of dilemmas were at play with how teachers approached sustainability in a tourism context.

This thesis’s findings offer a more nuanced understanding of sustainability education in tourism higher education, highlighting the influence a lecturer’s paradigm/worldview has on how and why sustainability is interpreted and taught. As the study’s findings support, unless individual
teachers were inclined to sustainability and include this concept in their delivery, sustainability was of low priority in much of the Australian TH&E university curriculum. Ultimately, the findings support that TH&E higher education, in the Australian context at least, is yet to respond to the “paradigm shift in thinking” required for sustainability education. Instead, this thesis argues for an alternative, critical approach underpinning tourism curriculum in order to challenge the current business as usual approach.
List of Publications

The following publications are associated with this thesis:

**Refereed Journal Articles**


This paper is based on the findings and discussions in Chapter 4 of this thesis.


This paper is based on the findings and discussions in Chapter 5 and 6 of this thesis.


This paper is based on the findings and discussions in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

**Refereed Conference Papers**


This paper is based on the findings and discussions in Chapter 5 and 6 of this thesis.


This paper is based on the findings and discussions in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

This paper is based on the findings and discussions in Chapter 2 of this thesis.


This paper is based on the findings and discussions in Chapter 2 of this thesis.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The concept of sustainability garners increased interest as we grapple with what it means to live on Earth today, and into the future. As a complex and highly contested concept, ‘sustainability’ permeates all aspects of society. Sustainability, however, is neither new, nor a Western developed idea this generation can claim its own. A commitment to environmental preservation and a consideration of both current and future generations has been seen in many cultures throughout history. Indigenous peoples have for thousands of years informed their lives through the principles of environmental stewardship and interconnectivity of all life forms (Howitt, 2001). The ancient Greeks, for example, observed that much of the damage to their environment was a result of human activity (Hundloe, 2008). Greek philosophers, such as Socrates and Aristotle, talked about ‘virtues’ and what it meant to lead the ‘good life’ (Jamal, 2004). This way of thinking has remained important for those who strive to live sustainably.

Since the 19th century, the prevailing Dominant Western Environmental Paradigm (DWEP) has succeeded in keeping humans separated from nature (Knill, 1991). Characterised by an anthropocentric view of the world, the DWEP places emphasis on science and technology to achieve progress (Olsen, Lodwick, & Dunlap, 1992). Following World War II, criticism of the DWEP emerged. Radical changes in social thought and a call to alter this worldview took place as modern environmentalism swept through the Western world during the 1960s and 1970s. The challenge culminated in a new ‘green paradigm’ shift in thinking, where emphasis was placed on biocentrism (nature as a focus) and the precautionary principle (caution towards the impacts of development) (Dunlap & Van Liere, 1978).

Important works produced in the 1960s and early 1970s brought environmental perspectives to the forefront of the developing Western environmental agenda. They included Silent Spring by Rachel Carson, a work that discussed the impacts of the use of DDT to control pests (Carson, 1962) and Paul Ehrlich’s 1968 work The Population Bomb which warned of mass starvation due to human overpopulation (Ehrlich, 1968). Hardin’s seminal essay The Tragedy of the Commons (Hardin, 1968) was pivotal in the debate about human-environment interactions, questioning classical economics’ assumption that behaviour driven by self-interest automatically acts for the greater social good (Merchant, 1990). Indeed, Hardin’s essay has become one of the most cited writings today in environmental studies. Not long after Hardin’s work, Barry Commoner published the first of his famous ‘four laws of ecology’ in The Closing
Circle, asserting that ‘everything is connected to everything else’ (Commoner, 1971). This was followed by *Limits to Growth*, where Meadows, Meadows, Randers, & Behrens (1972) warned against the environmental and societal repercussions of increased growth in human population. Finally, James Lovelock argued in his *Gaia* hypothesis, that the Earth was best understood as one organic body, where all animal and non-animal beings contribute to the whole biosphere (Lovelock, 1979).

As the concept of environmentalism became more widely embraced, contested and politicised, so too did the concomitant ‘sustainability’ issues (Orr, 1992). Today, terms ‘sustainable’ or ‘sustainable development’ are used widely within numerous contexts, including public policy, government, business and education. As a result, multiple interpretations exist as to what the terms mean, creating a contested landscape within which to define and respond to sustainability. Despite contrary opinions about what sustainable means, there continues to be a variety of globally recognised agreements and declarations all appearing to pledge allegiance to sustainability (Corcoran, Calder, and Clugston, 2002; Wright, 2004). A significant milestone was reached in 1992 at the United Nation’s Conference on Environment and Development *Earth Summit*, which saw the development of a detailed blueprint called *Agenda 21*. Although *Agenda 21* was inherently environmentally focused, it also marked the expansion of the prior standard environmental definition to encompass the widely known and used ‘pillars’ of sustainable development; namely the economic, social and environmental spheres (UNCED, 1992).

The debate on how to define sustainable development is not settled, and may never be (or need to be) given its variety of paradigmatic interpretations. The challenge of sustainable development remains contentious because any interpretation is inherently subjective (Kates, Parris, & Leiserowitz, 2005). For some, the notion of sustainability is so overloaded with conflicting implications to the point that it becomes meaningless (Kahn, 2009). Some argue that the concept of sustainability risks being nothing more than rhetorical green-wash (Mundt, 2011). A lack of universal agreement about the details of the three ‘pillars’ of sustainable development has led to continued confusion when interpreting what sustainable development means (Kates et al., 2005). The social pillar has the largest range of interpretations (Kates et al., 2005) and appears to be the most difficult to reconcile. This has led some authors to argue that although the social paradigm is important, it should not be connected with sustainability at all (Mundt, 2011).
Despite the vagueness surrounding the definition, there are useful guiding principles as to what sustainability involves. For example, according to a research study conducted by the International Society of Sustainability Professionals, the goals of sustainability include:

- Integrating actions of conservation and human development;
- Satisfying basic human needs;
- Achieving equality and social justice for all;
- Facilitating social self-determination and cultural diversity;
- Managing our legacy for future generations;
- Maintaining ecological integrity; and
- Developing new technologies and product manufacturing processes (Willard et al., 2010, p. 4).

For others, the absence of a specific interpretation of the term has benefits. Kates et al. (2005, p. 20) suggests: “its malleability allows it to remain an open, dynamic, and an evolving idea which can be adapted to fit these very different situations and contexts across space and time”. There is solid argument that the economy, environment and society are not inseparable, and to see them as such would not allow a real movement of sustainable development (Scott & Gough, 2004a). The idea of ‘culture’ as a fourth pillar of sustainable development, was considered at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (Rio+20 Summit) in June 2012 (UN, 2012).

Underpinning the necessity for stronger sustainability action is the belief that rapid depletion of natural resources and insatiable consumption of finite resources is damaging the natural and human world as we know it (Quisumbing, 2005). Proponents of sustainability call on contemporary society to urgently take action and change its worldview on expectations and goals of what it means to live life collectively as humans and in concert with nature (Eckersley, 2006; King, 2008; Sterling, 2010). Increasingly, governments, industry and organisations worldwide are expected to take the lead and support the change towards a more sustainable world. The global community is pointing to education to be one of the avenues to lead this change in societal world views (UNESCO, 2005).

This thesis explores the presence and interpretation of the concept of sustainability within tourism higher education at Australian universities. The study explored how academics understand and teach ‘sustainability’ in a tourism context. This Chapter introduces the central elements underpinning this study. Firstly, the concept of sustainability is briefly examined, followed by a review of sustainability in higher education. Next, the emergence of sustainable
tourism development and the Australian tourism higher education sector’s response to sustainability is introduced. The study’s objectives and qualitative research paradigm guiding this study is presented. The Chapter concludes with an outline of the thesis.

1.1 Sustainability in Higher Education

As educators of the 21st century, we are firmly situated in the global sustainability discourse with ongoing discussions regarding the role education should play (Fien, 2002b; Kearins & Springett, 2003). In response to a concern about the need for action, several international and national educational declarations have been made. Perhaps most notably, the 1990 *Talloires Declaration* created a ten point action plan for education institutions committed to promoting sustainability education and environmental literacy (ULSF, 1990), which has since been signed by university leaders worldwide. Other official declarations with sustainability aspirations followed and by 2005 the global forum appeared well primed to welcome the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESĐ) 2005-14. Its goal was to integrate the principles, values and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning (UNESCO, 2005). The message underpinning international educational declarations, and supported by some higher education commentators, was that universities have an important role to play in shaping societal change.

A consensus is building in the broader higher education literature around the need to change our view of the purpose of education (Fien, 2002b; Kearins & Springett, 2003; Tilbury & Cooke, 2005). According to Wals (2011), we can no longer afford the ‘wait and see’ attitude; action is required at every level in a way that brings about a new kind of thinking about what - and how - we learn. This involves a paradigm shift of thinking across the whole higher education institution where principles of sustainability are integrated in all practices and learning (Sterling, 1996, 2001). Some assert that the overall current education regime is technocratic and reductionist making it unsupportive of the principles and ideals of sustainability (Fien, 2002b; Sterling, 2001). More specifically, proponents of critical and radical education urge teachers to take the responsibility to expose and discuss values and assumptions of an unsustainable world with their students (Gough, 2002; Huckle, 1996; Orr, 1995; Sterling, 2001). According to Wals and Jickling (2002), sustainability has the potential to enhance education from an emancipatory perspective. Its “many faces” mean it can be viewed as:

- A socially constructed reality and a phenomenon to be taken seriously;
• An ideology and therefore political;
• A result of (on-going) negotiations;
• Contextual, where its meaning is dependent on the situation in which it is used;
• A vision to work towards;
• A dynamic and/or evolving concept;
• Controversial and the source of conflict (both internal and with others);
• Normative, ethical and moral;
• An innovation or a catalyst for change;
• A heuristic tool to aid thinking; or
• A stepping stone in the evolution of environmental education and of environmental thought.

(Wals & Jickling, 2002, p. 127)

With its foundational roots in environmental education, the term ‘education for sustainability’ (EfS) is a relatively recent and predominantly Australian term based on the concept of ‘Education for Sustainable Development’ (ESD) which is used more globally (Leihy & Salazar, 2011) or ‘sustainability education’ (see (Brown, 2012; Jones, Selby, & Sterling, 2010; Scott, 2012; Thomas & Nicita, 2002). Basically these terms define a style of educational approach which requires a paradigm shift from traditional ways of thinking and acting upon environmental problems towards a new approach based on future-orientated thinking and acting (Tilbury & Cooke, 2005). Since both terms are popular in the literature and policy documents, for the purposes of this research, the terms ‘educating for sustainability’ and ‘sustainability education’ will be used interchangeably.

There remain widespread differences of opinion about what ‘sustainable’ means and how this concept can be achieved in and through education (Fuller, 2010). A large number of academic papers discuss these issues. Generally the transition towards EfS appears to be contentious and difficult for most higher education institutions (Blincoe et al., 2009; Reid & Petocz, 2006; Shephard, 2008). Some strides have been made in the field of primary education and in social science areas, but so far less forthcoming in business/management paradigms (Springett, 2005). Nevertheless, it appears all sectors of society are heralding the call for sustainability. Tourism is no exception and has been the focus of increased sustainability discourse. The tourism industry and tourism education sector are prime examples where expectation and pressure is intensifying for, what some regard as the take-up of responsible engagement with, and action
for, sustainability (Blewitt, 2010; Shakeela, Breakey, & Ruhanen, 2012; Tilbury, Keogh, Leighton, & Kent, 2005).

1.2 Sustainability in Tourism

With the advent of wide-bodied planes following World War II, the opportunity to travel further became possible. Coupled with an increase in free time and discretionary income spent on leisure, tourism became a fast growing phenomenon in the second half of the 20th century (Leiper, 2004). By the 1960s and 1970s, and reflecting growing general environmental concerns, tourism researchers became increasingly aware of and concerned about the degradation of natural resources caused predominantly by mass tourism activity (Fennell, 2008). A realisation of the inextricable relationship between tourism and its impacts placed tourism within sustainability discourse.

In the context of concern over society’s increasing abuse and neglect of the natural environment, the tourism industry’s use of the environment came under scrutiny. Early tourism authors such as Krippendorf (1987) pointed to multiple ethical concerns arising from tourism’s interaction with natural and cultural environments. Concern for the harmful effects upon the environment caused by rapid tourism development stimulated the conceptualisation of sustainable tourism development. Notably, little attention was given specifically to tourism in the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio Agenda 21 (Hardy, Beeton, & Pearson, 2002). The only mention was a recommendation in Chapter 11 that ecotourism is promoted by governments as a means to encourage sustainable forest management and planning (UNCED, 1992).

Efforts were made towards enshrining principles of sustainable tourism development in other global fora. The Charter for Sustainable Tourism, formulated at the World Conference on Sustainable Tourism in 1995, aspired to set a framework for sustainable tourism development. Similar to Agenda 21, it received criticism for failing to clearly set out how sustainable tourism development was to be implemented (Mowforth & Munt, 2009). Later, the Earth Summit II in 1997 recognised and debated tourism as a specific economic sector to be developed sustainably (Holden, 2008). However, the goal of sustainable tourism development continued to face many challenges with little guidance on how tourism should be developed (Sharpley, 2000). It seemed sustainable tourism was often relegated to a cursory list of guidelines (Fyall & Garrod, 1997) in the form of non-enforceable codes of good practice. As a result, there was heavy reliance on developers to act ethically and responsibly.
To date, the interpretation of sustainable development remains dependent upon one’s political and philosophical worldview. For example, some believe it can only be accomplished through alterations of the market system and improvements in technology that do not threaten the status quo (Kates et al., 2005). Others argue sustainable development can only be achieved by a radical restructuring of society, involving changes in political structures and value systems (Orr, 2002). Hence, some sections of the tourism industry think sustainable tourism means the sustaining of tourism in the destination, as opposed to those who see sustainable tourism as a catalyst for major socially-determined goals and priorities (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006).

The contested relationship between tourism and sustainable development is discussed in sections of tourism discourse (Sharpley, 2008; 2015). Tourism is a vehicle through which to examine broader societal issues such as unsustainable development and ensuing impacts, for example social impacts on host societies (Boksberger & Laesser, 2007). Some believe that education offers the best chance of equipping future tourism leaders with knowledge and skills to tackle these challenges (Sheldon, Fesenmaier, Woeber, Cooper, & Antonioli, 2007; Sheldon, Fesenmaier, & Tribe, 2011). These include an assessment of the environmental, sociocultural, economic and political implications throughout the total tourism operation as well as the visitor and host experience. Thus sustainability should be central to tourism studies (Boley, 2011), not just because it is deemed important generally for higher education and a United Nations goal, but because it is even more crucial in this area of study than many others. The challenge is how to translate the lessons learnt from research of, for example, the impacts of tourism phenomena into a meaningful, holistic tourism higher education curriculum which harnesses tourism’s potential in creating a better world.

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

For the purpose of this study and simplicity’s sake, the term ‘tourism’ is used throughout the thesis when referring to tourism, hospitality and events. Although there has been an increase in sustainability awareness in certain disciplinary areas, studies have shown, there is still haphazard understanding and inconsistent uptake generally (Holdsworth, Wyborn, Bekessy, & Thomas, 2008; Thomas & Nicita, 2002; von der Heidt & Lamberton, 2011; von der Heidt et al., 2012). Qualitative research into the concept of sustainability education is particularly scant in tourism higher education research. A gap in knowledge was identified in the extent to which the principles of sustainability are explicitly stated or inferred within Australian tourism higher education tourism curriculum.
The teacher has an important role to play in sustainable education (Lund-Durlacher, 2012). However, scant research investigates academics’ perspectives, the role they play in sustainable education in universities, and what sustainability means to them at a personal and professional level. Furthermore, although previous studies have examined the way in which tourism teachers vary with teacher knowledge (what’ they teach) and teaching ability (‘how’ they teach) (Stergiou, 2005), little is known about ‘why’ this is so. Specifically, there is a gap in knowledge on how tourism academics fundamentally relate to the concept of sustainability, particularly when they are teaching into business and management-dominated curricula. Little is known about how practicing tourism academics integrate ‘sustainability’ into their teaching practice.

The thesis set out to add to the broader understanding of the range of issues surrounding the integration of sustainability within the higher education curriculum. The research did not intend to be a simple search for ‘what works’; otherwise the study would end up addressing essentially technical questions, which take for granted the prevailing structures of education and fail to address the underlying values and political questions about what is desirable and essential for sustainability education. This study aimed to move beyond questions that simply described sustainability education by throwing light on the array of factors at play in sustainability education. The topic is value-laden, complex and contentious, but it is hoped the research has recognised these complexities. It did not seek to find a single or simple answer.

Building on the identified gaps and questions, the central aim of this study is ‘to critically analyse the presence and meaning of sustainability in Australian tourism higher education curricula and teaching practice’. In order to address this aim, the study had the following four objectives:

1. To document the evidence of, and support for, sustainability education in Australian tourism higher education programs:
2. To explore what the concept of sustainability means to, and how it is understood by, tourism academics;
3. To investigate how and why tourism academics incorporate sustainability into their teaching practices;
4. To identify the challenges and opportunities in educating for sustainability in tourism higher education.
1.3.1 Research Approach

This exploratory study is positioned mostly within an interpretive paradigm, drawing upon qualitative data collection techniques. The advantage of a qualitative approach is it examines individual perspectives without setting a priori research assumptions or conceptions of sustainability (Denzin & Linclon, 2011b). The research aimed to address gaps in knowledge regarding the presence of sustainability in tourism curricula and tourism academics’ understanding and engagement with sustainability principles and values in tourism higher education.

To begin with, a web-based content analysis of publicly available information on Australian university websites presented an overview of the presence of sustainability within degree programs and individual subjects. Then university academics were interviewed who had some experience/interest of teaching and/or researching sustainability. An interpretive approach guided the in-depth interviews to ascertain the meanings and understanding of the concept of sustainability. Taking this qualitative methodological approach allowed multiple perspectives to be uncovered to explore the issues amongst the selected participants (Jennings, 2005). The research process also adopted an inductive approach to allow the subjective experiences of both the participants and researcher to be visible. Key themes and concerns voiced by the participants were identified (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The study is also informed by the ‘critical turn’ evolving in the field of tourism (Ateljevic et al., 2005; Bramwell & Lane, 2014; Pritchard, Morgan, & Ateljevic, 2011). Critical scholars have emerged to critique the notion of, for example, sustainable tourism development (Sharpley, 2009); ecotourism (Higham, 2007); and tourism scholarship (Higgins-Desbiolles & Whyte, 2013; Pritchard et al., 2011; Tribe, 2008). Nevertheless, there appears to be little critical analysis about, for example, how a tourism teacher’s worldview influences their teaching of sustainability. I took a critical eye to my research and engaged with these ontological and epistemological issues.

1.3.2 Scope of Study

When I decided to explore sustainability in tourism higher education, a number of approaches were possible. One option was to frame the study so as to yield a broad comparative and
contrasting data set. Sustainability education in tourism higher education might have been explored globally; for example, by comparing approaches taken by tourism academics in Australia, the UK and other nations. This approach would have offered a study of breadth. Another option was to take a case study approach and examine sustainability education at one, or a small number of universities. This approach would have provided in-depth data but a rather narrow picture. My desire was to gather data that incorporated elements of both depth and breadth. In this study therefore, I decided to adopt a middle ground and focus on the Australian tourism higher education scene. The findings of Stage One of this research offers a ‘snapshot’ of the presence of sustainability in tourism, hospitality and events programs at a number of Australian universities.

Another important consideration when scoping this study was to decide whose in-depth perceptions of sustainability were to be gathered in stage 2 of the research. A number of important stakeholders are associated with tourism higher education, such as students, the tourism industry, lecturers, institutional leaders, student alumni, and arguably the Australian tax payer. For the purposes and scope of this thesis, I made a decision to focus on one stakeholder’s perspective: the tourism academic whom I considered to be an expert with regard to teaching sustainability. As sustainability scholar Jickling (1997, p. 88) advises, rethinking and redefining sustainability education requires an understanding of the important role that educational practitioners play.

1.4 Thesis Outline

This thesis explored the presence and interpretation of the concept of sustainability within tourism higher education at Australian universities. Following from this Introductory Chapter, the thesis is divided into six further chapters as follows.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature relevant to sustainability, sustainable tourism, sustainability education and tourism higher education. It begins with an examination of the antecedents and theoretical approaches to environmental education, and sustainability education. The next section of the literature review focuses on the tourism context. Here tourism’s relationship to the environment and sustainability will be outlined, followed by a review of sustainability education in the tourism higher education context. The focus then narrows to the Australian higher education context and examines relevant literature pertaining to the role of the teacher in sustainability education.
Chapter 3 discusses the methodology that has been used for this study. Firstly a reflective piece describes what sustainability means to me and situates my role as researcher and tourism teacher within the research process. The ontological and epistemological stances I take are described, justifying why an interpretive, qualitative approach was suitable for my study. The methods of content analysis and in-depth interviews are explained. The data collection and data analysis techniques are also described. The Chapter concludes with an outline of the limitations presented by my methodological approach.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 together comprise the findings section of the thesis. Chapter 4 presents Stage 1 findings, obtained from the web-based content analysis, which explored the presence of sustainability in university degrees and subject information. Chapters 5 and 6 present Stage 2 findings derived from the in-depth interviews. The meanings and understandings of sustainability and teaching practice of sustainability as viewed by the participants are presented. The challenges and opportunities of teaching sustainability as perceived by the participants is presented throughout Chapters 5 and 6. In these chapters, detailed extracts from the interviews are given in support of the key themes which emerged and, in line with the interpretive approach, they provide a strong participant voice.

Chapter 7 links the findings back to the theory and existing literature and discusses the overall meaning of the findings and the contribution this thesis makes. Finally, Chapter 8 provides a conclusion with a summary of the thesis and its key findings. Suggestions for further research are offered to build on the findings of this study.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the literature relevant to sustainability in tourism higher education. To provide context for this study’s exploration of sustainable tourism curricula, it is important to begin with a discussion of modern environmentalism, in which sustainable development has its roots. This will be followed by a review of the relationship between tourism and the environment and sustainability, and analysis of sustainability education in tourism higher education. The chapter concludes with a brief examination of the Australian university sector and empirical research that has investigated academic perspectives of sustainability and teaching practices. The apparent gaps in existing studies are summarised, in particular outlining the lack of understanding about tourism academic perspectives of teaching sustainability in tourism higher education.

2.2 Modern Environmentalism

A range of discernible modern environmental worldviews is useful to help understand a person’s relationship with the environment and their interpretation of sustainability. ‘Worldview’ is often used interchangeably with ‘positions’ or ‘paradigm’, and can be defined as "a basic set of beliefs that guide action" (Guba, 1990, p. 17). Terms such as ‘environmentalism’, ‘ecological sustainability’ and ‘sustainable development’ are open to different interpretations depending on the adopted worldview and mindset as to ‘how we live our lives’. Environmental perspectives can be portrayed along a spectrum with opposing ideologies at each end of a continuum (Jacob, 1994; Turner, 1993). A range of ideologies inform our understanding of environmentalism too. There are myriad ways to define ‘ideology’; one definition sees ideology as a set of beliefs about the way society “ought to function to support the livelihoods and/or aspirations of its members” (Sunderlin, 2003, p. 14). The ideological perspectives of Marxism, eco-socialism, liberalism, neoliberalism, and more recently feminism and postmodern critical theory (Hay, 2002; Pepper, 1996) have in turn influenced environmental education and the more recent concept of sustainability education.

In the 1970s, Norwegian environmentalist Arne Naess articulated two broad environmental philosophical concepts of shallow ecology and deep ecology. These ecological viewpoints are
situated at opposite ends of the ideological worldview spectrum (Doyle & McEachern, 1998). Naess’s shallow ecology denotes an anthropocentric view of the natural environment where nature is separate from humanity and its value based on how it can meet human needs and wants (Naess, 1973). By contrast, deep ecology views nature as being interconnected with humanity and having intrinsic value (Naess, 1973). Other deep ecologists Drengson and Devall (2010, p. 54) explain “except to satisfy vital human needs, humankind does not have a right to reduce this diversity and richness”. Closely aligning to deep ecology, Lovelock’s Gaia hypothesis regards Earth as a single, holistic and living organism (Lovelock, 1989).

As well as deep ecology, other radical political ideologies of social ecology, eco-socialism and eco-feminism inform and continue to challenge environmental discourse. Although each of these movements has its distinct principles and tenets, they share a goal of challenging the dominant Western capitalist paradigm (Doyle & McEachern, 1998). Each movement argues that the root causes of non-sustainability are the distribution of power and wealth, gender inequalities and the inequitable behaviour of global corporations. Some contemporary environmental commentators can be seen to take a more radical ideological stance by challenging the capitalist worldview, accusing it to be the source of global unsustainability. Indicative of this viewpoint are works by the UK’s Forum for the Future and sustainability commentator Porritt (2007).

Another typology presented by O’Riordan (1989), portrays a range of worldviews under two broad orientations of technocentric and ecocentric. Four environmental perspectives of intervention, accommodation, communalism and Gaianism are placed within the two opposing orientations. These differing environmental perspectives have proved useful when conceptualising initial pathways for environmental education (Huckle, 1991). As depicted in Table 2.1, although each perspective values life, discrete differences in what is valued and what methods are used to achieve this are evident (O’Riordan, 1989).
Table 2.1: Environmental Perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technocentricism</th>
<th>Ecocentricism</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intervention</strong></td>
<td><strong>Accommodation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith in the application of science, market forces, and managerial ingenuity</td>
<td>Faith in the adaptability of institutions and approaches to assessment and evaluation to accommodate to environmental demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values progress above all</td>
<td>Values fairness above all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: O'Riordan (1989, p. 85); Cutter-Mackenzie (2011, p. 352)

Mirroring the characteristics of Naess’s shallow ecology, a technocentric view of the world believes technology will solve environmental problems (Doyle & McEachern, 1998). Subjective feelings and emotions are ignored as being unworthy with objective, technical measurements used instead in decision making processes (Cutter-Mackenzie, 2011). The anthropocentric perspectives of intervention and accommodation sees the physical environment as a resource to be exploited for human benefit and considers environmental needs only when they impact on humans (Des Jardins, 2006). Conversely, ecocentric perspectives of communalism and Gaianism implicitly value all life and seek to protect the entire ecosystem (Lautensach, 2010). This view represents an ideology which has no faith in ‘modern’ technology. Instead it advocates for alternative ‘green’ technologies in the belief these are environmentally kinder and generally not owned and operated by a powerful minority (Holden, 2008).

Another classification adding to the body of knowledge about environmental thinking is Merchant’s (1990) environmental ethical framework, consisting of three taxonomies - egocentric ethic, homocentric ethic and ecocentric ethic. Each ethic represents a different approach to the environment. An egocentric ethic is “grounded in the self and based on the assumption what is good for the individual is good for society” (Merchant, 1990, p. 45). Its alignment to laissez-faire capitalism permits exploitation of natural resources for individual gain (Merchant, 1990). An egocentric approach puts faith in human technical ingenuity to combat environmental degradation and has notable similarities to shallow ecology and
technocentricism. A homocentric ethic is “grounded in society and is based on the assumption that policies should reflect the greatest good for the greatest number of people and that, as stewards of the natural world, humans should conserve and protect nature for human benefit” (Merchant, 1990, p. 45). The final ethic draws on the ecocentric ethic first formulated by Aldo Leopold in the 1930s and 1940s, published as a chapter The Land Ethic in Sand County Almanac (Leopold, 1949/1968). An ecocentric ethic is “grounded in the cosmos or whole environment” (Merchant, 1990, p. 45). It recognises the intrinsic value of nature and has similarities to the environmental worldview of deep ecology, O’Riordan’s ecocentricism and Lovelock’s Gaia.

These environmental worldviews influence society’s relationship with, and use of, nature. The belief that nature exists for human exploitation is used as an ideological justification for the extensive development of the natural environment (Holden, 2008). A shallow, technocentrist would not consider the finite nature of natural resources and carry on extracting these resources so long as it is productive to do so. A deep ecologist and ecocentricist on the other hand, would always question the purpose of society’s use of natural resources to make sure their consumption was really necessary (O’Riordan, 1989).

2.2.1 ‘Weak’ and ‘Strong’ Sustainability

During the 1970s the idea of a ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ sustainability paradigm arose (although the terminology was not in use then), when followers of neoclassical economic theory began to factor in non-renewable natural resources into their economic growth models (Neumayer, 2010). The ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ paradigm represents a spectrum of ideological worldviews to reflect the broad environmental philosophical concepts of shallow ecology and deep ecology expounded by Arne Naess. At one end of the continuum, ‘weak’ sustainability denotes an anthropocentric view of the natural environment where nature is separate from humanity and its value based on how it can meet human needs and wants (Naess, 1973). The approach places economic interests above everything else and readily uses trade-offs to meet the business imperative of economic gain (Turner, 1993).

Strong sustainability on the other hand, is placed at the opposite of the spectrum, viewing nature as being interconnected with humanity and having intrinsic value (Naess, 1973). This approach believes that humankind does not have the right to trade off the environment for economic
interests and instead advocates new ways of operating that values other aspects of life, such as equity and justice (Turner, 1993).

In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development released the *Brundtland Report (Our Common Future)*. This seminal report of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century introduced a wider sustainable development theme:

> Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainable development does imply limits - not absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities. But technology and social organization can be both managed and improved to make way for a new era of economic growth. The Commission believes that widespread poverty is no longer inevitable. Poverty is not only an evil in itself, but sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to fulfil their aspirations for a better life. A world in which poverty is endemic will always be prone to ecological and other catastrophes (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 16).

The *Brundtland* definition, as it has become known, continues to be “the most widely used definition of sustainable development” (Dawe, Jucker, & Martin, 2005, p. 52). The *Brundtland Definition* tends to use the shorter version “that which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987, p. 16). Yet *Brundtland* has received much and enduring critique, with some disputing its effectiveness and apparent narrow application (Bratt, 2009). Bonnett (1999) questioned the pairing of ‘sustainability’ with ‘development’, arguing that although politically attractive, the term sustainable development suggests potentially conflicting agendas. Scholars point to the *Brundtland report’s* ambiguity, arguing fundamental questions such as, what is to be sustained and what is to be developed were not clearly answered, and very much left to interpretation (Glasser, 2004; Richardson, 1997). Despite the ambiguities, the concept of sustainable development won broad appeal because multiple interpretations were possible (Dietz & Neumayer, 2001).
However, the meaning of ‘sustainability’ is still disputed amongst resource and environmental economists. Terms of ‘weak’ are used to highlight differences of opinion on the substitutability between the economy and the environment (Ayres, van den Bergh & Gowdy, 2001). At the heart of ‘weak’ sustainability lies the premise that natural capital (the environment) could always be substituted by human-made capital (Pearce, Hamilton & Atkinson, 1996). ‘Weak’ sustainability is framed in terms of human well-being or utility (Dietz & Neumayer, 2007). Hence, this interpretation of sustainability seeks to provide equal opportunities for present and future generations, also known as intergenerational equity (Neumayer, 2010). Proponents of neoclassical economics took the view that sustainability was seen as a problem of managing a nation’s capital portfolio (Toman, Pezzey & Krautkraemer, 1995).

Negative outcomes of pursuing ‘weak’ sustainability practices have been documented, showing once natural capital is destroyed there is no way back to the original situation. A study by Gowdy and McDaniel (1999) found the income that Nauru, a small Pacific Island nation made from phosphate mining was intended to secure the nation’s future economic sustainability. However, the nation’s investments into a trust fund was wiped away in the Asian financial crisis. Nauru has since been left largely economically ruined and biologically impoverished, showing that the “substitution of natural for manufactured capital may be one-way” (Ayres, van den Bergh & Gowdy, 2001, p. 4).

At the other end of the sustainable development spectrum, ‘strong’ sustainability considers natural resources to be essential for economic production and societal welfare and cannot be substituted by human-made capital (Ayres, van den Bergh & Gowdy, 2001). ‘Very strong’ sustainability, as supported by the Deep Ecology movement, further acknowledged that nature had ‘rights’ in and of itself, implying that every aspect of the natural environment must be preserved (Turner, Pearce & Bateman, 1994). Difficulties noted with ‘strong’ sustainability, mostly stem from the challenge of defining what it means in practice. One criticism is that ‘strong’ sustainability appears to allow unlimited substitutability between forms of natural capital (Dietz & Neumayer, 2007). The acceptance of natural capital substitutability by proponents of strong sustainability is illustrated by investment in wind farms to replace fossil fuels in generating electricity (De Groot, Van der Perk, Chiesura & van Vliet, 2003).

Nonetheless, convincing reasons point to why a ‘strong’ interpretation sustainability ought to inform sustainable development (Porritt, 2007). Our planetary ecological systems provides us with basic life support systems and access to clean water, air and food are arguably impossible
to substitute (Ayres, van den Bergh & Gowdy, 2001). More importantly the loss of some natural capital may be irreversible (Gowdy and McDaniel, 1999). Another reason which displayed more anthropocentric undertones, was humans appear highly averse to losing natural capital when it directly provides utility (Dietz & Neumayer, 2007). Finally, ‘strong’ sustainability supported the ethical argument that posited perpetual material consumption was no longer an appropriate substitute for natural capital losses (Porritt, 2007).

Variations of the ‘Capital Approach’ presently help define sustainability. One approach known as the Five Capitals Model (Forum for the Future, 2014) offers a framework for sustainability. This model posits that in order for an organisation to be sustainable, five forms of capital consisting of: natural; human; social; manufactured; and financial are expected to be maintained and ideally enhanced, rather than degraded or depleted (Forum for the Future, 2014). The goals for each of the five capitals are outlined to establish a basis for understanding sustainability in terms of the economic concept of wealth creation or ‘capital’ for any given organisation (Forum for the Future, 2014). Ultimately a capital approach requires trade-offs. The decision about what is considered an acceptable trade-off appears to be the point where the discourse surrounding ‘weak’ vs. ‘strong’ sustainability becomes most heightened.

Contributing to the sustainable development discourse are other terms such as ‘green economy’ (Barbier & Markandya, 2014). For others, ‘sustainability necessitates a critical examination of capitalism and radical re-thinking of human priorities and expectations about how we live now and into the future (Porritt, 2007). The link between the environmental rhetoric and environmental education is now discussed.

**2.3 Environmental Education**

The antecedents of environmental education are evident throughout history (McCrea, 2006). Some of the great influential writers and thinkers of the 18th and 19th century, such as Goethe, Von Humboldt, Haeckel, Froebel, Dewey and Montessori have contributed to its evolution (Palmer, 1998). For example, the 18th century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau advocated the importance of a connection between education and the environment in his work *Emile or On Education* (McCrea, 2006). Sir Patrick Geddes (1854-1933), a Scottish Professor of botany and instigator of town and country planning, is considered by environmental scholars to be the founder of environmental education (Palmer, 1998). It was Geddes who made that “all important link between the quality of the environment and the quality of education” (Palmer &
Neal, 1994, p. 11). Geddes considered it important to educate the whole person and is regarded by many as the first to take students out into the field - the natural environment - as a learning experience (Sterling, 1992).

By the 1940s, the momentum for ‘nature studies’ expanded into ‘environmental studies’ (Palmer, 1998). What we now refer to as modern environmental education had its real roots in the 1960s and 1970s, stemming from educators’ desire to address the planet’s environmental degradation (Tilbury, 1995). The conceptualisation of environmental education has been credited to the influence of a small group of scholars - Peter Fensham, Russell Linke and Arthur Lucas from Australia, and Harold Hungerford, Bob Roth and Bill Stapp from the USA (Gough, 1997). Concern about the limitations of nature studies and outdoor education identified the “need for a new area that looked at the total environment and which explored much more of a problem solving orientation and about what citizens could do” (Gough, 1997, p. 6). In the first edition of the *Journal of Environmental Education*, Stapp et al., (1969, pp. 30-31) stated:

Environmental education is aimed at producing a citizenry that is knowledgeable concerning the bio-physical environment and its associated problems, aware of how to help solve these problems, and motivated to work toward their solution.

During the active environmentalism in the 1970s, conflict between the opposing ideologies of ‘development’ and ‘conservation’ emerged. From this period through to the 1990s, major international bodies (United Nations; United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); United Nations Environment Program) launched a series of declarations with the main focus on protecting and conserving the physical environment. The central foci of the international declarations are summarised in Table 2.2 and a comprehensive overview of the declarations is available in work by Lozano, Lukman, Lozano, Huisingh, and Lambrechts (2013) and Wright (2002).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Declaration/Event</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td><em>Stockholm Declaration</em>, United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Sweden</td>
<td>First time interdependency between humanity and environment was formally recognised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td><em>Belgrade Charter</em>, Belgrade Conference on Environmental Education, Yugoslavia</td>
<td>Debated the ‘environmental situation’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td><em>Tbilisi Declaration</em>, UNESCO, Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education, USSR</td>
<td>First official declaration stating environmental education be provided to people of all ages, all levels of academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Declaration/Conference</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
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<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td><em>The Brundtland Report: Our Common Future</em>, World Commission on Environment and Development</td>
<td>Sustainable development defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td><em>Talloires Declaration</em>, University Presidents for a Sustainable Future Conference, France</td>
<td>First official statement made by university administrators for a commitment to sustainability in higher education. A ten point action plan was signed by 20 universities. As of 2015 there are 497 signatories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td><em>Caring for the Earth: A strategy for sustainable living</em>, UNEP, IUCN, WWF</td>
<td>Revision of the World Conservation Strategy. Endorsed sustainable development to be the conservation of nature, natural resources and human development. Environmental education to be practical (action orientated) as well as theoretical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td><em>Halifax Declaration</em>, Consortium of Canadian Institutions, IAU, UNU, Canada</td>
<td>The ethical and moral obligation of universities in addressing sustainability was recognised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td><em>Earth Summit</em>, Rio de Janeiro. United Nations Conference on Environment and Development – Agenda 21, Chapter 36, Promoting education, public awareness and training</td>
<td>Adopted “Agenda 21” which specifically addressed issues relating to sustainability in education. The three main points were: • reorienting education towards sustainable development • increasing public awareness of environmental issues; and • promoting environmental training among educators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td><em>Kyoto Declaration</em>, Ninth International Association of Universities Round Table, Japan</td>
<td>Comprised eight points reaffirming universities’ ethical obligation to sustainability. Called for a clearer vision of how to achieve sustainability within universities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td><em>Swansea Declaration</em>, Association of Commonwealth Universities’ Fifteenth Quinquennial Conference, Wales</td>
<td>Encouraged cooperation between universities and society at large when pursuing practical and policy measures to achieve sustainable development and safeguard interests of future generations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td><em>COPERNICUS</em> University Charter for Sustainable Development, Association of European Universities (Copernicus Alliance)</td>
<td>It called for a paradigm shift in European universities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td><em>Thessaloniki Declaration</em>, International Conference on Environment and Society – Education and Public Awareness for Sustainability, Greece</td>
<td>Affirmed that all subject disciplines must address issues related to the environment and sustainable development and that university curriculum must be reoriented towards a holistic approach to education.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: adapted from Wright (2002; 2004); Lozano et al. (2013); Jones, Selby and Sterling (2010); Holden (2008)

The term ‘sustainable development’ was formally acknowledged at the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment (UNESCO, 1972). The *Stockholm Declaration* was the first time the global community recognised environmental problems and pronounced sustainable development as a major goal (Barber, 2003). Although pitched primarily at the environment, the seeds were sown for future declarations targeting specific areas such as education. The 1977 Conference on Environmental Education in *Tbilisi* officially established environmental education. Sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the conference yielded the first international declaration linking education with the environment. Importantly, *Tbilisi* included detailed objectives and guiding principles of environmental education (UNESCO, 1978). A further criticism was the Brundtland Report made little mention...
about the role education could play in reconciling the environment with development (Bonnett, 1999).

In the latter part of the twentieth century, a number of international declarations collectively lifted the profile of environmental education and sought to consolidate an understanding of its aims and objectives (Palmer, 1998). The signing of the Talloires Declaration by a group of university leaders at the 1990 United Leaders for a Sustainable Future was a major first step, formally establishing a link between sustainable development and higher education (Wright, 2002). The Talloires put forward a ten point action plan for colleges and universities committed to promoting education for sustainability and environmental literacy (ULSF, 1990). To date, the Talloires had been signed by 497 university leaders across 54 countries (ULSF, 2015). Issues relating to sustainability in education were addressed later in the 1992 Earth Summit. *Agenda 21 Chapter 36 (Education, Awareness and Training)* (UNCED, 1992), explicitly stated:

> An educational focus includes the reorientation of education towards sustainable development, the increase of public awareness of environmental issues and the promotion of environmental training among educators, as well as the more obvious and basic suggestion of improving provision of basic education (Reid, 2006, p. 106).

Despite the rhetoric of the above declarations, some commentators felt they did not go far enough. *Agenda 21* was criticised for being egocentric and homocentric, with Merchant (1992) arguing they both supported a human-centred, scientific, mechanistic approach of environmental knowledge. Critics of *Agenda 21* felt that the dominant discourses were allowed to go unheeded; nature was still constructed as a ‘resource’ for human use within a growth-orientated industrial model of development where any issues could be scientifically solved (Merchant, 1992). Others felt that the fundamental attributes of environmental education were not being addressed, namely critical awareness of the social and political factors of the environmental problem (Gough, 1997; Orr, 1995). Environmental education scholars who promoted this form of education as a vehicle for social change and more sustainable forms of development believed progress was hampered (Huckle, 1993). Those who aspired to an ecocentric approach to education remained on the fringes of a technocentric dominated style of education (Gough, 1997). The call for a more ecocentric paradigm for education was gaining traction only in isolated pockets of the sector (Palmer, 1998).
Throughout the 1990s, official declarations followed pronouncing sustainability aspirations in education. The 1993 *Kyoto Declaration* saw 90 international university leaders agree to attribute direct responsibility to the global university community to stimulate sustainability through environmental education. Commitment to the creation of specific plans of action was included in order for universities to pursue the goal of sustainability through their physical operations (Wright, 2002). In 1993 over 400 universities in 47 countries signed the *Swansea Declaration* recognising that to achieve sustainability “equality amongst countries” was an “important factor” (Wright, 2002, p. 110). A wider environmental scope of application to education was seen in 1997, when the *Thessaloniki Declaration* announced all education subject areas must address environmental and sustainability issues (UNESCO, 1997).

Nonetheless, environmental education scholars were forging a seminal body of knowledge. In Australia during the 1960s, environmental awareness and scholarly discourse was reflected in the growth of environmentally focused curricula (Sherren & Robin, 2006). The 1970s saw the emergence of an interdisciplinary study of the environment with undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in environmental management. The 1980s curricula were designed to meet some of the needs of a “more policy-conscious environmental movement” (Sherren & Robin, 2006, p. 33). However, similar to the vague concept of sustainable development or even sustainability in the *Brundtland Report*, what environmental education involved still lacked clarity due to different interpretations (Tilbury, 1995). The interpretation of environmental terms was, and still is, determined by the ideological viewpoint adhered. The result was a highly complex situation with a multitude of variables depending on location and circumstances (Palmer, 1998). Although a deep ecological approach was theoretically espoused, there remained a dissonance between the rhetoric and reality (Palmer, 1998; Spork, 1992).

### 2.4 Theoretical Approaches to Environmental Education

A useful typology of the different practical and theoretical approaches for environmental education was presented by French educational scholar Lucie Sauvé. Her proposed typology identified fifteen currents, which appear in environmental education” (Sauvé, 2005). Although all the currents share a concern about the environment and belief that education plays a central role, each pursue a different discourse and diverse range of educational practices. While the fifteen currents shown in Table 2.3 date back to the 1970s and 1980s, others are more recent imaginings of environmental education. According to Sauvé they co-exist today and may be studied from a “synchronic view” (Sauvé, 2005, p. 12).
Evidence of overlap between one or more current exists since a single current rarely operates alone in environmental education (Sauvé, 2005, p. 32). However, critical educational scholars contend it is necessary to have a critical orientation in environmental education in order to counter the mechanistic approach (Gough, 1997; Orr, 1995).

Historically, environmental education is said to have originated in a science-based curriculum dominated by an objective, mechanistic worldview (Gough, 2006). Gough (1997) pointed to the tension this creates for environmental education as a traditional, technocratic curriculum background of science seeks to be value neutral. The modernist orientation views curriculum as a transfer of knowledge in a mechanical, industrial process which Brazilian critical education scholar Paulo Freire refers to as the “banking concept” of education (Freire, 1972). The 1970s environmental movement informed a growing awareness that knowledge is a social construction – there is no one ‘truth’ (Gough, 1997). Early indications of support for a new approach came from UNESCO’s Tbilisi Declaration in 1978. Tbilisi encouraged education to adopt a critical approach and use a variety of learning approaches of teaching and learning to tackle current and potential environmental issues (UNESCO, 1978). Nevertheless, some were critical of Tbilisi, noting despite its attempts, it glossed over the issues and obstacles environmental educators were facing to implement a postmodern approach (Sauvé, 1999). Following Tbilisi, some felt environmental education still operated within a realm of “instrumental rationality”, arguing the focus remained on knowledge building rather than the development of ethical and critical capabilities (Sauvé, 1999, p. 18).

Tension between modernity and postmodernity is also evident within environmental education (Sterling, 1996). Modernist epistemology is positivist and, as it seeks objectivity, “relies on instrumental rationality to legitimize knowledge and to organize it into separate disciplines”
On the other hand, the advantages of a postmodern perspective is beneficial for environmental education because according to Sauvé (1999, p. 13), it is: “inductive, essentially critical and socio-constructivist and recognizes the complex, unique, and contextual nature of the objects of knowledge”. This approach supports the rejection by critical educators that students are empty vessels to be filled (Freire, 1985). Instead of delivering defined disciplinary knowledge via a ‘sage on the stage’ style of didactic teaching, a postmodern approach is preferred which regards education as student-centred and reflective (Freire, 1998).

The views taken by individuals within the field of education are important as they determine the orientation of curricula (Sterling, 1996). An Australian joint working party working on Curriculum and Transition at the Victorian Institute of Secondary Education produced a study called “ Orientations to curriculum and transition: Towards the socially-critical school” (Kemmis, Cole, & Suggett, 1983). Kemmis et al. (1983) posit an environmental educator’s curriculum orientation can be located within one of three positions: neo-vocational, liberal progressive or socially-critical viewpoint, shown in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4: Orientation of Environmental Educators to the Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation to the Curriculum</th>
<th>Neo-Vocational</th>
<th>Liberal-progressive</th>
<th>Socially-critical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>View of knowledge</td>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Subjective</td>
<td>Dialectical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desired student outcome</td>
<td>Finding one’s place in society.</td>
<td>The ‘educated’ person.</td>
<td>A critical and constructive co-participant in society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning theory</td>
<td>Behaviourism, deficit models of the learner.</td>
<td>Constructivist-interactionist models of the learner as building cognitive structures through interactions.</td>
<td>Social constructivist-interactionist model of learner as reconstructing their own knowledge and social reality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-student relationship</td>
<td>Teacher is an authority who uses directive pedagogy involving telling and testing.</td>
<td>Teacher is a leader with recognised knowledge and concern for student growth. Mix of telling and self-directed learning within a set model.</td>
<td>Teacher is a coordinator with an emancipatory aim. Learning is a co-operative process where critical reflection and action are encouraged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad curriculum organisation</td>
<td>Rigid subject differentiation and timetabling.</td>
<td>Weak subject differentiation and timetabling.</td>
<td>Differentiation of subjects and use of time based on</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A neo-vocational view of education considers knowledge to be objective and set within a rigid timetable of defined subjects. As Freire (1998) notes, education seeks to prepare students for opportunities in a pre-structured society of inequalities. A liberal progressive curriculum orientation follows a constructivist learning theory where knowledge is viewed subjectively and set within a looser timetabling of subjects (Kemmis, 2012). The aim of a liberal progressive education is to prepare students to participate in the reconstruction of society (Nussbaum, 1997). A socially-critical view of the curriculum, on the other hand, takes a dialectical view of knowledge and adopts a social constructivist-interactionist learning theory (Freire, 1998). Here, subject content is negotiated with a whole-of-curriculum approach and includes collaborative community projects “which engage students in collaborative reflection and learning from direct experiences” (Gough, 1997, p. 92). A socially-critical curriculum specifically aims to prepare students to overcome social inequities and participate in “social, political and economic activities, with a stress on socially, morally and politically justifiable conflict resolution” (Gough, 1997, p. 90). The three curriculum orientations in Table 2.4 remain visible in today’s educational system (Kemmis, 2012).

Although Kemmis (2012) posits that each orientation “has a view of what the good life and the good society is”, environmental educators nonetheless argue a socially critical approach has greater resonance with the goals of environmental education (Fien, 2002b; Robottom & Hart, 1993). More in line with Henry Giroux’s work on critical pedagogy, a socially critical perspective takes the view that curriculum should refute any ideological pretence of being value-free (Giroux, 1997). The benefit of a socially critically informed curriculum for environmental education is it can identify and critically examine opposing values (Gough, 1987). Through critical reflection, inequities in society become apparent. Students learn to question existing social structures to make informed decisions (Gough, 1997). Furthermore,
some authors argue a feminist perspective be adopted in education (Gough, 1999; McKenzie, 2004). These scholars claim that a post-structural feminist approach to socio-ecological education is essential in allowing marginalised voices be heard. Gough (1999, p. 153) proffers it would: “draw attention to racism and gender blindness in environmental education.”

Philosophical differences underpinning how one thinks about ‘sustainability’ have resulted in myriad terms and interpretations. The 1980s and 1990s saw heavy debate about distinctions between ‘education about the environment’, ‘education for environmental awareness and interpretation’, and ‘education for sustainability’ (Huckle, 1993; Palmer, 1998). Education about the environment predominantly served the human technical interest on environmental education and was based on empirical science (Huckle, 1993). Education for environmental awareness and interpretation was underpinned by hermeneutic science, and aimed to increase peoples’ understanding of their behaviour in relation to the environment by, for example, learning about conservation (Huckle, 1993). Education for sustainability, on the other hand, was based upon critical science and involved empowering people to make social change (Fien, 1993; Huckle, 1993). A discrete difference in the various terminologies was outlined by Spork (1992, p. 147):

Education in and about the environment is intended to develop the knowledge, awareness, attitude and skill objectives, while education for the environment has its focus on the values, ethics, problem solving and action objectives.

In their critique of environmental education, Jickling and Spork (1998) believed the terms ‘educating for/with/about/in the environment’ were insufficiently questioned and had become slogans. Drawing from a deep ecological worldview, Australian environmental education scholar Noel Gough, favoured the term education with the environment because for him: “an ecological paradigm should give us cause for optimism that we might someday learn to live and live to learn, with environments” (Gough, 1987, p. 50). Although the term educating for the environment appeared popular, Gough believed little had improved. He argued the concept was as inadequate and narrow as the approach taken by education about or in the environment:

Apart from being somewhat patronising and anthropocentric (who are we to say what is ‘good for’ the environment, and which environment is the environment anyway’), this slogan maintains the sorts of distractions that tend to work against a deeply
ecological worldview – distinctions between subject and object, education and environment, learner and teacher (Gough, 1987, p. 50).

The dominant approach up till the mid-1990s appeared to favour knowledge and skills in and about the environment. John Fien, one of the leaders in Australian environmental education, promoted education for the environment to address “neglect of controversial environmental issues, and the avoidance of values and problem solving objectives...and a widespread avoidance of environmental politics and the political economy of resource use” (Fien, 1993a, p. 9). Education for the environment was preferred by many as a way to liberate the focus of environmental education away from its old style focus about/in the environment and embrace political aspects of environmental issues (Fien, 1993a).

David Orr, renowned North American environmental educator and commentator, in his discussion about the importance of environmental literacy in education, sought to reconceptualise an approach he termed ecological literacy (Orr, 1992). Building on Orr’s work, Cutter-MacKenzie and Smith’s (2003) study of school teachers’ perceptions of environmental education, found a poor level of eco-knowledge (eco-literacy). These scholars strongly argued knowledge about the environment is relevant and required in order to change the current environmental education status (Cutter-MacKenzie & Smith, 2003).

The term ‘environmental education for sustainability’ was first made popular in the 1990s, heralding a “new focus” for environmental education (Tilbury, 1995, p. 197). Although remaining environmentally focused, the concept of holism expanded its philosophical basis (Tilbury, 1995). Learning was constructed on seeing the whole picture, not only how one connects with the environment (Tilbury, 1995). Importantly, and possibly reflecting one of the goals of Agenda 21 from the 1992 Earth Summit, environmental education for sustainability recognised social, economic, political, cultural and historical connections with sustainability (Tilbury, 2004).

In some circles it appears the term environmental education is seen as an “older and less comprehensive form of education” and so the word ‘environmental’ is dropped (Dyment et al., 2014, p. 663). Sauvé’s typology in Table 2.4 shows ‘education for sustainable development’ (ESD), also widely known as education for sustainability (EfS) to be the present ‘current’ in environmental education. Building on the previous work of environmental educators Fien (1993b) and Huckle and Sterling (1996), the central aim of EfS is the acquisition of action-
oriented skills for change in the form of critical thinking, reflection, innovation and problem solving skills (Tilbury & Cooke, 2005).

EfS represents a move beyond education that was in and about the environment to one that was for the environment, an approach promoting critical reflection with an overt agenda for proactive and systemic social change (Tilbury & Cooke, 2005; Tilbury & Wortman, 2004). According to Tilbury et al. (2005, p. 20) “learning for sustainability encourages students to envision and collaboratively construct their concept of sustainability in a way that is meaningful to their own specialist areas”. Some education scholars, however, recommend ‘education about and for sustainable development’ (Thomas & Benn, 2009) or ‘education about and for sustainability’ (EafS) (von der Heidt et al., 2012) is more appropriate. They maintain that knowledge and understanding of the environment should be combined with the necessary capacity building skills, so people are equipped to make the required changes towards sustainability (Tilbury, 2004).

Discussion on what an appropriate term should be continues in the education literature. The concept of ‘education for sustainability’, also known as sustainability education, are the terms used today which reflect Sauvée’s (2005) ‘sustainable development current’ in environmental education. For the purposes of this research I use ‘education for sustainability’ and ‘sustainability education’ interchangeably since both are popular terms in the literature and policy documents (see Brown, 2012; Jones et al., 2010; Scott, 2012; Thomas & Nicita, 2002).

2.5 A Revisioning of Sustainable Education

Environmental education, however, has responded slowly towards adopting a critical approach (Fien, 1993b; Robottom, 1987). Kemmis (2012) contends that any socially critical view of the mid-twentieth century is over-taken by the rise of the neoliberalism and neoconservative era of the 1980s. He believes neoliberalism is present in many of today’s education systems. As a result, Kemmis (2012) considers knowledge and experience are discussed as if they were somehow global, abstract and separate from what is actually taking place in communities.

The call for a paradigm change in education includes a conversion from the teacher-learner relationship to a learner-environment relationship (Sterling, 1990, 1996, 2001). A re-orientation of the curriculum requires teachers and students to join together in the learning process of inquiry, experiencing and understanding (Freire, 1998; Sterling, 2001).
In the general higher education literature a consensus is building of the need to change our view of the purpose of education (Fien, 2002a; O'Sullivan, 2002; Orr, 1995; Tilbury, 1995). Some authors believe education is a “deeply moral enterprise” and “should be about equipping people to lead good lives” (Kelly & Alam, 2009, p. 33) instead of merely training students with skills for the workplace (Inui, Wheeler, & Lankford, 2006; Lewis, 2005).

Some remain critical of the dominant Western education system (Huckle, 1996; Orr, 1992; Sterling, 2001). More specifically there is criticism the overall education regime is technocratic and reductionist making it difficult to include the principles of sustainability (Fien, 2002a; Sterling, 2001). In particular, Stephen Sterling, a prominent English environmental educator and commentator, is concerned about the big question, which he feels goes largely unnoticed – what is the purpose of education? (Sterling, 2001, 2004). Sterling believes this and other questions, such as “what is education? And whose education?” are “key to unlocking the values of any educational system or ideology” (Sterling, 2001, p. 24).

Disenchanted and frustrated by the limited progress which had occurred with the “interface between education, environmental problems and sustainability” (Huckle, 1993, p. 1), pioneer environmental educational scholars Ian Robottom, John Huckle, John Fien, Noel Gough and Stephen Sterling advocated for a major paradigm shift in education. Sterling (1996) considered Western education to be dominated by a paradigm valuing progress, economic efficiency, science and technology and where humans and nature are separate. Orr (2004, p. 5) agreed, articulating his frustration that “the kind of education we need begins with the recognition that the crisis of global ecology is first and foremost a crisis of values, ideas, perspectives, and knowledge, which makes it a crisis of education, not one in education” (emphasis in original).

The challenge was to agree on “what ideology will achieve the change in education” (Gough, 1997, p. 138). Many believed it warranted a move from the materialist and scientific worldview and epistemological paradigm dominating formal education, towards education with an ecological paradigm (Huckle, 1993; Robottom & Hart, 1993; Sterling, 1996). The whole education system was criticised as it “daily reinforces unsustainable values and practices in society” (Sterling, 2001, p. 21). Proposed instead was a rethinking of all education, holistically framed by an ecological view of the world (Gough, 1987; Sterling, 1990, 2001). The key differences in core values between a mechanistic paradigm view of education compared with
an ecological view of education are summarised in Table 2.5: Values in Educational Paradigms: A Comparison of the Mechanistic and Ecological Views.

**Table 2.5: Values in Educational Paradigms: A Comparison of the Mechanistic and Ecological Views**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanistic View</th>
<th>Ecological View</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for economic life</td>
<td>Participation in all dimensions of the sustainability transition – social, economic, environmental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection or exclusion</td>
<td>Inclusion and value of all people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal education</td>
<td>Learning throughout life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing as instrumental value</td>
<td>Being/becoming (intrinsic/instrumental values)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Cooperation, collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialisation</td>
<td>Integrative understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialisation, integrating to fit</td>
<td>Autonomy-in-relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing institutional profiles</td>
<td>Developing learning communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective learning</td>
<td>Transformative learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardisation</td>
<td>Diversity with coherence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith in ‘the system’</td>
<td>Faith in people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modernity</td>
<td>Ecological sustainability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sterling (2001, p. 58)

In order to pursue an ecological educational paradigm, deep seated values and assumptions need to be exposed (Sterling, 2001). The emergence of the concept of sustainability education in the 21st century offered scholars a conceptual platform to discuss such issues.

At the turn of the century, the *Earth Charter* presumed “virtuous action” wherever humanity creates society underpinned by values of compassion, cooperativeness, intergenerational justice and stewardship (Preston, 2010, p. 188) and is considered by some to be “one of the most significant international documents” (Savelava, Savelau, & Cary, 2010, p. 261). The Millennium Goals saw universal agreement on aspirational targets related to health, education and poverty UNESCO (2006, p. 15). Many declarations followed relating to sustainability in higher education, and Table 2.6 provides a brief chronology.
Table 2.6: Chronology of 21st century declarations regarding sustainability in higher education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Declaration/Event</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td><em>Earth Charter</em></td>
<td>Source of inspiration and guidance of universal ethical principles for sustainable development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td><em>Global Higher Education for Sustainability Partnership (GHESP)</em></td>
<td>Seeks to develop and share effective strategies, models and best practices for promoting higher education for sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td><em>Millennium Goals, United Nations</em></td>
<td>Global agreement on a blueprint containing 8 millennium development goals, ranging from halving extreme poverty rates to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, by the target date of 2015.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td><em>Ubuntu Declaration, UNU, UNESCO, IAU, Third World Academy of Science, African Academy of Sciences and the Science Council of Asia, COPERNICUS-Campus, GHESP, ULSF</em></td>
<td>Called for the development of a global learning environment for learning for sustainability. It suggested the creation of networks and Regional Centres of Expertise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td><em>Graz Declaration on Committing Universities to Sustainable Development, COPERNICUS CAMPUS, UNESCO</em></td>
<td>Stresses the key opportunities which the Bologna Process creates for embedding sustainability across higher education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td><em>UNDES - United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development begins</em></td>
<td>Major goal to integrate the principles, values and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td><em>Bonn Declaration, UNESCO World Conference on education for sustainable development, Germany</em></td>
<td>Reaffirmed universities’ role in committing to transforming teaching, research and community engagement to strengthen local and global knowledge of ESD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td><em>World Conference on Higher Education, UNESCO</em></td>
<td>Called on governments to increase investment in higher education, encourage diversity and strengthen regional cooperation to serve societal needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td><em>G8 University Summit Sapporo Sustainability Declaration, G8 University Network</em></td>
<td>Aim was to develop common recognition of the need for global sustainability, to discuss responsibility of universities and provide messages to G8 leaders and societies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td><em>Living Sustainably: the Australian Government’s</em></td>
<td>Provides a framework for national action to work towards the objectives put forward in the United...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>World Conference on Higher Education, UNESCO</td>
<td>Called on governments to increase investment in higher education, encourage diversity and strengthen regional cooperation to serve societal needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td><em>Turin Declaration</em> on Education and Research for Sustainable and Responsible Development</td>
<td>Aim was to acknowledge the pivotal role that higher education institutions and scientific research organisations should play in supporting sustainability at global and local levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Higher Education Declaration for Rio+20, UNESCO, UNEP, PRIME, UNU</td>
<td>Leaders in higher education signed a commitment to Sustainable Practices of Higher Education Institutions in the lead up to Rio+20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td><em>The People’s Treaty on Sustainability for Higher Education</em>, Copernicus Alliance, and 35 HE agencies, associations and organisations</td>
<td>Treaty developed to influence international negotiations and dialogues. A formal voluntary commitment of Rio+20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Wright (2002; 2004; 2012); Lozano et al. (2011); Jones, Selby and Sterling (2010); Holden (2008)

The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD) 2005-14 built upon the *Earth Summit – Agenda 21, Millennium Development Goals 2000, Education for All Dakar Framework 2000* and the *United Nations Literacy Decade*. The UNDESD’s major goal is to integrate the principles, values and practices of sustainable development into all kinds of education and learning (UNESCO, 2005) and is therefore of particular interest to this thesis. The rhetoric seemed to prepare for a paradigm shift in education towards a more ecological approach with Nevin (2008, p. 57) observing that:

The underlying principles of ESD as outlined by UNESCO highlight the importance of respect and care for life in all its diverse forms: this involves the protection and restoration of the earth’s ecosystems, respect for the dignity and human rights of people, respect for the rights of future generations and respect for cultural diversity.

The 2006 *Framework for the UNDESD International Implementation Scheme* outlined the kind of education considered essential to facilitate sustainable development (UNESCO, 2006). These involved three ‘pillars’ of sustainable development:

- Society: an understanding of social institutions and their role in change and development, as well as the democratic and participatory systems which give opportunity for the expression of opinion, the selection of governments, the forging of consensus and the resolution of differences.
• Environment: an awareness of the resources and fragility of the physical environment and the effects on it of human activity and decisions, with a commitment to factoring environmental concerns into social and economic policy development.

• Economy: a sensitivity to the limits and potential of economic growth and their impact on society and on the environment, with a commitment to assess personal and societal levels of consumption out of concern for the environment and for social justice (UNESCO, 2006, p. 14)

Despite the good intentions laid down in all of the declarations, several scholars are critical of the underlying messages. In their critical hermeneutic examination of United Nations discourse, Sauvé, Berryman, and Brunelle (2007) point out little had changed in sentiment over the last thirty years. Although wording is substituted, Sauvé et al. (2007, p. 36) analysis revealed the following were recurrent themes in the education declarations: “(1) education is an instrument to support a political and economic agenda; (2) environment is reduced to problems of resources, and (3) development is mainly associated with sustained economic growth”. In concluding their examination, Sauvé et al.’s (2007, p. 51) asserted the UNDESD continued to follow preceding UN sentiment and reduce education to: “an instrument for preparing ‘human resources’ to solve environmental ‘problems’ through a reformed notion of development mainly associated with sustained economic growth”.

It appears clear to Wals and Jickling (2002, p. 129), both prominent commentators for environmental education from The Netherlands and Canada respectively, that higher education must still respond to the ‘messy, ill-defined concept’ of sustainability, to provide opportunities and ‘space’ for new ways of thinking in education. The creation of targeted journals such as Journal of Environmental Education (established 1969), Australian Journal of Environmental Education (established 1984), Environmental Education Research (established 1995), Canadian Journal of Environmental Education (established 1996), and the International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education (established in 2000), demonstrate active scholarly thought in this field.

In the lead up to the Rio+ Summit, leaders of higher education institutions came together to reaffirm their commitment that higher education has an explicit responsibility towards an international pursuit of sustainable development (HEI Declaration, 2012). That same year 39 higher education organisations signed the Rio+ 20 People’s Sustainability Treaty in Higher Education, committing towards improving their performance and action in this area (Tilbury,
2013). The impact of this latest international commitment in higher education is yet to be examined by scholars.

### 2.5.1 Characteristics of Sustainability Education

Conceptual papers about sustainability education are prolific in the literature, indicating the level of academic interest in this topic, and the growing body of knowledge around it (Sherren, 2006b). A number of key characteristics for sustainability education are acknowledged and discussed here in this section.

Sustainability education is widely accepted to be concomitant with a whole systems-thinking approach (ARIES, 2009; Dale & Newman, 2005; Sterling & Thomas, 2006; Strachan, 2009; Warburton, 2003). Sterling (2001, p. 52) explains whole systems-thinking to mean moving away from “dominant forms of thinking which are analytic, linear, and reductionist” and by incorporating “humanistic ideas, it offers a way of making holistic thinking understandable, accessible and practicable”.

Scholars who support an ecological worldview suggest since the world is based upon systemic process and relationships, our values and actions in education should be consistent with systemic reality too (Sterling, 1990; Strachan, 2009). Other scholars advocate extending the concept of ecological holism when learning how to think holistically about the interconnectivity of the Earth’s systems (Harding, 2009). Some argue that systems thinking ought to be a “threshold concept” (Land & Meyer, 2006) when learning for sustainability. According to Sandri (2013), this involves shifting the foci of sustainability learning away from what needs to be taught about sustainability, “to the processes that allow learners to engage with and internalise a systems view of the world” (Sandri, 2013a, p. 820).

Coupled with a systems-thinking approach is the strategy of inter/transdisciplinary input achieving holistic understanding (Nowak, Rowe, Thomas, & Klass, 2008; Shephard, 2010; Sipos, Battisti, & Grimm, 2008; Sterling & Thomas, 2006). As Smyth (1995, p. 5) notes: “If we try to treat the environment holistically we must do the same for education”. Many scholarly articles agree the complex nature of “wicked” (Rittel & Webber, 1973) sustainability challenges requires inter/transdisciplinary input to garner a comprehensive understanding of the issues (Bacon et al., 2011; Brown, Harris, & Russell, 2010; Jurowski & Liburd, 2001; Kurland et al., 2010; Mrnjavec, Pavia, & Vujić, 2012; Sherren, 2005). A transdisciplinary approach is
favoured as it allows universities to draw on the combined insights of individual disciplines to create new explanations and understandings to tackle multi-faceted problems (Albrecht, Higginbotham, & Freeman, 2001; Brown et al., 2010).

It is argued that students need to understand alternative value systems and become reflexive to enable a resilient society capable of creative thinking and ethically responsible action (Wals, 2011). Advocates for sustainability education recommend integrating values into sustainable development discourse of university curriculum (Muijen, 2004; Sterling, 1996). Values education refers to the importance of the ‘affective’ domain of learning (Littledyke, 2008; Shephard, 2008; Sipos et al., 2008) allowing students to reflect on their values, beliefs and attitudes to generate learning about sustainability (Lewis, Mansfield, & Baudains, 2008; Nowak et al., 2008; Sterling, 1996). Moreover, what is desired by some is a paradigmatic shift away from a passive, non-critical culture that is value-free, to one that challenges current student attitudes and behaviour, is value-laden and emancipatory (Springett, 2005). Critical scholars argue that teaching, like all other spheres of social life, is always a political act, thus educators are required to take responsibility to expose and discuss values and assumptions with students (Fullagar & Wilson, 2012; Springett, 2005).

However, Ballantyne and Packer (1996) caution against an over-emphasis on values education to the exclusion of environmental knowledge. Instead, these scholars suggest adopting a ‘constructivist’ approach to learning to enable a change in students’ understanding (Ballantyne & Packer, 1996). According to Ballantyne and Packer (1996, p. 28), since a constructivist view of learning focuses on the student’s current conceptions or misconceptions, this method of teaching and learning can challenge students, helping them: “become aware of their own and alternative conceptions, and selectively confront them with new information or learning experiences designed to challenge inaccurate or inadequate conceptions.”

A constructivist approach to learning has its critics too. If students are expected to construct their own learning, Bowers (2007) contends students could remain ignorant of “accumulated and time-tested intergenerational knowledge and skills”, which unless challenged, will continue to influence that person’s worldview (Bowers, 2007, p. 271). According to Bowers double bind thinking occurs when past misconceptions are relied upon to address current problems and the solution actually amplifies the problem. He illustrates this with the example of “pursuing greater economic growth when it destroys the natural systems” (Bowers, 2007, p. 271) The disadvantage with double bind thinking in sustainability education is the reinforcement of
consumer-orientated patterns of beliefs, values and behaviours which run counter to sustainability (Bowers, 2007).

Similar to values-based education, the study of ethics is considered important in a student’s higher education experience (Byrne, 2012; Dunfee & Robertson, 1988; Kronlid & Öhman, 2013; Mustakova-Possardt, 2004; Newman, 2008; Ohman & Ostman, 2008; Rundle-Thiele & Wymer, 2010). Graduates will need to draw on ethical principles when they face major decisions affecting the environment and society in general (Rundle-Thiele & Wymer, 2010). Ohman and Ostman (2008) recommend ethical and moral issues are treated in a pluralistic manner, where different and opposing views are considered. Naeem and Neal (2012) agree, advising students need to be exposed to realistic ethical dilemmas from their disciplinary standpoint and how these may relate to wider societal context. In research on the application of critical inquiry in business education, García-Rosell (2013) showed how ethical understanding can be achieved by using problem-based learning techniques to critically discuss ethically problematic corporate social responsibility case study scenarios.

In the scholarly community, transformative education is becoming synonymous with EfS (Elliott, 2010-11; Johnston, 2009; McNamara, 2010; Moore, 2005b; Pavlova, 2013; Sterling, 2010-11). To achieve the EfS ‘capacity building’ skills of critical thinking, reflection, innovation and problem solving skills advocated by Tilbury and Cooke (2005), it is recommended that transformative opportunities for deep-learning and education must be made available (O'Sullivan, 2004; Tilbury & Cooke, 2005; Warburton, 2003). More specifically, in order to equip students to tackle the future challenges and harness opportunities of sustainability, educational scholars recommend education requires a re-orientation from transmissive to transformation education (Gadotti, 2010; Sterling, 2001, 2010; Wals, 2011; Wals & Jickling, 2002). A range of forms of learning have emerged and include: transdisciplinary learning; transformative learning; anticipatory learning; experiential and participatory learning; collaborative learning; and social learning (Wals, 2011; Wals & Jickling, 2002). The key feature common to all is they “consider learning as more than merely knowledge-based” (Wals, 2011, p. 180).

The importance of real life experience which: “explicitly engages with values in real life environmental contexts” (Lewis et al., 2008, p. 151), rather than vague and abstract concepts, is discussed in the sustainable education literature. Numerous studies conclude that exposure to real life experiences with the opportunity for self-reflection associated with a socially critical
approach can achieve the deep learning required to make significant change (Jamal, Taillon, & Dredge, 2011). Particular pedagogy which includes experiential and participatory ‘social learning’ is of value (Jamal et al., 2011; Wals, 2007). The benefits of experiential and participatory social learning are appealing as students not only acquire vocational and technical knowledge, but learn to understand and address ethical stewardship responsibilities by critical thinking and practical application (Wals, 2007). Furthermore, Sibbel (2009, p. 79) shows these experiences “lead to a greater awareness of social and moral responsibilities”.

2.6 Theoretical Frameworks for Sustainable Tourism

Tourism activities and industries are highly dependent on natural resources, thus the extension of concepts like sustainable development have long been discussed in the field of tourism studies. It is now widely documented that tourism can contribute to a wide range of environmental, sociocultural, economic and political impacts, at both a local and global level (Connell & Rugendyke, 2008; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). As in the environmental education discussion above, the linking of ‘sustainable’ with ‘tourism’ is also highly contested. Many tourism academics have been critical of the notion of sustainable development to begin with, and see the notion of sustainable tourism development as particularly problematic. The idea of sustainable tourism development is regarded by some as an oxymoron, coupled with those who describe complex paradoxes emanating from the concept of ecotourism (Becken & Schellhorn, 2007; Higham & Luck, 2007). The notion of ‘sustainable tourism development’ is situated within the wider sustainability debate. The interpretation of sustainable tourism development depends largely on one’s ideological worldview about what tourism is and what it represents.

Drawing on similar spectra in the debate on sustainable development, Weaver and Lawton put forward a spectrum of sustainable tourism development as a way of representing differing ideologies and beliefs (Weaver & Lawton, 1999). At one extreme of the continuum is the anthropocentric belief in laissez-faire capitalism, dependent on the exploitation and marketable value of natural resources. Located at the opposite end is the biocentric worldview of deep ecology, supported by a belief in conservation and preservation (Weaver & Lawton, 1999). It is argued that most people fall into what is considered the majority ideology which represents a combination of ‘resource conservationists’ and ‘resource preservationists’ (Hunter, 1997). Depicted in Figure 2.1, this is regarded as the ‘realm of compromise’ and is often argued as perhaps the only way to achieve mainstream support for sustainable development. The
challenge for tourism is how to achieve its development within a sustainable development paradigm.

![Figure 2.1: An Ideological Continuum of Sustainable Development Perspectives](image)


Scholarly views about tourism have expanded and various theories developed to understand and explain tourism phenomena. A number of models provide an ideological backdrop in which to situate the emergence of sustainable tourism education. A selection of theoretical frameworks which evolved to explain the relationship between tourism and sustainable development will be critiqued. To begin with Jafai’s platforms model of tourism research is one such model that affords a useful “framework for studying how approaches towards tourism have changed over the years” (Hardy et al., 2002, p. 484). In particular, the framework accounts for the rising profile of sustainable tourism.

Jafari’s platforms model of tourism research represents the building of tourism scholarly thinking to depict the growth of tourism from the middle of the 20th century to present day. Widely cited, it is used in tourism education to demonstrate the various stages through which tourism thought has moved from its inception as an academic discipline or area of study (Leiper, 2004). Since the model provides a “historical context in which sustainable tourism developed and how it is currently dealt with” Hardy et al. (2002, p. 484), the platforms may also “provide an insight into how sustainable tourism may be viewed in the future” Hardy et al. (2002, p. 484). Jafari’s original 1990 model consisted of four platforms representing a chronology of tourism research and scholarship: namely advocacy, cautionary, adaptancy and knowledge-based. While it is suggested that these platforms have developed over the past few decades,
evidence of thinking in each phase still exists today (Hardy et al., 2002). The four phases are briefly discussed here in turn.

The end of World War II saw the development of what Jafari referred to as the **advocacy platform**. This phase of thinking highlighted the economic prospects flowing from tourism as a labour intensive industry, providing viable economic alternative for many communities and countries and generating valuable foreign exchange. The platform is entrenched within the business of some tourism developers and organisations today, seen through their “boosteristic” views towards tourism (Leiper, 2004, p. 230).

The **cautionary platform** of thinking took form in the 1960/70s, with the overall position to reject the claims of the advocacy platform (Jafari, 1990). This way of thinking linked to the modern environmental movement gaining momentum during the period. It highlighted the undesirable consequences of tourism, particularly the negative impacts on host communities. Research shows these include: seasonal and unskilled jobs; benefits flowing primarily to tourism firms and big corporations; destruction of the natural landscape; and commodification of local cultural practice. Discourse about sustainable tourism emerged from Jafari’s cautionary platform. One example was Lea (1993) discussion of the social and cultural impacts of tourism in the third world which according to Macbeth (2005, p. 975) “resonates with Jafari’s cautionary platform”. Scholarly works continue to reflect present day thought guided by the precautionary principle (a theory of avoiding risk even when its likelihood seems remote) (O’Riordan & Cameron, 1994).

Jafari’s third platform advocated a different approach from the previous two opposing views of tourism. Moving away from the ‘mass tourism is bad, no tourism is good’ dichotomy, the **adaptancy platform** proposed a kind of middle road, where scholars realised that rather than all forms of tourism being criticised, some forms of tourism could be better (and less unsustainable) than others (Jafari, 1990). By the 1980s a new tourism concept termed alternative tourism had emerged, advocating a philosophy to provide an alternative approach to conventional mass forms of tourism considered most damaging (Krippendorf, 1982). As an extension of alternative tourism, and a result of growing dissatisfaction with conventional profit-centred forms of tourism, the concept of ecotourism arose (Higham, 2007). Despite ambiguity over its precise origins, most academics agree Ceballo-Lascurain ‘coined’ the phrase in 1987 (Higham, 2007). Since then a plethora of literature exists critically debating the effectiveness or otherwise of ecotourism as a panacea to counter negative impacts arising from
tourism (Cater, 2007; Higham & Luck, 2007). Some argue alternative tourism may not always be appropriate and can cause just as many negative impacts as mass tourism (Cater, 2007; Higham & Luck, 2007). At the time, Jafari suggested that adaptancy acted as a partial remedy only when accommodating the mass volume of global tourism (Jafari, 1990).

Finally, as an endorsement to the call for further development of the adaptancy platform, Jafari put forward the fourth knowledge-based platform. This proposed a non-biased, critical thinking approach to tourism based on ‘scientific knowledge’ (Jafari, 1990). It involved the systematic study of the tourism phenomenon by examining it holistically and within the context of what generates and accommodates tourism. The result is the formation of a scientific body of knowledge for tourism. The creation of the Journal of Sustainable Tourism in 1993 reflected the growing desire to recognise the concept of sustainability and its operationalisation within the tourism industry (Hardy et al., 2002). The editorial of the first edition stated the journal’s aim was to “foster both research and practice in sustainable tourism to help develop both a theoretical base for the subject and reliable empirical evidence of its results and impacts” (Bramwell & Lane, 1993, p. 3). The impetus behind proposed scholarly works seems to be in response to rising criticism that the concept of sustainable tourism was “fundamentally misguided” as explained by the editors:

> Good intentions and idealism alone are not a sufficient basis for real advances in our understanding. There is a need to evaluate critically the theory of sustainable tourism and assess in specific circumstances the aspects of practical initiatives that have worked well and those that have not (Bramwell & Lane, 1993, p. 3).

As the field of tourism studies progressed into the 21st century (it has been almost 25 years since Jafari’s paper was published), Macbeth (2005) suggested extending Jafari’s ideal model by introducing a fifth platform of tourism thought. The fifth platform seeks to formally incorporate sustainability as a paradigm which Macbeth (2005) posits is already informing much of the current research and scholarship in tourism. Macbeth (2005) calls the new platform the ethical platform to reflect the important role an ethical dimension plays in the goal of sustainability. It appears to build on an earlier study by Hultsman (1995) who proposed an ethical framework for tourism by incorporating ethics in order to create a more meaningful tourist service delivery model (Wijesinghe, 2014).
Macbeth’s sixth platform extends ethical thinking further and: “points toward a reflexive process, aiming to move tourism praxis toward a nonanthropocentric living earth ethic” (Macbeth, 2005, p. 964). Here, Macbeth argues that an ethical platform of tourism thought is needed to challenge the positivistic-scientific paradigm dominant in tourism scholarship (Macbeth, 2005). As one’s ethics are never value-free, the explicit aim of the sixth platform is: “to develop the self-awareness of scholars and practitioners with regard to their ethical positions and the implications of those positions for sustainable development and tourism” (Macbeth, 2005, p. 972). All working in the field of tourism are encouraged to: “interrogate and understand [their] ethical and moral positions” (Macbeth, 2005, p. 963). Scholars such as Macbeth, clearly call for a “reflexive ethical understanding” in all aspects of tourism (Macbeth, 2005, p. 964).

Exposing students to ethical considerations in order to understand principles of sustainability is generally well understood, but a review of the tourism literature shows ethical responsibilities is an element often missing in the discussion of tourism (Jamal, 2004; Nowaczek, Moran-Cahusac, & Fennell, 2007). Scholarly work in the 1990s noted a lack of ethical content in tourism textbooks. Hultsman (1995) sought to remedy the situation by offering an ethical framework referred to as ‘just tourism’ to kindle educating for a tourism ethic. More recent discussions of ethics are apparent in tourism education discourse (Fennell, 2008; Jamal, 2004; Kazimierczak, 2006; Macbeth, 2005; Pritchard et al., 2011; Tribe, 2002a; Sharpley, 2015). This work demonstrates a new platform for tourism education and research based on ethical considerations may be emerging.

Arising from a growing belief that sustainable tourism had disconnected itself from the original concerns of sustainable development (Wheeler, 1993), numerous critiques of the notion of sustainable tourism emerged via the cautionary platform (Hunter, 1997). Tourism scholars debated the nexus of tourism and sustainable development. One of the earlier critiques to adopt the knowledge-based platform approach was Clarke (1997), who concluded there were four positions of understanding sustainable tourism: polar opposites, continuum, movement and convergence. According to Clarke (1997, p. 224):

These four positions are broadly chronological, reflecting the dominant approach to sustainable tourism and offering insights into the concept’s development; [and] provide a structure within which an author’s approach to the concept may be identified, affording insights for literature reviews.
Clarke’s framework reflected the conflict and debate occurring around sustainable tourism at the time, by conceptualising tourism in relation to tourist numbers and scale of operation. The first position showed two types of tourism as ‘polar opposites’: small scale tourism was good and sustainable, whereas mass tourism was bad and unsustainable. The next position depicted small scale and mass tourism at either end of a ‘continuum’ with variations in-between. The third position named ‘movement’, removed the negative connotations mass tourism generated and instead tried to focus large scale tourism to be more sustainable. The final position of ‘convergence’ depicted the point where regardless of size of operation and number of tourists, all tourism businesses were seen to be moving towards a sustainability goal.

Sustainability in tourism has tended to be situated within a spectrum that consists of polarised views: resource, exploitative growth orientated tourism developer on one side, versus resource preservationist, zero growth-oriented conservationist on the other (Fyall & Garrod, 1997). Clarke believed convergence was the most desirable option for sustainability aspirations as it accommodated all scales of tourism. Since both large and small scale tourism had positive sustainability characteristics, the flexibility of the convergence position allowed both large and small tourism operations to foster sustainability as a potential goal (Clarke, 1997).

Using a similar knowledge-based platform approach, Hunter (1997) advocated against a simple, inflexible paradigm of sustainable tourism. Believing sustainable tourism had drifted away from the wider sustainable development debate, Hunter sought to open up a much needed discussion on “how sustainable tourism should be considered under different circumstances” (Hunter, 1997, p. 864). In order to provide clarity and depth, Hunter proposed an adaptive paradigm capable of accommodating different scenarios for sustainable tourism (Hunter, 1997, p. 864). As seen in Table 2.7, sustainable development could be viewed through four possible theoretical interpretations: tourism imperative; product-led tourism; environmentally led tourism and; neotenous tourism (Hunter, 1997). All scenarios were within an overarching paradigm that orientated towards the viability of the tourism industry and the physical environment. Hunter acknowledged the four interpretations of sustainable tourism could be placed within a sustainable development spectrum ranging from ‘very weak’ to ‘very strong’ interpretations (Hunter, 1997, p. 852).
Table 2.7: A Theoretical Framework for Sustainable Tourism Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretation of Tourism</th>
<th>Sustainability Position</th>
<th>Underlying Belief</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tourism imperative</td>
<td>Very weak</td>
<td>Satisfying needs of tourists and operators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product-led tourism</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Environmental and social concerns are considered important to sustain tourism products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmentally led tourism</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Tourism system concerned with environmental impacts. Seeks an ecocentric reorientation of tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neotenic tourism</td>
<td>Very strong</td>
<td>Circumstances exist where tourism should not be allowed on ecological grounds or at least limited with strict controls.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Hunter (1997)

Nevertheless, scepticism of sustainable tourism labels such as ecotourism and alternative tourism prevailed (Cater, 1993; Hunter, 1997; Wheeler, 1993). Some tourism scholars believed these forms of sustainable tourism hid behind the rhetoric of seeking ‘balance’, thereby giving the impression of environmental stewardship (Cater, 1993; Wheeler, 1993). Hunter (1997, p. 859) suggested the search for balance relied on a “narrowly-defined concept” of sustainability which was possibly too restricting. Motivated by the aim to provide a conceptual model for tourism development policy makers, Hunter suggested sustainable tourism could be viewed as: “an over-arching paradigm within which several different development pathways may be legitimised according to circumstance” (Hunter, 1997, p. 859). It was argued the quest for balance was not achievable since in real life trade-off decisions were a daily occurrence and likely to produce skewed priorities (Hunter, 1997). The importance of Hunter’s work to the sustainability tourism debate is it provides a simple conceptual basis for the study of mainstream and alternative tourism. This framework affords a useful starting point for an analysis of “different interpretations of sustainable development and formulations of sustainable tourism within these interpretations” (Hunter, 1997, p. 856).

Despite the wide acceptance of the need for sustainable development, there was disagreement and confusion about what the industry was required to do to achieve sustainable tourism (Stabler, 1997). This situation was analysed by McKercher (1993a, p.131) who further expounded:

The inherent vagueness of ‘sustainability’ is its great weakness. At present it is being used by both industry and the conservation movement to legitimise and justify their
existing activities and policies although, in many instances, they are mutually exclusive. Rather than acting as a catalyst for change, sustainability may serve to entrench and legitimize extant policies and actions, thus exacerbating rather than resolving conservation/development conflicts.

The dominating view tended to be linked to ensuring the continuity of tourism (Stabler, 1997). Fyall and Garrod (1997) believe much of the industry was still stuck at the first stage of defining and establishing what the concept of sustainable tourism was and accepting that sustainability was the objective of the tourism industry. Most were far from developing a framework for measuring progress towards sustainable tourism or developing a set of techniques to make sustainable tourism operational (Fyall & Garrod, 1997). Tourism was, and still is, traditionally viewed as a trade-off between environmental and economic goals (Stabler, 1997, p. 15). Without any real transition and implementation it risked sustainable tourism becoming: “a mediating term which bridges the gap between the developer and the environmentalist” (Fyall & Garrod, 1997) without actually making any changes.

Due to entrenched worldviews about progress and growth, tourism business developers continue to face ongoing challenges to justify ethically a decision not to develop a natural site. Tourism developers tend to follow an anthropocentric ethic in the decision making when not to develop and advocate preserving the future livelihood of locals as the reason, as opposed to preserving the environment for the intrinsic value of nature (Holden, 2008). Although the principles of sustainability may have generally been accepted, tourism continues to be justified by economic development objectives (Sharpley, 2000). It seemed for some tourism commentators, such as McKercher (1993b), the dominant paradigm of thought still favoured growth and a ‘weak’ interpretation of sustainability (Hunter, 1997). However, others strongly argued that tourism’s dependency on the natural environment for its primary resource base must ultimately induce it to track towards ecocentricism (Stabler, 1997).

A common theme in the sustainable tourism debate is whether the community is considered to be either a stakeholder or a resource for tourism development. The expansion of interpreting sustainable tourism to include at all times social, cultural and political perspectives, as well environmental and economic, has only recently become apparent. One of the first attempts to recognise the needs of community in the sustainable tourism discussion was provided by Saarinen (2006) who identified three traditions of how sustainability manifested itself in tourism: resource-based tradition; activity-based tradition; or community-based tradition. A
resource-based tradition viewed tourism as a physical and real construct, based upon conservation and measurement (Saarinen, 2006). On the other hand, some point to the activity-based and community-based tradition having bias towards a social interpretation of sustainability (Holden, 2008). A summary of the key characteristics for each is depicted in Table 2.8.

Table 2.8: Three Traditions of Sustainable Tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tradition</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resource-based tradition</td>
<td>Conserve and protect nature from unacceptable changes by tourism activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conservation management practices of ‘carrying capacity’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity based tradition</td>
<td>Acceptance that tourism development can contribute to sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Management practices aim to sustain tourism and its resource base and capital investment for future development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-based tradition</td>
<td>Challenges existing political economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advocates wider involvement of stakeholders, especially host communities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The acceptable level of trade-off between economic and social gains is judged against natural resource losses (Holden, 2008). However, a key difference between activity-based and community-based tradition is: “the hegemonic relationship between the stakeholders and those parties who hold the absolute power of decision making” (Holden, 2008, p. 161). An appreciation of the relationship between power and decision making is crucial when considering who determines what resources are to be accessed for tourism (Saarinen, 2006). Underlying political tension is considered a factor in the debate about interpreting sustainable development (Bramwell, 2007). Bramwell (2007) suggests that concepts/frameworks like political ecology could provide useful contributions to the sustainable tourism debate. The use of critical theory to analyse sustainability can highlight the importance of considering not just the physical environment but also the cultural, economic and political dimensions of tourism (Bramwell & Lane, 2014). Although these dimensions are discussed generally in the academic literature, when applied to tourism, some commentators believe more attention was given to environmental and economic concerns than factors relating to the effect on communities (Hardy
et al., 2002). Deep-seated political and ideological influences engrained in tourism development need to be uncovered in order to fully grasp the concept of sustainable tourism development (Farrell & Twining-Ward, 2005). The transition towards sustainability according to Farrell and Twining-Ward (2005, p. 119) requires:

The identification of, and the combating of, an array of counter forces, including the ideological values of potent and powerful cultures, conservative elements within tourism, mono-disciplinary science, and linear tools and methods.

A concept of systems-thinking is evolving in the sustainability literature and the influence this has on scholarly thought about sustainable tourism is evident (Strachan, 2009). Sustainable tourism development is advised to be: “viewed as an evolving complex system that co-adapts to the specifics of the particular place and especially to the aspirations and values of local people” (Farrell and Twining-Ward, 2005, p. 110). These authors recommend sustainability be regarded as a “transition” and put forward a model of “seven steps towards sustainability” (Farrell & Twining-Ward, 2005, p. 110). This model reflects an attempt to acknowledge a combination of eco-centric and anthropocentric ideological elements. In effect they advocate for knowledge of “integrated social-ecological systems” (Farrell & Twining-Ward, 2005, p. 110). Similar to Holden (2008), who regards sustainability as “not an end-point, but rather a guiding philosophy”, Farrell and Twining-Ward (2005) view sustainable tourism to be an “evolving process”. The distinguishing feature of Farrell and Twining’s work is the way it presents sustainable tourism as part of an evolving holistic system where the norm is constant change and uncertainty. Instead of focusing on achieving stability and certainty, these scholars advocate for enhancing resilience. Most importantly a call for a change in thinking is made that “requires an entirely new outlook on the world, building on what has already been learned” (Farrell & Twining-Ward, 2005, p. 119).

Several authors appear to be questioning the path taken by the sustainable tourism discourse. Sharpley (2009) advised the lack of progress and uptake by industry points to the need to go beyond sustainable tourism in order to make headway with tourism development. Moscardo (2008) concurs, suggesting the dominant pro-growth view limits discussion on broader issues such as restoration or dismantling of tourism. As pointed out by McKercher (1993a), there are some instances where sustainable tourism is not possible. Moscardo (2008, p. 4), agrees, stressing the “need to develop new ways of thinking and innovation in tourism” arguing further “there is no such thing as sustainable tourism”. Moscardo (2008) claims new approaches to
development are made possible when it is accepted that “tourism cannot be sustainable in its
own right but may contribute to the sustainable development of some regions under some
circumstances” (Moscardo, 2008, p. 4). Proposed is an inversion of the traditional view where
community resources, skills and infrastructure are tapped into by the tourism industry. This
view is replaced with an alternative approach, where communities use tourism developers and
tourists to achieve the community’s aspirations and goals (Moscardo, 2008). By reversing
assumptions about tourism development, tourism is reconceptualised as a means to support the
advancement of socio-economic activities within the destination (Moscardo, 2008).

Presently, it would seem inherent tension remains around how the principles of sustainability
are to be interpreted and realised in a tourism context. The conceptualisation of sustainable
tourism has been met with a surfeit of argument because as yet “an explicit and universally
accepted theory” about this is lacking (Hardy et al., 2002, p. 484). In spite of a general
consensus that sustainability is crucially relevant and urgent action is needed, actually achieving
sustainability has proven difficult (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010; Sharpley, 2009/2010;
Wijesinghe, 2014). This review will now focus its attention on sustainability education in
tourism higher education to examine the extent that critical enquiry has permeated tourism
studies.

2.7 EfS in the Australian University Context

As society moves towards a more hopeful world, Australian universities are expected to pursue
the creation of sustainability opportunities within their programs. Central to this goal is the
building of capacity and skills among students so they can tackle the less hopeful challenges
they will face (Tilbury et al., 2005; Universities Australia, 2006). Research by Sherren and
Robin (2006, p. 33), mapping the curriculum trends of sustainability education over the last
four decades in Australian universities, noted “the 1990s curricula were shaped by the increase
in the number, reach and style of universities as they negotiated transitions from public-good
funding to business models”. By the arrival of UNDESD in 2005, Sherren (2006b, p. 32)
observed that the “task of meeting the market for sustainability education had become a
noticeable element in curriculum design”.

The increasing focus for sustainability education by some higher education commentators can
be seen by the rapid expansion of journal articles and special issues discussing sustainability
initiatives across the globe (Lozano-García, Kevany, & Huisingh, 2006). Initiatives such as
Australasian Campuses Towards Sustainability (ACTS), an online non-profit member based organisation which “brings together a network of people for positive engagement, capacity building and change” (ACTS, 2012), is an example of action being undertaken collaboratively by higher education institutions in Australasia. Similar organisations exist in other parts of the world such as the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) in America and the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC) in the UK. These initiatives have helped stimulate most of the campus sustainability action that has taken place and often referred to as campus ‘greening’ (e.g. recycling and carbon foot print mapping), which appear to be widely pursued by most institutions in Australia and worldwide (Leihy & Salazar, 2011; Shriberg, 2003; Sterling & Scott, 2008).

Articulating what EfS means in curricula has gained some traction (Thomas & Benn, 2009). Several disciplines are endeavouring to interpret the concept from their disciplinary point of view, such as architecture and design (Fuller, 2010) and business (Hazelton & Haigh, 2010). Discernible champions of sustainability appear to be driving changes to teaching and learning sustainability using action research (Jennings, Kensbock, & Kachel, 2010; Nowak et al., 2008; Thomas & Benn, 2009). Nevertheless, overall changes appear to be rare, as most institutions in Australia as well as worldwide, have barriers thwarting sustainability education (Lang, Thomas, & Wilson, 2006; Shephard, 2010; Velazquez, Munguia, & Sanchez, 2005).

It is the end of the UNDESD 2005-14 and there is apparent confusion of what is required of sustainability education. Evidence suggests that similar to the higher education system elsewhere (See Sterling & Scott, 2008 for review of UK), Australian universities have been slow to adopt the required shifts (Fisher & Bonn, 2011; Shephard, 2010; Sherren, 2005; Springett, 2005; Thomas & Nicita, 2002; Lang et al., 2006; Thomas, 2004). A number of academic papers written on the topic of barriers and challenges in Australia reflects the struggle higher education has in incorporating sustainability at all levels, but particularly with sustainability in curricula (Fisher & Bonn, 2011; Nowak et al., 2008; Reid & Petocz, 2006; Sherren, 2005; Sibbel, 2009; von der Heidt, Lamberton, Morrison, & Wilson, 2011). A number of factors are known to deter sustainability initiatives in higher education institutions (Moore, 2005; Velazquez, Munguia, & Sanchez, 2005). They appear to revolve around five major issues: lack of time; poor interest and expertise; lack of funding; absence of training; and dearth of supportive policies. As observed by Shephard (2010) and Kelly and Alam (2009), the issue of sufficient resources particularly with regard to time allocations, and a disciplinary protectionist silo attitude, deter progress towards sustainability.
An additional challenge discussed in the literature is how universities effectively turn the abstract concept of sustainability into the concrete practices of EfS (Lang, Thomas, & Wilson, 2006). Furthermore, research shows deep-seated change towards the implementation of environmental and sustainable principles requires support from the top (McNamara, 2010; Scott et al., 2012; Wright & Horst, 2013). A lack of support at the top, indicated when the mission and vision of the university are not explicitly aligned with sustainability, could result in ‘ad hoc’ sustainability programs of short duration (Krizek et al., 2012).

Discourse in the sustainability education literature promotes holistic embedment of sustainability in the curriculum (Savelyeva & McKenna, 2011) by harnessing a ‘whole-of-university’ approach (Koester, Eflin, & Vann, 2006; Mcmillin & Dyball, 2009). Useful frameworks for the design of sustainability curriculum have emerged more recently (de Ciurana & Filho, 2006; Junyent & de Ciurana, 2008). A team of European and Latin American universities collaborated to develop The ACES model (Spanish acronym for ‘greening’ the curriculum) which defines the characteristics required to ‘green’ the curriculum (de Ciurana & Filho, 2006; Junyent & de Ciurana, 2008). Some of the characteristics include: commitment to change towards sustainability; disciplinary flexibility and permeability, and the need to contextualise the curricula in space (local and globally) and in time (past, present and future) - and in an integrated and holistic manner.

The Spanish ACES model does not advocate a ‘recipe’ for sustainability education but is a useful generator of strategies and actions for moving forward with recognised EFS concepts (Junyent & de Ciurana, 2008). Pilot studies undertaken by institutions across different countries have actioned the model at the subject, syllabus and institutional levels. The authors acknowledged some of the model’s characteristics were not unique to sustainability education, but advise the harnessing of this “potentiality if they are already occurring” (Junyent and de Ciurana, 2008 p. 778).

2.8 Sustainability in Tourism Higher Education

This thesis on sustainability education is located within the context of tourism, hospitality and events higher education (referred to from this point forward for simplicity’s sake as tourism education).
From its inception in the 1960s in many universities, tourism and hospitality higher education has focused on vocational learning (Airey, 2005). In response to increasing job opportunities in the tourism and hospitality industry (Breakey & Craig-Smith, 2008), as well as a general development of vocational higher education programs (Airey, 2005), tourism and hospitality courses experienced rapid growth throughout the 1980s and 1990s. From its original vocational origins, tourism curriculum expanded to include subjects concerned with wider issues of tourism impacts (Airey, 2005). The growing dynamic field of tourism attracted not only economists but also scholars from other disciplines, such as geographers, anthropologists, and psychologists who consequently “all left their mark on the curriculum” (Airey, 2005, p. 17). According to Tribe (2005, p. 51), the new millennium witnessed an “extraordinary burst of research activity and articles relating to sustainable tourism”. Further, the rise of critical tourism studies with interest in gender studies and cultural theory using different methodologies such as interpretivism and critical theory occurred (Tribe, 2005, p. 51). Arguably the ‘critical turn’ taking place in some pockets of tourism scholarship (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson, & Collins, 2005) may point to a reimagining of tourism in these turbulent times (Bramwell & Lane, 2014). However, despite this infusion of multi-disciplinary and methodological insight, recent research by Dredge et al. (2012b) has confirmed tourism education remains largely vocationally focused, driven by a highly competitive consumer orientated market.

Active discourse continues about what a tourism education should represent and incorporate (Dredge et al., 2012c; Fidgeon, 2010; Sheldon et al., 2011; Tribe, 2005). Two notable global academic networks have been formed by those interested in the future direction of TH&E education. Firstly, the Tourism Education Futures Initiative (TEFI) developed a values framework for tourism curricula (Sheldon et al., 2007). It outlines five key values for curriculum to be based upon, namely: ethics; stewardship; knowledge; mutuality; and professionalism (Sheldon, Fesenmaier, & Tribe, 2009; Sheldon et al., 2011; Sheldon & Fesenmaier, 2015). Studies by Gretzel, Isacsson, Matarrita, and Wainio (2011), Barber (2011) and Liburd (2015) have demonstrated successful application of TEFI values in teaching tourism by creating an innovative learning environment. The second initiative, Building Excellence in Sustainable Tourism Education Network (BEST-EN), is a forum committed to developing education which caters for future knowledge and skills of graduates and the development of sustainable tourism (Jurowski 2002). BEST-EN organise regular Think Tanks where issues pertaining to sustainability education are discussed. Some tourism commentators advise that in order to meet the challenges facing the tourism industry, fundamental changes are required of tourism education (Airey & Tribe, 2005; Sheldon et al., 2011).
Although the need to integrate sustainability throughout tourism education is recognised as important (Boley, 2011; Jurowski & Liburd, 2001), scant empirical research is available on how to achieve this in the context of tourism study. Evidence so far suggests sustainability concepts are yet to fully enter either business (Fisher & Bonn, 2011; Naeem & Neal, 2012) or tourism and hospitality curricula (Barber, Deale, & Goodman Jr, 2011; Busby, 2003; Deale, Nichols, & Jacques, 2009; Wilson, von der Heidt, Lamberton, & Morrison, 2012). In line with the view expressed in studies by Sherren (2005) and Kelly and Alam (2009), the findings of a pilot study conducted by von der Heidt, Lamberton, Wilson, and Morrison (2012), indicated tourism teachers may perceive challenges with how to include wider social, cultural, environmental and political issues into an already crowded business focused curriculum.

Positioned in a largely business-oriented paradigm, much of tourism research has been situated within a positivistic approach (Botterill, 2007; Xiao & Smith, 2006). Consequently, “many orthodox tourism researchers follow the largely discredited positivist correspondence of truth theory...one that is almost entirely rejected by the social sciences” (Botterill, 2007, pp. 124–125 cited in Pritchard et al., 2011, p. 947). Others note this positivist approach may be changing following the “proliferation of new journals that are orientated towards theoretical and critical works in methodological issues in tourism studies” (Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001, p. 66). The advent of journals such as Journal of Sustainable Tourism (established in 1993) and Journal of Ecotourism (established in 2002), reflect the growing critical scholarly thought about sustainable tourism. The importance of sustainability within tourism education appears to be gaining some recognition.

In order to meet the challenges facing the tourism industry, fundamental changes are apparently required of tourism education (Sheldon et al., 2011). Within tourism higher education literature discussion exists about what tourism education should represent (Dredge et al., 2010, 2012c; Fidgeon, 2010; Sheldon et al., 2011; Tribe, 2005; Sheldon & Fesenmaier, 2015). Some commentators voice concern about tourism education’s vocational perspective (Ayikoru, Tribe, & Airey, 2009; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006; Lashley, 2013) It is argued this approach limits the opportunity for students to gain broader perspectives and skills required to tackle the future challenges faced by tourism (Dredge et al., 2012a). Some question whether the current curriculum adequately develops the necessary sustainability skills of critical thinking and reflection, problem solving, innovation and creativity required by future tourism leaders of tomorrow (Inui et al., 2006; Lewis, 2005). One suggestion is for tourism curricula to move
Two decades ago, tourism scholar John Hultsman canvassed for the field of tourism to involve “liberal an education as possible” (Hultsman, 1995, p. 564). Debate continues on how to balance the current tension between liberal versus vocational tourism studies (Dredge et al., 2012a, 2012c; Tribe, 2002b). Suggestions in the literature exist on how to move towards a balanced approach with tourism curricula. Prominent English tourism scholar John Tribe, claimed a more balanced curriculum requires a major upheaval and paradigmatic change to philosophy and practice (Tribe, 2005). Tribe also suggests we should be cultivating our students as ‘philosophic practitioners’, with curricula focused on “four key domains of vocational action, vocational reflection, liberal reflection, and liberal action” (2002b, p. 338). The domains form a model which offers essential elements of a curriculum with liberal and vocational views to enhance the world of tourism. Dredge et al. (2012c) have recently extended Tribe’s (2002b) concept of the philosophic practitioner by advocating for “curriculum space” where the graduate capabilities of both practical and theoretical knowledge can be developed.

Conceptually, sustainability education fits best with a more liberal style of education (Kelly & Alam, 2009; Sherren, 2005, 2008a), emphasising social justice, equity and wellbeing (Clifton & Amran, 2011). The importance of collaboration with tourism industry stakeholders to achieve a relevant curriculum is nevertheless widely acknowledged (Canziani Farber, Sönmez, Hsieh, & Byrd, 2012; Padurean & Maggi, 2011; Shakeela et al., 2012). Some report concern for tourism higher education’s ability to remain relevant to industry if the sector’s teaching staff and curriculum content are not vocationally orientated (McKercher, 2002). This causes tension as to whose needs are being catered to since others contend tourism education should not focus on the needs and expectations driven by economics and employment requirements alone (Inui et al., 2006). It appears how to structure tourism education requires the navigation of somewhat competing interests with its stakeholders (Fidgeon, 2010). In Australasia it seems tourism is returning to its original business studies roots and “essentially flavouring a business-based curriculum” (Fidgeon, 2010, p. 720). Indeed, the last remaining schools of tourism dissipated, and merged with their university business school during the time of writing this thesis.

One benefit of a liberal tourism curriculum is that it provides students with a holistic understanding of tourism as it relates to global and local social, cultural, environmental and political issues (Tribe, 2002b). Students can question and reflect how these relate to the
responsibilities of tourism and think critically about the future of the industry (Hultsman, 1995; Inui et al., 2006). The ability to adapt tourism curriculum to a changing world depends on the quality, knowledge and development of tourism teachers and researchers (Tribe, 2005). The likelihood to adapt to change may depend on the paradigm one takes when approaching sustainability in the first place. Investigating the paradigmatic view of sustainability by individual tourism academics is one aspect which is central to this research.

Attempts to conceptualise the integration of content specifically within tourism courses have been made. Hultsman (1995) advocated for integration of cognitive and affective elements into tourism curricula so students are better prepared to face the challenges of the business world. Hultsman reasoned this would enable students to think about intellectual, moral and ethical issues across a wide variety of contexts. In particular Hultsman (1995) maintained critical thinking skills would be harder to achieve if sustainability was taught only in one class or one specific major.

Boley posited two possible contextual approaches to sustainability in tourism education. According to Boley (2011, p. 26), if the study of tourism is viewed within a preferred context of sustainability: “sustainability will occur naturally because sustainability is the end goal rather than just the advancement of hospitality and tourism”. This representation is in line with scholarly thought on sustainable tourism which argues regardless of tourism’s size or scale, the goal of all tourism is sustainability (Clarke, 1997). When tourism forms the context for sustainability, this equates to an incremental approach of sustainability within curricula (Boley, 2011).

The value of integrating sustainability into the curriculum is well documented (Corcoran & Wals, 2004; Gough & Scott, 2001, 2007; Jones et al., 2010; Scott & Gough, 2004b; Winter & Cotton, 2012). A lack of empirical research on the extent to which sustainability education is incorporated into tourism programs at undergraduate level makes it difficult to assess the situation. Previous investigations of sustainability in tourism programs tend to be small case study research, such as Busby’s (2003) work at the University of Plymouth. The scant research available reports that sustainability education in tourism education is relatively piecemeal, with little evidence of a holistic or integrated approach (Boley, 2011). Deale et al. (2009) reported that while many educators think sustainability is important, very few actually address it within their learning and teaching practices, and in curriculum development. Their US survey of 151 educators who were members of the International Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional
Education revealed while sustainability is taught in a variety of ways in hospitality courses it does not appear to be central to the courses and programs. This result suggests sustainability concepts do not carry great emphasis in hospitality education (Deale et al., 2009). The findings from an Australian study by von der Heidt et al. (2012) concur by showing that although tourism and business academics agree sustainability is an important issue, it does not necessarily translate into sustainability in curricula. This state of affairs resonates with similar findings from a programmatic content analysis of sustainability within Irish accredited tourism and hospitality courses undertaken by Fáilte Ireland (2008). The Irish study reported sustainability was a “poorly understood and inconsistently applied concept” with “little or no systematic treatment of sustainability issues” and “incorporation of sustainability content is largely discretionary and tends to be driven by an interest in such issues on the part of individual lecturers” (Fáilte Ireland, 2008, p. 3).

More needs to be done generally to incorporate sustainability education into the tourism curriculum (Boley, 2011; Deale & Barber, 2012; von der Heidt et al., 2012). So far, there is disconnection between sustainability being broadly important to the tourism industry, and the actual teaching of sustainability in hospitality and tourism programs (Boley, 2011; Deale & Barber, 2012; Fáilte Ireland, 2008). According to Lund-Durlacher (2012), some progress is being made in this regard at MODUL University in Vienna where aspects of sustainability are incorporated in all tourism courses. Instead of treating sustainability as an “isolated issue”, an integrated approach “takes sustainability as an omnipresent topic which permeates all other teaching areas and can be further discussed in different contexts as an underlying philosophy” (Lund-Durlacher, 2012, p. 3).

Creating meaningful tourism curricula is not a simple task (Barber et al., 2011; Benckendorff et al., 2012; Lewis, 2005; McKercher, 2002). For example, there appear to be differences in understanding of sustainability education amongst the stakeholders of tourism education (Barber et al., 2011; Benckendorff et al., 2012; Deale & Barber, 2012). Tourism education is characterised by pressures and contests in the curriculum space (Benckendorff et al., 2012). As part of a large Australian multi-method study investigating key issues in tourism, hospitality and events curriculum design and development, Benckendorff et al. (2012) found stakeholders have mixed priorities for curriculum content. When asked about “perceived importance and performance of liberal and vocational elements of the undergraduate programs”, the study found overall that there was a “push towards expert practice rather than a push towards practical wisdom” (Benckendorff et al., 2012, p. 35).
Similarly, a US study surveying 341 stakeholders in hospitality management programs (students, educators responsible for teaching the students, and industry leaders that will employ the graduating students) found “significant differences between stakeholders as to environmental attitudes” (Barber et al., 2011, p. 14). Although sustainability in education was viewed as important by each stakeholder group, the results pointed to differences with regard to the relevance of environmental topics in the hospitality curriculum and how best sustainability theory and practices can be taught (Barber et al., 2011). Although acknowledging each stakeholder group had important contributions to make, “industry professionals were significantly more interested in economic sustainability while educators were more interested in social sustainability” (Barber et al., 2011, p. 15).

The persistent challenge appears to be how and where to proceed with the paradigm change of embedding sustainability into tourism higher education. The process might already be taking place in some Australian tourism higher education programs. Some tourism scholars are using alternative research methodologies to address and enhance sustainability education. One example is an action research project which sees the collaboration of students, the course convener, the project assistant, and the tutor to revise a tourism studies program at Griffith University with the specific aim of shifting teaching agendas from ‘education about sustainability’ to ‘education for sustainability’ (Jennings, Kensbock, & Kachel, 2010, p. 165). The study is part of a larger funded action research study conducted by Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability (ARIES). The researchers explored the infusion of higher-order thinking skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, innovation and creativity into the program. A knowledge-and-content based format of lecture/tutorial/final exam regime is replaced with alternative pedagogy and assessment using multiple pedagogic techniques such as guest speakers, debates, panel sessions, online critical learning activities, weekly critical journal entry and reflection and a final two-page summary reflection. Details of the project show how the collaborators’ understanding of curricula can move from knowledge-and content-based curricula to a stronger focus on a process-based curriculum (Jennings et al., 2010, p. 170). One reported important aim achieved was “students’ critical thinking abilities are reported to be further developed as a result of the changed learning engagements” (Jennings et al., 2010, p. 163).

From the above review it can be seen that a plethora of discussion about sustainable tourism and some conceptual work is emerging about sustainability in tourism education. The literature appears to suggest a number of factors are concomitant for effective EfS to occur in teaching
and learning. First, sustainability principles are to be ‘incorporated’ or embedded in curricula and pedagogy (Wilson et al., 2012; von der Heidt et al., 2012). Next, sustainability ought not to be considered as a separated or ‘isolated issue’ (Lund-Durlacher, 2013), but integrated as an underlying philosophy throughout all learning contexts. Finally, sustainability is a concept that requires holistic thinking and action, based on an ecological approach to education, as opposed to a linear and narrow understanding that is more common in a mechanistic approach (Sterling, 2001; Thomas, 2009). The following section narrows the focus onto the university environment and reviews the literature about the academic perspective of sustainability education. Particular attention is given to research concerning perspectives of tourism academics.

2.9 The Academic’s Perspective of EfS

Plenty of educational literature confirms the important role a teacher plays in education. Fundamental aspects such as: what a teacher thinks teaching is (Biggs and Tang, 2007; Ramsden, 2003); or the role of values in teaching (Hawkes, 2014), are some of the facets that have been known to affect the style of teaching and ultimately the learning that follows. As well as these philosophical considerations, one factor critical to the incorporation of EfS, is how educators understand the concept of sustainability. It seems ‘how’ sustainability is understood, depends on the interpretation of the concept by the user of that concept. This pluralist approach suggests there will probably never be agreement on ‘one’ definition of sustainability.

Research of academic perspectives to date has identified the following challenges associated with education for sustainability: perceived lack of expertise, paucity of time and crowded curriculum (Blincoe et al., 2009); concern over receiving criticism for indoctrinating students (Shephard, 2008); and confusion over what to teach and how to assess (Reid & Petocz, 2006). However, there is scant empirical evidence about the opinions and actions of current working academics, how this group thinks sustainability education should be taught, theoretical perspectives adopted and pedagogical methods used for addressing sustainability issues (Christie, Miller, Cooke, & White, 2013; Dyball & Carpenter, 2006). This area of interest is ripe for further investigation and a goal of this present study.

One obstacle to incorporating sustainability education was revealed by Reid and Petocz’s (2006) qualitative study which found teachers in higher education may not hold sustainable development as a core value. Adopting a phenomenographic orientation, Reid and Petocz (2006) interviewed fourteen volunteer postgraduate lecturers from a variety of disciplines to
explore their thinking about sustainability in relation to their teaching environment. Unlike this present study, their aim was “to investigate views from a broader range of areas” (Reid & Petocz, 2006, p. 111), so the researchers specifically selected those who were not involved in teaching ecological and environmental sustainability. The study found the teachers’ conceptions fell into one of three categories: distance, resources and justice. The conception of ‘distance’ was assigned if a dictionary definition of sustainability was given, usually referring to keeping something going, but “essentially to keep the concept at a distance and avoid engagement with it” (Reid & Petocz, 2006, p. 116). The conception of ‘resources’ was where either physical or human resources were the focus of sustainability. Finally ‘justice’ referred to a conception of sustainability based on the notion of “fairness from one generation to the following one, or even within one generation” (Reid & Petocz, 2006, p. 117). The conception adopted by each lecturer was then located into one of three possible teaching approaches: disparate, overlapping and integrated. The study found most lecturers’ conceptions of sustainability were located in the distant and disparate section, where “sustainability and teaching are seen as separate entities” (Reid & Petocz, 2006, p. 120). The study revealed a number of challenges to an integrated approach being adopted. One issue highlighted was the lack of a shared common language about sustainability amongst university lecturers. Therefore, as Reid and Petocz (2006, p. 121) concluded that academic perspectives were important, and that we need to:

Tackle the ways in which the academics themselves – the teachers – understand the issues of sustainability. This will need to be done not only globally, but also in a discipline-specific manner. Practitioners in each discipline will need to explore the ways in which sustainability can be positioned as core business for the particular discipline rather than peripheral to it.

A UK study critically investigating lecturers’ beliefs and understandings of sustainable development in the curriculum came to a similar conclusion (Cotton, Bailey, Warren, & Bissell, 2009; Cotton, Warren, Maiboroda, & Bailey, 2007). In their study, Cotton et al. surveyed 328 lecturers from different disciplinary backgrounds at the University of Plymouth to see how they interpreted sustainable development (Cotton et al., 2007). The results revealed “considerable ambiguity” with the terms ‘sustainability’ and ‘sustainable development, although the majority of respondents found sustainable development easier to understand (Cotton et al., 2009, p. 722). The researchers then interviewed in-depth 28 lecturers about their understanding of sustainability development; integration of sustainability development into the curriculum;
teaching methods used; and finally barriers with integrating sustainability into the curriculum. The findings showed that sustainability education action was dependent on how academics interpret sustainability through the “lens of personal beliefs” and the disciplinary background in which they teach (Cotton et al., 2007, p. 725). Only three of the 28 lecturers interviewed were from a business discipline, making it difficult to ascertain the important influence this field of study had on the business lecturers’ responses.

More recently, a study by von der Heidt et al.’s (2012, p. 67) concluded that although many business-tourism academics interviewed held strong sustainability beliefs, this did not necessarily translate into curriculum and their own teaching practices. Von der Heidt et al. (2012) mixed methods study investigated the extent to which sustainability had been ‘embedded’ in three first year programs at Southern Cross University: Bachelor of Business courses at first-year level across three schools – Southern Cross Business School, School of Tourism and Hospitality Management and School of Law and Justice. In von der Heidt et al.’s (2012) study, sustainability ‘embeddedness’ was considered to have been accomplished if sustainable development principles were actually incorporated in higher education institutions, in pedagogy and in the tourism curricula taught. The term ‘embedded’ is a useful term for the EfS discourse and one which this thesis will adopt to indicate the integration of sustainability principles across the curriculum.

Overall von der Heidt et al.’s (2012) study revealed a “diversity of opinion amongst participants concerning the meaning of sustainability, methods of teaching sustainability and the importance of sustainability to the units and students they teach” (von der Heidt et al., 2012, p. 62). The findings from structured interviews with sixteen lecturers showed no difference in levels of engagement with sustainability education between the discipline and school suggesting “individual academics rather than school/university policy are driving a sustainability-oriented curriculum” (von der Heidt et al., 2012, p. 4). More importantly it points to a “gap between many lecturers’ strong sustainability beliefs and their actions to translate this into the curriculum” (von der Heidt et al., 2012, p. 67).

Other studies by Borg, Gericke, Höglund, and Bergman (2014) and Birdsall (2014) have given attention to the role of disciplinary location when examining the conceptions of sustainability by school teachers and student teachers. Borg et al. (2014) surveyed teachers’ conceptual understanding of sustainable development. Birdsall (2014) measured student teachers understanding and self-awareness of sustainability. Both found collectively the teachers had a
range of understanding about sustainability which predominantly existed at a simplistic level of understanding. Borg et al. (2014, p. 526) noted that “teachers differ in their understanding of the concept mostly according to their subject traditions”. For example, “social science teachers emphasize social dimensions and science teachers’ ecological dimensions, respectively” (Borg et al., 2014, p. 526). The influence of an academic’s background on their perception of sustainability is an area of interest in this study.

Furthermore, analysing differences of teaching approaches between the disciplines, Christie et al. (2013) found the creative disciplines engaged more with innovative pedagogy resulting in teaching approaches conducive to sustainability education. Christie et al. (2013) note the ability of the creative arts to connect with the affective, or heart, domain of learning advocated by Sipos et al. (2008) to be important for EfS, compared with other disciplines such as science (Littledyke, 2008). This supports the call for more interdisciplinary learning to tackle “wicked problems” and enhance sustainability learning by infusing creativity into other disciplines (Sandri, 2013b, p. 766).

Numerous conceptual papers and texts advocate for certain pedagogical techniques when educating for sustainability. Case study research by Cotton et al. (2009) and Sherren (2005) discuss and make suggestions about suitable pedagogy. Research conducted by Christie et al.’s (2013) surveyed Australian university teachers to determine what pedagogical practices they used. The aim was to garner a reliable representation of academic opinions across Australian universities as opposed to a small case study sample, generally examined in the past. The researchers received 1819 responses to the online questionnaire representing every discipline and every university bar one, and six percent of the entire Australian university’s teaching population (Christie et al., 2013). The findings showed the teachers preferred lectures, tutorials, critical thinking and discussion as modes of teaching, despite a low uptake of these methods in practice. This contrasted with findings presented by Cotton et al. (2007), where respondents were found to choose distinct pedagogical approaches for teaching sustainability. Instead the respondents in Christie et al. (2013) study used the same teaching methods of critical thinking and discussion that are already valued and commonly used regardless of what is being taught. However concurring with Cotton et al. (2009), the actual uptake of student-led pedagogies, such as problem-based learning remains largely “aspirational” for Australian academic teachers (Christie et al., 2013, p. 19). It seems EfS was not practiced much in the class and if it was then the pedagogical method remained the same. This led the researchers to consider “EfS is not currently associated with pedagogical innovation” (Christie et al., 2013, p. 1). This suggests a
gap exists between the rhetoric of student-centred pedagogies and what is really happening in practice.

In Wooltorton’s (2012) socially critical analysis of sustainability in Australian education, a gap is revealed between the rhetoric of the UNESCO-driven agenda and what is actually occurring at the grass root level of teaching. Wooltorton describes that in practice “sustainability education is a messy, contested picture with overlays of contradictory visions, oxymoronic objectives and often only barely masked neoliberal agendas” (Wooltorton, 2012, p. 257). It appears that the ideal of a holistic uptake of sustainability across an institution depends upon elements often out of the control of those teaching and designing curricula.

From a review of the sustainability education literature there appears to be a dearth of insight from the educational practitioner’s perspective - the academic tasked with the role of teaching sustainability principles in a tourism context. Occasionally the personal views of sustainability have been highlighted in some research findings. It would appear the higher education academics’ personal perspective of sustainability is generally one that has not been explicitly explored. The motivation for this research was inspired by the scant knowledge on tourism academics’ perspectives and understandings of sustainability, and education for sustainability in tourism higher education.

2.10 Summary

In summary, this chapter has traced the antecedents and characteristics of environmental education and sustainability education. It then outlined pertinent themes about sustainability in the field of tourism before focusing specifically on sustainability education literature in tourism higher education relevant to this thesis. This review of literature recognises a gap in the research that relates to sustainability education which can inform and extend current knowledge on sustainability education in tourism higher education. The present study seeks to contribute to this apparent gap in understanding by investigating tourism academic perceptions of sustainability generally and interpretation of sustainability education specifically.

Since educational practitioners are largely responsible for their students’ learning, it is important when exploring the uptake and nature of sustainability education in tourism that tourism academics’ perceptions of sustainability are understood and explored. While the research outlined in this chapter points to a solid body of knowledge regarding sustainability
education very little research has dealt explicitly with the perceptions of sustainability by educational practitioners in general and tourism academics in particular. Clearly there is a research and theoretical gap concerning tourism academic perceptions of sustainability and how it is incorporated into tourism higher education that needs to be addressed. It is with this gap in mind that this study has been framed and designed.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

As indicated in Chapter 1, the overall aim of this study is ‘to critically analyse the presence and meaning of sustainability in Australian tourism higher education curricula and teaching practice’. Specifically, this thesis investigated how and where sustainability education was taking place in tourism higher education programs within Australia, followed by an exploration of tourism academics’ perspectives of sustainability education in tourism education. The research process involved 2 stages of data collection. The first consisted of a web-based content analysis of curriculum documents available on Australian university websites. Since I wanted to explore people’s understanding of ‘sustainability’ and what it means within their worldview (Denzin & Linclon, 2003; Ponterotto, 2005), the second stage involved in-depth interviews with tourism academics. As a result of my own non-positivist paradigmatic perspective of the world and the research process, this study’s methodology and methods were framed within a qualitative, interpretive paradigm.

3.1.1 Philosophical Considerations

One’s research approach is informed by one’s paradigm, philosophies and ontological views. In essence, a paradigm “is a basic set of beliefs that guides action, whether of the everyday garden variety or action taken in connection with a disciplined inquiry” (Guba, 1990, p. 17). In social science research, the paradigms generally referred to are positivism, post-positivism (pragmatism and critical realism), interpretivism, critical theory, feminism, postmodernism, chaos theory and participatory (Jennings, 2010b). Each paradigm brings with it a different view about ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology and therefore, the researcher’s paradigmatic stance underpins all aspects of the approach taken. Positivism views the world as being guided by scientific rules to explain causal relationships between phenomena. Interpretivism views the world to be made up of multiple realities where phenomenon is subjectively constructed. Critical theory has similarities to interpretivism, but it is informed by a need to emancipate and give voice to minority or oppressed groups (Giroux, 1983).

Regardless of what research is undertaken, the position and process that is adopted comes with a set of beliefs and assumptions; these beliefs and assumptions may differ fundamentally
depending on the ontological and epistemological positions one takes (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Linclon, 2008; Flick, 2014; Ponterotto, 2005). Despite the acceptance and growing recognition of paradigms other than positivism, it is still important to make clear the reason for selecting one’s methodological approach (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2012). Thus it is important at the outset that I explain the philosophical and paradigmatic influences underpinning this study and acknowledge my own ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological positions.

Ontology

Ontology refers to the nature of reality and being. It asks the question – how is the world perceived? (Jennings, 2010a). A positivist’s ontology is one where reality exists ‘Out There’ awaiting discovery by objective, scientific inquiry in order to reveal some sort of grand, overarching (and often singular) ‘Truth’ (Denzin & Linclon, 2011a; Jennings, 2010a; Ponterotto, 2005). In contrast, an interpretive researcher normally assumes relativist ontology by seeing that the world is made up of multiple realities (Denzin & Linclon, 2011a; Jennings, 2010a). In this way, the nature of reality cannot be reduced to one single ‘truth’, but instead considers realities are dynamic and forever changing (Denzin & Linclon, 2011a; Neuman, 2011). An interpretivist’s ontology is where reality is subjectively construed. Things do not have an inherent meaning in and of themselves, but are made meaningful by how an individual regards them in order to structure their own reality (Neuman, 2011). The nature of reality is influenced by context, such as cultural background, experience and interaction between researcher and participant (Ponterotto, 2005). Therefore everything will have a different meaning depending on the person who is thinking about it. The interpretive researcher assumes an inductive approach to research and “commences their study in the empirical world in order to develop explanations of phenomena” (Jennings, 2010a, p. 40). Furthermore, an interpretivist researcher collects, from an insider’s perspective, ‘empirical material’ rather than statistical data (Patton, 2002). This position contrasts with a positivist paradigm which takes a deductive approach, “commencing with theory and then testing the theory in the empirical world” (Jennings, 2010a, p. 40).

My own ontological stance is more an interpretive one. My aim is not to seek ‘The Truth’ about the meaning of sustainability education, but to focus on finding multiple explanations of sustainability education from the perspective of those who are experiencing and teaching it.
Therefore the best way to explore what sustainability education means in the world and through the eyes and words of tourism academics is to have them speak in-depth about their experience.

**Epistemology**

Epistemology considers “the issue of how we know the world around us” (Neuman, 2011, p. 93). In other words, it is concerned with how we obtain and construct our knowledge of the world and recognises these views will have multiple meanings. Of particular importance is the relationship between the research participant and the researcher. Positivists argue knowledge can only be abstracted from objective and value-free research where the researcher is isolated from the field (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011b). On the other hand, non-positivist researchers want to narrow the gap between researchers and researched in order to know participants’ views of their world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011b; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Jennings, 2010a). While out in the research field, the role of the interpretivist researcher is perceived as one of ‘insider’ rather than an ‘outsider’ (Creswell, 2007).

An interpretivist view of epistemology fits with my role as researcher as I wish to interact with participants in their natural setting to gain an insight into their knowledge of the world. Ponterotto (2005) notes that in some cases, the research experience changes the researcher and participant in some way. This experience was witnessed in this research and the views of me as researcher and my participants are acknowledged through reflexive exercises and discussed later in this chapter.

**Axiology**

Axiology considers how knowledge is valued and how values influence the research process. A positivist researcher seeks propositional knowledge which declares facts rather than beliefs (Jennings, 2010a, p. 40). Therefore the researcher tries to mitigate against the roles values play during a positivist research process. My role as researcher aligns with the interpretivist view of axiology which values propositional knowledge that is transactional and where values are intrinsically embedded in the research process (Ponterotto, 2005).

To recognise possible clouding of interpretation (which some positivists would claim as ‘Bias’), I reflected on the impact of the research as it proceeded (Ponterotto, 2005). I reflected on my taken-for-granted beliefs, values and assumption that sustainability education is vital and
necessary to incorporate across curricula and teaching practices, and the effect my worldview may have on the research process. I was conscious, therefore, that the methodology reflected the values and beliefs of the people participating in the research; it was important I openly reflected their worldview. I have included the voices of the teachers interviewed throughout the thesis to reflect their beliefs and understandings about sustainability personally, and in the tourism educational context. As an educator, my motivation throughout this research was underpinned by a desire to advance sustainability learning and teaching in tourism, hospitality and events higher education. Later in this chapter, I detail my own experience, expectations, bias, and values.

**Methodology**

Researchers’ paradigmatic views also influence their choice of methodology. If both qualitative and quantitative methodologies are used, a mixed method approach is adopted, although one of the two main approaches is usually dominant. The traditions of positivism, and to a large extent post-positivism, inform a quantitative methodology. A positivist researcher conducts research objectively using a deductive approach to support a hypothesis. Quantitative methods such as experiments, questionnaires and document analysis are undertaken and analysed using statistical calculations. The interpretive social sciences and other paradigms such as critical theory and feminist perspectives, use a qualitative methodology. Since an interpretivist’s research goal is to understand the phenomenon under question from an insider perspective, an inductive approach to gathering and analysing empirical materials is used. Qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups and participant observation enable the researcher to gain rich accounts of the participants’ experience. These personal accounts can be analysed and interpreted using techniques such as, thematic analysis or grounded theory. My study has used thematic analysis as opposed to grounded theory to identify emerging themes in stage 2 of the research process.

The choice of methodology for my study was influenced by personal ontological and epistemological positioning. As a researcher working within an interpretive research paradigm, I selected qualitative methods which focus on induction, flexibility and reflexivity. I was not interested in basing my investigation on *a priori* assumption which verifies, quantifies, replicates or supports a theory. My interest centred rather on exploring how and why people understand, describe and make meaning of sustainability. Therefore, the most appropriate method for this type of study was in-depth interviews. Another worthy option could have been
participant observation, where I entered the participant’s teaching domain to observe their practice of sustainability education. This would have been feasible had I perhaps pursued a small case study scenario maybe targeting the Business and Tourism School (formally known as the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management) with which I am associated at Southern Cross University. However the decision was made instead to capture the thoughts of academics from across Australia located at a diverse range of universities and participant observation on this scale was not feasible within the parameters of a PhD study.

3.2 Reflexivity: Locating the Researcher

As a researcher, it is important to make clear one’s position within the study (Creswell, 2003). Having already noted my philosophical positioning regarding ontology and epistemology, I acknowledge here the influence of my “subjective position” in this qualitative study (Jennings, 2005, p. 108). Reflexivity is a powerful tool which promotes rich insights into the impact of the presence and perspectives of the researcher on the qualitative research process (Cassell, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Denzin, 1997). Therefore, it was necessary to engage in reflexivity throughout the whole research process (Jennings, 2005). To begin with, I provide a brief description of my worldview and experience to give the reader a better understanding of my choice of research topic and approach taken.

I grew up in England and spent my childhood living in different parts of the country, moving with my father’s work. As a family, we travelled Europe extensively. Looking back we were early adopters of independent continental travel; in the 1970s it was fairly unusual for a British family to travel autonomously for long periods across remote parts of Europe in a small campervan. If families did ‘go abroad’, it was usually flying to a ‘sun, sand and sea’ destination such as a Mediterranean beach resort. This formative experience of a low-key style of travel founded my interest in travel and later brought to my attention the impacts of tourism. On completing university studies in Law, and not ready to ‘settle down’ to work, I left England to go solo travelling. In 1986 I arrived in Australia as a backpacker on a working-holiday visa. For a year I worked my way around the continent, with a trip to New Zealand to renew my visa. At Uluru in Central Australia, I met my husband. Eventually we returned to his family dairy farm in Northern New South Wales and much to the amazement of my friends and family, I have lived in the one spot ever since.
We set about ‘doing up’ a house on the property built in 1868, derelict for 30 years, using all recycled materials. Solar energy was just emerging, and we put a hot water solar panel on the roof. Twin girls arrived, followed by another daughter four years later. Our family became actively involved with the local community, centred on the small primary school which numbered around 26 students in total. Our girls grew up with hand-me-down clothes, fresh food in school lunch boxes, an appreciation of limited resources such as water and electricity, and recycling was the norm. We bought 320 acres from my husband’s parents and after various failed attempts at other farming enterprises, such as growing chamomile, set about creating a pecan orchard and later growing dryland rice. The decision was made from the start to use biological farming techniques in an effort to enrich the soil and farm sustainably. The rice is not irrigated, relying instead on natural rainfall and we do not use insecticides. We process and package our farm products ourselves and sell them primarily at local farmers markets, but also supply small retail outlets, local restaurants and bakeries. This aligns with our sustainability philosophy of low food miles and strengthening local food production.

My interest in sustainability has grown over the years, fuelled now by a life closely connected and dependant on the land. Looking back, I can see I always had an interest in aspects of sustainability, although the terminology was not part of my vernacular. As a university student of neoliberal Thatcherism in the early1980s, I was politically active, protesting against Britain’s decision to go to war in the Falklands Isles, taking part in the campaigns for nuclear disarmament (CND), as well as Ethiopia’s famine appeal. Issues of social justice and environmentalism were forming part of my budding philosophy of sustainability.

Moving to my connection and experience with tourism in the 1990s, I worked as a retail travel agent managing a busy high street office. At this time, the concept of ‘alternative tourism’ was becoming popular and I enthusiastically sold the emerging array of ecotourism products. I remember one familiarisation trip visiting an eco-lodge and was disappointed to see the superficial reality of their ecological claims. This experience awakened my concern for tourism’s potential marketing ‘greenwash’ and the challenges of a tokenistic attitude towards sustainability.

I have been teaching tourism part-time for many years, starting off in the vocational education sector before moving to Southern Cross University as a casual Associate Lecturer. I taught across a range of subjects but my favourite was an elective subject called Tourism in Pacific Asia. However, I discovered that the original study material contained scant coverage of the
sociocultural and environmental impacts of tourism in this Asia-Pacific region. The curriculum focused on the economic aspects of tourism typical of the ‘advocacy’ perspective. I set about incorporating content to engage students with other phases of ideology influencing tourism development – ‘cautionary’, ‘knowledge-based’ and ‘ethical’ platform. Talking with students back then, it seemed they had limited exposure to concepts of sustainability elsewhere, especially in other core business focused subjects. Unless they elected a subject explicitly about sustainable tourism, the students could potentially complete their degree without engaging in discourse about sustainability. I became interested in this approach and wondered about the impact of a teacher’s beliefs, attitude and values. I pondered questions such as: “How does a teacher’s value system influence their teaching?”; “Would aspects of sustainability permeate regardless of what you taught?”; “Can you teach something you do not personally believe?” A specific interest in teaching and learning was heightened further in 2010 following the completion of a Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (Learning and Teaching). This exposed me to educational curriculum and pedagogy theory.

By 2011 our three daughters had ‘flown the nest’ and having space to dedicate to my own pursuits, I decided the time was right to start a PhD. Colleagues advised to choose a topic I was passionate about. I heard about the term ‘education for sustainability’ and saw this combined my three passionate interests of sustainability, tourism and education. The challenge was deciding on where to enter and make contributions to the discourse. Many perspectives were possible and worthy for investigation. Since I am a teacher, it was natural and appropriate to frame the study from a teacher’s perspective. Being a teacher offers the benefit of an insider perspective. However, it brings to the fore issues of ‘bias’ and suppositions. The views of the academics I interviewed will be subjectively filtered through my lens of understanding. As a tourism teacher myself, it was necessary to reflect personally on what I bring to my research and influences upon the process of understanding the experiences of my participants. Reflexivity as stated by Hollinshead and Jamal (2007, p. 101) “constitutes the understanding that is obtained about the data that is collected in the investigative process in terms of what the researcher knows and how he/she came to know it”. As such, this study cannot be entirely objective. Being a reflexive researcher, I was aware of the roles I brought to the interview process. These included being regarded as a fellow teaching colleague, perceived expert on sustainability education or student researcher. Occasionally all three roles were experienced in one interview. A notable benefit of being a teacher was I could empathise and converse freely on matters of teaching tourism and having worked in the tourism industry I could relate to industry language and culture.
Throughout the research process I continually reflected on the influence my own experience might have had on how I heard, interpreted and wrote. Interviews bring people ‘into’ the research process (Dunn, 2010, p. 135). People are emotional beings. Linked to reflexivity is sensitivity or insight derived from data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), in my case the interviews. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008, p. 41), this occurs when the researcher “grasps meaning by responding intellectually (and emotionally) to what is being said in the data in order to arrive at concepts that are grounded in the data”. It stems from the idea of “putting feeling in” to the research process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 41). Gadamer (1989) cited in Jamal and Hollinshead (2001, p. 73) proffered that: “all texts are shaped by the writer's standpoint, by the writer's traditions and prejudices.” Therefore, I was aware and self-reflected on feelings and responses when collecting and analysing the data. Hollinshead and Jamal (2007, p. 101) posit: “The reflexive self is that highly personal yet interactive analysis of the way insights are obtained in and about any single research context in terms of sociological rather than theoretical growth.” Thus, my conduct and reactions in the research process inextricably bound cognitive and affective insights together.

It was important for me to be ‘true’ to the data and include extracts from the data in the form of participant quotes wherever possible. Jamal and Hollinshead (2001, p. 73) remind us that “the text constitutes a dynamic tension between the topic which engages the researcher and the researcher's own position, interest and role in the re-telling of the participant's narratives”. This involved trying to refrain from privileging my voice as researcher over the participants (Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001). The making of copious field notes enabled me to engage in reflexivity about such matters. Also, the words of those who contributed to this research (tourism academics) have been woven through this methodology chapter. The decision to incorporate the participants’ words sooner than the findings section of the thesis, was because I believe their comments ‘fit’ and contribute an authentic voice to my report. The intention was for the reader to be acquainted with the rich nuances that surrounded the methodological process.

Currently in Australia and elsewhere, there is general debate about the nature and future of tourism higher education. My investigation of sustainability education appears to have entered this wider debate. For example, one participant of this study remarked: ‘I think the research you are doing is really interesting and the outcomes will be very important for the survival of tourism within higher education.’ And another commented: ‘You’re coming at a time when we’re all worried and we can see the writing is on the wall.’ Many participants were interested to know what I thought about their view and were curious about what other respondents had
said. One question mid-way through data collection was quite thought-provoking, as I was asked: ‘so what are you hoping, I know it is for your own qualifications, but are you looking yourself to make a change?’ This exchange illuminated the subjective nature of my research approach, the demand for a personal, reflexive approach that meant I could respond to participants and the impact it would have in my own world.

As revealed in the previous chapters, the literature points to a movement towards sustainability education. As one academic observed, ‘I think it [this study] is interesting. You are doing this against a backdrop where it is becoming something, even from the top down it is considered to be important. It’s not just a grassroots sort of thing.’ The extent and form to which sustainability education is actually taking place in tourism higher in Australia is not clear and thus ripe for investigation.

### 3.3 Research Paradigm

In the past, positivism, which is grounded in the physical sciences, was the dominant paradigm for social science research. However, research in social science now takes advantage of a variety of paradigmatic approaches (Riley & Love, 2000). Business and management focused research in tourism though until recently, operated within a positivist research paradigm seeking objective truth (Ballantyne, Packer, & Axelsen, 2009; Jennings, 2010a). Alternative paradigmatic approaches have expanded in tourism-related research and include a range of practices and tools to undertake subjective, “messy” qualitative inquiry (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010; Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001). Further, an interpretive approach is beneficial to explore gaps in knowledge about peoples’ understanding, meanings and interpretations of sustainability, which are associated with sustainable tourism. Farrell and Twining-Ward (2005, p. 119) support research which is open to new ways of viewing the world to enable “movement towards a sustainability transition” and contend this:

Requires the identification of, and the combating of, an array of counter forces, including the ideological values of potent and powerful cultures, conservative elements within tourism, mono-disciplinary science, and linear tools and methods. Above all, it requires an entirely new outlook on the world, building on what has already been learned. Without this, transitions will never be achieved and future tourism will be handicapped and endangered by fragmentation, disunities, vulnerable management and inadequate knowledge of how to meet problems during the rest of this century.
Within the field of education and until the 1990s, there was heavy reliance on a positivist tradition in environmental education research (Palmer, 1998). In their analysis of environmental research, Robottom and Hart (1993) found that in the leading journal in this field at the time, *The Journal of Environmental Education*, the majority of studies sought to empirically (objectively) derive generalisations and hence legitimise scientific knowledge. The reliance on instrumental measures for educational inquiry proved to be an impediment to the task of improving environmental education since a positivist inquiry actually reveals nothing about the value of environmental education programs (Robottom & Hart, 1993). Palmer (1998, p. 119) reported a dynamic field of inquiry in the 1990s with a growing number of qualitative studies, but many of them had poorly articulated methodologies or lacked ‘rigour’ which in Palmer’s opinion, raised issues of ‘reliability and validity’. It is argued that research issues such as these hampered progress towards a paradigm shift in environmental education (Robottom & Hart, 1993).

A variety of paradigms such as interpretive and critical approaches are now being taken to describe, explore and explain education phenomena (Krathwohl, 2009; Seidman, 2006). With regard specifically to environmental education, journals such as *Environmental Education Research*, portray a rich diversity of research undertaken in this field (Walker, 2006). Furthermore, Walker (2006, p. 399) advocates for a more “inclusive and pragmatic approach” taking advantage of the wide range of positivist, post-positivist, interpretivist, and critical paradigms available. Education researchers are encouraged “to be open to new or unfamiliar ways of doing research, and yet not dismiss the knowledge that has built up over the years” (Walker, 2006, p. 399).

Focusing on a tourism perspective, Tribe (2001) suggests scientific-positivism, interpretivism and critical theory are three overarching paradigms which drive the development of tourism education. Scientific-positivism is based on hypothesis formulation and testing against empirical evidence where the social world is objectified (Neuman, 2011). Since the scientific-positivist paradigm concentrates on facts that can be verified, rigorous scientific methods such as experiments and surveys are used to find the key elements of the core curriculum (Tribe, 2001). The interests addressed are ‘technical’ in nature (Tribe, 2001). Interpretivism in contrast, treats the world as subject and is concerned more with empathetic understanding than testing of theories; it seeks to uncover the way others see the world (Neuman, 2011). According to Tribe (2001, p. 445), an interpretive method has “practical interests”, where “insight into the tourism curriculum is sought by reference to the participants in the curriculum in the widest
sense”, including the “point of view of all the stakeholders in the tourism environment”. Finally, critical theory goes further than interpretivism by adopting a “transformative perspective towards applying knowledge” (Neuman, 2011, p. 114). Since critical theory has emancipatory goals, Tribe (2001, p. 445) suggests that a “critical approach to the tourism curriculum seeks to expose and rectify this imbalance and seeks emancipation from the grip of any particular ideology”.

Tribe (2001) posits that studies addressing tourism curricula requires the use of all three methodological approaches since practical and emancipatory interests, as well as technical interests, need to be addressed. Although Tribe (2001) does not advocate for a particular approach when researching sustainable tourism education per se, it appeared from his critique of methodological paradigms, an interpretive approach would be appropriate for my PhD research. An interpretive approach seeks to gain an understanding of the sustainable tourism education world, by acknowledging meaning and understanding held by those directly involved (Tribe, 2001).

An interpretive approach is ideal for exploring phenomena that are complex and about which there is little knowledge (Krathwohl, 2009). Although much is written conceptually about sustainability education, little is known about academics’ viewpoints on approaches to learning and teaching sustainability concepts. Research using survey instruments tend to dominate when assessing engagement with sustainability education (Carpenter & Meehan, 2002; Cotton et al., 2007; Holdsworth et al., 2008; Sherren, 2005). This instrumental approach lends itself to a large random survey to investigate technical interests. These were not the aim of my study. More appropriate was qualitative research, using in-depth interviews to allow for nuances and details that would not be possible using quantitative methods (Creswell, 2007; Seidman, 2006). I sought the participant’s personal view of the world as opposed to describing reality ‘out there’ in an objective way as obtained from an etic perspective (Krathwohl, 2009; Ponterotto, 2005). According to Patton (2002), it is important to place the participant’s behaviour within the context of their lives and those around them in order to explore the meaning of an experience.

To begin with, critical theory was considered to provide an advantageous lens through which to approach my study as the issues surrounding sustainability are complex and often determined by overt and hidden power structures. However, on further reading of the literature and considering that my investigation of sustainability education was situated within a tourism education context, I believed a critical approach was not yet warranted and was not something
I felt fully comfortable with embracing at that point. Ultimately, I considered an interpretive approach was a better fit at this stage. However on reflection, and as a result of engagement with and analysis of the data, my research did take a decidedly more critical path than first anticipated. Though I would not say my study is drawn from critical theory overall, the findings uncovered issues that would benefit from the paradigm of critical theory for future research.

A growing acceptance for qualitative research in sustainable tourism was apparent in Lu and Nepal (2009)’s content analysis of papers published in the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* since its inception (1993-2007). Their findings showed the majority of papers (139 or 41 percent) had applied qualitative methods, closely followed by quantitative (125 or 37 percent) and mixed methods (21 or 6 percent), while 16 percent were theoretical papers. Similarly, the more recent *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education* (established in 2000), included a variety of research studies which engage in a range of methodological approaches. The use of small case study projects with semi-structured interviews and focus groups (Djordjevic & Cotton, 2011) and action research (MacVaug & Norton, 2012) appear popular; although so too are survey instruments (Naeem & Neal, 2012).

According to Seidman (2006, p. 10), “one of the main ways a researcher can investigate an educational organisation, institution or process is through the experience of the individual, the “others” who make up the organisation or carry out the process”. Furthermore, “social abstractions like education are best understood through the experiences of individuals whose work and lives are the stuff upon which the abstractions are built” (Seidman, 2006, p. 10). I recognised many stakeholders are connected with tourism education - for example, students, institutional executives, tourism employers and the wider community. There appears to be a dearth of research so far which seeks to uncover deeper insight into the academics’ perspective of sustainability, especially within tourism education. Therefore this thesis sought to explore what EfS means through the eyes and words of tourism academics from within their specific cultural setting (Neuman, 2011).

Having placed my research within a qualitative interpretive paradigm of inquiry, I explored the methodological approaches available. My research used a combination of two methods within an overarching qualitative methodology. I began with a content analysis study which investigated where sustainability and sustainability-related content was present in the tourism curriculum. This was followed by the major qualitative research component of in-depth interviewing of tourism academics.
3.4 Stage 1: Content Analysis

This study’s first research objective was to document the evidence of, and support for, sustainability education in Australian tourism higher education. Content analysis is a technique used as a research method for over one hundred years to analyse data in an inductive or deductive way (Neuman, 2011). The method is of use within both quantitative and qualitative paradigms (Krippendorf, 2004; Sarantakos, 2005). The difference between them is that quantitative content analysis counts words/phrases (Krippendorf, 2004), whereas qualitative content analyses focus on the meaning of ‘discourse’ of the text, and are not “forced in any way by a priori theory” (Jennings, 2010, p. 212). Qualitative content analyses means the researcher is ‘open’ to discover what the text reveals rather than searching for themes to fit a pre-existing theory (Jennings, 2010; Sarantakos, 2005). Qualitative content analysis can also involve counting, but it seeks to go further and interpret the meaning within and behind the words, and how that discourse is situated in a wider sociocultural or political context (Neuman, 2011). Sarantakos (2005, p. 280) notes content analysis as a qualitative technique “may be directed toward more subjective information, such as motives, attitudes or values”. Consequently, analysis can expose messages in a document that are often hidden when observed casually (Neuman, 2011).

With a view to being transparent about what methodological approach informed this content analysis, the method I used aligned more to a quantitative method. The techniques of data collection and analysis involved ‘counting words’ associated more to a quantitative method. In a qualitative content analysis, the researcher interprets the contents of the texts and explains: “their meanings based on the social setting or context from which they are drawn” (Jennings 2010, p. 212). For the purposes of this study, this type of qualitative approach was not necessary. The quantitative content analysis yielded insights which sufficiently informed the larger qualitative study undertaken.

Curriculum content analysis has been useful in previous studies of tourism and business programs; through this method, key themes and messages can be counted, elucidated and discussed, using the curriculum as ‘text’ (see (Bridges & Wilhelm, 2008; Dredge et al., 2012b; Rundle-Thiele & Wymer, 2010; von der Heidt et al., 2012). Rundle-Thiele and Wymer (2010, p. 8) conducted an audit of marketing programs in 39 Australian and eight New Zealand universities to see whether a course’s content contained coverage of ethics, sustainability, or social responsibility. Seventy one course (subject) titles and descriptions were reviewed using
key search terms of “ethics (ethical), social responsibility, society, values in society, moral(s), sustainability, environment, and current issues” Rundle-Thiele and Wymer (2010). By using content analysis it is seemingly possible to “record what educators actually do, not what they claim to have done” (Boote & Mathews, 1999, p. 20). Rundle-Thiele and Wymer (2010, p. 7) concur that an advantage of content analysis of program requirements is it can “yield information on what universities are actually doing rather than what individual professors perceive”.

Content analysis has been used to investigate sustainability content in higher education. Sherren (2005, 2006a) undertook an internet audit to survey environmental and sustainability programs at 41 Australian universities to assess the issue of disciplinary mix in university sustainability education. The content analysis for this present study differs from Sherren’s work as it went above and beyond counting the terms ‘sustainable’ and ‘sustainability’ to take a broader analysis of ‘sustainability’. UNESCO’s guidelines on Educational Strategic Perspectives have been an initial guiding framework for this study explained further in Section 3.5.3 concerning data analysis. Further, the data in this study focuses on one field of study (tourism, hospitality and events) and investigated all programs and subjects for sustainability rather than those with ‘sustainability’ in the program title, as was the case for Sherren’s studies.

### 3.4.1 Sample

The population for the web-based content analysis was all Australian universities offering tourism, hospitality and events (TH&E, for simplicity’s sake) undergraduate programs. The recent comprehensive mapping of Australian TH&E curricula (Day et al., 2012; Dredge et al., 2012b), meant a full sample of 25 public universities from all Australian states and territories (see Appendix 1). Dredge et al.’s (2012a) study at the time of data collection identified 27 Australian institutions. However by 2013, two universities had withdrawn their TH&E degree programs reducing the sample size to 25. The sample represents public universities from all states and territories, including 19th century ‘sandstone’ universities and post 1976 universities located in urban and regional centres currently offering tourism, hospitality and events undergraduate programs. The focus was on universities only; Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges, private hotel schools and other private providers were not included. A search for the terms tourism, events, hospitality, hotel, events or leisure in the degree title name, identified 68 TH&E degree programs or any combination of these. Across the 25 universities,
the number of TH&E degrees offered ranged from one degree at four universities, up to a choice of six degrees available at one university.

### 3.4.2 Data Collection

The creation and display of unit information on public websites is ongoing, hence selecting ‘artificial dates’ for data capture was necessary. To draw a discrete yet arbitrary chronological boundary for data capture, the content analysis was limited to information available in the first teaching semester of 2013. The TH&E programs’ descriptions, presented on the university’s website, were copied and pasted into an Excel workbook. The same process was undertaken for every unit/subject within each program. In total, 682 individual subjects were identified in the 68 degree programs.

It was fully recognised that the ‘curriculum space’ is much broader and more complex than the subject information alone, in that it is “socially constructed; it will have multiple meanings, be dynamic and will always be a matter of debate and refinement” (Dredge et al., 2012b, p. 13). For the purposes of this study, I have taken a fairly structured view of ‘curriculum’; that is, it is literally the content proposed to be offered in a degree program and the component parts which make up that degree (the subjects or units). As such, a boundary was placed around what was and was not to be included in curriculum analysis. Text which formed the ‘data’ for curriculum analysis was thus limited to undergraduate degree name and description, followed by the subject name and description. I deliberately did not drill down into degree syllabus, assessment or full subject guides. This detailed information is not always publicly available on universities’ website. Therefore, I decided since the retrieval of such data could not be relied upon, this level of detail would fall outside the scope of this study.

### 3.4.3 Analysis

The data analysed in this research consisted of 68 Australian university tourism, hospitality and events programs titles and descriptors (often referred to as course or program aims/overview/objectives) and 682 unit or subject titles and descriptions. As mentioned, content analysis usually involves counting how often certain words or themes appear within text (Neuman, 2011, Sarantakos, 2005). Once a body of material is identified, its analysis requires the creation of systematic recording of specific aspects of its content (Neuman, 2011). In other
words, the process of analysis entails looking for reoccurring patterns and themes (Patton, 2002).

A quantitative study uses a deductive approach to content analysis; it assumes the codes are known beforehand and so always uses predefined codes (Bryman, 2008). As stated by Patton (2002, p.453), deductive analysis is “where the data are analysed according to an existing framework”. Qualitative content analysis may start with some initial codes, as the process involves movement back and forth between conceptualisation, data collection, analysis and interpretation, it permits new codes to emerge (Bryman, 2008; Neuman, 2011). Patton (2202, p. 453) explains inductive analysis takes place when “findings emerge out of the data, through the analyst’s interaction with the data”. In the end, a combination of deductive and inductive analysis was utilised in the analysis of the curricula documents in this study.

When recording the “presence, frequency and intensity” of the units in the document (Sarantakos, 2005, p. 282), the creation of codes is a crucial first step (Bryman, 2008). Therefore, the question of what is to be counted is important and be explicit about how one undertakes coding and analysis (Bryman, 2008). The analysis undertaken in this study involved a number of steps. TH&E degree titles and descriptions were entered into an Excel workbook. The same process was undertaken for every subject within each degree program. The study combined deductive and inductive or hybrid coding (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006) allowing different codes to be added as the data were read and new themes emerged. The sustainability education literature provided insight and meaning of topics and additional themes were included in the coding scheme.

Since a key aim of the study was to determine the presence of sustainability in Australian THE programs, it was necessary to count the explicit use of the words ‘sustainable’ and ‘sustainability’ at the two levels (title and description) of the identified curricula documents (program and subject information). Second, the word ‘sustainability’ is not the only way of capturing the full suite of sustainability principles and skills; sustainability is a broad concept with decidedly social and environmental platforms. I needed a way to broaden, yet operationalise sustainability in the curriculum space. This was achieved using the three common ‘pillars’ of sustainability namely the triple bottom line of sociocultural, environmental and economic aspects, and adapted from the UNDESD International Implementation Scheme of 2006 (UNESCO, 2006). The UNDESD’s list of key characteristics of education for sustainable development, outlined as “strategic perspectives” that “must inform education and
learning for sustainable development” (UNESCO, 2006, pp. 17-21), formed part of the coding scheme when examining the curriculum documents for evidence of wider sustainability-related perspectives. Table 3.1 shows UNESCO’s 15 educational strategic perspectives for sustainable development.

Table 3.1: UNESCO’s Educational Strategic Perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key areas</th>
<th>15 strategic perspectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sociocultural: Human rights</td>
<td>Peace and human security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural diversity and intercultural understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental: Natural resources (water, energy, agriculture, biodiversity)</td>
<td>Climate change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sustainable urbanisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disaster prevention and mitigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic:</td>
<td>Poverty reduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Corporate responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Market economy and innovative technology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from UNESCO (2006)

In line with content analysis which takes a more inductive approach to coding, I was open to incorporate other concepts into the empirical material for analysis. Ethical learning is an essential component of sustainability education (Schlottmann, 2008) extending to tourism higher education (Kazimierczak, 2006; Tribe, 2002a; UNWTO, 2001). Therefore ‘ethical/ethics’ was included along with evidence of ‘politics/political’ content which is important when thinking about sustainability (Gough & Scott, 2006). To aid analysis the coded data (see Appendix 2) were entered into SPSS.

Once the counting of the term ‘sustainability’ and related words had been undertaken, the text was interpreted for richer meanings. Similar to discourse analysis (Krippendorf, 2004), a critical eye was applied to the data, where possible, to interpret how sustainability is represented. This approach interpreted the type of language used when describing curricula content. The aim was to gain insight into what the documents were saying about the engagement with sustainability in the tourism courses and to tentatively establish the prevailing sociocultural discourse
(Fairclough, 1992). By critically examining the language used in the ‘texts’ (program description and subject description) it was hoped it may “reflect the ideologies” which underpin the tourism programs and their units (Fairclough, 2003, p. 9).

Finally, in a separate word document, and when the information was available, I recorded the name of the teacher/convener for every subject which had ‘sustainable/sustainability’ or contained one or more of the UNDESD’ Educational Strategic Perspectives, such as ‘social justice’, ‘climate change’ or ‘corporate responsibility’. This information provided the initial list of names of who could be approached as a potential participant for an in-depth interview.

### 3.4.4 Trustworthiness and Ethics

An advantage of content analysis is that it is a nonreactive, unobtrusive method (Babbie, 2010; Neuman, 2011). Furthermore, the method poses no threat to confidentiality or an ethical dilemma as the data is freely available on publicly accessible websites (Harris, 2001; Sarantakos, 2005). The data captured for analysis (program description and subject description) were all publicly available on universities’ website.

Content analysis often involves coding information from a large amount of text; therefore, the issue of coder reliability needs to be acknowledged (Neuman, 2011). Since I carried out all coding personally, *inter-coder reliability* was established to determine and analyse the results. To establish this, I adopted a reflective stance throughout each step of the research process to account for perceived ‘bias’ (Neuman, 2011). However, *intra-coder reliability* was important in this study and coding needed to be consistent (Bryman, 2008). This was achieved by taking care to accurately record the identification of codes consistently during the coding process, disclose how the codes were created, as well as to describe their systematic application. This step is important to the credibility of the research, and provides clear information about the coding process also makes it possible to undertake replication and follow up studies (Bryman, 2008).

### 3.4.5 Limitations

There are disadvantages with using content analysis, namely, the method can only be as good (or as recent) as the documents under study (Sarantakos, 2005). The study by Dredge et al.
(2012a, p. 13) “noted over the course of the whole project that web pages containing information about programs are dynamic: programs which are continually being changed, restructured or even withdrawn”. Similarly, I was aware that some institutions were in the process of conducting a review or in some case an overhaul of their degree programs. Consequently, the results presented in the next chapter do not claim to reflect the current situation, but are intended to provide a ‘snapshot’ of the landscape in the first teaching semester of 2013 and inform the main stage of data collection – the in-depth interviews.

Since information was missing from some university websites (for example a number of subjects did not include a subject description) some may claim it jeopardises ‘generalisability’ (Bryman, 2008). However, in this qualitative study, the expectation to produce results that are generalisable is not a significant research goal. Nonetheless, incomplete documents risked the information being biased and often unreliable (Sarantakos, 2005), as one participant also pointed out: It does not surprise me that the info is wrong. It still has a graduate certificate in tourism that has not been offered for over a decade. I would not trust information on any University website’.

Another potential weakness of content analysis is its susceptibility to coder bias (Sarantakos, 2005). This hopefully has been alleviated by making clear the type of coding employed. As explained earlier, both manifest and latent coding were used. Manifest coding is considered to be “highly reliable because the phrase or word either is or is not present” (Neuman, 2011, p. 312). As such, the findings from this aspect of the content analysis allow for the conclusions drawn to be considered dependable. However there are drawbacks with manifest coding; “it does not take the connotations of words or phrases into account” and fails to recognise that “the same word can take on different meanings depending on the context” (Neuman, 2011, p. 313). For example, the use of the word ‘economic’ may not necessarily equate with the principles advocated by UNESCO in its guidelines for Educational Strategic Perspectives. For UNESCO, the ‘economic key area’ is associated with ‘poverty reduction’ or ‘corporate responsibility’ (UNESCO, 2006). Whereas in a curriculum document the term ‘economic’ may represent a more traditional business as usual interpretation of economic, such as pro-growth and profit, or learning financial analysis. A careful analysis of the subject description can point to a general tone for sustainability, but without more information may limit the conclusions that can be drawn.
Where the units of analysis relate to latent coding, it is stressed that any interpretation and judgement involved is used with caution. I acknowledge more information is required to gain a fuller understanding of the underlying message of sustainability which has been inferred from the selected units of analysis available on the university’s website. Ezzy (2002, p. 85) points out content analysis “restricts the extent to which the data are allowed to ‘speak’ to the researcher”. Overall there were limits to the conclusions drawn from this content analysis since the data collected was not as rich as interview data. A content analysis of topics and assessment items may have elucidated the presence of sustainability content more fully. Rundle-Thiele and Wymer (2010, p. 11) suggest counting the number of course learning goals or objectives and classes that are dedicated to the topics of ethics, sustainability and social responsibility as a recommendation for further research. Also, research of curricula by Ramsden (2003) shows assessment defines the curriculum from a student’s point of view and so investigating assessment items for sustainability content may prove insightful (Rundle-Thiele & Wymer, 2010).

During the analysis process, I made a distinction between evidence of ‘stand-alone’ sustainability and evidence of ‘embedded’ sustainability. During the data collection and analysis process I interpreted ‘stand-alone’ to mean subjects where the terms ‘sustainability’ or ‘sustainable’ appeared in the title of the subject. Where ‘sustainable’, ‘sustainability’ or other ‘sustainability-related’ dimensions were explicitly present in the descriptions of the majority of subjects in the program, then this would indicate sustainability was ‘embedded’. However, I am mindful of the limitations with this inquiry and have been careful to avoid assumptions based on the information alone. Nevertheless the content analysis can indicate whether, for example, sustainability was referred to overtly or not in course and unit descriptors. An inclination can be deduced on how the concept of sustainability was generally manifested. Ezzy (2002) recommends when undertaking qualitative content analysis other forms of data analysis are utilised. Therefore, interviews with the academic practitioners themselves allowed for the inclinations gathered in the content analysis to be explored further.

3.5 Stage 2: In-depth Interviews

The second stage of this qualitative study investigated Objectives 2, 3 and 4: how sustainability is understood by tourism academics; informs their choice of teaching material and practices; and the challenges and opportunities experienced by teachers of sustainability. One of the major goals of the research was to understand how teachers of sustainable tourism understand,
incorporate and embed ‘sustainability’ in their teaching practices. This is because I was interested in the tourism academic’s ‘subjective understanding’ (Seidman, 2006) of sustainability and sustainability in tourism education. Informed by the content analysis scoping exercise, the interpretive, qualitative method of in-depth interviews was chosen to enable a deeper investigation (Rubin & Rubin, 2011) of academics’ meanings of sustainability in tourism education.

Previous research which used quantitative methods to survey teaching and executive staff at educational institutes about their response to sustainability education, recommend a deeper understanding is required (Fisher & Bonn, 2011; Sherren, 2008a; von der Heidt & Lamberton, 2011). Qualitative in-depth interviews offer an opportunity to investigate deeper understandings of how academics make meaning of sustainability in tourism education. The benefit of this qualitative method is the ability to probe more deeply than with a questionnaire-based survey (Ticehurst & Veal, 1999). Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, and Alexander (1996) note that where structured surveys imply the questioning is clearly between the surveyor and their recipient, during an in-depth interview a more relaxed and impromptu atmosphere exists. Coupled with this, in-depth interviews produce rich, “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) or narrative, sourced directly from participants’ words to reveal multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2007; Jennings, 2010a).

The focus and design of the study was not rigidly marked out, but intended as an emergent study, to develop as it proceeded (Glaser, 1992; Krathwohl, 2009). Concepts and theories were inductively arrived at from the data collected (Bryman, 2008). Although the literature provides overarching concepts that frame EfS (de Ciurana and Filho, 2006; Junyent and de Ciurana, 2008), the purpose of this research was not to ‘test’ a model or framework. Rather it sought inductively to uncover new insights about the perspectives of sustainability education held by academics involved.

### 3.5.1 Purposive Sampling

In this study, academics who taught sustainable tourism were invited to participate in the research (Neuman, 2011). Purposive sampling is regarded as a suitable method when seeking appropriate respondents for the research objectives, and those who are most knowledgeable of an area or phenomenon under investigation (Bryman, 2008; Neuman, 2011; Patton, 2002). In
contrast to random or representative selection procedures, purposive sampling selects cases or interview subjects for particular purposes (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Purposive sampling means the researcher uses their discretion to decide who will provide the best perspective on the area of interest, and they then intentionally invite those perspectives into the study (Abrams, 2010).

It was preferable for the participants to have some knowledge/experience of sustainability education, but the degree of expertise was not considered a necessary criterion as a wide range of experience would be illuminating. Through web-based content analysis presented in Chapter 4, I was able to identify suitable potential participants. As a result, I assembled a purposive sample of tourism academics to incorporate a range of: academic experience; gender and age; representation from tourism, hospitality, events; and representation from business, social science and science schools/faculties. I cross-checked staff profiles where available on the university’s website to establish teaching and/or research interest in broad sustainability issues. The list of names was supplemented by suggestions from the networks of my supervisors and other peers and colleagues.

The selection criteria required participants to:

- work at an Australian university
- identify as a TH&E academic and,
- have experience/interest of teaching and/or researching sustainability.

Often there was little choice with identifying potential participants because only one or two people in a whole tourism course appeared to teach aspects of sustainability. An outcome of this situation seemed to be either the academic was keen and available or through work pressure, unavailable. Excerpts from emails received from potential participants show this context:

I would be delighted to take part. I am the only lecturer involved in teaching sustainable tourism.

Thanks for your email Andrea, but as I am now the only tourism lecturer here I am extremely busy and won’t be able to assist with your survey. However, I wish you all the best with your thesis.

Over two days in March 2013, an email was sent direct to the university email addresses of 60 potential participants. The introductory email included a copy of the information sheet and
consent form (See Appendix 3 and 4 respectively). I was encouraged by an immediate response, positive response from five academics and from another ten over the next week. Genuine interest in this study was apparent:

Yes, I would love to talk with you! I am indeed passionate about my teaching, and the courses I teach are a perfect fit with my values. I put enormous energy into my courses and I constantly think of ways I might realise more meaningful outcomes in terms of the ownership students take of sustainable practices.

I relied on participant self-identification which worked well to help form the sample, as noted from this reply: ‘I am not a tourism academic, but have passed the information onto colleagues who are’. Other potential participants, although willing, felt they had no connection to ‘sustainability’:

In looking at your topic, I am not sure whether I am the right fit for your thesis. I mainly teach in food and beverage management along with contemporary issues. As far as sustainability teaching, it is very limited in my courses.

I am always eager to help but neither my teaching, nor my research is remotely connected to traditional notions of sustainability. Happy to help though.

On these occasions I double-checked the subjects taught by the academics. The subject descriptions invariably fitted the wider criteria of sustainability as outlined in UNESCO (2006) described earlier in Section 3.5.3, and mentioned terms such as: ‘social, cultural and political nuances’. In order to have representation from academics teaching hospitality subjects, it was necessary to use my judgement on a couple of instances when deciding if the selection criteria were fulfilled. For example, I opted to accept a reference in the subject description: “enable effective consideration of the contemporary issues that emerging professionals will face”, when this was coupled with the academic’s interest in “innovation” and “creativity”. It was explained to the hospitality academics a wider interpretation of sustainability was incorporated in this study and their participation was welcomed. They gave their consent and as it turned out, yielded data with depth and new insights.

Some academics informed me of their unavailability, which helped me to eliminate the number of potential participants to follow up. After two weeks had passed from sending the first enquiry
email, a follow up email was sent to the participants who had not yet replied. This yielded confirmation from a further eight participants. Three potential participants, who at first expressed interest to be involved, unfortunately ceased their involvement. It was disappointing at the time, but I was reluctant to apply pressure. After sending two more email requests to follow up their initial interest to participate and, receiving no reply, I assumed they were simply no longer interested or available. Simultaneously a snowballing technique was used where research respondents either volunteered or were asked if they could recommend any research participants (Neuman, 2011). Sometimes when one academic was unable to participate, snowballing enabled further participant recruitment: ‘Your study sounds really interesting; however, unfortunately I will have to decline participation as I am heading off on leave. You may like to try our other two tourism lecturers X and X’. Snowballing helped fill in the gaps for some subjects and resulted in a final sample size of 31 participants. Except for the Australian Capital Territory and South Australia, where I was unable to recruit participants and the Northern Territory, which no longer offers a tourism program, all remaining five Australian states and territories were represented in the sample.

The issue of how many participants is enough is one of the challenges of sampling in qualitative research (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Seidman (2006, p. 45), the collection of material collection can cease when there is sufficiency and saturation with regards to materials and their analysis. Furthermore, Corbin and Strauss (2008, p. 149) state that “a researcher knows when sufficient sampling has occurred when the major categories show depth and variation in terms of their development”. Although total saturation is probably never fully achieved, it can be reasonable to state saturation is reached when no new ideas are presenting themselves (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). My sampling process continued until I considered saturation of ideas was achieved when respondents were not contributing new information (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). By the twenty-fifth interview, saturation in the form of information redundancy was apparent. It is acceptable to review the number of participants as the interview process takes place (Seidman, 2006). Data continued to be gathered from the remaining participants who had agreed to participate and by the completion of those, was assured that no significantly new issues were emerging. A number of academics approached were not available during the six month period of data collection due to long service leave or sabbatical commitments. This group would have been contacted again at a later date if data saturation had not been achieved. However, after 31 interviews, it seemed there was no further advantage in seeking more participants. Table 3.2 profiles the final participant sample at the time of their interview.
Table 3.2: Participant Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of birth</td>
<td>Australasia</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>America/Canada/Africa</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD qualified</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior Lecturer</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional roles</td>
<td>Program/Course Coordinator</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Head/Deputy Head</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary background</td>
<td>Tourism/Business</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arts/Social Science</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environmental/Geography</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science/Agriculture/Health</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hospitality</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching experience</td>
<td>5 years or less</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21-30 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31-40 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism industry experience</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other non-tourism work experience</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academia experience only</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The issue of sample size has ramifications for other research protocol and impacts on participants as demonstrated by this enquiry received from a potential participant: ‘I have concerns regarding the anonymity of the results as X is a small place, and I have been identified before following an interview for another research project. Please, how big will your sample be?’ Identification is a real concern for participants in this type of research as the targeted tourism academia is a relatively small pool and potentially easy to work out ‘who is who’. In retrospect although confidentiality was assured in the information sheet, complete anonymity could have been explicated more clearly by emphasising that all quotes would be treated similarly, using no identifiers of name, gender, title, level of career or type of institution. Thus
all participants were labelled as ‘A’ for ‘Academic’ and assigned a numerical code (for example: A1, A2). From this point on in the research process, anonymity and the de-identification process was reconfirmed with all participants via email and prior to the interview. Research protocol regarding ethical considerations is explained further in Section 3.6.5.

3.5.2 Data Collection

The research design was emergent in nature and evolved during the data gathering stage. Patton (2002, p. 40) describes an emergent design as:

Openness to adapting enquiry as understanding deepens and/or situations change; the researcher avoids getting locked into rigid designs that eliminate responsiveness and pursues new paths of discovery as they emerge.

A wide range of interview practices are possible (Dunn, 2010; Kvale, 1996; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2006). The degree to which an interview is structured lies on a continuum where the unstructured interview is closer to the qualitative tradition (Krathwohl, 2009). Opinions appear to vary on how focused a qualitative interview should be (Kvale, 1996). There is also a trade off with the degree of structure as more structured interviews are easier to analyse (Krathwohl, 2009). Since this is an emergent study, it was appropriate for the interview to be less structured (Patton, 2002) and therefore I used an informal semi-structured interview format.

Participant interviews spanned a period of six months (March to September 2013). During this period I continued to recruit participants by snowballing. In total, 31 interviews were conducted either face-to-face (25), via Skype (5) or by telephone (1). Two trips were made to Sydney to enable the capturing of interested participants face-to-face. One willing participant who was unable to meet face-to-face in Sydney, consented to a Skype interview instead. One data collection trip to both Brisbane and Melbourne took place which fortunately captured all interested parties in that period. Several day-trips were made to the Gold Coast with interviews in my local vicinity scattered in between. Due to the location of some participants in Western Australia, North Queensland and Tasmania, the distance precluded a face-to-face meeting. This group was comfortable with technology and offered to meet on Skype instead. Every participant was given a range of days and time slots and asked to nominate their preferred location/time. A tentative schedule was set-up and suitable slots reconfirmed with each participant.
Setting up the interviews took time and involved many exchanges to firm up a mutually suitable time and location for the interview. Circumstances often changed: ‘Next week is problematic as I am covering for two other staff members so I may not have the time. The week after is better if that suits you’. Flexibility was required on the part of both researcher and participant since there were often narrow windows of opportunity: ‘I will be away nearly all June. July is likely to be my most available. May is very busy’. It was important to remain patient and allow arrangements to finally eventuate. I remained conscious of the balance between not wanting to hassle people and also recognising that people need to be reminded in their busy working lives: ‘Oh my goodness, I am so sorry Andrea - absolutely still keen’. A week before the interview date an email was sent reminding participants of agreed appointment. The process of organising each interview was readjusted when one participant failed to show for their interview; they had forgotten to record the appointment in their electronic dairy. The simple step of reconfirming time and location again two days prior was undertaken from then on. Another copy of the consent form was sent again where necessary.

**Interview Process**

Prior to each interview, I read the academic’s biography where available on the university website to be familiar with their teaching expertise and research interests. I had to become proficient at using effective interview techniques. Allowing time at the start to build rapport was important in order to create an atmosphere where open and honest responses are possible (Krathwohl, 2009; Seidman, 2006). Initially there was informal conversation about: participant background; major influences in their lives; academic and industry career and family life. Completing any gaps about their academic background at the start of the interview was a useful ice breaker tool; it helped establish rapport and gave me valuable background information. For the academics who had not returned a signed consent form, a consent form was presented for signing at the beginning of the interview.

Interviews were audio recorded on a small digital recorder, except for one interview when the participant requested no recording take place, thus notes were taken to substitute. Of the 25 face-to face interviews, well over half of the participants (56 percent) chose to meet during work hours in their university office. Usually we sat together at a round meeting table in their room; only a few preferred to remain seated behind their desk. When people were located behind their desk it was especially important to build rapport quickly to alleviate the sense of formality. The next most popular venue of choice (24 percent) was the university’s coffee shop.
This immediately provided a relaxed and informal environment. A number of academics (20 percent) chose a more intimate and often convenient venue, such as their home, coffee stall outside a music festival they were attending, a children’s park because their child was accompanying them, and at a beach location where we sat on a bench overlooking the surf. It was interesting to note these conversations were the longest and most informal, a possible consequence of being located in the participant’s personal environment, away from the influence of academia and the work office. One participant referred to the influence of academia: ‘I can turn that academic speak off now and I’ll just talk in [their name]-land’.

A sample of topics was provided to the participants prior to the interview to help them understand the nature of the interview and prepare in advance if they so desired (see Appendix 5). Specific questions were not provided as they “may inhibit the naturalness of the discussion” (Bryman & Cassell, 2006, p. 52). I only received one particular request enquiring ‘is there a set of questions or pro forma that I need to brush up on or is it a random interview?’ Another participant suggested: ‘you might want to remind a few days before by email with the project details again so I can be prepared’. Other than these requests, participants seemed satisfied with the information they received. At the beginning of the meeting, however, some vocalised their consciousness about not preparing for the interview: ‘I’m probably very unprepared for this so it will be very top of mind what I have to say’.

The suggested topics were listed as follows:

- What the term sustainability means to you in your everyday life
- The importance of sustainability to you as a teacher of tourism
- What key sustainability concepts or issues are important to you for students to know
- How you incorporate sustainability into your teaching or curriculum
- The constraints or challenges for sustainability in tourism education
- What you envisage the future for sustainability in tourism education to be.

However, the list of topics did not constitute a fixed agenda; interviews were constructed using semi-structured questions and proceeded in a fluid, open-ended way permitting other areas or questions not included in the guide to be pursued (Bryman, 2008; Kvale, 1996). The interview guide located in Appendix 5, shows the types of questions I used during the interview. While the interviews did not specifically question the academics about their ideology/worldview, for example, the questioning probed for their understanding and interpretation of sustainability. Each participant was asked to describe what sustainability meant to them in their everyday life.
Further questions included how sustainability was constructed in teaching practice and the key sustainability concepts or issues important to them for students to know.

The benefit of the semi-structured format was it allowed for flexibility and room for open conversation about key issues (Bryman, 2008). All of the suggested topics were eventually covered in every interview. As the scheduled interviews progressed, it was apparent the depth of response to each topic varied between academics depending on their level of interest and experience. My flexible approach to topic order was beneficial as many participant returned to an earlier question later in the interview. Nearing the end of one interview, one participant said: ‘So, thinking back to your question...’ and another, ‘that conversation we had just a few minutes ago about the norm, I think...’ and then proceeded to answer a question I had asked earlier. This may not have been possible in a structured interview since the participant would feel the topic had been addressed and moved on from. The fluidity of the approach suited the overall area of interest. Sustainability is not a straightforward phenomenon and the format of the interviews permitted the academic to revisit, recap and enrich their ideas throughout our time together.

Prior to interviewing, I was conscious of potential issues arising from interviewing experienced researchers. The influence of an uneven power relationship (Dunn, 2010) between myself as student researcher and the participants was something I had considered. Many participants were of notable academic standing in the tourism field, professors, associate professors and senior lecturers. For example, the thought crossed my mind that a participant may feel entitled and more qualified to challenge the grounds of this research and its methods. It is normal for researchers to feel apprehensive about these types of interviews (Bryman & Cassell, 2006). Guided by Bryman and Cassell (2006), the taking of field notes was a useful tool to record and reflect on the effect such possible circumstances may have on the research process. However, in my case, it seemed most participants appeared genuinely interested in my study.

The jotting down of theoretical insights as they arise during field work or data analysis is considered important (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Corbin and Strauss (2008) advise that a researcher should take detailed field notes either during an interview (if this is possible and appropriate) or straight after; for example, noting when a participant seemed uneasy about answering a question. When conducting the analysis, I could recall these initial interpretations and impressions which aided the process of interpreting meaning.
It was important to set the tone of the interview to be friendly, informal and more conversational. The interview questions were open-ended to encourage a full explanation rather than a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response. This appeared to work well: ‘I like the way that your questioning has been really open in terms of terms like EFS rather than you saying, well this is what the definition is and how do you feel about that’. Occasionally in order to clarify my interpretation of the participant responses, it was paraphrased back to the participant. Mastering the nondirective response is a useful interview skill, enabling the interviewer to reflect back on the respondents’ answers and the underlying feelings they convey (Krathwohl, 2009). Not only does it convey the interviewer’s respect for the respondent, but also assures the interviewer is not misrepresenting the participant’s reply (Krathwohl, 2009). Minichiello et al. (1996), note the importance of probing during the interview to gain a deeper response. Probing questions such as: “Could you tell me more about that?” or “How do you mean?” were used. However I was mindful not to overuse this technique otherwise the participant may think I was not listening properly or could not recognise a valid answer (Krathwohl, 2009). I endeavoured to reflect on the conversation as it was unfolding in order to be responsive and adaptable to individual comments and concerns. This reflection allowed me to clarify, amplify or correct my interpretation on the spot.

After the first few interviews there was a need to reassure academics the reason and focus of the interview was not a ‘test’ of their knowledge or evaluation of their teaching skills. Some participants appeared a little more wary and puzzled at the beginning. One participant remarked they were ‘quite curious’ as to what my study was about. On reflection this may be due to participant uncertainty as to the nature of the interview; what I wanted and what they should say. The same participant asked: ‘Are you trying to work out what we are doing is right? Like is it working? Like how we inform our teaching practices or what informs that or how I relate it to my life and how I live?’ My interest in their individual perceptions and understandings of sustainability was clearly reaffirmed. The wish was for it to be as easy as possible to settle into an informal and conversational exchange and subsequent participants appeared comfortable with expressing their thoughts freely and sooner. I sensed that some participants found my line of inquiry refreshing; for some it was the first time they been asked about or deeply reflected upon the subject of sustainability: ‘I’ve never really thought about it to be honest”. One participant explained how our conversation “reconfirmed it [sustainability] for me in a clearer way’ and another said that, ‘I suppose it’s [our conversation is] a bit of a brainstorming. It’s not that every day I reflect on this. It’s more just my experience and the opportunity now to talk about it’.
Following the initial rapport required to build conversation, as mentioned earlier, one of the first questions asked was what sustainability meant to them. After the first couple of interviews I detected such a question may be rather challenging or confronting at the beginning of our conversation: ‘that’s a big question!’ One of the first participants interviewed responded: ‘Oh I’m not sure. I think things will come out as we go into the questions. I mean that is so broad and open-ended, I’m not quite sure what else to add at this point’. Therefore, my approach was modified for the remaining interviews to allow the question, what sustainability means to them to occur naturally in the conversation. Instead, participants were asked about their background and family life first, linking it to aspects of environmental awareness and sustainability where any connections arose. Once in this frame of mind, the participants seemed able to answer the question about their understanding of sustainability more easily.

Although I had a list of topics to explore, depending on the nature of the conversation, each interview followed its own path. After about the tenth interview I had become familiar with the topics of interest and could move easily from one to the other adapting to the natural flow of the conversation. The list of topics was with me at every interview and occasionally I glanced down to check topics were being addressed. Perhaps this technique was unusual for a semi-structured interview: ‘Are we answering your questions yet? You haven’t even looked at them!’ I made few notes during the interview, preferring to engage with the academic as one would in an in-depth conversation. This technique worked well; I relied on the recording and prolific note taking directly following the interview.

Five participants (16 percent) were interviewed using Skype. Despite Skype lacking the nuances of clear body language, I felt all interviews achieved a similar rapport and conversational flow as the face-to-face encounters. The familiar technology issues of poor connection and occasional ‘dropping out’ did not deter the participants who patiently waited to be reconnected. Unfortunately, one recording was poor due to microphone issues, making transcribing difficult. However the gist of what the person was saying could still be ascertained, but as accuracy could not be guaranteed, the use of direct quotes was limited.

During interviews, once we had talked for about an hour, the participant was asked if they were okay for time as this had been indicated to be the approximate length. Interviews varied between one and two hours and were generally guided by the academic. I would watch their body language and listen for comments indicating the participant wished to draw the interview to a
close: ‘This is one subject I can talk about for hours but I don’t want to keep you’ or ‘So that’s where I guess I could pretty much wrap it up there because obviously we could continue to talk till sundown easily’. Participant responses varied in length, and took a number of directions depending on the enthusiasm and concerns of each participant. Some academics’ responses were quite long. A number of participants were animated and passionate in their responses to particular aspects. Sometimes other aspects were less significant to them and were passed over briefly. Occasionally participants returned to certain aspects later in the interview, adding: “spinning back to...what I meant was...” and “coming back to that definition of sustainability, it’s not a clear-cut thing...”. Such remarks suggest participants were willing and able to reflect on their thoughts and comments as the conversation evolved.

On a number of occasions, participants asked me “what is your view of that?” about aspects of the conversation. Some were interested in my understanding of sustainability: “how do you understand the word sustainable or sustainability?” or “when you say sustainability, what does that mean to you?” On these occasions it seemed appropriate to exchange my understanding. For other academics, articulating their understanding of sustainability was sometimes difficult: ‘I wish I had my line of thinking clear and straightforward and well-formed, but I guess it’s not particularly’. Others made use of anecdotes to answer a question. When this first occurred I was initially concerned we may have gone ‘off track’ with the topic and I think so were the participants, as indicated by several responses: ‘anyway, I’m probably going off in tangents here’ and ‘I don’t know where I was going with that?’ or ‘tell me to shut up if I’m digressing, but...’ The digressions often produced interesting data which could not have been anticipated.

Participants often wondered if their responses were helpful: I don’t know whether I’m answering your questions’. Many academics treated the interview as a discursive interaction, making comments such as: ‘Do you know what I mean?’ or ‘Does that make sense?’ These exchanges enhanced the conversational interaction which invariably took on the atmosphere of a peer-to-peer discussion. Remarks received such as: ‘It was good to chat’ and ‘Thank you for the interesting conversation this morning’. Nonetheless, mindful of Ticehurst and Veal’s (1999, p. 100) advice, “The interviewer is meant to listen and encourage the respondent to talk – not to engage in debate”, the challenge for me with the informal interview format was to be continually vigilant and restrict exchanging my thoughts and opinions; the interview was not about what I thought.
Notable characteristics were apparent across the sample of participants. Many were empathetic to the challenges of research: ‘I did my Ph.D. only a few years ago and I know what it was like’. All were generous with the time they had available and a few seemed to relish the opportunity to talk about the research topic, ‘thanks for giving me the opportunity’, with another adding: ‘when it’s a cool topic people are really happy to talk to you’. Many were happy to be contacted again: ‘Well if you need any more you can always ring me’ and another offered: ‘if you’re looking at the transcript and think oh, can she clarify that. Oh, I wish I would have asked them that question here. Feel free’. Participants’ knowledge of the research process was useful and offers to follow-up were taken on a number of occasions which afforded further insights. Most interviews ended with general conversation as the participants were relaxed and happy to keep chatting. In the first few interviews I had turned off the microphone by this stage. Then I realised it was too early because I was missing further rich insights into their world which were of relevance to my topic. Therefore, for remaining interviews I kept the recorder switched on until I was walking out the door or had shut down Skype. Then when I sent the email thanking the academic for their participation, I asked for their permission to use off the record comments.

Important decisions are made on how and what is captured when transcribing the interview recordings. The same process must then be applied consistently to every interview (Kvale, 1996). I transcribed the interviews personally because I was present, was best placed to understand the meaning of what was said, less likely to misrepresent the spoken words and able to insert non-audible occurrences (Dunn, 2010, p. 121). Furthermore it allowed me to fully immerse in the data again (Dunn, 2010). Although a very long process, it was satisfying as the interviews were relived again enabling familiarisation with the nuance of each experience. Transcribing took place as soon as possible after each interview. Most face-to face interviews were scheduled together by location and transcribed accordingly. For example, during the trip to Melbourne, the six Victorian participants were interviewed over four days and subsequently transcribed as a block. Use was made of voice recognition computer software (Dragon Naturally Speaking) to assist with the time-consuming task of transcribing (Dunn, 2010). The voice recognition computer software was trained to recognise my voice and I spoke each entire conversation back to the recorder. Despite this training, manual corrections of mistaken words were often necessary.

It was important to capture the whole conversation and therefore I transcribed verbatim; repeating every word that both interviewer and participant uttered. This included repetitive word such as ‘um’, ‘er’ and ‘you know’ and noting when the participant took a long pause.
before answering or laughed. The transcript represented an authentic representation of what was said: ‘*Thanks for this – enjoyed reading the transcript! You’ve captured it really well – a nice conversation*’. Some participants however, found the inclusion of ‘um’ and other repetitive words in their transcript rather confronting to read: ‘*I hadn’t realised how often I say ‘you know’ and ‘stuff’*’. Consequently, participants were assured that after completing the iterative process of thematic analysis, the ‘um’ and ‘you know’ words would be removed in all quotes used in the thesis or any publications.

Nonetheless, it was useful to retain ‘um’, ‘er’ and significant pauses and laughs during the analysis stage to get a sense of when the participant was hesitant, unsure, thinking deeply or amused. Care was also taken with punctuation to avoid altering the meaning of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Nuances observed in the interview were recorded in the field notes after the interview and cross referenced when re-reading the transcript. Furthermore, discretion was used about whether some sections of the interview needed to be transcribed verbatim. When conversation lapsed into general chit-chat towards the end of the interview, I felt it unnecessary to capture every word and instead gave a brief summary of what our final conversation covered. All the interviewed academics were sent a typed copy of their interview transcript for member checking. Some participants made minor corrections on their annotated transcript. Others did not respond back and based on my ethics protocol, it was assumed they were satisfied with the transcript.

### 3.5.3 Analysis

The main sources of data available for analysis included: transcripts of audio-recorded interviews; documentary data that I had invited each academic to bring to the interview such as assessment documents; subject information guides; lecture slides; and memo notes from post-interview reflections. According to Babbie (2010, p. 400), when conducting qualitative data analysis “there are no cut-and-dried steps that guarantee success”. At the heart of the qualitative data analysis process though, is the identification of key themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Patton, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2011). A number of analytical techniques can be employed to detect patterns and categories or themes, such as grounded theory and ‘thematic’ discourse analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These two examples have their own detailed theoretical and technological knowledge of approaches. According to Patton (2002), grounded theory tends to be more prescriptive in application, with Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 81) stating that thematic analysis “is not wed to any pre-existing theoretical framework”.
Therefore, thematic analysis as prescribed by Braun and Clarke (2006) was selected as the best method of analysis in order to identify patterns in the qualitative data which can be turned into meaningful themes (Patton, 2002).

In essence, a theme captures something significant about the data in relation to the research question and signifies a “patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). There are a number of ways thematic analysis can be conducted Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994, Patton, 2002). Whichever technique is chosen, it is important the “theoretical position of a thematic analysis is made clear, as this is all too often left unspoken” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81). The reader here is referred back to Section 3.1 of this Methodology Chapter, where my “assumptions about the nature of the data, what they represent” were made transparent (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81).

To begin with, I intended using a computer assisted program, such as NVivo, to facilitate coding. However it soon became apparent the process of entering the data into the computer was time consuming and I felt time was best spent actually analysing the data, something a computer assisted program is largely unable to do (Weitzman, 2000). There is merit in learning how to use this software; it is considered by many a useful tool to organise and manage data (Phelps, Fisher, & Ellis, 2007; Richards, 1999), especially if there are multiple researchers or the data set is very large. Nevertheless, some researchers, such as (Weitzman, 2000), argue computer programs do not facilitate ‘rigour’ in the data analysis stage; in fact, such programs can distort the data as it removes the analyst from the context of the participant’s world. Also, the program is only ever as effective as the researcher who operates it (Dey, 1993). Other qualitative researchers have found the use of computer assisted programs to be inflexible. Sections of the transcript often fall into more than one category and there is frequent overlap between multiple themes which cannot be sufficiently accommodated by discrete codes required by the computer program (Holdsworth, 2007; Wilson, 2004). Furthermore, subtleties and nuances available within the data may be missed by electronic data manipulation (Silverman, 2010). Concurring with Wilson (2004) and Holdsworth (2007), who interviewed between 30 and 40 participants in their research, I considered the amount of data obtained in this study relatively small. Therefore, I chose to use the more traditional process of coding manually with the aid of highlighter pens, post-it notes and paper.

Researchers have been known to omit the ‘how’ question from the account of their analyses (Attride-Stirling, 2001). To enhance the value of my interpretations, as well as aid other
researchers wishing to carry out a similar study, it important to articulate how analysis was conducted (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The thematic analysis process undertaken in this research consisted of six stages. However, treating analysis as a staged progression is not to suggest analysis is a linear process; qualitative data analysis is an iterative process involving a constant moving back and forth between the entire data set, the coded extracts and the evolving interpretations (Charmaz, 2006). The six phases of analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006, pp. 87-93) guided my analysis and are as follows.

**Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with your data**

Immersion in the data is vital to become familiar with the depth and breadth of the data set (Dunn, 2010; Green et al., 2007). The process of familiarisation began with the transcribing of the audio-recorded interviews as soon as possible after the interview. As a result of transcribing all the interviews personally, early immersion in the data was made possible. I heard the nuances of each conversation again, made notes of first impressions and anything which caught my immediate attention. Each transcript was read completely several times to gain an overall understanding of content and meaning. Immersion continued through repeated reading of the transcripts in an ‘active way’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). This involved consciously searching for patterns, and latent and semantic meanings within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Notes were made for ideas about coding.

**Phase 2: Generating initial codes**

Initially a broad analytical framework was provided by the topics of interest covered during the interview. This enabled patterns of recurring responses similar in nature to be detected (Patton, 2002). Responses associated with each topic, for example questions about the meaning of sustainability, understanding of the term EfS and family influence were clustered together in a word document. This enabled a preliminary analysis of the topics of interest. Nonetheless the treatment of the data in this manner was soon discarded as I did not want the topics of interest informing the creation of themes. I wished for the codes and themes to be drawn inductively from the data set (Charmaz, 2006). Therefore all the transcripts were read again and another system of coding occurred. This involved assigning descriptive labels to a section of the transcript, sometimes against a word, sentence or large paragraph.

Throughout the process of generating initial codes, questions were asked such as: “What is the participant saying?” (Green et al., 2007, p. 546). Notes were made in the margins of the
transcripts and a label assigned to a word, sentence or body of text which correlated to a code. Krathwohl (2009, p. 337) states that “memos capture inferences about the concepts and dimensions underlying the codes”. During coding and analysis, memoing occurred alongside (Charmaz, 2006). Highlighter pens were useful to indicate potential patterns. As a result of working systematically through the whole data set, a long list of codes was created (see Appendix 6). I made sure to code for any anomalies occurring in transcripts as it is important to “retain accounts which depart from the dominant story in the analysis” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89).

When gaps were found during coding of the data, the iterative process of reverting to data gathering began again (Krathwohl, 2009); it was a constant cyclical process. An advantage of transcribing the recorded interviews as soon as possible was the ability to apply initial codes to subsequent empirical material. Kvale (1996) advises it is important to consider not only what is said, but also ‘read between the lines’, so notes were made of what was not said. I paid attention to silence or the absence of speaking during the interview, as according to (van Manen, 1997) this may be a way of finding the taken-for-granted or the self-evident.

**Phase 3: Searching for themes**

Following initial coding, the study moved to searching for possible links between codes (Ezzy, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The process of analysis in qualitative research is basically one of data reduction (Krathwohl, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994) and the creation of categories between the codes is a first step towards this (Punch, 2005). However, I was mindful not to be too reductive and risk the data becoming ‘flattened’. In qualitative analysis it is important not to “lose information by stripping the data from its context” (Punch, 2005, p. 198). All the transcripts were re-read for context and meaning to ensure the academic’s voice was present and as clear as possible. Throughout analysis, a continuous loop of data collection, coding and theming took place (Krathwohl, 2009).

**Phase 4: Reviewing themes**

Analysis is more than identifying themes; it necessitates a deeper process of linking the themes and identifying correlations, and uncovering what this means (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Essentially I was looking at how different codes could be collapsed or grouped together to form an overarching theme. Sometimes it involved unpacking a single code further where it eventually formed a theme in its own right. Throughout the analysis systematic and constant
making of comparisons to garner themes and identify abstract concepts took place (Punch, 2005). Guided by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 91), when reviewing the themes, I aimed for data within themes to “cohere together meaningfully” as well as have “clear and identifiable distinctions between themes”. Knowing when to stop coding and theming is a matter of individual judgement as it is a process that “could go on *ad infinitum*” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92). Coding ceased when it was believed my coding framework “fit the data well” and nothing substantial was being added (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92).

**Phase 5: Defining and naming themes**

Next it was important for themes to be defined and refined. This process involved capturing the “essence” of what each theme represents (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It requires a moving beyond mere *description* of a range of themes to ideally an *interpretation* of the issues under investigation (Green et al., 2007, p. 549). This means clearly identifying a number of aspects: what the theme is saying about the phenomena under investigation; how the themes fit into the overall story being told in relation to the research objectives; and how the themes sit with the theoretical concepts relevant to the study (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Green et al., 2007). Questions were asked such as: “What does this theme mean? What are the assumptions underpinning it? What are the implications of this theme? What conditions are likely to have given rise to it? Why do people talk about this thing in this particular way (as opposed to other ways)” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 94). By conceptualising and explaining the data in this way, a higher and final level of abstraction was possible (Punch, 2005). The interpretations of the findings were linked back to the literature to not only ascertain existing theoretical underpinnings, but also build on theory in the published literature and where possible, offer new insights (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

**Phase 6: Producing the report**

The final phase is the culmination of the analysis process and the writing-up of the research findings. This stage signifies ultimate data reduction as the final data is abstracted into the final narrated discussion section of the thesis (Krathwohl, 2009). In other words, the thesis tells the story of my data supported by sufficient evidence of the themes in the form of participant quotes. The aim was “to be a rich narrative that goes beyond description of the data and make an argument in relation to your research objectives” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). The themes presented formed the basis for the building of a tentative conceptual theory about sustainability.
education in tourism higher education which was presented as an ideal sustainability educational model for Tourism, Hospitality and Events Higher Education.

3.5.4 Trustworthiness

A qualitative research design needs to be open and flexible (Patton, 2002) and interpretations are always somewhat uncertain and open-end, too (Ezzy, 2002). This raises a common concern amongst positivists that qualitative research lacks ‘rigour’. To begin with, there is no single right way to do qualitative data analysis (Punch, 2005). Multiple interpretations of the data are possible as other researchers looking at the same data may arrive at different themes (Bryman, 2008). However, the issue of multiple interpretations is considered acceptable for interpretive, qualitative research (Bryman, 2008), although it remains problematic for people who want to establish generalisations across a given population (Ezzy, 2002).

Ongoing debate in the literature indicate some people still approach qualitative research in a positivistic style, replete with concern about ‘generalizability’, ‘triangulation’, ‘coding’ and ‘bias’ that is associated with a positivist paradigm of research (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). An interpretive study can never make claims to objectivity, but as Patton (2002, p. 575) notes, it can nonetheless make claim to “being balanced, fair and conscientious in taking account of multiple perspectives, multiple interests, and multiple realities”. Both positivist and interpretive paradigms are concerned with the issue of whether the research results produced are credible, believable and authentic (Creswell, 2007). In the positivist sciences, ‘validity’, ‘reliability’ and ‘generalisability’ have been called the ‘holy trinity’ (Kvale, 1996). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), validity is traditionally understood to refer to the correctness or precision of research; reliability is generally understood to concern the replicability of research findings and whether they would be repeated if another study, using the same or similar methods, was undertaken; and ‘generalisability’ is concerned whether the findings can relate and transfer back to the wider population. However, some qualitative researchers criticise the use of the terms ‘validity’, ‘reliability’ and ‘generalisability’ in qualitative research, arguing that qualitative research has its own procedures and processes for judging and attaining quality research (Kvale, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2002). Bryman (2008) and Guba and Lincoln (1994) offer the alternative terms of trustworthiness and authenticity.
‘Generalisability’ is a claim most qualitative researchers do not seek anyway since they often deal with small sample sizes (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Often the selection of a smaller sample is precisely what has motivated a researcher to undertake the research in the first place; seeking depth rather than breadth of understanding (Merriam, 2002). This research was not trying to identify one set of results (i.e. one true reality) that can be made ‘generalisable’ across a larger population, nor achieve outside verification of my analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The aim of my study was to investigate a particular group of tourism academics rather than tourism academics at large. The consideration of ‘generalisability’ in these circumstances was therefore not relevant or seen as a limitation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The reader will judge the merit of the work by the ‘rigour’ of the study on the basis of rich/thick descriptions (Ponterotto, 2005). It would be beneficial to seek consensus from another researcher on the themes identified, but as this research formed an individual PhD study this member check option was not possible.

‘Triangulation’ is associated more with quantitative studies (Bryman, 2008), but it can be employed in qualitative studies as a way to cross reference findings using two or more methods, multiple investigators or multiple theoretical perspectives (Merriam, 2002). In this study, findings from two sources of data (online curricula documents and interview transcripts) and two data collection methods (document content analysis and interviews) were cross referenced to authenticate emerging findings.

Attention was given to sampling for the in-depth interviews. The study purposefully sought variation and diversity in sample selection to allow a greater range of application of the findings. The sample considered the following: approximate same number of males and females; a mix of age range; full range of academic titles; representation from multiple universities across Australia; differing levels of teaching experience; mix of participants with industry experience as a well as pure academic career; and a mix of hospitality, events and tourism expertise. It was considered the final sample of 31 participants allowed for and opened up a range of realities and perspectives.

Member checking is a recognised technique to help appease the positivist’s pursuit for ‘rigour’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It can involve returning data and tentative interpretations to the people from whom they were derived and asking if they were acceptable (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). In this study, the transcribed interviews were sent back to participants...
for member checking and verify the transcripts were an accurate representation of what was said in the interview. Many participants took time to annotate their transcript, correcting errors and offered further insights either voluntarily or where I had requested clarification.

It was important to be open and transparent about the process of analysis and interpretation. Care was taken to assemble a list of codes and categories during the interpretation process. The codes for the content analysis and interviews are located in Appendix 2 and Appendix 6 of the thesis.

Using rich, thick descriptions is an appropriate strategy for promoting trustworthiness in a qualitative study (Merriam, 2002). Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 125) state that “the description must specify everything that a reader may need to know in order to understand the findings (findings are NOT part of the thick description)”. Therefore the intention was to provide “enough description to contextualize the study such that readers are able to determine the extent to which their situation matches this research context, and hence, whether the findings can be transferred” (Merriam, 2002, p. 31). Thus ‘thick descriptions’ were provided within the analysis and discussion of study findings. This entailed providing quotes to support points made and explaining it within its context, so that it allows more meaning to an outside reader (Luhrmann, 2001; Merriam, 2002). Furthermore, the decision to use manual coding as opposed to a computer assisted program for coding and analysis ensured I remained connected to the context of the data. This method of coding strengthened the integrity of portraying participants’ perceptions and understandings (Silverman, 2010).

Reflexivity considers the researcher’s position and is a strategy for promoting trustworthiness in this qualitative research (Creswell, 2003). It was important to make explicit my philosophical position with regard to ontology and epistemology. A critical self-reflection regarding my assumptions, world view, ‘bias’ and relationship to the study which may affect the investigation was required. Therefore, earlier in this methodology chapter, a self-reflexive text was provided to explicate my positioning in this study. The piece included information about insights, decisions and justification for decisions that were made throughout the research process. A useful tool has been the keeping of a journal where I recorded thoughts and reflected about all aspects of my PhD journey.
3.5.5 Ethical Considerations

With regard to ethical consideration regarding the content analysis, the decision was made to identify the institutes in the thesis and academic publications. Informed consent is not required for data collected from the public domain. There is no conflict of confidentiality since the information pertaining to the documents collected for the content analysis is publicly available on the Internet.

Prior to contacting potential participants and commencing the interview data collection, ethics approval was successfully gained from Southern Cross University’s Ethics Committee: Approval Number ECN-13-011. Participants who agreed to be interviewed were provided with the following documents before the interview:

1) Participant invitation and information sheet (See Appendix 3)
This document introduced myself as researcher and outlined the nature of the research. The invitation was personalised as much as possible, especially if I was acquainted with the academic. Also I privileged the potential participants by making it clear they were contacted because of their passion or interest in curriculum and sustainability and mentioning what they might get out of the study too.

2) Consent form (See Appendix 4)
This document enabled participants to agree to informed consent. It outlined the protocols of confidentiality, security and recording.

Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity was a key ethical concern in the interview stage of the study. All participants were required to sign a confidentiality form, demonstrating their consent to partake in a recorded interview and agree to allow direct quotes from their conversation to be included in the thesis or future publications. Since my participants were academics, many understood the importance of this requirement as they abided by similar processes in their own research. A bit of prompting was required to return the signed form and for those who forgot, spare form was on hand which was duly signed prior to the interview starting. Unfortunately, one academic interviewed via Skype still forgot. The recoding of this interview turned out fairly poor and parts could not be deciphered so I made the decision to forgo using direct quotations and used this data for general context only.
During the in-depth interviews, care was taken on my part to listen attentively to the academic and provide an environment where they could relax and open up. Protection of the participant’s anonymity was always reaffirmed at the beginning of the interview to give them confidence to speak freely about any issue and concern. Overall there were no particularly sensitive issues discussed.

However, on a couple of occasions potentially sensitive and confidential matters were revealed, resulting in the responsibility of handling this information with acute concealment. In one interview I sensed the participant was beginning to hesitate and look uncomfortable with what they wanted to say, so I offered to turn off the tape recorder. This immediately alleviated the participant’s discomfort who continued to talk freely. At the academic’s request, the tape recorder was later switched back on. With the participant’s consent, this information was only used to provide general context to their overall responses in the interview. Another academic later requested reassurance of anonymity: ‘I assume you are not going to include information that would identify me (such as my PhD thesis topic) in your thesis? Another asked: ‘can you delete the controversial parts of our conversation – those [party] were very private work related matters which I shouldn’t really have shared with you! So they should be deleted’. These are ethical issues we grapple with as researchers, especially when people are talking about radical pedagogy or sustainability or things wrong with their institution. They are serious matters and participants need to be protected as their comments could potentially affect their careers.

3.5.6 Limitations

Researchers need to consider potential limitations associated with their studies (Patton, 2002). Choice of methodology and methods is commonly cited as a limitation. A possible concern for empirical studies using interview data is they rely upon self-reported accounts (Huber & Power, 1985) which may be influenced by the participant’s view of what the researcher might want to hear (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). A potential issue in this study is the participants may have tried to guess what understanding of sustainability they think they ‘should’ report and embellish the reference to sustainability principles when explaining how they translate sustainability into their teaching practice. In other words, as an interpretive researcher I accepted that what the teachers reported was what they chose to report as ‘true’. There is a possibility that participants did not want to appear ignorant of the topic or were embarrassed about revealing their inner beliefs (Bryman & Cassell, 2006). This potential scenario was alleviated by creating a non-threatening or judgemental atmosphere in the interview which allowed the participant to express what they
personally believed and understood from their worldview. I emphasised that all perspectives were valid and would be reported (Jennings, 2005).

Arguably the issue surrounding participant recall is not just a limitation with interviews but also applies to survey and questionnaire techniques. A solution could have been to use participant observation in conjunction with in-depth interviews to observe and analyse the participants’ understanding of sustainability by witnessing their teaching of sustainability concept to students. However, my aim was not to pursue a naturalistic inquiry of tourism teaching practice in the form of an ethnographic exploration (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Prior to the set interview date I informed all participants they could bring a sample of their teaching material to the interview if they wished to talk about it. Only one participant did this. I individually sent each academic who participated a thank you email and invited them again to send any teaching documents they were willing to share. Eight academics sent a sample which ranged from: de-identified student assessments; subject guide; assessment details; and lecture slides. I considered there to be an insufficient number and depth of samples to be able to draw conclusions and discern notable theme/s. The decision was made to use this teaching material as a way of building context. However, I recognise the omission of this level of information this teaching material potentially could provide formed a limitation to my study.

Another possible limitation was the sample selection. The study focused only on tourism teachers who had some interest in and/or experience with teaching sustainability. Data was not sought from a general sample of tourism teachers and so the findings will be limited to the perceptions of those who have explicit connections to sustainability and participated in this interview. Also, in order to assure anonymity, information about each academic was removed. The loss of information, such as level of career and courses taught, reduced the level of contextual understanding. Therefore, no comparisons can be made with other teachers who have not explicitly expressed interest or experience with sustainability, or are located in universities in other parts of the world. However, as discussed earlier around issues of trustworthiness, and in line with the interpretive paradigm, this study did not seek ‘generalisability’ across the general population of tourism academics.
3.6 Summary

This chapter has provided a detailed account of the methodological and data collection processes chosen to answer the broad questions posed by this study. Overall my aim was to explore the presence and support for sustainability education in tourism higher education in Australia. To begin, the chapter outlined the philosophical considerations guiding this inquiry by explaining my ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions. As the study sought to explore how and why people understand, describe and make meaning of sustainability, it was justified why a qualitative, interpretive approach was employed. When researching within an interpretive, qualitative paradigm it is traditional for the researcher to invoke a reflexive standpoint. Therefore, at the outset, I described my subjective positioning in the study by providing a short reflexive piece.

The chapter discussed the two modes of inquiry used to explore the aims of this study. Firstly, the chapter outlined the web-based content analysis of secondary data undertaken to document the evidence of sustainability education in Australian tourism higher education. The procedures for data collection and analysis were explained including issues of trustworthiness. Ethical considerations and the study’s limitations have been acknowledged. A discussion of the second stage data collection method of in-depth interviewing followed. I discussed how qualitative in-depth interviewing was chosen as this method allowed the personal voice and stories of tourism academics to be uncovered. Since I was not seeking ‘The Truth’ about the meaning of sustainability education, but focused instead on discovering multiple explanations, it was important I sought the experiences of those involved with sustainability education. I detailed the interview procedures undertaken with tourism academics focusing on methods of data collection and analysis. Issues of trustworthiness and ethics were discussed. Finally, study limitations were acknowledged and accompanied by justifications, with possible solutions provided.

The following three chapters will provide the results section of the thesis. Chapter 4 summarises the findings from the content analysis which affords a ‘snapshot’ of the presence of sustainability education within tourism higher education. A discussion of the findings in this chapter proffers inferences for tourism curricula. Chapters 5, and 6 outline the findings from the in-depth interviews by presenting the words of the tourism academics in the form of quotations. Chapter 5 provides a synthesis of what sustainability means to tourism academics and how it is embodied in their lives and experiences. Chapter 6 reveals how tourism academics
incorporate sustainability in their learning and teaching. Throughout Chapter 5 and 6 the challenges and opportunities in educating for sustainability in tourism higher education are outlined. Following the results section of the thesis, the findings are linked back to the literature and discussed in Chapter 7 where the overall implications for sustainability education in tourism higher education are laid out and the contribution this thesis makes.
Chapter 4: Stage 1 Findings: Sustainability in the Curriculum

4.1 Introduction

The first research objective for this study was to document the evidence of and support for sustainability education in Australian higher education tourism. This chapter presents the findings from the website content analysis of all TH&E undergraduate programs in Australia. As described in Chapter 3, the analysis examined the use of the terms ‘sustainable’ and ‘sustainability’ as well as other sustainability-related terms using the three sustainable perspectives (sociocultural, environmental and economic) from the United Nations’ DESD International Implementation Scheme of 2006 (UNESCO, 2006). The content analysis was undertaken in the first teaching semester of 2013 and therefore the data captured only reflects the situation at that time. It was necessary to draw a discrete yet arbitrary chronological boundary for data capture, but I acknowledge that programs and subjects may have been updated and changed during the writing and submission of the thesis.

The content analysis of curriculum documents involved two levels of interpretation; the program/subject title and the program/subject description. The first section of the chapter shows how sustainability is located in the 68 degree titles and descriptions and then section two examines the presence of sustainability in the 682 subject titles and descriptions. Next, the use of other sustainability perspectives in the title and description at both degree and subject level are analysed and presented in section three. Finally section four shows how EfS skills, often referred to as ‘capacity building’ skills, are incorporated in the degree and subject descriptions.

4.2 Sustainability in Degree Title and Description

The number of TH&E bachelor degrees on offer in Australia universities has recently fluctuated. Since the 2010 review undertaken by Dredge et al. (2012b), five universities had withdrawn or reduced their TH&E degree offerings. Conversely, four universities released new TH&E degree programs for the start of 2013. Other TH&E degrees are currently under review. During the data capture dates for this study, the total number of degrees on offer numbered 68 tourism, hospitality and events programs titles and descriptors. Figure 4.1 shows the most common degree type was tourism, accounting for a third (34 percent) of the 68 degree programs
available. Next was a combination of tourism and hospitality in the degree title at 19 percent, closely followed by just hospitality/hotel accounting for 18 percent of the degrees. Of note however, when combining all the degrees which have more than one type in the title, a combination of tourism and/or hospitality and/or/events, this accounted for 32 percent of the total degree type. Degrees with applied science-adventure ecotourism in the title represented 3 percent of the sample. Another feature was most of the degrees had TH&E as a major in the title as opposed to a separately named TH&E title.

Figure 4.1: Types of TH&E Bachelor Degree Programs

Most of the TH&E degrees (91 percent) were situated within a business faculty or school. The exceptions were four degrees within social science/arts faculties and two in the environmental sciences. A few programs (15 percent) incorporated or gave credit for a TAFE or equivalent TH&E advanced diploma or diploma towards their bachelor degree.

Of the 68 TH&E degrees, only two included the word ‘sustainable’ or ‘sustainability’ within the full degree title. These were the Bachelor of Sustainable Tourism Management at Deakin University (which included a TAFE Diploma of Sustainability) and the Bachelor of Business (Sustainable Tourism Management) at Griffith University. The majority of TH&E degree names (84 percent) included the words ‘business’, ‘management’, ‘commerce’, ‘international’ or a combination of these. Five degrees used terms such as ‘heritage’, ‘nature-based’, ‘cultural’ or ‘ecotourism’ and two degrees were simply called Bachelor of Tourism.
Looking further at the actual degree descriptions that were promoted on university websites, Figure 4.2 shows the majority (63 percent) made no reference to sustainable/ability. Nevertheless, this means just over one third of the 68 degrees (37 percent) did include the terms ‘sustainability’ or ‘sustainable’ in the degree description.

![Figure 4.2: Presence of Sustainable/Sustainability in Degree Description](image)

One example where sustainability dimensions featured prominently in the degree description was University of Western Sydney’s description of its Bachelor of Tourism Management:

*The innovative Bachelor of Tourism Management may be for you. As one of the few tourism degrees in Australia with a social science and management focus, the Bachelor of Tourism Management degree provides you with unique and highly marketable expertise and experience in sustainable development, the cultural basis of tourism and the desirable social contributions of tourism and the tourism industry. The Bachelor of Tourism degree provides an in-depth understanding of the interactions between different aspects of the tourism industry and its natural, social and cultural environments. The degree integrates concern for the host or destination community and the process of tourism planning and development in the context of ecologically sustainable development. The degree considers the relationships between tourism and management systems, mechanisms for regional and community planning and development and the role of tourism as a social, cultural and economic phenomenon* (University of Western Sydney, 2013b).
Another example was the University of Newcastle’s Bachelor of Business (Tourism) degree description which stated: ‘Studying tourism at Newcastle Business School will enable you to gain a critical understanding of the complexity of both the traditional and sustainable tourism industries, as well as economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts of tourism’ (The University of Newcastle, 2013). As a further example of this occurrence, the B. Arts (Tourism & Events Management) offered at Murdoch University does not have anything about sustainability in its title, yet the words ‘Focus on Sustainability’ are prominently written on the degree’s information page and the degree description has an explicit focus on sustainability:

In this unique course, you’ll gain a deep understanding and appreciation of the tourism industry, with a special focus on sustainable events and festivals. You’ll explore the wider tourism system, policy issues, and how cultural, environmental and economic factors impact the tourism industry and events (Murdoch University, 2013).

Also the University of Queensland’s Bachelor of International Hotel & Tourism Management, the description for the Tourism Management Major stated: ‘You will learn about sustainability, ecotourism, visitor behaviour, and the physical, social and economic impacts of tourism’ (The University of Queensland, 2013). Similarly, The Bachelor of International Tourism at Flinders University described that: ‘International Tourism examines the tourism industry from a global perspective, with a triple bottom line approach of economic, environmental and cultural impact, which is underpinned by the principles of sustainability’ (Flinders University, 2013). Examples like these suggest that while sustainability might not be explicitly present per se in the names of degrees, it is a term used more liberally when degrees are described.

### 4.3 Sustainability in TH&E Subjects

Moving from the degree to the subject level, across the 68 degree programs, 682 subjects formed the TH&E curriculum. Figure 4.3 shows the breakdown of the 682 TH&E subjects according to faculty location. 531 subjects (78 percent) were located or offered within a Business faculty. At the time of data collection in 2011 there were two separate Schools of Tourism and Hospitality Management (within a Business faculty); one at Southern Cross University and the other at the University of Queensland, contributing between them 71 subjects (10 percent). The remaining 80 subjects (12 percent) were offered in a social science faculty, arts or environmental science faculty.
Of the total 682 TH&E subjects analysed, most (97 percent) clearly did not use the words sustainable or sustainability in the subject title. For the small number of subjects that did (3 percent), six explicitly used the title ‘Sustainable Tourism’, showing the popularity of this as a broad concept bringing sustainability and tourism together. The remaining 17 subjects had a variety of titles that incorporated ‘sustainable’ or ‘sustainability’ with other concepts like economics, operations, events, technology, and so Table 4.1 shows these subject names in full.

Table 4.1: Subjects with Sustainability/Sustainable in the Title

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Major Theme/s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Tourism (x 6)</td>
<td>Tourism (x 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism and Sustainability</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Tourism Practices</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Practice in Tourism Project</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Tourism Development</td>
<td>Tourism/Management/Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Tourism Management</td>
<td>Tourism/Management/Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Tourism, Leisure and Events</td>
<td>Tourism/ Events/Leisure/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Management/Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing for Sustainability</td>
<td>Management/Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Sustainable Destinations</td>
<td>Management/Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for Sustainable Destinations</td>
<td>Management/Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Operations</td>
<td>Management/Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics for Sustainable Business</td>
<td>Management/Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Events Development</td>
<td>Events/Management/Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Community Events</td>
<td>Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sustainable Hotel Environment</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment, Technology and Sustainability</td>
<td>Environment/Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics, Sustainability and Culture</td>
<td>Ethics/Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating Sustainable Futures</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The counting of the occurrence of other words in the 23 sustainability/sustainable titled subjects, revealed a little over half (52 percent) contained the word ‘tourism’ in the subject title. As shown in Table 4.1, a management/business theme was the next most popular, where management/business terms such as ‘marketing’, ‘planning’ or ‘operations’ were incorporated into the sustainable/sustainability subjects’ title. Reference to ‘event/s’ or ‘hotel’, occurred in four of the subjects. The term ‘environment’ was used in two subject titles and ‘ethics’ and ‘technology’ were used in one subject title each. Another subject included the term ‘futures’.

The presence of sustainability in the subject title was analysed according to the subject’s faculty/school location. Twenty of the 23 sustainable/sustainability subjects were located within a business faculty with three located within a specific T&H school and one in an arts faculty. None were located in either a social science or environmental faculty. Furthermore, as shown in Figure 4.4 when the 23 sustainable/sustainability subjects were grouped by location within degree type (i.e. tourism, events, hospitality/hotel or combination of these), they were positioned more often within a separate named tourism degree or degrees with tourism and events in the degree title. No sustainable/sustainability subjects were located in a separate named events or combined events and hospitality degree, hence these two columns are absent in Figure 4.4.

**Figure 4.4: Location of Sustainable/Sustainability Named Subjects According to Type of Degree**
4.3.1 Subject Description

Looking at subject descriptions, I found the prevalence of the sustainable/sustainability concept was a little higher, but still relatively low. Indeed, of all 682 TH&E subject descriptions, the term ‘sustainable/sustainability’ only featured in 13 percent of those descriptions. Therefore, as shown in Figure 4.5, close to three quarters of subjects (87 percent) made no mention of sustainability in their subject descriptions. Furthermore, five of the 25 universities in this study did not include sustainable/sustainability within the descriptions of any subjects in their degree programs.

![Figure 4.5: Sustainability in the Subject Description](image)

With regard to the 23 subjects identified above with sustainable/sustainability in their title, most included the term sustainable/sustainability in their subject descriptions too. However, four subjects were found to have the term sustainable in the title only, with no further mention of sustainability or sustainability-related concepts included in the subject description. Recurring themes for 50 percent of the 23 sustainable subjects were the impact of tourism (most referred to sociocultural, environmental and economic impacts) together with issues of sustainable tourism development. Four of the 23 sustainable subjects concentrated on environmental conservation and sustainability, with three subjects making ecotourism the subject’s focus.

Comparing the presence of sustainable/sustainability in the subject description by faculty/school location, as shown in Figure 4.6, of the 86 subjects, I found 79 percent were located within a combined business and tourism faculty/school. This greatly outnumbered the subjects located in other faculties containing sustainable/sustainability in their subject description which ranged from 6 to 8 percent.
However, the positioning reversed when comparing the number of subjects that did not include sustainability in the subject description. Out of the 596 subjects not including sustainability in the description, 89 percent were located in the combined business and tourism faculty/school compared with a very small number (3 percent to 4 percent) of subjects located in the other faculties of social science, environmental science and arts. This result shown in Figure 4.7 provides some evidence that business faculties/schools incorporated the term sustainable/sustainability much less in their subject descriptions when compared with social sciences/arts schools, and despite the fact that most TH&E subjects were located in a tourism/business school/faculty.
When the TH&E subjects were grouped according to degree type (i.e. tourism, events, hospitality/hotel or combination of these, or applied science-ecotourism), the number of subjects which contained the term sustainable/sustainability in the subject description were located in a combined tourism, events or hospitality degree. However, on calculating the total subjects as a percentage within each type of degree program, as shown in Table 4.2, the adventure ecotourism degree contained the most said subjects (22 percent), followed closely by a combination of tourism with either events (17 percent) or hospitality (16 percent) or tourism degree (16 percent). As can be seen in Table 4.2, subjects located in an events or hospitality/hotel degrees were least likely to include sustainability (6 percent) and there were zero subjects in a combined hospitality and events degree.

**Figure 4.7: Subject Descriptions NOT Including Sustainable/Sustainability According to Faculty Location**
Table 4.2: Presence of Sustainable/Sustainability in TH&E Subject Description According to Degree Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Type</th>
<th>Number of Subjects</th>
<th>Subjects with Sustainable/ability in Description</th>
<th>Subjects without Sustainable/ability in Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applied Science-Adventure Ecotourism</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5 (22%)</td>
<td>18 (78%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism &amp; Events</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>18 (17%)</td>
<td>88 (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>28 (16%)</td>
<td>143 (84%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism &amp; Hospitality</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>17 (16%)</td>
<td>89 (84%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combo of Tourism, Events and Hospitality</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>8 (6%)</td>
<td>124 (94%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>5 (6%)</td>
<td>34 (94%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality/Hotel</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>5 (6%)</td>
<td>96 (94%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality &amp; Events</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>682</strong></td>
<td><strong>86 (13%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>596 (87%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study revealed a mixed approach towards sustainability across the 68 TH&E programs. To begin with, the wording of the degree’s description did not always reflect the actual existence of sustainability in the degree content. Some degree programs claimed sustainability to be present in degree descriptions, but on further investigation at the subject level, sustainability or sustainability-related concepts were not well incorporated. For example, the description provided for a Bachelor of Tourism Management stated one of the ‘specific themes that run throughout the program is sustainable tourism development.’ However, no subject description referred to sustainability and only three of the 17 subjects had evidence of sustainability-related concepts. Conversely, some degrees did not mention sustainability in their degree information, but then showed a high presence of sustainability across many of its subjects. Also similar to the degree title and description, there was not always a strong correlation between the presence of sustainability or sustainability-related concepts in the unit title and its inclusion within the unit description.
4.4 Other Sustainability Perspectives

Recognising the broader relevance beyond the words ‘sustainable/sustainability’, the study also explored the presence of other sustainability-related perspectives within TH&E curriculum. Thus the analysis deliberately searched for terms aligned with the UNDESD triple-bottom line ‘pillars’ (social, cultural and environmental). As such, the analysis drew on UNESCO’s (2006) educational strategic perspectives, as listed in Table 3.1 in the Methodology Chapter. The UNESCO’s framework structured around the sociocultural, environmental and economic ‘pillars’ provided a guide when searching for sustainability-related words in the degree names, subject titles and descriptions. Since the sustainability education literature considers ‘political’ perspectives (Levy & Zint, 2013; Gough & Scott, 2006) and ‘ethical’ perspectives (Kronlid, & Öhman, 2012. Tribe, 2002a) to be relevant in a sustainability education discourse, the analysis looked for the presence of these two additional dimensions as well.

4.4.1 Degree Title and Description

The majority of TH&E degree names (84 percent) included the words ‘business’, ‘management’, ‘commerce’, ‘international’ or a combination of these. Five degrees used terms such as ‘heritage’, ‘nature-based’, ‘cultural’ or ‘ecotourism’ and two degrees were simply called Bachelor of Tourism. Within the degree descriptions, 11 degree programs (16 percent) were found to include references to these other sustainability-related dimensions. However, the majority of the degree descriptions (84 percent) made no explicit reference to other sustainability perspectives.

One example, the Bachelor of Business (Tourism Management and Marketing) at La Trobe University, stated in its degree description that ‘a triple-bottom line approach is adopted where economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism are examined’ (La Trobe University, 2013). Another degree, Bachelor of Business and Commerce – Hospitality Management at University Western Sydney stated ‘the course develops a critical awareness and understanding of the social, cultural, environmental and economic factors that affect the hospitality industry’ (University of Western Sydney, 2013a). However, this appears to focus on the ramifications to the hospitality industry – the effect social, cultural, environmental and economic factors could have on hospitality rather than on the sustainability-related consequences caused by the industry. Generally it would seem other sustainability perspectives are not well represented in the degree description either.
4.4.2 Subject Title and Description

Extending the above analysis, evidence was sought for sustainability-related dimensions in subject titles. In total, only a few subjects (14 percent) used the terms ‘sociocultural’, ‘environmental’, ‘economic’, ‘political’ or ‘ethical’, or broader associated terms. Some examples of the range of subject titles including other sustainability dimensions are listed in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Sample of Subjects with Other Sustainability Dimensions in the Title

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible Tourism and Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Environment and Society in the Tropics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecotourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coastal and Marine Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoreline Recreation Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Cultures and Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisations, Politics and Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EcoTourism and Resource Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure Tourism and Environmental Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macroeconomics in the Global Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Economics of the Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Cultures &amp; Tourism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other sustainability dimensions were counted within the subject description. Although sustainability or sustainability-related dimensions were not part of the subject title, there was reference in the subject description to one of the four ‘pillars’ (i.e. sociocultural, environmental, economic and political/ethical) in 181 of the total 682 subjects (27 percent). Hence, the majority (73 percent) of TH&E subjects do not include reference to sustainability-related dimensions and as shown in Table 4.4, the titles that did vary considerably.

Table 4.4: Subjects with Other Sustainability Dimensions in the Subject Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Events and Festivals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk, Crisis and Disaster Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourses in Hospitality Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary Issues in Tourism Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues in World Development: “Rich” World, “Poor” World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Transport and Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Interest Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events Management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

119
For the 181 subject descriptions that did feature other sustainability dimensions, as shown in Figure 4.8, the most commonly cited/found pillar (40 percent) related to some aspect of the sociocultural pillar appearing in 136 of the subject descriptions, and often referred to as ‘cultural diversity’. The environmental pillar was the next most common representing 25 percent of the sustainability-related perspectives covered. This was followed by the economic pillar at 14 percent. Less frequently referred to were ethical (8 percent) and political (2 percent). The term ‘impacts’ was noted in 21 subject descriptions (6 percent) with the remaining 18 subjects including a miscellaneous range of other broader terms such as ‘risk’, ‘crisis/disaster’, or ‘innovation’ accounting for 5 percent of other perspectives in the subject descriptions.

![Figure 4.8: The Three Major ‘Pillars’ and Other Sustainability-related Dimensions in the Subject Description](image)

### 4.5 Education for Sustainability Skills

The literature points to a number of ‘capacity building skills’ associated with EfS (Tilbury & Cooke, 2005). They are critical thinking, critical reflection, problem solving, innovation and creativity (Tilbury & Cooke, 2005). The 68 degree TH&E degrees identified in the content analysis were examined for reference to one or more of the capacity building skills. Commonly found were statements claiming that prospective students would gain the necessary skills and knowledge to work in TH&E industries. Victoria University did however include the term ‘sustainable’ in relation to skills acquired in the description of their Bachelor of Business (International Tourism Management) stating: ‘Equip yourself with the skills and knowledge to work in sustainable tourism businesses’ (Victoria University, 2013), although it did not articulate specifically what the skills were. As shown in Table 4.5, only a small number of
degree descriptions included a reference to the skills with the majority (76 percent) making no reference at all. The most commonly cited skill was critical thinking occurring in 15 percent of the degree descriptions. This was followed by problem solving, found in 6 percent of the descriptions and 3 percent referring to creative thinking. Reference to innovation and reflection were found in one degree program each.

Table 4.5: EfS Capacity Building Skills in Degree Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capacity Building Skills for EfS</th>
<th>% of degree descriptions (n=68)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No skills</td>
<td>76 (52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>15 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>6 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative thinking</td>
<td>3 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reference to three capacity building skills was made in two degree programs. One was University of Western Sydney’s Bachelor of Business and Commerce – Hospitality Management, which included critical awareness, problem solving and the term ‘creative’ in its degree description:

*Focusing on business management principles, the course develops a critical awareness and understanding of the social, cultural, environmental and economic factors that affect the hospitality industry. It turns out efficient, creative and entrepreneurial managers who have a commitment to service excellence and the potential to reach senior management positions. This Hospitality Management degree major endows you with strong, real-life problem-solving capacities, the ability to anticipate change, and a commitment to lifelong personal development* (University of Western Sydney, 2013a).

The second was the Bachelor of Tourism and Event Management at the University of South Australia where the degree included the same three capacity building skills of critical thinking, problem solving and creativity. The description stated the degree will:

*Prepare you with a set of skills that are highly sought after by employers, such as: effective problem solving; critical and strategic thinking; communication, and an awareness of the business environment. The Bachelor of Tourism and Event*
Management encourages creativity and offers a global perspective (University of South Australia, 2013).

Two other degree programs: B. Business (Hospitality Management) and B. Business (Event Management), both located at Edith Cowan University, made reference to two capacity building skills in the degree description, which in each case was critical thinking and problem solving.

The 682 subject descriptions identified in the content analysis were also assessed for evidence of capacity building skills, taking into account other iterations of the skills, such as ‘reflective’, ‘critically examines’, ‘innovative’ and so on. Table 4.6 shows the skills were only present in a very small number of subject descriptions (17 percent). Therefore, 83 percent of the TH&E subject descriptions did not refer to one or more of the capacity building skills considered important for EfS.

**Table 4.6: EfS Capacity Building Skills in Subject Descriptions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capacity Building Skills for EfS</th>
<th>% of subject descriptions (n=682)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No skills</td>
<td>83 (563)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>5 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>4 (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>3 (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>3 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative thinking</td>
<td>2 (16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In contrast to the degree descriptions, the skill referred to most often was ‘reflection’ appearing in 5 percent of the subject descriptions. Although it must be noted ‘critical’ reflection was only specifically stated in two of the 32 subject descriptions mentioning reflection. The next most commonly occurring skill was ‘critical thinking’ appearing in 4 percent of the subject descriptions. The least occurring skill was ‘creativity’ found in 2 percent of the subject descriptions. Further, it was noted that critical thinking and reflection were two skills invariably found together in a subject description. Overall it would appear despite the rhetoric of TH&E claiming critical thinking to be present in the degrees, there appears to be poor representation in the subjects.
4.6 Summary

This chapter presented the findings from the web-based content analysis conducted on curricula information. The content analysis identified how sustainability is written in online curricula and what is being taught. It found that overall the terms sustainable/sustainability were not readily used in the degree and subject titles although its presence increased in the degree and subject descriptions. Despite this the overall use of the sustainable/sustainability terms was limited across the TH&E curriculum. With regards to the inclusion of other sustainability perspectives they tended to be included more often. The inclination to incorporate the sociocultural pillar in the curriculum as opposed to the environmental and economic ‘pillars’ was apparent. There was scant evidence of ethical and political perspectives. The analysis found minimal evidence of explicit reference to the capacity building skills both at degree and subject level. The most popular skill in the degree description was critical thinking with little reference to the other skills. The subject descriptions emphasised reflection closely followed by critical thinking as the most commonly occurring capacity building skill.

The content analysis found most TH&E programs were situated within a Business school/faculty suggesting possible ramifications this may have on what was taught and how sustainability was written in online curricula documentation. The analysis has also highlighted the use and importance given to language revealed by a spectrum of approaches to include sustainability dimensions. This ranged from the treatment of sustainability as a stand-alone subject to integration of sustainability dimensions across the programs’ curricula. I am mindful of the conclusions which are possible from this content analysis; assessment of the presence of sustainability in the curriculum space would be enhanced if the subject’s learning objectives, topics and assessment were examined. Incipient themes from the content analysis will be expanded and discussed in detail when a complete discussion of all the study’s findings is provided.

Exploring the TH&E’s teacher’s personal view of sustainability and how sustainability was integrated into teaching practice is the subject of the next two chapters.
Chapter 5: Stage 2 Findings: Sustainability as a Personal Value

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter revealed where sustainability was presented in Australian TH&E degree programs. The second stage of this study sought to go deeper and explore the TH&E educators’ understandings of sustainability (from now on referred to as ‘tourism academics’ or simply ‘academics’ or ‘teachers’ and ‘A1 or A2’ etc. in quotations). This chapter represents the first of two results chapters based on the interview empirical materials with sustainability teachers. It reveals how sustainability was understood by the academics in their personal lives (Objective 2).

To help begin to understand how sustainability concepts, values and beliefs were directly incorporated into academics’ teaching practices and processes (Objective 3), academics were asked how they interacted with sustainability terminology. The analysis revealed a variety of responses ranging from feeling comfortable with the traditional triple bottom line, ‘pillar’ approach of sustainability through to a desire to seek and use other terms to express sustainability concepts.

5.2 Defining Moments

Many academics described significant moments which had influenced their worldview and seeded sustainability principles in their lifestyle choices. One believed her deep connection and understanding for sustainability ‘comes back to my own upbringing and the contact I had with nature’ (A8). A few recalled pivotal memories from childhood:

Even as a young kid before the notion of sustainability was on the radar screen, I was always very conscious of that. I’d be travelling and picking up litter and thinking why are they cutting down all the trees over there, and shouldn’t we be controlling our population. So I think it’s been with me since my mother’s milk basically (A6).
I grew up in a green, clean country. We had days where you are not supposed to do exercise because of high ozone levels. They said “alert, ozone alert”. Well that kind of makes you start thinking (A24).

I remember the geography classes in high school really clearly. We had a topic on deforestation and this was in the 80s. Acid rain and deforestation and I think Chernobyl had happened...I just really remember that point in time of sort of environmental awareness kind of coming in to play (A11).

Several academics could identify key moments in the workplace where they had experienced cognitive dissonance about issues of sustainability:

The pivotal moment was when we had done some work on the impacts of tracks and what type of tracks in the Alpine area would be most suitable. Some politician rang up and said, “I’m coming up in two months, I want to cut a ribbon”. So they basically went and put in probably one of the worst options possible in terms of the long-term. It was the quickest but they just went and did something so that he could open something. That’s when I started thinking, well what’s the point of doing science when you can’t actually translate into actions and communicate it to management and politicians too (A24).

I have always had a very strong green philosophy about the way I want to live my life and the way I want to see development happen. What I saw in North Queensland was consultants making decisions that were just to generate jobs and income and develop land, it was about business. The reason I left was I felt really uncomfortable morally with some of the decisions being made which I felt were not sustainable. The things really important to me was real understanding of what communities want and how they want to live their lives and how they can be sustainable in the future, and moving away from the constant model of economic sustainability as being prioritised over everything else (A8).

When I went in that helicopter it was shocking to see this development here on the Gold Coast... how many people live on water and I was a little sad. We went to David Fleays and there was a little pocket of what the land used to be like. There was a mangrove forest before all this was drained and made into canals for all these houses. Seeing
everybody’s house on the water …all these kind of manufactured canals, ugh! I mean this is luxury living, but is it sustainable? (A7).

I came from this idea of a lovely holiday, but as I got into it [working on an island resort] what really resonated with me was the environmental impacts and I think that is where my leaning towards sustainability has come from and my interest in climate change as well …this sort of pro-growth develop at all costs (A17).

5.3 Lifestyle Values

Sustainability principles were seen to play a role in academics’ everyday life. For many sustainability represented a personal value which underpinned their lifestyle or in some cases permeated their consciousness:

For me personally it’s about the way I live and the way I value… I’m an ethical vegetarian and part of that relates to the issues around sustainability that subscribe to Peter Singer and those sorts of values… I don’t fly. I’m just about to say no to a trip to China. To come over for two hours to do a lecture and one visit, and just the resources that go into flying. So I don’t do a lot of conferences… I’ve got into heaps of fights with environmentalists about flying around the world and saying “do you really rationalise it? Can you use Skype? Are there other ways of doing this?” (A28).

In my own world, my everyday life, it’s about trying to live with, not anti-consumption, but resisting a lot of the mainstream consumption and commercial activities that drive most of the planet’s operations and recognising the power imbalances in those… half the planet doesn’t have enough food (A11).

It’s definitely a value that is embedded and if I don’t do it I am aware I’m not doing it and I’m certainly not happy about it. I think it’s a value more so than anything else that you have or not (A3).

I have my own values about things like consumption and quality and trying to do the right thing. I think that’s key. I can’t say I am brilliant at all of those things but at least I am conscious (A4).
Unconsciously thinking as I live; not wasting stuff, not overusing, making sure water is kept to a minimum. Recycling rather than throwing stuff out, can it go to an op shop, can somebody else use them? I think it is an ethos that I live by (A14).

I’m still probably classed as, I wouldn’t say green...some would call me tight possibly (laughs). I just don’t like any form of wastage. I don’t think I’d even change if I won a wad load of money. I would still not want to waste (A27).

A few academics described their way of thinking was not the norm: ‘We are different. Our household is also much more politically aware than a lot of households’ (A8) and another commented that, ‘life is so much more than what most people see and I am a different thinker’ (A31).

All academics understood sustainability to mean taking some form of action to reduce resource consumption. Minimising electricity and water usage were particularly important. Many had taken steps in their everyday life to reduce their use of non-renewable resources:

We have done the low hanging fruit stuff, change light bulbs, tried to reduce water and electricity use so our utility use comes down. We have got solar panels on the roof and done that side of things. Minimised the watering in the gardens (A1).

As appliances get changed we have tried to change over to better rating ones. We have done the energy audit on the house. We’ve put in water saving devices. Slowly going through this house and through the gardens replacing lawn with things that don’t need watering. So moving to a much more low maintenance, low-water usage garden and try to go organic (A12).

I try and minimise water waste, because overusing water, is a big problem in Perth. So our lawn does not look very good in the summer whereas everyone else’s is bright green (A16).

We have tank water and we use the equivalent of one person in our water use with two children and two adults (A28).
The saving water thing, you get a visitor from overseas and they use all your water, and you go “seriously?” It’s all that kind of stuff. So I’m very aware from that home point of view (A10).

Recycling was regularly cited as a taken for grante d action these days. Others took steps to avoid buying into the consumer culture, or tried to avoid buying packaged goods:

On a day-to-day basis I don’t think I live extremely green, but I do the things like recycle. I don’t know anybody who doesn’t recycle, that’s a given. I will consider things like packaging, like kid’s lunchboxes (A2).

Try and minimise packaging. I know it is a very simple thing, but we always try and take our bags to the shopping centre. Obviously we recycle (A16).

I look to buy quality rather than disposable items. I’m not someone who is into conspicuous consumption. Even though I could afford something better than a Swatch watch, I tend to use them (A4).

Several academics described the choices they made purchasing food. Some were growing their own food:

I buy organic. I only buy within a 200 kilometres radius of Brisbane. I’m in a local fruit and veggie co-op (A8).

Growing our own vegetables and herbs – picking organic, well actually that’s one of those challenges, in terms of organic, sometimes local (A12).

We have veggie gardens and chooks in our suburban block (A28).

Some talked about their decision to cycle to work while others described consciously minimising their car use:

I cycle every day here. I try to persuade my partner to walk as much as she can rather than just using the car (A24).
We shifted house. We lived about 20 kilometres out of the city, which was a very pleasant lifestyle, but we used a lot of petrol driving backwards and forwards (A12).

Sustainability principles guided some academics’ decisions when making holiday plans:

I consider it when holidaying as well...so in terms of, do we really need to fly? (A24).

Last holidays we stayed at home. We figured maybe it’s time to just explore our area and resource wise and cost wise. I think that a sustainable lifestyle is about trying to live in environments where you don’t have to travel as much and particularly air travel. I wrote and did a guest spot for someone, and said “the real eco-tourist stays at home” (A28).

I make choices when I travel. I probably have my eyes open more to things and to how people are being treated. We’ve just been on holiday so it’s very strong in my mind…I’m always aware of how tourism affects the communities, particularly the negative side of it (A2).

**Concern for Intergenerational Equity**

A number of academics thought deeply about the future: ‘I guess the thing to me is how I want the world to be?’ (A13). Care and concern motivated them to adopt sustainable practices:

I have a commitment of leaving the world in a better place and even if it is through transferring and helping people think through ideas and solutions. I care. I care a lot. And I actually think quite a bit about what the world is going to be like for my kids and their kids. It is something I think about regularly (A8).

Since he [grandson] came along I feel like I am running out of time to get my message across. So there’s a sense I’ve actually got to do something about it (A31).

Especially having a six-year-old son, I want him to enjoy the quality of life using the same or similar resources that I enjoy now. It will change but certainly the attempt to not have things erode in a way that are going to be detrimental to my son’s future or my students futures or other people I know (A19).
The idea of leaving a ‘legacy’ was a way some related to sustainability. One academic explained the motivation to undertake environmental restoration work: ‘all relates back to my son. It’s partly a legacy for him’ (A19). Another believed:

For me this [sustainability] is what I believe in. Other people get married and have kids; I don’t have kids, this is my kid. This is my legacy. If I die tomorrow I know that I have done something for the world. And that keeps me happy (A18).

Many academics expressed concern about the state of society and the environment and what they believed to be a lack of real progress towards sustainability:

Unfortunately I feel a bit glass half empty with the idea of sustainability and frustrated that I just don’t see it really happening (A17).

In an environmental sense, no, sustainability in a developed country like Australia, it’s an oxymoron. We live completely unsustainably (A25).

I see all the global poverty and the global conflicts and a lot of them are driven by our unsustainable lifestyles and unsustainable economic growth. For me the deeper meaning of sustainable is scratch the surface and it’s more than just the petrol you are consuming (A25).

We can’t be sustainable. I mean we can try and do what we can to slow things down but in terms of leaving the world for other generations the way we find it, we don’t (A13).

Outside of the classroom I’m a little bit more negative. We’re the representatives of the sort of reformist change generation and look where we are, we are still travelling and using resources the rate we are. I don’t hold out a lot of hope (A28).

One academic thought it was necessary for certain broader social attitudes to change in order to achieve the real meaning they attached to sustainability:

All these reality programs and survivor programs are the worst things that we could be doing to the culture for sustainability. Sustainability is not about me versus you. Sustainability is about cooperation and collaboration, it’s not about competition (A18).
Others had a dimmer view believing only some sort of world crisis would result in sustainability action:

*Particularly Western society and the neoliberal society are going to have to fall over before we change* (A28).

*For things to change to a level where we can be sustainable there needs to be a big catastrophe because I can’t see how we can sustain or change to a huge degree the way we are going at the moment* (A22).

### 5.4 Challenges of “Walking the Talk”

For many academics, a sustainable lifestyle represented a constant balancing act:

*On a day-to-day basis, it’s about the quality of life and balancing the pressures of work, which are very much driven by factors like economy and reputation and efficiency with other aspects of life* (A23).

Despite all good intentions, most faced a variety of challenges to undertake what they conceived sustainable living:

*I regard myself as a moderate sustainable person. Not entirely, when I’m in a rush and leaving the house I just throw all the recycles in the bin and go “screw it; I’ve just cleaned the fridge out”. So every now and again I will make a very rash decision* (A2).

*Like everywhere we fall down on as many things as other people do, but there is an attempt to live a bit more sustainable lifestyle* (A28).

*I try and do as much as I can but am also aware that I could be possibly doing more* (A22).

*We moved to another house and it’s not very environmentally well designed. We’re strapped in the way we can live to be more energy conscious* (A13).
We are sitting in an office that has no insulation and I have electrical heaters that are just not... But then they [the university] have this campaign about turning off the lights and I’m like, “sorry I’m wasting energy with all the heating issues here! The lights are not the issue” (A30).

Holidays in the past were all very much about doing the local thing, backpacking, getting local buses and stuff and not staying in big hotels. It’s a bit different now because with the young children convenience becomes paramount, quite an important factor (A16).

I have a collection of batteries at home, and honestly, I took them to Europe the last time I went home (laughs) because I couldn’t figure out where to take them here (A30).

The issue around flying was a notable challenge, given that as tourism academics, many were active travellers, attended conferences or regularly travelled for work. Concerns were raised about the amount of flying they undertook and the ensuing impact to the environment. Many academics felt guilty and saw it undermining their aspiration to be sustainable travellers:

That’s what makes me a hypocrite to go travelling because I believe it is probably not doing too much good for the world. I have a lot of conflict and dual thoughts about travel. It is a personal battle between trying to do the right thing and resisting the pleasures out there, e.g. air travel! (A13).

I don’t really practice as much as I preach in my personal life. I fly and do all of the things we tell the students as a society we should not be doing but reducing (A17).

I know that I can do as much as I like during the year: save as much water as I like, turn off all the lights switches, buy food with no packaging, buy locally, minimise my waste, compost, I can do all those things, but as soon as I get on a flight back to the UK, it’s all down the drain (A16).

Personally, I am very conscious, but then also I fly a lot. So people are like “how do you reconcile that?” (A30).
Being sustainable is all about using the resources you and not wasting, so I feel guilty every time I fly (A10).

Some academics described how they endeavoured to reduce their carbon footprint accrued from flying by minimising car travel in their everyday life:

*I do what I can to lead a life where my carbon footprint is as small as possible but I still fly ....I try to get public transport to work because the train is more sustainable than driving my car* (A23).

*When I’m actually at home I catch buses and I walk and I cycle or I jog everywhere. I almost don’t ever get in the car if I’m at home so I try to make up for it* (A8).

5.5 Finding the Right Terminology

This section pulls together the 31 academics’ voices around a common interview theme, which was how they felt about the language of ‘sustainability’. Despite describing an understanding of the concept of sustainability, as shown by the reported meanings that were attached to sustainability in the previous section, many appeared to grapple with ‘sustainability’ terminology.

The interviews with tourism academics revealed presents a wide-range of meaning associated with sustainability. An overarching theme was the complexity of and the struggle with the word ‘sustainable’. While no doubt interested and passionate about the philosophy of sustainability, a number avoided using the term ‘sustainable’ or ‘sustainability’. To further this analysis, I put together a full list of the types of meanings and words that were often negatively aligned with sustainability, as shown in Table 5.1.
Table 5.1: Words Associated with ‘Sustainable’

- Appropriated
- Rhetoric
- Green washing
- Meaningless
- Alienating
- Misused
- Usurped
- Overused
- Problematic
- Feel good word
- Decoration
- Slogan
- Dirty word
- Oxymoron
- Superficial
- Buzz word
- Too broad
- Hijacked
- Misunderstood
- A bit passé
- Difficult to reconcile
- Thrown around a lot
- Academic theoretical speak
- Western dominated paradigm

A general feeling of dissatisfaction with sustainability terminology was expressed:

*It’s extremely problematic because it is now just part of the rhetoric and being pumped out left, right and centre. I am very uncomfortable with it* (A8).

*It’s rubbish, because I just think people use it in a very superficial way without actually understanding all the processes that sit behind it* (A25).

*Almost sort of a dirty word, really. It’s not naïve to use it, but it’s almost when you talk about sustainable tourism you feel, oh no, should I put a caveat to that* (A17).

Some described how they avoided using the terminology in their teaching: ‘*I probably teach about sustainability in a way every day without actually using the S word*’ (A5); ‘*definitely it is a buzzword…we probably don’t use the actual word a lot in the lectures. It’s a bit like Harry Potter and not being able to say ‘that’ word*’ (A1).
Despite the term ‘sustainability’ attracting some negativity, several saw the ‘sustainability’ language as a useful organising concept. As one noted, ‘it’s used so widely it’s difficult to start using other terms’ (A23) and others thought:

Even though it may be tokenistic at least it is doing something. Even if we don’t know what we are meeting by sustainability, at least any attempts to move in that direction have got to be better than doing nothing at all (A17).

Everybody knows what it is. What else would I call it, green? Alternate? It’s not a catchword. It’s a word, a real word. We’ve trained people to understand it. So why then turn around and call it a buzzword? (A31).

Whether it’s a light or heavy version of the term sustainability, the fact that people are using the word and trying to understand it is a good thing (A28).

One academic bemoaned the preoccupation and time wasted defining sustainability:

A lot of people would spend every meeting discussing the definition. It drove me bored and witless. Who cares what you call it, it’s what we are trying to achieve and are we making any progress on it. I don’t care what people call it so long as we try to make the individual see that they’ve got a role (A26).

Some academics noted the concept of sustainability seemed to have waned in popularity: ‘All trends lose their essence and it has lost a bit of its essence as a result of that’ (A28). Due to misunderstanding and misuse some felt the term ‘sustainable’ was becoming redundant. One academic believed ‘it is a little bit passé now. It got very, very popular as a term and lost its meaning. Is it off the boil now?’ (A10). A few pondered that ‘sustainable’ may evolve:

It [sustainability] will fold into something else in the future. But it has got some good legs for longer. ‘Limits to growth’ was another example. That was a really big buzzword for a long, long time. It transitioned into sustainability in a way. And it will be something else in 30 years probably (A28).
Even if it does shift out of the terminology that’s used we’ll have something else...there’s a lot of focus on the ‘green’ economy, but underneath that is still recognition of the principles of sustainability (A20).

Others were sceptical about the concept of sustainability and pointed to ‘green washing’ and tokenism. One academic who described sustainability as ‘a wicked concept’ added, ‘it promises a lot but it also lets people off the hook too. So a lot of people have picked up on it, like “sustainable tourism”, well...Mmm!’ (A26). Another questioned whether sustainability ‘is really internalised? Is sustainability like multiculturalism? Like, “ah well, that’s good”, but is it really? What does it mean? I mean beyond these Sorry Day or Earth Day. “Well now, we will go back to our own regular life”’ (A7).

The long-held, and what some may refer as the ‘traditionally’ held view of sustainable development, namely the triple bottom line (TBL), was how many academics best made sense of sustainability. Although not always using the language TBL or ‘pillar’, it was clear sociocultural, environmental and economic aspects represented an understanding of sustainability. Several understood sustainability to be about finding ‘balance’ between the three ‘pillars’:

*Sustainability is all about minimising the economic, environmental and social cultural costs and at the same time maximising the environmental, economic and social cultural benefits. So it’s kind of a moving target* (A6).

*The first thing that comes to mind is the environment but at the same time the economic reality and the need for support, that social support, whether it’s from your community or from your community of traveller* (A2).

*I see sustainability as a holistic principle and you can’t divorce environmental and sociocultural and economic. Impact in one generally affects the others. So when you are looking at environmental impacts there’s an economic cost to that and there’s also socio cultural costs to that as well* (A14).

*You need to be able to balance your impact and your involvement with the environment. The environment is really important and when you’re talking about balance you are respectful of the communities in which you live* (A5).
I have a fairly holistic view. So it’s much more than just environmental. It’s much more than just financial. It’s also the social component, which is really important to me. They’re not independent, they’re obviously linked (A24).

Some academics tended to favour one pillar in particular. One chose to describe their understanding of sustainability in economic terms:

There is a cost to it [sustainability]. You throw rubbish down and somebody has got to pick it up. There’s an economic cost. If everybody does the right thing then it’s going to make it a more pleasant world to live in and also have an effect on the cost. Just wasting resources; there is an economic cost to that as well (A14).

Another academic explained why the sociocultural pillar prevailed in their worldview:

I would always privilege people over the environment because they are valuable to me...because my value system has always been a humanistic one (A25).

However, some academics believed the ‘environmental one is probably the most profound, the loudest (A8). For them, the environmental pillar was imperative:

I like the capitals approach. We have got to think about the impacts across a range of different dimensions of community and individual well-being but particularly taking the stronger line that the natural capital can’t actually be replaced by the others. So that sits aside from the others. You can make trade-offs amongst the others but you can’t trade-off the natural capital (A12).

Sustainability is really about focusing on the alternatives to just the economic bottom line. So, sociocultural aspects of society, human rights. But also what is really important is the environmental side of things, the biological, ecological, which I think gets left off (A11).

Others, however, went further and expressed sustainability differently to the traditional TBL approach, appearing to extend the meaning to other concepts. A small number of academics talked about preferring other terminology indicating there was a range of sustainability
dimensions in use. Notably, some academics considered the concept of ‘resilience’ was more meaningful than ‘sustainability’. One commented that: ‘Resilience actually gives us an underpinning goal...so for me resilience is actually more meaningful than sustainability’ (A8). Others thought the sustainability term was old-fashioned. One academic talked about how they were ‘moving on from that [TBL] because as my colleague is teaching me, it has started to become a bit dated and it’s more about the social ecological systems approach’ (A16). Another believed the choice of terminology was not as critical as ‘the concept and the paradigm and values system that sits behind it, that’s important’ (A23).

5.6 Summary

This chapter has presented the first section of interpretations arising from analysis of the interviews with sustainable tourism academics. It described how the group of academics personally connected with sustainability in their everyday lives. A number of themes emerged from the participants’ own words and experiences: defining moments which had initiated sustainability awareness and action; sustainability as a lifestyle value with concern for the future; and challenges of sustainable living, with a notable guilt about flying.

It then described how participants viewed the language of sustainability. Generally there was merit seen in use of the concept, but a noted struggle with the terms sustainable/sustainability suggesting a move from viewing sustainability in a traditional way to a preference for alternative concepts.

In the following Chapter 6, Objectives 3 and 4 of the research will be explored by providing a synthesis of how this group of tourism academics incorporated sustainability into their teaching practice, and the opportunities and challenges they encountered.
Chapter 6: Stage 2 Findings: Sustainability in the Classroom

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented findings which addressed Objective 2 of the thesis, which was to explore what the concept of sustainability means to tourism academics, in terms of how they understand it and why it is important in their everyday lives. Going beyond this and towards the classroom, this chapter provides a rich insight into the way in which the tourism academics who participated in this study, incorporated the concept of sustainability in their teaching practices (Objective 3). An inductive approach to analysis of the tourism academic words and experiences, revealed three broad themes, namely: sustainability values as an underpinning teaching philosophy; conflicting paradigms of approach to teaching sustainability; and desire to question mainstream business as usual thinking using critical approaches (Appendix 6). The identified opportunities and challenges in educating for sustainability in tourism higher education (Objective 4) voiced by the academics, are woven within the chapter as well. Notable challenges centred on the constraints of mode of delivery, the absence of overarching institutional support, and impacts of a diverse and disengaged student cohort.

6.1.1 Lack of Familiarity with ‘EfS’

Although all the academics were aware one of the criteria to be a potential participant required some experience with teaching sustainability they were asked what the ‘a priori’ theme ‘education for sustainability/EfS’ meant to them. Most academics (19 out of the 31) admitted to not having heard of the concept of EfS. Three academics were vaguely aware of the term and nine indicated a familiarity with the concept. Common responses were: ‘I don’t know what the words mean’ (A10); ‘I haven’t really looked into that’ (A22) or ‘It’s just not something I was necessarily aware of’ (A21).

Similar to defining sustainable/sustainability, some academics appeared to wrestle with the term EfS and found it a limiting term, as seen by this academic’s reaction:
I struggle with this [EfS] because my immediate reaction is it’s about educating students about the triple bottom line. And I know it needs to be much more than that. I find it’s that word sustainability which is quite alienating to me (A8).

Instead these academics preferred to use alternative concepts. Several substituted ‘sustainable’ and ‘sustainability’ with the concept of ‘values’:

Three criteria are through all my subjects. I teach about needs, values and criteria. And that is the fundamental for me (A28).

If you talk about values-based education, I’m in it, a hundred percent. And one of those values is sustainability (A8).

The few academics who were familiar with ‘EfS’ felt the concept had merit:

To me it’s just a catchphrase that encapsulates all those things that I was just talking about, sociocultural, environmental, economic, triple bottom line, alternative ways of thinking, recognising power shifts, power differences, gender differences and the destruction of the planet of course (A11).

The feeling was EfS allowed all students, regardless of discipline, to be exposed to sustainability knowledge and skills: ‘It’s not just privileged information for people doing an environmental science degree. It’s all about how to get it into the business curriculum’ (A26).

Some academics had a thorough understanding of the EfS term and could describe the nuances in the sustainability education discourse:

We are looking at two approaches...at education ‘about’ sustainability but we are increasingly embracing education’ for’ sustainability, which is, what are the skills that students will need to respond to sustainability issues? (A12).

However, some academics considered EfS to be yet another jargon term which they struggled to keep abreast of: ‘The catch is there are so many programs around these days that you just can’t keep up with everything’ (A16). Another did not ‘disagree with the term’ but questioned
me by asking: ‘interesting, is it a new term? Because it’s new to my hearing. Is it a term that needs to become part of the vernacular so that we actually start to be more aware of it?’ (A15).

Even though EfS was ‘not something that came up’ (A16), some academics believed they were probably educating for sustainability anyway as the concept naturally aligned with their personal ethos:

*I suspect I do it without knowing. I am sure I have been doing that all along, but I’ve never had any formal teaching training or educational training* (A6).

*I haven’t gone “ooh I need to do this because the UN said to” I’ve done it [EfS] because I believe in it and I believe that it is important that the students understand it* (A16).

Some academics questioned the need for another term, given that sustainability was inherent in everything they did:

*I guess it’s hard for me because I just think it’s a given. Do we need a label? Why can’t we just do* (A31).

*Maybe we don’t need the “for sustainability” on the end because all education will be for sustainability. We will just take that for granted. That wouldn’t be a bad thing* (A21).

Others believed sustainability should be an integral part of higher education:

*Something a University adopts as one of its core values; seen in teaching, the way the campus is built, what materials they use when they are doing new buildings, what they’re doing in terms of the local community* (A22).

*Just become part of the philosophy behind teaching. You can see here at [name of university] the fact it [sustainability] is going to be part of the way we educate our students* (A14).

*It should be there. It used to be hippie, extreme, greenie, now it is mainstream and we are all expected to do it, so therefore why not teach about it. It is taught in primary and secondary school; part of their curriculum* (A10).
6.2 Teaching to Your Values

Some academics’ responses regarded sustainability as an underpinning teaching philosophy. This broad theme of underlying sustainability philosophy was unpacked further and explored under two sub-themes to explain why and how tourism academics incorporated the concept of sustainability into their teaching practices. Firstly, the analysis found an academic’s personal sustainability philosophy, revealed in the previous chapter, underpinned and was reflected in how they perceived their role as teacher. Secondly, a real commitment by the university/school/faculty was considered important to integrate sustainability dimensions in the curriculum.

The analysis of the academics’ words and experiences revealed their personal sustainability philosophy was reflected in their teaching practice. One commented ‘I don’t think I could turn it off because it is who I am. You bring your life experience when you teach as you do’ (A31). Another academic thought the way they ‘teach reflects the way I was brought up or how I think about things so my students might think about that and that’s kind of a bit scary to think that isn’t it’ (A17). Several described experiences which had founded their commitment to teaching sustainability:

I really wanted to go and save whales. I was never going to be an academic. I was going off to save the environment. The environment was a really big part of our lives so that’s why I did marine science; I was going off down that path. Then I met Steve Irwin and he said to me if I really wanted an impact I should get into education so that’s what I have ended up doing (A31).

The clarity of the relationship between nature and growth is something that I have had many transformational experiences in myself and so I love to give my students those sorts of experiences (A8).

A common thread among some academics was they could not envisage teaching curricula that did not have sustainability content. Sustainability was ‘a philosophy underlying things’ (A21):

It doesn’t matter what course I teach. I always talk about sustainability (A18).
It’s not just because it’s a theory I’ve got to teach, it’s because it’s a principle I believe in (A21).

Sustainability is something that I believe should be inherently within everything (A15).

I wouldn’t teach anything that wasn’t. I am happy to present other points of view, but certainly your philosophy comes through. I’m not the generation…I’m a typical baby boomer, “sorry I missed Woodstock and my car broke down when I was trying to get to Nimbin” and that’s reflected you know (A29).

I can’t imagine someone saying to me “I couldn’t fit sustainability into any course”. I don’t understand how you couldn’t. I mean, our accounting guys are doing it! (A31).

There was general agreement that when a person has sustainability as a core value it naturally pervades that person’s teaching:

If somebody has an interest and is a champion, or by the way they operate its part of their consciousness, it will come through automatically (A24).

[It’s my] underlying belief system, whether they call it sustainability or something else, I probably would still be doing it. It isn’t because it’s a theory I’ve got to teach, it’s because it’s a principle I believe in (A21).

I’m absolutely passionate about this course. I think about it the whole year because it’s really me and my values are embodied in this course (A25).

Some academics believed that teaching sustainability benefited from having agency and ownership with teaching. For one academic, having a sense of agency provided them with ‘that autonomy to allow you to teach true to your own values and beliefs system’ (A25). Another felt that ‘flexibility’ allowed them to teach in the desired manner which ‘gave a lot of sustainability and I enjoyed that. It was a part of me’ (A27). To maximise the opportunities for sustainability teaching, one academic thought:

As an academic and a teacher you have to have that ownership and that agency to be able to influence and teach the way you want and teach the content that you want. So
from a management point of view you’ve got to let all those different skills of your staff be played out (A11).

Others, although personally committed to sustainability, conceded that the concept of sustainability may have limited scope in some parts of the curriculum:

Within a degree you can have component parts of that [sustainability]… Some subjects might have some of that and some might not. I recognise that in accounting there’s probably not that scope (A11).

We don’t all teach it because we might not have the ability or your course may not open itself up to that (A31).

One academic believed teaching sustainability was an ongoing practice of learning and development:

A journey. There is no straight line to sustainability. I’m still “aha-ing.” My approach to teaching is still under construction and as the students change and the situations change, so do I (A18).

Most academics understood sustainability to be a values-laden topic and therefore sometimes difficult to teach: ‘I try and keep it as broad as possible. Whether I do a good job I’m not sure, but it is such a value-laden personal construct of what you think sustainability is’ (A17). It was important for several academics to be transparent about their values at the beginning of the teaching session:

I make it very clear where I am, where I stand and what I believe (A12).

Because of my values I always in week one explain my background, what my teaching values are and why the course content is the way it is (A8).

Upfront, first lecture; it’s about my own values, beliefs and assumptions (A11)

I use a slide with photos of my life which speak for themselves in terms of where I stand…me on a bicycle, family, at protests, that sort of thing (A24).
Values-based teaching is absolutely essential because if you don’t declare and make transparent your values upfront, students because they are smart and critical will think “they are just trying to indoctrinate me”. No I’m not trying to indoctrinate you, this is where I’m coming from and you have the right to engage with me. So making that transparent at the very beginning makes them more accepting and more able to engage (A8).

Others described how they felt it important to engage students with their own values: ‘I get the students to work through their values, beliefs and assumptions’ (A11) and another would tell his students: ‘I’m interested in teaching about your values and how you value and how you see and perceive the world’ (A28). This lecturer’s outlook to teaching sustainability was always framed by a values approach:

It’s about whose values are we talking about? Whose needs are we dealing with? And who put the criteria in place to try and make that work? Those three things are fundamental to me to teach to students (A28).

In contrast, however, some academics thought it important to be seen as having neutral views or ‘try to be as impartial as possible’ (A23) and ‘as objective as I can’ (A2). Several were conscious about not wanting to ‘evangelise or push a particular agenda’ (A14) and another was ‘not that comfortable in general about expressing my beliefs’ (A7). Teaching sustainability as understood by these academics, therefore, involved presenting others’ views and avoiding disclosing their own position:

If I try to infuse the discussion or debate with my own values and perspectives then that presents a rather biased perspective I prefer to say to the students, “here are the problems and challenges, what do you think some of the solutions are?” Rather than imposing my own value system on them (A23).

Authentic Role Model and Change Agent

Some of the academics shared a number of characteristics which explained what teaching sustainability meant to them. Three dominant features were apparent when teaching: the role of values; being an authentic role model; and the desire to make a difference. To begin with, a
connection was apparent between making clear one’s own personal view about sustainability and looking authentic to students: ‘Students can pick up if it is all fake or it doesn’t really ring true’ (A14). One academic felt anyone could theoretically teach sustainability, but pointed to the shortcomings of lack of personal conviction: ‘You can teach it if you don’t believe in it, but I don’t know if the students will believe it as much’ (A20)

Although committed to live a sustainable life, one teacher commented about the burden this had created:

*Sometimes I would like to get into my car and drive home. People check my trolley, what sort of groceries I get. The students will always ask “have you got solar panels, miss? Have you got a hot water unit? Do you ride a bike?” Fortunately I can constantly say “yes”. I would have done that, but now there’s an obligation to do it* (A31).

Believing they were a role model to their students, several teachers felt it important and necessary to take authentic sustainability actions. They were compelled to show students they were attempting to ‘walk the talk’ about sustainable living:

*Definitely it’s important for me to aim to walk the talk and yes, I do think about that regularly. I cycle here every day* (A24).

*I pick up rubbish because if I ran past that and the students saw me I will lose all credibility. Now I do it not only because I want to, but because I want to have an impact with the students as well… I felt I had to put a lot of thought and effort into the car I was going to purchase. These students ask me “what car do you drive, miss?” They ask me every year* (A31).

*When you’re teaching students you have to be able to demonstrate. We start the class by doing our own environmental footprints. And in the first year mine was way bigger than theirs. We had lots of discussion and debate and each year I have been attempting to try and make a lifestyle change that brings it closer. And I’m pleased to say that in 2011, I managed to be less than theirs* (A12).

The desire for teaching to have ‘a real positive influence’ (A31) was also important for some teachers interviewed. Some explicitly regarded their role to be ‘change agent’ and ‘persuasive
communications’ (A12). After their class one teacher felt ‘I’d made a difference in personal lives. With students you touch individual lives’ (A30). Another hoped they ‘contaminated’ their students so ‘then they can go and contaminate other people as well’ (A6). Many echoed these feelings: Another lecturer felt they were ‘making a really substantial contribution. I’ve got my teaching to a point where the students walked away with something meaningful’ (A2): Others described similar goals when teaching sustainability:

I like to think you are making a difference. I sleep better at night thinking that. I hope we have, even if it is a small difference (A20).

If sustainability becomes part of their thinking that is great, I feel like I have done my job (A14).

If I can make a little bit of my own enthusiasm contagious I hope they go away with it (A6).

I definitely feel like I’m having an impact. I still get my graduates contact me and say “I was walking somewhere the other day and I could not walk past this litter because all I could think of was you saying to me “pick it up, pick it up” (A31).

The positive feedback that was received when teaching sustainability was discussed. It was apparent these teachers gained enjoyment and satisfaction to see ‘the light bulb go on for students’ (A20); ‘there’re pretty nice and that’s really what presses all the buttons and why you do it’ (A15). They seemed to draw a great sense of satisfaction from the ‘positive stuff [that] comes out of the evaluations; “one of the best courses ever; it’s opened my eyes” (A8). Typical comments included:

Amazing to see the students attitudes change from week one through to week 12. I just love it, thrive on it (A1).

I teach a lot of different subjects and it is very rare I get that sort of personal warm feedback as often as I do in this subject (A2).

At the very end they are just “we want more of this” (A6).
One teacher relayed how students who entered his class at the beginning said they were there only because: “I’ve got to do it, so I’ll just turn up” but by the end of the subject this lecturer had observed that:

*When they get involved and starting to put things together about the whole unit, the lights are going on. It’s been really great, I’ve had students come up and thank me. I’ve had those expressions of appreciation from students. I’ve even had hugs (A1).*

Some academics thought a deep personal investment and substantial amounts of energy was required when teaching sustainability. One believed this was because ‘*an educator who wants to make a difference is emotionally embedded and invested and means they are generally putting 150% effort into things*’ (A8). Another described their approach to teaching sustainability:

*I have read lots of things on teaching philosophies and for me it is about being passionate about what you are teaching and wanting to get that passion across to the students and just trying to get them engaged, make it interesting and getting them to run it instead of you. So you become a facilitator. You don’t just stand there and tell them stuff, you get them to tell you what they think and then you try and tease that out a bit. It doesn’t always work. It’s bloody tiring. But when it works it’s a hell of a lot of fun (A20).*

### 6.2.1 A Shared Sustainability Teaching Philosophy

The quotes presented in the previous chapter five have noted the academics’ philosophical alignment to sustainability. For the academics interviewed in this study, sustainability was recognised as an important goal for education: ‘*It should be the goal for all higher education*’ (A11) and ‘*part of what you teach students, reading writing and arithmetic and sustainability is in there*’ (A10). Many believed sustainability ought to be a shared philosophy: ‘*something that a university adopts as one of its values*’ (A22), and supported throughout the institution:

*Seen in teaching, the way the campuses are built, what materials they use when they are doing new buildings, what they’re doing in terms of the local community. It would be a university core value (A22).*
Some academics believed their colleagues mirrored similar commitment: ‘All of us teaching in it; it’s our personal philosophy’ (A14) and ‘we’re a bit black and white. For us it’s “what’s the big deal? Get on with it”’ (A31). To be surrounded by like-minded people in the school/faculty was seen as a positive influence to cement an underpinning sustainability philosophy:

All of us are quite passionate about being sustainable and making sure others can (A20).

The underlying thing we all have is we’re passionate about life, passionate about education. I run into my colleagues doing all sorts of cool stuff. It’s maybe why I’m still there and haven’t gone off to do something else (A31).

We are all sort of cut from the same cloth. We’re authentic, different and honest (A6).

One academic described the support evident from the top level down as an important feature which helped garner interest in sustainability across their university: The shared characteristics of those with an underpinning sustainability philosophy was noted in her comment:

Our new university’s focus is sustainability. We all are fundamentally the same. Some of us are more over-the-top than others, but I think we all care about our university and we care about the environment, we care about teaching our students about that…At no level of my work do I ever feel like I’m trying to preach to the Executive Deans, everybody gets it. You don’t have to explain it to them. They get it. We all get it (A31).

In contrast to those academics who reported a sense of shared sustainability philosophy within their school/faculty, a number of other academics talked about a lack of shared culture for sustainability to be a barrier. One felt: ‘the problem is you need staff in all your subjects committed to all these concepts and not all the staff are’ (A13). One academic pointed to the need for support and available time to allow everyone to embed sustainability in the curriculum: ‘I’m not sure if all of them have it because the staff are, either not interested or too overworked’ (A12). Another lecturer compared the positive impact a larger supportive environment had compared to the fractured support they were currently experiencing:
At X University we had a larger team and more people were interested in the topic. There was very much an alignment in personal philosophy and research philosophy, whereas here it is just too disparate (A8).

A notable challenge shared by some participants was the feeling of estrangement with the dominant paradigm of growth and profit associated with the field of business and where most tourism educators were situated. When describing their sense of isolation, several wished they could move to another discipline:

*I don’t fit in. I’m more social science than business; I’m not interested in business. I’m much more interested if we were in an arts faculty or a social science faculty. The right sort of approach is one that is a softer approach and looking at people and social justice. The business faculty is profit focused and hard business (A13).*

*Business schools are very much in that mainstream model of business which is based in the elements of society which I don’t like. Very much profit orientated. I couldn’t say I like being in a business school. I’d hop into a geography school or into an environmental study school without any problem (A28).*

Due to differing values and opposing worldviews, several academics referred to a sense of separation from the business majority commenting: ‘I don’t fit. I have always felt a bit of an odd one out...I feel like a fish out of water’ (A8) or ‘I’m the odd one out in the team’ (A3) and ‘I feel very alienated’ (A28). One teacher commented ‘There are people in business who have sets of values that I find really interesting but as an overall group and where it is headed, no’ (A26).

Several academics perceived themselves to be the only person interested in teaching sustainability dimensions:

*As far as I know this is really the only exposure they are going to have to practical sustainability in their whole degree (A6).*

*If I move, if I leave one day, I think that subject might easily be replaced by something from the core subjects (A3).*
When I was first teaching it [sustainable subject] nobody else even wanted to go near it (A11).

There is no one else with a background in sustainable tourism (A2).

Several teachers talked about the reliance on an impassioned individual to ‘carry the weight’ of teaching sustainability. This was seen as a risky strategy and another justification to embed sustainability across all subjects. One teacher believed sustainability ought to be taught regardless of different personality styles: ‘Sustainability is a policy not a personality. You shouldn’t be sold by the person. The value is in and of itself not the person who sells it. That’s what worries me’.

**Embedding Sustainability in the Curriculum**

Moving to consider sustainability within the teaching arena, the academics were asked to describe the way in which sustainability was present in the curriculum. A number of teachers reported that sustainability dimensions were ‘embedded’ or ‘filtered throughout the whole program’ (A29), appearing ‘holistically across the degree’ (A31), as echoed in these comments:

- Definitely underpins everything… This sustainable thinking has been part of the degree the whole way along (A14).
- Embedded through everything we do (A23).
- There is a bit of sustainability embedded in each of the units, one way or another (A4).
- It’s there in almost every one of our units…they [students] have got that sense of it and they talk about it and say “oh yes, we looked at that in another unit” (A16).
- Everybody’s got it as our core; it’s underlying the whole business school and certainly the tourism program (A31).

A small number of academics saw the merit of having a stand-alone subject ‘focus sustainability’ (A5) and where ‘sustainability should be an introductory module for every kind
of study that is done because it gives us the context in which we do everything’ (A18). Others thought using sustainability in the title of the subject was a good strategy to reinforce the importance the subject gave to sustainability dimensions:

*By calling it ‘Sustainable Something’ we are putting it front and centre. The fact it is part of the title of the subject was clearly seen as really important, it puts it at the forefront* (A14).

However, overall, academics appeared not to favour a separate sustainability named subject as quotes such as: ‘It should not be one subject. It really needs to come up again and again’ (A30) were common. A few academics explained their thought process with sustainability in program development:

*We embed sustainability in all the subjects across the board, instead of having a single subject on sustainable business, which is why we don’t offer it any more, we have talked about including sustainability components in all the subjects* (A12).

*Plan is to see this [sustainable] unit disappear over time because it shouldn’t be a stand out subject; it should be an automatic reaction in everything we do as business people, as graduates out of here. Therefore us holding this up as a beacon, you should already be across this* (A4).

The main reason why academics preferred to have sustainability ‘embedded’ in many units, rather than relying on a stand-alone sustainability subject, was concern it would represent sustainability as a unique concept as these academics explained:

*One subject on sustainable tourism implies it’s okay to have other sorts of tourism that aren’t sustainable and that’s inconsistent. If you are going to embrace sustainability then it is for everyone and not a specialist niche kind of thing. If you embrace sustainability as a philosophy then it has to be a whole change and has to work across the board* (A12).

*If what we teach in this course on sustainable tourism is sustainable, then basically all the other courses are teaching unsustainable practices...I came to the conclusion that sustainability should underpin all our courses and everything that we do and we didn’t
actually need to have a stand-alone course...the idea of sustainability was so well
defused and accepted now that no one is going to be in business setting out to be
unsustainable, everyone is going to be doing what they think is sustainable (A17).

Concern was also voiced about isolating sustainability and removing the concept from
tourism’s broader context:

*The issue of sustainability, like critical thinking actually needs to be woven through and
when you take sustainability out and put a spotlight on it you are actually removing it
from the context of everything else* (A8).

*All tourism should be sustainable so we shouldn’t need to teach a ‘Sustainable Tourism’
class, it should be just part of all tourism when we teach students about tourism* (A23).

Several argued that isolating sustainability dimensions into one subject was ineffective as it
prevented sustainability linking to other fundamental concepts in the curriculum:

*One of the biggest issues is drawing boundaries around sustainability. For example we
have a Sustainable Tourism unit, we should not be teaching that. I’m sure the content
is good but we need to actually identify our values and teach those values permeated
through all of the courses and the units. The unit should be about substantive things
(A8).*

*From a student point of view they can get quite passionate about it [sustainability], but
they actually still need direction as to where and how it applies in other areas* (A12).

Other academics talked about the merit of reinforcing the concept of sustainability in every
subject as another reason not to rely on one subject; *‘see it over and over again everywhere they
go’* (A18). For them, repetition was a useful technique to embed the concept:

*We know it goes in one ear and comes out right away. Maybe it doesn’t go through at all!* (A30).
That’s the only way it will be effective. It’s repetition that makes advertising work; it gets into the subconscious of people’s minds. We want sustainability to be a subconscious choice (A18).

Some academics, however, thought repetition of sustainability dimensions could pose as a problem when there was a stand-alone sustainability subject already or sustainability content in other subjects:

Careful how you do that [embed sustainability] because students are very aware of repetition and very sensitive to repetition in their courses (A23).

We do talk about overlaps, if there are any, trying to avoid them. I suppose we try to avoid having it [sustainability] everywhere really (A3).

I think we have to be very careful that we don’t overkill (A5).

Another teacher pointed to a dilemma arising from the timing of sustainability content in the degree program:

I’m mindful we have certain courses in our program that are specifically on sustainable tourism development and so it would be inappropriate for me to commandeer multiple lectures in my session to teach what should be in their session. We have a core course in third year in our undergraduate that is on sustainability. I see my role in the first-year semester course as paving the way for it, but it’s not stealing their thunder (A21).

### 6.2.2 Contextual Challenges Teaching Sustainability

From the analysis of academic interviews, a number of contextual factors posed as challenges for teaching sustainability. Several themes emerged around issues of limited skills and knowledge amongst staff, technocratic managerialism and tokenistic institutional support, restrictive mode of delivery and the impacts of a diverse student cohort.
**Limited Teachers’ Skills and Knowledge**

Several lecturers identified limited sustainability knowledge and skills hindered engagement with teaching sustainability. This was not necessarily due to a lack of staff interest in sustainability, but a result of limited understanding or lack of confidence:

*A lot of my colleagues are enthusiastic about the ideas but lack skills themselves* (A12).

*Some of it is very badly taught. There are people who got excited about it as a topic without a huge amount of background or experience to draw on* (A26).

*Sustainability* is not what they did when they did their degree. People are saying “I’m really interested but nobody mentioned any of this and I’m not feeling comfortable doing it...that understanding of the ecological system” (A12).

Others mentioned the hindrance caused by confusion over the various interpretations of sustainability education:

*There are still people who struggle with what is the difference between ‘about’ sustainability versus ‘for’ sustainability* (A12).

*People confuse ecotourism and sustainable tourism. They assume by saying ecotourism they mean sustainable tourism and I’m trying to educate people that no, ecotourism is a subset of sustainable tourism. If you don’t know the difference between sustainable tourism and ecotourism you can’t very well design an effective curriculum* (A6).

To build teaching capacity for sustainability, several academics suggested taking advantage of available staff expertise. Although one academic pointed out this raised a further issue: ‘*Finding some resources and space in the current circumstances to help staff develop their skills is another constraint*’ (A12).

**Technocratic Managerialism and Tokenistic Support**

The analysis of academic comments indicated an overall perceived technocratic managerialistic approach and tokenistic support at the institutional level. The ensuing negative impact from
technocratic managerialism was highlighted among the group of academics and voiced by these academics:

The business model of universities in Australia is broken because it is about the ‘massification’ of higher education and all these incredibly complex teaching arrangements that promote the standardised delivery across different institutions that operate in different cultures. And that’s very problematic for the teaching of meaningful exchanges around sustainability. There are no incentives and there’s no leadership to really break that mould and do something that’s going to cater for the future challenges that we have in the sustainability area (A8).

There definitely are constraints. I think the whole teaching and learning-isation of our classes has taken a lot of power away from the teacher to be able to just go forth and design a unit or course, or subject …It’s like there’s 10 steps removed between everything you want to do. There are all of those administrative things that I think can just… by the time you get to the classroom you’re just feeling a little bit depleted, a bit jaded (A11).

Several academics commented about the impact that tight budgets had on subject offerings and how sustainability type courses were often the ones to be discarded: ‘Universities are constantly wanting to become more efficient, to get rid of extra units, get rid of our electives, so that constrains us’ (A16). Another added due to universities taking ‘a neoliberal approach’ even though they admit the sustainability type courses ‘are innovative interesting courses’ they say ‘but they are only attracting eight students a year, so we can’t keep teaching them, sorry’ (A23).

A few participants were critical of the lack of real support for sustainability and indicated this to be a barrier to teaching sustainability:

Our business school tries to say how innovative it is and how it really wants to have environmental sustainability. But subtly they always tell you “no, no, there’s a certain way to dress, there’s a certain corporate professional image we want to convey.” What are we trying to do, create cookie cutters with the students? Certainly people embrace the principle, are they really super serious about it? I don’t think so. Because what they have in most of the classrooms is very superficial. I think in a business environment they are happy if you can say “well we’ve met government regulations about sustainability
and done enough of the certification stuff that we get a competitive advantage for the 10% who are the true environmentalists” (A6).

Others pointed to a tokenistic commitment to sustainability across the institution in general to be a barrier; scratch the surface and there was no real substance to genuine support for sustainability: ‘That’s our rubbish bin. But we say “it would be even better if you don’t have one at all!”’ (A26). Others believed sustainability action tended to be treated as a tokenistic ‘check the box’ exercise:

As long as you’re making money and your bosses are satisfied with you I think that’s as far as it goes. Isn’t this a lovely little eco-bin? Wow, we are so innovative (A6).

Sustainability was incorporated at the school level, one of the departments was ‘sustainable something’, “so what are we doing? Okay, we don’t print out everything as much”. I think that is what it just added up to (A7).

**Constraints with Mode of Delivery**

Several teachers specifically remarked about the demands of travelling between campuses and how this conflicted with their sustainability teaching philosophy of avoiding excessive car travel:

Having just driven to X campus to run a three-hour session with a handful of students and then I’m talking about sustainability, it just does not make sense! (A24).

It’s a joke because we have to travel all the time, so our footprint is huge… we are an institution that has the biggest ecological footprint of any government (A26).

We’re supposed to be sustainable. They are telling me but now I have to commute once a week to the X campus. I’ll have to burn all that fuel to get there and back…politically we have a multi-campus model and it’s very important that we are seen back and forth. I’m saying “you’re not really serious about sustainability are you?” (A6).
Some academics commented how increasing class sizes presented a challenge for teaching sustainability. One who felt ‘fairly disillusioned with the change in the university system’ explained that the:

*Central problem is we are wanting more and more students through a mass produced system where they get limited experiences and for sustainability it doesn’t work. You really need students to have some sort of connection to issues around sustainability and trying to put that into your curriculum is really interesting with large numbers involved* (A28).

Providing a learning experience which enabled students to experience sustainability in practice was constrained with increasing online teaching:

*This converged delivery across the campuses, how do you do a service learning project? How do I do that with externals? It’s something that could touch on issues of sustainability, but ground it, because I feel like a lot of it was very abstract* (A7).

Other academics were concerned about the diminished ‘personal contact which I think is essential to give messages about sustainability’ (A28). This teacher questioned:

*It’s not just about the banking sort of knowledge-based stuff, it’s about students really learning from that personal level of interaction and there is less and less of that… more and more is that separation… my question is what are they really learning?* (A28).

Another academic recounted a previous transformative experience which they believed was no longer possible in the current university climate:

*We’d do a field trip. I’d deck them out. I would make sure they had the proper shoes. It was the whole experience; mosquito repellent, sticks to walk through mud. The students would sit in the sun, be bitten by mosquitoes, listen to these people and they would come away completely in the zone, and very, very powerful experiences. I just can’t see in this environment, where you are teaching across [multiple campuses] you can’t do that* (A8).
6.3 Conflicting Paradigms of Sustainability

As shown in Chapter 5, academics often engaged with the triple bottom line approach to sustainability. As well as sustainability content being incorporated and driven by the personal beliefs of the academics, several participants pointed to their responsibility of preparing students to respond to future needs of the tourism industry: ‘Because tourism consumes mass resources I think it just has to be a core focus’ (A20). When teaching, many tried to ‘integrate social, economic and environmental spheres’ (A3), where TBL ‘pillars’ were ‘looked at as a package’ (A14).

However, the analysis of the interview data revealed differences of opinion existed among some academics regarding the sustainability-related pillar/s the participants considered most important for tourism education. One academic felt teaching sustainability meant ‘talking about the trade-off ... You can’t always have all of them and there are knock-on effects’ (A16). A distinction was exposed between the academics whose sustainability content always came back to an economic paradigm as opposed to the academics whose interpretation of sustainability was more concerned with environmental and social imperatives.

6.3.1 Economic Perspective of Sustainability

Some academics’ interpretation of sustainability was underpinned by an economic perspective. They viewed sustainability as ‘a business reality’ or ‘in terms of improving the efficiency for business’ (A4).

Makes good business sense. “Why would we green our industry? Why would we put in solar power or make sure certain money goes back into the community? Well it is good business practice!” (A20).

This group of lecturers felt it important for students to be equipped with an understanding of the economic reality underpinning all tourism business. Sustainability education was regarded as providing students with knowledge and skills ‘to understand what it [sustainability] might mean for business and how you are going to have to respond to that strategically’ (A12); and ‘whether you are looking at a strategic management of a tourism business or a destination, sustainability is going to become part of that’ (A5).
One teacher felt a typical sustainability subject ‘may not focus so much’ on the ‘profit side of things’ which they thought was ‘a really important element’ (A5). The shared belief held by these academics was that tourism students required more economic awareness in their sustainability education. It was important for their students to ‘pick up that it’s more than just about environmental’ (A16). Others concurred saying:

> I hope they realise that sustainability isn’t just about the natural environment because they tend to think that and they tend to get that a little bit more than culture and economic...ultimately I think economic sustainability can underpin the rest because you need money to be sustainable (A20).

> Within the business discipline sustainability is often seen as something that needs to happen in the environment but I feel there’s not this perception that economic sustainability needs to be maintained (A15).

The group of academics, who subscribed to a dominant economic paradigm, interpreted sustainability tourism education to be vocationally meaningful. An important goal was for students to:

> Leave the classes with an idea that sustainability can actually be employed in their day-to-day work. That it isn’t some kind of foreign concept that only academics talk about. It’s actually something which will help them in terms of management and apply as a point of differentiation between what they offer and what other people have to offer (A5).

The lecturers who taught sustainability ‘from a business perspective’, included ‘topics around operational sustainability’ (A5) in the curriculum. There was desire to include in their teaching of sustainability, economic realities of managing a tourism business within a tight budget:

> Give them [students] economic constraints and political realities. It’s all very well to go around and tell operators what to do. But if you’re an operator and you’ve been told to put in these environmental technologies and do this and do that, join up with this Green Globe Scheme and other schemes, there is an economic reality to everything and at the end of the day you need to be able to put food on the table (A2).
As a result of their economic outlook, some academics explained how they ultimately equated the significance of sustainability for the tourism industry to be a quest to save money and maintain profits:

_We spend a lot of time talking about the environmental impact of all forms of transport. So airlines, not because they’ve necessarily gone on the road to Damascus, had a vision and said “gee-whiz, we’ve got to be very careful about polluting it”; they’re worried about their bottom line!_ (A5)

The interviews revealed that the academics with past TH&E industry experience and/or current industry connections tended to favour an economic imperative with a focus on business/management issues. One academic conceded that: ‘_I always had my eyes open to the economic reality of operating a business. So absolutely it has had a profound impact on my teaching_’ (A2). One academic with extensive tourism industry experience pointed to a tension between pure academic interpretations of sustainability and a realistic business-minded approach, observing:

_One of the things that surprise me about coming into academia was that they were so god-dam holier than thou about being sustainable. Amongst people who are purely academics, the whole idea of actually somebody making money out of tourism is still is seen as a bit naughty. But hey, you don’t have an industry if people don’t make a buck out of it_ (A5).

It was evident academics with a business background felt comfortable with tourism education’s location within a business focused faculty because important management concepts could be drawn upon when teaching sustainability principles. For them, sustainability was a business imperative and ‘_likely to be more serious if it is in a business context_’ (A20) when taught under the auspices of economic business management:

_Although tourism is a social phenomenon, it should be managed like a business. If you are looking at sustainability and thinking of tourism as a commercial industry, based on the consumption of finite resources it needs to be managed and taught as a business_ (A20).
6.3.2 Environmental and Sociocultural Perspectives of Sustainability

The analysis of the interview data revealed another group of academics chose to focus more on environmental and sociocultural perspectives of sustainability. One academic hoped ‘by now it’s not all about the light bulbs’ (A3). For several participants, sustainability education was far more than sustaining the tourism industry or appealing to the business bottom line, but rather involved a deeper philosophical understanding:

*Be about is breaking the mould. Thinking of new ways, innovation in terms of moving away from the growth model to using a resilience model* (A8).

*Looking at what sits outside that mainstream framework. It’s not just about the financial. I hope my students debate that; is it ideologically sustainable development or environmentally sustainable development? Who defines it as what?* (A28).

These academics tended to view tourism higher education as preparing students to be ‘*good global citizens...isn’t it what we are there for?*’ (A31). The idea for students to become ‘*more of a conscious citizen, so just themselves personally realise their impact on the world*’ (A20) was a popular aspiration. One academic introduced the subject to students saying it was ‘*actually about you becoming global citizens and understanding where you fit in this world*’ (A8). Another explained their teaching of sustainability as focusing on non-business perspectives was because ‘*it helps students realise tourism, hospitality and events are more than just business because a lot of what we do cover is still leaning them towards the business side of it*’ (A21).

These academics were more concerned about discussing the two ‘pillars’ of environment and social-cultural with their students:

*I tend not to talk so much about the economic sustainability aspect but talk equally about the need for social and environmental sustainability* (A23).

*We always start with understanding the socio cultural, environmental and I don’t do much on economics I’m afraid, they get enough of the economic stuff from the other classes* (A11).
There were those who believed their subject to be one of a few, or in some cases the only opportunity students got to consider sustainability which was not focused on economic issues:

*It’s our last chance to instil some sort of environmental and social awareness. They certainly get the economic, but just to have an appreciation, an awareness of that environmental and social underpinning* (A17).

Several academics thought it important to go deeper and include content about the environmental movement since their business focused students tended to lack this insight:

*I ground the first couple of weeks in the modern environmental movement. I figure the business tourism students are coming in with maybe not much understanding or engagement with the environmental movement* (A11).

*Students* get a little bit of a taste of deep ecology, Arne Naess’s work and right through to neoliberal reformism (A28).

Whereas another academic, whose ‘value system has always been humanistic’, aligned more to a social paradigm and interpreted sustainability education with the ‘impacts on people. Who are the winners and who are the losers? I always privilege people over the environment because they are valuable to me’ (A25). What could be discerned from some academics’ comments was

*Business is important, but it [tourism] is not all business* (A21).

*Important to start separating tourism from a purely business view* (A24).

*They all have got this idea that events have to make money* (A14).

*Get my students to think about and realise that it’s not all about the profit…they are business students so they have to make money [but] it’s not what we are about* (A19).
6.3.3 Constraints of a Business Faculty Location

Several academics made comments about the impact arising from the location of tourism programs in a business faculty. Indeed at the time of writing the thesis, the last remaining Schools of Tourism and Hospitality Management in Australia, located at Southern Cross University and University of Queensland, were merged with Business Schools. The challenge of a business focus dominating the curriculum was seen by many of the academics interviewed as a constraint to teaching sustainability subjects. Several academics’ observations were:

*Business is one of the dominant sorts of areas within education at the moment* (A26)

*We’re seeing more of a move into business schools. We hardly have any stand-alone schools left* (A11).

*(The TH&E curricula) is all very much business focused. The degree at X University is in a business faculty and everything there involves around having a strong business degree* (A3).

Many academics believed the underpinning business as usual focus unfortunately influenced how sustainability was viewed: ‘even the way we teach sustainability at X University and other places it is still very much a pro-growth model of sustainability. So there are triple bottom line impacts, but tourism is still good!’ (A17). Part of the problem with a business focused curriculum was it conflicted with some teachers’ values system: *‘business schools are in that mainstream model of business which is very much based on the elements of society I don’t like. Very much profit orientated’* (A28).

Notable issues around curriculum space were evident. Some academics pointed to pressures arising from the budget regime of funding allocations which favoured the domination of business in the curriculum. Several noted this occurred at the expense of other non-business focused subjects:

*If you’re a business school that focuses on the bottom line of economics and your students must have finance, accounting, and economics, but is there any scope for alternative kinds of voices?* (A11).
The business school insist they have a unit so they make money. There are common cores for all first-year business. Students have to do information systems, accounting, law, economics, marketing and management. These are the compulsory units. We didn’t have any choice. (A16).

When asked where sustainability skills fit in the degree, some academics conceded ‘it’s usually left to one subject’ (A11). Lack of space in the curriculum tended to be voiced as the reason sustainability was treated as a stand-alone subject. Those who taught a sustainability titled subject, pointed to the lack of sustainability elsewhere in the degree due to ‘limited opportunities to really do it’ (A3) and ‘you don’t have much other scope to cover it really (A11).

Tension over what occupied the space in curricula was evident when trying to incorporate sustainability content: ‘The catch with every program is that if you put that in to the core at the undergrad what you take out’ (A21). Academics talked about the pressure exerted from differing interest groups vying for the fixed space of a degree program. Finding consensus of opinion about which subjects should form the tourism curriculum was identified as a challenge faced by many. As one academic conceded:

*Trying to fit everything into a degree program that everybody thinks they should have continues to be the ongoing challenge. If we give them another first year subject that introduces them to social justice we have to take out accounting for managers and we seem to always be somewhat constrained by what we are going to have to leave out* (A12).

The same academic described how in order to alleviate the issue of space they were moving ‘towards embedding things in existing subjects’ (A12). However, this strategy still presented challenges due to staff fatigue from constraints imposed across the general higher education sector: ‘At the moment with all the other changes for universities and pressures on budgets etcetera, people are tired and reluctant to engage in another revision, a new version of something’ (A12).

Another challenge with space arose from pressure between topics within a subject. One academic conceded although sustainability dimensions were taught, they were relegated to the end due to pressure of getting through other key concepts: ‘Sustainability is the last topic in the
unit...it’s kind of tagged on. We spend time finding the concepts and the context and then sustainability comes right at the end’ (A7).

Several academics pointed to inflexible course structures which restricted the opportunity for students to take sustainability infused subjects. One teacher thought: ‘it would be a shame to lose that space of a nature-based type of unit or sustainability unit in a tourism degree which doesn’t have much of it otherwise’ (A11). Another pointed to:

Structural limitations are a bit of a challenge to what we can teach. It means we can only teach a certain number of units which is quite hard. They do all sorts of business subjects, which quite frankly can be a bit off-putting, but we don’t have any control over that...only eight are tourism units because we are only able to have that number (A16).

Including multi-disciplinary subjects in a tourism degree were limited or non-existent at many academics’ institutions. This academic believed that:

The way universities are designed now you lose a lot of that inter/ multi-disciplinary focus for your students. I used to send the students, “go and do environmental politics with social science and widen your education”. It’s a shame our tourism students just go along and have their business degree (A11).

Compounding this factor of limited opportunity for teaching sustainability was the trend for these type of subjects to be optional: ‘sustainability type classes, or the politics or the ethics are the electives rather than the standard’ (A11). Adding to the challenge was elective subjects tended to be limited, or not offered due to low student numbers.

For others, since tourism was ‘parked in a business school’ (A6), there was a pronounced vocational focus which some believed created tension for sustainability content:

Sustainability is a hard one for us because we are in the business faculty; it’s not sort of a liberal arts, learning about environmental studies. People are focused on working (A7).

The challenge for some academics was getting others to see ‘there are other types of tourism as well; it’s not just the hotel industry’ (A11). For one academic the pressure to be vocationally
orientated with course content was the antithesis of what could be achieved with a more liberal style education:

> Because of the matrix and the way that higher education is in Australia and across the world, increasingly we are asked to produce work ready graduates. To me there is this huge gap between producing technically adequate graduates who can do coalface jobs and producing mindful graduates who can take a position and be global citizens in the future (A8).

Some academics thought that business school staff in general tended to adopt a superficial attitude to sustainability: ‘Sustainability is a decoration. They’ll put it on as they need to and then they’ll dump it as soon as they see the opportunity. There is no commitment to it’ (A26). Another academic concurred, believing business’s interpretation of sustainability could be manipulated as financial sustainability to the detriment of environmental and social considerations:

> Most business schools now want the AACSB accreditation and that really dictates. In a business school environment it’s mostly superficial sustainability or superficial environmentalism. A lot of it is tokenism and ties into green washing whereas if it is parked in an environmental faculty or a geography faculty then it’s far more likely to be actually putting the emphasis on the environmental and social cultural sustainability. One of the slightly sinister aspects of sustainability is the TBL concept really made it amenable to say financial sustainability is just as important as environmental sustainability and that can be used to justify business as usual. There’s a real risk of that (A6).

**Curriculum Planning Opportunities**

Several academics suggested sustainability education could be further enhanced by creating more opportunities for liberal education and more flexible programming. One believed beneficial learning opportunities could be gained by ‘people moving across disciplinary boundaries’ (A26). A rethink of program requirements was suggested by this academic using ‘sequencing and co-requisites rather than pre-requisites because prerequisites basically just builds silos which stop people going across disciplines’ (A26). Another described how a business dominated program could be enriched with broader sustainability subjects by allowing
and actively encouraging students to take subjects that incorporate sustainability-related content:

One of the things we are looking to do is put together a recommended list of the other units they do. They can choose whatever they like, but we would say we think these would be the most useful for you; aboriginal culture, environmental issues in business unit, some sustainability units (A16).

The general feeling expressed was teachers tend to work in isolation; ‘they talk about this silo thing’ (A15), either separated by disciplinary boundary or by the subject/s delivered. Often lacking in a business faculty was an ecological understanding. Some felt the opportunity of sharing content delivery with other teachers could draw on diverse skills and knowledge. The potential benefit could be seen when one academic described how in their school a ‘colleague has a really strong [science] background so we just share it with the students. We get them to understand the science component’ (A31). Another academic suggested tapping into academics’ research expertise to enhance sustainability teaching and learning: ‘Have courses that are connected to the research that I’m doing, which would be about sustainability and ethics, environment and communities. You get the best outcomes and the best opportunities for students to engage’ (A21).

Nonetheless a restricted business silo was not symptomatic across all degree programs. A small number of academics explained how their students were encouraged to take other non-business focused subjects. Where academics were located in a social science/arts faculty they recognised it was much easier for students to move between disciplines due to the flexible nature of the program. Nevertheless, only a very small number of degrees permitted the taking of subjects from other disciplines (for example programs offered by University of Western Sydney and University of Tasmania).

The benefit of mapping the curriculum for sustainability content was often mentioned as an opportunity to enhance sustainability education. One participant described a curriculum mapping exercise they were involved with ‘required each school or each faculty to address how they are going to embed that [sustainability] into their degree specialisations’. On doing this, they ‘realised we needed to have a unit specifically for sustainability’ (A4). One academic proposed the use of a course renewal process to lobby for the incorporation of sustainability-related content: ‘I would love a subject on aboriginal studies or indigenous tourism course, to
see space for that. I’d like our tourism students do the diversity X subject and in this new review I’m actually pushing for it in our new degree for our students to have more exposure’ (A13).

Absence of a clear understanding of program and subject content was seen to be restricting sustainability, alluded to by these comments:

I don’t have a sense of what other people are doing in their units really. It would be good to see where we are overlapping (A7).

I don’t have enough insight into unit content within those individual units and it has been something that I have raised a number of times. How can we make those decisions about our courses when we haven’t got that course or content mapping? (A24).

A few academics thought tourism ought to be moved into a social science faculty, reasoning that:

It is important to start separating tourism from purely business...there are a lot of people who aren’t necessarily business orientated. It’s about more than just business and we could be in social sciences or elsewhere and maybe that should be where we are placing ourselves (A24).

The type of degree where we have hope for a sustainable tourism industry and for empowering the sustainability agenda is if we teach a social science of tourism. Business is part of it, but so is the environment, so is politics, so are the social cultural dimensions and they are just underdone (A8).

As well as mapping the curriculum for sustainability dimensions, another opportunity to develop sustainability education was to map each student’s progress:

There is a lot of merit in being able to assess and map each particular student through their degree and find out how that sustainability message can be embedded and then revisited over three years of the degree (A4).
Another suggestion was for universities to use automated tools to aid the incorporation of key sustainability dimensions in the curricula. One academic mentioned a system which allowed curriculum designers and teachers to check sustainability content:

*When we structure each course we have automatic boxes pop up on the university system like indigenous issues, internationalisation of curriculum and sustainability. It's not compulsory but I always fill in what this course is doing for the sustainability agenda (A29).*

### 6.4 Questioning the Mainstream

The majority of academics believed it important for their students to *‘be critical, to question’* (A13); this was seen as a fundamental skill for learning at university and for understanding sustainability in general. However, instead of applying critical thinking in the business as usual way, some academics framed the desire for critical thinking within alternative approaches to thinking and learning sustainability. Particularly crucial for some participants was students’ ability to learn to question the status quo. Therefore, in the context of sustainability education, many teachers wanted students to learn to:

*Develop the art of challenging (A15)*.

*Not just soaking what I am saying, but to critically analyse and think about it and debate and negotiate (A20)*.

*Look at themselves critically...able to critically look at others (A24)*.

*Don’t just take things on face value; that they think about it. Trying to encourage them to have their own points of view, not to just regurgitate what they have read (A14)*.

*Think, not just following the theory; that must be the way it is, but being able to evaluate and adjust and be flexible (A22)*.

*Question why this should be done in a particular way? Critiquing and analysing it and when things go wrong, why did they go wrong? Where’s the issue? (A27)*.
Be aware that the decisions they are making have broader impacts. To think about why are we doing this, the ability to analyse (A16).

View phenomena and the world around them critically...be more aware of the impacts of what we do; instead of looking at something in terms of a single outcome, say “well it has these other outcomes as well” (A25).

Academics talked about creating an environment in the classroom where students can challenge the dominant rhetoric. One relayed how ‘I challenge myself sometimes to actually take the reverse if I see it is a little bit unbalanced as well’ (A8). Another described adopting the stance of devil’s advocate, encouraged questioning of the mainstream:

If there is a consensus in the classroom I will try and be the devil’s advocate even if I actually agree with the consensus. If everyone suddenly unanimously says “oh I think that host communities should get the ultimate say” I will then have to put my devil’s hat on because I want them to argue and want them to critically think about there are two sides to all the stories and I want them to be able to argue and negotiate (A20).

6.4.1 Empowering Students

The importance of student-centred learning was raised: ‘I bring it right back to the student. Little action, every action can make a difference’ (A31). Another referred to the process of giving their students’ ‘consciousness about’ sustainability in order to ‘develop a sensitivity’ to the concept themselves (A3). Another believed ‘you can’t force-feed them that stuff because they glaze over and are not interested in it’ (A26). It was important to first tap into aspects which sparked interest because ‘once they’ve got the hook, they start to learn and get more engaged...’suddenly “oh, oh, it’s actually climate change issues and bio diverse issues” (A26).

Therefore, getting students to first personally connect with sustainability was important. One approach to sustainability education favoured by several academics was garnering a person’s sense of ‘ownership’ with sustainability:

You’ve got to find what the connection for them is... Their priorities, their goals, their objectives, things that they think are important (A26).
Find those touch points to get them interested, you can’t tell them what they should be. I try to associate that with their lives, their lifestyle. So how they value and try and make them make connections around those things. That starts at a personal level. We talk about their home life and what they do and how they might be sustainable (A28).

The goal for one academic was to target people who have never contemplated sustainability. For this academic, sustainability education was:

Not about privileging just the eco-warriors to get a tick. The eco-warriors, who cares they're already doing the right thing. We want the people who never in a million years will do the right thing. We want to encourage them because it's just something that they've never thought about or known about (A26).

Within the theme of empowering students, three views about the purpose of sustainability education were identified to explain the academics’ approaches. The themes included: bringing about awareness of sustainability; developing an opinion about sustainability; and encouraging students to take sustainability action. Some academics had preference for one approach whereas others combined one or more approach in their teaching practice.

‘Planting the Seed’

The approach to sustainability education taken by a number of academics was one where students were made aware of sustainability dimensions:

Bringing these things to their attention, opening their minds to this goes on and there are these issues (A17).

Let them evaluate the impacts and that opens their eyes…deep in my heart even the ones that didn’t pay enough attention, when they are going to go out somewhere now, work in the industry, particularly in tourism, they are going to be aware (A3).

Those who viewed sustainability learning to involve becoming aware of sustainability issues, tended to be academics who did not wish to come across dogmatic to students:
I don’t like preaching to them but just showing them, open their eyes up… giving them an opportunity for change without ramming it down their throats that this is bad, this is wrong (A17).

Sometimes I feel a little bit uncomfortable when we talk about changing people’s behaviour. If you can just open up their awareness and not do it in too much of a dogmatic kind of way. I don’t think ramming anything down anyone’s throat is gonna help (A11).

The academics who regarded teaching sustainability to be about ‘planting the seed’ tended to recognise limitations of their teaching:

Realistically, it is one class they have with me for one hour a week for 12 weeks. I’m not that charismatic, but if it plants an idea that grows over time (A14).

I hope somehow a light goes on and they want to be a better person. I don’t know if they really get it, but you can only try (A2).

‘Adopt a Position’

A number of academics were keen for students to take a position on sustainability: ‘It’s not just about opening their minds, but where do they sit in this’ (A8). The underlying feeling was the challenging and development of students’ views was ‘what university was about’ (A11) and ‘if I can get them just to think for themselves, isn’t that really all we’re doing’ (A31). Another academic would ask their students: ‘What do you think? Have an opinion’ (A31). The aim for sustainability education was extended from just learning about issues, but actually getting students to identify where they stood on sustainability:

It is about an ideal of getting my students to think and to challenge their views (A11).

See and recognise opportunities and think themselves where they stand (A24).

Encouraging them to develop their own position (A8).
'Take Action'

Several teacher extended the goal of sustainability education beyond raising awareness and taking a position to be action-orientated. The goal for one was for their students to ‘take that principle into the world. Go and change the world’ (A31). A predominant wish for these academics was students to experience a change in behaviour: ‘I would really like to think they get some change’ (A20). A few academics saw their role to be ‘that change agent’ (A12); preparing students with skills to be proactive and solve problems:

What is most important is to give them awareness but then give them the skills to find the information and to go through and to resolve the problems themselves (A12).

Developing their awareness and skills, that’s the change and then hoping, well anticipating they will take those skills on wherever they go and apply them (A1).

If I could just change one student out of every semester I’d be stoked. And typically I do… I got an email just recently from a student saying: “I didn’t realise that you had an impact on me” but they were in some circumstances and their behaviour changed. Ideally in the ideal world, 420 [students] would go away going ‘well I’m never going to do that again. And I love the environment and I understand about social sustainability and I am going to be a more responsible traveller” That’s the challenge I put out there’ (A31).

The belief that learning to take action also involved a life-long learning process was mentioned by several academics:

It might just come back to them, click, and they think about all these negative things I might have said and if they can make a small decision one day that might help employ someone from the local area maybe that is already a small step (A3).

There are two levels of change, the immediate one with the student and then there is also the change in future management or future life and whether they make a difference. And I hope that my students can make a difference (A1).
The notion for their students to ‘become an activist’ was appealing to some academics. One hoped their students would be able to ‘influence’ others in the future by being:

*Passionate and confident enough in telling other people to think about their impact and their contribution in looking after our resources. Ideally I would love them to become advocates, get out there and just talk about it* (A20).

**Challenges of a Disparate Student Cohort**

However, many teachers raised issues around the changing nature of the student cohort and the challenges that posed for teaching. Some believed that ‘*disparate views and also disparate backgrounds*’ (A14) had resulted in conflicting expectations and motivations, opposing perspectives and poor engagement. One teacher described the diverse range of motivation in their sustainability class:

*I tend to see there is a hard-core, of probably about 25 percent of the audience that are there and are really getting a lot out of it. I think there are 25 percent that are interested on top of that, but not passionate and then I would say the other 50 percent are there to get a result, move on, get your degree, get out, get a job and they’re going through the motions* (A4).

The challenge of poor student engagement came up in many academic comments. Teachers noted student engagement had been diminishing over the years. A variety of external pressures were seen to be competing on students’ time:

*A large bulk of them appear far less motivated than they did when I first started teaching. Most of us are finding that students are less engaged. They are not coming to lectures* (A23).

*They are not here all the time, they work* (A22).

*University is something they fit in around their work, social lives and family lives. They don’t see the need to come to class* (A16).
Some academics believed their style of teaching sustainability was hampered by the ‘students that choose to study in tourism’ (A8). Other academics thought that:

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\text{It would be totally different in a school of environmental science. They’re coming to that wanting to learn about the world and understand science and they’re challenging thoughts. Our business and tourism students if you talk to them they are there to get a job and so it’s “come on guys, you just need to think about this stuff a bit” (A11).}
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\[
\text{If its environmental planning they are already coming with a commitment to the environment, I want to make a difference in this area (A8).}
\]

\[
\text{They’re not like students who come to university and want to study environmental management or social ecology or environmental science, it’s not because they’ve got a love of nature or fascination with conservation (A26).}
\]

Another academic found since their students generally ‘want to be the manager of a big company, mostly a hotel’ they could be resistant to sustainability ideas believing anything beyond a basic understanding was unnecessary:

\[
\text{It’s always reduced to recycling and light bulbs and water saving now, not beyond that. They think they know everything about it so why do they need to know what all the other things are about, it doesn’t really matter (A3).}
\]

The common belief was most business tourism students were uninterested in nature, and according to this academic, not ‘really going to walk around an environmental area through mud to understand what ecotourism, the challenges of designing an ecotourism experience might be’ (A8). The feeling amongst many teachers was business tourism students were more focused on getting a job: ‘business school students are very vocationally orientated’ (A16).

From teachers’ comments, a further challenge was the inability of some students to ‘actively’ learn and question the norm. A common thread was academics lamented students’ apathy:

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\text{They tend to just accept what you say. I just want students to engage and not to accept everything at face value. I want them to test the norm, to argue it. And they don’t think. You can give them a model that clearly has some flaws in it and you might say to them,}
\]
what are the limitations of this? Half of them wouldn’t even know what limitation meant and a lot of them just go “I don’t know”. They look at it and go “okay” (A20).

Many agreed with this sentiment, wanting their sustainability classes to be discursive interactions between themselves and their students, demonstrated with these comments:

A lot of them come along and they have an expectation that you are going to tell them what they need to know (A1).

[Students] are not really aware of what is happening politically. So how can you talk about some of these sustainability issues when they are not aware? (A22).

They don’t have the attitude to start off with. I thought people know it, but I had to realise that it just went past their head and the interest is not there. Lots of students are just passive (A3).

They are just very quiet. Maybe everybody is online but there’s not that much passion. Students today seem to come on campus, do what they have to and then off they all go to work and they don’t hang around and argue about stuff, debate and question (A20).

Many academics recounted poor academic skills impeded their students’ ability to relate with sustainability education. The issue arising from students’ not reading course material was seen as a contributing challenge restricting discussion. Common issues among the teachers were

Students lack confidence to be critical about what they are told, whatever it is (A18).

There is no discussion, they don’t really like to talk about or they can’t talk about it [sustainability issues] (A3).

A particular challenge among academics was how to deal with the differing and often conflicting perspectives of Chinese students. Finding that connection with sustainability was not always an easy task: ‘I haven’t got a clue what will touch them because what would touch Australian students may not necessarily touch them’ (A18). Some academics noted a conflict with differing value systems:
There is a value system that is overlaid on top of the way we conceptualise sustainability in a Western context that doesn’t translate very well in an Asian context. They don’t seem as convinced about the whole sustainability argument as Western students are...they come from an education system where the focus is just on productivity, efficiency and growth (A23).

Asian students are not interested in social justice because from their perspective they’ve come from countries where economic prosperity is happiness and it doesn’t matter whose expense it comes at... if that’s their values how can I educate them for sustainability? How do I get them engaged in sustainability given that it’s not what they are interested in at all? (A18).

It was more build, build, build and I imagine students think that would all be good, new big hotels, everything is great (A7).

The issue of student non-receptivity to the notion of sustainability had ramifications on some academics’ themselves. One participant recalled a discussion with Asian students which ‘probably was one of the few times where I taught sustainability to students where they’ve really challenged me’ (A23). These academics recalled when:

A number of students put their hands up and challenged and said “well is it really a problem? Why should we be worried about this? We’re not sure the problem is as big as you’re making out X and you have to work a bit harder to convince us” (A23).

I presented a very environmental orientated film on snowmobiles and the ATVs running around just tearing up the land and one student responded rather negatively “but this is great fun!” (A7).

Many more observed the learning styles exhibited by Chinese students impeded their ability to critical analyse. One academic described:

It is a real challenging environment we teach in, in terms of possible cohort we have. We’ve got a lot of international students who come from a background where how dare you challenge your lecturer for a start, or any authority. It’s just not what you do. So
even talking about things like critical thinking and critical reflection, that’s a huge struggle in itself. It’s hard enough for us to do (A24).

Asian students, particularly from China were used to a didactic style of teaching where content was memorised and regurgitated in an exam. One academic wondered if ‘we are actually getting the message over correctly or whether it’s just their mentality, how they learn. It is not critically thinking about what’s actually happening it’s just reproducing what you’ve seen. So it’s a tough one!’ (A27). Poor language skills were also commented on:

X campus is 80 or 90% Chinese, huge, and the language issue there is huge (A24).

We have a number of international students, where language can be a struggle, which makes it more difficult (A16).

One teacher offered their view about the different challenges surrounding the learning styles of a typical domestic Australian student compared with an Asian counterpart:

It’s funny the difference between Asian and Aussie students without hopefully not stereotyping, but I think the Aussie students don’t want to learn any of the basic information. They just think they’re very good and are very entitled and should be asked their opinions about things; they can solve problems without having the basic knowledge. The Asian students tend to be excellent at memorising the basic knowledge but don’t often have a clue what to do with it. I’d like to be able to tell them that and say “look you have to be able to do both. Aussies, memorise this, you have to do it, there’s no alternative. Asians, you can’t just memorise it you have to take it beyond, onto a higher level” (A6).

6.4.2 Interactive Pedagogy

Despite the challenges raised in the previous section, overall academics preferred learning techniques which actively engaged as opposed to a passive, didactic style of delivery. One teacher explained:
I didn’t feel that it was a course I wanted to stand and lecture. For me to stand there and say “this is what ethics is and this is what it should be and this is what you should or shouldn’t be thinking about” seems odd (A17).

Creating an interactive environment was the preferred classroom atmosphere for many because of the discursive opportunities it presented for exploring sustainability issues, as well as enhancing student engagement:

I like interactive classes so I try to generate a lot of discussion and bring out different points of view (A23).

Much discursive storytelling, lots of case studies. It is a very interactive environment (A8).

Several teachers described the interactive techniques they used to encourage students to take a position with sustainability:

I get students to line up on the spectrum of sustainability on where they would stand (A24).

We play a value clarification exercise where you stand on a line about where you make a decision. They get to see where other people stand and feel safe in that environment because it is a classroom. So they talk about their values and issues around sustainability at the same time (A28).

The overall feeling was the academics’ teaching of sustainability benefitted from practical examples involving real life scenarios. There was a desire for learning to be fun: ‘students love it’ (A8). Another talked about doing ‘simulation games about various things’ (A5). Some academics felt role playing and debates were effective ways to enhance student engagement with sustainability issues: ‘There is a lot more scope for that type of game playing...students like practical examples they can make sense of and they also like that interaction and banter that comes with it’ (A4). Consequently these lecturers preferred a tute format rather than a lecture style feeling the former lends itself to interactive activities: ‘You can do it better in a tute class than you can in a lecture’ (A4).
Regardless of which paradigm underpinned the academics’ view of sustainability, all the academics interviewed agreed there was a need for authentic examples in sustainability education. In an effort to include realistic content, the use of real-life case studies and DVDs was popular. For one academic it was important for students to experience ‘the pictures and the sounds and seeing things’ (A3). Another described how showing images about sustainability-related matters allowed students to get a sense of the issues, especially for those who had not travelled overseas to these areas:

\[
\text{It has everything that could go wrong; the sex tourism, animal cruelty, drug trafficking and the students are “holy crap”, really, really shocked: “I would have ridden an elephant”. And they all look a bit horrified about what happens to the elephants in the training and I have to give a bit of warning at the front (A17).}
\]

Others felt it was important for students to relate the theory of sustainability to practice in order to make the concept meaningful. Some felt students’ benefited from exposure to sustainability-related matters through industry experience:

\[
\text{Hopefully realise what we are teaching them isn’t just wanky esoteric crap. They do some practical application and can see it is not just something that we’ve pulled out of our arse and said “look, this is interesting” (A20).}
\]

\[
\text{Get them to work with industry. Actually go into a business and physically measure sustainability for a local small business. It’s usually the small businesses that struggle with that kind of stuff and I really like them to do that (A31).}
\]

Experiential learning opportunities in the form of field trips were described by many academics as an effective pedagogical technique. Many strongly believed an immersive experience enabled greater engagement with the concept of sustainability or resulted in ‘a life changing experience’ (A29).

\[
\text{Engaging with the environment and the community, being interactive. I think if it is perfunctory, if there is no enjoyment in it, it is not going to happen (A1).}
\]

\[
\text{You really have to show people the reality. It is good pedagogically and more interesting for students to get out of the classroom and do things (A16).}
\]
Do a field trip to look at sustainable destinations. I want them to see here’s a practice that is supposed to be sustainable. Why is that? What does it do? (A26).

Another indicated it was easy to ‘talk sustainability’ and described a first-hand pedagogical experience where students were taken ‘to this off the grid place and oh suddenly they couldn’t flush the toilet, plug in their iPads, use the blow dryer…suddenly they saw the other side of that picture which even as a tourist when they go to X they would not experience that’ (A30).

A small number of academics thought their faculty/school could take more advantage of their locality to engage with sustainability education: ‘We live in this area where you’ve got all this alternative lifestyle and you can expose that too’ (A11). Another talked about the benefits of their university holding ‘an accreditation for sustainability’ (A31); they were able to use their natural ‘beautiful campus’ environment to undertake sustainability-related activities outside the classroom. In order for students not to miss out completely on an experiential experience, one teacher recommended ‘doing something locally that wouldn’t be very expensive’ (A16).

Several academics believed there were opportunities to be gained by distinctly positioning their university apart from other institutes: ‘actually leverage and make X University a unique and quite a niche institution with international repute’ (A8). This teacher pointed out

Some universities are actually choosing to do that. Monash for example, has got commitment to problem-based learning. There are universities overseas who do problem-based industry/government type assessments. They have got an institutional commitment to delivering those sorts of experiences (A8).

The idea of creating a university as a ‘living laboratory of sustainability’ was suggested (A8). Another noted that their university ‘has always been a green university, the environmental science university. A lot of that philosophy is still here and it must come through in the website’ (A1).

**Lack of Experiential Learning**

A recurring problem mentioned by academics was the challenge of field trips; a matter ‘so fraught with difficulty’ (A31). Even when a field trip was offered as an elective there were still
barriers, highlighted by this academic’s observation: ‘students also say we can’t go because we haven’t got cars or we can’t do this or we can’t do that’ (A16). They lamented the lack of any field trip experience was due primarily to lack of space within the curriculum. Rigid timetabling of subjects had reduced the window of opportunity to take students away:

\[I don’t do the field trip because there isn’t any time (A2).\]

\[They have to fit it in within their time schedule. I would have to run it in a three-hour slot within the week and that would include getting there and back. So that limits where we go (A16).\]

\[I would love to take them out somewhere and show them this is an example of sustainable tourism and this is an example of unsustainable tourism (A18).\]

\[How do you fit that in with three other units where people have to attend? You can’t just take a week or a few days because then they are missing classes elsewhere (A24).\]

One academic pointed to the ramifications of excessive bureaucracy:

\[I’d like to have a field trip component but regulations and all the liability issues it’s just become a bureaucratic nightmare. Everything is so administrative and so much more risk management and scared of being sued and it really does inhibit a lot of creativity and innovation now whether it’s in our content but particularly in the way we deliver that content. So the safest way to do it and the easiest, the least bureaucratic is just show up in the classroom and lecture the same two-hour block every week for 13 weeks. Instinctively I think it’s completely wrong (A6).\]

The challenge for some academics was the changing nature of higher education. Instead of a focus on experiential learning, the sector had moved to a classroom based delivery, compromising how sustainability education could be taught: ‘We slowly lost that experience-based teaching. It merged more into that classroom-based. It was disappointing for me because part of my basis for looking at sustainability is around that experience. I really think people need the experience of the issues around sustainability by doing it rather than by just hearing it’ (A28). An absence of practical experience of ‘important real-world practical stuff’ (A27) was a constraint many academics mourned. They felt it reduced the transformational

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opportunities of teaching sustainability. One academic who personally ‘had many transformational experiences’ and would ‘love to give my students those sorts of experiences’, described how they found it ‘impossible to organise field trips anymore in this environment. It is just too complex and costs too much’ (A8).

6.5 Summary

This chapter has outlined the findings from the in-depth interviews with 31 tourism academics which addressed the Third and Fourth Objectives of this study: why and how tourism academics incorporate the concept of sustainability into their teaching practices; and the challenges and opportunities doing so. To begin with, although all academics believed sustainability education was essential, there was a notable lack of awareness of the term ‘education for sustainability’ by the majority of participants. Reactions varied from seeing it as useful jargon to unnecessary terminology.

Three overarching categories were discerned from an inductive analysis of the interview data. The first major theme discussed revealed that sustainability values underpinned many academics’ teaching philosophy. The benefits of a shared culture of sustainability and how sustainability was incorporated in the curriculum was outlined. When probing deeper for commonalities it appeared many academics felt an affinity towards the idea of being an authentic role model and the wish for their teaching to make a difference.

The second major theme identified from academic comments revealed a noticeable split in views regarding how an academic interprets the role of sustainability education. Some teachers aligned with an economic paradigm whereas others emphasised environmental and social perspectives. The third theme showed that a number of academics’ wanted their teaching to question the mainstream. Since these teachers opposed a business as usual approach, they tended to favour an alternative approach to learning. Describing how they connected their students with sustainability dimensions, the desire for student empowerment and preference for interactive pedagogy when teaching sustainability, emerged as sub-themes.

Throughout this chapter, opportunities and challenges perceived by tourism academics to affect engagement and incorporation of the concept of sustainability into their teaching practices were outlined. Many challenges tended to interrelate, but in order to seek clarity when presenting the results, discrete themes have been teased apart and woven through the chapter. The first
challenge was personal in nature and referred to limited staff skills and knowledge and a feeling of isolation and estrangement. The second and larger category dealt with a range of challenges which were more contextual. Notable challenges centred on the constraints of mode of delivery, the absence of overarching institutional support, and impacts of a diverse and disengaged student cohort.

The next chapter will discuss the meaning of the academics’ stories and perceptions presented in the three results chapters. The findings gathered from the academic comments will be linked to the wider theory and literature about sustainability education in general and specifically within tourism higher education. The chapter also includes the contribution that this thesis makes.
Chapter 7: Discussion

7.1 Introduction

Few studies have critically examined the presence of sustainability in the tourism curriculum, and few again have explored the role, perspective and agency of the tourism academic in teaching sustainability. This chapter combines the results from the web-based content analysis and the interviews with tourism academics lecturers. It discussed where sustainability is positioned in the Australian tourism curriculum and why academics are inspired by the role of teaching sustainability principles in a tourism context. Objective 1 of the research sought to document evidence of, and support for, sustainability education in Australian tourism higher education programs. The discussion therefore, begins by considering the results presented in Chapter 4 of the content analysis of curricula documents for 68 TH&E programs located at 25 Australian universities. The outcome of the analysis conceptualises sustainability in the Australian TH&E curriculum within a spectrum of engagement which comprises different ideological levels.

The chapter then moves the discussion to the findings from the in-depth interviews with 31 tourism academics. Conclusions are drawn which address Objectives 2, 3 and 4 of the thesis. Respectively these were: explore what the concept of sustainability meant, and how it is understood by tourism academics; investigate how and why tourism academics incorporate sustainability into their teaching practices; and identify the challenges and opportunities of educating for sustainability in tourism higher education. Finally, drawing together the conclusions from the whole body of data gathered, the chapter provides an all-encompassing discussion and extended insights about sustainability in the Australian tourism teaching and curriculum space.

7.2 A Separate Concept: Sustainability as a Tokenistic ‘Add-on’

The content analysis revealed that few TH&E programs were incorporating ‘sustainability’ or sustainability-related terms across the curricula from degree to subject level. The content analysis of curriculum documents involved two levels of interpretation; the program/subject title and the program/subject description. I acknowledge the conclusions that can be drawn based on the data collected. However, at this level of interpretation sustainability appeared to be poorly represented, if not absent, in the majority of TH&E degree programs. Infrequent
explicit reference in the subject descriptions to capacity building skills, such as critical thinking and reflection, was noted. Some Australian TH&E curricula pointed to a tokenistic approach to sustainability shown by the use of the term ‘sustainable’ or sustainability’ in the program description without any further use of these terms or sustainability-related dimensions in the subject titles and their descriptions. Further analysis of syllabus/learning outcomes/topics and assessment was beyond the scope of this study, but may more deeply reveal a subject’s ‘true’ aims and values. However, one may argue that explicitness – on the most public form of communication, which is the University website – is crucial in conveying upfront the program’s mission, pedagogy and values. Subject names and their constituent subject descriptions are also important marketing tools, and are what make up the TH&E curriculum.

Sustainability was treated more as a ‘separate’, add-on concept within curricula. The sporadic presence of sustainability points to the lack of an integrated, holistic approach in Australian TH&E curricula. Most degrees examined in this study had evidence of either no subject or only one or two subjects explicitly referring to ‘sustainable’ or ‘sustainability’ in the subject title or description. Very few TH&E degrees had sustainability dimensions integrated throughout the entire degree as shown by the minimal presence of sustainability-related terms in the descriptions of programs and subject. Therefore, this study shows the incremental and ad hoc nature of EfS depicted in Figure 7.1, characterises the majority of the TH&E curriculum. In contrast, the proposed ‘ideal’ scenario where the TH&E curriculum holistically engages with sustainability throughout its programs is represented to the right in Figure 7.1. This holistic approach is strongly advocated in the general sustainability education literature (Sterling, 2010) as well as featuring in EfS discourse in discipline specific literature. A holistic approach is advocated by Goodman (2011) in nursing, by Pappas (2012) and Mulder, Segelas, Ferrer-Balas., (2012) in engineering, and by Lozano (2006) and Sidiropoulos (2014) in business management courses.
Based on this research, sustainability was currently ‘added in’ as an alternative concept instead of being engaged with as an underlying philosophy in Australian TH&E education. In other words, it seems TH&E as a field of study, faces challenges with incorporating sustainability content into its curricula. The Australian situation appears to correspond with Boley’s (2011) portrayal viewing tourism as the context for sustainability, rather than sustainability as the context for tourism. The results of this content analysis appear to add support to von der Heidt, Lamberton, Morrison, and Wilson’s (2011) suggestion that confusion about, and ambivalence towards, sustainability is resulting in a reluctance to make sustainability explicit in the curriculum.

The findings of this study have shown where sustainability dimensions were explicitly stated in the curriculum. Sustainability-related terms were most prominent in tourism focused programs and subjects. The tourism programs which tended to adopt more of a holistic approach to sustainability invariably had an overt ecotourism focus in the degree title. Sustainability appeared to be poorly represented or absent in hospitality or events subjects. This finding concurs with Deale and Barber’s (2010, p. 85) report of an “apparent low level of attention given to the topic” of sustainability dimensions in the American hospitality curricula. The findings also resonate with a content analysis of curriculum documents of T&H programs in Ireland conducted by Fáilte Ireland (2008), which found overall Irish tourism and hospitality courses were poor at explicitly addressing sustainability issues.
The analysis of curricula documents revealed a preference for stand-alone ‘sustainable’ subjects to cover the issues of sustainability. It appeared that these subjects must then ‘carry the weight’ throughout the entire program. Fundamentally, this approach could point to a possible ad hoc, tokenistic approach to sustainability and its wider related dimensions. Furthermore, sustainability appeared detached and demarcated – reference to sustainable tourism was popular with other delimiting titles such as ‘sustainable hotel’ or ‘sustainable events’. The issue of using limited concepts and definitions as a way of including sustainability in the curriculum has been previously raised. Fáilte Ireland’s (2008, p. 16) report argues that treating sustainability as a separated concept risks obscuring how individuals and their actions “fit into the sustainability whole, and not vice versa”.

In addition to the issue of treating sustainability as a separated concept, the stand-alone sustainability subject was often a non-compulsory choice, or ‘elective’. Viewing sustainability as an optional phenomenon or ‘type’ of alternative tourism, infers students’ lack of opportunity to relate sustainability theory and practice across all areas associated with TH&E. Even with the optional sustainability subjects aside, a large number of programs appear to rely on only one or two other units at the most to incorporate other key themes or concepts associated with sustainability. Interestingly, the same situation was recognised to be problematic by Flohr (2001) in a review of British tourism programs. Although Flohr investigated the post graduate level in the UK, it seems that over a decade later Australian undergraduate tourism students can potentially progress through their program without explicit exposure to issues around sustainability.

Thomas and Nicita (2002) noted three methods of sustainability adoption by Australian universities. The authors describe a ‘modular’ approach to sustainability when it is introduced as a new subject to deal with environmental issues relevant to the discipline (Thomas & Nicita, 2002, p. 480). ‘Incorporation’ occurs when environmental themes are integrated into existing subjects. Thirdly, ‘engagement’ occurs when sustainability is built holistically into the whole course. According to Thomas and Nicita (2002, p. 481) all three methods had advantages, but the researchers found an engagement approach was the most comprehensive and effective method of implementing sustainability education. Applying Thomas and Nicita’s (2002) conceptualisation of possible approaches towards adopting sustainability, the results of the content analysis show sustainability is a modular concept in Australian TH&E education. Moreover, no program demonstrated a holistic engagement with sustainability. Some exceptions did exist; a handful of degree programs appeared to be taking Thomas and Nicita’s
(2002) ‘incorporation’ approach. Although sustainability was not in the title of the degree or subjects, the concept was articulated using explicit sustainability-related content in the subject description. Conversely in some instances, despite sustainability terminology appearing in the subject’s title, on closer examination there was no evidence of sustainability-related content in the subject description. However, it is important at this point to recall the acknowledged limitations of this content analysis. A deeper analysis of other curricula document may have revealed another picture of sustainability.

The role of the words ‘sustainable/sustainability’ in curricula occupies some commentators’ discussion. It seems a holistic approach to sustainability education would necessitate more than merely including the word ‘sustainable’ in a degree or subject name. Fáilte Ireland’s (2008) report suggests that avoiding the use of the term ‘sustainable’ removes the temptation to adopt a tokenistic and superficial approach to sustainability in degree programs and subjects. Farrell and Twining-Ward (2005, p. 118) clarify this point further stating that “the use of sustainability on its own, or in conjunction with the term sustainable tourism, is fraught with ambiguity unless a specific explanation of this issue is made”. The argument follows that by using other terminology than ‘sustainable’, the curriculum designer would be forced to explicitly articulate underpinning values, instead of assuming sustainability is present merely because the word ‘sustainable’ is used.

On the other hand, critical scholars such as Jickling (2001) are wary about the use of specific language to incorporate sustainability issues. They are critical of a sustainability education agenda being imposed, claiming this would run against liberal principles of neutrality and threaten students’ ability to think (Jickling & Spork, 1998). Ferkany and Whyte (2013) counter this claim, however, arguing that environmental education, in all its iterations, can be compatible with liberalism as it draws on similar virtues such as critical thinking, humility and fairness. Nonetheless Jickling (2001, p. 168) contends that explicit sustainability education risks forming a “one-dimensional” sustainability agenda. According to these scholars, education should not be about indoctrinating students into a particular ideology (Jickling, 1992; Jickling & Spork, 1998). Even so, this warning does not necessarily detract from the call to change from traditional business as usual content to curriculum content that acknowledges alternative ways of thinking. If the view suggested by Jickling and others is misinterpreted, it risks opposing curricula with overt sustainability principles, yet fails to question or reflect upon their implications.
Many working in EfS agree that sustainability education is not a matter of simply inserting facts into existing curricula, (Huckle, 1999; Tilbury, 2004), in other words an ‘add sustainability and stir’ mentality. Nor, some argue, should it be viewed as a predefined concept taught by ‘experts’ (Jickling & Wals, 2008). Rather it is a process of learning (Wals & Jickling, 2002). The concept of sustainability has a transformative goal which necessitates systemic change, involving “an innovative and interdisciplinary process requiring participative and holistic approaches to the curriculum” (Tilbury, 2004, p. 98). Some scholars concur that labels should not be the worry; rather, focus needs to be on the intent embodied with regards to “manifested values and philosophy in any educational policy or practice” (Sterling, 2010, p. 216). It is the underlying philosophy, or as Bonnett (2006) puts it, the ‘frame of mind’ that is important when considering EfS.

The findings of Chapter 4 showed minimal inclusion of the ‘capacity building’ EfS skills of critical thinking, problem solving, innovation, creativity and critical reflection in the curriculum documents reviewed. In fact, 83 percent of subject descriptions contained no reference to any EFS skills. The most common skill explicitly referred to was ‘critical thinking’ occurring in five percent of subject descriptions. The EfS literature, though, purports an educational approach that involves cultivating critical thinking, respect for others, capacity for future thinking and opportunities to reflect upon and possibly change behaviours and lifestyle (Wals, 2011). This study acknowledges an investigation into the wording of subjects’ topics and assessment tasks may have revealed references to EfS skills. My content analysis did not drill down further than the subject description. It is possible my findings have pointed out the issue related to the ability of writing the course outline using the ‘right’ genre.

From the findings of this study, this thesis agrees with von der Heidt et al.’s (2012) recommendation that the Spanish ACES model for greening the curriculum could offer a useful strategy for TH&E higher education to proceed towards building sustainability in undergraduate business curricula. In essence, space for EfS should be concerned with the process of learning ‘how’ to think rather than necessarily ‘what’ to think (Thomas, 2009). The ACES model identified “working within a prospective orientation of alternative scenarios” (Junyent & de Ciurana, 2008, p. 769) as one of the 10 characteristics of a ‘green curriculum’. These scholars explain this to mean the inclusion of “critical thinking and responsible decision making for the present and the future” (Junyent & de Ciurana, 2008, p. 769).
7.2.1 Business as Usual Curriculum

Based on the findings presented in Chapter 4, TH&E curricula appeared to be, not surprisingly, influenced by the majority of programs located within a business school or faculty. The content analysis showed that TH&E formed a major in a degree for 37 of the total 68 TH&E programs, 33 of which were business focused. Furthermore, while I was writing the thesis, the last two remaining Schools of Tourism and Hospitality Management located at the University of Queensland and Southern Cross University announced they were merging with their respective business schools. The analysis of sustainability content within the degree programs under examination in this study, and subjects offered within them, indicated that sustainability was most constrained in the TH&E programs positioned in a business school or faculty. For example, the majority of the 682 subjects which included the term sustainable/sustainability in their description were located in a faculty other than business, the latter only accounting for 11 percent of these subjects. In contrast, the small number of TH&E programs located in a social science faculty showed greater propensity to explicitly include sustainability education, usually via a sociocultural perspective. The degree and subjects located in these non-business faculties contained sustainability and sustainability-related dimensions across 50 percent of degree programs.

Despite tourism having a significant impact on the physical and natural environments, the findings of this thesis suggest then that many TH&E students may graduate with sparse, if any, knowledge about the connection tourism business has with the natural environment. From the examination of the TH&E curriculum space at four levels in this study, it was apparent many programs were dominated by generic business content: management, marketing or accounting. Engagement with sustainability issues was reflected with some coverage of sociocultural, environmental, economic, ethical and political ‘pillars’. However, a limited inclusion of the environmental perspective generally across all programs (occurring in just 13 percent of the total subjects) pointed to some serious shortfalls.

Of all the sustainability-related perspectives, the results showed that the sociocultural pillar was most highly represented in the TH&E curriculum space. It was included in 20 percent of the total units, though often captured as ‘cultural diversity’. This locates sustainability within an anthropocentric discourse (focus on profit and people) as opposed to a biocentric approach where an explicit environmental perspective is included. It suggests across Australia, TH&E education is on the ‘weaker’ end of the ideological sustainability spectrum (Hunter, 1997;
Further, it is unclear whether the sociocultural content is ‘critical’ in nature. The word ‘culture’ tended to be associated with discussions about cross-cultural communication rather than a critical examination of social justice and equity issues, deemed essential for the study of tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006).

Ethical content was present in some form in nearly all TH&E degrees and included in 12 percent of the subject descriptions; this is an important finding given that ethical analysis is considered central to sustainability education (Schlottmann, 2008). However, the implicit meaning underlying the term ‘ethics’ or ‘ethical’ in many of these subjects is ambiguous based on the context of where these terms were positioned. It appeared the common interpretation of ethics in TH&E education was equated to ‘managerial’ ethics and centred on behaviour and conduct, rather than an association with wider social equity and justice issues.

Authors contend it is difficult to find room for a sustainable, critical or ethical perspective within a neoliberal business curriculum (Manteaw, 2008). Therefore, the ‘location’ of many tourism programs within business faculties could pose as an impediment for a sustainability paradigm shift. The trend towards corporate social responsibility and triple bottom line considerations is gaining leverage in some fields such as business education (Springett, 2005). However, Springett (2006) cautions that a focus on ethical business behaviour does not necessarily translate into sustainability ethics. Scholars argue that a study of ethics should critique issues of justice, equity and impacts of differing power structures associated with social, economic, environmental and political matters, as opposed to a (narrower) business approach focused on professional conduct and ‘management’ of the sustainable development agenda (Kearins & Springett, 2003; Springett, 2006). An absence of discussion and reflection on a range of different ethical standpoints within curricula, as shown in the results of this present study, would make it difficult for students to develop a critical attitude (Ohman & Ostman, 2008).

Overall the results of the content analysis point to a compacted business dominated curricula with limited space for alternative sustainability thinking and reluctance to critically analyse the political status quo, depicted in Figure 4.2.
The noticeable absence of political discourse within TH&E curricula (political discourse was included in only 8 percent of the subject descriptions) suggests a lack of explicit challenging or critical analysis of the political nature of sustainable tourism. On a prima facie account of the website content analysis at least, it is argued that TH&E education is reflecting more of the dominant, neoliberal attitude as opposed to a social democratic view of the tourism world, which would normally be underpinned by concerns such as equity, justice and economic fairness. Authors critical of Western society’s ideological status quo stress the importance of understanding the influence that politics and different ideologies can have on decisions about sustainability (Huckle & Sterling, 1996; Porritt, 2007). Based on the content analysis of titles and descriptions, it seems the paradigm shift advocated by Ayikoru et al. (2009) and Higgins-Desbiolles (2006) to move TH&E curricula away from the current narrow neoliberal business focus, is moving slowly in the Australian TH&E higher education context.

The content analysis revealed that when tourism was situated within an Arts faculty it facilitated a more liberal style education which in turn seemed to have greater synergy with sustainability education. This supports the view taken in the tourism scholarly community that TH&E education would benefit practically from a more liberal arts education as it develops questioning minds and builds tourism students’ capacity for critical thinking (Caton, 2014; 2015). Moreover, the skills acquired through liberal education have been shown to be of value when critically examining issues of sustainability more broadly (Sherren, 2006a). Put another way, teachers of business dominated curricula may have to consciously work harder to steer away
from a business as usual dominated tourism approach to one that incorporates alternative sustainability-related approaches in curricula. In agreement with Fáilte Ireland’s (2008) report, it must be stressed that sustainability is not necessarily anti-business. Other authors strongly advocate for the incorporation of a critical agenda into business focused curricula in order to interrogate the traditional approach of business education (García-Rosell, 2013; Kearins & Springett, 2003; Springett, 2005; Springett, 2010). The limited presence of sustainability shown by the results of this study suggests that an uptake of alternative sustainability thinking as the context for tourism involves difficult across-the-board changes.

7.2.2 A Spectrum of Sustainability in the Tourism Curriculum

The content analysis showed that apart from a few standout programs, sustainability overall was explicitly stated or inferred in a sporadic way, suggesting space within the TH&E curriculum for sustainability content may not be valued, or is misunderstood. A potential risk posed by these results is that by presenting sustainability-related content in a fragmented manner it relies on students making the connection themselves between sustainability as a theoretical concept and sustainability in practice within the field of TH&E management.

Busby’s (2003) study, which examined sustainability within the British higher education tourism curriculum, found the concept of sustainability was located within a spectrum of engagement. Resembling Busby’s (2003) case study findings, the results of my study point to patchy engagement with the concept of sustainability. Busby identified the continuum to consist of an incidental approach (absence of serious study about sustainability), moving to an incremental or ad hoc approach (overt issues of sustainability were covered in one or two subjects only) and then to the opposite end where sustainability was holistically ‘embedded’ throughout the curriculum (Busby, 2003).

Analysis of the use of the term ‘sustainable’ or sustainability’ in program titles and descriptions and subject titles and descriptions located in web-based curricula documents has shown that currently the Australian university TH&E curriculum engages with sustainability at three levels, ranging from none to minimal to medium. The conceptual framework in Table 7.1 depicts the characteristics associated with these three levels and where they lie on a sustainability spectrum ranging from ‘no sustainability’ to ‘integrated sustainability’ (Kearins & Springett, 2003; Sterling & Thomas, 2006).
Table 7.1: Levels of Sustainability in Australian University TH&E Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Characteristics of Sustainability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>Considered irrelevant to course content. Business as usual way of thinking dominates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Sustainability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Mixture of core ‘sustainability’ named subjects. Evidence of sustainability and related concepts in some subjects. Considered relevant to some subjects or reliant on lecturer to incorporate. Some evidence of alternative ways of thinking in some subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad hoc Sustainability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Evidence of sustainability throughout all subjects. Not reliant on stand-alone sustainability subjects. Considered relevant in all subjects. Evidence of underpinning sustainability philosophy. Different ways of thinking evident in all subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author

Educational scholars have been known to make reference to ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ sustainability paradigms when discussing sustainability in the curriculum (Kearins & Springett, 2003; Sterling & Thomas, 2006; Busby, 2003). At the time of this study’s data capture, no evidence pointed to any TH&E program being situated at the high or ‘strong’ end of the EfS spectrum where sustainability principles are explicitly stated or inferred throughout all subjects (Busby, 2003). A ‘high’ level however, is included in the framework above to show the characteristics recommended in the literature that represent ‘strongly’ integrated sustainability in the curriculum and a potential goal for TH&E.

The texts used in titles and descriptions of the majority of TH&E programs generally had minimal evidence of explicitly stated or inferred sustainability and therefore were located mostly at the minimum or ‘weak’ level of the spectrum. The programs relied on an incremental inclusion of one or two ‘sustainability’ named subjects. As Chapter 4 noted, a small number of programs were considered to be at the ‘medium’ level of sustainability term usage. Although they were not relying merely on sustainability named subjects, according to the method of examination used which counted the term ‘sustainability’ and sustainability-related terms, both
explicitly stated or inferred sustainability and related dimensions appeared ad hoc throughout the subjects of a degree.

Australian TH&E’s overall low level approach to EfS, as represented in Table 7.1, may denote a general tokenistic, add-on of sustainability in the curriculum which results in superficial understanding of sustainability. A similar assertion was observed in Cotton and Winter’s (2010) study which posited that a tokenistic treatment of sustainability focuses on learning about isolated tasks, such as paper recycling or changing light bulbs. This view also represents a business as usual attitude, with Sanders and Le Clus (2011) noting changes made amounting to symbolic gestures. A mixed response to sustainability is not unique to tourism programs. Similar patchy engagement with sustainability education in other disciplines has been recorded in previous research (Shephard, 2010). Leihy and Salazar’s (2011) study investigating the incorporation of sustainability in curricula across all universities in the state of Victoria, Australia, found no evidence of a policy which “ensures EfS is effectively and widely included in teaching and learning or research activity” (Leihy & Salazar, 2011, p. vi).

EfS scholars advocate the infusion of sustainability principles in a holistic manner (Sterling, 2001). Further, a holistic integration of sustainability seems to engender strong support and satisfaction from students. A UK report assessing student skills for sustainable development found a continued preference for embedding sustainability overall, as opposed to merely ‘adding’ content or courses on sustainability (Drayson, Bone, & Agombar, 2010).

Following the investigation of Objective 1 – to document the explicit statement of sustainability in the TH&E curriculum, consisting of program titles, descriptions and subject titles and descriptions- the need for awareness of what ideological forces were at work when designing curricula, was warranted. The analysis of findings led me to concur with Tribe’s (2005, p. 59) advice: “Decisions to frame courses in a narrow part of curriculum space need to be made conscious of the situatedness of course designers in particular ideological streams and be mindful of the consequences of narrow specialisation”. In line with the conclusions of others, a similar inference may be drawn here in Australia that the responsibility for embedding sustainability in the TH&E curriculum still relies in part on individual lecturers (Fáilte Ireland, 2008). Resonating with findings by Barth and Rieckmann (2012) and Cotton et al. (2009), the focus of sustainability for TH&E education appears largely dependent on the teachers’ interpretation of sustainability and motivation to incorporate it. An understanding of this
phenomenon formed the remaining objectives of this thesis, which are reviewed and discussed in the next section.

7.3 Differences in Understanding ‘Sustainability’

Stage Two of the study explored the views of tourism academics who taught sustainability. Tourism scholars generally agree that an understanding of sustainability is crucial for tourism graduates to tackle future global problems (Sheldon, Fesenmaier, & Tribe, 2011). Participant selection criteria for my chosen research method of in-depth interviews meant I interviewed only academics who had an interest and/or taught sustainability. To begin with, I explored what the concept of sustainability meant to, and how it was understood by, tourism academics (Objective 2). This exploration was followed by an exploration of what sustainability meant within their teaching and learning practices (Objective 3). Lastly, challenges and opportunities perceived by tourism lecturers in educating for sustainability were explored (Objective 4).

While all of the academics interviewed incorporated dimensions of sustainability into their teaching, many were not acquainted with EfS terminology as an educational approach or pedagogy. Over half did not know the term ‘education for sustainability’, indicative in comments such as: ‘not heard of it; is it a buzzword’? This view contrasted with a small number of academics who were familiar with EfS terminology and knowledgeable about the differences between educating about and educating for the environment. Generally they had been exposed to the term through involvement with their institution’s curriculum development committee, charged with incorporating sustainability in the curriculum.

The interview data show how sustainability education was being forged mainly by the personal commitment of individuals, occasionally embraced by the whole school/faculty and, reportedly, sporadically supported at the institutional level. The question this finding raises is: why is there a lack of awareness or engagement with the concept of EfS? The state of affairs points to poor communication of the sustainability education message at all levels of education: from global and national platforms through to the higher education executives, school/faculty leaders and individual teacher. It seems EfS has been regarded as another ‘buzzword’ that may or may not have caught on.

A general lack of awareness about EfS is not unusual. Reid and Petocz’s (2006) study of lecturers’ understandings echoed similar results in the context of other disciplines. Furthermore,
case study research by Djordjevic and Cotton (2011), discovered a lack of effective communication of sustainability in higher education to be an issue. They found the sustainability message was too complex and insufficiently contextualised, and lacked shared understanding about the meaning and value of sustainability (Djordjevic & Cotton, 2011). These researchers noted a lack of high-level support reduced the impact of messages, which was exacerbated by the sheer overload of electronic information received by staff, causing messages to fail or distort. The UNDESED has ended and it would appear that most tourism educators remain largely oblivious of the global push for sustainability education.

7.3.1 Shift to Alternative Concepts

Results from the interviews indicate that despite having a personal affinity with the philosophy of sustainability, the term is understood quite differently among tourism academics. It was apparent that for many academics interviewed for this thesis, the terms ‘sustainable’ and ‘sustainability’ invoked a more traditional understanding, and an affiliation with terms such as ‘triple bottom line’, ‘intergenerational equity’ and ‘impacts’. Other academics, however, preferred what might be called ‘alternative’ sustainability terms, such as ‘resilience’ and ‘social-ecological systems thinking’. For whatever reasons, the terms ‘sustainable’ and ‘sustainability’ had certain negative connotations, such as being ‘meaningless’, ‘alienating’ and ‘out-of-date or ‘usurped’.

Some academic comments indicated they preferred to lessen the reliance on using the terms ‘sustainable/sustainability’ as it risks the ‘basket case’ scenario where anything can be included, and then rendering the terms meaningless. For these individuals it was important to unpack what sustainable/sustainability meant and talk about values instead. It was evident those who had a greater affinity with sustainability principles tended to use the word less often. Instead, they ‘put meat on the bones’ and talked specifically about principles of resilience, social justice, ethical responsibility, conservation and were conscious about being sensitive to local context – one size does not fit all.

Lecturers’ apparent reticence in engaging with more traditional sustainability terminology and a preference instead for other terms, points to an emerging alternative conceptualisation of sustainability. The move beyond the language of ‘sustainable’ and ‘sustainability’ suggests a change in the paradigmatic view by some academics towards sustainability. A shift in language could point to a move to a post-sustainability phase where other concepts perhaps better
encapsulate broader underlying principles of what it means to live life and conduct business now and into the future. This view has support of environmental educators who envision a time when sustainability principles are intrinsically woven through every aspect of higher education and the reliance on the terms ‘sustainable/sustainability’ becomes redundant (Fien, 2004).

A movement away from traditional concepts to alternative concepts, used by some academics to define what sustainability means, is presented in Figure 7.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Concepts</th>
<th>Alternative Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Triple Bottom Line</td>
<td>Capitals Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impacts</td>
<td>Resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Systems Thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasteful</td>
<td>Transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pillars</td>
<td>Responsible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic</td>
<td>Ethical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergenerational Equity</td>
<td>Integrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adaptive Capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Climate Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Innovative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Ecological Systems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7.3: Traditional and Alternative Sustainability Concepts used by Tourism Academics
Source: Author

For some academics, their usage of alternative terms is a first step away from business as usual language which they feel has been compromised and hijacked by political corporate rhetoric. The question posed is does this shift mean we lose the original tenets of triple bottom line? The alternative language favoured by some academics has similarities with the preferred language emerging in other areas of tourism. Moyle, McLennnan, Ruhanen, and Weiler’s (2014) study tracking the concept of sustainability over the last decade in Australian tourism policy and planning documents, found while frequency in use of sustainability as a concept had slightly increased, its conceptualisation had moved from triple bottom line to evolving concepts of responsibility, climate change, adaption and transformation.

The issue of language has previously been seen as a barrier towards the progress of sustainability education (Filho, 2000). Scholars have noted challenges presented by the multitude of possible interpretations for ‘sustainable’ and ‘sustainability’ making it difficult to agree on what the terms represent (Wals & Jickling, 2002). They debate the usefulness of
‘sustainability’, with Wals and Jickling (2002, p. 122) believing the term is “conceptually flawed” because “it provides no inherent clues about how to mediate between advocates of incompatible value systems”. The terms are prone to misuse and their malleability is seen by some to result in meaningless rhetoric about complex issues on all sides (Sherren, 2006a). Some believe sustainability’s contested nature means a single agreed definition is unlikely in the near future (Martin, Dawe, & Jucker, 2006; Orr, 2010).

The findings from the content analysis and the report of academics pointed to a tension with how sustainability ought to be represented in the tourism curriculum. Given that some academics were not using the ‘S’ word when incorporating sustainability-related dimensions, it was difficult to clearly ascertain whether sustainability was being incorporated in their teaching. A further tension was raised between ‘stand-alone’ and ‘embedded’ sustainability. Just because an academic may be teaching a stand-alone sustainability titled subject, many still preferred to view sustainability as an ‘embedded’ concept. Therefore, to ascertain whether sustainability was ‘embedded’ in the curriculum, further analysis of information such as assessment items and an observation of tutorial activities, which were beyond the data capture of this study, would be necessary.

Although this study sought multiple perspectives from the purposive sample of sustainability academics, this thesis raised the issue of lack of a shared common language and understanding about sustainability among tourism academics. A study of educational practitioners’ approaches to ESD in the UK indicated the absence of an agreed definition of sustainability “justifies a much wider discourse in teaching and learning about sustainability than single definitions might permit” (Martin et al., 2006, p. 66). The findings of this current study are reminiscent of Reid and Petocz’s (2006) study of university lecturers’ understanding of sustainability, which concluded that the absence of a common sustainability language could be restricting the integration of sustainability dimensions within the curriculum.

### 7.3.2 Challenges of Sustainability Praxis

In their personal life most academics aspired to live ‘sustainably’, evidenced by the many examples given to explain what they considered was a sustainable lifestyle. The quotations in Chapter 5 reveal most lecturers made conscious decisions and took action to minimise their resource use wherever possible. However, many expressed a tension with what steps were
realistically achievable given the constraints of modern day living. Several academics felt under particular pressure to meet the expectation to attend conferences (often involving overseas air travel) to fulfil and maintain their academic profile and professional standing. Comments from some academics indicated they were endeavouring to undertake sustainability action. The idea of role modelling sustainability to students (walking the talk) was commonly mentioned. The academics talked about the challenge of sustainability practice at two levels: within one’s private life and within the classroom.

In their daily life, many academics were conflicted by the desire to act for the good of the planet but often felt foiled by the pressure of consumerism, for example desires to take annual overseas holidays and own multiple cars. The numerous comments made by academics about their personal sustainability action, which many felt compelled to make known to students, revealed the importance of this form of personal praxis in the eyes of sustainability educators. However, tension with sustainability in practice mentioned by academics, points to issues surrounding praxis.

Academics’ comments in Chapter 5, appear to resonate with Orwell’s (1989) satirical notion of “double thinking”. According to some authors, the phenomenon of ‘sustainability talk’ is wrought with contradictions that distort the real issues at hand (Wals & Jickling, 2002). “Double thinking” occurs:

> When comparing the sustaining of ecological processes with the sustaining of consumerism we immediately see inconsistencies and incompatibilities of values, yet many people, conditioned to think that sustainability is inherently good, will promote both at the same time (Wals & Jickling, 2002, p. 123).

Even though the desire was there to “act rightly” (Kemmis, 2012, p. 88) on behalf of the teacher, the reality for some was sustainability action was thwarted. For some lecturers interviewed, “double thinking” about sustainability was their way of life.

Sustainability discourse considers praxis an important element. The value of praxis is it represents social change for the “good of humankind, not just in the service of sectional interests” (Kemmis, 2012, p. 90). Put another way, “the person who is doing praxis is doing it because it is good in itself to do it” (Kemmis, 2012, p. 87). Within EfS literature, it is contended that the development of phronesis (practical wisdom) and praxis (social change) would appear
more relevant than ever in today’s education as we seek skills and knowledge for a sustainable future (Kemmis, 2012). Although not writing in a tourism education context, Kemmis (2012, p. 81) explains the importance of praxis as a way to combat characteristics of self-absorption, self-interest individualism and destruction of the community by globalism:

Praxis is not a matter of following rules or priorities or routines. It is a matter of deliberating in the face of uncertainty about how to act rightly, taking into account moral, social and political considerations, not just prudential questions, and then acting for the good – acting rightly, or as one should under the circumstances (Kemmis, 2012, p. 88).

Praxis has been shown to be beneficial for sustainability education as a way to unpack theoretical and abstract aspects of sustainability into practical application and action (Hazelton & Haigh, 2010). In the literature it has been examined in the context of: critiquing ecotourism and benefits of reflective praxis (Jamal, Borges, & Stronza, 2006); creating an integrated disciplinary approach in engineering studies (Bacon et al., 2011); as way of embodying virtue ethics in the study of sustainable tourism (Jamal, 2004); and as part of a collaborative service learning approach (Jamal et al., 2011 373). Freirian principles of praxis and critical empowerment have also been recommended within business education (Hazelton & Haigh, 2010).

7.4 Ideological Forces in Tourism Education

Discernible differences in an academic’s ideology or worldview were evident from the interpretive analysis of the interview data. Lecturers’ worldviews clearly influenced their understanding of sustainability and explained the prominence of sustainability principles in curricula and teaching practice. A range of worldviews evident among the tourism academic interviewed gave rise to some notable divergent views towards sustainability education.

There is ongoing ideological debate surrounding the concepts of ‘sustainability’ and ‘sustainable development’. With myriad meanings, ‘ideology’ refers to beliefs about the way a society ‘ought to function to support the livelihoods and/or aspirations of its members” (Sunderlin, 2003, p. 14). Terms such as ‘environmentalism’, ‘ecological sustainability’ and ‘sustainable development’ are difficult to reconcile as multiple perspectives exist depending on the preferred worldview to ‘how we live our lives’. One’s ‘worldview’ (often used
interchangeably with ‘paradigm’) is derived from personal values and mindset about the way the world is, or should be, and can be put simply as “a basic set of beliefs that guide action” (Guba, 1990, p. 17). According to Tribe (2005, p. 59) “ideology offers a way of identifying ways in which the curriculum may be skewed by sets of ideas which are deeply embedded in our ways of thinking so that they are taken for granted”. Educators’ approaches to EfS are influenced by their ideology and worldview.

### 7.4.1 Influence of a Teacher’s Worldview

Sustainability education was pursued to some degree by all the tourism academics interviewed. I criteria when creating the sample of participants was that they had some experience and/or interest in teaching/researching sustainability. Hence all were operating within a sustainability ‘paradigm’. As seen in the findings presented in this thesis, despite having a personal affinity with the philosophy of sustainability, the academics interviewed defined and interpret it differently. Lecturers’ comments in the interviews suggest they were incorporating sustainability principles into their teaching due to their own personal conviction, rather than through professional learning or with support from university leaders. A range of reaction revealed not only did the lecturers find the sustainability terminology difficult, but more importantly, the concept of sustainability in tourism education itself was prone to conflicting ideology. The findings presented in Chapter 5 reveal that academics’ language of sustainability is varied, largely informed by life experience and their own political and ideological tendencies. A few academics believed that the most prominent barrier in teaching sustainability was their colleagues’ lack of support for, or understanding of, the concept. This suggests the importance paradigm plays when integrating sustainability into teaching. The thesis has shown unpacking the reasons ‘why’ and ‘how’ tourism academics’ interpret sustainability within a tourism educational context, are critical to understand.

The findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5, uncovered some discrete differences among the lecturers’ worldviews and paradigms. It must be noted that these paradigms are also subjective classifiers, dependent on ‘who’ is promulgating them. I was classifying the academics’ positioning from my own interpretive lens and worldview. With this in mind, the model presented in Figure 7.4, depicts the possible positions the tourism academics interviewed in this study held. Each circle corresponds to a dominant pillar – economic, social or environmental. The overlap of the circles denotes that more than one ‘pillar’ could influence the individual’s
paradigm at any one time, depending on a number of factors: the context of the situation - class size, topic they were teaching, allocated time or available resources.

Figure 7.4: Paradigmatic Orientation of Tourism Academics and Sustainability
Source: Author

Academic comments revealed a spectrum of understanding as to what sustainability means. Conceptualisations ranged from an anthropocentric view of sustainability where the overriding goal and focus was on maintaining economic and business sustainability imperatives, towards a more biocentric perspective concerned with the natural environment and its biophysical systems. Three broad groupings emerged from the analysis of paradigmatic orientation of tourism academics’ interpretation of sustainability. Firstly, several academics were found to be positioned within an economic paradigm, on the left side of Figure 7.4 as their interpretation of sustainability revolved around an economic imperative. Here academics taught sustainability to ensure students were well placed in a future industry job market and equipped with skills to sustain the tourism industry. This may suggest that for some academics located in this paradigmatic position, they were willing to trade-off concern for the environment in order to secure economic imperatives.

Located at the right side of Figure 7.4 were a second, small number of lecturers who were not swayed by the argument for an underpinning economic paradigm when teaching sustainability. Instead they displayed characteristics of an ecological paradigm. Their interpretation of sustainability was always grounded in an overriding environmental commitment reflecting
aspirations of ‘strong’ sustainability. The ideological positioning held by some teachers meant they believed occasions existed when ‘no tourism’ development was the only acceptable option.

Finally a third, slightly larger group of academics were located in the middle of Figure 7.4 and talked about their belief in ‘balancing’ the three ‘pillars’-economic, sociocultural and environmental. They endeavoured to treat each pillar with equal importance. Within this group, some reflected characteristics of Bookchin’s (2009) view of a socioecological paradigm where anthropocentric needs were considered equal with ecological imperatives. A few lecturers strongly inclined to the social pillar, with one ascribing specifically to a ‘humanist’ ideology.

Although a ‘balanced approach’ to sustainability was generally described by many academics, analysis of interviews showed challenges and ideological differences emerged with the meaning of sustainability in a tourism context. Ultimately, one or two ‘pillars’ appeared to influence the lens through which sustainability was viewed, revealing an underlying ideology which was either the economic or sociocultural/environmental paradigm. An analysis of the lecturers’ comments revealed the presence of two key ideological positions: those who operated within an economic paradigm and those situated within a sociocultural/environmental paradigm.

Defining sustainability remains contested and dependent on the paradigmatic vantage point of whomever so defines the concept. When analysing tourism in general, scholars have discussed the significance of worldview (Chalip & Costa, 2012). It appears to date, however, that little critical analysis has been undertaken about the influence of an academic’s ideological worldview on their teaching of sustainability in the context of tourism higher education. Scant empirical research about the influence of paradigm means the findings of this study cannot be directly compared with other results. From a thematic analysis of academic comments, a conceptual framework for tourism sustainability education is put forward. Table 7.2 highlights the spectrum of positions the sustainability tourism educators adopted. It makes transparent the range of paradigms affecting the concept of sustainability education within a tourism context. In short, the conceptual framework demonstrates the relationship between an academic’s sustainability position and how this translates into the underlying focus taken with sustainability education in tourism.
Table 7.2: A Conceptual Framework for Sustainability in Tourism Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability Position</th>
<th>Lecturers’ Perspectives on Sustainability</th>
<th>Focus of Sustainability Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrow and ‘Weak’</td>
<td>Economic focus concerned with sustaining business needs.</td>
<td>Teaches the economic imperative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad and ‘Strong’</td>
<td>Social and economic focus concerned with sustaining anthropocentric needs.</td>
<td>Teaches a socio-economic orientation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environmental focus concerned with sustaining biocentric needs.</td>
<td>Teaches an ecocentric imperative via a values-based orientation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author

This framework makes transparent the rhetoric of sustainability education. The majority of academics interviewed were located in the narrow and ‘weak’ range of possible sustainability perspectives and teaching foci. This framework makes transparent the rhetoric of sustainability education. The majority of academics interviewed were located in the weak to medium range of sustainability depicted in Table 7.2. Comparable to Colin Hunter’s spectrum of ‘very weak’ to ‘very strong’ interpretations of sustainable development (Hunter, 1997, p. 852), conceptualisations of sustainability in tourism higher education were also “legitimised” according to the dominant pillar(s) adopted (Hunter, 1997, p. 859).

An educator plays an important role in helping to trigger sustainability learning (Barth & Rieckmann, 2012). According to Cotton, Bailey, Warren, and Bissell (2009, p. 725), sustainability action in education is dependent on how academics interpret sustainability through the “lens of personal beliefs”. This understanding concurs with Smyth (1995, p. 10), who observed how educators perceive sustainability education is “filtered, like anything else, through their own attitudes, experience and capacities”. Sustainability literacy and practice has been regarded as a crucial area of study in tourism higher education (Flohr, 2001). The findings presented here therefore raise the question - what are the ramifications when a lecturer’s values are not aligned to the sustainability values of the course/subject? Or to sustainability at all?

Cohen (2002) conceded that achieving a balance between ranges of need is often fraught with challenge. Showing agreement with this position, Jamal et al. (2011, p. 136) claim that interpretations and responses to sustainable tourism development are fraught with opposing
ideologies because social, environmental and economic priorities vie for attention. It seems the malleability of sustainability’s interpretation and incorporation in learning and teaching, echoes similar assertions by some in the tourism development literature (Sharpley, 2009; Wheeler, 1993).

7.4.2 The Inhibiting Effect of Neoliberalism

Academics described how their university’s perceived superficial / tokenistic action further restricted their engagement with sustainability. According to these lecturers, this made it easier for the university community to ignore the sustainability message unless personally motivated. Based on the views of the academics, it seems a majority of institutions and business faculties are leaving ‘sustainability’ to the devices of the individual, instead of adopting a holistic, concerted university wide effort. Although some academics felt fully supported at both university and school/faulty level, many were disappointed by a lack of genuine support for sustainability shown by their leaders apathy or disinterest in sustainability.

A critical review of lecturers’ interviews highlighted the power of neoliberal forces within tourism education. Many lamented the tendency for an instrumentalist ideology directing sustainability education. The findings in this thesis presented in Chapters 5 and 6 illuminated academics’ barriers which hindered the praxis of teaching sustainability. In particular, academics talked about the problems of budgetary constraints, lack of support and time. Some academics interviewed in this study felt that tourism education had fallen victim to tenets of neoliberalism and technocratic managerialism, aligning with Ayikoru’s (2015) similar appraisal of the current situation. The lack of alternative viewpoints to neoliberalism was voiced as a barrier for sustainability by the teachers. The feeling expressed by some was the matrix of standardisation currently dominating Australian higher education inhibits the chance for transformative education.

Since neoliberal economic management philosophies have taken hold on higher education, universities now operate in an environment of reduced budgets and increased competition (Dredge et al., 2013). According to Kemmis (2012, p. 93), prevailing neoliberalism has resulted in “rational calculation of costs and benefits in every domain of human existence, from markets and economies through to education”. In their examination of tourism higher education in England, Ayikoru et al. (2009, p. 191) noted “the notions of competition, markets,
performativity and quality assurance, commonly associated with industry and commerce, converge in tourism higher education”. A review by Dredge et al. (2013, p. 1) found a variety of “political, philosophical and managerial” factors have created a “pressured academic environment” in Australian tourism higher education. Similarly, Ayikoru’s (2015) critique of tourism and hospitality education contends neoliberalism has wide reaching impacts which negatively affect academia and students in this field of study. Within this compressed economic climate it is probably inevitable that pressures have been exerted on the curriculum space (Tribe, 2015). The incorporation of sustainability is a long term commitment and university time frames do not bode well with annual budget targets (Bacon et al., 2011). Other scholars find the effect of standardisation on education to be problematic with Wals and Jickling (2002) noting the setting of standards has reduced space in education.

Previous studies discuss the impact of institutional technocratic pressures and other political forces which result in a compacted and squeezed curriculum. Wilson and von der Heidt (2012) found TH&E teachers and curriculum designers felt the current pressured teaching environment made it difficult to innovate and ‘do something different’. In particular, Wilson and von der Heidt (2012) identified similar challenges when integrating EfS into curriculum, noting that academics lack time/space in curriculum, experience staff and student resistance and face complex, multi-campus teaching. Other research has identified issues of insufficient resources, particularly with regard to time allocations as challenging for EfS (Shephard, 2010; Kelly and Alam, 2009).

Within the literature more broadly, critical debate exists about the influence that neoliberal ideology has on education (Giroux, 2008). Some commentators believe the prevailing neoliberal culture, characterised by a capitalist, market-driven, pro-growth agenda, conflicts with the ideals of sustainability education (Manteaw, 2008). Others have issue with neoliberalism’s faith in the free market and accompanying belief that everyone has an opportunity to succeed; where economic progress, which exploits and accrues wealth, is valued (Porritt, 2007; Saunders, 2010). According to Saunders (2010, p. 52), “what is most difficult to overcome is the most powerful aspect of neoliberal ideology: the pervasiveness of economic rationality into all aspects of life”.

This discussion chapter has already suggested that making space for alternative views is challenging within a neoliberal dominated curriculum (Manteaw, 2008; Saunders, 2010). Critical scholars lament the dominating neoliberal ideology claiming it poses serious
ramifications about what is taught and what is omitted (Giroux, 2008; Saunders, 2010). They further argue that neoliberalism thwarts the very advancement of education by the fact its ideology is based on the premise that ‘there is no alternative’ to the current way of thinking (Apple, 2004).

Tourism scholars have already acknowledged there is a tendency towards a neoliberal, technocratic style of tourism education (Ayikoru, Tribe, & Airey, 2009). It seems from academics’ comments this has made it difficult to engage with EfS in tourism higher education. Other EfS scholars concur that a non-anthropocentric, business as usual attitude runs the risk of reinforcing the very attitudes responsible for the degradation of the environment and quality of life (Sterling, 2001). It seems unless there are systemic changes to the current state of affairs, the paradigm changes considered necessary for EfS may remain evasive in tourism higher education.

Several of the academics interviewed for this research described the importance of having agency over their work in order to incorporate sustainability in their teaching. The findings presented in Chapter 6 revealed many teachers felt they were operating in a pressured environment characterised by shrinking resources in terms of available time, curriculum space and budget. Their reports suggested in tourism education, and higher education in general, tension exists between allowing space and time for creative learning opportunities and acquiescing to budget cuts, compressed time and space allocations for teaching and learning. The academics interviewed considered the latter approach, typical of a neoliberal agenda, tended to dominate. It appears there are shrinking opportunities for teachers to teach sustainability in the manner they feel is effective as noted by the loss of immersive field trips. Therefore, this thesis purports the current compacted situation reported here has the potential to negatively impact sustainability education.

However, it could be argued that the depth of passion and commitment to sustainability shown by several teachers in this study may form a useful precursor for EfS. The teachers who identified and/or described a sense of agency appeared to be incorporating sustainability in tourism higher education. The thesis suggests that when individual teachers are inspired by their personal commitment to a sustainability philosophy, they will find opportunities to challenge the status quo and invigorate the momentum towards EfS.
The importance of leadership to cultivate support for a sustainability education agenda was raised by the academics in the current study. This issue has been previously examined (McNamara, 2010; Scott, Tilbury, Sharp, & Deane, 2012; Wright & Horst, 2013). A low level of interest by university leaders can restrict the path to sustainability and other values-based teaching and learning initiatives; curricula remains fragmented and duplicated preventing a full across-the-board whole system approach (Cotton et al., 2009). Contributing to this debate Orr (2010, p. 82), describes the steps that some institutions have achieved but ends his synopsis with the proviso for sustainability education: “to be effective on a significant scale, however, the creative energies of the rising generation must be joined with strong and bold institutional leadership to catalyse a future better than the one in prospect”.

Nevertheless, a recurrent theme across the higher education literature is the lack of leadership for institutional drive and commitment towards sustainability goals (Aznar Minguet, Martinez-Agut, Palacios, Piñero, & Ull, 2011; Martin et al., 2006). A mixed methods study by McNamara (2010) investigated leadership strategies used to initiate, manage, and support sustainability initiatives at American universities and colleges. These studies have found a lack of commitment to financial resources and time were primary barriers. Other researchers have suggested strategies to combat these challenges, stressing the importance of establishing the value of sustainability to begin with in a university and secondly building support by its leaders (Willard et al., 2010, p. 2). Another strategy suggested by McNamara (2010) was to explicitly incorporate sustainability visible in the institution’s mission and policy documents.

7.4.3 Orientations to Teaching Sustainability: Training or Educating?

The academics interviewed were predisposed to sustainability education in one form or another due to the focus and sampling techniques of this study. While there were some shared ideas about the importance and necessity of sustainability, the concept itself was viewed and perceived quite differently depending on the academic’s ideological position. The interpretive analysis of comments about how and why academics integrated sustainability in tourism education, demonstrated a connection between lecturers’ worldviews of sustainability with their view of the overall purpose of tourism education. This study highlights a conundrum with tourism higher education which impacts on sustainability education. A tension was apparent amongst those lecturers intent on preparing students to be work ready for the tourism industry and who had a narrower sustainability focus, with those lecturers whose motivation was to broaden students’ life skills with wider sustainability capabilities.
This study has noted individuals’ past experiences influences their paradigmatic stance. Exposure to a transformative environmental experience, some of which are presented in Chapter 5, left deep impressions for a number of individuals, laying the foundations for their embracing an ecological paradigm. However, academics with a solid business background were more likely to operate from an economic paradigm with a vocational orientation to teaching. Where lecturers aligned with an economic perspective of sustainability, they tended to regard tourism education to be about preparing for industry and vocational skills. In this instance it was evident that sustainability was interpreted within the context of preserving the viability of the industry as shown by comments such as: ‘that’s the thing in tourism, we are about sustaining the industry too because those are the jobs for the students’ (A7). Consequently, the lecturers for whom future employment for students was a key goal, tended to frame sustainability education within a vocational orientation. On the other hand, the findings have shown some academics felt there was value in broader sustainability education in the context of tourism higher education. They inclined to view it not as a vocational skilling per se, but as education for global citizenship. The interpretation of sustainability encompassed concerns which were much broader than a narrow vocational perspective and included wider aspirations of what it means to live sustainably. A tension between the two orientations towards teaching sustainability was evident.

A significant finding from the analysis of the interviews therefore, is the tension among this group of tourism academics between what is perceived to be required by industry and what is deemed important for global citizenship. A vocational/training orientation inclined tourism education to a business/management dominated curriculum and teaching approach. For example, vocationally orientated academics regarded ‘creativity’ skills to be important in order for students to learn product differentiation skills to increase sales, rather than learning how to creatively tackle environmental or societal issues. In contrast, the academics whose orientation to teaching was centred on education for general citizenship gravitated more to a liberal style of sustainability education; examining social and environmental issues of tourism were central with less emphasis placed on acquiring business management skills. The feeling among these academics was a vocational orientation risked isolating sustainable tourism into a ‘business silo’ rather than understanding it as a social phenomenon with far reaching impacts.

The consequence of a vocational-dominated perspective, with regard to its effect on curricula and teaching practices is rarely discussed in the tourism literature in the context of sustainability education. In their study of sustainability pedagogies, Cotton and Winter (2010) allude to flaws
with pedagogy that focus on operational or technical interpretations of sustainability – water saving, recycling etc. rather than adopting a stronger sustainability pedagogy which enables a deeper exploration on the quality of social aspects and environmental issues. The findings in the present study appear to align with this view when EfS skills such as - creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking and innovation - are limited within a narrow economic worldview of sustainability.

Paradoxically, Wijesinghe (2014) argues that a skewed interpretation of sustainability will not benefit the industry that the students are being prepared for over the long term. Some scholars in tourism academia are concerned that if the focus remains on economic gain, the tourism businesses will ultimately weaken from within, leading to the diminishing of the industry and result in an unsustainable world (Wijesinghe, 2014). Following Wijesinghe’s (2014) line of thinking, this study has shown the tension between balancing what is good for tourism industry and what is good for greater society. Further, the findings have shown that in practice, interpretation and teaching about sustainable tourism development are fraught with opposing ideologies, concurring with Jamal et al.’s (2011, p. 136) observation that:

> Competing social, environmental and economic priorities, public – private sector interests and power relations embedded within political – industrial complexes are common explanations for why interpretation and implementation of sustainable tourism is often thwarted.

Within the general education arena, competing ideologies have been shown to influence the approach taken with curricula and teaching (Barnett, 2003; Scrimshaw, 1983; Sterling, 2001). It is important to have these discussions since the approach taken dictates the role education represents (Sterling, 2001). Distinct ideological influences have been useful in this present study to critically examine tourism education. It was evident that some academics interviewed in this study appeared informed by a liberal humanist ideology, where “education is a good in and of itself”. A few aligned to reconstructivism or Sterling’s transformative function, which “encourages change towards a fairer society and better world” (Sterling, 2001, p. 25). However, some lecturers seemed to err towards an instrumental approach, viewing education to be for a purpose based on the need to provide trained professionals for work (Goodman, 2011, p. 734). These teachers aligned more with Sterling’s vocational function; training for employment (Sterling, 2001). My study’s findings therefore appear to have synergy with similar observations by authors such Tribe (2005), Ayikoru et al. (2009) and Ayikoru (2015), who have
previously discussed the prevalence of neoliberalism in tourism education. This study, however, has gone further and revealed the negative effects of neoliberalism have adversely impacted sustainability teaching practices.

Within the sustainability education literature, an argument prevails that disciplinary education, should extend beyond an instrumental ideology which focuses on vocational outcomes (Goodman, 2011). Scott and Gough (2006, p. 93) finds the predominant instrumentalist view of education which seeks to cater for the “skills-needs (sic) of the economy in the future”, problematic. It is contended since the focus on skill preparation is a result of present day curriculum based on current available knowledge, by definition it can focus only on present expectations for the future (Scott & Gough, 2006). The risk therefore with a vocationalist ideology is that it threatens to stifle and undermine future thinking of a more sociocultural or arts-based nature. Ironically, as pointed out by Scott and Gough (2006, p. 93), this approach “may have the effect of limiting that future, through a failure to encourage students to test or challenge those expectations”.

Tourism education literature contains similar debates with Dredge et al. (2012c, p. 2154) noting “diverse discourses about the balance between higher order knowledge in liberal education and skills-based vocational education required by industry”. Central to the discussion is Tribe’s, (2002b) concept of the ‘philosophic practitioner’ (Tribe, 2002b), later extended by Dredge et al. (2012c). The philosophical practitioner articulates tourism education according to its emphasis on vocational or liberal tenets and practices. It highlighted four possible domains: vocational action, vocational reflection, liberal action and liberal reflection. An ideal position for a Philosophic Practitioner according to Tribe was a balance between all four domains. Tribe (2002b, 2005) argued that tourism should not be either/or choice between vocational or liberal, but a holistic rounded approach to understanding tourism. There is agreement that that teaching tourism needs to move beyond dualism (Stergiou, 2005), or as Tribe (2005, p. 59) argued “neither technical aspects nor pure academicism leading to “ivory tower mentality” is warranted”.

Dredge et al. (2012) later contended since tourism education operates in a dynamic space, the influence of the wider political climate of higher education needs to be reflected. These authors argue a range of factors dictate the positioning of the tourism curriculum within the axis of capabilities (basic to expert practice) and knowledge (simple to complex knowledge) (Dredge et al., 2012). Tourism education should not involve a static either/or approach between
knowledge and skills, but instead recognise both are required to achieve practical wisdom (phronesis) (Dredge et al., 2012). These authors recommend using the extended Philosophical Practitioner Education model as a tool to map course/subject offerings against the two axis’s to assist with planning and marketing.

The findings in the study identified a link between the following ideological positions: vocational approach to teaching; focus on industry skill development; and a business as usual approach to align with a ‘weaker’ sustainability interpretation. This contrasted to a link between the following positions at the other end of the ideological spectrums: a liberal humanist approach; focus on global citizenship development; and a critical management approach appeared to align with a ‘stronger’ interpretation of sustainability. Informed by the range of opinions interpreted from the academics’ comments, the model in Figure 7.5 identifies a number of conceptual spectrums which influence the understanding and teaching of sustainability in tourism higher education.

![Figure 7.5: Positions Influencing Sustainability Education](image)

**Figure 7.5: Positions Influencing Sustainability Education**  
Source: Author

The findings discussed in this thesis agree with Stergiou (2005, p. 295) that teaching tourism is a “complicated matter” as it contends with the expectation to teach vocational elements which directly apply to business and industry. The issue of context is paramount and this research provided evidence that alternative worldviews of sustainability ought to be included in students’ holistic learning for sustainability to counter the dominant neoliberal approach. My study supports the argument that progress with sustainability in the curriculum has been slowest in neoliberal environments promoted in business and management disciplines (Bates, Silverblatt, & Kleban, 2009; von der Heidt et al., 2012).
However, this present research has gone further and identified a tension between the foci of tourism education and the concept of sustainability. One of the major themes upon which this thesis pivots is that within Australian TH&E higher education, the interpretation and sustainability education depends on whether the teacher/faculty/school situates sustainability within a business vocational dimension, or whether it is about equipping global citizens with broader awareness of sustainability.

7.5 A Different Kind of Teaching

An underpinning values system incorporating sustainability principles was evident in the teaching philosophy for many of the academics interviewed. Several were acutely aware of this relationship and explicitly described their values in interviews, and how these influenced their teaching and curricula. The academics interviewed pointed to the stance of being true to oneself. Sustainability presented as a philosophy underpinning the way many academics tried to live their life and therefore it was natural, indeed impossible for some to teach any other way as shown by comments such as: ‘It’s about the way I live and the way I value, and that’s what I teach’ (A29). As a result, a sustainability philosophy translated through their teaching, underlying the approach they adopted in educational practice.

A number of academics in this thesis who appeared to identify with a deeper philosophical approach towards education, also tended to adopt student-centred learning techniques of active learning and critical thinking. They saw value in presenting students with ‘messy’ scenarios; seeing sustainability as a ‘wicked problem’ requiring consideration of multiple perspectives and alternative approaches. These lecturers consciously adopted a discursive style of teaching to stimulate students’ thinking: ‘I love it when people challenge me and come up with different ideas because then you are on the true path as to why you are here at University’ (A6). It was important that students be given opportunities to critically assess their own value judgements and hear other perspectives. As lecturers they explicitly sought discussion on other worldviews which underpin alternate views of sustainability. Teaching practices were active, encouraging students to be provoked into critically thinking and reflecting. Several described how ‘exhausting’ it was, but also ‘exhilarating’ witnessing students have their ‘eyes opened’ to different ways of knowing and thinking. It appeared the lecturers were comfortable adopting this style of teaching.
It was apparent therefore, that some lecturers align with Wals & Jickling (2002, p. 129) opinion that universities are in a unique position “to grapple with the concept and develop new ways of thinking about the concept” of sustainability. Not only were some teachers at ease grappling with the messy, ill-defined concept of sustainability (Wals & Jickling, 2002, p. 129), they wanted students to be able to make up their own minds on what sustainability meant to them. Many of these lecturers described how they deliberately engaged in the affective domain of learning.

Previous studies demonstrate that tapping into the affective domain of learning has been particularly important in promoting sustainability education (Lewis et al., 2008; Muijen, 2004; Murray, Goodhew, & Murray, 2014; Shephard, 2008; Sipos et al., 2008; Stubbs & Schapper, 2011). Sipos et al. (2008) work “engaging heads, hands and heart”, offers a framework for values-based and transformative sustainability learning. The framework combines the three domains of learning: cognitive (head) through transdisciplinary interaction; psychomotor (hands) by acquiring practical skills; and affective learning (heart) by incorporating values (Sipos et al., 2008).

Active learning pedagogy has also been shown to be valuable in sustainability education (Jones & Merritt, 1999; MacVaugh & Norton, 2012). Contemporary understanding of effective student learning in general focuses on the merits of student-centred learning which incorporates active learning instead of the traditional didactic teaching approach where students are passive learners (Biggs & Tang, 2007). The education literature shows active learning does not mean a lecturer abrogates their values into student learning. To the contrary, their role as a stimulating guide is crucial to the active learning process (Bonwell & Eison, 1991).

An emancipatory approach to learning has long been favoured over an instrumental approach (Sterling, 1996). Wals and Jickling (2002) contend higher education should be about “creating possibilities, not defining or prescribing the future for our students”. Wals and Jickling (2002, p. 124), reiterated in his later work Wals (2011, p. 180), argues an instrumental approach “stifles creativity, homogenises thinking, narrows choices and limits autonomous thinking and degrees of self-determination”. This is because the premise of transmissive instrumental learning is based on training for a pre-desired outcome (Wals, 2011). In contrast transformative and emancipatory learning sees the world as dynamic and its citizens “engaged in active dialogue to establish co-owned objectives, shared meanings, and a joint, self-determined plan of action to make changes they themselves consider desirable” (Wals, 2011, p. 180). Gruenewald (2004)
concerned, stating a transformative discourse “challenges the assumptions and purposes behind existing practices and articulates a fundamentally different vision”.

The interviews with the academics point to the importance of values education and transformative education. Although both approaches are invariably interconnected (Elliott, 2010-11), each will be examined separately in the context of sustainability education within tourism higher education.

7.5.1 Incorporating Values into Sustainability Education

The findings from stage 1 of this research study have shown there to be minimal evidence of ethical content that is broad ranging, covering issues of equity and social justice in the curriculum. Also, in stage 2, not all lecturers in this study pointed to the merits of opening up discussion about values in sustainable development from a moral and ethical point of view. Nevertheless, the interviews with teachers have shown that a number of them understood the importance of values and ethical dilemmas and tried to imbue this in their teaching of sustainability, despite the challenges they faced.

Acting as a role model for sustainability praxis was seen as an important aspect of being a sustainability educator. Some academics talked about the importance of disclosing their own personal values to students, but at the same time, being mindful of not coming across as dogmatic or ‘preachy’. However, a number of academics were hesitant to make their values known, suggesting decisions like these are themselves loaded with value judgement. Analysis of comments showed the academics who followed a sociocultural/environmental paradigm felt at ease, and/or necessary to disclose their values position regarding sustainability. It would appear from the findings of this study that some academics are sensitive to these issues and go out of their way to include multiple perspectives. As seen by the quotations included in Chapter 6, their teaching included alternative scenarios, critical questioning of the status quo, and exposure to the effect of different worldviews.

The role of values in sustainability tourism education is discussed a little in the literature (Moscardo & Murphy, 2011; Muijen, 2004; Murray et al., 2014; Schott, 2009). The consensus by some tourism scholars is that values education orientates students towards moral and ethical dilemmas through integrating social, economic, environmental and political spheres in tourism/business development (Liburd, Hjalager, & Christensen, 2011; Moscardo & Murphy, 2011).
Within the wider education literature the role of values is discussed in depth. Educational scholars claim teaching can never be value free (Barnett, 1990; Ramsden, 2003). Some feel strongly that education is primarily influenced by the values held by those connected with it; students, teachers, coordinators and leaders (Hawkes, 2014). When considering the role values play from an educators’ perspective, Sterling (2010-11, p. 21) recalls Lawton’s (1989) view that:

Every statement that a teacher makes in a classroom is value-laden, connected with ideas about the purpose of education, probably connected with more general values and beliefs, and maybe with the purpose of life. So it is with educational planners and curriculum developers whether they realise it or not.

The idea of teacher role modelling values is treated as a crucial element of values-based education (Hawkes, 2014). Values-based education is regarded as one of the fastest growing educational methods in the world (Values-based Education, 2014), especially it seems within primary school education. Its roots are in “moral education” which was fundamental to the thinking of a range of philosophers over the last two thousand five-hundred years, including the likes of, Confucius, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Wesley, Rousseau, Kant, Dewey, Montessori, and Fielding (Hawkes, 2013). A values approach sees the purpose of education as the “flourishing of humanity” (Hawkes, 2014, p. 9) that “can positively influence the development of positive values, which sustain a civil, caring and compassionate society” (Hawkes, 2014, p. 11). One outcome of values-based education pertinent to this discussion surrounding sustainability education, is that engaging everyone in an all-encompassing dialogue about ethical intelligence, builds social capacity and planetary sustainability (Hawke, 2014).

However, as shown by some academics’ views in this study, some scholars also find a values discourse problematic in sustainability. They question whose values are to be considered and whose could be ignored, and the ensuing difficulties these questions raise with sustainable development (Gough & Scott, 2006). There is concern about sustainability ideology (Martin et al., 2006). The issue for some is sustainable development has been construed under the guise
of a Western-centric perspective. Jickling and Spork (1998) point to the inclination to universalise ESD which they believe indoctrinates neoliberalism tendencies at the neglect of marginal worldviews. Within education, Wals (2010) is critical of the UNESCO rhetoric which he believes homogenises education for sustainable development (ESD). As already noted, we have reached the end of the UNDESD which advocated for the integration of EfS across all education. Some are critical of this type of sweeping approach which mandates EfS for all and sundry. A potential ramification for universities according to Scott & Gough (2006, pp. 93) arising from “government attempts to mandate sustainable development (in a particular conception)”, is curricula risk becoming a “kind of instrumentalism which is, at best, simplistic and at worst self-defeating”.

However, Martin et al. (2006, p. 66) suggested that homogenisation of sustainability understanding can be ameliorated by allowing “as many different perspectives as possible and by encouraging diverse approaches make ESD less of an ideology and more a matter of academic freedom for individual tutors”. Others agree with this approach, with Sund and Öhman (2014) recommending universal values as part of the sustainability education process. By acknowledging that multiple perspectives exist about sustainability, cultural difference and differing political and ethical views would be recognised and reflected (Bowers, 2003; Sund & Öhman, 2014).

A study which surveyed sustainability engineering lecturers about value issues concluded that the value laden characteristics of sustainability education pose few problems so long as teachers see their part to consist of motivating students’ self-learning instead of ‘preaching’ dogma (Mulder, 2010). According to Mulder (2010, p. 83), sustainability education means “lecturers should not prescribe norms and values to students, instead they should help their students to find their own way by helping him/her to sharpen his/her judgement”. Nonetheless, Martin et al. (2006, p. 66) cautions the “postmodern dogma that any perspective is as valid as any other is simply not tenable in the context of a materially non-growing, limited ecosystem”. This view supports the argument raised in the findings of this thesis that EfS operates best when adopting a values approach within an explicit sociocultural/environmental paradigm.

7.5.2 Transformative Education

The tourism lecturers who participated in this study were engaging with and moving towards transformative education. Some described their teaching to be about empowering good citizens
and ‘worth studying within the context of it being a transformational activity that can lead to global citizenship’ (A8). A number of tourism academics deeply believed in these times of global environmental, economic and political challenges, it was vital for their students to learn alternative value systems and become reflexive to enable a resilient society capable of creative thinking and ethically responsible action.

The theme of transformative education is currently popular within certain circles in the field of sustainability education (Elliott, 2010-11; Johnston, 2009; McNamara, 2010; Moore, 2005b; Pavlova, 2013; Sterling, 2010-11). Regarded as a different way of learning, transformational learning emphasises reflection on values and empowering people to take action (O'Sullivan, 2004). Critical authors such as Orr, Wals and Sterling declare the nature of current education is leading to unsustainability. These authors concur that the current educational system is reinforcing unsustainable thinking and acting. They call for a distinct pedagogy to enable a radical change in how learning takes place. Education is required to move away from its foundations of scientific rationalism where education is expected to be value free, to one that involves critical reflection, inter/transdisciplinary, experiential learning (Sipos et al., 2008). According to (Wals & Corcoran, 2006, p. 108) a radical transformation is needed to “break the cycle of un-sustainable knowledge creation and transfer, un-sustainable technological development, and unsustainable consumption patterns tied to un-sustainable economic principles”. Sustainability scholars contend that sustainability in the curriculum is not a matter of simply integrating into existing curricula but, as Wals and Corcoran (2006, p. 107) advise, involves “innovation and systemic change within our institutions that will allow for more transformative learning to take place”. It is thus evident ‘how’ we teach is as important as ‘what’ we teach (Moore, 2005a).

Drawing together the findings, the model in Figure 7.6 builds on a major theme discussed earlier in this thesis, that a number of ideological forces exert pressure on sustainability in the tourism curriculum and in teaching practice. In this field of study, where the curriculum and teachers aligned with an economic perspective they tended to take a vocational, business as usual approach with sustainability and vice versa. On the other hand, where curricula and teachers inclined towards a stronger sociocultural perspective of sustainability, values-based and transformational learning were more likely to be adopted.
Figure 7.6 shows the overall location of sustainability education in Australian TH&E higher education. My thesis posits that hospitality and events education is largely understood and taught from a narrow and ‘weak’ economic perspective of sustainability. Apart from a few individual academics and tourism courses, sparse evidence showed that programs and teachers were taking an ecological perspective and using transformational learning and values-based approaches throughout the curriculum and teaching practice. In the context of TH&E, economics is an important aspect of sustainability. Figure 7.6 points to the aspirational goal where all three ‘pillars’ – economic, sociocultural and environmental will be important. The broad and ‘strong’ side of the sustainability spectrum shown in Figure 7.6 is largely an aspirational goal. The model is a proposed tool to map individual lecturers, faculty/school or course/subject offerings according to the sustainability perspective and teaching orientation to see where they are positioned within the ‘weak to strong’ sustainability spectrum.

Discussion about what constitutes sustainable development literacy has been occurring for some time (Gough, 2002). Scholars posit that “sustainable development is not a theoretical pursuit, but by its nature is rooted in praxis” (Dale & Newman, 2005, p. 357). For Dale and Newman (2005, p. 357), sustainability literacy is achieved by acquiring fact based knowledge “(disciplinary based knowledge pertaining to the ecological, social and economic imperatives)” and process-based knowledge and skills “(understanding of interdisciplinarity and requires the acquisition of process-based tools capable of managing unexpected change)”. 

Figure 7.6: Positioning Sustainability Education within Australian TH&E Education
Source: Author
However, Jamal et al. (2011) extend the epistemology of sustainable development to include an ethical underpinning. Incumbent on sustainability educators is the provision of transformational learning opportunities which enable praxis within a clear ethical framework (Jamal et al., 2011). By using a critical reflexive stance it is possible to address the issues of fairness, equity and justice for disadvantaged local groups, including poor, minority and indigenous populations in the context of sustainable tourism (Jamal & Camargo, 2014). According to Kemmis (2012), praxis in the context of sustainability, requires deliberate thought by a person to understand the situation in which they find themselves and in which they must act, including taking into account the interests of humankind in having a sustainable future. Or as Gadotti (2010, p. 203) suggests, taking an approach to educate for “the emergence of a different, possible world”.

Critical educators recommend pedagogical approaches which orientate students towards socially-critical, progressive education (Bawden, 2007). It ought not to equate to a “banking” style of education (Freire, 1998), where students are just given the facts of sustainability (Huckle, 1999). Neither should sustainability be viewed, according to Wals & Jickling, (2002) as a predefined concept taught by experts. Instead, sustainability is one of several drivers or inputs for transformational learning (Wals & Corcoran, 2006). Like many transformative approaches, emphasis is placed on the ‘process’ of learning rather than the ‘product’ or accumulation of knowledge (Wals & Jickling, 2002). It represents a social learning process (Wals & Corcoran, 2006) with potential to be life changing (Moore, 2005a).

The literature suggests a “critical turn” is taking place in the field of tourism (Bramwell & Lane, 2014; Small, Harris, & Wilson, 2008; Tribe, 2008). Gilbert (2003) suggests the modern day expression of sustainability in the form of ecotourism could offer a critical approach to environmental education using critical discourse analysis as a strategy. Further, some tourism scholars are “hopeful” a “new perspective in tourism enquiry which offers alternative values-led approach to tourism knowledge production” is evolving in tourism research and studies (Pritchard et al., 2011, p. 947). According to Pritchard et al. (2011, p. 955), “hopeful tourism seeks to engage democratic and emancipatory learning agendas”. The emphasis is on critical enquiry which “regards moral and ethical obligations as intrinsic” (Pritchard et al., 2011, p. 947). As a transformative experience, critical research is a “political act which is values-led” (Pritchard et al., 2011, p. 947). Hopeful tourism enquiry is future-orientated with the aim of interrogating what ‘ought’ to be rather than what ‘is’ (Pritchard et al., 2011).
Some point to limitations with “hopeful” tourism enquiry. Critical tourism scholars Higgins-Desbiolles and Whyte (2013), argue although hopeful tourism may transform the researcher, it does not necessarily emancipate greater society. Drawing on Freire’s critical pedagogy, they maintain that if the pedagogy suggested by hopeful tourism enquiry is engaged with by those of privilege (such as tourism academics and tourism higher education students) it “may fail to challenge them to engage with those oppressed by the forces of tourism and globalization and it is likely to set mild agendas which do little to contribute to the vital transformations we need” (Higgins-Desbiolles & Whyte, 2013, p. 430). More radical pedagogy is thus being advocated here. A truly emancipatory experience of change is only achieved by people of power and privilege when they hand over their power and have “meaningful contact with those who experience oppression that yields transformation” (Higgins-Desbiolles & Whyte, 2013, p. 431).

Although learning by experience is not a new phenomenon, Jamal et al. (2011, p. 136) regard it to be a crucial feature for achieving sustainability education with its ability to relate ‘phronesis’ (practical wisdom) with ‘praxis’ (social change). In their call for new sustainability tourism pedagogy, Jamal et al. (2011) claim students should not only acquire vocational and technical knowledge, but learn to understand and address ethical stewardship responsibilities through critical thinking and practical experiential education. According to these scholars, “six core STP [Sustainable tourism pedagogy] literacies (technical, analytical, ecological, multicultural, ethical, policy and political) are identified which guide skill and knowledge development and guide the sustainability practitioner” (Jamal et al., 2011, p. 134). Drawing on John Dewey’s perspectives in experiential education, these authors contend the combined approach of critical reflexivity and collaborative community service-learning approach ‘facilitates critical thinking, practical knowledge and participatory action” (Jamal et al., 2011, p. 134). In essence, Jamal, et al.’s (2011) study shows how transformational learning through direct field experience and participatory action enables sustainability literacy and practice.

Other tourism commentators have concern whether the term ‘sustainable tourism’ actually represents ethically sound tourism or is instead a dubious marketing ploy (Lansing & Paul, 2007). According to Lansing and Paul (2007, p. 83) review of ‘sustainable tourism’ by the sector, it appeared to point to a “rather unsubstantiated situation” and signified the claims were more of a marketing tool. Recent scholarly work with an ethical focus indicates a possible surge of ethical concern in tourism discourse (Jamal & Camargo, 2014; Pritchard et al., 2011; Wijesinghe, 2014). In tourism academia, interest in transformational learning is reflected, for example, by the theme Transformational Learning: Activism, empowerment and political
agency in tourism education for the Tourism Education Futures Initiative (TEFI) Conference in Guelph, Canada in 2014. The desire to explore pedagogic approaches which foster transformational and transcendental learning may be gaining momentum.

### 7.5.3 Model of Sustainability in Tourism Higher Education

In line with the findings of this research and discussions throughout the thesis, Figure 7.7 incorporates the ‘ideal’ elements that compose sustainability education in tourism higher education. Four major components have been identified, namely: teacher, curriculum, school/faculty and university. As shown in the model, each has a significant part to play in making sustainability education possible. A strong interrelationship and connectivity between teacher, curriculum, school/faculty and university has been shown to be important. To achieve long term success it is vital that mutual and supportive relationships towards the shared goal of sustainability TH&E education are established. From this base of genuine support from management and teaching staff, space is available for tourism teachers and curriculum planners to holistically embed sustainability principles in the curriculum.

Based on the findings of this research, Figure 7.7 shows that sustainability TH&E higher education ought to be predicated on five sustainability ‘pillars’ of environment, society, economy, politics and ethics. Both teacher and learners, the curriculum, school/faculty and university and learners are required to assess the consequences of all decisions and actions undertaken or proposed through the lens of the sustainability ‘pillars’. Questions such as - what are the impacts of this decision/action? And, whose/what interests are being ignored as a consequence? - would help identify attitudes and practices that are potentially unsustainable from the viewpoint of the five pillars. Moreover, to allow teachers and students to garner a strong sustainability standpoint, TH&E contexts should be critiqued from environmental, sociocultural, economic ethical and political perspectives.

The findings in the thesis show it is important that alternative views to business as usual are aired through curricula, via assessment, and ‘in class’ so that students can acquire critical perspectives of their own and others’ worldviews. By being open to critical pedagogy, teachers are able to adopt teaching and learning techniques that expose hidden agendas and critically analyse taken-for-granted assumptions. The incorporation of the principles of values-based education by the teacher and incorporated in the curriculum enables opposing values and
encourages multiple perspectives be critically analysed. These approaches help develop students’ skills with regard to ‘how’ to think as well as ‘what’ to think in the context of sustainability.
Figure 7.7: An Ideal Sustainability Education Model for TH&E/Tourism Higher Education
Source: Author
The findings of this research have shown that the tenets of transformative education play an important role when seeking knowledge and skills for sustainability. Therefore, to actively engage students with all dimensions of the transition to EfS, TH&E higher education ought to be underpinned by holistic and transformational goals. This includes both teachers and learners critically self-reflecting on their own biases, assumptions and attitudes. When both teacher and the curriculum incorporate this approach, it signals a move away from business as usual content and education towards a style of education that seeks alternative ways of thinking, questions the norm, and exposes hidden agendas. An infusion of liberal education, as recommended by Caton (2014; 2015) into curricula would also signify a paradigm shift in tourism higher education from a business dominated sustainability outlook with narrow vocational goals, to include sustainability education for global citizenship. The findings of this thesis support that the transformative tenets of political agency, critical reflection and activism in tourism higher education are much more likely to take place when underscored by a stronger sustainability perspective (by teacher and in curricula) which recognises sociocultural and environmental imperatives.

The study found that life experience, background, and inclination towards a particular worldview affect a teacher’s disposition towards sustainability and their view about the role of education. It is recommended that teachers critically analyse and be self-reflexive about their own assumptions, beliefs and worldview, when developing teaching materials, such as which topics are included and the manner in which they are taught (Wilson, 2010). When staff lack knowledge and skills for sustainability, the school/faculty and university need to provide resources and ongoing support for training and skill development. Key to this process is the provision of supported opportunities for staff to gain skills and expertise with how to integrate sustainability education into teaching.

This research has revealed the need for careful consideration of the impact of particular educational approaches on teaching and learning. An important first step would be to establish the overarching aims of TH&E higher education. To proceed towards a paradigm change of EfS, it seems a radical rethink of what a futures-orientated tourism education looks like is necessary. This study has shown that from the academic perspective, many tourism programs require a review and reallocation of priority and space for sustainability-related dimensions. The ramifications of Australian higher education operating within a neoliberal environment have been discussed in this thesis. Issues associated with increasing technocratic managerialism were seen as challenges for EfS. An overarching premise appears to be genuine institutional
top-down commitment and bottom-up support for sustainability (Scott et al., 2012). Although top-level leadership governs the long-term success of EfS across the institution, some initiatives at the school/faculty and individual academic level can stimulate sustainability education. A starting point would be to conduct an overview of current curricula using existing curriculum or program development opportunities. Tourism educators are encouraged to lean their programs away from a ‘business as usual’ approach towards more critical tenets. What this entails from a values-based perspective is important to establish and embed into all tourism curricula.

Finally, sustainability is context-dependent and often regarded as a journey rather than a set goal (Milne, Kearins, & Walton, 2006); there is no ‘right way’. Nonetheless, a pedagogical shift that is critical, transformative and experiential is recommended. Wherever an institution, school/faculty or individual academic is positioned within a ‘weak to strong’ spectrum of engagement with sustainability, ongoing genuine support for EfS progress, and space in tourism higher education appear essential.

7.6 Summary

This chapter has combined the findings from the content analysis of TH&E curricula and interviews with tourism academics, to focus on the presence and meaning of sustainability in Australian tourism higher education. To begin with, sustainability was found to be invariably regarded as a separated concept in the curricula rather than being holistically ‘embedded’ throughout. I concluded the TH&E curriculum was located at the low to medium level of sustainability engagement, with a high level of integrated sustainability remaining largely aspirational. This suggests heavy reliance on individually motivated teachers to incorporate sustainability principles in teaching and learning. The significance of teacher agency and ownership was raised as an important factor in order to pursue sustainability education. Enabling this sense of agency was raised as a possible catalyst for EfS in the future. Furthermore, it was evident lecturers faced a number of challenges with EfS. It seems at some Australian universities, neoliberalism, in the form of managerialsim and technocentricism has created a pressured teaching and learning environment generally.

Academic comments revealed differences in understanding ‘sustainability’. Many appeared to possess negative associations with the sustainability terminology, believing it to have been
politically hijacked and rendered meaningless. The analysis of interviews detected a shift away from traditional sustainability terminology to alternative language by some lecturers. Due to conflicting pressures in their personal and teaching lives, the challenge of sustainability praxis as a way forward was raised.

Seen as an overarching theme emerging from this study, the influence of ideology/worldview was discussed. The worldview of individuals was noted as significant in affecting the particular stance taken with teaching sustainability. A spectrum of paradigms/worldviews existed among the tourism academics interviewed. Some teachers reported having a ‘balanced’ approach to sustainability. However, the chapter discussed the tension surrounding academics who adopted either an economic perspective or a sociocultural/environmental perspective. The discussion acknowledged where the findings supported others’ work in EfS. The thesis then advanced the discussion by presenting several original frameworks to conceptualise sustainability education in Australian tourism higher education.

The thesis has exposed distinctions with educational approaches towards sustainability education. Those academics, for whom sustainability and the teaching of sustainability was underpinned by an economic perspective, wished to prepare students to be work ready for the tourism industry. While those who aligned with sociocultural/environmental perspectives, aimed to equip students with broader life skills and wider sustainability capabilities.

The findings in this exploratory study suggest the ‘critical turn’ has not been fully engaged with in tourism education. Pockets of critical inquiry exist, but it seems they are in the minority and rely heavily on the individual’s ideological stance to integrate alternative thinking and non-business focused sustainability dimensions through teaching practice, rather than embedding explicitly in curricula. The findings pointed to sustainability involving a different kind of teaching. The discussion analysed the role values education and transformational learning play in sustainability tourism education. Finally the discussion culminates in the presentation of two original models. The model in Figure 7.6 locates Australian TH&E education according to the paradigmatic stance taken overall to sustainability education. It shows the majority of TH&E subjects/courses and tourism academics are currently located at the narrow ‘weak’ end and up to the middle section of the sustainability spectrum.

The chapter concludes with a model (Figure 7.7), depicting the ‘ideal’ elements emerging from this research to be crucial for sustainability TH&E higher education. The four major features
of the model consist of teacher, curriculum, school/faculty and university. Each are seen to have a combined and unique part to play. All actions and decisions pivot around five sustainability ‘pillars’ which this research has identified to be: environment, society, economy, politics and ethics.
Chapter 8: Conclusion

As 21st century educators we are firmly situated within global sustainability discourse. In the field of tourism, the concept of ‘sustainable tourism’ has been prominent on the research agenda over the last few decades, as cautionary and post-cautionary platforms have prevailed and scholars continue to voice their concern over tourism’s impacts. Until now, little empirical research has explored where sustainability education is taking place and how sustainability principles are presented within the tourism, hospitality and events curriculum space. Furthermore, scant research has explored how sustainability is interpreted by tourism educators who incorporate the concept into their teaching. Taking an interpretive, critical approach this thesis has addressed these gaps. Through a two stage methodology of web-based content analysis of TH&E curriculum documents and in-depth interviews with tourism academics, this study has documented and conceptualised EfS within aspects of the Australian tourism higher education space.

Previous studies investigating EfS in higher education have tended to use a positivist approach, with surveys a commonly adopted method of inquiry. This study responds to the call by tourism scholars for research to take a qualitative methodological approach when examining tourism related phenomena (Hollinshead & Jamal, 2007). The thesis’s contribution provides a rich overview of salient opinions on sustainability by those who teach tourism. The study investigated what the term ‘sustainability education’ means through the words of the academic practitioner and ‘why’ and ‘how’ sustainability was incorporated into their teaching and learning practices. In essence, the interpretive approach has captured the seldom acknowledged voices of those directly involved in the phenomenon of teaching sustainable tourism. Furthermore it has allowed previously unexamined elements, namely the role and influence of ideology/worldview when teaching sustainability, to be critically foregrounded.

My study set out to explore four objectives. The First Objective investigated the presence of sustainability in Australian tourism higher education. This objective was addressed by conducting a website content analysis looking to locate explicit statements regarding sustainability within the tourism higher education curriculum in Australia universities. The results revealed that the term ‘sustainability’ was elusive, at least at the level of degree/subject names and descriptions. As education does not happen in a vacuum, I analysed the implications of these findings, and put forward reasons why it can be difficult to find the space for a sustainability perspective within the contemporary business/tourism curriculum.
The remaining three objectives moved the research to a deeper exploration of sustainability as seen through the eyes of tourism academics motivated to include sustainability in their teaching. The Second Objective explored what the concept of sustainability meant to, and how it was understood by, tourism academics. The Third Objective investigated how and why tourism academics incorporated sustainability into their teaching practices; and the Fourth Objective identified the challenges and opportunities in educating for sustainability in tourism higher education.

The teacher is only one of several stakeholders with vested interests and important contributions to sustainability education. This study serves as a preliminary exploration of sustainability on which future research can be built. Based on the analysis and interpretation of the findings, this thesis has explored the role and presence of sustainability in Australian tourism higher education. It has proposed that a number of themes are at play. The first major theme analysed the apparent tensions surrounding sustainability terminology and discussed evidence of movement towards alternative concepts, such as ‘resilience’, and the challenges of sustainability praxis. The second theme discussed the effect of ideological forces in tourism education, namely: the influence of an individual’s past experience and ideological worldview on their understanding of sustainability; and the impact of neoliberalism in TH&E higher education. The third major theme moved the discussion to consider alternative kinds of teaching, which draw from values and transformational learning approaches, as a way to engage with sustainability education. A number of key conclusions can be drawn and these will be summarised in this final chapter.

The content analysis, conducted as part of Objective 1, reviewed the number and types of subjects which explicitly incorporated sustainability. Analysis of the results suggested coverage of sustainability and other key sustainability themes was limited. The majority of TH&E courses have yet to achieve an overt sustainability presence in the curriculum. The lack of explicit inclusion of critical thinking, problem solving, innovation, creativity and critical reflection in the TH&E curriculum descriptions presented as further evidence of lack of engagement with the tenets of EfS.

From the evidence of the ‘snapshot’ presented in this thesis, sporadic treatment of sustainability in the TH&E curriculum under examination in my study revealed some difficulty about how and where to best embed sustainability themes. Despite the acknowledged importance of
sustainability in education, it appears an explicit sustainability presence is largely not considered essential in the curriculum space of a TH&E degree program of study. Presenting sustainability as an ‘add-on’ to the curriculum points to a ‘tick the box on sustainability’ mentality. This thesis concludes the Australian TH&E curriculum treats sustainability as a self-contained curriculum module, rather than a philosophy underpinning broader aspects of learning.

Discourse in the sustainability tourism education literature may be pointing to the need to holistically embed sustainability in the curriculum (Boley, 2011), but this study suggests the task at hand is largely rhetorical. Furthermore, although a consideration of ethics and “taking the moral turn” (Caton, 2012) may be taking place in tourism research, my study shows it has yet to be embodied in tourism education. The results of this Australian-based research concur with studies which have examined sustainability in TH&E curriculum in other countries. It seems more needs to be done internationally to incorporate sustainability education into the TH&E curriculum (Deale et al., 2009; Deale & Barber, 2012; Boley, 2011; Fáilte Ireland, 2008).

From the content analysis, it was unclear whether curriculum designers are critical of the so-called ideology of sustainability education and therefore refraining from its inclusion. One conclusion arising from the apparent reluctance to fully engage with sustainability as an underpinning concept is that curriculum designers are unaware, or do not believe sustainability should inform all aspects of learning. At this point, I recommended caution, noting an absence of the words ‘sustainable/sustainability’ in a subject description did not necessarily mean the curriculum was not covering sustainability content and developing EFS capacity building skills.

A limitation of the content analysis conducted is it represented a snapshot of Australian TH&E curricula at one point in time. The structure of programs and subjects are always changing; sometimes quite radically. The situation may have changed quite radically since and so the analysis cannot claim to represent the current state of affairs. Furthermore there are limits to the conclusions which can be drawn from this content analysis since the data collected did not include topics and assessment items which may have illuminated the presence of sustainability content more fully. I therefore acknowledge more information is required to gain a fuller understanding of the underlying message of sustainability which has been inferred from the selected units of analysis available on the university’s website. Nonetheless, this thesis has revealed evidence of limited progress towards explicitly stating sustainability in TH&E
curricula program titles, descriptions and subject titles and descriptions highlighting a number of dilemmas exist in the curriculum space.

One factor raised in the current research is the impact and influence of a business dominated curriculum. As discussed earlier, the content analysis showed the majority of Australian TH&E courses sit within business or management schools and/or faculties, with business skills central to the curriculum and a focus on promoting graduates to be ‘job ready’. Tourism higher education has been criticised for its predominant vocational perspective as opposed to the preferred more balanced liberal approach (Ayikoru, Tribe, & Airey, 2009). The content analysis pointed to a liberal approach being more conducive to the underlying principles of sustainability. The TH&E programs located in an arts/social science faculty incorporated a greater number of sustainability-related themes in the curriculum than those programs located in a business faculty.

The findings also support the views of other tourism scholars, such as Dredge et al. (2012c), Caton (2014) and Tribe (2015), who contend that the TH&E curriculum space faces the ongoing challenge of how to conceptualise a curriculum which ensures the development of a wider awareness to contribute to society more broadly. By investigating curriculum content and teaching practices, this research has stimulated a conversation about phenomena that according to Dredge et al. (2012c), up until now, has been regarded as a neglected area of enquiry. By placing a spotlight on TH&E curricula in the context of sustainability, my research has shown that the impending task ahead for many TH&E degree programs involves an overhaul and reallocation of priority and space for content to engage with this inherently value laden issue. In particular, the content analysis has highlighted there were gaps in the hospitality and events degree programs in relation to sustainability content in the curriculum.

Therefore, my research concludes the location of tourism academia within a business paradigm compounds the problem of lack of broader theoretical engagement. This aligns with Pritchard et al. (2011, p. 947) who argue that “critical reflections on the market economy are rare in business schools”. The result is that business “researchers continually eschew social, political and ethical critique in favour of technical, problem-solving research” (Dunne & Harney, 2008 cited in Pritchard et al., 2011, p. 947). This view has implications for what is considered essential for tourism curriculum with Tribe (2009, p. 4) noting: “tourism enquiry promotes particular values of performativity, consumerism and profitability over all others.” If tourism education’s purpose is to focus unequivocally on procuring employment under the auspices of
a neoliberal ideology (Ayikoru, Tribe, & Airey, 2009), then the ‘paradigm shift in thinking’ so needed for sustainability education may be greatly limited.

The tourism education literature has examined the pressures that interested stakeholders exert on tourism education. Research shows that many students just want to ‘get a job’ and industry wants graduates who are skilled for work (Benckendorff et al., 2012; Wang, Ayres, & Huyton, 2010; Zehrer & Mössenlechner, 2009). Further, the results of an Australian case study by Wang et al. (2010) revealed a tendency by the tourism industry to place low value on subjects related to social development in favour of business skills subjects. Likewise an American study of hospitality education concluded a business perspective of sustainability resulted in the hospitality industry “positioning themselves towards influencing the business aspects of curriculum development” Barber et al. (2011, p. 15). A similar state of affairs was found in business accounting courses by Hazelton and Haigh (2010, p. 159), who reported:

Efforts to create permanent curriculum change were hampered by the predominantly vocational orientation of student cohorts. The traditionally technical focus of the professional bodies and competing educational reform agendas (such as vocational skills) add to the difficulties for sustainability in penetrating already overcrowded curricula.

However, tourism business is not the only field of study that needs to carefully analyse whether its educational approach hinders EfS. Disciplines such as nursing have been criticised for their vocationally focused approach which ignores wider sustainability–related dimensions (Goodman, 2011). To ameliorate this situation Goodman and East (2014) advocate nursing education should occur through a “sustainability lens”. My thesis has argued tourism higher education would benefit from such an approach depicted in Figure 7.2; sustainability becomes the context for tourism, rather than the other way round (Boley, 2011).

A fundamental paradigm shift in how education is perceived at the institution and filtered through to faculty and program level is required. From analysis of the data collected in this study it would seem this task is proving to be a challenge. Many academics interviewed concurred with others’ research findings that university leaders play a significant role in the acceptance and ongoing success of sustainability education (Scott et al., 2012; Sherren, 2006b). A study of sustainability content in Australian MBA programs found deep-seated changes to holistically embed sustainability required support from the top (Nowak et al., 2008). My study
concurs with the view that the success of embedding sustainability holistically into TH&E higher education will depend on the explicit support of institutional leaders as well by the motivation and confidence of teachers to follow through (Barth & Rieckmann, 2012).

Constraints facing higher education’s general engagement with sustainability principles are well documented and point to logistical, pedagogical and political issues (Leihy & Salazar, 2011; Scott et al., 2012; Wilson & von der Heidt, 2013). Others have pointed to the challenges for sustainability education within an era of mass higher education and increasingly tight budgets (Cotton et al., 2009). When addressing Objective 4 of the study, which identified the challenges in educating for sustainability in tourism higher education, this study has made a contribution. This thesis has identified the impact of neoliberalism in the broader higher education sector has been felt within tourism sustainability education. One casualty from higher education’s economic rationalisation reported in this study is the demise of field trips. A number of lecturers interviewed believed strongly that experiential opportunities of sustainability praxis have been greatly reduced. They felt tourism education was the poorer for it. Compelling argument exists in the education literature that instead of focusing on the administrative calculations of the costs and benefits of education, universities need to focus on how they can educate students so they participate in society for the greater good of society (Kemmis, 2012). This thesis proposes unless a radical change to combat the venerated forces of neoliberalism and managerialism occurring generally in higher education, there will continue to be reliance on pockets of determined and committed tourism academics who talk about ‘values’ and provide alternative voices at a grass root level.

Objective 2 of this research explored what the concept of sustainability means to, and how it is understood by, tourism academics. Generally there was merit in use of the concept but there was a notable struggle with the terms sustainable/sustainability suggesting a move from viewing sustainability in a traditional way to a preference for alternative concepts. Analysis of academic words showed sustainability was characterised by aspiring to thinking and acting sustainably but being invariably thwarted by lifestyle challenges, notably the issue of air travel.

In relation to Objective 3 of this research, which investigated how and why tourism academics incorporate sustainability into their teaching practices, all academics interviewed agreed sustainability was important in tourism education in some form or other. A limitation with the interview data however is it focused on the perceptions only of those who have interest and/or experience with teaching sustainability. Other potentially different perspectives derived from a
general sample of teachers have consequently not been explored. Also the sample was confined to Australian university academics and can only therefore reflect the opinion of this group of lecturers. Future research examining tourism academics’ perspectives in other countries may reveal similarities or different circumstances.

Analysis of the academics’ interview comments revealed the important role and influence of a lecturer’s paradigm, worldview and values. Sustainability scholars have suggested a rich sustainability discourse necessitates an evaluation of personal values, beliefs and attitudes (Lewis et al., 2008). Other researchers have pointed to a link between a lecturer’s values, beliefs and attitudes and their direct engagement with teaching ‘sustainability’ (Cross, 1998). One of the major conclusions derived from in the analysis and presented in the thesis is the strong reliance on an individual teacher to champion sustainability content in Australian TH&E higher education.

The findings have shown the approach to sustainability education is orientated according to the overarching paradigm taken by the tourism educator. This study has exposed a distinction between those academics whose sustainability content always came back to an economic paradigm, as opposed to those whose interpretation of sustainability was more concerned with environmental and/or social perspectives. My thesis posits that a worldview which holds an economic perspective of sustainability tends to favour an economic/business interpretation of sustainable tourism. Further, it contends the domination of a narrow business view in tourism studies predisposes an economic paradigm to direct how sustainability is incorporated in the curriculum and teaching practice.

I have argued in the thesis, the risk with a dominating economic focus of sustainability in curricula and teaching practices, is its concern with operational or technical interpretations of sustainability. The motivation to integrate sustainability is to save money and increase profit, rather than deliberating on the quality of social aspects and environmental issues connected with tourism. The issue of context is paramount and the findings from this research provide evidence that other sustainability worldviews need to be included in students’ holistic learning for sustainability to counter the dominant neoliberal approach prevailing.

Some scholars claim paradoxically a predominant economic interpretation of sustainability will not benefit the industry that students are being prepared for. They argue over the long term, tourism businesses will ultimately weaken from within, leading to the diminishing of the whole
industry (Wijesinghe, 2014). Viewing sustainability from an economic paradigm alone is therefore inadequate. Where an economic paradigm governs a tourism academic’s interpretation of sustainability raises the issue of how EfS skills (creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking and innovation) are acquired and applied. If they are developed within an economic worldview of sustainability then it is questionable whether the skills gained will actually prepare students for wider sustainability problems. Absence of alternative narratives which are not focused on industry growth and profit and an explicit aim of procuring employment would run counter to the call for a paradigm shift in thinking required for sustainability education.

Revealing the broader relevance of this study, and echoing Scott and Gough’s (2006) observation, the discussion about sustainability education is firmly situated in the current debate about the ultimate purpose of education. This thesis contributes to the general discussion about the purpose of tourism higher education by including sustainability education as an underpinning contextual layer. Scholarly work has discussed critical models of tourism curriculum (Dredge et al., 2013; Tribe, 2005), yet this study identifies a link between how a lecturer interprets and teaches sustainability education and their view about the purpose of tourism education. My study’s findings have exposed a deep ideological complexity when incorporating sustainability dimensions into tourism education. The findings emulate observations by other scholars that in general, tourism curriculum is framed as vocationally dominant (Airey & Tribe, 2005; Ayikoru et al., 2009; Tribe, 2005).

This exploratory study has exposed an underlying conundrum: is the purpose of sustainability tourism education to acquire and hone managerial business skills and/or is it an education which broadens the student’s horizon? As argued in this thesis, since tourism is viewed as an employment avenue for future graduates, a tendency is to place sustainability within the context of preserving industry viability rather than exploring sustainability in the context of wider societal and environmental needs. This thesis concurs with Airey and Tribe (2005, p. 506), that tourism education “must do much more than reflect the immediate needs of the workplace or the immediate demands of entry-level employment positions”. These tourism scholars posit that tourism education is well positioned to be able to:

- Provide new insights to the operation and management of a major world activity;
- Contribute to the effective stewardship of scarce resources used by tourism;
- Ensure...
that those who leave their courses have a range of knowledge and skills for their career, whether it be in tourism or elsewhere (Airey & Tribe, 2005, p. 506).

Thus, this thesis contends there are issues with incorporating sustainability in the curriculum when tourism education is delineated by vocationalism (Tribe, 2015; Caton, 2015). My study concludes that in order for EfS to be fully articulated, tourism needs to be seen as more than a vocational study but instead an opportunity to equip students for a range of careers. Furthermore, throughout the EfS literature it is recommended that a holistic understanding of sustainable development requires recognition of the inter-relationship between economic, sociocultural and environmental elements (Hidalgo & Fuentes, 2013; O’Connor, 2006; Scott & Gough, 2004a). However commentators concede seeing each element as a separate entity makes it easy to manage in education and research is too simplistic as they are not separable (Scott & Gough, 2004a). EfS researchers argue sustainability education is not attained when the economic imperative overshadows other considerations (Blewitt, 2010). In the field of tourism education, some scholars are calling for liberal education to become part of tourism higher education. The conclusion arising from the findings of my study is this suggestion ought to be considered seriously to assure the accommodation of sustainability principles in the tourism curriculum space.

Critical tourism scholars advocate for a critical eye to the business as usual approach (Ateljevic et al., 2005; Pritchard et al., 2011). Implications of an absence of alternative narratives around sustainability matters as evidenced in this study, pose as a significant limitation on tourism education. The challenge facing Australian tourism higher education is to ensure tourism students graduate with knowledge and skills for sustainability praxis within the tourism field (Jamal et al., 2011). Jamal et al., (2011) conclude alternative worldviews are important in order that students engage with critical tourism discourse to gain a critical understanding of sustainability and sustainable tourism development.

It can be concluded from this study that the incorporation of innovative and creative pedagogies will not assist in TH&E’s transformation unless the overarching ideology of its educators is conducive to change. In other words, for tourism to move beyond an instrumental ideology and a vocational role, its educators and other stakeholders’ beliefs and values need to be open to transformation. Proponents of a radical change in education acknowledge there are challenges which face the educator who wishes to pursue transformative education (Sterling, 2001). Opportunities to incorporate new ideas require space, time and commitment, so it may not be
surprising that this thesis has shown the TH&E curriculum has been slow to respond to EfS; action toward sustainability requires ongoing energy and support. Therefore there is much more that can be studied in this space; my study recommends further exploration of curricula, pedagogies and assessment and from other perspectives, as well as those of the teachers.

The model Positioning Sustainability Education within Australian TH&E Education (see Figure 7.6) conceptualises sustainability education in the context of this field of study. It represents a useful tool with which to ascertain where each program, lecturer or subject is located regarding orientation to sustainability, in order to find gaps. Other tourism scholars have conceptualised aspects of tourism higher education (Dredge et al., 2012c; Tribe, 2002b). The model presented in this thesis can be an initial tool to map entire programs and offer an opportunity to examine the integration of sustainability principles across TH&E degrees. This information can then be compared and shared with other universities to engender support and collaboration.

Studies have shown the importance of collaborating with all stakeholders to garner input into creating a relevant curriculum around issues of sustainability and potentiality for conflict Padurean and Maggi (2011). Both TEFI and BEST-EN networks offer promising opportunities for issues such as sustainability, professional ethics and social justice to be developed within TH&E education (Dredge et al., 2013). Suggestions emerging in the literature described above collectively offer promising pathways with how tourism education can engage with sustainability. Borg et al. (2014, p. 546) agreed, stating “to work in a cross-disciplinary way, the teachers need to have a common conceptual understanding of SD [sustainable development] at an acceptable level”. Concurring with Reid & Petocz (2006), my study recommends further research be undertaken on developing academic thinking towards more integrated levels of teaching sustainability to link together more sophisticated ideas to engender holistic sustainability learning.

It could be surmised that the range of interpretations presented by the group of academics interviewed in this study is no cause for concern; an important point to note is the concept of sustainability was at least being broached with students in some form. A small number of teachers seemed to be tapping into elements of ecopedagogy, an approach inspired by Gaia that “establishes the symbiosis between human beings and nature as an underlying assumption” (Gadotti, 2010, p. 203). However, among the lecturers interviewed in my study there was an overall tendency towards an anthropocentric view of sustainability. For sustainability scholars, it is an ecological rather than mechanistic approach that should underpin education (Sterling,
1996, 2001). The conclusion arising from the discussion of this study’s findings shows that since more needs to be done in this area, further research is recommended to understand what pedagogy in particular represents an ecological approach in the context of tourism higher education.

Objective 4 of the study sought to identify opportunities in educating for sustainability. The findings from this research agree with other sustainability scholars that sustainability cannot simply be inserted into existing teaching and learning structures. Instead the academics in this study add to a growing body of evidence reinforcing the need for a change in approach to curricula and pedagogy. Tilbury (2004, p. 98) argued that as EfS requires inter/transdisciplinary input, it cannot be simply added into existing teaching and learning frameworks. Barth and Rieckmann (2012, p. 34) agree, contending sustainability is not another topic that needs addressing in the curriculum space but one which “challenges traditional discipline-oriented and teacher-centred teaching and asks for participatory and competence-oriented approaches in higher education”. Some of the teachers interviewed agreed with the view that EfS has a “transformative agenda that requires, and often leads to, professional, curriculum as well as structural change” (Tilbury, et al., 2005, p. 15).

The findings presented here have pointed to opportunities for institutions and faculty leaders to be subject to change and teachers motivated to engage in making changes for a better world. Due to its transformative agenda it necessitates change at every level; teacher development, curriculum and also organisational change (Tilbury, 1998). This may require academic staff development to manage and adapt to this changing environment. Some teachers will need to acquire new skills and then have space within the curriculum to put them into practice (Barth & Rieckmann, 2012). Tilbury (2004, p. 98) goes so far as predicting “institutions themselves will be the subject of change (and not just a vehicle for change) as teachers and students engage in making changes for a better world”.

This research has identified that practical professional development and support for sustainability education would benefit some academic staff in the field of tourism education. Both Sibbel (2009) and Thomas and Benn (2009) recommend if a grassroots momentum of commitment by academics is desired, considerable professional development as to the meaning and approach for sustainability education is required as an important first step. This can be followed by the adoption of innovative teaching and learning activities which demonstrate the link between critical values thinking and vocational and life skills to students (Holdsworth et
Lund-Durlacher (2012, p. 1), points to staff and educators acting as “role models” in education for sustainable development thereby inspiring and motivating students by their actions related to sustainability. As Lund-Durlacher (2012, p. 4) posits:

This holistic approach in education for sustainable development shows that learning for sustainable tourism is not only a matter of introducing the concept of sustainable tourism into the curriculum, but also about the institutions’ and lecturers’ commitment towards sustainability, about using teaching approaches which not only create a knowledge base but which also enable social learning toward a sustainable tourism future.

The dilemma therefore, is how teachers should approach such a contested values-laden subject as sustainability whilst also being mindful of not “preaching” prescribed norms and values to students (Mulder, 2010). This study recommends further investigation be undertaken to examine this quandary.

It is important to remember that sustainability is not settled as a defined concept which can be taught as fact, but as Fáilte Ireland (2008, p. 17) suggest, it “represents a guiding framework for understanding and implementing responsible and appropriate practices in order to achieve long term sustainable development and management”. The process of achieving sustainability has been referred to as a journey rather than an end destination. Or as Schlottmann (2008, p. 214) suggests as “stepping stones or conversations rather than concrete ends”. The path to be taken is not clearly defined and will change with future expectations. However, that is not to say goals of sustainability (the destination) are not important because, as argued by Milne, Kearins, and Walton (2006), a focus on the journey alone may seek to paradoxically reinforce business as usual.

Little mention was made by the academics interviewed about inter/multi/trans disciplinarity teaching showing tourism studies tend to operate in the business disciplinary silo. The overall lack of engagement beyond the business discipline among the academics interviewed may be due to a variety of factors - lack of awareness, interest or opportunity. Also institutional academic careers are typically developed within and not across disciplines. What the findings discern is very few have had the opportunity to experience the potential benefits transdisciplinary input offers as a way of achieving holistic understanding of sustainability. Since calling for higher education institutions to lead the way and pursue interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary education (UNESCO, 1998), discussion prevails about sustainability
education benefitting from transdisciplinary input – no one discipline can achieve this type of learning solo (Albrecht et al., 2001; Brown et al., 2010; Vollger & Pechlaner, 2015). Advantages of transdisciplinary education are purported to be numerous but basically revolve around its ability to formulate new knowledge and innovative skills. Since transdisciplinarity involves the fusion of multiple approaches to formulate a different approach it enables wicked and messy issues associated with sustainability to be effectively tackled (Brown et al., 2010).

What may be concluded from this study is the uptake of sustainability education in tourism has been foiled due to minimal inter/multi/transdisciplinary engagement. Tourism business education is not alone. The literature contains evidence that progress towards cross disciplinary interactions overall is hampered due to a multitude of factors. Aznar Minguet et al. (2011, p. 162) point to “disciplinary myopias” as an ongoing barrier to holistically redesigning the curricula to include sustainability education. Although tourism phenomena naturally cut across many disciplines and can easily be regarded as multidisciplinary in nature, development of tourism theory and the approach taken with tourism studies, has tended to accord with a scholar’s main discipline (Echtner & Jamal, 1997). Since tourism education has scarcely embraced alternative disciplinary approaches, the thesis concludes such an outcome is a result of the monopoly of business/management throughout the majority of tourism studies.

Signs of early adopters of transdisciplinarity in tourism education have prevailed. Bushell, Streckfuss, Sheringham, Powis, & Farmer (1994) highlight a transdisciplinary approach facilitated experiential learning in hospitality education. More recent studies are exploring an inter/transdisciplinary approach for tourism education (Mrnjavac et al., 2012; Vollger & Pechlaner, 2015). This research points toward adopting a fresh approach which cannot be gleaned from one or more existing disciplines, but gained from a transdisciplinarity approach.

The thesis has included several original models. Figures 7.6 and 7.7 are the culmination of discussion that has analysed the presence of sustainability in Australian TH&E curricula and the meanings and understandings that teachers’ hold for sustainability both personally and in their teaching practice. The findings of this research have shown there are a number of important elements required for an ‘ideal’ sustainability education to occur in tourism higher education. The tenets of critical pedagogy, values-based education, experiential and transformational learning, all play a crucial role in sustainability tourism education. Analysis of opportunities and barriers towards EfS helped to tease out issues.
A radical rethink of what a futures-orientated tourism education looks like is required which arguably extends beyond EfS. Rather than educating students to be passive citizens with limited capacity to reflect, problem solve and innovate solutions to the problems they will face, tourism programs need to move towards a more transformative, sustainable and critical educational approach. This thesis has argued in order for tourism higher education (and the educators that teach within it) to fully embrace this concept called sustainability, we must move beyond the myopia of a business as usual approach.

8.1 Recommendations for Future Research and a Final Reflection

Value judgements are made all the time as to whose voices are captured and those that are not in a research project that seeks understanding of any phenomenon. I was always mindful this study could have been approached in so many different ways. The decision to focus on the teacher’s voice was a combination of the insider view I personally could offer as a teacher of sustainability myself, and the pragmatic decisions required when designing a PhD project given the parameters of available time and funding. As my thesis draws to an end I am even more alert to the fact that the voices of important players in sustainability tourism education are missing, in particular that of the student. This aspect has already been acknowledged as a limitation elsewhere in this study. Therefore it is recommended that further qualitative research is undertaken to explore the student perspective - current and past (alumni) - in order to complete a holistic picture of sustainability teaching and learning in tourism higher education.

This research has pointed out that sustainability is particularly explicitly absent in the events and hospitality curriculum space. A closer investigation of these areas of study is warranted to identify how sustainability is best incorporated into their curriculum. Also, this research purposefully targeted and interviewed sustainability tourism educators, and so it would be insightful to undertake a similar inquiry with teachers who are not so explicitly aligned to sustainability in their teaching practice. Additionally, to enhance TH&E higher education’s holistic understanding of sustainability, further research is recommended to examine opportunities that fully engage inter/transdisciplinary interactions with other areas of study. Similarly, opportunities for EfS are possible with the emergence of ‘virtual reality’ in the field of tourism (Guttentag, 2010), coupled with advancement of simulated learning technology in teaching and learning (Singh & Lee, 2009). These emerging approaches could provide promising pathways for tourism education and worthy of further examination in the context of EfS.
Finally, the research I undertook as part of this thesis has had a tremendous impact on me personally in so many ways. Apart from the anticipated development of scholarly thought and skill, as well as contribution to the body of knowledge about the topic, several impacts have occurred that were not expected. I have undergone a transformation myself in how and what I understand teaching to be. One initial impression gained early on in my research following the analysis of the first stage results, was a sense of urgency that is upon us as educators. It has never been more critical to implement changes in teaching practice and incorporate sustainability education into TH&E higher education. I found the scant inclusion of sustainability principles unsettling and it has inspired me to try and ‘walk the talk’ explicitly as a teacher of sustainability. My deeper understanding about the concept of transformative education transpired as a result of this thesis, and it has cemented a personal call for my own role to be one of activism in sustainability education.

Talking with this group of tourism teachers, so many of whom were enthusiastic and committed to teaching sustainability, has enriched my own thoughts about what it means to be a sustainability educator. I found myself constantly self-reflecting on what I have understood it to represent in the past and why this was so. As I contemplate the possibility of returning to the classroom, I find myself asking questions such as the following: What values will I be disclosing to my students and why? How can I maximise sustainability education within the curriculum space that I have control over? How can I improve the critical pedagogical approach I believe in? Lastly, I hope this research may inspire others to contemplate the role they play in tourism higher education, whatever that may be. As educators we are in a privileged position to be a catalyst for change towards a fairer and ethically moral society which cares deeply about the natural environment. We owe it to our students, ourselves and our planet to step up to the plate.


Fien, J. (2004). *The Tao of Prius, Keynote address presented at the 4th Australasian Conference of Sustainable Campuses, 29 Sep - 1 Oct, Griffith University EcoCentre, Brisbane, QLD.*


Jickling, B. (1997). If environmental education is to make sense for teachers, we had better rethink how we define it! *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, (Spring), 86-103.


O'Riordan, T., & Cameron, J. (1994). *Interpreting the precautionary principle*, London: Earthscan’


Wals, A. E. J. (2010). Between knowing what is right and knowing that it is wrong to tell others what is right: on relativism, uncertainty and democracy in environmental and sustainability education. Environmental Education Research, 16(1), 143-151.


Wright, T. (2002). Definitions and frameworks for environmental sustainability in higher Education. *Higher Education Policy, 15*(2), 105-120.


### Appendix 1: List of Universities

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## Appendix 2: Content Analysis Coding for Sustainability-related Dimensions

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Appendix 3 : Participant Information Sheet

My name is Andrea Boyle and I am a PhD Candidate in the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, at Southern Cross University in Lismore. Part of my study seeks to explore the academics’ experience and understandings of teaching or designing curriculum for sustainability in tourism higher education. As an educator or leader in sustainable tourism, I am hoping you may be willing to participate in my project via an interview.

Title of project
Educating for sustainability: Exploring the presence and meaning of sustainability in tourism higher education in Australia

What is this research?
The aim of the research is to uncover the experiences and understandings of sustainability held by tourism academics who teach tourism related content at Australian university. The research aims to find out about experiences of teaching sustainability in tourism programs such as the one/s you are involved with. I am particularly interested in your perspective.
I have found your name in the course information available on your university website [Alternative: and a colleague at SCU suggested I contact you...]and invite you to participate in this study which investigates how the concept of sustainability is interpreted, incorporated and actually translated into tourism higher education. It is hoped this research will ascertain why, how and where tourism academics, who teach and/or design tourism curriculum, are engaging with sustainability.
I am particularly interested in your perspective on what for example sustainability means to you and how and how it is interpreted by what and how you teach and/or plan curriculum. I hope you will be interested in participating in this research as the tourism academic voice is one that is often not captured when exploring engagement with sustainability in tourism education.

What does this research involve?
The study uses in-depth interviews using semi-structured questions which allow flexibility and room for open conversation about key issues. The interview format will be more like an in-depth conversation as it seeks to explore your overall engagement and involvement with sustainability. You are invited to participate in a face-to-face interview at a location convenient to you, such as your office or nearby quiet café.
I would be most interested in any samples or evidence of your teaching material that you feel reflects your relationship with sustainability which you can bring along to the interview. This could include lesson plans, assessment items, any recorded footage, your teaching philosophy, important articles, or anything else that you would like to talk about that shows how and what you teach.

It is anticipated the interview will take about one hour or as long as needed. If required I may request a follow up conversation either by telephone or Skype. With your permission, the interview will be recorded and transcribed so that I may reflect later on our conversation. Recordings will be transcribed and a printed transcript sent to you for review and approval before analysis. This is to ensure that your comments and views have been correctly recorded and enable you to add or withdraw information as you please. Only the text version of the transcript will be retained and de-identified and its use and storage is subject to the ethical clearance identified below. No information given in the interview will be made public in any form that could identify you. Pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity.

Topics which may be covered in your interview
- What the term sustainability means to you in your everyday life
- The importance of sustainability to you as a teacher of tourism
- What key sustainable concepts or issues are important to you for students to know
- How you incorporate sustainability into your teaching or curriculum
- What you envisage the future for sustainability in tourism education to be

What are the researcher’s responsibilities?
In undertaking this research I am required to follow the Australian Government National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and University policies and procedures. It is my duty to make sure that information given by you is protected. Data will be de-identified - your name, the name of your institution and any other identifying information will be removed from the data collected. De-identified records will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at Southern Cross University and on a personal computer which is not used by anyone else but the researcher. Every effort will be made to ensure that your confidentiality is protected. The research is deemed to be ‘low risk’ and does not involve any foreseeable risks to you.

What are the participant’s responsibilities?
Participant consent is required for this research project. Please find attached a copy of the Consent Form for you to sign and send back via return email if you agree to participate in an interview. Your participation in this research is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason for your decision. You may refuse to answer any question/s you are not comfortable with. You may also request to have the voice recorder switched off at any time. In this case I will ask permission to take notes during the interview. The interview is expected to take about one hour. Interviews will be conducted by me face-to-face, or via Skype if more appropriate, at a time and place convenient to you.

Dissemination of research outcomes
The results of this study will be published in a PhD thesis. Other publications may be prepared from this research, including peer-reviewed journal papers and scholarly conference presentations but no
information will be provided in these publications that might identify you or the organisation you work
with. Quotes from your interview may be used in such publications; however these will be reported
in a way that will not be traced back to you.
You will be given the opportunity on the consent form to indicate you would like to receive a summary
of the results by email or mail upon completion of the study.

**Inquiries**
If you have any enquiries about this research please contact the researcher, Andrea Boyle on +61 266
269431 or andrea.boyle@scu.edu.au.
My research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Erica Wilson who is a member of Southern
Cross University’s School of Tourism and Hospitality Management. If any issues or questions are raised
as a result of your participation in this research please contact Dr. Wilson on: 02 6620 3151 or email:
erica.wilson@scu.edu.au

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Southern Cross University Human
Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The Approval Number is [insert when approved].
If you have concerns about the **ethical conduct** of this research or the researchers, the following
procedure should occur. Write to the following:
The Ethics Complaints Officer
Southern Cross University
PO Box 157
Lismore NSW 2480
Email: ethics.lismore@scu.edu.au

All information is confidential and will be handled as soon as possible.

**You will be given a copy of this form to keep**
Appendix 4 : Interview Guide

What the term sustainability means to you in your everyday life (what drives it? – family values; industry experience...)

Can you define and describe sustainability as you understand it yourself?

Given your description of sustainability do you feel you are a sustainable person? Why? Why not?

What does this experience mean to you personally?

What is teaching sustainability like for you?

Can you explain what sustainability means to you as a teacher of tourism? Why is it important?

What is your understanding of EfS? Do you believe there is general confusion?

How do you incorporate sustainability into your teaching or curriculum?

What key sustainable concepts or issues are important to you for students to know? Why?

Would you like to talk about this sample of evidence – can you send me?

Can you describe what issues, if any, you face when trying to engage with EfS? Do you feel supported in your faculty – why/why not?
   Curriculum space?
   What opportunities not being utilised?
   What changes are necessary?

What do you envisage the future for sustainability in tourism education to be?

Other
Appendix 5: Consent Form

Title of research project: Educating for sustainability: Exploring the presence and meaning of sustainability in tourism higher education in Australia

Name of researcher: Andrea Boyle

Tick the box that applies, sign and date and return to the researcher andrea.boyle@scu.edu.au

I agree to take part in the Southern Cross University research project specified above. Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand the information about my participation in the research project, which has been provided to me by the researcher Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree to be interviewed by the researcher. Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree to allow the interview to be recorded Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree to make myself available for further interview if required. Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and I understand that I can cease my participation at any time. Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that my participation in this research will be treated with confidentiality. Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that any information that may identify me will be de-identified at the time of analysis of any data. Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that no identifying information will be disclosed or published. Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that all information gathered in this research will be kept confidentially for 7 years at the University. Yes ☐ No ☐

I am aware that I can contact the researcher at any time with any queries. Her contact details are provided to me. Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that this research project has been approved by the SCU Human Research Ethics Committee Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant name: ______________________________________________________

Participant signature: ____________________________ ________________________

Date: ______________________

☐ Please tick this box and provide your email or mail address below if you wish to receive a summary of the results:

Email: ____________________________________________ ____________________________
## Appendix 6 : Interview Coding

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