

Workshop 10: The Role of the Private Sector in ESD

**Coordinators: Katherine Madden, World Business Council for Sustainable Development;
Alex Wong, World Economic Forum**

Conference Objective 1: To Highlight the Essential Contribution of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to All of Education and to Achieving Quality Education

Why is ESD relevant?

The participants of the workshop agreed that Education for Sustainable Development contributes to improving the overall quality of education and learning in all types and levels of education. From the perspectives of the business and corporate sector, among others, key contributions of ESD were highlighted. It was underlined that ESD is important for business as it helps in improving business practices and assists the process towards sustainable development. Moreover, it provides opportunities for increased engagement between the private sector, civil society, Governments, employees and trade unions – through multi-stakeholder partnership processes, i.e. “better Public Private Partnerships”. ESD also helps in preparing a skilled, informed and responsible workforce and employees. Furthermore, it raises the awareness of all stakeholders such as customers, suppliers and employees about sustainability issues and challenges. This awareness is essential for improving the contribution of the private sector to sustainable development efforts. Finally, ESD is essential for a sustainable world, and a sustainable world is the precondition for sustainable and profitable business.



Erich Harsch presenting a case study

Conference Objective 2: To Promote International Exchange on ESD

What can we learn from each other?

The workshop participants, having shared their individual experiences, came to the conclusion that there is, firstly, a rich resource of sustainable development knowledge and practices across the private sector which can contribute to improving the overall learning environment and make this learning relevant to the sustainable economy. A second aspect is that the business sector is sometimes already incorporating sustainable development principles in its practices. These practices and experiences can contribute to re-orienting and improving education programmes and encourage innovation. Finally, sustainable development challenges are shared. Hence, there is a need for increased dialogue between Governments, civil society (including trade unions) and the private/corporate sector, i.e. companies.

Conference Objective 3: To Carry out a Stock-taking of DESD Implementation

What have we achieved so far, what are the lessons learnt?

Workshop participants felt that even though the engagement of the private sector in the DESD processes was rather limited or fragmented, there are important lessons from the business and corporate sector experiences which are valuable for the DESD and ESD. The key points highlighted during the workshop are:

- The business/corporate sector has made significant achievements in integrating or implementing Sustainable Development practices but they are fragmented and not coordinated;
- With the emergence of global challenges there is a need for businesses, i.e. the private sector, to become integrated into the ESD process to strengthen the business licence to operate;
- The private sector needs to engage with the ESD community proactively in driving educational processes towards sustainability, e.g. to contribute to curriculum development, particularly at secondary and tertiary education levels according to business



Debating how to further engage with the private sector

needs, supporting the local suppliers to integrate sustainability into their business practices, etc.

Conference Objective 4: To Develop Strategies for the Way Ahead

Where do we want to go from here?

The workshop participants agreed unanimously that the private sector is an important stakeholder of the DESD. It has the experience, knowledge and resources, which need to be and can be fully mobilised. The workshop was seen as a positive step towards mobilising the private sector. The key points highlighted were firstly, that there is a need to integrate private/business/corporate sector experience, knowledge and experience in the DESD efforts better. One possibility will be the formation of a formal/informal multi-stakeholder body facilitating the engagement of the private/corporate sector in the DESD efforts. Secondly, it was felt to be important to facilitate the sharing of best practices on employee education through ESD.

Thirdly, a framework should be designed for a platform for sharing ESD results and a platform for this should be developed in communities. Fourthly, it is necessary to run a new monitoring, assessment and evaluation process on learning and ESD. Finally, a need was ascertained to foster industrial demand to drive innovation in the delivery of learning for ESD. In particular it was regarded as important to consider en-

couraging the business/corporate sector to support the establishment of ESD Chairs to strengthen ESD in business education.

Workshop rapporteur: Santosh Khatri, UNESCO Office Hanoi

