

Workshop 15: From the margins into the Centre: Establishing ESD in Education Plans and Curricula

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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?

Education for Sustainable Development has an instrumental role to play in giving education a new direction. In order to do so, ESD has to move into the centre of curricula and education plans. Only then can ESD provide learners with a future-oriented viewpoint on the increasingly globalised world and issues affecting the future. ESD provides learners with basic competences that can enable them to act responsibly. It offers an opportunity to give a new direction to education as a whole. ESD provides a holistic vision of education. It is a new form of learning that emphasises active participatory and transformational learning. ESD and quality education are mutually reinforcing, aiming at the fullest possible development of the potential of learners. ESD underscores the application of knowledge and change in values and behaviour. It changes education from being transmissive to transformative.

Conference Objective 2: To Promote International Exchange on ESD

What can we learn from each other?

Countries have adopted different approaches to mainstreaming ESD with varying degrees of success. Various developing countries reported having experienced many challenges and difficulties in doing this, owing to a lack of resources and technical expertise. The participants recognised the need for North-South, South-South and North-South-South cooperation. Regional and sub-regional networks of Ministries, teacher education institutions and universities have worked in Africa (e.g. SADC REEP). The ENSA programme supported by Germany, which involves exchange between schools in Germany and developing countries, has shown promise in terms of strengthening ESD in schools and giving pupils and teachers an opportunity to acquire competencies related to ESD. Different forms of partnerships and networks involving multiple stakeholders should be utilised. The support of ministries at national level and head teachers at local level is a key element. To promote learning from each other ESD has to be put on the agenda of cooperating partners supporting the development of education to achieve the EFA and MDG goals.

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

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

As a result of DESD efforts, a paradigm shift has occurred where the environmental notion of sustainable development is being replaced by an integrated view of sustainable development. Increasingly, issues and concepts of environmental education, global citizenship and development are occupying space in education plans and curricula. There is increased recognition of the need to mainstream ESD in all levels, types, components and dimensions of education. Many participants emphasised that elements of sustainable development are already present in schools but this should be further promoted and strengthened so that ESD is visible and acquires priority. A competency-based approach to ESD has potentials in terms of providing a holistic view of sustainable development. It also provided the opportunity to link ESD to the teaching subjects.

Conference Objective 4: To Develop Strategies for the Way Ahead

Where do we want to go from here?

A dual approach to mainstreaming Education for Sustainable Development should be adopted where ESD is promoted through subjects and at the same time integrated into all aspects of school life (subjects-based as well as whole school approach). ESD should be at the heart of the curriculum. However, the focus of the curriculum must encompass the areas of competencies such as knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours. Professional development of teachers is vital. The role of technology and internet in mainstreaming ESD should be encouraged. To achieve this, teachers need to be supported. ESD should be the overarching thrust of all subjects. Both top-down and bottom-up approaches should be promoted where all stakeholders are given proper orientation on ESD. It is also essential to carry out research to find out where gaps and barriers to integrating ESD are. Mainstreaming activities should be adequately resourced. Participants underlined that developing countries will need both technical and financial support.

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