

Workshop 17: Monitoring and Evaluation of ESD

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This workshop provided opportunities for participants to be actively engaged in issues associated with monitoring and evaluating of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) during the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). They were asked to engage in a scenario planning situation and fish bowl exercises as well as in group discussions and analysis.⁸

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

Why is ESD relevant?

Education for Sustainable Development is relevant to education for several main reasons. ESD seeks a new vision for education which helps learners to better understand the world where they live. It supports learning which is locally and culturally relevant and based on active, critical, exploratory, creative and learner-centred approaches. It seeks a focus on challenging dominant mindsets and practices which hinder pathways to a sustainable future. ESD calls for a re-orientation of education systems as these have failed to provide learners with the skills needed to move to a more sustainable future.

The scope of the DESD is broad and its potential effects are far-reaching. If it is successful, the DESD could transform not only education but also the quality of life of many across the globe. For this reason, it is important to look at ways in which we can effectively monitor progress and capture learning in the process of implementation. The DESD International Implementation Scheme stresses that Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is not only a way to assess progress in ESD, but also a mechanism to implement the Decade. Thus, the process of M&E is more than just measuring performance; it offers the opportunity to engage stakeholders in ESD activities. The development of ESD monitoring and evaluation frameworks helps ensuring ongoing relevance and effectiveness of ESD

efforts; guiding planning and reorienting of ESD programmes; increasing understanding of ESD progress; and improve decision-making and action-taking.

M&E is important to ESD as it is also a 'learning to change' and a capacity-building process itself, in which stakeholders are involved in a complex process of: understanding and identifying indicators; capturing learning in implementation processes; reporting progress on ESD; raising key questions to re-orient existing practices; and taking relevant actions for the future.

Conference Objective 2: To Promote International Exchange on ESD

What can we learn from each other?

Monitoring and evaluation processes can assist in assessing change but also acknowledge the importance of involving stakeholders from different cultures, contexts and levels of experience in ESD in the 'learning' process which results from reflecting upon progress. Therefore, identifying and engaging stakeholders from across all sectors is key to advancing M&E processes in ESD. This process of engaging stakeholders is as important as defining the monitoring and evaluation framework or ESD indicators.

Workshop participants recognised how international exchange is relevant to share different perspectives and experiences on how to improve the collection of better data in ESD which can actually capture ESD realities. International exchange is also important to share and acknowledge the challenges and limitations of M&E mechanisms: What can be monitored?; What cannot be monitored?; What are the resources available?; How can the existing M&E systems help us in assessing progress?

⁸ To enrich its analysis, this report has drawn on Tilbury, Daniella. "Monitoring and Evaluation during the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development". *Journal of Education for Sustainable Development* 1(2) (2007): 239-254; and Mulà, Ingrid and Tilbury, Daniella. "A United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014): What difference will it make?" *Journal of Education for Sustainable Development* 3(1) (2009): 87-97

Conference Objective 3: To Carry out a Stock-taking of DESD Implementation
What have we achieved so far, what are the lessons learnt?

A collection of experiences and summaries, presented in different UNESCO documents and reported in the workshop, suggest that the DESD has facilitated the adoption of ESD policies and strategies, ESD working groups and focal points, monitoring and evaluation initiatives and the engagement of stakeholders in ESD activities. However, workshop participants stressed that it is still too early to draw a conclusion and state whether the DESD has already made a difference. It is also difficult to ascertain the value and impact of those ESD initiatives which have taken place during the DESD, and to know to what extent the Decade itself has contributed to their development. However, it is a good time to ask questions regarding the value and legacy of the DESD. Participants recognised that progress during the Decade will depend on the coordination among the different stakeholders and networks.

Workshop participants agreed that the network of Regional Centres of Expertise (RCE), coordinated by the United Nations University (UNU), is a good example of what the Decade can achieve. More than 60 RCEs exist around the world and they are planning and developing creative projects involving different ranges of partnerships.

However, ESD is still at the margins. Although more ESD policies exist and interesting initiatives such as the RCE network have been developed, there is still a lack of financial resources and governmental support; there are still no common cultural values supporting ESD; and sustainable development is still not embedded in all education sectors.

Conference Objective 4: To Develop Strategies for the Way Ahead
Where do we want to go from here?

The workshop was designed to develop strategies for the next M&E phase, based on assessing learning processes in ESD. This means, that it will be important to determine the focus and the targets which need to be monitored. Workshop participants agreed that this is a difficult task as there is a need to define what learning means and to find ways to know how and which type of learning is translated into actions which lead to sustainable futures. Therefore, criteria to monitor innovative learning, such as experiential, inquiry-based, problem-based learning, will need to be de-



Deciding upon priorities

finised. Workshop participants also emphasised how competencies in ESD as well as a change in value-systems should be foci of the next M&E phase.

Monitoring and Evaluation in ESD needs to be planned and reported through multi-stakeholder consultation, not only involving government agencies and departments, but also civil society organisations, education institutions and the business sector, taking into account the existing diversity of cultural perspectives. This means that it will be essential to determine who are the key stakeholders, who will need to be involved in this second phase, and the ways they can contribute to the evaluation process. This entails to empower and engage people and organisations to take part in the process in order to include their different voices and perspectives. The stakeholder involvement will require adequate training to build capacity and develop skills to effectively monitor and evaluate ESD.

The second Monitoring and Evaluation phase will also have to set in place an accurate system to collect data and thus evidence of what is globally happening in terms of learning for sustainable development. Workshop participants suggested creative ideas such as: collect data in conferences where different stakeholders meet; create online systems to enhance the opportunities to contribute to offering evidence; development of longitudinal studies to measure changes over time; and to document stories of change.

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