

Workshop 18: EFA-ESD Dialogue: Creating Synergies and Linkages for Educating for a Sustainable World

Coordinators: Karin Jahr de Guerrero and Nadja Bleiber, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development; Khawla Shaheen, UNESCO

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?

There was a strong consensus that synergies between Education for Sustainable Development and Education for All (EFA) will strengthen both agendas and bring them mutual benefits. In particular, ESD can help EFA achieve its goals by ensuring that increased emphasis is placed on relevance, appropriateness and contextualised learning and by incorporating indigenous and local knowledge. 'Knowing is not enough': there is a need for education for empathy, which includes empathy for future generations, education for praxis, problem-solving, critical thinking, responsibility, and for inclusive societies. ESD's commitment to the values and concepts of sustainability and to processes of critical thinking and reflective practice also strengthens the quality dimensions of EFA. In addition, EFA can draw on ESD's experience in interdisciplinary work across both the natural and social sciences to enhance the quality of learning and the development of educational systems appropriate for the 21st century. Education alone is not sufficient to address 'capability' and poverty⁹, indeed sometimes it can compound them and even become part of the problem¹⁰; therefore, it is the **kind** of education which matters. For this reason, an educational process is needed that is transformative, develops socially critical thinkers, and enables citizens to hold those in power accountable. This needs to be addressed at an individual as well as collective level.

ESD, with its broader reach and perspective, could help to 're-imagine' EFA delivery outside the constraints of school systems, for example, learning in and with the community¹¹ and forging links between schools and communities. Nearly half of the world's population are young people, most of whom are in developing countries. Therefore strong opportunities exist for EFA and ESD synergy. ESD can also enhance the

quality of EFA by incorporating the concept of lifelong learning and by providing an opportunity for rethinking how educators are trained in order to strengthen inclusive, participatory, facilitative approaches to teaching and learning. Synergies between EFA and ESD could enable more joint training between formal and non-formal educators and seek to break down the divisions between the two agendas. It offers opportunities for learning in, by and as communities.

Conference Objective 2: To Promote International Exchange on ESD

What can we learn from each other?

ESD is for everyone but it is most urgent for those at the top with the greatest power to affect change. Participants felt that UNESCO should encourage and set up further opportunities for key people to come together in order to develop joint EFA-ESD strategies.

It was expressed, however, that ESD until now has mainly been focused on richer countries though it should be viewed as an entitlement for everyone. Education which can sustain lives and people is essential. It was underscored that "ESD is not a luxury but a necessity" both from an ethical but also a practical standpoint. Educators from richer northern countries and southern developing countries need to have more opportunities to share ideas and develop programmes of mutual benefit.

Some work has been carried out to develop EFA-ESD agendas. Several participants saw EFA as a **target**, and ESD as content and methodology. A participant from South Korea, for example, mentioned that it has achieved EFA but has a long way to go with ESD.

Many participants felt that current formal education systems were preventing the introduction of ESD because of their inflexible curricula. It was emphasised that a wholesale transformation in the way education is perceived was necessary. Participants believed that the need to acquire additional resources was not

⁹ Sen, Amartya. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999.

¹⁰ See among others, David Orr 2004 *Earth in Mind: On Education, Environment and the Human Prospect*. Washington D.C.: Island Press, 2004.

¹¹ Community is meant here in the broadest sense, not just geographically.

always necessary, but rather an adoption of different approaches; such as closely linking the formal, non-formal and informal sectors together. Further opportunities to make these links at local, national and sub-regional levels would facilitate this process.

Workshop participants stressed that the Conference offered NGOs, Governments, the community sector and private sector organisations an opportunity to work together. However, many believed that there are more opportunities within regional and existing structures and also perhaps the Regional Centres of Expertise (RCE) process.

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

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

Participants underlined that ESD and EFA thus far are not strongly integrated and therefore integration needs to occur immediately. Such integration should build on existing structures and mechanisms where possible. Some countries (for example the Southern African Development Community (SADC) which has a protocol on ESD) have made greater progress than others.

A positive start has been made with EFA-ESD dialogue and it needs to be taken forward by UNESCO as a matter of urgency. UNESCO could build on the EFA-ESD dialogue technical paper to take the process forward. In some countries this process is already being developed. An example of such initiatives is the UNESCO UK National Commission's ESD working group planning of an expert seminar on the dialogue paper in June 2009 in the United Kingdom.

The current global financial crisis offers an opportunity to develop a strong case for quality education (EFA and ESD) because it underscores the need for the world to change in the light of the global challenges, especially that of climate change.

Conference Objective 4: To Develop Strategies for the Way Ahead

Where do we want to go from here?

Develop structures which link EFA and ESD agendas while recognising their individual and particular attributes, goals and perspectives.

There is a need for more intersectoral collaboration and partnerships: strategies and structures need to be put in place and financed. Although this process should be facilitated by UNESCO there is also a need for ESD and EFA practitioners on the ground to take it forward. This needs to happen at all levels: regional, national, international, between different UN bodies and within UNESCO itself. UNESCO, as the lead UN agency for both ESD and EFA agendas, has a key role in making this happen, and therefore should seek to build on existing structures.

Proposed key activities:

Participants emphasised that policy-makers needed ESD capacity-development in the light of the urgency of the challenges of climate change and the current financial crisis. This should include civil servants, Government, media, leaders of the private sector – all major change agents. In order to form a critical mass of informed and politically active citizens who can put pressure on policy-makers and to provide quality education for all, ESD implementation at school level should also be further actively promoted.

Many participants felt that the current financial crisis offered an opportunity for a review of the neo-liberal growth agenda which has substantially failed to address issues of climate change and sustainable development, including poverty eradication. ESD can offer a socially critical framework through which to address these current challenges.

In order to do this effectively, participants stressed that ESD needed a higher profile in educational debates and policy-making platforms (both national and international). UNESCO clearly has an important role to play in this regard. This includes the need for UNESCO to lobby for funds for ESD (especially for capacity development, training, advocacy, and awareness-raising) as well as for EFA.

It was felt that ESD should be put on the agenda of international meetings and other UN agencies' agendas. Participants emphasised that UNESCO could, for example, raise the interest of the World Bank in ESD as it has done with EFA or train international funding agencies to incorporate ESD in the same way that they have incorporated gender. EFA needs to bring in a range of other partners, for example from the economic and environmental sectors to explore the range



of factors which (in addition to education) are contributing to the challenges in attaining the EFA goals. There is a need to further link formal and non-formal educators to share practice and expertise in quality-relevant education for all and for sustainable development. This is of particular importance for teachers and educators. Goal 3 of EFA (Promote learning and life skills for young people and adults) can be addressed within this context: Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes. Finally, it was underlined that climate change concerns are an opportunity to link EFA and ESD not just for mitigation but also for adaptation of social systems.

Research agenda

Participants pointed out that ESD needs to work more closely with EFA and higher education institutions to find ways of developing holistic, interdisciplinary capacities and structures which could be implemented in educational systems. Current systems of measurement and evidence collection are not yet adequate in reflecting and evaluating quality education, and it was felt that ESD-EFA synergy could help to develop this area. Effective indicators for quality education should be developed by 2015. In relation to ESD, the UNESCO Monitoring and Evaluation Expert Group is already working in this area and opportunities for EFA-ESD synergies exist in this regard. Interregional as well as international research programmes would enable more contextually relevant research and evidence.

Teacher Education

EFA's two key challenges, shortage of qualified teachers combined with concerns about the quality of teacher education in some regions, mean that EFA-ESD synergy is an imperative. In particular, it was emphasised that opportunities should be developed for the involvement of community non-formal and informal educators, including NGOs to participate in teacher education and to help break down the barriers between the formal and non-formal sectors as well as between different disciplines. It was also stated that much more professional development at school level is needed because centralised top-down programmes can be counterproductive or contribute to the disabling of teachers. UNESCO's International Network of Teacher Educators in ESD could provide opportunities to develop EFA-ESD synergy.

Workshop rapporteur: Ros Wade, London South Bank University, United Kingdom