



## Workshop 19

### Better schools at preschool, primary and secondary levels through ESD

**Time:** 2 April, 9.00-13.00h

**Organizers:** Moacir Gadotti, Paulo Freire Institute, Member of the International Advisory Group of the Bonn Conference; Jeannette Larue, Ministry of Education in the Seychelles

#### Objectives:

This workshop will provide participants with an opportunity to

1. explore how the concept of sustainability can transform formal education at pre-school, primary and secondary levels;
2. consider in greater detail how education for sustainability can enrich and reanimate teaching/learning strategies, the curriculum, pedagogy and the role of the teacher, and the school environment
3. share and learn from each other about how schools in different countries are responding to the call for education for sustainability.

#### Abstract:

Education for sustainable development implies a transformation in every aspect of school life at pre-school, primary and secondary levels. At policy level, governments need to establish links between education for sustainable development and education for all, recognizing that the purpose of education is not just to support economic development, but to help individuals and societies develop to their fullest potential, without undermining the health of the society at large or the environment. But at the grass-roots level, in schools, much can and must be done by school leaders, teachers and students to integrate sustainability into all aspects of school life and the curriculum, drawing out the interconnections between social, environmental, cultural, and economic problems and achievements. School level initiatives

can respond best to the context, opportunities and needs of particular communities and the natural environment. In this workshop, participants will have the opportunity to hear, share, and critique concrete experiences, projects, and strategies from schools trying to integrate education for sustainability into their programs. Through sharing circles and small group work tasks, participants will consider in greater detail how education for sustainability can enrich and reanimate teaching/learning strategies, the curriculum, pedagogy and the role of the teacher, and the school environment.

#### Concept note

Education is fundamental for achieving sustainability and for creating a more sustainable future. All teachers can contribute to education for sustainability: mathematics can work with data that refer to pollution of environment, the poverty growth; linguistics can analyze the role played by means communication and propaganda in consumption habits; history and social sciences can discuss ethnic issues and gender inequality.

Sustainability implies a curricular reorientation, so that some principles may be incorporated to them. These principles should, for example, orientate on the conceiving of contents and elaboration of school material. Jean Piaget has taught us that a curriculum should include things that are meaningful to stu- →

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dents. We know, this is correct, but incomplete. The contents that are present in the curriculum have to be meaningful to the student, and they will only be meaningful to them, if these contents are also meaningful to the health of the planet.

Regarding the impact of the concept of sustainability at the formal education, we can consider two levels: a) The legal level: educational reforms (curriculum, contents). The law, the rule, can introduce new behaviors, but, we need another level. b) The level of the commitment of persons, engaging her/his endorsement (for a sustainable lifestyle), by a virtuous process, biological, intuitive (not mechanic or rational process), possible by different motivations (compassion, love, fear, anger, etc.).

ESD is an integrative (integrate education, health, jobs, sciences, etc) and interactive concept. We need, for example, to establish a dialog between ESD and Education For All (EFA) strategies. EFA have made a long way (Jomtien, Dakar...). ESD is beginning. We need to create synergies between these two processes and use the concept of sustainability to implement a new quality of formal education, a socio-environmental education. In this moment, the rich countries have more attention to ESD and the poor countries, due to his reality, have more attention to EFA.

What is the difference of emphasis between these two movements? EFA refers to basic education, formal system, to basic learning needs, to schools, literacy, to the right of education. Basically, EFA involve just the Ministry of Education. By contrast, ESD movement goes beyond the basic education and formal education. It is also non-formal, and involves the lifelong learning education (social level, systems and organizations). However, ESD, serve to reorient curricula. It is more emancipatory and involves other Ministries, like Environment, Agriculture, etc.

We need to re-orientate existing educational programs in the sense of promoting knowledge, competences and abilities, principles, values and attitudes related to sustainability. A concrete strategy so that we can start this debate inside our schools and building an eco-audit in order to discover where exactly we are being unsustainable. It is very simple: we only need to trace everything we do and compare this data to

the principles of sustainability. It is not hard to identify where we are and where we are not integrating in our curriculum, in a broad sense, the concepts of sustainable development, in history, in social sciences and in our daily lives.

In terms of level of teaching, we have to adopt different strategies: in primary school, for example, our children need to experience (experiences stick more than talking) and they need to know the plants' and animals' needs, their habitat, how to reduce, re-use and recycle materials that have been used, how to keep ecosystems attached to forests and water. In a more advanced level, we need to discuss biodiversity, environmental conservation, alternatives of energy and global warming. At university level, besides diffusing environmental information, we need to produce new knowledge and do research that aim at looking for a new development paradigm.

Among the pedagogical values and principles of an eco-pedagogy, we can highlight: educate for a global thinking; educate one's feelings; teach our identity in the Earth as a vital human condition; educate for planetary awareness; educate for understanding and educate for voluntary simplicity and quietness.

Essentially, the Decade of Education For Sustainable Development aims at making people aware through means of their disposal. Therefore, it will work with ethical values and principles which are related to people's sustainable life and to the planet's survival itself. For this reason, the Decade is, above all, a call for a transforming action, a call for popular education, for an education for and to planetary citizenship, for an intertranscultural and intertransdisciplinary dialogue, for a culture of peace and sustainability that promotes the end of poverty, of illiteracy in the world, of political domination and economical exploitation, finally, an education for emancipation.

Educate for sustainability is educate for another possible world, educate to living in the cosmos – cosmological education - broadening our comprehension of Earth and universe. It is educate for having a cosmic perspective. This is the only way we will be able to understand better problems like desertification, deforestation, global warming etc. Classical paradigms, arrogantly anthropocentric and industry-oriented, do



not have enough reach to explain this cosmic reality. Since they do not have this holistic view, they were not able to give answers in the sense of how to take the world off of this route that leads to extermination and to cruel differences between the rich and the poor. Classical paradigms are leading the planet to a loss of natural resources. The current crisis regards civilizatory paradigms. Educate for sustainability needs a new paradigm, a holistic one.

What can schools do in order to save the planet? The EDS's main goal is to influence on curricular change by introducing the theme sustainability. Some countries have already started. In order to promote this chance. Implementing the concept of sustainability in school curricula, make them more flexible, involving teachers, students, parents and communities, associating formal and non-formal education. The community, in and out of the school, meets in order to discuss the theme and to build eco-political-pedagogical projects in schools, attaching education and sustainability. The result is the construction of a eco-school.

ESD needs to have a school approach, like the Eco-School concept developed in many countries. Apart from building environmental awareness, and positive environmental attitudes and values, it also needs to be reflected in the day to day running of the school, in the non-formal curriculum or hidden curriculum. We cannot teach students about energy conservation in their science class, if the schools are not doing anything to reduce energy consumption as school level. Environmental awareness is necessary, but not enough.

A curriculum which promotes ESD must continuously be reviewed to address new environmental, social and economical crisis and see how it can be tackled at local level and perhaps, how the schools can adapt to all these changes taking place. Issues like climate change, sustainable consumption, human rights, living values and food security also need to be integrated in both the formal curriculum as well as the non-formal curriculum. Schools need to identify local problematic issues and see how it can be dealt with in their local context, through school based programme.

It must also involve the school population, not only the students, but also school managers, the teaching and non-teaching staff, the organizations and community groups which work with the school. But most importantly, ESD needs to get the support of authorities concerned; especially the Ministry of Education to ensure that is in cooperated in the school formal educational system.

In summary, ESD is a great opportunity to renew the curricula of formal educational systems and to promote the emergency of complex methodological epistemological approaches that may empower the inter-disciplinary and the inter-transculturality. EDS is a great opportunity to the teachers at all levels, to schools and university heads, to students, education ministers and other education politicians, to change all levels of our education systems.

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