

REPORT FROM WORKSHOP 4: EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (ESD)

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development could be described as a development as a result of which human inhabitants of planet earth can live together in peace, dignity and mutual respect on that one planet without causing irreversible damage to it by their production and consumption activities. Making sustainable development to a societal core objective means entering a process of change, a joint learning process, at a global scale. What sustainable development should look like and what has to be learned is determined by the big global problems on the one hand and by national and regional ecological, socio-economic and cultural conditions on the other. In other words: sustainable development has many faces and there is not one single recipe.

PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Workshop 4 focused on the role of higher education institutions (HEIs) in promoting ESD and how it can be understood as a process taking place in formal, non-formal and informal learning environments and continuing life long.

Carl Lindberg discussed the background and process of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD), the European response to UNDESD and ESD in Sweden. The policy recommendations that came to the fore out of this presentation were that parties that endorsed UNDESD in Johannesburg in 2002 should take responsibility. For governments this means to use appropriate instruments to stimulate its implementation; a law like in Sweden is a powerful instrument. For universities taking responsibility implies making action plans by the university board, organizing activities across disciplinary boundaries, and appointing a group of persons to take responsibility for the activities.

Antonio Gino I Roca discussed how UPC, the Technical University of Catalonia is giving shape to its responsibility for sustainable development in society. Also he stated that for dealing with societal complexity an interdisciplinary approach and interaction between university and society for instance via 'science shops' and the RCE, is needed. UPC is taking advantage of the Bologna process to design and implement new curricula in which sustainable development is a compulsory element in all programmes.

Dzulkifli Bin Abdul Razak described the important role ESD plays in the strategies and operational plans of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) in Penang. Both the interaction with regional stakeholders and international networking are important aspects. The involvement in the global RCE network is considered important as it can constitute a driving force for transforming educational policies and education through trans-

disciplinary cooperation with regional stakeholders. The policy recommendations emerging from these two presentations are that explorative co-operation at inter- and trans-disciplinary levels can contribute to creating a new world view that hopefully will be that sustainable development is a 'must' and this in turn will constitute a driving force for innovation of education.

Ryokichi Hirono described experiences with ESD in Japan. He also touched upon the important role the RCE initiative of UNU can play in that context and also the importance of inter-university networking in the Asia Pacific Region. ESD could be seen as a catalyst for changing not only the educational vision, goals and infrastructure via participatory process with local stakeholders, but also the role of HEIs in community, local and national development in favour of sustainability. The policy recommendation emerging is that parties involved, especially HEI, should work on continuity of the process of change by taking away institutional barriers such as the lack or inadequacy of inter-disciplinary, inter-organizational, inter-stakeholder and inter-ministerial interaction and coordination as well as by generating and providing financial resources.

Eun-Kyung Park discussed ESD in Korea and also she stressed the diverse approaches needed to promote ESD in different educational sections in Korea. University level activities (in which both students and professors are involved) and RCEs can play an important role in awareness-raising. Explorative projects in the RCE context are suitable to do justice to the most important regional cultural conditions. A policy advice from the Korean experiences would be that less top-down regulation by the government and more bottom-up activities through regional participatory process should be encouraged.

Antonio Augusto Dos Santos Soares discussed how the Banco do Brasil is committing itself to the new agenda of sustainable development working from a “triple-bottom-line” perspective. In its Regional Sustainable Development (DRS) Programme, the Banco do Brasil evaluates social and environmental impacts of small businesses it supports via micro-credit and other capacity development activities. The Bank also conducts evaluation of performances of businesses it supports in order to ensure that DRS Programme contribute to income generation, capacity development and improvement of quality of life in rural areas. The policy recommendation to be extracted from this presentation is that investments in ESD in all programmes by all parties, not just the state, should be stimulated.

SUMMARY OF POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. All parties including higher education institutions that endorsed ESD in Johannesburg in 2002 should take responsibility for implementing it via appropriate instruments at their disposal.

2. To deal with societal complexity, inter- and trans-disciplinary approaches are needed in education and such approaches focused on ESD should constitute a compulsory part in learning situations in all curricula.

Recommendations for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs):

- a) University authorities should draw up action plans to ensure that education is indeed characterized by a sustainable development (SD) perspective.
 - b) The boards of the faculties should assume responsibility for mainstreaming SD/ESD into all educational programmes. This should be done through a participatory process involving students and student organizations.
 - c) The boards of the faculties should improve opportunities for all members of the university community including students to become competent in SD and to engage with the (local) civil society.
 - d) The university managements should create an organization/organization structures with a cross-disciplinary mandate to promote ESD activities.
 - e) The universities should engage in joint learning experiences/ create strong partnerships with companies, governments, NGOs etc. on SD/ESD.
 - f) HEIs should become models of SD not only in what is taught but also in how all university activities are carried out, i.e., purchasing policy, campus greening, employment policy, and other issues involving environmental and equity concerns.
 - g) The boards of the faculties should earmark development funds in order to achieve the above objectives.
3. RCEs should be promoted as they can function as incubators for the innovation of HE to better meet the demands of a globalized complex society.
 4. Governments should create frameworks based on trust in vision and autonomy within which creativity and flexibility of HEIs to meet the needs of civil society to progress towards SD can flourish.
 5. Cultural and ecological diversity and wisdom should be considered and respected as a rich source of inspiration that should not be suppressed.
 6. UNESCO and UNU should lobby for national support of ESD and RCEs as an effective instrument to promote ESD, via National UNESCO Commissions, UNU research and training centres and their bi- and multilateral relations with governments and HEIs.

