Education for Sustainable Development
Workshop Part II: What is ESD?

Rosalyn McKeown, Ph.D.
Portland State University
Portland International Initiative for Leadership in Ecology, Language and Culture
What is education for sustainable development (ESD)?

How can I contribute to the United Nations Decade of ESD?
In Part I of this workshop, we had a brief introduction to the topic of sustainable development. Now let’s look at education for sustainable development, which is referred to as ESD.
Education for Sustainable Development . . .

➢ is a key and vital element in moving sustainability forward.

➢ will help people to pursue sustainable livelihoods, to continue to learn after they leave school, to participate in community life, and to live in a sustainable manner.
What are the roles of education in sustainable development?

- To foster environmental stewardship.
- To improve quality of life.
- To develop creativity and innovation for a better tomorrow.
What are the roles of education in sustainable development?

In terms of economic development:

- To reduce poverty.
- To facilitate development through creating an educated workforce that can move beyond a agricultural and extractive economies.
- To help everyone do their job better by reducing environmental impact and creating more just and equitable workplaces.
- To create wise consumers.
What are the roles of education in sustainable development?

In terms of society:

- To raise social tolerance, equity, and justice.
- To create life-long learners who can adapt to societal changes.
- To reduce the population growth rate and the hardships and inequities that accompany rapid population growth.
What are the roles of education in sustainable development?

In terms of awareness:

- To raise the level of public understanding of sustainability.
- To develop a voting citizenry knowledgeable about sustainability issues.
- To enhance public support or demand to implement policies related to sustainability.
What are the roles of education in sustainable development?

In terms of community decision making:

- To assist the public develop the skills to be engaged in the dialog about their future.
- To assist citizens develop the skills to analyze local issues and propose and implement solutions.
Education: Promise and Paradox

Education is conceptualized as a great hope for a more sustainable world. However, we know that the most educated nations leave the deepest ecological footprints. Clearly, simply educating citizenry to higher levels is not sufficient.
Note the difference

- Education about sustainable development is an awareness lesson or theoretical discussion.

- Education for sustainable development is the use of education as a tool to transform our societies to achieve sustainability.
More than an awareness lesson or a theoretical discussion is needed to move countries toward a more sustainable future.
Characteristics of ESD

- Locally relevant and culturally appropriate.
- Deals with all three realms of sustainability - environment, society, and economy.
- Based on local needs, priorities, perceptions, and conditions, but recognizes that fulfilling local needs often has global effects and consequences.
Characteristics of ESD cont.

- Addresses content, context, and pedagogy.
- Engages formal, non-formal, and informal education.
- Is a life-long endeavor.
- Accommodates the evolving nature of the concept of sustainability.
The Strengths Model

ESD is such a large task that efforts from many people and disciplines are needed to make progress.

Elements of the Strengths Model

➢ Every discipline can contribute to ESD.
➢ Every teacher can contribute to ESD.
➢ Every administrator can contribute to ESD.
➢ No one discipline should claim ownership of ESD.
Strengths Model continued

- Each discipline contributes knowledge and skills.
- Each discipline contributes pedagogical methods.
Strengths Model Examples

- Mathematics helps students understand extremely small numbers (e.g., parts per hundred, thousand, or million), which allows them to interpret pollution data.

- Language Arts, especially media literacy, creates knowledgeable consumers who can analyze the messages of corporate advertisers and see beyond "green wash."

- History teaches the concept of global change, while helping students to recognize that change has occurred for centuries.
Strengths Model Examples cont.

➢ Reading develops the ability to distinguish between fact and opinion and helps students become critical readers of political campaign literature.

➢ Social Studies helps students to understand ethnocentrism, racism, and gender inequity as well as to recognize how these are expressed in the surrounding community and in nations worldwide.
Strengths Model continues

- Someone needs to pull together the disciplinary and pedagogical pieces to form a comprehensive ESD program.

- We need to overtly tell students that what they are learning contributes to a more sustainable future.
What is Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)?

- Improving access to quality basic education,
- Reorienting existing education.
- Improving public understanding and awareness.
- Providing training.
Basic Education

- Access to and quality of a primary education is a major global issue.

- 760 million adults are illiterate.

- Millions of children are excluded from school, especially females.
Basic Education Transformations

- Basic education allows farmers to gain title to their land and apply for credit. It also allows farmers to adapt new methods, cope with risk, and respond to market signals.

- Basic education transforms the lives of women.
  - Enhanced status and sense of efficacy.
  - Have fewer and healthier children.
  - Have higher expectations for offspring.
  - Have more economic opportunities
  - Increased well-being of their families.
Basic Education Transformation

Basic education is so important that the UN had three major efforts related to basic education

- Education for All
- Decade for Literacy
- Millennium Goals
Basic Education

Where education levels are low:

- economies are often limited to resource extraction and agriculture.
- development options are hindered.
- creating and implementing sustainable development plans are limited.
- For example, a software company will not locate in a region where the average duration of education is five years.
Reorienting Education

**Question:** How is education for sustainable development (ESD) different than the education we are currently providing our students?

**Answer:** An appropriately reoriented education includes more principles, skills, perspectives, and values related to sustainability than are currently included in most educational systems.
Reorienting Education cont.

- An appropriate and relevant curriculum is reoriented to integrate environment, economy, and society.
- The curriculum balances looking back to traditional ecological knowledge and looking forward to a more sustainable society.
- Occurs at all levels - nursery school through university.
Public Awareness

Sustainable societies require:

- A population that is aware of sustainability goals.
- An informed voting citizenry.
- Knowledgeable consumers who can see beyond the “green wash.”
- A public who are media literate and able to analyze the messages of corporate advertisers and the advertising industry.
Training

- The world needs a workforce that is:
  - Literate
  - Environmentally aware
  - Socially equitable and just

- All sectors - business, industry, higher education, governments, NGOs, and community organizations should train employees related to environment, society, and economy.
Training cont.

- Training is distinct from education in training is often specific to a particular job or class of jobs.
- Training informs people of accepted practices and procedures and gives them skills to perform specific tasks.
- Examples: safe disposal of cleaning solvents, use of solar cookers, non-discriminatory hiring.
Four levels of Action

- Disciplinary
- Whole school
- Educational system
- International
Action Level; Disciplinary

- What can my discipline contribute to sustainability?
- Remember the Strengths Model.
- EE and ESD, Education for International Understanding and ESD, Gender and ESD, etc.
- Will engaging a number of disciplines be sufficient to make progress in ESD?
Action Level: Whole School

- Whole-school approaches
  - it takes more than information about sustainability to make the enormous behavioral shift needed for a more sustainable future.
- Schools model environmental, social, and economic sustainability everyday running of school.
- Sustainability is lived to reinforce concepts taught in the classroom.
UNESCO identified 5 key aspects of quality education at the systems level.

- creates a legislative framework,
- implements good policies,
- builds administrative support and leadership,
- provides sufficient resources, and
- measures learning outcomes
Action Level: Educational System

Contributing to a More Sustainable Future: Quality Education, Life Skills and Education for Sustainable Development

Action Level: International

- Some educational issues take more than a national approach
- Transnational educational issues:
  - Education for and about refugees
  - HIV/AIDS
  - Educating girls and women
- Four UN Educational Initiatives: MDG, UNLD, EFA, and UNDESD
**Action Level: International**

Four UN Educational Initiatives:

- Millennium Development Goals
- United Nations Literacy Decade
- Education For All
- United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development
Action on all four of these levels is needed to make significant progress during the DESD.
Education is our great hope for a sustainable future. By taking on the important task of implementing ESD you are bringing the possibility of a more sustainable future to your community and nation.
To learn more about ESD read: Education for Sustainable Development Toolkit & UNESCO’s Contributing to a More Sustainable Future: Quality Education, Life Skills and Education for Sustainable Development
Reference

*Education for Sustainable Development Toolkit*

http://www.esdtoolkit.org

By Rosalyn McKeown, Charles Hopkins, Regina Rizzi, and Marianne Chrystalbridge.
Funded by the Waste Management Research and Education Institute.
Reference

Contributing to a More Sustainable Future: Quality Education, Life Skills and Education for Sustainable Development


By Rosalyn McKeown

Published by UNESCO, 2005.
Presenter Contact Information

Dr. Rosalyn McKeown, Executive Director
Portland International Initiative for Leadership in Ecology, Culture, and Learning
Graduate School of Education
Portland State University
P.O. Box 751
Portland Oregon 97207
USA
Telephone +1 503 725 8934
Fax +1 503 725 3200
Email mckeownr@pdx.edu