

A POINT OF AWARENESS

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Major action areas for DESD 2010-2014

BONN, Germany — Co-hosted by UNESCO and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the first half of the UN DESD (Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, 2005-2014) was assessed by a total of 600 delegates from UNESCO Member States.

Annette Schavan, the German Education Minister stated, "We need to learn from each other, exchange best practices and establish international cooperation." (Germany has 800 official projects for DESD.)

The conference site of Bonn used to be the diplomatic capital of Germany. Max and I were guests of the late Ambassador Mel Aquino at his residence – a mansion at Frederich Evert Strasse – in the '60s, when he presented his credentials as then Philippine *botschaft* (ambassador). At Christmas time, when his driver and housekeeper took their holidays in Spain, Max and Mel had to hand shovel coal into the basement coal furnace. Today, the heater is more modern.

The capital was transferred to Berlin when the "wall fell". Bonn was converted to the international think tank and convention center, which included the huge UN campus. Every afternoon, divided into several workshop groups, we would walk two kilometers to ultra modern glass and chrome buildings, such as the World Conference Center, the Deutsche Welle, Deutsche Post Tower, Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, Haus der Geschichte, the UN campus and the Federal Press office.

The first five years, 2005-2009

Review reports on progress and obstacles encountered during the first five years in establishing and implementing DESD strategies were collected from each geographical continent. Asia alone has UNESCO cluster offices and field offices in Almaty, Kazakhstan, New Delhi, Bangkok, Beijing, Jakarta and APIA (Australia, New Zealand and 15 Pacific islands).

The review identified 10 key findings: (1) The meaning of ESD vary according to whether a country adopts a more pedagogical orientation emphasizing social learning and capacity building or placing more emphasis on changing people's behavior. Thus, local and national debates

are crucial; (2) The UN Country Team's support of DESD. Jakarta Regional Director Hubert Gijzen has been helping set up the Philippine UNESS (UN Education Support Strategy) with our government agencies; (3) ESD national coordinating bodies are in 79 out of 97 country reports. Insight is needed to clarify the roles they actually play; (4) ESD in national education policy documents (Basic Education) and environmental strategies.

From interdepartmental government cooperatives to re-developing school curriculum for ESD

(5) Structure for interdepartmental government cooperation on ESD is still lacking in many countries. At least, the Philippine National EFA Committee is in the process of linking ESD components into the strategies of each government agency with the help of the SEA-CLLSD (Southeast Asian Center for Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Development);

(6) ESD in formal education in primary and secondary curricula has been supported by many countries necessitating the re-designing of curricula, teaching and learning as the case of "a whole school approach." A more common response is to make minor adjustment to the existing system. Few countries report Early Childhood Education in ESD plans.

(7) ESD in non-formal and informal learning is on the agenda of most responding countries. But, it is impossible to say whether the volume and the quality of support are adequate enough to tap into the infinite possibilities of ESD in non-formal and informal settings.

On ESD research, networking and budgeting

The last three findings point to: (8) ESD research not being well developed around the globe. Support for ESD-related research is needed to enhance both quality and evidence base of ESD. Most ESD research is focused on formal education and on policy, as well as regulatory measures. Focus on theoretical and critical discourse, analysis of efforts should support and track the progress of ESD. Much of the existing quality assessment schemes are sustained by international bodies, but not so much by the national governments. There is no financial report for ESD innovation and capacity building.

(9) There is an increase in ESD networking, however not all examples necessarily facilitate ESD networking but instead are promotion schemes.

(10) The availability of public budgets for ESD is either non-existent or minimal. Countries are now beginning its consideration, financing and budgeting for ESD across ministries by determining how ESD aligns with their key documents.

Way forward

The above review has identified major action areas for the second half of the DESD.

First, the limited awareness and understanding of ESD are still a basic challenge resulting in a limited government support-base for ESD. It prevents people from recognizing existing ESD activities within their own agencies.

The involvement of media needs to be strengthened in communicating ESD and encouraging dialogues among different audiences, especially the young people.

The interconnection between social, environmental, cultural and economic aspects of SD (sustainable development) must not be ignored.

Re-orienting curriculum towards ESD tripartite theme

The ideal ESD curriculum must have the tripartite theme of SOCIETY, ENVIRONMENT and ECONOMY. Culture though has been added lately to it. The Operation Brotherhood Montessori schools, now the SEA-CLLSD National Laboratory, has been using the Cosmic Curriculum which embodies this theme perfectly since the '70s - from preschool to primary and secondary levels.

Its general concept: Planet Earth is where the animal, plant and mineral kingdoms exist. Mankind's environment responsibility is to conserve the land, water and air from pollution where these kingdoms thrive. (Theme: Environment)

On this act depends the survival of the human family for his basic material needs for food, clothing and shelter. These needs are expressed differently by the various cultures of the world supplementing people's spiritual needs in education, recreation, religion, and the arts. (Theme: Society)

Now, that we are in the 21st century, lessons in Economics may already start in preschool and continued to primary lev-

el to help understand the intrinsic life of the families, such as that they are both producers and consumer of goods and services. The discussions of parents' occupations can be very exciting. Then, this is extended to the lesson on "Interdependence of Men". (Theme: Economics)

For example: Who are involved in producing a bowl of rice? After the farmer harvests the rice, a driver takes it to the miller. Then, it is stored in granaries for wholesale distribution. Buyers pack them into sacks and sold to retail sellers, who pack them in 1 kilo bags. They are transported to markets and groceries where parents buy and cook them. A bowl of rice employs many.

High school should be ready to tackle Advanced Economics. Since the world's progress depends on national and international business affairs, the young adults should know the banking system, loans and savings, taxation etc.

Incorporating ESD into the budgeting framework for national network

The brotherhood concept of mankind is tested by proper North-South and South-South cooperation within each country and region. The lack of materials to make ESD properly understood is being resolved by the objectives of our Category 2 Center for Southeast Asian countries, which is to become a service provider for ESD teacher training, inclusive of curriculum and materials, as well as supervision of the novice teachers on site.

To give full support to a national ESD network, it is essential to involve government ministries. This is evident among the 133 Pagsasarili preschools all over Luzon, which were established in the past eight years with the strong support of the governors, mayors, DepEd and DSWD (social welfare) regional directors. Strong cooperation is the key to ensuring successful DESD achievement.

Raising funds for ESD activities by government agencies, multilateral and bilateral donations require incorporating ESD into the budgeting framework. Thus, relevant ministries must advocate budget ownership for ESD.

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