

Building Capacity and Empowerment through ESD

Conference on
Education for
Sustainable
Development
in Esbjerg 2005
A conference report
prepared by
Bjarne Bruun Jensen



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SEED

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT
THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL
EDUCATION

Building Capacity and Empowerment through ESD

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Development
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19 – 21 May 2005,
Esbjerg, CVU Vest,
Denmark

Report on a
SEED Conference

By Bjarne Bruun Jensen

**Danish University of Education, Research Programme for
Environmental and Health Education**

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Preface

By Günther Franz Pfaffenwimmer, President, ENSI

This report is one of the fruits of a landmark Conference for the Danish Ministry of Education, the Austrian Ministry of Education, the Danish University of Education, the European Network SEED on Environmental Education and School Development, and its umbrella international government-based research network, ENSI, the Environment and Schools Initiatives.

The goals of the Conference, which was held at the University College of West Jutland in Esbjerg, Denmark, were to optimise the impact of the start of the UNESCO-led UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development, DESD (2005-2014) in national education systems, and to advance on educational approaches to ESD. The conference offered fresh thinking, some bold recommendations and raised key questions for national planning, implementation and evaluation strategies and the quality of ESD. It brought together some of the key global players – both political and research-based - advancing Education for Sustainable Development.

Crucially, the Conference framed the wider context – the educational, sustainability and equity challenges of the Millennium Development Goals, Inclusive Education and Education for All. Discussions highlighted the need for an interdisciplinary and holistic approach. ENSI and SEED focused on UNESCO and its role in the Decade on ESD, as a natural institutional partner. This will also enhance the policy impact and outreach of both networks to a whole range of stakeholders within the global community of quality education and Education for Sustainable Development. This Conference, as one UNESCO representative speaker highlighted, epitomised what the Decade is really about.

Another important area addressed by participants was that of new partnerships, particularly in the corporate sector, where the sustainability agenda is building momentum both in local businesses and also through international initiatives like to the UN Global Compact and the World Economic Forum. The economic tenet of ESD, alongside the social, environmental and cultural was widely acknowledged at the meeting, with emphasis on the primary role of educationalists to bridge these areas.

With these perspectives, we are confident that this conference has contributed to new energy, commitment and partnership to drive the ESD agenda, tackle some of the fundamental questions, and advance our work internationally, regionally and locally. This report is thus an important reference document for further discussion and debate, and a potentially influential policy tool. We encourage its wide dissemination and critique as one of the first written contributions to the UN DESD.

The report is also available in a PDF-format on the ENSI website: www.ensi.org

Education for Sustainable Development - Building Capacity and Empowerment

19 – 21 May 2005, Esbjerg, Denmark
Report on a SEED Conference

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1. Introduction and Background

In May 2005 the conference "Education for Sustainable Development – building capacity and empowerment" was held in Esbjerg, Denmark, with the aim of optimising the impact of the United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) in national education systems - and to advance on educational approaches to ESD. The conference – like the UN Implementation Scheme for the Decade for ESD – builds on the premise that education is a *fundamental* prerequisite for achieving sustainable development and an essential tool for informed decision-making and for the promotion of democracy.

The main foci at the conference were: 1) The lessons learned on strategies and policies for implementing ESD in national curriculum systems and 2) The central approaches and ideas in ESD aiming at developing action competence and empowerment to support school development.

The discussion on these issues took their starting point in experiences and lessons learned within the SEED project ("School Development through Environmental Education"), which is an EU COMENIUS III Network project. The SEED project consists of a group of educational authorities and institutes from 20 countries that promote environmental education as a driving force for school development. SEED invites schools, teacher education institutes and educational authorities to work together, to learn from each other's experiences and to accumulate their knowledge in working towards education for sustainable development. At the conference results, challenges and questions developed within this network were presented and discussed with the

aim of outlining possible and fruitful pathways for the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development.

The conference, therefore, not only marked the beginning of the UN Decade on ESD but also the culmination of the SEED project which for a period of three years has focussed on environmental education and school development. Furthermore, the conference was an important landmark for the international ENSI network that has an extensive 20 year history of research, school projects and policy orientation. ENSI, which has also supported the SEED project, originated under the auspices of the OECD–CERI network, and in recent years it has strengthened its relationships with UNESCO to become a key player within the framework of the UN Decade for ESD.

The conference emphasised policy as well as educational strategies for implementing ESD. Furthermore it took into account the main results of the SEED network that Environmental Education can play a crucial role in developing schools and their curriculum and therefore contributes significantly to preparing students for a sustainable and democratic future.

The conference brought together more than 123 educational policy makers, researchers, teacher educators, teachers, and other professionals concerned with ESD from 26 countries throughout the world (see list of participants in the annexes).

The conference was organised by the University College of West Jutland in co-operation with the Danish Ministry of Education, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and The Research Programme for Environmental and Health Education at The Danish University of Education.

The two days programme included a number of workshops where findings and challenges identified through the SEED network were presented and discussed. These workshop topics were:

- ESD in national curricula systems
- Partnership and alliances
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Teacher education in ESD
- Empowerment and action competence through ESD
- ESD and school development

Furthermore, the workshops were supported and framed by presentations in plenary sessions where various key people addressed more general political and educational perspectives related to the workshop topics. In total 10 keynote speakers and 18 workshop presenters provided stimulating inputs for the discussions at the conference (see list of speakers in the annexes). During the following pages the main issues identified and addressed will be outlined and discussed. The report then goes on to address the main conclusions and the new questions and challenges for future development.

2. Setting the scene

The background and framework for the conference was provided by among others Uffe Toudal Pedersen (Danish Ministry of Education), Phillipp Müller-Wirth (UNESCO), Charles Hopkins (UNESCO Chairholder) and Poul Nyrup Rasmussen (Chair of the European Socialist Group, Member of the European Parliament and former Prime Minister of Denmark).

Phillipp Müller-Wirth and Charles Hopkins presented the role of UNESCO, which is the leading UN agency for DESD and is in the process of developing an International Implementation Scheme for DESD. More than 2000 responses have been incorporated into the draft Implementation scheme. The scheme includes a number of key points which among others include the human rights approach, the three pillars of sustainable development (society, environment and economy) and the need to promote inter-sectorial linkages and partnerships. The reorientation of educational approaches away from providing pure knowledge towards dealing with problems and identifying possible solutions was mentioned as a key element. One of the lessons learned so far is that the movement from EE towards ESD is not an easy step.

It was emphasised that the linkage with the private sector has great potentials and a number of examples of fruitful collaboration with the private sector in other areas (with among others L'oreal, DaimlerChrysler and Samsung) were given by Phillipp Müller-Wirth as inspiration for future collaboration in the area of ESD.

UNESCO has the task to prepare a midterm review of implementation of the DESD to the UN General Assembly at its 65th session in 2010. It was stated by Phillipp Müller-Wirth "... that the UNESCO headquarters is not going to be the main driver of DESD – instead this conference is an example of the DESD – this is the decade!"

Poul Nyrup Rasmussen exemplified the current complex global challenges for ESD: 1) world population is rising and global temperatures are increasing, 2) biodiversity is declining and our oceans are suffering and 3) unemployment is rising and labour rights are under pressure. He also emphasised the partnership with the private industry and as an example he stressed that many advanced leaders in the private sector have realised that sustainability is a new brand that can be used by the industry.

Poul Nyrup Rasmussen also stressed the main challenge for education; namely to integrate theory and practice and involve students as active partners in the learning processes if we want to contribute to the development towards a *"...more human, environmentally friendly and decent world."* And he posed the challenge for education to create the space for ESD so it is not considered as an extra burden by the teachers.

The overall challenges of education were also taken up by the representative from the Danish Ministry of Education, Uffe Toudal Pedersen, who stressed that the Danish Government's strategy for ESD is very much in line with the overall theme for this conference. He quoted from the Act of the 'Folkeskole' (the primary and lower secondary school) in Denmark:

"The Folkeskole shall familiarise the pupils with Danish culture and contribute to their understanding of other cultures and of man's interaction with nature. The school shall prepare the pupils for active participation, joint responsibility, rights and duties in a society based on freedom and democracy. The teaching of the school and its daily life must therefore build on intellectual freedom, equality and democracy."

Following this the overall aim of schooling is to facilitate the development of students' ability to take action and generate change – to develop their action competence. In his presentation Uffe Toudal Pedersen also stressed that ESD should not be considered to be a new burden for schools and teachers: *"ESD should be seen as an instrument to meet today's challenges in education. The new questions are how to qualify the students to participate in a democratic society, how to strengthen their capacities to understand central societal issues, take a stand on them and act accordingly."* In other words ESD should not be considered as contradictory to the key tasks of the school – it is the other way around.

In conclusion all the introductory presentations took their starting point from the fact that current environmental problems are complex and have to be explained, understood and solved in a wider cultural, economic and societal context which is the reason why 'Sustainable development' is an appropriate notion. They also acknowledged that education has a key role to play in providing and facilitating democratic pathways towards more sustainable societies. Nevertheless these conclusions also provoke a number of questions and challenges which were addressed during the workshops and the plenary presentations in the remaining part of the conference.

3. Conference themes

Each of the six themes mentioned in the introduction was covered by two different workshops. At each workshop presenters had prepared a few key questions in advance which they briefly outlined as a framework for the discussion. Each workshop had a rapporteur who prepared a written report on the basis of a template. The following has been summarised from these 12 workshop reports as well as plenary presentations.

3.1. ESD in national curriculum systems

In the two workshops a number of concrete examples made up the starting point for the discussion. For instance the German programme "BLK 21 – ESD 1999-2004", involving currently almost 10% of all German schools was mentioned. Also the development of the 'Green School' project in China, where 18.000 schools have now been awarded, was presented as a thought provoking project. And finally, the UK Sustainable Development Strategy implemented in 2003 was presented. This is currently being reviewed to significantly strengthen the role of learning within it.

A number of prerequisites for ensuring ESD has an effective role in the curriculum and in the school were identified:

- the role and the commitment of the head teacher is crucial
- the curriculum has to leave space (and time) for students' own initiatives so they become the driving forces in the processes
- Monitoring and evaluation are important drivers of the processes, but the phrasing/wording is important. For example 'monitoring' is much better than e.g. 'inspection' and 'accountability'

- There is a tendency that formulation in the curriculum is more in 'EE-oriented' than about ESD. Consequently a fundamental understanding of the content of ESD is lacking at various levels (including the national/ministerial)
- Schools (and ministries) should be supported in using their work with ESD as a way of branding them as institutions raising awareness among young citizens about fundamental rights and challenges
- The governmental level and the respective ministries need to show a genuine interest in ESD and SD, and not only "do a few things...because the UN's DESD has been decided!"
- In many countries themes such as ESD compete with the 'PISA-agenda'. Therefore we need to influence exams and the curriculum so they include proper elements of SD.

As can be seen from the statements above the workshops also identified a number of dilemmas, which highlight important issues for future research and development. As mentioned by Poul Nyrup Rasmussen and Uffe Toudal Pedersen from the Danish Ministry of Education it seems to be a fundamental challenge to make sure – in the curriculum and in the schools' daily work – that ESD is not considered as an extra burden by teachers. It was also recognised that there are many examples of good practice around the world which should be collected and disseminated.

3.2. Partnership and alliances

The workshops dealt with partnership as a very complex issue. Various examples, such as the 'North South Wales Sustainable Schools Program' in Australia, was used as a concrete case in the discussion. Most of the presentations and discussions were addressing schools' possible collaboration with different stakeholders and their different (and often hidden) agendas and interests were subjective to intensive debate. In the following the main issues and suggestions are briefly mentioned:

- Clarify the conditions and aims of the partnership (e.g. between a school and organisations in the local community) by asking as many questions as possible at the outset. This will help to make the hidden agendas more explicit from the beginning.
- Different goals can have similar objectives and strategies, therefore integrated and linking strategies are a key for achieving a range of goals. These are worth identifying and prioritising.

- Clarify and take into account the ‘indicators of readiness’ for successful partnerships (e.g. culture, values, trust, institutional frameworks, personal commitment and language)
- Breaking down barriers between school and community requires some kind of leadership - make sure who is going to lead the partnership. Be aware of the role of the school in managing a partnership with the local community
- One thing is initiating a partnership – another thing is maintaining it. Maintaining partnerships is often a difficult and demanding process – who is the driving force, what happens when one partner leaves the partnership, how to keep up the commitment etc. Be aware that partnerships don’t have to last for ever – it depends on the concrete project and its aims
- Be aware of the human factor in the partnership – “partnership involves real people with feelings!”
- It is crucial to involve the headmaster at the school in the processes from the beginning.
- Make sure that “everyone is a winner”, that all stakeholders develop a common language and have the same understanding of what is going to take place and why.
- Consider carefully how the partnership increases learning potential and learning outcomes in relation to SD within schools
- Identify and develop the role government agencies can play to support local collaboration with schools – and address the question: “what is the potential for this local partnership to improve local governance?”

As indicated above, the focus on increased partnership and collaboration, as suggested by Phillipp Müller-Wirth from UNESCO, has to be dealt with very carefully by the stakeholders involved. In the workshops various suggestions for future research were also given. One was to develop a virtual tool for integrative planning that enables capacity building and cooperative strategic planning and action (partnership/alliances). Another recommendation was that quality assessment of the capacity building processes and strategic planning methodologies need to be researched by an academic and by other independent institutions. In conclusion, it is critical to consider: who asks the questions? What questions are asked and why? When are they asked? These meta-questions ensure that important issues of power, exclusivity and transparency are considered.

3.3. Monitoring and evaluation

Evaluation in ESD is a key issue in a number of official documents. The UNESCO draft implementation scheme and the UNECE Vilnius strategy are examples of international documents which propose the development of 1) indicators for the implementation of ESD, 2) a monitoring scheme and 3) an evaluation scheme – eventually a benchmarking scheme. In Günther Franz Pfaffenwimmer's presentation it was mentioned that UNESCO is in the process of building up an expert group to be involved in these tasks.

In spite of the obvious agreements that evaluation and monitoring are crucial elements in ESD, the workshops and the plenary presentations demonstrated that evaluation and monitoring in ESD are highly contested concepts. Different ideologies and values inherent in ESD lead to different evaluation approaches and vice versa. In one of the plenary presentations, Michela Meyer and Finn Mogensen introduced the document 'Quality Criteria for ESD schools' (Breiting et al., 2005). During their presentation the importance of making the criteria - which are often used implicit in schools' work with ESD – explicit, was stressed. Furthermore, these criteria should rather be used for quality enhancement than for quality control. The criteria, which are inspired by the analysis of research reports on schools' work within the SEED project, take their starting point in a systemic view on schools. Consequently, the criteria produced, include the following areas:

- I. Quality criteria regarding the quality of teaching and learning processes
- II. Quality criteria regarding the school policy and organisation
- III. Quality criteria regarding the school's external relations

The set of quality criteria should be considered as a 'translation' of a set of shared values formulated in terms that are more explicit and closer to the practice. The proposed list was considered as a 'non-exhaustive list' of quality criteria to be used as a starting point for reflections, debates and further development regarding future work on ESD among educational officials, teachers, headmasters, parents, and students.

The workshops addressed some of the same key issues in their discussions. *Why* evaluation, *who* should evaluate, *how* and *when* should evaluation be carried were some of the key questions discussed in the workshops. The workshop presentations and discussions clearly demonstrated that the background and experiences between the countries are very different and reflect different educational traditions and attitudes. Some of the key agreements and suggestions were:

- The language we use (including the cultural and emotional meanings of the specific words) when we talk about evaluation is important. Some words have connotations to control (e.g. 'tests') while others imply quality enhancement. Consequently we need a cultural sensitive 'language' of evaluation which acknowledges the basic values in ESD
- It is a problem and a huge challenge that the public aim of evaluation is legitimization and control of public expenditures while the "real important" aims are to improve professional, organisational and social development, to reflect upon processes and realign action and to be open to the unexpected.
- Evaluation should be integrated and carried out from the beginning and not only come up at the end of a project.
- In planning evaluation it is important to identify what kind of information different stakeholders need in order to improve their development.
- Numbers and figures are not meaningful on their own, and it is recommended that indicators are descriptive and maintain flexibility concerning how to collect data.
- The concepts related to evaluation are often used in confusing and in vague terms. Therefore there is a need to clarify and exemplify (from case studies) the differences between concepts such as evaluation/assessment, indicators/criteria, formative/summative/diagnostic etc.
- As peer evaluation between schools demonstrates interesting results, it was suggested to develop peer evaluation between countries.
- Cultural sensitivity is important in evaluation and therefore it is a crucial question how to maintain a common core in evaluation which allows us to compare different countries but still leave space to differences in contexts and in interests

Several people in the workshops expressed concern that the chapter on evaluation in the DESD implementation scheme was not in accordance with the value base for the UNESCO vision of DESD. Consequently it was suggested to carry out a contextual analysis of the UNESCO/UNECE documents with the aim of proposing frameworks for evaluation processes that are consistent with the basic ideas of ESD.

3.4. Teacher education and ESD

The discussions at the conference illustrated huge variations between different countries' teacher education systems and how they are dealing with the area of ESD. In the presentation by Regula Kyburz-Graber from Switzerland a number of common dilemmas were identified. One such dilemma was that the educational approach used in ESD is challenging established patterns, positions and practices in schools which

makes it difficult for student teachers to try out ESD during their own work. Another dilemma is that teacher educators often try to inspire their students to revisit and reform materials and approaches in accordance with their own ideas and needs while they are at the same time confronted with the express need of student teachers for ready-made materials. One provocative statement from Regula Kyburz-Graber was that the whole idea of ESD – due to its complexity may fundamentally irritate the self concept of student teachers. Not a fruitful starting point for integrating ESD in teacher education, unless the whole idea of being challenged, irritated and provoked is considered as a stimulating input for the learning processes by the student teachers themselves.

Discussing concrete school cases involving a participatory and action-oriented educational approach Bjarne Bruun Jensen outlined a number of key skills for future ESD teachers. These were among others: 1) understanding of the concept of ESD, 2) an action-oriented insight in ESD-issues, 3) knowledge about power relations in the local community, 4) understanding of genuine dialogue-based processes with students and 5) knowledge of young people's own concepts in relation to SD.

In the workshops a number of suggestions and expressions of concern were identified:

- The notion of ESD is new and unfamiliar for most of the teacher educators. Of the teacher educators who have some experience with environmental education many find the concept of ESD complex and different to implement in practice.
- There is a strong need for ESD to be endorsed by the senior management in training establishments as an integrated and important part of the education programmes.
- There is a strong need to build good and close relationships between teacher education and training schools to ensure that theoretical and conceptual issues will be tried out in practice
- As ESD is cross-curricular it suffers if teacher education focuses on school topics and disciplines.
- As ESD is a complex and relatively new concept time is needed for education programmes to develop systematically an appropriate educational approach. Action research can be one fruitful way for student teachers to develop, critically reflect and 'internalise' the concept of ESD.
- There is a need to improve evaluation of ESD courses. Action research could be tried out as a self evaluation 'tool' by student teachers and teacher educators.

All the discussions and presentations concluded that teacher education is crucial for improving ESD in the educational systems. In addition to the preconditions and barriers mentioned above the close relationship between national curricula and teacher education was also emphasised. On the one hand teacher education might work as a change agent for education, but on the other hand, if ESD is absent – or vaguely defined – in the national curriculum, then it is hard to get it on the agenda in the teacher education institutions. Further research is needed to explore the complex relationships between teacher education and education itself (including the national curricula).

3.5. Empowerment and Action Competence in ESD

During the presentations and the discussions the overall aims of ESD – empowerment and action competence – were linked to practice, to theory and to international documents. In their presentation, Daniella Tilbury and Johannes Tschapka reminded the conference, that ESD is outlined in the UN's documents as a *"...process that develops vision, builds capacity and empowers people to make changes within their societies"*. Furthermore, they clarified that ESD takes the learning experiences beyond nature studies by addressing socio-economic issues and critically reflecting upon ways of attaining sustainable development. ESD is a process which enables learners to: 1) critically reflect, 2) detect bias, 3) clarify their own values and 4) develop their action competence.

In his presentation 'Is ESD a widening, radicalization, or taming of EE?' Karsten Schnack emphasised that the 'action competence' approach takes its starting point in 1) a reminder that ESD is first and foremost education, and 2) a critique of the tendency in many programmes to reduce this to behaviour modification activities. Therefore, this approach – and education in general - aims at contributing to democratic pathways by enabling future citizens to play a critical and active role in the development of the society. Consequently, ESD as political and democratic education has to be judged against the aim of improving and qualifying the action competence of the students and not according to the success of students' behavioural changes in the short run.

In the workshop discussions there was agreement that ESD as well as SD are complex and open concepts. The 'openness' of the concept demands a participatory educational approach where students are encouraged to take their own stand, develop their own visions and carry out their own actions. On the other hand it was also emphasised that

a concept of student participation does not exclude the professional, on the contrary it implies a responsible and competent teacher who is able to challenge and support students and to provide the necessary insight and knowledge for their learning processes. The workshops agreed on the following statements:

- Sustainability is an open issue with many possible avenues. Consequently, alternative future scenarios and possible next steps need to be developed and provided
- Due to the complexity of SD it is sometimes useful to focus on a few themes at a time. Furthermore, concept mapping – and similar tools - might be used to ‘grasp’ the complexity
- To carry out actions in relation to SD is an important prerequisite for developing action competence. Therefore, ESD has to work with the “real world-authenticity” in ESD .
- The “principle” of authenticity leads to a focus on collaboration between school and community. To maximise students’ learning and action competence from “real life” actions it is important that external partners understand and appreciate the democratic “atmosphere” of ESD
- Emotions, aesthetics and feelings are all involved in actions, and therefore it is important that these are part of ESD. Empathy and solidarity are key notions in relation to SD which is why ESD is not only a cognitive process.
- Reflection is also closely linked to actions as many issues in ESD contain dilemmas and conflicts. Reflections are contextual and changes over time and space. Teachers need to focus on reflections and how to support students in these processes during ESD.
- There is a need to operationalise the concepts of empowerment and action competence for assessment and evaluation purposes.

The main part of the discussions in the workshops focused on the concept of action. In addition to the relations mentioned above a number of other issues were also related to students’ actions. These were among others: participation, democracy, creativity and communication. Another challenge identified was how to deal with the ‘openness’ of the concept of SD in ESD. This leads to a suggestion for future research and development which is to explore and develop ideas, strategies and tools for managing dilemmas and conflicts of interests which will appear as inevitable and central parts of SD in ESD.

3.6. ESD and school development

The workshops dealing with the links between ESD and school development drew on a number of cases from the SEED project, which had the task to explore and develop the possibilities for improving school development through environmental education.

As an introduction for the discussion Daniella Tilbury and Johannes Tschapka presented an external evaluation of the SEED project in their plenary presentation. A toolbox on action research for teachers, Quality Criteria for Eco School Development and a comparative study of teacher education were mentioned as main products coming from the SEED project. There is evidence that the project has increased participants' understanding and use of concepts such as 'ESD', 'action research' and 'school development'. A complete evaluation, including a summary of what has been learned, what has changed and answer to the question "if SEED has made a difference in terms of school development" will be available in September 2005.

From the presentations and the discussions the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The structures across nations do not generally support the introduction of ESD into school curriculum and educational bureaucracies which makes it difficult to influence the school development
- Use existing syllabuses and programs to implement ESD hence avoiding overcrowding of the curriculum
- Whole school sustainability initiatives (such as 'Ecoschools') offer good possibilities for schools to innovate and showcase good practice.
- Methodologies used in ESD (and SEED) such as 'action research' are important tools for school development.
- Cooperation, which is often used in ESD, is critical to support and maintain school development
- The systemic approach used in ESD (see for example the 'quality criteria' for ESD schools), including teaching/learning, organisational and management dimensions and external relations are crucial for school development.

As can be seen from the points listed above it makes sense to explore links between ESD and school development as there exist many parallels between their characteristic features and prerequisites. As Franz Rauch, quoting De Haan & Harenberg (1999) outlined in his presentation, the following theorems apply to educational reforms and school development:

- a reflective understanding of education, which focus on independence, self-determination, communication, co-operation and reflection;
- autonomy for schools to design projects independently as a concept of democratisation and differentiation;
- school development plans as dynamic instruments to develop teaching and schools;
- the openness of schools towards shaping the relation of schools and their environment.

It is clear that these characteristics have much in common with ESD (as the ideal case) which makes it reasonable to expect that an investment in ESD is also an investment in the “preparedness” of a school for future development.

4. Main conclusions and recommendations

In this final section several overall conclusions are presented. Furthermore, some questions and challenges for future research and development related to each of the conclusions are outlined. These represent in the main the personal reflections by the conference rapporteur and were presented in plenary at the end of the conference. The key conclusions are:

- DESD is viewed as an exciting opportunity;
- Participatory and action-oriented educational approaches are important;
- Collaboration and partnerships are fruitful and important elements for schools' work with ESD
- ESD has to be in the curriculum at all levels;
- Evaluation is important for quality development and has to reflect the basic values in ESD;
- International, global and cross-cultural issues are important in ESD;
- Teacher education/professional development is crucial;
- The 'setting approach' (the whole school approach) is a useful framework.

4.1. DESD is viewed as an exciting opportunity

All the participants at the conference viewed the UN decade as an opportunity to initiate new exciting projects, to establish new kinds of collaboration etc. But a number of questions are still to be solved and clarified.

What is exactly the difference between E and SD, between EE and ESD? We are still not clear about the content and the consequences of the concept of ESD. Although many of us tend to look at ESD through an “environmental lens” it is not a ‘given’ that e.g. the

'environment' is more important than the 'economy' if we take a concept of SD seriously. And what is a sustainable school? Is it a school which highlights the environment and then takes into account the social and economic aspects and consequences of this? Or is it a school trying to optimise the social and health-related conditions and then taking the environment and the economy into account? The answers are not apparent but need to be discussed and decided in the light of how the concept of SD is interpreted.

We might ask if SD is another way of addressing environmental problems or another way of addressing societal problems. In the debate we often talk about ESD and SD as vague and complex concepts without distinguishing between these two problems. We need to get closer to an operational definition to avoid the "vagueness" but we probably have to live with – and to benefit from - the increased complexity. Perhaps it is when we try to make the 'vague' more concrete that the complexity really appears. In our efforts to operationalise the concept we furthermore need to distinguish between pillars, perspectives and underlining values.

4.2. Participatory and action-oriented approaches are important

We are eager to go ahead with the principles of involving students in all phases of a project in ESD. But at the same time there might be a risk of excluding the professional and the knowledge and insight that she or he possesses. Perhaps it is timely to recognise that a 'bottom up' approach is not the only alternative to a 'top down' model. Perhaps we need to develop much more sophisticated models of student participation which are more based on collaboration and dialogue (between the student and the professional) than on student's own ideas and influence. And we need to sort out and analyse the different (and conflicting?) reasons for the principles of student participation.

In our eagerness to focus on student's actions as parts of ESD we should not confuse the overall aim of ESD, which is to build up students' empowerment and action competence. The popularity of the action-part might lead us to focus on what kind of changes the students are facilitating as indicators of success. We need to remind ourselves that the students' actions in ESD are important if and when they contribute to building up their action competence.

Both the concept of action and the concept of participation need to be analysed further in case studies in different cultural settings.

4.3. Collaboration and partnerships are fruitful and important elements for schools' work with ESD

We tend to talk about collaboration and partnerships from positive perspectives only. If we look at collaboration from the perspective of improving young people's action competence, how do we then make sure that external partners are not restricting and narrowing down the "space" for students' participation and ownership? Different partners will be entering the field from different sides with different interests. The private sector has primarily economic interests ('profit in the end'), different 'social' organisations might have interests dominated by peace or equity matters while for instance the technical department at the municipality could have a short-sighted environmental interest (e.g. sorting garbage). Is it possible – and wise – always to look for "win-win" situations or could collaboration build on different interests and values? Could collaboration models, where different values are present, be used to help students to realise what kind of conflicts that normally exists with respect to SD issues. In other words: could the conditions and framework for schools' collaboration with the community be turned into and used as 'content knowledge' in a critically and empowering education for SD?

4.4. ESD has to be in the curriculum at all levels

During the discussions and presentations it was recognised that ESD – or rather SD – are often missing in the curriculum and consequently there was an agreement that we need to work on integrating ESD into the curriculum at all levels. At the same time there might be a tension here as a stronger role and placement of ESD in the curriculum at the same time may reduce opportunities for students' active involvement in the teaching and learning processes. It is an important research task to explore and clarify the tensions and possible conflicts between these two 'sides of the coin'. Furthermore, there are different ways of integrating ESD in the curriculum where one is to integrate SD issues in the general curriculum crossing a number of school subjects while another is to have ESD as a separate subject or integrated in one or two specific subjects. Finally it is crucial to work out strategies for getting the head teachers on board – one thing is to get ESD in the curriculum, another question deals with how different topics in the curriculum are prioritised in the school itself. An interesting way to clarify strengths and weaknesses related to the questions and problems above would be to make an international case study comparing and evaluating different countries' models and their successes.

4.5. Evaluation is important for quality development and should reflect the basic values in ESD

Regardless of principles surrounding evaluation carried out by teachers themselves aimed at enhancement of quality, reality tells us that practitioners often consider evaluation as a tool for control. This is not surprising since evaluation (in the form of exams) in schools have had that purpose for many years. But we have to take care not to underestimate the dominant discourse that is often implicitly 'built in' to the evaluation-language. In the debate we often focus on outcome evaluation and its benefits. But if we are clear about the outcomes related to ESD (e.g. empowerment and action competence) it would perhaps be wise to operationalise and document these in our evaluation activities as well. Participatory approaches in ESD are important and part of the value base but it might be too simple to argue that these participatory educational activities can be evaluated by participatory research and evaluation methods only. There is an agreement that ESD represents a new approach, but does that mean that we also need to develop a new approach to evaluation? Do we run a risk of throwing the baby out with the bathwater and who is the "baby" in this case? We should perhaps be more aware to use evaluation methods from a broad spectrum of areas such as the humanities as well as the social sciences involving quantitative and quantitative methods.

4.6. International, global and cross-cultural issues are important in ESD

Issues related to SD are complex due in part to the fact that they are global. Therefore global perspectives have to be integrated into ESD. One important question to ask is if the global and the intercultural dimensions of SD should appear as content in teaching and/or as part of the teaching approach? At the conference it was suggested to focus on the principle of 'authenticity' meaning that students get experience from addressing and influencing real problems related to SD during their learning. How can students gain direct and authentic experience with global and intercultural dimensions in ESD? One obvious area to integrate is the use of internet communication technology (ICT) facilitating students peer collaboration across cultural and national borders. But at the same time there is still a strong need to further explore and research how we optimise the use of ICT in students' intercultural learning in the area of ESD?

4.7. Teacher education/professional development is crucial

During the conference it was stated that ESD often appears as an irritating and disturbing element for student teachers due to its complexity. There are at least two different responses to this challenge: 1) make ESD and SD more simple to teachers and

provide ready made materials, toolboxes etc. 2) try to change the philosophy of being a teacher student focusing at mental disturbances, provocations etc. as valuable and crucial parts of the learning processes. Our choice will influence which philosophy the student teachers bring to their students in their future work. In continuous education and professional development with teachers many emphasize a so-called 'critical friend' approach. Perhaps it would be worthwhile to document, evaluate and describe this approach as a potential strategy for teachers' continuous education? Finally schools' collaboration with the local community is mentioned and appreciated by many people as a contribution to a powerful and necessary learning approach. If we think it is a prerequisite for collaboration that partners agree on the goal and to a certain degree speak the same 'language', it might be worthwhile to involve teachers, technicians, parents, politicians and other potential partners as participants in the same courses and continuous education activities.

4.8. The 'setting approach' (the whole school approach) is a useful framework

It is important to view the school as a system, including teaching, education, culture, leadership and collaboration. Furthermore, it might be important to rethink the relationship between the school as a physical and social context and the school as a learning institution. Students learn from planned teaching as well as from the cultural and physical context, and the overall aim is to optimise the synergetic interplay between these different elements. Introducing the concept of 'policy' might be helpful but it is important that it is not moving the focus away from the teaching activities. Consequently, an ESD policy might include teaching and education processes, management and organisation as well as the physical and socio-cultural context. To facilitate ownership all stakeholders, including the students, should in principle be involved in developing the school's ESD policy. This means that an ESD policy is not something that is developed only once (by a few), but it is a continuous process or a 'living organism' which has to be nurtured to grow and develop.

4.9. Concluding remarks

The two overall foci at the conference were:

- Lessons learned on strategies and policies for implementing ESD in national curriculum systems
- Central approaches and ideas in ESD aiming at developing action competence and empowerment to support school development.

The paragraphs above indicate that the aims of the conference have been reached. During the discussions a number of dilemmas and challenges for future curricula developers were outlined. One important challenge is the strong tendency that formulation in the curriculum is more about EE than about ESD. Consequently a fundamental understanding of the content of ESD is lacking at various levels (including the national/ministerial). The importance of clarifying the conditions and aims of the partnership among different stakeholders was stressed as an important issue, to make potential hidden agendas more explicit from the beginning. With respect to evaluation it was emphasised that cultural sensitivity is important and therefore a crucial question is how to maintain a common core in evaluation which allows us to compare different countries but still leave space to differences in contexts and in interests.

With regard to action competence and empowerment it was stressed that ESD is a process which enables learners to: 1) critically reflect, 2) detect bias, 3) clarify their own values and 4) develop their action competence. In other words action competence is viewed as the overall aim of ESD and of education in general which at the same time bridges ESD with school development. One of the crucial preconditions for developing action competence is participation and it was emphasised that a concept of genuine student participation does not exclude the professional, on the contrary it implies a responsible and competent teacher who is able to challenge and support students and to provide the necessary insight and knowledge for their learning processes. This also leads to important challenges for teacher education and teacher educators, as they need to improve the skills of future teachers for involving participatory approaches without losing the content of ESD.

The conference was without any doubt an important step forward. Looking at the evaluation statistics 84 % of the respondents agreed that the conference empowered them for their ESD projects. On the other hand, the dilemmas and challenges for research and development in the area of ESD outlined in the report indicate that we still have a long way to go to develop a consistent and coherent profile of ESD. And this possibility of influencing the future ESD-agenda is probably the main reason why this area is currently considered by many researchers and other professionals as a stimulating and challenging field in which to be involved.

Glossary

DESD:	Decade for Education for Sustainable Development
EE:	Environmental Education
ENSI:	Environment and School Initiatives
ESD:	Education for Sustainable Development
OECD:	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SD:	Sustainable Development
SEED:	School Development through Environmental Education
UN:	United Nations
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

5. Annexes

5.1. Literature and web addresses

Breiting, S. Mayer, M. Mogensen, F. (2005): Quality Criteria for ESD-Schools, Guidelines to enhance the quality of Education for Sustainable Development, SEED, Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (translated into 10 European languages)

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www.ensi.org

www.seed-eu.net

5.2. List of participants

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Gabriela Scarlet	Romania	The Ministry of Education and Research
Gaetano Battistella	Italy	APAT
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Gunver Barnholt	Denmark	Danish Ministry of Education
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Mr. Peter Cuming	Australia	Sustainable Futures Australia
Mr. Sandor Brassoi	Hungary	Ministry og Education
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Oswald Franziska	Switzerland	Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education
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Philip Stimpson	Hong Kong	The University of Hong Kong
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Søren Breiting	Denmark	Danish University of Education
Søren Vinding	Denmark	University College of West Jutland
Steffen Rønne	Denmark	Ribe Seminarium
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Veerle Gaeremynck	Belgium	Katholike Hogeschool Leuven
William Lynch	England	Learning and Teaching Scotland
Yap Sin Tian	Malaysia	United Chinese School Committees

5.3. Conference programme

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BUILDING CAPACITY AND EMPOWERMENT

May 19th – 21st, 2005

ESBJERG, DENMARK

Thursday 19th May

- 12.00 – 18.00: Arrival to Esbjerg
- 18.00 – 21.00: Registration and reception at the venue
(including short speech by MinR. Dr. Gunther Pfaffenwimmer,
ENSI President, Austria)

Friday 20th May

- 8.30 – 9.00 Registration of new participants
- 9.00 – 9.10 Conference welcome by Finn Mogensen,
conference co-ordinator
- 9.10 – 9.20 Tyge Skovgaard Christensen, rector of CVU VEST
- 9.20 – 9.40 Uffe Toudal Pedersen, The Danish Ministry of Education:
Opening of the conference
- 9.40 – 10.20 Philippe Muller-Wirth UNESCO, France and Charles Hopkins
UNESCO Chairholder, Canada: *Going from Launching the
Decade to Building and Fostering Practical and Productive
Partnerships*
- 10.20 – 10.50 Coffee break
- 10.50 – 11.30 Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, Member of the European Parliament,
Denmark: *The Decade for Education for Sustainable
Development: A Turning Point for A Better Future?*
- 11.30 – 12.30 Prof. Daniella Tilbury, Australia and Dr. Johannes Tschapka,
Austria: *Achievements in School Development through EE
for Sustainability -Experiences from the European
Network SEED*
- 12.30 – 13.30 Lunch

13.30 – 14.00	International show casing
14.00 – 16.30	Six parallel workshops addressing 3 central issues related to strategies and policies on ESD in national curriculum systems (coffee break included): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Methodology on strategies for implementation of ESD in national curriculum systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> workshop 1a) Reiner Mathar and Reinhard Tempel, Germany workshop 1b) Leszek Iwaskow, United Kingdom 2. Partnership and alliances / resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> workshop 2a) Phil Smith and Syd Smith, Australia workshop 2b) Johannes Tschapka, Austria; Cam Mackenzie and Peter Cuming, Australia 3. Monitoring and evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> workshop 3a) Daniella Tilbury, Australia workshop 3b) Günther Pfaffenvimmer, Austria
17.00 – 22.00	Excursion to the Wadden Sea including dinner and cultural events at Myrthuegård

Saturday 21st May

8.30 – 9.00	Registration of new participants
9.00 – 9.40	Dr. Michela Mayer, Italy: <i>Working with Quality Criteria for ESD-Schools</i>
9.40 – 10.20	Prof. Dr. Regula Kyburz-Graber, Switzerland: <i>ESD in Teacher Education: Learning from Case Studies</i>
10.20 – 10.50	Coffee break
10.50 – 11.30	Prof. Karsten Schnack, Denmark: <i>Is ESD a Widening, Radicalization, or Taming of EE?</i>
11.30 – 12.10	Prof. Bjarne Bruun Jensen, Denmark: <i>Participatory and Action-oriented Approaches in ESD - Challenges for the Professionals</i>
12.10 – 13.30	Lunch and international show casing (continued)

13.30 – 16.00	Six parallel workshops addressing 3 central issues related to approaches and ideas in ESD (coffee break included): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The role of teacher education in ESD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> workshop 1a) Willy Sleuers, The Netherlands workshop 1b) Peter Posch, Austria 2. Central approaches and ideas in development of empowerment and action competence through ESD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> workshop 2a) Søren Breiting, Denmark workshop 2b) Mariona Espinet and Rosa Maria Pujol, Spain 3. ESD and School Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> workshop 3a) Franz Rauch and Martin Heinrich, Austria workshop 3b) Tony Shallcross, United Kingdom
16.00 – 16.30	Analysis: Review of the Conference by Prof. Bjarne Bruun Jensen, Denmark
16.30 – 17.00	Closing ceremony
19.00 – 23.00	Banquet and dance to live orchestra at the venue

5.4. Keynote speakers and workshop presenters

Keynote speakers

- Uffe Toudal Pedersen, Director General, The Danish Ministry of Education, Denmark
- Philippe Muller-Wirth, Programme Specialist, UNESCO, France
- Charles Hopkins, UNESCO Chairholder, Canada
- Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, Member of the European Parliament, Denmark
- Dr. Günther Pfaffenwimmer, MinR., Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and ENSI President, Austria
- Prof. Bjarne Bruun Jensen, Programme Director, The Danish University of Education, Denmark
- Prof. Dr. Regula Kyburz-Graber, University of Zurich, Switzerland
- Dr. Michela Mayer, INVALSI, Italy
- Prof. Karsten Schnack, The Danish University of Education, Denmark
- Prof. Daniella Tilbury, ARIES, Australia,
- Dr. Johannes Tschapka, SEED Co-ordinator, Austria

Work shop presenters

- Reiner Mathar, Head of Department, State Authority for Teachers Education, Germany
- Reinhard Tempel, School Consultant, Paedagogisches Zentrum Rheinland Pfalz, Germany
- Leszek Iwaskow, Her Majesty's Inspector, Ofsted, United Kingdom
- Phil Smith, Director, Know Hands, Education and Training Concultancy, Australia
- Syd Smith, Environmental Education Consultant, Australia
- Dr. Johannes Tschapka, SEED Co-ordinator, Austria
- Cam Mackenzie, A/Senior Education Officer, Education Queensland, Australia
- Peter Cuming, Sustainable Futures Australia, Australia
- Prof. Daniella Tilbury, ARIES, Australia
- Dr. Günther Pfaffenwimmer, MinR., Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and ENSI President, Austria
- Dr. Willy Sleurs, Ministry of the Flemish Community, Dep. for Educational Development, The Netherlands
- Prof. I. R. Dr. Peter Posch, University of Klagenfurt, Austria
- Associate Professor Søren Breiting, Danish University of Education, Denmark
- University Professor Mariona Espinet, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain
- University Professor Rosa Maria Pujol Vilallonga, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain
- Univ. Prof. Franz Rauch, University of Klagenfurt, Austria
- Senior Researcher Martin Heinrich, Johannes Kepler University, Austria
- Dr. Tony Shallcross, Manchester Metropolitan University, United Kingdom

Moderators for the plenary sessions:

- Christine Affolter, Vice President ENSI, Switzerland
- Nicola Bedlington, Head of ENSI Secretariat, Switzerland

5.5. Keynote abstracts

Programme Specialist Philippe Muller-Wirth, UNESCO, France, and Charles Hopkins, UNESCO Chairholder, Canada : *"Going from launching the Decade to building and fostering practical and productive partnerships"*

The presentation will be divided into three main parts: (i) a brief introduction to the UNDES and the International Implementation Scheme ; (ii) perspectives for establishing partnerships in the context of the UNDES and, in particular, outcomes of a study conducted in 2004 on this subject by a team of students from the Institut d'Etudes Politiques (Paris); (iii) main achievements reached to date in launching the Decade.

Prof. Daniella Tilbury, ARIES, Australia, and Dr. Johannes Tschapka, SEED Co-ordinator, Austria: *"Achievements in School Development through EE for Sustainability - Experiences from the European Network SEED"*

The SEED experience demonstrated COMENIUS projects are a valuable basis for promoting school development across Europe. SEED encouraged reflection and exchange of experiences in Environmental Education assisting with the development of intercultural understanding and professional development. The opportunity to experience and share reflections with schools of other countries enabled teachers and principals to reflect and revise their own educational practice.

Prof. Dr. Regula Kyburz-Graber, University of Zurich, Switzerland: *"ESD in teacher education: learning from case studies"*

Environmental education and education for sustainable development differs from mere curriculum implementation projects in many respects. Case studies from teacher training courses can provide a rich basis for student teachers to reflect on the various purposes and expressions of educational practice and the benefit of action research. It is shown what issues emerge from case studies and how they can be used for pre-service training and professional development.

Dr. Michela Mayer, INVALSI, Italy: *“Working with quality criteria for eco-schools”*

Eco-schools are increasing in number and improving in quality at international level under different names. They are engaged in profound changes regarding the aims and roles of educational institutions. The ENSI and the SEED networks devoted time and research for investigating the explicit and implicit criteria used for the evaluation of the quality of these changes and of the related processes. One of the outcome of this research is a proposal for a non-exhaustive list of 'quality criteria' to be used as a starting point for reflections, debates and further development regarding the future work with ESD.

Prof. Karsten Schnack, The Danish University of Education, Denmark: *“Is ESD a widening, radicalization, or taming of EE?”*

The action competence approach to environmental education and education for sustainable development will be explained and the question will be discussed in this perspective. The answer will be: "yes and no" and "it depends".

Prof. Bjarne Bruun Jensen, Danish University of Education, Denmark:
“Participatory and action-oriented approaches in ESD - challenges for the the professional”

The concept of 'Participation' in ESD is focusing on a dialogue between the professional and the target groups. The 'Action approach' emphasizes that target groups as part of their learning processes take part in authentic actions addressing environmental problems. The presentation outlines and operationalises the participatory and action-oriented approach and clarifies the demand on the professional.

SEED NETWORK

The European COMENIUS 3 network, "School Development through Environmental Education" (SEED) is a group of educational authorities and institutes who promote Environmental Education as a driving force for School Development.

Within the 14 European SEED partner countries and 6 SEED member countries, Environmental Education fosters an innovative culture of teaching and learning that promotes Education for Sustainability.

SEED invites schools, teacher education institutes and educational authorities to work together, to learn from each other's experiences and to accumulate their knowledge in their quest in working towards sustainable development.

TARGETS

Because of the creation of the COMENIUS 3 networks, SEED is able to encourage co-operation among its stakeholders by working on existing, completed and prospective COMENIUS projects. Stakeholders associated with the network benefit from these environmental education developments.

SEED also facilitates a close dialogue and better understanding among policy makers and practitioners in the various education systems. The ultimate target group is the pupils who benefit from innovative teaching practices and modern teaching and learning pedagogies.

THEMATIC CONFERENCES

According to the contract with the European Commission, SEED organised thematic conferences like the one in Esbjerg from May 19th to 22nd 2005. The target of the conference is to bring together stakeholders from different SOCRATES actions with national authorities and experts in the field of Education for Sustainable Development and School Development in Europe and beyond.

www.seed-eu.net

PARTNERS:



Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture / Austria



University College of West Jutland / Denmark



Austrian Forum for Environmental Education / Austria



Autonomous University of Barcelona, Faculty of Educational Sciences / Spain



Education Highway (Innovation Centre for School and New Technology) / Austria



Finnish National Board of Education /Finland



University of Klagenfurt, Centre for interdisciplinary Research and Education, Department of School and Societal Learning / Austria



University of Joensuu, Savonlinna, Department of Teacher Education / Finland



National and Capodistrian University of Athens



Ministry of the Flemish Community, Service for Educational Development / Belgium



National Institute for Public Education / Hungary



RAGO, Council for Community Education / Belgium



National Institute for the Evaluation of the Educational System / Italy



Hessian State Institute for Education / Germany



University of Milan / Italy



Danish University of Education / Denmark



Ministry for Education, Vocational Training and Sports / Luxembourg

Danmarks Pædagogiske Universitet
The Danish University of Education



SLO
Institute for Curriculum
Development / Netherlands

MEMBERS:

New South Wales
Department of Education
and Training /Australia



Agency for Educational
Design / Netherlands

University of Regina, Faculty
of Education / Canada



National Board of Education
/ Norway

Tokyo Gakugei University,
Institute for Environmental
Education / Japan



Norwegian National
Education Office,
Aust-Agder County / Norway

Cheongju National
University of Education /
Republic of Korea



Swedish National Agency for
School Improvement /
Sweden

Massey University, College of
Education / New Zealand



National Education Institute
/ Slovenia

Swiss Foundation for
Environmental Education /
Switzerland



Office for Standards in
Education / United Kingdom

University College of
Solothurn / Switzerland



Nottingham Trent University,
Faculty of Education / United
Kingdom

University of Zurich, Institute
for Teacher Education /
Switzerland

The conference report on Building Capacity and Empowerment through ESD emphasises policy and practical strategies for implementing the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). It reflects the results of the thematic SEED conference held May 2005 in Esbjerg / Denmark on how ESD plays a crucial role in developing schools and their curricula and therefore contributes significantly to preparing students for a sustainable future.



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