



# ESDebate

## International debate on education for sustainable development

Editors: Frits Hesselink, Peter Paul van Kempen, Arjen Wals

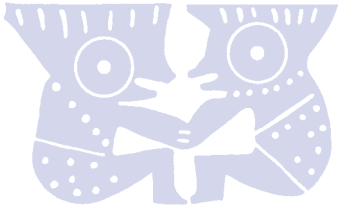


IUCN Commission on Education and Communication (CEC)



# **ESDebate**

**International debate on  
education for sustainable  
development**



## **IUCN – The World Conservation Union**

Created in 1948, IUCN – The World Conservation Union brings together States, government agencies and a diverse range of non-governmental organizations in a unique world partnership: 935 members in all, spread across some 139 countries along with some 10,000 scientists and experts from 181 countries in the voluntary Commissions.

As a Union, IUCN seeks to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.

The World Conservation Union builds on the strengths of its members, networks and partners to enhance their capacity and to support global alliances to safeguard natural resources at local, regional and global levels.

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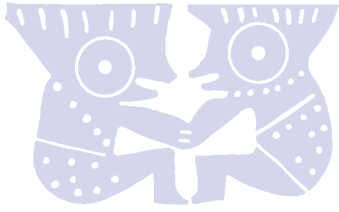


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Frits Hesselink, Peter Paul van Kempen, and Arjen Wals, Editors

IUCN Commission on Education and Communication  
IUCN – The World Conservation Union 2000



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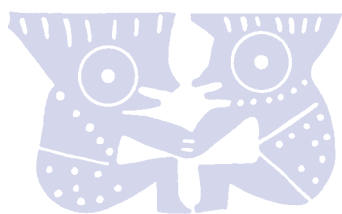
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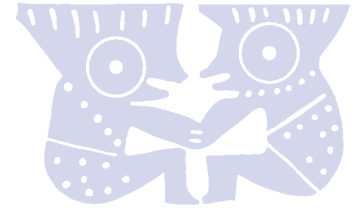


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## Foreword

In 1970 IUCN wrote the first international definition of environmental education with members of its international network of experts in the Commission on Education, as it was then called. Now, at the turn of the millennium and 30 years later, the IUCN Commission on Education and Communication is publishing the results of another seminal discussion, which considered the relationship between environmental education and education for sustainable development. This discussion has come about because Agenda 21, chapter 36 recommended that education be reoriented to include environment and development education. As part of its work plan on chapter 36, the Commission on Sustainable Development is seeking clarification of the concepts of education for sustainable development. It was at the Pan European Expert Meeting on Sustainable Development and Environmental Education held in Soesterberg, the Netherlands, 27–29 January, 1999 that the stimulus arose to further discuss the concept of education for sustainable development.

The different ways in which these two pieces of work have been undertaken reflects the new opportunities available for communicating around the world. In 1970 the environmental education definition arose out of face-to-face dialogue over a period of some two weeks, while the discussion in this book – *ESDebate* - has been held over the Internet. The lessons from this Internet debate suggest new possibilities for drawing on global knowledge and for preparing for deeper discussion at meetings. Indeed, the Internet can be a forceful way to mobilise large sectors of society for sustainability issues.

IUCN has learnt from experience that the best solutions come from involving people in decision making and management of their local natural resources. In such a process people share their perceptions, knowledge and interests to work out solutions to problems and in so doing learn. IUCN has found that for change to take place, learning must take place at various levels, individual, organisational and institutional, as the path to sustainability requires changes in our systems as well as in people. This is at the core of IUCN's work and why the IUCN Programme is structured to contribute to generating and processing knowledge, on empowerment and governance.

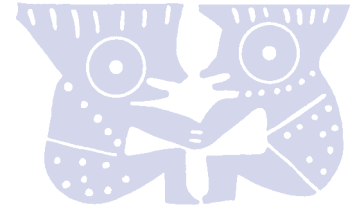
I hope that this publication and the accompanying CD-ROM will help professionals in their daily work.

*Maritta Koch-Weser*

Maritta R. von Bieberstein Koch-Weser  
Director General  
IUCN







# Chapter 1

## Initiative and objectives

### 1.1 Initiative

At the Pan European Expert Meeting on Sustainable Development and Environmental Education (Soesterberg, Netherlands, 27 – 29 January, 1999) participants shared their work in the field. However Douwe Jan Joustra, Program Manager of the Dutch Extra Impulse for Environmental Education, felt there was insufficient discussion on the concept of education for sustainable development. He launched the idea to organise a follow-up discussion with the use of information, communication technology (ICT). The idea caught on. As it was planning a next phase of its Program focused on *'learning for sustainability'*, the Dutch Interdepartmental Steering Group for Environmental Education supported further discussion of the issue. Furthermore there was interest to explore new ways of knowledge management in the field and to expand the use of ICT to the Dutch practice of environmental education.

Internet debates on environmental education have taken place before. These debates centred around a collection of articles and were not really an exchange of opinions intended to stimulate debate and new ideas. So managing this innovative process was to be a challenge and learning experience.

### Objectives

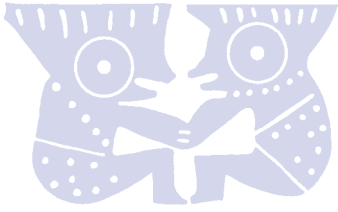
The Inter Departmental Steering Group asked the NCDO (Dutch Committee for Sustainable Development) to organise a tender. By the end of April 1999 HECT Consultancy was asked to manage the project, form a team of moderators and fulfil the following objectives to:

- bridge the gap between the Dutch policy with regard to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and the international practice of ESD;
- provide Dutch experts with an impulse for deepening their thinking about ESD by confronting them with opinions from international experts;
- contribute to the ongoing international debate on ESD managed by UNESCO and the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD).

### 1.2 Approach

#### Challenges

Organising a professional discussion among experts on the internet meant that the moderators had to meet several challenges such as:



- How to find and motivate participants: what costs and benefits are there in it for them?
- How to work from an unknown web-site?
- How to keep the exchange lively, readable and to avoid long articles?
- How to keep the interest of participants and the public over a longer period?
- How to make the exchange of ideas, opinions and experience into a learning exercise?

### **Moderators with different backgrounds**

Education for Sustainable Development is an ‘ill defined’ concept and can be approached from various perspectives. The educational perspective brings in the notions of individual learning, pedagogy and emancipation. The sustainable development perspective includes policy and managing participatory processes in organisations and communities. These two different paradigms are often difficult to reconcile. For that reason HECT Consultancy chose people for the project team with different backgrounds:- an academic researcher in environmental education, a consultant for education and communication policies and programs, a marketing consultant and a webmaster with experience in educational projects.

### **Structured debate as a success factor**

Several Internet on-line discussions were studied to prepare for the *ESDebate*. This showed that the level of participation in debates varied markedly. In some cases a few participants produced extensive contributions, while many participants hardly contributed at all. A lot of reading was required to participate. Often there was a low response to the questions or to the essays that were to be critiqued. With these observations in mind the moderators chose to set up a semi-closed group of selected participants and a format of rounds of discussion on issues in order to stimulate a higher response.

### **Selecting participants by invitation**

To guarantee the quality of input, the moderators decided to work by inviting participants to the debate. While the debate would be open to everyone, the main discussion would be confined to a smaller group. There was not time in the project for a lengthy process to identify the participants. So the moderators started by approaching a small group of experts who had attended the Soesterberg Conference and some key people from their own international networks in environmental education and sustainable development. These people were also asked to suggest more names of people who were then approached.

### **Personal approach to participants**

Participants were approached by email. Where possible the moderator who knew the expert personally made the approach. During the whole period of the internet discussion, communication between the moderators and participants was by email (including the *ESDebate* address to click on) and had, if possible, a personal touch.



## Creating a new brand

Internet is characterised by abundant information. Adding a new initiative is like creating a new brand in the market. So the moderators considered that one factor in the success of the *ESDebate* would be a distinctive way to present the discussion compared to other initiatives on environmental education and sustainable development on the web. Therefore they gave the discussion its own name: "*ESDebate*". ESD is an easily recognised acronym amongst experts. The term debate was to appeal to the notion of real interaction. The interaction was to be between high quality experts. You should either be one of those experts or know one or more of them. The name "*ESDebate*" was promoted in a PR campaign through environmental education and sustainable development magazines, websites and networks.

## Using registration to make the site and the idea visible

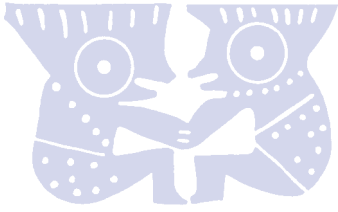
A list of invited participants was published on the web according to nationalities in mid June 1999, stimulating even more suggestions for participants. Participants were asked to fill in the registration form and give some statements on the issue. These answers were immediately posted on the web. So between July and September each registered participant's abbreviated CV, a favourite book, websites, and statement on sustainable development and education was available. The registration was the first possibility for the moderators to receive feedback and suggestions from participants. It also gave the moderators an overview of the regions or sectors to further invest in to stimulate participation.

## Links with well known websites

One of the first things the moderators did was to ask organisations with a well known website to be a partner organisation in this project and to make a link from their home page to that of *ESDebate* and vice versa. This not only added credibility to *ESDebate*, but it proved to be vital for hits by non-participants. During the debate 50% of the visits to *ESDebate* came through the websites of IUCN and UNESCO. We also invested in publicising the debate through existing networks.

## Taking factors for success into account

To ask people for their time over a period of four months to really engage in an international exchange on the internet is asking quite a lot. Internet is by nature transient and characterised by surfing, zapping and staying a very short time on a page, until one sees something very interesting. To contribute to five rounds of debate and to read others' contributions takes much more effort. So the moderators took care to design the site in as interesting and readable a way as possible with good visuals, a clear navigation structure and teasers for revisiting the site. Included were opportunities to visit other sites and access to a "top ten" list of web sites and books.



### **Creating commitment by publishing the results**

However this is not enough to create commitment to participate in the discussion. While approaching the first participants, the moderators noticed the dilemma of many academics to providing contributions without credits. This was contrary to the academic culture. So the moderators asked IUCN's Commission on Education and Communication to publish *ESDebate* and give credits to participants for their contributions.

### **Creating ownership and joint learning**

The moderators announced at the outset that *ESDebate* would be conducted in 5 rounds. The first round would explore the concept of Education for Sustainability, the second to discuss examples of good practice and the third round to investigate the implications. The subjects of the last two rounds were kept open to deal with suggestions from the participants. During each round, participants were asked to give feedback. The moderators tried their best to incorporate the many suggestions they received.

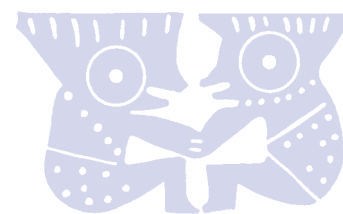
After a few rounds a recurring issue in the debate appeared to be the conflicting paradigms of education and of sustainable development policies. Therefore the fourth round was devoted entirely to this subject. In the last round participants were given the opportunity to reflect on the debate, their own and the collective learning.

### **Articles versus interaction**

There is abundant literature on Environmental Education and Sustainable Development. Conferences and workshops have triggered numerous articles. No wonder that one's first reflex to participate in an internet expert discussion is to send in existing articles. To avoid this, the moderators made a structure in which they opened each round with statements on which participants were asked to react. The statements were followed by a few open questions. This approach was meant to focus attention on specific questions and provoke an immediate personal answer.

### **How to avoid drop outs**

The moderators designed a system of regular communication with participants during the months September – December, the time for the discussion proper. Right from the start the participants were provided with a timetable for each round, asking them to reserve time in their agenda in specific weeks. Then the moderators sent reminders to give time for responses and made sure that, at the indicated time, the results of each round were indeed visible on the website of *ESDebate*. Sometimes personal emails were used to urge participants to respond. The time schedule was designed so tightly that participants almost had no time to forget *ESDebate* and their commitments.



## How to service non-participants

Visitors to the site who were not participants, could read all the information from the rounds, summaries of the answers, the individual answers themselves, the opening statements and personal data of the participants. If visitors wished to make comments, ask questions or react to the discussion they could use a guest book. Visitors also had the opportunity to email directly to individual participants.

## 1.3 Participants and visitors

### Participants

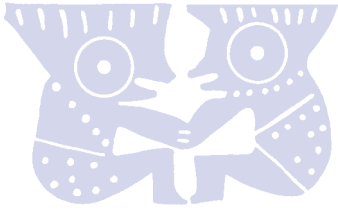
Of the 70 invited participants, 50 participants registered for the debate, coming from 25 countries. Most of them participated in three or more rounds. Between 22 and 37 participants took part per round. The majority of participants have an academic and or environmental education background. *ESDebate* has not been able to attract participation from experts involved in sustainable development nor the corporate and public sector. This coloured the dominating paradigm in the discussion resulting in more focus on pedagogy and individual emancipation than on aspects like developing learning organisations and managing processes towards sustainability.

### Outreach

In the period June 1999 and mid March 2000, the site has received around 6,500 hits from 104 countries. There is no data available to answer the question on how intensively the site has been visited. However compared to the hit frequency of similar educational sites it can be concluded that this is a remarkable result. Figure 1 below gives some indications of the geographical spread of the hits.

Region	% Hits
Europe	39%
North America	15%
Asia	4%
South America	3%
Australia	2%
Central America	2%
Africa	1%
Unknown	35%

Figure 1: Origin of *ESDebate* "Hits" June 1999 – March 2000



Three categories of visitors to web sites can be distinguished:

- 1) *hit & miss surfers* who stumble upon a site and leave right away;
- 2) *relay surfers* who discover the site, have a quick look at it and pass it on to friends who have that interest;
- 3) *deep surfers* who visit several layers of the site, return to the site more than once and may even download information.

Although a NedStat counter was used to keep track of the origin of people visiting the site and the frequency of the visits, we lack information about the number of people belonging to each of the above categories. Anecdotal evidence, mostly gathered during environmental education conferences attended by the moderators, suggests that the debate has reached many professionals in the field. Of course, the fact that the debate was in the English language may have excluded many potential visitors and may have discouraged people to write in the guest book.

### **Guest book**

The public guest book was useful to the moderators to pick up signals from the wider audience about the direction the debate was going. Also people who felt excluded could express that. If someone strongly felt that the debate was too closed and could make a case for being included, the moderators would open the debate to accommodate them. The number of guest book entries (45 through mid-March) is quite low compared to the number of hits during the same time period (6,500). More information is needed about what the people visiting the site actually did.

## **1.4 Appreciation of ESDebate by participants**

Many participants found the debate inspiring. An internet debate was a new and stimulating experience for some contributors. The majority of the participants appreciated the ESDebate including the following features:

- the input in five rounds to the debate made it easier to manage and moderate;
- the inviting design of the web-site;
- the speed with which it was possible to answer the round surveys;
- the quality of the round summaries and the speed with which they were put on the web;
- those who had little time but wanted to be part of the debate could answer the closed ‘trigger’ questions and ignore some or all of the open questions;
- those who had more time or whose work it is to reflect on some of the issues raised could spend more time on the open questions and elaborate on their answers.

In addition to the positive comments about the debate and its format there were some reservations and objections to the format as well. These reservations can be summarised by the following two questions:



- Was it a debate?
- Were the right questions being asked?

### **Debate?**

Some participants did not really consider this to be a debate as the level of interaction between the participants was too low. In essence, these critics felt that most of the interaction took place between the moderators and the individual participants. Although some interaction took place between individual participants as a result of *ESDebate*, this interaction was unnoticed by the larger group. This meant that the moderators were surveying the ideas of a selected group of EE-experts from around the world and summarising these every round.

### **Interaction**

Indeed, technically speaking this was not a real debate. The discussion triggered a lot of opinions, anecdotes, and new ideas. These were accessible to everyone and summarised by the moderators. Some bilateral interaction went on between participants – through their email linkages - but this was not visible for others. The language used in the submissions is more like spoken language and removed from that of a scientific article. Participants spoke right from their heart, and some times showed enormous spontaneity. The contents of the various inputs show an enormous richness in thinking and ideas, demanding further exploration.

### **Right questions?**

The language of the questions, as some participants commented, was the language of instrumental thinkers (i.e., using words like target groups, delivery, tools, marketing, etc.) and the world of positivism. Critics of such thinking argue that this way of thinking lies at the root of many social and environmental problems in the world today. To address these problems we require new ways of thinking and alternative worldviews. The questions should reflect this point of view too, they argued.

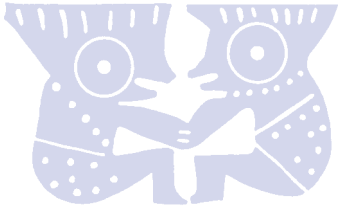
### **Statements: closed questions**

Furthermore, some participants criticised the closed questions. The statements, they argued, are often ambiguous and are stripped from context, so it is hard to know what the respondents meant by their answers. Evidently, interpreting the data becomes rather tricky in this situation. Some participants suggested that statements only have merit when the opportunity is given to clarify the answers bringing in context and nuance. In later rounds this possibility was added.

### **Statements: effective triggers**

The statements were intended as appetisers and a ‘quick and dirty’ way to get the keyboards to heat up. Judged by the lengthy responses to the open questions this seems to have worked. We agree that ‘quick and dirty’ is not





the best way to get at the subtleties and nuances which are necessary in an increasingly polarised world. Academics particularly tend to have a negative reaction to ‘quick and dirty’ survey methods, especially when the questions are ambiguous and open to many interpretations. A balance needs to be struck between getting arousing responses and providing space for nuances, subtleties of meaning and sensitivity to alternative viewpoints.

### **What was missing?**

The input from the corporate sector is definitely one of the major missing elements in *ESDebate*. The corporate sector is picking up sustainable development in its practices with considerable speed. Also corporations increasingly recognise that this is a learning exercise, so how to manage knowledge and learning organisations are key concepts in this development. The same is true for various areas of the public sector. Input from experiences from the private and public sector has been mostly missing in the educational debates so far. *ESDebate* has been no exception in that respect. Next time the moderators would advise putting much more effort in at the beginning to guarantee participation from these sectors.

### **Final thoughts of participants**

Chapter 6 of the *ESDebate* gives an overview of the various ways in which participants evaluated the exercise. That not all participants leave the debate with the same feelings is clearly illustrated by the following quotes:

*“The debate has so far seemed to me rather like a lot of little paper boats launched onto a pond, bobbing around independently but getting nowhere much. Surely they need to become a fleet with a united capacity to confront the enemy. They carry in their cargoes many useful loads....., some very useful, but not so far a force to which governments or even some large NGOs will pay much attention.”* John Smyth, UK.

*“Do not touch it... its working! People are responding - the level of the debate is fantastic - it is time consuming but we are moving forward. The structure is great. It is one of the easiest debates I have had online since the invention of Internet - it will become a model for future discussions. I love the synthesis and the graphs - congratulations to the organisers and the web master.”* Jean Perras, Canada.

## **1.5 Leads for the future**

One of the conclusions drawn from the experience of *ESDebate* is that on-line debates have a future. A direct off-spin of *ESDebate* is that the format is now used in two projects of the Wageningen University: "*Education for Integrated Rural Development*", and "*Integrating Concepts of Sustainability in Education for Agriculture and Rural Development*". Furthermore debates like *ESDebate* provide opportunities to prepare



workshops, seminars and conferences so that the participants come well prepared, know each other already from cyber space and are ‘fired up’ for a lively real debate.

### **Distance learning**

Other applications of *ESDebate* are in distance learning. During the debate the University of Leiden used *ESDebate* as a learning exercise for its students. A possible scenario is for students in small groups to moderate a round in the discussion, preparing questions, analysing answers and formulating a synthesis.

### **Social marketing and interactive planning**

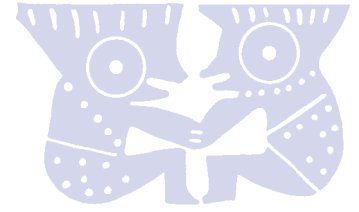
*ESDebate* also offers an emerging internet format for expert consultations for social marketing and interactive planning, especially on issues with an international dimension. International organisations with a mission in the field of sustainable development could use the format to investigate their clients’ ideas about existing products and services and could explore the added value of new services and products. When planning their programs or activities these organisations could use the *ESDebate* format to generate input of key stakeholders from various parts of the world.

## **1.6 How to read this report**

Each chapter in this report summarises the results of a debating round. To illustrate the results, a selection of participants’ quotes has been inserted. The moderators have edited some of the quotes to obtain a smooth flow of text. We refer to the enclosed CD-ROM for the ‘uncut’ version of the participants’ responses. On this CD-ROM you will find all participants’ answers and all round summaries. Furthermore, CV’s and e-mail addresses of the participants are available. The website also provides the top ten lists of relevant links and books. Finally, information about the supporting organisations and the aim and structure of the *ESDebate* is accessible. We hope you enjoy reading this report and ‘surfing’ on the CD-ROM and hope you will find ideas and opinions that inspire you!

To start the CD-Rom: insert the CD Rom in your drive, the site will appear automatically. If it doesn’t, you’ll have to select the file index.html in Windows Explorer, and start the site by double clicking this file.





## Chapter 2

# The concept of education for sustainable development

### 2.1 Participants' responses to the statements

This chapter focuses on the participants' view of the relation between ESD and environmental education (EE). Furthermore, we explore how ESD can contribute to sustainable development.

We first asked the participants to react to statements. The statements we used were actually meant as 'warming up'. We intentionally formulated controversial statements in order to provoke a strong response which indeed we got! Figure 2 below shows the results. Please note that the 'neutral' category has been left out to highlight differences (this explains why the number of participants varies). The graph shows that some statements are more controversial than others.

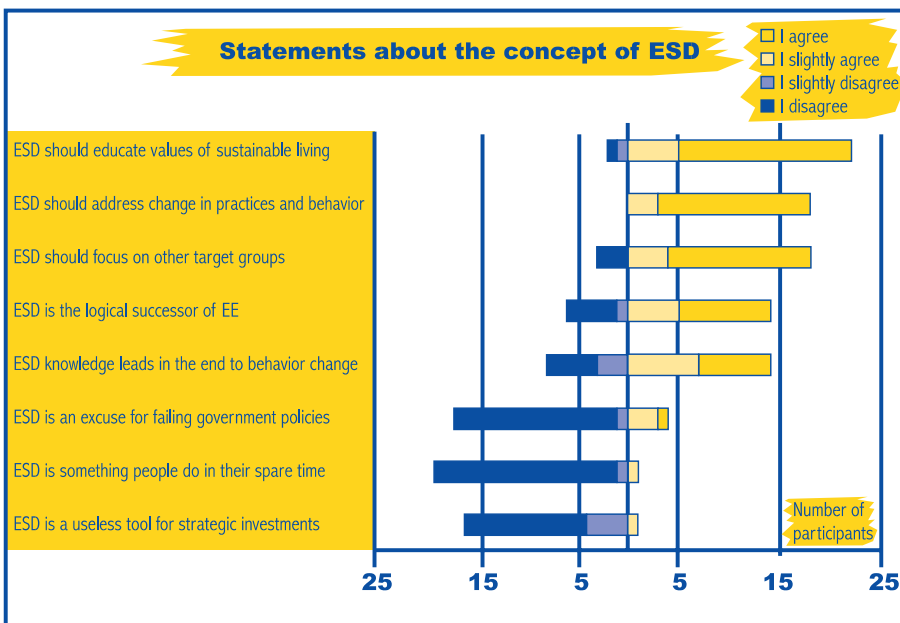
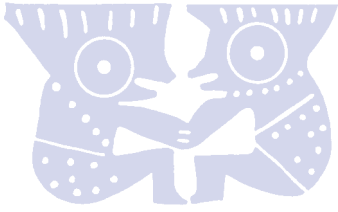


Figure 2: Results from the closed questions about the concept of ESD

Below are shown the areas of agreement and disagreement drawn from the participants' answers to the open questions.

### 2.2 ESD = EE?

There appears to be consensus that ESD as a force, phenomenon or tool within contemporary education, both formal and non-formal, has to be



reckoned with and has added value. Less agreement can be found with regards to the relationship between ESD and EE. Many view ESD as the next generation of EE, which includes issues of ethics, equity and new ways of thinking and learning. Others say ESD should be a part of good EE and there is no need to do away with EE as an umbrella. Again others suggest that EE is a part of ESD. They argue that ESD is more comprehensive than EE by including issues of development, North-South relationships, cultural diversity, social and environmental equity.

Figure 3 shows the four relationships between EE and ESD found amongst the participants. Despite the differences in opinion about the relationship between EE and ESD most participants appear to regard ESD as the next evolutionary stage or new generation of EE.

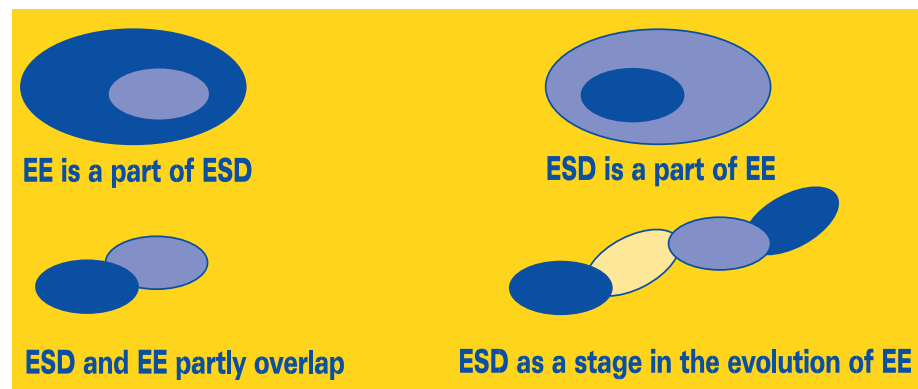
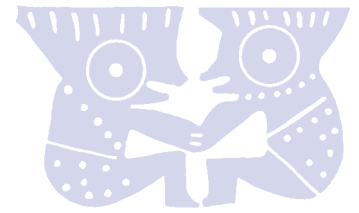


Figure 3: Four perspectives on the relationship between EE and ESD

*“ESD differs significantly from the naturalist, apolitical and scientific work carried out under the EE banner in the 1980 and early 1990’s. Now EE practices are closing the gap as they focus more sharply on developing closer links between environmental quality, ecology, and socio-economics and the political threads that underlie these. ESD has a strong futures education component. It involves learners in an examination of probable and possible futures. ...this exercise is crucially linked to the development of ‘hope’ ‘empowerment’ and ‘action’. However, futures thinking continues to have a low profile in EE.” Daniella Tilbury, UK.*

*“EE is an essential component of ESD, one of many components. There are other fields that need to be brought into the equation of ESD including system dynamics, sustainable economics, globalisation and global theory, cross cultural education, futurism, scenario planning and strategic thinking, design, community based education, and many more. We need to move to a systemic view of the world, not one of discrete isolated educational niches.” Keith Wheeler, USA.*

*“EE is a component of ESD and one of the strands on which ESD is built. Where ESD looks at social, political and economic dimensions, EE concentrates on just the environment. ESD is basically the next step to EE*



*but with a broader agenda and a further understanding of the inter-linking relationship of these components with the environment.” Stella Jafri, Pakistan.*

*“ESD provides an orientation to EE, even if it is a rather ambivalent term. There is a danger that it legitimises the notion of infinite economic growth - only at a more sustained pace. This interpretation is not in line with notions of EE. Another interpretation concentrates on ecologisation: "shaping human interaction with the environment in an intellectual, material, social and emotional sense to achieve a lasting quality of life for all". If sustainable development is interpreted in this way, it provides a useful orientation to EE.” Peter Posch, Austria.*

*“[EE, unlike ESD,] focuses almost exclusively on the natural forces without sufficient attention to the need for profound changes in the social forces that limit our ability to develop a balance with the environment.” David Barkin, Mexico.*

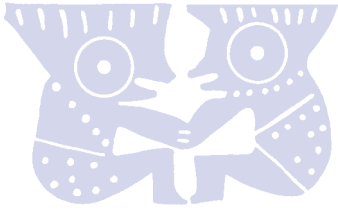
*“EE has failed to a great extent to start the discussion with decision-makers in governments and commerce, ESD is explicitly attempting to do so. EE represents an interest (group); not so ESD which much more tries to balance values and interests.” Chris Maas Geesteranus, The Netherlands.*

*“ESD has a sharper and more critical focus than EE. Education for sustainable development, like education for peace or democracy, is a critical and democratic process of reflection and action on our present troubled society (unsustainable, violent, undemocratic) and how we might realise more ‘worthwhile’ (sustainable, peaceful, democratic) futures. ESD, unlike much EE, has strong links with social, political and development education.” John Huckle, UK.*

## 2.3 ESD for or about?

Many participants are quite comfortable with ESD as a tool to develop norms and values and change practices and lifestyles. Emphasis is placed on developing so-called higher thinking skills and personal, social and environmental competencies. Several participants suggest that indeed some values are more sustainable than others, and there is nothing wrong in teaching these values and to teach *for* sustainable development.

Some participants, however, are quite uncomfortable with ESD as a tool to change behaviour. They argue that ESD should enable people to determine their own pathways towards sustainable living. The emphasis should, in their eyes, be on developing the competencies people need and working towards a more democratic and equitable world. They oppose the idea of expert and pre-determined universal norms and values of sustainability since nobody knows what the ethically and morally right sustainable values of behaviours are for one self let alone others. They feel it is more appropriate to speak of education *about* sustainable development.



It should be noted that some participants also object to the whole notion of sustainable *development* and much rather speak of education about sustainability. Figure 4 illustrates how the main focal points of EE seem to be shifting.

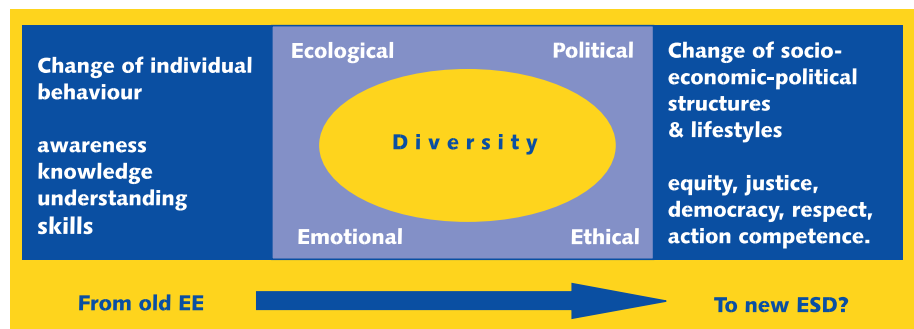


Figure 4: EE in transition: broadening the scope or a new paradigm?

*“In order to strengthen environmental education we need to adopt a more ‘ecumenical’ stance: we should not want to trounce our alleged adversaries just because they see things differently. At the same time, we cannot intend to ‘equalise’ certain positions, which are politically irreconcilable because of the environmental strategies they advocate. Obviously, environmental educators should receive a firmer grounding in the theoretical and political aspects of their field, which so far has mainly been based on a naive, empirical and conservation approach.”* Edgar Gonzalez-Gaudio, Mexico.

*“The individualising ‘turn’ of individual rights so marked in the 1990’s needs to be complemented by a less selfish orientation where societies rights prevail. The main driving forces that will bring about such a world are environmental education processes in support of social change.”* Jim Taylor, South Africa.

*“Coming from a less developed country it is clear to me what issues make people become interested in ESD as an alternative to improve their current standard of living. ...I am curious, however, what the approach is in more developed countries, such as USA and in Europe, to engage people in a paradigm which asks them to decrease their level of consumerism and their high standards of living...”* Fiorella Ceruti, Peru.

*“ESD should bring an awareness of the excessively wasteful and unsustainable lifestyles of the ‘developed world’ and the more affluent sections of the developing world, an awareness of the huge gap in resource consumption levels in different parts of the world, an awareness of some of the efforts at making lifestyles more sustainable.”* Kartikeya V. Sarabhai, India.

*“ESD should use the force of social learning in conjunction with individual learning. It should engage citizens in dialogue, participation and opportunities to work towards the balancing of economy, ecology and culture.”* Douwe Jan Joustra, Netherlands.



*“ESD is a contested concept and there is little prospect of consensus on its meaning in a debate such as this. Those who accuse advocates of critical ESD of seeking to indoctrinate students with a particular meaning or outcome, ignore the democratic safeguards within critical pedagogy. In reality, it is more often light green reformist ESD that indoctrinates by offering support for the greening of capitalism or the status quo.”* John Huckle, UK.

*“ESD should make people more qualified to take up, in a democratic way, the discussion on what they prefer and want for their future. This includes to develop them as participants as opposite to spectators - to develop them as action competent persons, i.e. persons who have the will, the skills and the abilities to take part in people’s conflicting relation to the natural resources. The role of the education is not to give the pupils the correct answers and [to prescribe the ‘right’] behaviour.”* Finn Mogensen, Denmark.

## 2.4 Distinctive features of ESD

Those participants who seem to view ESD as a successor of EE argue it is:

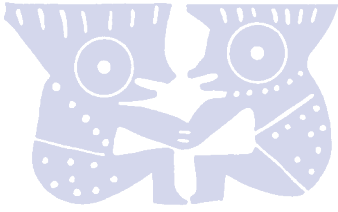
- more future-oriented (careful examination of probable and possible futures);
- critical of the predominant market and consumption driven society;
- more sensitive to the different realities that challenge people around the world (sensitive to context);
- more systemic in dealing with complexity;
- more community and solidarity oriented (as opposed to individualistic and self-promoting);
- less concerned with product (behavioural outcomes);
- more concerned with process (creating the right conditions for social learning);
- more open to new ways of thinking and doing;
- preoccupied with linking social, economic and environmental equity at the local, regional and global level.

Some participants made some cautionary remarks as well. Some warn of ESD becoming a tool of policy-makers and market players. Others suggest that sustainable development is nothing more (or less) than a neo-colonial concept riding the waves of globalisation.

Most participants believe that ESD should not just focus on school audiences, but also and perhaps foremost on situations where informal and non-formal education takes places, i.e., the workplace, recreation areas, people’s homes, etc., as well as in policy and decision making processes. Some even prefer to speak of *learning* rather than of *education*. Since in their eyes, education has strong connotations with in-school and formal learning whereas, the ‘broader’ concept of learning refers to learning taking place at all levels in all situations formal, informal and non-formal.

*“Sustainable development may be thought of best as an ethical principle, guiding human behaviour into paths which will combine the principles of*





*ecological integrity, economic realism and equity between people; it should foster respect for, and investment in, the needs of future generations of humankind, and by extension other members of present generations, for an environment in sound working order, at least as well resourced as the present one and if possible better.” John Smyth, UK.*

*“I am in favour of debating and exchanging ideas to further our understanding of EE and ESD but I am also against absolute answers. That is, these concepts are interrelated and will be used according to the countries’ social, cultural and economic contexts. The actual processes and results seen in the implementation of the educational projects is what really matters and not so much the absolute definitions. Therefore we should be flexible in understanding when they overlap, merge or relate or when they do mean two different approaches.” Fiorella Ceruti, Peru.*

*“The world in 2020 should be a world facing new challenges in the way natural resources are shared..... among which: environmental security, competition and conflicts in using natural resources... Furthermore I think ESD should consider using innovations in telecommunications.” Le Quy An, Vietnam.*

*“A sustainable world is worthless without being a good world to live in. Like a safe street thanks to cameras, security guards, clearance of all places to dwell is not a good street to live in or go through.” Susanne Lijmbach, The Netherlands.*

## **2.5 ESD as a force for change**

The reactions to the opening statements also show that the majority of the participants believe that ESD can provide an important contribution to sustainable development or, as some prefer, to sustainability. Most participants present rather utopian visions of the future when asked to finish the sentence “the world in 2020 should be a world that is...”. A few of them find creating imaginary or possible sustainable futures an essential element of ESD for it inspires creative thinking and a sense of hope. Some participants stress that it is preferable to describe possible directions that can change over time rather than to prescribe fixed targets to be achieved at all cost.

*“The world in 2020 should be a world that is free from hunger, war, oppression and environmentally damaging activities. The role which education should play is that of facilitating an understanding of ESD and its potential in change. I consider education, policy and community involvement as the main driving forces that will bring about such a world.”*  
Derek Colquhoun, Australia.

*“The world in 2020 should be a world that is on a straighter path towards sustainability -- with clearer commitments to elevating environmental and social concerns in national, regional and local development agendas, and a better set of tools and techniques for doing so. The main driving forces that*



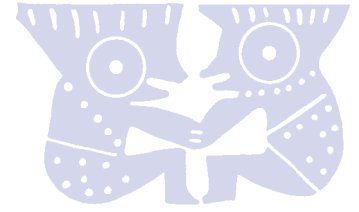
*will bring about such a world are public pressure and private sector interest to use the gains of economic development to reverse deteriorating trends in quality of life (greater environmental degradation, social insecurity). The role which education should play is that of teaching specific competence in environmental and social/civic issues, but in generally fostering a method of thinking and problem solving with wider parameters: long-term time frames, active learning, critical problem solving, dealing with complexity...*” Elaine Geyer-Allély, France.

*“The world in 2020 should be a world that is conscious of what it uses and what it leaves behind; a world where people have knowledge and values that include respect, solidarity and empathy for all living species; a world where individuals are educated with skills that reflect concerns for an equitable society, viable economics and sustainable environments. The main driving force that will bring about such a world is changing our ways of seeing the world and our roles in it. We should strive to be better human beings, rather than seeking happiness in possessing more. The development model which most countries have adopted, is unsustainable and only a small fraction of humanity is benefiting from it. Therefore, if we begin to consider ourselves as a small (but unique) parcel of the whole, we will find that our happiness can only be fulfilled if conditions of life for all are good.”* Suzana Padua, Brazil.

Furthermore, some participants point out that the major driver of a sustainable future is a change in socio-economic structures, which in their eyes breed inequity and over-consumption. Without such structural change, they seem to suggest the well organised and globally institutionalised drive to consume will be far greater than the newly emerging drive to sustain. Education is considered by most of the participants to be one of the driving forces to bring about such structural change and a more sustainable world. However, there are also some participants who seem to believe that we are a crisis driven species. In other words: it will take a major crisis or an avalanche of smaller crises to really force humanity to pull together and rally behind more sustainable socio-economic structures and the norms and values embedded in concepts of sustainability.

There is an overwhelming richness of ideas and visions among the participants, which invite further thought and reflection. We invite you to take a closer look at these ideas on the CD-ROM.





## Chapter 3

### Good practice of ESD

#### 3.1 Introduction

Many projects, activities and programs are examples of good practice of education for sustainable development. But what makes an example stand out? The purpose of the third chapter is to identify factors that are critical for successful ESD projects.

The participants provided a large number of factors to take into consideration when initiating an ESD project. Almost all participants agree with the statement that *"studying good practice, guidelines and tools, increases chances of success"*. So, examples of good practice are important!

At this point a few respondents criticised the structure of the debate as the focus on ESD in all questions biased the debate in favour of ESD. It was stated that when a participant disagrees with the concept of ESD, answering the questions becomes difficult. This issue is addressed in chapter 1 and chapter 6.

#### 3.2 Participants' responses to the statements

Figure 5 shows the results on the closed questions about good practice of ESD. Please note that the 'neutral' category has been left out to highlight

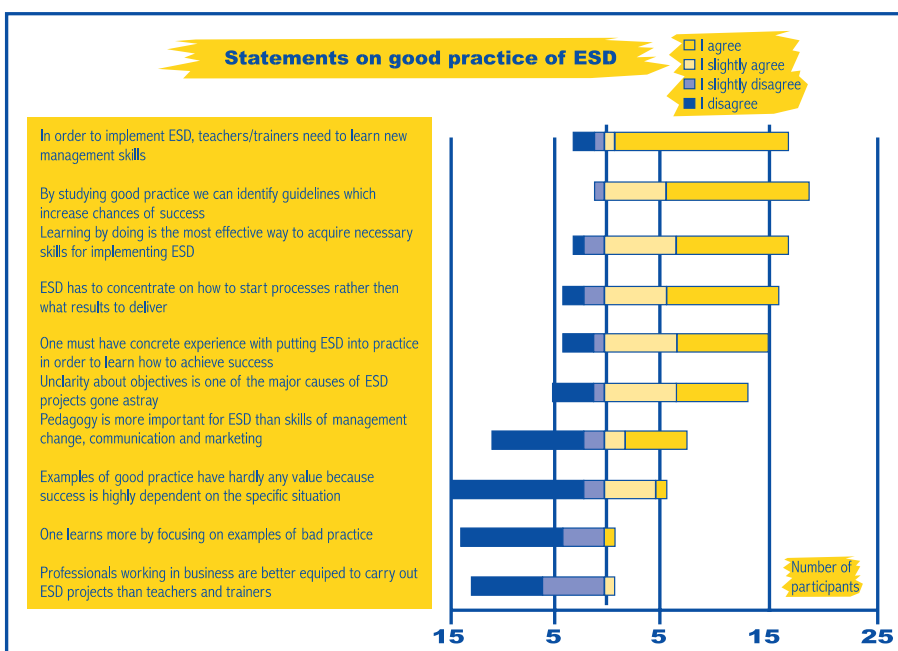
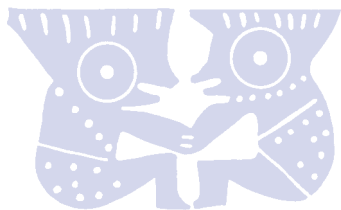


Figure 5: Result on closed questions about good practice of ESD



differences (this explains why the number of participants varies). The following paragraphs elaborate on the results.

### 3.3 Factors which make ESD projects successful

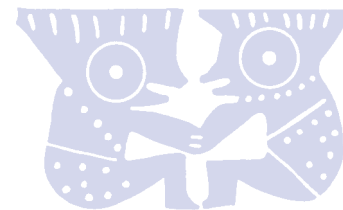
A few participants point out that the question about factors for success is very general. They state that the approach should be dependent on the situation. Furthermore, different strategies are needed depending on the scale of the project; a national project aiming to integrate ESD in several policies requires a different tactic than a project aiming to involve a community in finding sustainable solutions for waste disposal. Which factors are essential for success depends on what is considered to be the aim of ESD.

On analysing the answers, it became clear that the different viewpoints on ESD discussed in the second chapter, lead to different views on which results can be considered a success. For instance, a participant who believes that ESD should concentrate on formal educational settings, comes to a very different conclusion than a participant who believes ESD is needed to make all humans conscious of the need to change life style and social, economic and political structures.

Over all, many valuable contributions were made, providing a broad variety of factors which can enlarge chances of success. The moderators have taken keywords out of the contributions and put these in the following categories:

Factors for success in ESD projects		
Management	Learning	Communication
Good project management	The defining of a problem	Put up a challenge
Interdisciplinary team	Capacity building of participants	Involve communicators
Setting attainable outcomes	Working with real problems	Execute market research first
Definition of the project	Using facilitators rather than teachers	Participation and partnership
Decentralise management	Initial training change agents	Do we know what we talk about when we use the word ESD?
Indicators of success	Understanding sustainability	
	Understanding the community	
	Develop visions	
	Professional core tasks	
	Alternative ideas for ESD	

Figure 6: Factors for success in ESD projects



management, learning and communication (see figure 6). In the CD-ROM, when you click on a key word, you see the full contribution on that subject by a participant.

### Professional project management

Many participants mention factors that are an integral part of project management. Obviously, like any project, an ESD project needs to be organised and managed in a professional way in order to obtain results. But considering that ESD projects are often very complex in nature, because many actors and interests are mostly involved, professional project management becomes even more essential for achieving goals.

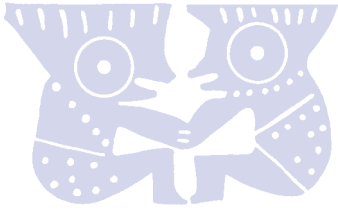
The target or the aim of the project should be clear, concrete and realistic. The majority of the participants agree with the statement that a lack of clarity of objectives is one of the major causes of ESD projects going astray.

A valid and thorough analysis of the problem to be solved is needed. The viability of the desired changes and achievements needs to be clear. Furthermore, results of the project should be monitored in order to adjust the targets, strategy and tactics during the project. The quotes illustrate how much the participants value professional project management.

*“Important success factors are: clear aims, clear ways, concrete target groups, clear results and practical uses and impacts, clear resources, time management etc (in other words: normal project management).”* Alena Reitschmiedová, Czech Republic.

*“I believe an ESD project can be successful when:*

- *communication managers are involved from the outset of the project design, so that the problem is clearly defined, the right questions are asked and the appropriate information is gathered to help design the learning process;*
- *educational functions are linked into other inputs in the project, i.e. it is not a separate education action. This implies that economic incentives, technological inputs and regulatory basis work together;*
- *the project focuses on internal communication (to see that all things happen when they should, and all players know their role) as well as external communication;*
- *there is constant review of the progress and depending on the results, the process is adjusted (internal learning);*
- *there are communication management experts associated with the project in appropriate proportion to other human resource inputs and with resources to operate;*
- *continuity is maintained so interest does not flag, and the stimulus to learning is adapted to the people involved;*
- *credible and inspiring examples are shared, recognising that people learn from others in the same position as themselves, so farmers teaching farmers is a more powerful tool than external extension officers...the idea of facilitating the process;*



- *marketing approaches are used, working to stimulate interest or engagement by addressing human concerns and benefits... rather than scientific arguments alone;*
- *people can connect to something that they can improve and change, in that way there is feedback, especially when this is done with community groups or networks.” Wendy Goldstein, Switzerland.*

*“Success in ESD projects is dependent on a set of conditions including:*

- *clear goals and indicators of success;*
- *projects which are practical and manageable;*
- *ownership by the participants of the project;*
- *a willingness on the part of the participants to evaluate their own attitudes, values and practices.” Kim Walker, Australia.*

### **Involving stakeholders and target groups**

Many participants stress the need to involve stakeholders and target groups. Political support is of vital importance for implementing ESD projects successfully. The complex nature of the problems to be solved makes support essential to bring about results. It is also important that the target groups who ‘own the problem’, are involved in defining the problem, agree with the analysis of the problem and contribute to finding and implementing solutions.

*“A recognition of the direct relevancy of the project to those involved is usually a factor in the success of any undertaking, and ESD projects are no exception. We must study the known regarding the role of education and societal change theory. A second factor beyond relevancy is the realisation of resource and policy alignment. A concerted effort that is deemed a priority by all levels from policy setters to learners is more likely to succeed. A third factor is the setting of attainable and measurable outcomes that are aspired by all involved.” Charles Hopkins, Canada.*

*“Multi- and interdisciplinary cooperation between teachers and courses is needed to create a coherence between various specialised courses in which sustainable development is a subject. Such cooperation concerns the various natural technological disciplines as well as the various social disciplines and philosophy and ethics.” Suzanne Lijmbach, The Netherlands.*

*“The following success factors are evidently important:*

- *involve stakeholders and key-partners from the beginning;*
- *define (by consensus!) "milestones" during the process so that the undertaking is not too ambitious;*
- *celebrate success with those involved;*
- *plan feedback-loops to re-orientate and for new goal setting: if you want to sail from A to B you have to know the "course" and destination but you also have to go "with the winds" and need constant navigation, need to know how to handle storm and lull.*

*There are many more success-factors but these seem to be crucial to me.”  
Monica Lieschke, Austria.*





*“The defining of ‘the problem’ by all stakeholders involved; stakeholders with opposite/conflicting opinions/interests. Doing so, all potential partners have their ‘say’ and participate in processes leading to solutions/decisions. If people think that it’s difficult to analyse a problem in its ecological, economical and socio-cultural components, let them try to analyse a problem that is well known to them, and let them analyse the different components of this known problem, for instance the social, ecological, cultural and economical aspects of Christmas.” Margreet Schaafsma, The Netherlands.*

### Managing the process

The majority of the participants agree with the statement that ESD has to concentrate on how to start processes rather than on what results to deliver. Reading the answers to the open questions sheds some light on the participants’ considerations.

In most projects many actors are involved and the contribution and involvement of these actors is needed to reach a satisfactory result. Therefore managing the process is essential for success. Defining the problem, developing a strategy to tackle the problem, and selecting concrete activities are a result of ‘negotiations’ of groups with different cultures, interests and viewpoints. It is clear that a high level of process management skills is needed to accomplish this task with success!

*“Clarity about the profound institutional changes that are required and the reorientation of living standards, especially in the industrialised countries. A clear understanding of the importance of community and of local autonomy to be able to implement productive projects are essential correlates of any program in ESD.” David Barkin, Mexico.*

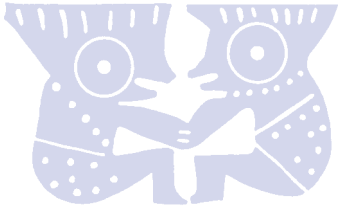
*“Things to do:*

- *execute market research (a lot of ESD projects still start with the ‘message to deliver’ without taking the target group into account, when you know what ‘the market’ wants, changes of success improve;*
- *involve your target group in the project formulation phase (a project has to be participatory in order to be successful, this knowledge is widely acknowledged in other fields, but many ESD projects are still ‘top down’);*
- *be positive (make sure your target group gets positive energy out of the project: the willingness to change will increase greatly).”*  
Madeleine Vreeburg, The Netherlands.

### 3.4 Factors which make ESD projects fail

A substantial number of participants state, that just as ‘applying’ success factors leads to better results, neglecting these factors can lead to failure. So, in many cases failure factors are the opposites of success factors: unclear objectives, lack of project management, lack of involvement of stakeholders and target groups, etc. Furthermore, some participants point out that it is





difficult to communicate clearly about such ill-defined concepts as ESD. This makes it hard to build bridges to target groups and stakeholders, and hinders developing a shared view on the necessary changes. A few participants stressed that it is impossible to find solutions appreciated by all actors involved. Sustainable development requires sacrifices according to these respondents. Figure 7 shows key words taken from participants' input.

Factors which make ESD projects fail		
Management	Learning	Communication
Too ambitious in goal setting	Natural science textbook approach	Lack of sense of necessity
Hostile management / lack of political back up	Making sustainability theoretical	Failing to link to interests
Willingness to compromise with certain groups	Not problem focussed	Top down approach
No clear aims	The idea you should know the solution	Missing of relevant stakeholders
Failure to look what is driving the project the wrong way	The EE guild	SD just for its societal importance
	Lack of understanding of the educational process	Gap between people and project
		Doom scenarios

Figure 7: Factors which make ESD projects fail

*“Initiators of ESD projects should not compromise with groups who are only willing to support marginal changes. It is a failure factor to compromise with groups that are seeking to make marginal changes rather than engage in profound reorganisation of social and productive activities. Unless we are clear that ESD and sustainable development itself involve profound changes and even substantial sacrifices for many of the privileged in the north and south alike, there is little hope to make ESD a force for real change.”* David Barkin, Mexico.

*“ESD projects fail when:*

- they are owned by an outsider and not by the participants;
- they are imposed;
- they are too ambitious;
- they do not take the existing constraints into account;
- they are not problem focused.” Kim Walker, Australia.

*“According to me, the following aspects can contribute to failure:*

- no clear vision of where we want to be in 25-30 years;
- zooming in only on the negative aspects of the issues;
- initiating a process with tactics and no clear strategy;



- *preaching only to the converted;*
- *rigidity and utilisation of linear models.”* Jean Perras, Canada.

### 3.5 Most needed in the field of ESD

Participants made a broad variety of suggestions for what is needed on the level of individual projects and at the national level. The figure below shows keywords taken from participants’ responses.

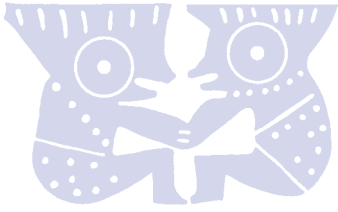
Most needed in ESD projects		
Management	Learning	Communication
Initiators driven by idea of change	High degree of consciousness by practitioners	Break down your walls, look outside for partners
Put concept in curricula	A better theory on how to implement ESD	Respect for your partners concerns
Project management that sustains innovation	Improve the pedagogic imaginary	Communication management
Sincere involvement of Ministries of Education	Developing competence	Sharing of knowledge
Clarity of purpose	Training in key competencies	Consensus of partners
Investment in time for reflection	Deeper understanding of sustainable development	
More energy and direction in projects		
Realistic planning		

Figure 8: Most needed factors in ESD projects

#### Capacity building essential for success

Considering the demanding nature of ESD projects, several skills are required. One needs to be skilled in pedagogy and skills like project management as well. The majority of the participants agree with the statement that *‘in order to implement ESD successfully, teachers and trainers need to learn new management and communication skills’*. The answers to the open questions illustrate why this is so important. The most important reason being that most ESD projects require the involvement of several target groups with different interests.

It is interesting that a majority of the participants agree to the statement: *‘pedagogy is more important for ESD than skills of management change, communication and marketing’*. Most participants disagree with the statement



that ‘professionals working in business (i.e., consultancy) are better equipped to carry out ESD projects than teachers and trainers.’ From these findings one could conclude that according to some participants much needs to change in order to achieve successes, but not the core team of teachers and trainers.

“What is an ESD project? Which factors make an ESD project successful depends on what kind of project one is engaged in. This might be anything from a family outing in a regional park, an exercise within community planning of local facilities, to a national strategy for teacher education or the training of protected area personnel. Obviously success in any ESD project depends on the educator understanding, for the particular set of circumstances and issues involved, notably:

- What is the present condition in terms of physical/ecological, social and economic determinates?
- What are the desirable outcomes of the project that will qualify it for the description ‘sustainable’ and how in the light of these success will be defined?
- What are the starting points of those with whom the project is being developed, and by extension, how likely are these points to change as a consequence of exposure to the project?
- What are the main obstacles in attaining the desired outcomes and how might they be overcome?
- By what means are, in these various circumstances, the desired outcomes to be achieved?

“The one thing, which might distinguish this rather self-evident set of statements, but be also common to all ESD projects if such can be defined, is the need to adopt a systemic approach to whatever situation is the focus for the project. ESD by definition requires the educator to develop an approach, which can identify and bring into play the ecological, social and economic factors which bear on the issue in question, identify their interdependence and interactions, and move to the position of balance which indicates sustainability. For most educators this presents serious challenges. This is due to:

- their own lack of training in the techniques for doing so;
- an almost inevitable bias, whether professional or not, towards one or another aspect of the issues in question; and
- corresponding difficulties for those being addressed in managing the idea of complex systems and compensating for personal bias.

“Taking all these things into account, success depends on the knowledge, understanding, values and commitment of the educator and as accurate as possible, an assessment of how these relate to the corresponding qualities of the target learners. The definition of the project is therefore also a critical factor: it should be within the realistic range of the educator and the learners, let alone the various parameters of the situation. As a general rule it is usually better to proceed by small steps with obviously achievable outcomes than by more ambitious, less definable stages. Reward is important. A series of small successes is more progressive than a glorious failure. But if the question were to be answered with reference to a project on



*a different scale the reply would be correspondingly different - the success factors in devising a national strategy for example, published elsewhere.”*  
John Smyth, UK.

*“Regarding the do’s and don’ts, what is most needed to reach a higher level of success in the field of ESD is to make it an official concept and put it in curricula.”* Alena Reitschmiedová, Czech Republic.

*“We need a better theory of how to implement ESD. This theory must take current practices into account and must provide realistic strategies for change. I believe the field is under-researched and under-theorised.”* Kim Walker, Australia.

*“It is not possible for me to think about efforts to lift environmental education to a higher level without a pedagogic imaginary. We can have the possibility to re-activate the educational practice, by looking at alternatives that des-sediment the discourse of environmental education of the current fixed meanings: of the omni comprehensive meta narratives about Nature, from the appealing representations to an impossible idyllic relation between society and environment... We have made efforts to develop a pedagogy of environmental politics capable to open up new social participation flows based upon the understanding and by assuming the rights and obligations of each one....”* Edgar González-Gaudio, Mexico.

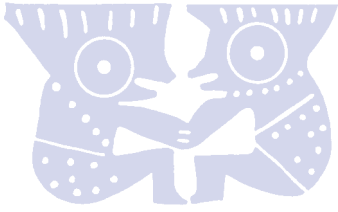
*“The players or change agents must have at least some change of awareness in their own thinking if they are to implement ESD. So some training or initial induction is necessary.... What we need first is more energy and direction in projects, coupled with some humility and readiness to learn - we are all learners in the changes we are interested in. And that includes ‘experts!’”* Stephen Sterling, UK.

*“...Using people’s competence to thinking and learning about an ill-defined subject like sustainability, should be a driving force. It can start a learning process that could even get sensual and exciting and can result in more attentive people, a stronger social orientation, working together, learning from each other... The initiators of projects should be fundamentally driven by the idea of ‘change’ and trust in the capacity of individuals and groups to think, analyse, create and gain new insights. This type of ‘change-agent’ operates in all sectors of society, however at the moment such change agents are scarce. Their current primary objectives are mostly not to contribute to sustainability. According to me, the search for successful change-agents who are willing to work on ESD projects should be initiated.”* Douwe Jan Joustra, Netherlands.

*“... training and capacity building of project participants in ESD content AND in pedagogical processes can highly contribute to success...”*  
Daniella Tilbury, UK.

## **Practical experience**

Learning by doing is an effective way to acquire the necessary skills for implementing ESD according to most participants. One must have concrete



experience with putting ESD into practice in order to learn how to achieve success.

*“Projects that help people to acquire more insight into other questions they are dealing with, or more skills for their jobs. It means that the issue of sustainability must be handled in terms of professionals’ core tasks, not as a new and additional, or even opposing approach. This characteristic is well expressed in the name and the ambition of The Natural Step (i.e. do what is natural in your situation). Thing to do: look for your client’s main professional questions.”* Maarten Pieters, The Netherlands.

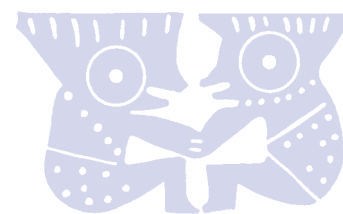
The case Finn Mogensen, Denmark, describes (see below or the CD-ROM) also underlines the importance of action oriented learning.

### 3.6 Inspiring examples

Ten inspiring examples were described by the participants - some on the international level, some on the national level, and others on the local level. Some are done with or in schools. Some are community undertakings. The examples also show the various concepts people use when referring to ESD. So further clarification of the concept seems necessary. The figure below lists examples of good practices provided by participants. For full information about the practical examples we refer you to the CD-ROM.

*“The Masterclass SD in The Hague, organised in the framework of Local Agenda 21, was a successful initiative. During a series of six round-table debates a group of inhabitants of The Hague discussed possible sustainable solutions for the city. Several ‘masters’ were invited to stimulate the discussion (masters on local economics in relation to sustainability and on sustainable building and living). The participants were invited to raise questions, ideas and themes for discussion. The moderators were keen on bringing information, providing room to discuss and work towards a concrete result - the sketchbook for sustainable The Hague: including ideas, visions and policy statements of all the participants. I find this a good example because it was the first well organised activity based on principles of social learning and the need to use peoples own ideas to enhance the visions on sustainable development. A good element was the participation of a local artist, who made sketches of the ideas, visions and discussions... This was an inspiring learning process!”* Douwe Jan Joustra, Netherlands.

*“Which factors make ESD projects successful?’ It depends on how you define a “successful” educational process! I do not believe that the criteria are related to whether or not the students/pupils have made the “world” a little bit more sustainable. This approach tends to have an overall aim of improving and saving the world here and now through behaviour modification of the students. For me, that is no valid approach. But if we take the opinion of the pupils as the reference point (which must be essential due to the fact that it is the students/pupils who are in focus when speaking of education!), the national research and developmental programme (MUVIN) perhaps gives some answers to the question above. In this programme,*



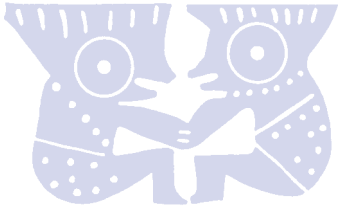
Examples of good practice of ESD			
Example	Setting	Results	Learning
Master Class	LA 21 The Hague, Netherlands	Sketch book	Social learning
Traffic Plan	Local School and its quarter, Netherlands	Plan to reduce mobility around the school	School environment as learning site
Landcare	Rural areas Australia	Reverse soil degradation	Sharing knowledge
Change the Worlds Raimundo	Local level, Brazil	Curriculum development, environmental improvement	Active engagement of people, encouragement of critical thinking
Education For All Program	International organisations, national level	Improvement of basic education	Extending literacy
Education 21 Forum	National level Scotland	Clarification of concepts	Consensus building
Curriculum Management Award Scheme	Schools UK	Change of curricula towards ESD	Deep change in the culture of a school
WHAM	Waste minimisation project in local community Scotland	Conversion of waste into local economic benefit	Community learning
Distance Learning Course	National Level, Hungary	Course on ESD for teachers	Interdisciplinary approach by different faculties of universities
Rosino Herb Program	National Park, Bulgaria	Improvement of local employment, conservation of biodiversity	Local school as catalyst for community development

Figure 9: Examples of good practice of ESD

carried out by the Royal Danish School of Education Studies, we found that the following aspects - on which I shall comment - were of great importance to the students. After Søren Breiting, Denmark:

- 'To work interdisciplinary with real problems which at the same time are taken seriously by adults.' By taking a real authentic environmental problem as example and involving enthusiastic adults with different opinions on the problem, we found that the pupils did engage much in the teaching. The pupils found it especially exiting to visit and experience different places, environments and provoking adults outside the school. Pupils considered working with questionnaires "in the field" to be exciting and interesting because they thereby realised that the teaching was connected to real life where the informants were people in "flesh and blood" who cared to talk to them expressing their actual attitude.
- 'To work in groups with freedom to organise the work and get ideas to different kinds of investigations.' The special emphasis in MUVIN



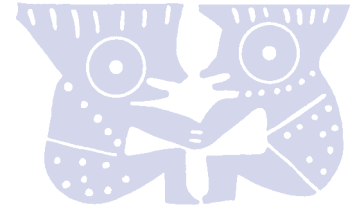


*on conflicting interests in the use of the natural resources and the pupil's taking part in the decision making process challenged them to try out other kinds of activities than they were used to. Contrary to former environmental education where activities often only relate to natural sciences, the MUVIN projects showed a much more extensive variation: also humanistic and social sciences were taken into use to a great extend. Especially social study methodologies like the use of questionnaires and interviews were carried out in several MUVIN projects with great success.*

- *'To get influence on the objectives, content, organising and concrete way of teaching.' If education is aimed at supporting the future generation to become action competent citizens in a democratic society, than teachers should share the responsibility for the teaching process with the pupils, not make all the decisions and not give all the answers to the questions – presupposing the teacher has got these answers! Of course, sometimes the teacher has to force a decision - but nevertheless s/he has an obligation to involve the pupil in the decision-making process in order to train them for this difficult task. If not, the goal of qualifying the coming generation for a democratic society has a rather hollow sound.*
- *'To try to do something to change or counteract the problem they are working with.' Experiencing the action dimension contributes highly to the learning process, for instance presenting their solutions in a meeting. However, it is important that these actions are framed within an educational philosophy or pedagogical context. What is considered to be a successful (pedagogical) action, must not be evaluated in terms of how well the pupils collect the litter on the beach or to what extend they buy ecological milk. Actions must first and foremost be seen in relation to their educational value and less in relation to the objective effects. It is of minor importance whether the children solve the problem completely, or whether they only try to solve parts of it. What is highly significant is that through their actions the children learn which mechanisms, phenomena and barriers are related to solving an environmental problem. Furthermore, it cannot be the task of school children, nor their responsibility, to repair the damages on society and natural resources caused by adults.'* Finn Mogensen, Denmark.

*"The Finns would claim that their community based action competence project is successful. It is successful because it focuses on real community problems, involves the community, the university and the education authority, is well theorised, is evaluated constantly and is well resourced."*

*Kim Walker, Australia.*



## Chapter 4

### Implications

#### 4.1 Participants' responses to statements

If ESD is to be a powerful tool to help the world to become a better place, what are the implications? The fourth chapter focuses on what target groups should learn and unlearn to bring ESD into practice. The figure below shows the answers to the statements. Please note that the 'neutral' category has been left out to highlight differences (this explains why the number of participants varies).

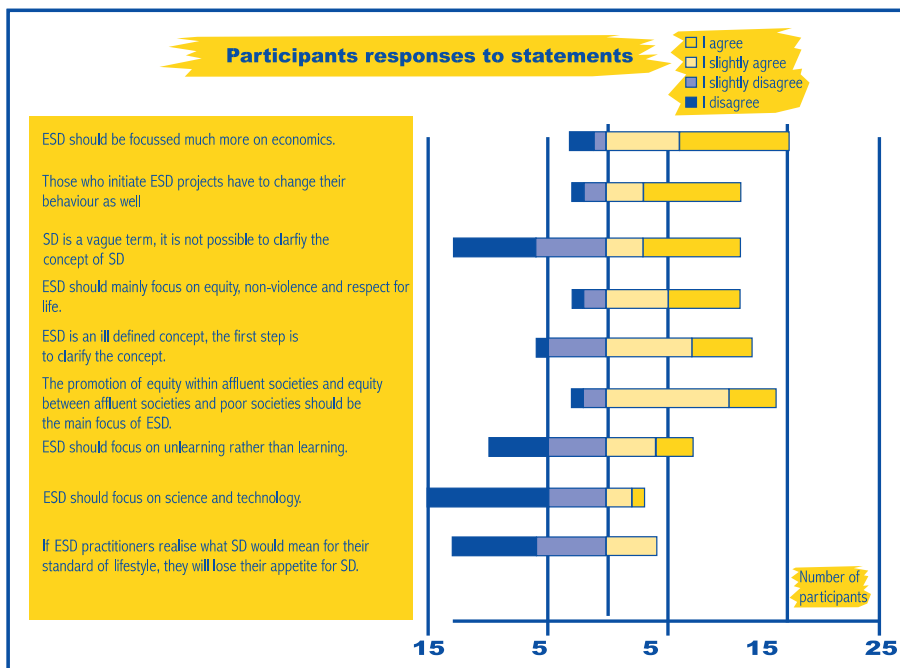
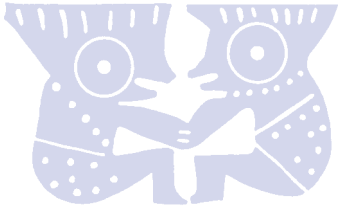


Figure 10: Responses to the closed statements about implications

It is clear that many participants find ESD to be an ill-defined concept. Much attention should be given to clarify the concept of ESD, according to some respondents. However, some participants doubt that clarifying such a vague and broad term such as sustainable development is actually possible. Several experts believe that it is a waste of energy to try to find a clear and concrete definition for ESD. This energy can be used more effectively, for instance for setting up projects and learning by doing. It must be stressed that some participants do not agree with the concept of ESD (see also chapter 1, chapter 6 and CD-ROM).

The responses to the statements further indicate that according to many participants, ESD should mainly focus on (the promotion of) equity and on





human values like non-violence and respect for life. Furthermore, ESD should be much more focused on economics than it tends to be today. Science and technology are not the most important focal points for ESD according to the majority.

Most participants agree that ESD can only be successful if those who are initiating ESD projects and processes are also changing their behaviour and practices. It seems that many participants do not believe that this ‘task’ is unrealistic. The majority disagrees with the statement that *‘if ESD practitioners would realise what sustainability really would mean for their standard of living and lifestyle, they would lose their appetite for sustainability.’*

## 4.2 What should target groups learn and unlearn?

### The context of ESD

ESD takes place not in isolation but in the context of society and as such it has implications for this context and vice versa. In their reflections about what target groups should learn and unlearn to bring ESD into practice, most participants focused on the implications for educators (10 participants) and governments (5 participants). A few reflected on universities, business, politics and NGOs. In the following paragraphs the highlights are described.

### Business, politics and NGOs

Decision makers in business should learn more about sustainability and review their proceedings according to Ricardo Carvalho, Brazil. Monica Lieschke, Austria, states that NGOs should become less pretentious and should change into learning organisations. Norbert Reichel, Germany, believes that politics should learn that sustainability is necessary in all political action fields. What has to be unlearned is that quick solutions are needed, risks should be avoided and that politicians need to be popular.

*“Decision makers in business should learn more about sustainable production and consumption and should believe and invest more in ESD. What decision makers should unlearn, is to defend their status in an egoistic way and fight for better conditions of life for all human and non human species. Also, they should unlearn to assume that the development model adopted by developed countries is appropriate for the entire world. If more questions are raised, perhaps it will become easier to dare make changes that benefit all. The first thing they should do is to review their own proceedings (few are doing it), in order to reach Sustainable Development.”*  
Ricardo Carvalho, Brazil.

*“...NGOs should unlearn to cultivate the role and image of being “the navel of the world” and at the same time being ‘needy’. The first thing they should do is to find their individual answers as ‘learning organisations’ (which is their only possible future anyway).”*  
Monica Lieschke, Austria.



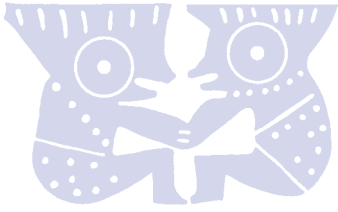
*“Rather than attempting to replace environmental education with education for sustainable development, education for sustainability, or some other new slogan, I suggest that we talk more about philosophy, politics, ethics, justice etc.--in the environmental context. Not with a view to finding and inculcating answers, but with a view to fostering inquiry within these realms. Once again, I’m not sure exactly where to place my comment or how to target them. So these remarks probably cut across the target groups and question categories. And I’m certainly not working from the assumption that ESD is a given.*

*“In reading round 2 comments I have come away with the feeling that it would be worthwhile to focus on what might constitute "good education." In one of the earlier rounds someone, and I think it was Suzana Padua, said something like the aim of the adjective driven forms should be to improve education to the point that they, themselves aren’t necessary. Good education--whatever that is--would be enough.*

*“So what is missing in many, if not most, education systems that leads various educators to promote environmental education, global education, peace education, development education and so on? Are there any common themes or educational problems that these educators share? I noticed that a number of people in this discussion have spoken about importance of values and the various social disciplines, philosophy, and ethics. I agree. Perhaps the ethical and political dimensions of environmental thinking and the implications of these broad categories as they spread across other disciplines informing and being informed, are some of the under-represented modes of understanding and inquiry. If this is the case let’s talk plainly about this and not try to subsume these important categories under such an unsatisfactory term such as ‘sustainable development’. Rather than attempting to replace environmental education with education for sustainable development, education for sustainability, or some other new slogan I suggest that we talk more about philosophy, politics, ethics, justice etc.--in the environmental context. Not with a view to finding and inculcating answers, but with a view to fostering inquiry within these realms.*

*“Next, I was struck by a number of comments that spoke about delivering a message, clarity of goals, and measurable outcomes. But is this talk educational? I know that the tyranny of outcomes based education and the positivist predilection for measurement, is a global phenomenon, but that doesn’t make them desirable. If we think that education is about enabling change, social critique, teaching to transgress, agitating the comfortable, or transcending the present and the particular, then we are limiting the possibilities when we define our goals and outcomes within the scope of present possibilities. Noel Gough and I were recently lamenting over "outcomes-based education," and we agreed that it was, in many ways, comprised of mutually exclusive terms.*

*“So, I guess we could think about, consider, or ponder (learn is a bit objectifying) the nature of education more--as opposed to other important, but different activities (and yes boundaries are not always distinct). And we could ever-more rigorously critique our objectivist and positivist predilections.” Bob Jickling, Canada.*



## Universities

Universities should learn that sustainability is part of their core business and start to take action so that it is part of their mission and accompanied by an implementation strategy. Students should be provided with the broad concept of sustainable development and the different meanings and views on key concepts. Students should relate their scientific study and future profession to social issues, which constitute the justification of their study and profession.

*“Universities should stop talking about sustainability and start to act. Many universities are taking sustainability seriously, however, they remain dependent on a core of committed people. When the people leave so does the commitment. Sustainability needs to be part of the core business of universities, enshrined in mission statements and accompanied by an implementation strategy. Kim Walker, Australia.*

## Governments

Most reflections on the role of government suggested not to focus only on legislation and economic instruments. They would prefer a more social approach and an increased use of social instruments, among which are ESD and social learning. They further would like governments to interact much better internally and to coordinate more effectively between ministries.

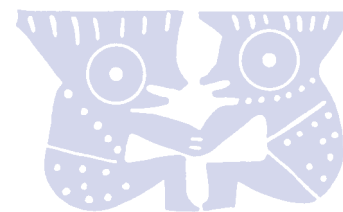
*“According to me governments should learn:*

- *better coordination between branches;*
- *better ability to look in the long term future and to plan strategically;*
- *better political will to study the interests of the different stakeholders;*
- *better ability to use the achievements of the managers and the science;*
- *decentralise and give more initiative in the hands of everyone;*
- *work better with experts.*

*“And they should unlearn to:*

- *make decisions only for today and tomorrow;*
- *listen only to one interested group;*
- *take care for the ideology;*
- *the first thing they should do is to make an assessment and analyse the national or regional interests from the point of view of the global humanity.” Kamelia Georgieva, Bulgaria.*

*“Each ministry should learn to cooperate with other ministries by checking each others policies on socio-cultural, economical and ecological implications for sustainable development. Every ministry should unlearn the idea that they themselves know best! Raise the number of interdepartmental commissions with concrete tasks and give serious follow-up to their suggestions and advice. Appoint civil servants not only skilled in the core-business of the Ministry but also people skilled in related (or ‘opposite’) fields.” Margreet Schaafsma, The Netherlands.*



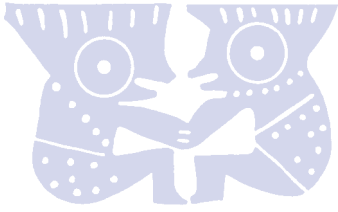
*“The first thing governments should learn is that the State is one of the main driving forces behind environmental degradation. Structural and institutional factors are due to these forces and therefore institutional changes within the organisation of the State and its government must be changed. Government officials should stop believing that the direction of environmental improvements should be (or could be) defined by policy makers within the government or the administration. Environmental issues structurally get a low weight on political agendas, even often cannot be found on political agendas. The main agenda setting of environmental issues comes from society, so the authorities should unlearn their ‘planners fallacy’. They should initiate institutional changes directed at open decision making processes in which all stakeholders, particularly the ones that have a natural interest in keeping up environmental values, can have substantial influence. ESD may support the input of such stakeholders: it might offer them facilities, help in developing their competence etc.” Maarten Wolsink, The Netherlands.*

*“Many decision makers tend to lose contact with the world where things really happen. Values that back up the maintenance of the ‘status quo’ seem to prevail, so changes are not easily achieved. There seems to be a tendency to accept the term SD without a deeper reflection on what are the implications for nature or for the less privileged societies. What decision makers should learn is a new ethic that includes respect, solidarity and reverence for diversity. ... It is important to start from where people are rather than waste time convincing them that they are wrong. In the case of universities, they should revisit their core values. Universities should be about equity, social justice and the pursuit of new knowledge. It is essential that universities take a leading role in ESD. The first thing decision makers should do is to think of the planet as a home, where all forms of life deserve adequate conditions to live. The thinking then needs to influence the behaviour. This in itself would bring a new significance to the very debated term ESD.” Suzana Padua, Brazil.*

## **Educators**

Educators should discuss across disciplines to identify convergence and divergence. They should reflect about how education should prepare people for using their rights and responsibilities in society, education should empower people rather than teach them. Many participants reflected first of all on the role of educators not as the source of knowledge and moral admonition, but as a guide and process facilitator and a learner at the same time. Some participants would like educators to have more knowledge of principles of sustainable development and other content of ‘deeper ecology’.

*“Educators should learn that the empowerment of individuals to participate effectively in the process of social change is the key purpose and that the participation relates to direct interventions that will impact on the direction, progress and dynamics of social, economic and environmental development. These interventions will include decisions and actions: as consumers; within their occupations; as employees/employers; as voters (or in other forums of social decision making; within their homes and communities).” Peter Martin, UK.*



*“Educators should learn:*

- *critical reflection;*
- *collaborative work;*
- *communication skills;*
- *linking philosophy to practice;*
- *conflict management;*
- *linking global to local.”* Eva Csobod, Hungary

*“Educators should learn that:*

- *single subject education (e.g., chemistry, maths, geography etc. the tactical level of education) must change. ESD is about changing the paradigm and looking at the impact of ones science on individuals and their communities, the environment and the economy locally and globally;*
- *environment, economy and society well-being are interdependent;*
- *schools must open up to their community and become active in finding solutions to create a sustainable future.*

*They should unlearn that:*

- *the present education paradigm, single subject approach, must be transformed into a multi/inter/trans-disciplinary approach to education;*
- *the first thing they should do is to organise intensive discussions across disciplines to identify points of convergence and divergence;*
- *create a school vision .. for example: a sustainable future for the immediate/global community in 2030;*
- *identify knowledge, skills and attitudes that might be conducive to the creation of a sustainable future.”* Jean Perras, Canada.

*“Educators should learn.... that wind is necessary for sailing. But one can also sail against the wind (use existing developments and tendencies to forward a cause).”* Peter Posch, Austria.

*“Furthermore the role of the educator is dramatically changing: from knowledge and skills transmitter towards guide or even mediator in interaction with dialogue as the primary characteristic. Learning about/for and educating about/for sustainability (as an example of ill-defined concept) allows the learner to cope better with the uncertain future in that the former is a form of ‘anticipating learning’. Educators should unlearn myths (e.g., that young children would not be able or interested in learning about global issues; practice in the Netherlands proves the opposite). Also the extreme belief in the power of ‘facts’, knowledge should be reconsidered.”*  
Chris Maas Geesteranus, Netherlands.

*“Educators should learn some (critical) economics, some history, some Marx. Furthermore, they should learn more about the way of life and feelings of ordinary people and about deeper (not: deep!) ecology, about*

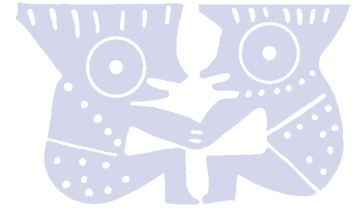


*entropy and over and under development. They should unlearn the superficial, mentalistic approach...*” Willem Hoogendijk, The Netherlands.

*“As to their students, educators should learn to find learning opportunities for them outside their immediate sphere of influence. ‘Things that matter’ are more important and more fruitful to learn about than clean and modelled problems. Educators should therefore try to find the drives of their students.”* Maarten Pieters, The Netherlands.







## Chapter 5

# Ideas for work programs for ESD on local, national and international level

### 5.1 Introduction

#### Position of the fifth chapter

In the second chapter we shared views on the concept of Education for Sustainable Development. In the third chapter we focused on good practice. The fourth chapter examined the context of Education for Sustainable Development and the consequences for educators, schools, universities, business, politics and government. This chapter focuses on ideas of how a good work program might look for Education for Sustainable Development.

#### ESD Programs

Education for Sustainable Development is for many international organisations, governments and local authorities one of the areas in which they think it is important to make investments as a contribution to their policies for sustainable development. Several countries have developed policies and work programs for ESD. So has the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development, CSD. UNESCO is the task manager of this work program. At the local level many authorities engage in education for sustainable development activities and are developing their own programs often in the framework of their Local Agenda 21.

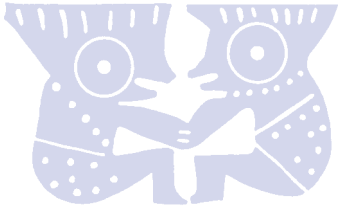
#### Participants as ESD Program Advisors

ESD programs are not always made with sufficient involvement of education experts. No wonder that these experts sometimes are critical about the programs for ESD by international organisations, governments and local authorities. We asked participants to imagine being in the position of the main advisor to plan the outlines for such a program. What would that advice be for local programs, national programs and international programs?

### 5.2 General conclusion: most attention given to underlying principles

The majority of the participants reflected on the underlying principles and philosophy particularly for local programs. Some go further and provide specific steps, stepping-stones or phases such programs should honour. In many cases it is stated that the principles and processes, which apply to local programs, apply to national and international programs as well. In this light it is not surprising that only a minority of the participants elaborate on the national and international





programs. It is believed that national and international programs should at least support local programs by influencing policies and decision makers and in various aspects of knowledge management. Many participants seem to acknowledge that local communities are the ‘real potential for change’.

*“If sustainable development/creating a sustainable future is to be implemented, and there is a sense of urgency, it will happen at the local level, not at the national and international level. These levels must support local initiatives - thus national and international programs should be defined after you define what you would like to do at the local level. Otherwise, it will never happen!”* Jean Perras, Canada.

A few participants point out that several documents are available describing how to set up an effective program and which indicators can be used to measure the effectiveness of programs (UNDP, WHO, Agenda 21).

### **5.3 Philosophy: empowerment and education *about or as* sustainability**

Analysing the contributions, it is interesting to note that many of the participants can be positioned on the right upper side of the figure 4 in chapter 2.

Many participants emphasise the importance of taking people’s own ideas, values, images of the future and abilities to shape their own lives and futures seriously. Empowerment of learners, and creating a community of learners is often stressed.

*“The underlying philosophy would be to equip learners with the skills and materials to investigate environmental issues and work towards solving them in partnership with others.”* Jim Taylor, South Africa.

*“The basic philosophy of a local program on learning in relation to sustainability would be that we have to meet competent civilians and invite them to reflect on their role in sustainable development, local, regional and even global. People should be invited to:*

- *think about the information they need and want;*
- *reflect on their actual behaviour and its effects;*
- *analyse the possibilities on the individual, societal and governmental level;*
- *communicate with others in order to achieve a dialogue on the theme of ‘change’ and its effects.*

*“This makes the choice of issues difficult: it would not be right for the moderator on the local level to make too many choices without a basic idea of the interests, needs and abilities of the involved group of people. So it is almost an obligation to make contact with a group of people who might be interested in joining a learning process concerning sustainability.”*

Douwe Jan Joustra, Netherlands.



*“Education needs intrinsic changes. We can no longer accept education as a means to transfer information, especially when one subject is rarely linked to others. A holistic approach could help us view the world as if we are part of it. As such, we are responsible for its well being and need to engage in processes that transform our realities for the better. That is how I understand that an ‘empowering’ education model could enhance individual and collective participation with responsible actions and behaviour. Instead of only valuing the rational potentials of human beings, we need to stimulate our sensitive and creative realms that can raise our self-esteem and ultimately encourage participation. These ‘empowering’ processes may demand a longer period of time than the traditional transferring of information. However, I see it as a very powerful means to change the world into a much better place for all species including humans.” Stella Jafri, Pakistan.*

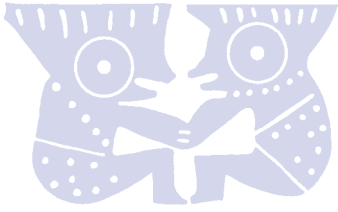
Stephen Sterling, UK, captures the ideas of many in his contribution about instructive and constructive approaches and the shift he endorses from education *about* sustainability, to education *for* sustainability, to education *as* sustainability. According to Sterling, the ESD community itself has been engaged in a process of learning, and has felt the need to shift from a behavioural model to an empowerment model.

A critical distinction is made between more ‘positivist’ (instructive) and more ‘constructivist’ approaches and strategies. This is an important distinction, as governments and sometimes conservation NGOs often favour the positivist approach, which is content and behaviour change oriented. It is based on a ‘deficiency model’ that is, it recognises that people or communities need some knowledge or skills or values that they are perceived to be currently deficient in, and seeks to ‘educate’ them accordingly.

The constructive model by contrast values what people and communities already know, can do and value as well as their capacity for knowing what they need. So these programmes seek to increase capacity, realise potential and develop from within. These programmes are primarily ‘bottom up’ (demand driven) whereas instructional programmes are primarily ‘top-down’ (supply driven or imposed).

Positivist	Constructivist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Top down</li> <li>● Content oriented</li> <li>● Instrumental values</li> <li>● Based on deficiency model: people or communities need knowledge/ skills/ values</li> <li>● Teaching</li> <li>● Control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bottom up</li> <li>● Process oriented</li> <li>● Intrinsic values</li> <li>● Values what people and Communities know, do, value and need</li> <li>● Learning</li> <li>● Empowerment</li> </ul>

**Figure 11: The distinction between positivist and constructivist approaches to education**



The bottom up approach is more process based, the top down approach more content based. The former stresses intrinsic values, the latter instrumental values. The constructivist approach considers local differences carefully, the positivist believes in universals. Figure 11 illustrates the distinction between the two approaches.

The majority of the participants seem to think along comparable lines. The people whose ‘environment’, lifestyle and behaviour is concerned should be the starting point of E(E)(SD) programs. Their interests, values, knowledge and economic and social relationships form the ‘environment’ where activities are developed. Activities must be based on these interests and values in order to be effective. It seems that the idea of ‘shaping the world’ from a hierarchical point of view has been abolished by most participants. Some point out that a sense of place, the development of a strong (emotional) bond with ones local environment, in conjunction with the realisation that we are part of a larger system, is crucial (Suzan Padua, Brazil).

*“My proposal is based on the social mechanism of interaction between the sectors and social groups in a relatively small community and in a later stage, the transfer of social experience to neighbouring communities. The problem situation is to be described by economic difficulties in the region caused by the transition from a centralised planned economy to a market economy. The rate of unemployment is relatively high because of closed down industrial enterprises, which used old technologies polluting the environment. The level of migration of young people is high as well. The communities are located in a region with significant biodiversity. The problem is that the use of the natural resources is almost the only way for the local communities to survive. More concretely, the problem is that the local people use the natural resources in an unsustainable way. This could lead to a degrading of the biodiversity in the region, which in turn will lead to significant decrease of the quantity and quality of the natural resources. The long term objective of the program would be to create conditions and incentives for the local community to develop their local sustainable economy based on the closeness to a National Park. The immediate objectives of the program are to educate the most important groups in the community in sustainable natural resources management and use. The process of education itself will facilitate the creation of new type of relationship between the members of the community. It will stimulate the social justice in the community. The relationship between the local community and the National Park will be maintained in support of the park management and biodiversity conservation. The expected results are: improved management of the National Park; decreased level of unemployment in the community; increased understanding of the concept of the sustainable development among the population and the government of the community; increased average income per capita...”*

Kamelia Georgieva, Bulgaria.

Furthermore, some participants point out that a holistic approach is required. To achieve sustainability not only environmental issues are relevant, but also social and economic issues.



*“The underlying philosophy would be based on the well being of the community as well as the environment. The goal would be the presence of a well-informed and action oriented citizenry capable of taking informed decisions, individually as well as jointly. Economics, environment, governance and equity issues would have to be explored in conjunction with each other. The principals of the local Agenda 21 can be used as guidelines...” Stella Jafri, Pakistan.*

John Smyth, UK, introduces the concept of the three-legged stool: education consistent with Agenda 21 could promote Personal, Social and Environmental Competence. He also stresses that education consistent with the commitments of sustainable development should be concerned with the whole environment, natural and cultivated, constructed, cultural and social.

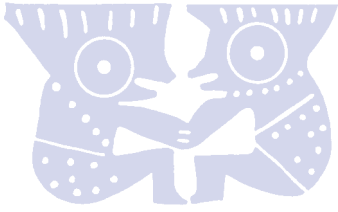
Some participants point out that learning by doing is very important, and programs should therefore focus on this type of learning, for instance Maarten Wolsink, The Netherlands. Wolsink also stresses that consensus on the concept of sustainable development is not possible, and without clarity about the concept it is not possible to develop an effective program. According to him, the first step should be the abolishing of the concept of ESD.

*“I would not call it ESD in the first place. Since several different approaches exist on what exactly SD is, we would have to start a confusing discussion with no outcome: there is no current consensus on SD, there is no consensus possible. Or we have to choose one approach, which will mean that we end with a very top-down planned programme. If that is the idea, I would refuse to advise (the only advice I can think of is don’t start the programme at all). I would advise to allocate funds for facilitation and support of initiatives (at all levels) based on some well defined (broad) criteria, by some independent and competing councils. These criteria should not be based on any definition of ESD. I would not allocate funds to local authorities or parties affiliated with the administration itself. Since the authorities are involved in most developments threatening environmental quality (and sustainability, if you like) the natural criticism toward policy and all shareholders and stakeholders of this policy must be fostered. The fact that anyone starting initiatives directed at achieving environmental goals and learning about how to achieve them, can get help is crucial.” Maarten Wolsink, The Netherlands.*

Susanne Lijmbach, The Netherlands, stresses the need to make a distinction between education, teaching and caring for nature.

## 5.4 The process: steps & guidelines

Some participants have clear ideas about how a program for ESD should be developed (Maarten Pieters, The Netherlands, Wendy Goldstein, Switzerland, Peter Posch, Austria). One could conclude from the contributions that the processes needed to develop and implement programmes effectively are at least as important as the content. More precisely, according to many participants, the content is dependent on the people for whom the program is



developed. Some of the participants found the questions hard to answer because of the general nature of the questions. They stated that which program is effective is highly dependent on the specific characteristics of the situation. Which issues should be addressed? How is the education system organised? How much support can be expected from important organisations and stakeholders? However, in many contributions some general guidelines are given about how to organise the process to develop and implement an effective programme.

### **Involving people from the early start**

A first point stressed by many participants is the importance of involving the people in identifying issues that are relevant to them, involving them in developing problem statements and in generating and executing action plans. Participants of the program should also be involved in setting a time line, developing activities and defining indicators for evaluation.

*“My philosophy for local programs would be: to stimulate people through personal communication on living conditions to develop initiatives to achieve sustainable improvements. This can be achieved by creating local groups starting from overt interests (which have to be investigated beforehand) and assist them in identifying their personal environmental concerns and interests in improving the quality of life. There must be a strong emphasis on the training of local coordinators. Furthermore, local enterprises should be involved which can offer support in achieving individual improvements (e.g., with insulation, use of energy etc.). Finally, even small improvements should be celebrated.” Peter Posch, Austria.*

*“...What would make this initiative work? Firstly, a good facilitator who would stimulate group identity and commitment to action. Furthermore, pedagogical processes should be developed which seek to empower and not just inform. This can be done through:*

- *supporting rather than directing people in a way which enables the participants to develop ownership of their actions;*
- *engaging the participants actively in the learning process – not only in terms of active seminar approaches but also in terms of determining their learning needs and taking control of the agenda;*
- *providing the experience for participants to clarify their own personal values about environmental issues and reflecting critically on how to pursue actions in line with their values and beliefs;*
- *providing opportunities for participants to plan and take action as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of these actions.” Daniella Tilbury, UK.*

This is an example of the constructivist approach. It recognises that since the people concerned have the knowledge of the problem and the key to the solution, they must be taken very seriously in the whole process of identifying the desired changes and developing the methods to accomplish these changes.



## Start with identifying ‘target groups’ and involve all relevant groups in exploring issues

A program should start by:

- identifying all relevant groups, partners, influentials and decision makers. The business community, the media, and other groups, which may at first sight not be viewed as allies should be involved;
- conduct a stakeholder analysis at the start of program development;
- undertake ‘research’ to explore which issues, which problems and which interests are relevant;
- make clear (if such information is not yet available) which educational systems are involved. Several ‘instruments’ can be applied to take this step, ranging from market research, to organising workshops, round tables or other interactive sessions where people can participate in the process. Most contributors value interactive methods.

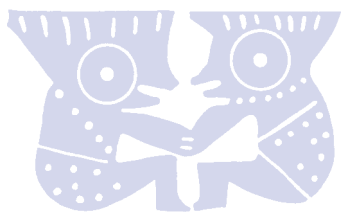
*“I will give you some rough thoughts:*

- *organise round tables per sector or interest group (companies, public services, shopkeepers, schools’ staff, youngsters,...) with a design assignment on the local environment. Ask them to make criteria for quality of their environment and for sustainability of that quality explicit;*
- *organise a meeting mixing or confronting those groups;*
- *select a limited number of plans to be carried out and discuss who takes what responsibility. For example: a traffic plan, a sustainable-building plan, a sport or playground plan. Professional designers, architects, etc., should be available to support the elaboration of plans;*
- *facilitate the realisation of some plans with money, human power, involvement of volunteers, school students;*
- *document the processes in a multimedia way (TV, newspaper, animations), publish progress a few times a year, open an internet-site on the developments that is refreshed regularly. List the criteria mentioned before, and allow them to be criticised;*
- *work towards a result within two or three years. Evaluate results and process with all groups involved from the start;*
- *repeat the round tables in years 2, 3 and 4, in 2 and 3 reflecting on current developments such as local policy initiatives, and with new design assignments, in year 4 for the big evaluation.” Maarten Pieters, Netherlands.*

## List priorities, develop plans, carry out activities

The people involved with the issues need to be involved in making the choices on which issues the program will concentrate. A list of priorities should be developed. Next, a plan is needed to accomplish what is mutually agreed upon. Activities have to be carried out and results have to be monitored. Evaluations can point out where progress is made and which adjustments of plans and activities are desired. Figure 12 over summarises the steps to be taken.





Steps for developing ESD programs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify all relevant groups, decision makers and influentials</li> <li>● Explore relevant issues with these groups</li> <li>● List priorities, select and develop plans together</li> <li>● Carry out activities</li> <li>● Monitoring and evaluation</li> <li>● Adjustment of plans and activities</li> </ul>

Figure 12: Steps for developing ESD programs

### 5.5 Local, national and international programs

Figure 13 below summarises the participants’ views on how effective programs on the local, national and international level can be developed. Contributions were most elaborated on the local level. Some participants have described the programs they are currently working on quite extensively, Kamelia Georgieva for Bulgaria, Wendy Goldstein for IUCN’s international Commission on Education and Communication CEC. Check the CD-ROM for full information on these.

Programs	Local	National	International
<b>Starting points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Promotion of personal, social and environmental competence</li> <li>* Learning in relation to sustainability/Agenda 21</li> <li>* Facilitation &amp; support to local educational initiatives concentrated on ‘doing’ by citizens</li> <li>* No preconceived ideas</li> <li>* Choice between positivist or constructivist models</li> <li>* Choice for real education</li> <li>* Locality starting point</li> <li>* Focus on democracy, health, consumption and communication</li> <li>* Facilitation of NGOs and community based organisations CBOs to play their roles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* To contribute and support local programs</li> <li>* Publicity for local programs</li> <li>* Integration of local program into other policy sectors</li> <li>* Lobby for support at highest governmental levels</li> <li>* Basis of program to be found in lessons learned locally</li> <li>* Creation of well informed citizens</li> <li>* Continuous learning process</li> <li>* Focus on gender, pollution, resource use and equity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* To contribute and support to national programs</li> <li>* To address the north south inequity</li> <li>* To implement Agenda 21</li> </ul>

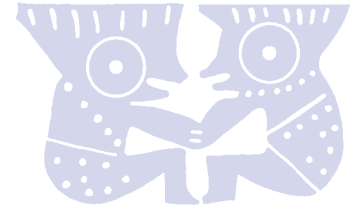


Programs	Local	National	International
<b>Issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Bottom up initiatives</li> <li>* Orientation on issues of sustainability &amp; future</li> <li>* Scoping exercise</li> <li>* Stakeholder analysis</li> <li>* Analysis of state of affairs with regard to learning in relation to Agenda 21 and other holistic and locally based approaches in e.g. health programs</li> <li>* Formulating performance criteria and indicators</li> <li>* Analysis of human resources and capacities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Clarification of concepts</li> <li>* Links with related programs and initiatives</li> <li>* Integration through dialogues with other sectors of society</li> <li>* Development of systemic approaches to the treatment of multidisciplinary, multi-sectoral issues and the implications for the education system, government, business, etc.</li> <li>* Development of a strategy for capacity building for ESD</li> <li>* Development of incentives to move from pilots to routine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Shift in educational paradigms</li> <li>* Influencing policy makers</li> <li>* Integration of different cultures and interests</li> <li>* Provisions for the inclusion of all shareholding interests in sustainability objectives in designing the education policy</li> <li>* Basic principles of Education 21 (E21)</li> <li>* Methodology for E21</li> <li>* Human resources for E21</li> <li>* Refinement of Agenda 21</li> <li>* Targeting international policies and agencies</li> </ul>
<b>Main elements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Round tables with design assignments</li> <li>* Selections of plans to be carried out</li> <li>* Facilitation of realisation</li> <li>* Documentation and publicity of the process</li> <li>* Monitoring &amp; evaluation</li> <li>* Make process a multiyear cycle</li> <li>* Training of local coordinators</li> <li>* Celebration of even small improvements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* R&amp;D</li> <li>* Knowledge management</li> <li>* Reorientation Teachers</li> <li>* Monitoring, Evaluation</li> <li>* Enhancement of policy development</li> <li>* Allocating funds to support local programs of citizens</li> <li>* Study and training for local initiatives</li> <li>* Re-discussion and re-design of national plan by selection of local actors</li> <li>* Greening of schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Peer reviews between professional and non-professional policy makers</li> <li>* International multimedia documentation on results and processes</li> <li>* Recommendations to decision makers in national governments and business</li> <li>* Intercultural debate on sustainable society, globalisation and cultural diversity</li> <li>* Electronic linkages between schools and teachers</li> <li>* Joint initiatives and</li> <li>* Joint research</li> </ul>

Figure 13: Summary of the starting points, issues and main elements of programs at the local, national and international levels







## Chapter 6

### Evaluation of the ESDebate

#### 6.1 What did we learn?

*ESDebate* has tried to involve experts from various backgrounds in a dialogue by exchanging thoughts and opinions. It has done so in a rather structured way with different rounds focused on issues such as the concept of ESD, examples of good practice, implications, and advice for programs. This last chapter focuses on the participants' learning.

#### 6.2 Concluding statements: overview

To trigger thinking about the conclusions on the content of *ESDebate*, the moderators formulated some first ideas of conclusions as statements. Each statement was followed by a short explanation to which participants were asked to rank their agreement and to explain their positions.

The figure below shows the results. Please note that the 'neutral' category has been left out to highlight differences (this explains why the number of participants varies).

The participants' explanations are elaborated below.

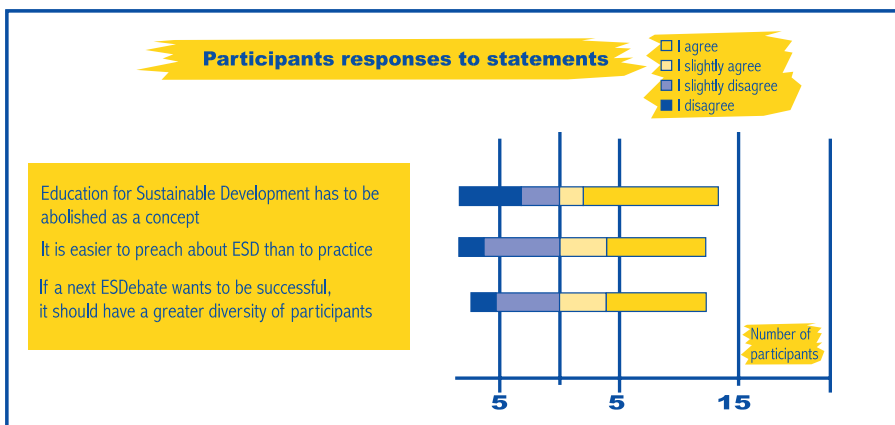
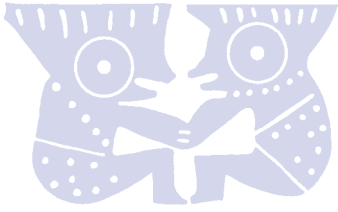


Figure 14: Reactions to the closed questions

#### 6.3 Should ESD be abolished as a concept?

##### Moderators' explanation

The previous chapters made it clear that the concept of sustainable development itself is an issue requiring further discussion and clarification. As long as there are **too** many interpretations one can argue that the term



ESD, while having political significance, leads to various problems when framing it in the context of education. This debate has shifted the focus from what is ESD or what should it be, to what constitutes good education. In other words: how can education – regardless of its name or label – help people in determining their own pathways to sustainable living within their own context, taking into account the lives of others (including other species) elsewhere in place and time.

### **ESD should be abolished as a concept: participants' explanations**

More than half of the participants agreed with the statement. Maarten Wolsink, stressed that the real danger is that when education is framed in the context of ESD it may become a political tool. This is coherent with comments in other chapters that criticised the instrumentalist approach to ESD.

*“I don’t care about ‘framing ESD in the context of education’, the real danger is that education may be framed in the context of ESD, and then it may become a policy tool. This does not mean, however, that the term ESD should be fully abolished, because it really has political significance. The political level might become less approachable when the term could not be used anymore.”* Maarten Wolsink, The Netherlands.

Norbert Reichel, addresses the same issue from a different viewpoint: ESD practitioners are insufficiently aware of the issues and perceptions of youngsters because they do not know enough about the impact of sustainable development on education.

*“The debate focused on education, not on the implementation of SD by education (or other social instruments). That is OK, but sometimes I have the impression that ESD people don’t reflect about topics, contents, the things youngsters should learn etc. They reflect about participation (or other important words) without thinking about where youngsters should/could/would like to participate. I believe the reason why they do this, is that they do not know enough about the impact of SD on education (contents, methodology, processes).”* Norbert Reichel, Germany.

Another argument agreeing with the statement is that education should include many different areas as well, such as peace education and political education. Education should be the core focus point, not the message.

*“Education should include sustainability as well as all other areas, such as sexual education, health education, ethical education and so on. It is perhaps due to the crisis in which education is at present, where there is more concern on information transfer than in encouraging individuals to reflect on processes that can turn this into a better world, that the discussion ended up focusing more on education per se than on ESD. Another factor that contributed to concentrate on education, is that the term ESD has brought up many diverging points of view and was not accepted easily by participants.”* Suzana M. Padua, Brazil.



Kim Walker, Australia, states that educational practices cannot be easily generalised because cultural differences have a strong influence on what is effective and what's not.

### **ESD should not be abolished as a concept: participants' explanations**

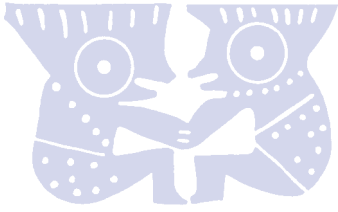
Some participants disagree that there are too many interpretations of ESD, accepting indeed that the concept has multiple meaning, but that this can also be regarded as a strong point. Sustainability is a complex term, but nevertheless there seems to be an agreement that the balance of social, ecological and economic systems is of central importance. The fact that many interpretations can be made makes the concept flexible. Because ESD is such a broad term, in many situations, it has many specific contextual applications. Another benefit of using an 'umbrella concept' is that it stimulates addressing the issue with an interdisciplinary viewpoint. An interdisciplinary approach is needed to solve the complex problems of achieving sustainability. So ESD can be used to stimulate the required bridging of disciplines.

*"I disagree on the issue of 'too many interpretations' because I think that we are facing a world with numerous ideas about sustainability. Nevertheless we seem to agree on the idea that the concept has to do something with the balance in the social- ecological and economical systems all over the world. So we have many interpretations, but never too many. The concept of education should take into account that the context, in which the individual lives, determines her/his concept of sustainability. That's why we should educate in the way that is described as 'good education': how to help people in determining their own pathways..."*  
Douwe Jan Joustra, Netherlands.

*"Yes, I agree that there is confusion with the term, but that the international consensus on the importance of complex interdisciplinary work in this area is important and therefore it would be a shame to 'thrown out the baby with the bath water'. I urge a more measured consideration of insisting on its complexity and its political content."* David Barkin, Mexico.

*"The practice of ESD is that it should lead to good education and therefore good education that integrates various disciplines, encompasses the multicultural approach, and is based on the actual experiences of people and their communities is what the objective of ESD is. Previous education efforts have not accomplished this completely and ESD is perhaps needed to give education itself the impetus to do so."* Stella Jafri, Pakistan.

Because it is a complex term, it has extended people's thinking (Stephen Sterling) so ESD can be used as a tool to broaden the horizon and stimulate learning. Stephen Sterling also states that we should dig deeper to find out what connects leading edge sustainability, learning and education. We will then find out that important 'new' educational values (such as empowerment), which oppose the currently dominant development model of education are a part of the transition to sustainability.



*“I disagree with the statement, but am broadly in sympathy with the text that follows it. Let’s recognise here the problem of language - we have to use SOME words to convey what we mean. Language is a model and as such it can both extend our thinking, and limit it. I think the concept of ESD has stretched people’s thinking a good deal over recent years (including mine) - notably in the UK, the government in the last 13 months - and this can only be a good thing.*

*“The second thing to state is that we are all learners. Our thinking about this area is bound to change and move on as the debate and circumstances change. It may be that we come up with a more adequate concept in the future, which might more adequately represent and convey our thinking at that time. But let’s not abandon ESD just yet - it still has work to do! Another point, which is implied by your text, is a shift of focus to the nature of education. Not surprisingly, it is not possible to talk meaningfully about ESD without talking about its broader context, which is education as whole, and it’s not possible to talk about ‘good education’ without looking at the cultural context of education - so there are ‘levels of focus’ here.*

*“What I would have liked to have seen in the debate is more reflection on the wider cultural context of education, including the significance of what might be termed ‘ecological’ or ‘integrative’ or ‘systemic’ thinking. This systemic approach is emerging in many fields in the ‘post-modern’ context - including the sustainable development movement.*

*“While it is true that we can’t know for sure what sustainability is, we need to be careful not to be adrift in a sea of relativism - the problems are far too urgent for this response to be adequate. As Professor Tim O’Riordan says’ there is no template for the transition to sustainability...but there is a direction and there are principles’. So in my view we are not just talking about ‘good education’ (does good education necessarily impact on global warming?), but need to dig deeper to see what connects leading edge thinking in sustainability, learning and education. As I have written elsewhere, I think the integrative principle that connects these things is the need to enhance capacity, potential and diversity in human and natural systems, which requires nurturing self-developing, self-reliant, and self-sustaining abilities at all systemic levels - something that the dominant development model tends to destroy. It is only a short jump to see how educational values such as autonomy, empowerment, self esteem, critical and systemic thinking, community and participation are part of this picture, and part of ‘the transition to sustainability’.” Stephen Sterling, UK.*

### **Considerations**

John Smyth points out that you cannot abolish a concept even if you wanted to. Furthermore, he stresses that the various interpretations of the concept by ‘outsiders’ are more of a problem than the concept itself.

*“I agree with the statement but not with the heading. You cannot abolish a concept even if you wanted to. In any case the concept is not the problem, in the present company at least, but the various interpretations made of its title*



*by others outside the circle. These become part of a learning experience and in rejecting or accepting them we do not abolish the concept but build on it.”*  
John Smyth, UK.

## 6.4 Is it easier to preach about ESD than to practice it?

### Moderators' explanation

Regardless of whether ESD is a good flag or umbrella, participants provided extensive comments on criteria for good practice of ESD. When asked for concrete examples of ESD projects, the results were less extensive compared to questions about the concept of ESD. One might conclude that a majority of the participants feel more familiar with theory than with the practice of ESD.

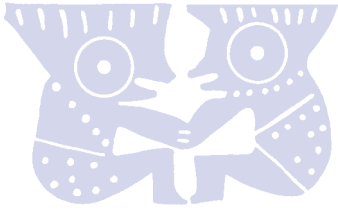
### It is easier to preach ESD than to practice it: participants' explanation

Over half of the participants agree with the statement. According to some participants ESD is easier to preach about than to practice because we are just beginning to develop good practice. There are no criteria or methods for benchmarking yet. We are exploring a new concept of education involving new paradigms. This makes it even more important to share concrete experiences.

Stephen Sterling stresses that ESD needs a changing epistemology and fundamental changes like that require an enormous effort and take time. The currently dominant models have to be challenged and changed.

*“Yes, it’s perhaps obvious to say it’s easier to talk about it than do it, and this applies to most areas of theory and practice in life! What makes ESD different from other areas of knowledge is that we are grappling here with what appears to be a changed or changing epistemology. It values different ways of knowing such as local and tacit knowledge, inter and trans disciplinarity, participative and reflexive learning styles, group and social learning in addition to individual learning, and so on - all characteristics that go against the dominant models of education. So let’s be not too critical of ourselves - we operate in a larger context that is largely unsympathetic and not conducive to ESD that is practised in any radical or strong mode. Having said that, in my experience, thinking educators (teachers, in my work area) are more than ready for a liberating approach which offers a counter to the narrowly instrumentalist, managerial and market model which dominates at present. But it’s still not easy and they need a lot of support.”* Stephen Sterling, UK.

Another possible cause of the difficulties to bring ESD into practice is that the concept implies that ‘everything’ is connected. So a good example requires taking all these areas into account. On a concrete level however, we have to cope with conflicting interests, which often hinders success. (Margreet Schaafsma, The Netherlands).



### **It is not easier to preach ESD than to practice it: participants' explanations**

Maarten Wolsink, points out that preaching suggests a deterministic approach while environmental education should be facilitating and focusing on bottom up processes.

*“There should not be any preaching at all about ESD. The term ‘project’ is already quite deterministic and top-down. I think about EE more as facilitating (although including ‘teaching’, not only learning) what comes up in the entire domain of environment and/or sustainability (whatever that may be, that’s up to the initiators themselves).”* Maarten Wolsink, The Netherlands.

An important question is: what is good practice of ESD? Chris Maas Geesteranus stresses that if you would apply serious criteria, you would have to reverse or at least reform our present education. Of course, this is very ambitious and would take a long period of time to establish.

*“I should not know of very many projects which fulfil criteria as given e.g. in the booklet ‘Education for Sustainable Development in the Schools Sector’ from the Panel for Efsd; UK, 1998. It highlights 7 key concepts, which are so vast in meaning and intention that simply nobody can cope with it. It would mean a reverse (reform at least) of our present education. Who dares, who has time and money to do so? And: who allows such experiments?”* Chris Maas Geesteranus, Netherlands.

Jean Perras illustrates the historical development of the concept of ESD. The concept has potential because stakeholders with very different backgrounds have contributed to its development and are still involved. Bringing together different groups and movements eventually has positive effects on our common future.

*“ESD did not happen overnight. It is part of a slow and iterative research process that started at the end of the fifties. The theory and the practice was initiated by organisations and governments involved in international development, development education, community development and other popular movements in North and South America involved in empowerment, justice and poverty issues, in liberation movements in Africa and Asia, labour organisations movements all over the world and global education. In some form or fashion, all of these organisations and movements have been involved in education, both formal and informal.*

*“These different development movements came into contact with the environmental movement and such advocates as IUCN, Greenpeace, and others in the late seventies, early eighties. The IUCN and United Nations debates on this issue, the compromises and the consensus of the late eighties and nineties between the development and environment movements created the concepts of sustainable development and later of sustainability.*

*“In a way, development and development education have been around for a long time. The meeting with environment, environment education and*





*other stakeholders has the potential of making development, environment and our common future, much sustainable than it is presently.”*

Jean Perras, Canada.

According to Suzanna Lijmbach there was not sufficient opportunity in the debate to share concrete examples. She suggests developing a bibliography that contains case studies. Daniella Tilbury also acknowledges the fact that ESD is very complex and difficult to implement at the practical level. This may explain the lack of good examples.

*“I totally disagree with the statement that it is easier to preach about ESD than to practice it. The fact that not all participants have described an example of good practice in ESD does not necessarily mean that participants are more familiar with the theory than the practice. Have you considered the possibility that perhaps participants are experienced at the practical level but are having difficulties identifying successful projects? ESD is very complex and difficult to implement at the practical level. To be honest, there are not many examples of good practice in ESD.”* Daniella Tilbury, UK.

## **6.5 Should a future ESDebate have a greater diversity of participants?**

### **Moderators’ explanation**

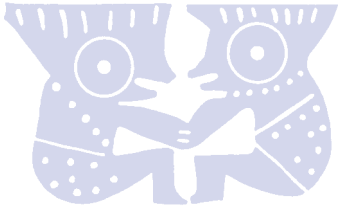
Most of the participants have similar backgrounds: academia, research, environmental education, and international programs. As chapter 36 of Agenda 21 addresses a much wider audience from business to consumers, the next dialogue will definitely win in richness and depth, when participants are selected from a greater variety of professional backgrounds.

### **A future ESDebate should have a greater diversity of participants: participants’ explanations**

A greater variety of backgrounds can indeed stimulate the development of new and useful ideas, some participants believe. To achieve successes the cooperation of many sectors of society is required, so these sectors should participate to increase the depth of the debate. Boundaries between disciplines have to be broken. Some participants point out that environmental educators also need their own forum focussing on how educators can assist the transition to a more democratic and sustainable world. Eva Csobod, Hungary, stresses that the representation of poor countries in debates like this is important, but that resources for this participation are a major obstacle.

*“We explored ‘our’ ideas and opinions quite extensively. In the Netherlands we asked some other people (academic) to set their focus on ‘learning for sustainability’ through making an essay on ESD from their point of view. It gave some new perspectives that will be an inspiration for our ideas on ESD. So, the next ESDebate: new chances and (hopefully) new inspiration!”*  
Douwe Jan Joustra, Netherlands.





*“The challenge would be to have a broader array of participants really contributing their ideas. We know we are the converted, so our answers may be predictable. But we are so involved in the topics discussed that we have tried to answer the best we can, sometimes extensively as a way to reinforce our beliefs and perhaps stimulate interest, challenge and motivate a broader audience while doing so.”* Suzana Padua, Brazil.

*“I strongly agree that if a next ESDebate wants to be successful, it should have a greater diversity in participants. Whether we like it or not, business, consumers associations, health workers, local and regional governments, labour movements, international development organisations, community workers, new information technology institutions and businesses, media and marketing experts are needed in this debate, to move it to the next plane. Personally, I feel that human and community health and well-being specialists must be brought into the debate on development and environment as the next step.”* Jean Perras, Canada.

*“Yes, but we are environmental educators and as such we have a distinctive contribution to make to the transition to sustainability. We are (or should be) guardians and developers (with others) of critical knowledge and we are (or should be) experts in skills of learning and teaching. True we have much to learn from other professionals, workers, community representatives, local people, politicians, NGOs, etc. but we do need our own forum about how we as educators can assist the transition to a more democratic and sustainable world.”* John Huckle, UK.

### **Explanations of participants who disagree**

Norbert Reichel explains that it is not possible to discuss about improving educational systems and about the strategy for the implementation of Agenda 21 simultaneously. For the first subject the current variety of the participants is sufficient (Peter Posch, Austria).

*“We cannot do all things at the same time. We have to decide: better education systems or strategy for the implementation of Agenda 21. If we want to speak about the first, we should not find other experts to join ESDebate, if we want to speak about the second, we should.”*

Norbert Reichel, Germany.

The current ESDebate revealed great differences in perspectives on what ESD is or should be. If more participants with different backgrounds would be invited confusion would only increase.

*“When you invite even more groups who did not even start to think what ESD is (they probably have never heard of the term) you end up with even more confusion than in this debate. When you invite others to join a debate on Sustainable Development, you will get a quarrel about what that it is supposed to mean. It will lead you nowhere, so then terms like this should be avoided in the first place. SD is a policy term and an ideological tool!”*

Maarten Wolsink, The Netherlands.



Chris Maas Geesteranus also states that the first thing to do is to work out the concept and its implications with the people involved in education. More diversity of participants would hinder the development of a clear direction and increases the risk that the discussion only focuses on vague concepts.

*“...the resulting ideas might be a wide, shallow lagoon full of misconceived minnows. But it is certainly worth trying. Who knows, you might even get some non-educational producers and consumers to read Agenda 21 Chapter 36?”* John Smyth, UK.

*“Yes, more participants might enrich the discussion but still it will be rather a theoretical debate. Easy and harmless. Real enrichment and deepening will be realised by focusing the discussion to certain contexts. Then there will be fireworks! On the other hand I think that if this discussion was organised especially for professionals and volunteers in the field of environmental education, there would have been quite different conclusions.”* Margreet Schaafsma, The Netherlands.

## 6.6 The participants’ learning in ESDebate

The majority of the participants found it interesting, stimulating and instructive to be confronted with other participant’s views.

*“For the first time in my professional life I am participating in such a debate by internet. It was a challenge for me. I was following the statements of colleagues I know and of colleagues who I have never met before, and now I feel that I know everybody.”* Kamelia Georgieva, Bulgaria.

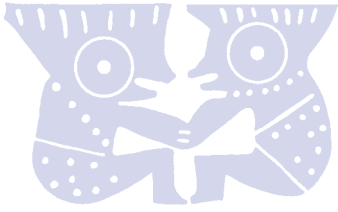
The other participants’ answers can be a valuable trigger to think about certain ideas and to reflect on one’s own position in the discussion (Wendy Goldstein).

*“Learning is through reflection and re-examining what you say and do and changing what you do where necessary. The debate was an opportunity to reflect, however often in a too rushed manner. The results and provocation from others were valuable to trigger yet further reflection on my thinking. However, I will enjoy laying out the full story in a printed form and examining what has been said more comprehensively.”* Wendy Goldstein, Switzerland.

Some participants found the discussion about the term ESD especially interesting. It is clear that there are opponents of the term (Bob Jickling).

*“First, it was good to learn just how many others were uncomfortable with the idea of ‘education for sustainable development’. Second, a number of other issues for our field were raised. I think that re-reading the discussion, in published form, will help to identify ideas we should think about over the next few years.”* Bob Jickling, Canada.

Norbert Reichel learned that nearly all participants put focus on environmental education when they reflect on ESD. He also suggests



analysing examples of good practice in order to define criteria and methods to benchmark.

*“I learned that nearly all experts you invited to participate in the ESDebate put a focus on environmental education when they reflect on education for sustainable development. There are some among them who are threatened by ESD: ESD could destroy Environmental Education. Others are more open to ESD: they think that EE can (only) survive by the integration in ESD and by accepting the impact of other topics (e.g. the development topics). This discussion seems to be very similar in the different countries.*

*“My conclusion: we need more ESDebates, perhaps next year to see if there are changes in the attitudes of the participants. Perhaps this can be an indicator for the implementation of ESD.*

*“My second conclusion: We should analyse some examples of good practice to see how to reach ESD. Perhaps the organisers could present some of them with different questions (as you did every round. This will be a kind of evaluation of the analysed projects and could help us to find criteria to benchmark.” Norbert Reichel, Germany.*

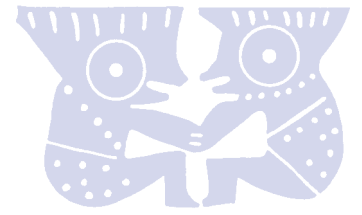
Suzana Padua realised that in many ways we think alike, despite the differences in cultures and geographic locations. Globalization causes problems and challenges to become more similar around the world.

*“I felt the world was small and tied by specific ideas. In many ways we think very much alike, despite the differences in cultures and geographic locations. Because of globalisation, the problems and challenges are similar. This can be distressing in a way (with most of the world facing so many serious problems) but on the other hand it can also be an exciting way to integrate people to seek solutions that contemplate respect for diversity of cultures and of life forms.” Suzana Padua, Brazil.*

Chris Maas Geesteranus, the Netherlands, found the idea of the debate very interesting, but also found that giving your ideas without interaction with other participants is not very enriching. Margreet Schaafsma, the Netherlands, concludes that it is not possible to discuss ESD without taking a specific context into account.

A few participants also learned from the medium: an internet debate is a new instrument to discuss and research viewpoints and experiences (Jean Perras). It is an instrument with potential and by practice one can develop several useful applications.

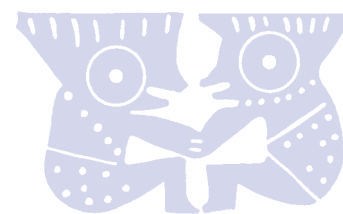
*“I now am convinced that internet can be used to create intelligent and worthwhile debates. I have gained a better understanding of where everyone is coming from and have discovered new actors in this evolving field. Special thanks to the key organisers, the webmaster and to the government of the Netherlands for the resources to hold this debate. I sincerely hope that this ESD debate will be saved, marketed to universities, governments and NGOs around the world.” Jean Perras, Canada.*



## Final thought

The moderators and the initiator of the ESDebate would like to thank the participants for their time, effort and interesting ideas. We experienced the ESDebate as a challenge and we are very satisfied with the results. When we look at the complete picture, there is a lot of valuable information that has been gathered. Many interesting views were shared. We hope that the thoughts, ideas and considerations put forward by the participants will be used in concrete situations as well as in further developing the field of .....  
(fill in the term of your preference: ESD/EE/?)





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### Initiator and supporting organisations

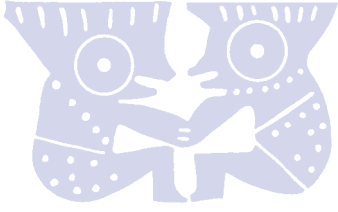
The International Debate on Education for Sustainable Development is initiated by the Dutch Inter Departmental Steering Group on Environmental Education. The Steering Group is a collaboration of six ministries. These six ministries have taken the initiative to join forces in giving an Extra Impulse to environmental education to contribute to sustainable development in the Netherlands. The National Committee for International Co-operation and Sustainable Development (NCDO) is the co-ordinator of the debate. The general aim of the NCDO is to strengthen the support for international co-operation and sustainable development in the Dutch public opinion. The NCDO stimulates and co-finances activities that contribute to raising awareness and support in the Netherlands on these matters. It co-ordinates the social debate about relevant policy issues between the Dutch public, trade, industry, and politicians. The ESDebate is a contribution of the Netherlands to the International Work Programme on Education, Public Awareness and Training for Sustainability launched by the UN Commission on Sustainable Development in 1996. The debate is supported by UNESCO, the IUCN, EEA, the NAAEE, EEEN, WWF and LSF.

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Frits J. Hesselink is founder and managing director of HECT Consultancy. HECT Consultancy focuses on (international) projects in the field of environmental education, communication and training. Frits started his career as a fellow at the Institute for International Law of the University of Utrecht where he became involved in curriculum development for law and social studies. He was the co-founder of SME MilieuAdviseurs, the Institute for Environmental Communication in 1976, and was the managing director of SME in the period 1983-1998. Frits was involved for more than a decade in the formulation and implementation of the various Dutch national Programmes for Environmental Education. As Chair of the IUCN Commission on Education and Communication since 1994 he has a good insight into the professional discussion, the developments in the field, the key-actors and relevant networks worldwide.

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Arjen E.J. Wals is a senior environmental education researcher at the University of Utrecht and the Department of Communication & Innovation Studies of the Wageningen University. His PhD, obtained from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, U.S.A., focused on young adolescents' perceptions of nature and environmental issues and their implications for environmental education. Recent research focused on the greening of vocational agricultural education in the Netherlands, action research & community problem solving as a methodology for environmental education, and contextualising biodiversity through environmental education. He has published over 75 articles, chapters and books on environmental education related issues. He is the acting president of Caretakers of the Environment International and a member of the Research Commission of the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE).



**Peter Paul van Kempen**

Peter Paul van Kempen works for his own marketing consultancy since 1998 focusing mainly on projects in the environmental field. He majored in organisational psychology in 1984 and took a postgraduate course in Environmental Management organised by four Dutch Universities. Working three years as a project manager for Motivaction, a research based consultancy, he gathered experience in the field of marketing research. At SME MilieuAdviseurs, Institute for Environmental Communication, Peter Paul applied marketing techniques in multidisciplinary environmental projects. Before starting his own business he worked as a senior consultant for Ergo using marketing research as a tool to consult on environmental strategies.

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