

Date : 3 November, 2010
Workshop 2 : Higher Education: Towards a Sustainable Future
Coordinators : Simanta Kalita, Ishwar Poojar
Moderators : Jim Taylor, Alicia Jimenez
Rapporteur : Bijoy Goswami, Sujeeva Jashsinghe, Gundula Haage

Session 4: Time: 12:15-13:45hrs

Final Discussion, recommendations, future priorities and forging partnerships for the next decade

Speaker : Simanta Kalita



Topic: Summary presentation on the comments of the participants

Simanta Kalita gave a brief overview of the process for preparation of the Higher Education discussions and outcomes of the Workshop Group. His presentation focused on various dimensions like the responses from the web-discussion, concerns of the youth, learning from the speakers and participants, case studies, networks (e.g. with Regional Centre of Expertise, European Higher Education, Global University Network for Innovation, Copernicus Alliance, European Network on Higher Education and Sustainable Development, RCE, ProsperNet etc.) and concerns for the next decade.

Some articulated concerns were - how to deal with the North-South divide, inequity in access to Higher Education, how ethical questions and values can successfully be incorporated into HE, how to involve youth in the decision-making process for the changes in the education

system and how far universities will be successful in incorporation EC principles into their curriculum, if the governments do not recognize the Earth Charter.

Sharing of Experiences and recommendations from participants

The second part of the session offered space for sharing of experiences. Three participants shared best-practices from their work.

Wolfgang Brunner from Sweden shared a tool, called “The Mission”, which he uses in his classes as well as in teacher trainings: By using a spaceship model, he simplified the complex system of our interconnected world, through which the students/ participants truly understand the concept of sustainability, through this also the principles of the Earth Charter.

Ashok from the Gujarat University introduced the online course of his university, which offers even handicapped students to have access to videos, audios, comments, assignments, online examinations, references, downloads and self-check quizzes. In his opinion, ICT is the only answer to enable a large number of students to have access to HE.

Dr. Raghubanshi from BHU shared his experiences of the genesis of the Centre of Environment Education and Sustainability in Banaras University. He also talked about the visions and policies of the Centre. He also mentioned the course work and curriculum development, where SD approach is incorporated. He also recommended for an inter-university discussion forum to provide a better understanding of SD. Furthermore, he strongly emphasized to have extensive research on socio-economic issues to outreach to the community level.

Recommendations by participants

Ryokichi Hirono strongly recommended

- (1) the need for diverse approaches in different areas to achieve a true SD
- (2) importance of local approaches based on local knowledge
- (3) the participation of the civil society
- (4) leadership of institutions and organisations to address the EC
- (5) selection of relevant principles for individual countries
- (6) getting recognition of the UN-system

Priyankar Upadhyaya pointed out

- (1) the importance of interconnectedness of peace, conflict and development; therefore it should be addressed in a comprehensive manner.
- (2) that there should be limits to growth and profitability
- (3) the need for a larger critical mass to create awareness for SD
- (4) that the Earth Charter is a fundamental critic of the capitalistic system

Qing Tian recommended four points:

- (1) Initiate a decade of the Earth Charter
- (2) to create a forum for universities how to promote EC or ESD
- (3) encourage real world research in universities, especially in human and social sciences.
- (4) Develop research that helps to evaluate EC and is linked to traditional cultural knowledge and values

G. Hariramamurthy strongly recommended

- (1) the engagement of communities in the governmental system
- (2) to minimize the impact of the consumerist culture, to properly address the North-South divide-issue
- (3) to consider the earth as part of its cultural context and realizing the importance of moving away from the profit-oriented growth in India

Vimmi Surati, one of the youth representatives, strongly urged

- (1) to focus the mindset of people before implementing the Earth Charter
- (2) the need of including teachers and students from rural areas in the process
- (3) finding key people as participants in conferences like “Ethical Framework for a Sustainable World”

Vrunda Nair, another youth representative, strongly recommended the need of EC in Gujarat University especially, irrespective of streams, whether it is science or arts.

MK Laliwala from the Gujarat Commission of Higher Education suggested a separate portal for the Earth Charter, which could use teacher training and capacity building. He also emphasized to train the minds of policy makers.

Marie K Harder recommended starting an identification process of universities using the Earth Charter.

Dr. Rangelaaxmi emphasized the incorporation of EC in the universities and colleges, which are not fully affiliated by the government. She also mentioned about a programme of sustainability practice: Life-long learning.

Billal Hossain from Bangladesh strongly recommended that EC and SD courses should be given to those students, who have the potentiality to be future leaders, who can shape the nation through the EC principles.

With these recommendations the session was ended.