

WORKSHOP 2

Higher Education

Moderators

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Over the ten years since its formal launch in 2000, the Earth Charter has gained recognition as a global consensus on the meaning of sustainability, the challenge and vision of sustainable development, and the principles by which sustainable development is to be achieved. It is today accepted that there are many dimensions to the concept of sustainability, all of which need to be supported by an underlying ethical framework. In this context, the effective translation of Earth Charter principles into practice assumes critical significance. It is appropriate at this stage to review and strengthen ways by which these principles and values can find resonance in different areas of life and work and across different sectors.

As a declaration of shared values and ethical principles for sustainability, the Earth Charter provides an integrated and coherent framework from developing educational programmes and curricula aimed at teaching and learning for a more just, sustainable and peaceful world. The integrated approach promoted by the Earth Charter emphasizes the relationships between the different challenges faced by humanity, ranging from the eradication of poverty, to the protection of Earth's ecological systems, and to the elimination of all forms of discrimination. The Earth Charter can be used as a resource to undertake teaching and learning in many fields and can help in exploring the links and inter-relationships between the various dimensions of sustainability. UNESCO recognized the Earth Charter as an important ethical framework for sustainable development.

Higher Education is an important stage of formal education. Higher Education Institutions across the world play a major role in guiding the youth of the society and in deciding the various national and international policies. Some 400 universities, academic departments and centers have endorsed the Earth Charter world over. Many of them are using the Charter in courses and research; it has proven to be an especially valuable teaching instrument in the fields of environmental education and education for sustainable development. It has been utilized as well in human rights and peace education. The Earth Charter is also a useful instrument for sustainability campus plans.

This workshop will be a forum to share experiences of bringing the values and principles of the Earth Charter to ESD efforts in Higher Education institutions and professional development courses and the EC's contribution to understanding sustainability and social-environmental challenges. It will be a forum to look at implementation strategies for application of the EC for colleges and universities in teaching, research, operations and outreach and making an inventory of available existing resources of such applications.

Objectives of this session

1. To give the community of people engaged in Higher Education an opportunity to come together, share experiences of bringing the values of the Earth Charter to ESD efforts
2. To document and highlight case studies of the effective use of EC or some of its principles from the field of Higher Education
3. To find out the gaps keeping the future SD scenario in mind
4. To explore and find out approaches to introduce EC in HE
5. To prepare a plan of action for the remaining period of DESD and beyond (what is that HE wants to achieve in terms of introducing EC)
6. To identify future priorities and forging partnerships for the next decade

A summary of the discussion at the workshops will be posted on the Conference website each day. Each workshop will come up with a final report on day three. The report will include a road map for the future and a set of recommendations for the Rio plus 20 Conference proposed in Brazil 2012, the end of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) Conference in Japan in 2014, as well as for the next decade of the Earth Charter 2010 - 2020.