

Education for Sustainable Development

– Recommendation* –

In view of the urgent need to counter the crisis in values that has resulted in serious environmental threats and to assure the continuity and appreciation of the fragile gift of bios – life – on our planet, the participants of the BIO Workshop on Environmental Education, who convened in Athens on March 29 – April 1, 2001, reiterate the BIO proposals for an all-encompassing environmental education and, being encouraged by the progress resulting from the expansion of the sustainability concept promoted by the UN, its special organisations and numerous NGOs, recommend the implementation of the following issues of highest priority.

Building new ethics through environmental education

Environmental ethics should be at the core of every human endeavour. The involvement of every individual and sector of society and the co-operation of culture and technology are vital in this context.

There is need for a holistic interdisciplinary approach in curriculum planning and design. This is indispensable in order to integrate social, cultural and environmental aspects and, in particular, values and ethics.

Environmental rules and principles should be incorporated in obligatory codes of conduct for representatives of public authorities, diplomats and businesses.

It is crucial to stress the positive relationship between environmental ethics and the notions of peace, poverty alleviation and equity in society.

Environmentally ethical behaviour implies individual responsibility that leads to action. Lifestyle patterns should become disengaged from overconsumerism. Waste-free production cycles and new strategies for energy production and consumption and for the protection of non-renewable natural resources are essential.

To avoid further degradation and catastrophe, the concept of defence has to be restructured on the basis of environmental ethics and with a long term vision of international co-operation in environmental protection.

Investing in environmental education: a genuine profit for society

The concept of profit needs to be redefined to include the dimensions of qual-

ity of life, preservation of natural resources and biodiversity, and better health and education: elements which constitute a "genuine" profit for humanity.

Governments and international, regional and national financial institutions as well as the productive sector should be encouraged to mobilise additional resources and increase investments in education and public awareness.

An independent fund for environmental education needs to be considered. This fund would encourage contributions from the public at large, from businesses and from governments. It would give high visibility to these issues.

capture the widespread attention of the general public and actively involve the local administration (mayors, municipal authorities, etc.) in environmental awareness and training.

Environmental education in vocational training is indispensable not only for the transfer of new skills but also for the enhancement of employment opportunities.

Environmental education is needed in business and economics, in policy and decision-making, science and technology, as well as in the fields of legislation and jurisdiction.

A two-way link between teachers and scholars/students needs to be created. Learners should be given the opportunity to acquire new knowledge and skills through concrete projects and develop their own ideas and problem-solving initiative.

Participatory environmental education can act as a catalyst for participatory democracy.

Proposals for implementation

Revision and expansion of the existing bio-syllabus and development of new curriculum materials for all educational levels as well as audio-visual materials on environmental issues.

New economic models and incentives (tax cuts, etc.) promoting investments in cleaner production strategies. A Green Salary instead of unemployment benefits, in order for the unemployed to get involved in environmental projects (tree-planting, recycling, city cleanup, etc.).

A clearing-house to provide, through the use of computer link-ups, a network of people wishing to co-operate in environmental education. An electronic Bank of Ideas to be available on the Internet can promote a worldwide interdisciplinary exchange of information and encourage environmental appreciation.

Volunteer environmental action groups to tackle local issues. The participation of youth and senior citizens is particularly valuable. Environmental Olympics and Bios Prizes to reward individuals or institutions that have contributed to the preservation and better understanding of the environment.

A World Referendum for people throughout the world to express their willingness to preserve the environment and the continuity of life on our planet.

Environmental education can enhance the development of an International Court of the Environment, under the auspices of the Permanent Court of Arbitration.



Courtesy: SDWi

Investment is a crucial means for capitalising on the full force of education. Environmental education can positively shape the attitudes of the profit-seeking sector.

Reorientation of formal and non-formal education towards sustainability

There is a need to reorient education towards lifelong learning. As promoted by the IUBE, an interdisciplinary environmental education which guarantees environmental literacy for every citizen on the planet is a priority.

Non-formal education is as important as formal education. There is a need to

* See also page 79.