



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

A REVIEW OF EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

FROM A CULTURAL DIVERSITY
AND INTERCULTURAL
DIALOGUE PERSPECTIVE

IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES
FOR FUTURE ACTION



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International Research Institute in Sustainability

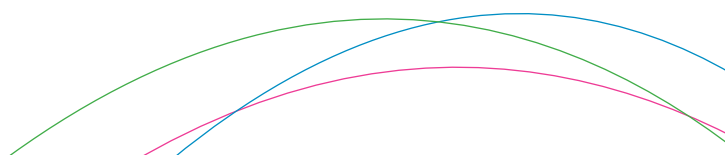


UNIVERSITY OF
GLOUCESTERSHIRE

at Cheltenham and Gloucester

A Review of Education for Sustainable Development Policies from a Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue Perspective

Identifying Opportunities
for Future Action



This document has been developed within the framework of UNESCO's activity on integrating a cultural diversity approach into the elaboration of policies for sustainable development, which forms part of the UNESCO intersectoral platform on Education for Sustainable Development.¹ It is based on the UNESCO Background Note, *A Review of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Policies from a Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue Perspective: Identifying Opportunities for Future Action* (UNESCO, 2008a).

The report was informed by research undertaken between 15 December 2008 and 15 April 2009 by Daniella Tilbury and Ingrid Mulà, from the International Research Institute in Sustainability (IRIS), University of Gloucestershire, Cheltenham, UK. IRIS researchers worked closely with Susanne Schnuttgen and Sandrine Amiel, from the Policies for Culture Section at UNESCO Paris, who guided the development of the research and accompanied the report.

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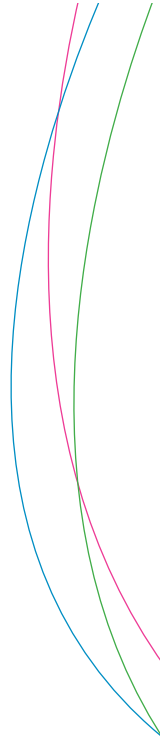
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Foreword

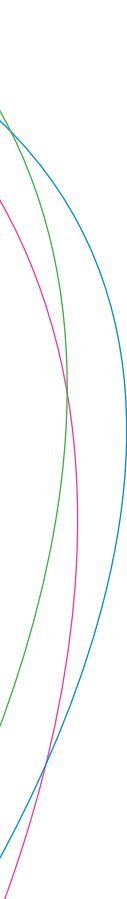
UNESCO is the United Nations' Lead Agency for the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD, 2005–2014). The vision guiding this international mobilization effort strives for 'a world in which the values inherent in sustainable development are integrated into all aspects of learning in order to encourage changes in behaviour that allow for a more sustainable, economically viable and just society for all, a world where everyone has the opportunity to benefit from education and learn the values, behaviour and lifestyles required for a sustainable future and for positive societal transformation'.

Indeed, the values, behaviours and lifestyles inherent in the ESD philosophy are intrinsic parts of culture as understood by UNESCO: culture encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs (UNESCO, MONDIACULT, 1982 and the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001). Underlying this approach is a profound transformation of the notion of culture. The initial concept of the 'fruitful diversity of cultures' – a vision of cultures as distinct and finite entities, ideally coinciding with the borders of nation states and contributing to culture's common treasure – has been replaced by the concept of 'cultural diversity' both 'inside' and 'outside' each society, regarded as the entire range of interactions between cultures: we think by associating different images; we identify by contrasting ways of living; we decide by choosing from an array of options; we grow by rebuilding our confidence through dialogue.

Diversity is the source of the human capability for development, and dialogue encourages readiness to question well-established, value-based certainties by bringing reason, emotion and creativity into play in order to find new shared understandings. Thus, culture becomes a driving force connecting meanings – a site of permanent self-understanding, contestation or accommodation of difference. In other terms, diversity and dialogue imply a constant process, supporting, amplifying and regenerating culture across time and space.

If culture is understood in these broad terms, rather than narrowly as arts, literature and heritage, then it is through culture that we formulate our expectations for development, which gives meaning to our lives. For UNESCO, development is understood in both tangible and symbolic terms. On the one hand, it is viewed as economic growth; on the other, it is seen as the flourishing of the human being, benefiting from his or her fundamental rights and maintaining an open mind without sacrificing personal points of reference.

People seek to hold on to valued cultural traditions and meanings from the past, while participating in the exciting creation of new meanings in a world of hypercommunication. This exercise is not easy, however. It implies the need to develop 'intercultural competencies' to navigate constructively through



our globalized and plural societies. The ultimate aim is to enable each emancipated individual to fully participate in the new symbolic environment providing them with the ability to express future aspirations for all forms of life.

In this regard, John Dewey's definition of education is relevant, as it alludes to the intercultural character of education, under constant redefinition, provided it is centred on the learner: 'Education is that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience'. Thus, the concept of development in educational terms means 'that the educational process has no end beyond itself. It is its own end; and that the educational process is one continual reorganizing, reconstructing, transforming'.

Halfway through the Decade, it became crucial to review the extent to which culture had been taken into account in national policies and strategies in support of ESD. This is why UNESCO commissioned this review. While it by no means attempts to assess the full scope of the gaps and opportunities regarding the mainstreaming of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in ESD, it does provide key baseline data to assess future progress and action expected for the remaining years of the Decade.

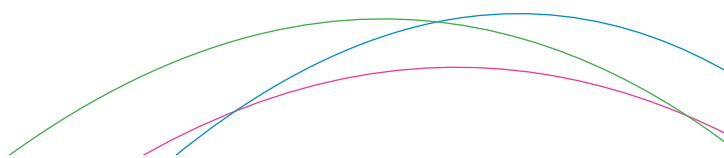
This review highlights the striking absence of culture in ESD, a gap also acknowledged by participants at the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development held in Bonn, Germany, from 31 March to 2 April 2009. The final declaration emphasizes that ESD is about 'creative and critical approaches, long-term thinking, innovation and empowerment for dealing with uncertainty', and for solving complex problems, highlighting in particular the interdependence of environment, economy, society, and cultural diversity from local to global levels.

The review and its methodology provide an instructive example of ways to articulate the linkages between cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and ESD, required for a sustainable future. I am hopeful that it will help share knowledge and experiences and build commitment to integrate the values of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in ESD policies and programmes.

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A cultural context for sustainable development

The world is changing at a pace never experienced before. New economic, socio-cultural and environmental issues, such as the global economic crisis, human mobility and climate change, are challenging governments' and civil society's aspirations. As the international community seeks a new global order, cultural diversity, intercultural collaboration and dialogue take on new meanings (UNESCO, 2008a, 2008b). These concepts, and the dynamics which underpin them, provide an important context for understanding sustainable development² and the creation of alternative futures which it seeks.

1.1 Sustainable development through the 'culture lens'³

Sustainable development is a concern of several UN agencies that appreciate how well-being, social justice, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, human development and the health of our planet are inextricably linked. At the last UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002) which took place in Johannesburg, world leaders acknowledged the urgency of this agenda, but also recognized that no country was close to achieving sustainability. The reality is that no map or guide exists to help us get there. This means that we can only make progress through learning – and learning in an active, exploratory, inclusive, creative and responsive way. Accompanying this learning-based approach to sustainability is an acknowledgement that we need to rethink our dominant models of thinking, practice and communication; challenging our short-term approaches and limited understanding of life and living systems.

The 'culture lens' can assist with reframing our thinking by locating sustainable development issues within a context of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. It can also facilitate a better understanding of sustainability challenges such as globalization, and improve our ability to respond. The panoramic view permitted by this culture lens results in the inclusion of alternative perspectives and new connections, and gives access to traditional wisdom and forms of knowledge important to challenging unsustainability.

² In this report, sustainable development and sustainability are used interchangeably.

³ The report borrows this term from a UNESCO document developed in 2008, *The Cultural Diversity Programming Lens Toolkit*, which defines key components to analyse and evaluate policies, programmes and practices from a 'culture' perspective.

1.2 Cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue

International discourses acknowledge the place of cultural diversity in the achievement of sustainable development.⁴ Authoritative documents, such as The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), recognize cultural diversity as 'one of the roots of development and a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence'. Other equally important documents refer to 'the manifold ways in which the cultures of groups and societies find expression' (UNESCO, 2005: 4) through the arts, literature and folklore. For some, however, cultural diversity is viewed as a constraint to human and economic progress or a threat to national stability (UNESCO, 2008a, 2008b).

Central to sustainable development are people's values, worldviews, knowledge and creativity, which are inextricably linked to culture. Sustainable development theory recognizes cultural diversity as a rich source of innovation, human experience and knowledge exchange which can assist communities and societies to move to more sustainable futures. It also acknowledges the importance of cultural diversity as a means to build a culture of peace, tolerance, non-violence and human fulfilment (UNESCO, 2004). However, sustainable development policies and programmes do not always acknowledge cultural diversity as a valuable means to re-orient current practices or assist with the creation of alternative futures.

Policies that truly engage with culture should confront the double challenge that cultural diversity presents (UNESCO, 2008a, 2008b). On the one hand, creative diversity needs to be promoted, as it is central to people's values, heritage and expressions. Thus, one of the key challenge for sustainable development is ensuring that cultures retain their traditions and distinctiveness (and avoid mono-culture through globalization). On the other hand, it is vital to promote the peaceful co-existence of culturally pluralistic societies, and acknowledge the principle of 'learning to live together' for a more positive and sustainable future. Policies should reflect this complex, yet evident, relationship that exists between 'culture' and sustainable development more accurately, and appreciate that the underlying dimension is 'culture' (Nurse, 2006; UNESCO, 2005b) or the fourth pillar of sustainable development (Hawkes, 2001), as it was termed at the United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002.

The value of intercultural dialogue in understanding and positively shaping social, cultural change processes is widely acknowledged (UNESCO, 2008a, 2008b). Cultural diversity is an evolving characteristic of societies. Culturally diverse societies reflect how culture is lived and alive: evolving and shaped by human aspirations for better environmental, economic and political situations. Therefore, cultural diversity is not an unchanging stock which needs to be preserved, but a setting for a continuous dialogue. It is this dialogue among cultural societies which needs to be promoted and preserved (Stenou, 2004). Intercultural dialogue is about confronting different values, worldviews, knowledge and beliefs; challenging people's assumptions and bringing possibilities for new and creative ways of living (UNESCO, 2008c). Intercultural dialogue enables the exploration of people's aspirations and visions for the future. It provides people with an experiential opportunity to understand, respect and forge links among cultures, as well as to exchange knowledge to seek and re-invent more creative ways to live together.

⁴ See the 2004 Human Development Report 'Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World'; the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg; and the comprehensive body of UNESCO standard-setting instruments to protect and promote cultural diversity between 2001–2005.

This is a critical component of sustainable development since it not only seeks to create peaceful coexistence between cultural communities, but also to recognize intercultural dialogue as a valuable means to define more sustainable visions for the future. Intercultural dialogue contributes to sustainable development by facilitating knowledge exchange – traditional, local and scientific. Through combining all these valuable forms of knowledge, more sustainable practices can be developed and better resolutions to current issues may be achieved.



2

Culture, learning and sustainable development

The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014), otherwise known as DESD, provides an opportunity to understand and integrate cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue perspectives into learning and education systems. This international platform may prove to be the key to bridging links between cultural, socio-economic and environmental change and enabling the culture lens to inform possibilities and progress.

2.1 The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)

On 20 December 2002, the United Nations General Assembly at its 57th session adopted Resolution 57/254 to declare the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), and designated UNESCO as the official international lead agency. Spanning 2005 to 2014, DESD is a global platform that offers an opportunity for policy-makers and practitioners to integrate the principles of sustainable development into all areas of learning. The Decade particularly encourages governments to embed sustainable development into all education systems, plans and strategies, and to support public awareness to increase participation in education for sustainable development initiatives (UNESCO, 2004, 2005b).

The official DESD documents are consistent in outlining their vision for a world ‘where everyone has the opportunity to benefit from education and learn the values, behaviour and lifestyles required for a sustainable future and positive societal transformation’ (UNESCO, 2004: 6, 2005b: 4). Inherent to this vision is an international community which celebrates cultural diversity, acknowledges cultural perspectives, and values intercultural dialogue. These tenets relate to people’s lives, values and worldviews and are central to sustainable development.

2.2 Education for sustainable development: vision and principles

Education for sustainable development (ESD) is a process that engages people and social groups in learning to live in sustainable ways (PCE, 2004). It encompasses a new vision of education that seeks to empower people of all ages to assume responsibility for creating a sustainable future (Tilbury 1995; UNESCO, 2002). ESD provides opportunities for people and communities to engage in reflecting

upon preferred futures, defining their vision for sustainable development (Tilbury and Wortman, 2004). Therefore, in this exercise, people’s cultural backgrounds and worldviews intrinsically shape how development is defined and the future envisioned.

ESD has a systemic and holistic approach and tries to reach all societies and sectors. As the DESD International Implementation Scheme (UNESCO, 2004) acknowledges, ‘ESD is for everyone, at whatever stage of life they are. It takes place, therefore, within a perspective of lifelong learning, engaging all possible learning spaces, formal, non-formal and informal, from early childhood to adult life’ (2004: 5). The literature acknowledges that ESD needs to be culturally rooted and locally relevant. It seeks to frame values, worldviews and cultural expressions within a process of participation and dialogue necessary for working together towards a common future.

The following table illustrates internationally recognized ESD principles:

| ESD key principles | |
|--|---|
| Futures thinking | Futures thinking engages people in imagining preferred visions for the future. It engages people in meaningful understandings and interpretations of sustainable development and enables the exploration of people’s assumptions. This process of envisioning futures leads people to take ownership and responsibility for a sustainable future. |
| Critical and creative thinking | Critical and creative thinking enables people to explore new ways of thinking and acting, make informed decisions, and create alternatives to present choices. It involves reflecting on how people interrelate with each other, understanding cultural differences and creating alternative ways to live together. |
| Participation and participatory learning | The engagement of people is necessary in order to build a sustainable future together. Engaging diverse stakeholders and communities is essential, as they value and include differing knowledge systems and perspectives. The process of participation is also important to creating ownership and empowerment. |
| Partnerships | Partnerships are a motivating force towards change. They empower people and groups to take action, take part in decision-making processes and build capacity in sustainable development. Intercultural partnerships are often highlighted as critical to ESD. |
| Systemic thinking | Thinking systemically is essential to sustainable development as piecemeal approaches have been proved not to work, resolving one issue while creating other problems. Sustainable development requires approaches that go beyond problem-solving and/or cause-effect. |

Table 1: ESD Principles

ESD is based on key learning themes that tackle economic, socio-cultural and environmental issues of sustainable development. The UN DESD Global Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (UNESCO, 2008d) summarizes them as follows:



| Key ESD learning themes | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace and human security, conflict resolution • Human rights • Citizenship, democracy, governance • Participatory decision-making • Gender equality • Cultural diversity • Intercultural understanding • Biological diversity • Ecological principles, ecosystems • Natural resources management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change • Disaster prevention • Energy • Waste • Health and well-being • Consumerism and ethical trade • Water • Rural and urban development • Corporate social responsibility • Globalization • Millennium Development Goals |

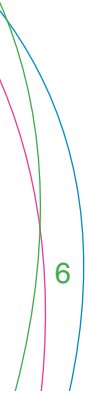
Table 2: Key ESD learning themes

Some of these key learning themes, such as peace and human security, human rights, participatory decision-making, gender equality and cultural diversity, are clear socio-cultural challenges which are core to the sustainable development agenda, but also critically relevant to culture plans and programmes. Whilst other key sustainable development themes are considered to be part of the economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability, their links to culture are inevitably established. Learning about biological diversity, ecosystems, natural resources management or climate change, to mention some examples, also involves learning about how these issues emerge in specific cultural contexts and how cultural groups can respond to the challenges these present.

2.3 The culture-sustainable development interplay in ESD policy

Appreciating the importance and value of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, as well as the challenges it poses, UNESCO has launched a thematic programme on mainstreaming principles of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in ESD, as part of the UNESCO Intersectoral Platform on ESD. The programme follows a two-pronged approach. It strengthens participation in dialogue on ESD strategies and programmes by local actors, including indigenous communities, and promotes the integration of principles of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue into national policies for ESD, within the larger context of United Nations (UN), regional and national development frameworks.

As regards the latter approach, many countries and regions have designed their own strategic frameworks, in response to the global learning challenge for sustainable development. Some of these frameworks were already in place before the start of the Decade; many others have been designed or revised in recent years as a result of the momentum it has created. These strategic frameworks often take the form of national policies or regional strategies in ESD, although some may enter this



agenda through an environmental education window.⁵ These policies serve to guide the implementation of ESD throughout the countries and regions, and are for the most part developed from the long and rich expertise and initiatives of ESD stakeholders and practitioners.

Although these documents support education or learning for sustainable development, each of them focuses on different issues and defines different priorities for educational sectors and/or groups. These frameworks are underpinned by differing socio-economic and cultural contexts, and are thus aligned with the realities of each territory or region. The extent to which culture has been embedded in these policies will determine how issues of learning and sustainable development are dealt with in these differing socio-cultural contexts.

5 Environmental education and ESD differ in principles and objectives. Whereas environmental education has contributed to enhancing experiential learning opportunities with nature, raising awareness about the environment and focusing on changing the values and behaviours of individuals, ESD is about changing mindsets and lifestyles as well as increasing people's choices to create and build collectively a sustainable future. Many countries which had a strong and powerful tradition of environmental education continue using this term in their national strategies, but have also broadened their scope with ESD approaches.



3

This review

The UN Decade recently celebrated its mid-term achievements in Bonn (Germany), where it presented forthcoming actions for the second half of the Decade.⁶ The Bonn Declaration (UNESCO, 2009a) calls for governments to develop ESD policies and frameworks to ensure quality education for all, and raise awareness and understanding of sustainable development. The timing of this review provides an opportunity to inform the development of a Bonn roadmap which is currently under development and will influence national and international responses to DESD in the coming years.

This review assesses to what extent culture has been integrated in national and regional ESD policies, and propose ways in which it can be more effectively strengthened. It identifies best practices, gaps and opportunities with regard to mainstreaming cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in ESD, and proposes recommendations for future actions that can be used to inform the policy-making process (UNESCO, 2008a).

3.1 What was the focus?

This review seeks to assess ways in which cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue are reflected in existing ESD national and international policy frameworks. Specifically, the intention is to assess: how culture is interpreted and represented; the interplay between sustainable development and culture as framed by the documents; and whether learning for sustainable development is viewed through the culture lens defined earlier in the document. The report also provides recommendations on how the culture components could be strengthened (UNESCO, 2008a).

3.2 What was done?

This review has involved the development of the following five steps:

- The identification of seven national ESD policies or frameworks and two regional ESD policies appropriate for review.
- The development of a framework of analysis (set of questions) to assess the extent to which ESD policies are responsive to principles of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue

⁶ The UN World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development was held from 30 March to 2 April 2009 in Bonn. This conference gathered key government agencies, stakeholders and experts in the field with the purpose of reviewing the strategies and achievements of the first half of the Decade and proposing actions for the second half.

- Telephone and face-to-face interviews with key ESD stakeholders to ascertain how cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue principles are integrated into ESD policies
- The application of a framework designed according to selected ESD policy documents, and
- The identification of gaps and opportunities for future actions.

3.3 What was the process?

3.3.1 Selection of ESD policies

Seven national ESD policy documents and two ESD regional documents were identified as the focus of this review.⁷ A number of criteria underpinned their selection:

- The chosen member states and regions are taking steps to link ESD with cultural perspectives. Some of the selected documents explicitly identify gaps as well as opportunities for integrating cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue through ESD programmes.
- Ensuring a geographical balance amongst the five UN regions.
- The inclusion of documentation which may not explicitly be labelled as ESD (and may be identified as Environmental Education or Education Policies), but which does have sustainability or ESD principles embedded within the framework.

The policies initially selected for the review included those from Canada, Jamaica, Kenya, Mexico and New Zealand. The Northern Areas of Pakistan and Wales (United Kingdom) were also selected as 'national' policies as they presented key cultural issues which were interesting for the purposes of the review. Regional policies selected were developed in the Asia-Pacific region and sub-Saharan Africa.

3.3.2 Design of the framework of analysis

A framework of analysis was developed as part of this review exercise. The framework seeks to facilitate a strategic understanding of the cultural dimensions of ESD and their inclusion in policy documents, rather than illustrate the complexity that culture embraces. The framework was piloted and then adapted to improve its effectiveness as a review tool. The framework and accompanying guidance notes can be viewed in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

The framework includes questions regarding:

- Understanding of culture, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue and their relationship with sustainable development (Understanding)
- Integration of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue learning objectives and pedagogical approaches into ESD strategic documents (Planning and practice of culture through ESD), and
- Inclusion of cultural stakeholders in the process of development, implementation and evaluation of these documents (Accessibility and process).

⁷ Some of the policies selected enter the ESD agenda through an environmental education window.

The following table illustrates some of the key questions which guided the review:

| | | Key questions |
|--|---|--|
| Understanding | Understanding of culture | <p>Understanding how culture is interpreted in ESD documents is important as it determines the ways in which cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue are addressed. Some key questions underpinned the review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is culture interpreted as an element of ESD which needs to be conserved/preserved? • Is culture viewed as static? Or is it viewed as lived/changing? • Is culture a means to establish dialogue? • Which cultural challenges are acknowledged? • Which key principles of cultural diversity are acknowledged? • Is culture acknowledged in discrete parts of the document? Or does it underpin the document? |
| Planning and practice of culture through ESD | ESD learning objectives related to culture | <p>The definition of ESD learning objectives is essential to guide the action plan and facilitate the implementation of ESD. The review was keen to ascertain whether ESD policies include ESD learning objectives related to culture? e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is learning to appreciate cultural difference a key objective of these policies? • Is learning to develop human and creative capacity supported? • Is learning to recognize and work with culturally specific worldviews promoted? • Is learning to interact through intercultural partnerships a key objective of these policies? |
| | Pedagogical approaches to culture | <p>The framework of analysis sought to establish whether ESD policies supported pedagogical approaches relevant to culture. The review was underpinned by questions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the document promote values reflection in relation to culture and cultural biases? • Do ESD policies support critical and creative thinking as a means of tackling cultural challenges? • Does it promote systemic thinking? • Does the document support futures thinking? • Does the document promote transformative learning and learning to engage? • Are creative arts and expressions used as a medium to learn for sustainable development? |
| Accessibility and process | Inclusion and participation of culture stakeholders | <p>The framework of analysis was keen to ascertain whether cultural voices had informed the development of policies and/or whether the policy content was culturally acceptable. Some key questions underpinned the review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have culture stakeholders been involved and how have they participated in the development of the policy? • Is the policy culturally acceptable for all? • Is the policy available in languages and formats suitable for all? |

Table 3: Framework of key questions of the analysis

3.3.3 Interviews

The review included a series of telephone and face-to-face interviews with stakeholders who met at least one of the following criteria:

- They were involved in the development of one or more of the ESD policies chosen for this review.
- They are relevant stakeholders who are well informed on national ESD issues and/or ESD policy-making in the chosen country/region.
- They are 'culture stakeholders' who are able to contextualize the cultural issues and dimensions relevant to ESD and the policies generated at national or regional levels.
- They are ESD national and regional policy-makers. These are key stakeholders who the review wished to learn from, but who were also influenced through the interview process, in particular, through targeted questions about culture and its relationship with ESD.

3.3.4 Policy review using the designed framework of analysis

The ESD policies selected were reviewed using the framework identified above. In this process, the framework was piloted and adapted with a view to making it a useful tool for others seeking to establish the relationship between ESD and culture in a variety of settings.

3.3.5 Identification of gaps and opportunities

The exercise of reviewing policies revealed some existing gaps in integrating cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue at the policy-making level. Opportunities for future action have been identified taking into account the results of the review, the key issues raised during the interviewing process, and the consultation of key literature in areas of ESD and culture.

3.4 What challenges were encountered?

Timeline: This review was conducted over a period of four months. Given the conceptual complexity underpinning this work, and the need to design (rather than adapt) a framework of analysis, time proved to be a constraint.

Language: The research sought to review ESD policy documents through a framework which established how culture could add value to learning for sustainable development. ESD is underpinned by a specific conceptual basis which brings with it its own terminology. Equally, culture stakeholders relate to particular concepts and language which are not always shared by those engaged in ESD thinking or practice. It proved difficult to define and to formulate a language that both sets of stakeholders could understand and use in future applications.

Literature on ESD and culture: Despite the abundance of literature on ESD and culture, there are few documents that try to link both and identify common principles. The review relied heavily on recent UNESCO documentation such as the *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* (2001), the *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* (2005) and the *Cultural Diversity Programming Lens Toolkit* (2008 version, under revision) when developing the analysis framework. As

a result, some may argue that the review relies on information from one key source and thus presents a limited perspective.

Selection of policies: ESD policies with a stronger cultural component were developed between the years 1998 and 2008. The review was unable to ascertain why this was the case. This meant that many of the chosen policies were developed some time ago, thus it proved difficult to locate the stakeholders engaged in the policy development process as many had moved on – in some cases to other fields or areas of responsibility.

4

Key findings

This section outlines the key findings arising from a review of education for sustainable development policies from a culture perspective. The analysis privileged cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue dimensions and sought to identify broad opportunities for strengthening the contribution of culture within ESD strategic frameworks. Snapshots,⁸ consisting of extracts from the documents reviewed, are included in this section. Both illustrate good practices and showcase issues which are yet to be addressed. Text in brackets accompanies and exemplifies the main text, and boxes provide further explanations.

This section is structured in accordance with the key areas identified in the framework of analysis:

- **Understanding of culture:** analysing references and interpretations of culture broadly as well as representations of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue
- **Planning and practice of culture through ESD:** integration of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in ESD learning objectives and pedagogical approaches
- **Accessibility and process:** inclusion and participation of culture stakeholders in the process of development, implementation and evaluation of ESD policies, and
- **Summary:** overview of how culture has been embedded into the specific ESD policies reviewed.

The key findings of this review will enable the identification of gaps and opportunities as well as future recommendations, which can guide ESD policy-makers seeking to embed culture within ESD frameworks.

Understanding of culture

Key finding 1:

Culture is interpreted essentially as cultural heritage

The documents acknowledge, describe and respect the rich cultural and natural heritage of their respective countries and regions. All the policies reviewed emphasized the importance of conservation to the well-being and spiritual fulfillment of their communities and sought opportunities to learn about cultural traditions. As an example, in New Zealand, education for sustainability is seen as a means to learn about cultural heritage (see Box 1).

⁸ Different snapshots from various countries and regions are given as examples. Some countries and regions are featured more often than others. This does not imply that countries and regions not featured in this section are, or are not, addressing the components reviewed.

Box 1.

Culture as cultural heritage

See Change (PCE, 2004) views Maori perspectives as an integral component of ESD in New Zealand. Specifically, the document acknowledges that ESD can provide a context for students to learn about the Maori people in relation to the natural resources and cultural heritage of New Zealand, and the significance of this heritage to present and future generations (2004: 67).

The policies convey a partial view of culture and, through limiting their interpretation (mostly to issues of conservation and heritage), they stifle progress towards sustainable development. Culture can assist in deepening understanding of the core issues underpinning sustainable development and in identifying pathways for change towards more positive futures. This can only be achieved if it is embraced in a more holistic sense.

Key finding 2:

Cultural diversity is valued mostly within the context of indigenous knowledge

The Mexican ESD framework recognizes the value of alternative worldviews and the inclusion of divergent thinking as important in constructing responses to environmental issues (see Box 2). The document focuses on indigenous knowledge and constitutes a prime example of how cultural diversity was reflected in the policies reviewed.

Box 2

Culture as cultural diversity

The Mexican framework encourages cultural diversity and pluralism of worldviews.

The recognition of pluralism, respect for different worldviews and recovery of traditional systems to manage the natural resources, are elements which will enable communities to define their own environmental culture (SEMARNAT, 2006: 42)

Many of the ESD frameworks reviewed stress the importance of traditional and aboriginal communities in promoting and informing responses to sustainable development issues. This is especially true with reference to the management of natural resources and sharing of indigenous knowledge.

Immigrant cultures are less visible within the culture discourse of the ESD policies reviewed. The Welsh document is an exception to this in that it recognizes how access to formal education is critical to the empowerment of minorities and cultural groups, which in turn are vital to informing visions for a more sustainable future (see Bracket 1).

Bracket 1:

Cultural diversity as a means to create a more sustainable society (Wales)

The Further Education sector 'draws a disproportionate share of its learners from deprived communities, ethnic minorities, the disadvantaged and other groups that traditionally rarely participate in learning after they leave school. As such, the sector is not just a driver of inclusion, social mobility and economic competitiveness, but can play a key role in creating a sustainable, globally aware society' (DCELLS, 2006: 47).

Key finding 3:

ESD policies see culture as static

Cultural diversity is evolving within and across communities. As a concept, it changes over time and is shaped by human mobility and aspirations. Few of the ESD policies reviewed acknowledged the evolving nature of cultural diversity and instead placed emphasis on the need to preserve cultural traditions. The exceptions were the New Zealand and Asia-Pacific frameworks (see Box 3), which saw this dynamic as a means to promote learning for sustainable development and global citizenship. The New Zealand document tracks how cultural diversity has changed over time. Acknowledging these changes is important as evolving worldviews will continue to shape how sustainable development is defined and addressed in the country. The Asia-Pacific strategy also recognizes that culture is not static and offers a framework which is able to adapt to the changing realities of the region.

Box 3

Culture as lived and evolving

Over 4 million people live in New Zealand today. The mix of this population and the locations where they live, have changed a lot over the last century. Two key trends are: a change in cultural mix and a shift to urban centres (PCE, 2004: 22).

The Asia-Pacific region has designed a flexible ESD framework, so it can be adapted over time and, thus, meet the region's evolving socio-cultural realities:

Socioeconomic, environmental and cultural realities are not static; therefore, the Regional Strategy is an open document that is adaptable for revision to the changing needs of stakeholders throughout the Decade (UNESCO Bangkok, 2005: 4).

Key finding 4:

Intercultural dialogue is acknowledged but rarely promoted explicitly in ESD policies

Development is about the sharing of learning and visions for a sustainable future. This means that mechanisms are needed for dialogue across cultural backgrounds and worldviews. The Mexican and Asia-Pacific ESD documents provide good examples of how intercultural dialogue can be included in ESD policies (see Bracket 2).

Bracket 2:

Culture as a means for dialogue

Mexico: It is important to emphasize that sustainable development is an open concept which embraces different understandings. This plurality in understandings needs to become an invitation for dialogue to contextualize (culturally and regionally) the definitions. This pluralism should not be understood as a limitation or disqualification among the different opinions and views (SEMARNAT, 2006: 32).

Asia Pacific: It is essential to the success of ESD at the community level that coordination and networking be strengthened between different stakeholders such as women, youth, men, faith-based groups, cultural institutions, indigenous groups, schools, teachers and law makers (UNESCO Bangkok, 2005: 7).

Key finding 5:

Culture is often seen as a challenge rather than an opportunity to move closer to sustainability

Linguistic diversity, human mobility and globalization are the cultural challenges that are most acknowledged in the ESD frameworks reviewed (see Box 4). These are interpreted as constraints to progress towards sustainable development. Intercultural dialogue is rarely seen as an opportunity to explore new creative ways to live or construct a sustainable future amongst diverse groups. None of the documents acknowledge the double challenge that cultural diversity unfolds: promoting creative expressions and 'learning to live together'.

Box 4

Cultural challenges in sustainable development

Communities in Kenya have mainly relied on traditional knowledge and technology to deal with sustainability issues. However, the Kenyan document states that globalization and the growth of population have severely affected the ecological equilibrium of these communities.

Industrialization, globalization and population ... present new challenges in sustainable utilization of the country's resources. This has resulted in the disruption of natural and cultural systems. It is imperative; therefore, that capacity is built to ensure sustainable use of national resources (NEMA, 2007: 14).

In New Zealand, different worldviews and languages seem to be the main barriers to sharing values and taking action for sustainable futures.

Cross-cultural communication is also challenging at times because of vast difference in language. It is very difficult to understand the worldview of one culture while using the language of another (PCE, 2004: 105).

Key finding 6:

Links between language (as a means of cultural expression and communication) and sustainable development are yet to be acknowledged

Some policies link the promotion of native languages and multilingualism through education to the achievement of sustainable development. A good example of this is the Sub-Saharan Africa Strategy, which promotes African languages as the means for teaching and learning, and reinforcing African cultural identities.

However, in some policies, languages are interpreted more as a communication barrier than a vehicle for understanding cultural perspectives or a medium for inclusion (see Box 5). Minority languages tend to be mostly overlooked. Links between language and sustainable development are not yet acknowledged.

Box 5

The language challenge

Maori people use their own language and terminology of sustainability. While learning about their practices is important, language seems to be presented as a knowledge-exchange barrier.

Many people have highlighted problems with understanding Maori environmental concepts without possessing an understanding of te reo Maori (PCE, 2004: 105).

Bracket 3:

Native languages and education

According to the African Union and UNESCO, heritage and cultural values should form the basis for education at all levels. Similarly, the importance of African languages is recognized by these two organizations as an engine or medium of instruction and culture for giving concrete expression to African renaissance (UNESCO-BREDA, 2006: 16).

Key finding 7:

The complementarities between indigenous knowledge and scientific learning systems are not explored

The documents acknowledge the importance of local and indigenous knowledge in sustainable development. Some countries are attempting to assess local knowledge and traditions to explore their potential for wider application or to identify those practices which are hindering sustainable development. One example of this is the Jamaican framework (see Box 6). However, the complementarities between indigenous knowledge and scientific learning systems are yet to be thought through. The exception is the Canadian document which does try to link indigenous and scientific knowledge in an assessment of sustainability issues (see Box 7).

Box 6

Traditional knowledge assessment

In Jamaica, traditional and endogenous knowledge is highly promoted. However, for wider application an in-depth assessment is needed:

Environmental Education for Sustainable Development can also assess traditional knowledge and practices and re-emphasize those which are sustainable and which show potential for wider application development (NEEC, 1998: 27).

Box 7

Complementarities between indigenous and scientific knowledge

The Canadian framework is a good example of an attempt to try to link indigenous and scientific knowledge to achieve sustainability.

Over the past years, the Innu Nation, Environment Canada, the Gorsebrook Research Institute of Saint Mary's University and Natural Resources Canada have been exploring new ways to connect Innu knowledge and Western science in Labrador (Government of Canada, 2002: 7).

Key finding 8:

Creativity is underplayed in sustainable development

Creativity is key to sustainable development as it enables people to imagine and construct different pathways for the future. Creativity is also essential to learning to live together, a fundamental cultural principle. However, it is frequently omitted in the ESD frameworks reviewed – the Jamaican document is an exception (see Box 8).

Box 8

Creativity as a culture principle

Jamaica is one of the countries which acknowledged the importance of creativity in education for sustainable development. Although creativity is promoted throughout the entire document it also acknowledges that it is not as supported as it should be:

There is little use of theatre arts or popular culture as vehicles for education on or awareness of the environment and sustainable development (NEEC, 1998: 74).

Planning and practice of culture

Key finding 9:

There are missed opportunities through not embedding culture components within ESD learning objectives

Although most ESD documents acknowledge cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue as important to sustainable development, these are not supported in the learning objectives of strategies. No concrete learning objectives exist that can assist in translating these elements into real practice. As such, the lack of connections between ESD learning objectives and culture leads to many missed opportunities.

Almost all the ESD policies reviewed promote capacity building and partnerships as fundamental to moving closer to sustainability. This is important in order to develop abilities to achieve the goals and actions required for sustainable development, and to create ownership. However, ESD policies do not explicitly support capacity building in relation to cultural issues or through intercultural dialogue. They do not explicitly promote the creation of intercultural partnerships either, which are essential in sustainable development processes to allow different worldviews and ambitions to influence and inform the pathway to a sustainable future.

ESD policies appreciate and respect cultural difference and worldviews. However, learning to appreciate cultural diversity and learning to work with different worldviews are not promoted as objectives of ESD. This is a missed opportunity as intercultural dialogue is necessary in order to share values and advance visions for a sustainable future. Boxes 9 and 10 provide some examples of opportunities missed.

Box 9

Learning to interact through intercultural partnerships

Many documents promote the creation of partnerships to build sustainable futures. However, intercultural partnerships are not specifically supported, as shown by these examples from Jamaica, Kenya and the Asia-Pacific, respectively.

Partnerships within the wider community are important as a source of financial and material resources and expertise (NEEC, 1998: 80).

The effectiveness of the Decade in Kenya will depend on the strength and inclusiveness of the partnerships, networks and alliances formed by stakeholders at all levels (NEMA, 2003: 33).

Partnerships must not be viewed as simply business-NGO. Other possibilities include business-government, business-business, and tripartite partnerships (UNESCO Bangkok, 2005: 7).

Box 10

Learning to develop human and creative capacity

The sub-Saharan framework acknowledges that the success of implementing an ESD policy will depend on how stakeholders are involved and participate in this process. The framework promotes training for all key stakeholders including local leaders. They are important to guarantee that cultural communities participate in the process.

Provision of training for such key actors as parliamentarians and local leaders, journalists and NGO personnel to enable them to promote the implementation policy at the regional and national levels and the participation of the community in the design of implementation strategies (UNESCO BRENDA, 2006: 15).

Key finding 10:

Few policies see the relevance of culture to pedagogy or how it can add value to ESD approaches

Culture is not reflected in the pedagogical approaches outlined in the reviewed ESD frameworks. The findings of this review illustrate how often planning and practice of culture through ESD is forgotten in the development and implementation of ESD policies. Few documents establish relationships between critical, systemic or futures thinking and culture, or use multicultural learning spaces and creative expressions as a means to promote learning for sustainability. The Welsh frameworks do identify a small area of overlap (see Box 11). The Wales document acknowledges critical thinking as a good medium for reflecting on inequalities and injustice and for learning to work together.

Box 11

Critical and creative thinking

ESD policies promote critical and creative thinking. However, a few documents reflect on how critical thinking can help in understanding and addressing cultural issues and challenges. In Wales, critical thinking is viewed as important for challenging inequalities and learning to work together.

Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship comprises knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. Skills development includes aspects such as critical thinking, the ability to argue effectively, showing the ability to challenge injustice and inequality and cooperative working (DCELLS, 2006: 19).

Accessibility and process

Key finding 11:

Culture stakeholders and interest groups have fewer participation spaces during the development, implementation and evaluation of ESD policies than dominant stakeholder groups

Information regarding the accessibility of documents was limited. It was difficult, therefore, to ascertain through document analysis whether there were plans to ensure that the documents were accessible to diverse cultural groups. Questions about language and mode of accessibility (e.g. non-electronic) remained unanswered. This research also sought to establish whether the content of the document was culturally acceptable to all. The interviews did assist with addressing the above questions, however.

The documents reviewed are usually available in the official languages of the country or region, and in hard copy or online. This limits accessibility to some people, for example, those who do not use any of the official languages as mother tongues. As a trend, countries with strong aboriginal cultures, such as Canada or New Zealand, have stated and recognized that their ESD frameworks do not reflect the whole reality of their complex cultural context (see Box 12). This was also reaffirmed in some of the interviews.

Box 12

Dominant voices in ESD policies

ESD policies do not usually reflect the whole reality of their respective cultural contexts. This is acknowledged in the Canadian and New Zealand frameworks.

We recognize that the terminology used does not always acknowledge the voices of aboriginals and groups from other cultures, and we hope that the inclusivity we wish to achieve will make room for their voices (Government of Canada, 2002: 1).

Although this report has looked at learning across society, it has not had a major focus on tangata whenua. It is likely that many close connections can be made with the principles of education for sustainability and tangata whenua perspectives in the environment. Further research is needed in this area, and should be conducted in a culturally appropriate way (PCE, 2004: 135).

The participation of culture stakeholders in the policy development process is important as it contributes to empowering people and building ownership. Culture stakeholders also bring new perspectives to sustainable development and alternative visions for the future. Most of the ESD frameworks analysed have been developed through stakeholder consultation and participation. However, it is difficult to ascertain whether culture stakeholders have been taken into account in these processes and to the extent to which they have been able to participate. The Kenyan policy document is a prime example of this.

Some of the ESD stakeholders interviewed stated that frameworks developed through a consultation process are usually representative of all major groups, including cultural ones. However, interviewees also recognized that not all social groups have the same opportunities or space for participation. Participation strategies, therefore, need to be developed to ensure that culture stakeholders are fairly represented and are as engaged in the development process as other major groups.

Bracket 4:

Participation of culture stakeholders

Kenya: The document has been developed through a consultative process involving a wide range of key stakeholders (NEMA, 2007: 7).

The development of the ESD Strategy assumed a participatory process involving key stakeholders including government agencies, the private sector, civil society organizations and media (NEMA, 2007: 9).

Summary

Key finding 12:

Culture has been partially embedded in discrete parts of the ESD policies and strategic documents reviewed

Most of the ESD policies reviewed could be described as culturally sensitive although they are not always explicit about the potential of culture in the attainment of sustainable development (see Box 13).

Box 13

Results from the review

The following examples are extracts from the results of this review regarding how culture has been embedded in ESD policies.

Canada:

Cultural diversity is acknowledged throughout the document as an important dimension that characterizes the country. However, it is basically about protection of diversity and acknowledging local and indigenous knowledge as a source for sustainability. It sees culture less as a challenge, and more as an opportunity, a basis for dialogue and value-sharing. The document is culturally sensitive. However, cultural statements seem too often very general and nebulous.

Northern Areas – Pakistan:

Culture is acknowledged in discrete parts of the document. Many cultural aspects are not acknowledged in this document, especially issues of intercultural dialogue.

Kenya:

Culture is acknowledged and addressed in discrete parts of the document. The document reinforces the importance of issues such as contextualization and knowledge systems, but other issues such as intercultural dialogue, interculturality, creativity and creative expressions are not addressed.

The documents acknowledge the cultural dimension of sustainable development in the initial parts of the document when scoping sustainable development. In these context-setting sections, culture is seen as intrinsic to societies and is highly valued in terms of cultural heritage. However, interculturality is weak and notions of diversity sometimes narrowly defined. There were several missed opportunities in terms of translating this cultural component of sustainable development into real practice.

Culture is almost absent from learning objectives and pedagogical approaches across the documents. The lack of participation strategies to accompany the development, implementation or evaluation of the frameworks meant that culture stakeholders had limited opportunities to engage with the ESD frameworks reviewed.

A more holistic interpretation of culture and a clearer translation of its principles into practice would help align these documents with the realities of their respective countries and regions. Integrating culture in ESD policies, with the complexity which it embraces, would enrich the implementation of sustainable development and facilitate the creation of more inclusive pathways for a sustainable future.

The following table summarizes the needs arising from the key findings of this review:

| Embedding cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in ESD Policies: emerging needs: |
|--|
| <p>Understanding of culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To embrace a deeper interpretation of culture. ESD policies tend to limit their interpretation of culture to heritage conservation. • To address the double challenge that cultural diversity presents: promoting creative and cultural expressions, and constructing new ways of living together. • To design ESD frameworks which acknowledge the changing cultural realities of the country/geographical area. • To define the cultural challenges faced and view them as a positive means to promote sustainable development. |
| <p>Planning and practice of culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explicitly promote initiatives which encourage intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity in the attainment of sustainable development. • To embed and make more explicit the cultural principles in ESD policies' learning objectives. • To promote cooperation, dialogue and intercultural learning spaces among and for cultural groups, so that shared values and visions for a sustainable future can be constructed. • To reinforce linguistic diversity in ESD, notably by encouraging linguistic exchanges (including minority language communities) at national, regional and international levels, promoting learning for sustainable development in one's mother tongue and making sustainable development learning materials available in different languages. • To promote the linking of scientific and technological models of understanding with those underpinned by traditional knowledge. • To strengthen the culture components of ESD in the formal curriculum. • To promote creative and cultural arts and expressions as a means of education for sustainable development. • To promote critical, future and systemic thinking as well as values reflection to explore culture assumptions, question beliefs and cultural practices, and envision more inclusive futures. |
| <p>Accessibility and process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop specific participation strategies to ensure that culture stakeholders are represented or engaged in the policy development process. • To support exchanges among cultural groups and communities during the policy development, implementation and evaluation processes. • To ensure that ESD policies are culturally appropriate and disseminated in various formats which all stakeholders can access. |
| <p>Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To embed cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue explicitly and holistically throughout the whole document. |

Table 4: Needs for embedding cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in ESD policies



5

Opportunities and recommendations

Based on the above findings, this section identifies opportunities and proposes recommendations for mainstreaming cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue principles, issues and challenges in policies and strategic documents that support ESD.

5.1 Bringing culture to the core of the ESD policy agenda

The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2004–2015) provides a timely platform to facilitate and strengthen connections between ESD and culture. It offers excellent opportunities to bring the cultural dimension to the core of ESD agendas at policy and practice levels. The Bonn Declaration (UNESCO, 2009a) was consistent in reinforcing the educational response to sustainable development challenges and in building capacity to adapt to change. In this context, key learning objectives and pedagogical approaches related to culture should be promoted during the second half of the Decade.

Opportunities also exist in terms of strengthening collaboration between the UNESCO Culture Sector and the UNESCO DESD Secretariat. ESD has been identified as an intersectorial theme and opportunities for strengthening links between the two units are to be encouraged, especially in developing innovative resources that map the relationship between these two areas. The possibility of co-hosting a culture-ESD forum is to be encouraged.

UNESCO, in close collaboration with the DESD Reference Group, the Monitoring and Evaluation Expert Group (MEEG), the International Advisory Group for the ESD World Conference and the United Nations Inter-Agency Committee for the DESD, has already started to design a multi-stakeholder consultative process to develop a strategic roadmap for the second half of the Decade (UNESCO, 2009c). This is a good opportunity to set in place targets to embed culture in ESD policies. The Bonn Roadmap will also involve the updating of some aspects of the DESD International Implementation Scheme, in which the relationships between ESD and culture could be strengthened and clearly addressed (UNESCO, 2009c).

There will be many opportunities within the context of the DESD Monitoring and Evaluation processes to assess the extent to which culture has been included in educational policies and initiatives related to sustainable development. These will constitute learning processes in and of themselves.

It will also be important to influence other key UN DESD groups (DESD Reference Group, International Advisory Group and UN Inter-Agency Committee for the DESD), UNESCO National Commissions and international key ESD agents (e.g. Earth Charter, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, Regional Centres of Expertise of the United Nations University, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development) to advance this agenda at planned regional and international ESD events over the next five years.

Recommendations:

Ensure that culture forms part of Phase II and III of the DESD Monitoring and Evaluation processes. This could involve providing MEEG with a brief to assist them with the task of defining possible indicators relating to culture and learning for sustainability.

- Disseminate a brief of the findings of this review to UNESCO ESD, MEEG, the DESD International Advisory Group, the DESD Reference and UNESCO National Commissions as a basis for dialogue at meetings. Formal and informal opportunities for interaction between the above stakeholders and the UNESCO Culture Sector could be created.
- Further involve culture experts and actors in revisions of the International Implementation Scheme to promote stronger connections between culture and ESD.
- Explore the possibility of organizing a joint culture-ESD policy forum under UNESCO's leadership, notably through the UNESCO intersectoral platform on ESD.
- Develop a policy brief linking culture and global initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and/or Education for All (EFA). A targeted communication plan should accompany this document.

5.2 Expanding and disseminating resources exploring the linkages between culture and ESD at policy and practice levels

One of the main challenges is updating the thinking of policy-makers and stakeholders such that they have a more comprehensive and relevant view of culture and its relationship to sustainable development. There is an opportunity to build upon materials which already exist. For example, UNESCO's Cultural Diversity Programming Lens Toolkit (2008 version) and Education for Sustainable Development Lens (2009b) are primary resources for ESD policy-makers and stakeholder groups. These documents can inform the writing of a policy brief to assist in addressing needs in this area, when distributed as part of a targeted communication plan.

Despite the existing materials mentioned above, there is a lack of documents and resources to establish connections between ESD and culture at the policy level. The development of such documents will be important in guiding policy-makers and other ESD stakeholders in the task of embedding cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue holistically in ESD policies and initiatives. This review is a first step in addressing this existing gap. However, it will be important to create additional resources and research opportunities to engage and guide ESD stakeholders.

While developing such materials, it is important to acknowledge that many ESD policies are developed by environment rather than education ministries. This was also confirmed in the selection of ESD strategic documents for this review. Sustainable development learning approaches can prove a major challenge

for policy-makers from an environmental background, therefore, guidelines and resources should be prepared from this perspective. It will be important to focus on ways to embed culture in ESD learning objectives and pedagogic approaches.

Recommendations:

- Reinforce capacity building for decision-makers and ESD stakeholders, making better and extensive use of existing resources such as the UNESCO Cultural Diversity Programming Lens Toolkit (2008 version). Promote these through ESD forums, workshop, conferences and websites.
- Develop a web portal on culture in ESD as an integral part of the UNESCO-DESD website. The target audience should be ESD stakeholders who inform and influence development of ESD strategies and programmes. The web portal should include a resource list and further reading.
- Identify innovative ways of expanding the range of resources available for ESD policy-makers in the field of culture.
- Explore the possibilities of establishing a UNESCO Chair in culture and ESD. This could enhance the development of research agendas and support research in these two areas at policy and practice levels.

5.3 Engaging culture stakeholders in ESD

One of the key findings of this review is that culture stakeholders have fewer participation spaces during the development, implementation and evaluation of ESD policies than dominant stakeholder groups (see Key finding 11).

An excellent opportunity exists for UNESCO to develop key documentation to influence and change the ways in which culture groups are involved in ESD generally, not only at policy levels. Experiences of developing similar documentation can be drawn upon for inspiration. For example, in 1997 the International Union for Conservation of Nature developed a guidebook for those engaged in environmental conservation, entitled *Beyond Fences: Seeking Social Sustainability in Conservation*. The book sought to re-define and explore alternative ways to involve social groups and local stakeholders in conservation (see IUCN, 1997a, 1997b). It had a significant impact on how conservation was framed, planned and undertaken, redirecting IUCN strategies in this area. It would be useful to develop a similar text with a focus on the participation of culture stakeholders in ESD. Other initiatives highlighting the role of culture stakeholders in ESD could be envisioned, for example, by forming a group of 'Culture Ambassadors for ESD'.⁹

Recommendations:

- Use material from this report and documented frameworks to develop guidelines on how to engage culture stakeholders in ESD. The IUCN guidebook *Beyond Fences: Seeking Social Sustainability in Conservation* can be used as an inspirational tool.
- Form a group of ESD ambassadors who support the embedding of culture within ESD strategic frameworks. The ambassadors, drawn from UN regions across the globe, would be supported in

⁹ These ambassadors would be specifically nominated to assist stakeholders in their region to embed culture in ESD strategic frameworks. Their role should not be confused with that of UNESCO Goodwill Ambassadors.

delivering workshops and chairing dialogues at key sustainable development conferences and ESD meetings such as: the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the World Conservation Congress, the World Environmental Education Congress, UNESCO ESD Regional Seminars and Expert Group Meetings, and UNEP platforms.



6

Final comments

Cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue are internationally recognized and valued as vehicles to move closer to sustainable development. However, the 'culture dimension' of sustainability can prove a challenge to policy-makers and practitioners seeking to incorporate it into sustainable development and ESD strategies. Only a small number of documents articulate the relationship between culture and sustainability, and few resources support a closer integration of these two areas. This review is a first step in identifying needs and ways forward to strengthen the relationship between ESD and culture in ESD strategic documents. However, more resources and stronger dissemination and communication plans on culture within the context of ESD are needed to take this agenda forward.

The UN DESD (2005–2014) has created significant momentum to encourage governments to develop innovative ESD policies and programmes, and strengthen international cooperation. This international platform therefore provides an excellent opportunity to increase awareness of the cultural dimension of ESD. The achievements of the first half of the UN DESD have been celebrated in Bonn, and a strategic roadmap for the second half of the Decade is under development. The publication of this review is timely and provides a basis to inform the development of the Bonn roadmap and set in place targets to embed culture in ESD policies.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Framework of Analysis

Is culture embedded in ESD policies and strategies?

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Understanding | Q. How is culture interpreted in ESD documents? |
| | Q.1 Is a holistic interpretation of culture reflected? Does it include all the following dimensions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • culture as heritage? • culture as cultural diversity? • culture as 'lived' – incorporating ways of relating, behaving, believing and acting? • culture as dialogue – understood as a basis for intercultural exchange? • culture as a challenge? |
| | Q.2 Is interpretation of culture limited to one or two of the components outlined above? |
| | Q. Are key culture principles acknowledged? |
| | Q.3 Are the acknowledged principles relevant to sustainable development? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interculturality? • cultural heritage? • multilingualism? • knowledge systems? • creativity? |
| | Q.4 Is the document limited to acknowledging one or two of the key concepts outlined above? |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Planning and practice of culture through ESD | Q. Are key ESD learning objectives related to culture included? | |
| | Q.5 Does the document reflect the following key learning objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning to appreciate cultural difference? • learning to develop human and creative capacity? • learning to recognize and work with culturally specific worldviews? • learning to interact through intercultural partnerships? Are there any others? | |
| | Q. Are key pedagogical approaches to culture supported? | |
| | Q.6 Does the document promote values reflection as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a means to understand where one's values come from? • a basis for challenging one's own cultural values and questioning cultural assumptions? • a process for sharing and defining common values? | |
| | Q.7 Does the document promote critical and creative thinking? | |
| | Q.8 Does the document promote systemic thinking? | |
| | Q.9 Does the document promote futures thinking? | |
| | Q.10 Does the document promote transformative learning and learning to engage? | |
| | Q.11 Does this document promote creative arts and expression as a medium for learning for sustainable development? | |
| | Q.12 Does this document promote multicultural learning spaces? | |
| | Q.13 Are there any others? | |
| | Accessibility and process | Q. Is the document accessible to all? |
| | | Q.14 Is the content culturally acceptable to all? |
| Q.15 Is the document available in the different languages of the territory? | | |
| Q.16 Is the policy available and disseminated in different formats so all groups can access to it? | | |
| Q. Have stakeholders and interests groups from diverse cultural backgrounds participated in the development and/or evaluation of this document? | | |
| Q.17 Have culture stakeholders participated in the development and/or evaluation of this document? | | |
| Q.18 Is culture part of the focus of the evaluation? | | |
| In summary | Q. In summary: how does the document address culture? | |
| | Q.19 How does the document address culture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is culture acknowledged in discrete parts of the document? • Does culture underpin the document? | |

Appendix 2 – Framework of analysis. Guidance notes

| | | Q. How is culture interpreted in ESD policies? |
|--|---|---|
| Understanding | Q.1 Is a holistic interpretation of culture reflected? Does it include all the following dimensions? | This dimension concerns promoting cultural legacy and diversity. Globalization, a core sustainable development issue, can erode cultural heritage, but also can offer new opportunities for cultural development and transformation. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • culture as heritage | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • culture as cultural diversity | ‘Cultural diversity refers to the manifold ways in which cultures of groups find expression. ¹⁰ Cultural diversity is intrinsic to every society and, thus, plays an important role in sustainable development. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • culture as ‘lived’ – incorporating ways of relating, behaving, believing and acting | <p>Culture is lived and alive. It conditions the ways in which people think, reflect upon themselves, make choices, relate with others and take decisions. Culture is a source and a catalyst of creativity, which enables people to reshape their lives. It is important for the promotion of arts, languages and cultural diversity, all of which constitute a source of creativity for people to develop their own identities and choose their ways of life. Therefore, culture is reflected in lifestyles and is continuously evolving.</p> <p>Sustainable development concerns lifestyle choices and thus learning about sustainable development is inextricably linked to learning about culture and work with cultural identities.</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • culture as dialogue – understood as a basis for intercultural exchange | Culture is a platform upon which issues can be explored and addressed. Through intercultural exchange, values can be acknowledged and often shared, and ways forward identified. This is key to peaceful co-existence among peoples and a shared vision for sustainable development. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • culture as a challenge | <p>This document interprets culture as a challenge itself, promoting not only peaceful co-existence among different cultures living in the same place, but also the creative diversity from each of these different cultures: diversity of cultural knowledge systems, specific cultural practices, creative expressions and heritage.</p> <p>This is important as sustainable development is about ‘learning to live together’ – a core pillar of learning for the twenty-first century,¹¹ which revolves around promoting cultural identities and lifestyle choices.</p> | |

¹⁰ Source: UNESCO (2005a)

¹¹ See Delors, (1996)

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| | <p>Q.2 Is interpretation of culture limited to one or two of the components outlined above?</p> | <p>'Culture embraces the whole complex of spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only arts and letters, but also ways of life, the fundamental rights of human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs.¹²</p> <p>A holistic interpretation of culture is important if sustainable development is to build upon existing values, respond to lifestyle choices and attain social justice.</p> |
| <p>Q. Are key culture principles acknowledged?</p> | | |
| | <p>Q.3 Are the following principles acknowledged as relevant to sustainable development?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interculturality | <p>'Interculturality refers to the existence and equitable interaction of diverse cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions through dialogue and mutual respect.¹³ This is linked to intercultural dialogue, which is key to cultural diversity and sustainable development.</p> <p>'Intercultural dialogue constitutes a means to understand and shape ongoing cultural changes and societal transformations. It is about confronting different values, worldviews, knowledge and beliefs, challenging people's assumptions and creating possibilities for new and broadened logics.¹⁴</p> <p>This is key to sustainable development because of the need to engage people from different cultural backgrounds in dialogue exchanges about paths towards a sustainable future.</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cultural heritage | <p>'Cultural heritage is the expression of a living culture inherited from the past, which is lived at the present and will be passed on to future generations.¹⁵</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tangible or physical cultural heritage: monuments, groups of buildings, sites, natural features, geological formations or natural sites. • Intangible cultural heritage: cultural practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces. <p>The links with sustainable development are strong because culture needs to be supported and promoted as a core component of sustainable futures. Cultural expressions and representations are important for building ownership and commitment for a sustainable future.</p> |

12 Source: UNESCO (1982, p.1)

13 Source: UNESCO (2005, p.5)

14 Source: UNESCO (2008a)

15 Source: UNESCO (2008c)

| | | |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • multilingualism | <p>Languages are the core means of knowledge transmission and communication. Languages and multilingualism are part of the challenge of cultural diversity: ensuring that peoples with different mother tongues live together while, at the same time, protecting and promoting the use of all these languages. This is important for sustainable development as one of its major goals is changing dominant worldviews that do not acknowledge diversity and hinder the development of alternative visions for a sustainable future.</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge systems | <p>There is no one unique or universally accepted form of knowledge. Modern knowledge, such as the use of technology, is of valuable importance for development, especially green technologies. On the other hand, traditional and indigenous forms of knowledge have an important role to play in informing sustainable futures. As an example, indigenous peoples often possess knowledge concerning how to balance the use and preservation of their environment. Interactions between modern science and traditional and indigenous knowledge are needed to find more sustainable solutions to current problems, such as climate change. This dialogue and synergies among different knowledge systems will enable the exploration of more creative and sustainable ways of looking at problems, and to envision and advance possible future scenarios.</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creativity | <p>Creativity allows people to reshape their lives in more open ways: broadening choices, offering a wider selection of solutions to problems, and presenting more and different pathways for the future. It enables thought, ideas and responses to transcend cultural mindsets, and inspires dialogue among cultures.</p> <p>People need alternative choices in order to take sustainable decisions and actions. Creativity gives birth to alternative choices and visions for the future, and is therefore vital to sustainable development. The capacity to envision futures is key to engaging and motivating people to think about consequences when taking decisions and planning actions.</p> |
| | <p>Q.4 Is the document limited to acknowledging one or two of the key concepts outlined above?</p> | <p>The inclusion of all the concepts outlined above is key to engaging people and communities in sustainable development, sharing knowledge and values, and promoting a more equitable society.</p> |

| Q. Are key ESD learning objectives related to culture included? | |
|--|--|
| Q.5 Does the document reflect the following key learning objectives? | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to appreciate cultural difference | The document reflects an accurate knowledge and understanding of the different cultures that exist in the territory and promotes this difference as a positive learning tool. It is important for sustainable development to provide non-threatening learning spaces where discussion, dialogue and diversity of cultural expressions are possible. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to develop human and creative capacity | <p>The document specifies how individuals, groups, organizations and societies will develop abilities to achieve the goals and actions required for sustainable development.</p> <p>Human capacity needs to be developed in areas such as: critical thinking, futures thinking, responsible local and global actions, participation in democratic decision-making, understanding different worldviews, challenging assumptions, freedom of expression, etc.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to recognize and work with culturally specific worldviews | <p>The document identifies the different existing worldviews in the country or region. Gathering together stakeholders with different views of nature and society is essential, so that they may learn as a group and construct a common future. These stakeholders may have different faiths, mother tongues, cultural practices and visions for the future.</p> <p>The effectiveness of sustainable development will ultimately be judged by the degree to which particular mindsets and dominant worldviews, which are hindering sustainable development, are challenged and changed.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to interact through intercultural partnerships | Intercultural partnerships are key to sustainable development. They bring together cultural stakeholders with different worldviews and ambitions, which influence the pathway towards a sustainable future. Intercultural participation is important for sustainable development as it empowers people to take action, take part in decision-making processes, build capacity and take ownership of solutions. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any others? | Can others, not mentioned above, be identified? |

Planning and practice of culture through ESD

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| | Q. Are key pedagogical approaches to culture supported? | |
| | Q.6 Does the document promote values reflection as: | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a means to understand where one's values come from? | <p>It is important for people to uncover their values and explore where they are derived from: are their values chosen or absorbed through socio-cultural practices? Through this process of values clarification, people can understand how values affect their actions and behaviours.</p> <p>This is important for sustainable development as people can explore how values affect their relationships and attitudes towards other people and the planet. This allows them to adjust and/or change their actions to meet their aspirations for a sustainable future.</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a basis for challenging one's own cultural values and questioning cultural assumptions? | <p>Challenging one's own values, if they are detrimental to people and the planet, is key to challenging unsustainable attitudes and actions. Critical and creative thinking underpin visions for a more sustainable future. This thinking process can assist in exploring alternative pathways.</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a process for sharing and defining common values? | <p>Sustainable development depends on the meaningful engagement of cultural groups and aspirations for a common future. This process goes beyond respecting cultural differences. It seeks to promote the dialogue needed to forge meaningful partnerships and collaborative efforts.</p> <p>Examples of sustainable development values include: equity and justice, faith and spirituality, democracy, resilience and durability, respecting the limits of the environment and resources, non-violence and peace, shared responsibility, etc. .</p> |
| | Q.7 Does the document promote critical and creative thinking? | <p>Critical and creative thinking are core elements to both sustainable development and culture. There is a need to explore new ways of thinking and acting, create choices and envision the future. Critical and creative thinking are key skills needed for this exercise.</p> |
| | Q.8 Does the document promote systemic thinking? | <p>The policy document encourages systemic thinking in order to link the economic, environmental and socio-cultural crises facing the world.</p> <p>Thinking systemically is essential to sustainable development as piecemeal approaches have proved insufficient: the resolution of one single issue creates other problems. Sustainable development requires approaches that go beyond problem-solving and/or cause-effect. There is a need to develop integrative approaches.</p> |

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| | Q.9 Does the document promote futures thinking? | The process of thinking about the future provides a space for people to engage in meaningful interpretation of culture and sustainable development. This helps construct a common vision, and leads people to take ownership and responsibility for a sustainable future. |
| | Q.10 Does the document promote transformative learning and learning to engage? | <p>'Transformative learning involves a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thoughts, feelings and actions. It implies a radical change towards interconnectedness and creates possibilities to achieve more equality, social justice, understanding and cooperation amongst peoples'.¹⁶</p> <p>Sustainability and cultural literacy are important to build common and better futures. However, there is a need for competences that offer people the skills and abilities to manage change and take action for a sustainable future.</p> |
| | Q.11 Does this document promote creative arts and expression as a medium for learning for sustainable development? | <p>The document promotes creative arts and expressions as tools for learning for sustainable development and cultural issues. Creative arts and expressions as learning tools provide learning environments that encourage the appreciation and understanding of cultural aspects.</p> <p>Creative arts and expressions also enhance individual and collective creativity, which are fundamental for sustainable development and the capacity to face cultural challenges. They also give learners the means to explore cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge, among other examples. In addition, they provide learners with the opportunity to express themselves and communicate ideas in creative and alternative ways.</p> |
| | Q.12 Does this document promote multicultural learning spaces? | <p>The document supports and encourages multicultural learning spaces as a tool for experiential learning, which is key to sustainable development.</p> <p>The engagement and participation of people of different cultural backgrounds, faiths, languages, etc. in learning activities, helps them to review, experience and reconceptualize the cultural diversity which characterizes their lives and societies.</p> <p>This experience contributes to sustainable development by offering learners some of the skills and competences needed to appreciate, understand, coexist and share values with people of different cultures. This assists them in defining goals together for a sustainable future.</p> |
| | Q.13 Are there any others? | Can others, not mentioned above, be identified? |

16 Carbalho da Silva. et al. (2008: p.10)

| | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| | Q. Is the document accessible to all? | |
| Accessibility and process | Q.14 Is the content culturally acceptable to all? | The policy document acknowledges the different worldviews and understandings in the territory, including minority and dominant cultural views, as equal. Sustainable development seeks to include all major groups and ensure that specific cultural issues are represented accurately. |
| | Q.15 Is the document available in the different languages of the territory? | The document is available in the different languages of the territory, so that all people can understand it in their mother tongue. Translations are carefully analysed and evaluated to assure accuracy. |
| | Q.16 Is the policy available and disseminated in different formats so all groups can access to it? | <p>Access to document information is guaranteed by dissemination through different formats and techniques, acknowledging the different ways in which information is accessed and disseminated in the territory.</p> <p>As examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy-makers take into consideration literacy and illiteracy levels, so that the policy may be disseminated via mediums other than the written word. • Not all society groups have easy access to online services, so alternative ways of dissemination are taken into account. |
| | Q. Have stakeholders and interests groups from diverse cultural backgrounds participated in the development and/or evaluation of this document? | |
| | Q.17 Have culture stakeholders participated in the development and/or evaluation of this document? | <p>All possible stakeholders have been identified and participated in the development and/or evaluation of the document, taking into consideration: faiths, mother tongues, cultural practices and alternative visions for the future.</p> <p>This is important for sustainable development as participation in the development of ESD documents contributes to empowering people and building capacity as well as ownership.</p> |
| | Q.18 Is culture part of the focus of the evaluation? | Culture is key to sustainable development as it conditions how people think, live, interact with the others, take decisions and choose their lifestyles. Therefore, the evaluation mechanisms and tools used to monitor the ESD document need to appropriately reflect the cultural aspects as a focus of the evaluation. |
| | Q. In summary: How does the document address culture? | |
| In summary | Q.19 How does the document address culture: | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is culture acknowledged in discrete parts of the document? | Culture is identified as a specific issue or content to be addressed. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does culture underpin the document? | Culture is seen as intrinsic to sustainable development and is reflected throughout the rationale, objectives and implementation plan of the document. |

Appendix 3 – List of ESD policies and supporting documents

| Country or Region | Policy/Strategy/Framework | Generated by |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| Canada | <i>A Framework for Environmental Learning and Sustainability in Canada (2002)</i> Supporting documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LSF and Manitoba documents | Government of Canada |
| Jamaica | <i>The National Environmental Action Plan for Sustainable Development (1998-2010)</i> Supporting documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the Status of Implementation of the National EE Action Plan for SD (2004) • Proceedings of the national consultation on EE for SD (2003) • A proposed institutional framework for EE for SD in Jamaica (2004) | National Environmental Education Committee (NEEC) |
| Kenya | <i>Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Implementation Strategy (2005-2014)</i> Supporting documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development-UNESCO Nairobi Cluster (2006) | National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) |
| Mexico | <i>Estrategia de Educación Ambiental para la Sustentabilidad en México (2006-2014)</i> Supporting documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compromiso Nacional por la Década de la Educación para el desarrollo sustentable | Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Government of Mexico (SEMARNAT) |
| New Zealand | <i>See Change: Learning and Education for Sustainability (2004)</i> Supporting documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating Our Future: Sustainable Development for New Zealand (2002) • A Pacific Dialogue on Religious diversity two-day meeting August 2008) • Learning to care for our environment – A national strategy for environmental education | Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (PCE) |
| Northern Areas Pakistan | <i>Northern Areas Strategy for Sustainable Development. Background paper: Environmental Education (2003)</i> | IUCN – Ghulam Abbas |
| Wales | <i>Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship: A strategy for Action (2006-2015)</i> | Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS), Welsh Assembly Government |

| | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| <p>Asia-Pacific</p> | <p><i>Working paper: Asia-Pacific Regional Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (2005)</i></p> <p>Supporting documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting ESD in the Asia-Pacific region: A framework for action • UNESCO Culture Strategy in the Asia-Pacific (UNESCO Bangkok portal) | <p>UNESCO Bangkok</p> |
| <p>Sub-Saharan Africa</p> | <p><i>Strategy of Education for Sustainable Development (2006)</i></p> <p>Supporting documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of commitment and call for support and action in the implementation of ESD in sub-Saharan Africa (2006) | <p>UNESCO regional office for Education in Africa (BREDA)</p> |

Appendix 4 – Interviews

List of ESD stakeholders interviewed

| Who? | When? | How? |
|---|-----------------|---|
| <p>Roel van Raaij Secretary of the National Steering Committee on Learning for Sustainable Development Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, The Netherlands</p> | 22 January 2009 | Face-to-face interview University of Gloucestershire, Cheltenham, UK |
| <p>Arturo Curiel Instituto de Medio Ambiente y Comunidades Humanas, University of Guadalajara, México</p> | 24 March 2009 | Telephone call |
| <p>Pam Schwartzberg Ontario Program Director for Learning for a Sustainable Future (LSF), Ontario, Canada</p> | 24 March 2009 | Telephone call |
| <p>Glenn Strachan ESD Expert Advisor to the Welsh Assembly Senior research fellow at the International Research Institute in Sustainability (IRIS), University of Gloucestershire, UK</p> | 25 March 2009 | Face-to-face interview University of Gloucestershire, Cheltenham, UK |
| <p>Heila Lotz-Sisitka Chair of Environmental Education and Sustainability, Rhodes University, South Africa</p> | 2 April 2009 | Face-to-face interview ESD World Conference, Bonn, Germany |
| <p>Gerald Farthing Manitoba Deputy Minister Education, Citizenship, Youth, Manitoba, Canada</p> | 2 April 2009 | Face-to-face interview ESD World Conference, Bonn, Germany |
| <p>Charles Hopkins UNESCO Chair, Reorienting Teacher Education to Address Sustainability, and United Nations University Chair for Education for Sustainable Development, York University, Canada</p> | 2 April 2009 | Face-to-face interview ESD World Conference, Bonn, Germany |
| <p>David Ainsworth Programme Officer, Implementation and Technical Support Division, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Montreal, Canada</p> | 2 April 2009 | Face-to-face interview ESD World Conference, Bonn, Germany |

Key findings from the interviews

How is culture interpreted in ESD policies?

- In countries characterized by a strong cultural identity and history, cultural considerations are seen as integral to sustainable development thinking and actions. Culture is recognized as part of the fabric of life and is key to constructing individual and group identities.
- Many interviewees acknowledged that culture is perceived as part of a nation's history, but at the same time is also an aspiration.
- The documents that explicitly acknowledge the cultural dimension of sustainable development, frame these according to stakeholder (term used inclusively) understandings and perceptions. This has meant that the interpretation of culture embedded in the documentation is often limited to the conservation of heritage or promotion of indigenous or traditional knowledge, as this reflects dominant interpretations.
- Several interviewees perceived culture as related to learning about heritage, cultural history and social cohesion. They also identified with the promotion and celebration of cultural heritage, which many argued was well represented in the ESD documents analysed.
- A few interviewees referred to the challenge of engaging culture communities and multicultural groups in heritage and conservation issues.
- ESD stakeholders and practitioners usually interpret culture as continuously evolving. Interviewees pointed out that ESD policies and frameworks often take a more static and limited view.
- An interviewee identified how indigenous communities were explicitly referenced throughout the ESD policy under consideration – often to the exclusion of other cultural groups such as migrants.

Which are the key culture principles and learning objectives acknowledged in ESD policies?

- Several interviews identified overlapping principles between ESD and culture, such as interculturalism, multilingualism, creativity and dialogue. They argued that these were embedded within the documentation under consideration.
- A few interviewees remarked that some of the culture learning objectives related to sustainable development were integrated into ESD competency frameworks developed to define skills, attitudes and behaviours required for a sustainable future.
- Multilingualism is usually well addressed in the documents. However, minority languages not considered official languages in specific countries tended to be overlooked.
- In many countries, there is an emphasis to promote learning in the mother tongue.
- Many interviewees pointed out the importance of linking language and ESD concepts.
- Most interviews acknowledged that ESD policies recognize the important role that local, indigenous and rural knowledge play in developing understanding and commitment to sustainable development. Nonetheless, the connections between these are not always made explicit or supported by the actions identified in the documents.

Which are the key pedagogical approaches to culture supported in ESD policies?

- Interviewees acknowledged the existence of an emphasis on values clarification as well as critical thinking, with many of the stakeholders confirming the importance of these to understanding cultural issues associated with sustainable development.
- Many policies were implicitly underpinned by action learning, cultural interpretation, drama and arts as pedagogical tools critical to ESD. However, in some countries there is a lack of promotion of approaches that enhance creativity and imagination.
- Two interviewees held the view that systems thinking is generally easier to address in primary education because of greater options for interdisciplinary education.
- Several interviewees saw capacity building as important to engaging stakeholders (including cultural stakeholders) in issues of sustainable development. Similarly, they argued that all stakeholders should be given opportunities to appreciate the global dimensions and intercultural engagement requirement for sustainable development.
- Worldviews are inherent to the bilingual situation of specific countries. However, this might not be acknowledged explicitly in the specific documents.
- Some stakeholders emphasized the need for ESD to transcend formal education mechanisms to allow access by culture stakeholders. Several interviewees supported pedagogical approaches which linked home education and school education.

Accessible to all?

- ESD documents that have been developed through a consultation process are characterized by good representation of all major groups, including cultural ones. However, not all the social groups have the same opportunities or space for participation.
- No specific participation strategies were developed to ensure that culture stakeholders were represented or engaged in the policy development process.
- Documents are usually available in the official languages of the country. The document is rarely translated into minority or non-official languages.