



Special Report: Education for Sustainable Development
World ESD Conference Nov. 10 – 12, 2014 (Nagoya, Japan)
 by Brent Simmonds (Chair, JALT Environmental Committee)



Introduction

The United Nations decade of *Education for Sustainable Development* (ESD) concluded in 2014. This project aimed “to equip people with knowledge and skills in sustainable development, while increasing their opportunities for leading healthy, productive lives in harmony with nature and with concern for social values, gender equity and cultural diversity” (WWF, 2014).

In November 2014, the city of Nagoya, Japan hosted the final ESD conference of the decade. Whilst the conference delegates mapped ESD’s future, an informative exhibition, featuring 25 education projects selected from over 900, showed how the vision of sustainable communities can be achieved through education, dialogue, public awareness and training activities (UNESCO, 2014).

The exhibitors showed not only passion but a deep understanding of the complex issues in Sustainable Education, focussing not only on the environment but on intrinsically linked issues such as gender, global issues and corporate governance. Educational resources were readily available. Although mostly in English, material was also available in German, French, Spanish and Dutch. Every exhibit had outstanding qualities. However, four were particularly impressive as they feature good practice in technology, teacher training, lesson resources and sustainable campus initiatives.

1 In the Netherlands, the NGO *GroenGelinkt* (www.groengelinkt.nl) found that enthusiastic teachers were being overwhelmed by the volume of information available. On an easily accessible website, educators can find teaching materials, guest lectures, outdoor activities and ESD. Materials are submitted to a group of expert educators, then given a score. Users can also give feedback using a simple star system (1-5). In the future, they plan to develop a system to categorise resources more efficiently. Although the project is in Dutch, it provides a sustainable model in other countries. Similarly, it demonstrates how technology has become an essential player for ESD.

2 The *Green Pack* (www.education.rec.org) is a collaboration of 18 nations in Central and Eastern Europe and Asia. The project focusses on the development and implementation of an innovative multimedia educational kit for students available, as and teachers. Topics such as packaging, climate

change, urbanisation and waste management have been designed for use in Eastern Europe and can be readily adapted to Japan.

3 Climate change is an enormous problem which cannot be solved simply by governments and business. We all have a part to play, especially in education. The sustainable campus uses an **Environment Agency Dubai** (EAD) manual “*Basmat Al Shabab Beeiya - Handprint of Youth on the Environment*” which transforms academic concepts into reality. As part of this, audits covering water, climate, land, energy and waste are undertaken (SCI, 2014). Environmental improvement targets are set whilst at the heart of the project is the concept of “learning by doing”.

4 In Kenya, the *Alliance of Religions and Conservation* (ARC) a cross-section of Christian, Muslim and Hindu religious groups in collaboration with the *Kenya Organisation of Environmental Education* (KOE) have developed a faith-based ESD teacher’s toolkit. 80% of schools in Kenya are associated with faiths either through their founders, coordinators or managers. (Story of Faith-based ESD, 2014).

The toolkit enables teachers to implement faith values into the curriculum, which include living in peace and stewardship of the environment. Pathways to becoming eco-schools using not only good teaching practice but engaging the students’ imaginations have been developed by establishing mini-projects that help the environment such as rainwater harvesting, planting fruit trees and waste management initiatives.

Education will form a central role in the post-2015 *Sustainable Development Goals* which are expected to be adopted by UN member states in September 2015 (UN, 2015). The ESD exhibition in Nagoya showed what can be achieved through collaboration by diverse groups. At the conclusion of the conference, a *Global Action Programme* (GAP) on *Education for Sustainable Development* was adopted which seeks to generate and speed up ESD action for the future. (UNESCO, 2015.).

Brent Simmonds

Chair, JALT Environmental Committee
 E-mail: <brentoldchap@hotmail.com>