Educators for the Future: Insights from European ESD Professional Development Initiatives

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SOLSTICE Conference, 6th June 2017
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Project Funder: EC Lifelong Learning Programme
– Erasmus Academic Networks
Consortium: 53 institutions in 33 countries
Duration: 2013 – 2016

Steering Group - Regional Hub Co-ordinators:

North: University of Gloucestershire
South: Autonomous University of Madrid
East: Charles University of Prague
West: Leuphana University of Lüneburg
Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) – an international movement

ESD is a growing area of education practice and scholarship linked to global sustainable development agendas.

It aims to equip people to understand and apply sustainability in professional responsibilities as well as personal lives.

ESD gained visibility with the UN Decade of ESD (2005-2014), followed in 2015 by the UN Global Action Programme in ESD.
ESD is about changing education practices and systems. It is not:

- Teaching about sustainable development (issues/content)
- Developing new courses on sustainability (specialist/silos)

What is Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)?

ESD draws on various strands of pedagogical practice and education theory including transformative learning, critical pedagogy and competence-based approaches to education.

ESD has roots in environmental, citizenship and global education practice. It focuses on approaches such as: **systems thinking, futures envisioning, intercultural literacy, critically reflective practice, learner empowerment and pedagogies that challenge power and develop change skills.**
UE4SD Project Concept

UE4SD was inspired by the need for university educators in all specialisms to develop their understanding and practice in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

It recognises the importance of higher education in preparing people to respond to sustainability through transformative learning – and the need for university educators to gain insight and experience in ESD through professional development.

The UE4SD vision was to develop an expert ESD network across Europe to build capacity, share learning, generate new ideas and stimulate innovation in HE for developing professional competence in ESD.
Professional Development and ESD

To get past the ‘bolt on’ mentality and start to ‘build in’ ESD requires professional development as ESD brings unique and complex challenges:

- Interpretation and application of sustainability in context
- Integration of innovative and unfamiliar pedagogies
- Interdisciplinary and/or interprofessional learning

It also seeks change not just to classroom practices and curriculum design but to teaching discourse and institutional priorities – influencing and change are key to ESD professional development
TRIALLING AN ESD ACADEMY:
4 Spanish university teams carried out year long pilot projects and an action learning residential process

MAPPING POLICY & PRACTICE:
Reviewed the state of the art & identified leading practice in Europe across 33 countries

DEVELOPING RESOURCES:
Used the findings to create a Leading Practice publication & Online Platform of resources
The Online Platform

Purpose
Policy
Principles
Practices
Pathways
Publications

LEADING PRACTICE PUBLICATION
Professional development of university educators on Education for Sustainable Development in European countries

UE4SD Academy
UE4SD Academy Granada 2016

The UE4SD Academy is a key activity of the UE4SD Project, piloting an approach to ESD.
UE4SD Core Outputs

http://platform.ue4sd.eu/

Practitioners Network – the UE4SD consortium of ESD experts across Europe

State of the Art Report – mapping existing practices and policy in Europe

Leading Practice Publication – best examples of ESD professional development

UE4SD Academy – residential training process piloted for university teams

Online Platform – toolkit of resources and materials created by the project

Special Issue – International Journal of Sustainability in HE - due summer 2017
Findings on ESD Policy in European HE

• 1/2 UE4SD countries have policy/plans on ESD (but not HE level)
• 1/3 UE4SD countries have HE Acts to support progress on ESD
• Less than 1/3 have ESD in their national sustainability strategies

Only 7 national ESD professional development initiatives found
Few HE institutions with ESD in professional development agendas
Findings on ESD Practice in European HE

- Spectrum of understanding – lack of pedagogical focus
- Environmental focus still dominant out of the ‘3 pillars’
- Dialogue emerging on ESD professional competence
- Plenty of ESD tools but not enough change experiences

UE4SD selected 26 good practices from 17 countries - with both an ESD (not SD) focus and clear professional development process

Sharing and Selecting Practice – playing off various factors:
- Cultural diversity
- Depth/Quality of ESD
- Focus on CPD process
Some Examples of ESD Professional Development

- **Funded Projects** – RUCAS multi-country curriculum development
- **Grassroots Initiatives** – ISE action research, Daugavpils University
- **Training Courses** – Linnaeus University ESD course for staff
- **Network Activities** – CADEP Spanish university rectors group
- **Institutional Processes** – University of Glouestershire LSF scheme

Highly Rated Approaches:

- Cross-boundary exchanges
- Peer-to-peer-mentoring
- Formal and informal learning
- Set in institutional context
- Transferable at low or no cost