



Children's voices on ESD

OMEP World Project 2009-2010

***Ingrid Engdahl
Milada Rabušicová***



Ireland France Norway Sweden Poland Finland Czech Republic

Canada

USA

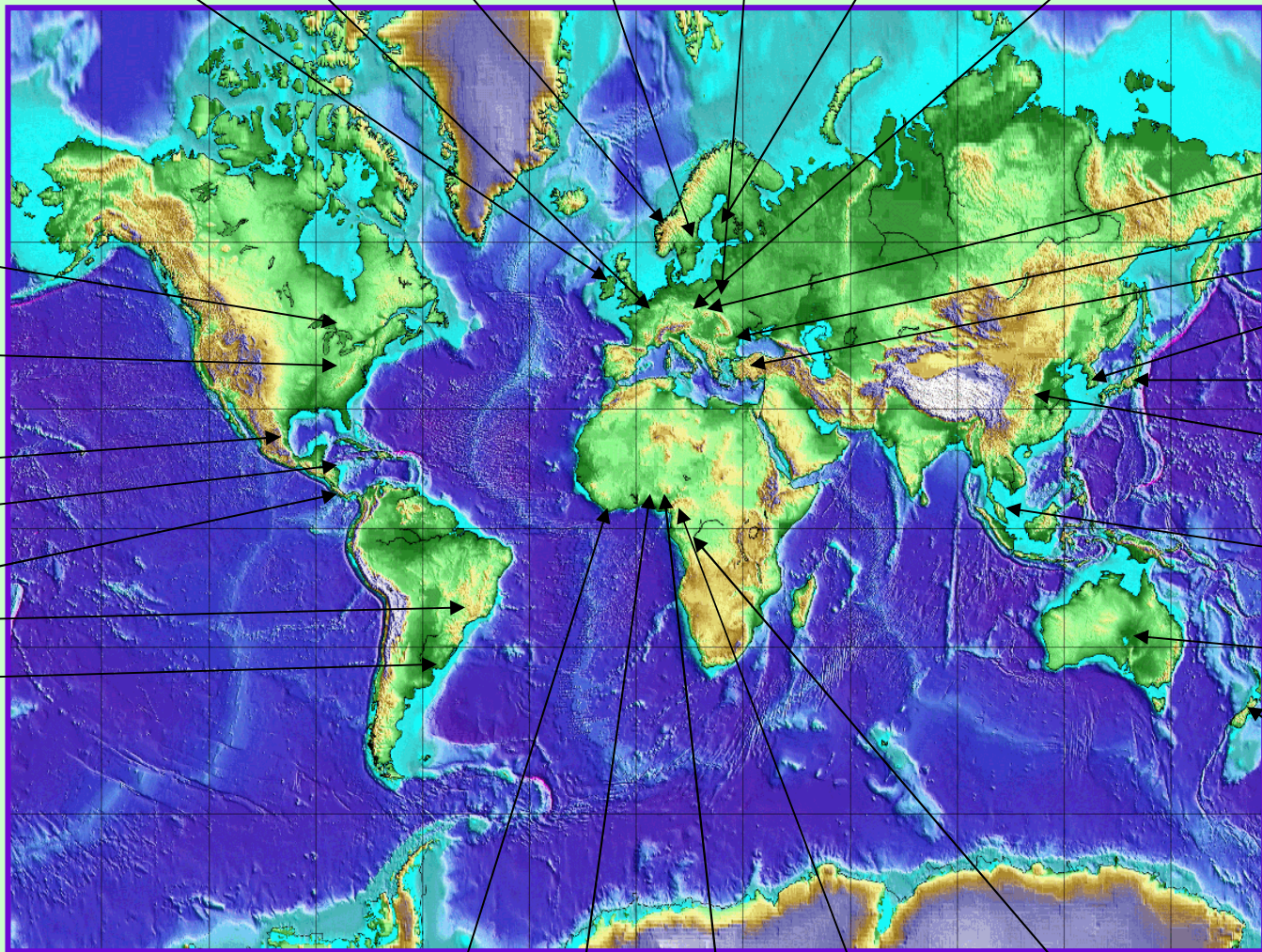
Mexico

Nicaragua

Panama

Brazil

Uruguay



Slovakia

Bulgaria

Turkey

S. Korea

Japan

China

Singapore

Australia

New Zealand

Ivory Coast Benin Nigeria Cameroon DR Congo

What is ESD?

Sustainable Development (SD) is a form of development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. (Brundtland, 1987)

Therefore, SD can be considered to represent an attempt to provide equity with, to and for, future generations.

A view on children

- Citizens - competent, active agents in their own lives with rights of their own
- Children of today face a rapidly changing society with new challenges and possibilities
- Children have the right to be involved and to be heard in matters that are affecting them
- Children are recognized as important participants in the shaping of a sustainable future

ESD is put on the agenda

There are three interdependent, mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development; social development, economic development, and environmental protection.

The pillars are intertwined in Education for SD.

ESD handles value dimensions; ideological and political issues.

Thus normative approaches are common.

ESD is also a problematic concept

The dominance from the Minority world, e.g. the North, industrialised or the American-European societies, has even been interpreted as cultural imperialism towards the Majority world, e.g. the South, non-industrialised or the previously called developing countries.

There is no global 'best practice' or 'preferred outcome'

The global economy does not follow the border of nations or cultures.

But we know that contextual and situational dimensions are important in all kinds of learning.

Indigenous traditions and ways of passing on knowledge to future generations have not been valued.

ESD is also a problematic concept

(continue)

If ESD is to be meaningful and successful, it has to be rooted in the local concrete reality of young children.

Change and sustainability may co-exist if they are accepted both in the local and in the global society.

Innovations need to be meaningful if they will promote a sense of agency and empowerment.

There should be harmony within the individual, between individuals and between human beings and nature.

Education for sustainability (EfS)

Focus on what is important – Sustainability

EfS includes the pros in sustainable without being compromised of the negative connotations to development.

Both children and teachers need competencies such as courage, integrity, critical thinking and responsibility.

However, research shows that discipline and obedience are values or priority from the perspective of teachers.

Do preschools really provide an environment for critical thinking?

UN Decade for ESD 2005-2014

ESD characteristics:

- interdisciplinary and holistic
- values-driven
- critical thinking and problem solving
- multi method
- participatory decision making
- applicability
- locally relevant

Early childhood education and ESD

Using children's everyday lives

- the integrated curriculum approaches,
- thematic oriented instruction and
- authentic topics

Close relationships between teachers and children and leaning on child participation

Experiential learning, values clarification, creative thinking, problem solving, story telling and inquiry learning are important means

EfS is a process

ESD in ECE should be recognised as

- dynamic rather than static
- a means rather than an end
- a challenge for continuous cultural and social change

(rather than a once and for all measurable outcome)

Project methodology

The aim of the project:

to collect information about young children's thoughts, comments and understanding of the OMEP 2010 Congress logo and to enhance the awareness of ESD among OMEP members.

The idea behind the project:

to introduce and invite children and professionals to discuss ESD

Method:

informal interviews with children 1-8 years

Project methodology

(continued)

Interview questions:

- Please look at this picture. Tell me about this picture. **What is going on? Tell me more. What can you see in the picture?**
- Follow up question: **Why are they doing this?**
- **Anything more** you want to tell me about the picture?
- **Anything else** that has to do with the things we have talked about?
- For some children, when relevant, elaborate on: **Have you heard of Sustainable Development? Do you know what it means?**

Project methodology

(continued)

Answers following to the interview questions organized under headings:

- A. What is going on?
- B. Why are they doing this?
- C. Anything more?
- D. Anything else?
- E. What do the children say 'Sustainable Development' means?

Project methodology

the National Reports

Description of the most common answers

+ Examples of very interesting answers

(5 – 10 illustrating and typical quotes)

+ Background information on:

- total number of children interviewed,
- their age and sex,
- form of interview: individual, pair or group,
- place: preschool, home, other institution,
- type of location: rural, urban, other,
- number and sex of interviewing adults.

+ Description of organisation and process

+ Discussion + references

Project methodology

The congress report

- **basic statistics on the project**
- **qualitative and some quantitative content analysis**
- **first comparisons between reports**
- **methodological considerations** such as:
 - Pilot studies (CR, Turkey)
 - University students involvement (Bulgaria, China, Turkey)
 - Translations to different languages
 - Different opinions on the logo (Slovakia)
 - Challenges connected to types of interview (individual or group) (Japan)
 - Research ethics (USA)

Statistics

28 national reports have been delivered from different parts of the world

9 142 children at the age of two to eight have participated in the interviews

interviews were carried out by 641 interviewers (mainly females)

in 385 preschools, schools and other settings for small children

in 241 cities and regions around the world

Results

Results are organized into categories.

The categories are based on their logic, not on the interview questions.

The categories are supported by illustrative citations, mostly with the country of origin noted.

They are as follows:

Children are able to comment on objects, people and actions in multiple ways

All children were able to give detailed comments on what they saw in the pictures.

Some report a difference linked to age, where younger children name objects and not always recognise the 'ball' or 'stone' to represent the Earth. This was also reported from child interviews in rural areas in some countries.

I see children. They are washing the earth. They are painting a stone. They are playing. I can see some countries. The children have built a planet. A boy with a watering can.

Children register a lot in their environment

While looking at the logo, children tell about the associations they make to other experiences and things in their environment.

I saw rubbish in the water at the beach and I saw the digger cleaning it up and the rubbish made me feel sad. I didn't want it to be there.

(Australia)

Are they really cleaning up the earth, or just washing the globe? (Japan)

Children demonstrate aesthetic sense and human values in relation to Earth

Children of all ages expressed opinions and concerns reaching beyond the immediate picture.

To make it beautiful and clean. (Singapore)

Clean because the Globe shall be beautiful. (Bulgaria)

To make the earth colourful so someone will say it is a beautiful one. (Turkey)

I can see they are helping each other, it means they are being friendly to one another. Being nice, the world is like a family. (Ireland)

Children are able to see causes and consequences of bad environment

Taking the congress logo as a starting point, children volunteered information and suggestions about the state of the earth.

Because the globe-warming is very serious problem and it would lead to the last day of the earth. (Japan)

Ils font ça pour entretenir le monde pour que le monde soit prospère à l'avenir. (Cameroun)

Sharks eat fish –if the water is dirty then the fish die then the sharks don't have any fish and then they all die. (Australia)

Because they hope the weather be better, and less storm. (China)

They're cleaning because we die if the earth dies. (Korea)

Children are able to name things which should be done for the environment

The very image of the logo made children name different things that can be done for a more sustainable world. Their suggestions were very well connected with their concrete everyday experience.

Throw trash in the trash can. (Korea)

Things that you don't want to use, you can give them away to others. (USA)

We should not waste the paper. If we draw a picture, use both sides. (China)

We need to consume less water and electricity. (Turkey)

You know, it is very easy. You just turn off lights or electricity when not in use. (Japan)

Children recognise that taking care of the Earth is our common task to share

Children express in various ways the interdependence between all people and between human and nature.

Les enfants unis travaillent ensemble , ils veulent la paix pour développer le monde. (RDCongo)

People cannot live without the earth. (China)

They are doing it as a group activity since it would be much fun rather than playing alone. (Japan)

So we can live well here on this earth of ours. (Slovakia)

People have no manners and children have to clean rubbish after them. If Earth will not be clean we will be sick. (Slovakia)

I save water for the earth so other people can have water too (USA)

Children are aware of many things related to sustainable development

Children are aware of the state of the earth and they are involved in thoughts around our common future. They understand that problems are complex and interconnected.

Because the global warming is very serious problem, and it would lead the last day of the earth. (Japan)

Que debemos darnos una segunda oportunidad para concientizarnos del mal que le hemos hecho a nuestra propia casa la tierra. (Mexico)

Tener más alimentación permite que menos niños y niñas mueran de hambre en el mundo. (Panama)

Il faut de l'eau. (France)

Children need to be cared for. (Brazil)

Ideas on the term '*sustainable development*'

Most of children did not recognise the concept, and there is not even a corresponding concept in all different languages, that are spoken in the participating countries.

Action, love and care for nature. (Brazil)

Ensuring everyone a better future. (Brazil)

Moving forward, develop better. (China)

I think it might mean, like, to save the world for later. (Ireland)

Everybody has a right to live healthy in this world. (Poland)

So we will always have stuff, the water and food to eat. We have to take care of the earth and don't use too much ... Only use what we need. (USA)

Adults have a tendency to underestimate the children

One parent made the comment *“But why are they asking the kids?”* and one of the children said *“Why not? We know stuff too”*. (Australia)

The findings from the five Norwegian preschools do not support the assumption that environment concepts such as greenhouse effect and ozone depletion are beyond the intellectual capabilities of young children. (Norway)

It is essential to change the social attitude against their ability to participate effectively. (Brazil)

Discussion

- How can we support teachers to take on the task to reorient education within a broader political perspective towards sustainability?
- How can we together with parents and other professionals develop an environment in which the children get truly involved and can make their own choices?
- How can we give children the opportunity to acquire a caring attitude to nature, the environment and each other?
- How can we engage children in research questions about learning for sustainable development in preschool setting?
- Anything else?