



**International IAU Conference**  
**EDUCATION FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**  
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**Report of Working Group 2**  
**Teacher education & Sustainable Development**

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Working Group 2 dealt with the overarching question, "What is the practical role of teacher education in higher education for sustainable development?" We sought answers through two corollary questions.

First question: "How to introduce sustainable development in teacher education?" Conceptually, we acknowledged that education for sustainable development is an entirely new kind of education. It is fundamentally different. We need to emphasize problem-oriented, not disciplinary teaching. We need problem-based learning and problem solving. We need culturally diverse case studies. Indeed, acknowledgement of the cultural context of education for sustainable development came up again and again.

We must support student interests. We must give them substantive response to their concerns. We must develop strategies for influencing schools of education, and we need cases of schools of education in transition to education for sustainable development. We need to link education for sustainable development with ongoing processes of change - be they professional, such as reconsidering practice; or be they political, such as educational reform. For example, we think we all should link with the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development process.

Second question: "How do we create a regular system of training and retraining for education for sustainable development?"

We need to coordinate levels of education-primary, secondary, and tertiary. We also need to coordinate locally, nationally, and globally. We need the support of ministries of education. The support of central governments is critical. We need to bring ministries along - or to push them along. We believe universities can do this! The role of foundational courses in global sustainability was highlighted--including the concept of making these courses required for graduation. The need for contextually specific teacher education for sustainable development was emphasized.

One of the participants saw the ghost of Paulo Freire at this point.

We saw an important role for research here, both in linking knowledge from research to classrooms and in "research and development" in education, what some of us might call educational research. Essentially, this is a mobilization of a learning process. We can draw lessons from the recently completed development of a 100 hour multimedia training website and CDROM for UNESCO called Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable Future<sup>1</sup>. This is a remarkable global process involving forty faculties of education in thirty-eight countries that has been developed by John Fien.

We also had a brief discussion of the *Earth Charter* at this point. We saw many ways to develop education for sustainable development in light of Earth Charter principles.

We had a morning-long discussion regarding the Toolkit. The group was uncomfortable with the instrumental nature of the name "Toolkit." We felt the Toolkit must emphasize ethical and social justice issues and speak to the need for equity in education and in society. We saw similarities between what higher education must do in education for sustainable development with what teachers must do.

We felt that higher education has much to learn from pre-tertiary education. We know teachers can be a leading edge and leading wedge in educational change. We know that teachers understand how to teach values fairly and effectively. We believe that teachers know how to support student interests. So, we believe that teacher education has much to offer the Toolkit process.

We feel the Toolkit should emphasize models. Universities must be models for teachers-to-be. We felt a portal should be added for teacher education. We also felt there should be many links available to centres of excellence for sustainable development.

Overall, we found the Toolkit exciting and valuable and believe it is critically important for teachers and teacher education. We think it should keep its focus on the functioning of higher education, i.e., not to be all things to all educators. Most importantly, we concluded that the Toolkit needs to engender a spirit of engagement in the process. It should not provide answers, but rather it should provide resources. It should invite the dynamic tensions that exist in education for sustainable development. These include

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<sup>1</sup> This CD Rom was awarded the 2002 Allen Strom Eureka Prize for Environmental Education and the 2002 ASCILITE Award for Best Higher Education Software Programme

North/South differences and questions of economic development. We believe that to feel the tensions in these legitimate contestations is valuable.

We acknowledge our skillful moderator Rob Siebörger of the University of Cape Town in South Africa. On behalf of Working Group 2, we want to say how much we appreciate the leadership of IAU in having a conference on such an important topic-and in supporting GHESP and the GHESP Toolkit process. We value enormously the role of IAU in raising the profile of education for sustainable development. We also appreciate that teacher education is valued in IAU as an important dimension of higher education.

Respectfully submitted,

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