

Beijing Consensus

2018

Working together on ESD to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals

Recommendations based on 20 years of experience in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in China to further promote ESD to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

2018 Nov. 10-12, in Beijing, more than 200 ESD experts, principals and teachers from China, the United States, Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom, Norway, France and UNESCO participated in the Summary Meeting of 20 Years' China ESD Achievements, the 13th National Workshop on ESD in China and the 6th Asia-Pacific Expert Meeting on ESD.

Focusing on the theme of "Working together on ESD to achieve Sustainable Development Goals", we as all the participants of this conference summarized and celebrated the outstanding achievements of ESD in China from 1998 to 2018. We discussed the future of ESD within GAP 2030 and put forward suggestions for governments and education systems to further promote ESD.

1. The achievements of ESD in China in the past 20 years

During the meeting, we listened to about 50 keynote speeches and thematic reports from representatives of Chinese National Commission for UNESCO, the expert team of Chinese National Working Committee for UNESCO on ESD, more than 20 education administrators from various provinces and municipalities in China, principals and teachers, and other stakeholders. We visited the 20-year exhibition of achievements on ESD in China, composed of more than 100 display boards, and reviewed more than 10 kinds of printings and publications on the achievements of ESD in China. Therefore, we are pleased to see that ESD people in China have achieved encouraging results of ESD since 1998, mainly including the following 10 aspects:

1.1 Promoting the wide spread of Ecological Civilization and ESD in China, by studying & applying Chinese government's and UNESCO's documents through various research, lectures, training, translation and editing publications.

1.2 Setting up a national research and guidance institution for ESD, carrying out localized special studies, and publishing papers and monographs on Ecological Civilization and ESD with a total number of more than 5 million words.

1.3 Actively making recommendations to the government and promoting the integration of ESD into the national public education policy and educa-

tion planning.

1.4 Performing research on curriculum, teaching & learning innovation, so as to promote school development and teachers' professional growth, and foster a number of ESD experimental schools, districts and outstanding individuals promoting quality education.

1.5 Nationally carrying out ESD in the youth, as well as activities of scientific technological innovation including the collecting, selecting and honoring the practice results of sustainable development learning, and launching thousands of outstanding innovation practice results.

1.6 Establishing a three-level (nation-local-school) training system and effective ways for ESD principals and teachers.

1.7 Establishing a cooperative ESD alliance among stakeholders, such as social organizations, enterprises and museums.

1.8 Establishing the platform for collecting, storing, exchanging and serving educational information on ESD in the forms of magazines, websites and We-chat, etc.

1.9 Establishing a high-quality ESD group for researching, organizing and guiding.

1.10 Establishing the stable international expert network and exchange platform for ESD.

We believe that, for a long period of 20 years, ESD practitioners in China have organized a lot of educators in many provinces and cities to carry out ESD (ever called EPD in the first five years) and achieved outstanding results of ESD promoting Quality Education. China's experience is extremely precious and has values for wide international communication.

2. Suggestions on globally implementing ESD for SDGs.

We comprehensively studied the outcome documents and related information of the important conferences, such as the UNESCO's Costa Rica Global Action Programme Key Partner Meeting and the Technical Consultation Meeting on the future of ESD in Thailand in 2018, and discussed the future of ESD in the next 10 years respecting the realities of countries and regions. We welcome the consultation process on developing the new GAP 2030 involving all stakeholders worldwide coordinated by UNESCO with the aim to further develop "ESD for the Sustainable Development Goals" (ESD for SDGs), and put forward the following suggestions:

2.1 Strengthen theoretical research in ESD

Ecological Civilization is the comprehensive embodiment of material and cultural progress made by human beings in the process of realizing harmonious development of human beings, nature and society. The essential

foundation of a society with ecological civilization is sustainable development. Today, most countries are approaching the stage of transformation from industrial civilization to ecological civilization. With the advancement of national sustainable strategy processes, elements of ecological civilization in the societies of all countries will certainly be promoted to increase, and then the transformation from industrial civilization to the era of ecological civilization will be accelerated to be realized. As many countries face the challenges of a changing planet, not only nations but each individual citizen will understand that aiming at sustainable development is vital for the future of all. Education systems in every country are facing a new topic: how to help all citizens in all forms and levels of education to comprehend and meaningfully engage in sustainable development, thus creating this ecological civilization society. Hence, one area of ESD research should focus on citizen's sustainability literacy assessment, including the design of survey instruments as well as the model used to analyze the survey results. The correlation between the various components of sustainability literacy should also be studied, while everyday knowledge and sustainability can be another strand of direction for ESD research.

We suggest that to support all actions with a well-researched academic basis it is an urgent task for education experts of all countries to bring quality research on ESD forward. In this regard, the research reports, such as "*Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives*" and "*The Issues and Challenges of Education for Sustainable Development*", published by UNESCO in 2017-2018 have important reference value.

2.2 Focus on policy recommendations and monitoring mechanisms for ESD

It is necessary to strengthen the leadership responsibilities of governments at all levels. It is expected to set up an inter-departmental specialized coordination and guidance institution for Education for Eco-Civilization & Sustainable Development (EECS), and also to allocate the necessary resources.

It is necessary to strengthen the responsibilities of universities and research institutions, not only to students and academics but also to their respective communities. Comprehensive colleges and universities should strengthen ESD-focused curriculum design and compile textbooks and study books; normal colleges and local colleges should bear the responsibility of the professional training and guidance for surrounding primary and secondary schools, communities and enterprises.

It is also necessary to raise sustainability literacy in the wider community as a means to a sustainable community through formal, informal and con-formal education. In this process, environmental NGOs have a central role to play.

We suggest that the successful experience of some countries is worth

sharing widely. In China, Chinese National Working Committee for UNESCO on ESD (CNWCESD) undertakes the liaison, coordination and guidance of ESD in 11 provinces and municipalities, and promotes ESD in more than 1,000 experimental schools through the annual national training course system. In the past two years, Japan has established a high-level organizational mechanism of ESD jointly promoted by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Environmental Protection, and mobilized universities to play a professional guiding role in ESD development in surrounding primary and secondary schools, enterprises and communities.

2.3 Organize experts to do research and provide guidance on ESD teaching

"Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives: Learning Objectives", issued by UNESCO at the Ottawa conference 2017, defines the specific learning goals for primary and secondary schools and other types of education for the explicit implementation of the 17 goals of *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, including cognitive goals, emotional attitudes and values goals, and behavioral goals. Herewith, countries can develop their specific curricula that are suitable for their circumstances, and integrate the concept of ESD including the ecological civilization, with a focus on cultivating teenagers' literacy of sustainable development.

We suggest that National Commissions for UNESCO, the Ministry of Education or education management departments for sustainable development are relevant actors in developing guiding documents within the frameworks of *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* adopted by United Nations added by government documents of various countries on promoting ecological civilization and sustainable development. It is necessary to form a team of experts from the fields of education, science and technology, environmental protection, and resource conservation, to set the 17 SDGs as well as the country's goals of building ecological civilization and sustainable development. It is necessary to integrate and subdivide the 17 SDGs into cognitive targets, emotional and value targets, and behavioral targets and specifically design a series of learning and practice activities. At the same time, it is also necessary to use innovative teaching & learning methods, and social practice bases.

2.4 Extensively carry out the innovation of ESD courses and teaching

It is necessary to actively conduct experimental research on the E-STEAM course with reference to the experience of some countries. The E-STEAM course is a comprehensive curriculum paradigm that highlights the concept of ESD (E) as a leading concept that parallels the multidisciplinary teaching functions of science, technology, engineering, art and humanities, and mathematics (STEAM). The main curriculum resources of E-STEAM are from 17 SDGs including 169 targets in *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable De-*

velopment and the practical sustainable development issues in social, economic, environmental and cultural fields in developing ecological civilization. The specific purpose of implementing E-STEAM courses is to improve students' academic knowledge and their literacy level for sustainable development. The main way to achieve the effect of the course is to complete the solution or research report of sustainable development issues by student groups or individuals.

We suggest that we should vigorously study the Sustainable Learning Class and construct a kind of classrooms with features of teaching knowledge of sustainable development, multi-disciplinary integration, multi-ability development, green sustainable lifestyle practice, innovative solutions for sustainable development, and data based on information technology. Through innovative teaching methods (such as project-based learning, research-based learning, etc.) to generate the innovative classes for sustainable development problem solutions and the data classes based on artificial intelligence, big data, adapting the cutting-edge technologies such as learning.

2.5 Widely mobilize youth teams and individuals to participate in activities of green social construction

At present, in response to the increasingly severe situation of global climate change, it is very necessary to mobilize young people to actively, enthusiastically and extensively participate in the green social construction of local communities. It is recommended that all countries and regions implement the following key urgent topic educations in achieving the 17 SDGs under actual conditions.

Topic 1. Practicing healthy lifestyle (including consciously practicing sustainable consumption, green travel, water saving, electricity saving and other green lifestyles in families, classes, schools and communities, and studying and formulating solutions);

Topic 2: Investigating the current situation of various resources and energy sources such as water and electricity, and developing the efficiency program of science and technology innovation and results application on clean energy;

Topic 3. Survey on earthquake, tsunami, flood and drought, haze and other issues, training on self-rescue, mutual rescue and mass prevention, and relevant proposals to deal with climate change.

Topic 4. Recommendations on investigation and solution for Urban Sustainable Development issues;

Topic 5. Surveys and solutions for rural poverty eradication, community-disabled residents or low-income families;

Topic 6. Protection and inheritance of excellent traditional culture in all

regions of the world (especially the related countries and regions of "One belt and one road".);

Topic 7. Protecting various cultural & nature heritages in the world, and deepening students' understanding of "building a community of human destiny".

2.6 Accelerate the development of sustainable development schools

Schools are the important bases for implementing ESD in a large scale. According to the experience of many countries, it is an effective form to build multiple types of sustainable development schools. Referring to the experience of China, Japan, Germany and other countries, the quality standards for sustainable development schools are as follows: establishing the concept of ESD in schools; designing the curriculum system with the main line of "learning sustainable development"; making sustainable learning classroom a normal classroom model; making green campus construction a local demonstration of energy conservation and emission reduction; teachers and students generally practicing sustainable lifestyle; youth participating in the building a green society prevalently; teachers with the ability of bringing ESD into the classroom.

We suggest that, in the light of the experience of various countries and regions, it is suggested that the educational administrative departments should pay attention to the formulation of specific quality standards and Implementation Rules for sustainable development schools, and that the school leadership should pay attention to the top-level design of sustainable development schools from the perspective of building future schools.

We suggest that attention should be paid to encouraging the construction of similar schools in various names: green schools, ecological civilization education schools, ecological schools, ASP schools, environmental education schools, etc. and to cooperating with all kinds of social organizations and enterprises related to interests and help build the school into a model center for local ecological civilization and sustainable development.

2.7 Focus on building national ESD experimental school districts

The construction of ESD experimental districts is an important way to widely carry out ESD. The basic criteria of experimental districts are as follows: The regional government formulates long-term plans and organizations for ESD; more than one third of schools implement ESD; trainings on ESD are conducted for all principals and teachers; the regional departments for education administration formulate documents of curriculum and teaching guidance on ESD; local primary and middle school students often participate in green social construction activities The districts have a learning and practice base on ESD for youth; ESD enters education supervision content in this districts.

We suggest that all countries and regions should actively accelerate the

preparation of plans for the construction of experimental districts for ESD and include the society in each district; set up and improve regional experimental guidance groups for ESD; regularly carry out exchanges of experience between schools; pay attention to inviting experts to guide the experimental work; pay attention to establishing extensive associations of ESD, combining to work together various institutions, organizations, teams and individuals from Green Education, Ecological Education, Environmental Education and ESD, aimed at promoting Sustainable Development with Ecological Civilizations in formal, non-formal and informal education.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs present an aspirational initiative for transformative social change, and its achievement will require the empowerment of a learning society engaged in the collective pursuit of new knowledge, solutions and innovations for achieving sustainable development. The principles of a sustainability learning society can be fostered through ESD by supporting cooperative learning relationships and multi-stakeholder partnerships aimed at the elaboration of practical approaches and interpretations of sustainable development. Due to SDG 4's primary focus to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, the important relationship between this quality education and ESD should be a priority for educational policy development. Furthermore, the inclusion of ESD in non-formal and community-based education approaches can strengthen social learning for sustainability and support communities in establishing practical, locally relevant approaches for sustainable development.

In the face of the call for the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and the call for long-term goals of Ecological Civilization construction, all the participants of the conference issued the following proposals:

—Achieving the 17 SDGs is priority to each nation and their well-being. We call on governments to take further action. It is necessary to focus on formulating and enhancing policies to promote the implementation of SDGs and the construction of Ecological Civilization through ESD, study and formulate guidance documents for deepening teaching, learning innovation, training and supervision, and mobilize and organize more educators to participate in the process of ESD.

—Achieving 17 SDGs is of concern for each citizen's personal health and life, family happiness and the sustainable future of work and career. To this end, we call on every child, adolescent, middle-aged and elderly citizen to take further action, consciously, actively and happily practice a sustainable lifestyle with the theme of green catering, green living, green travel and green shopping, and become an active participant in the construction of a green society.

—Achieving 17 SDGs is the priority area in development strategy, qual-

ity and prospects of schools, research institutions, enterprises, NGOs and various stakeholders. We call on each stakeholder group to link and focus their actions to contribute to a sustainable future of the country and the region, so as to take strengthening learning and ESD as an opportunity to quickly complete the process of upgrading its own quality and pattern from excellent to outstanding.

We firmly believe that in the next 10 years, with the deepening of theoretical research and innovative practice, the education for the Ecological Civilization in a sustainable world will be at the heart of all education systems worldwide.