

Learning to Live Together

Education for Sustainable Living

Policies and practices from around the world



Developing the ability to

- **reflect**
- **take responsibility**
- **consult**
- **be creative**
- **collaborate**
- **commit**



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United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

UN Decade of Education for
Sustainable Development

Learning to live together: Education for sustainable living

All around the world groups of informed, skilled and motivated people are striving to achieve more responsible ways of living. It is recognized that education is essential to achieve sustainable development for all. There is also a growing recognition that people everywhere need to acquire the knowledge and skills to change their consumption behavior and to become more creative and active citizens.

The question today is what policies and practices are needed to facilitate education for sustainable living and what lessons can be learned from the experiences already taking place in different countries.

This brochure mainly focuses on the formal education system and provides an overview of the policies and practices from diverse countries to assist further action around the globe.



Against the backdrop of climate change, environmental degradation, and the crippling extremes of wealth and poverty, the transformation from a culture of unfettered consumerism to a culture of sustainability has gained momentum in large part through the efforts of civil society organizations and governmental agencies worldwide. Beyond informed policies and “greener technologies” it is a transformation that will require an earnest examination of our understanding of human nature and of the cultural frameworks driving institutions of government, business, education and media around the world.

Rethinking Prosperity. Bahá'í International Community 2010, p.1

Education for sustainable living here and now

Today, many education systems are being redesigned to better prepare people for life - for job security, for the demands of a rapidly changing society, and for technological changes. Some aspects of education for sustainable living (also known as education for sustainable consumption) are already being taught but there is a general lack of cohesiveness and a lack of innovation in teaching methods.

On the conceptual level, understanding of sustainable consumption based on sustainable human development is often vague. In course content, much of what is taught is fragmented and is often based on outdated scientific data and models which have proven to poorly reflect the real world. On the didactical level, teachers struggle to combine theory, research and practice, and find it difficult to connect course content to students' everyday lives. And on the level of student motivation, teachers often encounter disillusionment, passivity, fatalism and a sense of powerlessness.

Despite existing difficulties, and different historical, cultural and socio-economic circumstances, many countries are making significant progress towards a broader understanding of education for sustainable living and how to make it happen.

How does education for sustainable living differ from existing educational programs?

Based on a clear vision of what kind of society we want and what kind of individuals are needed to bring this about, education for sustainable living is practical, holistic and oriented to future needs and challenges. It focuses on the development of core life skills needed for all ages, and uses participatory, practical and personalized methods that also involve the local community.



The life skills which are needed include the ability to:

- **reflect** on the purpose of life and on our personal and collective needs and actions
- **take responsibility** for one's own betterment and for the advancement of society as a whole
- **consult** in the public and private discourse on the nature, purpose and choices involved in human development
- **be creative** in envisioning and constructing alternative solutions to challenges
- **collaborate** with others through continual questioning, learning and taking action
- **commit** to both short and long-term goals.

The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014), led by UNESCO, endeavors to integrate the principles, values and practices of sustainable development into all levels and types of education and learning. Education for sustainable living is one important part of education for sustainable development.

The Marrakech Process is a global multi-stakeholder process initiated in 2003, to promote sustainable patterns of consumption and production (SCP) and work towards a 'Global Framework for Action on SCP', the so-called 10-Year Framework of Programmes on SCP.



Education for Sustainable Consumption (ESC) aims at providing knowledge, values and skills to enable individuals and social groups to become actors of change towards more sustainable consumption behaviors. The objective is to ensure that the basic needs of the global community are met, quality of life for all is improved, inefficient use of resources and environmental degradation are avoided. ESC is therefore about providing citizens with the appropriate information and knowledge on the environmental and social impacts of their daily choices, as well as workable solutions and alternatives. ESC integrates fundamental rights and freedoms including consumers' rights, and aims at empowering citizens for them to participate in the public debate and economy in an informed and ethical way.

Here and Now! Education for Sustainable Consumption, UNEP 2010, p.11

What policies and practices are being used?

Countries have undertaken a variety of approaches to implement education for sustainable living. The examples shown in this brochure have been selected to cover different regions of the world. The following categories have been used to show policies and practices:

- Government leadership
- Educational projects
- Community involvement
- Cross-curricular themes
- Online learning.

What can be learned from current experiences?

The examples presented in this brochure show that there are many ways to start implementing education for sustainable living. Lessons can be learned from what has worked but it is just as important to learn from what has not worked. Experience shows that four factors are particularly important:

- 1. Cultural and historical context:** What works in one country or location may not work in another. It is important to look at the factors that have shaped the educational situation that exists in a given place, and to look for strengths to help implement educational initiatives.
- 2. Collaboration between civil society, the educational sector and government:** Various initiatives may have different leaders, but collaboration between stakeholder groups is essential to ensure that progress is made.
- 3. Encouraging creativity:** Learning to recognize, develop and implement creative solutions is essential for stimulating innovation.
- 4. Monitoring of initiatives:** Periodic monitoring is necessary so that essential themes are not missed, to track implementation progress and to identify weaknesses that need to be addressed.

How can PERL assist?

As a key objective of the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development, mainstreaming education for sustainable consumption, through policy-making and pilot projects can only be done with the support and cooperation of governments, regional and international organizations and civil society organizations. PERL (The Partnership for Education and Research about Responsible Living) is an international network of experts, researchers, teachers and policy-makers that are developing methods, materials and guidelines to implement education for sustainable living.

Knowing what other regions are doing often stimulates ideas about how to initiate or further develop policies and practices in one's own country. PERL's global network can provide information on a wide variety of initiatives in different countries and settings. The process of establishing a public dialog involving stakeholders, the educational sector and the government is often a demanding one. PERL can offer advice based on previous experiences. PERL also has experienced partners to assist with adapting approaches, methods and materials to local conditions.



Government leadership

There are many ways that governments can take leadership in implementing education for sustainable living, such as making constitutional changes, initiating curriculum development, collaborating with stakeholders, and running public campaigns. Ensuring coordinated, systematic action from the various ministers, government agencies and schools in both developing educational policy and carrying it out is perhaps one of the most significant examples of governmental leadership.

South Africa

Focusing on education for sustainable living

“Environmental education is not just about trees, soil and water. Environmental education is about the impact of the lifestyle choices we make, about the decisions we take that affect the air we breathe and the food we eat”¹ South African Minister of Education. Education for sustainable living means making the connections between, among other things, environmental and consumer education.

The South African Revised National Curriculum Statement was implemented in 2001 and its vision is for South Africa to be “... a prosperous, truly united, democratic and internationally competitive country with literate, creative and critical citizens leading productive, self fulfilled lives in a country free of violence, discrimination and prejudice”.² Its aims are to nurture life-long learners who are confident, independent, literate, numerate, multi skilled, compassionate, who have respect for the environment and participate as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities.³

The Department of Education’s National Curriculum Statement: Consumer Studies states that the consumer studies subject “focuses on developing knowledge, skills, values and attitudes in learners to enable them to become responsible and informed consumers of food, clothing, housing, furnishings and household equipment, and to use resources optimally and in a sustainable manner.”⁴



Argentina

Coordination and procurement

Setting the agenda at the highest level is important, but implementing it in specific programmes and coordinating multiple agencies is equally important.

In Chapter 2 of the Constitution (1994), New Rights and Guarantees, a series of rights are stated known as third generation or social rights. Article 41 states: “All inhabitants are entitled to a healthy and balanced environment fit for human development and productive activities to meet present needs without compromising those of future generations, and have a duty to preserve it...The authorities shall provide for the protection of this right, the rational use of natural resources, preservation of cultural and natural heritage and biodiversity, and environmental information and education.” In addition Article 42 states: “The consumers and users of goods and services they are entitled, in terms of consumption, health protection, safety and economic interests to adequate and truthful information, to freedom of choice and treatment conditions fair and decent. The authorities shall provide for the protection of these rights, to consumer education, the competition from all forms of market distortion, the control of natural and legal monopolies, the quality and efficiency of services public, and the creation of consumer associations and users.”

The Ministry of Health of the Nation is carrying out the National Program of Municipalities and Communities in order to “promote the exchange of experiences between municipalities and communities around the country”. Among the program principles is a commitment to sustainability.

The Cabinet of Ministers, through the Ministry of Civil Service, carries out five programs on sustainable public procurement. These programs are aimed at introducing environmental criteria in their procurement processes, training procurement officers and suppliers in the state, and stimulating more sustainable supply and demand in the marketplace.

Educational projects

Education for sustainable living is not only an activity for teachers and learners in formal education. It is an important part of informal life-long learning and is carried out in the family and the local community. Education for sustainable living involves bridging gaps between generations by identifying common values, setting goals together and promoting interaction in the community. Learning can occur in different environments by engaging with a wide range of people. Many projects are able to be implemented locally without first requiring changes to the educational system. They can also influence developments outside their own region.

Many young adults are willing to participate and improve the world they live in through more sustainable lifestyles. They need to know how and be given opportunities to take concrete actions.

Visions for Change: Recommendations for Effective Policies on Sustainable Lifestyle. UNEP 2011, p.72

¹ World Environmental Education Congress 2007. Deputy Minister Surty quotes Minister Pandor.

² SADE 01:04

³ <http://www.haynesemail.com/South%20Africa/south%20africa.html>

⁴ Part of the National Curriculum Statement Grade 10-12, 2003. Department of Education.

China

Green schools network

The green schools network in China focus on the environmental management of the school to:

- make full use of all education resources inside and outside of school
- implement environmental education
- enable teachers and students to participate in practical resource saving actions.

As a material and energy consumption system, the school can set an example as an experimental and social demonstration plot for resource saving, low-energy consumption actions and the improvement of the campus environment.⁵

Reuse of textbooks in schools

Since 2008, the Ministry of Education has encouraged schools to reuse their textbooks, which means that schools give all students textbooks while they are in school and the textbooks can be reused year after year. Students do not need to buy the textbooks themselves. This campaign has been implemented in many regions supported by local education agencies and it has become a popular project in green schools.⁶

UNEP/UNESCO YouthXchange programme

YouthXchange is a guidance manual to help young people build sustainable lifestyles and develop responsible consumption behavior. It was translated into Chinese in 2005. YouthXchange has been distributed to all of the national award green schools and green communities, with more than one million people receiving the information. Based on the YouthXchange material, many green schools and green communities have carried out activities to reduce consumption and to recycle, such as using cotton instead of paper tissue in kindergartens, recycling in schools and refusing plastic bags in communities.⁷

The Beijing Environmental Education Center joined the YouthXchange programme in 2010 to develop a new adaptation of guidebook, and to organize public events and workshops in cooperation with the green schools network.



Kenya

Sustainable life skills course (Youth Education Network)

Matungu, a district in the Western Province of Kenya, is prone to perennial drought and malnutrition is a problem. The Sustainable Life Skills course, carried out by Youth Education Network at the Lukaris Education Centre, aims to bridge the gaps between school, real life experiences, colleges and universities. The training targets women who are high school leavers and pre-university youth. Lecturers are drawn from local district authorities, and from the departments of health, environment, agriculture, home economics and gender. The teaching module was developed by professors from public universities, selected NGOs and includes contributions from under-graduate university students.

Students participate in community development workshops where they discuss with villagers home economics, the importance of the environment, health, and other issues. Examples of sustainable and profitable ways of utilizing the land to grow vegetables rather than sugar cane were developed in one class.



Republic of Korea

Leadership training for the next generation – Eco-leadership camp (Consumers Korea)

One of Consumers Korea's aims is to educate the next generation of citizens. Consumers Korea holds eco-leadership camps for adolescents over the age of 13 from all over the world. The goal of the camps is to enable participants to understand:

- the difference between ordinary consumption patterns and sustainable consumption patterns in everyday life
- that problems may be caused by an individual's consumption
- that international solidarity is necessary to solve problems relating to consumption.

Participants have an opportunity to recognize current environmental and social issues, and to obtain a global perspective. The camps play an important role in preparing the next generation of citizens.⁸

⁵ Education for Sustainable Consumption in Northeast Asia: Strategies to promote and advance sustainable consumption. Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, 2009, p.103.

⁶ ibid p. 109

⁷ ibid p. 109

⁸ Education for Sustainable Consumption in Northeast Asia: Strategies to promote and advance sustainable consumption. Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, 2009, p.129

Community involvement

Education for sustainable living encourages listening to, learning from, and caring for knowledge and ways of being which may be different from our own. By interacting with the community around them, children and young people can learn to compare and reflect on other ways of understanding and living. Education for sustainable living aims to find viable solutions built on traditional knowledge and innovation to meet modern challenges.

Japan

Team Minus 6% project

In 2005, the Japanese government established a national project entitled “Team Minus 6%” which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 6%. The significance of the challenge of climate change means that this project targets not only government and business organizations but also individual citizens. The ultimate goal of Team Minus 6% is to engage every citizen and to get various civic actors’ collaboration. By providing a clear vision and encouraging simple actions through team membership, Team Minus 6% has been very successful.

An individual team unit consists of 1,000 people and a business unit is based on its organizational member scale. From 2005 to 2008, a total of 2,302,513 individual teams and 21,795 business or civil groups joined.

The simple actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are:

- set air conditioners
- turn off the faucet
- drive your car more efficiently
- choose eco-friendly products
- say no to excessive packaging
- unplug electric appliances when not in use⁹.



USA - New York City

Amplify (Parsons The New School for Design/DESIS – Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability)

Amplify’s starting point is that communities around the world are no longer waiting for governments and businesses to take action. Many are creating more sustainable ways of living themselves. This project draws on the considerable research on design for social innovation and sustainability that has been conducted around the world over the last five years.

Amplifying Creative Communities is a project of the DESIS Lab at Parsons The New School for Design. The project aims to:

- Find often-hidden examples of people who have organized their own resources for more sustainable city living.
- Learn how to create successful alternatives to the standard commercial and government services
- Help those initiatives become easier and more enjoyable through service design
- Show others how they could create similar alternatives for themselves.

As one example of the work, students from the Design and Management program at Parsons The New School for Design documented 17 Lower East Side community gardens through interviews, photography, and film to understand their members’ efforts and motivations. The gardens are the realization of a long history of urban activism, with ups and downs throughout the years. On the Lower East Side social innovation is intertwined with community gardens - they are the starting points to think and rethink social and environmental sustainability in the neighborhood.



⁹ Education for Sustainable Consumption in Northeast Asia: Strategies to promote and advance sustainable consumption. Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, 2009, p.151

Cross-curricular themes

Education for sustainable living is interdisciplinary – elements of it can be found in different subjects of formal school curricula. The central topics of environmental education, consumer education and civic training provide the backbone of education for sustainable living. Implementing education for sustainable living requires integrated approaches that highlight the interdependency of all the diverse aspects of our daily lives. Establishing a common understanding amongst teachers facilitates interdisciplinary cooperation and helps to ‘mainstream’ education for sustainable living into established curriculum subjects. Independent subjects on sustainable living can also be taught to provide a core focus.

Research shows that the most common education for sustainable living topics taught are on energy, food and waste management. Common secondary subjects are housing, urban space, eco-labelling and environmental management of schools.

The UNEP publication *Here and Now! Education for Sustainable Consumption* outlines the following central themes which contribute to education for sustainable consumption that is interdisciplinary and personalized: life quality, lifestyles, resource management, economics, consumer rights and responsibilities, information management, health and safety, change management and global awareness.

Mexico

Public Schools

Basic education in Mexico is in a reform process that began in 2004 with kindergarten levels and is continuing through to 2012. The intention of the reform is to provide learning opportunities and experiences that are meaningful to all students, and to enable graduates to achieve the following skills from all subjects:

- Skills for life-long learning
- Skills for managing information
- Skills for handling situations
- Skills for coexistence
- Skills for life in society.

The twelve years of basic education contain a single graduate profile, training in five life skills and four formative fields. To organize the content the following training areas were identified:

- Language and communication
- Mathematical thinking
- Exploration and understanding of the natural and social world
- Personal development and coexistence.

To include education for sustainable living, three curriculum options have been identified:

1. In concrete subjects in primary school
2. In the first year of secondary school
3. As cross and transversal themes.

The cross-cutting themes for primary and secondary schools that have been identified are below.

Cross-cutting themes Primary, 2009	Cross-cutting themes Secondary, 2006
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental education • Sexual education and gender equity • Civics and ethics • Health education • Driver education • Consumer education • Financial education • Peace education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental education • Sexual education and gender equity • Training in values

Maritius

Public Schools

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources is implementing the ‘Education and Communication for Sustainable Lifestyles Project’ in primary and secondary schools. The aim is for young people to develop attitudes, habits and reflexes for a more sustainable future. Curriculum guidelines for sustainable consumption and production have been written and primary school textbooks have been developed with the integration of sustainable consumption and production concepts. The writing of teaching and learning resource materials at the secondary level is underway and sustainable consumption and production will be a cross-cutting theme in the learning experiences of students.

In January 2010, the Ministry published the National Curriculum Framework for secondary education. Education and Communication for Sustainable Lifestyles is dealt with as a cross-cutting theme: “This section addresses issues that cut across the curriculum. It gives an indication of four key cross cutting issues, namely, Sustainable Development, Peace Education, Education and Communication for Sustainable Lifestyle, and Addressing HIV/AIDS. Such issues should be taken into consideration by all curriculum writers as they should be integrated in a number of subject areas and learning domains in the curriculum.”

Sustainable consumption and production is also being integrated as a cross-cutting theme in such subjects as English, French, Mathematics, Science, History/Geography, Health and Physical Education, Social Studies, Art and Design.

The curriculum is competence-based and teachers adopt participatory and experiential methods of teaching based on a variety of pedagogical approaches. To enable this curriculum, including cross cutting themes, to be implemented, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources has worked closely with other ministries as well as private sector, non-governmental organizations and local and international agencies.

Education for Sustainable Consumption is a core theme of Education for Sustainable Development, and it is essential to train responsible citizens and consumers towards lifestyles based on economic and social justice, food security, ecological integrity, sustainable livelihoods, respect for all life forms and strong values that foster social cohesion, democracy and collective action.

UNESCO-DESD, Bonn Declaration, April 2009. UN DESD Strategy 2010-2014

Online learning

The internet, through computers and mobile devices, provides an unprecedented amount of information and increasingly advertising as well as social connection. Many young people today do not know life without the internet. Finding credible information and safe and fulfilling interactions online requires many of the same skills as in other areas of life. The internet also provides tools for exploring and learning in both formal and informal learning situations.

Latin America

The Virtual Schools for Sustainable Consumption (Colectivo Ecologista Jalisco)¹¹

This online educational learning tool is based on three years of implementation of the Global Environmental Citizenship (GEC)¹² project in Latin America. The Virtual Schools for Sustainable Consumption were developed to deal with issues such as toxic substances and human health, solid waste, sustainable mobility, biodiversity protection and consumption, and consumer rights and awareness. The Virtual Schools are a useful, attractive and technically simple tool that informs and entertains in order to facilitate learning. It now offers the user a glossary, links, statistics, actions and learning activities in each school. Humorous language and attractive illustrations are used to create interest and to 'hook' the user. The schools now include 'green washing' and labeling issues.

In order to obtain feedback from users, a simple evaluation questionnaire has been designed in each of the schools asking users to give their opinion about the graphic design, content of the school, ease of navigation, usefulness of the information, the learning process and the willingness to spread and apply the concepts. Many websites now link to the virtual schools including Mexico's Consumer Protection Ministry (PROFECO).



¹¹ <http://www.cej.org.mx/escuelas.html>

¹² The Global Environmental Citizenship Project (GEC) was an initiative implemented in Latin America, funded by GEF and coordinated by the UNEP ROLAC Office, with the objectives of generating greater public awareness and increasing levels of understanding of global environmental issues and mobilising support in the countries of the region for the objectives of the GEF thematic areas.

Norway & USA

Your Expedition

Liv Arnesen and Ann Bancroft combine polar exploration and online education activities. In 2001, they were the first women to cross Antarctica on foot and 3 million school children joined their 1,717 mile journey via the internet. The Bancroft Arnesen Expedition curriculum is based on their historic crossing of Antarctica. It is customized for kindergarten through sixth grade (ages 5 to 12 years old) and is available in English. The curriculum incorporates life skills and focuses on subjects that include science, languages, art, health, social studies, geography, math, history, and physical education.

They have also developed two other curricular. 'Exploring Cultural Conflicts: Journeys Towards Peace' is intended to help teachers work with students to develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to resolve conflicts peacefully. The curriculum is available in Norwegian, Russian and English.

Inspired by Ann and Liv's commitment to encourage others to pursue their dreams, 'Dare to Dream' is an activity-filled curriculum to help kindergarten through sixth-grade students develop one of the life's most important skills — the ability to set and achieve goals.

Ann and Liv are currently working on an Access Water 2012 expedition and associated educational work.

Information campaigns have been widely used for achieving public interest goals. But they are known to be less effective than other forms of learning. Research suggests that learning by trial and error, observing how others behave and modelling our behaviour on what we see around us, provide more effective and more promising avenues for changing our behaviours than information and awareness campaigns.

Motivating Sustainable Consumption: A Review of Evidence on Consumer Behaviour and Behavioural Change. Tim Jackson 2005, p.XI



¹³ <http://yourexpedition.com/>

The way forward

There are three levels of action that are important to further implement education for sustainable living:

- 1. Internationally:** It is hoped that a significant programme on 'sustainable lifestyles and education' will be adopted and supported under the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (at the UN Commission on Sustainable Development meeting, May 2011). A programme has been proposed and PERL is willing to be an implementing partner.
- 2. Nationally:** Countries can initiate national roundtables to bring stakeholders together to discuss education for sustainable living, to agree on recommendations and to form implementation plans. With the support of the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea, and UNEP, PERL is coordinating a pilot project to initiate national roundtables in Indonesia, Chile and Tanzania.
- 3. Locally:** Discussions about education for sustainable living must be stimulated and local projects and initiatives supported.

The challenge to governments and to civil society is to partner together to plan and implement education for sustainable living. The need to do so is urgent. The pathways are many and there are numerous examples. Tomorrow's leaders are today's students. Today's leaders must take the first steps!



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How to achieve education for sustainable living

Here and Now! Education for Sustainable Consumption is a set of guidelines and recommendations published by UNEP which contains the following roadmap for achieving education for sustainable consumption.

1. **Ensure education institutions** reflect in their daily management the priorities given to sustainable development
2. **Include themes, topics, modules, courses and degrees** about education for sustainable consumption in established curriculum
3. **Encourage research** in education for sustainable consumption-related areas
4. **Strengthen connections** between researchers, lecturers, teacher trainers and socio-economic actors and stakeholders
5. **Enhance cooperation** between professionals from diverse disciplines in order to develop integrated approaches to education for sustainable consumption
6. **Facilitate teaching and teacher-training** which strengthens global, future-oriented, constructive perspectives within education for sustainable consumption
7. **Reward creative, critical, innovative thinking** related to education for sustainable consumption
8. **Ensure** that education for sustainable consumption respects the importance of **indigenous knowledge** and recognizes **alternative lifestyles**
9. **Foster intergenerational learning** as an integrated aspect of education for sustainable consumption
10. **Provide opportunities for practical application** of theoretical study through social involvement and community service.



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