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Submission of

**the New Zealand Advisory Committee for the
United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable
Development (UNDESD)**

to the New Zealand Ministry of Education

on the

**The New Zealand Curriculum:
Draft for Consultation 2006**

Introduction

The UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) pursues a global vision:

The vision of education for sustainable development is a world where everyone has the opportunity to benefit from quality education and learn the values, behaviour and lifestyles required for a sustainable future and for positive societal transformation.

Definition of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

Education for sustainable development is about learning to:

- respect, value and preserve the achievements of the past;
- appreciate the wonders and the peoples of the Earth;
- live in a world where all people have sufficient food for a healthy and productive life;
- assess, care for and restore the state of our Planet;
- create and enjoy a better, safer, more just world;
- be caring citizens who exercise their rights and responsibilities locally, nationally and globally.

Goals of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UN DESD)

The **overall goal** of the DESD is to **integrate the values inherent in sustainable development into all aspects of learning to encourage changes in behavior that allow for a more sustainable and just society for all.**

This translates into **four objectives**, to:

1. Facilitate networking, linkages, exchange and interaction among stakeholders in ESD;
2. Foster an increased quality of teaching and learning in education for sustainable development;
3. Help countries make progress towards and attain Millennium Development Goals¹ through ESD efforts;
4. Provide countries with new opportunities to incorporate ESD into education reform efforts.

There are three key areas of sustainable development – society, environment and economy with culture as an underlying dimension.

Characteristics

ESD mirrors the concern for education of high quality, demonstrating **characteristics**: such as:

- Interdisciplinary and holistic: learning for sustainable development embedded in the whole curriculum, not as a separate subject;
- Values-driven: sharing the values and principles underpinning sustainable development;
- Critical thinking and problem solving: leading to confidence in addressing the dilemmas and challenges of sustainable development;
- Multi-method: word, art, drama, debate, experience, ... different pedagogies which model the processes;
- Participatory decision-making: learners participate in decisions on how they are to learn;
- Locally relevant: addressing local as well as global issues, and using the language(s) which learners most commonly use.

ESD is for everyone, at whatever stage of life they find themselves. It takes place therefore within a perspective of lifelong learning, engaging all possible spaces of learning, formal, non-formal and informal, from early childhood to adult life. ESD calls for a re-orientation of educational approaches – curriculum and content, pedagogy and examinations. Spaces for learning include non-formal learning, community-based organisations and local civil society, the workplace, formal education, technical and vocational training, teacher training, higher education educational inspectorates, policy-making bodies, ...and beyond.

At the National level - NEW ZEALAND

Vision

“Making the Good Things Last” - “Kia mau tonu ai, ko nga hua pai”

We believe that education for sustainability is about making the good things last.

This includes being connected socially, culturally, environmentally and economically as a nation.

The decade is about looking after what we have as a nation and ensuring that there are enough resources for future generations.

The decade is about our heritage as a people and our legacy to our grandchildren.

Goals

1. Growing our collective wisdom from early childhood education to adult education
2. Making the connections between different fields of knowledge and people
3. Taking responsibility and action as individuals and collectively as new Zealanders

To achieve these goals the education curriculum must provide the support, context and process for effective teaching and learning in education for sustainability.

Broad Feedback

- The New Zealand Curriculum does not guide, encourage or promote schools, teachers and teacher educators towards education for sustainable development.
- Environmental, economic and social sustainability is pivotal to New Zealand's future and to both our and other species ability to sustain life on our planet. The UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005 report and the Stern Report 2006 supports this view.
- Education for sustainability is needed to achieve a connected and integrated approach to ESD
- A much stronger position needs to be taken by government to incorporate education for sustainable development and environmental education **explicitly** within the New Zealand Curriculum.
- To achieve a sustainable future, we need teachers who are familiar with theory and practice of sustainable development. Opportunities need to be established that will facilitate this.
- The current curriculum tends to promote a single disciplinary approach to learning. The curriculum should also provide alternative approaches that include integrated models of learning.
- The draft curriculum does not provide a strong enough commitment to issues relating to the environment and sustainable development and will not necessarily prepare young people for the 21st century.
- Key Competencies: consider an additional Key Competency called "Living Sustainably" to reflect impact of people's behaviour on their environment.
- Broaden the overall focus on individualism to include community perspectives so that we may move forward as a collaborative, cooperative and sustainable nation.
- Refer the Treaty of Waitangi as a founding document of New Zealand, and as central to the way we view and use natural resources.
- Provide professional development for pre-service and in-service teachers in Education for Sustainability following implementation of the New Zealand Curriculum, including updating the *Guidelines for Environmental Education in New Zealand Schools*.

Specific Feedback: Draft Document pg.8 – 31

UNESCO is endorsing the specific feedback outlined by the National Education for Sustainability coordinator.

(Vision, Principles, Values, Key Competencies, Learning areas, Effective Pedagogy, Designing a School Curriculum, Planning with a Focus on Outcomes, Planning for Purposeful Assessment).

Vision – positive points

Young people should be able to:

- understand, **value and be able to** critique the world around them and make informed decisions **now and for the future. Covered in critical and creative thinkers but would be better if it was expanded**
- Participate effectively in a range of life contexts
- Life long learners – active seekers, users and creators of knowledge. Expand to **Be resilient seekers, users and creators of knowledge to be thoughtful and active citizens**
- Be willing and able to contribute to **cultural**, social, economic and environmental wellbeing -

Principles

The Principles generally reinforce the 'me' aspect of education. Where are the "we" statements? Should these not be re-ordered? Include Sustainability as a principle of its own. NB this is the only section of the document that does not mention sustainability or environment

1. **Equity** for learners
2. **Education for the future – an addition**
All students will have the opportunity to learn in holistic (integrated or interdisciplinary) ways that provide them with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to equip them for a sustainable future
3. **Diversity in Learning**
4. **The pursuit of excellence – not excellence**
All students will learn and achieve to the best of their abilities, seek personal **success and celebrate the success of others**
5. **Learning to learn- Becoming a capable learner**
6. **Cultural heritage – does this meet the needs of Maori students and ToW obligations? – “Learning for Maori students”**
Students who identify as Maori will experience a curriculum that **incorporates that identity**
7. **Connections**

All students will have opportunities to experience learning that makes connections with their own lives and enables families and communities to support learning

8. Coherence

All students will have a **broad and balanced / integrated / holistic/ and seamless** education that provides a range of coherent pathways for learning.

Values –pg 10

We would like to see environmental values part of those the students will learn about, second column p.10 second bullet point. Through their learning experiences, students will learn about:

Bullet point 2

- a. Different kinds of values, such as, moral, **environmental** social, cultural and aesthetic and economic values.

New Zealand students are encouraged to value:

Is excellence a value? It has been called a Principle on page 9.

- **The pursuit of** excellence – listed as No 1, environment listed No.7
- Respect for themselves, for other and for human rights is included but respect for **all living things is not there**. This further highlights the anthropocentric view being portrayed.
- Equity includes , **fairness** and social justice but **social sustainability through** equal opportunities is not included.
- Community and participating for the common good – but what about **social sustainability** through quality relationships
- Care for the **Environment and nature** “the earth and its interrelated ecosystems” needs the addition of “on which all life, including human, depends” This value should also include the word sustainability - care for a sustainable environment.

The values that students will develop (as described pg10) are all anthropocentric.

Some additional ideas to consider:

- Community and participation add **peace**
- Equity– add **open-mindedness**
- Care for the Environment - Add **biodiversity, interdependence, sustainability, personal and social responsibility for action, managing New Zealand’s natural resources in accordance with the Treaty of Waitangi and the significance of these for both the present and future generations.**
- Excellence – add **co-operation and collaborative excellence**

Key Competencies

The Key Competencies are based around an anthropocentric view of world, focused only on the learner as an individual and their relationships with other people.

People don't live in isolation from their environment. They need to relate to living in interrelationship with the world that they are dependent upon and be competent to maintain that world for humans to live on.

a. Managing Self

Focuses on a self-centred approach. Managing self requires recognition of the 'we' dimension. **Managing self is about making good decisions for oneself whilst recognizing that we are part of a wider interdependent world.**

Students need to **work co-operatively with others** and **collectively** they have the strategies to overcome hurdles. Students need to know when to make their own, well informed choices **and when to accept collaborative decisions.**

Managing self should require individuals to make choices in relation to their social and environmental impacts and take responsibility for conserving natural and human resources.

b. Relating to others

They have addressed the notion of knowing when it is appropriate to compete and when to cooperate. This competency is still all about communication. There is no 'action' component so it is less boy-friendly.

c. Participating and Contributing

This competency should be about the sustainable well-being of society.

It should include the notion of students' knowing their rights and responsibilities as citizens by participating in a democratic society.

Words in **bold** are additions needed to widen this competency

Participating and contributing is about taking an active part in a range of local, national and global communities **and environments.**

Communities can be based on kinship, interest or culture and include learning, work and recreation **environments.**

Students who participate and contribute effectively **value their contribution and that of others.**

Many suggestions put forward by the review team have been considered in this competency

d. Thinking

The concept of reflection has now been added – good point

Should learners examine their own belief system, see inter-relatedness and think holistically? This is an essential part of equipping students for a future that will unarguably herald complex social and environmental changes.

e. Using languages, symbols and texts

Using languages, symbols and texts is about communicating and should provide the interconnectedness between the competencies.

You might also consider including:

... the need to recognize the limitations of symbols in interpreting our world and the complexity of the real world. 4.5 Learning Areas – Introduction p.13

Learning needs to be relevant and contextual.

Learning areas are not the only contexts for learning

Specific settings and real issues are suitable contexts and provide for broad groupings of knowledge.

Students should be able to use and enhance key competencies in contexts that are real and meaningful to the students. Real and meaningful contexts increase motivation and enthusiasm to learn. This allows more time for quality learning and decreases classroom management time.

There is no statement that highlights the possible integration of the learning areas this is the place to emphasise holistic learning between the Learning Areas rather than within them.

Key statement

All eight learning areas and the interconnections between them are important to a broad and balanced education.

The diagram needs to be adapted since it is divided into sections with no indication of links between the Learning Areas. The colour are all separate and show a single discipline approach to learning rather than an interwoven model of learning areas working together. Te Whairaki conveys a similar message through a flax mat.

Key Statement

Cross curricular learning is more likely to provide the contexts within which the key competences and values can be developed rather than through the Learning Areas. Therefore in planning programmes schools need to understand and make use of the natural connections between Learning Area's that arise when authentic issues and contexts are used as the basis for learning

There are no examples of how school could design or plan for integrated learning

A cross curricular unit on buildings and structures could include knowledge and skills from science technology, English, and mathematics while considering values such as environmental sustainability of building materials and incorporating the key competencies of participating and contributing and thinking.

We can argue that schools should not design or deliver programmes **solely** around Learning Areas, strands or achievement objectives. WE strongly recommended that **cross curricular learning across strands and learning areas could well provide broad, rich, contextual learning experiences.**

In the pedagogy section how does the current document addresses the following questions?

Is it going to promote a transformative approach?

In what way is the pedagogy section going to shift teacher practice?

Designing a school curriculum

The new draft does consider the role of students and other members of their community and environment in planning curriculum.

Strong feedback was given earlier recommending that consideration be given to students and the strengths and opportunities in their community and environment in planning curriculum.

Planning for the development of the key competencies p.29

The general focus is fine until para 3 where the language reinforces that the learning areas provides unlimited options. No mention of integrated approaches.

This places the second paragraph which states that ... the challenge is for teachers to design learning experiences that will take students from where they are. Such experiences may be built into units of work or arise out of the ways that classrooms and schools environments are structured. This is followed by the statement above reinforcing the learning areas.

Issues around integration include:

- between learning areas
- between early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary – addressed on pg 32-33
- between formal education , business, community and adult education ??
- between community, local, national and global issues – aspects on p.26 (limited)
- between thinking, feeling and acting
- between the biophysical, social, political, cultural, and economic environments that lead to a sustainable future
- between motivation and confidence as a learner and relevance to real life contexts for learning
- between Future Focus Themes, Key Competencies, Principles and assessment curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment

Planning for Purposeful assessment p.30-31

Cross curricular achievement standards for EFS are being developed in 2007.

However it is fair to say that most curriculum delivery is through the learning areas. There are national standards set in all of the learning areas. There are no national standards for Education for Sustainability (EFS) or any of the other integrated themes. Assessment information or achievement in these areas is limited.

Teacher, parent and community perception of effective curriculum delivery is often driven by assessment tasks and achievement in key areas. Where is the assessment that highlights student's integrated understanding and action potential when dealing with issues and problems across a range of learning areas?

Should all assessment be based around the individual? Are there opportunities for collaborative or group assessment?

Broad Recommendations

We urge the following changes to the document.

1. The Preamble must acknowledge that the world and all humanity faces serious environmental issues, damage to nature and ecosystems, and global warming that challenge our assumptions about development and progress.
2. Direct references to the environment and sustainability must be included in the objectives of the Social Studies, Technology and Science statements (and descriptors), and should preferably occur in all curriculum areas.
3. References to the environment and sustainability throughout the draft document must be stronger and more clearly defined. For example -
4. They should include the concept of interdependence that is contained in the *Guidelines for Environmental Education in New Zealand Schools*.
5. Sustainability and sustainable development should be defined from the widely acknowledged definition from the World Commission for Environment and Development report *Our Common Future* (1987) which defines sustainable development as 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs'.
6. The Ministry of Education should consider environmental, social, cultural and economic sustainability as a critical aspect of educating people for the future.
7. It is disappointing that a critical literacy such as financial literacy is the only example given under critical literacies. ECO-LITERACY would be of equal or greater value as a significant theme, as it would enable consideration of critical literacies as part of understanding a complex system.

The curriculum should promote the following:

1. Provide a strong mandate for the implementation of innovative programs of study in EFS. There needs to be a coherent curriculum framework for implementing EFS in New Zealand schooling
2. The curriculum needs to place a greater emphasis on educating people not just for the present, but for the future.
3. The curriculum needs to place a greater emphasis on a cross-curricular approach to learning and assessment. Assessment must reflect a cross curricular approach to address EFS.
4. A more collaborative and cooperative human worldview
5. There needs to be a stronger consideration of the Maori world view in this curriculum.

New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO
Te Kōmihana Matua o Aotearoa mō UNESCO

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

Draft Curriculum Feedback
Ministry of Education
PO Box 1666
Thorndon
WELLINGTON

Wednesday, 29 November 2006

Re: The New Zealand Curriculum: Draft for Consultation 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

Please find attached a submission compiled by the New Zealand Advisory Committee for the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development on the New Zealand Curriculum – Draft for Consultation 2006.

Should you wish to contact the New Zealand Advisory Committee for the DESD, you may reach them by communicating with the National Coordinator for the DESD, Christine Robertson, located within the New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO Secretariat, phone 04 473 5536, or email christine.robertson@minedu.govt.nz.

Regards,



Hayden Montgomerie
On behalf of the New Zealand Advisory Committee for the DESD.

