

10th Global RCE Conference

Yogyakarta, Indonesia



Policymakers' Roundtable

24 November 2016, 8:30-10:30

Moderator: Mario Tabucanon (UNU-IAS)

Background

The Global Action Programme (GAP) on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) focuses on five priority action areas - advancing policy, transforming learning and training environments, building capacities of educators and trainers, empowering and mobilizing youth, and accelerating sustainable solutions at the local level. These action areas are key leverage points to advance the ESD agenda. The 2030 Development Agenda underscores the importance of multiple level governance for effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and translating the global agenda to national priorities and local actions.

The Policymakers' Roundtable is designed to discuss how RCEs can contribute to enabling a policy environment for mobilizing education and learning for sustainable development and scaling up ESD actions, and to discuss the interface of policymakers and RCEs in the context of GAP and SDGs implementations.

Key Issues

Speakers, commentators and discussants are invited to address how RCEs can be engaged with policymakers in:

- Integrating ESD into policies at all levels – global, national and local - in education and development sectors by mainstreaming and upscaling sustainable practices and bringing about systemic change.
- Working with government ministries, national agencies and local governments to strengthen ESD policy environment.
- Connecting ESD policy with development sectors.
- Engaging in intergovernmental, international sustainability policy processes.

Mario Tabucanon introduced the session by highlighting below agenda.

Agenda

Local perspectives – Local policymakers from RCEs:

RCE Okayama (via video)

RCE Tongyeong: Jong-Keun Yoon, Director of Lifelong Learning Center, Tongyeong City Government

RCE Minna: Binta Suleiman, Member of Niger State Parliament, Nigeria

RCE Espoo (via video)

National perspectives – National policymakers:

Yasushi Nagami (Director, Office of Environmental Education, Environmental Policy Bureau, Ministry of the Environment, Japan (MoEJ))

Ayub Macharia Ndaruga (Director, Environmental Education, Information & Public Participation, National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), Kenya)

International perspectives

Ushio Miura (Programme Specialist and Team Leader for ESD and Global Citizenship, Section for Educational Innovation and Skills Development, UNESCO Bangkok)

Naoya Tsukamoto (Project Director, ESD Programme, UNU-IAS)

Saroj Srisai (Head of Environment Division, ASEAN Secretariat)

Jesus Fernandez (Deputy Director for Programme, (Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) BIOTROP

Monika MacDevette (Deputy Director of the Ecosystem's Division, UNEP)

Commentators' interventions

Dzulkifli Razak (International Association of Universities (IAU))

Akpezi Ogbuigwe (Regional Advisor to the RCE community in Africa)

Jos Hermans (Regional Advisor to the RCE community in Europe)

Open discussion

Proceedings

Since 2012, the Policymakers' Roundtable has been a feature at each Global RCE Conference. As heard in Session 3 – Strategic Discussion Part II, policy support was one of the most important tasks an RCE should do. How can we engage with policy makers in the context of GAP and SDGs? Mario Tabucanon explained that all speakers can address issues at all levels of governance and referred to above key issues in the agenda.

Local Perspectives:

RCE Okayama and RCE Espoo showed videos on their respective ESD activities. RCE Okayama exemplified engagement in the promotion of ESD with the local government facilitating multi-stakeholder involvement in a community-based learning framework known as community learning centers or “Kominkan”. RCE Espoo commented that they were in a very lucky position as their work is seen as crucial in the country and hence they are able to work closely with the national government. They gave an overview on how the RCE is connected at local, national and international levels to promote ESD and these connections are cross-administrative and link with the city strategy that is the Espoo Story.

RCE Tongyeong talked about RCE engagement in policy support through its Sejahtera Centre which is a collaborative platform for RCEs in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. It is a hub that welcomes diverse groups of people and conducts programs – including study visits, school exchanges, residency programs and various other forms of learning and research in a collaborative fashion – to advance ESD and influence policy. RCE Minna is a champion and an

ambassador of ESD at the local and national level. It works hand in hand with the grassroots including schools and engaged with policymakers in making access to policy processes.

National Perspectives:

MoEJ: Yasushi Nagami explained that there is a successful context of ESD in Japan since 1970 when the process began. Environmental consultation is an ongoing process. Environmental activities exist broadly outside of schools. Environmental education is incorporated in middle schools. This is also pushed by NGOs and intergovernmental institutions.

A change in attitude on the education side had made all the difference. In future Japan faces big challenges. He went on to explain that Japan is keen to cooperate with other governmental agencies, NGOs and even human rights organisations. They would also gladly cooperate with organisations that push for an understanding of sustainable consumption. This would also help mainstream ESD from the local to the national level. Medium and long term challenges remained with differential commitment by schools. Particularly in elementary schools it was difficult and in universities, where students focus on specialised subjects. This makes the integration of ESD rather difficult. Their priority lied on high schools and universities. He felt the major challenge was how to be effective in implementing ESD. The economy was currently difficult in Japan and the government was reluctant to spend more on ESD. The other challenge was to publicise the effectiveness of ESD policies. It would be helpful to have some kind of measurement of impact. He was interested to hear what initiatives were available in the different countries and how one can measure impact and effectiveness.

NEMA: Ayub Macharia Ndaruga explained that in Kenya one of the core values was sustainable development as embedded in its Constitution. Since 2012 there was an official obligation by the Ministry of Education to promote ESD. They have a national ESD policy. There were national performance contracts in place developed together with the government. This included sustainability targets, for example six items needed to be fulfilled which could be for example pollution control, and managing issues of climate change at NEMA. But one of them was also to promote ESD. Much of this was implemented through the Kenya University Network. At NEMA they had a keen interest in RCEs, as NEMA deals with sustainability issues, so they can give RCEs work to do. One examples is river restoration. They hold regular meetings with the RCEs, they motivate them, and facilitate them with funds. There were different forms to promote ESD. One of the major challenges in Kenya was sanitation.

International Perspectives

From the international perspective there were several people present at the Roundtable, representing important organisations, such as UNESCO, UNEP, UNU-IAS, ASEAN and SEAMEO Biotrop the latter being our link to Indonesia.

UNESCO: Ushio Miura said there were different entry points through which the RCEs could get into the arena of international policy making. UNESCO was an intergovernmental organisation. The most orthodox way to influence would be via national governments. RCEs were in a good position to convey the ESD message to governmental representatives, argue for their position and initiate a policy debate at UNESCO. Often governments ask professors

to represent a country in important meetings to discuss issues. So as many RCEs are hosted by universities, they could also have a direct link this way.

Traditionally during the process civil society was also involved. A common way would be via consultation of the society. The Education For ALL Movement (EFA) for example is a government-led process, via NGO collective consultation. Here many NGOs agree on one collective voice on certain issues. There are NGO representatives in the steering committee of EFA too. Now that ESD was incorporated under SDG 4 it has opened up the door to enter the policy debate arena. Civil society actors working under EFA were not really familiar with ESD so here was an opportunity for RCEs to come in and advise and share their expertise.

GAP ends in 2018 so next year will be the year when everyone will begin thinking post-GAP. In March 2017, ESD GAP Review Meeting will take place in Ottawa. Here RCEs could contribute. Also there will be a forum to hold post-GAP reflections, planned for September 2017 which may be another good consultative opportunity. Another channel often used by NGOs was via the international human rights treaties. All treaties have committees from each country that has ratified it. They have to submit a report whereby there was a periodic review of the committee including an open dialogue. During this process civil society organisations can report as experts and make quite an impact as officials later have to make a statement on this. This would allow RCEs to reflect on an issue in a more official way.

UNU-IAS: Naoya Tsukamoto resonated with the other speakers by emphasizing that when one understands the structure of an RCE one can see its importance. One was not limited to any activity on this earth. We gradually understand that the earth is round and hence we face resource limitations. Everyone can trade and consume anything from anywhere. Internationally the world has become smaller. How can one solve these conflicts? International policies generally have a strong influence on national environmental policies which in turn have an impact on the RCEs' work. RCEs work towards increasing sustainability via engagement. We have come to understand how important it is as RCEs to work with national governments. RCEs also understand the importance of not only working with governments as a whole but also with individual politicians. Through universities RCEs can also engage in the political arena, particularly through participation in global events.

ASEAN: Saroj Srisai mentioned that ASEAN looks at things more from a regional perspective. In terms of creating a better policy on ESD he suggested the following: 1) working with governments nationally, here one could look into the policy of each country of environmental education and come up with a national plan. There was no influence at the local level, but the would align with all ten national policies. 2) Every year there was a summit with other governments or unions on potential collaborations, the European Union was one example. 3) Potential collaborations with regional partners such as for example SEAMEO that look at a blueprint for ESD in all their regional partners. 4) Work with global partners to make sure all follow one global policy such as the SDGs.

SEAMEO: Jesus Fernandez described potential synergies between SEAMEO and RCEs. He mentioned the three areas of SEAMEO BIOTROP¹, RECSAM², and RETRAC³, which are already directly connected to RCE Bogor, Penang and South Vietnam, respectively. He thought it was of advantage that most RCEs were centred around a university, since it was a key link. There were potential possibilities for inclusion of RCE matters into the SEAMEO agenda by looking for common interests. Establishing a SEAMO RCE Secretariat and propose joint projects could be possibilities. Transforming RCE experiences as teaching learning materials would be a way to mainstream ESD. There was a great opportunity to link SEAMEO with the RCE network by maximizing the presence of both in different countries. RCEs could be established in countries where no RCEs are yet such as Brunei or Bandung.

UNEP: Monika MacDevette mentioned additional entry points to the ones mentioned by UNESCO such as the many resolutions declared by other UN bodies relevant to sustainable development, for example, UNEP's adopted resolution on ESD. UNEP has the mandate to work specifically on ESD. There were other entry points that could be used particularly beyond the education sector.

Commentators

IAU: Dzulkifli Razak highlighted the question of leadership. In universities and RCEs when leaders themselves were not aware of ESD it was all about the ESD and RCE concept. The whole process was about a paradigm shift which was not an ordinary leadership style. A whole mind-set had to be changed, which was not easy for national leaders, international leaders and university leadership. There was a lot of risk taking by going into ESD, and most leaders wanted to be safe. He suggested to look at the context of leadership as pivotal for the concept of ESD. He mentioned the 5 Cs that he thought were important for engagement: (1) Committed (documents were not enough), here the best example was RCE Okayama which implemented ESD at all levels of society. (2) Consultative – policies are usually a top down process which was not the case for ESD. (3) Co-operation or co-creation or co-leadership, (4) Committee based and conscious, one example at this conference was the river based project in Yogyakarta and (5) Co-existence.

Akpezi Ogbuigwe said if one wanted to take RCE action to the next level, one needed to be involved with policy makers. In Kenya they had seen how it can be taken from the community level to the national level. The benefit was not just for the RCE but also for the government itself. Steps to take were the UNU secretariat had to show clear leadership that RCEs are supported all the way and this cannot be dependent on leadership change. This would take a lot of commitment. There should be a special outreach plan for policy makers where RCEs can meet policy makers and media. RCEs should be provided with policy materials and visual materials that were plain and captured what RCEs had to offer to policy makers. Lobbying was also important with legislators and city mayors. RCEs were doing a good job at the local level but to make a real impact with the SDGs, they need to engage more boldly with politicians.

1 SEAMEO Regional Centre for Tropical Biology (SEAMEO BIOTROP)

2 SEAMEO Regional Centre for Education in Science and Mathematics (SEAMEO RECSAM)

3 SEAMEO Regional Training Centre (SEAMEO RETRAC)

Mario Tabucanon mentioned other groups such as media that require engagement directly or by other means.

Jos Hermans agreed fully on the leadership ideas. RCEs had been established as a network of expertise to serve the communities. Hans Van Ginkel (a former UNU Rector) did not give a specific format when beginning the process of RCE making. He just sent everyone off and said 'come back and see what you have learned from society'. This link to the needs of society and their translation of them into policy recommendations was the key. RCEs need to find a position and listen to their communities. It was difficult to accept this as RCEs are often seen as research centres and knowledge brokers with links to their universities to use the research and then link to the communities. Once an RCE has marked his position they need to tell it to others. RCEs were service providers with a function in society. How can we explain to others what we do as RCEs? Akpezi's suggestions could be categorised under communications, and Hanna Stahlberg, Communications Associate at UNU-IAS could help coordinate this.

Mario Tabucanon said one needed to stick to the core elements of an RCE: collaborative, decision making being participatory, engaging in research and development and transformative education to effectuate change in communities. The question remained when engaging with policy makers during the policy cycle, at which point can and should RCEs engage?

RCE Minna: mentioned the UNESCO Learning Cities project, where countries and projects were encouraged to participate. But when this was initiated in Nigeria, the Minister of Education was not aware, so RCEs could have played a crucial role as an advisor or a consultative body.

Mario Tabucanon: RCEs should not just be known to international organisations, but also to national governments, this seemed to be the weakest link.

UNEP: addressed Hon. Binta Suleiman if she could give the roundtable some insight why it was so difficult to get a footing in even though so many different entry points have been defined here.

Hon. Binta Suleiman: as the only woman in government, my first contact with RCEs was in August 2016. There was no doubt about the importance of the RCEs' job. Now having established the contact with RCEs it gives me the confidence to do the right thing, for example on education or women issues, as I could request RCEs' support. The direct contact with RCEs was very important to understand what RCEs are all about.

RCE Okayama: In Japan, the reason why translation of policy seemed easier, was that they have a strong community based understanding of ESD and a strong civil society movement. It was very important to have strong civil society leaders. Demonstrations by children on different issues for example help people understand the issues at hand.

SEAMEO: Bureaucracy will always stay in government and this needs to be recognized. Jesus Fernandez asked if it was worth organising an RCE desk? This would provide a link for communications in each Ministry of Education.

NEMA: Many governments are out of resources and many of the available resources are still being wasted. Often governments are just not aware, where the problems were. So when they make their budget they could do with RCEs' insight. A volunteer could help with that.

Mario Tabucanon wrapped the session up by highlighting that each experience could be a model in itself. Raising the level of engagement was crucial. They all needed to digest all these important points said and follow up with some of them. From there one could see what one can do to advance engagement.