UNITED NATIONS
UNIVERSITY

UNU-IAS
Institute of Advanced Studies

Report on the
2ND INTERNATIONAL RCE CONFERENCE

7 – 8 August 2007, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia

DAY 1

OPENING CEREMONY: WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Prof. A.H. Zakri, Director of UNU-IAS

In his opening remarks Prof. Zakri briefly outlined the role of UNU-IAS in the setting up of RCEs and in servicing them. He welcomed all the participants to the Conference, and pointed out the need for monitoring and evaluation of the RCE initiative as it progressed.

Prof. Dato'Anwar Fazal, Co-Chair of RCE Penang

Prof. Fazal formally welcomed all the participants to Penang and encouraged them to explore the natural tropical beauty of not only USM's University in the Garden, but also of Penang Island.

Dr. Derek Elias, UNESCO Representative

The representative from UNESCO briefly introduced the role of the organization in ESD in the Asia Pacific Region. He talked of the goals of Universal Education and the involvement of youth and media in ESD and in natural disaster preparedness. He further highlighted some regional activities and the development of the UNESCO-IUCN DESD indicators programme for the Asia-Pacific region, and reported on the Asia-Pacific UN DESD Interagency Steering Committee. He ended by identifying some of the potential areas for RCEs to explore, show leadership and get involved in – research and reporting, documentation and publications, and addressing Agenda 21 and the MDGs.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Education for Sustainable Development: Words into Action
by Prof. Hans van Ginkel, Rector of UNU.

In his keynote address the Rector first introduced UNU and its mission, roles, objectives, core values, and areas of operation. The concept of the UN DESD and ESD and the origins of the RCE initiative were also introduced. The Rector indicated the involvement of UNU in the DESD and in the development of the RCE concept, and pointed out the roles and characteristics of RCEs. The roles of the major stakeholders in the RCE network – universities and higher institutions of learning – were discussed, and the role of RCEs as building blocks for the global learning space for SD was stressed. He concluded by re-emphasizing the support of UNU for RCEs to help achieve the goals of the UN DESD.

Presentation on experiences of RCE Penang by Prof Dzulkifli Bin Abdul Razak, Vice Chancellor, USM

Prof. Razak spoke about the historical development of USM, a science-based university with 29,000 students. In his presentation, Prof. Razak discussed the role of RCE Penang in making USM a healthy campus and moving it towards the "University in the Garden" concept with activities involving students, lecturers and administrators. RCE Penang is also collaborating with the UNESCO programme at USM in implementing several of the activities on campus. They are also collaborating with other countries, including Cuba, on the issue. Activities on campus include tree planting and conservation of old and rare plant and animal species. The RCE is also involved in the future strategic planning of the University and in the development of education and awareness materials for use in primary and secondary schools and at the university level.

SESSION 1: EXPERIENCES OF SELECTED RCEs

Panel Discussion on major concerns and issues of RCEs by Greater Nairobi, Barcelona, Penang and Saskatchewan.

A brief about each RCE was given as an introduction and this was followed by interactive question and answer sessions with pre-selected questions on major activities of the RCEs, their inputs to the community and the major challenges they are facing.

Most RCEs reported that they were making a difference in offering a unique opportunity for different Sustainable Development operators to convene and talk about what they are doing and what they can collaborate on. This was pointed out as one of the most important achievements of the RCEs. The convening power of the network makes it a unique avenue for the communities.

There were several challenges highlighted and these included resources especially for developing country RCEs and the need to maintain an added value over other existing networks.

SESSION 2: TOWARDS A GLOBAL LEARNING SPACE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Progress report about the Global RCE Service Centre
by Katsunori Suzuki

Mr. Suzuki outlined the mandate and composition of the Ubuntu Committee of Peers for RCEs and then reported the current number of RCEs – 34. This was followed by a report on the 2nd Ubuntu Committee meeting held on 6th August in Penang, when 16 new RCE applications were reviewed and decisions and advice conveyed to the new and old RCEs in their organizational and operational areas.

Several publications produced by the Global RCE Service Centre, including a new poster and brochure about RCEs, were mentioned in the presentation. The development of a new RCE logo and the local and international meetings attended by the RCE Global Service Centre were also reported.

Report on RCE networks (RCE Server, European RCE Networks, other geographical and thematic networks) by Katsunori Suzuki.

Three major areas/topics for discussion have developed from the RCE networks — mobilization, communication and information exchange, and development of substantive items to be learned. Mr. Suzuki also reported on the multi-layer networking — in the RCEs, between the RCEs and at different levels, and among thematic groupings like teacher education, sustainable production and consumption and sustainable use of energy.

The need for reporting by RCEs, first when applying for acknowledgement and then annually to the Global Service Centre, was emphasized. A report on the importance and use of the RCE server, which is soon to start operations, was also included.

SESSION 3: MAJOR CHALLENGES: RCE PORTFOLIO, REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Brief presentation on the RCE Server by Prof. Kimio Uno

Prof. Uno presented an Asia-Pacific prototype of the RCE Server whose aim is to create, accumulate and disseminate knowledge by encouraging participatory research, spatial browsing and thematic search functions. It will have a dual serving scale: Global to Local and Local to Global.

RCEs will individually be able to upload their own information and also to access information uploaded by others. There will also be discussion fora for all the RCEs.

DAY 2

SESSION 4: ESD RESEARCH AND CAPACITY BUILDING

On line learning for sustainable development presentation by Dr. Brendan Barrett of the Media Studio, UNU

Dr. Barrett briefly introduced the UNU Media Studio whose mission is to "develop and share engaging on-line educational content using innovative methodologies". This studio uses the internet to create a tool for global learning in a creative and interactive way for all levels of education and all types of learners, using limited resources but collaborating to achieve set objectives. Instances given were having over 400 RCEs around the world in the future collaborating and working together to achieve sustainable development through education; the Water Virtual Learning center and the UNU-Global Virtual University. Dr. Barrett concluded by advising the RCEs to "widen their circle of collaboration or risk widening the gap".

SESSION 5: BREAKOUT SESSIONS

GROUP1: Teacher Training and Retraining
(Chaired by Prof. Chuck Hopkins and coordinated by K. Suzuki)

The Panel and Sharing Information:
Rosalyn McKeown spoke about the activities of the International Network of Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs). Derek Elias spoke about UNESCO Bangkok's future projects related to ESD and the ESD NET, which is a network of TEIs across the Asia-Pacific region. Wei Dong Ying spoke of teacher education efforts in ESD related to RCE Beijing. Mags Libby of Ireland gave an overview of teacher education in Ireland, which uses development education as an entrée for ESD. Ake Bjorg talked about distance learning. Kiran Chhokar spoke of India's Center for Environmental Education and RCE efforts related to teacher education.

Needs assessment:
Participants were asked to break into small groups to discuss RCE needs related to teacher education. Some points that came up follow.
- Capacity building is needed.
- RCEs should have a cross-curricular agenda.
- Lack of curriculum to educate teachers and textbooks on ESD.
- The need of examples from practice, schools, and TEIs.
- The 5 Ws and 1 H. * What is needed? * Who with and Who by?   * Who for? * Where? * How?

- The need for transformation in the mindset of university teachers.

Recommendations and Actions

<u>Mandate</u>
- Mount a public relations campaign for ESD to be better known.
- Develop a mandate for ESD.
- Mainstream the mandate.
- Work closely with local governments and ministries of education.
- Work to integrate ESD with Education for All (EFA).

<u>Textbooks, materials, and curriculum</u>
- Involve teachers in the development of textbooks and in supplying information about local needs.
- Create materials on important issues like climate change and poverty.
- Map the curriculum.
- Provide case studies of good ESD.

<u>Institutions of teacher education and higher education</u>
- Facilitate establishment of teacher-education forums in conjunction with TEIs.
- Create case studies and distribute them.
- Make recommendations for transformation of universities to overcome powerlessness and increase community outreach.
- Establish forums and liaisons to discuss emerging ESD issues.

<u>Pedagogy</u>
- Promote pedagogical models that help achieve goals of ESD.
- Promote experiential learning as part of ESD.

<u>Research</u>
- Do market research and develop a market.
- Identify gaps in the literature and knowledge base and fill them.
- Survey local needs to inform further actions.
- Answer important questions to ESD such as how to engage students in the ESD process.

<u>GROUP 2: Sustainable Production and Consumption (SPC)</u>
<u>(Coordinated by Z. Fadeeva)</u>

Two presenters - Zinaida Fadeeva and Rene van Berkel – introduced a range of topics and approaches to the broad subject of SPC. The group identified four themes which it discussed and made recommendations on.

1. The group on 'Getting businesses involved' proposed three projects to be undertaken for business partners (or partners working with businesses) in the RCEs.
- Development of Leadership Programmes for businesses in the area of sustainable development and CSR. The first leadership programme

could be run globally or regionally with consequent programmes for individual countries.

- Identification and development of good practices of businesses engaged in collaborative RCE activities.
- Training programmes for RCE stakeholders on communication and engagement with businesses.

2. The group on 'Information sharing for SPC' suggested seven actions for better information exchange. The actions range between publishing stories and cases in magazines, exchange of information in RCE newsletters, TV documentaries and use of SMS. The group developed suggestions for engagement of partners and assigning primary responsibilities.

3. The group on 'Life style' focused its discussion on the question of waste minimization in communities. It suggested possible projects including awareness raising and competence building for waste minimization with the involvement of all significant members of the community.

4. The group on 'Getting consumers involved' discussed strategies to involve consumers in the promotion of SPC. The range of strategies suggested involved campaigns, train the trainers programmes, formal education, consumer education activities, etc. with the goal of raising consumers' awareness. Activities suggested by the group are strategy mapping and assessment of effectiveness of individual strategies.

GROUP 3: Sustainable use of Energy (Coordinated by Y. Natori)

The thematic group opened its discussion with several presentations from different RCEs followed by a facilitated discussion. In this discussion, the group emphasized that while a lot of knowledge and good practice information is available, RCEs would need to look into the challenges of awareness raising, sharing knowledge, facilitating access to information and utilizing it in action. A range of approaches such as workshops, seminars, conferences, partnerships, visitor centers, etc. were brought forward as means of addressing the challenges.

The group also considered thematic areas that would take priority in the broad agenda of sustainable use of energy solutions. The following topics were proposed for discussion within RCEs.
- Technology
- Relation between partners in RCE
- How to promote
  o Energy efficiency
  o Renewable energy
  o Energy saving
  o Climate change issues such as CDM and Kyoto Protocol
  o Global solution
- Policy issues

The group agreed that in addition to the key areas listed above, reduction of energy consumption is a basis for sustainable use of energy. The group encouraged facilitation of all RCEs in the activities related to this theme.

CONCLUDING SESSION

<u>Concluding remarks by the Rector of UNU, Prof. Hans van Ginkel</u>

Prof. Hans van Ginkel, Rector of UNU, summarised the two days' discussion, by pointing out that,

- more networking and communication is necessary within and between RCEs;
- educators should be involved in the activities of RCEs;
- university is more important as a learning or teaching organization than as a research organization in RCE activities;
- an award system should be developed to commend and promote 'best practices' among RCEs;
- the RCE server should be operationalized as quickly as possible, even in an incomplete manner, to allow RCE stakeholders to share and access RCE-related information easily;
- working groups on research should be established, focusing on education for sustainable development, not on sustainable development;
- each RCE should develop a portfolio of RCE activities; and
- more issue-based dialogue should take place in future meetings.

He also expressed his expectation that the number of RCEs will be increased to 100 in two years and indicated that the next International RCE Conference is likely to be held in Europe in 2008 and that the time and place would be decided following consultations with European RCEs. He closed the meeting by thanking the Secretariat team and University of Science Malaysia for their hard work and hospitality.