

Education for sustainable development towards responsible global citizenship

Kirsi Lindroos and Marja-Leena Loukola

Introduction

Since the millennium the Finnish national core curricula have been redrafted and as a result providers of education have devised their own curricula based on these updated plans. Sustainable development and internationality are key areas of education within the core curricula and knowledge of environmental skills is part and parcel of one's own field in vocational education establishments. In practice, however, the learning process towards both a sustainable way of life and global citizenship is a big challenge. Schools are in need of many support measures in order to make progress in their endeavours. In Finland, strategies aimed at providing further support have been drawn up within the National Board of Education (NBE) and also in collaborative efforts between the NBE, governmental institutions and other contributors. The strategies are currently in the early stages of implementation.

Definitions of the goals of the learning processes involved in sustainable way of life and global citizenship in Finland

If we are to build our future on sustainable ground, we need to learn to maintain social, cultural, and economic well-being without depleting natural resources or overloading nature's delicate balance. It is the task of education and training to ensure that citizens of all ages have the knowledge, skills, readiness and vision that will enable them to build a sustainable and equitable future and commit to a sustainable way of life.

Finnish education policy is based on the principle of life-long learning with its points of departure being equality and nationwide participation. Such a policy strengthens the society's sense of unity, active citizenship, well-being and global citizenship. The Finnish Constitution states that everyone is responsible for nature and its biodiversity, the environment and cultural heritage. It is the task of education and training to ensure that citizens of all ages learn to function according to this responsibility.

In the Strategy for Education and Training for Sustainable Development

authorised by the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development in March 2006, the vision of sustainable development, education and training is one of citizens committed to a sustainable way of life. Knowledge, skills and motivation are increased in all education and training by way of the built-in sustainable development education.

Citizens committed to a sustainable way of life shoulder a life-long responsibility to develop new and sustainable working practices and working environments in every stage of their lives and in every task that they meet. In reality, they are able to weigh the ecological, economic, social and cultural effects of their choices in both local and global terms. Citizens form a society in which people's physical, psychological, social, cultural and economical well-being are looked after without depleting natural resources or natural diversity nor without overloading nature's delicate balance (Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development, Sub-committee for Education, 2006, p. 23).

The goal of education and training for sustainable development in the Finnish national core curricula is to increase the student's readiness and motivation to act on behalf of the environment and the well-being of the individual. The goals of the varying school levels can be summarised as follows:

- to increase understanding of the connection between human well-being, economy and protection of the environment, aiming at an eco-effective welfare society
- to increase understanding of our own cultural heritage, different cultures, justice and the preconditions of trust between human groups, as well as to develop abilities for intercultural and international interaction
- to enhance readiness to detect changes in the environment, society and human well-being, as well as to identify their causes and consequences in both our immediate environment and at the global level
- to affect changes in daily practices and make a commitment to a sustainable way of life
- to improve the readiness and motivation to participate and influence decision-making as a citizen and member of the work community and other communities
- to provide the sort of vocational skills in different fields of vocational education that create the prerequisites for developing each branch of industry in a more sustainable direction.

Building the future on ecologically, economically, and culturally sustainable grounds necessitates the ability to perceive and understand things in their

entirety. It calls for a wide knowledge base of how society, trade and industry, and the natural environment work, how decisions are made, and what opportunities a citizen has to influence decision-making. It also requires the ability and courage to critically assess current practices and change practices in private life, educational institutions, public affairs, work, and free-time environments. The builders of a sustainable future need to have insight into the extent of the need for change and an ethical responsibility for national and global equality and distribution of well-being. Diverse skills in information acquisition, problem solving, communications, critical and innovative thinking, and the ability to reconcile different interests and handle conflicts are required.

The challenge of more holistic learning becomes tangible in cross-curricular collaboration, development of daily practices and the operational culture, and more frequent interaction with the surrounding society. The courage to grapple societal and economic issues and an ability to see the local activity in a global framework are necessary. Everyone must gain experience of shouldering responsibility, participating and making a difference in public affairs from a young age.

It is important to understand the significance of the everyday solutions of individuals, families and schools. The ability to seek out solutions concurrent with sustainable development can be taught in schools and different people can be made responsible for their being carried out. The entire work community can be made to commit to those solutions, with the result that the ability to learn development processes aimed at changing everyday practices and the effects of those processes remain with the students throughout most of their lives (Loukola, 2004, pp. 94-95).

Global education and sustainable development education have common goals. The global education action plan of the Finnish Ministry of Education has defined the goals of global education as, amongst other things:

- steering towards individual global responsibility and common worldwide responsibility
- support for growth into a critical and media-critical citizen who has the knowledge and skills to function successfully as part of their own community in a globalising world
- the ability to perceive the world as a whole with limited natural resources; a world in which we need to learn to save resources and distribute them fairly, equally, and equitably.

These are also the goals of sustainable development education (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 14).

International co-operation

International treaties and processes on sustainable development concern also education and training. The strategies of the United Nations (UN), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), European Union (EU), the Baltic countries, the Nordic countries and Finland on sustainable development pay attention to the central role of education and training in promoting sustainable development and their preparation and realisation has produced many co-operation networks in the area of training.

Finland has committed to the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) documents regarding its implementation and also the Baltic Sea region sustainable development education Baltic 21E programme. On the basis of the aforementioned, Finland has prepared its own national strategy for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development in 2006 (Ministry of Education, 2006). The national ten year strategy takes into consideration the universities' Copernicus charter on sustainable development, which was drawn up in 1993. To date it has been signed by over 320 higher education establishments in 38 countries.

The Haga Declaration was presented at the Council of the Baltic Sea States conference for Ministers of Education held in Stockholm in March 2000. The declaration expressed the desire that education should also be included in the Baltic 21 programme as a sector of its own. The preparation of "An Agenda 21 for Education in Baltic Sea Region - Baltic 21E" began, and in 2002 the Prime Ministers of the Baltic Sea States endorsed the programme. Its aim is that sustainable development perspectives form a natural, permanent part of the education systems in the Baltic Sea States. The Baltic 21E programme defines as the general objective of education that everyone acquires the competence to support sustainable development to meet the needs of the present population without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. In 2002, Finland drew up a launch plan for a national Baltic 21E programme, and at the beginning of 2006, for the programme itself. The programme doubles as a national strategy for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, and it covers the entire educational system.

The first Nordic sustainable development strategy, adopted by Nordic Prime Ministers and the Nordic Council, came into force in 2001 and was later checked in 2004. The strategy sets long-term development goals for the period up to 2020 and describes what actions the countries should attempt to focus on between 2005 and 2008. The main theme of the strategy is

sustainable consumption and production habits and the social questions of sustainable development. One of the central goals of the strategy is the promotion of education for sustainable development and the integration of sustainable development perspectives in Nordic educational systems based on the principle of life-long learning (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2004).

National strategies concerning sustainable development education since the millennium

A proposal drawn up by the Ministry of Education on a national action plan for global education was finished in December 2005. The action plan emphasizes the challenges of teaching and learning specifically on the basis of the UN's Millennium Declaration and the resulting millennium development goals, the Finnish development policy programme and the Maastricht recommendation for global education. The action plan also looks at global development questions and the handling of them in both training and the operations of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Ministry of Education, 2006).

The Ministry of Education drew up the strategy for sustainable development in education, which concerns the entire education system, the implementation of Baltic 21E programme and the Finnish strategy for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014). It was finished in February 2006 and it contains policy definitions for the whole educational system (Ministry of Education, 2006).

The strategy for education and training for sustainable development and its implementation plan 2006-2014, drawn up by the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development Sub-Committee, was approved in a committee meeting lead by the prime minister in March 2006. It is a joint plan of various participants, striving to reinforce the importance of sustainable development in education and training and to provide additional support for teachers, trainers and educators. The strategy focuses on areas that require extensive cooperation within educational institutions and the combination of expertise in the field of education with that of other participants and also resources. Further resources are sought primarily via cooperation between various fields of administration, trade and industry and NGOs (Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development, Sub-committee for Education, 2006).

Finland was one of the first countries to draw up their own sustainable development programme in 1998. The government's sustainable development programme attempted to create ecological durability and the economic, social and cultural prerequisites that come with it. The

programme has been put into action by Ministries and other public sector centres of administration (Ministry of the Environment, 1998). The evaluation of the Government's Sustainable Development Programme was performed as a broad interactive process between 2000 and 2002 under the supervision of the Finnish Sustainable Development Committee. The Committee authorised a new strategy in June 2006 whose points of departure are the combination of sustainable use, up keep and protection of natural resources, the well-being of citizens and the securing of the unity of the society. The result is a Finland of sustainable development that is skilled and can take advantage of its strengths. The prerequisites for implementation of the strategy are:

- during change the economic, social and environmental effects of sustainable development should be taken into consideration in a balanced manner
- the differing contributing bodies in society are included in the preparation and implementation of the strategy
- the implementation is secured by way of institutional systems
- political programmes and plans arising from the strategy contain an integrated evaluation of the effects of sustainable development.

The strategy contains a separate chapter which deals with education and training for sustainable development. (Finnish Sustainable Development Committee).

Increased co-operation between administrative fields

For many years in Finland partnerships between different fields of administration have been formed. Also, the Government, NGOs and trade and industry have pooled resources for mutually agreed sustainable development education projects. These projects have concerned, amongst other things, cultural heritage education, preventing climate change, re-evaluation of mobility and the protection of waterways. Good results have been achieved by combining small projects and co-operation between varying professions.

A broad-based forum for discussion between administrative officials and other civil servants, chaired by the prime minister, has been running in Finland since 1993. The Committee for Sustainable Development coordinates national sustainable development processes and promotes open debate between administration and civic societies. It also follows and takes a stand on global and regional sustainable development processes.

Administrative fields such as education, environment, social welfare, health and financial administration, the Federation of Municipalities, university teacher training, trade and industry and 14 NGOs are represented on the educational Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee participates in the preparation of the Committee's programmes of work and incorporates the differing administrative fields in the strategies and action plans, bearing in mind the point of view and co-operation requirements of education and training for sustainable development. The Education Sub-Committee organises and prepares a plan of execution for the Education and Training for Sustainable Development Strategy just as it does the National Sustainable Development Strategy regarding training.

The Finnish model supports schools in sustainable development learning processes

In compliance with laws, decrees, and the approved distribution of lesson hours, the Finnish National Board of Education draws up the national core curriculum for pre-school, basic, secondary, upper-secondary and upper secondary level vocational education and training. Based on the core curricula, local authorities and other education providers devise their own curricula which are specified and complement the aims and core contents. The core curricula of comprehensive schools contain pre-subject defined key education and teaching areas and cross-curricular themes. They are unifying themes for education and training that must be part of curriculum subjects, common events and they must be visible in the working culture of the school. Sustainable development and internationality are cross-curricular themes that must be included in both curriculum subjects and the everyday life of the school (Finnish National Board of Education, 2003 and 2004). In vocational training and on-the-job training the promotion of sustainable development is stressed throughout all fields. Knowledge of environmental skills is part and parcel of one's own field.

It is a big challenge for an entire school to embark on the sustainable development learning process. It requires true commitment and support for leadership, purposeful organisation of work, the commitment and in-service training of the entire work community, co-operative planning between curriculum subjects, improvements to the working culture, organising co-operation with non-school bodies and planning and implementation of the process evaluation. The strategy and its action plan prepared by the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development, Sub-committee for Education contain many new forms of support for schools (Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development, Sub-committee for Education,

2006, pp. 21-27).

The strategy proposes that education and training for sustainable development be named a key area in educational administration and social welfare and health administration and also in both the basic and in-service training of teachers. Expert support for teachers, trainers and educators is presented as significant in the strategies of other administrative fields and organisations. Those themes named as key areas receive the greater part of development resources.

According to the strategy implementation plan, on a national level the administrative fields and other central contributors are working on a concrete work plan to organise and consolidate communication. The aim is to purposefully direct resources and differing expertise to schools in support of the sustainable development learning process. Projects will be agreed upon and invested in collectively. Improving the efficiency of the collection and distribution of development ideas and new solutions will be agreed upon taking advantage of the networks and channels of communication of different contributors.

In 2005 the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of the Environment initiated the gathering together of collaboration groups in the provinces. By the end of 2006 the collaboration groups will draw up an action and development plan and seek out units profiled as development centres. The development centres function as regional skill centres that collect and distribute development ideas. Connections with universities and upper secondary vocational schools are important.

At the local level coordination will be strengthened to augment skills in sustainable development. Co-operation between day-care and schools providing various levels of education will be strengthened. The creation and consolidation of connections with nature and environment schools, organisations providing basic art education, organisation and associations promoting sustainable development themes, the media and experts and research in differing fields of administration and trade and industry will be supported. The aim is to expand the learning environment beyond the school and out into the society. Attempts will be made to give school-goers, students and mature students the opportunity to participate in local development activities. New technology will be taken advantage of as networking and interaction diversifies. The drawing up of guidebooks will be initiated with cross-curricular instruction and school-external bodies to ease the task of collaboration. The aim is that by 2014 all schools and educational establishments will have functioning modes of collaboration with school-external bodies.

The knowledge and utilisation of differing methods of influence and

participation are essential in the development of a democracy and in building a sustainable future. Learning to participate begins with understanding the effects of one's own way of working, participation in the planning and implementation of those plans in one's own working community and it continues as civic activity and influences the different stages and tasks in life. All children and young people should gain experience in shouldering responsibility and handling communal matters in both their own community and the school-external community. It is important to understand the effect of small, local actions even on a world-wide scale. Participation in national and international projects supports the growth into global citizenship and provides insight into global environmental and development questions. It also sheds light on the requirements and possibilities of a more just division of well-being.

The methodical promotion of sustainable development and the commitment of the working community are brought about with greater certainty when the entire working community draws up together the sustainable development plan of action. The preparation of the plan of action begins with mapping the current situation, on the basis of which the development steps can be decided upon. The development steps are concerned with leadership, tuition and daily practices. In terms of learning, it is important that both tuition as well as the operational culture support growth of a sustainable way of life and training in sustainable consumption habits. The compilation of the plan of action requires persistent work, multi-profession collaboration and definitions of responsibility.

The strategy suggests that a sustainable development programme of action be drawn up in every educational organisation by 2010. It should be part of the budget and action plan and quality assurance. The aim is that 15% of day-care centres, schools and educational institutions should have received an external acknowledgement or certificate for their sustainable development activity by 2014.

Environmental management systems offer a tool for the administration and development of an organisation's environmental issues. The best known environmental management systems EMAS and ISO 14 001 have been developed based on the needs of companies. Their administrative demands and costs are too great for most schools. Finland has about ten ISO 14 001-certified vocational education establishments or vocational upper secondary schools.

The Green Flag programme is part of the international Foundation for Environmental Education FEE Eco-Schools programme. In Finland the Finnish Environmental Education Society is responsible for running the programme, which includes just under 200 schools, educational

establishments or day-care centres. The programme in Finland is made up of 4 themes: water, energy, reducing waste and immediate environment. At the end of 2006 the theme of consumption was also included.

An environmental certificate has been developed which is suitable for the needs and operations of schools and educational establishments and is also appropriately inexpensive and light-weight for smaller schools. The environmental certification and its criteria have been developed in the Envedu project with the help of funding from the EU Life Environment Fund. The basis for the certification is the environmental criteria of schools and educational establishments (Hyvinkään-Riihimäen aikuisoppilaitos, 2004). The criteria include specific demands of school leadership, tuition and daily practices that help the schools in environmental work. The stipulations required by ISO 14 001 and the EMAS decree on operational planning, guidance, assessment and development, have been taken into consideration in the criteria. These stipulations have, however, been slackened so that they would be better suited to educational establishments. The criteria focus on the ecological area of sustainable development, in other words, the responsibility for the environment but the expansion of the criteria to encompass the area of economic, social and cultural durability has also been initiated. In this way the criteria can be utilised as a tool to aid the drawing up of the action plan for sustainable development. The OKKA foundation is responsible for the administration and development of the environmental certification of educational establishments.

Achieving certification requires a few years of systematic environmental work by the school or educational establishment. A prerequisite for the receipt of the environmental certificate is the school's self-assessment. In addition to this an independent outside auditor checks the self-assessment report and performs an assessment in the school. This outside assessment ensures that the school fills the environmental criteria. The certificate is awarded for three years at a time. The environmental certification began in 2004 and the certificate has been awarded to around 10 basic education establishments, upper-secondary schools and vocational educational establishments.

Conclusion

There is no universal model for sustainable development education. The aims of sustainable development education should be set according to the conditions of one's own culture and the local social, economic and environmental conditions. However, it is just as important to take into consideration the global dimension and also to be able to perceive the field

of global responsibility in its entirety (Finnish Sustainable Development Committee, 2006).

The responsibility for increasing environmental awareness and learning about a sustainable way of life lies with not only tuition and environmental administration but also other fields of administration, parishes, organisations and the media. Each institution has its own areas of interest within the goals of education and training.

A quality education system is the best coach for sustainable development. Investment in a training policy based on the quality of training and the principles of life-long learning ensures an increase in the abilities of humanity.

Kirsi Lindroos

Director General

National Board of Education

Marja-Leena Loukola

Counsellor of Education

National Board of Education

References and Bibliography

Finnish National Board of Education (2004) *National core curriculum for basic education*, Vammala.

Finnish National Board of Education (2003) *National core curriculum for upper secondary schools*, Vammala.

Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development, Sub-committee for Education (2006) *Strategy for Education and Training for Sustainable Development and Implementation Plan 2006-2015*, Helsinki.

Hyvinkään-Riihimäen aikuiskoulutuskeskus (2004) *Environmental certification and EMAS registration of Educational Establishments- Step-by-step Guide to EMAS*, Tampere.

Loukola Marja-Leena (2004) *Ympäristönlukutaito ja kestävä elämäntapa julkaisussa Aihekokonaisuudet perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelmassa* (toim. Marja-

Leena Loukola), Helsinki.

Ministry of Education and Science in Sweden (2002) *An Agenda 21 for Education in the Baltic Sea Region - Baltic 21E*, Baltic 21 Series No 2/02.

Ministry of Education (2002) *Education for Sustainable Development / Baltic 21E programme- A proposal by the ESD committee for a starting-up plan for the programme*, Helsinki.

Ministry of Education (2006) *Sustainable development in education; Implementation of Baltic 21E programme and Finnish strategy for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)*, Helsinki.

Ministry of Education (2006) *Global Education 2010, proposal for an action programme*, Helsinki.

Ministry of the Environment (1998) *Finnish Government Programme for Sustainable Development, Council of State Decision-in-Principle on the Promotion of Ecological Sustainability*, Helsinki.

Ministry of the Environment (2003) *Evaluation of sustainable development in Finland - Summary*, Helsinki.

Nordic Council of Ministers (2004) *Sustainable Development - New Bearings for Nordic Countries - Revised edition with goals and measures for 2005-2008, Principal policy points*, Copenhagen.

Suomen kestävän kehityksen toimikunta (2006) *Kohti kestäviä valintoja - kansallisesti ja globaalisti kestävä Suomi - Kansallinen kestävän kehityksen strategia* (julkaisu tulossa ja käännettävänä).