

Teacher's competencies in implementing education for sustainable development

Indicator 06 Networks for actors in the field of ESD

Objective defining the desired end state

Opportunities to exchange experiences and knowledge about the implementation of education for sustainable development are taken advantage of.

Underlying assumptions and considerations for the operationalization

Exchange and the transmission of knowledge advance the implementation of education for sustainable development and the quality of its implementation. Networks enable and facilitate the access to experience and complementary knowledge, are an incentive to learning and thus generate collective learning effects in specific fields of application. They counter isolation, promote the diffusion of best-practice examples and support lobbying. Moreover they set standards, norms and rules and support innovative problem solving. Networks thus have a quality-assurance effect. State support in turn has a beneficial effect on the durability of networks and on the quality of how they moderate discourse. Institutionalised (i.e. established on a lasting basis and moderated) networks encourage in particular the exchange and transmission of knowledge. Networks serving the exchange and transmission of knowledge in the field of education for sustainable development can be targeted towards individuals or towards educational institutions.

Country specific rationale behind the selection of criteria and the data basis

Switzerland has national networks devoted to the issue of education for sustainable development and targeted towards educational institutions and teachers/lecturers. At present three major national networks dealing exclusively with education for sustainable development can be named:

The first is "BNE-Forum Schweiz", a network chaired and managed jointly by the Foundation for Education and Development (FED) and the Stiftung Umweltbildung Schweiz (SUB). It is targeted towards all actors involved with education for sustainable development, including not only educational institutions and teachers/lecturers of all educational levels, but also government agencies. The second is a network addressing lecturers teaching at the tertiary level in universities of teacher education, and managed also by the SUB. The third one is "Nachhaltige Entwicklung an den Schweizer Fachhochschulen (NNE-FH.CH)", a network at the tertiary level that is currently being established. It is targeted towards very diverse actors having in common that they deal with or are interested in sustainability in different fields of action in Swiss universities of applied sciences. Its aim is to foster synergies in the fields of teaching, research and services. Shortly, a special national agency for ESD, that will have networking functions also, will start its work - the situation will therefore certainly change.

A quantitative evaluation of these three existing national networks would not lead to solid results. The data needed to ensure a methodologically sound quantitative analysis cannot be collected, even with high effort and cost. The reason being, among others, that the networks do not have criteria for admission, do not have a formalised membership, do not record data of those participating and are not limited to educational institutions and teachers/lecturers participating. But, as these networks are of importance from a national point of view, a qualitative evaluation is justified.

At the international level, the two networks of major importance are the "Copernicus Alliance", targeting towards institutions of higher education and the network of UNESCO project schools, targeting also towards educational institutions, but those at the primary and the secondary levels. They both are open to Swiss educational institutions and a quantitative collection and analysis of data is possible. They are, however, barely known in Switzerland.

Functions of ESD

Education in specific competencies

Implementation in educational institutions

Level

Primary, Secondary I+II, Tertiary

Location

Process

Characteristic

Quantitative (Criterion 1)

Qualitative (Criterion 2)

Teacher's competencies in implementing education for sustainable development

Indicator 06 Networks for actors in the field of ESD

Criterion 1

Educational institutions cooperating in established education for sustainable development networks (including professional and academic associations).

Measurement

Number of educational institutions listed in the network of UNESCO project schools (primary and secondary levels) and number of educational institutions being member of the "Copernicus Alliance" (tertiary level).

Procedure

Step 1: Open the lists.

Step 2: Count the UNESCO-associated Swiss schools respectively the Swiss institutions of higher education that have joined the Alliance.

Step 3: Only with regard to UNESCO-associated schools: Sort out private schools and split the schools according to the educational levels.

Data basis

List of UNESCO-associated schools in Switzerland (<http://www.unesco.ch/die-unesco-und-die-schweiz/unesco-assozierte-schulen-in-der-schweiz.html>).

List of the "Copernicus Alliance" (www2.leuphana.de/copernicus/members).

Informative value, advantages / disadvantages, prospects

One problem is that it is not possible to define the percentage of Swiss schools participating due to the fact that the total number of schools at the primary and the secondary levels in Switzerland is not known at present. As efforts to register the individual schools are on their way, this problem could be solved in the near future. Another factor limiting the informative value with regard to the UNESCO project schools is that the schools associated are committed to all five concerns of UNESCO; as sustainable development is only one of them it is not possible to know which schools orientate themselves towards sustainable development and to count them separately. That these networks are barely known in Switzerland is another factor limiting the informative value - focusing on national networks could eventually increase the informative value, but this would make an international comparison impossible.

Criterion 2

Organisation and structure of the education for sustainable development networks.

Elements of description

Which is the target audience of the network respectively who is actually participating (educational levels, conditions of membership, educational sectors)?

What are the goals/functions of the network?

How is the organisation of the network?

What are the activities/offersings for members of the network and which kind of moderation activities are delivered?

Procedure

Step 1: Collect up-to-date documents and websites of each network.

Step 2: Analyse the documents and websites per network along the questions listed under the heading "Elements of description" and describe the findings.

Data basis

Network "BNE-Forum Schweiz": www.bne-forum.ch.

Network for lecturers teaching at the tertiary level in universities of teacher education: <http://www.umweltbildung.ch/llb/netzwerke>.

Network "Nachhaltige Entwicklung an den Schweizer Fachhochschulen (NNE-FH.CH)": As this network is currently being established, only little information is available.

Informative value, advantages / disadvantages, prospects

As this criterion has to be qualitatively operationalized the room for interpretation is big. Furthermore, the quality of the analysis depends on the informative value of the documents and websites given by the networks and on the fact whether this information is up to date. The analysis according to the elements of description though can provide a basis for developing criteria that in turn can serve to evaluate the quality of single networks. One thing that can be already stated is that networks demanding that membership is linked with concrete activities are better with regard to the exchange of knowledge and experience than those allowing a passive membership only.