

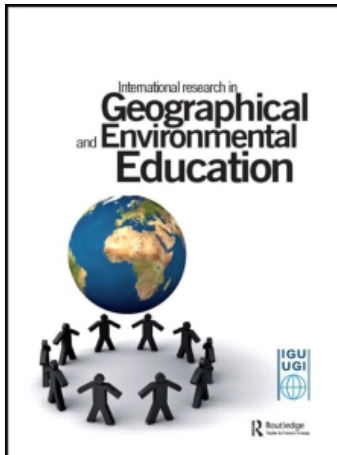
This article was downloaded by: [Reinfried, Sibylle]

On: 23 October 2009

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 916167287]

Publisher Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t794297793>

Education for sustainable development and the Lucerne Declaration

Sibylle Reinfried

Online Publication Date: 01 November 2009

To cite this Article Reinfried, Sibylle(2009)'Education for sustainable development and the Lucerne Declaration',International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education,18:4,229 — 232

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/10382040903250960

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10382040903250960>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

GUEST EDITORIAL

Education for sustainable development and the Lucerne Declaration¹

Sibylle Reinfried*

Since 2005, we have been living in the International Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) proclaimed by the UN. The purpose of the Decade is to help countries make progress toward and attain the Millennium Development Goals through Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) by providing countries with new opportunities to incorporate ESD into education reform efforts. The important question is how to ensure that issues related to sustainable development are incorporated in the curricula, teaching materials and classroom practices of all educational levels. Specifically, how can we implement the ideals of ESD in geography education? The Lucerne Declaration on Geographical Education for Sustainable Development endeavors to answer this question and provides guidelines for the implementation of ESD in geography education.

This editorial explains the Lucerne Declaration and argues for its adoption while answering five key questions: (1) What is the Lucerne Declaration on Geographical Education for Sustainable Development? (2) Why is it so important? (3) How did the Lucerne Declaration come about? (4) What are its aims and content? and finally, (5) Why should the IGU-General Assembly ratify the Lucerne Declaration and other entities put it into action? I address each question in turn.

What is the Lucerne Declaration on Geographical Education for Sustainable Development?

The Lucerne Declaration supports the aims of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD). The Declaration is a proposal to integrate sustainable development into the teaching of geography at all levels and in all regions of the world. It is based on the conviction that **knowledge, skills, attitudes and values** learned in the geography classroom inspire decisions and actions contributing to the goals of the UNDESD and making sustainable development a more attainable ideal. According to UNESCO, “ESD calls for a re-orientation of educational approaches – curriculum and content, pedagogy and examinations – to ensure that change in public attitudes and educational approaches

¹Guest Editor Prof. Dr. Sibylle Reinfried (Department of Geography, University of Teacher Education of Central Switzerland, Museggstrasse 22, 6004 Lucerne, Switzerland) presented this statement at the Plenary Assembly of the 31st IGU-Congress on 14 August 2008 in Tunis. Her statement was presented on behalf of the International Geographical Union’s Commission on Geographical Education (IGU CGE) to request ratification by the IGU Executive Committee of the Lucerne Declaration.

*Email: sibylle.reinfried@phz.ch

keep pace with the evolving challenges of sustainable development” (UNESCO, 2004). Geography education can and must contribute to this reorientation process. This process can best be introduced into geography teaching on a global level with the help of appropriate curricula and teaching material, as well as by suitable educational practices. This is why members of the Commission on Geographical Education took the initiative to write the Declaration.

Why is the Lucerne Declaration so important?

Today’s world problems are complex, interrelated and cannot be minimized or solved by a few individuals or one nation alone. How can we move forward together, benefiting from increased technological progress, avoiding the immense dangers of climate change, growing shortages of drinking water, increasing soil erosion and mass famines, violent conflicts, explosive population growth in some parts of the world and pandemic diseases? The UNDESD sees ESD contributing to “a world where everyone has the opportunity to benefit from quality education and to learn the values, behavior and lifestyles required for a sustainable future and for positive societal transformation” (UNESCO, 2004). Nearly all of the “action themes” highlighted in the UNDESD (**environment, water, rural development, sustainable consumption, sustainable tourism, intercultural understanding, cultural diversity, climate change, disaster reduction, biodiversity and the market economy**) have a geographical dimension. Therefore, the paradigm of sustainable development is easily integrated in all countries into the teaching of geography in schools, from kindergarten to colleges, to reach the Decade’s goals. The success of the Decade depends on the stakeholders involved in ESD. The IGU CGE is such a stakeholder; its members feel a strong commitment to ESD. They cooperate at sub-national, national, regional and international levels to form a worldwide network that can play a crucial role in forging a common agenda concerning ESD relevant for geographical education.

How did the Lucerne Declaration come about?

Based on these ideas Hartwig Haubrich (Freiburg), Yvonne Schleicher (Weingarten) and I drafted the *Lucerne Declaration on Geographical Education for Sustainable Development* which addresses curriculum development, the development of educational material, the importance of new technologies and educational research concerning ESD in geography education.

In July 2007, approximately 90 delegates of the IGU CGE met at the University of Teacher Education of Central Switzerland in Lucerne to attend a regional symposium on *Geographical Views on Education for Sustainable Development*. In the year preceding the symposium, the Lucerne Declaration went through several revision phases in which all commission members and delegates all over the world were invited to comment on it, and suggest additions or changes. At the Lucerne Symposium, the Declaration was discussed in the plenary, accepted, proclaimed and signed by the Commission’s Chair, Lex Chalmers, on 31 July 2007. Subsequently Dr. Chalmers invited all the IGU national delegations and commission chairs to comment on the final version of the document. The final version of the Declaration has been published on the Commission’s website (<http://www.igu-cge.org/>) in more than 14 languages, including English, German, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Turkish, Russian, Japanese, traditional and simplified Chinese, Mongolian, Korean and Arabic.

What are the aims of the Lucerne Declaration?

Through the Lucerne Declaration, geography educators can turn ESD into a reality in geography classrooms around the world. Designing new curricula, in which the criteria, principles and practices highlighted in the Declaration are taken into account, is a first step toward this goal. The general frame of such curricula should focus on students' learning outcomes instead of syllabus-oriented teaching; be individualized and personalized; emphasize higher-order skills such as problem solving, communicating, critical thinking and creativity; adopt particular teaching methodologies thought to be effective in developing both knowledge and behaviors; and integrate computer technology as a major teaching and learning tool.

Of course, it is not the intension of the Lucerne Declaration to seek consensus on a single, global curriculum. Curricula contain objectives and content, which address regional and national needs and thus differ from place to place and from country to country. A global curriculum might disregard such regional or national needs and differences. The Lucerne Declaration therefore establishes fundamental criteria, principals and practices considered to be essential for ESD in geography that can be followed when national geography curricula are being developed, renewed, or evaluated.

What is the content of the Lucerne Declaration?

Epistemologically, the Declaration is based on a systems approach (the concept of the "Human-Earth" ecosystem), which focuses on the interconnectedness of the physical and the human systems that shape our Earth. Conceptually, the Declaration consists of three parts: (1) a paradigmatic description of the contribution of geography to ESD; (2) a list of criteria for developing geographical curricula for ESD; and (3) a section concerning the importance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in ESD in geography.

The first part of the Declaration describes the geographical competencies such as knowledge and understanding, skills as well as attitudes and values necessary to enhance awareness of sustainable development. Geographical knowledge and understanding should build student awareness of the major natural systems of the Earth in order for them to understand the interactions within and between ecosystems; the socioeconomic system of the Earth in order to achieve a sense of place; and spatial concepts – key ideas unique to geography, such as location, distribution, distance, movement, region, scale, spatial association, spatial interaction and change over time. They help students to make sense of the world. What kind of topics does this involve? The Agenda 21 (UNDESA, 2004) identified topics such as poverty and justice, consumption, environment and development, international cooperation, biodiversity and pollution. Many of these topics have been on the agenda of geographical education for a long time. The skills helpful for sustainable development addressed by the Declaration to be learnt at schools include both practical skills like the ability to communicate and to think critically as well as the social skills needed to apply knowledge in real-world settings and to explore geographical topics at all scales, from local to international. The attitudes and values helpful for sustainable development in geography concern the dedication required to seek solutions to local, regional, national and international questions and problems, working within the framework of the "Universal Declaration on Human Rights".

The second part of the Declaration includes criteria for finding geographical objectives, for the selection of geographical themes taught in schools and for selecting appropriate geographical areas and learning approaches, while the third part includes a description of

why ICT is important in the geography classroom and outlines what kind of additional value ICT can contribute to sustainable development.

Why should geography educators embrace the message of the Lucerne Declaration?

While the teaching of geography alone cannot save the world's problems, it can play an important role in providing opportunities, encouragement and support for young people to think about and clarify ideas and personal values concerning sustainable development. The Lucerne Declaration recommends principles and practices on which effective ESD in Geographical Education should be based. It aspires to help teachers in geography on all educational levels and all over the world to integrate ESD into their national curricula and to teach ESD to reach the goals of the UNDESD.

On behalf of the Commission, I urge all geographers to work to integrate the ideals of the Declaration into your curricula and to work to transmit it to executive agencies such as the national education authorities of all states and the international policy agencies, especially UNESCO. This task will not be easy and will require many local adaptations to reach high degrees of integration. But our world will be a better place if we succeed.

References

- Haubrich, H., Reinfried, S., & Schleicher Y. (2007). Lucerne Declaration on geographical education for sustainable development. In S. Reinfried, Y. Schleicher, & A. Rempfler (Eds.), *Geographical views on education for sustainable development* (pp. 243–250). Proceedings, Lucerne Symposium Switzerland, July 29–31, 2007, *Geographiedidaktische Forschungen* Vol. 42, Hochschulverband für Geographie und ihre Didaktik, Nürnberg.
- UNDESA. (2004). *Agenda 21*. Retrieved July 26, 2008, from <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/agenda21/index.htm>
- UNESCO. (2004). *Education for Sustainable Development, United Nation's Decade (2005–2014)*. Retrieved July 26, 2008, from <http://portal.unesco.org/education/>