

## BARRIERS: IMPLEMENTING ESD

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[Three Questions on Education for Sustainable Development](#)

#### Three Questions on Education for Sustainable Development

By Dieter Gross

Last year I sent an email questionnaire to education leaders on educational researchers from the USA, Canada, Australia and Germany asking three questions:

1. What are the main obstacles in implementing the principles of SD in educational and economic systems?
2. What are the qualities young students need for coping with the challenges of an economic, ecological, and cultural globalization?
3. What are the next important steps to overcome the previous deficits and deficiencies in education and economy?

In November 2000, I released a compilation of answers from the 10 respondents in hopes they might be useful to political leaders and the public who deal with sustainable development in education and business.

#### Question 1: Obstacles

- The causes and consequences of unsustainable practices are not analyzed.
- The concept behind "sustainability" hasn't been explained sufficiently: most people still do not understand it.
- Political leaders do not know how to motivate people to become a part of a civil society.
- Members of NGOs who might implement SD in education and business lack a mandate.
- The highest priority for political leaders is technology and job training rather than education for a sustainable future.
- One of the key obstacles in school systems is the lack of synergy among the sciences.

#### Question 2: Student qualifications

- Qualities such as human values, perspectives such as respect and tolerance, a sense of caring for the environment and for others, and the personal and vocational skills to be self reliant and not become a victim.
- An understanding of the strategic issues facing them at the local and global levels and how issues regarding the environment, the economy, and society's well being are interdependent.
- Fundamental skills such as critical and ethical thinking, problem-solving, consensus building and conflict resolution as well as the knowledge that science, business, and politics must work together.
- The capacity to empathize with the cultures and values of peoples from different cultural groups.
- The ability to think openly and laterally and a capacity to act collectively.

#### Question 3: Next Steps

- Politicians should commit their constituents and themselves to both a global and a local solution to sustainable development.
- The public should be linked to the process of implementing sustainable development
- New legislative frameworks should be created that will incite the principle actors of the economy to understand that their field is intertwined with the environment and society. But legislation is not enough: we must also create new spaces for dialogue and education between society's stakeholders.

- Intensive cooperation among communities, schools, and teacher education institutions. Teacher education institutions must reformed first to educate the next generation of teachers how to prepare students for a sustainable future.
- Educational leaders should meet and design some practical examples. At the moment, the leaders of education for sustainable development do not have the critical mass, resources, or mandate to launch pilot test cases.

For more information email [Dieter Gross](mailto:Dieter.Gross@greencom.org).

Dieter Gross is the Spokesman and Representative for Environmental Education and Education for a Sustainable Future in the Union of German Teachers of Geography (Verband Deutscher Schulgeographen e.V.)

**Strategic Participatory Communications**  
GreenCOM - Academy for Educational Development  
1825 Connecticut Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20009-5721 USA