Regional Experts Meeting on Climate Change Education for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

(San Jose, 12-14 May 2015)

Working Group – Session IV

**SESSION IV: WHOLE SCHOOL/INSTITUTION APPROACHES TO CLIMATE CHANGE EDUCATION**

**Testimonies**

Margot from Bahamas: On 2008 a program was designed by 17 professors and lecturers including all existing areas of the university excepting business, aimed for major or minor graduating on sustainability. The students came from different backgrounds and they have to present seminars at the end of the program. 18 students were graduated. Right now the program has been back to silos, splitting the themes in different areas and creating institutes. Key Learning: It is easier to begin a program, counting in the initial enthusiasm, but it is difficult to keep it in a holistic way.

There was a report from an NGO from Uruguay on how they developed a program to train teachers and students and how they created a monitoring plan working with social perspectives on climate change. Key learning: All sectors of society can be involved and offering support to schools. It is important to look for common ground, to really act collectively and with the same directions.

Another experience from Peru that elected the coast area to establish a network to work with teachers and students, mainstreaming environmental related issues in the curricula. Games were one of the chosen strategies. Key learning: Chosen an ecosystem can be a way to facilitate the information exchange.

There was a report from Uruguay representative on how they worked with a tale written by a local writer to work Climate Change on the coastal area, in the EcoPlata Project. Key learning: The importance of other areas than science to arouse the interest and to add other layers to CC learning and teaching.

Omar from ARIUSA brought the experience of Universidade San Marcos from Lima, Peru in establishing a workshop/lab dedicated to Climate Change developing a climate-oriented vision. Key learning: The importance of higher education in order to support the development of knowledge and research on the area.
Costa Rica representative presented their experience in working with schools, students and community in order to bring natural parks to daily life and to share the responsibility for their conservation.
Key learning: The importance of a common effort of local community to conserve natural areas that have important roles in CC.

Virgin Islands representative told us that there are common school standards, but also some specific ones related to each school. One of their objectives is arise the awareness of student community and also permit students to share the knowledge acquired with their community.
Key learning: The role of students to help establishing a learning community.

Trinidad Tobago refers that they encourage principals to come along with coordinators in training programs, in order to arouse leadership involvement.
Key learning: The need to involve leader and the whole institution sectors in order to really have them aboard.

The Peru representative told us about an initiative of The Meteorological National Service that began a teacher-training program to bring technical knowledge to community linked with CC and to local related problems. They are not achieving their results, but it seemed that it is an on going process.
Key learning: The need to translate technical knowledge while training teachers and also the difficulty this action involves, connecting spheres that are not usually in touch.

During a whole institutional approach project conducted by Lorna in her Jamaican university, one of the most touching remembrance she had was when a gardener approached her and told that this was the first time that somebody at university asked for his opinion.
Key learning: Those projects can empower people, creating space and giving them voice to express their opinions and been listened.

Orlando for ARIUSA told us that this network is conducting a sustainability diagnosis designed for Latin America universities and based in a holistic way. This diagnosis involves 5 spheres:
1. Governance and university polices related to sustainability
2. Education and curricula development
3. Research conducted
4. Community work
5. Country background or how these programs were developed in each country

He also defended in a later talk that we should stop fragmenting the sustainability and begin to work in a holistic way.
Key learning: The need of systemize and to evaluate what have been done in order to understand how this theme has been appropriated and developed by higher education and how to proceed in future.
A Costa Rica representative questioned why should Climate Change issues be more important than other ecological limits that are in more unbalance situation? We already have crossed planetary boundaries related to Biodiversity Loss and the Nitrogen cycle and nobody is giving attention to that. The situations that should be developed in schools should be related with the problems that community faces, in order to empower them and promote their leading role, changing the way they and society see themselves.

Key learning: CC is not a separated issue. It is part of a complex system and should be seen as so. If we don't relate to that we could not really prepare students, teachers and community to important challenges that we will have in the future.

Uruguay representative from a NGO addressed the following recommendations:

1. The pedagogical approach should benefit of all knowledge dimensions and not be limited to science.
2. Collective, multi-institutional and networked approaches should be preferred.
3. Recognize the role and history that environmental education has played and its contribution to the state of art of Education for Sustainability.
4. Which conceptual pillars are chosen as basis and how they are used for developing learning process
5. Spread education on CC in all kind of socio educative spaces, not only in schools and universities, including adults that could not be reached in formal educative spaces.
6. Training programs devoted to segments and to practical community issues.

Other recommendations also suggested by an Uruguay government representative, suggest the need of:

1. Developing training programs for decision makers;
2. Surpassing personal and institutional selfish and learn how to act collectively for the common good;
3. Empowering networks;
4. Recognizing that this theme is too important to address it by silos, separately.

The Paraguay representative told us about a project they are developing with ARIUSA support focus in establishing a network devoted to articulate common actions and efforts, exchange knowledge and promote CC workshops addressed to Paraguay teachers and students.

Key learning: The need for support different countries with different realities and the importance networks can acquire in this situation.

A claim of a representative of an unidentified country was directed to the need of sharing the responsibility in CC issues and not putting all the responsibilities and hopes in teachers and education system shoulders. The initiatives that address
this theme in other society segments are not as many as they are in educational sector, in the representative point of view.
Key learning: Facing this challenge is an obligation of the whole society in not for a special segment.

Guerra, a Brazilian representative highlight the incoherence of addressing a XXI century challenge with tools and curricula developed in XIX century. He also pointed out the absence of politicians and decision makers in this kind of meeting we are participating.
Key learning: How can we address a problem with the same kind of thinking that already created it? How this could be succeeded?

Waverli from Brazil express her conviction on the importance of developing teacher skills to work with uncertainty and vulnerability, two key skills that CC issues are directed related. The schools mindsets go direct against these two skills and are not used to them. Not addressing them at training programs can lead to failure when professors/teachers has to deal with these feelings.
Key learning: Our teachers has to be trained not only in acquiring knowledge but mainly in acquiring the necessary skills to deal with the challenges that CC brings, which can be completely different from the ones presently required.

Another suggestion pointed out that: You also have to learn how to deal with teacher’s resistance and to know that not every people can get engaged in the process. That is why you have to think about having ambassadors, really engaged persons for each school. We also should keep in mind our long goal that is achieving a sustainable way of living.

Peru representative said that’s because schools lacks so many things we should look for alliances with companies and other society segments, looking their social responsibilities. We also should pay attention for each school particularities and reserve a different time for working with them, recognizing and preserving their identity. Evaluation should also been done along the process and not only in the end.

Education is not just adding knowledge to an empty book; it is a process that provides the opportunity to unfold the purpose of one’s life. Education should create the space for one’s reflect about their path in life and work with emotions that appear in this process. CC is a process that involves everything and when people realize that we must prepared to the terror feeling linked with that perception. How to balance this terror with hope is something we will have to learn. Resistance is a signal that must be seen in this context. The real education process must be centered in developing persons.

5Cs prepared kits for CC and also for disaster situations. They have partnership, helping than to learn from other education initiatives, looking for key lessons,
and where they can find studies on that. Their advice is that we need clear messages to engage teachers and tools and games can support them.

The last message was related to finding the persons who hold confidence and can keep the attention of population when addressing CC issues. They are natural connectors and who says is as important as what is said, that must come from a shared understanding. For achieving this you have to look for a common ground.