
International workshop "Innovations in Teacher Training through Environmental Education"

Summary

An international workshop, "Innovations in Teacher Training through Environmental Education", at the Center for Interdisciplinary Learning and Research was held from June 3-5, 1999 by the ENITE team. Teacher trainers from Italy, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the Czech Republic and Austria participated. Participants had the opportunity to exchange experiences in research and development projects on environmental issues in teacher education, to develop and discuss criteria for success in teacher education reform through environmental projects (range of topics: inter-disciplinary teaching and learning, co-operation between schools and universities, community education etc.), to prepare groundwork for cooperative national and international projects, and to build a network of contacts in teacher education reform through environmental education.

In addition to a presentation by Peter Posch, the workshop used smaller work groups to concentrate on four issues:

- inter-disciplinary teaching and learning in teacher education within existing organizational structures;
- co-operation between teacher training institutions and schools: case studies, forms of collaboration, strategies for implementation;
- community learning and sustainable local development in teacher education, and
- policy: implementing strategies for innovation in teacher training.

These topics were discussed with examples from the participating countries. Success criteria were developed and ideas for national and international exchange and co-operative projects were generated. Each group was moderated by two participants of the ENITE group. On the final morning, after a report by each group and a plenary introduction of projects and initiatives by the participants, the opportunity to make contact, concretise mutual interests and make joint plans for the future was offered by allowing participants to form planning groups voluntarily.

The feedback from participants was altogether positive. For example, a participant from Switzerland wrote, "The workshop was strongly based on exchange and co-operation! The examples presented, especially from Austria, Holland, Norway and Sweden made a strong impression through innovative and motivating approaches and the methodology of the action research. My participation resulted in two concrete offers to collaborate" (Nagl 1999).

At the final session of the workshop the participants reported on the first agreements they made on future collaborations. Some examples of topics:

Sustainable agriculture: Students learn about real life at farms co-operating with Teacher Training Institutions (TTI)

Global Learning: joint projects between TTI/schools in Europe and in Africa

Schoolprofiles on EE in Teacher Education

Trendreports on the status and potential for development of EE in Teacher Education

Expectations for a network on Innovations in TE through EE expressed by the participants include follow-up meetings and site visits in order to have the chance to meet personally and work on joint projects, a platform for electronic communication, joint efforts to get support from officials and funding bodies.

The workshop introduced international networking which aims to increase the exchange of experiences in teacher training reform through environmental education by using documentation of practice and case studies. The work resulting from the ENITE project is a good starting point to bring two years of experience into the international discussion and to encourage development in the future.

The OECD project "Environment and School Initiatives" (ENSI), which focuses inter alia on teacher training, is building the framework for the further international networking. The goals of ENSI closely correspond to those of the ENITE project. These are to prepare teachers to deal with uncertainty, conflicting values, open-ended learning situations.

to create win-win partnerships between teacher training institutions and schools involved in environmental initiatives.

to integrate innovative approaches to teacher education in the curricular and organizational structures of teacher training institutions.

In addition to Austria in the context of the ENSI project, Denmark, Hungary and Switzerland have set their focus on teacher training as well. In the school year 1999/2000 the following steps have been planned:

collection of documentation and case studies of projects and plans in these countries (by the end of 1999);

meeting of researchers in Zurich (in January 2000) to exchange experiences and compare analyses of current practice with documentation/case studies; to reflect on current, collaboration initiatives and plan of future projects;

international exchange projects for visitation of teacher trainers to study projects in other countries;

follow-up workshop in Switzerland (in June 2000) for teachers and teacher trainers to report and exchange experiences on their joint plans for collaboration; to develop projects further; to analyse the current status of implementation of innovations in curricula and organizational structures.

These plans represent the foundation for the development of the network on an international level.