An ‘ENSI-special’ edition

Content:

1. ENSI – Today’s news
ENSI is closing its secretariat by end August 2018. But it will not disappear! The website with all the documents will stay available for your research and teaching activities (www.ensi.org).

2. ENSI’s new publication: \textit{ENVIRONMENT AND SCHOOL INITIATIVES}
\textit{Lessons from the ENSI Network - Past, Presence and Future}
ENSI’s final publication, August 2018

“Environment and School Initiatives” (ENSI) was an international network, offering a platform for cooperation among practitioners, researchers and policy makers in the fields of Environmental Education and Education for Sustainable Development. Innovative environmental projects, Action Research, Quality Criteria for ESD schools, Teacher competencies for ESD and the Whole School Approach are main features that ENSI promoted throughout its lifespan. The current book gives an overview on ENSI’s history, its impact on national contexts in three continents, its ways of
collaboration and the lessons learnt in thirty years of work. More than forty internationally acknowledged experts share their experience and provoke forward-looking thoughts about education, science, sensitive problems and new concepts for networking.” (Quote from the ENSI 2018 book)

Lessons_from_the_ENSI_Network.pdf


3. ENSI’s legacy and future directions

By Syd Smith, former ENSI representative from Australia

ENSI HAS LEFT A LEGACY

What made ENSI unique over its 32 years of operation was its “emphasis on the implementation of Education for Sustainable Development across the whole educational spectrum “through research based projects in the fields of quality development, competence enhancement for teachers and students, co-operation among schools and the civil society and development of new skills for VET students.” (From www.ensi.org/About_us/Whats_ENSI_all_about/).

In the past ENSI had been successful in connecting “institutional/ governmental interests, with school practices along with educational research in a common collaborative work”. These three ENSI pillars are still very important and should not be lost in any new management practices or support structures now that ENSI has gone. In other words ENSI did not separate the field of research from the development of teaching and learning resources for teachers nor how teachers could improve their practice. Most similar support organisations in the world today usually keep all these areas separate or support only one or two of them. Another of ENSI’s strengths was its acceptance that it was not an isolated education island living in its own bubble, but rather an organisation that successfully co-operated with other major international organisations such as UNESCO, UNEP, UNECE, RCE/UN-Universities, CEE India, Baltic 21 and others. Over its 30 years, ENSI has been very clever in adjusting to the changing economic and political challenges that were thrust upon it. From its early days when it was under the umbrella of OECD's Centre for Educational Research & Innovation (CERI) to its reorganisation when all decentralised networks became independent in 2004, to the time ENSI was recognised as an international NPA in 2008, to the current situation, ENSI had made the necessary adjustments and continued to function as a self-supporting organisation. As external funding and human resources from member nations declined ENSI remained a force, albeit somewhat weakened, but still dependent on selected, dedicated members. The lesson we learn from this, however, is that no longer can we depend on external funding, especially from governments or ephemeral private providers and, like ENSI, we must become more adaptable to change and new challenges.

There are two questions now that we need to ask. Is the decline of ENSI, unfortunate as it is, such a bad thing and what external holistic factors have caused its decline? If we examine these issues we are more likely to find new ways to influencing students, teachers
and even the general public to embrace more sustainable practices and enjoy a more habitable planet.

The first truth one has to accept is that when an organisation becomes extinct it isn’t necessarily a bad thing. Times have changed and a new approach might be needed. The way a support organisation operates could be outdated or its goals may be less relevant than previously. Often, when one door closes another opens.

As Churchill once said:
“Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.”

ENSI had difficulties because the political landscape was changing. By enabling politicians to understand that the complex concept of sustainability as a long term process, essentially global in nature, futures oriented and based on systems thinking, we realise that this has not only exacerbated the struggle for serious recognition of ESD’S importance, but presented us with a much bigger challenge as educators. Planning projects or policies at government level usually involves a terminal or completion date with milestones, achievement targets or identifiable goals along the way, but unfortunately sustainable goals are long term and unfortunately ongoing. While the UN Decade of Sustainability till 2014 was a welcome development in itself it now requires many more decades of similar developments with ongoing goals to ensure we have continued success towards a more sustainable future. Changing the economic and social priorities over short time periods may work well for government; sustainability with its 3 integrated pillars of social, economic and environmental does not.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

On reflection it appears there are certain principles that any ESD support body could promote, recognising that the challenges will be difficult and there will be many other national and global bodies all of which are attempting to do similar things. The following proposals are provided, not in order of importance, but for discussion and debate only and on the understanding that everything listed here is easier said than done. The proposals are neither extensive nor finite of course.

• A global ESD organisation is required to recruit as many member countries as possible. All nations should be eligible, albeit a necessity, to become members. Member countries should take turns in serving as the central administrator and all countries should be assured their local projects and programs will still be their own. The European Union may be available to lead and instigate such an initiative from the beginning.

• Other international support groups not attached to specific nations (e.g. IUCN, WEEC) should be advised of the new global ESD support body and invited to provide advice, information or even become partners.

• Regional sub groups of countries should be formed from the central list of countries and their specific issues and potential resolutions should be shared internationally.

• Specialised groups should be formed and made responsible for each of Agenda 2030’s major goals including curriculum support and resources, teacher training, research, VET, Tertiary Education and the other major areas listed.
• All existing global ESD support groups should be invited to join this new global ESD group and be encouraged to make submissions and provide feedback on how to improve ESD and reach new and underserved audiences and communities. Agenda 2030 would be an effective stimulus from which the invitation could be made.

• The new global ESD group should recognise the existence of the numerous alternative groups worldwide and even those groups within countries.

• To secure recognition the new ESD global group should first approach the UN making a detailed submission and offer a plan to support and implement the goals of Agenda 2030.

• Younger representatives should be encouraged to join and take active positions in this new super support structure and plans should be made to ensure that as some personnel retire there should be adequate advance training and preparation for a continuous supply of replacement officers.

• A lobbying group should be formed to advise nations of sustainability

• A lobbying group should be formed to advise nations of sustainability issues and to understand the importance of ESD. Training programs should be developed to assist nations to lobby their governments and providing politicians and senior bureaucrats with information and programs to assist in their understanding of sustainability and ESD issues.

• While it is hoped the UN would assist in funding the new ESD support body, strategies should be in place to seek funding from other government and NGO groups.

• Many ESD groups survive because they have some unique quality or a specialisation in one aspect of sustainability. Should the above proposals appear too great a challenge then this idea or model would be less preferred but at least better than nothing. The challenge is to identify which areas of specialisation would be attractive globally.

• As a final gesture ENSI may consider writing to governments of all member ENSI countries, past and present, informing them of its achievements over 30 years, and to thank them for their support and contributions. ENSI should also advise them that with no replacement group now available it would be more difficult to achieve the goals of Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change 2017.

CONCLUSION

The future of ESD is dependent on the commitment of government and the support of millions of citizens who are prepared to stay for the long haul. Without appropriate legislation and sincere action ESD faces an unenviable challenge. We therefore need to continue informing governments of the importance of sustainability and ESD and ask that they treat it as a permanent ongoing priority rather than a separate educational concept unrelated to government environmental policy. Continuing to let politicians view sustainability as an ideology and of declining importance is to be at our peril. But there is continued hope as evidenced by the work of other support groups within and beyond countries. Where there is success among other successful ESD global support groups there is a partnership among academics, governments, private enterprises and educators.

Excerpt from the ENSI 2018 publication “ENVIRONMENT AND SCHOOL INITIATIVES Lessons from the ENSI Network – Past, Present and Future”.
4. Invitation for future activities

We indeed are sure that it needs engaged experts from various backgrounds for bringing the SDG’s forward and making change happen. We believe that the ENSI-way of collaboration is still working. We can offer our competences as a ‘door-opener’ to the ENSI-community – and we would be pleased to see a new ENSI arising in the future.

The ENSI-experts are looking forward to support you - don’t hesitate to contact us with your questions and ideas.

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Dear Christina,

RE: Congratulations to EnSI

On behalf of the Australian Association for Environmental Education (AAEE) we would like to acknowledge the fabulous work that you have contributed to the Environmental in Schools Initiatives.

Australia's six states and two territories were members of EnSI (the Environment and School Initiatives project), when it was an international project conducted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Centre for Education Research and Innovation (CERIC). Australia was a member of ENSI from 1988 to 2011. From 1988 to 1997 Greg Hunt, an Environmental Educator from Victoria, was the first person to represent all Australian states and territories at EnSI. In 1997, the Australian Education Senior Officers Committee (AESOC) meeting approved New South Wales to represent Australia at EnSI and Syd Smith, Chief Education Officer, Environmental Education, with the Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate, was approved as the systems representative for the program. On 29 August 2003, AESOC approved the appointment of Cam Mackenzie, Principal Advisor (Environmental Sustainability) was the Australian Education systems representative on EnSI along with Prof Danielle Tilbury, from Macquarie University (2003 – 2008). In 2010 Jonathan Noble, Senior Education Officer, South Australia, Department of Education replaced Cam as the EnSI representative until Australia ceased it's membership in 2011. All Australian EnSI representatives found their experiences absolutely invaluable both from what we could share from Australia (e.g. Learnspaces) to the international expertise from the EnSI Network, especially the Quality Criteria for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Schools.

Both Cam Mackenzie and Peta White attended the 2005 EnSI conference in Esbjerg and reported it as a wonderful event filled with many great ideas and learning opportunities.

We are sorry to see EnSI will be closing its operations in July 2018 and hope all its valuable research documents and ESD resources are still available into the future.

Sincerely,

Mark Caddey  
President

Peta White  
National Secretary

Cam Mackenzie  
Vice President