Editorial

Jenna Coriddi

In the past decade, the concept of education for sustainable development (ESD) has grown remarkably, bolstered by strong international support. The most significant and well-known recent international initiative being the United Nations proclamation of the years 2005-2014 as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). The Decade is the culmination of many initiatives that have developed on the international stage since 1980, when the term 'sustainable development' was first introduced by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Seven years later, the Brundtland Report (Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development) stated that the aim of sustainable development is to 'meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. In 1992, Agenda 21 identified education as the most important tool that could be used to achieve sustainable development. However, ten years later the progress made by its initiatives was deemed insufficient, and the concept of education for sustainable development was created to reshape how we think about education in a global context.

But as development educators, how is this new concept of interest? ESD has traditionally been perceived as having a strong environmental focus, while development education (DE) primarily addresses issues related to social inequality and poverty. Issue 6 of *Policy and Practice* examines the relationship between DE and ESD and considers why it is important that development educators should deepen their engagement with the sustainable development agenda.

Although ESD developed significantly from environmental movements and continues to have a strong environmental association, it has evolved to incorporate the explicit interaction between society and the environment. ESD encourages collaboration among all adjectival sectors that seek to educate on sustainability issues including the protection of the environment, economic development, human rights and social development. Vision building, partnerships and networks are among the strategies being employed in the DESD to incorporate contributions from as many relevant sectors and interested parties as possible, including the DE sector.

Given the breadth and relevance of ESD to several related educational disciplines, it is important to fully understand what it is and, most importantly,

what it can provide us as development educators. The methodologies and content matter of DE and ESD are closely aligned including the concept of education as a tool of empowerment, inspiring individuals and society to assume sustainable lifestyles for the benefit of present and future generations. DE and ESD provide skills, values, knowledge and understanding that support positive action toward sustainable management of the environment and greater social equity and poverty eradication.

However, there is also a tension between DE and ESD based upon a perceived environmental bias in the latter and, perhaps, a concern that a stronger alliance with ESD may diminish or dilute the primary social agenda of development education. These tensions need to be addressed and resolved for the benefit of both disciplines to ensure strong collaboration on issues of common concern. Climate change is an obvious issue that has drawn together DE, EE and ESD practitioners in new coalitions toward raising awareness and advocating national and international policies to address this most pressing of global issues. Increasing numbers of development organisations are adopting climate change as a campaigning issue and refocusing their educational work to partner with colleagues in the environment sector. These new alliances may point the way forward for greater co-operation under the auspices of ESD.

The four Focus articles in this issue address different aspects of the relationship between DE and ESD. Deirdre Hogan and Roland Tormey identify the tensions and uncertainty that exist between the sectors and acknowledge the growth of ESD from environmental beginnings. They outline the commonalities between DE and ESD and the possibilities for development education arising from greater collaboration with ESD practitioners. They conclude by urging the reconciliation of sectoral tensions in order to benefit mutually from the expertise and experience that each can provide.

Peter Hopkinson, Peter Hughes and Geoff Layer introduce a useful case study examining the implementation of a whole-institutional approach to ESD. This Ecoversity initiative, a pilot programme launched at the University of Bradford in November 2007, aimed to commit the university to sustainable practices throughout the campus influenced by national and international sustainable development processes. The article outlines in detail the top-down approach to ESD used in the project and the methodology they employed in measuring its outcomes. It is an interesting and informative look at how such expansive educational projects can be successfully implemented.

Ros Wade introduces education for sustainability (EfS) into the debate, preferring the term EfS to ESD with the former offering a more

open approach to alternative viewpoints beyond the rubric of the Western-dominated development discourses. Using her experience as director of the EfS programme at London South Bank University, she discusses how EfS aims to overcome the separation of development education and environmental education that is frequent in the global North. Wade believes that EfS can provide a framework based on the idea of interdisciplinarity to bring together related sectors that have similar aims and objectives, and acknowledges that we will all have to work hard to maintain pace with growing awareness of environmental and development issues.

Elaine Nevin uses her expertise as director of ECO-UNESCO to explain, in depth, how education can support sustainable development practice. She provides a number of examples of good practice in Ireland in the formal, non-formal and informal sectors identified through a research project carried out by ECO-UNESCO on behalf of Comhar SDC. She examines the similarities and differences between ESD, DE and environmental education (EE) and explains the extensive role that ECO-UNESCO has played in the implementation of the DESD in Ireland.

The Perspectives articles present different approaches to ESD theory and practice. Stephen Sterling suggests that a veritable shift in thought and character is required to support sustainable living and that education needs to play a radical role in nurturing this process. Lucy Hargreaves tackles the problem of how to transform a successful pilot programme into systemic and lasting change in schools and universities. Danny Hunter and Peter Taylor examine how Higher Learning Institutions can participate in the Learning and Teaching for Transformation Initiative. Cathal O'Keeffe discusses Link Community Development's Global Teachers and Linking Schools Programmes which both aim to bridge the gap of knowledge and understanding between schools in the global North and South. David Thomas discusses his participation on the Cut the Carbon march and outlines some of the obstacles to teaching about climate change based on his experience with Christian Aid which was one of the first development agencies to adopt climate change as a campaigning focus. The introduction of ESD and development issues through less traditional vehicles of drama and creative writing is discussed by Pete Mullineaux who relates the importance of human emotion and engagement in understanding the importance of progressive societal change.

This issue aims to encourage debate within the development education sector, and between DE and ESD colleagues, on how closely aligned areas of educational practice can move toward greater collaboration based on mutual support. Despite the distinctions that can sometimes be drawn between DE and ESD, it is important that these sectors learn from each other

for the benefit of their target groups and the wider social and environmental issues that preoccupy these educational disciplines. Reflection and discourse on our current policies and practice, and how they relate to other sectors, is absolutely necessary to continue moving forward.

Readers of *Policy and Practice* are encouraged to contribute to the debate on ESD initiated by this issue. If you have comments on any of the articles published in Issue 6 then please write to the editor: jenna@certreforglobaleducation.com.