Report of the
Promoting Community-based Education for Sustainable Development
Panel and Workshop
At the International Conference on Sustainability Education
10 September 2019, 11:30 – 15:30
Room Silver Oak 1, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

Contents

I.   Overview of the session

a. Background

UNESCO Bangkok and UNESCO New Delhi organized the "Promoting Community-based Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Panel and Workshop" as a special session during the International Conference on Sustainability Education (ICSE) 2019. The session aimed to share the pilot training experiences and the "Reflect-Share-Act" framework developed under the UNESCO Bangkok project "Promoting Community-based ESD".

The objective of the project is to develop learning modules intended for community-based, adult and/or lifelong learning educators to enhance their capacities to support communities in embedding learning in their pursuit of sustainable development by bringing the whole community together.

Under this project, preliminary modules "*Reflect*", "*Share*" and "*Act*" were prepared through expert meetings. Pilot training programmes have been designed and implemented in India led by the Centre for Environment Education (CEE) South Regional Office, Japan led by the Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU), Lao PDR led by the Non-formal Education Development Centre (NFEDC), Mongolia by the National Centre for Lifelong Education, and Philippines by the University of San Jose Recoletos (USJ-R) and other universities in Cebu and Negros.

b. Objectives

The objectives of the special session were as follows:

- To share the experiences, achievements, and lessons learnt from the pilot implementation of the training programme in India, Japan, and the Philippines.
- To share information with the general audience on how to reflect on and implement ESD action in their own communities by utilizing the Reflect-Share-Act approach.
- To observe the general audience's participation and gather feedback for further revision of the training modules.

c. Programme and format

Link to the programme:
https://www.dropbox.com/s/6rq5ocvc37ecmqe/ICSE%20Session%20Concept%20Note%20Promoting%20Community%20based%20ESD.pdf?dl=0

The session consisted of two parts. In the first part, a panel of three speakers shared their pilot experiences, namely:

- Lynnette Camello, University Director for Sustainable Education, Cebu Technological University (CTU), Philippines
- Kiichi Oyasu, Director of Education, Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU), Japan
- Santosh Sutar, Regional Director, Centre for Environment Education (CEE) South, India

In the second part, an interactive workshop was conducted based on the preliminary modules. The workshop was facilitated by Jose Roberto Guevara from the School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University.

The session was attended by over 40 participants including local school teachers and university staff, development workers from NGOs and international organizations, and local government officials.

II. Introduction

Link to the presentation:
https://www.dropbox.com/s/c9hdq2sltaz5cvi/Community%20based%20ESD%20Introduction%20to%20the%20project%20and%20the%20sessions.pdf?dl=0

Ushio Miura, Programme Specialist, UNESCO Bangkok, welcomed the participants to the special session. She commenced by sharing an overview of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), stating ESD is about transforming the way people think and act towards a sustainable future. She showed an image depicting the whole school approach to sustainability from the cartoon book "Let's Work Together" published by UNESCO (available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000369006).

Miura asked the audience to look at the image and share some of the parts that they found different from the "conventional" education that they had experienced. Some participants shared the following answers:

- Engaging the community outside school walls.
- Not just learning, but actually practicing.
- All of the people are happy and relaxed.
- Learning and action is done everywhere, for everyone i.e. not only students and children, but also parents and teachers.

Figure 1: Whole school approach to sustainability

From these answers, Miura posed the question to the attendants: how can we realize this community of education and learning as depicted? The project "Promoting Community-based ESD" was initiated to create this kind of community. She also emphasized the importance of educators, particularly in this case, non-formal educators, who do not receive the same formal training as school teachers. This project aims to enhance the capacities of such educators.

To do so, a training programme with preliminary modules were developed using the "Reflect – Share – Act" framework for contextualizing sustainability. Pilot training programmes are being implemented in

India, Japan, Lao PDR, Mongolia, and the Philippines. For the morning session's programme, representatives from India, Japan, and Philippines shared their experiences from the pilot implementation so far.

III.   Sharing the pilot experiences

a. India

Link to the presentation: https://www.dropbox.com/s/dchppg49zl0xfcc/Santosh.pdf?dl=0

Sutar introduced the pilot training in India. The location for the training is mainly focused on the forest areas of Sirsi, in the southern state of Karnataka. In the past, this area has had many issues of forest exploitation and depletion. Sutar explained that the communities engaged are tribal communities whose livelihoods depend on the forest. Because of this, they found that the tribes are already engaged in sustainability practices, but they were not able to understand or were not aware of the sustainability concepts.

The objectives of the pilot training in India were as follows:

- Adapting the modules to local contexts in the local language
- Developing locally relevant teaching and learning materials
- Developing a training programme
- Developing sustainable community action by the community, for the community
- Developing an evaluation tool for measuring the impacts of the training

For the methodology, the project team translated the preliminary modules into the local language of Kannada. They found this task to be challenging due to the difficulties in contextualizing the sustainability concepts to be shared at the local level.

Furthermore, they developed ESD educational materials. For example, flipchart posters were created by local community artists, with the communities involved in visualizing and illustrating the issues themselves. This is so that they can gain a full understanding and reflect on the situation in the community in order to develop solutions to the sustainability issues they are facing.
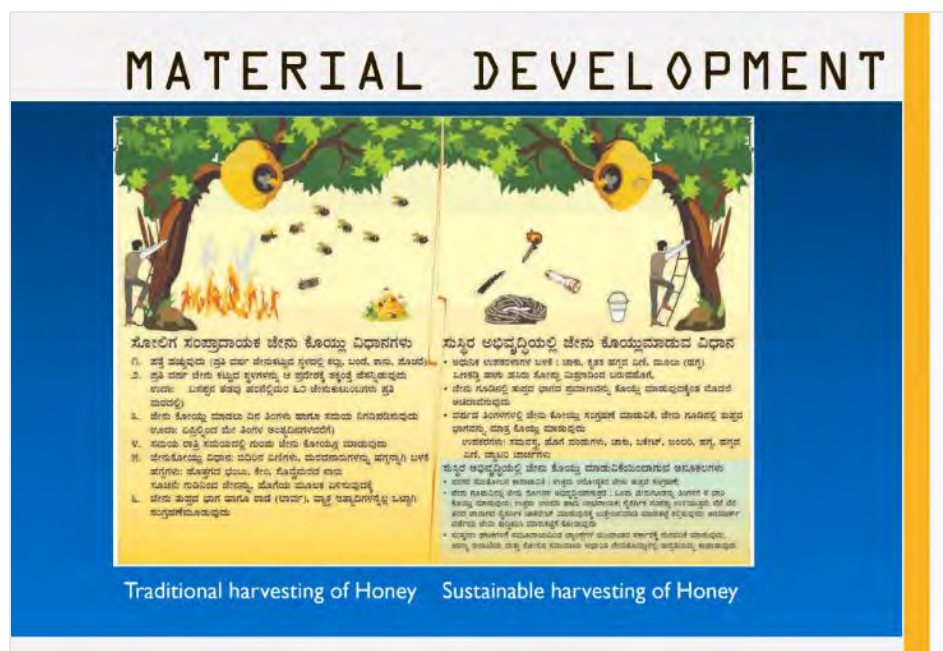
Figure 2: A poster in Kannada language used as a learning material to compare the traditional and sustainable methods of honey harvesting in the Soliga tribal community

During the training of the master trainers, who were mainly non-timber forest produce collectors and farmers, they divided the trainers into eight groups to each develop an action plan for their community. Sutar gave an example of the Soliga tribe community who developed a plan for sustainable honey harvesting.

After the training of trainers, the master trainers from the Soliga tribe then conducted training in their community, where community members also developed their own action plans. In addition, they conducted ESD demonstrations in the community, engaging the local honey harvesters. After applying sustainable practices, the community has become a "cooperative society" for honey collecting, with many benefits such as more yield and higher market prices.

Sutar emphasized the importance of partnership in community-based ESD. He expressed that the Forest Department and other government units should be engaged in the training in order to influence policy.

He then shared the key outcomes of the training and the preliminary modules including the following:

- The communities gained a better understanding of ESD.
- The training activities initiating a lot of dialogue among the communities.
- The community members were eager to share and were able to understand the value of sharing ESD concepts, particularly in local contexts.
- The training reached 26 master trainers, who then each went on to train 121 community trainers, ultimately reaching over 1,200 community members.

b. Japan

Oyasu presented the pilot training programme in Japan, which is being implemented in the city of Hiratsuka in Kanagawa Prefecture. The pilot in Japan aims to apply ESD to the existing community learning centre (CLC) system in Japan. The CLCs, or *Kominkan* in Japanese, were established since 1946. There are over 14,000 Kominkans that are run by local government administrations. In Hiratsuka, the project team are working with the Central Kominkan and 4 district Kominkans.

The features of the Kominkan programmes in Hiratsuka are as follows:

- Common thematic programmes targeting various groups e.g. all generations, senior citizens, families, children, etc.
- Context specific programmes e.g. local history, environment, disaster risk reduction, etc.
- Learning circles e.g. music, art, language, cooking, etc.

Then, Oyasu shared the progress of the project in Japan. Initially, the project team followed the structure in the preliminary modules, starting with organizing an orientation workshop for Kominkan directors and staff. This would lead to the Kominkans conducting capacity building activities for community educators, and then carrying out community-based ESD action with monitoring and evaluation. However, they faced many challenges in this process.

The revised methodology is to discuss with the Kominkans to review their activities, reflect on the needs of the local communities, and develop action plans to include ESD in the Kominkans' existing activities. This is followed by individual reviews and follow-up with each Kominkan.

The following are some examples of the Kominkan activities that have incorporated ESD action at the community level:

- Day camp for primary school students – previously, the camp was organized for the children and their families to experience and appreciate nature; after reviewing the activity with the project team, the camp now incorporates more discussion on sustainability issues through the activities.
- Exploration of mountain and coast – also formerly mainly recreational, the Kominkan now initiates dialogue with the participants to find the linkages between the mountains, river, forest, and ocean through experiential learning.
- Eco-shopping workshop – in this activity, the children were encouraged to come up with their analysis, action plans, and to use critical thinking to make decisions by themselves.

Figure 3: Suka Kominkan's ESD activities during exploration of the mountain and coast

Oyasu shared the key lessons learned from the project so far:

- Communicating concepts using academic language and "UN jargon" was difficult and did not have the desired impacts. In localizing ESD, it is important to negotiate between the different contexts and understandings of the community.
- It is not necessary to use outside materials. Instead, training developers can utilize or build on existing local materials.
- It is not necessary to initiate new activities. Depending on the context of the community, it may be more effective to incorporate ESD into existing activities.

For the way forward, the Japan pilot team will continue the action research cycle with further workshops, study visits, monitoring and evaluation, and a final review of the project. Ultimately, they hope the project can lead to the embedding of ESD into local-level education policies.

c. Philippines

Link to the presentation: https://www.dropbox.com/s/wi9fv7qvj4r5txv/Lynnette.pdf?dl=0

Camello explained the nature of the pilot training in the Philippines, which focuses on universities' extension programmes as the implementing partners. She shared the process from the view of her university, Cebu Technological University (CTU), focusing on their journey to university-wide mainstreaming of ESD.

Camello shared how CTU has been motivated by the Reflect-Share-Act framework. Upon reflection, CTU identified the local hand weaving community, or "hablon" in the local language, as an entry point for integrating and strengthening ESD.

CTU conducted research on the weaving community in the locality and realized that the industry was dying. They identified the problems in order to develop a holistic approach to ESD in the hablon community by conducting market research, material and product development, and utilizing their

expertise as a technological university to apply technology to the local practice. They also organized capacity building for the weavers in addition to establishing partnerships and doing promotion.

Camello highlighted how addressing the issues of the hablon community reflects the action principles for community-based ESD in the process as follows:

1. *Responding*: by addressing the dying hablon practice, CTU is responding to emergent local community issues that impact on achieving sustainable development.
2. *Engaging*: the project engages different stakeholders including the university, the community, and the local government.
3. *Enabling*: the community is able to learn more about how to make their practice sustainable and to earn more income as a result.
4. *Embedding*: CTU is embedding the principles and practices of ESD into daily life, in particular by aiming to integrate ESD into the university-wide curriculum.
5. *Transforming*: it transforms the lives of the weavers, students, and extension programme workers, changing practices and policies towards a more sustainable future.
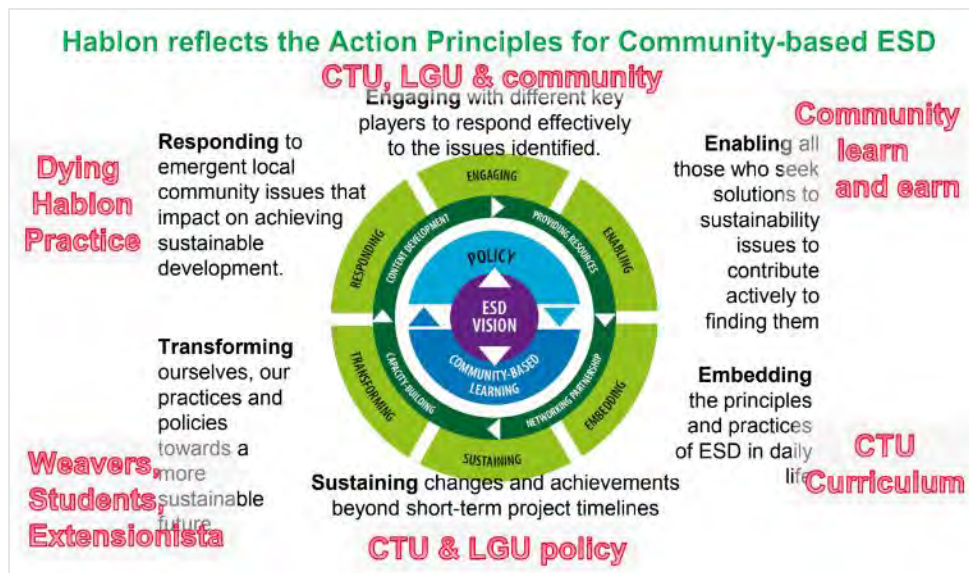

Figure 4: Addressing the issues of the hablon community reflects the action principles for community-based ESD

Under this project, the Philippine team translated the modules and organized an orientation training for CTU's extension programme leaders. Now, ESD integration is required in all extension projects, and they aim to apply this regulation at the institutional level. To do so, the following activities are being implemented:

- Capacity building among internal and external stakeholders
- Harmonizing mandated university functions of curriculum and instruction, research, development, and community extension
- Incorporating policies for sustainable practices university-wide

IV.   Discussion

Before opening the floor for discussion, Miura shared information on UNESCO's new international framework for ESD entitled "Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the SDGs (ESD for 2030)". The framework highlights several key factors that facilitate or stimulate transformative actions for sustainability. These factors include critical inquiry, experiences, relevance to life, non-formal and informal education, social emotional learning, etc.
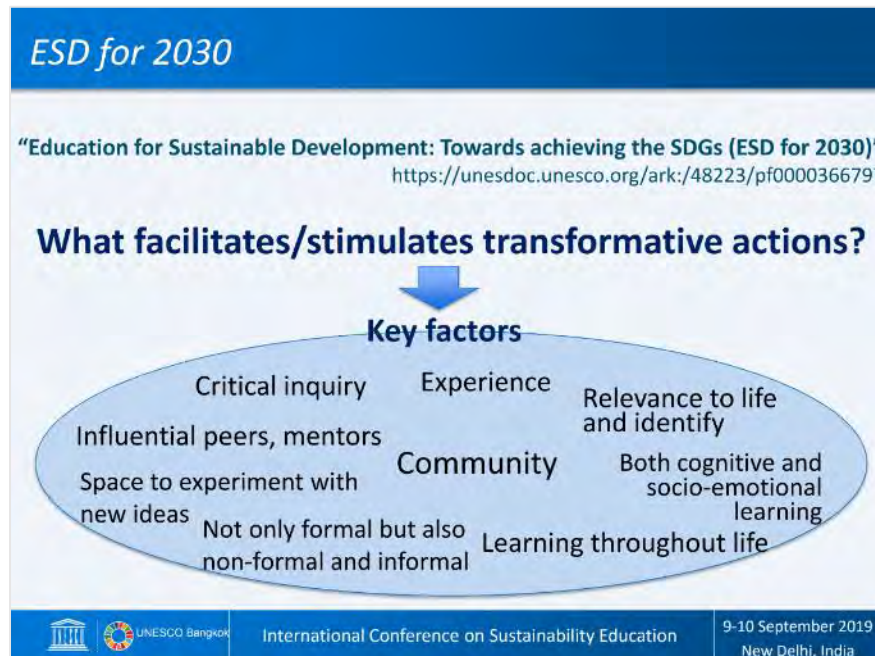

Figure 5: UNESCO's new international framework on ESD

Miura particularly noted how the framework pinpoints community as a platform for action. In view of this, the following question was then posed to the three presenters: Do you see indications that education and learning are stimulating action for sustainability in the communities; if so, how?

Sutar stated that there have been many changes in the communities. He noted that one of the most prominent is the Soliga tribe. This was striking to him because, at first, he thought that other groups would be more advanced than the Soliga tribe group. Sutar understood that, because they had already been living with ingrained local knowledge of sustainability, it was more difficult for the others to open up to new significant changes.

Similarly, Oyasu explained that Kominkans have a long history, and because of this, there is a tendency for a "business as usual" mentality with a resistance to new ideas. The locals did not seem to have a connection with ESD notions. As a result, the pilot team changed their approach, instead asking them to reflect on their particular priority issues and issues that would occur in five years. The Kominkans were asked to think of solutions themselves through initiating dialogues.

Oyasu shared that, although Japan is considered a homogeneous society, it is also quite diverse; each CLC has different ways of understanding. It is critical to let them think and then listen to them in order to find ways to trigger small changes in the community together.

Camello stated that she has witnessed a substantial transformation on campus with the university trying to embrace ESD using community extension as an entry point. She saw the general feeling on campus that there is a need to integrate ESD. However, she emphasized that institutions cannot limit ESD integration to certain focuses such as research, but must also incorporate it in other aspects as well.

Miura summarized the session, highlighting how the pilot experiences demonstrate the need to "unwind and rewind" current practices and find ESD in each of our respective practices and communities in order to understand ESD and trigger further action. She then opened the floor for questions and comments.

A participant who was a teacher from an international school in Punjab expressed how, prior to this, she felt that she had not seen how to exact change and take action at the school level. In the case of her school, the SDGs had been adopted in the school and projects were initiated to expose students to the goals. However, she felt that more change could be triggered if ESD action was institutionalized. She appreciated the demonstration of how schools can implement ESD at the school level.

Guevara responded that, to be institutionalized, ESD should be included in the school curriculum. In addition, to make more significant changes, it is not only the children who should be educated, but it is also important to focus on how to educate their parents as well. Today, valuable education cannot only be limited to inside the classroom.

A participant from an NGO working with adolescents, communities, and public health systems asked a question to Oyasu. He inquired how to continuously bring in adults and senior citizens to participate in the programmes at the Kominkans in Japan. India is similarly an aging society, but it is difficult to bring in the aging population to engage in such activities.

Oyasu shared that senior citizen programmes are a priority for the Kominkans with many different programmes, both for learning and entertainment. As the average life expectancy is 80, there is a focus on how to make life after retirement meaningful. Community networks such as Kominkans provide ways for senior citizens to socialize and participate in society. One of the methods to engage them is to invite people who were high-ranking executives or experts as resource persons for the community learning programmes. This gives them the feeling that they are valued in society.

Another school teacher inquired, from the schools' perspective, how children can be involved in the ESD action. Coming from a teacher training institution, Camello expressed that it is important to start from a young age. Although there may be limitations in students' participation, they should still be exposed to the values of serving the larger community outside themselves.

A participant who was from the Forest Department asked about the impacts of sustainability education and how to objectively measure them so that the learning programmes and activities can be improved upon. Sutar agreed that monitoring and evaluation is a critical part of all projects. For the India pilot project, the team is still in the process of finding methods on how to measure which parts are most impactful.

Guevara expressed that, while measuring impacts is valuable, it is not the only thing that is important and not all things can be measured. It is critical to bring both the measurable and unmeasurable aspects together for a more holistic view.

Miura pointed out that learning assessment does not necessarily have to be quantitative and measurable. In order to transform the education system as we know it, we must rethink education including reducing learning assessment to that which is focused solely on test scores. In terms of transformative learning, self-assessment of the learners reflecting on their own transformation is also an effective method of assessment.

V. Interactive workshop

Link to the presentation:
https://www.dropbox.com/s/uvj754k70jf9g8r/Afternoon%20Session%20ESD%20REFLECT-SHARE-ACT%20Module%20Workshop.pdf?dl=0

In the afternoon session, an interactive workshop was conducted for the participants to experience the key processes of the Reflect-Share-Act framework so that it may be applied to their own projects. Guevara commenced the session by asking the participants to introduce themselves to the other attendants at their table. He also led a physical warmup exercise simulating the experiences in the process e.g. learning, feeling, sharing, taking action, etc.

Figure 6: The objective of the interactive workshop was to share the experience of the Reflect-Share-Act process

Guevara introduced the Reflect-Share-Act framework, emphasizing that the method is not a prescription. As everyone's experience is different, the framework can be applied in different ways, depending on each individual's context. The heart of the framework is the vision of transformation, which is to bring the community together to learn, to reflect, to share, and to act. He explained the framework as shown in the below slide.
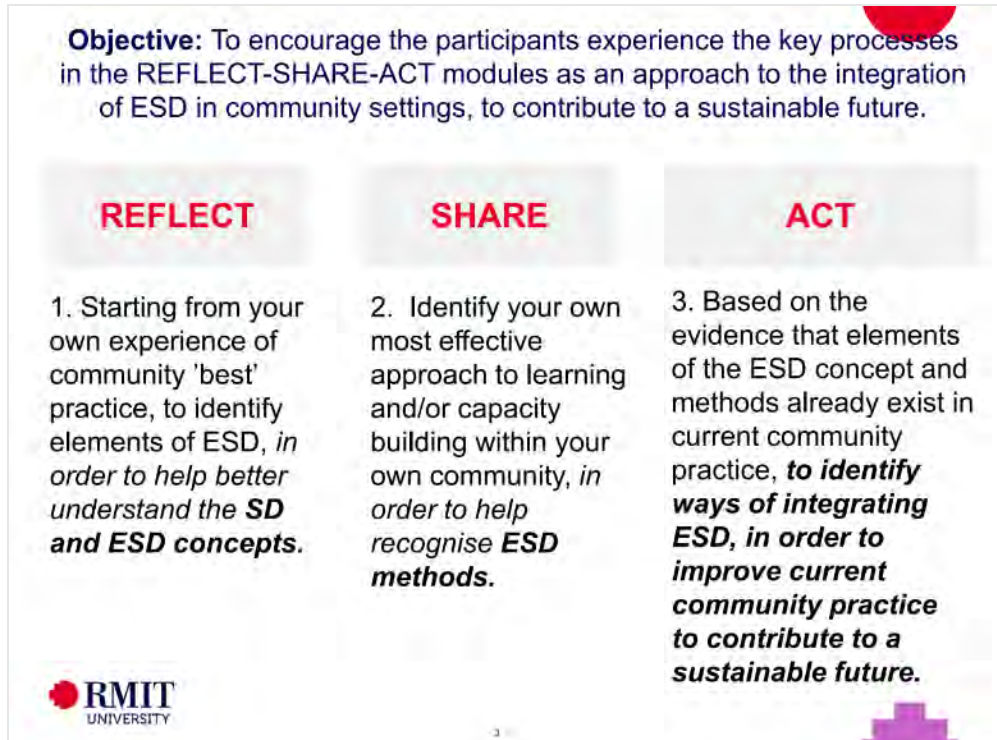
Figure 7: The Reflect-Share-Act process used in the session

a. Reflect

For the Reflect stage, firstly, Guevara asked participants to think of a specific community they worked with. Some of the communities identified were:

- A settlement in Nigeria
- A community of college students in Delhi
- A rural forest community
- A private primary school working with a local farm
- A community of 14-15-year-old students in Delhi
- An engineering college
- A college-level sustainable hospitality management class
- An NGO teaching ESD to out-of-school communities e.g. a traditional religious community in an urban area
- Local government officials working with indigenous people in the forest area
- A group of young mothers and their children focusing on good nutrition and organic gardening

Figure 8: Questions used for the Reflect stage

After identifying the specific community context and reflecting on their relationship to the community, the participants were asked to think of an example of a community practice that they considered as 'best practice'. They shared some of the following examples.

- Taking ideas and sharing them with the community; working on the problem together through making informed decisions and actions.
- Banning plastic use in school and using reusable water bottles.
- Teaching young children organic farming as a life skill; the children go to the local farm 20 times per year so that the activity is continuous and sustainable.
- Establishing a post-graduate programme in conservation; students work with school children and teach them to do sustainability-related activities such as composting.
- Promoting SDG awareness in school, instilling values that life is not just about earning money, but also contributing to society.

Guevara then asked the participants to specify why they think these are best practices. The participants answered:

- Teaching about SDG 11 on sustainable cities in school is a best practice because it gives students hands-on experience through activities such as constructing a wall using waste from cafeteria; it teaches them empathy and appreciation for the environment.
- Teaching students about sustainability through action is valuable because it creates opportunities for youth to come together to take action for society e.g. teaching slum children, cleaning up public spaces, bike-riding campaigns, etc.; it converts theory to practice and incites empathy.

- Constructing a bio-toilet in a place in Punjab that is not connected to the main sewer line can prevent waste going into the water, and it is a way to understand the problem in connection to the other elements around it.

Guevara highlighted that there are entry points to learning sustainability everywhere including through cultural, social, political, and economic aspects. The typical analysis conducted in sustainable development helps the learner understand that whatever one does is connected to everything else.

He summarized that the aforementioned practices are good because they allow us to gain a deeper understanding of the problem we are trying to solve in a holistic manner. Lifelong learning and transforming society are crucial elements of quality education.

In addition, it must be recognized that ESD doesn't need to be introduced, but rather elements of ESD can be identified from what already exists. The important steps are the identification of local issues, sharpening the analysis of the situation, and developing effective responses.

b. Share

After developing a contextual analysis and the direction for change during the "Reflect" stage, the next step is to identify the effective approaches that can contribute to this change. The participants shared some of the following approaches:

- Learning across life: learning must be incorporated everywhere, such as in civil societies and homes.
- Cross-sector learning: there should be an exchange of ideas between different sectors and stakeholders.
- Peer learning

Guevara then shared an approach called the HOPE framework. The examples given by the participants demonstrate ESD practices as described by the HOPE framework in that they are approached in a holistic manner, are ownership-based, involve participation and partnership, and empower people to take action and make changes.
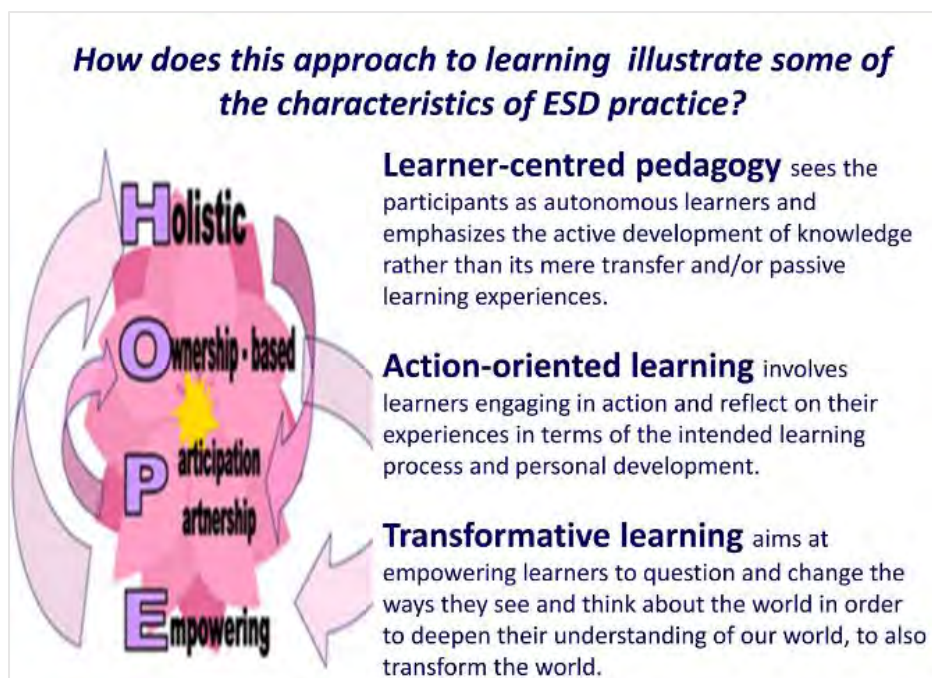
Figure 9: The HOPE Framework

He further explained the main characteristics of ESD that participants can identify in the practices they had identified: learner-centred pedagogy, action-oriented learning, and transformative learning. Once such characteristics are identified, the next step is to strengthen this contextual analysis and share the learning process with others.

c. Act

After identifying the best community practices and most effective approaches to capacity building, the participants were asked to reflect on how they can improve and share their practices with others. Representatives from each table shared the following approaches to improving the community practices:

- Audio-visual aids can be utilized as a part of learning.
- Reflection should be done before making informed decisions and taking action e.g. conducting SWOT analysis.
- The community should be the centre of the action and ESD should be very localized.
- The community practices should be properly showcased either by the community themselves or by the mainstream media in order to involve others in improving the effectiveness of the practices and as incentives for people to feel motivated to join the practice.
- It is also important to improve the manner of how we approach the communities, particularly in approaching indigenous communities or sensitive groups. In so doing, enhancing communication styles, soft skills, and emotional intelligence is also crucial.
- When most people talk about sustainability, they most often think of the environment. The definition of sustainable development in our minds should change and go beyond the environmental aspects.

- Students know what they have to do, but they do not know how to do it. We need to give them a support system – not only from teachers and schools, but also from parents. There should be more activities involving parents.
- There is still a lack of environmental education in teacher education and knowledge transfer only is not sufficient. Teachers should be encouraged to initiate projects with students and the community and monitoring and evaluation should be conducted.
- If the action is solely relying on teachers, it may not be effective as not all teachers will choose to participate in the activities. One key element to scale up action is institutionalization. If ESD is institutionalized, other stakeholders would also be interested to join.

Guevara shared the following responses to the above suggestions:

- Showcasing work is not only about describing the story, but must also include the analysis and clear evidence of outcomes.
- Teaching is commonly regarded as a way of "telling". However, it should be more like communication in that it requires feedback, conversation, and dialogue.
- While the holistic approach is crucial, there must be a starting point and environmental issues often serve as that entry. However, he agrees that sustainability action should not end there.
- If ESD action in schools rely only on teachers, they will become tired in attempting to solve these huge problems and they will experience burnout. In this regard, it is important that they are supported and are not taking on this massive cause on their own.

The session was summarized with Guevara reiterating the Reflect-Share-Act process:

- Reflect on the community's situation and identify the issues.
- Conduct a clear analysis of the problem and develop a holistic approach.
- Find and utilize a suitable entry point. This may be an environmental issue at first, but ultimately, sustainability issues will also concern social, economic, and political aspects, among others.
- Take action and engage multiple partners and stakeholders.

Finally, Guevara shared some methods and frameworks to refer to when planning community-based ESD action as follows:

- Appreciative inquiry method – do not focus only on the deficits or problems, but discover the good aspects and practices of the community and use them to add value to the problem they are trying to solve.
- HOPE Framework – develop a holistic analysis and engage the community in the process so that they may gain a sense of ownership and empowerment.
- An ESD action principle framework is available in the UNESCO publication "Communities in action: lifelong learning for sustainable development" available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000234185 (pp. 47)

Figure 10: The ESD Action Principle Framework can be used to guide community-based ESD action

VI.   Feedback

Participants gave the following points as feedback:

- A participant from Bhutan commented that, throughout the continuous discussion on transformative action, we should ensure that the action is conscious action. All those involved should be aware of the background, impacts, and vision behind it.
- Guevara agreed that action alone is not sustainable; it must be informed and it must also continue to change as we change.
- It would be beneficial to embed this type of framework into policy. Guevara agreed, emphasizing that education is political, and all those involved should continually advocate sustainability education to policy-makers.
- A participant expressed his appreciation for the way the session was facilitated by Guevara. He shared his impression that Guevara was able to demonstrate the framework very effectively and that the method of sharing was well planned.
- Another participant who was a school teacher pointed out the importance of instilling a sense of ownership of sustainability action in other members of the community, as much of the responsibility is often put upon teachers.
- Guevara emphasized that everyone can be a teacher and that every moment can be a learning opportunity for change.

VII.   Closing

Miura closed the session by expressing appreciation to the attendants for their active participation and affirmation of the approach to ESD that was shared. She stated that this work on the approach to ESD is

still ongoing and called upon everyone to continue to develop, share, and improve our ESD practices together.