

### **3<sup>rd</sup> World Forum on Transdisciplinarity**

## **Symposium “TRANSDISCIPLINARY EDUCATION FOR THE CITIZENS OF THE EARTH”, Rome, 27 November 2020**

### **Presentation by Julie Saito, International Coordinator of the Associated Schools Network (ASPnet), UNESCO**

Dear Participants, dear organizers,

It is an honour and a pleasure to have been invited to speak at this forum, the III WORLD CONGRESS Symposium on "TRANSDISCIPLINARY EDUCATION FOR THE CITIZENS OF THE EARTH" in this particular context.

Allow me to, first, acknowledging the presence of our Italian ASPnet schools and this meeting's Moderator, Ms Carla Guetti, the Italian National Coordinator for ASPnet, and commend her for her points about "Education for planetary citizenship: the experience of UNESCO Associated Schools Network ASPnet", which clearly demonstrate the central role ASPnet plays in transdisciplinary education towards a global citizenship.

In the current context UNESCO's education sector focus is on applying the principles of the Delors Report in the framework of 4.7, namely:

to 'ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development'.

Let me illustrate this point with a quote from the UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education, Ms Stefania Giannini:

*"For our very own survival, we must learn to live together sustainably on this planet. We must change the way we think and act as individuals and societies. So in turn education must change to create a peaceful and sustainable world for the survival and prosperity of current and future generations."*

UNESCO's position on transdisciplinarity in this context, esp. in the context of its UNESCO Response to COVID-19 in education highlights UNESCO's core values and approach to education.

ASPnet is a prime example of the application and piloting of UNESCO's innovative thrust for the transmission and promotion of universal values, with transdisciplinarity an inherent value, shown in work across sectors to accompany this evolution of education in a broad view, vision of ED as comprehensive approach to learning to live together (through GCED), and applied at concrete level of schools through ASPnet.

Allow me to present some examples to illustrate:

We have an innovative pilot project in line with UNESCO and ASPnet's function as laboratory of ideas: The whole-school approach to climate change which I want to put in focus as an umbrella approach to the implementation of different more specific ASPnet activities. It is an inherently

transdisciplinary approach: it brings together what is taught, how it is taught, extra-curricular activities, teacher training, decision-making processes, the physical buildings, the environment and the wider community, or, in the words of Benjamin Franklin:

*“Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn”*

The pilot for this approach mobilized **230,980 students, 13,853 teachers** as well as the **258 participating schools’ principals, staff and wider community**, in **25 countries**<sup>1</sup>.

The pilot’s overall purpose was to explore the feasibility and effectiveness of a whole-institution approach to climate action at a global scale, with students in diverse economic, geographic, social, and cultural contexts, as well as from different age groups.

**Key features of a whole-institution approach to climate change** are that it takes a **holistic, participatory** approach and a **combination of learning and actions to integrate sustainability in every dimension of a school/learning institution**. It means that students, teachers, principals, school staff, parents, local citizens, community organizations and the private sector are involved **and work together to embed sustainability in four domains** (Figure 2):

1. School Governance
2. Teaching and Learning
3. Community Partnerships
4. Facilities and Operations.

**The WIA to climate change has the power to enable learners to live what they learn and learn what they live and to change the culture of a school and its surrounding community (Figure 3).**

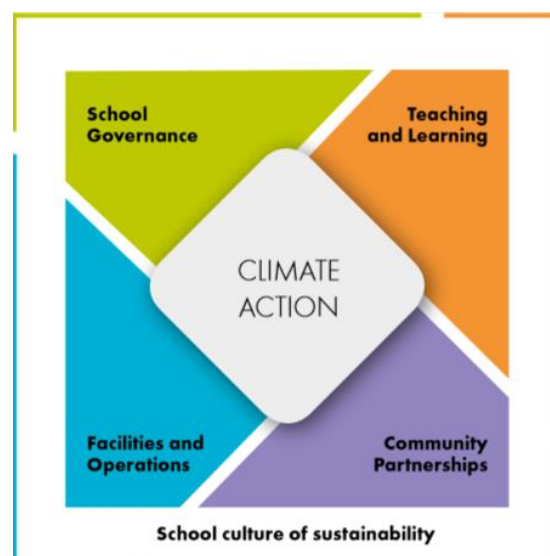
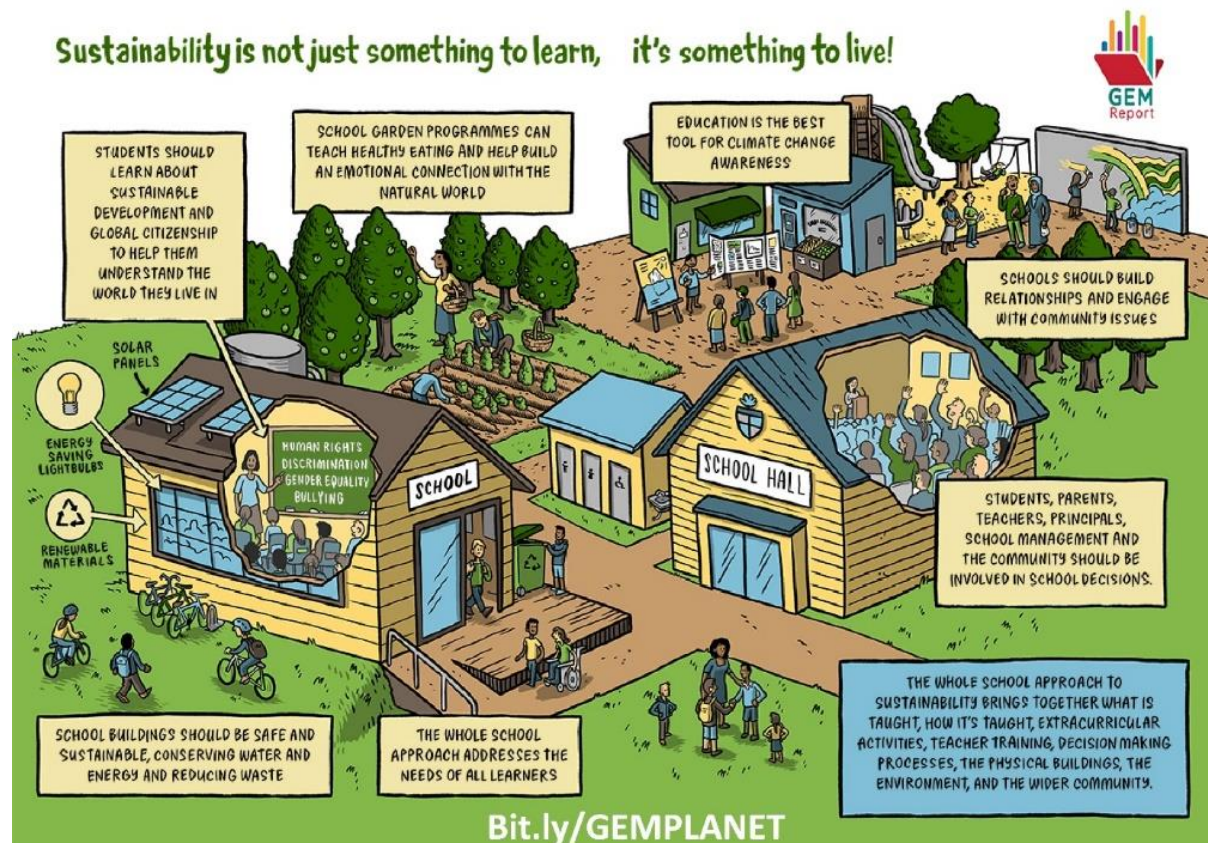


Figure 2 Conceptual Framework

<sup>1</sup> Countries from all world regions participated. Countries spanned along all income levels, and geographical compositions, including seven Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and three Small Island Developing States (SIDS).



**Figure 3** The Whole-Institution Approach to Climate Change (UNESCO Global Monitoring Report)

The pilot contributed to understanding the significant impact a whole-institution approach to climate change can have on students, teachers and wider school communities' attitudes, behaviours and actions<sup>2</sup>:

- **95% of participating schools<sup>3</sup> integrated Education for Sustainable Development in school curricula** and is taught through at least 4 different subject disciplines.
- Schools shifted their teaching and learning practices, focusing on **inquiry-based, immersive and real-life teaching and learning**.
- Participants reported a **shift in mindsets**, from zero interest to heightened awareness and motivation to take climate action and the **development of an environmental conscience**.
- **Students critically reflected on their career choices and pathways**, e.g. female students in several schools expressed wishes to move towards STEM higher education studies.
- **Participatory and student-led decision making** was strengthened in participating schools and communities.
- **Classroom and overall school climate improved significantly** and participants developed a **strong sense of belonging to their school and community**.
- School Climate Action teams built **transformative school- community partnerships**: 81% of schools formalized at least one partnership with another school, neighborhood associations, local government, environmental groups, media, local business, networks, universities and/or community centers. Partnerships focused on reinforcing:

<sup>2</sup> A 3min [Trailer](#) and 30min [Documentary](#) on the pilot's outcomes and achievements.

<sup>3</sup> The integration of climate change into school curricula is a national requirement in 67% of the countries where the pilot phase of the project was implemented.

- **School greening** e.g. 94% of schools created school gardens, green nurseries of local species and eco-walls.
- **Improvement of litter and waste management**, e.g. 88% of schools introduced recycling practices or changed garbage collection service to one with a green label.
- **Optimization of water management**, e.g. 79% of schools reduced water consumption or the safe depositing of chemicals.
- **Improvement of health and well-being**, e.g. 78% of schools introduced good practices related to hygiene, nutrition and physical exercise.
- **Initiation of responsible consumption initiatives**, 63% of schools promoted small-scale farming or purchasing of local products.
- **Optimization of energy consumption**, e.g. 59% of schools monitored energy consumption or developed alternative sources of energy.
- **Introduction and promotion of alternative means of transport to/from school**, e.g. 43% of schools initiated alternative means of transport to/from school, including days of virtual classes.
- Participants developed a **new vision of what a school can be and do for those that study, teach, or work in it – for surrounding communities**.
- Participants developed and strengthened their sense of belonging to a **global community** involved in climate action, including like-minded schools across the globe.

The pilot project also made an **impact on policy making** in several participating countries where policy makers are currently moving towards integration of ESD in national curricula and scaling activities from pilot schools to all schools in their country (e.g. 800 additional schools in Brazil, France, Germany, Greece, Indonesia and Lao PDR have already started to articulate climate change in a comprehensive way into their plans, programmes and dynamics).

In the current situation of COVID-19 96% of ASPnet member institutions were closed at the height of global lockdown. This is why in May of this year, the ASPnet community came together through a Global Webinar to share and reflect on their own experiences of remote learning and to re-imagine the diverse futures of education: teachers and students emphasized importance of social and emotional learning during COVID and made pleas to make more space for that in overcrowded curricula (this reflection can be taken further a step: we need to reflect on what were the “essentials” of the curriculum that teachers selected to transmit during confinement. This can help to further identify areas for alleviating curricula).

The coordination team at ASPnet has also adapted projects due to COVID: we have set up the “Change Initiative for Teacher Education and Training Institutions”. ASPnet membership included 104 Teacher Training Institutions (TTIs) in 32 countries and all regions of the world. We call it the Change Initiative because the current crisis has not only brought with it massive change, it has created a window of opportunity for more. We have a chance to bring about real transformative changes that make education systems more just, inclusive and resilient.

I say this for 2 reasons: 1. A shift in perception has taken place over the past months: Change is now perceived as inevitable and even as a necessity, if we want to find solutions to the many challenges we are facing. 2. This unprecedented crisis has already unleashed a great deal of innovation and creativity within the education sector which we can build on and channel through this newly established initiative and in pursuit of SDG 4 Target 4.7. So what do we aim to achieve? The Change Initiative sets out to build a community of practice with the mission to promote and strengthen Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development in teacher education and training. As the providers of teacher education and training to thousands of student teachers around the world, they have a

unique and critical role to play. The need to greatly expand society's capacity to solve complex challenges has never been more important or more urgent, with just ten years remaining to the 2030 deadline of achieving the SDGs. Based on our work and the ASP network, we know that learning communities can be a very strong driver for innovation and change.

Let me conclude by thanking you for your attention.