

# CIEA 2006

Handout 4

## **Teaching for sustainable action and decision-making necessitates the promotion of special competences**

**Ideas, experiences and findings from a  
research project in Switzerland**

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## Handout 4

# Education for a sustainable development: Specific didactical principles and criteria for the selection and alignment of subject contents

*Excerpts from: Kuenzli, CH (2006): Bildung für eine nachhaltige Entwicklung. Didaktisches Konzept und Umsetzung auf der Unterstufe. Dissertation bei Prof. Dr. W. Herzog. Institut für Erziehungswissenschaften. Universität Bern.*

## 1. Specific didactical principles of an education that promotes a sustainable development

All of the principles listed below are an indispensable condition for conversion of a sustainable development; they are, however, individually insufficient. In combination, however, they can develop their effect on an education that promotes sustainable development. It is, therefore, only possible to talk about education for sustainable development when these general and specific didactical principles are directing the action during a lesson regarding the higher-ranking main objectives.

*Cross-linked learning:* The lesson contents must be diverse and include several perspectives. When making decisions, it must facilitate and promote the consideration of main- and auxiliary consequences that result from action; this is particularly important regarding environmental, economics and social-cultural aspects. Simultaneously, the interdependence of regional- and global events and effects on future generations must be kept in mind.

*Alignment of Participation:* The inclusion of children in the shaping of their own learning processes or as part of the community that has particular concerns affecting the entire grade. The alignment of participation in the sense of an education that promotes a sustainable development also entails dealing with being part of social structures, the question of examining power balance and the consideration of control-possibilities for a sustainable development.

*Alignment of Vision:* The alignment of lessons to- and development of common visions for a sustainable development. In addition, the organization of lessons should demand and promote reactive *and* pro-active thinking.

## **2. Lesson contents**

Education for a sustainable development does not define mandatory topics dealt with in lesson. Deduction of binding principles from the idea of sustainability is impossible; there are many objects that enable reflection regarding more detailed sustainable development plans and facilitate learning about participation in the design of social processes in terms of sustainable development. This, however, does not signify that the selection of suitable topics can be carried out at will and that all topics are equally suitable. The topics must primarily correspond to certain criteria that are derived from an overall concept of sustainable development. Secondly, lesson topics can be dealt with differently during lessons and can be planned differently. For this reason, the precise alignment of lesson topics must be based on criteria. Criteria for the selection and alignment of lesson topics: The criteria for the selection and alignment of lesson topics are summarized in the table below.

*Criteria for the selection of lesson topics and for their alignment during lessons*

<b>Criteria for the selection the lesson topic</b>	<b>Alignment of the lesson topic</b>
<p><b>Global and local dimension</b></p> <p>Is the topic suitable for demonstrating the relationship between local and global conditions and processes?</p>	<p>Demonstrate local and global dimensions and their interrelationship.</p>
<p><b>Time- and dynamic dimension</b></p> <p>Is the topic suitable to demonstrate field of activity change due to changing requirements?</p> <p>Is the topic suitable for initiating discussion regarding effects of the past and present on future generations?</p> <p>Does the lesson topic (e.g. the field of activity) offer a window of opportunity for change? Is it possible to conceive different visions for the future?</p>	<p>Highlight for discussion the issue of topic change and in particular future visions that are talked about in society. Stimulate one's own, personal handling of the future and examine this with regards to a sustainable development.</p>
<p><b>Social-cultural-, economical and environmental dimension</b></p> <p>Is the topic appropriate for identifying the three dimensions of a sustainable development with respect to entire society interests and the corresponding competing and coinciding interests of individual participants?</p>	<p>Bring into evidence the interrelationship between the three dimensions concerning the relevant topic. Disclose differences in interests and common grounds between individual participants and relate these to the interests of society.</p>
	<p><b>Further criteria for aligning the lesson topic</b></p>
	<p>Bring into evidence for discussion the issue of main- and auxiliary consequences of decisions or behavior.</p>

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	Increase the understanding of students of present- and future impacts. Establish relationships between the topic and the environment of the learner.
	General applicable values in the sense of fundamental perceptions must be demonstrated, worked out and transferred to new situations using specific examples (exemplum and transfer).