

Empowering teachers to bring sustainability to schools - a professional development for in-service teachers

24.09.2018 The following international project was conducted by the Infis members Matthias Barth, Kirsten Bruhn, Lydia Kater-Wettstädt and Erin Redman on the national level in Germany.

Youth education is a critical environment for building capacity for transformative change towards sustainability. Schools and their teachers reach a culturally and economically diverse population that are today's youth and tomorrow's leaders. Teachers often see the need to educate for sustainability, but feel that they do not have the knowledge and skills to do so.

To support teachers as leaders in sustainability and equip them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to integrate sustainability into their schools, we are working with a team of sustainability researchers and educators from across the globe to lead sustainability continuing professional development (CPD) workshops. The Global Consortium for Sustainability Outcomes (GCSO) funded this project. The sustainability CPD model is building off the successful model developed by Arizona State University researchers and implemented across the United States. To date the CPD has also been piloted with primary school teachers in Ireland, Germany, and Mexico as part of the current project.

We completed the Germany-based CPD program on the August 25, 2018. At the closing event, the participating teachers presented their projects and their personal development over the course of the CPD. Their motivation for education for sustainable development was clearly visible and the future oriented projects they had planned and initiated made it obvious that they will affect the schools and the schools' environment dramatically. One team started to equip a researcher's room, two teams already made steps in the direction of waste free schools and a few of them started gardening projects in their schools and at home. They started with little changes in their everyday life and in school; at the end they were more courageous to make bigger steps towards sustainable development. In a few months, the first meeting of the newly launched network for education for sustainable development in schools will take place, which will re-enforce and multiply the teachers' already impressive efforts. While the exact sustainability CPD model used varies based on country, culture, and

context, there are key features that remain the same from the original United States model to the Germany, Ireland, and Mexico programs, which made it that successful. Those features include:

1. Teachers attend in teams to foster organizational change and overcoming the barriers associated with one-person leading school projects.
2. The CPD is long-term and intensive, including more than 50-hours of face-to-face workshops over the course of three to six months. The intensity allows for deeper learning on sustainability and the duration enables the teachers to translate their knowledge into practice in between workshop sessions.
3. The CPD focuses on key sustainability competencies through real-world, solutions-based pedagogies that empower to create positive change in the community. The key competencies include systems thinking, future thinking, values thinking, strategic action, and stakeholder engagement.
4. Teachers connect with local and regional sustainability leaders through field-trips and guest speakers.
5. Each team of teachers works together to develop and implement a school project, with small seed funding provided to each school as part of the CPD.
6. Formative evaluations are conducted in each location. The quantitative and qualitative instruments share questions across all site locations to allow for comparability.

The success of the model is not measured in number of attendees, rather it is assessed through the impact on the schools, the curriculum, and the learning outcomes of the students in these regions.

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