Chapter 4
Integration of Education for Sustainable Development into Formal Secondary Curricula of East Timor

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the relevance of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in formal education reform in East Timor. This chapter relied on relevant published documents and information published by various national and international agencies concerning East-Timor. It firstly reflects on the organization background of development of new secondary curriculum in East Timor; then it focuses on what protocols and principles form the basis of these new curricula. There is further description of the development and implementation of the new curricula inclusive of subject selection in consideration of ESD and Millennium Development Goals (MGDs) as illustrated with some examples of ESD integration in new textbooks for 10th year. Lastly, it highlights the challenges that team developers faced at the completion of curricular development and presents some solutions to overcome difficulties related to restructuring and implementation. Thus this chapter aims to provide an example of sustainable development integration into secondary curricula of a young country - East Timor – while illustrating the extent of curricular materials could contribute to developing skills, values and attitudes aligned with sustainable development perspectives.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

Education for sustainable development (ESD) concerns educational processes to help achieve sustainable development (SD), based on three premises: environmental protection, economic development and social development, integrated in an inclusive and equitable manner (UNESCO, 2011a). Therefore, ESD is important for improving the living conditions of all citizens, promoting SD and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), especially in young countries like East Timor. The government of East Timor has recognized the importance of secondary school curricula restructuring, including disciplinary programmes, along with the production of resources required for the various disciplines, as a priority (RDTL, 2011). In these circumstances, the Government, within the project *"Restructuring of secondary school curriculum of East Timor,"* together with Portuguese institutions (e.g. IPAD, 2010), has been developing new secondary curricular materials, with the general purpose to contribute to local MDGs (UNMIT, 2010) and sustainable development, (Capelo, 2013). Also, teacher-training courses were implemented (IPAD, 2010.

Many young countries that have undergone a post-war political transition present common patterns of development. Such a political transition may include internal conflicts, divergence over environmental and economic priorities, and a diverse ethno-cultural heritage. East Timor is no exception and presents many problems of resource degradation and deterioration, as well as local and regional diversity in the social, economic, cultural and environmental domains, reinforcing the need to respect and preserve national identity (Presidency of the Ministers' Office, 2007). All these concerns underscore the need to improve education in order to promote respect and a sense of responsibility for the sustainable development of the country. In other words, educational practices (formal, non-formal and informal) should be adjusted to local needs in order to encourage students to explore questions, issues and problems, especially in contexts relevant to SD (GC-UNESCO, 2009).

A main role of formal institutions is strengthening the preparation of students to face emerging local, national and global problems in an appropriate way, and to understand these problems and constructively participate in solving them. Moreover, the holistic perspective present in any educational program guided by ESD principles will help students develop multiple competences, e.g., technical, cognitive and emotional (UNESCO, 2011a, b).

East Timor is a country in Southeast Asia, comprising the eastern half of the island of Timor. During 400 years it was a Portuguese colony. In 1975, East Timor declared its independence but soon after it was invaded and occupied by Indonesia. In 1999, following the United Nations-sponsored act of self-determination, Indonesia relinquished control of the territory, and East Timor became the first new sovereign state of the 21st century on May 20, 2002. After independence, East Timor became a member of the United Nations and the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (Earnest, 2003). Since independence, Timor-Leste's social and economic policies have focused on alleviating poverty to address the immediate needs of our people, consolidating security and stability, and providing a foundation for nation through building institutions of State. As most education infrastructure in Timor-Leste was destroyed during the Indonesian period. East Timor's Government had invested in building and rehabilitating schools across the country, training teachers and innovating curriculum (RDTL, 2011).

Since this time, the government has invested in building and rehabilitating schools across the country, with modern and adequate classrooms, water and electricity. Also, the government invested in reform of education system, including development of a new curriculum that focused on "developing relevant knowledge, useful capacities and critical intellectual and social skills, and on

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