Contextualising Teaching and Learning in Schools Using Natural Resources

- the case of school tree nurseries -

TRAINING COURSE, by distance learning

17 September – 5 October 2007
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INTRODUCTION

Education for sustainable development continues to highlight the importance of addressing the issues of natural resources (water, energy, agriculture, biodiversity) as part of the broader agenda of sustainable development. In particular, the links with societal and economic considerations enables learners to adopt new behaviours in the management of natural resources.

Many attempts have been made to adjust educational content so that it becomes relevant to sustainable development. In practice, this has often meant the introduction of new topics or subjects, for example natural resources or environmental management. Relatively little emphasis has been placed, however, on the development of education strategies that are based on the immediate context in which the school is located. This training course will deal with the use of natural resources as a way of contextualising primary and secondary education and making teaching and learning more relevant to the local situation. Tree nurseries in schools will be used as examples to demonstrate this concept.

Interesting and relevant school projects in natural resources management have the potential to foster powerful alliances between schools and communities - working together to reach local sustainability goals and create relevant and appropriate education. For this training course, tree nurseries were chosen as entry points for contextualisation, since they offer many opportunities for integration into school programmes through locally relevant, experimental activities.

Without trees human life would be unsustainable. Trees provide a wide range of products (timber, fruit, medicine, beverages, fodder) and services (carbon sequestration, shade, beautification, erosion control, soil fertility). But trees and forests are rapidly disappearing. There is therefore an urgent need to grow and plant more trees, also within farming systems (agroforestry). Tree nurseries are therefore getting increasingly popular around the world as viable and exciting school projects in education for sustainable development. Schoolchildren and young people can gain knowledge and practical skills by helping to establish and maintain a tree nursery and by planting trees in school, at home and in their community.

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1 Contextualisation of learning occurs when the content of the curriculum, and the methods and materials associated with it, are related directly to the experience and environment of the learner. In many schools in developing countries, most learners have direct experience of natural resources, either as a result of their own activities, or from observation in their immediate surroundings. Agricultural or environmental topics used as media for contextualising education can provide avenues through which children can have repeated experiences which help them to master skills.
PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE TRAINING COURSE

The World Agroforestry Centre offers an innovative training course “Contextualising Teaching and Learning in Schools Using Natural Resources – the case of school tree nurseries” by distance learning. The course helps participants to get a broader understanding of problems and issues related to tree nurseries in schools within the framework of education for sustainable development, and to analyse information and find workable solutions.

Specific objectives of the training course are:

− to share experiences in contextualization of teaching and learning using natural resources
− to demonstrate how concepts and principles of tree nursery establishment and management can be made relevant to primary and secondary schools and their communities
− to identify opportunities for and constraints to school–community linkages related to tree nursery and natural resource management projects.

In the long term, this training course is expected to contribute to the empowerment of young people by enhancing the effectiveness of education through active, experiential and contextualized learning, while improving their natural resource management knowledge, skills and attitudes.

PROGRAMME AND INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

The training course will cover technical and methodological aspects related to contextualising teaching and learning in schools using natural resources. Tree nurseries in schools will be used as a case to demonstrate this. The course programme includes:

− Concept of contextualising teaching and learning using natural resources
− Case studies that have made significant progress towards contextualisation of teaching and learning using natural resources
− Tree nursery establishment and management (planning, site selection and preparation, sourcing and treatment of seeds, wildlings and cuttings, raising trees in a nursery, transplanting young trees)
− Links to curricular and co-curricular activities in schools
− Community involvement and school–community linkages.
The training course will be delivered by distance learning (mainly through online or e-learning). This gives participants time and space flexibility. The course will enable participants to incorporate study into their working lifestyles and positively encourage the integration of personal experience into the study process. Participants will learn by studying resource materials, performing exercises and sharing ideas, questions and solutions with other participants. All this will guided by facilitation from the World Agroforestry Centre, and participants become engaged in an insightful and thought-provoking learning process. The World Agroforestry Centre is well known for maintaining high quality in the preparation, delivery and management of training courses, and in the support provided for learners: our learning materials are of high quality and practical use to participants and we provide comprehensive background materials backed by expert tutorial support.

Recognising that participants from all sorts of backgrounds, scattered across the globe, will have different expectations and different facilities available to them, the World Agroforestry Centre is committed to meeting their needs through a combined system of traditional as well as more interactive learning resources.

The course materials are designed to meet all study requirements. Whilst learners are encouraged to follow up further interests and explore other information, the material provided is sufficient for the required elements of the course. The set of course materials has been designed and developed by subject experts drawn from the World Agroforestry Centre and other leading research institutes and specialist organisations.

DATES

The training course will take place from 17 September to 5 October 2007.

PARTICIPANTS

The training course is of interest and application to:

− teachers in primary and secondary schools
− lecturers in teacher training colleges
− education officials
− curriculum development specialists
− representatives of NGOs and CBOs active in education for sustainable development
− other educators and trainers in education for sustainable development.

Prospective participants should note that distance learning demands a high degree of commitment, determination and self-discipline. Whilst the World Agroforestry Centre provides significant support through the tutorial system and by other means, participants have to possess a strong measure of self-reliance.
In order to make full use of all online learning materials and fully engage with the tutoring and support offered, participants should have access to a computer with the following capabilities:

− Good Internet connection and an up-to-date web browser such as Internet Explorer 6.0 or above or Mozilla Firefox 2.0 or above
− CD or DVD drive
− Regular access to email
− Software that can read Word and PDF files
− Sufficient capacity for downloading files
− Access to a printer to print hard copies of learning materials.

Participants should be able to be connected to the Internet between 0.5 and 1 hour on average every day throughout the training course. Participants need to be computer literate and have experience with web-based resources. The activities and interaction reinforce the course material and are an essential part of the course.

We accept applications from suitably qualified candidates around the world. Women candidates are strongly encouraged to apply since the aim is to have a good gender balance for this course.

The working language will be English and thus participants are expected to be fluent in this language.

Participants will have to prepare contributions to the course in the form of assignments related to their work experience. Active participation will be required throughout the learning event. Participants will also have to formulate a personal action plan as a result of their participation. Guidelines for participants’ contributions and personal action plans will be provided.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

The application procedure is as follows:

− Complete the enclosed application form.
− Email it to t.vandenbosch@cgiar.org no later than 7 September 2007.
− You will be notified of the success or failure of your application by email.
− Once you are confirmed as a participant, you will have access to the course through our online learning management system as soon as the course opens.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact Tom Vandenbosch at the World Agroforestry Centre using the following email address: t.vandenbosch@cgiar.org