

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: INTERVIEW WITH DR MANDY SINGER-BRODOWSKI



How has early childhood education (ECE) for sustainable development unfolded in recent years?

Early childhood education is characterized both internationally and in Germany by a strong dynamic of professionalization and academization, meaning that more and more pedagogical professionals have a university degree or take part in intensive further training. At the same time, the main features of early child education (experience-oriented, proximity to nature, participation, democracy) make ESD quite compatible with

early education, which is why many pedagogical professionals are highly interested in its application here. Both efforts to professionalize the careers of early childhood educators and the compatibility of ESD with early childhood education have favoured the inclusion of ESD in the documents and institutions concerned with early education over the past years. In particular, the increasing anchoring of ESD and related educational concepts could be observed in the educational plans for ECE of the different German states in recent years.

„The main features of early child education make ESD quite compatible with early education, which is why many pedagogical professionals are highly interested in its application.“

What does this increasing anchoring in educational plans mean for training in early childhood education?

In more and more German states, ESD provides an important orientation for educational processes in early childhood education. This trend is even stronger in the educational plans which have only been developed in recent years. At the same time, this positive development is not yet reflected in the curricula used in the professional education of preschool educators; in other words, in the practice of vocational education, ESD does not yet play a sufficient role. The module descriptions for early

RECENT UPDATES FROM THE GERMAN ESD-MONITORING (LINK)

Holst, J., Brock, A., Singer-Brodowski, M., & de Haan, G. (2020). **Monitoring Progress of Change: Implementation of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) within Documents of the German Education System.**

Grund, J., & Brock, A. (2020). **Education for Sustainable Development in Germany: Not Just Desired but Also Effective for Transformative Action.**

Singer-Brodowski, M., von Seggern, J., Duveneck, A., & Etz Korn, N. (2020). **Moving (Reflexively within) Structures. The Governance of Education for Sustainable Development in Germany.**

pedagogical study programmes, by contrast, show the growing inclusion of ESD. Programmes with stronger ESD anchoring use this to foster their image to further develop their programmes and to communicate externally.

What other starting points could be identified by the monitoring for reinforcing ESD?

Important fields of action for anchoring ESD in early childhood education are, among others, further training for pedagogical professionals and kindergarten managers as well as the quality management ideas that institutions and institutional associations bring to the table. Becoming active in these fields will make it possible to better realize ESD as an integrated aspiration to transform the entire institution. After all, this ‘whole institution approach’ not only touches upon questions pertaining to sustainable sourcing or organic and regional lunches; it implies basic pedagogical elements like the democratic participation of children, for example in children’s parliaments. These aspects create an environment for children in which they can experience sustainability directly.

„Only well-trained educators can implement educational plans that formally anchors ESD with enthusiasm and professionalism in everyday situations in early education.“

What do the findings of the ESD monitoring mean for actors who would like to advocate the strengthening of early childhood education?

In the past years, large model projects like Leuchtpol or additional training courses were carried out by the foundation Haus der kleinen Forscher (The Little Scientists’ House) in order to make ESD more well known among preschool educators. These and other comprehensive commitments to strengthening ESD in early education have had a clear impact over the past years. In the future, special attention should be paid to the deeper anchoring of ESD in the vocational training of educators. Only well-trained educators can implement educational plans that formally anchors ESD with enthusiasm and professionalism in everyday situations in early education. Furthermore, approaches should be developed for target groups who as yet have not been the main focus of the discussion: managers, institutional representatives and experts in the state ministries. In the end, the driving role of science can be used to further professionalize ESD.

Contact

Dr. Mandy Singer-Brodowski

E-Mail: [s-brodowski\(at\)institutfutur.de](mailto:s-brodowski@institutfutur.de)

URL: www.institutfutur.de