Mobilising environmental and sustainability education Actors and actions: Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa Nodes

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents strategies and opportunities for and successes in facilitating and scaling local agency, mobilising actors, nurturing ownership and expanding environmental and sustainability education actions through the Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa (EEASA) nodes. Formed in 1982, EEASA is the world's oldest association of environmental and sustainability education practitioners. EEASA is a legal private voluntary organisation registered in South Africa, operating in southern Africa and owned collectively by its members spread across the region and the rest of the world. Every year EEASA has been able to service its members through an international conference, provision of a peer-reviewed Journal, and circulation of a bulletin. Publications, membership and curriculum development have been enabled by many factors including a long-standing partnership with and support from the Southern African Development Community – Regional Environmental Education Programme (SADC-REEP). Expansion of membership and local actions has recently been catalysed by the formation of EEASA nodes at national level in a number of countries, whose function is to catalyse and coordinate local actions and align their networks and activities to the vision and mission of EEASA. There are excellent examples of EEASA nodes manifesting national-level networking, local actions and monitoring and evaluation such as the Botswana National Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa (NEEASA) the Namibia National Environmental Education Network (NEEN) and the Seychelles EEASA node among others. What appears to ensure success of these local networks is regular collaboration, meetings, exchanging experiences, information sharing, mutual respect and personal commitment. Some of the advantages of national and local networking include learning together across disciplinary, sectoral and hierarchical boundaries; establishment of sustainability commons where members can co-create sustainability practices and learn from praxis, co-generate new knowledge, co-publish and engage practitioners, academics and policy makers together. Environmental and sustainability education networking and agency in EEASA advance the ethos uBuntu by providing a platform for learning together, nurturing professionalism and respect for diverse knowledges and ways of knowing. This paper provides ideas on how EEASA nodes can further contribute to EEASA's Global Action Programme (GAP) Commitment made to UNESCO in 2015 through local actions.

Key words: EEASA Nodes, partnerships, GAP commitment, local action, common good, ownership

Acronyms

EE	Environmental Education
EEAS	Environmental Education Association of Seychelles
EEASA	Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
GAP	Global Action Programme on ESD
NGO	Non-governmental organisations
RCE	Regional Centre of Expertise (United Nations University – Institute of Advanced Studies)
SADC-REEP	Southern African Development Community – Regional Environmental Education Programme
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

1.0 Introduction

Formed in 1982 the Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa (EEASA) is the world's oldest association of environmental and sustainability education practitioners. EEASA is a legal private voluntary organisation registered in South Africa, operating in southern Africa and owned collectively by its members spread across the sub-region and the rest of the world (EEASA, undated; 2001; 2014). "EEASA was founded in September 1982 as a result of interaction between educationalists and environmentalists. It is a multidisciplinary Association concerned with the education process, which leads to changes of attitude and behaviour towards the environment" (EEASA, 2001, p.1). The mission of EEASA is also captured in the preamble of its constitution through its aims, namely to

- act as a responsible body for consultation and coordination on matters of public and professional interest concerning environmental education;
- promote interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary studies of the environment;
- promote, organise and sponsor activities and research in environmental education;
- disseminate information regarding environmental education;
- provide opportunities for the exchange of ideas and opinions on environmental education in Southern Africa (*ibid*).

Every year EEASA services its members through an international conference and workshop (which rotates among the SADC Member States through bids) considered by members as 'the very heart of EEASA'; provision of a peer-reviewed Journal and circulation of a bulletin. The Environmental Education Bulletin is a forum for the exchange of opinions and for promoting scholarly articles on Environmental Education. It also serves as a platform for learning and sharing of ideas and the dissemination of information about environmental and sustainability education.

Publications, membership and capacity building have been enabled by many factors including a long-standing partnership with and support from the Southern African Development Community – Regional Environmental Education Programme (SADC-REEP, 2013). Voluntary personal commitment has been a key driver sustaining EEASA and catalysing local actions. While EEASA membership fluctuates between 250 and 500 members annually, the number of practitioners active on the combined EEASA-SADC ESD network database is up to 3000.

The idea of EEASA nodes has been discussed in the network for the past 10 years and implemented on an ad-hoc basis for most of this period, with formalisation beginning with the resuscitation of the Namibia Environmental Education Network in 2009. It is recognition of the power of distributed environmental and sustainability cognition and leadership among different people and institutions and localisation of participation and actions. The aim of cultivating and sustaining EEASA nodes is to facilitate local and national networked learning and action. EEASA nodes provide a non-threatening and non-hierarchical forum for testing and sharing ideas and practices, critically reflecting on environment and sustainability challenges, risks and uncertainties of our times, showcasing indigenous ways of knowing and connecting them to modern science in an attempt to learn to live better.

In 2014 EEASA made a commitment to UNESCO to do its part in implementing the Global Action Programme (GAP), across all the five GAP Priority Action Areas (see plate 1), of which the third priority area was officially pronounced by UNESCO as the area of accountability:

3. **Increasing the capacity of educators and trainers**
   ➢ To encourage re-orientation of teacher education programmes in southern Africa in partnership with the SADC Mainstreaming Environment and Sustainability in African Universities (MESA) chairs, the SADC ESD Teacher Education Network, the SADC Regional Environmental Education Programme (REEP) Network, Education for Strong Sustainability and Agency, Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa, and Regional Centres of Expertise (RCEs) through cluster and institution based training workshops and online initiatives
   ➢ To promote and implement the use of eLearning and mLearning in disadvantaged areas; even those where electricity and Internet Connectivity are lacking to enhance access to quality ESD materials in partnership with SADC REEP community of practice (EEASA, 2014, p. 2).

The EEASA GAP Commitment is part of alignment with UNESCO's call to organisations worldwide to fulfil the declaration from the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development which made a "call for urgent action to *further strengthen* and *scale up* Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)" (UNESCO, 2014, p. 1, our emphasis). Working in SADC and partnering with SADC-REEP in ESD aligns with responding to poverty through education (SADC, 2004). This is now well aligned in the Education 2030

Agenda which is formed from Sustainable Development Goal 4 - 'quality education' (UNDP, 2015; UNESCO, 2015b).

This paper explores the emergence, value and role of EEASA nodes in catalysing local action and contributing to EEASA's Global Action Programme (GAP) commitment to UNESCO, through the general questions: What role do EEASA nodes play in mobilising actors for scaling up Education of Sustainable Development (ESD) in the GAP, and why is this important for southern African local actions for sustainable development?

2.0 The socio-ecological context

EEASA operates in a region made up of 15 SADC Member States. SADC has a pre-dominantly agricultural economy and livelihood base, and is characterised by capability deprivation as poverty inherited from histories of colonisation and apartheid rule (SADC, 2004). The people who formed EEASA had the visionary aims to "promote interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary studies of the environment" among others (EEASA, 2001, p. 1). This implies going beyond 'educationists and environmentalists', and can be extrapolated to include the corporate sector specifically commerce and industry, including agriculture, extractive, manufacturing, transport and service industries as they have the biggest potential to impact negatively on the environment. These sectors have been featuring but in small and inconsistent numbers among EEASA membership. The separation that is indicated by this level of engagement can polarise and dualise the "environmentalists" versus the "non-environmentalists". In reality all individuals and corporates are expected to be agentive environmental and sustainability actors and educators if planet earth is to flourish with happy, prosperous, moral and socially-just people (Sen, 2010; Tikly and Barret, 2013). This calls for a dialectical approach that brings people to work and learn together for the common good rather than to compete for skewed interests or advance hegemony (Bhaskar, 1993; UNESCO, 2015).

Some existing national EE networks have evolved into EEASA nodes smoothly such as the Botswana and Namibia EE Networks and Swaziland RCE while others have failed mainly because they were hardly functional as networks and / or their coordinators lacked agency.

2.1 The socio-ecological issues

Often environmental issues are conceptualised from their manifestation (symptomatic) rather than from their real causes (causality) because of lack of conceptual depth required in such complexity. Depending on diverse cultural practices and world views there can be a multiplicity of interpretations of a problem issue and its generative mechanisms in laminated systems (Archer, 1998; 2015; Bhaskar, 1993), and in their recent socio-ecological applications in SADC (Price and Lotz-Sisitka, 2016). This reality justifies the need to seek solutions jointly. Meaningful, intentional and purposeful networking of diverse actors which are alluded to in Section 3.1 becomes a critical activity. EEASA aims to "act as a responsible body for consultation and "provide opportunities for the exchange of ideas and opinions on environmental education in Southern Africa" (EEASA, 2001, p. 1). In practice the realisation (or lack) of these intentions through networking activities, is illustrated in the temporal domain of EEASA (Irwin, 2007). EEASA has been a resilient network simply because of its networking capabilities.

Collaborative networked lenses in EEASA have the capability to connect environment with the economic, social and political dimensions of sustainability. They also benefit from developing citizenry with "openness to virtue-based moral/political perspectives" (Barry, 2006, p. 22). What this means is that diverse perspectives will emerge from networked activities, which may be convergent or divergent. These multiple voices help to map the actors' aspirations and motives with respect to the sustainability problems faced, and thus expand into joint solution-building. This includes listening to the disadvantaged and often historically-marginalised rural community voices and enhancing livelihoods capabilities (HSRC [Human Sciences Research Council], 2005).

An example is found in the South African context of good and enabling policies and legislation where the White paper on Foreign Policy (RSA, 2011) states that:

> South Africa … embraces the concept of Ubuntu as a way of defining who we are and how we relate to others. … This philosophy translates into an approach to international relations that respects all nations, peoples, and cultures. It recognises that it is in our national interest to promote and support the positive development of others.

A conventional network is a collection of interconnected nodes or hubs depending on the strengths of attachment of the persons involved (Babarasi and Bonabeau, 2003). Wenger-Trayner, O'Creevy, Hutchinson, Kubiak, and Wenger-Trayner (2014) view well established networks as communities of practice whose members are bound by a common domain, meet regularly to learn together to improve their practice, and incorporate new members through and expert-centred legitimate peripheral participation. Engeström and Sannino (2010) view networks as boundary-crossing activity systems representing the actors within their organisations and interacting with other actors' activity systems. The latter view recognises explicitly the life and energy in networks, and their potential to catalyse and expand collaborative learning, and builds on the weaknesses of communities of practice (Engeström, 2007).

3.0 Methodology and theoretical lens

This paper was developed using a generative case study methodology and a capabilities lens (Sen, 2004) for analysis. The capability approach has been defined as "a broad normative framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual well-being and social arrangements, the design of policies, and proposals about social change in society" (Robeyns, 2005, p. 94). This approach was selected because it focusses on what people are able to do, as ESD scaling in southern African EEASA nodes is a networked 'social arrangement' that entails people's valued doings and beings, which are closely connected to livelihoods. This approach places an importance on the freedoms that people are able to have to achieve well-being. These freedoms are understood as people's capabilities. It is also important because the realisation of outcomes (also called functionings) is based on deliberate practical choices people make, i.e. having capability is a choice "to achieve outcomes that they value and have reason to value" (Sen, 2001, p. 291). Hence capabilities are the real opportunities that people have to do and to be what they value, and are converted to functionings by various personal, social and environmental factors (Robeyns, 2005).

A number of relevant cases were identified at regional, national and local levels using initially anecdotal experience, and then through consultation with network representatives. Document analysis also provided empirical evidence, using EEASA node reports and

National Environmental Education Network representatives' reports. Network representatives were engaged with in focus group discussions at the 32nd EEASA conference in Windhoek, Namibia in 2014 (approx. 20 people from 9 countries) and at the 33rd EEASA conference in Matsapha, Swaziland in 2015 (15 participants from 8 countries) to tell their stories. The following cluster of five key questions was then sent out as a questionnaire to nine EEASA node members in Botswana, Namibia and the Seychelles of which five responses were returned. Three members were purposively selected from each EEASA node based on the criteria of EEASA node membership but varying professional work engagements in the areas of: a) University or College lecturer or School teacher; b) Non-governmental organisation; and c) Government employee connected to environmental education or education for sustainable development function.

Sub-questions:

i.   A) What is working well in your EEASA node? B) Why?

ii.   C) What is not working / has not worked well? D) Why?

iii. E) What is / was the turning point (AHA! moment)? F) Why?

iv.   G) What lessons have you learnt which should be enhanced and those that should be avoided in your EEASA node and H) do you feel the positive ones can be shared and scaled out into other networks? (YES/No)

v.   I) What modes of communication and engagement do you use in your EEASA node and J) how effectively do they work for you?

4.0 IDENTIFYING AND EXPLORING THE ISSUES FOR SCALING AND ROLE OF EEASA NODES

The fundamental issues for scaling ESD through EEASA nodes are perhaps identifying the issues for environmental and sustainability education scaling actions, the role and significance of EEASA nodes and the actors to lead and carry out the actions. These are evident in the articles of association of EEASA namely the constitution (EEASA, 2001) and EEASA Conference Guidelines (EEASA, 2004), in the EEASA GAP Commitment (EEASA, 2014, see plate 1) and in the activities of the EEASA nodes. It is from the intentions and aspirations

expressed in these policy and operational documents and activities that the research questions were formulated.

The Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa re-affirms its commitment to Education for Sustainable Development implementation beyond 2014. The following are our commitment and contributions to the Global Action Plan

1. Advancing policy ...

2. Integrating sustainability practices into education and training environments (whole-institution approaches)
To support incorporation of SD/ESD in formal, non-formal and informal sectors through learning support material such as the bulletin and journal, networking in ESD communities of practice, and capacity development in partnership with the SADC Regional Environmental Education Programme (REEP).

3. Increasing the capacity of educators and trainers
To encourage re-orientation of teacher education programmes in southern Africa in partnership with the SADC Mainstreaming Environment and Sustainability in African Universities (MESA) chairs, the SADC ESD Teacher Education Network, the SADC REEP Network, ESSA, WESSA, and RCEs through cluster and institution based training workshops and online initiatives
To promote and implement the use of eLearning and mLearning in disadvantaged areas; even those where electricity and Internet Connectivity are lacking to enhance access to quality ESD materials in partnership with SADC REEP community of practice

4. Empowering and mobilizing youth
To strengthen youth involvement and participation in planning for EEASA annual conferences through their institutions, organisations and networks to enhance ESD. EEASA would support youth participation through debates, use of social media, projects etc.
To support national youth initiatives/activities (e.g. conferences/workshops/projects) in southern Africa
To strengthen youth learning and participation in SD through mLearning, eLearning and social media in formal and informal education including TVET.

5. Encouraging local communities and municipal authorities to develop community-based ESD programmes
To encourage public awareness and understanding of ESD through the media, conferences, sustainability commons and workshops. Specific support would include encouraging local authorities to develop community based ESD programmes in partnership with EEASA in respective countries.
To engage local communities with the support of partners to build knowledge, capacity and networks to promote leadership and increase momentum for social change.
To engage with the corporate sector in integrating and supporting ESD

Plate 1 An extract from EEASA's GAP Commitments (EEASA, 2014)

The contents of the EEASA GAP commitments provide a nearly comprehensive list of EEASA's aspirations for environmental and sustainability education during and beyond the Global Action Programme period. They also indicate that on one hand scaling-up actions have been taking place to some extent as implied in for example "to **strengthen** youth involvement..." (GAP Commitment item 4 in plate 1, our emphasis), and formation or enhancing partnerships for example "to encourage reorientation of teacher education ... in **partnership** with the SADC Mainstreaming Environment and Sustainability in African Universities (MESA) Chairs" (GAP Commitment item 3 in plate 1, our emphasis). On the other hand there is need to put effort in other key areas e.g. "**to engage** with corporate sector" (GAP Commitment item 5 in plate 1, our emphasis). The emphases above provide expressions implying scaling of existing actions in different dimensions, either horizontal (widening scope e.g. starting different engagements) or vertical (deepening e.g. strengthening involvement, connections or partnerships).

Below are the specific findings from this study and their analyses.

4.1 Finding 1: The role of EEASA nodes in mobilising actors for scaling up Education of Sustainable Development (ESD) in the GAP, and its importance for southern African local actions for sustainable development

All five respondents indicated that the role of EEASA nodes was to recruit new members and work with existing members to organise local and country-based ESD activities regularly in between EEASA regional conferences. "The role of nodes ... is to regularly update members in each country on EEASA activities and assist in maintaining regular contact with the Secretariat. Nodes facilitate information-sharing and access to publications" (Respondent 1 Botswana, personal communication, March 23, 2016). Publications are also planned for in EEASA nodes articles of association such as the responsibility of "paper presentation workshops prepared for and abstracts edited" (NEEASA, 2013, p.1).

It can be deduced that scaling up is understood to entail expansion of the membership base and to enhance environmental and sustainability education communication and actions, as explained by Respondent 2 Botswana (personal communication, March 23, 2016).

> The EEASA node is a sub-committee of the National Environment Education Committee which oversees the implementation of the National Environmental Education Strategy and Action Plan (NEESAP). At the national environmental education conference last year in August it was agreed that NEESAP is the vehicle to implement ESD

The role of EEASA nodes was also described as to "organize local activities (or country based activities), recruit new members and trace former members, assist in encouraging members to contribute articles to the EEASA publications" (Respondent 1 Botswana, personal communication, March 23, 2016) as a way to make EEASA an active network in promoting sustainable development throughout the yearly cycle and from conference to conference. Publications are a key mechanism for enabling networking exchange and sharing

of sustainability actions in EEASA. However for these to happen, there is need for local ESD activities to be implemented and monitored in sustainable and scalable ways.

The Botswana EEASA node has been very successful in supporting implementation of 'change projects' in organisations through deploying multi-sectoral monitoring and evaluation teams to the change-project sites. Change projects can be described from a SADC REEP - EEASA collaborative capacity-building context as "reflexive action-oriented interventions through which course participants institutionalise and externalise new knowledge and practices with the aid of co-workers and supervisors" (Mukute and Pesanayi, 2014, p. 63). This had the effect of mobilising principals of schools, teacher education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges (also called Brigades in Botswana), and heads of non-governmental organisations where change projects were taking place to participate more fully in ESD activities. When examining ESD scaling actions agency is an essential indicator in monitoring and evaluation of capabilities and barriers to sustainable livelihoods.

Analysis of reports and questionnaire responses showed that the meaning of ESD scaling actions meant a number of things such as replication of best practices, increasing membership, strengthening implementation and institutionalisation of ESD actions at national level, quality assurance of ESD actions and reporting, monitoring and evaluation and strengthening of national networks. These meanings were further explored in the analysis of findings from the sub-questions of this study.

4.2 Finding 2: what is working well and why?

All five respondents indicated that national annual conferences were working well regarding bringing people from different professional and practitioner contexts, and from different places in the country. The outcomes valued most were the sharing of experiences and information, coordination of ESD activities and providing opportunities for upcoming researchers to make maiden presentations and get constructive feedback, "EEASA node is responsible for organising the pre- EEASA workshop to assist those presenting papers to have a dry run" (Respondent 2 Botswana, personal communication, March 23, 2016). "For

instance in Namibia, there are annual conferences that bring EEASA members, partners and affiliates together on education for sustainable development agenda. In Botswana, pre-EEASA workshops are held on an annual basis. These activities are sharing forums on EE and ESD activities that contribute to EEASA objectives and GAP priority areas", (Respondent 2 Botswana, personal communication, March 23, 2016). This was reiterated by another member of the same EEASA node:

> In the context of Botswana, the node has been so important in the sense that it brings together the actors of ESD through participation in pre-EEASA conference workshops and the conference itself. This however does not mean the focus is on EEASA conference only; the node also acts as a mentoring platform to actors who from time to time seek guidance on how to implement their ESD projects (Respondent 4 Botswana, personal communication, March 26, 2016).

Another aspect that was identified as working well is the use of information and communications technologies to facilitate networking, which was expressed as follows for NEEN "...a well functional network using technology. Constructive communication, exchange of ideas and resources are well established" (Respondent 3 Namibia, personal communication, March 26, 2016).

The influential capabilities of EEASA node committee members and their connections was also found to be working well, where these members were able to convert capabilities into functionings i.e. "beings and doings" as subject of capabilities (Sen, 1992) for environmental and sustainability education actions. Here it was found that "most people use them (committee members) as facilitators in their own activities aimed at raising awareness and... proposal writing" (Respondent 4 Botswana, personal communication, March 26, 2016). Mentoring can be added to the conversion factors. EEASA nodes thus develop personal and collective agency, a virtue which depends on the personal ability to choose the functionings one values, such as pursuing the goal of abstinence from meat-eating as a cultural value with no regard for physical well-being, or as an environmental health value to reduce risk of cancer or carbon emissions with achievement judged in consideration of the entire goals (Sen, 1992).

Another capability developed in EEASA nodes was 'learning-as-connections' in their potential to relate meaning-making, context and concept (Lotz-Sisitka, 2012) through demonstration and dialogue around transformative change projects and lessons. This was expressed as "sharing of best practices in different regions of the country, and linking different line ministries, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and individuals together" (Respondent 4 Botswana, personal communication, , March 26, 2016) with such outcomes such as Ministry of Environment and Tourism sponsoring teachers (Ministry of Education employees) through funding and logistical support to EEASA conferences. The partnership between the SADC-REEP and EEASA was found to be working well through capacity development, mentoring and providing official regional legitimacy to local actions. In these cases the conversion factor was found to be the facilitation and nurturing of such connections.

EEASA nodes are effective at mobilisation. They do this by enabling effective and efficient sharing of ESD information, recruitment of new members to EEASA activities and reviving of old members since the structure keeps them regularly informed and motivated through various media including electronic mail and Facebook group. Mobilisation also includes attracting government support which provides funding sustainability.

3.3 Finding 3: What is not working well and why?

Among the things that were not working well was the perceived failure of replication of the EEASA best practices in all EEASA nodes such as poor quantity of contributions to the EEASA publications which affects the annual output that has been set by the organization. This was attributed to lack of capacity, confidence or commitment from members to write articles for publications. Lack of enabling structures was believed to be generating this weakness.

Coordination of some activities within the countries was also recognised as not working well, in particular "exchange of information on projects is not yet well coordinated" (Respondent 3 Namibia, personal communication, March 26, 2016). Projects are executed in isolation, especially those in the regions" and this was attributed to diverse and uncoordinated funding streams and sources and their demands whereby "sponsors are not

exchanging data regarding the funded projects. It is hard sometimes to know the existence of some important projects" (*ibid*). This weakness was supported by reports from Botswana EEASA node of poor reporting of achievements, and also the restricted capability of EEASA node committee members to meet regularly due to work functions. Poor coordination and lack of information sharing also gave an impression of stagnation in the implementation of projects despite the availability of communication tools.

The negative effects of the world financial recession were identified as limiting the work of EEASA nodes. "Recently there is a constraint on financial resources and this has negatively affected the network activities. This comes about with the change in governance", (Respondent 5 Namibia, personal communication, March 28, 2016).

3.4 Finding 4: What is/was the turning point for EEASA node activity (AHA! moment) and why?

A number of turning points catalysing EEASA node environmental and sustainability education activities were identified of which one was more engaged youth participation in EEASA activities. This was evidenced by the making of resolutions and proposed ESD projects by youths at their parallel conference during the Swaziland EEASA conference because "they were properly mobilized and supported for the process" (Respondent 1 Botswana, personal communication, March 23, 2016). The other evidence for increased youth engagement and participation in EEASA activities was increased youth representation in the Botswana EEASA node from two to seven in the period 2014 to 2015 with more youth environmental and sustainability education projects. "One of these (university) students has been chosen to participate at the first ever Wildlife Youth Forum to be held in South Africa in September 2016, only 20 young persons were picked all over Southern Africa" (Respondent 4 Botswana, personal communication, March 26, 2016).

Another turning point was identified as the alignment of the next (2016) EEASA conference to address GAP priority areas. This was seen as contributing to EEASA's GAP commitment in terms of EEASA members implementing some of the commitments and gearing to report back their environmental and sustainability education activities at the 34th EEASA conference

in October 2016. This momentum is attributed to the democratic governance and communication processes within EEASA that see the EEASA Council appeals being taken up by members in this case to align with current developments within the global GAP commitments processes.

The sharing of information during EEASA node national workshops/conferences was considered a turning point due to the learning of different environmental and sustainability education initiatives already implemented and/or in implementation around the country. "During these moments, we realise that stakeholders in EE are really working hard and push the ESD GAP agenda" (Respondent 3 Namibia, personal communication, March 26, 2016).

The inter-sectoral cooperation between the education and environment sectors was considered a key turning point that generated environmental and sustainability education agency. This was manifested through the good working relationship of two major coordinating ministries (Education and Environment) with an interest such as sponsoring of teachers by the Environment Ministries to attend EEASA conferences, and co-hosting the former. Related to the government leadership above is the spread of EASA node activity at local / regional levels attributed to leadership of the EEASA node networks which in Namibia adopted the regional representation in the NEEN committee where all 14 regions of the country are represented. According to Respondent 5 Namibia (personal communication, March 28, 2016) "each region established a regional forum which then has representatives for the NEEN executive. This was a unique leadership style that was adopted in 2015".

3.5 Finding 5: Lessons learnt and potential for sharing and scaling out into other networks exist

It was learnt that a key driver of local level environmental and sustainability education action is generated by commitment and passion of agentive individuals with and motivating others. The Namibia and Botswana cases were cited as case examples which have local support such as the one provided by the National EE Network and National EE Committee respectively considered necessary for EEASA node functionality. Affiliation to a well-

established organisation or ministry was deemed important for sustainability of EEASA nodes.

EEASA nodes indicated that they needed to share more of the work they are doing through publications, Facebook and during conference sessions. The need for mobilizing for financial support and budgeting to support the nodes and Node portfolio to visit each EEASA node annual or frequently was considered as necessary to assist in facilitating EEASA activities that contribute to its GAP commitment and at achieving EEASA objectives. Duplication and resource wastage was also identified as resulting from poor communication among stakeholders implementing projects. The lesson was to improve coordination and communication. The Khomas-Erongo Regional Centre of Expertise in Namibia provided a good case to learn from through its resolution to develop a technology solution where all stakeholders will be feeding data on their projects and the progress, which is now being implemented.

Effective teamwork was found to close some gaps in coordination over long distances and to avoid clash of activities. 'Effective' here means sharing both positives and negatives, coordination by passionate members, and deliberation of meanings emanating from sharing local ESD news and relevant events and activities. From the Namibia case it was found that team members in the EEASA node executive committee were more committed when they volunteered for nomination driven by passion rather than when they were nominated for election by third parties.

Formative monitoring and evaluation of ESD change projects was found to be a key driver generating individual professional growth, relational agency and transformative change. Without it many practitioners would be working in isolation and their efforts would remain undeveloped to their full potential and remain uncoordinated. In addition scaling up of best practices would be hampered. The emancipatory nature of sustained and engaged professional mentoring converted freedoms among practitioners and those of the people they worked with into functionings for the common good, such as modelling best practices in used motor oil disposal in Botswana.

3.6 Finding 6: Modes of communication and engagement and their impact

Face-to-face engagement during conferences was identified as the most effective mode of communication, but needed follow-ups as implementation of resolutions made is a slow process. In Namibia the EEASA node demonstrated a novel way of communication and engagement with members using listserv, a Google Group tool for effective distribution of electronic mails and resources. While this provides effective information sharing, it is however challenged by management by volunteers who have other work commitments elsewhere. Other modes of communication used in EEASA nodes were the use of telephone, email, WhatsApp and Facebook groups, of which for node committee members phone, email and WhatsApp were found more effective. With the rest of the members, Facebook and email proved to be more effective.

5.0 STORIES AND NARRATIVES OF SUCCESSFUL NETWORKING AND LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION ACTIONS

The stories narrated in this section are intended to demonstrate that it is possible to form and maintain EEASA nodes, using locally available resources and networks. They all provide key success factors for meaningful and productive networking. They are designed to inspire but to also share some lessons learnt, based on positive and negative experiences. These stories need to be reviewed in future EEASA node workshops by affording story-tellers short time slots to tell their story from experience or as testimonies, with plenary discussion of each, and then lessons learnt collated. This process was not completed in the 2014 EEASA conference hence it was taken forward in the 2015 conference and through a subsequent questionnaire investigation.

5.1 The NEEN Story from Namibia

Environmental education (EE) networking in Namibia is almost synonymous with the Namibia Environmental Education Network (NEEN), currently one of the most vibrant, inclusive, engaging and productive national EE networks in the SADC region. Namibia Environmental Education Network was formed in June 1995 through registration as an independent non-profit organisation.

The life of NEEN has not always been smooth. In 2007 NEEN became inactive but was revived in 2009 with consolidation 2010 through a national EE conference in collaboration with the SADC REEP. Box 1 illustrates this emergence.

Since then the network has not looked back. NEEN as it is known today can in many ways be linked to the genesis of the SADC Regional Environmental Education Programme (SADC REEP). Namibia hosted the first regional workshop for environmental education practitioners to assess the state of environmental education and build

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BOX 1 Communiqué on Resuscitation of Namibia Environmental Education Network and ESD scaling up

From: neen_friends@googlegroups.com [mailto:neen_friends@googlegroups.com] On Behalf Of Martina Namutenya - Wilderness Safaris Namibia
Sent: 04 January 2010 10:56 AM
To: neen_friends@googlegroups.com
Subject: [neen_friends Group] Namibian Environmental Education Certificate Course

Dear neen friends

Compliments for the year. Towards the end of last year we marked yet another significant event in the history of EE in Namibia, by reviving our EE network in Namibia. We currently have many EE practitioners in Namibia compared to 7-8 years ago.

As we are at the dawn of 2010, we need to explore possibilities and strengthen ties with relevant parties and individuals to take this further and make sure that NEEN aims and objectives reach the grassroots levels, even where internet is not heard of.

It is against this background, that I encourage NEEN friends to create awareness about Namibian Environmental Education Certificate Course that has been running since its inception in 2002. The course is currently administered by Polytechnic of Namibia. It forms a platform for creating Environmental Education awareness. As many of you are aware, it is adapted from the SADC REEP EE Course. Information about the

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capacity of environmental educators in SADC in 1994. NEEN coordinated the multi-stakeholder development of the national EE Policy of Namibia from 1991 to 2004, and the national ESD strategy development which was completed in 2013, with a mandate from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET).

The NEEN is sustained by a number of factors at structural and practice levels. These include:

- a multi-stakeholder membership made up of government ministries, NGOs, community-based organizations, private sector and interested individuals (Government of Namibia. MET [Ministry of Environment and Tourism], 2010)

- support from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism through state and civil-society partnerships,

- a democratic governance structure made up of an elected national committee and regional level coordinators,

- a vibrant and active Google groups network, and

- annual conferences.

5.2 The Botswana EE Committee (BEEC) Story and cultivation of NEEASA

Networking in Botswana has been coordinated by the Botswana Environmental Education Committee which is chaired by the Department of Environment, and has members from Department of Education, NGO, Universities among others. In 2013 Botswana formed the National Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa to coordinate local conferences which serve as platforms to afford new presenters the opportunity to present and share their work and also to try test out their stage confidence. These national conferences have been very instrumental in ensuring and enhancing EE / ESD networking in Botswana, and bringing stronger input to the regional EEASA forum. Quality of presentations by teachers and their learners, and other presenters from government and civil society provide evidence for this rich networking. Botswana EE Committee's work with environmental education has produced some very good change projects such as improved oil disposal in motor mechanics training in the Brigades (Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges) which have been showcased through the EEASA node.

The Botswana EEASA node organised and deployed an inter-sectoral monitoring and evaluation committee to mentor and nurture environmental and sustainability education change projects. This committee helped to engage leaders of institutions to fully participate in, monitor and institutionalise ESD processes.

5.3 The SADC REEP Story

The Southern African Development Community - Regional Environmental Education Programme (SADC-REEP), is a project of SADC. Its overall objective is to enable

environmental and sustainability education practitioners in the SADC region to strengthen environmental education processes for equitable and sustainable environmental management choices through training, policy support, materials development, research and networking opportunities through networks and communities of practice.

The SADC REEP's strength lies in its National EE Network representative's forum which meets once per year, and the expertise which has developed out of its alumni. The distributed knowledge, skills and experiences can be tapped into by government and non-governmental initiatives and new programmes. The network is kept together by a database which is served by an 'EE newsflash' and also by EEASA conferences and publications. A strong relationship has historically existed between SADC REEP and EEASA. SADC REEP also supports other networks which share their capital at various levels with EEASA, and these include the Regional Centres of Expertise, the 'Mainstreaming Environment and Sustainability in African Universities' (MESA) network and the SADC Teacher Education Network for ESD among others. The SADC REEP has traditionally supported the publication of the EEASA Bulletin and Journal with targeted funding for over ten years. These publications are provided for in article 11.10 of the EEASA constitution "The Council will be responsible for the publication of the official Journal and Newsletter of the Association..." (EEASA, 2001, p. 5).

5.4 The cultivation of an EEASA node in the Seychelles and its achievements

Seychelles broke new ground when the environmental education practitioners formed the Environmental Education Association of Seychelles (EEAS) as EEASA node in 2013, registered as a non-governmental organisation. The Environmental Education Association of Seychelles has objectives of membership recruitment, capacity building and mobilisation of environmental education actors in the Seychelles. EEAS functions as an umbrella organization for a network of environmental educators and other individuals interested in EE, and comprises over 50 members. The mission of EEAS is to maximize the potential role that environmental educators can play to bring about a peaceful and sustainable future for Seychelles and the planet. Its objectives include promoting and supporting research in EE,

awareness and communication and sharing of best practices among environmental educators in Seychelles and abroad.

One of EEAS's first tasks was to implement a project under the Global Environmental Facility Small Grants Programme entitled "Knowledge and Best Practice Fair" which aims to meet the capacity building objective of the Small Grants Programme by enhancing and strengthening capacities of NGOs/Community-based organisations to engage in consultative processes, apply knowledge management to ensure information flows, implement convention guidelines, and monitor and evaluate environmental impacts and trends. It is an efficient mechanism to help the SGP grantees network and share experiences but also to help them consolidate their capacity to influence environmental and sustainability education policy development by participating in national events and showcasing their work to the public and to key influential decision makers.

According to the EEAS node's developmental and mentoring aspirations,

> ...the Seychelles is counting on the expertise of Namibia and Botswana to further strengthen the capacity of its EEASA node so that it better aligns with EEASA's recommendations. One of the challenges is to increase EEASA membership and to increase our participation in the annual conferences" (EEASA, 2015).

6.0 DISCUSSION

From the analysis of findings and narratives it can be seen that successful EEASA node networks have the ingredients of sustained and regular meetings, a common domain of interest in this case EE and ESD, willingness to share and communicate regularly, division of labour and teamwork. A committed and distributed leadership at national and local levels is a key mechanism for catalysing actions. There is also some diversity in the modus operandi of these networks, where physical meetings are complemented by information and communication technologies-enhanced collaboration as in the NEEN case which broadcasts local and national activities, shares opportunities for capacity building and professional development, and communicates important national environmental issues and newsflashes across its all-member Google-group network (see box 1). Experiences from functional EEASA nodes show that they provide a very important forum for environmental education

practitioners, and better still educators and other interested or connected parties to meet together, exchange and share good practices in environmental stewardship.

Pre-EEASA conference workshops and monitoring and evaluation actions by EEASA nodes were found to strengthen connections between diverse ESD change projects taking place in different organisations, between people in different professional / practitioner contexts, involving youth more and influencing policy. The following conversion factors catalyse EEASA node agency and functionality;

6.1.1 Personal commitment (motivation and encouragement of emerging members, exemplary leadership and volunteerism, and hosting of EEASA)

6.1.2 Partnerships (University / MESA Chair, Government – Department of Tourism and Environment, and National EE Coordination Committees)

6.1.3 Capability development

    6.1.3.1 Training and Educational change projects implementation, monitoring and review

    6.1.3.2 Peer review of conference papers

    6.1.3.3 Quality assurance: mentoring of pre-conference presentation of papers

    6.1.3.4 Professional rigor: "have a peer reviewed paper or you may not be released from your work place for the conference"

Some of the generative mechanisms enabling the above conversion factors to produce functionings are the institutional arrangements put in place. These include

> ...the **structures in place** that are supported locally. For instance in Namibia we have NEEN as a **local NGO affiliated to EEASA** and functioning as a node. In Botswana we have EEASA Botswana national sub-committee ...functioning as an EEASA node. It is **supported by the Government**. ...**constant contact with EEASA** makes the nodes more active throughout the year (Respondent 1 Botswana, personal communication, March 23, 2016, our emphasis).

The importance of this "solid organisational structure at national and regional levels" was also observed by an EEASA node member in another country (Respondent 3 Namibia, personal communication, March 26, 2016).

The cultivation and strengthening of EEASA nodes was identified as an important factor in the strengthening of EEASA as a body corporate. This is because the complexity of sustainability problems requires multi-level, multi-layered and multi-scalar work by many diverse actors. The following proposals were shared for cultivating and strengthening EEASA nodes:

- Working with Regional Centres of Expertise (RCEs) to connect with EEASA,
- Merging SADC REEP and EEASA databases and activities,
- Identifying key persons in countries that do not have an EEASA node and assist them in creating nodes in their countries,
- Develop capacity, competencies and capabilities for quality ESD actions and networking,
- Defining terms of reference for EEASA nodes,
- Decide on strategies that will enhance networking within and between nodes.

The EEASA nodes workshop of 2014 in Namibia helped to mobilise ideas for a common understanding of the roles of EEASA nodes and the types of activities that they should engage in. There was however not enough time to do this during this workshop at the 2014 EEASA conference. However, prior to this conference EEASA nodes in Botswana and Namibia had provided some good scalable practices. These include:

- National EE conferences organised by the EEASA nodes whose roles were to provide a forum for information sharing and peer learning, coaching and mentoring presentation skills, and selection and quality management of papers for sharing at the regional EEASA Conferences,
- Certified regionally-oriented national EE/ESD courses,
- Well-coordinated and promoted virtual networking,
- Regular sharing of information on activities and breakthroughs,
- Providing fora for sharing challenges and problems with aim of seeking solutions,

- Working regularly on issues to improve sustainability of practice for the common good.

At the 2015 EEASA Conference the EEASA nodes conducted a follow-up roundtable meeting where the EEASA President provided information and a charge as follows;

> Following the Nagoya conference, EEASA was invited (by UNESCO) to be a key partner for the third priority which is capacity building for educators and trainers. Our biggest challenge now is to see how the nodes can help EEASA as an organization to implement and report on this priority area number 3. What is it that we are doing and what can we scale up? Where there is nothing, we have to do something and where there is something already happening, we have to scale up our activities. The nodes will report nationally amongst its members, regionally to other nodes as well as to EEASA and EEASA will report those best practices to UNESCO (personal communication, October 23, 2015).

7.0 CONCLUSION

Reports from EEASA nodes and input from the EEASA nodes meetings or roundtables in2014 and 2015 provided a better understanding of what works where EEASA nodes are concerned and what kind of support other countries need in order to establish nodes. Key among what is working well and scalable in EEASA through its nodes are the formation or more EEASA nodes at local and national levels in other countries or local areas, implementation, institutionalisation and ownership of environmental and sustainability education projects/programmes, and national conferences. It was also established that nodes can promote the objectives of the EEASA organisation and have a great potential to contribute more in terms of capacity building, mentoring of upcoming environmental and sustainability education researchers and promotion and showcasing of educational quality. In particular nodes can provide opportunities for nurturing the budding generation of members to present and improve papers for conferences and to write for publication in the EEASA bulletin and the Southern African Journal of Environmental Education. Alignment with international environmental and sustainability education policy and implementation and sharing of locally-relevant projects and programmes is a key factor generating EEASA momentum through nodes and has potential for scaling up.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the discussion of findings from the study leading to this paper, and are directed to the general EEASA membership and council.

Recommendation 1: It is recommended that EEASA consider developing terms of reference to guide the formation and operation of EEASA nodes, and also ensure the provision of EEASA nodes in the EEASA constitution. The Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa nodes also need to document their stories of change and share them with the EEASA membership at every EEASA conference and also through publication in the EEASA Bulletin. The partnership between EEASA and SADC REEP needs to be continuously strengthened and developed to ensure scaling of good practices, engagement of more sectors especially business, industry and technology, and linkage to East Africa and the rest of Africa. The partnership should also facilitate or enhance linkage between EEASA and the United Nations University RCEs. EEASA nodes also need to find time within the EEASA conferences to deliberate on their work, coordinate on joint activities, and plan funding of activities. Such meetings will benefit from including National Environmental Education Network representatives. In addition, EEASA nodes have the potential to provide an anchor for emerging or needed civil society fora in rural and urban areas. Such networks can form or catalyse sustainability commons such as girl-friendly sanitation facilities in areas where conventional facilities do not exist, local seed banks, local community lifelong learning centres, and community-based youth and elderly support centres. Such centres and fora can also guard against appropriation of indigenous intellectual commons and the promotion of indigenous knowledge, decolonising cross-epistemic learning, and green skills development.

Recommendation 2: In addition we recommend the establishment of five EEASA working groups whose activities can be realised at local national and trigonal levels through EEASA nodes, on the themes of:

- ✓ Teacher Education, Formal Education and Youth Development,
- ✓ Sustainable Agricultural and Water Education and Community-based expansive social learning for sustainable rural livelihoods,
- ✓ Technical and Vocational Education, Green Skills, Sustainable Business and Entrepreneurship Education and Workplace-based learning,

- ✓ Water and sanitation education, built environment for sustainable urban and rural development,
- ✓ Information and communication technologies-enhanced environmental and sustainability education (e-learning).

It is proposed that each working group have research, monitoring and evaluation-as-learning, and documentation functions, and that it be accountable to the EEASA membership through the EEASA Council and its line portfolios where applicable.

These themes are informed by the GAP implementation plan (UNESCO, 2015a), Africa 2063 Agenda (African Union, 2013), the Sustainable Development Goals (UNDP, 2015), the Africa EE&T Action Plan (UNEP/AMCEN, 2016) and the Education 2030 agenda (UNESCO, 2015b).

Recommendation 3: We further recommend that EEASA nodes be provided for in the EEASA constitution to ensure legitimacy and agency through an amendment in accordance with articles 13.2 and 16.2 of the constitution (EEASA, 2001, pp. 6, 7):

> 13.2 Notice of the date, time and place of the Annual General Meeting and the agenda thereof will be despatched to all members at least 60 days before the date of the meeting.
> 16.2 Any proposal to amend or add to this Constitution will be in writing and will be signed by both the proposer and seconder.

The proposed amendment will be based on the value given to EEASA nodes by the EEASA Membership and Council, and the three countries where nodes are distinctly operational as such namely Botswana, Namibia and the Seychelles, and those countries that have expressed an aspiration to start an EEASA node such as South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe (EEASA, 2015).

Recommendation 4: We also recommend that EEASA nodes facilitate the development of publication-quality papers and that they support members to publish in the Southern African Journal of Environmental Education and other peer-reviewed publications.

Recommendation 5: It is recommended that members of EEASA nodes and other working environmental and sustainability education networks aligned to EEASA continue to share their success stories through narration, testimonies, demonstrations, poster, academic papers and video. In addition policy-practice dialogues bringing policy/decision makers and practitioners together can showcase what works well and inform all parties on future policy priorities.

Recommendation 6: In the light of the environmental sustainability work that EEASA nodes are doing in liaison with MESA Chairs and with SADC (whose major sustainability issues is poverty eradication through food security), and the affinity that has developed with East African ESD work, it is further recommended respectively that

a) EEASA approaches the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to get into a Memorandum of Understanding to enable EEASA work to be reported through UNEP channels and thus scale up the work of EEASA and its nodes,

b) EEASA seeks network membership with organisations advancing non-hegemonic livelihoods development such as Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa,

c) EEASA approaches the East Africa education for environment and sustainability networks to establish more synergistic continental collaboration.

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