

# *Education for Sustainable Development: The Impact of an Out-door Program on Student Teachers*

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**ABSTRACT** *The study used an outdoor program for promoting Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in primary education and investigated the extent to which primary student teachers were prepared to deal with ESD. It also investigated the impact of an outdoor program on primary student teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards sustainable issues, and on their personal responsibility and willingness to be involved in ESD. The present study was part of a larger multifaceted project that attempted to provide an example for training primary student teachers in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Fifteen primary student teachers from a university participated in a training program. The program was based on an open-air photo exhibition titled "The earth from above" that focused on issues of sustainable development. Individual interviews were conducted with the participants, at the end of the program, for data collection. Evidence from the interview analysis indicates that student teachers' involvement in the project provided them with specific teaching strategies, and increased their competence and self-efficacy to be involved in ESD. The program also offered them the opportunity to identify the interconnections of environmental issues, and their social, economic and political dimensions. Student teachers realized through their active participation in the planning and teaching process how crucial is their role in cultivating environmentally literate citizens.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Education for sustainable development, higher education, outdoor learning, training program*

## **Introduction**

The complexity of environmental issues and the worldwide recognition that they constitute social, economic, and political problems contribute to the foundation of Sustainable Development (SD) as the cornerstone for confronting the environmental degradation and provide guidelines for sustainable ways of living. There also exists a consensus that "education is the driving force for the change needed" (UNESCO, 2004, p. 49) and that Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) should be infused to all educational levels as a mean for a "systemic understanding of the relation between learning, society, and sustainability" (Sterling, 2002, p. 29).

The interconnected issues of globalisation, poverty alleviation, social justice, democracy, human rights, peace, and environmental protection require inclusive partnerships to create a global learning environment. Education should be the vehicle that will help learners to reconnect with the reality of their world and redesign their actions in order to correspond to the critical challenges of Sustaina-

