



Ushirika wa Maendeleo ya Elimu Barani Afrika  
الرابطة لأجل تطوير التربية في إفريقيا  
Association for the Development of Education in Africa  
Association pour le développement de l'éducation en Afrique  
Associação para o Desenvolvimento da Educação em África

**Triennale on Education and Training in Africa  
(Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, February 12-17, 2012)**

**Promoting critical knowledge, skills and  
qualifications for sustainable development in  
Africa: How to design and implement an effective  
response by education and training systems**

**Sub-theme 1**

**Common core skills for lifelong  
learning and sustainable  
development in Africa**

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**Systemic Approach to Environmental Literacy:  
*Towards a sustainable Africa***

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**ABSTRACT**

**Working Document**

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**DOC 1.4.06**

## 1. ABSTRACT

1. The problems escalating in the global environment prompt questioning of our way of living and being. Simultaneously we are incrementally aware that we need innovative strategies and resources to cope with the challenges mooted by our unbridled consumerism and the several layers of competitiveness that dictate our lives. To realize and make others realize the harmful effects of our negative attitudes to Nature and to make our living sustainable, appropriate mechanisms are required. While the general discourse is around sustainable development, Godin (2006) warns that ‘sustainability’ may be a buzzword. Is sustainability true to its purported meaning? How to make initiatives sustainable so that they bring in results and so that we can replicate them with equal efficiency? The positive and encouraging feedback gained from an earlier effort that was carried out at the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit, Mauritius was reappraised and consolidated in the present study.
2. Consequentially, we deepened our literature review to understand why environmental education efforts have not yielded expected results. An effort to recognise why several proposed cures were not working to ‘fix’ the environment problem, highlighted the widening disconnect between the human being and the environment. This indicated that the human being’s current relationship with the environment was inadequate. To reduce the disconnect, or transactional distance between the human being and his/her surrounding, an appropriate pedagogy was required. In response, we proposed the concept of environmental literacy with its inherent inclusiveness as opposed to the more elitist environmental education.
3. As an overview, this study brings to the community of knowledge a framework for the development of environmental literacy policy and program-planning within a matrix that links quality and results-oriented pedagogy to institutional and national policy. To demonstrate its usefulness, we have developed a 150-hour module to train committed teachers into environmental activists. Our innovative approach aims at enhancing ‘sustainability’ in development.