

The Earth Charter and Education for Social Change

The Paulo Freire Institute, BRAZIL

Background

The Paulo Freire Institute (PFI), a non profit civil association based in Brazil, is an international network of persons and institutions with members in 24 countries. Continuing the legacy of Paulo Freire, one of the twentieth century's most influential thinkers on education, the Institute develops new practices in the fields of education, culture and communication toward a more democratic and socially just society.

As a participant in the development process of the Earth Charter since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, the PFI recognizes the Earth Charter's potential as a powerful tool to inspire positive change in individuals and communities.



An event organized by the PFI on Education and the Earth Charter, August 1999

Aim

The PFI aims to use the Earth Charter as an important educational framework in its projects and approach to education. As a focal point of

the Initiative in Brazil, PFI also helps to stimulate other groups to work with the Earth Charter in Brazil.

Participants

The main participants of the PFI's work with the Earth Charter are the educators, students, and communities they work with, mainly in Brazil, but also internationally.



Panel on Paulo Freire Institute by SGI

Timeframe

As mentioned, the PFI was one of the early participants in the Earth Charter movement, as far back as 1992, when the idea of drafting the Charter was being discussed. Throughout the 1990's, they were active in the Earth Charter consultation process, and since the Charter's launch in 2000, the PFI has been actively implementing the Charter.

Description

Method: Eco-pedagogy

In 1999, the PFI organized the first international symposium to explore the Earth Charter from the perspective of education. This was the first step in a PFI-coordinated movement to develop a pedagogy based on the principles and values of the Charter—a Pedagogy of the Earth. It has since published a book on eco-pedagogy (inspired by the Earth Charter) and formed a network of educators interested in putting into practice the Earth Charter's values and principles.

Eco-pedagogy is an appropriate pedagogy for education in the world that is globalised. Urban life separates the human being from nature. Eco-pedagogy, or pedagogy of the Earth, searches to recover this relation. The fundamental theme of eco-pedagogy is the future. Its goal is to empower people and develop globally-conscious citizens. It is also a pedagogy of affection, that starts from a declaration of love to the planet, and continues with a personal engagement to take care of the planet with tenderness.

"Eco-pedagogy is a pedagogy of affection, that starts from a declaration of love to the planet, and continues with a personal engagement to take care of the planet with tenderness."

Moacir Gadotti

Activities: Selected examples

- a) While continuing to advance the ideas and philosophy of eco-pedagogy, the PFI is using the Earth Charter as a central theme in its social education programs. In the "JOVemPAZ" project (Youth Peace Project), social educators are trained to generate school and community activities that focus on the development of a culture of peace and sustainability. The Earth Charter serves as a key element in this training, to encourage reflection on how a simpler lifestyle can contribute to social change and the common good. In 2002- 2003, over 200 educators were trained through this project in three regions of Sao Paulo. The project is seeking to be extended and has received funding from private sources.



Participants of project JOVemPAZ

- b) With the support of the PFI, Sao Paulo City (2001-2004) used the Earth Charter to train education leaders dedicated to developing educational, cultural, sport, and leisure activities. They were trained on the principles of the culture of peace and sustainability so that they could incorporate them in their educational projects and in their decision-making. The Earth Charter was utilized as an educational tool during this process.

- c) The Citizens School Project is another PFI effort to promote social change. It aims to develop and improve relationships between members of the school community-parents, teachers, students and administrators. It also invites schools to develop democratic management practices and to generate participation in curriculum development and evaluation. The schools use the Earth Charter as a guide. This project involves some 150 schools in Sao Paulo.
- d) PFI's literacy project called "MOVE-Brazil", aims to reach forty thousand young people and adults in six Brazilian states. The Earth Charter is used as a reference document.

Funding

PFI's used the Earth Charter as a framework and educational tool within its ongoing projects, and no external funding was received specially for Earth Charter-related work.

Results

While the short-term impact of PFI's educational work with the Earth Charter are hard to measure, its activities are leading to empowered educators (and citizens) who will have the skills to move forward with an integrated approach to education for sustainable development. The result will be significant in terms of the adoption of practices and principles

that will make social and environmental responsibility more central to educational processes. Over the long-term, the new educational pedagogy will contribute to a more just, sustainable and peaceful world.

Conclusion

The PFI has responded to the Earth Charter, not just as a code of planetary ethics, but also as a call to action. Via the work of PFI, the Earth Charter has contributed to the development of sustainability initiatives in thousands of schools and in communities.

However, PFI still feels the need to broaden the Earth Charter's recognition and acceptance around the world as a mobilizing force toward a culture of peace and sustainability. Moacir Gaddotti, Director-General of the PFI would like to see the Earth Charter in every teacher's hands.



Moacir Gaddotti, Director of the PFI

Sources: This case was drawn directly from the following sources

- *SGI Panel on the PFI*
- *Type II Questionnaire submitted by PFI*
- *Earth Charter Annual Report 2002-3*