



Environmental Education Policy Processes in the Southern African Region

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Abstract

An audit of environmental education policies in southern Africa was carried out to determine the status of environmental education policy processes. This paper presents a summary of the results and considers some of the emergent issues for environmental education policy in the region.

The audit was conducted under the auspices of the Southern African Development Community Regional Environmental Education Programme (SADC REEP) between October 2002 and March 2003. The research attempted to answer questions about the status and understandings of environmental education policy processes, common elements and role players, constraints and opportunities in the development and implementation of environmental education policy. Further questions related to how the audit could help to further the cause of sustainable development in southern Africa.

This paper discusses benchmarks in the environmental education policy process nationally and at regional level, as well as institutions active in environmental education. Synergies and linkages between and across regional and national policies are examined, together with some consideration of documentation and focus. The paper then explores constraints and opportunities for policy processes at national and regional level.

Introduction

An audit of environmental education policies in southern Africa was carried out by Charles Obol and Irma Allen of the SADC Regional Environmental Education Support Project, a component of the SADC REEP. The regional environmental education programme and the support project work in 14 member states of southern Africa and are funded mainly by the Swedish and Danish governments. While the programme has a policy focus as one of its objectives, there was relatively little programme activity in the policy arena.

The purpose of the audit was to determine the status of environmental education policy processes with a view to identify areas for future programme support. This paper presents a summary of the results of the audit and considers some of the emergent issues for environmental education policy in the southern African region.

The audit addressed the following questions:

- What is the status of environmental education policy processes in southern Africa?
- How are environmental education policy processes understood in the SADC?
- What are the common elements and who are the role players in the development and implementation of environmental education policy?
- What are the main constraints and opportunities for environmental education policy?
- How can the audit help to foster sustainable development?

The unpublished audit report (Obol & Allen, 2003) highlighted benchmarks in the environmental education policy process. These benchmarks were identified as key documents in use or in development, and institutions active in environmental education. The audit also revealed synergies and linkages between the SADC sectoral policies and policies at the national level, and synergy within and between different regional environmental education programmes and projects. In this context, the term 'SADC sector' refers to government agencies in each country responsible for specific areas of intervention, such as health, mining, education, environment, forestry or trade. These are the 'sectors', and the activities of each sector are coordinated in SADC Directorates, based in Botswana.

Methodology

In order to execute the study, the study team gathered and analysed information on policies, strategies, action plans and other policy processes in southern Africa. This was done through a literature review, semi-structured questionnaires and consultation in member states, as detailed below.

The literature review, conducted at the start of the project, entailed extensive and critical review of official documents and literature on national environmental education policy processes. This was undertaken in order to achieve the following:

- To get a better understanding of the policy processes in the SADC.
- To establish possible gaps.
- To identify constraints and opportunities.
- To identify other policy issues, if any.
- To identify possible processes for future support from within the Regional Environmental Education Programme.

Additional information was gathered from books, journals and unpublished research papers. A full list of publications consulted can be found in the full audit document (Obol & Allen, 2003).

A semi-structured questionnaire was prepared and sent to the national network representatives of the regional environmental education network. These are individuals in member states of the SADC, nominated by government to act as a contact person for environmental education within the regional programme. The questionnaire was designed to ensure that all respondents addressed common issues.

To ensure adequate coverage of all countries and to verify information, the survey was supplemented by interviews and consultations. Visits were made to selected member states to

hold discussions and obtain further inputs. The main aim was to obtain additional information from experts, institutions involved in environmental education and other stakeholders. In addition, focus group discussions were held with specific researchers, advisers or practitioners, as was appropriate.

Indicators for Environment Education Policy

One of the challenges of investigating environmental education policy in southern Africa is that there are different understandings of the meaning and role of 'policy' across the region. In practice, policy is difficult to define, and may be viewed as a set of decisions taken by those with responsibility for a given area. Taylor (2002) explains policy as 'a framework to enable governance'. Conceived of in this way, policy may be seen as a product of a process moving through stages of agenda setting, decision-making and implementation. Unfortunately, at times, a policy tends to be seen as a document or set of rules to be applied rather than a process to develop shared actions and practices that contribute to better ways of managing and protecting the environment. Keeley and Scoones (2003) observed that 'rather than seeing policy as simply a single decision implemented in a linear fashion...', it is useful to consider that '... in practice, policies consist of a broad course of action or a web of interrelated decisions that evolve over time during the process of implementation' and thereby can contribute to learning.

Thus, with such a broad understanding of policy, and wishing to avoid entrenched linear positions, the audit team recognised that policy processes do not necessarily demand formal documentation, and used indicators to identify policy activity (Obol & Allen, 2003). These were developed empirically through the course of the study. One indicator in the study focussed on policy developed in and for the country. Many policies tended to be characterised by broad participation in their development, and although not essential, the presence of written documentation provided a second indicator. A further indicator was that policies tend to be approved by stakeholders and by government, and have an institutional home or base in the sense of an organisation or agency responsible for its development, implementation or review. Lastly, policies are indicated by provision of guidance for formal, non-formal and informal environmental education, and are oriented to development or change, and may show synergies with regional and national development plans. These indicators assisted the team to clarify ways of 'framing' the study.

Evolution in Policy Processes

In carrying out research for the audit, Obol and Allen (2003) found that different participants regarded policy in different ways. Some regarded policy as a statement of official position, while others recognised that policy was a set of actions in pursuit of that position. It seems therefore, that policy can be viewed as a continuum with the different understandings as stages in a policy process or cycle. These can be grouped into four elements in the policy continuum or cycle:

- Policy initiation or development.
- Institutionalisation (meaning the adoption by an institution).

- Implementation.
- Review or evaluation.

The emergence of environmental education policy mirrors developments in the field of environmental education itself. Globally, the roots of environmental education lie within the study of the natural environment, aimed at preservation of species. Over time, the concept became more 'ecological', and there was a shift to the study of ecosystems and interrelationships. As interest in the impact of people on the environment became more pronounced, the aim of environmental education shifted toward conservation, as understood by the phrase 'wise use' of resources. Regionally, at the SADC level, environmental education has its roots in conservation with a focus on protected areas, but this was set to change.

The evolution of environmental education in southern Africa can be linked to developments both within and beyond the region. The 1992 Earth Summit and Agenda 21 influenced approaches to environmental education in the region, and stimulated the creation of infrastructure for environmental education and the development of policy in the region. The Earth Summit in 1992 brought a shift in macro-policy focus from 'environment or development' to 'environment and development' (UNESCO, 2002). This led to a broadening of the strategies and approaches used in environmental education, and closer integration of these processes with community development.

With increased global focus on sustainable development, environmental education is increasingly being re-articulated as 'education for sustainable development', leading to some controversy in the field (see for example Jickling & Wals, 2003). This has resulted in a general tendency to use a broader definition of environmental education and to widen its reach to include business and industry, decision makers, politicians and others. Globally environmental education policy is tending to promote the integration of environment into development planning at all levels.

Nationally SADC member states have experienced some difficulties in implementing policy for environmental education. Poverty and HIV/AIDS in the region have become the great priorities in national planning, arguably, to the detriment of environmental concerns. Despite this, the audit identified a wealth of policy processes in the region. The following section of this document provides a snapshot of the status of environmental education in each of the SADC countries according to the audit findings.

Status of National Environmental Education Policy Processes

The section below describes the range of policy processes presently active in the southern African region and attempts a classification of these activities. The list includes all SADC member states (with the exception of the Democratic Republic of Congo). In terms of the policy continuum, the analysis below indicates that there is relatively little policy activity in the review and evaluation category. This shows that the emphasis thus far has been on policy initiation and institutionalisation. The information presented here is summarised from the original audit document (Obol & Allen, 2003).

Angola

While this country has no overall environmental education policy, development of an environmental education strategy is currently taking place. Selected schools are encouraged to develop and implement school environmental policies. Curriculum is being revised at primary school level to include environmental education. Resource materials to support environmental education processes are being produced. At the time of the audit, no policy review or evaluation had been carried out.

Botswana

Botswana has no overall environmental education policy. However, the Botswana *Vision 2016 for Environmental Management* (in Ketlhoilwe, 2003) calls for an informed and environmentally educated nation. In addition, the National Conservation Strategy Botswana national Conservation Strategy, 1990) and the National Environmental Education Action Plan of 1997–2003 (IUCN & SADC ELMS, 1999) make provision for environmental education. To implement policy, environmental education is being infused across the curriculum in primary school education and resource materials are being produced. Pilot projects are being undertaken to encourage schools to implement environmental education in the classrooms. Training of trainers in environmental education is being conducted and a Botswana Environmental Education Network has been established. Funding from the Networking for Capacity Building Programme (NETCAB) was used to support a major initiative in the arena of school policy. This worked towards policy implementation through the development of grassroots environmental policy processes in individual school policies, in order to aid further implementation of other government environment policies. There is no evidence of policy review taking place.

Lesotho

The overall policy framework guiding environmental education in Lesotho is the Lesotho National Environment Policy of 1998 (Government of Lesotho, in Obol & Allen, 2003). Donor-funded initiatives are supporting curriculum development within agriculture, health, physical science and development studies, the development of fact sheets on environmental issues and a website. The National Curriculum Development Centre, through the Lesotho Environmental Education Support Project, is supporting the integration of environment into all curriculum areas, and the development of model schools to formulate policy in environmental education at school level (LEESP, 2001). This initiative also involves capacity building. A move is underway towards integrating environmental education into the school curriculum through a focus on population and family life, which covers all issues including HIV/AIDS. Here, too, there was no information on policy review.

Malawi

An early Environmental Education Strategy (Government of Malawi, 1996) is in place while the Environmental Education Policy of 2001 is still under development (Agabu, pers comm., June 2003). A quarterly magazine, *Nantshengwa* (environmental education) is published regularly. Policy implementation activities include workshops for parliamentarians and cabinet ministers.

Other processes include the integration of environmental education into initial teacher training, and the implementation of an environmental education course for industry as a partnership between the national university and the government.

Mauritius

Environmental Education in Mauritius is guided by the National Environment Strategy (2000-2010) (Government of Mauritius, 1999). A draft environmental education policy is still under development (Sooknah, pers comm., June 2003). Implementation processes include curriculum development with environmental education at all levels through citizenship education. Resource materials are produced. There is no information relating to policy review or policy evaluation.

Mozambique

Environmental education in Mozambique is guided by the Environmental Management Plan of 1995 (MICOA, 1996). The National Environmental Education Strategy is still under development (Russo, pers comm., June 2003). Implementation processes include integration of environmental education in teacher training programmes and development of guidelines to assist schools in establishing environmental clubs. Resource materials have been produced, and these include a manual for environmental education on soil erosion and bush fires. Information on policy review or policy evaluation was not available.

Namibia

The following documents exist: Environmental Education policy (draft) (NEEN, 1999), and an Education and Training Policy: *Towards education for all*. There is currently an attempt to get the draft policy officially accepted, and an environmental education curriculum development initiative has been established by the National Institute of Education Development. This project is run with Danish funding, and is known as the SEEN project (Supporting Environmental Education in Namibia). The project focuses on integration of environmental education into the curriculum, and professional development for teachers and advisers. The project is starting an ecoschools initiative, and is also developing resource materials. Information on policy review or evaluation was not available.

Seychelles

Environmental education activities in the Seychelles are guided by an Environmental Education Policy (MET, 1997). Other documents in place include the Environmental Protection Act of 1994 (Desaubin, pers comm., June 2003), dealing with public awareness on waste management and recycling. An Environmental Management Plan (2000-2010), is also in place. Institutionalisation processes include guidelines for wildlife club teachers and modules on environmental education in teacher education programmes. Resource materials are being developed for schools, radio programmes are run; and workshops are run, for in-service teachers. Local and community-level initiatives include an ecoschools programme that has been running since 1994. Information on policy review or evaluation was not available.

South Africa

The South African government's White Paper on Education and Training (RSA, 1995) and the National Environmental Management Act of 1998 (RSA, 1998) both contain principle statements on environmental education. Policy initiation processes include the development of 'A Strategic Framework on Environmental Education in South Africa' which is currently in progress (DEAT, 2003). Policy institutionalisation activities include: influencing policy development by providing support to initiatives of the Ministry of Environment; support to the Ministry of Education the development of learning support materials; and a pilot 'Ecoschools' project to encourage schools as institutions in the community to adopt environmental management systems and to foster environmental learning in classrooms. The implementation process includes the work within the National Environmental Education Project for General Education and Training (NEEP-GET), a major national project established by the Ministry of Education with Danish funding. This project has influenced curriculum policy to ensure that environment is integral to the curriculum. Other implementation initiatives include: course development for formal and non-formal education in 16 higher education institutions; in-service teacher training for environmental education by NGOs; production of resource materials by government departments and NGOs; and workshops for teachers by both governmental and non-governmental agencies and organisations (NEEP, 2003). South Africa has recently reviewed its curriculum policy, and the focus of environmental education in the formal curriculum has changed following this review.

Swaziland

Swaziland has a National Environment Action Plan, an Environmental Education Strategy and Action Plan (SEA, 2000), as well as the Swaziland Environmental Support Programme 2000 (Vilakati, pers comm., March 2003), all of which address environmental education. Institutionalisation includes initiatives such as: networking; a capacity-building programme for environmental impact assessment (EIA); and a course for stakeholders focusing on environmental education strategies. Implementation processes include the development of participatory course in environmental education, the development of a modular course for industry, workshops for teachers, parliamentarians and other decision-makers, and the development and production of resource materials by NGOs. No information was available on evaluation and review of these policies.

Tanzania

The documents that guide environmental education policy processes in Tanzania are the National Environmental Action Plan of 1994 (NEAP, 1994), and the National Environmental Policy of 1997 (Government of Tanzania, 1997). The National Environment Management Council is presently engaged in the development of a national environmental education strategy for Tanzania. A pilot project to integrate environmental education into curriculum by the national curriculum development centre is being carried out. Policy implementation processes include production of newsletters and other resources by NGOs.

Zambia

Environmental Education in Zambia is guided by the National Conservation Strategy of 1985 (GRZ, 1985). The country also has a National Environmental Action Plan (GRZ, 1994; Mukosa, pers comm., June 2003). An initiative to develop a National Environmental Education Strategy is at the proposal stage. Implementation processes include integration of environmental education in curriculum at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. A master's degree programme in environmental education is being implemented at the University of Zambia. The production of resource materials and environmental education clubs in the copper belt all support the implementation processes. Additionally, there is reform of teacher initial education, with the development of new courses at teachers' colleges. NGOs are involved in materials production and in teacher support.

Zimbabwe

The Environmental Management Act of 2002 (MoE & T, 2002); the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy of 1997 (IUCN & SADC ELMS, 1999) and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Policy of 1997 (SA, IEA, 2003) guide environmental education policy processes in Zimbabwe. Policy development processes include advocacy and policy development for the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, recommendations to the education commission of enquiry and preparation of the 'Zimbabwean National Environmental Education Policy and Strategy Recommendations of 2001' which is still in draft (See Shava, 2003, this edition). A document entitled 'Environmental Education in Action in Zimbabwe' (Herberden *et al.*, 2001), has been developed by implementers in Zimbabwe to influence policy. Policy implementation processes include integration of environmental education in all schools at all levels, resource material production in collaboration with NGOs, and environmental education courses offered by Speciss College and a number of universities. No information on policy review and evaluation was available.

SADC initiatives

At regional level, Table 1 below shows the status of environmental education policy at SADC sectoral level. The table refers to 'protocols', which are SADC policy guidelines in particular sectoral areas. They are intended to guide inter-sectoral collaboration around a particular issue and are based on regional assessments and consultations, and compliance with international conventions. Some of the most environmentally relevant protocols include those on shared watercourse systems, energy, health, mining, development of tourism, fisheries, wildlife conservation, law enforcement and trade. The SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (SADC, 2003) outlines plans, programmes and strategies within the region. As seen in Table 1, some reference is made to environmental education within different sectors, but this is by no means comprehensive. The research team analysed the protocol documents for content and potential, and found little reference to environmental education.

Table 1. Summary showing the status of policy at the SADC Sectoral Level

Sector	Protocol in place	Protocol reference to environmental education	Programme activity on environmental education	Reference to environmental education in the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Programme
Environment	None	None	Yes	Yes
Energy	Yes	Some	None	None
Fisheries	Yes	Yes	None	None
Forestry	Some	None	None	Yes
Food Security	None	None	None	Some
Mining	Yes	Yes	None	None
Tourism	Yes	Some	Some	Some
Water	Yes	Yes	None	Yes

Source: Obol and Allen (2003)

Discussion of Findings

The preceding summary has shown that each southern African country has made inroads into the development of policy for environmental education. The initiatives have varied in terms of the type of policy document produced, the level of participation in policy processes, approval of policies, institutionalisation of policies, and development orientation adopted in the policies. In assessing the present status of environmental education policy in the SADC region, a number of trends have emerged related to: policy as process; participation in policy development; development orientation of policies; the role of donor and other support in policy making; and benchmarks in the policy process. These aspects will be discussed in more depth below.

Documentation and process

Some policy documents were general environment ones, such as a national conservation strategy, or national environment action plan. Other countries have developed specific environmental education policy or strategy documents. In some countries, there may be several documents, each relating to specific projects in environmental education. In each case, the document was developed in-country. While the foregoing discussion focuses mainly on documentation, in keeping with the broad understanding of policy outlined at the beginning of this paper, the audit showed other processes in support of policy, particularly capacity building, professional development and materials development.

Gaps in the policy process

The preceding analysis emphasises the *policy process orientation*, with policy regarded as a number of inter-related stages. An analysis of policies within a *policy process framework* revealed that gaps and inaction in policy and policy processes are common. For example, the Botswana environmental education strategy has been dormant since 1996 as the responsible authority has not passed it, and there appears to be a need for review. Similarly, in Namibia, a national consultation process to develop an environmental education policy was halted at the institutionalisation stage, and was never adopted or implemented (Wilson, pers comm., March 2003). However, the research also revealed that policy implementation at one scale or level of the system may be regarded as policy development or initiation at another. This is especially true of school policy initiatives, where Eco-Schools (an international and officially registered programme) is a means of implementing national policy (O'Donoghue, pers comm., August 2003), in support of the Revised National Curriculum Statement. At community or local level, school policy work may be regarded as a full policy cycle in its own right.

Participation and partnerships

Although all policies identified in the audit were developed and implemented within the respective country, this does not mean that they have all been developed in the same way. Most have involved participatory processes, involving local expertise and stakeholders through focus groups and other means of consultation. In most countries, it was apparent that the consultations that took place in the policy development process were aimed at ensuring some measure of stakeholder approval. This is important in that in countries with effective environmental education programmes, it was noted in the audit that there was usually stakeholder involvement where an institution, such as a curriculum unit, university, NGO or environmental authority provided an institutional base for the initiative. Approval of the policies appeared to rest with different ministries. Some policies were generated by the Ministry of Education, while in other cases, environmental education policy was generated by environment or other ministries and approved through cabinet. Within this multi-stakeholder framework, documents that serve as the base for environmental education policy tended to provide strategies for different user groups or sectors, and usually pointed towards the provision of environmental education in different contexts.

One of the clear trends identified in the audit is a range of recent attempts to accommodate or include environmental education into the contested field of sustainable development. It is evident that participation and involvement of stakeholders and the development of partnerships are important aspects of this emerging trend. Thus, state and civil-society partnerships, or public-private partnerships, are becoming important agents in policy processes as governments are slowly beginning to open up policy formulation to include previously excluded groups. In southern Africa, non-governmental organisations have been key partners in this change, with the Namibian Environmental Education Network (NEEN) spearheading environmental education policy development in Namibia (Wilson, pers comm., March 2003), and the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) in South Africa acting as partners for policy implementation through supporting Eco-Schools and the development of learning support materials (Olvitt & Springall-Bach, 2003).

Development orientation

The audit revealed that most environmental education policy initiatives originated as a response to existing environmental issues or risks, mainly at local or national level. For example, current donor-supported environmental education initiatives in Tanzania utilise environmental education tools and strategies to involve people in national policy development and implementation (Obol & Allen, 2003). In turn, national development objectives include environmental education as a tool for implementation of policy. It seems that few of the environmental education policies convey an understanding of environmental education as merely awareness raising or nature education. At national levels, environmental education is increasingly seen as a process of enabling sustainable development, and is often articulated as 'education for sustainable development', in line with international trends.

The role of donor support

As outlined above, the audit revealed that more attention has been paid historically to the development of policy than to its implementation or evaluation. This may be a product of donor intervention, whereby support is sought or offered for the development of a policy document as a tangible outcome. Donor support and partnership was identified as a common feature of policy processes in the southern African region. It is clear that resources are often invested in the policy, particularly in the production of policy documents. Little support seems to be provided for implementation or review of policies. Similarly, government funding for policy development is often inadequate, and policy processes tend to be 'stuck' at the development stage, with minimal support for implementation and institutionalisation. Further, and as previously noted, there is relatively little policy review, which is essential if future policy work is to prove effective.

Education or environmental policy

Coordination across different sectors or between different ministries seems to be problematic at local, national and regional levels. In some countries, for example Swaziland, environmental education is housed institutionally by the environment ministries. South Africa, however, exemplifies a situation where a number of different ministries are involved, including both the environmental and educational ministries. This illustrates that environmental education policies often 'straddle' two or more different ministries. From the analysis of the SADC sector policies, it is apparent that the important role that environmental education policy can play in the context of other sectors, has been overlooked during the developments of SADC-wide protocols or sectoral programmes and projects. Most SADC-wide protocols, programmes, and projects are still insensitive to the important role that environmental education plays in environmental policy implementation processes. Opportunities for strengthening environmental policy implementation through environmental education processes are often overlooked. Environmental education offers a coordinating framework for many related initiatives and can thus assist with policy coherence. For example, in South Africa the ministries of environment, health and water affairs have all developed environmental policies that require capacity building and education. Environmental education policy assists all of these sectors to implement their environmental policies.

Benchmarks

Three major events seem to have shaped policy processes in southern Africa. These are namely: the Moscow World Congress on Environmental Education held in 1988, the UN Conference on Environment and Development, 1992, and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development held in South Africa. This concurs with views of the historical development of environmental education as outlined by Palmer (1998). At these times, governments were required to report on environmental issues and risks, and the development of environmental education as a response. This seems to have led to the initiation of policy development processes as outlined above.

School environmental policy

School environmental policy development is an emerging trend in the southern African region. Initiatives like Eco-Schools in South Africa, Model Schools in Lesotho and School Environmental Policy in Botswana and elsewhere provide some of the best examples of school-in-community policy processes. These countries have endorsed whole school approaches to school improvement through support for these initiatives that are seen as both a means to implement national policy as well as a framework for curriculum and local school and community policy development.

Scaling up

The focus for environmental education appears to be somewhat unclear in policy processes, and there is dissonance between regional, national and local priorities. Conceptually, much environmental education policy work supports country commitments to Agenda 21 and the global conventions such as the Convention on Biodiversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species; the Basel Convention on Hazardous Wastes and the Basel Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. The audit revealed that much of the focus of environmental education programmes and policy, however, tended towards local and national priorities, thereby losing the chance to support implementation of regional priorities. This is a difficult issue, but needs to be addressed if southern African countries are to work together to address trans-boundary issues such as desertification, water resources, poverty and HIV/AIDS, as well as natural resource management through education. As priority issues such as HIV/AIDS, poverty, water resources and solid waste become more pressing, the challenge for environmental education policy is to enable processes to respond to these issues.

One notable case of aligning national policies to the regional policy framework is the development of the regional document *Enabling environmental education – guidelines for environmental education policy and strategy processes in the SADC states* (SADC ELMS, 1996). This book was used in Mauritius, Malawi and Zimbabwe as a guide for making environmental education policy recommendations to government. In Zimbabwe, the guide helped provide a framework for recommendations to the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training of 1999 and was used in the development of an environmental education policy document in 2001. In Mauritius, the framework document was used in deliberations with

government and other stakeholders to draw up recommendations toward implementation. In Malawi, stakeholders used the framework document along with existing environmental education policy statements when they drew up recommendations for the revision of the government environmental education policy.

The 'Networking for Capacity-Building' (NETCAB) programme (NETCAB, 2001; Stiles, 2002) supported policy projects in Botswana, Malawi, Mauritius, South Africa and Zimbabwe to fulfil their commitments to international conventions and was designed to address and develop environmental education policy. In Botswana, the NETCAB project worked towards policy implementation. This was done through the development of grassroots environmental policy processes in individual schools in order to aid further implementation of other government environment policies. In Malawi, despite the draft environmental education policy, environmental education strategy and a national environmental action plan, there was a feeling that some sectors were not equitably represented in the development of policy. An 'environmental education-for-industry' course was developed to support the implementation of environmental policies in industry contexts. This provided opportunities for policy review and reflection, and the course is now undergoing re-development. In Mauritius, there are environmental policies but no environmental education policies. The NETCAB-supported project provided recommendations developed in a multi-stakeholder process for environmental education policy in formal education at all levels. In South Africa, NETCAB attempted to include environmental education in all the organising fields of the national qualifications framework, while in Swaziland, the NETCAB project supported the production of environmental impact assessment (EIA) guidelines and capacity building for parliamentarians. The NETCAB programme had a significant impact on the participating countries, enabling them to continue moving the environmental education policy development and implementation process forward (Stiles, 2002).

Regional coordination

The former SADC Environment and Land Management Sector was instrumental in catalysing country initiatives on environmental education policy in the region. The creation of a SADC regional environmental education programme and specifically the establishment of a regional environmental education network of representatives created an effective structure for communication on environmental education in the region. The establishment of a SADC regional environmental education centre was a major step forward in developing capacity in the region for environmental education policy development and implementation. The SADC Regional Environmental Education Centre has been a source of ideas (through materials production and training) with respect to the strategies and content for environmental education in the region (SADC REEP, 2002).

Conclusion

This survey research was initiated to gain an insight into the current status of environmental education policy in the SADC region. What has emerged, however, is an understanding of the transitive nature of environmental education policy and a view of both environmental education and of policy as processes rather than static events or documents. Due to the transitive nature of the field, the conclusions drawn here are at best tentative. Findings (as reported in this paper) have been verified through professional contacts and the national network representatives. In these responses it became evident that an understanding of policy processes is both personally and contextually informed. Conclusions drawn are therefore only representative of this state of flux. This means that opportunities exist for future work on environmental education policy processes particularly in searching for further evidence of policy processes, and their relation to policy cycles.

The preceding discussion showed that countries have pursued the development of environmental education policy at different rates. Different countries have used different national documents as the basis for the implementation of environmental education. The study also shows that the many features of the policy process are shared across countries in the region. It seems that environmental education policy processes have been on the agenda of southern African governments since the mid-90s to the present. Major international events, requiring countries to review the status of environmental education in the preparation of country reports and to chart a way forward, have given impetus to this process. Most SADC countries have a document that serves as a policy basis for environmental education. However, two major constraints exist. First, some countries have had difficulties having these documents approved by cabinet, and secondly, effective means for implementing these policies has been lacking and there is thus a time gap between development of the policy and its implementation. The support for environmental education by donor partners has facilitated important environmental education initiatives in the region, particularly the integration of environment into school curricula, but there has been little support for policy review.

The study has highlighted issues and opportunities to inform future environmental education policy processes. Firstly, supporting a process-orientation to environmental education, rather than regarding environmental education as a subject or an event, will strengthen education as well as environmental protection processes in all SADC countries. Secondly, opportunities exist for strengthening community-based natural resources management through environmental education policy processes. Creating stronger inter-sectoral links between education and other sectors would help to strengthen the policy framework for environmental education and ensure relevance and an action focus for priority environmental issues. In this way, environmental education policy is well placed to make strategic alliances with other policy arenas. Lastly, we have seen that attempts to integrate national environmental issues with environmental education policy have been moderately successful, while attempts to integrate regional environmental issues with environmental education policy appear to be lacking. Support to enable the integration of regional environmental issues with national and local ones through policy processes and support for review of existing policy processes would strengthen

environmental education processes and so help to make a more significant impact on poverty alleviation, quality of life and the state of the environment.

Notes on the Contributors

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