

Promoting Education for Sustainable Development the “ESD Competence Centre”

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Abstract

At the latest since the publication of the so-called Brundtland Report, sustainable development has become an important element of multilateral and national political endeavors. In order to align fields of action such as ecology, social affairs or economy with sustainable development and thus to address recent global issues, the concept of education for sustainable development (ESD) was launched with the proclamation of Agenda 21. Since then, scholars as well as practitioners have been dealing with the question of which factors promote and hinder the implementation of ESD in educational landscapes by relevant fields of action, such as municipal administrations, schools or the field of non-formal and informal education including NGOs and associations. The German project “Education – Sustainability – Municipality: ESD Competence Centre for Process Support and Process Evaluation” aims to answer this question on a national level while promoting the implementation of ESD in about 50 selected German municipalities. Against the background of this objective, we present the aims and scope of the “ESD Competence Centre” as well as first research impressions from 50 interviews with actors from different fields of action in 15 municipalities. With regard to the latter, we find that interviewees perceive an open and participatory discussion atmosphere and error culture as particularly conducive. On the other hand, administrative structures and an associated culture of responsibility diffusion and free riding are seen as hindering. These findings are complemented by impressions of the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic, to which, surprisingly, positive effects are also attributed.

Keywords: municipalities; Germany; project presentation; process support; process evaluation