

Activity 3.2



Back-casting exercise

Read the case study of PENU University outlined below. After examining its achievements, develop a plan to show how the University achieved its goals, showing the actions that were taken to achieve the goals (use two-year intervals) to map out what the University did to achieve what they did by 2014. Use this to guide planning your ESD innovation.

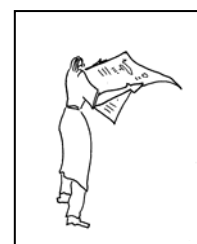
PENU University wins ESD Innovations Award!

It is 2014 and representatives of the over 2500 private and public higher education institutions in Africa and the donor community have met to witness the presentation of the AAU/UNEP/UNESCO award for Innovative ESD practices.

Giving a background on how her university managed to win the award (in the last year of the UN Decade on ESD), the Vice Chancellor of PENU University noted that having attended a series of Leadership and Management seminars organised by the AAU and other African sub-regional higher education bodies, as well as the ESD workshop run by UNEP and the AAU (in 2005) and its satellite agencies, one of the first things she did as the newly appointed Vice Chancellor was to review PENU's existing strategic plan (2005-2014). She worked with stakeholders in the University, and in the associated community to define a new vision and mission for the University that would address sustainable development. Experience from the leadership innovation workshops showed her that the existing plan was devoid of current development thinking, and did not address the AU objectives for revitalising universities in Africa.

The University prepared their submission for the Award for Innovative ESD practices and in their submission they were able to provide evidence of the following:

- Annual sustainability auditing and reporting in the University, which involves stakeholders, and feedback from stakeholders on the role of the University.
- A senate sub-committee that concerns itself with sustainability innovations, and which oversees the implementation of the University's sustainable



development policies.

- A staff development programme which has built capacity within the University for sustainability teaching, research and management.
- An innovative sustainable technology centre that has piloted and researched sustainable technology solutions to a number of local community and business problems, developed in partnership with the community and business partners.
- A research methodology course that is run for social and natural scientists to introduce new research methodologies for sustainability-related topics and questions, and which address the inter-disciplinary nature of sustainability challenges.
- Various degree programmes which have integrated sustainable development thinking and pedagogies into the courses.
- Examples of innovative pedagogical practices that strengthen student participation in learning about environmental and sustainability issues.
- Examples of inter-disciplinary research on campus. For example, the Education Faculty were co-operating with the Environmental Science Faculty to research appropriate participatory methods for community mobilisation. The Business School was co-operating with the Faculty of Science to research appropriate technologies for Small and Medium Enterprises.
- A service learning programme involving 1000 students from five faculties per year in community development projects in the University community.
- An active HIV/AIDS education programme for all students on campus which is also taught to teachers at local schools.
- Faculty innovations, for example, the public health students on community service were seen desilting gutters instead of only engaging in malaria vaccination; forestry students were mobilising people in tree planting exercises; architectural students had developed an innovative building design for low-cost housing using sustainability principles, and economics students were assisting the community with district assemblies to draw up sustainable development plans with a focus on net social benefits (not profit maximisation).

NOTE: Some of the case studies shared in this ESD Innovations Course (eg. Kigali Institute of Science and Technology) show that achieving what PENU University have achieved is not impossible in an eight to 10 year period!

What could you learn from the back-casting exercise¹ for the planning of your ESD Innovation?

¹ The idea of using back-casting exercises in ESD university courses was kindly provided by John Fien. The exercise here was adapted from a submission sent in by a participant in the ESD Innovations Course Planning process.



