

ORIGINS OF HANDPRINT

How did a Handprint approach to ESD emerge?

We live in challenging times. Human activities are fast disrupting the life-support systems that make healthy living possible. The air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat are all increasingly at risk. The concept of a Footprint is the measure of this risk and the negative impact in terms of emissions and resource consumption. To engage students in minimising their footprints, a learner-centred, action-oriented and transformative pedagogy is required. To empower students to take action in their immediate/local environment, as a part of their daily lives, thus becomes significant. This is especially the case in distinguishing action from behaviour, and focussing more on critical thinking for transformative learning, with teachers acting as facilitators of student learning.

The concern for positive action-taking led to an emergence of the concept of Handprint in India. This developed in an environmental education school programme run by the Centre for Environment Education (CEE). A Handprint symbolises action for sustainability and is a measure of ESD action that we can do individually, and collectively, to restore the balance between consumption and the planet's carrying capacity. It therefore indicates a caring attitude and a helping hand for the planet and all life on it.

Handprint was launched in 2007 at UNESCO's 4th International Conference on Environmental Education held in Ahmedabad, India. The Ahmedabad Declaration (CEE, 2007) from the conference states:

Our vision is a world in which our work and lifestyles contribute to the well-being of all life on Earth.



HANDPRINT

Action Towards
Sustainability

Handprints for Sustainability

Handprint has its roots in the imperative of a 10-year old student named Srija who offered her handprint as a commitment to action for sustainability. Her handprint and the inspiring imperative to undertake positive learning actions became a symbol for an international network of learner-led ESD programmes. These positive actions were supported by CEE across India, initially, and then through an active community of practice across the globe. Handprint action towards sustainability later became prominent in South Africa, Mexico, Germany and other parts of the world. Young learners from different parts of the world have adopted the Handprint concept and are transforming their lives and practices by doing something positive for change. As positive actions, Handprints offer a chance to contribute towards sustainability.

The ESD Expert Net members adopted the Handprint concept combining it with ESD and the CARE concept. Inspired by Srija and similar sentiments expressed by young learners elsewhere, the concept of ESD as ethics-led action learning shaped Handprint CARE as a process of learning to look after others to best care for ourselves and the surroundings we all share.

By engaging with Handprints for Sustainability thousands of people around the world are transforming their lives and practices by doing something positive for change. As positive actions, Handprint offer us a chance to contribute towards sustainability. Complementing Handprint with an ethic of CARE for others, results in a powerful framework steeped in kindness, consideration for others and enthusiasm for sustainability. In other words, it becomes a pathway to a just transition for all.

Towards a Handprint CARE approach

The inspiration that shaped 'C.A.R.E' came from Alta, Norway, from Sami members of a Local Culture for Understanding Mathematics and Science (LOCUMS) research group. The Sami noted that respect was the cornerstone of recovery from marginalising oppression. Sadly, the impacts of this period and some well-intended colonial tendencies, are still with us in modernity today. An evaluative and emancipatory imperative became the cornerstone of an emerging schema for the inclusion of ESD as an ethics-led learning process. This ethics-led process is more respectful of the teaching content of current school subject

disciplines and has an inclusive recognition of intergenerational knowledge practices within the diversity of cultural perspectives of Handprint CARE.

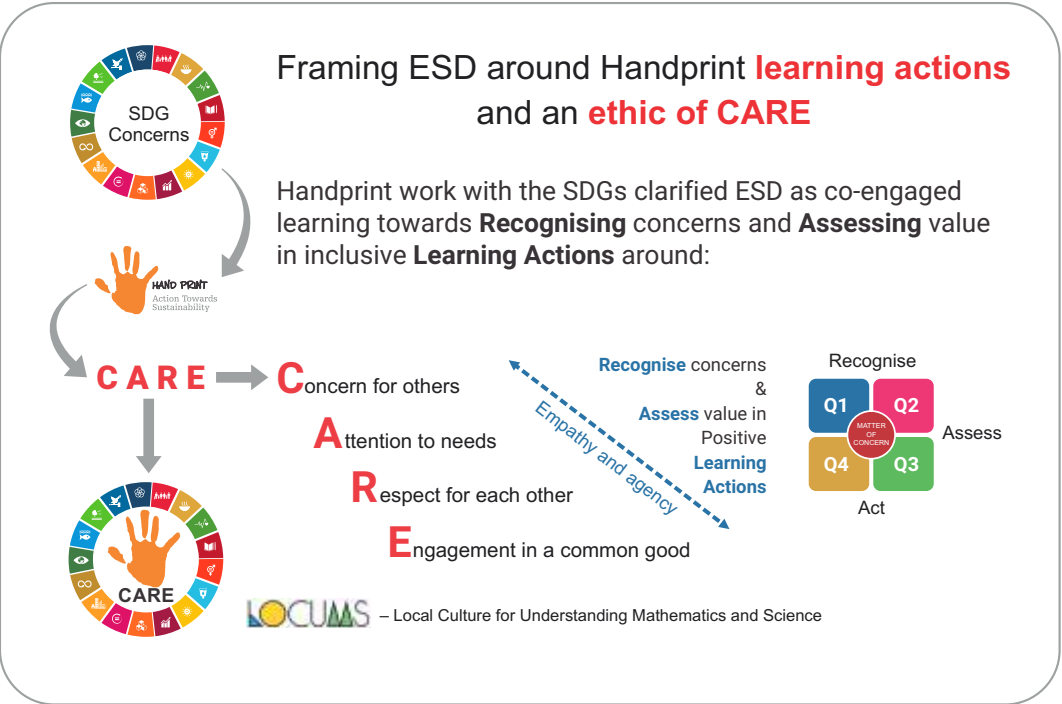


Figure 3: A schema for a Handprint ethic of care developed around the Sami notion of respect as an inclusive foundation for ESD

Figure 3 depicts how 'CARE' emerged as an acronym reflecting an ethic of inclusive respect through Concern for others, being Attentive to needs, showing Respect for each other and being Engaged in learning actions for the common good (CARE).

Handprint CARE can be characterised as a Handprint process of ethics-led learning actions built around respect and developing empathy for others. The SDGs also work well with this concept and are a useful and deliberative learning tool towards this common goal for humanity. Keeping this in mind, a Handprint CARE logo was developed which is culturally situated and follows historically informed approaches to ESD in the teaching of current subject disciplines (O'Donoghue et al, 2020).

Concluding Insights

The Handprint concept has emerged as a powerful methodology, which started in India and has inspired educators and practitioners across the globe. Young learners readily take up action learning initiatives for the common good in open-hearted ways. A school-in-community focus further activates and strengthens positive learning actions for future sustainability.

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