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Attaining Sustainability Through Praxis Oriented Curricular Approach Reinforcing Symbiotic Relationship Between Learning and Living

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ABSTRACT

It is commonly agreed that education is the most effective tool that can engage young people in debates regarding social problems, especially in environmental related issues. So the pedagogy should be designed to equip the next generation for the sustainable future through a green culture. Moving from a pedagogical disposition to a pedagogical thoughtfulness is highly essential. Curriculum should enable students to use nature as a learning tool to focus on real-world problems. Experiential learning with a praxis oriented approach can only facilitate symbiosis between learning and living. The pedagogical approach should make the young citizens to practise how to become a part of the solution. Major environmental issues should be incorporated to the curriculum so as to develop a green generation with sustainable attitude. The concept of Education for Sustainability would help the education system to equip individuals for a sustainable future.

Key words: sustainability, praxis oriented curriculum

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INTRODUCTION

Progress of the society depends upon the innovative, adaptive and inventive minds. This instincts and minds breaking the hard core cocoons of the research institutes and laboratories should be there in every walk of life. For confronting the challenges of the future, the most efficient means is the education. Education, to be certain, is not the whole answer to every problem. But educations, in its broadest sense, form a vital part of all efforts to imagine and create new relations among people and to foster greater respect for the needs of the environment. Education is a comprehensive process which includes formal, informal and also non formal education so it must not equated to schooling alone.

Education is the primary agent accelerates people's capacities to transform their visions for society into reality. Education not only provides technical and scientific skills, but also provides the motivation, and social support for pursuing and applying them. Improving the quality and coverage of education by analysing and reorienting its goals to recognize the importance of sustainable development must form society's highest priority.

A proper educational planning is necessary to fulfil the societal demands through education. Educational planning is concerned with the problems of how to make the best use of limited resources allocated to education in view of the priorities given to different stages of education or different sector of education. There are four major approaches to educational planning - Social Demand Approach, Social Justice Approach, Rate of Returns Approach and Manpower Planning Approach. Among these approaches, the social demand approach is widely accepted in the education sector. In India too, this approach is a popular one while opening new schools and colleges in particular. Thus, the major issue involved in this approach is to forecast future demands for seats keeping in mind social and educational trends as well as demographic changes. Social demand approach is more prevalent in those societies which favour traditional cultural values, where decisions are taken on the basis of public opinions and in societies where the social environment is generally pessimistic in nature.

The current major concern of global society is about environment depletion and related consequences which determine the future of existence of life on earth. Policy makers and world organizations recognised that the solution for such problems is possible only through education. Education for sustainability calls for a balanced approach which avoids undue emphasis on changes in individual lifestyles. It has to be recognized that many of the world's problems, including environmental problems, are related to our ways of living, and that solutions imply transforming the social conditions of human life as well as changes in individual lifestyles.

CONCEPT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN IN THE MODERN EDUCATION

Responsibility of individual citizen for sustainable development has proliferated since the Rio "Earth Summit" of 1992 (UNESCO, 1992). Most international declarations and conventions for compacting global environmental problems and their consequences demand a strengthening of environmental awareness among the population and measures relating to environmental education. What is required is therefore are worldwide and far reaching measure of environmental education.

Environment education refers to organized efforts to teach about how natural environment functions and particularly how human beings can manage their behaviour and ecosystem in order to live sustainably. It is a multi-disciplinary field integrating disciplines such as biology, chemistry, physics,

ecology, earth science, atmospheric science, mathematics and geography. The term is used more broadly to include all efforts to educate the public including print materials, websites, media campaigns etc.

Rousseau stressed the importance of an education system that focuses on the environment in 18th century which is traced as the roots of environmental education. Internationally environmental education gained recognition when the UN conference held in Stockholm, in 1972, declared that environmental education must be used as a strong tool to address global environmental problems. Environmental education, properly understood, should constitute a comprehensive lifelong education, one responsive to changes in a rapidly changing world. It should prepare the individual for life through an understanding of the major problems of the contemporary world, and the provision of skills and attributes needed to play a productive role towards improving life and protecting the environment with due regard given to ethical values.

Criteria for sound environmental education involve learning from personal and conveyed experience in everyday situations. Environmental education is an important tool for abandoning environmentally harmful forms of behaviour and for learning environmentally appropriate behaviour. For individuals to express concern regarding environmental issues, they must first be aware that environmental problems exist. Much of the environmental degradations that occurred in the past, and continues today are the result of the failure of our society and its education system to provide citizens with the basic understandings and skills needed to make informed choices about people and environmental interaction and interrelations.

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY BY MOVING AWAY FROM PEDAGOGICAL IMPOSITIONS

Reorienting education towards sustainable development requires a new vision for education. Education, including formal education, public awareness and training should be recognized as a process by which human beings and societies can reach their fullest potential. Education is critical for achieving environmental and ethical awareness, values and attitudes, skills and behaviour consistent with sustainable development and for effective public participation in decision-making.

International conservation organisations such as WWF and IUCN are also actively promoting the integration of education into sustainable development at local community, national and eco-regional scales. In addition, many individual governments have established committees, panels, advisory councils and curriculum development projects to discuss education for sustainable development, develop policy and appropriate support structures, programmes and resources, and fund local initiatives.

Indeed, the roots of education for sustainable development are firmly planted in the environmental education efforts of such groups. In its brief thirty-year history, contemporary environmental education has steadily striven towards goals and outcomes similar and comparable to those inherent in the concept of sustainability.

Following the Earth Summit, UNESCO was to accelerate reforms of education and coordinate the activities of all stakeholders in education through a wide-ranging Work Programme. The seven objectives of the Work Programme were to:

- clarify and communicate the concept and key messages of education for sustainable development
- review national education policies and reorient formal educational systems
- incorporate education into national strategic and action plans for sustainable development
- educate to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns in all countries
- promote investments in education
- identify and share innovative practices
- Raise public awareness.

Many international conferences on sustainable development highlighted the role of education and public awareness for sustainability, to consider the important contribution of environmental education in this context. Achieving sustainability will depend ultimately on changes in behaviour and lifestyles, changes which will need to be motivated by a shift in values and rooted in the cultural and moral precepts upon which behaviour is predicated. Education in the broadest sense will by necessity play a pivotal role in bringing about the deep change required, in both tangible and intangible ways.

The challenge of sustainable development is a difficult and complex one, requiring new partnerships — among governments, academic and scientific communities, teachers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local communities and the media. All are essential to the birth of a culture of sustainability. Within governments, for example, education for sustainability is of direct concern not only to ministries of education, but also to ministries of health, environment, natural resources, planning, agriculture, commerce and others. New policies, programmes, resources and activities can be reported from almost every country, a sure and encouraging sign that education is beginning to be seen as a significant aspect of national sustainable development policies.

RECYCLING NATURAL INPUTS FOR CURRICULAR DISPOSITIONS

The call for sustainability and green culture demands for a revision of existing curricula and the development of objectives and content themes, teaching, learning and assessment processes that emphasize moral virtues, ethical motivation and ability to work with others to help to build a sustainable future. This should be based on the learning from the book of nature customised to the psycho social levels of the children. This kind of orientation would require increased attention to the humanities and social sciences in the curriculum. The natural sciences provide concreteness to the abstract knowledge of the world. Even increased study of ecology is not sufficient to reorient education towards sustainability. Even though ecology has been described by some as the foundation discipline of environmental education, studies of the biophysical and geophysical basis of world are essential, but not sufficient prerequisite to understanding sustainability. The traditional primacy of nature study, and the often apolitical -contexts in which it are taught, need to be balanced with the study of social sciences and humanities keeping the content validity of the text. Learning about the interactions of ecological processes would then be associated with market forces, cultural values, equitable decision-making, government action and the environmental impacts of human activities in a holistic interdependent manner. The approach for curricular formulation and transaction must be praxis oriented and recycling the learner experiences in a wider perspective.

Reorienting education for sustainable development encompasses a vision for society that is not only ecologically sustainable but also one which is socially, economically and politically sustainable as well. While education reproduces certain aspects of current society, it also prepares students to transform society for the future. Education must help students to determine what is best conserved in their cultural, economic and natural heritage. It must also nurture values and strategies for attaining sustainability locally, nationally and globally. This requires a curriculum that enhances life skills as a foundation for basic education.

Various learning activities are to be designed for students for the proper understanding of the concepts and enhance critical thinking for the solutions. These rejuvenating efforts require all the stakeholders to work increasingly at the interface of disciplines in order to address the complex problems of today's world. Understanding and solving complex problems is likely to require intensified co-operation among scientific fields as well as applied field, between the pure and mathematical sciences and the social sciences, the arts and the humanities. Reorienting education in short require even anew epistemic culture, in the way we think of knowledge and its generative points.

Teachers learn about the community's vision and strategies for a sustainable future, and then bring this larger dialogue into their curriculum with a focus that's appropriate for their students. This fosters ongoing school-community partnerships that gain staying power from their ties to the

curriculum and to each other. And these partnerships create learning opportunities for students in their community—whether in the schoolyard or at the food shelf. With each learned lesson, students develop their own understanding of the web of connections that make up their community and their role in it. Students' personal appreciation and experience of interdependence give them the foundation for understanding and supporting global decision-making in their future.

CONCLUSION

Education has a key role in showing young people that not only do they have wider responsibilities, but also that they are entitled to involvement in decisions and counter and act the myriads of issues. Education can help to give young people the intellectual as well as emancipatory tools to take part in these decisions, allowing them to enter into the debate. Viewing education for sustainability as a contribution to a politically literate society is central to the reformulation of education and calls for a 'new generation' of theorizing and practice in education and a rethinking of many familiar approaches, including within environmental education. Convergences of the shift in the role of teacher from the authority of Knowledge to an experimental pedagogue with shift of the learner from passive receptor to an active constructor of own experiences are the prime variant in this movement.

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