

Education and a Sustainable world

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Articles

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I. Introduction

The environmental condition of the world is deteriorating at an alarming rate due to change in human activities triggered by inappropriate economic activities and rapidly changing demographic and socio-economic patterns. One of the most effective ways of ensuring we appreciate the importance of “Environmental protection and sustainable development” is through the education process. EE and ESD represent relevant means of prevention because these types of educations encourage learner's awareness of their environment's ambient conditions, as well as their active participation in solving environmental problems. EE is one of the long-lasting and most popular ones. EE depends on each country's background and influences contemporary ESD activities.

II. From Natural Science to Environmental Education (EE)

Natural Science education has been a double-edge sword that while useful for acquiring meaningful accomplishments. It has also led the world towards an ecological catastrophe as the result of “globalizing the Western consumer

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life style “. Natural science education as a predecessor to EE focused on the observation of natural phenomenon but lacked consideration of the social or economic forces that have influenced ecological relationships. Where science education has fallen short, principally because of its inability to address the economic, social, cultural, and political ramifications of environmental degradation, EE holds promise to holistically mitigate the damage suffered by human interaction with the eco-system. Perhaps one of the most important shifts in conceptualizing EE was the acknowledgement that the management of an eco-system was not value-free and was based as much on social values and perspectives as on scientific fact (Scott 2003).

The most widely used definition and concept of EE was identified at the first intergovernmental conference on EE in Tbilisi, Georgia in 1977. This concept was stated as follows: “EE is a process aimed at developing a world population that is aware of and concerned about the total environment and its associated problems, and which has the knowledge, attitudes, motivation, commitment, and skills to work individually and collectively toward solutions of current problems and the prevention of new ones” (Cui 2007).

The Institute of Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), defined EE as “a holistic approach to the learning process, whereby individuals and community acquire the knowledge, attitudes, skills, values and motivation to improve the quality of the environment and attain an ecologically and socially sustainable future”(Wang 2006).

EE means the educational process dealing with man’s relationship with his natural and man made surroundings and includes the relationship between population, pollution, resource allocation and depletion, conservation, transportation, technology and urban and rural planning to the total human environment.

The main objectives of environmental education are: (Cui 2007)

- The cultivation of love for the Earth and all elements which are used in them: water, plants, animals, etc;
- To increase the desire to protect, respect and protect nature by involving children in character and demonstration activities;
- Develop skills of research, exploration, environmental investigation;
- Knowledge of organism's and phenomenon's from environment and their characteristics;
- Enrichment of active vocabulary with words from the environment area;
- Acquisition of some conduct rules to ensure the balance between human health, society and the environment;
- Knowledge of plants and animals protected by law;
- Research remediation methods of environmental state using students in activities of waste recycling, the sanitation of towns, etc..;
- Take negative attitudes on those who violate environmental rules and laws.
- Taking into account this finalities, at international level have been designed and implemented a series of environmental projects.

III. Transformation of EE to ESD

The rise of global environmental problems and the spread of the new slogans, such as sustainable development, posed new challenges to EE. Heads of state at the 1992 Rio Summit emphasized that the reorientation of education and the enhancement of public information and awareness, as well as training are indispensable means of achieving sustainable development. Thus, it was unanimously agreed that the concept of environmental

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education which was formulated in the 1970's, was not broad enough to encompass the concept of sustainable development. As a result, they suggested the reorientation of the existing education to address the issues of sustainability in Chapter 36 of Agenda 21 (Chowdhury, 2006).

The following excerpt from the UNESCO sponsored Thessaloniki Conference should help clarify how the concept of environmental education has evolved to education for sustainability in addressing global issues as spelled out in Agenda-21. The excerpt reads, “environmental education, as developed within the framework of the Tbilisi recommendations and as it has evolved since then, addressing the entire range of global issues included in Agenda-21 and the major UN Conferences, has also been dealt with as education for sustainability. This allows that it also be referred to as education for environment and sustainability.....It is, therefore, not only necessary to deal with the problems, but even more essential to get our thinking right: to see interrelations among (these problems) and recognize the fundamental need to develop a new perspective rooted in the values of sustainability. It is this need which makes education the key to creating a sustainable future” (UNESCO and Government of Greece, 1997).

The IUCN Commission on Education and Communication recognizes ESD as a stage in the evolution of EE and claims that ESD has a strong link with the adjectival education. The original meaning of EE comprised of changes in behaviors, understanding, knowledge, awareness and skills. Overtime, it gradually moved to include other aspects shown in the center. Through this, EE reaches the stage of ESD, where equity, quality of life, human rights and environmental quality are achieved. In other words, it shows ESD as the successor of EE.

IV. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

ESD is an approach to teaching and learning based on the ideals and principles that underlie sustainability - human rights, poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods, peace, environmental protection, democracy, health, biological and landscape diversity, climate change, gender equality, and protection of indigenous cultures.

The Stockholm Declaration (1972), the Brundtland report and the 1992 World Conference on Environment and Development recognized education as a strategy for sustainable development. In December 2002, the United Nations General Assembly declared the United Nations Decade (2005-2014) of Education for Sustainable Development. Education was considered as humanity's best hope and most effective means in the quest to achieve sustainable development. The overall goal of DESD is to integrate the values inherent in sustainable development into all aspects of learning in order to learn and acquire values, behaviour and lifestyles required for a sustainable future and for positive societal transformation. (Zhou 2013)

UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development has the following objectives: (Song 2009)

- Facilitate networking, linkages, exchange and interaction among stakeholders in ESD;
- Foster an increased quality of teaching and learning in education for sustainable development;
- Help countries make progress towards and attain the millennium development goals through ESD efforts;
- Provide countries with new opportunities to incorporate ESD into education reform efforts.

In order to realize the above objectives, the Decade has proposed seven strategies. These are advocacy and vision building; consultation and ownership; partnership and networks; capacity building and trainings; research and innovation; use of information and communication technologies as well as monitoring and evaluation.

V. ESD in ECO-UNESCO

ECO-UNESCO is an environmental education and youth organization. As such, the environment plays a central role in the definition of ESD, while still placing great importance on the education of young people which is participative, inclusive and facilitates their own decision-making. As an affiliate of the World Federation of UNESCO clubs, centers and associations, ECO-UNESCO places great importance on a global perspective in our conception of education for sustainable development to examine how our actions are connected to the world at local, national and international levels (Nevin 2008).

Central to all of the work of the organization is the empowerment of young people and the protection and conservation of our environment from a local and global perspective. The aims of the organization are to raise environmental knowledge, awareness and understanding in young people, the promotion of the protection and conservation of the environment, and the personal development of young people. In essence ECO-UNESCO examines the 'bigger picture' in respect to issues such as environment, development and global justice. This 'bigger picture' is translated into local and personal action by enabling young people, their leaders and their teachers to explore the links between their lives, the environment and the

global context (Nevin 2008).

Moreover, ECO-UNESCO's work is innovative and has tried over the years to develop programmes and services that are coherent, engaging, empowering and support the development of skills in critical thinking and analysis. Examples of the programmes delivered by ECO-UNESCO include the Young Environmentalist Awards which encourage groups to undertake a local environmental action project to encourage citizenship as well as the development of skills and awareness raising in environmental protection. The ethos of the ECO-UNESCO club is to encourage groups of interested young people to participate in local environmental protection with the opportunity to link with the international network of UNESCO clubs and centers.

Education for sustainable development also works toward social inclusion and this is the focus of ECO-UNESCO's ECO-Choices programme, a drugs prevention and awareness initiative that highlights the environment's key role in the well-being of people and delivers empowering environmental action projects to young people. The ECO-Choices programme uses action projects, outdoor education and personal development work to encourage young people to take an active role in their environment (Nevin 2008).

VI. How can ESD be accomplished?

Education for sustainability can give people the tools, skills, and experience they need to understand, process, and use information about sustainable development. It will help them make individual and collective decisions that both benefit themselves and promote the development of sustainable communities. .But how can it be accomplished? The following

are key principles about education for sustainability that the Task Force identified (Ding 2013).

1. ESD must involve everyone.

Education on any topic, but particularly on sustainability, should flow from school to community and back again. Educators at all levels should reach beyond school walls, as many successful programs already do, to involve parents, industry, communities, and government in the education process. Colleges and universities should work with other schools and communities - to deliver information, identify questions for research, and provide direct services to help solve community problems.

2. ESD emphasizes relationships between formal and non-formal education.

Because sustainable development is all-encompassing, learning about it cannot and should not be confined to formal settings such as schools, universities, colleges, and training institutions. Non-formal education settings, such as museums, zoos, extension programs, libraries, parks, and mass media, provide significant opportunities to complement and build on classroom learning. This means that formal and non-formal educators should work together to produce an educated citizenry.

3. ESD is about connections.

ESD does not follow academic theories according to a single discipline but rather emphasizes connections among all subject areas, as well as geographic and cultural relationships. Rather than weaken the rigor of individual disciplines, ESD offers an opportunity to strengthen them by

demonstrating vital interrelationships.

4. ESD is practical.

While delving into many disciplines, ESD helps students apply what they learn to their daily lives. It engenders a sense of efficacy. Part of sustainability education is learning citizenship skills and understanding that citizens have the power to shape their lives and their communities in light of their vision of a healthy and prosperous future (Darner 2009).

5. ESD is lifelong.

Continual efforts should be made to institute programs about sustainability in a variety of arenas, including the workplace and community centers and through the media. A citizenry knowledgeable about the benefits of sustainable living will have the capacity to create and maintain lasting change. Benefits to the individual include an understanding of and ability to participate in the social and economic changes that will affect their lives (Darner 2009).

VII. Conclusion

The environmental dimension of the sustainable development is necessary for the continuation of the living life on the earth. Therefore, all countries in the World should follow a particular environmental policy. However, in this matter people should also be informed. Peoples' fulfilling of their responsibilities leads to a good deal of development by which the natural life is affected positively like decreasing of energy consumption and preventing environmental pollution. In this context EE and ESD includes

aspects related to a wide variety of environment and development issues that affect and are affected by human activities and natural phenomena. (McKeown 2010).

EE and ESD represent a relevant means of prevention because these types of education encourage learner's awareness of their environment's ambient conditions, as well as their active participation in solving environmental problems. The awareness among the public and industrial generators has to be created and motivated by the updated techniques and incorporating the innovative and implementable solutions to reform economy. These can be achieved through environmental education.

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Abstract

Global environment problems became public issues in the West in the late 1980s. The ozone hole, the greenhouse phenomenon and the alarming decline in biodiversity were seen as serious new threats. The underlying problems, such as deforestation, desertification and the scarcity of fresh water, gained new urgency. Education was considered as humanity's best hope and most effective means in the quest to achieve sustainable development and environmental protection. This thesis will make some general discussion on Environmental Education (EE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). This thesis will also highlight the role of ECO-UNESCO in global ESD process, analyses how ESD will be accomplished.

Keywords: Environmental Education, Education for Sustainable Development, ECO-UNESCO.