Education and Sustainability

Role of Education in Sustainable Development

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How we see "Education for Sustainable Development"

What is the role of Education in sustainability

Often, environmental education and sustainability are used interchangeably. In the mix, we have a more programmatic approach with end goals and timelines, and we call it sustainable development (referring to the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030). Dating back to the 1960's, environmental education was school-based and dealt with climate change. A landmark change in way environmental education was perceived as the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Environmental education after 1992 was seen only as half the story. The second half was missing in formal curricula. This second half was called "Sustainable Development," and this after 1992, environmental education transformed into education for sustainable development.

Rose and Bridgewater (2003) cover all these dimensions and define environmental education as "…a lifelong teaching/learning approach that has the potential to strengthen people's capacity to address environmental and development issues, to be more aware of and better understand such complexity; to develop knowledge, values and attitudes, life-skills and ethical behaviors consistent with sustainable development, as well as for effective participation in decision-making" (p. 265). The authors add that environmental education is useful for understanding natural and social processes and their inter-linkages. It also improves the socio-economic development of individuals and society (Kassas, 2002; Rose & Bridgewater, 2003). They state that the main objective of environmental education is to create equitable, participatory, culturally, and socially aware citizens, that are respectful of human rights and want to achieve a common goal of having a well-balanced environment. Clarke (1993) also combines all the different parts like values, attitudes, and action and its objective is to increase public awareness of environmental problems and possible solutions from the immediate locality. Kassas (2002) focuses on more beliefs and values that would collectively form perceptions of the environment and human linkages. Aho (1996) focuses on understanding inter-linkages, and leading a peaceful coexistence combines both action

and cognitive abilities. The action side is highlighted in the form of environmental citizenship that focuses on creating an environmentally responsible citizenry (Kasas, 2002).

This broadening definition of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) was further boosted at World Summit on Sustainable Development ("Rio plus 10") was held in Johannesburg in 2000. Mid 2000's saw the Launch of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014) by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2002.

Nature conservation to environmental education to education for sustainable development has broadened the scope to education to prepare individuals for life's challenges. However, some basic operations need to change-

· Sustainable Development Goals (4) calls for "Lifelong Learning Approaches" for education. Therefore, education should not be restricted to schools or curriculums, but also should reach the masses, whether educated or not.

· Since sustainability challenges are inter-connected, and therefore education should tackle all forms of challenges.

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