EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (EDS) : A WAY TO ENSURE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Alka Saini
Asstt. Teacher, Deptt. of Education,
Uttarakhand

ABSTRACT

The recent depletion in natural resources has put the survival of humanity at risk with a serious question i.e. "If we use up all the sources, what will the future generations do?"

Education is like a bridge from the past to the present and from the present to the future. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is considerably broader in scope and complements the adjectival educations. Sustainable development or sustainability is not a new idea; it is deeply embedded into the cultures of the Asia-Pacific region under different forms and names. Now it is felt all over the world and India in particular that literacy and education is one such reinforcing agent which addresses the fundamental issue of human suffering–thereby straddling all variables—technical, political, social, economic, geographic, racial, ethnic and many others.

The primary purpose of the paper is to outline the concept of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as a framework to refocus the education system to achieve the goal of a better future so that the present generation is engaged adequately for achieving its own well being while ensuring even better quality of life for the successive generations.

Keywords: Sustainable, Development, Environment, Education

Environmental issues, such as rapidly increasing global warming, ozone depletion, dwindling resources, famine, disease, loss of the world's forests, pollution, have captured the attention of the world. The recent depletion in natural resources has put the survival of humanity at risk. If we use up all the sources, what will the future generations do? The World Commission on Environmental Development (WCED) introduced the idea of sustainable development. According to WCED *"sustainable development seeks to meet the needs and aspirations of the present generations, without compromising the ability to meet those of … future generations."* (WCED, 1987).

The World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002, which was held in Johannesburg, South Africa, also confirms this in Agenda 21. The agenda 21 states, *"education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address sustainable issues."* (UNESCO-UNEP, 1994).

Education is critical agent of transformation in terms of changing life styles, attitude and behaviour. Now it is felt all over the world and India in particular that literacy and education is one such reinforcing agent which addresses the fundamental issue of human suffering – thereby straddling all variables—technical, political, social, economic, geographic, racial, ethnic and many others.

Idea of "Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)":

Both Development Education (DE) and Environmental Education (EE) share *"increasingly common aims, objectives, goal, vocabulary and approach"*. And their defining elements should be *"woven into a core*

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (EDS) :
A WAY TO ENSURE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

RE SEAR CH

RECENT EDUCATIONAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCHES
Issue : 3, Vol. : 6, Oct.-Nov.-Dec. (2017), Pages : 145 - 149, ISSN 2278 – 5949
Alka Saini

International Refereed & Blind Peer-Reviewed Research Journal

framework utilizing the concept of sustainability to produce an accessible, balanced and empowering education for sustainable development". This is what is to be called education for sustainable development (ESD). It differs from the other educations because it is radical in nature, and it does not subscribe to technocratic interpretation of sustainability.

Defining Sustainable Development:

There are many definitions of the term "*Sustainable Development*", but the most widely accepted is the one used in the publication "Our Common Future", sometimes referred to as the Brundtland definition: "*Development which meets the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs*" (UN, 1989).

Sustainable Development and ESD:

Education is our bridge from the past to the present and from the present to the future. ESD is considerably broader in scope and complements the adjectival educations. Sustainable development or sustainability is not a new idea; it is deeply embedded into the cultures of the Asia-Pacific region under different forms and names. It means caring not only for ourselves but also our children and their children. The world we live in, should be a better place (at least, not worse off), when we leave it for our children. So in a nutshell, sustainable development means "*living well within the means of nature*".

But the greatest challenge we are facing today are the growing population, absolute poverty, environmental problems, conflict, violence, terrorism and inappropriate development, which are clasping together to weaken the ecological system on which we depend and live. Not only these forces, but also other forces (natural calamities, human actions and their combined effects) are in the loom. It is for these reasons that a huge shift in our thinking, values and action is required.
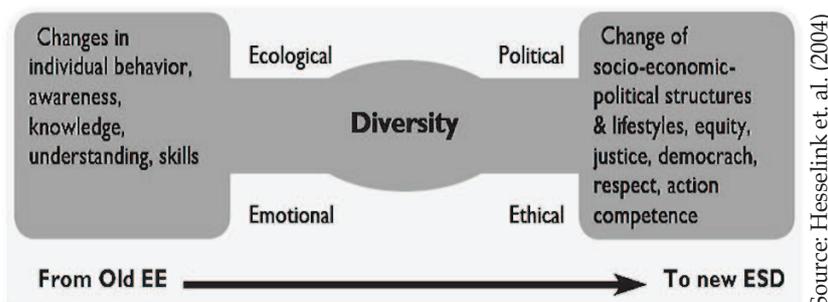
Meaning and Scope of ESD:

"*ESD is an emerging but dynamic concept that encompasses a new vision of education that seeks to empower people of all ages to assume responsibility for creating a sustainable future.*"

Many scholars agree at the point that ESD is an extension of environmental education that would promote a sense of responsibility and active learner's participation in resolving environmental problems (Tilbury 1995); a successor of environmental education (Hesselink *et al.*, 2002); a basic understanding of the interrelationships among environmental, economic and social equity issues (PCSD, 1996); a dynamic extended environmental education, emphasizing critical thinking, problem solving skills and sensitivity; a trick because it is a way of thinking as much as what we are thinking about; and the recent version of environmental education (Bhandari, 2003 a & b).

According to UNESCO, "*ESD means a lifelong learning process that leads to an informed and involved citizenry having the creative problem solving skill, scientific and social literacy, and commitment to engage in responsible individual and cooperative actions. These actions will help ensure an environmentally sound and economically prosperous future.* "*ESD is an approach to teaching and learning that meets the challenge of balancing the three "E's" and intergenerational equity. It is a lifelong process of gaining the knowledge, skills and values needed to create lasting economic prosperity, environmental health, and social justice.*"

Figure: 1 shows how the focal point of **E**nvironmental **E**ducation (EE) is shifting towards ESD and how it is becoming broader and more inclusive in content.


Source: Hesselink et. al. (2004)

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (EDS) :
A WAY TO ENSURE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

RE(SEAR)CH

RECENT EDUCATIONAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCHES
Issue : 3, Vol. : 6, Oct.-Nov.-Dec. (2017), Pages : 145 - 149, ISSN 2278 – 5949
Alka Saini

International Refereed & Blind Peer-Reviewed Research Journal

The Focus of ESD

ESD gets beyond the reduction and analysis approach to the synthesis and integration approach of what we know and can know. In other words, the understanding of interconnections between environmental, economic and social systems is core to ESD. To formulate focused action plans and implementation strategies, UNESCO divides ESD domain in eight areas or themes as shown in Figure: 2.

Figure : 2
Focal Themes of ESD
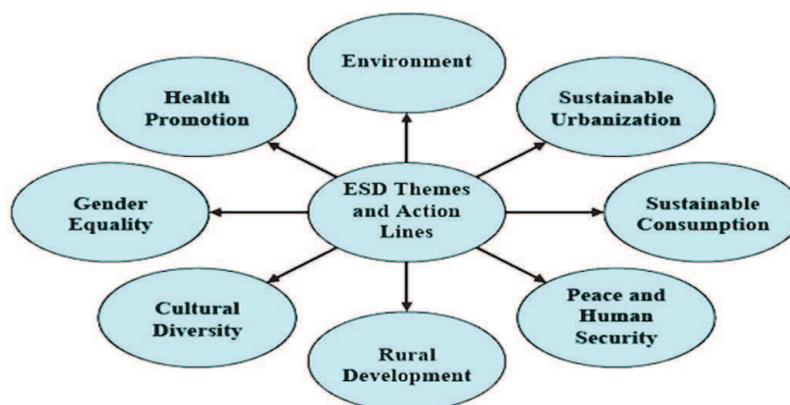
Current Scenario of World

- Today, the rich one-fifth of the world's people consumes some 75-80 percent of world resources and generate the most pollution, both absolute and in relative terms.

- It is estimated that up to 100 species become extinct every day. One estimate indicates that about 40,000 species were lost by the year 2000. (a rate far exceeding any in the last several centuries).

- In one example using the 'footprint' analysis, "it has been estimated that to provide one person living in Sydney with water, settlement area, energy and food requires at least 4 to 5 hectares of productive land. Therefore, if 9 billion people were to live as they do in Sydney, we would need about 40 billion hectares of productive land. However, this is approximately 6 times all the productive land area of the planet."

- Another estimate suggests that, if the world pushes ahead to the consumption levels reached in the US today, we would need about 5 or 6 more earths.

The essential elements of the current scenario is that, despite substantial progress in various areas, (a) population continues to grow, (b) poverty has not diminished, but increasing, (c) inequalities between the rich and the poor are widening, and (d) the environment is being pushed beyond its limits. This situation becomes even more pronounced with the rising tide of globalization. It also indicates that the consumption and production patterns of the present generation are endangering the survival of future generations, both human and nonhuman life forms. Such a situation has created much concern locally, nationally and globally.

Need for New Ethical Education

New values and ethical standards never arrive in abstract. They arise in view of new realities and new understanding of the world. We should realize that our society has become an accumulation of self-centred desires that threaten the life-support system of Mother Earth. Mahatma Gandhi has also warned the world saying *"Mother Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not any man's greed."* We should also realize that our lifestyles based on ever increasing materialistic consumption could be changed gradually by inculcating or embracing new values and ethics. In short, our educational systems

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (EDS) :
A WAY TO ENSURE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

RE(SEAR)CH

RECENT EDUCATIONAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCHES
Issue : 3, Vol. : 6, Oct.-Nov.-Dec. (2017), Pages : 145 - 149, ISSN 2278 – 5949
Alka Saini

International Refereed & Blind Peer-Reviewed Research Journal

will need to reform, innovate and focus towards sustainability. Only through re-orienting towards new ethical education will human society be able to achieve sustainable development.

Strategies for Future Education

Promoting a strategy for Education for Sustainable Development involves wide prospectus and covers important areas as poverty reduction, citizenship, peace, ethics, responsibility in local and global contexts, democracy and governance, justice, security, human rights, health, gender equity, cultural diversity, production and consumption patterns, corporate responsibility, environmental protection, natural resource management and biological and landscape diversity. Thus the objective of the Strategy should be to incorporate the key themes of sustainable development in all education systems at appropriate levels. The strategy must include the practical issues such as training of teachers, development of curriculum materials, research, awareness promotion, policies etc to promote sustainable development. The four priority areas of action for the Education for Sustainable Development aim to:

- Promote and improve basic education;
- Reorient and revise existing education programs;
- Develop public understanding and awareness of sustainability;
- Provide practical training.

Conclusion:

Education directly affects sustainability plans in the following three areas:

Implementation: An educated citizenry is vital to implementing informed and sustainable development. In fact, a national sustainability plan can be enhanced or limited by the level of education attained by the nation's citizens. Nations with high illiteracy rates and unskilled workforces have fewer development options. For the most part, these nations are forced to buy energy and manufactured goods on the international market with hard currency. To acquire hard currency, these countries need international trade; usually this leads to exploitation of natural resources or conversion of lands from self-sufficient family-based farming to cash-crop agriculture. An educated workforce is key to moving beyond an extractive and agricultural economy.

Decision-Making: Good community-based decisions - which will affect social, economic, and environmental well-being - also depend on educated citizens. Development options, especially "greener" development options, expand as education increases. For example, a community with an abundance of skilled labor and technically trained people can persuade a corporation to locate a new information-technology and software-development facility nearby. Citizens can also act to protect their communities by analyzing reports and data that address community issues and helping shape a community response. For example, citizens who were concerned about water pollution reported in a nearby watershed started monitoring the water quality of local streams. Based on their data and information found on the World Wide Web, they fought against the development of a new golf-course, which would have used large amounts of fertilizer and herbicide in maintenance of the grounds.

Quality of life: Education is also central to improving quality of life. Education raises the economic status of families; it improves life conditions, lowers infant mortality, and improves the educational attainment of the next generation, thereby raising the next generation's chances for economic and social well-being. Improved education holds both individual and national implications.

In view of above, it comes out that Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) empowers people to change the way they think and work towards a sustainable future. Hence, India needs to develop its education system at various levels by adopting the strategies towards the sustainable development. This entails assurance for economic and social development for mankind, leading to

improved quality of life, also benefiting the generation to come, thus making teams to contribute for sustainable development of a nation and its future generation towards which India has already began its journey through small initiatives and efforts.

References

1. Abdul Kalam, A.P.J. and Rajan, Y.S. (2000). *India 2020: A Vision for the New Millennium*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India.

2. Ashford, Nicholas (2004), "*Major challenges to engineering education for sustainable development: what has to change to make it creative, effective, and acceptable to the established disciplines* The International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education, 2004.

3. Bhandari, Bishnu B. and Osamu Abe. (2003), "*The ABC of ESD"*. A paper presented in the International Seminar on Wise Use and Conservation of Mangrove in Southeast Asia, jointly organized by Forestry Department, Universitie Brunei Darussalam

4. Gupta A. (2007). *"A study of existing perceptions/ understanding of Education for Sustainable Development of Indian Teachers"* Prithvi Innovations, Lucknow.

5. Hesselink, Frits; Pert Paul van Kempen and Arjen Wals. 2002. *ES Debate: International Debate on Education for Sustainable Development*. Gland: IUCN Commission on Education and Communication (CEC).

6. Nilekani, Nandan (2009). *Imagining India: Ideas for the New Century*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India.

7. Pandya, Hetal and Hemal (2011). "Education for Sustainable Development in India: Problems and Prospects" International Journal of Social Sciences and Education ISSN: 2223-4934 Volume: 1 Issue: 3 July 2011

8. Tilburry, Daniella, Robert B. Stevenson, John Fien and Danie Schreuder. 2002. *Education and Sustainability: Responding to the Global Challenge*. Gland: IUCN Commission on Education and Communication (CEC).

9. Tilbury, D. (1995). "*Environmental education for sustainability: Defining the new focus of environmental education in the 1990's.*" Environmental Education Research," 1(2), 195-212. [EJ 509 039]

10. United Nations. (1992) *Earth Summit: Agenda 21* (The United Nations Program of Actions From Rio). New York: United Nations Department of Public Information.

11. United Nations (2017) "Education for Sustainable Development Goals Learning Objectives" available at http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002474/247444e.pdf

12. Wheeler, Keith A. and Anne Perraca Biju (editors).2000. *Education for a Sustainable Future: A Paradigm of Hope for the 21st Century*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.