

NEW APPROACHES IN EDUCATION TO DEAL WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Humanity is part of a vast evolving universe. Earth our home, is alive with a unique community of life. But the dominant pattern of production and consumption are causing the depletion of resources and conflict in ownership. Now we are living in the era of civilization crisis and to overcome to this we have to change our approach of education and should define clearly what we have to learn to make our earth sustainable and to produce a just society. Aren't we building a science and a culture that are oriented towards the degradation of the planet and of humankind?. Now this is the time the concept of sustainable development should be linked to that of Planetarity, which means, viewing the earth as a new paradigm. This approach will lead us to a planetary citizenship, a planetary civilization, a planetary awareness. We must understand that the culture of sustainability is also a planetary culture, which means a culture that departs from the principle that the earth is constituted by one single community of human beings, the earthlings, who are citizens of one single nation. This paper tries to present the issues and ideas related to save our planet Earth and Human being as well

Keyword

Sustainable Development, Planetary Civilization, Planetary citizenship

Introduction

The issues related with Sustainable Development will dominate in educational debates in the forthcoming decades. What are we studying in schools? Aren't we building a science and a culture that are oriented towards the degradation of the planet and of humankind? Now this is the time the concept of sustainable development should be linked to that of Planetarity, which means, viewing the earth as a new paradigm. This approach will lead us to a planetary citizenship, a planetary civilization, a planetary awareness. We must understand that the culture of sustainability is also a planetary culture, which means a culture that departs from the principle that the earth is constituted by one single community of human beings, the earthlings, who are citizens of one single nation.

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unique community of life. But the dominant pattern of production and consumption are causing the depletion of resources and conflict in ownership. Now we are living in the era of civilization crisis and to overcome to this we have to change our approach of education and should define clearly what we have to learn to make our earth sustainable and to produce a just society. After taking seriously the issues, related to man and this planet, the Earth Charter is prepared in year 2000 at Hague after the discussion by several physical scientist and social scientist under the headship of Earth Charter Commission, which is an independent international entity to work on planet Earth's well-being. The Earth Charter's principles are following;

1. Respect and care for the community of life
2. Ecological Integrity
3. Social and Economic Justice
4. Democracy, Non-Violence and Peace

In coordination with UNESCO, Earth Charter's Principals has prepared the basis for the creation of a global educational system unique and universal, and set a common humanistic foundation for all national systems of education. This is not about creating a system that has a unique ideology, which would be a totalitarian initiative. It would highlight what we have in common. We must note that if we don't find anything in common, war is our only future. It is well known to all that environmental degradation generates human conflicts. The Earth Charter is, in many cases, serving as basis for resolution of conflicts previously generated by an unsustainable way of producing and reproducing our existence in the planet, mainly on a daily basis. As affirmed by Abelardo Brines, professor of the United Nations University for Peace, the principle of global responsibility established in the preamble of the Earth Charter "complements the Human Rights Declaration, recognizing each person as a citizen of the world. Each person is equally responsible for the Earth's community as a whole, even if, individually, we have different roles and responsibilities. We can emphasize on various related issues like the Global Campaign for Education, the Decade of Education for a Sustainable World, Children's Rights Declaration, It is also evident that the values contained in the Declaration of the Millennium are in agreement with the values defended in the Earth Charter: liberty, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect towards nature, shared responsibility,

For us, sustainability is the dream of living well; sustainability is a dynamic balance with others and the environment, it is the harmony among differences. Leonardo Boff, member of the Earth Charter Commission, emphasised on the Earth Charter role in a holistic and integrated view of humanity's social and environmen-

tal problems. He said that human being is a sub-chapter of the chapter of life and thus human beings must take care of the community of life as a whole. Renowned philosopher, Paulo Freire has said in his last book, "it is urgent that we take upon ourselves the duty of fighting for fundamental ethic principles, such as respect for the life of human beings, the life of other animals, of birds, rivers and forests. I do not believe in lovingness between men and women, among human beings, if we are not capable of loving the world. On one day we deliver a progressive and revolutionary speech and on just another day we do a life-denying practice. A practice that pollutes the sea, the water, fields and that devastates forests, destroys trees, threatens animals and birds" (Freire: 2000:66-67).

Now we have to practice on Eco-pedagogy which is a pedagogy focused on life, it takes into account people, cultures, lifestyles and the respect towards identity and diversity. It acknowledges human beings as creatures that are always in movement, as "incomplete and unfinished" beings, which are constantly shaping itself, learning, interacting with others and with the world. The current dominant pedagogy is centered in tradition, in what is static, in what generates humiliation for the learner due to the way he/she is evaluated. In Eco-pedagogy, the educator should welcome the student. Sheltering, caring are the basis for education for sustainability, which is being promoted since 2002 by the United Nations through the creation of a "Decade" entirely dedicated to it.

The role of United Nations in Education for a Sustainable Development:

In 2006, UNESCO has created a Reference Group in order to give conceptual and strategical support to the Decade's Secretariat. UNESCO's Secretariat for the Decade, based on studies and researches on education for sustainable development, had produced the educational materials and offered necessary training in order to facilitate the educational reforms.

According to Gerhard de Haan, professor of Future Studies in Education Science at the Free University of Berlin and Chairman of the German National Committee for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, the concept of sustainable development is about the ability to apply knowledge about sustainable development and simultaneously recognize the problems involved in non-sustainable development" (Haan, 2007:7). He divided it into ten parts:

1. to create knowledge in a spirit of openness to the world, integrating new perspectives
2. to think and act in a forward-looking manner
3. to acquire knowledge and act in an interdisciplinary manner

4. to be able to plan and act in cooperation with others
5. to be able to participate in decision-making processes
6. to be able to motivate others to become active
7. to be able to reflect upon one's own principles and those of others
8. to be able to plan and act autonomously
9. to be able to show empathy for and solidarity with the disadvantaged
10. to be able to motivate oneself to become active.

Besides, when talking about competences and indicators, teaching contexts and levels must be respected. Governments that are engaged in including themes related to sustainability need to consider poverty levels, construction of peace, justice and democracy, security, human rights, cultural diversity, social equality and environmental protection, among other issues.

In general UNESCO has two roles to play, related to the Decade:

1. To catalyse, coordinate and support the global processes initiated under the International Implementation Scheme, particularly in supporting the re-orientation of national educational systems” and
2. To facilitate an enabling environment for the achievement of the objectives and goals

Countries taken Step Forward:

Few European countries, i.e. Scotland's and Hungary's sets example. The Hungarian Network of Eco-Schools are schools whose pedagogical project is based on values of sustainability, environmental education, education for a healthier lifestyle and education for democratic participation. Around 272 schools, approximately 6% of the total number of schools in the country, are already taking part in the network. In order to be part of the network, schools have to demonstrate how they monitor and evaluate their plans of action for education for sustainable development.

The Asia-Pacific region has developed a regional strategy and given importance to the participation of other factors related to Education for Sustainable Development's like social activists, governments, communities, private sector, formal-education institutions, civil society, means of social communication, youngsters and international agencies. Similarly, Latin America has established its regional for Education for Sustainable Development, (in 2007). Latin America has a long tradition in environmental education movements.

Apart from the above-mentioned regions, many other countries already have

their own national plans or strategies for education for sustainable development, such as Finland, Japan, Scotland, Sweden and Germany. India is also taking an important step toward this helping and securing safe environment for everybody. Finland has strongly involved adult education. Among the principles that guide their Decade's strategic plan, are: transparency, interdisciplinarity, cooperation and construction of networks, participation and research. Japan was one of the first countries to create its own plan, in the beginning of 2006, in a meeting between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Environment. "Japan's DESD Plan of Action" attaches the ESD to the Goals of the Millennium and establishes many programmes in order to promote quality education according to the principles of sustainability, especially in teacher training. Among the diversity of issues involving the environment, economy, and society, what advanced countries including Japan are now required to do is to incorporate environmental considerations in their socioeconomic systems." (Japan, 2006:4-5).

In India, the Ahmedabad Centre for Environmental Education, created in 1984 and member of the Nehru Foundation for Development, has been experiencing good achievements in terms of promoting the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development with its training programme all over the country.

Precisely speaking, we must change our lifestyles and industrial structure based on mass production, consumption and waste, and establish sustainable consumption and production systems that ensure biodiversity. We have to produce committed teachers at all levels, schools and university heads, students, education ministers and other education politicians all around the world, just to take serious matters seriously, to work with others to change all levels of our education systems.

Concept of Sustainable Development:

The most simple definition of sustainable development can be: "sustainable development is a transformation process in which the use of natural resources, the direction given to investments, the orientation given to technological development and institutional change get in harmony with each other and reinforce the present and future potential, in order to fulfil human needs and aspirations". As we can see, it is a very wide concept.

There are several ways to understand the concept of sustainable development

1. A political system that secures effective citizen participation in decision making;
2. An economic system that is able to generate surpluses and technical knowledge on a self-reliant and sustained basis;

3. A social system that provides for solutions for the tensions arising from disharmonious development;
4. A production system that respects the obligation to preserve the ecological base for development;
5. A technological system that can search continuously for new solutions.
6. An international system that fosters sustainable standards of trade and finance, and
7. An administrative system that is flexible and has the capacity for self-correction.

The concept of “sustainable development” was definitely established during 1992 Earth Summit, in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, whose main result was the Agenda 21, which contained a set of proposals and objectives in order to reverse the process of environmental deterioration. Five years later (1997), a Protocol signed by 84 countries (except the United States) in Kyoto, Japan, aimed at the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. As it is known, the greenhouse effect is provoked by the excess of gases in the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide is one of these gases. When solar radiation reaches the earth, part of the wavelengths is absorbed by the Earth's surface and part is sent back to space. A very high amount of gases in the atmosphere, such as carbon dioxide and methane, makes the Earth absorb a higher quantity of sunlight, causing the planet's “overwarming”. Global warming was not a distant fact anymore. Its effects can be seen in the whole planet. Now we do not have a choice to take action rather we have to change our way to produce and reproduce our existence, otherwise we die. The ultimate cause of global warming is human action, so we have to bring change in our actions.

Despite all the discussion that is being done, the expressions “sustainable” and “development” are still vague and controversial. That is why we need to qualify both of them. We have been trying to give to these concepts a new meaning. It is a fact that the word “sustainable”, when associated to development, is worn out. While for some people it is only a label, for others it became the expression of a logical absurd: development and sustainability would be logically incompatible. To us, “sustainable” is more than a qualifier of economic development. It goes beyond the preservation of natural resources and feasibility of a development without harming the environment. It involves human beings finding a balance between themselves and the planet, and more, with the universe itself. The sustainability we defend refers itself to the discussion of who we are, where we came from and where we are going to, as human beings

So when we talk about sustainable life we understand it as a lifestyle that promotes well-being and well-living for everyone, in harmony (dynamic balance) with the environment: a fair, productive and sustainable lifestyle. Amartya Sen (2000), in his book *Development with freedom*, conceives the progress of humanity as a process of expansion of peoples' freedom, keeping away from the concept of a single way of producing and reproducing the existence, which is linked to industrialization and economic growth. The essential is to guarantee people's freedom to build their lives and their well-being the way they want. What governments should do is offer opportunities so that everyone is able develop their talents, by guaranteeing economic, individual, cultural, social and political rights. Freedoms are interlinked planetarily nowadays. That is why democracy also needs to be planetary and radical.

What we should learn for a sustainable development?

The feeling of being part of the universe does not begin at an adult age, nor arises from logical thinking. From childhood we feel deeply linked to the universe and we face it with a mixed feeling of respect and astonishment. And during our whole lives we look for answers to who we are, where do we come from, where are we going, in short, what is the meaning of our existence. This is an unceasing and endless search.

Education may play a very important role in this process, if it promotes the discussion of many fundamental philosophical issues, but if it also knows how to work well with our knowledge, this capacity we all have to be fascinated with our universe. Nowadays, we have become aware that the meaning of our lives is not at all separated from the meaning of the planet itself and we have to develop a new healthy relationship with the planet, recognizing that we are part of a natural world, living in harmony with the universe, which is characterized by the current ecological concerns. We are confronted with a choice. This shall define the future we will have.

It is supposed that fast growing of Technology is harming Human being and planet as well. But we should consider that technology and humanism seems orientated in parallel, and not opposed to one another. It was through the technology that human being was able to go to the moon and see the Earth. Technology and humanism are not opposed to each other. But, of course, there were excesses in our polluting and consumption-oriented lifestyles, impelled by technology and by an unsustainable economical paradigm. This is what is needed to be discussed. This is one of the roles played by a sustainable or ecological education. The preservation of the environment depends of an ecological awareness, which depends on education. And here is the contribution that can be given by the Earth Pedagogy, the Eco pedagogy. Is

a pedagogy that intends to promote learning the sense of things, departing from our daily lives. We need an eco-pedagogy and an eco-training today; we need a Earth Pedagogy, because without this pedagogy, which is necessary for re-educating man/woman. We don't learn to love the Earth only by reading books on the subject, nor books on integral ecology. Our own experience is fundamental. To plant and follow the growth of a tree or a flower, walking in the streets of a city, or venturing into a forest, feeling the birds' singing in sunny mornings, watching how the wind sways the plants, feeling the warm sand of our beaches, gazing at the stars in a dark night. There are many ways of enchantment and emotion before the wonders that nature reserves us. There is, of course, pollution and environmental destruction to remind us that we are able to destroy this wonder, and also to create our ecological awareness and motivate us to act.

Education for Sustainable Development within the context of globalization:

Globalization, impelled by technology, seems to have an increasing power in determining our lives. Decisions concerning what happen to us in our daily routine seem to escape from us, since they are made far away from us. As a phenomenon, as a process, there is no doubt that globalization is irreversible. Its immediate effects are unemployment, the increase of differences between a small amount of people who have too much and a big amount of people who have too little, the loss of power and autonomy by many nations.

The notion of global citizenship is founded in a unifying view of the planet and of a global society. It reveals itself in many expressions: "our common humanity", "unity in diversity", "our common future", "our common nation", "planetary citizenship". Planetary citizenship is an expression that was adopted to express a group of principles, values, attitudes and habits that show a new perception of the Earth as a single community.

Globalization itself is not a problem. It represents a process of advance never seen before in human history. In the same way there is not only one possible market, there is not one possible globalization. What we see nowadays is a globalization under a capitalist perspective. But there are other possibilities. The problem is a competitive globalization in which the interests of the market are more important than human interests, and people's interests less important than corporative interests of big transnational companies. Therefore, when are able to distinguish a competitive globalization from a possible co-operative and solidary globalization, which we also call a process of "Planarization". The first one follows laws of market, while the second one follows ethic values and human spirituality.

Conclusion:

Education for a sustainable world needs a review of our curricula, a reorientation of our view of the world and education as a space for the inclusion of an individual in a society that is local and global at the same time. A culture of sustainability presumes a pedagogy of sustainability that is able to cope with the big task of preparing for planetary citizenship. It is the time to reframe our education that aims at making us feel not only members of the Earth, but living a cosmic citizenship. The challenges are huge for educators and for the people responsible for educational systems. Eco-Pedagogy will provide the ability to understand the needs of earth planet and simultaneously will be able to save its environment. Again there are some signs in society that indicate an increasingly search for spiritual themes and for a deeper scientific knowledge of the universe.

So, educating would not be as said by Émile Durkheim, the transmission of a culture “from one generation to another”, but a big trip of each individual to his/her inner universe and to the universe by which he/she is surrounded.

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