

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, GENDER EQUALITY AND VALUE EDUCATION: TOOLS TO BRING INTEGRATION AND TRANSFORMATION IN THE HUMAN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT: Education, formal and informal, often in innovative forms and addressing all sectors of society and all age groups, will be an essential part of the agenda for transformation. Education is fundamental in building momentum for change. Leaders will only take courageous decisions and overcome the inertia and vested interests in the status quo if they have public understanding and support. The education required cannot be just business as usual, which has proven insufficient. Beyond a scientific understanding of the environment, it must motivate changes in behaviour, and that means operating at the level of ethics, values and lifestyles. This paper throws light on how education with a strong focus on values can help to remove barriers to implementation across all the areas of action for sustainability. The paper highlights the role females play towards achieving a sustainable development in an upcoming society in the global community. The productions of low income yielding crops which are relegated to the females are highlighted. Issues bothering on gender-imbalance in the education of children in the society which has led to a concomitant decline in the number of females involved in science oriented courses at the tertiary levels of education are discussed. The issues of poverty which forces female children into food vending as a means of enhancing the family economic base also lends a pointing finger at some of the reasons responsible for the decline. Lack of gainful employment of the men-folk, which has inadvertently forced females to take up the role of 'Breadwinners,' thereby short-circuiting the original role of female towards sustainable development are analyzed. Despite expanded normative commitments, equality is often undermined by a lack of implementation, institutional barriers and discriminatory social norms. In addition, increased access to education, for instance, has not been matched by policies to increase women's access to decent work, good employment conditions, promotion and equal pay. Progress is also hampered by the low levels of participation and leadership of women in decision-making, at all levels – household, local, regional and national governments, the management of environmental resources, national planning and development structures, national parliaments and global governance. In addition, this paper has tried to highlight on how aid focused on gender equality is typically concentrated in social sectors such as education and health, while only low levels of aid have been targeted to economic and governance sectors. Gender mainstreaming remains limited, and key institutions and mechanisms for promoting gender equality are often under-resourced and lack political support. In addition, monitoring progress is challenged by a severe lack of comparable data of high quality.

Key Words: : Females, Poverty, Sustainable-Development, Labour, Economy.

Introduction:

Globally, about 565 million women are illiterate, mainly in poor rural areas. Fritschel and Mohan (2001) reports that the failure to educate these women when they were girl's may be due to factors ranging from the need for girl's labour in the home, attitudes that devalue education for girls, fears about girls' security outside the home, and lack of resources to pay for education. Educating the girl child has far reaching implications in the reduction in fertility since better educated females marry later and have fewer unwanted pregnancies; have higher earning power which may lower the number of children parents want as income earners and also, educated females reduce the infant mortality rate through better childcare. A World Bank study reports that girl's access to education creates a better environment for economic growth and that the result is particularly strong for middle-income countries. Thus, societies that has a preference for not investing in girl's education pay a price for it in terms of slower growth and reduced income. This according to Fritschel and Mohan (2001) explains the logic about keeping girls out of school becoming a vicious circle: girls do not get educated because there is a lack of wage-earning opportunities for women, and women who are uneducated cannot get wage-earning employment.

Over the past two decades, governments have increasingly removed discriminating laws and have adopted laws promoting gender equality and addressing violence against women. Significant gains are also noted in

the enrolment of girls in primary and secondary education. In several regions, women's participation in the labour market has increased, while some regions have made progress in increasing access to birth control. Harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriages have started to decline in some contexts. Furthermore, some countries have made major gains in women's representation in national parliaments.

Nevertheless, global progress has been slow, uneven and limited. Despite expanded normative commitments, equality is often undermined by a lack of implementation, institutional barriers and discriminatory social norms. In addition, increased access to education, for instance, has not been matched by policies to increase women's access to decent work, good employment conditions, promotion and equal pay. Progress is also hampered by the low levels of participation and leadership of women in decision-making, at all levels – household, local, regional and national governments, the management of environmental resources, national planning and development structures, national parliaments and global governance. There continues to be a chronic underinvestment in gender equality globally, a tendency which has been aggravated by the austerity measures adopted in many countries in the post-crisis context. In addition, aid focused on gender equality is typically concentrated in social sectors such as education and health, while only low levels of aid have been targeted to economic and governance sectors. Women's organisations at all levels remain significantly under-resourced. Gender mainstreaming remains limited, and key institutions and mechanisms for promoting gender equality are often under-resourced and lack political support. In addition, monitoring progress is challenged by a severe lack of comparable data of high quality. Many countries are still not producing regular statistics that are of critical importance for gender equality such as time use, asset ownership, women's participation in decision-making at all levels, or data on gender-based violence and poverty.

Concept of Sustainable Development, Gender Equality and Need of Values—Issues related to Fundamental Transformation in Human Society:

Sustainable development has been defined by World Commission on Environment and Development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains two key concepts:

- the concept of "needs", in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
- the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.

There are three core elements that need to be harmonised in order to achieve sustainable development: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. Sustainable development aims at eradicating poverty through, in particular, creating greater opportunities for all, reducing inequalities, raising basic standards of living and fostering equitable social development and inclusion.

Sustainable Development includes the following targets with respect to Gender Equality:

1. End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere;
2. Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation;
3. Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation;
4. Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate;
5. Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life;
6. Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences;
 - a. Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws;
 - b. Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women;
 - c. Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

There is also an increasingly urgent need for action. Humanity is reaching if not overshooting planetary boundaries, overexploiting natural resources, damaging ecosystem services, and consuming the environmental capital upon which future society must depend. The scientific evidence is clear that these unsustainable trends represent a serious danger for future society. Yet the world continues largely with business as usual, giving priority to short-term interests. Now with climate change accelerating, time is running out to avoid potential tipping points leading to destructive and irreversible change. We all need to ask what else is needed to initiate the fundamental transformation in human society called for in the 2030 Agenda and to implement the ambitious decisions on climate change and the rapid transition to a carbon-neutral economy taken at COP21 in Paris in December 2015.

Education, formal and informal, often in innovative forms and addressing all sectors of society and all age groups, will be an essential part of the agenda for transformation. Education is fundamental in building momentum for change. Leaders will only take courageous decisions and overcome the inertia and vested interests in the status quo if they have public understanding and support. The education required cannot be just business as usual, which has proven insufficient. Beyond a scientific understanding of the environment, it must motivate changes in behaviour, and that means operating at the level of ethics, values and lifestyles. Education with a strong focus on values can help to remove barriers to implementation across all the areas of action for sustainability.

Education must be seen as a tool for creating social, economic and environmental capital. Social capital is created when people learn how to consult together and make plans, act to carry out those plans, reflect on the results achieved, and decide on the next steps to move forward towards their objectives. This institutional capacity for adaptive management can be strengthened at all levels of social organization. Economic capital is not only money, but capacities for work and wealth creation that are inherent in each person and that can be cultivated through education. Other skills like entrepreneurship and innovation can amplify this potential. In a world where the environment has largely been seen as an endless pool of resources to be exploited, resulting in the widespread degradation of natural capital, the challenge today is to rebuild that capital base and to restore ecosystem services, raising the planet's carrying capacity rather than eroding it. Education in the skills of environmental management and restoration can support widespread efforts to create a sustainable resource base for future society.

Values-based education and Ethical principles-- Its primary needs for Human Civilization

Values-based education can draw from a number of sources, and that will be critical to its success. It needs to leave space for individual preferences and sensibilities, cultural differences, the variety of environmental and social contexts, the rationalist and the mystic. Some of the dimensions of values-based education are outlined here to map the terrain to be explored further.

At the heart are the moral and ethical foundations of society, of knowing and doing what is right. Moral values state what is good and of primary importance to human civilization. These are often articulated as ideals that define right from wrong. Ethical principles are the operational expression of moral values that provide guidance to decision-making and action. A capability of moral reasoning starts from abstract general ethical principles to resolve conflicts that arise from moral dilemmas and ethical problems (Anello 2008). Values are the qualities on which worth, desirability, or utility depend. They are principles or rules generated by an ethical or spiritual framework. Values are what determine how humans relate to each other. They are the social equivalent of DNA, encoding the information through which society is structured.

Some of the values most relevant to sustainability are justice and equity, honesty and trustworthiness, integrity and altruism, respect for nature and the planet, and the golden rule of reciprocity. Where these are strong, a virtuous life becomes its own reward, and society becomes largely self-regulating. Where the ethical foundations are weak, society must fall back on laws and institutions for enforcement and punishment in a top-down regulation of society that is costly and inefficient. The stronger the ethical framework and its application, the less need for law and order; it is a more cost-effective, process-based solution to social organization. The challenge is to go from stating ethical principles to implementing them. We have not been very effective in building ethical responsibility into our institutions. At the governmental level, the extensive work load of the Human Rights Council and other human rights bodies demonstrates the facility with which governments can ignore basic human rights. Corporations easily place profits above principles of ethics and social and environmental responsibility. The flourishing of corruption and the illegal economy largely overreaches the efforts to control them. Globalization has made it easy to escape from national legislation and taxation and to profit from the vacuum of international mechanisms for law and justice.

Values are first transmitted in the family, by parents and other close family members, consciously or unconsciously, by example and by word, including through traditional stories, tales and fables. Increasingly, however, values are also being transmitted through the media and advertising, often with aims that are commercial rather than in the collective interest. As children become integrated into community life, values are modelled and communicated in a larger circle reflecting the local culture, and perhaps a faith tradition. Then come schools, which may include curriculum on citizenship and civic behaviour. Peer groups begin to have more influence on values than parents. Children and youth may be enrolled in associations and community groups, one purpose of which may be to convey values of service, accomplishment or care for nature. Sports also exemplify certain values. In this complex process of education for values, it is not always clear who is responsible, and whether they are conscious of that responsibility. When there is a failure to transmit values necessary for the proper insertion of the child in society, who is responsible and how can the error be corrected? This is an increasing problem in societies where parents have rejected a traditional religion or culture, or where these have been lost through migration, and nothing is transmitted to children other than the superficial values of a materialistic society. Such children grow up with no sense of a higher meaning or purpose in life, and are left with self-interest as the highest value, if not a complete denial of any social norms. The costs for society can be very high.

Conclusion:

In a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious world, there are a multiplicity of values, many of which are quite appropriate to and compatible with a sustainable world. In some parts of the world, indigenous knowledge and values are still important, and often reflect higher levels of sustainability than is common in Western society. Cultural diversity is in itself a sustainability value, just as an ecosystem with higher biological diversity is generally more productive, efficient and resilient than a system with only a few species.

Secular and faith-based approaches all have their place in education, especially if they are presented showing the unity in all their diversity, while assuring to each individual the right to independent investigation of the truth as they see it. The values of sustainability have their resonance in all the major religions, and linking the two can benefit from the powerful leverage for transformation that this can provide for those within any particular religious tradition. Qualities espoused in most religions, like altruism, humility, simplicity, solidarity and respect for the creation, make it easy to see the importance of equity and sustainability, and provide a strong motivation for changes in lifestyle. In this context, moving away from consumerism is no longer giving up something desirable but acquiring other less tangible things that are better.

Globally, females can play a central role in ensuring that the cycle of transmission of poverty from generation to generation is broken. Women have been known to be poorer than men globally. They are also deprived of adequate health, education and freedom in most societies. They as care-givers in the home, having the primary responsibility of caring for the children, have in them the potential of transmitting values to the next generation. Programmes put in place by National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) towards protecting vulnerable groups, specifically women and children, would go a long way towards alleviating the problems females face in a developing economy. These include increased representation of women to 30 percent in all programmes; education, including adult education; access to credit and land; maternal and child health. Education for the girl child; universal basic education; care of orphans and vulnerable children (children affected by HIV/AIDS); prevention and treatment of childhood diseases are also some of the targeted instruments. Women have a critical role to play in all SDGs, with many targets specifically recognizing women's equality and empowerment as both the objective and part of the solution. The choice of appropriate indicators to monitor the implementation of the SDGs it has an important impact on determining whether policy efforts towards women's empowerment are channelled adequately. Addressing the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations, with all the seriousness that it requires, especially with a view towards empowering and investing in women, will bring about the much needed sustainable development in a global society.

In some cultures, women produce most of the food for the family; in others it is women who do most of the shopping; in both cases most of the sustainability choices at the family level are made by women. Women are generally the first to transmit values to their children. Values-based education should be designed to target women's and girls' specific concerns and needs, as well as those of men and boys. Action learning is particularly important for values-based education. Learning ethical principles in the abstract is not sufficient. Values are learned best when they are put into action, acted out and experienced. The satisfaction that comes from planning and carrying out an altruistic act, planting a tree, or cleaning up a neighbourhood

or park, leaves its mark for a lifetime. With the SDGs, the high-level aspirations may seem too distant to be meaningful. In an educational context, the goals need to be translated into something relevant locally where the results are more concrete and seen to be within reach. Local indicators for the SDG targets would be an important support for education and public mobilization.

Since values include the rules of good conduct to support community life and social relations, an important component of sustainability education is the values important for building a sense of community and neighbourhood solidarity in villages, towns and cities. This is the most basic level at which the SDGs can find expression, and that expression is largely collective. Empowering local people to consult about their needs, to organize a response, to carry out their plans, to evaluate the result and to decide on further steps that may be needed, are skills that can be applied to many local sustainability challenges, whether social, economic or environmental. The aim should be a learning community that is open to change, essential to meet the challenges of the rapid transition to a more sustainable society that is now necessary.

Education for sustainability needs to include other dimensions to facilitate the necessary fundamental transformation in society. New occupations need to be created and old ones replaced. This creates a need for education for a culture of change, to overcome the natural resistance to change. Since the SDGs are integrated and indivisible, education needs to rise above its separate dimensions and specializations and teach the tools of integration and transdisciplinarity, so that depth and breadth are combined as necessary. Systems thinking will become a core component of education, as it will be of governance. The methods and tools of science: rational thought, experimentation, understanding cause and effect, should be generalized so that the scientific method is accessible to everyone, and science can become part of community life, monitoring the state of the local environment and innovating solutions to local problems. This is education for empowerment, providing the skills and knowledge necessary for transformation to occur at multiple levels as part of organic processes of change.

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