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Education for Sustainable Development: Barriers & Suggestions

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ABSTRACT :

Education is said to be Social Engineering and Teacher is a Social Engineer. The major function of education is to produce citizens who are sensible, sensitive and have capacity to take wise decisions regarding problems of each sector. Education is a key to social and economic development. Education which creates and promotes just societies, knowledge base society, culture of peace, defend human rights etc is essential pre-requisites for the creation of harmonious and progressive environment in the world. (It is very apt in time of Covid – 19).

Education helps in bringing desirable changes in perception, attitude and the way individual thinks. Achievement of sustainable development largely depends on quality of education and how well elements of SD are integrated and interwoven in execution of curriculum. Apart from reorienting education system there are other barriers too which are discussed in this paper and suggestions are also suggested.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is said to be Social Engineering and Teacher is a Social Engineer. The major function of education is to produce citizens who are sensible, sensitive and have capacity to take wise decisions regarding problems of each sector. Education is a key to social and economic development. Education which creates and promotes just societies, knowledge base society, culture of peace, defend human rights etc is essential pre-requisites for the creation of harmonious and progressive environment in the world. Education is a constructive process which gradually develops the society in to positive direction. The way we are going on the path of development is not at all secure the future of our forth coming generations. It creates lot many problems in natural settings and degrades level of morals of societies. So we require a kind of education which has capacity to overcome all such complex problems and promote sustainable development of society.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: MEANING AND CONCEPT:

The term sustainable development first used at the time of Cocoyoc declaration in 1970 and gained popular currency through IUCN report (1980, 1990) and WCED report (1987) – Our Common Future.

In 1972 the UN conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm emphasized on the need of inter-relationship between the environment and the socio-economic issues of poverty and underdevelopment. Thus the concept of sustainable development emerged in the 1980s in response to a growing realization of the need to balance economic and social progress with concern for the environment and the stewardship of natural resources. Than the term sustainability and its corollary SD are being widely used.

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“Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs.”

- World Commission on Environment.

This definition considers that while development may be essential to satisfy human needs and improve quality of life, it should occur in such a way that the capacity of the natural environment to meet present and future needs is not compromised. The essential elements and premises of SD cover all the following aspects:

1. Survival of human beings.
2. Survival of all other life forms.
3. Satisfaction of basic human needs.

4. Maintenance of bio-physical productivity.
5. Economic efficiency and growth.
6. Preservation of environmental quality and eco-system.
7. Inter and Intra generational equity.
8. Social justice.
9. Self reliance and people's participation.
10. Stabilization of human population.
11. Promotion of values and ethics.

There can be few more pressing and critical goals for the future of human kind than to ensure steady improvement in the quality of life for this and future generation, in a way that respect our common heritage – the planet we live on. So, sustainable development include all the dimensions of human life viz. – physical environment, social environment and biological environment. Achieving sustainable development should not be confined to material development alone; it should incorporate healthy body and mind. Also well developed persons who are loving, ever smiling and compassionate, a well developed society too which is full of human brotherhood, strong integrated communities and happy families. Material well being is of course important to achieve all these qualities but beyond certain level of material welfare, it is non-material gains that enrich life and make people happy. Our societies (i.e. entire world) require this kind of development which has potential to accommodate and give scope to future generation to progress further and live peaceful life.

EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

The major or potent weapon through which we can achieve sustainable development is '*EDUCATION*'. Education for sustainable development is a life-wide and life long endeavor which challenges individuals, institutions and societies to view tomorrow as a day that

belongs to all of us. Education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving capacity of the people to address environment and development issues. Ever since SD has been a common concern in all UN conferences and there has been a common consciences that education is a driving force for the change needed.

Hence education should help in making the abstract real and developing the capacities of individual and society to work for a sustainable future. Education for sustainable development has several major domains;

- Promotion and improvement of basic education.
- Reorienting existing education program at all levels to address sustainable development.
- Developing public awareness and understanding of sustainability.
- Involving higher education.
- Developing sensibility.

But achieving sustainable development requires recognition of challenges and taking up collective responsibility with constructive partnership. It strives at increasing people's capacity to transform their vision for society in to reality. Education hence, not only provides scientific and technical skills, it also provides the motivation, justification and social support for pursuing the values, behaviour and life style required for a sustainable future. Education for sustainable development has been seen as a process of learning how to make decision that consider the long term future of the economy, ecology and equity of all communities. The key task of education is building up the capacity for such future oriented thinking in individuals. By using the native strengths of the society and enunciating appropriate strategy, the transformation towards a knowledgeable society can be further accelerated for the development of a sustainable society.

BARRIERS IN ATTAINING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

Sustainable development has been widely promoted as a holistic concept which aims or targets to integrate social, economic and cultural policies to ensure high-quality growth. However, there are barriers combating the implementation of sustainable development in developing countries. These barriers are:

- Economic / financial barriers
- Social barriers
- Political barriers
- Poor monitoring and evaluation system
- Cultural barriers

- Poverty and disease
- Climate change

Economic and financial barriers:

Economists observed that the dominating development model tends to focus on economic growth as precedence rather than people's rights or welfare, and environmental processes and limits. Various contributors supported economic growth coming first in developing countries, especially least-developed countries (LDCs), and concluded that investment in environmental protection should be left to a later stage of development, essentially accepting environmental degradation to meet immediate needs. In other words, there was a controversy by other researchers saying that the future generation's ability to enjoy an acceptable standard of living would be on shambles if due attention were not immediately paid to social and environmental aspects as well as economic. This they said requires shift in the worldview from treating the environment as part of the economy to treating the economy as part of the environment; strategically this means the economy should be adapted to ensure environmental services are maintained. Some contributors recommended developed capitalist societies to act quickly to become more sustainable. Other researchers underscored the imperative for developing countries not to follow the western models of unsustainable development.

Initiatives to overcome economic and financial barriers

In other words to achieve economic growth without threatening social development and environmental resources, new and different "vehicles" for growth must be oriented to different country situations.

Governments should be responsible for market-led problems with incentive for the private sector to become problem-solvers, and not polluters.

There is need to shift the incentive and motivating structure for farmers around the world. Policies makers should promote agricultural production that is based on significantly higher labor inputs per area and significantly more diverse production streams.

There is need to reform the calculation of economic growth and removal of weapons-related cost from GDP would provide a strong indication of relative spending toward sustainable development to politicians.

Justifying the need to abandon linear system of industrial production based on total exploitation of natural resources, over production, and waste generation in favor of a circular system of production using clean technologies and the elimination of waste resources.

Social barriers

Population growth, paired with unsustainable consumption and production patterns among the wealthy, are the biggest social challenges to achieving sustainable development in the world and developing countries. Absent of a significant change in human behavior, sustainability will not be potential. There are other social barriers which are:

- The marginalization of the poor and entrenched inequities
- Limited awareness about sustainable development
- Environmental issues among both politicians and the wider public fragmented civil society
- Inadequate interaction between civil society and government
- Insufficient incentives to for the private sector to pursue sustainable development

Initiatives to overcome the social barriers

- Need for stronger policies to address income disparity and population growth.
- The introduction of programmes to create awareness and build capacity in the field of sustainable development among the general public can assist to the change in behavior and lifestyle that is needed to achieve sustainability.
- Efforts to increase scientific capacity will take place within a context of different funding patterns (which involves philanthropic foundations, business, and governmental and intergovernmental bodies), environmental concerns, and research orientations.
- Governments must foster their relationships with NGOs and other civil society organizations. Also , civil society must take on a great role in policy making and implementation. Participation of civil society in social programmes and related decision making process would ensure accountability; this will help in creating condition for receiving financial aid or UN assistance.
- Concrete partnership among national and local governments, the grassroots, private sector, civil society and development actors should be developed.

Political barriers:

Inadequate economic, social and environmental methods for policies, plans and projects are the major barrier combating the implementation of sustainable development in developing world. Researchers' believed that governments are stuck in the old development paradigm ,emphasizing economic growth and believing that industrial countries have made no significant effort to change their patterns in production and consumption, thereby threatening global resources. To meet sustainable development objectives requires genuine political and institutional will at all levels of government in all countries, developed and developing.

Nevertheless, Corruption, ineffective government and weak inactive law enforcement are hindrances to achieving genuine sustainability. Moreover, lack of information and relevant data availability, limited capacity of policy and decision-makers were identified as reasons for the limited cooperation of governments.

The outcome of the discussion by the World Summit on Sustainable Development that was held in South Africa in 2002 was that sustainable development has not been able to evolve out of its environmental roots and that greater focus on climate change may be pulling the issue towards a purer environmental direction rather than integrating sustainable development perspective. They also warned that SD is being replaced by climate change on the political agenda, leaving the rest of the sustainable development agenda forgotten.

Lack of coordination to integrate the three pillars of sustainable development has been a major challenge at all levels. At the global level, the United Nations failed to join together its efforts to promote a genuinely sustainable development. Campaigns for integrating many factors are themselves not harmonized, but try to meet different purposes at different times. It was noted that the sectionalized approach to the MDGs has dissolved the broader context of development, and MDG 7 on sustainable development has been largely neglected in favor of other goals rather than being a basis for achieving the rest of the MDGs. More consistent policies to support SD are needed at the international level, including within the United Nations system.

At the regional level, regional agreements on SD and mechanisms for their implementation are not stable. There was an agreement that, at national level, a multi-disciplinary approach to governance is needed rather than the persisting tendency for different line ministries,

departments and agencies to act without a clear framework for coordination across sectors. Sectorial systems of governance create and perpetuate silo thinking and behavior. It was observed that there is basically no effective national forum for strategic planning on pro-poor economic growth, social development, environment and climate change for developing countries. For instance, in Central Asia, it was noted that few countries have policies linking environment, poverty, trade and social development, that few environmental policies target equity or poverty issues, and health policies are still mainly formulated in isolation without blending to related sectors. Also at the institutional level, responsibility for the implementation of sustainable development is generally assigned to the Ministry of Environment, Environmental Protection Agency or the tantamount, which traditionally receive little attention and a insufficient budget. Environmental agency would find it difficult to take a balanced approach to economic growth, social development and environmental protection.

Moreover, policy making and implementation does not take into consideration the grassroots need or involve the lower levels of government.

Initiatives to overcome political barrier

- In combating political barrier, sustainable development strategies must be streamlined, but also applied with more severity.
- The need for environmental institutions to blend and work with other (non-environmental) institutions. Also all ministries must cooperate and work together to achieve an integrated sustainable development for their countries.
- Stringent efforts should be directed to encroach structural problems that deform both developmental and environmental prospects by focusing on key injustices, notably in trade, environment and climate change.
- There should be an analytical work on advanced financing for SD. Poverty and environment linkages must be undertaken to further incorporate economic, social and environmental factors.
- Basic components like sensitization of political leaders, private sector involvement, and participation of local communities need to be concrete in developmental approach. Capacity-building is also necessary across the board.
- Progress in sustainable developmental goals involves strong, innovation-driven science and technology policies.

Poor monitoring and evaluation systems

A basic problem is lack of specific targets (globally, nationally and at local level), measurement and data to track progress, resulting in a lack of information available to decision-makers. It is suggested for strengthening monitoring and evaluation of sustainable development strategies in order to establish a dynamic improvement process, with an objective of increasing their effectiveness. It is recommended that governments should turn up deeper and assess the socio-economic impacts of developmental projects, rather than the outcome alone.

Initiatives to overcome poor monitoring and evaluation systems

- Co-ordination of data within which the vast amount of data can be easily accessed.
- Countries specific knowledge bases are needed to guide decision making. This is a comprehensive mechanism for monitoring the outcomes of interventions that feeds into subsequent planning processes.
- National research and development systems need to be strengthened.

CONCLUSION:

Sustainable development is a complex and evolving concept. It is high time we understand importance of SD and strive to implement it as it is essential for the survival and existence of entire human race (**It is very apt in time of Covid – 19**). Sustainable development cannot be achieved by technological solutions, political regulation or financial instruments alone. We need to change the way we think and act. This requires quality education and learning for sustainable development at all levels and in all social contexts. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is about enabling us to constructively and creatively address present and future global challenges and create more sustainable and resilient societies. Collaborative efforts of each sector of society are required to promote SD. Teacher Education Institutes, various NGO's and social institute should come forward to sustain development. Mere debates and discussions are not the solutions to promote SD, it helps only in creating awareness. We required concrete strategies, appropriate policies and whole-hearted efforts to make the dream true.

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