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Education and enlightenment for sustainable development

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Abstract---Education is the most powerful tool to spread awareness in context to sustainability. It is the vital need of an hour & to make the planet a beautiful place to dwell. Since ages human societies have proved that living in harmony with our environment is possible. People across the globe realized that the resources are badly exploited and there is dire need to adopt sustainable strategies. There is the earnest need to move towards sustainable society. Education and trainings are the only keys to direct the society towards sustainability. People wonder how sustainable societies will look like and what are the ways in which these societies will work? Due to indigenous culture, there exist harmony between man and the environment. Unfortunately, due to advent of colonization, industrialization and globalization, human society progressed in leaps and bounds but the environment deteriorated over years. It's the alarming situation as resources are exploited and very soon it will vanish forever from the planet. Hence sustainable development is the only way to preserve our planet and make it a better place for survival. There must be efforts to promote and spread awareness and to ensure education for sustainable development.

Keywords---sustainability, colonization, harmony, curriculum, education.

Introduction

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) aims to develop competencies that enable and empower individuals to reflect on their own actions by taking into account their current and future social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts from both a local and a global perspective. It helps individuals to respond in a sustainable manner during difficult situations. ESD will develop the skills, attitudes, ethics and values that will help the citizen to lead healthy and content life, taking required decisions and to respond to their environment and the

surrounding in harmonious way. Through ESD, citizens will develop the ability to accept local and global challenges and will act responsibly. One of the original descriptions of sustainable development is credited to the Brundtland Commission: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p 43).

Principles of Sustainable Development

Many new ideologies and concepts coined for ESD. Government of various nations has pondered beyond the simple meaning of ESD. The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development listed out few principles of sustainability. Some of the basic principles of Sustainable Development are as follows:-

- People are committed to a healthy life in collaboration with the environment.
- Development must ensure the protection of environment and the resources to be preserved for future generations.
- Every nation is entitled to use its resources judiciously without affecting the environment beyond their territory.
- There must be the formulation of international laws in order to protect the environment and to compensate the damage occurred beyond borders.
- Nations shall adopt precautionary measures to prevent environmental degradation.
- Environmental protection and environmental awareness must be an integral part of our life as it can never work in isolation. Eradicating poverty and maintaining fair living standard are essential to attain sustainable development.
- Nations must unite to protect and restore the quality and integrity of Earth's ecosystem. The developed countries must shoulder the responsibility to support the environment and must acknowledge the responsibility for the pressure their communities place on the environment in the race of achieving development.
- Nations should avoid unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and must adopt fair policies.
- Every citizen must participate actively in protecting the environment. Nations shall encourage awareness by providing environmental information.
- There must be laws for the victims of environmental damage. The laws must be enforced in order to control illegal activities.
- Nations should collaborate and promote a workable economic system that will help every nation to attain economic and sustainable development. Environmental policies should not be implemented to restrict international trade rather it must be implemented judiciously to promote trade in harmony with nature.
- Nations must issue warnings for natural disasters or activities that may have adverse impact across the globe.

- Nations must integrate technological information and knowledge to achieve sustainable goals as sustainable development needs scientific knowledge to understand the problem and to provide workable solutions.
- Women must act as an important pillar to promote sustainable development. The creative ideas from young generation and indigenous people are also important. Nations must recognize their contribution and should ensure support to protect the identity and culture of indigenous people.
- Nations must adopt and respect international laws. During armed conflict, there should be no harm to the environment and its resources. Warfare is destructive and a great obstacle in sustainable development.

Peace and development are interdependent on each other. All the nations must think and act logically while making progress in the field of science and technology or accepting globalization. These principles will set some guidelines and will set a limit for the nations to take better initiatives towards education and enlightenment for sustainable development.

Role of Educational Institutes in ESD

Teacher plays a vital role in spreading awareness. The beginning of enlightenment for sustainable development must begin from the grass root level i.e school, college and further at the university level. Education for sustainability involves efforts and approaches to teaching and learning in formal classrooms scenario that integrate goals for conservation, social justice, appropriate development and democracy into a vision and a mission of personal, ethical and social change. It develops virtues and skills among the learner that can further empower the society and will motivate them to perform positive roles in the transition from regular society to sustainable society. Education for sustainability shares the vision for ecological, political and economical sustainability. Protecting the environment is the most important issue for the society. As a result, there is a strong desire to have much more frequent discussions on environmental topics in classrooms and other academic platforms. The desire for more opportunities to discuss environmental issues supports the need for a whole-of-school, cross-curriculum approach, inter State approach to the international approach in educational aspect for promoting sustainability. At the grass root level teacher can work over the formulation of habits for protecting the resources of daily use such as water, electricity etc and to use them judiciously. Moreover they can act as a driving force to spread awareness at community level and hence will develop the pursuit to keep their environment clean and hygienic. This habit will help to improve the quality index of life and will enable to develop harmony with nature. Schools and other educational institutions play a major role in generating the socially and ecological values that include the passion and determination of economic growth through a competitive and comparative economy, without affecting the environment.

A higher education level is necessary to generate jobs, sectors and industries that are "greener" (i.e., those having lower environmental impacts and affects) and more sustainable towards creating green societies. The relationship between education and sustainable development is very complex and intermingled with each other. Generally, research shows that basic education

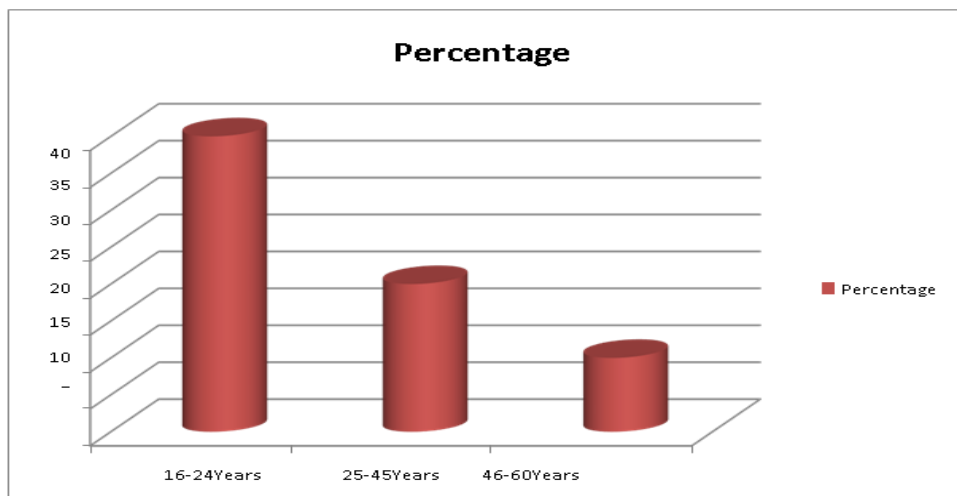
and training is the only key to a nation's ability to promote and acquire sustainability targets. Research has shown that education can improve agricultural productivity, create sustainable societies, enhance the status of women, reduce population growth rates, improve financial trends, enhance environmental protection, ensure quality of life and generally raise the standard of living. At least a primary education must be the birth right for everyone and should be fundamental in nature. Education directly affects sustainability plans. An educated citizen is well aware about the consequences and will implement the strategies in order to raise a good quality of life.

Materials and Methods

Survey with small population was conducted to check the awareness among the masses for sustainable development. The age group from 16 years to 60 years was the part of the survey. A questionnaire was given to them to fill and submit the same. The earnest efforts were done to collect the data from them. Questionnaire was mailed to the people who were at remote locations. Even a local visit was also taken up to understand their zeal to know about the sustainable development. It was an amazing experience to see their enthusiastic participation. The sample was divided into three parts i.e 16-24 years, 25-45 years, 46-60 years.

Results and Discussion

The data collected was processed and was converted into graphs to get a better understanding. Below attached is the result of the survey conducted. In the age group of 16 to 24 years, 40% were aware about sustainable development and they have heard about it. From the age group of 25 to 45 years, only 20% were having an idea about it. Further the age group of 46 to 60 years has shown the awareness of 10% only. Looking into the result, it is really alarming to know that the concept of sustainability is still new for majority. Hence there is dire need to spread awareness through various sources and to ignite the masses to adopt sustainable strategies to have a balanced and harmonious life.



Suggestions/Recommendations

Apart from conducting seminars or conferences at national and international level, it is very much needed to spread awareness at the local or grass root level. Various suggestions/recommendations are listed below:

- The first priority is to improve the basic education. It should not only focus upon reading, listening, speaking or writing skills but must ensure to develop comprehension skills among the students.
- There must be sustainability centers with an aim to promote awareness at local level.
- There must be inculcation of habits to develop love and harmony with their surrounding and the nature.
- There should be alternative means for the consumption of various energy resources.
- Public participation must be there and should be encouraged to acquire skills and values and must change their perspective towards environment and its protection.
- There must be a curriculum reframing or redesigning. The syllabus must include the content from sustainable development.
- Students must be encouraged to take up various projects and to ensure desirable learning from it.
- All sectors - including business, higher industry, education, governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and community organization are motivated to train their leaders in environmental management and sustainable development to provide training to their workers with a mission and vision to create a chain of responsible human resource who will develop a sustainable societies.
- There must be the development of critical-thinking skills, decision making ability, skills to organize data, assimilate ideas and interpret data and information, skills to draft questions, and the ability to analyze issues that confront and interrogate communities.
- The gender gap in both primary and secondary level must be reduced. The enrollment rates must be rising at faster level.
- Program developers need to balance and look forward towards a more sustainable society while focusing upon traditional ecological knowledge. Indigenous traditions often carry with them the values and practices that embody the use of sustainable resources in creating a sustainable living.
- Sustainability requires a population that is aware of the goals of a sustainable society and sustainable living and has the knowledge, potential, capability and skills to contribute to achieve these goals.
- Digital or print media should be used as a tool to spread awareness and encourage people participation at wider level.

Conclusion

ESD is a lifelong and continuous process. The formal, non formal, and informal educational sectors should work together to generate and accomplish sustainability goals. In an ideal world, the sectors would divide the enormous task of ESD for the entire population by identifying target audiences from the general public as well as will work over the layout of sustainability. They would then work within their mutually agreed upon realms. Knowledge, skills, perspectives, values, and issues must be addressed in a formal curriculum that has been reoriented to address sustainability.

Awareness must be pulled up at grass root level and then proceeding further to community, national and international level. One must learn to treat nature the way they want to get treated. Protect, preserve and promote the natural resources and keep them for the future generations as well. These are not merely resources but it's a heritage to be passed onto the future generations.

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