

Education for Sustainable Development(ESD) –Asia Pacific Perspective

Transforming higher education and creating sustainable societies

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Recognising the relevance of education and research for a more sustainable future is crucial. By the middle of the century the world will be significantly different from today, and the rate of change continues to accelerate. As a result, innovation and creativity are seen as being essential to learning in the 21st century. We must develop a vision of education and learning that has to be supported across the educational spectrum after 2022. The idea that education serves a much broader purpose in enabling both adults and children to actively participate in the development of their society needs to acquire traction. Each individual must develop the education, abilities, attitudes, and values required to create a sustainable future. The key to doing this is education.

Challenges and Opportunities in Asia Pacific

More than half of the world's population lives in the Asia-Pacific region, which is enormous and highly diverse in terms of geography, culture, economy, and society. The region is home to some of the world's largest and most populous nations, as well as some of the smallest and least inhabited ones, the majority of which are prone to natural disasters brought on by deteriorating environmental conditions and climate change. Asia-Pacific countries have a great opportunity to transform their growth patterns by completely incorporating sustainable development (SD) and education for sustainable development (ESD) concepts into their policies, development strategies, and project implementation. The transformative mandate placed on Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) is mirrored in the crucial role they play in introducing the sustainability paradigm to society and incorporating sustainability ideas and concepts into educational institutions and programmes.

Since HEIs are information producers, it is important to acknowledge and encourage them to use their power to influence social change. HEI is thus in a position to set an example by reforming their own curricula in order to motivate and encourage others to follow suit. The structural organisation of curricula and course designs should be mindful of sustainability considerations. Teachers-in-training and other soon-to-be professionals who received formal education under ESD-aligned revised curricula can then spread this example of leadership to other educational systems. To impress upon working professionals the value of sustainability, HEIs should invest in integrating ESD into both non-degree and degree courses. Professionals can then further implement the idea throughout their careers. These courses, which are increasingly being given online, should be designed to meet the needs of change agents in the non-formal and informal education sectors, embracing the training-the-trainers approach to maximise multiplying effects.

Both the pursuit of knowledge and the aspirations of society for a higher standard of living are ongoing processes. The operation of HEIs depends on the development of new knowledge and its applications to societal issues. It is necessary to constantly create new analytical methods and tools that take sustainability concerns into account. Research questions like how to increase resource utilisation efficiency, how to look for novel environmental protection techniques, how to develop thorough assessment indicators based on the various pillars of sustainability, and how to find fresh approaches to the rational use of the planet's resources for the benefit of all must be vigorously addressed. There is no denying the connection between research and education and the necessity to understand both fields holistically. The global ESD effort can and should be improved by creating academic collaborations to promote the sustainability paradigm in postgraduate education and research. The tactic minimises or eliminates duplications while also making the best use of resources.

Success requires a combination of "sharing of resources and expertise" and "learning from each other" strategies. Collaborations that at first just prioritised economic development must now take sustainability into account. Institutions of higher learning are starting to react to this trend. Collaboration between universities must be encouraged in order to support the modernisation of higher education, mutual learning across nations and peoples, and cross-cultural understanding.

Way Forward

The global process influences the generation of knowledge, and therefore necessitates international cooperation. Higher education, in particular, has been impacted by "denationalisation," which is defined as "the reframing of scopes of vision, institutional structures, and tactics to nurture linkages beyond the national scale." The extension of impact and links with knowledge centres abroad, the sharing of complementary resources, and the exchange of research analyses and outputs, are all examples of this.

However, the social, economic, and environmental demands of our modern world, along with the enabling technology that made instant communication and presence a reality, produce new dynamics and scales in which society must work. At the same time, a growing desire for change is being fuelled by the advancement of human knowledge, rising expectations for a better quality of life, and sustainable development. Redefining learning systems, processes, and content in the formal and non-formal education sectors in a way that supports the development of sustainable societies is necessary.

Thus, universities are essential in developing professionals who can handle problems that are becoming more complicated, transdisciplinary, and cross-border. As a result, it is critical for these higher education institutions to change how information is produced and disseminated. Institutions of higher learning are essential for expanding the body of knowledge about ESD and creating novel strategies. They must cultivate the skills necessary for the next generation to comprehend, empathise with, and put into practise the shared ideals and guidelines that can help people live fulfilling lives while respecting the planet's natural boundaries.

Moving forward, the goal should be to intensify efforts to create a more sustainable future for everyone by doing policy-relevant research and building capacity in the areas of sustainability and its social, economic, and environmental facets. And finally, propagating and achieving HEIs that serve the global community and contribute significantly and creatively to important UN discussions and high-level decisions will be important.