Chapter 10
Linking Culture, Pedagogy, and Digitalization for Education and Sustainable Development in Tribal Areas:
A Perspective From Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the role of education and sustainable development in Pakistan, especially in tribal areas. Forty-six teachers and 28 parents from 15 primary schools were interviewed for this study, and data has also been collected via observational technique. A mixed methods approach employs both qualitative and quantitate techniques. To achieve quality education at any level, especially at primary level, teachers and students should aim at creating the link between culture, pedagogy, and digitalization. Teachers should be competent in the implementation of technology, that is, the use of computers, and have multimedia skills in order to find and adopt pedagogies relevant to class environments. This chapter looks at the current situation Pakistan, and especially in the tribal areas of Pakistan, and suggests recommendations for the incorporation of ESD goals in the single national curriculum, the development of teacher education programs, incentives for teachers and (female) students, and the facilitation of electricity, computer technology, and internet access for all schools.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a great role in the development of individuals, societies, and countries. Sustainable development is necessary to meet human needs and improve quality of life, but at the same time it should also beneficial for present and future generations. In this regard the sustainable development goals (SDGs) developed by the UN are important landmarks in order to achieve peace and sustainable prosperity on our planet (UNESCO, 2017). The 17 SDGs are interlinked, and the improvement (or deterioration) in one area will affect all other areas of development. Quality Education is itself a central sustainability goal (SDG4), and it is also necessary in order to achieve all other goals (UNESCO, 2017). In this context, the role of technology and digitalization must not be underestimated.

The same is true for the actual quality of education, which is mainly influenced by the quality of teaching and the teachers' understanding of what learning actually means. Quality teaching makes an important difference to students' learning, their achievements, and their life chances (Smith, 2003). Thus, teacher quality matters a lot, in fact, it is reported to be the most important school-related factor influencing student achievement (Rice, 2003). Students and teachers play a vital role in creating an academic, social, cultural, intellectual, spiritual, and, most importantly, a supportive environment adapted to students' interests, motivations, needs, and abilities. However, the question remains what exactly should teachers do to create such a positive environment? How should lessons be constructed and what methods of instruction should be used to deliver the content/curriculum in the classrooms? Which communication technologies should teachers use to interact with their students?

Here, technology related pedagogy is among the players entering the stage. In this current moment of history, the scope of new technologies, knowledge, and learning is emphasized by digital learning environments. Digital learning is defined as technology-related methods used to support learning (Wheeler, 2012), and to provide learners with more control over pace, time, place etc. Overall, this type of pedagogy demands a highly digitally competent teacher.

Discourses on teaching, learning, and pedagogy, however, are shaped not only by the decisions made by teachers, but also by school values and organization, by local pressures, national policies, and the balance of political control, as well as by the tensions and ambiguities of the democratic ideal, and by culture and history in general (Alexander, 2001). Classrooms themselves are also considered to be of a complex nature. So, a classroom is not only a static picture of a room filled with 20 or 30 students, chairs, desks, books etc. On the contrary, classrooms are always in motion, and the atmosphere is influenced by immediacy, publicness, multidimensionality, unpredictability, history, and also by simultaneity (Doyle, 1980). In a classroom, students do not share the same lifestyles, IQ-/EQ-levels, color, even languages, customs, and family backgrounds.

At the same time, we might consider teachers to be the central change agents in implementing education for sustainable development in the classroom (J. K and O' Neil, 2019). Good teachers recognize both individual and cultural differences and translate them into a positive digital learning environment. Now if we look at teacher education programs in Pakistan, they all seem to be made for an average homogenous culture – a 'one size fits all'. What is sorely missing, however, is what teachers should do in classrooms with students of different cultures i.e., which type of pedagogy will be useful for urban, rural, and also the tribal areas of Pakistan. If there is a cultural gap between a student's everyday world and the world of the school, it can result in an inauthentic and ineffective teaching and learning process, be it digital or not.

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