Chapter 6
The Role of Education in Attaining Sustainable Development in Sub–Saharan African Nations:
Emphasis on Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

This chapter illuminates how education can be a game changer in the endeavor for attaining sustainable development in sub-Sahara Africa. Postmodern society is characterized by the quest for equity. Equity is an essential prerequisite to sustainable development which in turn necessitate lasting peace, economic and social well-being, among others. We need curricula responsive to postmodern society which would warrant socioeconomic and environmentally sustainable development. Today, there is a significant move towards educational expansion. There has been irregularity in success rates, however. Constituents of developing countries have been struggling to influence their government through the democratization process to open more schools and universities. Yet, accessibility has to be accompanied with quality. This can be achieved by enhancing privatization of education and the effectiveness of the regulatory role of responsible government. So, this chapter is a discourse extending beyond education for sustainable development in to education for sustainable life.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a blend of two crucial concepts education and sustainable development. Education refers to the process through which society passes its cumulated knowledge, traditions and cultural values, etc. from generation to generation. Sustainable development in itself is a blend of two concepts-development and sustainability. Development is a lucid concept which is often undeservingly determined by mere

increase of economic wealth. It must rather be conceived with the related concept of sustainability. Accordingly, sustainable development refers to limits on societal, economic activity in the interest of preserving or protecting the environment in consideration of inter-generational and intra-generational equity-by giving priority to the disadvantaged and/or the poor. Sustainable development in this connection put in other words, is development that benefits the disadvantaged, without negatively affecting the needs of the future generation (UN, 1987 as cited in Emas, 2015; and WCED, 1987 as cited in Pearce & Atkinson, 2002).

It is this definition that forces us to question what the complex questions of early 21st century postmodern society are, on the one hand, and the abuse of natural resources here and there and its consequences throughout the world and more specifically in what are referred to as Sub-Saharan African countries to which Ethiopia is part. Therefore, the writer of this chapter being a teacher in the field of social science and with his background of Pedagogical science wants to call the attention of readers from across the world as to critically question what and how can education contribute to the cause of sustainable life. Here, it must also be noted that reversing complex situations of people of Sub-Saharan Africa cannot be left to these countries alone for at least three fundamental reasons. First, both the fight with environmental and Global incidents such as human trafficking cannot be effectively put under control by mere regional and/or national efforts. Second, there naturally exist a widely accepted interest of human beings across the glob which consistently show alliance for the overall prosperity of mankind. The preceding few lines have captured why we should rethink on the possible role of education in attaining sustainable development. Thirdly, the polluters as a matter of ethical responsibility have to compensate for the wrong they have caused in all its forms. Here, it is also worth mentioning what Sen and Stiglitz stipulate the moral dimension of debt relief and past over-lending (Sen,1999 and Stiglitz,2006 both in McGrith, 2010, p242). In accordance with this, this chapter from its inception can also be taken for a call for potential Global pressure groups to revisit their educational policies in general and their curricula at all levels, including for the practicality of what is already there or what would be included in the future curricula.

Methodology

The review follows a critical realist paradigm of scientific research in a way it flexibly adheres a pragmatist philosophy to find out extant problems, challenges and prospects in the area of education for sustainable development or education for sustainable life. The study predominantly employs a desk review based on published works as its method. From among a host of African countries South of the Sahara including Horn of Africa and South Sudan, the present author due to accessibility of real life cases to observe focused on the Ethiopian case. Ethiopia is also a country that fulfills at least three out of what Collier (2007, p.242) calls the four traps where the roots of poverty lie, namely: being landlocked with poor neighbours, conflict, and bad governance. We must not also deny that it is a country that fulfill at least three of the four what Sachs (2008) captured as the four crises that face the earth, namely: environmental, population expansion, and poverty (and the risk this causes us) (Collier,2007, and Sachs, 2008 in McGrith,2010 p, 242 and p,244 respectively)

However, the writer also had a strong belief that the remaining Sub-Saharan context relates very much to the Ethiopian case. On the whole, the author attempted to critically assess the problem areas so as to suggest some solutions by also relating the theories with the author's careful analyses of the immediate environment.

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