

HIGHER EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN GLOBALISED ERA

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ABSTRACT

Higher education is facing increasingly formidable challenges. To cope up with the needs of today's information society the higher education systems have to be developed much broader than the concept of the traditional research university allows. To prepare new generation for such a challenge, to empower them to make a difference, in an exciting task for all who are directly involved in or concerned with higher education society.

The concept with human development and the related concept of human security have gained widespread interest and acclaim since UNDP's Human Development Report was first published in 1993. Indeed, important changes have taken place in the period of time. Both in developing as well as developed countries, it has become fully clear that the state has critical roles to play in providing an enabling environment for sustainable development and to ensure human security on the local, national and – in cooperation within regional sustainable future we depend strongly on the ways in which we successfully can link up the spheres of daily life of the individual band local level and that of economic life on the regional and global level.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization introduced as an economic concept, has now become understood in a much broader sense as a forceful, overarching process that , indeed, penetrates into all different aspects of life and society. It offers great opportunities for sustained welfare and well being. But poses also numerous policy challenges, those are related to the inherent risks created by financial markets lacking critical regulatory safeguards as well as by a lack of or inadequate understanding of long term development and interest of humans / people.

Both, in developing as well as developed countries it has become truly clear that the state although not a creator of wealth itself, has critical roles to play in providing an enabling environment for sustainable development. The 1997 world development report of the world banks shows clearly how crucial an

effective “State” is in this regard. It is becoming however an evermore complex task to find an appropriate balance in particular where civil society in weak and transitional forces overpowering . One of the crucial roles the “State”, has to play is to ensure human security on the local national and in cooperation within regional association and United Nations on the regional and global levels.

We have to ensure human security without which sustainable human development will not be possible. Our sustainable future will depend strongly on the ways in which we successfully can link up the spheres of daily life at the individual and local level and that of economic life on the regional and global level. Sustainable human development, however is not only based on economy, organization and communication. Fundamental to a sustainable future is to ensure the proper and use and stewardship of the heritage that was giving to human kind in the form of earth. As a consequence of its multidimensional character, sustainable development has been variously defined and described . This concept was for the first time indicate in principle I of the Stockholm Declaration on the human environment :..... “ Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well being bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment of present and future generations.”

These formulations link clearly human rights and environmental protection recognizing human rights as a fundamental goal and environmental protection as an essential mean to achieve the “ adequate conditions” for a “life of dignity and well –being” that are guaranteed. The concept of sustainable development was launched in 1987 by the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Report). There it was defines as : “meeting the needs of the present without compromising without ability of future generation to meet their own needs” and as “a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the directions of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspiration. “ Sustainable development is not a fixed notion, but rather a process of change in the relationship between social, economic and natural systems and processes. Thus sustainability calls for a dynamic balance among many factors, including the social, cultural and economic requirements of human kind and the imperative need to safeguard the natural environment of which humanity is

a part. Hence, the importance of the agenda 21 process officially started at the UNCED in Rio De Janeiro in 1992. There the International Community endorsed the concept of sustainable development as the key to reconcile economic and social progress, while safeguarding the planets ecosystems. The intense public interest in the recent Kyoto Conference (1997) of the parties in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate change provided. A good illustration of the widespread support for sustainable development. The discussion in Kyoto also illustrated that there exist still much uncertainty as to what actions exactly will have to be taken, to which levels we will have to rise to melt the challenges posed to us and also how to share common responsibilities a just manner. It is here that there is a major responsibility for universities , imded all the institutions of higer education , preparing new generations for a sustainable future.

ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Universities have a unique contribution to make , a contribution implicit and utterly in keeping with their mission of advancing learning through research and teaching . At the heart of any effort to understand and promote sustainable development are four key elements. Firstly, the serious and pressing nature of the problems ; 2ndly, the inter / trans disciplinary scope of potential solution ; 3rdly, the international skill of their impact; and 4thly, the ethical imperatives of self-knowledge. The unique contribution, however is not self-evident. Specific action plans will be required, when universities are prepared to play the leading role. The draft action plans for individual universities of International Association of Universities (IAU) states that to this and each university, in its own plan should strive (i) To make an institutional commitment to the principal and practice sustainable development with the academic milieu and to communicate the commitment to its student, its employees and to the public at large ; (ii) to promote sustainable consumption practice in its operations ; (iii) To develop the capacities of its academic staff to teach environmental literacy; (iv) to encourage inter-disciplinary and collaborative research programmes related sustainable development as part of the institution central mission and to overcome traditional barriers between discipline and departments ; (v) to work at ways that will help its academic community, and the graduates, friend and governments that support it, to accept these ethical obligations ; (vi) to promote the mobility of staff and students as essential to the free trade of knowledge, to forge partnership with other sectors of society in transferring innovative and appropriate technology

that an benefit and enhance sustainable development practices. To become really successful and become true intellectual powerhouse in the field, universities will have to pay specific attention to the internal drive in universities, life of students and staffs ; of teachers; tutors and researchers.

University have become increasingly aware of the role they do have to play in preparing new generation for a sustainable future. To this end, they have a different times and places drafted and adopted ambitious declarations in which they have to formulate the major principles and aims for the reform process into which they are prepared to engage themselves. A few examples are :

- i) Tallories Declaration of University leaders for a sustainable future (1990 at Tufts University)
- ii) Halifax Declaration in Brazil, Indonesia and Zimbabwe, 1991 ; iii) Kyoto Declaration on Sustainable development of the International Association of Universities (IAU), and iv) University Charter for Sustainable Development at Copernicus, 1993.

The conferences of the Association of University Departments of Environmental Studies (AUDES) have made quite clear that we will probably need more the different environmental specialists in Environmental Law, Resource Economics, Environmental Chemistry, Environmental Medicine, Toxicology and Engineering. Since, Rio Earth summit, a new International consensus has emerged concerning the critical role of education in achieving sustainable development. Principle 36. One of the forty principles in agenda 21, concerns “ Promoting education, public awareness and training”, while in Rio there was unanimous agreement among development and developing countries alike that education is “critical for promoting sustainable development and increasing the capacity of the people to address environment and development issues”. The scope of Principle 36 is extremely broad, ranging from formal education systems at all levels, vocational training and development of the work force to education in agriculture and health care, adult education and communication about environment and development. The principle is divided into three ‘Programmes’ areas : i) reorienting education towards sustainable development, ii) increasing public awareness; and promoting training. It is a ‘cross sectoral’ principle and therefore seen as linked to virtually all other areas of Agenda 21.

CONCLUSION

This, to sum up, education is being redesigned in terms of how to prepare people for life ; job security and employability, the demands of a rapidly changing society, technological changes that are directly or indirectly affect every part of life ; and ultimately, the quest for happiness, well being and quality of life. Education is therefore being redefined as a lifelong process that needs to be not merrily readjusted, but structured and reformed according to new requirement.

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