



Promoting Education for Sustainable Development: Role of Teacher

Pramila Bakhati

Deputy Director

National Centre for Educational Development

Sanothimi, Bhaktapur, Nepal

Email for correspondence: pramila_bakhati@hotmail.com

Abstract

Human beings are considered as the most intellectual living beings in this Universe because they are able to cope with all the natural resources for their personal needs and preserving the things as well. Due to the growing population and immense using of resources, the things which we get from the nature are being destroyed by using in improper way. Our common home: the Earth is now in crisis as a result of limited awareness, egotism and understanding about the real values of nature and natural resources. In this problematic situation, Sustainable Development (SD) is emerged as a window of hope and later Education for Sustainable Developed (ESD) is appeared to promote the SD. However, if the knowledge is not transformed into behavior and practical life, the knowledge will be nothing or the meaningless.

Key words: Education, Sustainable Development and Role of Teacher

Context:

Development is a holistic process in which the people enhance their capacity systematically to solve their own problems while promoting their cultural, social and economic well being (UNESCO, 2008). Hence, destroying the culture and disrespecting social norms and values are not the symbols of development and these do not support to the economic well being as well. Another key concern of development is preserving the natural resources and environment with proper utilization as per the human needs. Therefore, the concept of sustainable development emerged as a response to the growing concern about human society's impact on the natural environment. The concept of sustainable development was defined

in 1987 by the Brundtland Commission (formally the World Commission on Environment and Development) as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (Brundtland, 1987) which is widely accepted definition in SD. Living beings especially human's overall necessity is depending upon the nature. But we are destroying the natural resources on adhoc basis which is the major reason for facing the unexpected problems and natural disasters day by day.

The sustainable development movement has grown and campaigned on the basis that sustainability

protects both the interests of future generations and the earth's capacity to regenerate (Brutland, 1987). At first it emphasized the environment in development policies but, since 2002, it has evolved to encompass social justice and fight against poverty as key principles of sustainable development (Willy, 2008). Therefore, sustainable development is the cross cutting issues which is interrelated to all developmental agenda.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (Scott & Gough, 2003). After this conference, several other United Nations conferences were taken in different places for promoting sustainable development. The results of the UN Conference which are most recognized by the large public are the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (ibid). The Convention on Biological Diversity and the action program of Agenda 21 Chapter 36 are dedicated to promoting education, public awareness and training (UN, 1992).

However, the UN declared the decade for Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) from 2005 to 2015. And the UNESCO received the responsibility to promote the Decade and to develop an implementation scheme. After this declaration, many countries has developed the strategy for implementing the ESD and Nepal is one of them.

Education for sustainable development (ESD)

"ESD means education for life, not only for livelihood, but also for betterment of self, the people of the country, people of your region, the globe and future generations" (Safiullah, 2001). ESD goes beyond knowledge, skills along with attitudes and blend them together. In another way, ESD is context-oriented and puts emphasis on learning, action, reflection and action research to respond to the local issues (Bhandari & Abe, 2003). All these definitions indicate the same thing which is sustainable development is not just learning or teaching matter

but this is the beyond teaching and learning. The beauty of ESD is behavioral and attitudinal changes of people at school, workplace, community and home as well.

Education for sustainable development (ESD) aims to help people to develop the attitudes, skills, perspectives and knowledge to make informed decisions and act upon them for benefit to themselves and others now and in the future (UNESCO, 2011). ESD therefore aims to improve access to quality and basic education, reorient education curricula , train and raise public awareness and help people to develop the behaviors, skill and knowledge for their needs (UNESCO,2002 cited in UNECSO, 2011). Student of today is the potential leader for future at any field of national development. And the potential leader should be well educated having skills and values. Hence, quality education is main emerging issue of around the globe which is related not only with knowledge but related with skills, behaviors, and attitude too. In our context, Government is focusing on activity based curriculum and developing competencies of students and teachers as well . However, curriculum is only one way and which may not be sufficient for developing skills, behavior and attitude . In this regard, other informal activities, roles and responsibilities of teacher can play fundamental role in changing the behavior of students for sustainable development.

Characteristics of ESD:

The well known concept on ESD came into existence in the 1980s which describes ESD is based on three main pillars of Sustainable Development (SD). They are:

- **Environment-** An awareness to the richness of our natural resources and of the fragility of the physical environment.
- **Economy-** The sensitivity to the limits and potential of economic growth and to its impact on society and on the environment.
- **Society-** An understanding of social institutions

and their role in change and development with Culture—ways of behaving, believing, and acting, unique to every context, as an underlying and critical dimension. (Oliveira, 2008)

ESD is about learning rather than teaching. So, ESD is not only the part of knowing but it expects in developing positive attitudes towards its components and needed for life skills as well. Therefore, it requires:

- Reforming the structure and nature of basic education.
- Reorienting existing education programs.
- Developing public awareness about what sustainability means.
- Building capacity within education systems and across all other ESD partners. (Oliveira, 2008)

For an effective ESD, it should be addressed in two ways. They are:

- (i) Through the integration of ESD themes across all relevant subjects, programs and courses; and
- (ii) Through the provision of specific subject programs and courses; (Oliveira, 2008)

Education and ESD:

Education is recognised as a major tool to change societies; consequently it is necessary to make education into a constructive tool by creating awareness among students (Oliveira, M., 2008). For this directive, Government of Nepal is committed to provide quality education and so has integrated ESD components in the school curriculum. The learning has not been transformed into individual's behaviour and daily life which is the key concern of today's education system in Nepal. Hence, our education system has been facing the blame of growing unemployment and unskilled human resource who are unaware about social values and presence of unethical group of people instead of knowledgeable human resource with life skills and caution about social norms and values.

In these circumstances, ESD is an opportunity for

us because ESD can change our life to make it easy and resourceful. Although the dominant focus of ESD is on environmental concerns, it also addresses important themes such as poverty alleviation, citizenship, peace, ethics, democracy, good governance and many other emerging issues (UNESCO, 2006). According to UNESCO (2006) ESD should:

- **Be embedded in the curriculum in an interdisciplinary and holistic manner**, allowing for a whole-institution approach to policy making.
- **Share the values and principles** that underpin sustainable development.
- **Promote critical thinking, problem solving and action**, all of which develops confidence in addressing the challenges to sustainable development.
- **Employ a variety of educational methods**, such as literature, art, drama and debate to illustrate the processes.
- **Allow learners to participate in decision-making** on the design and content of educational programs.
- **Address** local as well as global issues, and avoid jargon-ridden language and terms.
- **Look to the future**, ensuring that the content has a long-term perspective and uses medium and long-term planning.

Sustainable development cannot be imagined without education and education is the heart of sustainable development in the other hand. Thus, these are two sides of a coin where one side is education and other side is ESD i.e. they go hand to hand or parallel way. ESD mainly aims to support sustainable and secured future without destroying the nature. To accept this notion, ESD should be included in the curriculum of formal, informal, non formal as well as vocational education so that no one is left to understand the core theme of ESD. The wide range of activities that support the development of ESD in formal but also in informal and non-formal setting include producing educational materials/books, organizing

conferences/workshops, training, research for capacity building, etc.(Wals, A., n.d.).

According to Wals(n.d.), workshops, courses and other out of school programs for students can build upon knowledge/skills acquired through the formal education channel.Wals (n.d.) also emphasizes that the meetings, dialogue, leadership programs for government officials, teacher trainers, NGOs and the private sector, partnering with local media to promote key messages of ESD are the methods in informal education. In school education, the child club as well as ESD related other possible activities might be the effective way for making peer and society aware. In addition, Community Learning Center (CLC) is the most probable forum for discussing the issues and implementing the ESD in community level.

Role of Teacher:

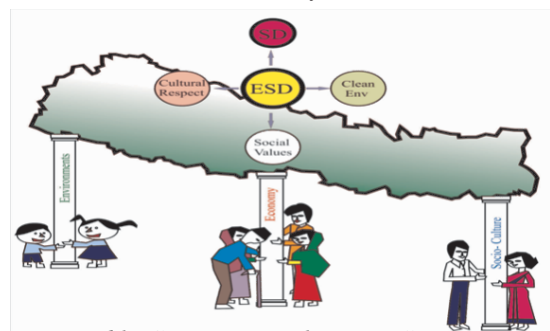
Teacher can be accepted as an effective agent to bring changes and core person of any issues in learning community. During the learning time/process, teacher is one of the trustworthy persons for students especially in the school education. One of the clear notions of every society is that if the teacher is aware of the issues associated with community/society, s/he can bring the positive changes because the teacher is closely connected with students, parents and community people as well. Even though ESD is new paradigm, it is not a complete new framework of education system in the sense of quality teaching and learning. Because some of the teachers have already made link between ESD's major issues in their classroom teaching and other ways of teaching methods. Despite, the fact that they can play the vital and appropriate role in the socialization of young people for their sustainable development. For this reason, the teacher needs to assist the young students to feel good about them, self confident to respect themselves as well as others and to take full responsibility of their actions (UNESCO, 2008)

According to Jacques Delors (2008) in the UNESCO report, ESD promotes five types of learning pillar

as the basis in fostering sustainable development. They are:

- **Learning to know** – knowledge, values and skills for respecting and searching for knowledge and wisdom.
- **Learning to do** – knowledge, values and skills for active engagement in productive employment and recreation.
- **Learning to be** – knowledge, values and skills for personal and family well-being.
- **Learning to live together** – knowledge, values and skills for international, intercultural and community cooperation and peace.
- **Learning to transform oneself and society** – knowledge, values and skills for self-reflection and active citizenship.

Among five pillars, the four pillars (except last one) have already been accepted in quality education. So most of the educational experts are conscious about it. Although fifth pillar was not much popular before, it works as the main pillar because in absence of it, the four pillars will be dysfunctional. Thus fifth pillar becomes main pillar of quality education and the major indicator for ESD as well. Learning, in real sense, is a changing behavior of learners that only happens when teachers educate the students to transform oneself and society.



Designed by Suman Bajracharya ,NCED, 2014

Context of Nepal

Nepalese parents, rich or poor, educated or not, are investing money as well as their lives in their children's education as they think that they should be placed higher in the society than they themselves have been and they believe that education does make

the difference (Adhikary ,2003). Adhikary (2003) further stated, when public and private schools gear for preparing the children to take them through the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) Examination, obviously society measures their efficiency in terms of comparative number of children passing SLC and the grades they receive. This is the painful reality of quality education where people labeling students on the basis of obtaining the score, it is not measured what they really learnt or what they knew. Apart from this scenario, some ESD components are already incorporated into our school education curriculum. However, many research studies explore the situation that the most of the teachers are still unknown about the curriculum and completely dependent upon textbook which is the fundamental challenge in our education system. Additionally, curriculum is not activity based where as teaching learning process is mostly based on lecture method or traditional method. Training skills of teachers are not being transformed into classroom and they are not able to help for increasing students' achievement in terms of quality education. But the core function of teachers should be delivering relevant education, equipping student with skills and attitude for sustainable future. Therefore, the role of teachers in our context regarding ESD could be as follows:

- Making school child friendly.
- Identifying local environmental issues.
- Respecting all the students with their different ability.
- Addressing core elements of ESD along with subject teaching.
- Developing student as a ;
 - a. critical thinker and problem solver.
 - b. ability to respond positively and develop positive attitude .
 - c. sense of self respect and respect to cultures responsible on preserving natural resources.
 - d. committed to transform knowledge and skills in personal and social life
 - e. awaking the student to respect social norms and values
- Supporting to make the school for environment friendly.

- Arranging the participation of community in concern events.

ESD is context based and many schools have exemplary contribution towards ESD and many other schools are potential for sustainable development to perform the activities regarding ESD .They are sharing their experiences as well as dedicating to make the school environment friendly and contributing for sustainable communities at the same time. Likewise, teachers are regarded not only as professionals only but also as individuals with civic responsibilities and as a role model with social and educational activities too. On the basis of experiences in related field and other related documents , the teachers could be qualified in terms of ESD by:

- capacity development through Teacher professional Development (TPD)
- workshop in related areas
- Building network among the schools or developing teachers forum
- Sharing of their best practices within the teacher forum
- Seminars
- Formulate competencies
- Action research
- Refresher courses
- Participation in ESD related programs

Despite these, there are some other opportunities for integrating the ESD components in educational activities or promoting ESD in school level. Government of Nepal has launched the demand based teacher training program which is Teacher Professional Development (TPD) and been operating through 29 training centers and 46 Lead Resource Centers (LRC) in the entire country for all level of school teachers. Primarily, in this training module, demands of the teachers are collected individually at training hub and then these are categorized on the basis of priority. After the verification of demands, training packages are developed at local level (शैजविके,२०७०) . In relation to ESD, if teacher understands its significance, they can create a demand on ESD related components which can be great opportunity for promoting ESD.

Conclusion:

In one hand, ESD is especially about the integration of three pillars like environment, socio-culture and economy which comprises very important and directly life related sub components. On the other hand, Goal of education is to empower all the people effectively to make them conscious, responsible and knowledgeable both individually and collectively. Education also aims to prepare the citizens to deal with present and future challenges successfully. So, the ESD and education is interrelated subject matter to each other. One is not complete without another as they are two sides of a coin.

Our each and every actions have impacts not only in our surroundings, it will impact everywhere in this globe now and future. For instance, we have just faced an intolerable incident of landslides and floods in various part of the country few days before. Many lives were lost and many people are still missing. That's why; we have to learn a lesson and should be conscious from these dreadful incidences which is the warning of brutal results of ignoring the environment. In this situation, schools are at forefront of ESD and can take the actions for empowering the people. Obviously, teachers can play crucial role by equipping the pupils with skills and attitude.

References

- Adhikary ,P.K. (2003) .*On the principles of community school. Education for sustainable development in Nepal*. Japan: IGES
- Bhandari ,B.B.,& Abe,O.(2003). *Education for sustainable development : in emerging paradigm. Education for sustainable development in Nepal*. Japan: IGES.
- Brundtland, G. (ed.). (1987). *Our Common Future: The World Commission on Environment and Development*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Delors, J.(2008) .*The UNESCO report 2008*. Paris: UNESCO
- Live and learn environmental education. (2009).*Teacher training manual*. Solomon Islands: Education for sustainable development in the south pacific.
- Md.Safiullah. (2001). *Education for sustainable development*. Bangkok : UNESCO.
- Shaeffer , S. (2007). *Education for sustainable development: A framework for educational reform*, Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, Bangkok
- Scott ,W.& Gough, S.(2003). *Sustainable development and learning, framing the issues*. London: Routledge Falmer
- UNESCO. (2011) .*Education for sustainable development*. Paris: UNESCO.
- UNESCO. (2008). *Teachers guide for sustainable development in the Caribbean*. Santiago, Chile: UNESCO.
- UNESCO. (2006). *UN Decade of Sustainable Development, UNESCO Nairobi Cluster*. Kenya: UNESCO.
- United Nations. (1992). *Agenda 21*. Rio de Janeiro: Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/agenda21/index.htm>.
- Willy, S. (2008), *Competencies for ESD teachers*. Belgium: Curriculum Department
- Wals, A. (n.d.), *Learning for a sustainable world*. The Netherland: Wageningen University.
- Oliveira, M. (2008), *Education for sustainable development within the formal curriculum in Costa Rica*. San Jose: University of Peace.
- शैजविक. (२०७०) शिक्षकको पेशागत विकास (टिपिडी) कार्यक्रम प्रशिक्षक प्रशिक्षण निर्देशिका । सानोठिमी, भक्तपुर