



ESD in Gandhi's Basic Education

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Abstract:

The study is undertaken to outline the basic concept of ESD and Mahatma Gandhi's concept of Basic Education, also known as Nai Taaleem and Wardha Scheme, and attempt to establish the similarity underlying both the concepts. ESD advocates the open system of education. It realizes the need of incorporating knowledge, skill, perspectives, values, and issues, in the curriculum in such a manner to address the need for sustained development indigenously. Education needs to improve the quality of life but not at the cost of the quality of life of the future generations. Education also needs to equip mankind with the ability to understand the problems and issues the society or world at large faces and contribute to its solution as possible. Gandhi's philosophy of education too is aimed at taking in to account the indigenous situation of one's country and addressing its needs accordingly. Hence, the importance of craft and dignity of labour in Nai Taaleem. This system cultivates in its students the character and life style that undeniably focuses on promoting sustainable development. Hence the stress given to simple and self-sufficient living is seen in Nai Taaleem.

Keywords: ESD, Basic education, Nai Taaleem, Sustained development

1. Introduction

In modern times a good deal is being written and discussed regarding the philosophy that should guide and mould educational practices and objectives. Some of most outstanding thinkers from Plato to Dewey and Gandhi to Radhakrishnan, have found education a prime concern and have been inclined to take it rather seriously. The reason is that "if philosophy in its last analysis is a way of life, education is the method of inculcating that way of life in others." (Introduction to Educational and Psychological Research, p. 32) Again much is being written and discussed regarding the need for sustained development and the role of education in promoting it.

The world commission on environment and development defined Sustained Development in 1987. The UN General assembly endorsed it the same year. After many discussions and negotiations, the agenda 21, for the first time, recognized the role of education in sustained development. It is a matter of pride that Indian thinkers have been exponents of the same thought from a period much earlier. Gandhi, specifically, had strong views about the aims and forms of education. In 1938 the Zakir Hussain committee supported Gandhi's views on Basic Education in their report known as Wartha scheme of education, which was accepted by the Indian National Congress. Today there are roughly 500 schools known as Utter Bunayadi Schools in Gujarat. The following study is aimed at describing the concept of Education for Sustained Development (ESD) and Gandhi's concept of Basic education and comparing them.

2. Definitions

2.1 Sustained Development

The Brundtland commission defines sustained development, as "sustainable Development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p 43)

2.2 Basic Education

In words of Gandhi, Basic education or Nai Taleem or Wardha Scheme is " My definition of Nai Taleem is this, that if you give power to someone who has obtained Nai Taleem, he will not puff up, and if you give him a broom, he will not be embarrassed. For him, both work value equal. Useless pursuits can have no place in his life. Not one of his activities will be unproductive or unnecessary. A student of Nai Taleem cannot be dull because his every organ will get work, his intelligence and his hands will go together. When people will work with their hands there will be no issue of unemployment and starvation. My Nai Taleem and cottage industries are two sides of the same coin." (Gandhijinu Shikshan Darshan, p. 93)

2.3 ESD

ESD carries with it the inherent idea of implementing programs that are locally relevant and culturally appropriate. ESD must take into consideration the local environment, economic and societal condition. As a result, ESD will take many forms around the world. ESD is more than a knowledge base related to environment, economy, and society. It also addresses learning skills, perspective and values that guide and motivate people to seek sustainable livelihoods, participate in a democratic society and live in sustainable manner. ESD also involves studying local and, when appropriate, global issues. Therefore, these five i.e., knowledge, skill, perspectives, values, and issues must all be addressed in a formal curriculum. ESD calls for giving people knowledge and skills for lifelong learning to help them find new solutions to their environment, economic and social issues. Education directly affects sustainability plan in the following three areas.

2.3.1 Implementation

An educated citizenry is vital to implementing informed and sustainable development.

2.3.2 Decision-making

Good community-based decisions – which will affect social, economic, and environmental well being also depend on educated citizens.

2.3.3 Quality of life

Education raises economic status of family; it improves life conditions, lowers infant mortality index, and improves the educational attainment of the next generations, thereby raising the next generations chances for economic and social well-being.

The chapter 36 of Agenda 21 of the Committee of UN General assembly's Report identified four major thrusts to begin work of ESD:

3. Improving Basic Education

Not only is it necessary to decide a globally similar duration of primary school education but at the same time there should be focus on skills, values and perspectives that encourage and support public participation and community decision making. Just increasing basic literacy is not enough for building sustainable societies. To achieve this basic education must be reoriented to address sustainability and expand to include critical thinking skills, skills to organize and interpret data and information skills to formulate questions and the ability to analyze issues that confront communities.

4. Reorienting Existing Education

ESD envisions a system that integrates environment, economy, and society. Reorienting education also requires teaching and learning knowledge, skills, perspectives, and values that will guide and motivate people to pursue sustainable livelihoods, to participate in a democratic manner. A balance is necessary between traditional ecological knowledge with a forward-looking sustainable goal. Indigenous traditions often carry with them the values and practices that embody sustainable resource use. Returning to indigenous lifestyles is not possible in most cases but the values and major tenets of

indigenous traditions can be adapted to life in the 21st century. Reorienting education applies to all levels of the formal education system.

5. Public Understanding and Awareness

Sustainability requires a population that is aware of the goals of a sustainable society and has the knowledge and skills to contribute to those goals. An informed citizen, who lends support to enlightened policies and government initiatives, can help enact sustainable development measures. Years of resource management has shown that a public that is aware of, and informed about resource – management decisions and programs can help achieve program goals.

6. Training

Training is distinct from education in that training is often specific to a particular job or class of jobs. Training informs people of accepted practices and procedures and gives them skills to perform specific tasks.

7. Main features of Gandhi's system of Education

- Education for a just social order
- Education through craft and manual work
- Education through mother tongue
- Self sufficient education
- Education related to life activities and experiences
- Dignity of labour
- Correlation
- Religious education
- Spiritual training
- Freedom to children but under discipline
- Character development
- Mass education
- Women's education

A bird's eye view of the concept of sustained development, role of education regarding sustained development and Gandhi's concept of education is presented above. Before a comparative report is forwarded, it is necessary to understand that the age in which Gandhi lived is different from the situation today. Thus, the concept of sustained development through education will have a different application today than in the age of Gandhi.

ESD points out the need for an improved basic i.e., primary level education, so as to result in, firstly, quantitative aspect i.e., literacy for all, secondly, enlightening women and thirdly reshuffling the curriculum to make it a skill-based activity. Gandhi too insisted that true education is that which draws out and stimulates the spiritual, the intellectual and physical faculties of the children. (Tendulkar, Mahatma vol. IV. p. 187). His basic education consists of developing in the child his hands, his brain, and his soul. (Gandhijinu Shikshan Darshan, P. 23). Basic education tries to correlate the life of the child with immediate, physical, and social environments. (Great Philosopher and Thinkers on Education, p. 161) Gandhi's concern for women's education was directed towards creating better societies. He said, "as long as we do not have real mother teachers who can successfully impart true education to our children, they will remain uneducated even though they may be going to school." (Great Philosopher and Thinkers on Education, p. 161)

ESD emphasizes reorientation of the education system for achieving its goals. However, ESD also points out the need of doing so diversely as educational programs need to be locally relevant and culturally appropriate. All sustainable programs must take into consideration the local environment, economic and societal condition. As a result, ESD will take many forms around the world. When Gandhi conceptualized Basic education, he did exactly this. He believed that the future citizen should understand their problems, rights, and duties. He believed that the three centres of correlation – craft, physical environment, and social environment of the child, should be integrated in the curriculum. Indigenous traditions often lead to practices in sustained resource use. When Gandhi advocates craft or cottage industries, he is advocating a social value system. To Gandhi, education was an integral part of a comprehensive program of socio-economic re-construction of Indian society. He is described as an

example who teaches us to become masters of external things and not their slaves, to establish our control over them and not let them control us.

A big challenge for ESD is the paradox in education. On one hand, education leads to tackling problems like population growth and better economy but on other hand education leads to higher consumption of resources thereby threatening sustainability. (Education For Sustainable Development Toolkit, p. 10) Gandhi's basic education makes a man educated but thrifty in the use of resources, as his every activity will be productive.

The need for public awareness through education is emphasized for sustained development. Gandhi's Wardha Scheme unifies knowledge and does not allow division of knowledge into watertight compartment. There is an integration of craft, physical environment, and social environment. This will produce useful citizens which is the aim of a sound education. This sociological aim of moulding citizen who understand their problems, rights and duties would undeniably lead to sustained development.

To sum up, if one believes that ESD works by moulding citizens who would firstly, implement plans for sustainability secondly, play a vital role in the decision-making process of the society in matter concerning sustained development and, lastly, who raise their standard of living while raising the next generations chances for economic and social well being, then Gandhi's philosophy of education as reflected in his basic education would be ideal way of achieving it. A product of Nai Taleem would be empowered "to discriminate between what should be received and what rejected." (Great Philosopher and Thinkers on Education, p. 157) Such a school has to help the child to realize his potentiality, to make his life better, fuller, happier both individually and socially." (Great Philosopher and Thinkers on Education, p. 159)

"The ultimate objectives of the new education are not only a balanced and harmonious individual but also a balanced and harmonious society." (Great Philosopher and Thinkers on Education, P. 160) For this kind of a classless society Gandhi's Nai Taleem should make one understand problems, rights duties and know well the working of the Government as in Panchayats, municipalities, and district boards (Great Indian Educational Thinkers p. 58). Such an enlightened citizen would only be instrumental in the needed decision making for sustainable development.

Gandhi's concept of education in Nai Taleem emphasized the use of Craft, making labour dignified and building of noble character. The belief that looking to the needs of the villagers of India, education should be self supporting a kind of insurance against unemployment (Great Philosopher And Thinkers on Education p. 160) will result in creating economically better citizens whose better judgment would assure future citizen, a better life. Thus, the student of Nai Taleem will raise his own standard of living without jeopardizing the well being of the future citizen.

8. Conclusion

A scrutiny results in the finding that ESD is the pragmatic manifestation of the ideal of Gandhi's educational philosophy. The nature of ESD calls for giving people knowledge and skills for life long learning to help them find new solution to their environmental, economical, and social issues. Only thus education becomes a tool for achieving sustainability. At the same time issues differ from region to region as well as time to time. If ESD is to conform to the requirements, it will differ in its curriculum from place to place and time to time thus idealistically speaking, ESD believes in open system of education and supports the growth theory. Now, if ESD in India is planned in the framework of Gandhi's Nai Taaleem, it will consider the goal of self-identification. Self-knowledge is the source of infinite prosperity – material, moral, spiritual. Such a person (having self-knowledge) automatically becomes sensitive to all issues concerning his own self as well as his society and state. Again, Gandhi's educational scheme is deeply rooted in culture. This is the indigenous aspect of balancing one's

progress with the progress and well being of the nation at large. This is the end towards which ESD as well as Nai Taleem strive.

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