

# INNOVATIVE THOUGHTS

## INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

**Volume 3**  
**Issue 1** **August 2015**

Indexed In

**ROAD**  
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Resources





## **BLENDING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INPUTS IN INSTRUCTIONAL ENVIRONMENT: AS A CATALYST TO EQUIP ONESELF AND SOCIETY IN DIGITAL ERA**

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**S**ustainable development is the overarching paradigm of the United Nations. The concept of sustainable development was described by the 1987 Brundtland Commission Report as “development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

Sustainability is a paradigm for thinking about a future in which environmental, social and economic considerations are balanced in the pursuit of development and an improved quality of life. The three inputs of sustainable development such as environmental protection, economic development and social development are inter-twined. For example, a prosperous society relies on a healthy environment to provide food and resources, safe drinking water and clean air for its citizens. The figure 1 depicts the interplay of varied aspects of the concept sustainability.

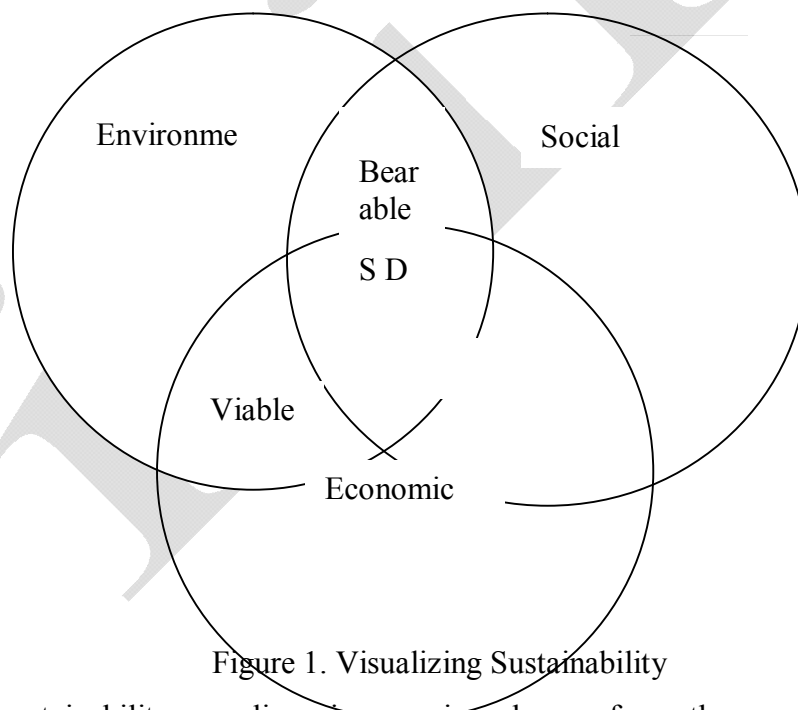


Figure 1. Visualizing Sustainability

The sustainability paradigm is a major change from the previous paradigm of economic development with its damaging, social and environmental consequences. Until

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recently these consequences have been seen as inevitable and acceptable. However, we now realize that major damage or serious threats to the well-being of humans and the environment in pursuit of economic development have no place within the sustainability paradigm.

## **EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (ESD)**

“Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world” -Nelson Mandela

The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNCED) 2005 -2014 provides an opportunity to progress towards implementing universal quality education that fosters the knowledge, skills, perspectives and values that need to a more sustainable future. Education empowers individuals, gives them voice, unlocks their potential, open pathways to self actualization and broadens perspectives to open minds to a pluralist world. Education is a dynamic concept that changes and evolves with time and changes in the social economic and environmental contexts of place Education is an indispensable element for achieving sustainable development.

ESD was first described by chapter 36 of Agenda 21. This chapter identified four major thrusts to begin the work of ESD.

1. improve access to quality basic education
2. reorient existing education to address sustainable development
3. develop public understanding and awareness
4. provide training programmes for all sectors of private and civil society.

All educational programmes should be based on five pillars of education, which are foundational to provide a quality education and fostering human development. Four pillars are from Delors Report, Learning: The Treasure within: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be. A fifth pillar was added by UNESCO to address the special challenges of sustainability learning to transform oneself and society.

The four thrusts of ESD and the five pillars of education bring together two compatible educational paradigms and efforts Both require that school systems and teachers move towards teaching all five pillars. This is a challenge because many formal education systems currently focus primarily on learning to know and only secondarily on learning to do. Nevertheless all five pillars are necessary to help people from all walks of life to create a more sustainable future.

### **Learning to transform oneself and society: Education for sustainable living**

All round the world groups of informed, skilled and motivated people are striving to achieve more responsible ways of living. It is recognized that education is essential to achieve sustainable development for all. To meet the demands of a rapidly changing world, citizens are needed who have learned how to learn, to reflect and to initiate, adapt to and evaluate change not only within themselves but also in society.



Life skills which are needed to transform oneself and society include the ability to:

- Identity principles which safeguard the basic values of integrity, honesty compassion and justice, know one and cope with one's emotions.
- Make critical reflected decisions which take into consideration both short and long term consequences.
- Generate and implement new ideas which are socially and ecologically responsible.
- Solve conflicts peacefully and with empathy
- Be of service to others by appreciating diversity and actively contributing to community.

We can use a lot of strategies to inculcate these abilities among students. Pedagogies associated with ESD stimulate pupils to ask questions, analyze, think critically and make decisions, such pedagogies move from teacher-centered to student-centered lessons and from rote memorization to participatory learning.

The strategies like storytelling, simulation, class discussions, issues analysis and extracurricular activities such as creating school gardens, community monitoring celebration of special days, events etc can be used to help the pupils to grow as learners and to enhance their skills and capacity to learn and think. Besides all these strategies we can think about another strategy by considering the pupils as digital age learners. Learning in the digital age is learning from technology and learning with technology. The pupils are electronic communicators, multi taskers, multimedia learners and on-line collaborators.

E learning is an effective strategy which can be used for transforming oneself and society. E learning is the learning opportunities delivered by electronic technology the pupil access to knowledge through pictures, sound video and animation. They are shaped by the new media of worldwide web.

Thus the sustainable development inputs can be integrated to educational practices through Small Learning Objects (SLOs) and E- content modules. By this schools can focus on learning which enables students to develop self awareness and the ability to contribute to constructive changes. Enhancing the learning of sustainable development with digital experiences make the learning more interactive, more participatory, more engaging and more involving. The role of the teacher as digital age teacher is an orchestrator of learning and not a dispenser of information, helping students to turn information into knowledge through higher order thinking skills such as creativity, critical thinking, evaluation and analysis,

## **CONCLUSION**

Education is essential to sustainable development. The education of today is crucial to enhance the ability of leaders and citizens of tomorrow to create solutions and find new paths



to a better, more sustainable future. Our ultimate aim is to work towards positive change and help pupil to develop a sense of social justice and self efficacy as community members.

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