Role of Educational Leadership for Sustainable Development

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Abstract
Education is the strongest instrument for any development or change in the world. It is the most durable, acceptable and popular method of creating a change necessary for future development by creating willingness and self-awareness amongst people. Education geared towards sustainable development enables the individuals to gain knowledge, focused attitude, necessary skills and particular values which are essential for the formation of sustainable future (UNESCO, 2014). The foremost focus of Education for Sustainable Development is to improve the quality of life without damaging environment. In this fast-changing world, leadership is the basic element for making sustainable development through education and other factors. This paper aims to study the significance of educational leadership in promoting sustainable development, its basic principles, core competencies and approaches required for effective leadership. The study also explores the challenges faced by sustainable leadership and ways to overcome these challenges. With the help of literature review, it can be pointed out that to implement educational policies effectively, a system needs competent leaders who have multifaceted qualities. Though there are many challenges for educational leaders, visionary leaders can create sustainable education system which will in turn help in making sustainable development in the arena of economy, society, environment (Ecosystem & Biosphere), enhancing social justice and fight poverty.
Keywords: educational leadership, sustainable development, educational sustainable development.

Роль лидерства в образовании для устойчивого развития

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Аннотация
Образование – самый сильный инструмент любого развития или перемен в мире. Это самый надежный, приемлемый и популярный путь, ведущий к будущим реформам через формирование у людей готовности к преобразованиям и через перестройку их сознания. Образование, направленное на непрерывное развитие, позволяет людям получить знания, внутреннюю мотивацию, необходимые навыки и ценностные ориентиры, которые важны для формирования устойчивого будущего (UNESCO, 2014). Основным направлением образования для устойчи-

вого развития является повышение качества жизни без ущерба для окружающей среды. В быстро меняющемся мире лидерство является основным элементом обеспечения устойчивого развития с помощью образования и других факторов. Цель данной работы – изучить значение лидерства в образовании для содействия устойчивому развитию, основные принципы, ключевые компетенции и подходы, необходимые для эффективного лидерства. В исследовании также рассматриваются проблемы, с которыми сталкивается устойчивое лидерство, и пути их преодоления. В обзоре литературы отмечается, что для эффективной реализации образовательной политики системе необходимы компетентные лидеры, обладающие многогранными качествами. Несмотря на то что перед руководителями образования стоит множество проблем, дальновидные лидеры стремятся создать такую систему образования, которая способна обеспечить устойчивое развитие экономики, общества, окружающей среды (экосистемы и биосферы), повысить социальную справедливость и благосостояние людей.

Ключевые слова: лидерство в образовании, устойчивое развитие, устойчивое развитие образования.

Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development aroused as a reaction to growing concerns regarding the damaging influence of human society on environment. The commission on Environment and Development, Brundtland Commission pointed that sustainable development should emerge as progress that fulfils needs without causing damage to the future generations' ability to meet their needs (Brundtland, 1987).

Initially, sustainable development was primarily focused on environmental aspects with a focus on Economy, Society and Environment (Ecosystem & Biosphere). However, starting from 2002, social justice and alleviation of poverty has been added as essential principles of sustainable development. For preserving the key values of a society or a country, education itself should work for the sustenance of its essence.
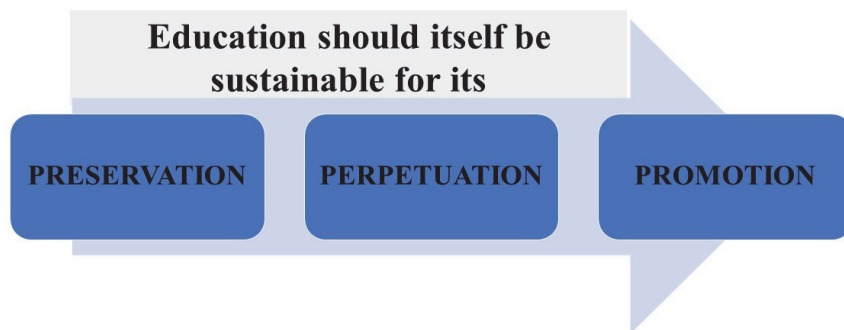

Fig (i). *Education for Self-Sustenance*

Education plays an indispensable role for survival and advancement of society. It creates new researches, innovation, industrial revolution and environment preservation. It should not only be comprehensive but must be sustainable for its preservation, perpetuation and promotion. It should evolve continuously to address the challenges posed by volatile and capricious world.

In order to build a sustainable world, education serves as a catalyst for the developing knowledge, skills and values, promoting social equity as well as economic sustainability and taking necessary actions to protect and preserve the environment. Thus, it is imperative to reorient the present education system, since only a quality education can lay the path for sustainable world.
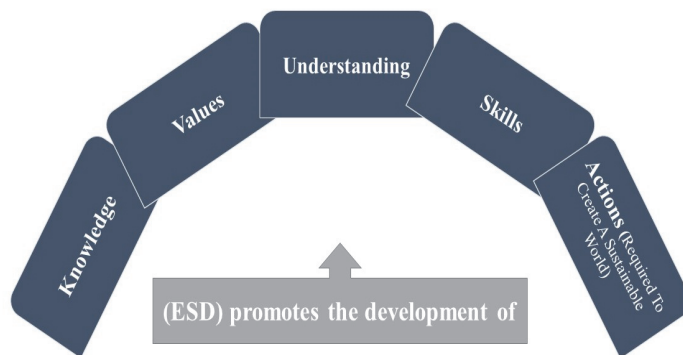
Which ensures **Environmental Protection** and **Conservation,** promotes **Social Equity** and encourages **Economic Sustainability.**

Fig (ii). *Education for Sustainable Development*

Concept of ESD

Education for Sustainale Develoment referes to the process aiming to cultivate more informed and engaged community members who are equipped with ability to solve problems creatively, having scientific and social litercay and dedicated to work individually as well as collabratively. These efforts will contribute towards creating enviromentally sound and economically prosperous future (PCSD, 1996). Additionally, as per UNO Agenda 21 ESD ought to address other intricate aspects of enviornment, for instance, physical, biological, economic, social and spiritual (United Nations, 2015).

Education for sustainable development embodies a novel educational approach which enables the individuals of different age groups to contribute to make a sustainable future (UNESCO, 2002). The World Conservation Union in 1980 articulated Education for Sustainable Development to deal with ways to encourage participation and creating a society that empowers sustainablity.

Panel Report of Sustainable Development Education in year 1998 highlighted that Education for Sustainable Development should enable us to keep updated as well as enhance our present quality of life and maintain the quality of life of future generation.

UNESCO in year 2014 stated that Education for Sustainable Development gives freedom to everyone to gain necessary knowledge, set of skills and values for shaping a sustainable future. ESD primarily focuses on enhancing the quality of life of people without causing any harm to the enviornment.

Therefore, for the attainment of ESD extensive transformations are needed in present education system. It focuses on fostering such competencies as critical thinking, collaborative decision making, envisage the future perspectives. It can be achieved through coactive teaching and learning which strengthen and inspire students to modify their behaviour and become active for sustainable development.

Leadership for Sustainable Development of Education

Leader is a change agent and facilitator of transitions (Hopkins & Jackson, 2003) and they need to be competent and knowlegbale for leading the process of transition to sustainable future. The term 'leadership' is highly subjective like all conceptual constructions in the social sciences that influence a group of individuals and their behaviour to attain shared objective (Katsaros, 2008; Northouse, 2004). For a successful

sustainable education, economy, social and enviornmental well-being, it is required to develop leadership skills such as perseverance, knowledge of fundamental elements of change, acknowledgment of objectives, openness towards novel ideas, dedication and skills to work collaboratively as well as coopertaively among future leaders.

Education aimed at Sustainable Development encompasses change management and to fulfill sustainable goals, leaders play a pertinent role in bringing smooth transformations in the educaton system by reorienting its curriculum, aims and objectives, methods and school policies (McKeown, 2013).

There have been extensive research reports indicating that educational leaders play remarkable influence on education system and educational institutions (Barth, 2001; Fuller et al., 2007). School leaders exert their influence by supervising the workforce as well as teaching, enact rules, and develop the school philosophy, culture and language (Marzano et al., 2005). Marzano et al. (2005) stated that there are several factors related to success of school such as teacher effectiveness, ethos and values of the school and students' learning interventions.

In the 21st century, sustainable development has surged due to widespread consciousness for harmonising economic growth, social progress and preservation of enviornment. At the heart of achieving sustainable development lie education, and more specifically, educational leadership. Educational leaders perform a pivotal role in developing a comprehensive understanding of sustainability practices and principles among learners by bringing changes in educational systems and institutions.

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (Pont et al., 2008), school leaders hold the capacity to modify schools to assist societal changes as they act as mediators within the school practices and reforms initiated by policy makers. Thus, it is the key responsibility of school leaders to manage change and rebuild the education system faciliating the sustainable development (McKeown, 2013). Consequently, the most important task for the educational leaders should be to execute and propagate the vision of education for sustainable development, and they ought to view ESD as a paramount area which requires a thorough comprehension and supportive practices for the changes in education.

Educational Leadership: A Catalyst for Sustainable Development

Educational leadership, often embodied by school principals, administrators, and policymakers, acts as a stimulant for sustainable development by influencing various dimensions of the educational system. Sustainable Development Goal 4 of the United Nations emphasises the significance of quality education for all which ensures equitable access of education and enhances knowledge, develops key skills and cultivates values necessary for sustainable living (UN, 2015). Educational leaders are central to the realization of this goal, as they become a keychain between the educational policies, practices and integration of sustainability.

Principles of Sustainability Leadership

Leadership does not merely entail a position rather it is an affair of influencing others. Similarly, sustainability leadership embodies a process of exerting influence to resolve social, economic and environment related issues with firm determination (McCauley, 2014; Quinn & D'Amato, 2008; Visser & Courtice, 2011). A group of individuals work collaboratively for making and achieving a common goal for change. Although the principles of leadership and sustainability leadership both promote sustainable development.

Fig (iii). *Principles of Sustainable Leadership*

The principles of sustainable leadership are as follows:

1. **Worldview**: The concept of worldview embodies ecocentric, systemic and long-term features. Ecocentric worldview signifies to understand that nature has intrinsic value and humans are part of a global ecosystem. Sustainable leaders need to think systemically for the long-term gains and embolden other prospective leaders to be aware of this.

2. **Cross-Boundary Network:** Sustainability leaders more likely trespass the boundaries and work with other leaders who are playing their different roles. The cross-boundary network of leaders consists of leaders having authority, thought leaders who possess powers, integrity and sovereignty.

3. **Influence without Authority:** Sustainability leaders have to put efforts to influence absolutely strange people from different corners of the world and they have no authority over them. For this they create an aura of their own personal strengths including trustworthiness, knowledge and integrity.

4. **Dealing with Complex Situations**: It is essential for leaders to have ability to choose appropriate style of leadership. A sustainable leader needs to have six pivotal competencies, such as collaboration, character, commitment, competence, communication, and creativity.

They should work in collaboration with high positive values like honesty, humanity, originality, having continuous commitment for grit by refining and redefining their skills and abilities to complete the task. They should also have effective communication skills and accurate listening skills to build a common vision, provide a quick and easy solution to conflicts by facilitating workers and other members. Leaders must be creative and innovative to take the organisation to the new heights of success.

5. **Investing time for Cross-Boundary Work:** Challenges in the work for SD involve cross-boundary issues and these can be related to different professional areas, i.e. status of different governmental machinery, demographic levels, geographical differences, different political theories. Therefore, education leaders should have a vast knowledge of

these cross-boundary problems and have competencies to solve these issues with a secular and scientific approach.

6. **Self-leadership**: Leaders must pay attention towards their own goals, set of values, personality traits as well as strengths and then making decisions such as where to work and spend time and what leadership behaviours to adopt.

Responsibilities of Educational Leaders

The educational leaders play an influential role in bringing as well as improving the knowledge and new methods, promoting positive outcomes for the organisation, learners, families and society at large. Efficacious educational leadership plays an important role in enhancing educators' capabilities by inspiring them to improve their pedagogy and practices. Educational leaders' important responsibilities are as follows:

1. **Curriculum Development for Sustainability:** One of the primary responsibilities of educational leaders is to shape the curriculum to reflect the principles of sustainability. By infusing sustainability concepts across subjects, students can develop a holistic understanding of environmental, social, and economic dimensions. For instance, a science curriculum could incorporate lessons on renewable energy sources and climate change, while a social studies curriculum could explore global inequalities and cultural diversity. Educational leaders drive curriculum development by advocating for interdisciplinary approaches that bridge traditional subject boundaries. They work with teachers to design the learning experiences which are not only innovative and engaging, but also foster critical thinking and problem-solving abilities among learners. This approach equips students with essential knowledge and nurtures the skills needed to address complex sustainability challenges.

2. **Fostering a Culture of Sustainability:** The culture within educational institutions significantly influences students' attitudes and behaviour. Educational leaders are instrumental in cultivating a culture of sustainability that permeates every aspect of school life. This involves promoting environmentally responsible practices which minimise the waste and conserve energy within school premises. Furthermore, educational leaders display sustainable behaviours and attitudes, demonstrating a commitment to ethical decision-making and responsible citizenship. By embodying these values, leaders inspire students, teachers, and staff to adopt sustainable practices in their daily lives and contribute to the attainment of goals of sustainable development.

3. **Community Engagement and Partnerships:** Educational institutions do not exist in isolation; they are integral parts of broader communities. Educational leaders play a pivotal role in forging partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and community groups to promote sustainable development initiatives. These collaborations can encompass initiatives such as community gardens, tree planation, protection of forests, watershed management, wasteland development, environmental clean-up campaigns, and awareness workshops. Engaging the community in sustainable development efforts not only enriches students' learning experiences but also demonstrates the school's commitment to its social and environmental responsibilities. Moreover, these partnerships provide students with real-world opportunities for utilising their knowledge and skills, and foster a sense of empowerment.

4. **Advocacy and Policy Development:** Educational leaders hold a unique position to make and modify the policies for sustainable development. They can engage local, regional, and national policymakers to influence education policies that prioritize sustainability education. By articulating the value of integrating sustainability into the curriculum, leaders contribute to the development of education systems that align with global sustainable development objectives. Educational leaders can also champion

teachers' professional development programs focused on sustainability education. Necessary pedagogical skills and content knowledge empower teachers to effectively deliver sustainability-related curricula and engage students in meaningful discussions about the pressing global issues.

Competencies of Educational Leaders

Leadership competencies consist of knowledge, attributes, technical and soft skills that make an individual an effective leader. There is not one unique set of leadership competencies that works across all organisations. In fact, different leadership positions within an organization may require different proficiencies and abilities. Certain competencies necessary for the educational leaders are presented below:

– **Vision and Strategic Thinking:** Develop a clear vision for integrating sustainable development principles into the institution's mission and strategies. Create a long-term sustainability strategy that aligns with global goals and local needs (De Haan, 2006).

– **Systems Thinking:** Comprehend that all factors such as social, economic, and environmental are interconnected. Identify and address potential unintended consequences of decisions regarding sustainable development (Wiek et al., 2015).

– **Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement:** Maak (2007) in his report stated that leaders have to build partnerships with various stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, parents, local communities and industry partners. Foster a culture of collaboration and engagement to drive sustainable initiatives as extension service programs. Ferdig (2007) stated that it is important for the sustainability leaders that they lead others with them and not over them.

– **Leadership and Change Management:** Lead by example in embracing sustainable practices and behaviours. Effectively communicate the importance of sustainable development to inspire and motivate others. Manage resistance and navigate change when implementing sustainable initiatives (Attah et al., 2017).

– **Curriculum Integration:** Integrate sustainability concepts across the curriculum to ensure that students are able to develop knowledge and skills to contribute to a sustainable future. Encourage project-based learning and interdisciplinary approaches that address real-world sustainability challenges (Middlebrooks et al., 2009).

– **Innovation and Problem-Solving:** According to Toseef et al. (2022), sustainable leaders should encourage creative thinking and innovation to develop sustainable solutions. They have to equip students and staff with problem-solving skills to tackle complex sustainability issues.

– **Ethical and Cultural Competency:** Shriberg and MacDonald (2013) in their research reported that ethical considerations in making decisions and taking actions towards sustainability should be promoted. They should respect and embrace diverse cultural perspectives on sustainability (Barth et al., 2007).

– **Resource Management:** Optimize resource allocation and management to minimize environmental impact and maximize efficiency. Implement energy-saving practices, waste reduction strategies, and sustainable procurement policies (Shriberg & MacDonald, 2013).

– **Data Literacy and Analysis:** Data should be used to study and keep track on progress toward sustainability goals. Metrics related to energy consumption, waste reduction, carbon footprint should be analysed.

– **Advocacy and Policy Influence**: Policies for supporting sustainable practices at institutional, local, and national levels should be advocated. Stay informed about relevant sustainability regulations and trends.

– **Communication Skills:** Communicate complex sustainability concepts in a clear and accessible manner to diverse audiences. Use various communication channels to raise awareness and engage stakeholders (Toseef et al., 2022).

– **Resilience and Adaptability:** Navigate uncertainties and adapt strategies in response to changing environmental, social, and economic conditions (Barth et al., 2007).

– **Model resilience in the face of challenges and setbacks:** These competencies collectively enable educational leaders to create a holistic approach to sustainable development, fostering a culture of responsibility, innovation, and positive change within their educational institutions and beyond especially in natural calamities, environmental degradation, soil erosion and disastrous pollution problems.

From multicultural perspective aspects like social equality and equity, collaborative decisions, democracy (Mindell, 2002), gender equality, knowledge of past and probability of future (Van Norren, 2017), social innovations, sustainability literacy, active values and forward-thinking can also play an important role for the competency of educational leaders.

Effective Leadership Approaches

Unlike conventional leadership styles, sustainability leadership embraces a holistic approach. Sustainability leaders diagnose the causes of unsustainability and additionally they adapt to new styles of leadership according to the existing situations, ascertain the economic and environmental effects, including cultural and social aspects of their institutions and highlighting the cultural and ecological variations of various ecosystems (Foundation for Deep Ecology, 2012). Effective leadership approaches may be discussed as:

1. **Visionary Leadership**: Visionary leaders coordinate a necessary vision to motivate others to look towards that vision directed for a secure future and inspire the individuals around them to work toward that vision. By communicating a clear and inspiring purpose, visionary leaders can align diverse stakeholders around a common goal (Senge, 1990).

2. **Adaptive Leadership:** Given the dynamic and evolving nature of sustainable development challenges, leaders need to be adaptive. Adaptive leaders are comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity, adjusting their strategies based on changing circumstances (Heifetz et al., 2009).

3. **Collaborative Leadership:** Sustainable development requires collaboration among governments, businesses, NGOs, and communities. Collaborative leaders facilitate partnerships, engage stakeholders, and create platforms for collective problem-solving (Gray, 1989).

4. **Inclusive Leadership:** Inclusive leaders value diverse perspectives and ensure that marginalized voices are heard. Inclusion is essential for promoting a holistic approach to sustainable development and addressing social equity concerns (Gardner et al., 2011).

Leadership Challenges in the Context of Sustainable Development

The challenges associated with sustainable leadership are formidable, but they present opportunities for growth, innovation, and positive change. Effective leadership in this context involves navigating complex interdependencies, fostering collaboration, and making informed decisions that harmonise the immediate imperatives and enduring sustainability goals. Visionary, adaptive and inclusive leadership approaches are instrumental to a more sustainable and equitable future. As the world is grappled with acute global issues like climate change, scarcity of resources and social inequalities, the role of leadership becomes paramount. Leaders who embrace these challenges as

opportunities to drive positive change can contribute significantly to the realization of sustainable development goals.

– **Balancing Immediate and Future Goals:** Sustainable development requires leaders to navigate the tension between short-term economic interests and long-term environmental and social goals. This challenge often arises due to the pressure to deliver immediate results while simultaneously addressing long-term sustainability concerns (Van Wassenhove, 2006).

– **Complex Interdependencies:** Sustainable development challenges often span multiple dimensions, including economic, social, and environmental factors. Leaders must grapple with the intricate interdependencies among these dimensions, understanding that decisions in one area can have unintended consequences in others (Sharma & Henriques, 2005).

– **Resistance to Change:** The transition toward sustainable practices can encounter resistance from various stakeholders who are accustomed to established ways of doing things. Leaders must navigate this resistance by effectively communicating the rationale for change and fostering a sense of shared ownership (Cameron & Green, 2015).

– **Lack of Awareness and Education:** Achieving sustainable development requires a shift in mindset and behaviour at both individual and organizational levels. Leaders face the challenge of raising awareness and providing education on sustainability principles to build a foundation for informed decision-making (Bansal, 2005).

– **Trade-offs and Ethical Dilemmas:** The process of sustainable development confronts in making choices and compel to compromise prioritising competing processes. Leaders must grapple with ethical dilemmas related to resource allocation, social equity, and environmental preservation (Biermann & Pattberg, 2008).

Ways To Respond to Leadership Challenges

Leaders generally face difficult challenges. Therefore, they have to be fully trained with strong measures and approaches to tackle these barriers and justify their leadership position in a strategic way.

Fig (iv). *Ways to respond leadership challenges*

1. **Specify Objectives:** Take a lead in setting goals to be accomplished in a time frame. These goals should be attainable and time-bound.

2. **Delegate More Work to Others:** Assign different tasks to different but competent persons, ensure intermittent feedback and suggest remedies to keep a task on track. The task should also enable personal growth of individuals involved in the task and give recognition and reward on the completion of task.

3. **Strengthen Team Alignment and Collaboration:** Ensure team work, develop confidence to make difficult decisions for effective and structured strategy, workers should know their roles as team members, analyse the system policies and procedures that are to be followed. Evaluate the accuracy of communication undertaken by its team members.

Conclusion

Leadership skills are the implements, activities and capabilities that leaders should have in promoting well-being.

Leaders should have all the competencies required for carrying out of educational activities to achieve aims of sustainable development. Simultaneously, they should keep in mind the welfare of concerned employees promoting their well-being. They should work for organizational development. Faculty, students and members of the community should be motivated for the successful achievement of goals. Leaders should have a sparking desire, dedicated commitment for the purpose in hand synchronising it with the vision of organisation with high integrity.

Educational leadership should work as inbuilt force to gear up education process for making the SD possible. Through curriculum development, fostering a culture of sustainability, community engagement and policy advocacy, educational leaders shape the learning experiences that prepare future generations to tackle complex global challenges. By integrating sustainability principles into education, these leaders create a foundation for a more just, equitable, and environmentally conscious society. As we navigate the complexities of the 21st century, the role of educational leaders becomes increasingly vital. They should identify the target audience of the community who possess concern for environmental causes arising out of social and economic parameters.

A particular policy for education needs to be driven by proactive governments. Collective efforts are required on multiple fronts to bridge ever emerging gap between policy, society and technologies for creating, maintaining and promoting SD through a sustainable education spearheaded by Sustainable Educational Leadership.

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