

Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Development in the Developing World

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Abstract

This paper is necessitated to demonstrate that lifelong learning is important if developing countries are to realise sustainable development, which has proven to be illusive for a long time. Sustainable Development is a concept that is not fully understood by the ordinary citizens and some technocrats in the developing world. This situation therefore calls for its demystification through lifelong learning, which can be instrumental in educating the ordinary people about the denudation of resources that are necessary for continued human existence. The knowledge dearth about the concept is aggravated by the fact that Developing World is facing challenges of poverty and limited expertise for meeting requirements for Sustainable Development, such the education of people about the benefits of parsimonious consumption of their finite resources.

This paper argues that the knowledge and skills deficit, which are partly a result of emerging technologies, have rendered lifelong learning most pertinent for the citizens of the developing world, if they are to maximally benefit from the economies of their countries. It is so because lack of knowledge on economic, political and social spheres is responsible for the maladies that are common in the Developing World, such as the depletion of resources that is aggravated by poverty and ignorance. The need for lifelong learning is identified as essential for global transformation because for development to be realised it is necessary for the people to have acquired the prerequisite skills, which when coupled with positive attitudes towards utilisation of resources render them responsive to emerging changes and challenges that are necessary for sustainable development. It is therefore imperative for people to be continually learning about apt measures of conserving resources, which are necessary for the development of the Third World. It has to be understood that for resources to be consumed scrupulously people should be informed through lifelong learning about the implications of overconsumption and depletion of such finite resources. The ordinary people should be educated to appreciate and be accommodative of reformist strategies that are important for the realisation of Sustainable Development that which can be relayed through heutagogical interventions.

Keywords: Lifelong Learning, Sustainable Development, Poverty, Developing World and Heutagogy.

Introduction

As noted by Rao (2000), an assessment of the relative roles of the various salient features that affect the current and future prosperity of a society is useful for any civilisation looking to develop appropriate perspectives. To underscore what Rao observed, the developing world cannot afford to lag behind in providing the necessary political, social and economic knowledge through lifelong learning of heutagogical nature, if it has to fully participate in endeavours that are directed at promoting sustainable development which is defined by Tickell (1996) as, “durable change for the better in the human condition while protecting the earth we inherit and the earth we bequeath”. Heutagogy, which a study of self-determined learning can best facilitate learning for the benefit of sustainable development. As noted by Blaschke (2012) heutagogy capacitates learners to take appropriate and effective actions that help in the formulation and promotion of problem solving capacity in both familiar and unfamiliar changing settings.

A knowledgeable nation is important in the 21st century because if nations are to be responsive to contemporary challenges that are political, economic, social and environmental, they should appreciate continuous knowledge acquisition and its utilisation. This translates into the use of approaches that uphold the conviction that is strongly promulgated by the aforementioned author, who stated that human beings are the centre of concerns for sustainable development and should be entitled to a healthy and productive life which is in harmony with nature. It has to be noted that acquisition of knowledge should be from “womb to tomb”, if its recipients are to benefit on a continuous bases from it. This means sustainable development should be taught by societies through any form of heutagogical training from the time an individual reaches a stage of trainability. The strength of heutagogical approaches is that they promote self-efficacy in knowing how to learn and promotes continuous reflection on the learning process, which is apt for sustainable development. It is important to note that if sustainable development is to be achieved the communities within the developing countries should take responsibilities for the utilisation of their own resources.

Lifelong learning of heutagogical nature is important in getting people to appreciate that learning is a continuous process that should be supported if any form of development is to be realised. As averred by DVV (2007), lifelong learning is of distinct and growing importance since it constantly opens up new occupational and social opportunities (p.124). This means lifelong learning is transformative and cannot be ignored if sustainable development is to have some positive impact in the lives of the people in the developing world. As noted by Commission of The European Communities (2000) lifelong learning has also to be activated today as the key organising principle for education and training systems, and for the building of “knowledge society” of the 21st century. As observed by Tight (1998), Lifelong learning should be presented as a means for enabling individuals, organisations and nations to meet the challenges of an increasingly competitive world. Lifelong learning is according to (Preston, 1999; Walters, 1999; Belenger, 1994), the process of allowing ourselves to be exposed to pre-packaged assortments of knowledge, throughout everyday life, either in home, through social movement, through work or through local community activities. It includes formal, non-formal and informal education.

This Paper will generate a discussion which its focus is to demonstrate that the relationship between lifelong learning and sustainable development is very important for the developing world. This is because both concepts are important for the amelioration of the lives of ordinary people in the developing world, which is endowed with resources and yet is characterised by poverty and ignorance. In order for the ordinary people to partake in the parsimonious utilisation of finite resources within their respective communities, they should receive the necessary training on the importance of such resources through both traditional and modern environmental conservation programmes that should be heutagogical. It is important because according to Alaboster and Blair (1996) education enables all individuals to make informed decisions about their responsibility towards their environment and community. However, it should be noted that the training of people on environmental issues should not necessarily be through formal education, because as noted by Walters (1999) Lifelong learning is both horizontal (between home, community, the media and work) and vertical (between different life stages). The heutagogical training is even more apt because according to Hase and Kenyon (2000) it promotes creativity, particularly in applying competencies to new and unfamiliar situations and by being adaptable and flexible. It is for knowledge sharing than for knowledge hoarding and imposition of knowledge by the powerful on the disempowered.

Lifelong Learning and Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is a term which according to Redclift (1991), was used at the time of the Cocoyoc declaration on environment and development in the early 1970s. Since then it has become the trademark of international organisations dedicated to achieving environmentally benign or beneficial development (p.32). It is important to indicate that whenever the term is used, it communicates the parsimonious utilisation of resources that should be allowed to sustain coming generations (posterity). It is therefore crucial to aver that sustainable development cannot be achieved if people are not willing to learn through new technologies and the contemporary approaches that should be employed in poverty alleviation endeavours. This is true because poverty contributes immensely to the unsustainable exploitation of resources because there is a tendency for poor people, who are often unenlightened or illiterate to have limited to no control over the resources that are in their milieus.

It is therefore important to have lifelong learning that promotes conservation of resources as a vehicle through which people can be transformed to respect their relationship with the environment and to jealously guard against unscrupulous exploitation of their resources. As opined by UNCED (1992), critical promotion of sustainable development should improve the capacity of the people to address environmental and development issues through generating ethical awareness, values and attitudes, skills and behaviour consistent with sustainable development. The heutagogical as noted by Hase and Kenyon (2000) promotes communication and team work skills. These qualities are necessary for sustainable development as it can only be achieved through team work that should be characterised by camaraderie and quid pro quo. That is where knowledge and skills that are beneficial for sustainable development are shared by teams or groups on a continuous bases.

It is worth noting that according to (Sussmuth, 2004; Collins, 1998), promotion of the development of the personality, in the sense of the mutual relationships between the individual and his or her surrounding is a necessity for an understanding of each person's role in the social context. It is important to mention that through provision of knowledge the

developing countries can empower the poor people as well as the political leaders to attach value on their resources and formulate apt strategies for their conservation; hence the need for heutagogical approaches to be employed to empower the ordinary people to take control of their own resources without any form of pressure from outsiders who often undermine sustainable development standards themselves.

According to UNESCO (2010) lifelong learning “from cradle to grave” is a philosophy, a conceptual framework and an organisation principle of all forms of education, based on inclusive, emancipatory, humanistic and democratic values; it is all-encompassing and integral to the vision of knowledge-based society. It is in the light of this understanding that lifelong learning of heutagogical nature becomes necessary to foster the training of people in sustainable development.

Poverty and other forms of deprivations in the developing world are responsible for the denudation of finite resources that should sustain mankind now and in the future. As stated by Rao (2000) forest areas continue to be depleted in many parts of the world, adversely affecting biodiversity and habitats, reducing the potential for carbon sequestration and hence contributing to global warming, and diminishing watershed functions as well as other ecological services. As noted by Sterling (2001) we are educated by and large to “compete and consume” rather than to care and conserve. It has to be noted that it is not only poor people who are not conscious of sustainable development. As noted by Sterling (1996), many people influential in political, economic, social and educational arenas still have little or no interest in or awareness of sustainable development issues, or the potential of education to address them.

It is important to state that continued phenomena of extinction of biological species poses serious problems for access to medicinal and aesthetic benefits. The points that are raised by Rao and those by Sterling cannot be ignored because they require immediate and serious attention by every country. It is this observation that informs the need for the training of adults through adult education programmes of heutagogical nature, which are well embraced under lifelong learning. This should include the training in the use of indigenous as well as traditional strategies through which communities managed to prudently utilise resources. The training of adults on sustainable development should be made instrumental in sensitising them about problems that can jeopardise their lives if resources are not parsimoniously utilised, allowing them to generate their own decisions, hence emphasise in the employment of heutagogy. As noted by Hase and Kenyon (2007) heutagogy applies a holistic approach to developing learner capabilities, with learning, which occurs as a result of personal experiences.

Heutagogy and Adult education are both important for sustainable development, with the latter being important because as noted by Cropley (1989), it is obvious that most learning takes place in adulthood, simply because most people spend more of their lives as adults than as children. This observation should not by anyway undermine the conceptual conviction that learning can and should be a lifelong occupation (Illeris, 2006). It is important also to note that trained adults normally create environments that are characterised by knowledge generation and its consumption. As noted by Thomas (2004) mother’s education, father’s education, mother’s motivation and father’s motivation should represent home environment. In interpreting what Thomas is saying, it is pivotal for us to make sure that people learn on a continuous basis, which will enable the world to have mothers and fathers that are educated and therefore motivated to be futuristic in their thinking and pass essential sustainable development strategies to posterity. This means preparing for a future of

generations that would parsimoniously utilise resources that are available and would be available for the coming generations.

The connection between Lifelong Learning of heutagogical nature and Sustainable Development cannot be ignored if the developing world is to realise the required amelioration for the deprived populace. The training of people on better approaches in the use of their resources requires full established methodological approaches that are fully funded by the government and the civil society. But most importantly, the need for the people to understand the approaches is crucial, hence the need for their empowerment through environmental education that should employ heutagogical approaches, which is embraced under lifelong learning. Lifelong learning is very important because as noted by Livingstone (1999) we are born more helpless than most other species and then constantly socialised by ever more complex and sophisticated communications with other humans throughout our lives.

It is important to indicate that through lifelong learning of heutagogical nature, knowledge gap that prevent the ordinary people from influencing policies that are designed to benefit them, including those on conservation, can be bridged. The natural resources should be conserved through the mechanisms that are accommodative and empowering, which dictates that the ordinary people should be informed about the consequences of human behaviour and activities that disregard cautions against depletion of natural resources.

Even in areas that are not environment related developing countries cannot ignore evident demands for learning, which can be fulfilled through lifelong learning of a heutagogical nature, which allow the learners themselves to shape their own learning. As noted by Varavarn (2010) over the years millions of literacy and adult education graduates from diverse backgrounds ranging from prominent political, business and community leaders to workers in the informal sector have generated new demands for further and continuing education (p.26). It is important to mention that Botswana has made some significant improvements on its education sector, but does not invest adequate resources in lifelong learning programmes that are designed by the learners themselves. This calls for consciousness rising amongst the leadership, so that lifelong learning programmes of heutagogical nature can enjoy the recognition that they deserve, which can be realised through allocation of resources for various lifelong learning endeavours that promote the participation of learners in the decision making processes.

The training of experts in lifelong learning is important as apt methodologies can be implemented accordingly by people who are trained to actualise them, than to rely on traditional approaches that are not germane for heutagogical interventions. The lifelong learning crusade is important in making sure that those countries such as Botswana, work closely with other countries regionally and globally, to provide avenues through which people can attach the importance to learning, in order to address problems that are directed at ameliorating their political, social, economic and environmental conditions. It has to be noted that lifelong learning is most important by virtue of its relevance in dealing with problems that are faced by the communities in developing countries like Botswana. The need for the formulation of policies that are meant to achieve lifelong learning objectives is an undertaking that must be fulfilled, hence the need for human resource that has the expertise to aid the decision making process of the less empowered.

Lifelong learning coupled with heutagogy, offers its recipients the rare opportunity to have some input in their own learning, which is not accommodated under the traditional system, which places the teacher as a protagonist that should design learning programmes. It is

therefore imperative that lifelong learning should be implemented with the understanding that it is empowering and can promote decision making capacity amongst the people who are often ostracised from the decision making platforms. As noted by Preece (2009) the semantic shift over the years from education to learning implicitly put responsibility for acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding onto the individual rather than the provider and suggests the move away from the traditionally linear teacher-student relationship.

The lifelong learning avenues that are available should be exploited maximally for the benefit of the people who for whatever reasons missed and continue to miss the opportunities that are availed by the schools and related educational formal structures. Lifelong learning should be instrumental in promoting information dissemination, so that the knowledge nations can be established and sustained in developing world.

Lifelong Learning and Social Justice

The other area where lifelong learning can be instrumental is that of social justice, it is so because lifelong learning through community education that is heutagogical can afford people the opportunities to access programmes that they would otherwise not be able to reach. The literacy of the adult population in any country requires the wide and well enriched programmes that are accommodated under lifelong learning of heutagogical nature, which allow the beneficiaries freedom to make decisions on which programmes to utilise. As noted by Alam (2004), literacy programmes usually allow individuals to acquire knowledge and skills through a variety of activities, promote informal learning, and encourage people to make and follow their own educational plans (p.47). As a vehicle for social justice lifelong learning can advocate and promote what Stott and Lillis (2008) indicated as the following;

Equality citizenship (equal civil and political rights), social minimum (living a decent life in society), equality and opportunity (life chances should depend on one's abilities and motivation, including fair chance to acquire skills and abilities) and fair distribution (distribution of resources and goods should be fairly conducted).

Lifelong learning can through technological enlightenment programmes create awareness amongst the ordinary people in communities, which has capacity to generate interest amongst them about the importance of modern and indigenous technology in their lives, which can promote the conservation of resources. As averred by (Lengrand, 1970; Michalakelli and Rhodes, 2000) scientific progress and modifications in techniques are gradually affecting the totality of mankind. Undoubtedly, technology has revolutionized society in many places around the globe and its influence has permeated into all the facets of our lives.

In pursuit of social justice it is pivotal that lifelong learning of heutagogical fashion gets characterised by the inclusion of the poor people in determining and designing their training on the parsimonious use of their resources. It should be the people themselves who should present their training needs, which should be met by the governments and other service providers. As noted by Watson and Taylor (1998) it is important to motivate individuals especially from under-represented groups, towards lifelong learning. In view of what Watson and Taylor mentioned it is important to note that lifelong learning should be heutagogical, which means it has to appreciate the experiences of the ordinary people including how they lead their lives and how they conserve their resources. It is indisputable that social justice can be realised through lifelong learning, which as noted by Commission of the European Communities (2000) is all purposeful activity, undertaken on an on-going basis with the aim

of improving knowledge, skill and competence... to adjust to the demands of social and economic change.

Lifelong Learning and Decision Making

It is indisputable that the relegation of people from the decision making arenas and platforms is often encouraged by their lack of knowledge and skills that are necessary for political empowerment and social justice. This is a limitation that even where heutagogical approaches are used, they may still not be able to generate decisions that can change the world and prevent its destruction. It is also important to indicate that the world still has people who are ignorant, which requires that more efforts be expended in making them literate and empowered to make decisions. As noted by Riftin (2000) more than half the human race has never made a telephone call (p.6). The dream of attaining sustainable development will remain a mirage if developing countries remain characterised by social injustice, such as the exclusion of the ordinary people from the benefits of technological advancement that could prevent the exploitation of their resources by external forces. It is indisputable that majority of the people that do not utilise modern technology are equally ostracised from decision making avenues at community, national, regional and international levels, which requires heutagogical remedies that embrace than to despise the so called primitive ways of knowledge sharing or training.

The empowerment of people through lifelong learning of heutagogical nature is necessary, so that they autonomously generate decisions and accordingly prioritise them. The inclusion of people in decision making would enable programmes and appeals that agitate for parsimonious exploitation of earthly resources to have some significant impact. It is disturbing to learn that, as noted by Bosco (2007), they are cities in the first world that do not have internet resources and it is obvious that access in the third world countries is small to virtually insignificant. This is despite the fact that we are currently living in an era of very rapid change, arguably the most rapid change ever seen. In most countries the internet and related technologies is responsible for changing the ways in which we work, learn, relax, socialise and above all, communicate (Corkill, 2008).

As noted by Gravells and Simpson (2009) only by eliminating discrimination and embracing diversity can we ensure that every single person is able to take advantage of the opportunities available to them and make a valuable contribution to the success of his/her country. This calls for what was proposed by Heider as cited by Emery (1974) who indicated that, people can make sense of the world and generalise from their particular perceptions, can conceptualise, and can perceive invariance.

The literacy skills that can promote communication amongst the citizens can be realised through lifelong learning of heutagogical nature, which is designed with the input of those who should benefit from it. The participation of the people in the design of programmes that are meant for them is important because it promotes a sense of ownership and embraces their decisions. The functional skills are also essential for any community to realise the necessary changes in the important areas such as, health, environmental conservation, sanitation and interactive discussions that are pivotal for political advancement. It is only through the training of people on sustainable development that can lead to them recognising the importance of their resources in development. As noted by Nayar (1994) both Stockholm and Cocoyoc declarations contained an ecological vision combined with Third World demands for development and social justice. It is important to indicate that most communities in the developing world are not informed about the declarations so mentioned, which could have

guided them into attaching some importance on their relationship with their resources after their contextualised conclusions.

The social skills are also necessary for human existence and can be achieved through the provision of avenues that are embraced under lifelong learning, such as the promotion of consciousness about human rights, which is promoted with the understanding that learning occurs through a progressive cycle namely: direct experience, reflective observation, conceptualisation and active experimentation (Venkatesh et al., 2003). The progressive cycle is also important in the enhancing the ability of individuals to make informed decisions in the heutagogical manner. For instance, experience, observation, conceptualisation and experimentation are important for decision making. As noted by Inoue (2007) it is obvious that general skills and personal qualities are considered at least as important as professional qualifications. As noted by Kuit and Fell (2010) educators today are tasked with developing lifelong learners who can survive and thrive in a global knowledge economy- learners who have the capacity to effectively and creatively apply their skills and competencies to new situations in an ever-changing, complex world.

The social empowerment has capacity to promote gender sensitization amongst the nations and most importantly those that are still developing like Botswana. The provision of materials and their consumption for the benefit of the people on social issues such as socio-cultural activities, presents lifelong learning of heutagogical nature as even most important. In the economic sector lifelong learning is important in promoting the appreciation of knowledge and skills that are important for economic advancement such as entrepreneurial skills. It is important to note that the improvement of the socio-economic status of the people who are languishing in poverty is crucial in the conservation of natural resources by communities. It has to be noted that according to (Chambers, 2003):

In the last years of the twentieth century, change accelerates and the future becomes harder to foresee. As instinct communications spread, and power and wealth concentrate, so ideas move faster. A balance sheet of development and human well-being shows achievements and deficits. Power and poverty are polarised at the extremes, with a global over class and global underclass. An evolving consensus converges on wellbeing, livelihood, capabilities, equity, and sustainability as interlinked ends and means. Huge opportunities exist to make a difference for the better. The challenge is personal, professional and institutional, to frame a practical paradigm for knowing and acting, and changing how we know and act, in a flux of uncertainty and change.

It is clear from what is advanced by Chamber that, knowledge acquisition is very important in the realisation of human advancement, which further necessitates heutagogy in lifelong learning, where all forms of training embraces provision of knowledge on sustainable development and on a sustainable basis. For instance, poverty is normally aggravated by lack of knowledge, which can be arrested through lifelong learning programmes that are designed to better the conditions of the global citizens that are relegated to abject poverty with their full participation. Through lifelong learning of heutagogical nature, the African people can also enrich their indigenous knowledge systems and most importantly, retrieve that which is ignored and discarded in order for neo development agenda to be designed. As vividly stated by Adjei and Dei (2008) it does not require any intellectual imagination to realise that the euphoria of international development has worn thin in the minds of many Africans, partly,

because the so called development paradigm in Africa has come at a high human, ecological, political, and ethical costs to Africans.

It is very important to indicate that the realisation of better living conditions and fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is important for the people to stay informed, but most importantly for them to inject their influence on activities that are undertaken. It is important for the people to participate in their own development, which should emphasise the essential components that attach value on sustainable development. This calls for the leadership that cherish and understand the importance of educating the citizenry employing heutagogical approaches, irrespective of its position in the national strata. This means through lifelong learning of heutagogical nature the leaders in the political and economic spheres should be influenced by well-informed experts or technocrats, hence the need for people to acquire qualifications in the important areas, which can be realised through serious investments in lifelong learning endeavours that are accommodative of ordinary people's experiences.

Conclusion

This paper has fully demonstrated that sustainable development and lifelong learning of heutagogical nature are highly important for the development of the developing world. It is now clear that most challenges that impede progress are as a result of lack of skills, knowledge and negative attitudes towards futuristic tendencies such as unscrupulous exploitation of finite resources.

The paper indicated the need to have the intense and robust connection between lifelong learning and sustainable development, which are necessary for the transformation of nations in the developing world towards parsimonious utilisation of finite resources. Resources in the developing world will continue to face the denudation, if communities are not fully educated through programmes whose aim is to promote the participation of the ordinary people in the design of most suitable stratagems that are not exotic to the continent. This arrangement advocates for the employment of measures that are accommodative of traditional or indigenous strategies that are more apt because of their relevance to the milieu in which they are utilised. Lifelong learning of heutagogical nature should be utilised as a vehicle through which knowledge can be shared and influence injected in the communities so that they can be responsive to change, without having to disparage and denigrate what is locally generated.

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