Re-orienting Teacher Education for Socially Sustainable Development

chan Lean heng, PhD
Popular Educator
Associate Professor
School of Social Sciences
Universiti Sains Malaysia

Paper presented at UNESCO Expert Meeting on Education for Sustainable Development: Re-orienting Education to Address Sustainability
Bangkok, 1 - 3 May 2006
Introduction

No society can sustainably nor can its members live in dignity and peace, if there is inequality, injustice, prejudice or discrimination of any group. Indeed one of the three core pillars of sustainable development anchors on the creation of a society where there is equity/equality and fairness in all dimensions of human life sometimes referred as socially sustainable development. This paper explores the meaning and contexts of socially sustainable development, and how to reorient teacher education to take on board aspects of social sustainability. Social sustainability is close linked to the social issues that threaten the peace and harmonious social fabric/cohesion in our society. The social issues to be addressed have to be locally relevant and culturally appropriate; hence they will vary according to the geo-politics of the respective regions and countries. However we do know that there are certain fundamental social issues like issues of equity and justice, which cut across all countries, at all levels and with all groups.

Part one examines the meanings and discourse of sustainable development to situate the concept of socially sustainable development. The meaning, relationship and interdependence of socially sustainable development, sustainable human development and gender inequity/inequality are explored in part two. This is followed in part three where gender equity is examined as a case in point to illustrate why it is necessary and important to address gender inequity/inequality, and in general, the dimensions of social sustainability to achieve sustainable development, and the subsequent implications arising for teacher education. The fourth and final section identifies and discusses two sets of proposals for reorienting teacher education to address sustainability.

Sustainable Development

Over the past decade, sustainable development has become a global concern. The term was first mooted by Barbara Ward, the founder of the International Institute for Environment and Development in the mid 1970s (Holmberg 1992). Sustainability was also promoted in the World Conservation Strategy in 1980, which stressed the interdependence of conservation and development (IUCN, 1980). However, it was not until 1987, after the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, commonly called the Bruntland Report, that sustainable development gained world attention. The Bruntland report defined sustainable development as; “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987). In other words, development is essential to satisfy human needs and improve the quality of human life. At the same time, development must be based on the efficient and environmentally responsible use and preservation of all of society’s scarce resources – natural/physical and human - economic, socially and politically as well as the protection of the cosmos which embraces the continuity of all species.

From one pillar to three-pillar or multi-pillars

Since its conception, various attempts have been made to find a more precise, operational definition of sustainable development. Sustainable development as originally
conceptualized, was related to harmonious economic growth, environmental protection and resource conservation. The various formulations of its meaning/s have evolved from what is termed as the one-pillar model to three-pillar or multi-pillar models (Littig & GrieBler 2005). The one pillar model is an ecological definition of sustainable development which gives priority to environmental concerns, emphasising the overall performance or health of ecological systems. Based on this definition, sustainable development is about preserving the ecological systems and resources necessary for economic and social life. The environment or planet earth is regarded as the important pre-requisite for meeting the future needs of humanity. In this definition the problematic association of sustainable development to concepts of social justice and equality is neglected.

Today, a further elaboration of the term sustainability is undertaken by many people who argue that the environmental aspect, though a necessary condition is not an adequate prerequisite for a humane and fully sustainable society (Georgopoulos, 2002). Some scholars contend that poverty alleviation, justice, solidarity, attainment of peace, population stabilization, women’s empowerment and empowerment of all marginalized vulnerable groups, employment that allows for the creation of decent livelihoods, human rights observance and equitable distribution of income, equitable access to opportunities, resources and social services within and between nations, etc. should be integrated into the notion and practice of sustainable development. Indeed sustainable development also requires an ethos of equity, fairness and compassion (Cairness 2001). These dimensions are examples of criteria that give an indication of the ‘desired direction of processes, rather than the final state’ (Sachs 1999) as sustainable development has to be locally relevant and culturally appropriate. Sustainable development therefore addresses virtually the entire process by which societies manage the material conditions of their production, reproduction and consumption (adapted from Becker et.al 1997), including the economic, social, political and cultural principles that guide the distribution of these and the environmental resources.

Put simply, sustainability requires the ecological imperative to stay within the carrying capacity of the planet, the economic imperative to provide an adequate and fair standard of living for all, and the social-cultural-political imperative to develop forms of governance and institutions that promote values, practices and relationships that can sustain everyone’s livelihood fairly. This debate gives rise to the so-called ‘multi-pillar model’, where sustainable development embraces ecological, economic and social goals. This is based on the belief that human needs cannot be sufficiently met through an ecologically sound and healthy environment alone. A society that is committed to sustainability has to take care of the equally important and legitimate economic, social, cultural and political rights, needs and responsibilities of its members as well. Indeed these very conditions and values are resources that need to be increased and preserved for future generations.

These dimensions - environment, economy and society (with culture as the underlying, cross-cutting base) are now referred by UNESCO as the three pillars of sustainable development (UNCED 1992). However, in reality there has been unequal attention or treatment of these three pillars. Neither are the links and inter-relationships of these pillars sufficiently mapped out. In fact much of the discourse on sustainable development has centered mainly on the environment and economy, neglecting the
cultural, spiritual, political-institutional and social dimensions in society. They have generally received far less attention than the economic and environment/ecological dimensions even though sustainable development is so closely linked with and integral to the quality of life and well being of present and future generations. What then is the role of social, cultural and political features in sustainable development? This brings us to the topic of this paper: socially sustainable development.

**Socially Sustainable Development, Sustainable Human Development and Gender Equity/Equality**

**Socially sustainable development**

What is socially sustainable development? How does it relate to sustainable development? How can it be recognized? What are its indicators? How can aspects of social sustainability be attained or addressed in the field of education, specifically through teacher education?

Sustainability addresses the question of how societies can shape their modes of existence, change and continuity in ways that ensure conditions that can support the continuity of life of present and future generations, preserving and making all that is good last. From this point of view the component of sustainable development under the pillar of ‘society’ refers to the viability of socially, culturally and politically shaped practices, relations and relationships amongst people in society - within and between nations; and between society and nature over time. This is what is often regarded as socially sustainable development by various people (for example, Sachs 1999, Koning 2001, Thin, Lockhart & Yaron 2002, Littig & Briebker 2005). Dimensions of social sustainability are related to the various social, cultural and political aspects of life, to the issues that threaten the continuity of people’s lives, which affect the continued betterment of our society, from intra-generation to inter-generation to inter-species, within and between nations. These issues range from those that affect the security and dignity of individuals at the intra and inter-personal levels to more systemic problems of poverty, injustice, inequity and armed conflict that affect not only the conditions and position of specific social groups but whole nations and whole regions in the world, including the issues that affect our economy and eco-systems directly. These issues are diverse and complex and have been defined in different ways and emphasized differently by different people. However the constituents of socially sustainable development whether they are regarded as themes/issues, goals, indicators or values have emerged clearly in the literature.

Koning (2001) defines social sustainability as a society that is **just and with a decent livelihood for all**, where there is **no exclusion** of social groups - a society characterised by **emancipation**, **freedom** and **solidarity**. Thin, Lockhart and Yaron (2002) highlight four themes necessary for socially sustainable development, namely, **social justice** (to achieve equal opportunity and human rights for all now and in the future), **solidarity** (to generate empathy and co-operation between different groups of people), **participation** (to build opportunities for everyone to play a meaningful part in development and governance to improve their quality of life) and **security** (to create livelihood security and safety from physical and environmental threats). These four areas are adopted by United Kingdom’s Department for International Development as the
cornerstones of a socially inclusive society (DFID-UK 2002). Khan (1995) draws our attention to the **socially equitable quality of life** and highlights **gender as the basis of many inequities**. Becker, Jahn, Steiss & Wehling (1997) have identified indicators that even consider access to information (including education and mass media), **connectedness, physical, psychological and reproductive health, access to life sustaining activities** (nutrition, housing, employment, access to land and resources), and **safety in and out of home**. The **intergenerational dimension** via the transfer of assets and/or skills, and land and knowledge from parents to children and from generation to generation as a whole is emphasized by Chambers and Conway (1992).

In the words of DFID-UK social sustainability “reflects people’s entitlements, especially the aspirations of the poor and powerless” (DFID-UK website). It is about minimizing exclusion and maximizing equity. This refers to all aspects that ensure a socially just and equitable quality of life, grounded on conscious and responsible individual and collective agency, which enables access to all life sustaining activities. This will include a fair and equitable access to rights and distribution/redistribution of essential resources and power, fairly applied laws and regulations, the guaranteed opportunity for everyone to contribute to the pursuit of meeting human practical and strategic needs, improving the human condition, and the full realization of human potentials for everyone in safe and healthy environments, and to a fair return to their labor and/or capital.

As such, social sustainability is both a means and an end, with analytical/political and normative dimensions (Littig & Griebler 2005). It is an end in itself as something, like a socially just or a socially inclusive society to be attained. On the other hand it is a means - by operationalising these aims into indicators that can be measured as a condition to be accomplished and sustained for future generations it (Koning 2001). The analytical aspects refer to the goals that include sustainable social processes and sustainable social relations that shape a society’s relationship among its members and with nature and the entire cosmos. In this respect, how society regulate and change these processes so as to ensure the chances for sustainable development for present and future generations have to be monitored. The normative aspect of social sustainability refers to the standards/conditions on how society ought to develop and what ideals should development strive for? Thus it is necessary to recognize that the importance of delineating and struggling for social rights and values like justice, equity, participation, and equal opportunities essential for socially sustainable development are also legitimate in themselves, and not because of their positive effect for sustainable development. Anand and Sen (1995) assert that socially sustainable development is above all, based on sustainable human development. To attain socially sustainable development we must at the same time understand and work towards sustainable human development.

**Sustainable Human Development**

Socially sustainable development is based on and integral to sustainable human development. What then is sustainable human development and how does it relate with and contribute to the understanding and formulation of socially sustainable development?

Sustainable human development is concerned with the whole development of human society, not only the economic aspects. It addresses the social dimensions as the most important element, and views productive (materialistic) efforts as one of the means
for achieving this. Sustainable human development views human life in its varied, multifacets. The non-economic dimensions are equally important. However it does not reduce the importance of economic development, but rather places it within a new paradigm where economics must serve humanity, not vice versa.

The International Human Development Report of 1995 (UNDP 1995) has identified four main constituents in sustainable human development. The first component is **productivity** of human capacities - not just economic productivity but human ability to carry out productive, life sustaining and creative activities that extend beyond the economic sphere. The second component is **equality**, which are equal opportunities available to each individual in society without any obstacles or discrimination, regardless of creed, sex, ethnicity or income level or other defining characteristics. With these inclusive forms of equality and non-discrimination, social justice will also be attained.

**Sustainability** is the third component. This will require that there is no damage inflicted on present or future generations whether as a result of the depletion of natural resources and polluting the environment or as a result of public debts, the burden of which is borne by future generations, or because of negligence in developing human resources, creating difficult future conditions as a result of present choices and consumption patterns.

**Empowerment** is the fourth component. This refers to people’s active participation and contribution. All members of society, not just the elites or politicians should participate in decision making and public affairs as development can only be achieved by and through people, and not for or on behalf of them. People are not merely passive beneficiaries, but are active agents instead.

In this respect, sustainable human development is about developing people’s capacities and human agency, and not maximizing material benefit or (unequal) economic growth only. The objective is not only to increase production, productivity or material well-being only but rather to raise the social cultural standards of all human beings, enabling them to live a fuller life, to realise their potentials and expand the range of their capabilities to do more, to live a better, healthier and more secure life, to avoid curable diseases, have protection from crime and all forms of violence, better access to knowledge, rest hours, political and cultural freedoms, creation of an environment that permits people to enjoy a long, healthy, sustainable and creative life, in harmony with, and preserving and protecting the eco-system. Sustainable human development is not only about material well-being. Neither is it about privileged individuals’ betterment only. Special attention has to be given to the distribution and redistribution of benefits, and to the consequential social-political and environmental effects. Development that is achieved at the expense of poorer groups, or that which enriches or discriminates certain segments of society at the expense of others, or that which destroys the environment, abuses freedoms, violation of entitlements and affects social and political balances is antithesis to sustainable human development. This is where and how the goals and criteria of socially sustainable development and sustainable human development converge.

Central to socially sustainable development and sustainable human development are guiding values like compassion, care, respecting differences, fairness and, equity. They are important not only for present and future generations of the human species but for the biosphere and other species of the planet’s ecological system. Underlying sustainable human development is the development of people’s capabilities and values,
critical consciousness and agency, which address the ability/ies to effect social cultural and political change as much as the ability to transform and transcend existing unequal economic growth. Sustainable human development therefore is both a means to and the goal of socially sustainable development. Sustainable human development emphasizes issues of basic needs and equity while raising the issue of whether there is any reason to pass these on to the next generation, while socially sustainable development emphasizes the need to address distributional equity and justice.

Although socially sustainable development and sustainable human development have relevance of their own, it is necessary to situate their attainment in the context of current and emergent processes of globalization and unequal progress in an unequal world. These very patterns of uneven development have also generated and even exacerbated immense problems in the environment, economy and society. While the material standard of living in most industrialised countries and a few developing nations have been raised the majority of the world’s population continue to live in abject conditions of poverty, social exclusion, discrimination and marginalisation. Even where there is growth, the poor have become increasingly disadvantaged because inequality has risen dramatically within and between countries dividing those who are able to benefit and those who do not. Conditions of the poor continue to be worsened with the hiv/aids pandemic and other life-threatening diseases. New risks and new uncertainties create new waves of impoverishment accompanied by environmental degradation of marginal lands where many of the poor are struggling to survive. At the same time it is necessary to note that men and women do not experience these issues and challenges in the same way. Globalisation of the economy has also contributed further to deepening the feminization of poverty and acerbated the gaps between men and women even amongst the poor. If we do not take into account these gender differences and the differential power implications arising from these differences in the assessment of solutions and challenges for sustainable development we are ignoring women’s realities and disregarding their knowledge and capabilities.

Indeed the current paradigm of uneven development in a globalising unequal world that perpetuate today’s inequities are neither sustainable nor worth sustaining. These inequities exist not only in economic terms. They are reflected in all arenas of human life, within and between generations and between species. Racism, sexism, discrimination arising from sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion/faith, social status, gender, etc are some of the visible indicators of social inequity. No society can sustainably if there is discrimination or prejudice of any group. Amongst these groups, women, more often than men experience systematic discrimination at all levels and encounter all forms of inequity and inequality all the time.

Contemporary economic, political and cultural systems continue to produce and perpetuate social inequities/inequalities. While all forms of equities\(^1\) are essential for a sustainable human society, socially sustainable development and ultimately sustainable

\(^1\) According to Daily (1996) equity is essentially a measure of the relative similarity among individuals or groups in opportunity to enjoy socio-political rights, material resources, technologies, health, education and other ingredients of human well-being. Essentially it focuses on basic fairness of both the processes and outcomes of decision making in all facets of society. An even broader approach to equity involves the concept of fairness for non-human forms of life and even inanimate nature. Humans have the responsibility of prudent stewardship over nature and the whole cosmos. It goes beyond mere rights of usage to conscious and responsible preservation and protection.
Gender Equity – the heart of justice and sustainability

What is gender equity/equality and how is it related to socially sustainable development and sustainable development? I will begin by explaining the meaning of gender, gender equity and gender equality before elaborating on why gender equity/equality is fundamental for socially sustainable development.

Gender refers to the economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female by society. It applies to both women and men, as well as to their relations with one another and to their environment. The way women and men share resources, make decisions about their livelihoods, and plan for the future of their children, family, community and society at large are all issues pertaining to gender.

Gender equity is the process of being fair to women and men. It refers to treating men and women differently, or the same when appropriate, to achieve outcomes that satisfy the needs of both. To ensure fairness, strategies and measures must often be available to compensate for women’s historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating on a level playing field. Equity leads to equality.

Gender equality means that women and men enjoy the same status and are in the same position to access resources and opportunities. Gender equality means that men and women have equal conditions for realizing their full human right and potential to contribute to national political, economic, social and cultural development, and to benefit from the results. It is the equal valuing by society of both the similarities and differences between women and men and the varying roles they play. Where gender inequality exists, it is generally women who are excluded or disadvantaged in relation to decision-making and access to economic and social resources. Therefore a critical aspect of promoting gender equality is the empowerment of women, with a focus on identifying and redressing power imbalances and giving women more autonomy to manage their own lives.

About two thirds of the illiterate adults in the world are female. More women than men live in poverty. Economic disparities persist partly because much of the unpaid work within families and communities falls on women. Women’s disproportionately higher share of domestic responsibilities restrains their opportunities for training and development. Regardless of their occupations, women with the same qualifications normally earn less than men for work of equal value. Social and legal institutions still do not guarantee women equality in basic legal and human rights, access to or own land or other resources, inherit property, in earning and employment and social and political
participation. Laws that potentially threaten the well-being of women like sexual and domestic violence are exceptionally difficult to be introduced not to talk of enforcement.

Poverty traps women in multiple layers of discrimination and hinders their ability to claim their rights and entitlements, widening and deepening the existing inequities and inequalities. Poor women find it even more difficult to obtain access to credit and schooling and earn an income. Globalisation has further widened the gap, with women losing more than their share of jobs, benefits and labour rights. Women continue to be grossly under-represented in positions of power and decision-making because of obstacles such as illiteracy, poverty and limited access to education, patriarchal attitudes and the dual burden of domestic and paid work. They continue to face intolerable levels of violence at all stage of their lives, in both private and public spheres. Prevalence of cultural attitudes and practices that promote the low value and disrespect of girls further deter women’s advancement and well-being. Indeed women's issues are issues of poverty, inequality and social injustice.

The poverty and discrimination of women and the subsequent gender inequities/inequalities are deeply entrenched in all societies, in all facets of live and are reproduced through a variety of practices and institutions. These issues affect the stability of society. Unless addressed the sustainability of our society will be affected. As illustrated above, the need for gender equity/equality cuts across all aspects of human life and is essential for sustainable development. Gutierrez (2006:2) described gender equity as “the door that opens wide the way toward new possibilities for justice and peace at all levels”. I will demarcate below five main reasons why gender equity/equality is fundamental to socially sustainable development, concluding with some ideas as to why gender equity/equality is an essential building block in sustainable development.

**Gender inequity/inequality is social injustice and is a pervasive global issue**

Almost 75% of the world’s poor are women. The disproportionate number of women suffering calls for a concerted effort and strategy to achieve justice and fairness in economic and social development to equalize the benefits to both women and men. Women and girls throughout the world have higher rates of illness and less education than men and boys. Infant girls are known to have much higher mortality rates worldwide. Though women hold fewer jobs, they are often singly responsible for providing for their families. They have far less representation in governance and government. They are excluded from ownership of property and the inheritance of wealth, and face far more discrimination in employment and wages. Discrimination based on gender creates persistent inequality between women and men in all aspects of life, exacerbating the vulnerability and insecurity of women and girls and of whole nations across the globe. Reduction of gender inequalities has a strong contribution to make to social justice and to sustainable development.

**Gender inequity/inequality is caused by and results in other inequalities and social problems that are not sustainable**

Research from around the world has shown that gender inequality tends to slow economic growth and make the move from poverty more difficult. Discrimination against women and girls (including gender based violence, economic discrimination, reproductive health inequities and harmful trade practices) remains the most pervasive
and persistent form of discrimination arising from inequality. The impact of sexism and patriarchy has adverse impact on women’s subjectivities and agency. Discrimination based on gender creates persistent inequality between women and men in all aspects of life, acerbating the insecurity and vulnerability of women and girls. Feminsation of poverty has further increased new forms of violence, such as forced prostitution and trafficking. Unequal power relations and participation in decision making between women and men are among the structural causes of social and political instability that often lead to poverty.

**Gender equity/equality is part and parcel of human rights**

Gender equality is, first and foremost, a human right. Women are entitled to live in dignity and in freedom from want and from fear. Despite many international agreements affirming women’s human rights women are still much more likely than men to be poor, malnourished, illiterate and excluded. Women usually have less access than men to medical care, property ownership, credit, training and employment. They are far less likely than men to hold positions of power or authority and far more likely to be victims of domestic violence. Women’s equality is undermined by historical imbalances in decision-making power and access to resources, rights, and entitlements for women. Either by law or by custom, women in many countries still lack rights to own land and to inherit property, obtain access to credit, attend and stay in school, earn income and move up in their work, free from job discrimination. Women are still widely under-represented in decision-making at all levels, in the household and in the public sphere. The need for women’s participation in all spheres of society – private and public domains and the recognition of inequality and discrimination have led to the creation of specific standards for the protection of women’s rights as human rights. The inequality that exists between men and women reflects the deficit in human rights. If women, especially poor women are not accorded equal rights as men development can never be achieved in a sustainable manner.

**Gender equality leads to reducing poverty and hunger**

Addressing gender inequality is central in the fight against poverty and the arising inequalities and injustices. “It has been noted that states that fail to promote gender equality between men and women tend to experience slower economic growth and more persistent poverty. Not only does gender inequality exacerbate poverty; poverty also exacerbates inequality between males and females” (Gender and Development Group, World Bank 2003:7). Empowering women is an indispensable tool for advancing development and reducing poverty. Research undertaken by the World Bank reports that as the education level of women increases, so does their children’s enrollment in school, and that women are more likely than men to use their income to improve the nutrition, health and education of their children. Higher levels of women’s education are strongly associated with both lower infant mortality and lower fertility, as well as with higher levels of education and economic opportunity for their children (see Gender and Development, World Bank Website, 2006). Thus when men and women are relatively equal, economies tend to grow faster, the poor move more quickly out of poverty and the well being of men, women and children is fostered.
Gender equality is also key to achieving the other seven goals of Millenium Development Goals.

The importance of gender equality is underscored by its inclusion as one of the eight Millennium Development Goals that serve as a framework for halving poverty and improving lives. The United Nations Millennium Declaration has committed its member countries ‘to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable’ (United Nations 2000). As clarified in the 2005 State of World Population, gender equality is also the key to achieving the other seven goals. “Without progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women, none of the MDGs will be achieved” (GENDERNET, OECD, 2003). In fact gender issues are highly relevant to achieving all the MDGs, be it attaining environmental sustainability or enabling universal access to health care, or reducing child mortality. Because the MDGs are mutually reinforcing, progress in one will affect the other. Thus progress in gender equality will help further other MDGs.

Gender equity is an essential building block in socially sustainable development and sustainable development.

Gender equity as the foundation of the three pillars of sustainable development has been recognized. It cuts across all aspects of the three pillars of sustainable development, including the fundamental cultural component. None of the three pillars of sustainable development can be attained without addressing the fundamental, pervasive and prevailing problem of gender inequity/inequality. Empowering women and ensuring their education and access to resources contribute to the health and productivity of whole families and communities and to improved prospects for the next generation.

Despite the fact that much has been published on gender and sustainable development (for example, Martine 1996, Naiyana 2003) most of the work in education for sustainable development has not given attention to gender relations or the gendered dimensions in education for sustainable development though the discourse on gender equity/equality and sustainable development has started (see Gender and Development Group, World Bank 2002, Hemmati & Gardiner 2002). A gendered perspective as well as a gender equity/equality perspective is essential to and in education for sustainable development. From the above discussion on socially sustainable development and gender inequity/inequality I have discerned two sets of implications for re-orienting teacher education. The first pertains to ‘how to enable teachers identify and examine the social issues threatening sustainable development, including their inter-relationships and effects; and to comprehend the meaning and contexts of socially sustainable development. The second relates to ‘how to take on board issues of gender inequity/inequality in education for sustainable development, including the need to build capacity for integrating a gendered perspective and a gender equality perspective into education for sustainable development. The next section will discuss how to address these implications for teacher education.

Re-orienting Teacher Education
Two areas for action can be discerned to re-orient teacher education to address sustainability arising from the implications delineated in the previous section. The first area deals directly with the content component of what and how to re-orient teacher education for socially sustainable development specifically, the agenda of mainstreaming gender in education for sustainable development as a strategy to address and attain socially sustainable development. The second set of recommendations identifies pertinent aspects relating to intervention in education for sustainable development. Given the constraint of length in this paper, I will only elaborate on the first set of proposals for reorienting teacher education for socially sustainable development. The second set of recommendations will only be outlined briefly.

1 Reorienting teacher education for socially sustainable development

To re-orient teacher education to take on board some of the concerns of SSD two sets of recommendations are appropriate.

(a) Introduce participatory social analysis, popular education and the role of teachers in transformative development to the curriculum in teacher training

To enable teachers explore issues of socially sustainable development and to understand the context and scope of socially sustainable development it will be useful to expose teachers to the methodology of participatory social analysis and popular education together with its wide array of experiential participatory tools and techniques. The issues of socially sustainable development are many and diverse. To enable teachers to identify and work through some of the issues that are relevant to and pertinent to their society it will be useful to incorporate into teacher education the knowledge and practice of participatory social analysis to enable them to identify and map the inter-relationships of issues threatening socially sustainable development. Using this methodology, teachers will be able to use participatory tools to chart the various levels of the contexts of their society and engage through guided participatory activities and the cycle of learning to deepen, analyse, and through visioning develop appropriate plans of possible actions. Participatory social analysis and popular education is an awareness-raising process. It is a way of understanding the society one lives in so as to be able to engage meaningfully to improve and/or change the situation. This methodology also embraces the use of different types of knowledge and different modes of learning to incorporate women’s ways and lived experiences of participants.

Teachers are currently a very demoralized community of professionals - overworked, underpaid and unappreciated in most countries. The decade of education for sustainable development can be an opportunity to help revive the morale and roles of teachers by providing a space and context for them to explore their conditions and situation by linking them to the concerns of sustainability. It will be very appropriate in particular to introduce ideas and discussions on transformative sustainable development and its relationship with the roles and contribution of teachers.

(b) Incorporate gender perspectives and capacity building for gender mainstreaming in education for sustainable development

To develop a gender perspective it will be necessary to include in the curriculum for teacher education topics on understanding gender and the unequal differential conditions and position of women and men (including that of teachers), as well as sensitizing and equipping teachers to address gender issues in the classroom. Again
because of constraint in the length of this paper these topics will not be elaborated here but I refer to two references of mine which will give some ideas on these aspects (Chan L.H. 1998, 2004). There is also lots of other published material on these aspects. What I will elaborate at greater length here will be my proposal on capacity building for gender mainstreaming as a way to introduce a gender equality perspective into education for sustainable development.

Before delineating what is needed in building capacity for gender mainstreaming let me first explain the meaning of mainstreaming and the different dimensions of gender mainstreaming (the summary here is drawn mainly from Corner 1999). Mainstreaming is about changing gender relationships between men and women in order to achieve more equal sharing of power and responsibility which will benefit both men and women and society as a whole. It is about promoting the full and equal participation of women in decision making in all areas and at all levels. It is not only about changes in women's gender roles and capacities. Mainstreaming also promote and support changes in men's gender roles, attitudes and behaviours as well. It uses gender analysis to identify the differential access to and impacts on women and men of all concerned areas. The analysis is then used to devise measures to bring about equal participation and equal benefits for women and men. To meet women's specific gender needs special programs or/and policies to address the areas of special needs for women may be needed.

There are three strands in mainstreaming and two approaches to gender mainstreaming. These three different strands are mainstreaming gender, mainstreaming women and mainstreaming gender and women. **Mainstreaming gender** is the more technical aspect associated with gender and development. It is a means of identifying the different interests, needs and effects of policies, programs etc on women and men through gender analysis and other forms of analysis. **Mainstreaming women** and their specific concerns and issues constitute the more political aspect of mainstreaming. It emphasizes the empowerment of women's equal participation, not as beneficiaries or actors in development but as active players in decision-making. **Mainstreaming gender and women** link mainstreaming gender and mainstreaming women together, recognizing that each is equally important and that both are complimentary. Mainstreaming women does not necessarily involve gender mainstreaming. Women can be just as gender blind to gender differences and their impact on men, or even on women! Gender mainstreaming could also be carried out with little or no participation from women. In our present current mainstream, women are under-represented and male dominated. If women and men were equally represented their differential impact would be taken into account with their equal participation in decision-making. Thus mainstreaming with a gender perspective as a technical approach is desirable even after men and women are equally represented. In our region, because women are excluded from political processes even in their own families, mainstreaming gender and gender analysis is the first step towards modifying the mainstream to enable and empower women into decision making.

There are two approaches to gender mainstreaming. The integrationist approach focuses on building a gender perspective into existing institutions - women enter the mainstream without major changes in society or the overall approach to development. The social, cultural and organisational arrangements remain the same except for more numbers of women. The other approach aims at transforming the mainstream. This means that an integral component of and even a pre-requisite for implementing a gender
perspective is the transformation of institutions and development. As it becomes possible for women to be more actively and genuinely represented, their involvement and the changing gender composition must lead to fundamental qualitative changes in the nature and functioning of institutions in mainstream society. The daily practices and power relations between men and women must also change to benefit men, women, children and society as a whole. Transforming the mainstream in gender mainstreaming is no doubt more appropriate for attaining sustainable development.

Gender mainstreaming has been proposed at the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995) as a key strategy to reduce inequalities between men and women. This recommendation also falls in line with UNESCO’s Agenda for Gender Equality. I will now demarcate four areas for building capacity in gender mainstreaming in education for sustainable development. Firstly, it will be necessary to incorporate gender sensitivity/awareness training on gender especially about gender relations and gender inequity/inequality, and the extent to which this affect sustainable development into the curricula of teacher education. The second set of actions falls within the scope of building capacities for transforming the mainstream for men and women. This will entail three types of capacity building, namely (a) capacity building for women in the confidence of their capacities and in non-traditional areas like leadership, governance and in empowerment which are to be based on democratic principles and the ethos of sustainability; (b) capacity building for men, mainly to change men’s gender attitudes, eliminate gender-based violence, enhance men’s capacities in sustainable roles and relationships with women, male responsibility and partnership with women; and (c) social capacity building for men and women about gender stereotypes, discriminatory behaviour, attitudes and practices. The third area deals with developing gender analyses in all realms of sustainable development where differences between women’s and men’s access to resources, benefits and control over participation and decision-making, and the direct and indirect impact on women and men can be explicitly delineated. Finally, information and resources used in education for sustainable development should be disaggregated by sex to develop the necessary gender statistics especially on topics relating to sustainable development that will be used in the curricula. Specific information on emerging gender issues like the incidence, nature and impact of violence against women should also be given due attention.

2  Intervention strategies of education for sustainable development

Intervention by teachers to teach or promote sustainable development is not only confined to the classroom or curricula only though these are the usual spaces given attention. Among others, I list here eight aspects for consideration in promoting strategic intervention for reorienting teacher education.

(a) Strategic advocacy: Striving for sustainability goes beyond the decade of education for sustainable development. To ensure continuity and sustained efforts special tactical efforts will have to be directed at reaching out to and

2 Including women’s knowledge, women’s ways of knowing and doing things (which are often very different from men), their confidence and to address the effects of sub-ordination and subjugation, especially that of internalized oppression.
converting those in strategic positions of power in the institutional hierarchy to the task and endeavor of education for sustainable development as well as to mainstream and institutionalise the agenda of education for sustainable development.

(b) **Neglected groups**: The perspective of socially sustainable development alerts us to recognize that social exclusion and unequal treatment is unsustainable. Special attention should be directed to rural areas and non-premier schools as well as the commonly excluded, vulnerable groups like children with special needs and children/youth from neglected communities like the indigenous people and rural/urban poor.

(c) **Ethical partnerships: linking men and women teachers, schools with the community, etc**: A central theme to improving gender equity is the need to inspire and build a culture of partnership. Partnership not only between men and women but also between school institutions and civil society, and between local to national and global levels of policy making for sustainable development. Apart from micro-intervention at the classroom, it will be strategic for teachers and schools to collaborate and link their education for sustainable development work with the community and with non-government organizations. Likewise, for men and women teachers to collaborate and to address the gender relations among themselves be it interpersonal or in terms of institutional practices at the school level.

(d) **Whole school approach**: Teaching sustainability at the classroom level is a good starting point but for education for sustainable development to be effective the whole school has to be involved, engaging the active participations of students and teachers beyond their classroom curricula as well as the assimilation of principles of sustainability in the organization, management and whole culture of the school. Other levels and members of the school community like parents and principals will also be equally important actors/partners to ensure inclusive, democratic participation and governance in the school.

(e) **Classroom dynamics as learning spaces for education for sustainable development**: Orientate teachers to the dynamics of classroom learning beyond the teaching of subjects to address gender and other discriminatory (cultural and social) issues and practices. The inculcation of sustainable values have to be inculcated and nurtured through the quotidian forms of interaction, role modeled and mentored by teachers and senior students consciously.

(f) **Education for sustainable development vignettes and resources**: Compile and make accessible the stock of resources on education for sustainable development for teachers’ reference. Develop case examples and document good practice on how to incorporate a gender perspective into sustainable development education, including the non-tangible aspects of value formation.

(g) **Building and linking capacities in all aspects of education for sustainable development**: Currently the issues of environment have been quite well integrated into the school curricula but not so with the other two pillars. Develop and sustain training/capacity building for teacher educators and teachers in the two neglected pillars of sustainable development.
Identify/develop a resource pool of people familiar with the substantive and methodological concerns of education for sustainable development and with gendered perspectives. Link and mainstream education for sustainable development into other existing endeavors with the school sector like ASP-net etc.

(h) **Follow-up support mechanism:** Create and sustain a support mechanism at UNESCO/sub-regional and national levels to promote, expand and document lessons and good practice from the various attempts and experiments in the regions. This support mechanism can be a focal point to initiate an ongoing network.

**Conclusion**

The ‘society’ pillar of sustainable development has generally received far less attention than the economy and environment/ecological dimensions even though sustainable development is so closely linked with quality of life, well being and future generations. This paper has attempted to bring attention to socially sustainable development - the social dimensions of sustainable development, and how to bring on board these dimensions in reorienting teacher education for sustainability. It highlights how gender equity/equality as the heart of justice and sustainability can be mainstreamed into education for sustainable development.

**References**


