Advancing Education as a Goal for Sustainable Development

Transformative Learning for Sustainable Lifestyles

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The truth is that without significant precautions, education can equip people merely to be more effective vandals of the earth. If one listens carefully, it may even be possible to hear the Creation groan at every graduation ceremony when another batch of smart, degree-holding, but ecologically illiterate, Homo sapiens who are eager to succeed are launched into the biosphere.”

David Orr (1994) Earth in Mind
“I don't want to protect the environment. I want to create a world where the environment doesn't need protecting”

Shaun Frankson

What kind of learning will make this happen?

The effectiveness of transformative learning

Transformational learning is about change, dramatic, fundamental change in the way we see ourselves and the world in which we live.
Transformative learning involves **experiencing a deep, structural shift** in the basic premises of thought, feelings and actions.

**TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING IS CRUCIAL BECAUSE**

- Environmental and Sustainability issues are **CONTEXTUAL**
- Environmental and Sustainability issues are **COMPLEX**
- Environmental and Sustainability issues are **EMMERGENT**
- Environmental and Sustainability issues are **CONTESTED**
We use transformative learning to explore ways of educating for a sustainable future

where one can appreciate that the future is ever-present,

where one can appreciate that the future is full of possibilities

where one can appreciate that the future is ripe with potential and

The Discussion Plan

The tentative discussion will follow the following format:

1. I will discuss SWEESD’s understanding of transformative learning and social change
2. I will share SWEESD’s experiences of translating transformative learning into practice with communities of practice in Africa and Asia
3. I will connect the contribution of SWEESD experiences to the framing of the Global Action Programme on ESD
How do people learn?

We have tried to understand learning for over 2000 years.

Learning debate on how people learn dates as far back as the Greek philosophers,

The following are some leading learning theorists:

- Socrates (469 –399 B.C.)
- Plato (427 – 347 B.C.)
- Aristotle (384 – 322 B.C.)
- Albert Bandura 1925
- Ivan Pavlov 1849 – 1936
- Jerome Bruner
- Jean Piaget (1896 – 1980)
- B F Skinner 1904 – 90
- Lev Vygotsky 1896 – 1934
- John Dewey 1859 – 1952
- Jerome Bruner
- Jerome Bruner
- B F Skinner 1904 – 90
- George Siemens
- Plato (427 – 347 B.C.)
Transformative learning

• Childhood - learning is formative

• Adulthood - learning is transformative

Adults make meaning of experiences by
• examining, questioning, validating and
• revising beliefs, values, attitudes and feelings

“Transformative learning is the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action”

(Mezirow, 1991)
The life of the plant is within the seed, not within the gardener. A gardener creates conditions enabling the life within the seeds to germinate, to blossom, to bear fruit. You cannot guarantee that every seed will yield its maximum possible output, and some seasons will realize a more abundant harvest than others. But if you create the right conditions, over time you can predict that your garden will produce consistently excellent results (Stephen R. Covey).

At SWEDESD we believe Transformative learning is one way of making this happen
Essential components of transformative learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Everyone has experiences that we must process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical reflection</td>
<td>Reflect and examine our underlying beliefs and assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective discourse</td>
<td>Open and objective analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Immediate, delayed or a confirmation of our previously held beliefs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are three types of reflection

1. **Content Reflection**
   Thinking of the actual content

2. **Process Reflection**
   Thinking of how to handle/use the experience

3. **Premise Reflection**
   Examining long held beliefs and assumptions

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Mezirow’s Ideal Conditions for Reflective Discourse (from Habermas)

- Have accurate and complete information
- Freedom from coercion and distorting self-deception
- Ability to weigh evidence and assess arguments “objectively”
- Openness to alternative points of view and to care about the way others think and feel

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Mezirow’s Ideal Conditions for Reflective Discourse - continued

- Ability to become critically reflective of assumptions and their consequences
- Equal opportunity to participate in the various roles of discourse
- Willingness to accept an informed, objective, and rational consensus as a legitimate test of validity until new perspectives, evidence, or argument are encountered and established as yielding better judgments.

Transformational Learning Theory
Transformative learning

**LEARNER’S EXPERIENCE**
- Assumptions
- beliefs,
- judgments
- feelings

**CRITICAL REFLECTION**
- Processing experiences
  - Content Reflection: What
  - Process Reflection: How
  - Premise Reflection: Why

**Reflective Discourse**
- Open and objective analysis of experiences
  - Sifting
  - winnowing
  - distilling

**INVESTING**
- Transformational Learning Theory

The role of the mentor

The role of the mentor is to teach, guide, challenge, support and encourage the student through their journey during the course of personal development

**MENTOR’S ROLE**
To support and encourage transformative learning that creates more inclusive, discriminating and integrative perspective for the adult learner

**HOW**
- Challenge untested assumptions
- Encourage critical reflection and critical self-reflection
- Create ideal conditions for discourse

How mentors can facilitate transformative learning?
- Establish trust and care
- Develop sensitive relationship
- Develop a community of knowers united in sharing meaning and making sense of life experience
- Role model a willingness to learn and change
SWEDESD PROGRAMMES OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING

Two examples
Change project approach – Teacher Education
Inquiry based approach – Urban Sustainability

THE CHANGE PROJECT APPROACH
New demands from Science and Society
• Strong sustainability
• Agency

Change projects

Teacher education 1.0
• Syllabi
• Methods
• Approaches

Classroom
• Plans
• Lessons
• Examples

Dialogue

Teacher education 2.0
• Syllabi
• Methods
• Approaches

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THE 42 SADC PARTNERS

2 Swedish institutions
14 SADC Countries
42 Institutions
83 teacher educators
Increasing the capacity of educators and trainers Competences

SYSTEMS-THINKING COMPETENCE: the ability to collectively analyse complex systems such as society, environment, economy, etc

ANTICIPATORY COMPETENCE: the ability to collectively analyse, evaluate, and craft rich “pictures” of the future related to sustainability issues and sustainability problem-solving frameworks

NORMATIVE COMPETENCE: the ability to collectively map specifies, apply, reconcile, and negotiate sustainability values, principles, goals, and targets

STRATEGIC COMPETENCE: the ability to collectively design and implement interventions, transitions, and transformative governance strategies toward sustainability

INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCE: the ability to motivate, enable and facilitate collaborative and participatory sustainability research and problem solving

(Wiek, 2011)

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Methods
How

Positioning of ideas about education alongside the social role of the educated person (Jickling and Wals, 2008)

Transmissive
Predetermined
Prescribed
Closed

Authoritative
Differential/Compliant
Training/Conditioning

Participatory
Active citizenship
Social learning

Socio-Constructivist Transformative
Transactional/Co-created
Socially critical/action-orientated
Open

Transformational Learning Practice
Positioning of ideas about education alongside the social role of the educated person (Jickling and Wals, 2008)

Methods that encourage:
- Reflexive thought and action
- Collaborative learning
- Making connections
- Learning as inquiry
- Empowerment, transformation and emancipation

Effective pedagogy enables Action

1. Encouraging reflexive thought and action
2. Facilitating collaborative learning
3. Making connections
4. Learning as inquiry
5. Enabling empowerment and emancipation
Systems-thinking competence: the ability to collectively analyse complex systems such as society, environment, economy, etc.

Anticipatory competence: the ability to collectively analyse, evaluate, and craft rich “pictures” of the future related to sustainability issues and sustainability problem-solving frameworks.

Normative competence: the ability to collectively map, specify, apply, reconcile, and negotiate sustainability values, principles, goals, and targets.

Strategic competence: the ability to collectively design and implement interventions, transitions, and transformative governance strategies toward sustainability.

Interpersonal competence: the ability to motivate, enable and facilitate collaborative and participatory sustainability research and problem solving.

INQUIRY BASED APPROACH (IBA)

Methods that encourage:
- Release thought and action
- Collaborative learning
- Making connections
- Learning as inquiry
- Enabling implementation
- Encouraging participation
- Engaging in connected inquiry
What is the IBA?

Cyclical learning process in multi-stakeholder teams revolve around inquiries.

An inquiry is a question that enables both learning and changes on the ground.

An example of a Strategic Inquiry from Ahmedabad, India

“How can we improve the quality of life in informal settlements around lakes and ponds in Ahmedabad?” (SUS 2011)
**IBA is a collaborative process which enables double loop learning**

- **Single-Loop Learning**
  - most common learning style, problem solving
  - Governing Variables
    - Goals, values, beliefs, conceptual frameworks
    - Why we do what we do
  - Action Strategies and Techniques
    - What we do
  - Results and Consequences
    - What we obtain

- **Double-Loop Learning**
  - more than problem solving, this learning style reevaluates and reframes goals, values, etc.

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**IBA objectives**

**Process objectives**
1. Establishing an inclusive and representative stakeholder team
2. Provide equal opportunity to participate
3. Handle conflict and dissonance in a constructive way
4. Mitigating power asymmetries and utilising power for change
5. Co-create knowledge about a wicked situation
6. Make decisions in consensus

**Outcome objectives**
1. Concerted action
2. Increased capacity for multi-stakeholder collaboration
3. Desired changes in a wicked situation
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Test beds for IBA

How does this integrate into the Global Action Programme on ESD
The GAP has two objectives:

OBJECTIVE 1
To reorient education and learning so that everyone has the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that empower them to contribute to sustainable development – and make a difference;

OBJECTIVE 2
To strengthen education and learning in all agendas, programmes and activities that promote sustainable development.

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Reorienting education and learning

1. At SWEDESD we are a centre of an ESD community of practitioners / we act as a focal point for a social network of practitioners and implementers of transformative and social learning processes. This community of ESD practitioners and thinkers strives to

   • Articulate a paradigm that facilitate quality and relevant education
   • Create social change processes through collaborative learning,
   • develop and implements new tools for addressing learning and social change
   • bring together the practitioners who have and who need the knowledge and skills
Reorienting education and learning

2. We articulate a new paradigm of learning: as mentors/facilitators of transformation

- blending mentor/facilitator and participants/student into partners in mutual transformation.
- relation based learning processes fostering mutual personal development.
- Acquisition of new competences through life experiences

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Reorienting education and learning

3. We offer practical opportunities to dialogue and communicate transformative experiences

The Change Project Approach and Inquiry Based Approach

- to empower/encourage individuals who value life-long learning
- to bring transformative learning to the attention of educational institutions & organisations, government and NGOs.

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3:2 Strengthening education and learning

1. *We develop & implement new tools:*
   SWEDESD provides ways for people to develop to their full potential – offering opportunities for life-long learners/transformers

   • Through the Change Project Approach and Inquiry Based Approach
     • collecting concrete knowledge and sharing it
       • within their institutions (intra),
       • between and among national, regional and global institutions (inter).

   • The SWEDESD ESD community is the reference point in terms of transformative learning for practitioners and their leaders.

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Strengthening education and learning

2. *We bring together practitioners and people interested:*

   • The SWEDESD ESD community is a hands-on, supportive, creative and current network of practitioners supporting each other

   • The SWEDESD ESD community provides opportunities for people to meet and participate in a non-hierarchical circle of learners
The GAP will focus on five priority action areas

Focus area 1
Advancing policy;

Focus Area 2
Integrating sustainability practices into education and training environments (whole-institution approaches);

Focus Area 3
Increasing the capacity of educators and trainers;

Focus Area 4
Empowering and mobilizing youth;

Focus Area 5
Encouraging local communities and municipal authorities to develop community-based ESD programmes

SWDESD is strong in three and gaining momentum in the other two

Focus area 1
Advancing policy; Sweden 3 June and 27 August / Ministries of Education and SADC Secretariat

Focus Area 2
Integrating sustainability practices into education and training environments (whole-institution approaches);

Focus Area 3
Increasing the capacity of educators and trainers;

Focus Area 4
Empowering and mobilizing youth; Youths in schools and out of school youths

Focus Area 5
Encouraging local communities and municipal authorities to develop community-based ESD programmes

Transformational Learning Practice
A transformation is a metamorphosis its more than just a transitional change

The life cycle of a Butterfly

THANK YOU
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References


References


