

Introduction by the Series Editors

All countries want **development**, because this implies improvement; and they also want development that is long term, and therefore **sustainable**. But communities increasingly want development that does not only stress economic matters but which pays greater attention to important social, cultural, political and environmental considerations. Increasingly countries (and certainly young people) are not willing to accept economic development at any cost; and expect the benefits of development to reach all sections of the community.

Numerous United Nations meetings (such as the first United Nations Conference on Human Development held in Stockholm in 1972; the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro; the 2002 Earth Summit in Johannesburg; and subsequent conferences) have stressed the importance of paying greater attention to improving the environment and of achieving sustainable development.

As the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (Bluntland Report, 1987) puts it:

‘Sustainability refers to the integration of environmental, economic and social considerations in development that optimises human and natural welfare and integrity for present and future generations.’

In essence, this means not living beyond our collective ecological means and not mortgaging the future for present benefit.

In many fields of endeavour there has been a reorientation of thinking and action to lay an increasing emphasis on the notion of ‘sustainability’ whether it be a sustainable environment, sustainable economic development, sustainable agriculture and rural development, sustainable food security, sustainable socio-economic development and so on. There has also been a move to think in terms of an ecology-based environmental ethic. Ecology and environment are not the same thing. Ecology is a biological science term relating to the study of relationships of living organisms with each other and their environment. The environment is the aggregate of external conditions (‘surroundings’) that influence the life of an individual organism or population.

It is also recognised that education systems need to adapt and change to best meet such challenges in our various societies. As education systems are modified to accommodate the inclusion of environmental education and education for sustainable development, it is now widely accepted that to be most effective, a transdisciplinary, holistic approach should be adopted which emphasises the importance and inter-relatedness of the environment as a whole and the interdependence of its parts.

There is also a need not only to **educate the head**, but also **the hand** and, perhaps most importantly, **the heart**. It is not enough that learners simply know, in a factual knowledge sense, about such matters as the problem of greenhouse gasses or various other forms of environmental degradation, but that they also understand that such problems also reflect the values and attitudes to development that are deeply embedded in our continuously evolving, modernising societies. It is also essential that they are keenly aware of the fact that to address such problems a careful examination of the ethical dimensions of human behaviour is necessary. This is where the moral education aspects of environmental education come into play with reference to ethics, values, attitudes, the clash between traditional cultural values and modernisation, and the like.

This publication, the first to be published in a Series devoted to examining *Education in the Asia-Pacific Region: Issues, Concerns and Prospects*, presents the views of young people on environmental issues in the Asia-Pacific region. It is clear from the research reported upon here that many youth are increasingly concerned about the environment and with finding sustainable ways of living in harmony with each other, and with the Earth. Environmental issues are of special concern to young people and youth, world-wide, at the current time. As the authors of this important book clearly demonstrate, youth are also concerned with coming to terms with finding a harmonious balance between modernisation and tradition; between global and local concerns, and between the materialistic and spiritual aspects of what it means to be a fully functioning and socially responsible human being in the twenty-first century.

The research reported upon in this book has much to say that is of relevance and value to educational policy makers and practitioners as they seek to re-engineer education systems to ensure they effectively cope with the emerging challenges concerning environment and sustainability, in both developing and developed countries alike.

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