"New Conceptual Framework for Sustainability"

Essentially sustainable development is about the dual goals of the promotion of human development and well-being while protecting the earth’s life support systems (Kates, 2010). According to Orr (2002, p.82) ‘Sustainability is about the terms and conditions of human survival, and yet we still educate at all levels as if no crisis existed’ (Orr, 2002 p.82) Importantly, education for sustainable development is recognised as key to achieving sustainability (Sarabhai, 2013) where without learning, sustainable development will not be realised (Goncalves et al., 2012; UNESCO, 2012). Confusion regarding sustainable development still exists where more recently DuPuis and Ball (2013, p.64) have stated “the concept has escaped definition”.

Here sustainable development is defined as:
“The global, simultaneous and interdependent pursuit of equitable socio-cultural, environmental, economic, political and institutional goals relevant to achieving sustainability” (Foley, 2015).

An important contribution of the authors PhD was the development of a conceptual framework for sustainability. The conceptual framework was informed by the critical, interpretive and sustaincentric paradigms, in addition, complex adaptive systems theory and Bourdieu’s Social Human social systems and ecological systems are complex adaptive systems, also informed the development of this conceptual framework.

This conceptual framework for sustainability advances present models of sustainable development. Essentially this framework links the environmental, social economic, institutional and political components of sustainable development, with critical issues and actions needed, in terms of increasing awareness and knowledge of sustainable development. This framework captures the complexity of sustainable development and facilitates systems thinking, regarding the movement towards a sustaincentric paradigm.

The strength of the model is that it can be applied globally and locally, importantly the framework links the achievement of sustainability with awareness and knowledge of sustainable development, consequently this conceptual framework can also be a valuable tool which can aid the advancement of education for sustainable development.

References


