EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: AN EMERGENT

DISCOURSE FOR MULTI-SECTOR LEARNING AND ACTION PARTNERSHIP

By

BOB OFFEI MANTEAW

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

Department of Teaching and Learning

MAY 2008

To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of BOB OFFEI MANTEAW find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

_____

(Chair)

_____

_____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My work thus far has been possible through the support, counsel, and friendship of more people than I can possibly acknowledge. Some, however, deserve special recognition. I owe a special thank you to my mother: Mansa Ewusiwa Baidoo, a visionary and hardworking African woman, who maintained a resolute belief and hope in the librating powers of education. She worked hard to instill this belief in all her children, and she continues to support us with deeds and prayers.

Secondly, I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. David Gruenewald, my Chair, my advisor, mentor, teacher, and a friend: David challenged me to understand the *Art of Scholarship*. My encounter with David is fateful and represents every graduate student's dream. I also owe special thanks to Dr. Gail Furman and Dr. Leslie Hall, my teachers and members of my committee. They showed belief in my work and have been extremely supportive of all my endeavors. A special mention also goes to my cohorts of doctoral students whom I studied with, particularly Tami Moore. Tami showed tremendous interest in my work and offered insightful comments and advice along the way. Her views have been inspirational.

Finally, some of my biggest and most reliable support systems during this lonely process of doctoral studies have come from afar: Ruby, then my girlfriend but now my wife, needs a special praise and thanks for the long and uncertain waits. Thanks also to my family both in Ghana and in England for their constant prayers and encouragement. This process would have been too lonely without them. I am grateful and thankful to all the diverse people who helped in diverse ways.

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: AN EMERGENT

DISCOURSE FOR MULTI-SECTOR LEARNING AND ACTION

Abstract

by Bob Offei Manteaw, Ph.D.
Washington State University
May 2008

Chair: David A. Gruenewald

As the discourse of sustainable development or sustainability begins to gain roots, both in the political and social arenas, it has become clear that people need to know and understand its full implications in order to be able to take the necessary actions around issues of environment, economics, and social justice. Sustainable development is, therefore, an educational issue; one whose cause must be championed by all knowledge-related institutions such as schools, businesses, and civil society.

The significance of the concept and the urgency it requires in reversing *our unsustainable present*—as epitomized in climate change, issues of health, poverty, violent conflicts, HIV/AIDS, inequality between and within nations—is unquestionable, yet not many people seem to recognize this need. As an emergent international discourse, *Education for Sustainable Development* (ESD*)* challenges humanity to explore new and creative visions of teaching and learning approaches that provide logical responses to our currently interconnected and interrelated global predicaments.

Against the background of current neolibral and capitalist discourses as they relate to educational policies and practices, the study proposes multi-sector learning and action partnerships as a response to what is described in the study as the *new epistemic challenge*. In this regard, businesses are invited into partnership learning activities that underscore the interconnectedness of life's different systems—economics, environment, society, and culture. In doing so, the emergent business practice, popularly known as corporate social responsibility (CSR) is critically explored to establish its potential as an avenue to align CSR activities as they relate to education to the broader principles of education for sustainable development. In the end, the study asks: How can businesses learn from doing *unusual business*, and how can schools and society learn from such partnerships for social and ecological transformation?

The study also explores the cultural dimensions of education for sustainable development against the belief that different notions and worldviews on development— human progress— in different cultures inform different approaches to educational thinking and practice. Ghana and the United States are used as international comparative cases to understand how people's different development aspirations guide and direct their educational planning for sustainable development. The underlying question for this comparison is: How can a global approach to education for sustainable development be possible when people in different cultures and regions have different understanding and approaches to development?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER THREE—EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A CALL

FOR A NEW LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, whose hard work, vision, and direction

guided me to self-belief and to the discovery of the joys and hopes in education.

Chapter One

Introduction

The last decade has witnessed an unprecedented awareness of the scale, severity, and complexity of many global problems. Numerous reports, Gore*, 2006*: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 2007; *The Earth Charter* , 2000 all point to a planet in crisis, a world faced with an uncertain future that has very little time to change course. Most of these reports also cite human actions and inactions as major causes of the planet's current predicament. Diverse but interrelated problems such as climate change, poverty, migration, HIV/AIDS, and violent conflicts within and between countries converge to constitute what I frequently refer to in this work as *our unsustainable present.* From the destruction of biodiversity to exponential growths in world populations, global resource distribution and consumption remain imbalanced creating situations of inequality and social injustices in different places.

While parts of the world live in relative abundance and comfort, others live in abject poverty and perennial deprivation. Coupled with these realities are grim accounts of the marginalization of minorities such as women, children, indigenous people, the physically disabled, and the unemployed (Fein, 1995; Slattery, 2006; UNESCO, 1997). The constant threats of war and violent conflicts around the globe are creating political, social, economic, and ecological instability that continues to threaten world peace. These have become common experiences in most communities both locally and globally. Together, these issues provide just a glimpse of the complex array of challenges facing this historical moment. They are the challenges of our unsustainable present, which calls

for urgent actions to change course. Changing course implies knowing and understanding our current realities, and committing to and exploring new ways of living and acting on the planet.

Sustainable development has, therefore, emerged as a concept that reminds humanity of how our old ways of living and acting on the planet have not worked, and why it is important to embrace new development approaches that could sustain the long term future of the planet and its many culturally diverse communities. Sustainable development is essentially an educational issue; it is a life-long and life-wide learning enterprise that requires interdisciplinary and multi-sector learning and action approaches. As a concept, it has evolved out of global environmental and development debates, and has emerged as a principal policy goal whose pursuit has become a major preoccupation of many governments, corporations, academic institutions, and major organizations such as the United Nations, and the World Bank (Eliot, 2006; Tilbury et al, 2002).

While the real implications of the concept remains contested, it continues to be embraced as a moral concept relevant to our time and difficult to ignore. Redclift (1997) writes that, "Like motherhood or God, it is difficult not to approve of it. At the same time, the idea of sustainable development is fraught with contradictions" (p. 438). The concept continues to gain political and social currencies, as it reaches further into popular consciences around the world. Countries and their governments have been called upon at different times and by different international declarations to act (DESD, 2005; UNCED, 1992; WCED, 1987; WSSD, 2002). While various strategies and approaches continue to be employed in what has become a global quest for sustainable development, the learning imperatives that underscore the quest as a learning quest have not received

the desired attention. Even when they have, learning approaches have followed the same educational philosophies and practices that have contributed to our current crisis (Bowers, 1997: Orr, 1992; Sterling 2004).

To unravel ourselves from our current predicament and to move towards sustainability necessarily implies the need to explore appropriate pedagogical logics that respond to our current crisis. Changing course, therefore, requires conscious educational actions, which involve changing how we learn to know what we know. It is an epistemological and ontological challenge that requires broad coalitions of institutions, societies, schools, and individuals to come together to reevaluate values, attitudes, behaviors, and even more importantly to recreate knowledge forms that are relevant for sustainable development. The recent declaration of an International Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) by the United Nations has brought about some momentum as it presents both opportunities and challenges for the reassessment of educational thinking and practice.

The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development

As a United Nations-sponsored agenda, the Decade, as it is now widely known, is a period designated for a conscious and concerted international educational effort to equip people, institutions, and communities with the knowledge and skills required for the creation of sustainable communities. These are communities where diverse people live and work in peace to meet the diverse needs of current and future citizens. Citizens in these communities are environmentally aware, and are sensitive to maintaining a healthy balance between human progress and the limits of the earth's resources. As the

Decade unfolds, it also becomes imperative that learning forms are reviewed in ways that reflect not only our current conditions, but also to emphasize the interconnectedness of life's different dimensions such as economics, environment, society, and culture. It is in view of this that I foreground education for sustainable development (ESD) as an emergent educational discourse that requires multi-sector and cross-disciplinary learning and action partnerships. By multi-sector learning and action, I am proposing a kind of social learning that has the capacity to bring diverse people, institutions, organizations, businesses, and communities together to learn and act for social and ecological transformation.

In this study, therefore, I analyze this new vision of education with a view to uncovering and understanding its theoretical, pedagogical, and conceptual underpinnings. I do that with an underlying desire to clarify the character, philosophy, and significance of ESD, as a way of establishing its ability to influence contemporary educational thinking and practice. Specifically, this dissertation seeks to address the following questions:

- How has the discourse of education for sustainable development emerged, and what is its capacity to influence contemporary educational thinking and practice?

- What is the scope and form of ESD within a multi-sector learning and action partnership for sustainable development?

- What are its conceptual, theoretical, and pedagogical implications and manifestations within the context of schooling in different socio-cultural settings (Ghana and the United States)?

Key Research Goals

In light of the above discussions and the specific research questions outlined, this study aims to achieve the following goals:

- To locate ESD within the history of global environmental politics, and to trace its emergence as an educational discourse with a view to exploring its capacity to influence contemporary educational thinking and practice.

- To examine the scope, characteristics, and disciplinary boundaries of ESD within the context of multi-sector learning and action partnerships by focusing specifically on the role of business in education for sustainable development.

- To examine the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of the discourse of education for sustainable development and to clarify its pedagogical implication and application within the context of schooling in different socio-cultural settings, in this case Ghana and the United States.

These goals have been carefully framed to respond to each of the main research questions. There are three main chapters and two supporting chapters. Each of the main chapters serves as a response to a key research question. As I have outlined in the methodology section, this dissertation follows the integrated article format, which is a collection of independent, but interrelated articles. Each of the main chapters in the dissertation could be published as a single article; however, put together, they provide a carefully-crafted coherent account of a single theme that is captured in the title of the entire work. Discourse analysis is the principle methodology for the study; however, critical approaches are employed to analyze different discourses as they emerge.

Chapter two responds to the first research question by locating ESD within the history of global environmental politics. It traces its emergence as an educational discourse in different international environmental debates. This is done by following key discourse moments in global environmental politics and examines how education has factored in these different discourses. The key concern of this section is to use *historical methodological approach* as a method for discourse analysis to examine the historical and contemporary conditions that have impacted on the evolution and development of education in the concept of sustainable development, and how the emergent discourse—ESD—could influence current educational thinking and practice. In this regard, the guiding question is: How have different factors—sociological, ecological, cultural, and political—informed ESD's conceptualization?

The third chapter focuses primarily on the issue of multi-sector learning and action partnerships for sustainable development. I examine the pedagogical implications and disciplinary boundaries, if any, of ESD within a multi-sector learning and action framework. What this means is that the notions of life-long and life-wide learning approaches are critically considered within the context of school-business partnerships. Business roles in schools are critically examined both in historical and contemporary terms, and against the emergent business practice of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Specific business roles in schools are examined as sample stories with a view to locating them within the thinking and practice of ESD. Such an approach, I believe, helps to clarify the scope and characteristics of ESD, as well as reinforce the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and partnership building in the quest for sustainable

development. Chapter four serves as an interlude: a space to discuss methodological and theoretical issues as they have arisen.

Chapter five examines sustainable development as a contentious concept that could have different implications in different socio-cultural settings. From this perspective, the main concern of this chapter is to clarify the notions of development and sustainability in two different contexts—Ghana and the U.S.A. The idea behind this international comparative approach is to make the point that what constitutes sustainable livelihood in Ghana may not necessarily be the same as in the United States or other Western countries. Within their different contexts, both countries may take their unique cultural circumstances into consideration when defining what sustainable development means. Such considerations may also influence educational philosophies and approaches. Thus, what might constitute a good approach to sustainable development in the United States may not necessarily work in Ghana and vice versa. The question then becomes: How do we initiate a global sustainability education agenda in different socio-cultural contexts? As a focus, this chapter critically explores both the conceptual and cultural imperatives inherent in the broader concept of sustainability, and how they inform a particular understanding, or pedagogical approaches to ESD. The conclusion to the study follows the fourth chapter.

Why the Discourse of ESD?

Action, it is believed, speaks louder than words; however, this assertion denies the power of words and the ideas and creativity of those who make and spread them (Adams, 2001). My position is words sometime speak louder than action or at least they

determine action, and in the process prove more powerful. In the *Power of Development*,

Crush (1995) observes that, the words written and spoken about development have

enormous power. Whatever constitutes development action is driven by words such as

poverty, wealth, economics, environment, education, underdeveloped, developing, etc.

Such words, according to Crush, portray the world in a particular way—a world divided

or a world in crisis of a kind—and one that requires some form of intervention. These

words and a host of others do not only define what development is or is not, but also they

determine the basis of action and authority as they reflect who has the power to define

the basis of knowledge legitimate enough to constitute a strategy for intervention.

In short, language and discourses are powerful as they are ideological. They

inform and direct social practice. The complexity of the function of language as a cultural

tool that mediates relationships of power, privilege, social interactions, institutions, and

bodies of knowledge is the focus of discourse studies and critical discourse studies

(Rogers et al., 2005). In foregrounding ESD as an emergent discourse, this study uses the

same approaches to understand the discourse of ESD, how it has emerged, evolved, and

where it is going in international educational discourse. Within the past two decades the

development discourse has been joined by a new terminology—sustainable development,

and has undoubtedly become one of the most prominent and pervasive phrases in

contemporary development and governance discourses. Lele (1991) had predicted that

the phrase was poised to become the development paradigm of the 1990s', and by current

indications, it has long exceeded that prediction. It remains the centerpiece of

contemporary development discourses, and epitomizes what development is and should

be, at least in this historical moment.

By drawing education into the discourse, the capacity of the concept to direct human progress and to restructure development thinking and practice around the world seems to have been established. The need to analyze the ESD discourses has, therefore, arisen because of the need also to understand the power of language in discourse production and how such productions influence social action. By themselves, words do not constitute power; they are framed and made to assume power (Fairclough, 1994). In a sense, words don't necessarily have power, but there are powers behind words. It is imperative, within the context of global environmental debates and the emergence of education for sustainable development, that discourse and the powers behind their production are carefully examined to understand their origins, intentions, and evolution over time. Such studies, in my view, have the potential of not only clarifying the role of education in sustainable development, but also to facilitate an understanding of their current influences as well as future potentials. Foucault (1972) calls this the *Archeology of Knowledge*.

Also, since confusion is a hallmark of words that are used differently to connote different ideas, sustainable development as a concept has been fraught with both linguistics and conceptual confusions. The more it continues to resist precise meaning, the more it allows different usages, which makes the concept even more confusing. It has, therefore, become somehow difficult to clearly articulate what sustainability means in different contexts and cultures. This makes it even more difficult to conceptualize a global approach to education for sustainable development when different people in different places and cultures understand the concept differently. These considerations drive my desire to foreground this discourse, and to engage in a critical analysis that will

pave the way for better understandings of the role of education in the concept of sustainable development.

It is also in view of this that I consider an international comparative discussion of the ESD discourse significant. Putting together two countries as diverse as Ghana and the United States (developing and developed) makes it possible to establish how different factors—cultural, economic, social, and political—inform the thinking behind the concept of sustainable development, and how that also informs their particular approaches to education. As an emergent discourse within a contested concept, the existing body of literature needs expanding just as much as the debate needs deepening. This work aims to make significant contributions in that direction. The fact that sustainable development has remained a contested concept has, somehow, thwarted efforts to solidify the role of education in the concept. This has also delayed mainstream acceptance of this emergent discourse as a credible educational movement which has the potential to shape educational processes around the world. In spite of all these shortcomings, the concept of sustainable development and the discourse of education for sustainable development continue to grow as global discourses that require serious intellectual attention.

Conceptualizing a new Learning Philosophy

As a generation, we are faced with a bewildering array of challenges that are interconnected, and always result in chain reactions of cause and effect both at the local and global levels. These challenges—climate change, HIV/AIDS, poverty, inequality, violent conflicts, and many more—characterize our present condition, yet in the face of

these challenges, educational systems continue to remain fragmented and compartmentalized, focusing on narrow subject-based specializations. Trainer (1990) observed that, "At present the more 'educated' one becomes the more specialized and narrow one becomes" (p. 104). If truly education is to maintain its role as a tool for individual and social transformation, and humanity's only remaining hope to achieve sustainability, then there is an urgent need for a pedagogical logic that responds to our current challenges. This need requires well thought-out educational philosophies that have the capacity to respond to our current predicament.

By proposing a multi-sector learning and action approach to the creation of sustainable communities, my desire is to draw attention to the philosophical composition of life. Life's systems are not compartmentalized; they flow seamlessly and naturally into each other in mutually supporting ways. A multi-sector approach to learning is, therefore, aimed at translating this systemic philosophy into educational thinking and practice. In this regard, the practice of education should not be designated only to school sites and classrooms that narrow the focus of what constitutes knowledge. Against the background of the strong influences of economics in the concept of sustainable development, I have found it necessary, within the framework of multi-sector learning and action, to pay particular attention to business roles in education. I critically analyze the roles, both historical and contemporary, with a view to aligning them within the principles of education for sustainable development. Even though businesses have played and continue to play varying roles in schools and education, these roles have not consciously been analyzed within the context of education for sustainable development. This study, therefore, breaks new ground as this area of academic study has not been ventured.

References

Adams, W. M. (2001). *Green Development: Environment and Sustainability in the*

    Third World. London: Routledge.

Alley, R. et al. (2007). *Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis*,

    Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC): Geneva.

Crush, J.C. (1995). Imagining development, pp. 1-23 In J.C. Crush (Ed.) *Power of*
    development. London: Routledge.

Elliot, J. A. (2006). An introduction to sustainable development, New York, NY:
    Routledge.

Fairclough, N. (1994) *Language and power*. London: Longman

Fein, J. (1995). Teaching for a sustainable world: The environmental and development

    education project for teacher education. *Environmental Education Research*, *1(1),*

    21-33.

Foucault, M., (1972). *The archeology of knowledge*. New York: Tavistock Publications.

Grainger, A. (2004). Introduction, In M. Purvis & A. Grainger (Eds.) *Exploring*
    Sustainable Development: Geographical perspectives, London, England:
    Earthscan.

Gore, A. (2006). *An inconvenient truth: Planetary emergency of global warming and*
    what we can do about it. Emmaus, PA: Rodale Press.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2007). Climate change: The synthesis.
    Retrieved: November 18, 2007, from http://www.ipcc.ch/ipccreports/ar4-syr.htm

Lele, S.M., (1991). Sustainable development: A critical review. *World Development*
    19(6), 607-621.

Redclift, M. (1987). *Sustainable Development; Exploring the Contradictions*, London: Routledge.

Rogers, R. et al, (2005). Critical discourse analysis in education: A review of the literature, *Review of Educational Research*, (75) 3, 365-416.

Schumacher, F. (1973). *Small is beautiful: Economics as if people really mattered*, London: Abacus.

Slattery, P. (2006). *Curriculum development in the postmodern era*. New York: Routledge.

Tilbury, D. et al, (2002). *Education and Sustainability: Responding to the Global Challenge,* Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.

Trainer, T. (1990). Towards an ecological philosophy of education, *Discourse*, 10(2), 93-116.

UNESCO, (1997). Educating for a sustainable future: A transdisciplinary vision for concerted action. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO-UNEP, (1996). Education for sustainable development, *Connect* XXI (2) June.

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992) *Agenda 21*, Albany, NY: State University Press.

World Commission on Environment and Development (1987). *Our common future*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Chapter Two

Education in Global Environmental Politics: Why the Discourse of Education for Sustainable Development Needs Attention

The United Nations has recently declared and launched a Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014). It is a period of conscious and concerted international awareness creation and educational action to move communities around the world towards sustainable livelihoods. As an emergent discourse, education for sustainable development (ESD) has its foundations in global environment and development debates that have evolved over time. UNESCO (2002) describes it as a new vision of education that has the capacity to provide opportunities for all humans to benefit from learning the values, knowledge, and skills that are critical for the creation of sustainable societies. It is life-long and life-wide, and is believed to have the unique ability to foster interdisciplinary and multi-sector learning partnerships that encourages learners to make creative connections between intellect, competence, and experience (Orr, 2004; St. Julien, 1992).

Education is discussed within the rhetoric of global environment and development politics; however, most references to education in the past have framed education as an afterthought, or an instrument to be employed to solve problems. The growing crisis of the human project on the planet has now made it an urgent requirement for education to lead and direct our actions rather than to be employed as a tool to clean up our mess. For this to be possible, Sterling (1996) was right to have noted that

"sufficient attention must be given to education as a subject of change itself" (p.18). Education for sustainable development has, therefore, emerged to provide that much needed opportunity to rethink educational philosophies and practices around the world. The Decade has been launched as a global project by the United Nations to help in that direction, and countries around the world are being urged to take the necessary actions to "reorient" their educational systems for sustainable development. UNESCO, the educational arm of the United Nations, has been nominated by the world body to oversee the general implementation of the Decade around the world.

Although the Decade has been launched, and some countries have already responded by taking the necessary policy steps to "reorient" their educational systems, the United States, at least at the federal level, has been silent. This is worrisome, especially when one considers the fact that as a country, the United States prides itself in providing political and moral leadership to the rest of the world. Sustainable development, as I will soon discuss in some detail, is a moral issue as much as a political and an educational issue. Even more importantly, any attempt to move the world towards sustainability should be a collective endeavor, and all countries must play a role. It is baffling, therefore, that the world's economic, political, and moral leader is quiet on this very important subject of sustainable development to the extent of blatantly ignoring a United Nations sanctioned project.

Even though the political elite of the United States tactically shies away from the discourse of sustainable development, obviously because of the country's obsession with international competitiveness and the economic growth agenda, there have been a few crusading individuals and institutions who have been championing the cause of

sustainable development. Former vice president Al Gore is one of such people, and together with a few non-governmental organizations, they have been striving hard to bring the issues of environment, development and human actions and inactions to mainstream attention. Their efforts, even though significant and worthwhile, are not making the desired impacts simply because federal government support is lacking. It is therefore not surprising that many educators are unaware of the recently launched United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development Decade, or even the idea of global sustainability. This is disturbing, but understandably so considering the fact that current public school policy in the United States is modeled on the economic growth paradigm and competitive market advantage, which requires that students are first and foremost seen and treated as resources to be developed for profitable use.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy has vigorously and persuasively been defended by politicians and some educational leaders with a now familiar rhetoric: 'we need to prepare our children to compete on the international economic stage.' Within the context of sustainable development, such an approach to schooling is a contradiction—preparing students for economic growth purposes while at the same time expecting them to learn to conserve natural resources. In fact, this is one controversy that lies at the heart of the concept of sustainable development, and one that makes this discussion even more relevant. It is imperative that the concept of sustainable development is critically examined and clarified to allow an understanding of what it means to educate for sustainable development, especially within the current school language and culture of high stakes testing, accountability, competition and job-readiness. It is also important that the discourse of education for sustainable development is located within different socio-

cultural contexts, and to examine what sustainable development means in different places, and what forms education for sustainable development might take in these different places.

As an African educator and a student of environmental and development education, my cross-cultural experiences, both as a student and a professional in different countries in the West, have not only impacted my critical understanding of the concept of sustainable development, but also, have convinced me that interpretation of the concept of sustainable development must be culturally-specific and locally-relevant. Currently, the manner in which the concept is used, especially in the West, standardizes expectations, and imposes meanings as derived from the West on less powerful countries in the South. Such conceptualization ignores local realities and cultures by defining what their realities should be. Inherent in the discourse of global sustainable development are critical geopolitical and cultural issues which are usually overlooked. This is even more true in formal education settings where what it means to educate for sustainable development in an urban inner-city school in the U.S. may be different from what it means to a school in rural Ghana. The declaration of an international decade of educating for sustainable development, therefore, provides an opportunity to foreground some of these underlying issues, and to examine what it means for educational thinking and practice.

Therefore, in this paper, I will provide an overview of how global environmental politics have evolved from a historical perspective, and trace how the discourse of education for sustainable development has emerged. Secondly, I will focus on the broader concept of sustainable development, explore its implications and applications, and

discuss why it is important for educational systems to embrace sustainability thinking in teaching and learning. In doing so, I will also argue that in spite of the growing recognition of the importance of education for sustainable development, its place within the current school language and culture of competition, economic growth, and market advantage makes it contradictory. Finally, I will discuss ESD within the context of the recently launched Decade, and show its capacity to influence contemporary educational thinking and practice. I will also provide specific recommendations for dialogue and action, and discuss why it is important for countries such as the United States to give ESD the desired attention.

Global Environmental Politics: A Historical Overview

Modern environmentalism, according to Dressener (2003), has two key concerns: "the limits to control that were emphasized by Leopold and Carson, and also the idea of a global environmental crisis—limits of scale on a small planet" (p. 22) These concerns have helped shape the political construction of the environmental discourse historically, and have in different ways influenced the role and perception of education within the discourse. From the conflicting ideologies of conservationism and preservation that dominated environmental debates in the United States in the 19th Century, environmental politics has evolved to extend its focus onto the global level, and has made human actions and inactions on the natural environment a major concern. Central to the environmental debates is the element of fear and uncertainty about the future of humanity on the planet, a situation that persists today as a result of our unsustainable patterns of living in our

places. These are issues that have defined global environmental politics in all its different

forms.

Silent Spring and the New Environmental Politics

      The quest for human progress (development) and its damaging effect on nature

first captured widespread attention with Rachel Carson's (1962) revolutionary work,

Silent Spring. It sparked a new awareness and catalyzed the modern environmental

movement. Her work criticized DDT as a technology by drawing attention to the

destructive effects of technologies. Through her exposure of the effects of DDT on

nature, Carson demonstrated how human actions that interfered with complex natural

systems could lead to serious environmental damages with serious consequences. Her

challenge to technology was in effect a challenge to what was considered human

progress. It raised a red flag to signal the dangers inherent in the obsessive idea of human

progress and development. With her work, she opened a new chapter in environmental

politics and initiated a new kind of conversation that resulted in the critical examination

of what human progress means.

      Environmental debates from this point onwards focused on human impacts on the

biosphere, and this included population growth and its effects on scarce natural resources.

The 1960s saw intense debates on the future of planet earth and its capacity to contain

human progress. The issue of space and the carrying capacity of the planet dominated

discussions; the modernist belief of an *endless frontier* was condemned by Boulding

(1966) as an irresponsible assumption in his book, *The Economics of the Coming*

Spaceship Earth. He pointed out that the idea of boundless space on the planet was not

only wishful but deceitful, and that human activity on the planet had increased to such an extent that there are no frontiers. The message therefore was this: no more space remains for humans to dispose of their environmental problems, and problems needed to be confronted and solved where they are. Boulding's work also drew attention to issues of population, resource use, economic growth, and its relationship with the natural environment.

The metaphor "Spaceship Earth" as used by Boulding generated new fears and awareness of a potential global environmental crisis. Concerns were raised about exponential population growth and the possibilities of a "population bomb" (Ehrilch, 1968) that will lead to famines in certain parts of the world, especially Africa and Asia. There were also talks about an imminent collision of humankind's activities with the planet's natural limits, these talks invoked fear and aroused attention around the world for urgent actions. Subsequently, a major international conference was convened in 1969 by UNESCO called, 'Man and His Environment,' which paved the way for other environmental actions to emerge. Following this, the first Earth Day celebration was held in San Francisco, California, in 1970. This is significant in the sense that San Francisco, so named for St. Francis, is the patron saint of the ecology. Coincidentally, San Francisco is also the birth place of the United Nations.

An Agenda for the Future: From Stockholm to Johannesburg

Another United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was held in Stockholm in 1972. The official slogan for the conference was: "Only One Earth," a theme that invoked Boulding's message of no endless frontier. Many commentators have

identified the 1972 conference as the first event that seriously put the environment on the international political agenda by ensuring the incorporation of environmental considerations in political decision making. One legacy of the Stockholm conference was formation of the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) and the formalization of environmental education, a process that resulted in a series of UNESCO-UNEP International Environmental Education Programs between the periods of 1983-1994.

In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development published its famous report, *Our Common Future,* in which they proposed a new model of development, one that "sustains and expands the environmental resource base" (WCED, 1987, p. 1). They named this new development model as *Sustainable Development*, which was defined as development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (p. 8). Sitraz (1993) wrote that, "Perhaps the most lasting accomplishment of the Brundtland Commission, however, was to thrust the concept of 'sustainable development' into the mainstream of world debate" (p. 4).

Following the Brundtland Report was the 1992 United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED), often called the Earth Summit, which took place in Rio de Janeiro. The conference provided yet another forum to address the environmental and development crises of the world, and to critically debate the meaning of sustainable development. In the final conference document, titled *Agenda 21* (Agenda for the 21st century), Chapter 36 was entirely devoted to the promotion of Education and Public Awareness and Training. The chapter notes: "Education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of people to address environment

and development issues" (p. 2). This assertion has since provided a strong basis for education to play a role in the creation of sustainable communities and livelihoods.

Ten years after the Rio conference, another World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) was held in Johannesburg, South Africa. The conference acknowledged the fact that the desired changes for sustainable development had been slow in coming, or not at all. The issue of education was revisited and the role of education in sustainable development was made a central focus of the conference. The conference also confirmed the need for the world to make the first decade of the new century one of reflection and action to clearly map out the future of our world. Based on this need, Japan, supported by other countries such as Sweden, proposed a United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, which was subsequently approved by the UN General Assembly at its 57th session in December 2002. The Decade, as it is now widely known, was officially launched in New York in March of 2005 and runs as a UN project through UNESCO. The central role given to education in the concept of sustainable development underscores the importance of that quest, and how it has become, perhaps, one of the most important global challenges of our time.

Sustainable Development: The Challenge of Our Time

In spite of the growing popularity of the concept of sustainable development, its actual implication and application remains unclear to many people, and has resulted in a situation where people with diverse backgrounds and interests use it to serve their own agenda. The most popular definition of the concept is that which was given in the Brundtland Report (1987): development "[t]hat meets the needs of the present without

compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (p. 43). Even though this definition is widely cited, different interpretations have emerged as the concept evolves. Its implication and application might remain unclear and contested; however, as a concept sustainable development succeeds in capturing three fundamental issues: the problem of environmental degradation, economic growth imperatives and issues of social inequality (Adams, 2006). These are contradictory issues, which imbue the concept with both peril and promise. The promise of a new era of continued economic growth is set against the threats and dangers that growth-oriented policies pose to the environmental resource base.

Sustainable development, according to Irwin (2001) offers the promise of reconciliation between apparent irreconcilables: economy and ecology, equity and survival, technological development and long-term interests, international policy making and local action. These are inherent tensions within the concept, which compels some critics to dismiss it as "diversionary and shallow" (Irwin 2001, p. 38). A full appreciation of these tensions, however, require a historical understanding of how global environmental problems have been defined over time, and how the quest for global solutions has led to a particular form of environmental politics. The unusual juxtaposition of a biological metaphor—sustainability, and an economic discourse—development, is one of appeasement for both economists and environmentalists (Orr, 1992). It creates a convenient relationship, which unifies green and capitalist discourses.

Razee (2002) observed that, within this opposing association, nature is captured in two distinct senses: first, as an ecocentric conception, which presents nature as a valuable entity that needs to be preserved, and second, as an anthropocentric conception

that portrays nature as an instrument for human progress. These apparent tensions have their roots in the now famous Brundtland Report, in which the Commission stated the possibility "of a new era of economic growth, one that must be based on policies that sustain and expand the environmental resource base" (WCED 1987, p. 1). This undoubtedly is contradictory and the point of confusion derives from the strange wisdom of pursuing accelerated economic growth while at the same time ensuring that natural resource bases are sustained—and even somehow "expanded".

It is this paradox that has brought environmentalists and the business world into conflict over the real meaning and implication of the concept. Environmentalists often criticize sustainable development as nothing but 'business as usual,' a potential smokescreen to cover the continued destruction and exploitation of the earth's limited resources in the name of development (O'Riordan, 1988). Economists on the other hand, criticize the concept as being too cautious about the future, resulting in sacrifices of economic growth for the sake of unnecessary concerns about depletion of natural resources (Dressner, 2003). These opposing view points have been the basis of an ideological and linguistic power struggle as both environmentalists and economists employ a particular line of argument to shape social cognition and understanding of the concept. Orr (1992) also talks about two meanings of sustainability: "Technological Sustainability" and "Ecological Sustainability." The former, he says, lies within the economic growth paradigm, and advocates of this paradigm believe that "every problem has a technological answer or a market solution" (p. 24). Advocates of the latter call on humanity to rethink our ways of living by seeking alternative lifestyles to those that have created our unsustainable present.

Moving the world towards sustainability is, perhaps, one of the greatest challenges of the twenty-first century. Porritt (1996) affirms this challenge by contending that "Sustainable development is one of the most important political challenges of our age by far" (p. xi). Much as this is true, it must be added that it is also a moral, educational and epistemological challenge, one that questions our loyalties and priorities on the planet, especially with regard to the choices we make. At the start of the twenty-first century, the world is besieged with a growing array of social and ecological challenges, challenges that have become self-evident in almost every human community in the world. The issue of environmental limits and the perception of imminent doom for the human project on earth is one that no nation can ignore. Global warming and climate change have become every day languages in most communities especially in the West, even though their real implications are not getting the desired attention. The threats and dangers of disasters, sometimes wrongly called *natural*, and of wars, violent conflicts, poverty, health, and inequality, both within and between countries, have become everyday realities in different communities around the world.

These problems are complexly interrelated, and result in chain reactions of cause and effect both at the local and global levels. They could well be described as the problems of global *unsustainability,* or *our unsustainable present,* and it is from this that the intrinsic meaning of sustainable development is derived. Against this background, the real challenge of sustainable development is not about the creation of a universally accepted meaning or definition. It is also not about the [in] convenient "reconciliation between apparent irreconcilables." It is about awareness, knowledge, and understanding of what is wrong in our current patterns of life, and how we can, as individuals or

communities transform them, if at all possible. This, in my view, is the work of education, and that is why the current global campaign for concerted educational effort for sustainable development—the Decade—needs attention from all nations and their local communities. The debates on meaning and application of the concept, even though helpful, have gone on far too long, and at the expense of concrete and timely interventions for alternatives to our current unsustainable life patterns and methods of learning. At worst, sustainable development is only contestable, and within the different contestations lays a certain potential to highlight the core essence of the concept.

A Protean Concept or a Contestable Concept?

Dressner (2003) describes the various interpretations of sustainable development as nothing but a "linguistic confusion." Dobson (1996) also writes that between 1987, when the phrase was given its official boost in *Our Common Future,* and 1996 more than 300 different definitions for sustainability and sustainable development were identified. This number is likely to have increased by now. The expanse of usage and application of the concept is boundless and keeps expanding, making it somehow problematic to hold up a single definition.

Like justice and democracy, sustainable development is often dismissed as a *contestable concept* whose goals most people support, but disagree on what exactly they mean, or how to achieve them. Such disagreements have never served as reasons to dismiss them as worthless, neither have they stopped people from pursuing them. Dressner's description of a "linguistic confusion" may be a fair assessment in view of the fact that the different language forms used in creating different meanings only succeed in

creating more confusion rather than clarity. In spite of all the confusions—linguistic, conceptual, and even perceptual, the importance of the concept has never been lost. According to Adams (2006), the idea of sustainable development continues to gain widespread acceptance precisely because of it looseness and elasticity. Environmentalists, governments, economic and political planners, and business people use 'sustainability' or sustainable development to express very diverse visions of how economy and environment should be managed. The diversity in usage and interpretation, if anything at all, is highlighting the truth and realities of our time and the more people disagree, the more we agree that there is a global crisis—*our unsustainable present.*

What is needed, perhaps, is an elementary understanding of the concept of sustainable development, an understanding that could easily be derived from the awareness and knowledge of the dynamics of the ecological and cultural crisis that have now become commonplace. From this, the interrelationships that exist between systems and structures and among the varied problems of our global community could be well appreciated to begin a process of exploring ways of preventing them. The differences in view points, as far as meaning and application are concerned, may not necessarily make them irreconcilably divergent. What is important, according to Orr (1992) is a middle ground, and that is why and where education could possibly play a role. Orr writes that, "These two perspectives are partly complementary, but their practitioners tend to have very different views…" (p. 24). It is with the hope of synthesizing these seemingly divergent, but complementary positions that sustainable development has become a global project, which is being pursued through an international educational drive.

Education and Sustainable Development

As the discourse of sustainable development or sustainability begins to gain roots both in the political and social arenas, it has also become clear that people need to know and understand its full implications in order to be able to take responsible actions around issues of environment, economics, and social justice. This, therefore, makes sustainable development an educational issue (Fein, 1995), one whose cause must be championed by schools and educational systems through innovation in teaching and learning. The rhetoric aside, the significance of the concept and the urgency it requires in reversing our unsustainable present is unquestionable, yet not many people recognize this need. In fact, most schools continue to educate "the young as if there were no planetary emergency" (Orr, 2004, p. 27). The ability of current educational systems to expose the prevailing truths of our time and to lead the charge for transformation remains doubtful. Formal educational systems, especially in the United States, have been shaped by the language, values, and practices of the so- called 'free-market' and competitiveness-at-all costs economy (Porritt, 1996), and therefore appear incapable of engaging in discourses that are based on truth and current realities.

Corporate Values, Schooling, and Sustainable Development

The need for the school to serve as a "sorting machine to separate and train human resources to meet the demands of the labor market" (Spring 1998, p. ix), and to ensure industrial efficiency has resulted in what is now described as the corporate model of schooling. The current trend is for school systems to adapt corporate management principles of accountability, standardization, competitiveness, and to consciously educate

students to fill the workforce needs of global corporations. The goal of education is to serve the economic system by training "a workforce that does not revolt against the existing economic system" (Spring 1998, p. 44).Training in the form of schooling, therefore, comes with an ideological control, one that suits capitalists' desires of profit-making and exploitation of resources for market gains. By emphasizing innovation, economic growth and competition at all costs, students are systematically imbued with corporate values, which eventually succeed in diminishing their own personal, social, ethical, and moral options or values. Interestingly, such dominance of corporate values, language and practices in schools are sometimes explained, and defended within the broader quest of sustainable development. This is because, under the new flagship programs of *Corporate Social Responsibility,* businesses form alliances within the social sector, including schools—to do 'good' and to earn their social license to operate. Such activities vary in nature, and are always connected, somehow, to the quest for sustainable development.

My desire here is not to be overly critical of the roles corporations and businesses play in schools and educational systems. School-Community or Business collaborations are essential as there are numerous evidences to suggest their positive impacts on the teaching and learning process (Sanders, 2006; Fitzgerald, 1997; Bucy, 1990). However; it is important to raise critical questions concerning such associations, and the real implication of educating for sustainable development, especially in Western industrialized nations where capitalists' values and aspirations are at variance with the ideals of sustainable development. Clearly, corporate aims of competition and economic growth contradict the ideals of sustainability, which are natural resource conservation and

intergenerational equity. Within the current climate of schooling, at least in the United States, a great deal of emphasis is placed on students' competitiveness on the world economic stage, and this, of course, is a major incentive for businesses to influence what goes on in schools.

The troubling aspect of this tendency of business involvement in schools is that it ignores some moral and ethical implications. Too much emphasis is placed on competition, profits, and wealth accumulation. In fact, the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) now has Family Days, and organizes sessions on "Stocks Kids May Like" exclusively for parents and their children. For the NYSE, this is good business which sets its eyes far into the next generation of future investors. This is done at the expense of other key skills and knowledge forms that are essential for the growth and development of children as future leaders, not only of business, but also society and the environment. In such an instance where children are prematurely exposed to wealth accumulation, what is seen as business or investment education for children totally ignores the "value of good communities or the human costs of narrow destructive economic rationality that valued efficiency and economic abstractions above people and community" (Lynd, 1982). The question then becomes what roles will children play in the future sustenance of our fragile planet? What is education for sustainable development all about, and what roles should formal and non-formal systems of education play?

Education for Sustainable Development: What Does it Mean?

According to UNESCO's (2004) Draft Implementation Scheme for the Decade (2005-2014), ESD concerns itself with three key areas of sustainable development:

- Society: an understanding of social institutions and their role in change and development, as well as the democratic and participatory systems which give opportunity for the expression of opinion, the selection of governments, the forging of consensus and the resolution of differences.

- Environment: awareness of the resources and the fragility of the physical environment and the effects on it of human activity and decisions, with a commitment to factoring environmental concerns into social and economic policy development.

- Economy: a sensitivity to the limits and potential of economic growth and their impact on society and on the environment, with a commitment to assess personal and societal levels of consumption out of concern for the environment and social justice.

With the launch of the Decade, it is now clear that ESD has established itself as an educational movement, which is increasingly gaining grounds in educational policy discussions around the world. Having emerged out of the discourse and politics of global environmentalism, the environment remains central within ESD discourse; however, the broader application and implication of the concept of sustainable development necessarily expands the focus of ESD. There have been various discussions on the relationship between environmental education (EE) and ESD; Tilbury (1995) asks whether ESD is the next step in the development of environmental education, or whether it represents a fusion of EE and development education (DE). Others, including Sterling (1996) have wondered if it is a convergence of all those 'adjectival educations' oriented

towards social change—citizenship, peace, health, political, human rights, multicultural, futures, etc.

These are all legitimate concerns, but one fact remains certain: at the end of the 1980's and the start of the 1990s, a new vision of education was taking shape, it was a vision borne out of the conceptual and pedagogical narrowness of what was then known as environmental education. Sobel (2004) observed that "Many educators are ready to move beyond environmental education, feeling that the term is too narrow and carries too much baggage" (p. 8). The general belief was that by employing certain pedagogical and didactical approaches, environmental education became a discipline that only succeeded, more or less, in reproducing certain aspects of society without equipping learners to develop innovative ideas to transform society (Rest, 2002). It preoccupied itself with pessimistic and alarmist predictions: rainforest destruction, ozone layer depletion, species extinction etc, compelling some to see it merely as 'catastrophe education.'

ESD, EE, and other Parallel Traditions

Education for sustainable development then emerged as the new vision for education; however, no matter how ESD is perceived, there is no doubt that it maintains a strong foundational relationship with environmental education and other parallel traditions that cannot be over-looked. Traditions such as Place-BaseD Education (PBE), Community-Focused Learning (CFL), Environmental Education (EE), Citizenship Education (CE), and many others, all share a common perspective that unites theory and experience (practice), and they all bring valuable resources to teaching and learning. They may have their unique histories, advocates, and practitioners, however, they share a

common aim of helping to reconnect living and learning by harnessing the natural interests of learners in where and how they live. A key concern, therefore, is to focus on local places and communities, and to get learners to see these places as valuable resources for learning and action. Place-based education is therefore an appropriate description for almost all these different traditions.

As Gruenewald (2003) indicated, the practices and purposes of place-based education "can be connected to experiential learning, contextual learning, problem-based learning, constructivism, outdoor education, indigenous education, environmental and ecological education, bioregional education, democratic education, multi-cultural education… (p. 3).These are all action-based approaches in the Deweyian tradition, and their core philosophies are premised on the deep and intimate knowledge of local places, and sensitivity to broader ecological and social issues (Lane-Zucker, 2004). The guiding belief is that, solutions to many of the ecological, economic, and social problems of the world are inter-connected, and solutions require approaches that encourage the utilization of the cultural, human, and natural resources of particular local places and regions. If there was need for an overarching name that describes all these traditions, then ESD has emerged to serve that need.

ESD: What is the Scope?

Many of the debates about the scope and nature of ESD have drawn comparison between ESD and EE, and understandably so. The main difference is that the focus of ESD goes beyond the traditional conceptualization of EE, which of course emerged out of the growing awareness of environmental crisis and the need for action. EE was

notoriously becoming preoccupied with nature preservation and conservation, nature watching, community cleaning, and tree planting. In fact, in some instances EE had become almost synonymous to tree planting. ESD then emerged to make these preoccupations more meaningful by bringing diverse themes such as poverty, rural development, gender equality, peace, human security, biodiversity, health, wasteful consumption and many others together. The role of education was therefore not seen as an end in itself, but a means to an end. In doing so, the principles of life-long and life-wide learning are emphasized to underscore the need for an active learning society that must strive to know and understand the complexity of the relationships that underlie these diverse themes.

Having emerged out of the concept of sustainable development—ecological health and social justice—the essence of ESD is to shape ethical values by providing humankind with the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills and ability to make informed and ethical choices, and to be aware of their individual and social responsibilities towards the preservation and enhancement of the 'biotic community.' Even more importantly, ESD aims at increasing people's capacities to transform their visions of society into realities by actively participating in the decision-making processes in their communities. Orr (1992) describes it as "connective education," one that has the capacity to integrate disciplines and to challenge learners to make those much needed connections between what is learned in schools and in real life. UNESCO (2002) defines ESD as "an emerging but dynamic concept that encompasses a new vision of education that seeks to empower people of all ages to resume responsibility of creating a sustainable future" (p. 7). In my view, ESD is fundamentally about values; diversity, knowledge,

behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, lifestyles, world views, etc. It focuses on helping individuals and whole communities to understand the worlds in which they live, from the local to the global, and to address the complex interconnectedness of life's different aspects.

As the growing worldwide cultural and ecological crisis becomes more apparent, many educators acknowledge that our current educational practices have contributed to the problems we face. Education, therefore, must be made the subject of change. Orr (2004) talks about the problems *of* education as opposed to the problems *in* education, he attributes many of the problems of education to the fact that " Schools, colleges, and universities have been uncritically accepting of, and sometimes beholden to, larger economic and political forces…"(p. xiii). Prior to this, Bowers (1997) had expressed similar concerns about "the intellectual and moral double binds in what is being taught in our public schools and universities" (p. 2), and how public school teachers and even university professors fail to recognize how modern values and behavioral patterns are connected to the ecological crisis of our time. In the face of these challenges, and honest acknowledgements of the complicity of our current forms of education, it is only by reexamining our current educational practices and philosophies, and reorienting them towards sustainability, that we can realize our preferred futures.

Key Characteristics of ESD

As I have already indicated, education for sustainable development *encompasses* environmental education by setting it in the broader context of socio-cultural issues of equity, poverty, democracy and quality of life. On this basis, education for sustainable development must be:

- Interdisciplinary and holistic—Learning, especially in formal situations must be embedded in the whole curriculum by consciously making creative connections between different subjects by showing how life, as represented in these subjects have different but inter-connected parts.

  - Values-driven—It is important that assumed norms, principles, and shared values of groups, communities and regions are made explicit in the learning processes, and are critically examined, applied, and tested in ways that demonstrate how they underpin, or undermine the principles of sustainable development.

  - Community-Focused and Problem-Based—Learning processes must aim to address verifiable local community issues and problems. Such issues must be diverse enough to reflect the broader cultural, ecological, social, economic, and political contexts, and should necessarily aim at imbuing in learners, critical-thinking, action-oriented and problem-solving skills. These approaches must lead to a surge in confidence in exploring and addressing the dilemmas and challenges of sustainable development as they pertain in communities.

  - Locally relevant and globally related—Learning should first aim at addressing local issues and needs, but must make an effort to show the relationships between the local and global. Issues of global nature must be given a local focus using the common language(s) of learners or the local community. Concepts and principles of sustainable development must be carefully expressed in relevant local languages to reflect the socio-cultural and linguistic variations in the expression and interpretation of concepts.

▪ Participatory, democratic and experiential—Both learners and facilitators of the

learning process must have mutual respect for each other and should engage in

open and equal exchanges that lead to the creation and recreation of knowledge.

Knowledge once created must be applied in context to test and verify its

validity.

Why the Discourse Needs Attention

As the Decade unfolds and as the ESD discourse evolves, there is no doubt that its

success as an international educational enterprise will depend on the levels of awareness,

knowledge, understanding, commitment, and passion on the part of teachers and

educators both in formal and non-formal education systems. This will, however, not

happen if conscious efforts are not made to engage teachers, educators, and civil society

in debates and conversations on the subject of sustainable development. It is precisely

because of this that ESD is described as being life-wide and life-long, its interdisciplinary

and multi-sectoral nature require that different learning and action partnerships are

formed to facilitate a coordinated effort. The complexity of such a learning project and

the need for full political commitment and leadership, is perhaps, why some observers

(Porritt, 1996; Jucker, 2002) see sustainable development as a political challenge, and

one that makes it imperative for politicians in all countries to muster the necessary

political courage and moral convictions to make it a subject of national priority.

Currently in the United States, the lack of political affirmation of the concept of

sustainable development in many ways explains the disturbing silence and ignorance on

both the concept of sustainable development and the Decade in schools and the wider

society. As the world's biggest economy, with an equally big contribution to the world's environmental problems, it will be disingenuous, at least, on the part of the United States to remain silent on this very important subject. The need for all countries to pay attention to the Decade and the discourse of ESD is not simply a matter of responding to an international call, but a way of ensuring that learning and action efforts around the world are coordinated and localized over the agreed period. Such an approach will provide a rare opportunity for the international community to take stock of our situations at the end date (2015), and to assess and establish how far we have come, and what else needs to be done. Also, even though it is a global campaign, the Decade provides the opportunity for individual countries and their communities to carefully reflect on their current situations and to explore what educational approaches will be appropriate to address these social and environmental problems. In short, in spite of its *globalness,* the Decade provides the opportunity for educational and social revival in all communities at the local level.

In many ways the Decade is an awakener; its essence opens our eyes and minds to current challenges and realities and the need for action. It offers an opportunity for momentum building towards a universal recognition and acceptance of the need to rethink educational approaches for sustainable development. Undoubtedly, the ESD discourse has the capacity to influence contemporary educational thinking and practice if it is given the desired attention. This attention must not be seen as one that is forced on countries and their communities by international agreements, but one that has become imperative because of our current conditions. It is my hope that by offering the following recommendations for action and dialogue, different communities around the world can

begin the process of responding to the many educational challenges of sustainability and sustainable development.

- Under the momentum provided by the Decade, countries and their communities at the local levels must organize local level awareness campaigns and conferences to brainstorm current conditions, how they have come about, and how they can be addressed.

- Schools, educational systems, civil society leaders, politicians, and businesses must form authentic learning and action partnerships with a view to critically examining existing knowledge forms, especially those provided by school curricula and the media to ascertain what is included, excluded, marginalized, and more importantly, what purposes different knowledge forms should serve in the advancement of communities towards sustainability.

- The current culture of 'Bottom line' and 'investment' education focusing on economic efficiency and neolibralism, especially as it pertains in Western industrialized societies must be reconsidered to expose and rectify the destructive impacts of narrow and selfish economic rationalities that value profitable outcomes above people, places, and the ecological mechanism of the biosphere.

- Processes of learning, both in formal and non-formal settings must be reexamined to underscore the fact that how learning occurs is as important as the content of what is learned. Learners in all communities, both privileged and underprivileged must be given the chance to reconnect with nature, local and distant places, and to understand what is required, as well as their own roles and responsibilities in the quest for global sustainability.

ESD: Tensions and Conceptual Confusions

Having sung all the praises of ESD, it is also important to point out that in spite of the relevance of ESD to our current challenges, it comes with its own tensions and problems. The most obvious tension is its place within formal educational systems and how teachers and educators will receive it. Most school teachers complain about an already crowded curriculum, and the heavy teaching loads they carry. It becomes somehow problematic to ask schools and their teachers to take on additional responsibilities. Coupled with this is the question of designation and identity within the school curriculum, especially when it remains unclear whether ESD qualifies as a separate subject, or should adopt and maintain a cross-curricular approach. There are other questions on where and how teachers should be prepared to facilitate its institutionalization, while some think that it should begin as an in-service training program for teachers, others believe it should bring about systemic changes in pre-service teacher training.

Also, apart from the discomfort that it creates among some environmental educators (Jickling, 2005; Gomez, 2005; Caretea, 2005), with regard to its apparent subsuming of environmental education, its instrumentalist and deterministic posture also causes some concern. The idea of education for sustainable development creates the impression that the only meaningful answer to our growing worldwide challenges is a pedagogical response, and that, just by altering educational practices, global sustainability will readily fall in our lap (Jucker, 2002). This is a highly idealistic notion that ignores other contributory factors such as political and economic reasoning that are not necessarily educational in their nature. These are all real concerns that need to be

addressed to move this agenda forward, especially now that there is an international Decade devoted specifically to educating for sustainable development.

The issue of local relevance with regard to meaning and application is, perhaps, one problem that stands in the way of the concept ever becoming a 'metafix' that will unite humanity in the quest for a sustainable world community. Local relevancy and cultural specificity have the tendency of justifying narrow anthropocentric views on what form education for sustainable development should take in different cultures. For instance, in the United States where the discourse of sustainability is marginalized in mainstream debates for political expediency, local relevancy provides enough reason for defense as capitalism and economic growth imperatives could easily be paraded and defended as national and cultural priorities. In fact, the economic cost of reducing green house emissions is one reason given for United State's reluctance to sign the Kyoto treaty. In this regard, what is relevant or important to the state is prioritized with a nationally-relevant explanation. Contradicting this call for locally-relevant and community-focused approaches is the *globalness* of the whole project of educating for global sustainability, a project which is now being directed by the United Nations sanctioned Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

For some, it is a globalizing agenda and "Regardless of one's predilections, the forces of globalization will influence educational decisions" (Jicklings 2005, p. 252). Within the 'globalizing' tendency are issues of power, privilege and geo-politics. Who decides on what sustainable development is, whose voices are heard and unheard in the debates, what are the standards and who determines them? Again, as an African, these questions make me wonder what sustainable development should mean to Africans if for

generations they have lived peacefully with and on nature without ever threatening the

sustaining capacities of the earth's carrying systems. Dei (1993) was right in saying that,

> It is immoral and incomprehensible from the standpoint of rural peoples in
>
> Africa for anyone to define and articulate a 'sustainable development' agenda
>
> in terms relevant to the world capitalist economy and the associated
>
> globalization processes at the same time that the daily needs of these people
>
> are not being met. (pp. 97-98)

The question is, whose future matters most and why does the world now care? Implicit in

the answers to these questions are geo-political and hegemonic tendencies, what Sauvé et

al (2005) refer to as a "'new' globalized frame of reference" (p. 272). My point,

therefore, is, when issues of environmental degradation, as caused mainly by Western

unsustainable lifestyles became evident, and threatening to the survival base of western

societies, it suddenly became a global problem that needed a global response. This

constitutes one dimension of global environmental politics, what I describe as a *global*

monologue.

Lastly, the different contestations of the concept of sustainable development, from

the different interest groups—environmentalists, economists, politicians, etc—have

somehow impacted the credibility of the concept in some circles, and raise issues on how

an educational philosophy or strategy could be derived from a contested concept. This is

a legitimate concern, but not one that suggests the uselessness of education within the

concept, in fact, it is rather the opposite; education has the capacity to help find the much

needed middle ground. The concept is only contestable as I have already indicated, and

the different debates and arguments have an educational imperative—an opportunity for

social, ecological, and economic enlightenment. Notwithstanding these different tensions and uncertainties, the argument for a global stocktaking accompanied by a conscious reorientation of educational processes on a global scale has never been more compelling. This, perhaps, is the reason why we can embrace the 'globalness' of the project while at the same time we focus on how to live well in our local places. This is what the Decade is about, it is overwhelmingly global in nature, but it calls for locally-specific and relevant actions.

Conclusion

Education for sustainable development has emerged out of global environmental politics, and holds tremendous potential to shape educational thinking and practice in all societies if given the needed attention. With talks and awareness of global environmental problems—climate change and global warming—growing, the role of education will always be central in global environmental politics. Concern for the natural environment and its impact on the social condition is gradually regaining its place in contemporary political discourse, as politicians, economists, and environmentalists all strive to bring the environment into the forefront of policy debates. Whatever changes are hoped for will, however, not happen if people do not have a clear sense of what is at stake and what the expectations are in terms of action. In the end, it becomes the work of education and awareness creation, and that is yet another reason the Decade deserves attention.

Education remains humanity's best hope for sustainability, but only when it is employed as a tool to lead and direct our actions rather than as a last minute instrument to clean up our mess. ESD, therefore, provides that clarion call to redirect the world's

attention to how the quest for global sustainability can be transformed into a life-long and life-wide learning quest. The Decade leads that call and provides the avenue for a united front for this very important endeavor. As an African educator with an international perspective on issues of environment and development, my vision is to see a world awakened from our sleep; the sleep of selfish and narrow conceptualization of what progress or development means. These conceptualizations are wrongly informed by capitalists' discourses and ideologies of endless frontiers and bountifulness as far as resource and wealth accumulation are concerned.

Worrying accounts of the current human condition on the planet are suggestive that the time has come for humanity to rethink and redefine our roles and places in the world. Education for sustainable development provides the necessary pedagogical resources for that exercise. It is my hope too that as the world unites to pursue the sustainability quest, the Decade, as it unfolds will foreground issues of otherness, diversity, local, global, to help people in different places to understand how diverse the world is, but also, how united we are in our destinies. Responsibility to positively influence our destinies therefore rests with all humanity, and the challenge is how we can collectively respond. ESD and the Decade provide some answers, they may not be all that the world requires in changing our destinies, but they surely provide an avenue through which all other avenues could be explored.

References

Adams, W.M. (2006). *The future of sustainability: Rethinking Environment and development in the twenty-first century.* Geneva: IUCN.

Boulding, K. (1966). The economics of the coming spaceship earth, In H. Jarrett (Eds.) *Environmental quality in a growing economy*. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press.

Bowers, C. A. (1997). The culture of denial: *Why the environmental movement needs a strategy for reforming universities and public schools*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Bucy, H. (1990). *School-community-business partnerships: Building foundations for dropout prevention*. Clemson, SC: National Dropout Prevention Center.

Carson, R. (1962). *Silent Spring*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Cartea, P. A. M. (2005). In praise of environmental education, *Policy Futures in Education*, 3*(3),* 284-295.

Dei, J. S. (1993). Sustainable development in the African context: Revisiting some theoretical and methodological issues. *African Development*, 18(2), 97-110.

Dobson, A. (1996). Environment sustainabilities: An analysis and a typology. *Environmental Politics*, 5(3), 401-428.

Dresner, S. (2003). *The principles of sustainability*. London, England: Earthscan.

Ehrlich, P. (1968). *The population bomb*, New York: Ballantine.

Fein, J. (1995). Teaching for a sustainable world: The environmental and development education project for teacher education. *Environmental Education Research*, *1(1),* 21-33.

Fitzgerald, J. (1997). Linking school-to-work programs to community economic development in urban schools. *Urban Education*, 32(4), 489-511.

Giroux, H. and McClaren, P. (1989). Teacher education and the politics of engagement. *Harvard Educational Review*, *56 (3),* 213-38.

Gomez, J. A. C. (2005). In the name of environmental education: words and things in the complex territory of education—environment—development relations. *Policy Futures in Education*, *3(3)*, 260- 270.

Gruenewald, D. A. (2003).The best of both worlds: Critical pedagogy of place. *Educational   Researcher, 32(4),* 3-12.

Huckle, J. (1996). Realizing sustainability in changing times, In J. Huckle and S. Sterling (Eds.) *Education for Sustainability*, (pp. 3-17). London: Earthscan.

Irwin, A. (2001). *Sociology and environment*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publications.

Jickling, B. (2005). Sustainable development in a globalizing world: A few cautions. *Policy Futures in Education*, *3(3)*, 251-259.

Jucker, R. (2002). "Sustainability?" Never heard of it!" Some basics we should not ignore when engaging in education for sustainability. *International Journal of Higher Education and Sustainability*, 3(1), 8-18.

Krasny, C. (2006). Prophetic voices: Three books to encourage us to listen beyond historical silence. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 36 (1), 27-36.

Lane-Zucker, L. (2004). Foreword. In *Place-based education: Connecting classrooms and communities,* Great Barrington, MA: Orion Society.

O'Riordan, T. (1988). The politics of sustainability. In R. K. Turner (Ed.) *Sustainable Environmental Management: Principles and Practice.* London: Belhaven.

Orr, D.W. (1992). *Ecological literacy: Education and the transition to a postmodern world*. Albany, New York: State University of New York.

Orr, D. W. (2004). *Earth in mind: On education, environment and the human prospect.* Washington, DC: Island Press.

Porritt, J. (1996). Foreword. In J. Huckle & S. Sterling (Eds.) *Education for sustainability,* London: Eearthscan.

Razee, A. (2002). *The rhetorics of sustainable development and conservation: A comparison of two internal tensions*, Paper presented at the National Communication Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, November.

Rest, A. (2002). From "environmental education" to "education for sustainable development"- The shift of a Paradigm. *Environmental Policy and Law*, *32(2*), 79-85.

Sanders, M. G. (2006). *Building-school community partnerships: Collaborations for Success.* Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Sitraz, D. (1993). (Ed.) *Agenda 21: The earth summit strategy to save our planet.* Boulder: Earthpress.

Sobel, D. (2004). *Place-based education: Connecting classrooms and communities*. Great Barrington, MA: Orion Society.

Spring, J. (1998). *Education and the rise of the global economy*. London, England: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Sterling, S. (1996). Education in change. In J. Huckle and S. Sterling (Eds.) *Education for Sustainability*, (pp. 18-39). London: Earthscan.

St. Julien J. (1992). *Explaining learning: The research trajectory of situated cognition and the implication of connectionism*. Paper presented at AERA meeting, San Francisco, California, April.

Suave, L., Brunelle, R., Berryman, T. (2005). Influence of the globalized and globalizing sustainable development framework on national policies related to environmental education. *Policy Futures in Education*, *3(3)* 271-283.

Tilbury, D. (1995). Environmental education for sustainability: Defining the new focus of environmental education in the 1990s. *Environmental Education Research*, 1(2).

UNESCO (2002). *Education for sustainability, from Rio to Johannesburg: Lessons learned from a decade of commitment*. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO (2004). *United nations decade for education for sustainable development: Draft international implementation scheme*. Paris: UNESCO.

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992) *Agenda 21*, Albany, NY: State University Press.

World Commission on Environment and Development (1987). *Our common future*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Chapter Three

Education for Sustainable Development: A Call for a New Learning Partnership

As the discourse of sustainable development or sustainability begins to gain roots, both in the political and social arenas, it has become clear that people need to know and understand its full implications in order to be able to take the necessary actions around issues of environment, economics, and social justice. This has, therefore, made sustainable development an educational issue (Fein, 1995; Rest, 2002; UNCED, 1992), one whose cause must be championed by all knowledge-related institutions, such as schools, businesses, and civil society. The significance of the concept and the urgency it requires in reversing our unsustainable present—as epitomized in climate change, issues of health, poverty, violent conflicts, inequality between and within nations—is unquestionable, yet few people seem to recognize this need.

Most schools continue to educate "the young as if there were no planetary emergency" (Orr, 2004, p. 27), and all that matters in our world today is educating to serve the growth agenda. The ability of current educational systems to expose the prevailing truths and untruths of our time and to lead the charge for genuine transformation remains doubtful. Formal educational systems, especially in the United States and other Western industrialized countries, continue to be shaped by the language, values, and practices of the so- called 'free-market' and competitiveness-at-all costs economy (Apple, 2006; Gruenewald & Manteaw, 2007; Hursh, 2007). Schools, in the process, have become largely incapable of engaging in discourses that challenge the status quo, or to explore emancipatory possibilities.

This situation has been exacerbated by the growing interests of businesses in schools to control and direct what is taught or not taught. Business involvement in schools is not new; what is new, however, is the increased emphasis on certain knowledge forms at the expense of others. Bowers (1997) draws a distinction between 'high-status' and 'low status' knowledge. The former, he says, is based on the modern myths that legitimize technological progress above 'low-status,' the latter, which he believes has the capacity to contribute to viable community and human/nature relationships. In Bowers' view, what is deemed as 'low status' knowledge is that which is believed to make no direct contribution to economic and technological progress. For instance, ecological, cultural, and human-centered issues are either considered inhibitive or irrelevant to the growth agenda by capitalists. Any knowledge that fails to promote or add to economic growth agenda is 'low status.'

The emphasis on technical and economic rationalities has increased the penchant for specialization in schools while narrowing the scope of knowledge required to attain expert status. As a result, other vital components of learning, such as community knowledge and experience, are often blatantly ignored in school learning processes. Again, Bowers (1997) sees a relationship between the conduct of formal schooling and our current cultural crisis contending that, "ecologically problematic cultural patterns are encoded and thus reproduced through the language processes mediated by public school teachers and university professors" (p. viii). Ironically, such blatant disregard for other knowledge forms in the learning process is happening at a time when the concept of sustainable development has emerged onto the global scene as a serious educational concern. Education for sustainable development (ESD) has emerged out of this need, and

the United Nations, led by UNESCO, has launched an International Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

In this paper, therefore, my desire is to discuss ESD as an emergent educational discourse by exploring the possibility of a multi-sector learning and action partnership between schools and businesses. My hope is to locate this possibility in what I will later describe as the new epistemic challenge as a way of establishing the discourse's capacity to influence contemporary educational thinking and practice. First, I will examine the discourse's historical emergence and contemporary significance. Secondly, I will discuss the pedagogical and disciplinary implication and application of the ESD discourse within the broader concept of sustainable development. In effect, I ask two questions: what is the role of education in sustainable development? How can it influence changes in contemporary educational practice? I will conclude with a discussion of emerging business practices in education with a view to laying out a vision for businesses to participate in ESD in schools and communities.

I have, for the purpose of highlighting the power and control of the United States as a global leader, focused on her current educational policy—No Child Left Behind (NCLB). This is to point out that, as a world leader, her actions and inactions, as far as ESD is concerned, have far-reaching global policy and cultural ramifications. I do so with the conviction that, if the United States embraces the ideals of ESD, and gathers the necessary political will to expand the scope and philosophies of her educational thinking and practice, there is the possibility of a snowball effect among the rest of the world. Although I embrace a combination of knowledge-related institutions such as schools, media, civil society, governments, etc., for this study, I am particularly interested in the

roles businesses and corporations play in education, and how such roles could be made meaningful within ESD thinking and practice. My proposition for multi-sector learning and action for sustainable development is, therefore, one that is business-led.

ESD as an Emergent Educational Discourse

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has emerged out of the global environment and development debates as a new vision of education. ESD has the capacity to provide opportunities for all humans to benefit from learning the values, knowledge, and skills that are critical for the creation of sustainable societies (UNESCO, 2002). This new vision of education possesses enormous potential to help humanity to transform our unsustainable present; however, conceptual and linguistic confusions inherent in the root concept of sustainable development have made it problematic to articulate a convincing philosophy of ESD. As a result, the beleaguering question has been: how can a contested concept, one that resists a precise definition, generate a coherent practice of education? While that question remains unanswered, the ESD discourse continues to grow in popularity, requiring that its theoretical and pedagogical implications are clarified and articulated within schools and among the general public to underscore its importance as an educational philosophy that needs more development. The timing of the emergence of the discourse is also significant; this is the period that has seen aggressive neolibral educational policies that favor competition and the promotion of capitalist ideals in schools. It is such contradictory, yet interesting, convergence that informs my desire to focus and analyze the discourses of ESD and neolibral educational

policies, which bring businesses into schools. In the end, my hope is to create a vision for a common ground to serve a common purpose.

Sustainability and sustainable development are interchangeably used in this paper to imply the same notions. As I have indicated, ESD has its foundations in the concept of sustainable development, thus making it necessary that any attempt to understand the discourse must begin with an understanding of the roots of the concept. When fears of a potential global environmental collapse began to grow as a result of unceasing human quest for progress (development), a sense of panic and urgency for action emerged. This fear was responded to with a series of international conferences and commissions that called for global concerted actions that would ensure a sensible balance between human progress and the carrying capacity of the earth's ecosystems. One of such commission, sponsored by the United Nations in 1983, was the Brundtland Commission whose report, *Our Common Future, w*as published in 1987.

The report acknowledged the growing understanding of the interconnectedness of the world's numerous problems. For instance, issues of poverty, health, violent conflicts, pollution, and depletion of natural resources, wasteful consumption patterns, and economic growth were described as very closely related. The Commission's report also reflected consensus on a key point: solutions to any of these problems can not be achieved without an equal consideration of the others. A new philosophy of development became inevitable, a philosophy that recognizes the interrelatedness of local/ global problems and calls for new ways of thinking and living in a world, which Commission members perceive as one "human family." This new development philosophy was therefore named as *Sustainable Development,* defined as development that "meets the

needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland Commission, 1987, p. 43).

Following the Brundtland Report, the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED), famously referred to as the *Earth Summit*, took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It served as yet another opportunity for the international community to address seriously the environmental and development needs of the world, and to debate critically the meaning of *sustainable development*. In the end, the conference adapted *Agenda 21[1]*, promoted as an agenda for the 21st Century, and emphasizing the role of education in pursuing sustainable development. It focused on the processes of orienting and reorienting education in order to foster values and attitudes that respect the environment. This conference marked a significant milestone in global environmental debates as it was the first time when conscious efforts were made to link education and sustainable development together, and to make education an instrument for its achievement. It is significant also to point out that this conference re-signified the role and place of education in both the environmental and sustainable development discourses.

Ten years after the Rio summit, another World Summit on Sustainable Development took place in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002. Participants revisited the issue of the reorientation of education for sustainable development; this time, the vision of sustainable development was broadened to encompass social justice and the fight against global poverty, and crisis such as AIDS. These discussions also brought to the fore the need for partnership and multi-sectoral collaborations for sustainable

---

[1] Both the *Agenda 21* and *Our Common Future* have faced various contestations from different grassroots organizations. *People's Earth Declaration* and *Who's Common Future?* are sample documents that present counter arguments.

development. Besides expanding the vision of sustainable development, the conference

also reaffirmed the educational objectives of the Millennium Development Goals

(MDGs)[2] and the Dakar Framework for Action (DFA). The International Decade of

Education for Sustainable Development, which is currently running from 2005-2014, was

proposed at the summit.

The launch of the Decade has provided the strongest international signal yet that

education and learning lie at the heart of all approaches to sustainable development.

Countries around the world have begun to take actions to educate their citizens for

sustainable development. However, as these actions begin, critical questions remain

regarding the capability of countries and their education systems to come to terms with

the concept of sustainable development, and to design and manage appropriate learning

approaches that have the capacity of bringing about sustainable changes. Within the

context of the current school language and culture of preparing young people for a

competitive world economic stage, the capitalist language of growth, competition, and

accountability dominates contemporary educational discourse, thereby making the idea of

education for sustainable development problematic, if not contradictory. The reason is,

the much favored *high status* knowledge (Bowers, 2004) currently being promoted in

schools fails to point out to learners that the natural resource base upon which the quest

for economic and technological progress is based, is fragile and limited, and needs to be

tinkered with intelligently. Schooling portrays the world's resources as bountiful and

---

[2] The MDGs are eight goals set by world leaders in 2000 to be achieved by 2015. Collectively, the goals respond to the world's main development challenges. Central among these goals is the goal of universal primary education, which is frequently linked with the Dakar Framework of Action, which is also a collective commitment by world leaders to the achievement of education for all (EFA).

limitless; it is antithetical to the ideals of ESD, which essentially calls for awareness and understanding of the need for a sensible balance in living and action. It becomes imperative, therefore, to bring broad attention to the inherent vision of ESD by clarifying its underlying pedagogical and philosophical assumptions within the context of schooling.

Pedagogical Implications and Disciplinary Integration

Within the current educational context, especially as it pertains in formal settings in Western industrialized countries, there is a growing hegemonic tendency of standard-based and test-focused pedagogies. This approach to teaching and learning, to a large extent, works against the philosophical basis of educating for sustainable development. Teachers are currently under enormous pressures to meet set standards, mostly directed at economic disciplinary and technological efficiencies. Such pressures have the potential to remove all possibilities of freely exploring complementary pedagogical forms that are capable of contributing to sustainable development. The result is that young learners are denied the autonomy of their creative potentials as their efforts are guided and controlled by standards and routines. Slattery (2006) comments:

> While school systems may promote critical thinking skills in the published curriculum…the effect of the emphasis on rote memorization, predetermined solutions to complex problems, canonical hegemony, rigid structural analysis, and standardized testing all contribute to the impairment of a student's ability to meander—like the river—and to create, discover, and respond from a self-reflective perspective. (p. 209)

Similarly, Gruenewald, Smith, and Manteaw (in press) have also argued that current

teaching and learning approaches in schools fail to provide learners with adequate

experiences to explore and understand the complex relationships that exist among

environment, culture, and education. The inadequacies exist because of the current state

of affairs in school curriculums and student learning. Today's standard educational

approaches perpetuate the unquestioned desirability of economic growth, consumerism,

and a passion for individual self-advancement at the expense of community well-being

(Trainer, 1990, p. 170). Gruenewald (2006) refers to it as "government school," learning

characterized by a testing and accountability regime rooted in market ideologies that

define success in narrow economic terms. School success, in most industrialized

societies, is therefore seen more in terms of a continuous rise in power, wealth, prestige,

and a predilection to get ahead of all others.

Current school systems also promote compartmentalization of learning into

subjects and *disciplinary enclaves,* which has created an inclination toward specialization

among learners and their teachers. Berry (2001) describes the effect as a profound failure

of imagination. In other words, it is the failure to think beyond specialized interests,

which of course is a failure of the teaching and learning processes to help learners

explore the natural connections that exist among disciplines and systems. In the end, the

result is the *production* of students who may show exceptional abilities in a particular

subject, but fail rather miserably to demonstrate similar abilities in other areas of

learning. Within the context of ESD, this is problematic as it ignores systemic and cross-

sectoral approaches to learning and action. Systems thinking and cross-disciplinary

learning are underlying philosophies of ESD, which rather sadly, are ignored by current

trends in school learning. This, in my view, provides ample reason to reconsider current learning philosophies and practices, both in schools and in the wider community.

By calling for a new learning partnership, I am proposing multi-sector learning as a kind of social learning that has the capacity to bring different people, institutions, and organizations, particularly in the United States, to participate in the current ESD campaign. ESD challenges current visions of education by calling for pedagogical approaches that recognize that humans are nested in cultural systems, and cultural systems are nested in natural systems (Bowers, 1995). Through a multi-sector approach to learning and action, ESD seeks the dissolution of artificial boundaries that have created, in the words of Orr (2004), "disciplines and sub-disciplines that have become hermetically sealed from life itself" (p. 11). This is by no means a suggestion to consolidate all subjects, disciplines, knowledge forms, and academic departments into one giant designation—ESD. However, much as sound specialized knowledge will forever be of essence, there is also the need for the creative mergence of different disciplines and knowledge forms in ways that allow connection and fluidity that reflect the reality of life. Prigogine (1989) reminds us that the impulse for creative discovery is at its highest when entities have *unblocked* and *uncluttered* connection to the flow of life.

Unlike the current standards-based educational approaches, which focus on narrow specialization and excellence in specific school subjects, ESD seeks to expand the knowledge and action base of learners by bringing diverse subjects or themes together. By bringing diverse themes such as poverty, rural development, community building, gender, equality, peace, human security, biodiversity health, and many others together, ESD emphasizes the interconnectedness of life as well as helping students to make

creative connections about cause and effects. In ESD, therefore, the role of education is not seen as an end in itself, but a means to an end. The principles of life-long learning and life-wide learning are emphasized to underscore the need for an active learning society that must strive to know and understand the complexity of the relationships that exist among life's different aspects. This is very much in contrast to the standards-based approaches, which currently underlie the accountability regimes in schools. The emphasis placed on standards and achievements in specific school subjects are driven by the belief that excellence in certain "high-status" or "economic" subjects are gateways to success, which more often than not is defined in economic terms. Such an approach to educational thinking and practice does not only make students too narrow-minded, but also denies them the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills, and ability to engage in processes that lead to informed, ethical and creative discoveries.

The impulse for creative discovery and systems appreciation underscores ESD as an emergent educational discourse. Fritjod Capra (2002) observed that "we must learn to think systematically—in terms of connectedness, context and processes" (p. 18). Modern educational approaches have failed to take Capra's vision into consideration, and it is an omission that has in many ways contributed to our current social and ecological predicaments. To seriously confront our current realities, there is the need to adopt radical learning approaches that have the capacity to transform our current mindsets and attitudes in ways that will lead us on to different paths of existence. I refer to this as the new epistemic and ontological challenge: to reevaluate our knowledge forms and how we have come to acquire them. Ultimately, the aspiration should be the empowerment of learners at all levels of society to meet this challenge by helping them to understand the

nature of systems and the systems of nature. Such a realization will assist in two ways: by facilitating their understanding of the ecology of knowledge, and in assessing their own places and roles in how systems function.

This will also require that new and innovative pedagogical forms are explored. The centrality of place and the interconnectedness of life require that teaching and learning are grounded in local realities and everyday experiences. Thus, teaching and learning both in formal and non-formal settings could be guided by experience, inquiry and action in learners' locales. The guiding principle for such action-based pedagogies is that, solutions to many of the ecological, economic, and social problems of the world are inter-connected, and they require approaches that encourage the utilization of the cultural, human, and natural resources of particular local places and regions. This vision makes the current global campaign—the International Decade of Education for Sustainable Development—timely and relevant, and requires attention from governments and educational systems around the world.

Multi-Sector Learning: The New Epistemic Challenge

By multi-sector learning for sustainable development, I am calling for conscious learning approaches that take into consideration the current social, economic, and ecological predicaments of our world. Its aim is to help people and institutions understand the complex interconnectedness of life's different aspects. It is a kind of social learning—a collective reflection and action—that, according to Keen, Brown, and Dyball (2005) "occurs among different individuals and groups as they work to improve the management of human and environmental relations" (p. 4). From a social learning

perspective, a multi-sector learning approach to sustainability focuses on how people, institutions, and organizations come together to acquire the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to cope with the ecological, social, political, economic, and cultural needs of our time. In this regard, there is the need for conscious learning efforts that bring different entities together to create and recreate knowledge through processes that critically examine taken-for granted assumptions.

Bowers (1997) affirms this need by pointing out that the current ecological crisis facing the world "raises fundamental questions about the dominant culture's way of knowing, its moral values, and its way of understanding human/nature relationships" (p. 65). Capra (1996) describes this as the "crisis of perception" (p. 4). Wals & Van der Leij (2007) believe this situation will require: "a new kind of thinking inspired and informed by powerful learning processes that simultaneously lead to individual and collaborative action and transformation" (p. 17). The urgency for knowledge integration and collaborative action underscores this new way of thinking. Jucker (2002) sums it up with the following rhetorical questions:

> How come we seriously expect genetic engineers—who might be the worlds best in their field but who know nothing about social causes of hunger and the political, cultural and historical context of poor societies—to solve problems of hunger? How come we expect economists who haven't even heard of the second law of thermodynamics and the fact that our biosphere is a closed, materially non-growing system to develop sensible strategies for our economic behavior? (p. 271)

It is apparent from these questions that in our bids to find solutions to our numerous problems, so much emphasis is placed on expert knowledge and narrow specializations, which more often than not, ignore the need for collaboration and cooperation with other knowledge sources. Norberg-Hodge (2000) expressed similar sentiments: " [in] direct opposition to the trend in mainstream culture toward greater specialization, we need to actively promote the generalist—the one who sees connection and makes links across different disciplines" (p. 189). This is what Orr (1992) describes as "connective education," a broad engagement of learners and actors from different constituencies exploring knowledge development and exchange possibilities.

Such an approach to learning is what is required in our current situation. Even though the language and philosophy of interdisciplinary learning are gradually gaining attention in formal school settings, particularly in higher education, most of the attention remains just rhetoric. Traditionally, colleges and universities are conservative and struggle to move away from their compartmentalized approaches to learning (Anderson, Fitzgerald, and Uhl, 2000). The call for multi-sector learning approaches is, therefore, aimed at addressing this deficiency both in schools and in community learning. It is driven by different factors, which includes competing definitions of sustainable living, multiple perspectives on how to achieve sustainability, and the absence of one clear plan to resolve the problems. Effort towards sustainability must, therefore, be a shared effort with an underlying pedagogical motive. As Wals & Heyman (2004) observed,

> Governments cannot rely on the exclusive use of economic instruments
> and legislation to enforce sustainable living. At the same time, reliance on
> the instrumental use of education, training, and communication to promote

or even force one particular view of "sustainable living" is problematic.

(p. 123)

By bringing different constituencies together to learn and act for a common agenda, the required platform will be created to give meaning to Bohm's (1998) dialogic social learning —learning derived from mutual exchanges placed in the context of collective disposition whereby a "flowing through" can occur (p. 118).

Even though sustainability as a concept seeks to emphasize the interconnectedness of life, and how humanity should maintain an ethical balance among the forces of economics, society, and ecology, there is no doubt that economic imperatives seem to dominate peoples' thinking and everyday social practices. As a result, current discourses on sustainability, particularly in the United States, are focused mainly on economic growth. Economic reasoning has an almost hegemonic influence on peoples' epistemological and ontological positions. To a large extent, this influence operates at the expense of social and ecological considerations. These positions are further strengthened by the pervasiveness and influential roles played by businesses and corporations in schools and almost all aspects of society, what (Orr, 1992) sees as the transformation of individuals into the "[e]conomic man who knows no limits of discipline, or obligation, or satiation which may explain why the growth economy has no logical stopping point" (p. 9). It is important that such roles as played by businesses and corporations are contextualized against the background of current neolibral policies, and critically examined within the thinking of education for sustainable development.

Neolibral Policies and Business Practices in Education

Neolibralism, according to Harvey (2005), is "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by librating individual entrepreneurial freedom and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong property rights, free markets and free trade" (p. 2). This includes private (business) participation in the management of schools. Peters, Marshall, and Fitzsimons (2000) describe this approach as "new managerialism and governementality"—a blend of corporate managerial styles and government technologies of institutional management. The government's role in neolibralism shrinks to that of a regulator as they strive to open up the public sector for private participation. Hursh (2007) comments: "Neolibralsim transforms how we conceptualize the role of government and the relationship between the individual and society" (p. 496). For neolibrals, Apple (2000) concluded that, "there is one form of rationality more powerful than any other: economic rationality" (p. 59), and underpinning this position is a vision of people and students as human capital. The world, Apple says, is seen as intensely competitive economically, and students, as potential future workforce, must be given the necessary skills and dispositions to compete efficiently and effectively.

Even though it may not be explicitly stated in most school reforms programs, current school reforms in the United States and other parts of the world are deeply influenced by neolibral ideals (Apple, 2004; Hursh, 2007; Torres, 2006;). In his recent work *Class, Capital and Education in this Neoliberal/Neoconservative Period,* Hill (2006) describes this tendency as the last stage of the capitalist project, which aims at reshaping public understanding of the purposes of public institutions and apparatuses,

such as schools and universities. He talks about the "Capitalist Plan for Education,"

which he sees as aimed at producing a work force and citizenry and a set of consumers fit

for the capitalists' world. Schools, according to this plan, must serve two overriding

functions: ideological and labor training, which in effect comprises of labor suitability

and ideological compliance through indoctrination.

In this context, Althusser's (1971) concepts of schools as ideological state

apparatuses become instructive. With schools serving as major avenues for ideological

indoctrination, an endless production line is created to turn out consumer citizens and a

work force who are trained to believe that there is no alternative to capitalism, and that

individualism and competition are facts of life (Hill, 2003, 2004; Spring, 2003). In

defense of his No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy, President Bush recently

underscored this "fact of life" reality by contending that the policy is an important way to

make sure America remains competitive in the 21st century. He added:

> We're living in a global world. See, the education system must compete
>
> with the education systems in China and India. If we fail to give our students
>
> the skills necessary to compete in the world of the 21st century, the jobs will
>
> go elsewhere. That's just the fact of life. It's the reality of the world we live
>
> in. And therefore, now is the time for the United States of America to give
>
> our children the skills so that the jobs will stay here. (U.S. Department of
>
> Education, Office of the Press Secretary, 2006).

Such discourses, especially as they come from the president, go a long way in reorienting

public perception and understanding of the purpose of schooling. Here, the public's

expectation of schools is gradually being shifted towards a focused purpose, which in this

case is the need for schools to counter economic threats and dangers posed by countries such as China and India. This again demonstrates how the neolibral discourse of education could be normalized through language and power (Fairclough, 1994; Olsen, Codd, & O'Neill, 2004) to shape public expectations of schools and other public institutions. It is no wonder, therefore, that the United States' competitiveness on the global economic stage is a key organizing factor for the NCLB policy.

NCLB: Ideology as a Social Practice

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy of the United States serves as a particularly evocative example of how ideology, represented in carefully crafted language, translates into social practice (Fairclough, 1994). As a major school reform project, the policy originates in part from the 1983 Presidential Commission on Education report: *A Nation at Risk*. The report disparaged American public schools for shoddy performance, and succeeded in painting a gloomy picture, not only of American public education, but also of the future of America as a competitor on the world economic stage. Assuming a highly patriotic tone, the report noted among other things that:

> Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world. This report is concerned with only one of the many causes and dimensions of the problem, but it is the one that undergrids American prosperity, security, and civility. We report to the American people that while we can take justified pride in what our schools

and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United

States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our

society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens

our very future as a Nation and a people…. We have, in effect been

committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament. (p. 5)

With such a damning report, presented so convincingly, the mechanism for the ordering

and normalizing of the discourse (Fairclough, 1994) of risk, pessimism, and stagnation in

America's progress had been put in place. The next common sense action is to call for

reforms in the public education system.

This process of ordering and normalizing discourse presents another classic

example of the role of discourse in society. As a practice that systematically forms the

objects of which they speak (Foucault, 1972), discourse distorts and infringes on the

possibility of independent thought. The public become psychologically influenced by

such sentiments, which, in the end, succeed in distorting how they perceive aspects of the

world. Power and language, undoubtedly, are at play here (Fairclough, 1994). By

focusing on education and describing it as an important driver of American society, the

Presidential Commission on Education succeeded in elevating the discourse on education

reform, while at the same time, hinting that there are other problems that need to be

addressed. The call for educational "armament" has, true to its description, since

triggered state-mandated testing in U.S. public schools. At the same time, it has also

become clearer that the risk factor, as underscored by the report, was essentially

economic, and the real fear was the prospects of America being left behind in a world

economic order.

In a bid to justify the efficacy of the results-oriented NCLB policy as an antidote to the nation's risk factor, Rod Page, then Secretary of Education of the United States made the following comments in 2000:

> Henry Ford created a world class company, a leader in its industry. More important, Ford would not have survived the competition had it not been for an emphasis on results. We must view education the same way. Good schools do operate like business. They care about outcomes, routinely assess quality, and measure the needs of the children they serve. (p. 3)

This statement is telling; it raises critical questions about the underlying assumptions of the reform process. It also underscores what Kennedy (1994) observed that "[b]usiness is the only foreseeable group with the clout and motivation to advocate, catalyze, participate in, and ultimately bring about educational reform" (p. 15). As to whether this assertion is true, or whether good schools operate like business still remains a question; what is certain, however, is that neolibral economic policies have fast become educational policies too. This is evidenced in the current school language and practices modeled after corporate culture. As Krasny (2006) pointed out:

> Education throughout the Western world has adopted a corporate rhetoric where terms like outcomes-based, targeted groups, tracking systems, performance scales, quality assessment, executive summaries, efficiency studies, standards… and bottom-line define the work of curriculum and pedagogy. (p. 32)

The current NCLB policy as it exists in the public school system in the United States is full of such corporatist language and culture, making it easy for any concerned observer

to wonder if the real essence of the policy is not to prove that good schools operate like business.

Thus, the No Child Left Behind policy presents a compelling vision that attracts a broad appeal. As a top domestic policy of the President, it was passed with overwhelming bipartisan support, and as the then Secretary Spellings, cited in Kim & Sunderman (2005) noted, " Few Americans disagree with the ultimate objective of the No Child Left Behind Act—to eliminate achievement disparities in reading and mathematics by 2013-2014 school year" (p. 10). The discursive and rhetorical powers of this piece of legislation make it difficult to challenge or ignore, and as Gruenewald & Manteaw (2007) observed, "[w]hen the narratives of economic opportunity, global competition, and equity and social justice are conflated in one slick phrase—'no child left behind'—the policy environment and practices behind the rhetoric becomes increasingly difficult to challenge" (p. 175).

Nonetheless, there is evidence, at least from the policy's origins and its strong emphasis on math, science, and reading that, as a policy, it is not so much about not leaving children behind, but more about getting America ahead of all her economic and technological competitors. As I have argued, economic imperatives and neolibral ideals drive contemporary educational reforms. It is a disturbing trend, which reduces the purpose of schooling to narrow economic rationalities that ignore social and ecological imperatives of human and non-human welfare. Such tendencies, as I have indicated, are on the increase all around the world, yet ironically, this contemporary time is also the era that has seen the United Nations, represented by its educational arm, United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), clamoring for educational

philosophies and approaches that have the capacity to liberate the world from its current

unsustainable practices.

In addition, there have been other calls from the World Business Council for

Sustainable Development and the United Nations Global Compact[3], for businesses or

market drivers to play supporting roles in social and environmental transformation.

Education is central to the success of this initiative. As the concept of corporate

citizenship or corporate social responsibility (CSR) begins to establish itself as a business

practice, it is important, also, to explore how CSR activities, particularly as they relate to

education, could be located within the current ESD discourse to maximize its pedagogical

value.

Corporate Social Responsibility and ESD

Expectations about the responsibilities held by businesses and corporations for

the societies in which they operate have changed (Cramer & Loeber, 2007). More than

ever before, public awareness of the impact of corporate activities on the environment

and communities is compelling firms to account not only for their financial bottom lines,

but also for their social and ecological performances. In responding to this trend,

businesses now seek to take up their "social responsibility" in ways that make them more

socially   responsible as well as competitive on the market. Corporate Social

Responsibility (CSR) has, therefore, emerged though as a set of principles and activities

---

[3] World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCD) and the United Nations Global Compact for business are two main organizations purposely put in place to direct and guide the roles of businesses in sustainable development.

that underlies business ethics and culture, but is also used as market and development

tools. As an emergent business practice, different businesses approach CSR differently

depending on what they want to achieve. In the process it has become somewhat difficult

to assign a precise definition to the practice. Several different definitions have, therefore,

emerged: Kivuitu, Yambayamba, and Fox (2005) have contended that "The concept of

corporate social responsibility (CSR) is sometimes used as shorthand for business'

contribution to sustainable development" (p. 1). The World Business Council for

Sustainable Development defined CSR as the "commitment of business to contribute to

sustainable development, working with employees, their families, the local community

and society at large to improve their quality of life" (WBCSD, 2000, p. 10). Against the

background of the different definitions, I rely on the definition of CSR as provided by

Blowfield and Frynas (2005). CRS is:

> An umbrella term for a variety of theories and practices all of which recognize
>
> the following: (a) that companies have a responsibility for their impact on
>
> society and the natural environment, sometimes beyond legal compliance and
>
> the liability of individuals; (b) that companies have a responsibility for the
>
> behavior of others with whom they do business (e.g., within supply chains);
>
> and (c) that business needs to manage its relationship with wider society,
>
> whether for reasons of commercial viability or to add value to society. (p.
>
> 503)

As I have indicated, firms are driven by different considerations to engage in

social investments, and these may include: the desire for competitive advantage;

maintaining a stable working environment; managing external perceptions; and keeping

employees happy (Frynas, 2005)). Increasingly, however, firms are using their CSR

activities to expand their market advantages as well as tools for social development.

While there are areas of compatibility between CSR as a market tool and as a

development tool, both tools are employed to achieve specific aims. CSR as a business

tool is distinct from CSR as a development tool. As a business or market tool, corporate

social investments provide businesses with competitive advantages *vis-à-vis* other

companies. It is an investment, which according Frynas (2005), could find favor with

specific government officials, or bring company managers closer to political decision

makers. This is particularly the case in developing countries where such socially-

responsive activities as performed by companies are looked upon favorably by

governments. They are seen as being complementary to government efforts towards

social development, projects such as poverty alleviation, HIV/AIDS, human capital

development, etc.

In development terms, therefore, CSR continues to gain political and social

currencies, particularly in developing countries. Currently, CSR as a business practice is

perceived as revolutionary in business-society relations, and development organizations

such as the United Nations, the World Bank, as well as some national development

agencies such as the Department for International Development (DFID) in the United

Kingdom have embraced this new relation. By embracing CSR, the hope is to make the

private sector key collaborators in social transformation, especially in situations where

national governments are perceived as falling short of their responsibilities. This explains

its increasing popularity in developing countries and in development thinking and

practice. Thus, even though CSR is seen largely as being a voluntary action taken by

businesses, its increasing popularity is also being interpreted as part of a wider revisiting

of the role of government in development (Blowfield & Frynas, 2005). In a sense, CSR

activities can remind governments of their own roles in social development.

It has therefore become common these days to see a variety of business

partnerships with communities on social and educational development projects (Petkoski,

Jarvis and de la Garza, 2006). These different projects are sometimes described as part of

the global quest for sustainable development (DFID, 1997: WBCSD, 2000), thereby

clarifying business roles in that quest. Such roles have, however, varied and they remain

as varied as the reasons that drive the roles. For some businesses, the need and desire to

have a say in human capital development, particularly in formal school systems, leads to

an increase in businesses involvement in schools. This has led to the formation of

different partnership programs between schools and businesses to pursue this agenda.

Much as these relationships with schools are described as part of corporate social

investment, it is in the nature and purpose of such partnership activities that certain

distinct characteristics of CSR become evident. While most school-business partnership

programs in education, and in this instance in developing countries, focus largely on

issues of poverty, hunger, health, infrastructure provisions, etc., corporate partnerships

with schools in most developed societies focus more on the support and promotion of

certain school subjects.

In the United States in particular, it has become almost pervasive to see big

corporations go into partnership programs with schools to support and promote the

teaching of math and science. The emphasis on math, science, and technological

innovation is a pointer to capitalists' interests and the need for businesses to have a say in

the skill and manpower development of young people to enhance market advantage. The current federal government position in the United States is to promote and support the teaching and learning of math and science to make the country competitive in the world economic stage (Brainard, 2007). This provides businesses and big corporations the impetus to be more responsive to such government initiatives, in the end they set the educational agenda by aligning what is learned in schools to the needs and requirements of business.

Most of these programs as they relate to schools are increasingly being located within the CSR and social development; however, the relation between such partnerships and the current ESD agenda remains unclear. Much as these endeavors are happening, there has not been any conscious effort to align CSR with ESD. The critical question then becomes: If CSR is primarily a business response to social and ecological imperatives of sustainable development, why do CSR activities and practices ignore the very important fact that the quest for sustainable development is a learning quest? That is to say, sustainable development is an educational issue (Fein, 1995) and all efforts aimed at sustainability must highlight its pedagogical importance. Much as CSR continues to develop and expand into educational programs, its pedagogical imperative as far as ecological, social, and economic balance is concerned is unclear or non-existent. Emphasis placed on the promotion of math and science in schools may be considered a learning venture for sustainable development; however, by failing to consider the ecological and community ramifications of scientific and technological innovations, development or human progress is once again defined in narrow techno scientific terms.

Consequently, there are those who see CSR as being nothing but a public relations stint—the tendency to use such public show of responsibility to deflect public criticism on issues of social and ecological injustices in communities in which businesses operate (Adams, 2002; Frynas. 2005; Manteaw, 2007; Newell & Frynas, 2007). Others have described CSR broadly as *creative destruction* to underscore the now pervasive businesses axiom: Doing good to earn the social license to operate. Even though businesses rely on creativity to advance their profit motives, some aspects of creativity come at a great cost. For instance, failure to use educational partnerships to direct the values of future managers towards more sustainable lifestyles and approaches to business could result in unsustainable business practices that could have serious social and ecological implications.

Also, by hiding behind the slogan of "doing good to earn the social license to operate," most businesses use their CSR activities to cover up actual environmental or social impacts. In his work *Capitalism at the Crossroad,* Stuart Hart (2005) takes this debate to another level by pointing out that:

> No amount of *greening* [sic] will save firms from the gales of creative destruction that are likely to ensue in the coming decades. Greening perpetuates the current industry structure; it fosters continuous improvement rather than reinvention of fundamental innovation. Given the velocity of technological change and the growing significance of sustainability, this no longer appears to be a viable strategy: creative destruction appears the key not only to the growth industries of the future, but to corporate survival. (p. 55)

This supports the notion of CSR as a market strategy for business survival. What this means is that the growing popularity of the sustainability revolution has, in a way, compelled businesses to adopt a green identity even though in reality, they might not have green values. This is sometimes referred to as *greenwashing.*

In spite of these views, there is still the potential of CSR, as an emergent business practice, to make significant contributions towards social and ecological transformation (Lodge & Wilson 2006; Porritt, 2006; Prahalad, 2006). Through CSR activities, the transformative powers of capitalism could be utilized in more positive ways, and this could include the possibility of businesses playing leading roles in social learning (Lund-Thumsen, 2007). Thus, CSR could be employed not only as a market advantage strategy, but also and more importantly, as a tool for social pedagogy. By paying more attention to CSR activities, particularly as they relate to schools, and locating them within the current discourse of education for sustainable development, there is the possibility of a conscious reassessment of what is taught (or not taught) in schools. Such an approach could also move CSR activities from being self-serving, unilateral, and a public relations project, to a participatory and knowledge-driven exercise that has the capacity to bring people, institutions, and organizations together to build a learning partnership for sustainable development.

School- Business Partnerships for Sustainable Development

Historically, businesses have a long record of involvement in education, especially within formal school systems (Cuban, 2004; Ruffin, 1983; Woodside, 1995). The nature and purposes of such involvements have, however, evolved over time, making

it imperative at this time to give it a critical review. The last few decades have seen unprecedented transformation in business involvement in schools, especially in Western industrialized societies, where most businesses continue to locate such activities in the CSR programs (Exxon Mobil, 2005; GlaxoSmithKline, 2006). Positioning business involvement in schools in what is now known as CSR is debatable; this is because, much as businesses can make claims of extending their socially responsible activities into education, similar claims could be made to describe such activities as neeolibral take over of schools. That is to say, such incursions into schools are strategic as they serve as avenues for businesses to influence what is learned in schools. A lot of these incursions or acts of responsibility are channeled through partnership activities between schools and businesses. What is not yet clear, however, is how these activities relate to the ESD agenda. In other words, how might businesses use their CSR activities to contribute to sustainability education both in schools and in community?

Against the background of neolibral policies, global economic competition and market advantage, the demand for a competitive work force has also increased, thereby making businesses approach their involvement in schools as a necessary intervention—a kind of social responsibility to redirect not only what is taught in schools but also how schools are run. While some of the activities or partnerships are described as educational, their pedagogical implications within the context of education for sustainable development have yet to be clarified to establish the capacity of the corporate community to influence change for sustainable development.

For instance, the natural resource base that supports economic growth is finite, yet business-supported educational partnerships fail to address the idea of limits to growth

(Randers & Meadows, 2005). Instead, businesses continue to favor the preparation of young people for the economic growth paradigm by encouraging scientific and technological innovations that assume bountifulness of natural resources. Again, it is common these days to see individual students and whole schools participate in corporately sponsored recycling and other environmental programs. While these programs provide learners the space and opportunity to reflect on ways to take action, they, however, fail to provide opportunities for learners to critically examine the social and economic dynamics of consumerism and the possibility of reducing consumption. Wal-Mart, for example, is one such corporation that collaborates with schools in the United States to engage in recycle programs for financial rewards. Much as these programs are worthwhile, they fail to educate students on the wider implications of globalization and mass production, and how corporations like Wal-Mart encourage consumerism in society. The lack of such critical approaches to business involvement in schools affirms the popular belief that such public show of responsibility is just a posture on the part of businesses to cover up their ecological footprints.

Within the context of education for sustainable development, and the current United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, school-business partnerships take on an added significance, and require that conscious efforts are made to align the CSR activities with the ESD agenda. This has been underscored by Welford (2006) who noted that "[a]ny discussion about a strategy for education for sustainable development would be incomplete without the role of business" (p. 1). It is against this background that the examination of current CSR activities of specific businesses as they

relate to education becomes imperative; it is necessary to explore how these activities are or could be aligned within ESD thinking and practice.

CSR in Schools: Examining Sample Stories

The following cases provide insights into specific stories of two multi-national corporations and what they do as part of their CSR agenda in education. GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) and ExxonMobil are industry leaders in the global pharmaceutical and oil businesses respectively. The basis of their selection in this discussion stems from the fact that they both are global giants in their domains of operation, and have global visibility. Going by their industry status, they are powerful entities in global and domestic market policy decisions. Besides, they both claim to approach CSR as part of a triple-bottom line approach to business. A phrase coined by John Elkington in 1994, triple-bottom line is usually explained as the 3Ps: "People (social well-being), Planet (ecological quality), Profits (economic prosperity)" and seen as the goal of sustainability. In practical terms, triple bottom line accounting captures an expanded spectrum of reporting to take into account environmental and social performance in addition to financial performance of businesses. The evolution and development of this idea of triple-bottom-line accounting is at the core of the CSR discourse.

As it is common with most businesses these days, GSK and ExxonMobil also publish their CSR reports on their respective websites by providing extensive information, including visuals of actual projects on their corporate citizenship activities. The websites, therefore, become gateways to understanding their ideological and

practical positions on CSR as a discourse and a business practice. They also serve as valuable sources of information in showing how the CSR discourse is evolving and how they are impacting social practice. Choosing to analyze the information as represented on the different websites therefore becomes consistent with the definition of discourse that guides this study. Discourse is broadly implied; it includes texts—spoken, written, and visuals. Together, they inform social practice as well as initiate varied ways of perceiving and understanding our world.

In their 2006 Corporate Citizenship Report, as posted on their website, the chief executive of ExxonMobil, Rex Tillerson, greets readers with these words: "ExxonMobil's primary responsibility is to produce the energy the world needs in an economically, environmentally, and socially responsible manner….ExxonMobil applies a rigorous approach to corporate citizenship in all aspects of our business, everywhere we operate" (ExxonMobil, 2006). Similarly, Duncan Learmouth, Senior Vice President, Corporate Communications and Community Partnerships of GSK, stated in their 2006 CSR report that "Corporate responsibility is about how we achieve our goals and implement our business strategy. We aim to operate in a way that reflects our values…connecting business decisions to ethical, social and environmental concerns" (GlaxoSmithKline, 2006). Both statements make implicit claims to applying the triple bottom-line approach in their operations. They also make strong statements to demonstrate their commitment to human capacity building and social welfare.

Even though they use different approaches, the rhetoric is similar and objectives are the same—investing in social programs that are relevant to their business and the skills of community members. The CSR programs of these two industry giants range

from school-based projects to community-wide projects that cover different issues such

as environmental hygiene, HIV, malaria, and other public health issues, both nationally

and internationally. GSK claims to have active community partnership programs in over

a hundred different countries around the world, and these include their Positive Action

Program of HIV education, African Malaria Partnership, and the School-based Personal

Hygiene and Sanitation (PHASE) programs in Africa and Latin America. ExonMobil also

boasts of supporting Africa Health Initiative, the Stop Aids Campaign, Educating Women

and Girls and many others. In Western industrialized societies, most school-related

partnerships involving these industry leaders are directed towards innovation, interest-

building in math, science and technology, and the development of entrepreneurial skills

among young people.

The GSK website proudly posts the following statement: "We support a range of

educational programs in the UK and US with the aim of developing an understanding of

science issues in everyday life and inspiring young people to take up careers in science."

Further, it notes that "[i]n the US, we support activities to prepare students to meet the

work and educational challenges of the 21st century, specifically in the scientific field

and the broader US education system" (GlaxoSmithKline, 2006). Some of the projects they

claim to have proudly supported are: "Science in the Summer," "Science in Suitcase,"

and "Destiny Traveling Science Laboratory" programs, all in the United States.

ExxonMobil operates similarly in schools. They are involved in a multi-million

dollar project in unearthing and training math and science teachers in the United States.

They sponsor the National Math and Science Initiative to facilitate the national scale-up

of programs that have a demonstrated impact on math and science education in the

United States. The project website explains:

> American students today are underperforming in math and science, and too
>
> many math and science teachers do not have the benefit of specific training
>
> and support in the math and science subjects they teach. To continue to
>
> innovate, the United States must upgrade and accelerate its commitment to
>
> improving educational quality. (National Science & Math Initiative, 2007)

Innovation and improvement in educational quality is here defined in narrow techno-

scientific achievements, which of course has economic ramifications that ignore any

consideration for its social and ecological consequences. Just like GSK, ExxonMobil also

lists its partnership projects, and among them are K-5 Mathematics Specialist Program,

Bernard Harris Summer Science Camps, Reasoning Mind, Science Ambassador Program,

Society of Women Engineers, and the Junior Achievement Program (ExxonMobil, 2006).

All these resonate with the call for educational "armament" as implied in the *A*

Nation at Risk Report (Presidential Commission on Education, 1983). It also reminds us

of President Bush's 2006 call on schools to provide children with the necessary skills to

compete in the twenty-first century global economy. This call continues to be intensified

at the highest level of politics to elevate the discourse on the need for American students

to raise the achievement levels in Science and Math. A recent report from the United

States Government Accountability Office provided the following reasons for such an

endeavor:

The United States has long been known as a world leader in scientific and technological innovation. To help maintain this advantage, the federal government has spent billions of dollars on education programs in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEMS) fields for many years….However, concerns have been raised about the nation's ability to maintain its global technological competitive advantage in the future. In spite of the billions of dollars spent to encourage students and graduates to pursue studies in STEM fields or improve STEM educational programs, the percentage of United States students earning bachelor's degrees in STEM fields has been relatively constant—about a third of bachelor's degrees—since 1977. (Government Accountability Report, 2005, p.1)

In a recent article titled: *Congress Nears Completion of Work on Math-and Science Bill to Enhance Competitiveness*, Jeffery Brainard (2007) writes on how the United States Congress is trying to improve on these 1977 statistics. He writes:

Congress is so close to completing work on a bill this week to authorize more spending on physical-sciences research at universities and on science education. Sponsors say the bill is a vital step toward improving America's global economic competitiveness…the House Committee on Science and Technology, predicted that the president would sign the measure "with a big grin on his face". (The Chronicle of Higher Education, August 10, 2007).

Such efforts typify what is meant by educational "armament" and it shows the extent nations will go to control the global market. Both politicians, as represented by President

Bush and corporations share the same vision—success through techno-scientific innovation in schools—and express it in almost the same language. The ultimate motive, as I have indicated, is market advantage and capital expansion. It is also a reminder of the powerful roles businesses and corporations now play in both domestic and global policy decisions. Within the context of ESD and the current international campaign to educate for sustainable development, the incursion of such capitalist ideologies in education, particularly formal education becomes intriguing.

Schooling in Late Capitalism: Power, Discourse, and Ideology

Schooling in late capitalism could be viewed as a continuing process of redefining the purpose of schooling to serve market interests in an era of a continuing quest for market expansion for capital gains. With the prevailing emphasis on science and math, schools have assumed a new sense of importance as sites for manpower production as well as the perpetuation of economic prosperity. They have become avenues for the comodification of knowledge to serve the purpose of controlling nature for profit. This situation gives further credence to Bowers' (1997) and Orr's (1992) claims that there is a link between the conduct of education and our current cultural crisis. The current pervasiveness of corporate culture and values in formal education systems is no coincidence; it is a manifestation of a world driven by market ideologies and neolibral market policies. Selby (2007) makes the point this way: "The educational practices of a time are a clear and efficient mirror of the time" (p. 178).

The emphasis on science, math, business, and technical rationalities, or "high status" knowledge, has derived from the language of global competitiveness and market

advantage imperatives ubiquitous in political economic rhetoric of our time. This

emphasis is also an indication of the powerful influences of corporations, such as

ExxonMobil and GlaxoSmithKline in policy directions that affect the conduct of

schooling. As capitalist giants, they do not only wield economic power, but also political

power that has significant policy influences in national and international affairs. In a

sense, they direct not only global capitalist discourses, but also political discourses that

connect the role of education to the global economic competition project. In addition, the

elevation of techno-scientific knowledge, as supported by corporations in such

discourses, has created unequal relationships among certain school subjects. Based on

their market values, school subjects could be ranked into "economic" and "non-

economic" fields, a classification that essentializes "economic" disciplines as "high

status'' over "non-economic" disciplines as "low status." This practice of ranking

subjects according to market value is currently epitomized by the special emphasis placed

on subjects like math, science and reading in the accountability movement in US public

school system

.

Schooling and the New Micro-Physics of Power

It is evident in the language of school governance that there is conscious push by

neolibralists to employ business technologies of administration and coercion to regulate

school learning, a process that both typifies Foucault's (1977) analysis of disciplinary

technologies of power, and points to power and domination in managerialist discourse.

Foucault's (1979) notion of *governmentality*—a rationalized and complex technology of

governance at different levels— helps to explain the discourse and practices of schooling.

Central in the creation of a corporatist discourse in education is the technical, yet strategic use of business language to articulate and normalize capitalist ideals as the main organizing philosophy of modern day schooling. For instance, by constantly touting the idea of a global economic competition, the idea that children in the United State are being left behind, and the need for schools to respond, a validating process is set in place to link this ideology to the purpose of schooling within the context of global capitalism. In that regard, the role of schools only becomes a common sense assumption, one that is hard to challenge.

The argument for a response from schools to the idea of global competitiveness is further strengthened by growing discourses of a knowledge economy—an economy (or society) where ideas about knowledge and information take on a decisive significance. A knowledge economy, therefore, implies highly specialized knowledge forms, which eventually become reified and legitimized based on their market value. As Fairclough (2005) noted,   such legitimization processes also call for a discourse-based economy— the instrumental use of language to influence practice. Here, corporatist school discourses, such as bottom-line, efficiency standards, quality assessment, and performance scales become a part of the language used to influence practice. It is within this practice that current business involvement in education becomes intriguing. At the end of the day, it all becomes an issue of power, and power, here, is Foucaldian; its permeability in social practices is embedded within social relations and are exercised through institutional relations, such as school-business partnerships, to discipline, coerce, and regulate actions and thoughts, or *governmentality.* The permeability of power in social practices and relationships makes it a significant disciplinary technology, which is

employed by businesses and corporations to extend and consolidate their ideological stances in schools. What is taught or not taught in schools becomes an issue of ideology and how it promotes the capitalists agenda.

This dynamic explains what I describe as the *aesthetics of association*, a description that highlights the fact that even though some of these partnerships are well-intended, there are underlying issues of power and manipulation which serves the interest of the powerful. Beyond the surface beauty of school-business partnership is what Foucault (1977) describes as the *new micro-physics of power*—a kind of political investment that comes in small "acts of cunning endowed with great power of diffusion, subtle arrangements, apparently innocent, but profoundly suspicious, mechanisms that pursue petty forms of coercion" (p. 139). Corporate power is therefore constituted not only in its ability to make financial contributions to schools, but also through its closeness to political power, and its ability to invoke the language of the "new global economy," and in ways that make them indisputably relevant to the philosophy of modern day schooling. This is affirmed by Morrow and Torres (1995) who observed that "those who accumulate more authority—that is to say, who hold the upper hand in power relationships—will produce the more persuasive or most forceful explanations, or at least these will be accepted as such" (p.134). In the end, we are again reminded of President Bush's "fact of life" axiom. The reality is, neolibralism and capitalist discourses in education will be around for a while, if not forever. It is only wise, therefore, to explore creative ways to chart a common path for education, business, and society.

Towards a New Learning and Action Partnership

For ExxonMobil, GlaxoSmithKline, and many other such corporations whose CSR activities have extended to both formal and non-formal educational settings, there is no argument that such practices have social value; however, within the context of sustainability and the current discourse of education for sustainability, there is the need for a conscious alignment of CSR practices within the ESD discourse. In most of the partnership projects mentioned in this paper, issues of sustainability, social justice, community welfare, and inter-generational equity are non-subjects because they are perceived as *non-economic.* If businesses and corporations are genuinely committed to issues of sustainable development and the long term future of the planet and its people, then business involvement in schools must be re-evaluated with a view to reassessing the pedagogical imperatives of such partnerships. What this means is that there must be a convergence between CSR activities, particularly as they relate to schooling and ESD. There is the need for a learning imperative that unites these two discourses in ways that encourage pedagogical approaches that consciously include ecological, social, and economic considerations. Thus, what is taught and learned in schools and communities, within the spirit of corporate social responsibility could reflect the principles and ideals of sustainable development and education for sustainable development.

The current on-going UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development presents both challenges and opportunities for all institutions to reexamine their practices. As a business practice, CSR activities could be reviewed by incorporating a learning philosophy that expands the meaning of the practice from just *doing good* to enhancing individual and social capabilities for sustainable development. By calling for a new

learning and action partnership among businesses, schools, and the wider society, I am calling for a partnership that will be built on the principles of participatory knowledge creation and exchange. Such a partnership will be underscored by a mutual (multi-sector) desire to reevaluate the notions and scope of knowledge forms that are relevant for human and non-human welfare. Central to such a process is the accommodation of issues of social and ecological justice within the broader frameworks of learning and human progress. Here, the intention is to refocus by redefining what human progress is or should be, and that implies helping individuals to expand their traditional understandings of human progress beyond capital creation, consumption patterns, material acquisitions, market expansion, as well as technological and scientific innovation. These are contemporary values that have contributed greatly to our current ecological and social predicaments, and they need to be challenged by counter-values and time-tested principles that serve as a pointer to how the concept of humanity could be deepened. Within the contexts of CSR and ESD, the guiding questions are how can we create more sustainable communities in our different places, and how can humanity embrace fundamental changes in values, institutions, and in ways of living and acting on the planet?

These are central philosophical concerns of ESD as an emergent educational discourse. By aligning CSR activities within this philosophy, the current capitalists' philosophy of development being about having more—accumulation, consumption, and materialism will be challenged. Current business agendas in schools focus largely on market imperatives that perpetuate traditional understandings of human progress. Changing this will imply the conscious alignment of school- business partnership

programs to the ideals and principles of ESD, which should involve the use of

appropriate approaches to highlight the pedagogical imperatives of CSR, and how

schools and communities could benefit from such programs. These approaches could

include:

- Interdisciplinary and holistic pedagogical approaches that provide learners
  with critical information on the current climate crises, and to challenge them
  to explore possibilities of maintaining an informed balance between the
  push for economic and technical rationalities and social and ecological
  imperatives.

- Value-based approaches that incorporate practical lessons in business ethics
  as a way of emphasizing the limits to growth, and also the need to make
  intelligent tinkering a necessary component of the quest for technological
  and scientific innovations.

- Community-Focused and Problem-Based learning processes that aim at
  bringing diverse sectors of the community together to collaborate in solving
  common problems. Such approaches could target local community issues
  and problems with a view to providing learning and action opportunities that
  will allow both businesses and community members to reflect on the
  broader cultural, ecological, social, economic, and political contexts of the
  community.

- Locally relevant and globally related learning experiences that help learners
  to connect local experiences to the larger global context. For instance, local

production and market dynamics could be connected to the larger global

context to underscore the place and role of the local in the global.

These approaches highlight the pedagogical imperatives of CSR while detailing

how both CSR and ESD principles could be brought together in a multi-sector learning

program. As the World Business Council for Sustainable Development has indicated,

CSR is primarily a business' contribution to sustainable development; it therefore

becomes important that such practices, as defined by businesses as CSR, are consciously

connected to the principles and ideals of sustainable development. And, since sustainable

development is a learning issue (Fein, 1995), it necessarily makes CSR a learning

enterprise. The question then becomes: How do businesses learn in such partnerships, and

how do schools and societies learn from these partnership activities? It is through the

adoption of such a learning mindset and approaches, that CSR could be located in the

wider international discourse of ESD. In the process, the role of businesses in ESD will

be clarified. As CSR continues to grow as a business practice, and as more businesses

and corporations begin to realize the need to be socially and environmentally responsible,

it is important that the pedagogical imperatives inherent in their activities both in schools

and in communities are highlighted and utilized.

References

Adams, C. A. (2002). International organizational factors influencing corporate social and ethical reporting: Beyond current theorizing, *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal,* 15, 223-250.

Anderson, A., Fitzgerald, G., and Uhl, C. (2000). Higher education: Good for the planet? *Bulletin of the Ecological Society of America*, 81(2), 152-156.

Althusser, L. (1971). Ideology and state apparatuses, in L. Althusser, *Lenin and philosophy and other essay*s. London: New Left Books.

Apple, M. (2004). *Ideology and Curriculum*, New York: Routledge.

Apple, M. W. (2000). Between neolibralism and neoconservatism: Education and conservatism in a global context, in N. C. Burbles & C. A. Torres (eds.) *Globalization and education: Critical Perspectives*, (pp. 57-77). London: Routledge.

Berry, W. (2001). In the presence of fear: Three essays for a changed world. *The new Patriotism series.* Volume 1.

Bohm, D. (1998) *On creativity*, London: Routledge.

Bowers, C. A. (1995). *Educating for an Ecologically Sustainable Culture: Rethinking Moral Education, Creativity, Intelligence, and Other Modern Orthodoxies*, New York: State University of New York.

Bowers, C. A. (1997). The culture of denial: *Why the environmental movement needs a strategy for reforming universities and public schools*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Blowfield, M. E. and Frynas, J. G. (2005). Setting new agendas; Critical perspectives on

corporate social responsibility in the developing world. *International Affairs*,

81(3): 499-513.

Brainard, J. (2007). Congress Nears Completion of Work on Math-and Science Bill to

Enhance Competitiveness. *Chronicle of Higher Education,* August 10, 2007.

Capra, F. (1996). *The Web of Life: A new scientific understanding of living systems,* New

York: Anchor/Doubleday.

Cuban, L. (2004). The *blackboard and the bottom line: Why schools can't be businesses,*

Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Cramer, J. and Loeber, A. (2007). Learning about corporate social responsibility from a

sustainable development perspective. , In Arjen E. J. Wals (Ed.) *Social learning:*

Towards a sustainable world, (pp. 265-277). Wageningen, Netherlands:

Wageningen Academic Publishers.

Department for International Development, (1997). *Eliminating global poverty: The*

challenge for the 21st century. London: HMSO

ExonMobil (2005). *Corporate citizenship report*. Retrieved:

http://www.exxonmobil.com/Corporate/Citizenship/gcr_education_other.asp.

Fein, J. (1995). Teaching for a sustainable world: The environmental and development

education project for teacher education. *Environmental Education Research*, *1(1),*

21-33.

Fairclough, N. (1994) *Language and power*. London: Longman.

Foucault, M. (1979). Michael Foucault's lecture at the College de France on neo-libral

governmentality. *Economy and Society*, 30, 190-207.

Foucault, M., (1972). *The archeology of knowledge*. New York: Tavistock Publications.

Ghobadian, A., Ghaller, D., and Hopkins, M. (In Press). TQM and CSR nexus,

   International Journal of Quality and Reliability Management.

GlaxoSmithKline (2006). *A human race*, Retrieved: July 12, 2007, from

   http://www.gsk.com/community/supporting_education/index.htm).

Gruenewald, D. (2006). Place-based education: Grounding culturally-responsive teaching

   in geographic diversity, *Democracy & Education*, 16(2) 24-32.

Gruenewald, D. A. and Manteaw, B. O. (2007). Oil and Water Still: How No Child Left

   Behind Limits and Distorts Environmental Education in U.S. Schools.

   Environmental Education Research. 13(2) pp. 171-188.

Gruenewald, D., Smith, G. and Manteaw, B. O. (In Press). Environmental Education:

   From International Resolve to Local Experience and Inquiry. In J.R.

   Andrzejewski (Ed.) *Social Justice, Peace and Environmental Education*.

   Routledge.

Harvey, D. (2005) *A brief history of neolibralism*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Hursh, D. (2007). Assessing No Child Left Behind and the rise of neolibral education

   policies. *American Educational Research Journal*, 44(3) 493-518.

Hill, D. (2006). Class, capital and education in this neoliberal/neoconservative

   Information for Social Change, No. 23. Retrived: November 12, 2007, from

   http://libr.org/isc/issues/ISC23/B1%20Dave%20Hill.pdf

Hill, D. (2003). Global neo-libralism, the deformation of education and resistance,

   Journal for Critical Education Policy, 1 (1) Retrieved: September 9, 2007, from

   http://www.jceps.com/index.php?pageID=articleID=7.

Jucker, R. (2002). *Our common illiteracy: Education as if the earth and people mattered.*
Berlin: Peter Lang.

Keen, M., Brown, V. and Dyball, R. eds. (2005). *Social Learning in Environmental Management: Towards a sustainable Future*, London: Earthscan.

Kennedy, R. D. (1994). Business as reform leaders, In S. J. Garone (Ed.) *Business and Education: Dynamic partners*, The Conference Board: New York.

Kim, J. & Sunderman, G. (2005). Measuring academic proficiency under the No Child Left Behind Act: Implications for educational equity. Educational Researcher, 34(8), 3-13.

Kivuitu, M., Yambayamba, K. and Fox, T., (2005). How can corporate social responsibility deliver in Africa? Insights from Kenya and Zambia. *Perspectives 3(7)* London: IIED.

Krasny, C. (2006). Prophetic voices: Three books to encourage us to listen beyond historical silence. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 36 (1), 27-36.

Lodge, G. and Wilson, C. (2006). *A corporate solution to global poverty: How multinationals can help the poor and invigorate their own legitimacy*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Lund- Thumsen, P. (2007). Corporate social responsibility: Towards a new dialogue, in Arjen E. J. Wals (Ed.) *Social learning: Towards a sustainable world*, (297-311). Wageningen, Netherlands: Wageningen Academic Publishers.

Manteaw, B. (2007). From tokenism to social justice: Rethinking the bottom line for sustainable community development, *Community Development Journal,*

http://cdj.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/bsm015?ijkey=sZOszugqkXmNfG4&key type=ref

Morrow, R. A. and Torres, C. A, (1995). *Social theory and education: A critique of theories of social and cultural reproduction.* New York: State University of New York Press.

National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). *A nation at risk: A report to the nation and the secretary of education.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

National Math and Science Initiative (2007). Retrieved: July 12, 2007, from http://nationalmathandscience.org/content/view/23/98/

Newell, P. and Frynas, J. D. (2007). Beyond CSR? Business, poverty and social justice: An introduction, *Third World Quarterly*, 28(4), 669-681.

Norberg- Hodge, H. (2000), *Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh*. London: Rider Books.

Olsen, M., Codd, J., Wald, J, and Swanson, C. (2004). *Education policy: Globalization, citizenship and democracy*. Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage.

Orr, D. W. (2004). *Earth in mind: On education, environment and the human prospect.* Washington, DC: Island Press.

Orr, D.W. (1992). *Ecological literacy: Education and the transition to a postmodern world*. Albany, New York: State University of New York.

Page, R. (2003). Letter to the Editor, *New Yorker*, October 6, p.12.

Peters, M., Marshall, J. and Fitzsimons, P. (2000). In N. C. Burbles & C. A. Torres (Eds.)

Globalization and education: Critical Perspectives, (pp. 109-132). London: Routledge.

Petkoski, D. Jarvis, M., and de la Garza, G. (2006). The private sector as a true partner in development. Retrieved: December, 21, 2007, from http://siteresources.worldbank.org/CGCSRLP/Resources/Theprivatesectorasatruepartnerindevelopment.pdf

Porritt, J. (2006). *Capitalism as if the world matters*, London: Earthscan.

Prahalad, C.K. (2006) *The fortune at the bottom of the Pyramid: Eradicating poverty through profits,* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Prigogine, I. (1989). The philosophy of Instability, *Futures*, 21(4): 396-400.

Randers, J. & Meadows, D. (2005). *Limits to growth: The 30- Year Update*, London: Earthscan.

Rest, A. (2002). From "environmental education" to "education for sustainable development"—The shift of a paradigm. *Environmental Policy and Law*, 32(2).

Ruffin, S.C. (1983). *School Business Partnerships: Why not? Reston*, Virginia: National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Selby, D. (2007). Reaching into the holomovement: A Bohmian perspective on social learning for sustainability. In A.E.J. Wals (Ed.) *Social learning towards a sustainable world,* (165-180). Netherlands: Wageningen Academic Publishers

Slattery, P. (2006). *Curriculum development in the postmodern era*. New York: Routledge.

Spring, J. (2003). *Educating the Consumer Citizen: A history of the marriage of schools, advertising and media*, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Torres, C. A. (2005). NCLB: A brainchild of neolibralism and American politics, *New Politics* 10(3) 79-85.

Trainer, T. (1990). Towards an Ecological Philosophy of Education, *Discourse*, 10(2), 93-116.

Wals, E. J. & Van der Leij, T. (2007) Introduction, In A. E. J. Wals (ed.) *Social learning: Towards a sustainable world.* Netherlands: Wageningen Academic Publishers.

Wals, E.J. & Heymann, F. (2004). Learning from the Edge: Exploring the Change Potential of Conflict in Social Learning for Sustainable Living. In A. Wenden (ed) *Educating for a culture of social and ecological peace.* New York: State University of New York Press.

Welford, R. (2006). *Education for sustainability: The changing role of Business.* Conference Presentation. Education for and about sustainability in Australian Business Schools. May 2006, Macquarie University, Australia.

Woodside, W. S. (1985). Business in Education: How Good a Grade: *Concerns in Education.* Educational Research Service: New York.

World Business Council for Sustainable Development (2000). *Corporate social responsibility: Making good business sense,* Geneva: WBCSD.

World Commission on Environment and Development (1987). *Our common future.* Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2002). *Education for sustainability, from Rio to Johannesburg: Lessons learned from a decade of commitment.* Paris: UNESCO.

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992). *Agenda 21*,

    Albany, NY: State University Press.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Press Secretary. (2006). President Bush

    discusses No Child Left Behind. Retrieved: August 31, 2007, from

    htt://www.ed.gov/news/releases/2006/10/20061005-6.html.

Chapter Four

Interlude: Methodological and Theoretical Considerations

This dissertation consists of three interrelated papers and other chapters of supporting materials. This description fits the integrated article format—a collection of independent, but interrelated articles. Each of the papers in the work is complete in itself for publication as a single article. I add, however, that much as manuscript length is of essence as far as publishing is concerned in some academic journals, these papers vary in length and are sometimes much longer than standard articles. The extension in length is deliberate as I make conscious efforts to align the work to the rigorous demands of deep scholarly analysis, as well intellectual originality that underscore standard academic dissertations. I also include stylistic and formatting features that are essential in dissertation writings. In spite of the lengths, however, all the three main papers could be published independent of each other; any decision regarding length will be purely editorial and dependent on the type of journal.

Also, the individual chapters could also be broken up, where necessary, into coherent pieces to make them publishable with regard to subject. Put together, all the three main papers represent a coherent account of a unified study rather than a collection of loosely connected articles. The title of the dissertation: *Education for sustainable development*: *An emergent discourse for multi-sector learning and action partnership* serves as the spine for all the different papers, and provides a running theme through all the chapters. This theme, therefore, serves as a logical bridge that connects the different papers. In effect, the integrated nature of this work necessarily requires that I connect the

different papers in a logical way. Making these connections have created the tendency for the repetition of concepts and ideas in the different chapters; these are stylistic issues that are deliberately employed to effect. As a mark of distinction as well as independence, each of the papers has its own reference list.

My main approach to this study is discourse analysis; while education for sustainable development is the overarching discourse under discussion, the theme of partnership learning and action makes it necessary to examine other discourses as they relate to the broader theme. This is what Fairclough (1992) describes as *intertextuality,* or *interdiscursivity.* That is, the shifting synthesis of related discourses, which allows semiotic hybridity, or cross-disciplinary meaning making (Chouliarakai & Fairclough, 1999). In this regard, businesses' roles in education, corporate social responsibility, neolibralism in education, economic growth and competition, are all explored within the context of intertxtuality. By examining the discourse of ESD, my over all desire was to establish its capacity to influence educational thinking and practice, and since ESD has become a global discourse, I found it necessary to engage in an international comparative discussion. The choice of Ghana and the United States in chapter four is, therefore, a strategic approach to understanding the role and place of ESD in different socio-cultural settings. The two countries do not only provide unique perspectives through which the discourse of ESD and the concept of sustainable development are critically examined, they also provide a platform to examine the concept of development (human progress) to establish how it informs the sustainability discourse.

Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis

A critical examination of these different discourses implies that even though I use discourse analysis (DA) as the main approach to the study, I also, where necessary, employ critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a method within the broader method of discourse analysis. Further, I make a distinction between discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis; this is because, "Different approaches fit different issues and questions better or worse than others" (Gee, 2006, p. 5). Such a distinction serves my work better, as it has allowed me to approach each specific research question in a particular way. The nature of these questions and what they specifically require have constituted the main concerns of each of the three main chapters. In a way, the different chapters serve as responses to the different questions. Similarly, the nature of the questions determines which methodological approach to use as far as analyzing the discourse is concerned.

Textual analysis is the main approach, and it involves the analysis of the form, content and organization of texts—what Halliday & Hasan (1976) refer to as "texture". Philips & Jorgensen (2002) have noted that in discourse analysis " The analyst has to work with what has been said or written, exploring patterns in and across the statements and identifying the social consequence of different discursive representations of reality" (p. 21). In line with this and within the context of the ESD discourse, I pay close attention to text by examining its *texture* (form and content) to establish how linguistic choices enact social practices. Through this approach, I also show how paying close attention to text can increase the value of discourse analysis as a method for researching different ranges of social science and cultural studies questions. Social life as always is built

around language, and it is important as Fairclough (1995) suggested that "close analysis of texts should be a significant part of social scientific analysis of a whole range of social and cultural practices and processes" (p. 187). In this instance, the discourse is on education for sustainable development, and much as I will be critical in my analysis, the actual intention is to explore the possibilities of enhancing and enriching processes of educational decision making for sustainable development.

Discourse analysis as a broader tradition, has its foundations in linguistic studies. It considers how language, both spoken and written, enacts social and cultural perspectives and identities. By focusing on the function of language, DA emphasizes the different functions of language, paying particular attention to how language supports the performance of social activities and identities. It also shows how language supports human affiliations within cultures, social groups, and institutions (Gee, 2006). In short, discourse analysis is an examination of 'language-in-use' and a primary concern is to establish the *who, what, why and how* of language use. This is to say that, unlike in CDA where the focus is on *what could be*, with regards to power relations and the possibility of change, DA focuses on *what is* said, and by *who, why,* and *how* it is said. These dynamics provide the sites for enactments and reenactments of social arrangements that result in the production and reproduction of discourses.

In this study, discourse is broadly implied to include texts—spoken, written, and visuals. Philip and Jorgensen (2002) define discourse as a particular way of talking about and understanding the world, or an aspect of it. Fairclough (1994) explains discourse as "language as a form of social practice," by social practices, Chouliaraki & Fairclough (1999) talks about habitualized ways that are tied to particular times and places where

people apply resources (material or symbolic) to act together in the world. Practices are therefore constituted throughout social life—in the specialized domains such as politics, education, economics, etc., but also in the domain of culture, which includes every day life. Practice could be understood both as a social action that takes place in a particular time and place, or an action which has over a period been transformed into relative permanency. The shifting relationships between different practices are what Laclau and Mouffe (1985) describe as "Articulation," which also signifies *different moments of discourse.* Thus the discourse moment of any practice is the shifting articulation of symbolic/discursive resources such as genres, voices, discourses etc. Foucault (1972) writes that "Discourses are practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Discourses are not objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their invention" (p.49). Discourse therefore has a high propensity to infringe on the possibility of independent thought; every discourse initiates varied ways of perceiving aspects of the world, and this is done either by altering or reproducing one's own worldview.

Central to understanding discourse theory is the issue of *power,* and here power is Foucaldian; the permeability of power through all levels of society through social practice. Power relations are embedded within social relations, and are exercised through institutional relations that discipline our ways of thinking and how our actions are regulated (Foucault, 1977). It is therefore the issue and role of power in language use and social practice that makes the *critical* analyses of discourse important, and also different from just analyzing discourse. Against this background, critical discourse analyses (CDA) as a method of inquiry seeks to analyze and understand the structural relationship

of dominance, power, control, and the interconnectedness of things as manifested in language with a view to bringing about emnacipatory possibilities or progressive revolution. The issue of change or intervention is therefore central within the notion of critical discourse analysis. CDA aims not only to discern *what is,* but also, and more importantly, *what could be* with regard to change.

While CDA may not constitute a well-defined empirical method, but rather a cluster of different approaches, it places its methodology rather in the hermeneutic than the analytical-deductive tradition. As a result, there is no clear distinction between data collection and analysis (Meyer 2005). Hermeneutics here refers to the process of grasping and producing meaning through interpretation. Just like DA, CDA derives from linguistics studies and focuses on how language as a cultural tool mediates social relationships of power and privilege in social interactions, institutions and bodies of knowledge. In fact, the terms *Critical Linguistics* (CL) and *Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA) are sometimes used interchangeably even though in recent times the term CDA seems more preferred (Wodak, 2005). The term *critical* in CL and CDA could be traced to the influence of the Frankfurt School and Jorgen Habermas (Thompson, 1988; Anthonienssen, 2001). In recent times, however, it is used in a much broader sense to denote the practical linking of social and political engagement with a sociologically informed construction of society (Krings et al., 1973). It does so recognizing, in Fairclough's (1985) words that, "in human matters, interconnections and chains of cause and effect may be distorted out of vision. Hence "critique" is essentially making visible the interconnectedness of things" (p. 747). The notion of "critique" is however understood differently: some adhere to the Frankfurt school, others to a notion of literary

criticism and some to Marx's notions. Much as I subscribe to all these notions, specifically for this work, my basic understanding of "critical" is having a distance to what I consider data (discourse), embedding the data in a social context, taking an explicit political stance, and engaging in self-reflection as a scholar doing research.

According to Wodak (2005), CDA may be "fundamentally concerned with analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power, and control as manifested in language" (p. 2). Most critical discourse analysts, therefore, agree with Habermas' assertion that, "language is a medium of domination and social force. It serves to legitimize relations of organized power" (1977, p. 259). Power relations are legitimized through language, thus making language a major source of ideology. As I demonstrate in this work, most of the discourses I discuss have evolved out of *articulation, or* shifting synthesis and have been normalized through language use. Neolibralism, corporate social responsibility, global economic competitiveness, and the sustainability discourses have all been borne out of language, which eventually becomes ideology. Discourses are oppressive in the sense that they infringe on, and distort independent thinking. They define social relations and practices in ways that are not easily detectable, critical discourse studies as a social scientific research, therefore, helps us to understand such complex processes.

Unlike other paradigms in discourse analysis and text linguistics, CDA focuses not only on texts, spoken or written, as the sole objects of inquiry. A complete *critical* account of discourse would necessarily involve a theorization and description of both the social processes and structures which give rise to the production of a text. It also helps in explaining the social structures and processes within which individuals or groups as

social historical subjects, create meanings in their interaction with texts (Faiclough & Kress, 1993). This work epitomizes this process; my attempt to describe the different issues and to justify my position on them has resulted in instances of elaborate theorization, which to some extent, explains the lengthy nature of some of the chapters. CDA begins with an interest in understanding conditions of inequality by locating power in the arena of language as a social practice; it also recognizes that power could take on the dual roles of being both liberating and oppressing (Rogers et al, 2005).

Taking into account that discourse is structured by dominance, and that every discourse is historically produced and interpreted (Wodak & Meyer, 2001), it is also important to note that dominant structures legitimate the ideologies of powerful groups and to reproduce such ideologies. What this means is that dominant structures stabilize conventions and naturalize them, and in doing, so the effects of power and ideology in the production of meaning are obscured. Power then acquire stable and natural forms, which are taken for granted. It is against this background that I find a comparative discussion of the sustainable development discourse from a developed and developing country perspective meaningful. From colonization to globalization, Western developed countries as well as other powerful international institutions have found it easy or convenient to transfer and impose certain ideologies and practices on poor developing countries. While the modality and impacts of such ideological transfers on social change has been the subject of many academic studies, the role of language and the relationship between power and language in social change has not had the desired attention.

As one of its primary purposes, CDA analyzes such practices of covert or overt use of power through language, and to create possibilities of resistance to unequal social

relations that appear as societal conventions. Four fundamental concepts are therefore indispensable in all critical discourse analysis: the concepts of history, power, language, and ideology. These form the basis of CDA and they form the basis of this study. What is distinctive about CDA is that it addresses the real issues of contemporary times with a view towards progressive revolution (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). The concept of sustainable development is perhaps one of the most pressing political challenges of our time. Current discourses on climate change, global warming, deforestation, poverty and HIV/AIDS underscore this challenge. As a "dissident" research, critical discourse analysts concern themselves with such issues by seeking to intervene on the side of dominated and oppressed groups and against dominating groups. In doing so, it openly declares emnacipatory possibilities. Van Djik's (2001) definition of CDA sums it all up as he sees CDA as a:

> type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are exacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social political context…With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position(s), and thus want to understand, expose and ultimately to resist social inequality (p. 352**).**

The idea of a "dissident" research excites me, and I very happily embrace it. My position on the different discourses as I discuss has been explicit, as my biases are self-evident.

In dealing with issues of global sustainability and education, it is very easy for the issue of power and domination to be downplayed or ignored. This is largely because of the way the discourse has been portrayed: A global problem requiring common global

solutions. Equality and commonality are emphasized at the expense of inequality. For many leaders of developing countries, such discourses of global commonality and equality only become relevant in international politics when it signals eminent threats and dangers of environmental mismanagement. Such complaints as the come from developing country leaders have been a source of contention in international environmental politics (Irwin, 2001). These feelings are better understood when one considers the fact that that industrialized economies do the most damage to the global environment, yet are the most vocal when it comes to seeking global solutions. Power is at stake here, however, its obscurity in the discourse makes it a non-subject. A core concern of CDA, and for that matter, this study is to highlight these issues of inequality by making them a part of the broader discourse.

Discourse as Data

As a theoretical research project, it is important for me to emphasize on the fact that discourse, irrespective of its nature, is data depending on how they are used to understand an aspect of the world or social life. All research data require some kind of analytical tool to make sense of them, and discourse analysis necessarily implies making critical decisions and value-based judgments on texts to differentiate between *form* and *content*. For this study, my major source of data is *text* and this involves the identification of specific texts of interest and relevance to the broader ESD discourse. Since discourse is defined as a particular way of talking about and understanding the world, discourses analyzed for this study have been carefully selected to know and understand their specific impacts on social practices.

Even though I used mostly written text, *intertextual* and interdisciplinary considerations sometime required that I engage with others in spoken discussions to ascertain how a particular discourse is evolving in specific disciplines. A good example is my collaboration with colleagues and other personalities in business schools and in businesses to draw on their views on themes such as CSR, capitalism and neolibralism and education. Apart from affirming intertextuality as a strategy in discourse analysis, it also underscores the theme of partnership building as discussed in the work. It is also in agreement with the "critical" tradition, which emphasizes the need for interdisciplinary engagement in order to gain a proper understanding of how language constitutes and transmit knowledge, as well as how language organizes social institutions. My data have, therefore, come from diverse sources; they include relevant national and international documents on the concept of sustainable development, education for sustainable development, the role of corporations and businesses in schools, and on education. Much as the general focus of chapter four is on Ghana and the United States, other relevant texts are considered to inform the work

The second chapter focuses primarily on discourses on global environmental politics and how education for sustainable development has emerged. I use the *historical methodological approach* to situate both the concept of sustainable development and the role of education in a historical context. Such an approach is in line with what Meyer (2005) meant when he said "[a]ll discourses are historical and can therefore only be understood with reference to their context" (p. 15) The Chapter also serves as an introduction to the whole project; by setting events in a historical context, it provides a foundation for subsequent chapters. However, in keeping faith with the integrated nature

of the chapters, summaries of historical facts are frequently repeated in subsequent chapters as a way of making the necessary connections.

Both chapters two and three focus on discourse as they relate to, or emanate from the United States. This is another strategic approach to highlight the role of the United States in directing global social and ecological changes. As a political leader, the United States is also a moral leader; I therefore use this premise to make the point that her actions and inactions, as far as the global quest for sustainability is concerned, have far-reaching global implications. I then I examine contemporary educational, political, and neolibral discourses as they relate particularly to the United States. Most of the data have come from written texts, and I characterize them with very long quotes to depict the source and nature of particular discourses and to show why they qualify as relevant data to be analyzed. This approach provides readers with insights and allows them to be part of the conversation. In a sense, the long quotes do not only serve as invitations to my audience to follow my thought process, it is also my way of contextualizing the different discourses.

Chapter five serves as the concluding chapter; it is a logical progression from the local, which in this case has largely been the United States, to the global. Ghana, my country of origin, is then set against the United States to help understand critical issues in the international conceptualization of the sustainability discourse. The choice of Ghana and the United States for a comparative discussion is another stylistic feature that highlights cultural and contextual differences in the discourse of sustainability and how it might impact educational approaches. The current international campaign to educate for sustainable development makes it imperative that such cultural nuances and contextual

differences that inform or impinge upon educational thinking and practice in different

cultures are clarified. The title of the chapter: *People, Places, and Cultures: Educating*

for Sustainable Development in an Unequal World, therefore, becomes instructive as it

sums up the core message.

My personal experiences, living, studying, and working in different cultures in

developing and developed country situations played a significant role in my decision to

use a comparative approach. Apart from allowing me to engage in self-reflective

processes, my divergent experiences also facilitated my arriving at the conviction that

current discourses on sustainability ignore issues of cultural, spatial, and situational

differences. That is to say, discourses of sustainability as they pertain in Western

developed societies are in many ways different from what pertains in developing

countries. Thus it becomes somehow problematic when certain ideas are *globalized* to

assume normative status. Selecting these different discourses has in many ways expanded

the base of my data sources and analyzing them critically gave me the opportunity to

combine theorizing almost concurrently.

Discourse Analysis and Theory Building

The process of doing discourse analysis almost naturally combines methodology

with theorizing; discourse analysis is both a method of research and a way of theorizing.

Chouliaraki & Fairclough (1999) wrote that,

> We see CDA as both theory and method: as a method for analyzing
>
> social practices with particular regard to their discourse moments
>
> within the linking of the theoretical and practical concerns… We see

CDA as bringing a variety of theories into dialogue, especially social

theories on the one hand and linguistic theories on the other, so that

its theory is a shifting synthesis of other theories, though what it

itself theorizes is the mediation between the social and the linguistic-

the 'order of discourse', the social restructuring of semiotic hybridity

(interdiscursivity). (p. 16)

This has been affirmed by Gee (2006) when he observed that "Method and theory cannot

be separated…Any method of research is a way to investigate some particular domain. In

this case, the domain is language-in-use. There can be no sensible method to study a

domain unless one also has a theory of what that domain is" (p. 6). Thus discourse

analysis and critical discourse analysis are simultaneous processes of theorizing about the

nature, form, content, and context of language-in-use. Rogers et al (2005) take this a step

further by noting that CDA as a research method. "[w]as an attempt to bring social theory

and discourse analysis together to describe, interpret, and explain the ways in which

discourse constructs, becomes constructed by, represents, and becomes represented by

the social world" (p.366). CDA could therefore be seen as a combination of critical

theory, social theory and linguistic theory, and even to some extent, cultural studies.

Unlike in other research studies where separate spaces and efforts are created for

the review of literature and theoretical perspectives, in DA, literature review and theory

building are weaved in seamlessly through out the process. As a result, it is unnecessary

to delineate separate sections for literature review as in conventional dissertation

formatting. This approach informs my work and it is one that has made it possible for me

to embrace different theoretical frameworks. This is primarily because, as different issues

come up for analysis, they tend to require specific theoretical foundations to support a claim or view point. In CDA, however, the focus on issues of power, social relations, and emancipation makes it necessary to invoke theories from the critical theory tradition. This is where theorists such as Foucault, Habermas, Gramsci and many others come into play.

They also affirm the existing connection between critical linguistics and the Frankfurt School. Because of the underlying quest for emancipatory possibilities, and the explicit position taken by the analyst, theorizing becomes a part of the process. Stated positions need to be justified and the process of justifying leads almost naturally to theory building. Such theorization processes takes place in different sections of this work. As a style, each chapter is characterized by a specific theory building process that is developed in the next chapter. Chapter two begins with the incursions of corporate values in schools and how that relates to sustainable development. Chapter three frames the reality of *our unsustainable present* and the role of education in an epistemic and ontological challenge that needs to be met. Chapter four focuses on the cultural dimensions of sustainable development and the need to unpack the irony of a "one human family."

Language, Power, Ideology, and Social Cognition

Within the context of the broader research questions of this study, the study also tries to pose and answer the following underlying questions: who are the main actors in the global sustainability debates? What is driving the ESD discourse, and whose voices are heard, or unheard? These are questions that help in clarifying how discourses are produced and normalized, and also, how they influence social change. They also show how power plays out in the production of discourse. In addition to the Foucaldian

understanding of power, that power permeates social relationships, this work is also informed by Van Djick's categorization of different forms of power:

- Power is a property of relations between social groups, institutions or organizations.

- Social Power is defined in terms of the control exercised by one group or organization (or its members) over the actions and/or the minds of (the members of) another group, thus limiting the freedom of action of the others, or influencing their knowledge, attitudes or ideologies.

- Power of a specific group or institution may be 'distributed', and may be restricted to a specific social domain such as that of politics, the media, law and order, education or corporate business, thus resulting in different 'centers' of power and elite groups that control such centers.

- Dominance is here understood as a form of social power abuse that is, as legally or morally illegitimate exercise of control over others in one's own interests, often resulting in social inequality.

- Power is based on privileged access to valued social resources such as wealth, jobs, status, or indeed preferential access to public discourse and communication.

- Social Power and dominance are often organized and institutionalized, so as to allow more effective control, and to enable routine forms of power production.

- Dominance is seldom absolute; it is often gradual, and may be met by more or less resistance or counter-power by dominated groups (Van Djick, 1985).

For the purpose of this study, however, I focus more on social or institutional power rather than individual power.

Critical Linguistics (CL) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as I have indicated, are all political projects that aim at critically studying how language use combine with other social factors such as power to bring about inequitable relationships in contemporary societies. Discourse therefore is a major instrument of power and control, thereby, making any critical approach to analyzing discourse a serious political project, which is aimed at unveiling and clarifying how power and discriminatory values are inscribed in, and mediated through the linguistic system (Coultard & Coultard, 1995). As I locate the sustainability discourse in the arena of power relations, my analysis has essentially been political both in intent and purpose. My task, therefore, has been to act upon the *word* with a view to acting on the *world* (Freire, 1972). Acting on the *word* and the *world* is my way of unveiling how discourses inform social practices and to explore emancipatory possibilities. It is also important to stress that it is the cognitive dimension of power and control rather than physical power and control that is important for this analysis. The reason, according to Van Djik (1995), is that dominant groups and institutions do have special access to, and control over the means of public discourse and communication. This implies that this group "may influence the structures of text and talk in such a way that, as a result, the knowledge, attitudes, norms values and ideologies of recipients are—more or less indirectly— affected in the interest of the dominant group" (p. 85).

This affirms Habermas' (1977) view that language is ideological, and even though language is not powerful on its own—it gains power by the use powerful people makes of

it. Our contemporary time provides ample evidence to show how language is used to mediate ideology. It is a "technology" that plays safely in the hands of politicians and other powerful entities in the production of different practices. Technology is here used broadly to refer to any apparatus applied to materials within a practice of production to achieve particular social, economic, educational, political, or cultural effect. Such technologies have become common place in the modern political economy. These include technologies of administration and coercion with an aim of regulating state-citizen relationships. Processes of surveillance as discussed by Foucault (1997), and his analysis of disciplinary technologies of power readily come to mind. For instance, the now pervasive school discourse of global economic competitiveness and how the United States will be left behind if the desired actions are not taken serves as a classic example. President Bush recently commented:

> We're living in a global world. See, the education system must compete with the education systems in China and India. If we fail to give our students the skills necessary to compete in the world of the 21st century, the jobs will go elsewhere. That's just the fact of life. It's the reality of the world we live in. And therefore, now is the time for the United States of America to give our children the skills so that the jobs will stay here. (U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Press Secretary, 2006).

This is what I describe as "the fact of life reality" in this work. It represents classic examples of *articulation, intertextuality* and *discourse moment*. Still drawing from contemporary political economy, current changes affecting education are indicative of how managerial discourses and technologies have become ideological constructions in

schools. Practices unrelated to education are linked to education through language-in-use, and in this instance economic practices have become educational practices. Such discourses then become ideologies that suppress aspects of social life, in a sense, ideologies impact on people's social cognition through "mystification" (Barret, 1991) and "misrecognition" (Althusser, 1971; Bourdieu 1991). It then succeeds in swaying people to see and accept them as "fact of life". Producers of the discourse then translate ideologies into various actions such as school reform, which in turn elevate other discourses such as testing, accountability, math, science, or reading.

In many societies, however, language in use (discourse) is taken for granted as its influences are not readily perceivable by many people. This has resulted in situations where language control or manipulation has been left in the hands of the powerful in society—the educated, media, politicians, etc, who use language to serve self-interests. The concept of sustainable development and its derivative, education for sustainable development, have all fallen victim to the complexities of language use in an ideology-driven society. The relationships between language and society are so complex and multifaceted that interdisciplinary research is sometimes required. This is why such studies that connect the origins of social realities to language and ideologies are important. In my work, therefore, even though my focus is to explore the capacity of ESD to influence educational change, I use a socio-linguistic approach to highlight the role of discourse in social change. Doing this have also implied that the complex roles of power in language use in relation to the sustainability discourse are analyzed with a view not only to establish the capacity of ESD to influence educational thinking and practice, but also to explore emancipatory possibilities.

References

Althusser, L. (1971). Ideology and ideological state apparatuses. In *Lenin and philosophy and other essays,* London: New Left Books.

Anthonisen, C. (2001). *On the effectiveness of media censorship: linguistic, paralinguistic and other communicative devices of media regulation.* Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Vienna.

Barret, M. (1991). *The politics of truth*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*, Cambridge: Polity Press

Bourdieu, P., (1977). *Outline of a theory practice Cambridge:* Cambridge University Press.

Chouliaraki, S. and Fairclough, and N., (1999) .Discourse *in late modernity: Rethinking critical discourse analysis.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of lang*ue, London: Longman.
Fairclough, N. (1994). Conversationalisation of public discourse and the authority of the consumer. In R Keat, N. Whitley and N. Abercombie (Eds), *The authority of the consumer,* London : Routledge.

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and Social Change*, Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.

Fairclough, N., (1989). *Language and power*. London: Longman.

Fairclough, N. (1985). Critical and descriptive goals in discourse analysis, *Journal of Pragmatics,* 9: 739-763.

Fairclough, N. and Kress, G., (1993). *Critical Discourse Analysis, u*npublished manuscript.

Foucault, M. (1981). The history of sexuality, vol. 1, *An introduction*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Foucault, M. (1977). *The order of things*, London: Tavistock

Foucault, M., (1972). *The archeology of knowledge*. New York: Tavistock Publications.

Freire, P. (1972). *The pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Penguin

Habermas, J. (1977). *Erkenntnis und intresse*, (Knowledge and interest) Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

Halliday, M.A.K.and Hasan, R. (1976). *Cohesion in english*. Longman: London

Krings, H., et al. (1973). *Handbuch philosopher Grundbegriffe*. Munich: Kosel

Meyer, M., (2005) Between theory, method, and politics: Positioning of the approaches to CDA. In: R. Wodak and M. Meyer (Eds.) *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis (*pp 14-31*).* London: Sage

Philips, L. and Jorgensen, M., (2002). .*Discourse analysis as theory and method*. London, England: Sage Publications.

Rogers, R. et al, (2005). Critical discourse analysis in education: A review of the literature, *Review of Educational Research*, (75) 3, pp. 365-416.

Thompson, J. B., (1988). *Critical hermeneutics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Van Djik, T. A. (ed) (1985). *Handbook of discourse analysis*, New York: Academic Press.

van Djik, T. (1995). Esoteric Discourse Analysis (Editorial), *Discourse and society* (5) 1

Wodak, R., (2005) The discourse historical approach, In: R. Wodak and M. Meyer, (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (pp.63-93). London: Sage Publications.

Wodak, R. and Meyer, M., eds. (2005). *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Press Secretary. (2006). President Bush

discusses No Child Left Behind. Retrieved from

htt://www.ed.gov/news/releases/2006/10/20061005-6.html.

Chapter Five

People, Places, and Cultures: The Cultural Dimensions of Education for Sustainable Development

As an African and an educator with cross-cultural experiences, my understanding of what constitutes development or sustainable development has been shaped by my lived experiences in different cultures both in developed and developing country situations. These different experiences have been complementary and insightful, and have naturally influenced my interest in the role of education in sustainable development. I am of the view that fundamental differences in people's lived experiences have frequently been neglected in discussions on global sustainability, and for that matter the role of education in the quest. This, to a large extent, has led to the taken-for-granted assumption that generalized global actions, including education, could transform all people for sustainability irrespective of their places and unique cultures. Blowers (2003) has observed that central to the analysis and understanding of the possibilities and prospects for sustainable development are issues of spatial and cultural differences, which need to be taken into consideration.

Dei (1993) also commented on the need to question "the appropriateness and applicability of such concepts as 'development' and 'sustainability' framed within Western modes of thought for non-Western peoples" (p. 98). These are central issues that inform my position; they raise critical questions relating to power, domination, and ideology imposition, thus making it imperative, within the current context of education for sustainable development (ESD), and even more so, the currently on-going

International Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, to understand the political project that informs the debates on sustainable development. The reality is people in different places pursue their own development forms through different ways, which are based on their cultural situationality and development aspirations. It is therefore important that discourses on global sustainability take into consideration such cultural differences that shape a people's lifestyles and development aspirations in different places. Against the background of such differences, the role of education in sustainable development needs to be carefully considered to avoid blanket prescription and approaches. Generalized assumptions and approaches may prove counter-productive to underlying ideals of ESD, which includes participatory, democratic, and context-specific approaches.

This paper focuses on the educational imperative of sustainable development. It begins on the premise that current discourses on sustainable development ignore spatial, cultural, and structural differences of different people. It also argues that the sustainability discourse has evolved out of historical and contemporary discourses of development or human progress, and has to a large extent, influenced how it is perceived and pursued in different places. Knowing the historical context in which the discourse has evolved is, therefore, important in helping to establish how it informs the current sustainability discourse. As Irwin (2001) observed, "Any meaningful discussion on the concept of sustainable development "needs to be set in context to explain its emergence and influence" (p. 35). Meyer (2005) underscores this by contending that, "[a]ll discourses are historical and can therefore only be understood with reference to their context" (p. 15).

In this regard, much as this paper focuses on the role of education in sustainable

development in different socio-cultural settings, the original ideology of development—

human progress—becomes particularly instructive in helping to establish the relationship

between the two ideologies. I begin with an examination of the historical significance of

the concept of development in the current sustainable development discourse. Secondly, I

will discuss two different development worldviews within the context of sustainable

development. Ghana and the United States have been chosen as two contrasting cultural

settings to explore their different understandings and approaches to development, and

how these approaches relate to the quest for sustainable development. Thirdly, I will

discuss education in sustainable development by arguing that different worldviews and

different development aspirations inform different educational philosophies and

practices. I will conclude with a discussion on the notion of *one human family* and its

impact on the ESD discourse. The principal organizing question for this paper, therefore,

becomes: What does sustainable living mean to people in developing and developed

countries, and how, if any, does their different conceptualizations translate into the

framing of a philosophy of education for sustainable development that suits their local

needs and peculiarities?

From Development to Sustainable Development

The last few decades have seen the term sustainable development emerge as one

the most popular development catchphrases in recent times. Its popularity came with the

publication of *Our Common Future* in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment

and Development (WCED). The publication also served as the official report of the

United Nations sponsored commission put together to explore the environment and development problems of our time. The report has since marked a watershed in global development thinking (Sneddon, Howarth & Nogarrd, 2006). It called for a recalibration of institutional mechanisms at local, national, and global levels to promote economic, social, and ecological development patterns that will ensure "the security, well-being, and very survival of the planet" (WECD, 1987, p.23). In effect, the report called for new development approaches that were sustainable.

Even though this call signaled a new development vision, like the old development ideology, this new vision emphasizes economic growth as an avenue for human development. There is still a conceptual relationship between the two ideologies, and this is shown in the levels of faith and optimism reposed in scientific, industrial, and technological capacities by the Brundtland Commission. From the perspective of the commission, such capacities provide a solid foundation for growth and human development, it states:

> Industry is central to the economics of modern societies and an indispensable motor of growth. It is essential to developing countries to widen their development base and meet growing needs. And though industrialized countries are said to be moving into a post-industrial, information based era, this shift must be powered by a continuing flow of wealth from industry. (WCED, 1987, p. 206)

Such pro-growth language and thinking only goes to emphasize the conceptual relationship that exists between the two development forms—development and sustainable development. Irwin (2001) explains this relationship as a marriage of the old

"developmentalism" and the new "environmentalism," implying that the only addition to the new vision is the need for environmental consciousness in development discourses. Adams (2001) connects the two concepts by their vagueness in meaning and their ability to take on different meanings in different contexts. He writes that: "One reason for the overlapping meaning of sustainable development is the highly confused question of what development itself means" (p. 6). This inherent confusion in the two concepts is described by Goutlet (1971) as a semantic, political, and moral minefield. Jucker (2002) sums it all up by contending that the new concept of sustainable development was founded on the same shaky foundations of its predecessor—development.

As a term, development has historically been used in two distinct senses: first, as a way to describe how progress is perceived or measured in societies, and secondly, as a normative term to set out what should happen (Goutlet, 1995). While Sachs (1996) sees development as a perception that models reality, Howard (1978) has concluded that it is a "slippery value word" used by "noisy persuaders" such as politicians "to herd people in the direction they want them to go" (p. 17). Like the current sustainable development discourse, many people of diverse backgrounds hold their own views and interpretations. However, irrespective of how the notion of development is perceived or defined, as an ideology, it has evolved to become perhaps the single most important human aspiration in most societies. Esteva, (1992) writes that "There is nothing in modern mentality comparable to it [development] as a force guiding thought and behavior" (p. 282). It is no wonder, therefore, that the current vision—global sustainability—has also become one of the most serious political challenges of our time (Porritt, 1996).

The key issue remains that progress or development is perceived differently in different places and cultures, and they are also pursued and measured based on different concepts and values as generated by both past and present generations (Power, 2003). For instance, while the concept of development in Western capitalist societies have for a long time focused on economic growth, technological and market innovations, as well as capital expansion, visions of development in most developing countries, particularly in Africa, are largely about survival—sustenance of human life almost on a day-to-day basis. It is about overcoming the causes of poverty and restoring dignity in individual and social lives. From an African perspective, a distinction could therefore be made between *sustainability* and *survivabilit*y, and it is such a distinction that characterizes different cultural understanding of development and sustainable development. It is because of such imprecision in interpretations and understanding that has led many to believe that development is a "slippery value word," that could mean different things to different people. Similarly, the current concept of sustainable development has also become a victim of ambiguous applications and implications.

The start of the "age of development" according to Sachs (1996, p. 1) is traced to the now famous inaugural speech of President Harry Truman of the United States in January, 1949. The term development was first given political and ideological proposition by President Truman when he declared in his address that: "We [United States] must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of *underdeveloped* [sic] areas." By this usage and in that context, President Truman invented a meaning of development, which linked human progress to industrialization

and mass production. Also, by dichotomizing developed and underdeveloped areas of the world, a new perception of self and otherness was created to draw a clear distinction between the developed North and the underdeveloped Southern hemispheres. The label, *underdeveloped*, has since provided the cognitive base for the establishment of otherness in geo-political relationships.

As an ideology and a standard for aspiration, development has since divided the world into two unequal halves—developed and underdeveloped. More recently, *developing* has replaced underdeveloped, but largely as a euphemistic preference. No matter how these dichotomies are perceived, they are attestations to the power of the philosophical grounding of the Truman ideology. Inherent in the ideology are underlying hegemonic assumptions that define the relationship between developed and developing countries. In other words, the protagonist, who in this case is the United States, determines another society's development deficiencies and prescribes remedies or interventions. The element of superiority in this geo-political power dynamic is what Sachs (1996) believes has finally been shattered by the current global environmental predicament, what I describe as our *unsustainable present*, which has necessitated a new vision and conceptualization of development.

In Sachs' view, the fact that global environmental problems have become so pervasive and endemic in almost all societies signal the end of the Truman idea of development, and even more importantly, Northern superiority. That is to say, the consequences of our present ecological and social predicaments have brought a level of equality in humanity in the sense that all humanity stand to suffer the threats and consequences of unsustainable development patterns. The current call for new

approaches to development—one that is sustainable—is an attestation to the reality of how unworkable or unsustainable old development ideologies have been. Sachs (1996) writes,

> This epoch [of development] is coming to an end. The time is ripe to write the obituaries…The idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape. Delusion and disappointment, failures and crimes have been the steady companions of development and they tell a common story: it did not work (p. 1).

This position had earlier been shared by the Brundtland Commission when they made the quest for a new development philosophy the central theme of their report. They wrote:

> Many present development trends leave increasing numbers of people poor and vulnerable, while at the same time degrading the environment. How can such development serve the next century's world of twice as many people relying on the same environment? This realization broadened our view of development. We came to see it not in its restricted context of economic growth….We came to see that a new development path was required, one that sustained human progress not just in a few places for a few years, but for the entire planet. (WCED, 1987, p. 4)

The need for "a new development path" underscored the realization of the irresponsible paths the old development philosophies have threaded. Notions of human progress had, and continue to be framed on narrow economic rationalities that have ignored ecological and social considerations. The call for new visions of human progress is, therefore, a quest for sustainable development.

Sustainable Development: The Quest for a new Development

The sustainability call, as led by the Brundtland Commission, had been necessitated by the unsustainability of current development patterns. In the wake of growing and interconnected ecological and social crisis, such as climate change, health, poverty, violent conflicts, extreme inequalities within and between nations, our *unsustainable present* became all too apparent. As a response, the Brundtland Report signaled a caution and the need for humanity to change course. A new vision for global environmental and development thinking was then proposed, and this vision is what is captured in the ideals of global sustainability. Sustainable development is widely defined as development "[t]hat meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, p. 23). This is the definition proposed by the Brundtland Report and even though it has proved popular in different contexts, its limitations are, however, becoming more and more obvious as it fails to convey the idea of biophysical limits within which human development must operate (Porritt, 2006). Other contentious definitions have since emerged, triggering different debates about the actual implication and application of the concept. The concept, therefore, remains contested and continues to resists precise definition.

Like its predecessor, development, sustainable development has also become a terminology of choice used variously to describe different perceptions of human progress. The reorientation of the idea of human progress is central to the concept, as it tries to shift the meaning of progress from an anthropocentric perspective to include ecological and community imperatives. Despite this renewed effort to redirect the focus of human progress, there are those who believe that sustainable development is only a new disguise

of the old development discourse, and that it is built on the same notions of economic

growth through technological, industrial, and market expansionism. Such beliefs are

affirmed in current sustainability discourses, particularly in the United States, where

economic and neolibral rhetoric and assumptions lead the charge for the quest for

sustainability.

In a sense economic growth is still seen as the key to sustainable development. In

fact, such contradictory claims were boldly made in the Brundtland Report, which said

among other things that:

> Our report…is not a prediction of ever increasing environmental decay,
>
> poverty and hardship in an ever more polluted world among ever decreasing
>
> resources. We see instead the possibility for a new era of economic growth,
>
> one that must be based on policies that sustain and expand the environmental
>
> resource base. And we believe such growth to be absolutely essential to
>
> relieve the great poverty that is deepening in much of the developing world.
>
> (p.1)

Such belief in the power of economic growth captured in the perceived need for

environmental protection with a concurrent desire for economic and industrial

development make the understanding of the concept somehow problematic. The

excessive faith in economic growth is built upon a belief in the bountifulness of

resources, which ignores the reality of "limits to growth." Further, the economic

imperative inherent in the concept also makes it problematic to delineate what is

supposed to be a new vision of development from the old development ideologies.

As the concept continues to grow as a serious international political discourse, its vagueness and indeterminate nature has lent itself to infinite abuse by different economic and political ideological positions. Irwin (2001) writes that, "It is not necessarily cynical to suggest that the discourse of sustainability is especially appealing to governmental and industrial officials—and, of course, to many politicians looking for an issue that is global in significance but not overtly divisive" (p. 46). It is therefore not surprising that a wide range of governmental and non-governmental organizations continue to embrace the concept of sustainable development as the development paradigm of the current era, around which development thinking and practice should be formulated (Elliot, 2006).

The different contestations and differences in implications and applications have, however, not impeded the concept's development; rather, it has helped propel it in popularity as it continues to gain more political strength. The popularity of the concept as a development ideology has also exposed the imbalance of power in the production of the sustainability discourse, and how such discourses impact on policy directions regarding sustainable development in different countries. The more powerful and affluent countries dominate such discourses as their versions of what sustainability means easily become the global status quo. Hajer (1995) describes this as the "hegemony of the idea of sustainable development" (p. 12). When views on sustainability of global powers assume "globalist perspectives", they only affirm unequal relationships in geo-political discourses and relationships.

Contrary to Sachs' view that current global environmental predicaments have signaled the end of Northern superiority, many believe that this superiority still persists. The conduct of global development politics, particularly as they relate to the

environment, is just another area where inequality in international relations becomes apparent. The less powerful countries are invariably left out in discussions that define the implication and application of the concept in their local places. Reid (1996) writes that by emphasizing economic growth, the concept of sustainable development has played safely in the hands of the powerful who dominate the global economy with a pretext of viewing sustainable development as the latest version of development.

Also, much as the concept of sustainability is perceived as a "unitary discourse," implementation processes continue to ignore underlying issues of institutional and cultural structures that support and promote unsustainable development (Lele, 1991). In a sense, cultural, spatial, and situational differences have not been considered as a serious consideration for the implementation process. While ignoring underlying issues of differences, discussions on global sustainability have embraced the rhetoric of commonality and "one human family," a popular phrase in the Brundtland Report, to divert critical issues of power, inequality, and difference. By adopting the language of global commonality, the impression is created, albeit wrongly, that *globalized* approaches that are uniform and concerted are the key to global sustainability. The current international agenda to educate for sustainable development rests on this assumption, even though there have been efforts to stress the need for country-specific programs and approaches. The tendency, however, remains for international ESD approaches, as formulated on specific cultural understandings of sustainable development, to have hegemonic influences on national practices, particularly in Africa.

The United Nations-sponsored International Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, otherwise known as the Decade, provides both opportunities and

challenges as far as the role of education in the quest for sustainable development is concerned. While the current international momentum for educational actions for sustainable development has the potential to bring about locally-led and culturally specific innovations in educational thinking and practice, it could also, under the guise of concerted and globalized educational actions, result in hegemonic influences through ideology transfers. In other words, as countries begin to take educational actions for sustainable development, the tendency exists for the more powerful countries to institutionalize their versions of approaches and philosophies as global standards to be aspired for in less powerful countries. In a way, educational approaches for sustainable development get absorbed by neolibral discourses.

Much as the Decade and what it stands for is a worthy endeavor, there is the need to approach it with caution. As it evolves, there are those who believe that global inequality, cultural differences, as well as conceptual confusions inherent in the concept make the idea global sustainability and the role of education problematic (Cartea, 2005; Dei 1993; Jickling, 2005; Power: 2003; Trainer, 1990). Resources, they say, are unequally distributed and utilized around the world; living standards, cultural beliefs and lifestyles vary from culture to culture, and poverty and environmental issues are even perceived and defined differently in different societies. In their work *Just Sustainabilities: Development in an Unequal World*, Agyeman, Bullard and Evans (2003) observe that "[u]nless society strives for a greater level of social and economic equity, both within and between nations, the long term objective of a more sustainable world is unlikely to be secured" (p. 2).

Similar sentiments had been expressed by Trainer (1990) who also observed that it will require heroic optimism to stave off the conclusion that. "[a] just world order cannot be achieved unless we in rich countries move to much lower per capita resource consumption" (p. 94). What this means is that issues of inequality as well as structural and cultural differences are core issues that underlie the global quest for sustainable development. Sustainable development, therefore, has a cultural dimension, which seems to be ignored in critical discussions. As the role of education in sustainable development begins to gain more attention, it becomes imperative that complex aspects of the sustainability discourse are explored and clarified to pave the way for appropriate educational actions in different places.

The Cultural Dimensions of Sustainable Development—Ghana and the United States

The choice of Ghana and the United States as comparative cases is primarily because they provide contrasting perspectives: developed and a developing country. In the two countries, we gain deep insights into how differing cultural situations, including "standards of living" inform a people's understanding of what development or sustainable development should be. It also provides critical insights into how such understandings inform and direct educational approaches for sustainable development. As countries are urged to educate for sustainable development, it becomes important that critical questions are asked to understand which ways of life the broader theoretical discourse on sustainable development speaks to. Again, from an African standpoint, my interest and curiosity rests on understanding how the current conceptualization of the

concept correspond, or not, to the contemporary African situation, and how the framing

of an educational philosophy should proceed.

Against this background, while the expectation for all nations and their

communities is to take this call for new approaches to human progress seriously, by

reorienting their educational philosophies, there is also a moral imperative to free such

calls of blanket prescriptions and hegemonic tendencies that ignore intrinsic cultural

practices of different people. Predefined prescriptions of what constitutes progress or

development should not be translated into local contexts without the necessary

adaptations. Particularly in Africa, and as Dei (1993) once noted, the impulse of

development and education for sustainable development should not be dominated by

Western hegemonic understandings of what developing societies lack and what they

should be.

Sustainable development must be viewed from the perspective of a people's

culture, history, local skills, ethnoecology, local ecosystems and humanity's role in

nature (Matowanyika, 1989; Sachs; 1987). Ensuring clarity in implication, application,

and expectation of the concept in specific locales should be a central concern in

determining how any educational philosophy should proceed. It is in view of this that an

international comparative discussion of the discourse becomes imperative; it allows a

critical exploration of how different people's formulation of a concept of development

might influence their understanding of sustainable development and the roles of

education. For the purpose of this paper, I discuss below two different notions of human

progress or development: Euro-American Development Paradigm and the African

Development paradigm. Even though I use the two paradigms exclusively to facilitate a

comparison between the United States and Ghana respectively, they could be generalized to describe key differences between developed (Western) and developing countries.

Euro-America Development Paradigm

President Truman's speech in 1949 is still instructive as it was significant in many respects; apart from its import as a presidential inaugural speech, it also outlined a post-war foreign policy that outlined a new world view of the American concept of development. Much as this worldview had existed long before the Truman era, its repackaging as a post-war ideology reinforced a particular notion of what human progress means in Euro-American thinking and culture. In a typical post- war fashion, where everything was linked to world peace, President Truman called on the world's people to aspire for development, which he defines as the acquisition of industrial and scientific techniques for increased production. He noted: "Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace." With development being defined exclusively in economic terms, a new worldview was affirmed, and here human progress is explained in terms of the degree of *civilization*, which is measured by the levels of production and consumption

Development in the Euro-American paradigm reduces every problem to an economic or technological solution (Orr, 1992). It is a capitalist system, which has largely depended on environmental resource utilization and the domination of nature. Bookchin (1980) writes that,

> Capitalism not only validates pre-capitalist notions of the domination of
> nature by man; it turns the plunder of nature into society's law of life…It
> requires a grotesque self-deception, or worse, an act of ideological social

deception, to foster the belief that this society can undo its very law of life

in response to ethical arguments or intellectual persuasion. (p. 66)

Current education and economic discourses in the United States epitomizes the

"ideological social deception" Bookchin talks about. When President Bush defends an

educational system that equips students with skills and knowledge to advance their

achievements in math and science for economic growth purposes, he is only reiterating

the Truman view of human and social progress: industrialization, production, markets,

and consumption, that ignore the limits to growth.

The current desire for America's competitiveness on the world economic stage is

an effort to maintain a controlling grip on the global market. The ultimate motive is

profit, which translates into economic prosperity both for individuals and society. It is a

development philosophy that is premised on competition and individualism, and at the

expense of community building and a democratic ownership of community and its

resources. This way of life inherently contradicts the principles of sustainable living,

which among other things calls for cooperation rather than competition. It calls for the

building of strong and healthy societies that meet the diverse needs of all people both

now and the future. Social cohesion and inclusion rather than individualism and

exclusion are the hallmarks of a sustainable society.

The Euro- American development concept is one that depends on environmental

resource exploitation and utilization both locally and globally. Development in Euro-

American thinking is equivalent to growth. This is evident in current emphasis on science

and math in the U.S. public school system. They are ultimately aimed at business and

technological innovations, which in turn results in production processes that does not

only depend on the environment, but also impacts on it. As Shiva (1991) puts it, "Technological processes can lead to higher withdrawals of natural resources or higher additions of pollutants than ecological limits allow….they contribute to underdevelopment through destruction of ecosystems" (p. 233). Unsurprisingly, the ecological implications of such an approach to human progress have not received the needed attention in social and political discourses in the United States, simply because the "American way of life" is non-negotiable and needs to be protected.

Current international debates on climate change have, to some extent, brought some attention to issues of environmental sustainability and the long term future of the planet in public discourses of the United States. Climate change and issues of environmental unsustainability that invokes discourses of lifestyle changes still remain an "Inconvenient Truth" in the United States. They are, as Orr (1994) puts it, "unspoken taboos" that are against the honest questioning of economic growth practices that undermine biological diversity. This raises critical questions about the compatibility of the idea of sustainability in a growth-driven economy such as the United States, and even more so on how education for sustainable development should proceed.

Core challenges of sustainability—over production, over-consumption, materialism, individualism etc.—are wittingly or unwittingly ignored in the debates while educational practices continue to be geared towards more competition and techno-scientific innovations for market competitiveness. As Jucker (2002) rightly observed, part of understanding the full impact of Euro-American lifestyles is the need for the realization that such a mode of development is possible only on the basis of massive resource exploitation, which makes both the intra and inter-generational imperatives

within the idea of sustainability almost impossible. He suggests the need for Euro-American development paradigm to undergo structural adjustments, something which has become all too familiar in African development approaches.

African Development Paradigm

Prakash and Richardson (1999) have suggested that "The so-called 'disadvantages' of 'underdevelopment' or 'poverty' should actually be viewed as advantages and opportunities" (p. 75). Much as I agree with this assertion, which suggests that the lifestyles of the poor are more *sustainable* within the context of sustainable development, it is not my intention here as an African, to propose or suggest an African development paradigm as an alternative for global sustainable development. The sole purpose is to demonstrate the extent of disparity in cultures and worldviews, particularly between the African and Euro-American development paradigms, and to use such juxtaposition to highlight my concerns about the specific roles education should play in sustainable development in different cultures and contexts.

The African Development paradigm is, therefore, an approach to human and social development that is premised on the desire and willingness of the majority of people in African communities to bring a level of dignity to their lives. It is about survival: emancipation from poverty and the ability to control the causes of poverty. These are immediate challenges that face the majority of African countries and their citizens, and they are challenges that define their development aspirations. The urgency of these challenges and the need for action were captured in the 2000 Millennium

Declaration[4] by world leaders at the United Nations General Assembly, which led to the

framing of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). Among other things, the

leaders resolved to:

> [s]pare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the
>
> abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more
>
> than a billion of them are currently subjected. We are committed to
>
> making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the
>
> entire human race from want. (The Millennium Declaration, Section 3,
>
> declaration 11).

Emancipation from poverty and the conditions that create them, therefore, characterize

the African development paradigm.

While the Euro-American development paradigm sees development as growth,

the African paradigm views development as freedom from dehumanizing conditions that

deprive people of their natural capacities to maximize their full potentials as humans .

Sen (2000) describes it thus:

> Development can be seen…as a process of expanding the real freedoms
>
> that people enjoy. Focusing on human freedoms contrasts with narrower
>
> views of development, such as identifying development with the growth of
>
> gross national product, or with the rise in personal incomes, or with
>
> industrialization, or with technological advance, or with social
>
> modernization…Development requires the removal of major sources of

---

[4] This was United Nations Resolution (A/55/L.2) that resulted in the framing of the Millennium
Development Goals (MDG's) in September 2000. The MDG's were eight broad development goals agreed
on by the Assembly to be achieved by 2015 by all countries. They respond largely to the main challenges
facing the world, but more specifically the developing world.

unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as

well as systemic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as

intolerance of overactivity of repressive states. (p. 3)

Human development is presented here as the expansion of human capabilities. This

implies the availability of the social and economic resources and opportunities that are

necessary for a people to be able to function effectively within their natural capabilities.

It is about the availability of choices and the possibilities for human agency. In an

African context, human progress is measured in terms of functionality—the ability to

survive by meeting the basic necessities of life such as finding food, water, clothes,

shelter, good health, and access to education and skills training—in the development of

cultural practices that facilitate the building of strong, healthy, and peaceful communities.

This concept of development is based on cooperation and collaboration among

governments, civil society institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and

communities. They work together to assist people to avoid deprivations, as such as

widespread illiteracy, social exclusion, starvation, HIV/AIDS, under-nourishment,

escapable morbidity, and premature mortality (Porrit, 2006). These are what Sen (1999)

describes as "unfreedoms" considering the fact they delimit, restrict, and infringe upon

human agency and on the abilities of people to maximize their natural capabilities. The

availability of these "freedoms", as they are in most Euro-American societies, determines

the degree of human agency. In their daily lives, therefore, the single most important

preoccupation of the majority of African people is to improve their quality of lives by

struggling to remove or alleviate these "unfreedoms." This is a way of life that has been

conditioned by the existential realities of the people in their places.

It is worth mentioning, however, that much as there is a notion of an African development paradigm, certain aspects of Euro-American development notions continue to penetrate traditional African lifestyles, and have created situations where some local people pursue their own versions of the so-called "American way of life" in Africa. While globalization has been blamed for this growing trend, the reality remains that the more Euro-American development paradigm continues to be showcased in the world's media, the more it becomes the standard of aspiration and the more people of diverse places desire to be like the Americans. The affluent and materialistic lifestyles of the Euro-American culture as portrayed in the media end up teaching people, particularly young people, to view their own cultures and values as inferior and, therefore, provide the incentive for copy-cat practices.

Here, the subtle ability of the Euro-American development model to exert a kind of dictatorial and hegemonic influence on people's lives becomes apparent. The repetitive and pervasive exposures of the American way of life robs generations of people of different cultures the opportunity to define their own cultural lifestyles, thus affirming the perceived superiority of American culture or the Euro-American development worldview. This is a troubling trend that is impacting several communities around the world; several countries both developing and developed are increasingly coming under the influence of American cultural lifestyles. However, it needs to be stressed also that there are different traditional and indigenous societies around the world who are resisting such cultural incursions by reaffirming their own cultural forms (Bowers, 2005; Esteva, Stuchul, & Prakash, 2005).

In Ghana as in most of Africa, those who strive to imitate the Euro-American lifestyles are in the privileged minority whose lifestyles are in sharp contrast to the vast majority of people whose daily preoccupation is to survive. For the majority, development or human progress is both survivability and sustainability, and the natural environment serves as home—an inseparable anchorage for survival and sustenance. In a sense, they live in and off the natural environment where life is characterized by frugality, subsistence, and sufficiency. The lack of abundance or the reality of scarcity has created a deep sense of contentment with what is available, and resources are optimized more than utilized. That is to say, people make the best of what is available rather than simply utilizing them for the sake of it. While people navigate the vagaries of life through their different struggles of survival, they also maintain a sensible balance between survival and sustenance of the earth's resources, and necessity in most cases drives invention.

Unlike the Euro-American development paradigm, which is characterized by the craze for technological and scientific innovations that seek to dominate nature, the African paradigm aims simply at dominating poverty and the conditions that create poverty. Notions of human survival or progress have, therefore, been constructed around a concept of nature, which directs the relationship between humans and nature. Living in and off the environment, therefore, implies multiple responsibilities of ecological awareness, understanding, and care. Within the spirits of sufficiency, frugality, and locality lies the intuitive requirement to conserve and preserve scarce resources not only for the future, but also for the present.

In that regard, cultural and institutional mechanisms guide the African development worldview. In Ghana for example, local myths, proverbs, songs and traditions attribute quasi-human and communal qualities to the forces of nature and the human environment (Dei, 1993). This necessarily reminds people of their responsibilities in and to nature. Nature and for that matter, natural resources are viewed as sacred and are protected with reverence. In different traditional societies in Africa, certain forests and some specific trees are considered sacred and could not be entered or cut down, some rivers and even the sea are also not to be used for fishing on certain days in the week. These are all time-tested educational approaches that also serve as social principles of checks and balances for ecological sustenance and replenishment; they epitomize traditional African approaches to sustainability.

Such unwritten norms are neither perceivable nor comprehensible to outsiders, particularly Westerners who sometimes dismiss such beliefs and practices as unscientific and superstitious. Experiences such as the cutting down of trees for firewood, energy, medicine, and in some cases food to facilitate their livelihoods are also labeled as backward or damaging to the natural environment. Such conclusions have resulted in different discourses on the relationship between poverty and environmental degradation (Brokensha, Waren & Warner, 1980; Dei, 1993; Richards; 1985), and in most situations poor communities have been blamed for their roles in environmental degradation. What most outsiders fail to realize is that it is in such beliefs, values, and practices that the social, ecological, and pedagogical imperatives underlying the African development paradigm becomes apparent. While some of the arguments and claims made about the role of poverty in environmental degradation (Adams, 2001, Dei, 1993) may be valid, for

most people in Africa, living in and off the environment represents the political ecology within which they lead their lives, and it is only through a careful examination and a thorough understanding of the complex dynamics of such a lifestyle could the links between human action and environmental change be understood.

Understanding the political ecology of the majority of Africans, especially with regard to their development aspirations is, therefore, central to any analysis of their perception and approaches to sustainable development. This necessarily implies an awareness of how and why the different peoples of Africa experience the environment in particular ways. The centrality of politics—unequal power relations—in attempts to explain such experiences define what Blaike (1985) describes as political ecology. Such attempts, according to Adams (2001) are characterized by unequal power relationships, inadequate understanding which results in conflicting discourses and knowledge claims about the environment and development. It is such conflicting knowledge claims that make concerted global actions for sustainable development problematic. For example, Euro-American obsession with science and technology, and the domination of nature is easily translated into their readiness to explain all realities in techno-scientific terms, thus providing the grounds to dismiss cultural and traditional knowledge forms that guide different aspects of the African survival worldview as backward or unscientific.

Bryant (1998) calls this "the dynamics and properties of a 'politicized environment'" (p. 82). He emphasizes the importance of the asymmetries of power and unequal relations between different actors, in explaining the intersection of society and environment in different societies and cultures. Against the background of power, unequal relations and contrasting development aspirations, global sustainability and the

role of education in the discourse becomes intriguing. Further, it becomes important,

within the context of the current United Nations International Decade of Education for

Sustainable Development, that the roles of education and its capacity to make significant

contributions towards sustainable development both in Ghana and the United States are

examined. Such an examination, I believe, will facilitate an understanding of how the

different worldviews as described direct different educational philosophies and

approaches.

Education and Sustainable Development

The role of education in sustainable development was affirmed in *Agenda 21*

(1992)*,* the official conference document of the United Nations Conference on

Environment and Development (UNCED). It commented that, "Education is critical for

promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address

environment and development concerns (Section 36.3), and countries were urged to

"reorient" their educational systems for sustainable development. This view was

strengthened by the recent declaration of a United Nations-sponsored International

Decade of Education for Sustainable development—a decade of conscious and concerted

international educational actions for sustainable development. The Decade, as it is now

widely known, is currently running from 2005-2014, and has as its primary goal to

encourage "Governments to consider the inclusion… of measures to implement the

Decade in their respective educational systems and strategies and, where appropriate,

national development plans" (UNESCO, 2005). As the Decade unfolds and as the

discourse of ESD begins to gain more international attention, there are questions

regarding how different countries are responding to such calls, especially against the background of different development aspirations and different educational philosophies. The United States and Ghana are again used here as cases to explore how their different educational approaches at the K-12 levels relate or not to the ESD discourse.

The NCLB Policy and ESD

In spite of its increasing popularity around the world, education for sustainable development as an emergent international educational discourse is yet to feature in mainstream United States educational thinking and practice. As a flagship educational program of the current United States administration, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy, has intensified the testing and accountability movement in schools, and as a result constrained the ability of schools and teachers to move teaching and learning beyond test-focused pedagogies. The emphasis on testing and accountability makes it almost impossible for widespread generation of creative pedagogies that ground learning within localities, regions and real life experiences. The policy as it is now is silent both in philosophy and approach on ESD or other parallel educational traditions such as environmental education, place-conscious education or community-based learning. It therefore brings into question what it means to educate for sustainable development in public schools in the United States.

At the core of the NCLB is the mandate "To close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child is left behind" (NCLB, 2001, Sec, 1). In the classroom and in pedagogical terms, this mandate translates into a testing regime that emphasizes the need to increase attainment levels in subjects such as math,

science, and reading; this narrowly defines what *quality* education implies. The essence

of such emphasis is what President Bush has repeatedly outlined:

> [t]o make sure America remains competitive in the 21st century. We are
>
> living in a global world…the education system must compete with
>
> education systems in China and India. If wee fail to give our students the
>
> skills necessary to *compete* [sic] in the world of the 21st century, the jobs
>
> will go elsewhere. That's just the fact of life. It's the reality of the world
>
> we live in. And therefore, now is the time for the United States of America
>
> to give our children the skills so that jobs will stay here (U.S. Department
>
> of Education, Office of the Press Secretary, 2006).

For the President, the reality of living in a global world cannot be questioned. It is the

fear of the United States falling economically behind other countries that needs urgent

addressing, and averting that situation requires educational reforms that focus on narrow

economic and techno-scientific rationalities that provide market advantage.

This in a way explains how and why the current educational thinking excludes

any opportunity for teaching and learning that focuses on the human and natural

environments. Schooling and the processes involved are, therefore, isolated from real

experiences in learners' immediate communities. This is not surprising as the current

educational philosophy is framed around globalization and neolibral policies that argue

that in an increasingly globalized economy, closing the academic achievement gap and

ensuring educational quality must be facilitated through market efficiency models that

foreground competition, accountability, managerial-reforms and market-based discourses

that link educational policies to economic models (Apple, 2004; Gruenewald &

Manteaw, 2007; Hursh, 2007).

The argument, as spearheaded by President Bush and other supporters of

neolibralist ideologies in education, is that globalization as a contemporary reality has its

own sets of rules: economic and market imperatives define society and underlying social

and educational changes need to reflect this reality. Friedman (1999) expands on this

view by asserting that:

> The driving force behind globalization is free market-capitalism—the
>
> more you let market forces rule and the more you open your economy to
>
> free trade and competition, the more efficient your economy will be.
>
> Globalization means the spread of free-market capitalism to virtually
>
> every country in the world. Therefore, globalization also has its own set of
>
> economic rules—rules that revolve around opening, deregulating and
>
> privatizing your economy, in order to make it more competitive to foreign
>
> investment. (p. 9).

Advocates of the NCLB policy capitalize on this notion of new "set of economic" rules,

and the idea of a globalized and competitive world market to promote the reforms as a

necessity to increase efficiency, ensure accountability, fairness and equality in education

and society. Most arguments in support of this policy have repeatedly invoked emotional,

rather than rational discourses of a fierce economic competition in a globalized world

market, which could leave America and its children behind if desired actions are not

taken. Gruenewald and Smith (2007) comment that "When the narrative of globalization

becomes effectively linked to the narrative of social justice and equity, globalization becomes increasingly difficult to challenge" (p. xv).

NCLB exemplifies the Euro-American worldview and lifestyle. Its signature theme of testing and quantitative measurements epitomizes the culture of individualism, accumulation, and competition that characterizes the "American way of life." As a law, it was passed with large majorities in both the Senate (87-10) and the House (381-41). Such overwhelming bipartisan support is not only a pointer to the popularity of its ideological stance, but also a show of faith in where such a policy could take the nation. Hursh (2007) observes that one explanation for its popularity is that it represents a larger shift from social democratic to neolibral policies. It is a shift that is reflected both in discursive and structural changes in education and the wider society, and one that is transforming dominant discourses on education and society into markets rather than deliberatively democratic systems (Guttmann & Thompson, 2004; Young, 2000).

In other words, the direction of the NCLB policy reflects the dominant Euro-American worldview, which is rooted in growth imperatives through techno-scientific innovations that have broader market level implications. The NCLB is not really a "new" educational policy; it is a reinvention of the ideological stance taken by the landmark publication *A Nation at Risk* in 1983. As a significant policy document, the report made the following observation about the connection between the industrial economy of the United States and education:

> Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged prominence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being over-taken by competitors throughout the world…the educational foundations of our

society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that

threatens our very future as a Nation and people….We have   in effect,

been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament.

(National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p .5)

The conclusion is that the United States has "an educational emergency"—the possibility

of the economy being left behind on the competitive world economic stage because of the

lack of well-schooled competitors. The response: market-efficiency models of education,

which according to Gruenewald and Manteaw (2007) dominates the discourse and

practice of schooling, and at the same time works against any possibility of education for

sustainable development in public schools in the United States.

Even against the background of the currently on-going International Decade of

Education for Sustainable development, which urges all countries to take actions, the

NCLB policy remains unflinching and continues to show no sign of accommodating

ESD. As it seems now, ESD has no place in the current policy especially as it shows no

verifiable advantage or contribution to the testing and competitive agenda. Gruenewald

and Manteaw (2007) again write that "Indeed, the Decade is unlikely to be seen or heard

at all by most educators[in the United States] and it has been totally ignored by an

increasingly powerful federal educational bureaucracy" (p. 183).

This observation brings back the question on the compatibility of sustainability

education in the context of schooling and the wider social and cultural contexts of the

United States' politics. It also raises critical questions on the notions of "common

concerns", "common challenges", and "common endeavors" as implied in *Our Common*

Future—The Brundtland Report. When a world political and moral leader—the United

States—decides to narrow its priorities to serve selfish economic growth and market interests, the question becomes: What common challenges does the world face, what are the common concerns, and whose future really matters? Placing the NCLB policy alongside Ghana's educational reform policy may not necessarily provide answers to all these questions; however, useful lessons could be learned about the assumptions and language behind globalized calls for sustainable development that ignore cultural relativity and situational difference.

Ghana's Educational Reform and ESD

Within the context of development and sustainable development, Ghana's educational philosophies and practices have been formulated based on the country's development aspirations. In that regard, Ghana's new educational system, which came into effect in September of 2007, aims at redirecting educational efforts to address the main development challenges that face the country. Previous educational philosophies and practices have followed old colonial educational legacies that emphasized manpower development to fill colonial white-color jobs. This colonial approach to education has characterized formal education approaches in Ghana and other African countries that were colonized by European powers. The current reforms, however, aim at reframing the understanding of human resource development by linking education and training approaches to specific local needs and requirements. By emphasizing technical, vocational and agricultural education, the reforms are not only aimed at skills and manpower development, but also to free the nation from its colonial past by grounding education in local realities and needs.

Unlike the NCLB, which focuses essentially on American leadership on the global economic market, the current reform program in Ghana is place-conscious, community-focused and locally relevant. Even though the program does not specifically mention education for sustainable development, the emphasis of place-based educational philosophies and practices aligns the reform process within ESD principles. In that regard, the desire to create a new knowledge and skill-based economy is to train a new generation of Ghanaians who are equipped with the relevant knowledge and skills to fight poverty and ignorance in their local communities. The essence of the new educational reforms is therefore not about economic competition as in the United States but more about cultural, social, environmental, and economic regeneration in local places.

A government White paper that ushered in the new education reform observed that,

> Ghana's new system of education, especially for the youth between age 12 and 19, should be reformed to support a nation aspiring to build a knowledge-based economy within the next generation. Essentially, the education process should lead to improvement in the quality of life of all Ghanaians by empowering the people themselves to overcome poverty….To this end, greater emphasis than hitherto needs to be, and will be placed on technical, agricultural and vocational education and on structured apprenticeship. (Section 5, Executive Summary, Report on Ghana's Education Reform Review, 2002)

While the aspiration to "build a knowledge-based economy within the next generation" may sound like a page from an American, or any Western country's vision of

development or the conception of growth, it is important to point out that such language as it is common in Euro-American societies continues to influence thinking and practices in less powerful countries such as Ghana. Again, it is about power and the tendency for dominant Euro-American discourses to influence practices in poor developing countries. In spite of the language, there are key differences in how growth or development is conceived in both societies. In the case of Ghana, economic growth is linked to cultural practices that lead to stronger community building processes. It aims also at poverty alleviation at the local level rather than global competitiveness.

These are core beliefs and philosophies that underlie the current educational reform program in Ghana. They are informed by the country's broader sustainable development vision, which has poverty reduction as an overriding theme. The emphasis, as suggested, "on technical, agricultural, and vocational education," represents a vision of culturally relevant entrepreneurial and employment opportunities that could bring income to people and to enhance their functionality. This philosophy is based on the country's current economic situation and its long reliance on Euro-American colonial philosophies, which have contributed to its underdevelopment. In a way this new vision counters earlier colonial white-collar educational approaches that have in many ways contributed to underdevelopment. As a non-industrialized country, most people in Ghana depend on government for employment and since there are not many government jobs for all citizens, many Ghanaians are left unemployed and are caught in the poverty trap. The new emphasis on vocational, technical, and agricultural education is a way of empowering citizens to be less dependent on being employed and to be able to rely on

local resources and communal ingenuities to generate their own incomes and sources of livelihoods.

This vision is captured in a comprehensive policy framework, which is popularly referred to as *Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy* (2003). This document has been preceded by similar documents in the past such as *Making People Matter: A Human Development Strategy for Ghana (1991)*; the *National Development Policy Framework (1994)*; and *Ghana Vision 2020*, which all prioritized poverty reduction as a major development framework. The current document also represents Ghana's strategic vision for sustainable development as it addresses interrelated and interconnected areas of national development such as economics, society, culture, environment, and education. The strategy includes both medium and long term plans to improve the quality of life of all Ghanaians as well as to highlight the need to maintain the quality of both the built and the natural environments. As the document notes:

> The quality of both the built and the natural environment is vital for long-term growth and development…Safeguarding the environment is therefore an essential condition for sustainable development and improving the quality of life. The long-term objective is to maintain a sound environment and to prevent all forms of environmental degradation. (Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy, p. 39)

The strong emphasis placed on poverty reduction through technical and vocational education is indicative of what Ghana's priorities are as far as sustainable development is concerned. By embracing place-based and community-focused approaches that are

locally and culturally relevant, the current reform program targets local problems with local solutions.

The current reforms also focus on ensuring educational quality by expanding access and increasing efficiency. Quality education is, therefore, perceived as educational approaches and outcomes that are relevant to national development vision. This emphasis on educational quality is part of the broader strategy to make educational practices responsive to national development aspirations. According to the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy document,

> The major issues with regard to education are quality, equity and efficiency. Quality education is constrained by poorly equipped and supervised public schools, wide geographical disparities in access and outcomes to basic education, limited relevance and spread of vocational and technical education (Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy, p. 98).

The removal of "constraints" or better still, the removal of "unfreedoms," is to ensure that educational processes lead to improved quality of life for all Ghanaians by empowering the people to overcome poverty. In other words, it is not enough for governments to provide the needed assistance in terms of resources as a way of enhancing capabilities through education. It is even more important that such "freedoms" are grounded in local realities through the adaptation of place-based pedagogies that highlight how local resources could be employed to solve local problems.

As I have mentioned, the new educational reform in Ghana may not necessarily use the language of education for sustainable development (ESD); however, education in Ghana and most African communities is generally perceived as a critical avenue for

human, social, and ecological development. As a result several avenues are created within existing school disciplines to allow the integration of cultural, social, and ecological knowledge in teaching and learning. It is significant to point out that while the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy, which informs the current educational philosophy, focuses on vocational, technical, agricultural and general education and training, it also recognizes the place and role of the natural environment in such enterprises by putting in place mechanisms to address the impacts of such ventures on the natural environment. For instance, technical, vocational, and agricultural education in Ghana are generally located in place; that is, in culture and in nature and learners are provided with experiential learning opportunities that allow them to critically evaluate their actions and inactions and how they contribute to the social, cultural, ecological and economic wellbeing of local communities. Quality education is thus broadly defined rather than in narrow techno-scientific terms.

It is interesting to observe how national priorities in Ghana and the United States inform a certain understanding of quality education. While Ghana is committed to closing the "access gap", the United States is committed to "closing the achievement gap." Quality education, within the context of the current NCLB policy of the United States, is seen as excellence in science, math, and reading. In Ghana, quality education is measured in terms of its relevance to national development aspirations. It is about how local people acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to solve local and national problems such as poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, and health issues. The notion of managerial efficiency is talked about in the reform policies of both countries, but in different ways. While neolirbral influences in the United States have introduced managerial rhetoric such as

outcomes based, performance scales, quality assessment, standards, bottom-line etc. (Krasny 2006) in public schools in the United States, Ghana's educational reform talks about "Reformed Management of the Education Sector," and this includes community participation in schools through the establishment and strengthening of School Management Committees (SMCs).

Within the context of education for sustainable development, school management technologies that rely on top-down neolibral managerial discourses are antithetical to the principles of ESD. As one of its principles, ESD calls for bottom-up, participatory, and inclusive approaches that allow constructive dialogue and creative exploration. As I have emphasized, ESD is life-wide and encourages multi-sector partnership efforts. The market efficiency managerial models, which are now pervasive in the United States educational system, are authoritative, restrictive, and top-down; they deprive both teachers and learners their potentials to "meander" in a bid to discover and recreate knowledge forms. Such approaches stand in contrast to Ghana's drive for more inclusive and bottom up management philosophies. Partnership building underscores Ghana's current educational initiatives, and as stated in the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy

> [s]pecial partnership programs with civil society and private sector organizations will be developed….These will focus on areas where non-governmental and private sector organizations have historically been lead players, viz., early childhood development, alternative education and vocational and technical training. (p. 103).

Against this background of differences both in philosophy and practice, how justified is the claim of a "one human family" faced with "common challenges" that require

"common endeavors." These are critical questions that underlie the current international campaign to educate for sustainable development. In effect, how should education for sustainable development proceed in different cultures and settings?

One Human Family: Unpacking the Irony

I have argued that peoples' situational experiences and cultures do not only inform their sustainable development aspirations, but also direct their educational philosophies and approaches. The reality is that current discourses on global sustainability have relied on the language and assumption of a common humanity faced with common challenges to make broad international calls for sustainable development. Such calls, invariably, have ignored cultural and situational differences by creating the wrong impression that common endeavors hold the key to common solutions. Much as common actions are ideal for a planetary crisis of this nature, differences in cultural approaches to human progress or development with corresponding differences in educational planning makes the assumption of common efforts problematic. It is therefore imperative, within the current international campaign to educate for sustainable development, to explore how such cultural and contextual differences could better serve the ESD agenda in different settings

The fact that nations of the world are nested together in natural systems, and are ecologically and economically unified in diverse ways cannot be denied; however, the over elaboration of the idea of "one human family" overshadows the inherent differences in a common humanity. As a theme, human commonality has largely been employed in the sustainability discourse as a unifying tool, a tool that raises international awareness

about *our unsustainable present* and the need for the world's peoples to work together to find solutions. It also underscores how interconnected our societies are, and how important it is for communities around the world to engage in common endeavors to unravel our world from its current predicaments. As appealing and convincing as this unitary discourse is, it excludes critical questions on differences in social structures, cultures, values, and the spatial characteristics of sustainable development (Gringer, 2004). The more the notion of a common humanity is popularized through various international discourses, the more difficult the quest for sustainable development becomes at the global level. This is because, without critical explorations of the real implications of such discourses, countries and communities employ certain approaches to sustainable development that are not necessarily applicable to their local unique contexts.

While the assumption of a one global family appears appealing to diverse audiences, it is essentially idealistic and obstructs the use of locally-specific approaches that respond to local needs and realities. As shown in the discussions on Ghana and the United States, there are differences in cultures and worldviews in relation to development—human progress—and how such worldviews inform specific understandings and approaches to sustainable development. The educational philosophies and practices of these two countries are both revealing and instructive as they demonstrate how different conceptualizations of human and social progress direct educational planning. Guided by the experiences of Ghana and the United States, the question then becomes: What lessons could be learned from such differentiated educational planning, and how could such differences benefit education for sustainable development?

Ghana and the United States have only been used here as specific cases to serve the purpose of this work. Beyond the two countries, however, there are wider issues regarding the global quest for sustainable development and the role of education. It is important that differences in worldviews and cultures are acknowledged in the planning of education in specific contexts. It is important also that within the context of differences, the underlying principles of ESD are acknowledged and adopted to suit unique local educational needs. In other words, the underlying principles of ESD must not necessarily be embraced as wholesale global prescriptions or indicators of common endeavors. What is important is that the existence of differences in commonality is recognized in all discourses that call for common global efforts for sustainable development.

In my view, the notion of "one human family" only becomes relevant and meaningful when people in their diverse places and cultures adopt the ESD principles and apply them in unique ways to respond to specific local needs. Such an approach, I believe, will not only allow creativity and flexibility in local approaches, but also will empower smaller and poor countries like Ghana to redefine their own development aspirations and design their own educational philosophies and practices to match local aspirations. Thus, colonial, hegemonic, and ideological tendencies could be resisted with locally-relevant efforts.

Against the background of the growing influences of neolibral and capitalist discourses in educational policies, local responses to educational planning will not only serve as resistant efforts, but also as an avenue for self-affirmation. Less powerful countries like Ghana can stake their claims by shaking off their colonial educational past

through the creation of new philosophies and approaches that are place-based and place conscious. Ghana's current reform process might not address all the needs of ESD; however, by localizing educational approaches through technical, vocational, and agricultural education that are locally-relevant, it has at least shown a commitment to redirect educational philosophies to the needs of local places. Sustainable development is about people and how they live well in their places. By grounding educational approaches in local places and through the use of local resources, the desired opportunities will be created for local people to reexamine their places and their own roles in ensuring the peace and wellbeing of these places. There is no doubt that the world is one big community; however, such notions should not be used to reduce the importance of the local in the global, and the need for local actions to ensure global peace and eco-social justice.

References

Adams, W.M. (2001). *Green development: Environment and sustainability in the third world.* London: Routledge.

Agyeman, J., Bullard, R. D. and Evans, B. (2003). Joined up thinking: Bringing together sustainability, environmental justice and equity. In J. Agyeman, R. D. Bullard, & B. Evans (Eds) *Just sustainabilities: development in an unequal world,* (pp. 1-16). London: Earthscan.

Apple, M. (2004). No child left Behind: A brainchild of neolibralism and American politics. *New Politics* 10(2).

Blaike, P. (1985). *The political economy of soil erosion in developing countries*. London: Longman.

Blowers, A. (2003). In equality and community and the challenge to modernization: Evidence from the nuclear oases. In J. Agyeman, R. D. Bullard, & B. Evans (Eds) *Just sustainabilities: development in an unequal world,* (pp. 64-80). London: Earthscan.

Bookchin, Murray. (1980). *Toward an ecological society.* Buffalo: Black Rose Books

Brokensha, D.W., Warren, D.W. and Werner, O. (1980). *Indigenous knowledge systems and development*. Lenham: University Press of America Inc.

Bryant, R. (1998). Power, knowledge and political ecology in the 'Third World', *Progress in Physical Geography*, 22, 79-94.

Cartea, P. A. M. (2005). In praise of environmental education, *Policy Futures in Education*, 3*(3),* 284-295.

Dei, G.J.S. (1993). Sustainable development in the African context: Revisiting some

   theoretical and methodological issues. *Africa Development* (28) 2, 97-110.

Dresner, S. (2003). *The principles of sustainability*. London, England: Earthscan.

Elliott, J.A. (2006). *An introduction to sustainable development*. New York: Routledge.

Esteva, G. (1996). Development, In W. Sachs (ed.) *The development dictionary: A guide
   to knowledge as power,* (pp. 6-25). Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University
   Press.

Feidman, T. (1999). *The lexus and the olive tree*. New York: Random House.

Goutlet, D. (1995). *Development ethics: A guide to theory and practice*. London: Zed
   Books.

Goutlet, D. (1971). *The cruel choice: a new concept in the theory of development*.
   London: Athanaeum

Gruenewald, D.A. and Smith, G. A. (2008). Making room for the local, In, D. A
   Gruenewald and G. A. Smith (Eds.), *Place-based education in the global age:
   Local diversity,* (pp xii-xxiii). New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

 Gruenewald, D. A. and Manteaw, B. O. (2007). Oil and Water Still: How No Child Left
   Behind Limits and Distorts Environmental Education in U.S. Schools.
   Environmental Education Research. 13(2) 171-188.

Guttmann, A., and Thompson, D. (2004). *Why deliberative democracy*? Princeton, NJ:
   Princeton University Press.

Harjer, M. (1995). *The politics of environmental discourse: Ecological modernization
   and the policy process*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Howard, P. (1978), *Weasel words*, London: Hamish Hamilton.

Hursh, D. (2007). Assessing No Child Left Behind and the rise of neolibral education

    policies. *American Educational Research Journal*, 44(3) 493-518.

Irwin, A. (2001). *Sociology and environment*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publications.

Jickling, B. (2005). Sustainable development in a globalizing world: A few cautions.

    Policy Futures in Education, *3(3)*, 251-259.

Lele, S. M. (1991). Sustainable development: A critical review, *World Development* (19)

    607-621.

Matowanyika, J. (1990). *Sustainable development in rural Africa: A matter of context*.

    Paper presented at the 17th Annual conference of the Canadian association of

    African studies. May 9-12.

Meyer, M., (2005). Between theory, method, and politics: Positioning of the approaches

    to CDA. In: R. Wodak and M. Meyer (Eds.) *Methods of Critical Discourse*

    Analysis, (pp 14-31). London: Sage.

National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). *A nation at risk: A report to*

    the nation and the secretary of education. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of

    Education.

Orr, D.W. (1992). *Ecological literacy: Education and the transition to a postmodern*

    world. Albany, New York: State University of New York.

Power, M. (2003). *Rethinking development geographies*, London: Routledge.

Porritt, J. (2006). *Capitalism as if the world matters*, London: Earthscan.

Porritt, J. (1996). Foreword. In J. Huckle and S. Sterling (Eds.) *Education for*

    sustainability, London: Eearthscan.

Prakash, M. S. and Richardson, H. (1999). From human waste to gift of soil. In G.A. Smith & D. R. Williams (Eds.) *Ecological education in action: On weaving education, culture, and the environment*, (pp-65-78). New York: State University Press.

Reid, D. (1996). *Sustainable Development: An introductory guide*. London: Earthscan

Richards, P. (1985). *Indigenous agricultural revolution: Ecology and food production in West Africa*. London: Hutchinson.

Sachs, I. (1987). *Development and planning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sen, A. K (2000). *Development as freedom*. New York: Anchor Books.

Shiva, V. (1991). *The violence of the green revolution: Third World agriculture, ecology and politics,* London: Zed Books

Sneddon, C. Howarth, R. B. & Norgaard, R. B. (2006). Sustainable development in a post-Brundtland world. *Ecological Economics,* 57, 253-268.

The Government of Ghana (2003). *Ghana poverty reduction strategy: An agenda for growth and prosperity*, Retrieved: October 13, 2007, from http://poverty2.forumone.com/files/Ghana_PRSP.pdf

Trainer, T. (1990). Towards an Ecological Philosophy of Education, *Discourse*, 10(2), 93-116.

World Commission on Environment and Development (1987). *Our common future*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992). *Agenda 21*, Albany, NY: State University Press.

United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000). Resolution adopted by the General

Assembly. Retrieved: November 20, 2007, from,

http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm

U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Press Secretary. (2006). President Bush

discusses No Child Left Behind. Retrieved from

htt://www.ed.gov/news/releases/2006/10/20061005-6.html.

Young, I. (2000). *Inclusion and democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Conclusion

The discourse of education for sustainable development presents both opportunities and challenges to the world; it provides the much needed avenue for the world and its diverse people to engage in critical processes of reflection and action. For the world to be able to unravel itself from its current social and ecological predicaments, the discourse of ESD needs to be given the needed attention. As an emergent discourse, ESD calls for a conscious reevaluation of how communities, institutions, and individuals acquire their diverse knowledge forms, and how these knowledge forms are put to use on the planet. In a sense, ESD presents both epistemological and ontological challenges to humanity as it calls for the exploration of new and innovative ways of living and acting on the planet.

Central to the discourse are the questions: What does development or human progress mean? And, what does it take to live sustainably in our diverse places and cultures? By foregrounding the ESD discourse in this study, my desire has been to find answers to these questions by highlighting our *unsustainable present* and to draw attention to the need for new and creative educational visions that provide logical responses to our current crisis. This is what I have described in this work as the *new epistemic challenge.* The currently on-going International Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) may not be getting the desired attention in some communities; however, as an international agenda, it provides a much needed platform for awareness creation, momentum building and action. It also serves as an opportunity for the localization of educational processes that are responsive to unique local needs. In

that regard, much as the Decade is a global agenda, it becomes more effective when it is directed at local needs and actions.

By tracing the role of education and the emergence of ESD in global environmental politics, it has been helpful for this study to locate and follow the different conceptualizations of the role of education in global environmental debates. In the process, it has facilitated the evaluation of the potential of ESD as an emergent discourse to influence contemporary educational thinking and practice in diverse places. These approaches have also helped to reveal how previous environmental debates only employed education as an instrument. That is to say, much as education has been relied on at various points in modern environmental history, the role of education has largely been seen as an avenue for *salvation*; an instrument to clean up our ecological mess only after the damage has been done. Education was therefore employed only as an afterthought—a remedial measure—to alleviate social and ecological crisis.

Earlier debates had constructed the role of education in global environmental problems in narrow terms resulting in the popular, but misguided perceptions that environmental education was all about tree planting or the protection and preservation of nature. Such characterization narrowed the scope of the discourse in ways that excluded cultural and social concerns. The fact that the world is still talking about *our unsustainable present*, and the potential of planetary crisis provides ample evidence that earlier conceptions of the role of education in shaping human attitudes towards nature have not worked. It is imperative, against the background of such revelations, that new concepts on the role of education in issues of environment and development are generated.

This work does not only emphasize that need, it also demonstrates how ESD as an emergent educational discourse relates to other parallel traditions such as environmental education, peace education, place-conscious education or community-focused learning. ESD is therefore presented in this study as an umbrella concept that accommodates all diverse, but related traditions to expand on existing notions and approaches to ensuring ecological, social and cultural welfare. The world's current ecological and social predicaments require that the role of education should be one of continuous guidance and a source of reflection and action. Education should, therefore, lead and direct our actions rather than to be employed as a last- minute tool to correct our wrongs.

ESD and the current International Decade provide the avenue and opportunity for countries and their diverse communities to examine and reframe their educational approaches for sustainable development. As many believe, education remains humanity's best hope for sustainability, and if that is true then the current momentum for global sustainability should be used as an opportunity to pay attention to the right approaches to serve that need. A multi-sector learning and action partnership is this study's way of calling for creative and community-focused approaches to knowledge creation and recreation. Such approaches, I believe, will best serve the interest of sustainability if they are collaborative, participatory, and allow diverse groups and individuals with diverse interests to critically evaluate their actions and inactions on a fragile planet.

It is a call for new learning philosophies that underscore the interconnectedness of life's different dimensions. This call has been necessitated not only by our current ecological crisis, but also, and as it has become evident from this study, by the increasing influences of neolibral policies and capitalist discourses that guide and direct educational

philosophies and practices. Even though in the study, the focus has been on the United States, it is a growing trend that is gaining in popularity in many countries both developed and developing. Economic growth imperatives and market incentives are increasingly becoming starting points for educational planning. While this work is not anti-growth, it recognizes the need for a sensible balance between growth that relies on fragile and bounded resources and the desire for human progress, which translates as production, consumption, market advantage, and capital expansion.

Against this background, it becomes even more imperative that educational processes that prepare future generations of managers and decision-makers to include lessons in cultural concerns for the environment and development. The values and worldviews of young learners need to be touched and shaped at early ages to enable them to acquire the life-long interest, knowledge and skills necessary for the creation of sustainable communities. In this study, therefore, I acknowledge neolibral policies and business practices in education. Rather than see them as entirely negative, within the context of sustainable development, I embrace them by exploring the potential roles of businesses in ESD. In that regard, this study invites businesses to participate in ESD by aligning their corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities to the principles if ESD. The essence of such a partnership, no matter how inconvenient, is to create common grounds that serve common purposes. Within the contexts of schooling and business partnerships with schools, the synthesis of CSR and ESD to serve a common interest is a novelty idea, which needs to be embraced and given further attention.

As I show in chapter three, sustainable development is a complex concept that requires new and innovative educational approaches. Central to the philosophy of

sustainable development is the idea of systems and interconnectedness of life's different aspects: Economic, environment, and socio-cultural. The concept of sustainable development highlights the symbiotic relationships that exist among life's different dimensions, and the need for awareness and understanding. The importance of these different connections in the natural systems of life is what has long been ignored in formal education and in modern day life experiences. By calling for new learning partnerships, I am, therefore, not only drawing attention to the need for systems thinking through interdisciplinary partnerships, but also calling for fundamental changes in underlying philosophies and practices of both school and non-school based learning.

The fact that educational approaches in most communities continue to be subject or disciplinary-based and compartmentalized makes it important that systemic and cross-disciplinary learning philosophies and practices are embraced with some urgency. This represents the radical change that the discourse of ESD is about. It is also part of the efforts required to meet the *new epistemic challenge* as I discuss in this work. While several approaches could be used for such partnership learning activities, my proposition is one that is business led. This is because, economics occupies a dominant and an almost hegemonic position in the concept sustainable of development and in the process, deflects most discourses on sustainability towards economic rationalizations. Through carefully planned educational pedagogies, issues of culture, society, and the environment could be drawn back into the concept to ensure the desired balance in sustainability thinking and practice.

Chapter five of this study foregrounds the cultural dimensions of sustainable development, and how varying cultures in diverse places influence educational planning

for sustainability. Using my personal experiences in diverse cultures, I argue that people's different livelihood experiences determine their understanding of what development and sustainable development means and how to approach it. Much as the concept of sustainable development symbolizes the quest for new approaches to development, it has become evident through the critical examination of the sustainability discourse that it maintains a conceptual relationship with the mother concept of development. Thus, it makes the current quest problematic at different levels. Tracing the historical origins and notions underlying the terms *development* and *underdevelopment*, I strengthen my argument by observing that a world dichotomized in "development" terms creates an unequal platform on which calls for global approaches to sustainable development should be made.

The central argument in chapter five is that, since different cultures hold different worldviews on the meaning and approaches to what constitute human progress, these different conceptualizations inform their educational planning for sustainable development. Representing two different cultural worldviews, Ghana and the United States helps to clarify how existing notions of human development or progress in their different cultural contexts define their different worldviews on sustainable development. As seen in the NCLB policy of the United States and Ghana's educational reform, such worldviews also direct educational philosophies and practices. Notions of "One human family," Common concerns," and "Common endeavors" are called into question as they become not only problematic but meaningless against the background of differences in cultures and situations.

Even though I appear to be critical of the notion of "one human family" in this work, I do not condemn it; instead, I draw attention to its notional errors, especially when it excludes our non-human neighbors in the family. Such anthropocentric interests and biases are what I describe as cognitive and perceptual flaws. They reflect how we as humans perceive and dominate the world, and it is such cognitive processes that have influenced our actions to contribute to our current social and ecological predicaments. It is in view of this that I call for new ways of learning and new ways of living. Much as I believe that we have "common concerns" as humans, I also believe that we employ our "common endeavors" to create a global "Commons" that accommodates and respects all nature.

The fact that humans and our non-human neighbors are nested in the systems of nature cannot be disputed; however, the fact this reality has been ignored in the thinking and practice of education is what needs attention in the world's quest for sustainable development. Making sustainable development a reality is one of the foremost challenges facing humanity today, and it necessarily requires the reinvention of educational approaches. The emphasis, therefore, should not be on empty unitary rhtoric on a common humanity or a global family; differences in human commonality needs to be recognized and acknowledged, and should be supported with global efforts that focuses on the local.

Education for sustainable development embraces the global, but also recognizes the place of the local in the global. In calling for new visions and approaches to education, my vision is to see more local efforts at reframing educational philosophies and directing such philosophies to address local issues. The global quest for sustainable

development is well served when efforts are localized and grounded in specific places to serve unique local needs. Such efforts, in my view, will make the quest more inclusive and participatory at the local level. The Decade, as I have indicated, provides the needed momentum for change. While it provides a united front for learning and action, it also reminds us of our differences in commonality.