

The Spirit of Sustainability

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The word 'Development' carries profound connotations. It transcends the physical and human spheres and reaches the level of nature, only to stand at the ethical, moral, and spiritual height of the man-nature harmony.

1 From Mechanistic Growth to Holistic Development

The neo-classical economic growth models, premised on the availability of infinite natural resources and infinite economic growth through capital- and technology-intensive production, assumed dominance during the 1950s and 1960s. These models, so popular during the said decades, spurred world economic growth mostly through industrialization, but have done so at the expense of intensive natural resource utilization as well as degradation of the environment. These ecological crises have mounted to the extent of endangering the very existence of both the living as well as the non-living systems. In the 21st century, scientifically educated people increasingly recognize the shortfalls of the mechanistic paradigm. While rational thought and scientific theory will still provide essential keys for grasping the world, they can no longer be deemed adequate. Modern quantum mechanics, as described by Fritjof Capra, transcended mechanistic interpretations as it considers the world as an integrated, coherent, living being made up of essentially interdependent parts, only understandable within a broader cosmic scheme. In response, the need for holistic, integrative, and intuitive thinking is taking center stage. These viewpoints promote an alignment of humankind with nature based on interdependence, interconnectedness of systems. True to such a vision, the Global Ethic, as outlined on the occasion of the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions at Chicago, envisioned spiritual values being integrated into sustainable development.

James Wolfensohn, former President of the World Bank between 1998, emphasized such an integration by declaring that its greatest mission was the combination of economic assistance with spiritual, ethical, and moral improvement. Thus, solutions for current crises around the world need to integrate science, technology, economics, as well as governance, with ethical, moral, and spiritual values. This is the essence of sustainable improvement.

2 The Global Sustainability Dimensions

The sustainable development paradigm gained visibility with the World Commission on Environment and Development's (WCED) 1987 report *Our Common Future*, now supported by 193 nations. The title itself reinforces the fact that the world belongs to all—humans, animals, flora, and even abiotic structures. The sustainable development is famously described as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" by the report. It established the widely used three pillars of sustainability—environmental, social, and economic.

a. UNESCO Four-Dimensional Framework

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UNESCO broadens this approach, considering sustainable development as the unifying framework of the UN's development agenda. It comprises four dimensions:

- Environment (respect for nature)
- Economy (Equitable distribution)
- Society (Individual freedom and human right)
- Culture (avoiding conflicts and war and keeping Peace).

Toward a Cultural Dimension

The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development reaffirmed the three-dimensional model, although specialists within the Agenda 21 framework stressed the necessity for a fourth pillar—Culture. This extra dimension has been defined as cultural-aesthetic, political-institutional, or religious-spiritual (Gemma Burford et al.).

b. Five-Dimensional and Seven-Dimensional Models

More recently, a five-dimensional model by Judita Thomaskinova and others includes ecological, economic, social, safety, and cultural dimensions. The cultural dimension includes science, education, tradition, religion, ethics, history, language, and communication.

Sustainable development is expressly defined within the Philippines as a multi-faceted concept with a minimum of seven main dimensions:

- Political Development
- Economic development
- Social Development
- Ecological Development
- Cultural Development
- Human Development
- Spiritual Development

A holistic approach, therefore, highlights that sustainable development is a multidisciplinary and integrative process and has become the new paradigm for the Global Development Goals.

3 Stratagems for Sustainable Growth

In attempting to solve the issues of resource depletion and environmental degradation, a multifaceted interplay of economic programs, political policies, scientific research, social evaluation, legal structures, and grassroots action is involved. Yet much of these processes is geared towards reactive, remedial actions rather than preventative, proactive ones.

Whereas certain policies and legislation have the goal of stopping environmental abuse, their total effect is restricted. These restrictions are pointed out by yearly reviews from organizations such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and World Watch Institute (WWI). For this reason, it is essential to balance institutional systems with mindset change as well as value education. According to the emphasis, "the state of the mind determines the state of the society, which in turn influences the state of the environment and the course of sustainable development."

4 The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Scheduled for adoption by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 interconnected targets seek to eradicate all types of poverty as well as ensure realization of human rights as well as equality of the sexes. The agenda defines a world action plan for peace and prosperity for humankind as well as the planet, both today as well as for the future.

The SDGs place special focus on interdependence between the environmental, social, and economic aspects of development. In their essence, there is the principle of sustainability, as the very words "sustainable development" would suggest.

5 The Corporation as a driver of sustainability

In the modern world economy, corporate business is an increasingly powerful force, occasionally offsetting national-level policymaking, outcompeting public sector organizations on scale and influence. The role of corporate bodies, as well as their responsibilities and visibility, has expanded immensely over the 21st century. In most instances, annual revenues of international corporations exceed the GDP of many nations, impacting deeply on the well-being of, and the lives of, individuals across the globe. Thus, including sustainability as part of its core business strategies is not only desirable but necessary for these organizations.

6 Business for Sustainability and Sustainability of Business

World business organizations would be compelled towards the trinity of Economic Sustainability (Prosperity), Social Sustainability (Welfare), and Environmental Sustainability (Survival). Mechanisation during the two Industrial Revolutions displaced human muscles and changed the lifestyle, giving rise to lifestyle diseases as well. With Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, and Metaverse becoming part of the business process, the unavoidable, unimaginable, and unforeseen impact on human life would be another challenge for humankind to deal with.

In doing so, humankind must go beyond information and knowledge and guide the business world towards wisdom, so that the role of business for the betterment of the world toward Sustainability, as well as the continuity of the business itself, can be ensured. Modern research concepts of Multi-disciplinary study, as well as the Holistic approach, have to be adopted in R&D centers of most businesses so that new paths of Sustainability can be attained.

The time is ripe for a transition from 'Green Business'(GB) to an 'Ever Green Business'(EGB) premised on concepts of sustainable development for environmental protection as well as development. To what extent can human being achieve equality of justice between Nature, Society, and Business? Are they mutually conflicting by their very definition, or complementary to one another? Is the dictum of Milton Friedman that 'the business of business is business' relevant for the 21st century?

7 Higher Education and SD

The World Higher Education Conference 2022, the third one, held during May 2022, aided by the Independent Expert Group Report on the Universities of the 2030 Agenda, 'continued building a 'knowledge-driven actions for transforming higher education for global sustainability'. The Indian National Education Policy goals align with the Global Education Development Agenda reflected in the UN SDG 4, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This is the first full-fledged education policy of the 21st century for a country like India. NEP 2020 constructed a policy for building a new world and country, rather than breaking the current one into fragments, but by developing an integrated approach within education. Based on the UN recommendation of the 'inclusivist approach of the Traditional Knowledge Initiatives (TKI) of the world's national education curriculum, the NEP India had space for integrating the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) of its indigenous origin for envisioning an indigenous model of higher education.

This peer-reviewed, open-access journal 'Sustainability Review' is designed for sharing, aside from the know-how of sustainability, the wisdom of sustainability. Because sustainability is of foremost current as well as forward-looking significance, R&D activities in the scholarly, commercial, as well as technical domains determine policymaking on local, national, as well as global fronts. The goal of overcoming environmental as well as economic issues through the sharing of knowledge as well as innovative strategies demands special attention on the part of SDGs as well as green business practices such as CSR as well as ESG, Ethical Business Practices, Green Technology as well as Innovation, as well as Green Finance. The editorial board of this journal seeks to share the know-how of experiments

as well as the wisdom of experience for a sustainable world holistically for a sustainable world comprehensively.