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Book Review

# 'EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE POSTCOLONIAL WORLD: TOWARDS A TRANSFORMATIVE AGENDA FOR AFRICA' BY *LEON TIKLY*

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While the UN fathoms the sustainability achieved globally with the utopian pronouncements of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) considering humanity as a single subject and as inclusive prosperity, the local agencies set more specific targets in line with the regional vision. Whatever the scale at which sustainability is addressed, some issues are interesting. When one thinks about what role education plays in sustainable development, it is not scale-specific. Any spatial and temporal datasets could prove that good quality education is an essential tool for achieving a more sustainable world that ascribes education as the key to sustainable development or following the UNs way, 'Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)'. Knowledge, skills, understanding, values, and rational actions pave the way for sustainability. Education is the guiding principle of developing a nation; it is the tool for
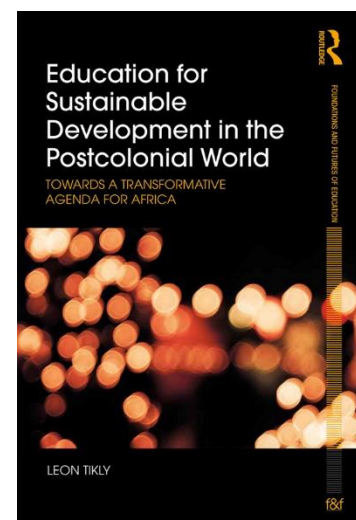
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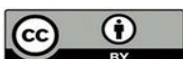
climbing up the social ladder, and it is the perspective about how the world can change for good. So the role of education in sustainable development is expected to be more prominent for the developing world than that of those who had already made a substantial level of development. However, reality often speaks something different. Africa is a particularly significant region to consider for retrieving the ground realities, and the book 'Education for Sustainable Development in the Postcolonial World' by Leon Tikly has done this.

Professor Tikly is the UNESCO Chair in Inclusive, Quality Education at the University of Bristol, UK. He has been associated critically with the African education system – he saw, as a child from a political activist family, the struggles against the racist system of Bantu education; he experienced it as the son of a South African political exile growing up in London; and he witnessed the difference as a teacher of secondary school both in London and at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College which the African National Congress established on land donated by the Tanzanian government during the 1980s. The gap between the theory and practice in ESD has not left his inquisitive eyes rather, it constructs the motivation to write an effective book on the lacunas in the African education system that resist the education becoming a powerful tool for ensuring development that lasts long.

The 228-page discussion is divided into ten chapters, which opens with the introductory discussions under an interesting title of the first chapter, 'Setting the scene'. While this chapter sets the background of the present study to develop the mindset of the readers for the following chapters of the book, the author also presumes that the ESD in the low-income and postcolonial Africa wrapped by apartheid atmosphere for a long could be meaningful for the other part of the globe where the ESD is being efforted under similar postcolonial settings. The long-term visions of transformation in its global form of the UNs Agenda 2030 or its regional version of African Union's Agenda 2063 envisioning the Continental Education Strategy for Africa have yet not ensured the continent with the skills and competencies required for sustainable development to happen. This chapter carefully assesses the colonial legacy, the effect of the cold war to the ascendancy of neoliberalism to drive sustainable development under the stresses of multi-causal and multi-directional relation overlain by the effects of different kinds of power and of intersecting regimes of inequality.

The second and third chapters carry the flavor of the discussion in the first chapter, not always with the same zeal, to start the discussion in the fourth chapter on how and to what extent the complex globalization process brings the change to the postcolonial condition in Africa - its relationship to the global economy and the natural resources; how the processes of global governance is influenced by the global polity, civil society, violence, and the cultural domain since colonial times. However, the most interesting is how the author has connected the complexity theory with ESD in the second chapter and has adjoined the recent scholarship on environmental justice with Sen's 'capability' and Fraser's 'global justice' in Chapter 3. The discussion places the complexity theory as an overall approach that complements rather than replaces other theoretical perspectives, unlike a general theory of education with predictive qualities. The author pleads in favor of the complexity theory in addressing ESD as it provides a vocabulary and a way of conceiving the nature of complex reality at a general level, which can serve as a valuable guide for action for policymakers and practitioners of sustainable development agendas. These two chapters (i.e., second and third) not only serves as to maintain a continuum between the introductory chapter and the thematic discussion in the fourth chapter; instead, it explores a broad and rather an alternative version of sustainable development which keeps its presence as the base element of the discussions in the rest of the books.

The global governance of education finds itself in critical linkages between postcolonial contexts and the current globalization process in Africa, which the author asserted (in Chapter 5) to be understood not only by simply discussing how the processes of global governance operate at a global level; instead, it requires exploring how they are taken up and mediated by regional and national policy agendas. The Cold War implicates the global politics in state-building agendas that make both the Western and Eastern powers support the authoritarian regimes to satisfy their specific global ambitions and economic interests. The most significant implication of neoliberal inspired (education) reform has been a convergence of (sustainable) development pathways in Africa. The Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA), along with comparatively newer African Union (AU) and many other similar regional cooperative blocks project new sub-regional identities and encourage economic integration and development in Africa. Besides, their counterparts (which set the new regionalism in Africa) comprising the informal and formal regional networks, NGOs, and the private sector exhibit considerable growth in numbers and influence in education in recent years. However, the form of political organization in postcolonial Africa does matter. As, unlike the Westphalian model of the Western world, most of the postcolonial states of Africa are neo-patrimonial bureaucratic and patrimonial norms coexist (which often makes them be called as 'personal rule', 'elite accommodation', and 'belly politics' etc.) where the state could extract and redistribute resources but unlike in the Westphalian state model, where the process is privatized. All these governance challenges critically influence the ESD in the continent.

The next half of the book are devoted to finding the silver lining amidst the cloud of uncertainty for ESD in the African continent. The first round of discussion (in Chapter 6) is predominated with the intimate detailing of the prospect of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016-2025. While Agenda 2063 is a roadmap for developing a peaceful, integrated, prosperous, and people-oriented continent, it traces achieving these visions in the shortest possible time. CEAS has primarily been based on fulfilling ten priority areas: equitable and inclusive access education for all; inclusion, equity, and gender equality; teachers and teaching; educational quality and learning outcomes; science, technology and skills development; education for sustainable development (ESD) and global citizenship education (GCE); youth and adult literacy; skills and competencies for life and work; financing, governance and partnerships; and education in crisis situations. However, the author warns that though the CESA has many merits, the proposals of privatizing education and training to facilitate the expansion of the public-private partnerships system do not provide a sustainable basis for expansion in the longer term; instead, it contributes to inequality. The author has critically evaluated the changing discourses on skills for development since the colonial education to modernity (in Chapter 7). It is reasonably true that the main focus is spotted on the relationship between education and the economy. The African continent witnesses, as argued by the author, how the economic development has wrought environmental catastrophe and education has be accompanying these processes. In postcolonial Africa, education and training are being repositioned in their linkages with the economy and environment. It is an effort of decoupling the education and training systems from processes of unequal growth, which had historically been based on extractive economic practices. At the core of all these transformative actions, the desired outcome is to make modern education and training work for the development of knowledge economies and environmental sustainability.

The last three chapters of the book (Chapter 8 to 10) accommodate the recommendation for the betterment of ESD scenario in Africa. The author rightly focused on CESA being reluctant to incorporate the culture and value of Africa in the curriculum, though the Eurocentric nature of the curriculum had already been an identified issue in Agenda 2063. The author had argued strongly

in favor of decolonizing the curriculum in terms of making education resonance to regional culture and language. While the language in the African education system has featured in pan-Africanist discourse for a long, developing indigenous languages has its value as an affirmation of African identities and may act to overcome regimes of ethnic and social inequality. Being proficient in both the mother tongue and a global language is an important outcome in its own right and achieves other learning outcomes. The author indicates how the unscientific medium of instruction policies negatively impacts the development of linguistic capabilities for disadvantaged groups and that this, in turn, negatively impacts other learning outcomes, including basic literacy and numeracy. In connection to the pedagogy, the author strongly recommends a 'transformative' approach by replacing the two dominant approaches followed presently as in Africa, namely, 'progressive' and 'formalistic' approaches those are evidenced to be limited in addressing either the realities of African classrooms or the needs of current policy agendas. Above all, the author argues for a change in the education system and building a counter-hegemonic movement organized around a project of implementing a transformative ESD.

The discussion contained in the book is straightforward, logical, and specific at most part. While the orders of the chapters are concerned, they are rationally arranged. However, the first three chapters have been with certain overlaps, which, at certain points, might make to feel the readers that these three chapters could be brought under a single heading. Moreover, the book has almost kept its discussion untouched regarding the worrying level of gender inequality-related issues in the education sector of Africa, where no country in sub-Saharan regions has achieved gender parity in both primary and secondary education. In general, the overall discussions orbits around the central argument of this book, what the author has noted as "whilst implementing ESD is inevitably a complex and contested process, it is a necessary one if education and training are to play a role in supporting sustainable development on the continent."