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UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goal # 7: Affordable & Clean Energy

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Introduction

In September 2015, United Nation's members launched the seventeen goals of sustainable development (SDGs) (UNESCO, 2017). These goals have emerged after a long consultations all over the world and with collaboration with international governments.

The implementation of all the SDGs will be a global effort through an international partnership between society institutions, private sector, local and regional governments and individuals. This partnership will allow the possibility to use all available global platforms for a local action so as to drive the development forward and to call for legal and financial support for the local governments who will take the action of implementing these goals.

UNESCO¹, as one of the United Nation's organizations, has undertaken to implement the 17 sustainable development goals to promote sustainability in peace, prosperity and equality for all. UNESCO focuses on the development and use of education as a useful means to achieve these goals.

Goal 7 is one of the 17 goals, which is about affording sustainable and clean energy for all Earth inhabitants of by the year 2030. To achieve this goal, efforts from all organizations, governments and individuals will be of great importance.

In this course, the current situation of the world's clean energy, the roll of education as a tool to aid in the implementation of SDG 7, will be presented.

¹ UNESCO: An acronym from United Nation's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, it was founded in 1946 after World War II. The headquarter office is in Paris/ France.

Answers to Questions

1. Why is UNESCO's goal of Affordable & Clean Energy important, in your opinion?

Answer:

Energy is the main nerve of life. Energy enters all aspects of life from production of food, medicine, means living, transportation, communications, educational tools to waste disposal and the fight against poverty and illiteracy, and to the invasion of outer space.

Since UNESCO calls for equality in everything, the equality in clean energy is the right for all. The affordability of clean energy or what is called green energy, is of great importance to fight poverty and health problems among those who still use natural resources such as energy from fossil fuel such as wood and coal, or from dried animal wastes in many parts of the world as the main source of energy for cooking and household affairs. The side effects of soot residuals from using such energy sources, causes respiratory problems and kills more people than AIDS and cancer.

Since the message of UNESCO is to fight against poverty and health problems for the prosperity of individuals, then goal 7 is at the top importance of UNESCO.

2. How is the state of Affordable & Clean Energy in the world?

Answer:

Although we are in the twenty-first century, and with the world witnessing a quantum leap in technology and advances in innovation in energy investment, we find that about one in five people around the world do not find electricity in their businesses, homes, schools, clinics, and they still use primary energy sources such as wood and dried animal manure. Nearly one billion people (1/6 Earth inhabitants) do not have clean energy or electricity (CAFOD, n.d). Although the situation in the developing countries still not encouraging for the use of renewable energy sources, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) statistics give us hope for more progress and development in green energy supplies, the UNDP reported that, after 2015 more than 20% of energy produced was through renewable sources. The investment in renewable energy also saved jobs for about 10.3 million people in the year of 2107 (UNDP, n.d).

3- What changes need to happen to achieve Affordable & Clean Energy?

Answer:

People are afraid to try new inventions, especially in primitive societies, in which the society is governed by traditions and some misunderstanding of religious beliefs and teachings. It may be very difficult to convince some people with new changes in their daily habits and style of living and they may think of the changes as a part of external invasion or a type of magic.

To achieve the goal of affordable & clean energy among new societies, where they are still using fossil fuel or wood in their daily life, many changes have to be achieved first.

- A change in the attitude of people towards new types of energy in societies who don't have any kind of modern energy such as electricity.
- A change among societies who have already types of energy such as electricity, to switch to the type of energy, renewable energy such as solar, wind, or tide energy.
- A change in the consumption behavior of people towards product that are environmentally safe and are produced by clean energy.
- A change in curriculums at schools and universities towards acceptance of affordable and clean energy.
- A change in the understanding of politicians and stakeholders towards the acceptance of clean energy, which will be of great help in the implementation of sustainable development goal seven among institutions and individuals.
- A change in the attitude and acceptance of the private sector towards the implementation of goal 7 in their businesses.
- The religious institutions, with the spiritual power they have, are of great help in the change of people's thinking towards the acceptance of new clean energy.
- A change of personal attitude of individuals from the narrow and short thinking of private interests towards global thinking of planet preservation and protection.

4- Do you think it is possible to achieve Affordable & Clean Energy around the world?

Why or Why not?

Answer:

World peace is the key for sustainable development. As long as there politicians, who think that they have the right and power on world resources, then sustainable development is very far.

But with the effort of scholars, social institutions, peace groups and the great power of social media, the possibility of change is great. It is now clear for everyone that the political conflicts in many parts of the world are caused by some greedy groups and politicians to acquire the resources of traditional resources of energy such as oil and coal, to stay in power over other nations.

It is very possible to transfer towards affordable and clean energy in developing countries, since the costs of ordinary energy resources such as fossil fuel, is also expensive in the developing countries and are not available for all inhabitants.

Because of the great leap in global communications and social media, people are becoming more aware of the side effects on children's health as well as adults from the use of traditional energy resources, and people are willing to change their living style towards safe and clean energy.

With little financial support from wealthy nations in America and Europe to the developing countries and under the supervision and control of the United Nations, implementation of SDG # 7 is very possible.

5- How can education lead to a world with Affordable & Clean Energy?

Answer:

UNESCO SDG4 is about quality of education, which ensures good quality education for all by the year 2030. It is much related to others SDGs. SDG 7 resembles the engine for all other SDGs, it acts like cement between all other goals, all goals the sustainable development, prosperity for Humans on this planet.

Education is the measure of nation's development and progress, as education fights ignorance, literacy and poverty. With education, sustainable development proceeds forward without obstacles.

Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO says “a fundamental change in the way we look at education as a key role in the world development, because it has a catalytic on the well-Being of individuals and the future of our planet” (UNESCO, 2017)

Ban Ki-Moon, United Nations Secretary-General, says “Education is a fundamental right and the basis for progress in every country. Parents need information about health and nutrition if they are to give their children the start in life they deserve. Prosperous countries depend on skilled and educated workers. The challenges of conquering poverty, combating climate change and achieving truly sustainable development in the coming decades compel us to work together. With partnership, leadership and wise investments in education, we can transform individual lives, national economies and our world.” (Sharma, 2018).

Education teaches skills for the learner and educator, it transfers knowledge from generation to other generations. Learners are able to have good judgment on things and they are able to connect things together.

With education, sustainable development or what is called Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) have an intense application as learners are able to go beyond the new inventions for the future.

Education is important to assist the sustainable development and to improve people's ability to solve environmental issues and development with great wisdom and good judgment.

With education, improvement of skills, ethical values and behavior should be consistent with the goals of sustainable development for the effective implementation of SDGs.

With education, educators will be able to know all types of energy, renewable and non-renewable, they will be able to know the impact of all energy types on environment and the health effects on individuals.

Educators will know the best type of energy that is applicable around him, taking into account efficiency of energy for the society and its impact on environment and people.

The educator will have skill and knowledge to share others and stakeholders with his ideas about energy and its applications in his society.

Educators are aware of world progress in affordable and clean energy through their contacts with other educators globally.

- 6- What objectives, principles and teaching techniques are used in education to achieve Affordable & Clean Energy around the world?

Answer:

Saving the planet, prosperity of mankind and reservation of our environment are the objectives that are behind UNESCO SDGs.

The objective of education is to build human capacity and prepare them for the new change in the field of affordable and clean energy. With education, people will more aware of health and environmental problems. Education raises understanding and cooperation around the world.

Equality is the main principle that must be in consideration to allow education succeed and fulfill its objectives. If we understand that Affordable & clean energy for all as an objective for SDG 7 then the change can be done and people will accept new life style.

On the principle of world cooperation between rich and poor countries, the change towards affordable and clean energy can also be met.

To meet the ESD objectives many things can be done in the teaching process:

- Introducing the goals of UNESCO in the curriculum of all school stages
- There should be at least one lecture per week for all students on the environmental issues and energy resources.
- There should be training workshops for teachers locally or in other countries.

- Encouraging students to practice writing on environmental issues, renewable and non-renewable energy resources.
 - Wall charts, posters and paintings by students to show the importance of clean energy and the health problems of other energy resources.
 - The use of home media, social media, magazines, newspapers to show the importance of change towards clean energy.
 - To use religious places to show the importance of environmental reservation and human life through the change towards clean energy.
- 7- How can education improve in your community so that the next generation has the tools and mindset to obtain Affordable & Clean Energy?

Answer:

In my community, people are aware of the importance to shift from ordinary energy resources towards green energy. Many institutions in the private sector have already moved to solar energy in replace or with cabled electricity. Birzeit university had a decision to move towards solar energy in all it buildings. We have a good opportunity to make use of solar energy since most of the year, sun shines for more than 300 days.

Many families are also moving towards solar energy, but the problem is that the solar energy tools and installation is very expensive for more than 95% of the inhabitants, which makes it difficult to afford for the high prices of installing solar energy cells.

It might be good for researchers to for start their researches on finding new and cheap tools to make use of the plenty solar energy.

Solar energy must not be used only for house and street lighting, there should be a shift towards applying solar energy in factories, hospitals, farms and even cars.

It is very important for coming generations to have more and effective use of solar energy, this can be achieved through intense education based on the complete understanding of learners towards the great challenges facing our nature and our planet.

Conclusion

UNESCO SDGs are of great importance to nature, individuals and planet.

The implementation of these goals by the year 2030, under the principles of equality and respect with the balance between economy and ecology, will bring world peace and will solve world problems such as poverty, literacy, malnutrition, health and education.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is a good tool for the implementation of the SDGs, since it opens paths towards economy, environmental and social progress.

ESD gives opportunity for actions towards sustainable development for the present and for the future generations.

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