

A few points to be considered when we engaging with a local community for research and practice for sustainability

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Local community-based and multi-stakeholder approach are considered as essential in a research and practice for achieving sustainable development. This is because governmental policies and conference declarations can create the frame but local community is the only place where we can actually work on and change the things (Fien and Tilbury 2002). Also, many sustainability challenges root in multiple causes, which even are complexly twined. Diversity is required in search for the solution at local community level. People from different fields, sectors, generations, cultural and socio-economic and educational backgrounds should participate in search for the solution of challenges. They share their knowledges and experiences in that process, so that they co-create a new knowledge for making their community sustainable.

Then, how can be multi-stakeholder participation realised truly –not in a tokenism way but in a really inclusive way where everyone, including, the marginalised, has ownership, is empowered and controls over the decision making process? And what role should we, researchers, take there? In my presentation, I would like to look at a few examples of local community practice and discuss the key factors to make community engagement successful and a potential epistemological pitfall of ‘participatory approach’ when everybody is fully believing that they are taking a participatory approach.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which is addressed in SDGs Target 4.7, is the interplay between the empowerment and participation of multi-stakeholders and their active collaboration and action for social transformation (UN, 2015). The role of ESD in SDGs is neither just one of the 17 Goals nor one of the 169 Targets. As clearly stated in ESD for 2030, which will be launched in 2021 and led by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), ESD is “an integral element of the SDGs on quality education and a key enabler of all the other SDGs” (UNESCO, 2019). ESD provides the framework for developing critical and contextualized understanding of the efforts for sustainable community development by raising questions on the inter-linkages and tensions among different SDGs (UNESCO, 2017).

ESD perspectives helps everyone including practitioner/researcher inside/outside education field to effectively articulate and tackle the sustainability problem, when they work with local community. At the same time, it is important for them to share their own ESD experience in diverse fields and sectors with the policy makers so that more supportive and effective policy can be developed for ESD beyond education field. Doing so is important, particularly now, when a national platform expected to be prepared by respective UNESCO Member State. Diverse voices to be heard and reflected in the policy making process for ESD for 2030.

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