

# The New Crucial Goal of World Education: The Quality of Sustainable Development

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**Abstract:** The survey and case study also reveal the same worrying educational reality. The quality of sustainable development in primary and secondary schools has been significantly reduced with the increase of grade in Beijing, China. The relationship between teachers and students is becoming increasingly tense because of the wrong values, and the moral added value of education is increasingly doubted. Human beings should rethink their own ways of living and learning, and unify green development, green schools, ecological civilization and sustainable development in the overall interests of human beings, and abandon narrow, selfish, greedy and vicious competition from each other. Sustainable development civilization is the latest stage of human civilization, which also originated in the gene of Chinese ancient civilization 5000 years ago. Human beings should achieve tolerance and reconciliation through education for sustainable development as soon as possible. Its success marks the establishment of a new key objective of world education as the quality of sustainable development: the truthfulness, noble, responsibility and hopefulness.

**Keywords:** World Education, Crucial Goal, SD Quality

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## 1. Introduction

It needs to be prioritized to find out the right road of our world. The right choice is to set up the new crucial goal of world education: the quality of sustainable development. Sustainable development value means one family of human relatives and the community of human destiny, instead of the vagueness, narrowness, selfishness and greed.

"Our vision is to transform lives through education, recognizing the important role of education as a main driver of development and in achieving the other proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We commit with a sense of urgency to a single, renewed education agenda that is holistic, ambitious and aspirational, leaving no one behind." [1] But the healthy education for SD requires deep thinking. Some key issues need to reach new consensus and new breakthroughs in research and practice. The research on education shows that education systems used throughout the world are well over a century old. Education for sustainable development (ESD) has to be forward-looking, because society is not preparing the new generations for a world human have already experienced but a new world with new

requirements, one which none of people have witnessed. The 17 noble goals of Education for Sustainable Development make evident that, [2] even if not in character, but in vision, the world has come to this recognition: that humanity has reached a crucial point in its history, a point where childish greed and selfishness are bound to give way to maturity, responsibility and fairness. [3] The environmental or societal aspects of sustainable development are necessary but not sufficient requirements for progress. The individual and society are interconnected: the society influences the individual, and the individual, in turn, exerts influence on society. Therefore, in order to achieve sustainability, changes need to be made at the level of both society and the individual. Seeking answers to the following questions is a good start for a discourse on the topic of ESD:

- a) To build a world that is economically, socially and environmentally prosperous, what characteristics would the individuals build that world needs to acquire?
- b) What kind of education will these individuals need in order to prepare them to contribute to sustainable

development?

- c) What knowledge, qualities, attitudes, insights, and skills are requisite for contributing to sustainable development, and how can these be addressed in an education for social development?

If this discourse could be continued as to look for answers to the above questions, it will be helpful to understand the following relationships:

## 2. Method and Content

### 2.1. The Relationship Between Sustainable Life and Sustainable Learning

What right relationship should be kept among education, sustainable life and sustainable learning? Based on experiences and research, the moral added value of educational righteousness has been more and more doubted than ever before.

#### 2.1.1. The Survey on the Quality of SD Among Primary and Secondary School Students in Beijing

In 2017, researchers from Beijing Academy of Educational Sciences conducted an important survey on the quality of SD among primary and secondary school students in Beijing.[4] 1950 primary and secondary school students were surveyed, including 746 primary school students, 662 junior high school students and 542 senior high school students. The results show that SD of most students is positive, but it is worth paying attention to their SD value index level decreased gradually, such as respect for themselves and others, respect for the environment, respect for resources, respect for the traditional culture and cultural diversity, with the increase of students' grade.

Researchers set that the total point of each SD value index is 5.0. As far as different grades concerned, the variance test showed that the students in different grades had a very significant difference ( $F=30.75$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) to the values of respect for themselves and others, and the value index of respect decreased remarkably with the increase of grade in Beijing, China.

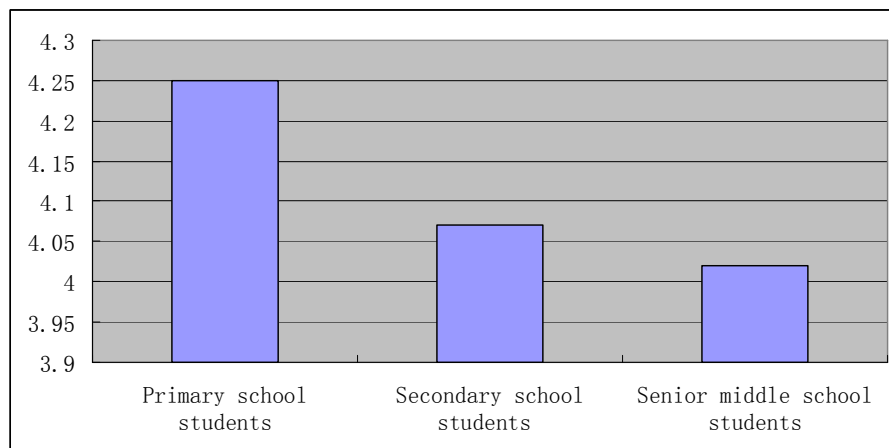


Figure 1. Respect yourself and others- SD value index of students in Beijing China, 2017 [4].

Based on the same research project, the variance test showed that the students in different grades also had a very significant difference ( $F=17.56$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) to the values of

respect for the environment, and the value index of respect decreased evidently with the increase of grade in Beijing, China.

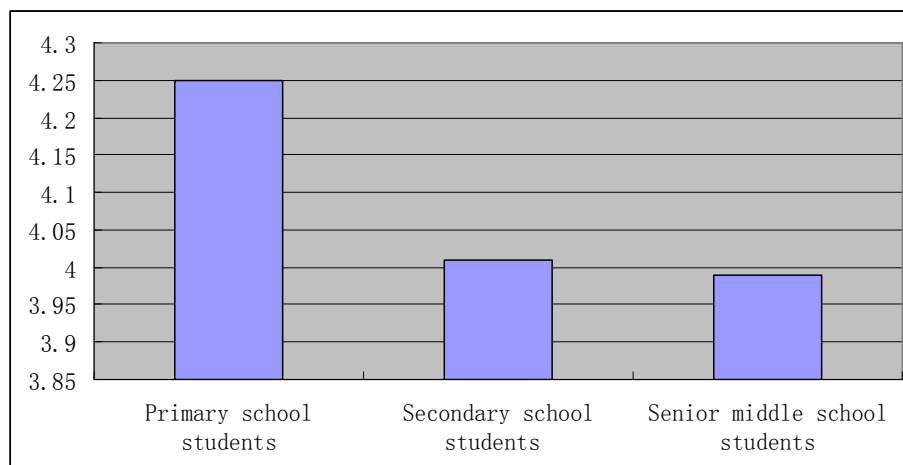
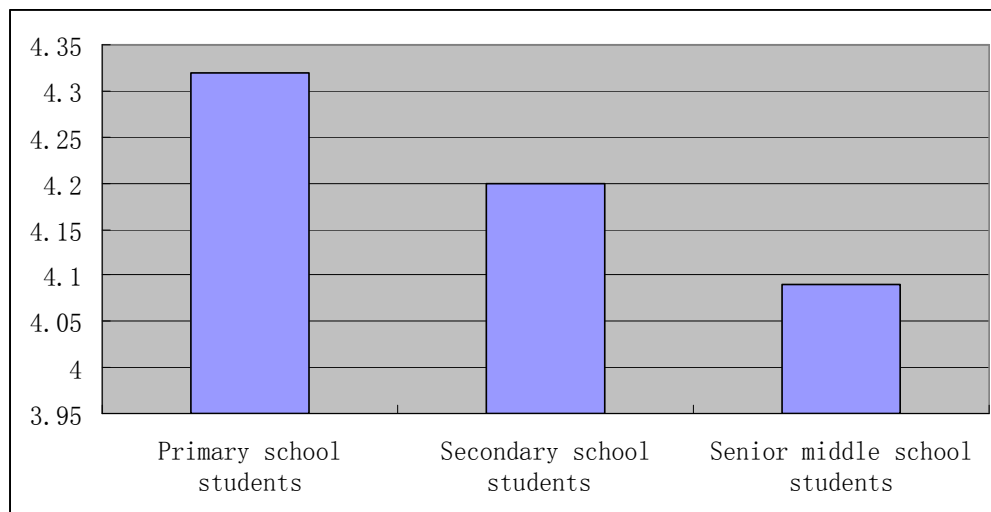


Figure 2. Respect the environment- SD value index of students in Beijing China, 2017 [4].

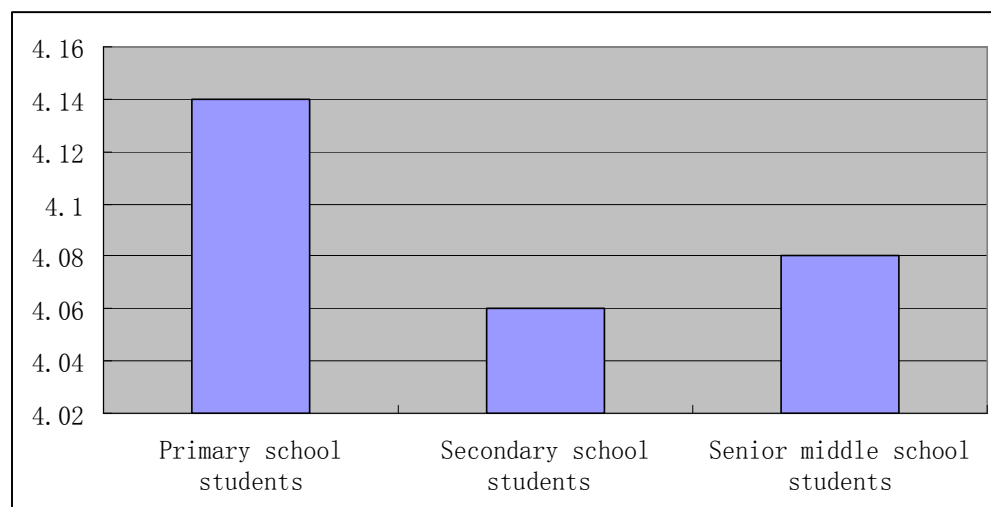
The variance test once more showed that the students in different grades had a very significant difference ( $F=16.23$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) to the values of respect for the resource, and the value index of respect also decreased markedly with the increase of grade in Beijing, China.



**Figure 3.** Respect the resource- SD value index of students in Beijing China, 2017 [4].

The variance test showed that the students in different grades didn't have the significant difference ( $F=2.35$ ,  $p=0.10>0.05$ ) to the values of respect for the traditional culture and cultural diversity, but the value index of respect

also decreased with the increase of grade, the senior middle school students' index just little higher than the secondary school students' index, much lower than the primary students'.



**Figure 4.** Respect the traditional culture and cultural diversity- SD value index of students in Beijing, China, 2017 [4].

### 2.1.2. The "11.22 Hunan Yiyang Teacher Case" in Hunan Province

It happened that there was a similar case in 2017, the "11.22 Hunan Yiyang teacher case" occurred in China, which is a more negative reminder of the important value of sustainable learning and sustainable life and ESD.

On the afternoon of November 22, 2017, the student-killing-teacher case occurred in Yuanjiang, Hunan province. Luo, a 16-year-old senior student, was trained by a teacher in charge of a class. A few minutes later, Luo rushed into the teacher's office and pulled out a spring knife and stabbed the teacher 26

times resulting in death. The daughter of the teacher in charge of the class was Luo's classmate. Luo went back to the classroom and said to his classmate, "I killed your father!" Then he ran out of the classroom and wanted to jump off the building and commit suicide. On November 13th, Luo was arrested for intentional homicide by the Yuanjiang Municipal Public Security Bureau in accordance with the law.

It was reported that the head teacher who was killed was only 47 years old, and was a pillar teacher in his school in the prime of his life. He was once rated as an excellent teacher in Yiyang, Hunan province. The killer is the top student in the third grade of the school, the first class and the top ten in the

grade. [5]

This Chinese student-killing-teacher case in Yuanjiang, Hunan province is an educational warning. Life and learning are essentially the same things, but education has cut it apart, and excessive pursuit of examinations and grades has harmed both teachers and students. Therefore, sustainable life and sustainable learning should be of the utmost concern of educators. These two things are two sides of a coin and indivisible.

The educational tragedy in Yiyang, Hunan, China, is a sharp contradiction between these two things. The class teacher, after the students had planned to finish school, let them watch the video, and asked them to finish reading after reading, and then rest. The "excellent" student wanted to go shopping outside the school according to the original plan, and did not want to write anymore. But the class teacher threatened him that, if he did not follow the teacher, his parents would be called to the school; so tension arose. This situation never should have happened.

How can teaching connect with life and learning? Education has not solved this puzzle. What is the use of high education if the soul has remained illiterate? In China we have the benefit of the education of the soul given to us by our sages, but we seem to be forgetful of the wealth of knowledge in our possession about the true meaning of education. In our 'Standards for Students' (Di Zi Gui), a compilation based on Confucian Analects we read: "If a person is intelligent and learned but lacks virtue, then his intelligence and learning become tools for committing evil; he would be like a tiger with wings. A tiger is already fearsome to begin with, but if he has wings and is able to fly, then it will be able to fly freely and do whatever it wants. Therefore being virtuous is far more important than having great scholarship and skills." With deep pondering, the question is proposed that where the bridge could be set up between life and learning in the existing education system?

### ***2.2. The Relationship Among Green Development, Green Schools, Ecological Civilization and Sustainable Development***

The Chinese government is very concerned about the construction of green schools, but educators of sustainable development put forward a new concept of sustainable development schools.

Which concept, between green school and sustainable development school, is more in line with nature? To build a model school to be followed, of course, is very important, but it is just a standard or a side of education. A model by itself will not solve any problems. The positive change will only occur when all schools learn, benefit and change according to the model. The concepts of sustainable development schools are more comprehensive, more thorough and superior. The two can and must work hand in hand. If regarding them as contradictory, it is a tragedy.

What is the relationship between green development and sustainable development? Green development is one of the pillars of sustainable development, but it is part of a greater

whole. Development encompasses five aspects, one of which is green development, and the others are innovation, coordination, openness and sharing. The problem of education should be considered as a whole and prevent one-sidedness. All the people should be vigilant, not confusing a part for the whole.

The concept of ecological civilization is a new orientation for the development of the Chinese government and the world. Ecological civilization incorporates a range of cultural dimensions including "social civilization", "political civilization", "economic civilization" and "spiritual civilization". What are the overall results of such civilizations? A team from Massachusetts Institute of Technology proposed (Denis. L. Meadows, 1972) that the highest civilization of mankind is sustainable development civilization. [6] This very important concept has been accepted completely in this paper.

### ***2.3. The Relationship Between Core Literacy and Sustainable Development***

Currently, the concept of core literacy is very hot in China. Experts often talk about it. Schools have to talk about it. In fact, the highest level of student development literacy is sustainable development, and the big problem now is not sustainable. Taking the tragedy of education in Yiyang, Hunan province as an example, if the student had been educated with the characteristics of sustainable development, would he have been so cruel to his teachers? The teacher loved him so much, when he had difficulties at home, and the head teacher helped him apply for a stipend. Does the teacher have a place to reflect on? Why would a teacher push a child into a corner because of a trivial matter?

After the research of problem of children and youth suicides, there are two suicide peaks among Chinese students: in grade six at primary school and grade three in senior middle school. The alarming news is that besides poor health and job burnout as primary and secondary reasons, the school teachers play a vital role in these instances of suicide. What does this tell us? Teaching, educating and protecting each child are the responsibility of all educators (parents or teachers). Knowing that a child's brain is not yet fully developed and is still in the process of development and maturation, we need to be concerned about the training of the teachers to deal with students with sensitivity, empathy and understanding. The quality of sustainable development is not only a child's problem, but also a teacher's problem. Every teacher should ask himself, are my ways in accordance with sustainable development? Am I fit to teach and prepare children for sustainable development? In another chapter of Di Zi Gui we read: "After first concentrating on the cultivation of virtue, we should spend some time studying." Education for sustainable development, of the highest quality, should be established in the mind of teachers and students. It is the ultimate accomplishment and must superpose core accomplishment, key accomplishment and basic accomplishment. The following consensus is urgently needed to be established: "to achieve sustainable

development, technology, political regulations and financial incentives will not suffice – we need to change the way that we think and act, as individuals and as societies." "This is the aim of education for sustainable development." [7]

### 3. Result and Discussion

The world perspective of sustainable development education and Chinese cultural consciousness should be integrated as a whole, together with the human SD. [8]

The discourse on education for sustainable development is a global conversation that involves individuals and institutions in diverse nations taking steps and sharing experiences and insights through various forums. China has experienced to contribute to this global discourse and also have things to learn from others within this international field who are also striving to learn through experience. The practice of Chinese teachers in the education of sustainable development has been praised by UNESCO and the United States amongst other nations. At the same time, own shortcomings and gaps have been found out evidently. It is of concern that when the gap between the developed and developing countries is still very large, some people are hot-headed and blindly confident. Educators should be amongst those who are more anxious, more conscious and more aware of the world. Every school should pay attention to the trend of world education development and the trend of Chinese education development.

Additionally, the consciousness of Chinese traditional culture should be strengthened in sustainable development. Is sustainable development something exotic? Is it just created by foreigners? Far from it, it is a gene of ancient Chinese culture. The earliest concept of sustainable development came from China. Mo-tse said an earthshaking word when he said, "We love the former generations and the later generations, just like loving the present age". Is this sentence not about sustainable development? Does Mo-tse not advocate universal love and non-aggression? Loving the generations of the past and the future, just as contemporary humanity, is the most profound expression of sustainable development. Therefore, sustainable development is not a foreign concept but inherently Chinese. The Chinese SD should have the inner moral motivation.

It is regrettable that some Chinese think-tanks worry that sustainable development is the language of Westerners. If the Chinese use it more, it will be assimilated by others. This shows a lack of basic cultural confidence. The ancient Chinese classic "Zhou Yi" stated, "Heaven is to be healthy, the gentleman is constantly strengthening themselves; the land is greatly moral, the gentleman is carrying the material". Is this not an expression of sustainable development? Educators should be close to the excellent traditional culture. Confucius said that gentlemen should be afraid of fate, fear of adults and fear of saints. Educators should learn from Confucius, and people who practice sustainable development education need more cultural consciousness. "Indeed a quality education should facilitate and promote human

relationships characterized by justice, peace and negotiated mutual interests which lead to greater equity, respect and understanding. It is these qualities which underpin both sustainable development and a quality education." [9]

In DiZi Gui we read: "We must also be kind and friendly to other people and other beings. That is true humaneness. If we wish to refrain from all evil and practice all good, we should constantly draw near to good teachers and ask them to teach us how to conduct ourselves well and to get rid of our bad habits. In drawing near such teachers, we should not feel shy or embarrassed, nor should we fear difficulty. No matter how far we have to travel, we should still draw near to them, not just sit at home and wait for a good teacher to show up and teach us."

It is necessary to expand world vision and pay tribute to classics. Sustainable development education is a two-way development. [10] On the basis of self-confidence, we should not be conscious of the mainstream. Sometimes the edge of education is quite noble, but sometimes the mainstream is not necessarily noble. "It would be more ethical, and more useful, were we to acknowledge that the purpose of education in relation to sustainable development was to explore the concept and its implications, tolerating different views in this process, rather than to persuade people to accept it, whatever its implications." [11]

### 4. Conclusion and Implication

Educators for sustainable development need to think deeply about whether teaching behavior meets the requirements of moral rules. They also need to take a great deal of wisdom and compassion to fight against the adverse social situation and maintain moral consciousness. Because the continuity of human civilization especially lies on the patron saint of life. Doctors also shoulder great responsibilities for human sustainable development. If doctor-patient relationship and teacher-student relationship are distorted and hostile, society will be hopeless. But the two warm relationships have been made a little cold and frightening in China. Education for sustainable development and accomplishment of sustainable development should be the key to improving the teacher-student relationship. If more principals and teachers become aware of education for sustainable development, more students will have the quality of sustainable development, education could be better, the tragedy of mutual disability between teachers and students can be reduced, and the world would be full of hope for a prosperous future. Consequently, the good end of opening up this increasingly chaotic world has to start with the educators with consciousness for sustainable development. In addition, human beings have no choice.

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## Appendix

The United Nations listed seventeen sustainable development goals in 2015, as follows:

- a) Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
- b) Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
- c) Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- d) Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- e) Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- f) Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- g) Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
- h) Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- i) Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
- j) Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
- k) Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- l) Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- m) Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- n) Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
- o) Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
- p) Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
- q) Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

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