

**Chamindri Abeysekara**  
**Faculty of Agriculture**

**Good afternoon everybody.**

Today I am here to talk about something very important. Can you all guess what that is? I'll give you a small hint.

Just think about a wealthy person, let's say the richest person in the world. He has enough money, enough resources. So he can enjoy his life a lot. It's like nothing to him. But if he wastes all his money for all the unnecessary things, what will happen to him? Though he enjoyed part of his life a lot, surely he will suffer for the rest of his life. This happened to him because; he does not have the knowledge to use his resources well.

This is about a one person, what about a one country or one nation? The most powerful country today can be the poorest country in the near future, if they do not use their resources in a correct manner.

So today I am going to talk how education helps for sustainable development in Sri Lanka. I think this is a very vital topic in such a crucial time.

So first of all we should know what is sustainable development is. According to world commission on environment and developments the sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

This does not only consider about the economic development. According to the blueberg report Sustainable development consider about a wide area. It consider about all social, economical as well as ecological development.

Once Mahathma Gandhi said the earth has enough resources for every man's need but not for every man's greed. So as a human being who knows the real meaning or the value of humanity, we should protect these resources for the use of future generations.

But how can we do such a change? According to Nelson Mandela education is the most powerful weapon to change the world. That is why the education is mentioned

as one of the most important criteria when categorizing countries in development wise by UNESCO in 1960.

As a developing country, Sri Lanka does not have a huge land area, or such valuable resources. But we have the most valuable asset that is our human capital. So what we can do is, we can educate our human capital well. So this educated human capital will manage the resources in our country sustainably.

But actually what is this education is? Is this the basic knowledge in skills, academic, technical discipline, or is it something else? The formal education system in Sri Lanka says the academic basic is important emphasizing the collection of knowledge without understanding its value. But what about the processing knowledge, using inspiration, visionary ambitious, creativity, risk and ability to bounce back from failure? These skills are associated with understanding the value of knowledge. But many institutions in Sri Lanka do not consider these values. So there is a huge disconnected gap.

Just think about Thomas Alwa Edison, Henry Ford and many other superior achievers in the world. They never finished grade schools. They succeeded because they had the great ability to process their knowledge. But typical class room system in Sri Lanka does not work in this way.

As we all know the knowledge itself has no value. It's like a dictionary filled with words. But now our education system is becoming a system that memorizes this dictionary. When students are memorized this dictionary they were given with a 1hr, 2hr or 3 hr written paper that will influence employment opportunities for the rest of their life. Anyone who does not have the ability to put clear thoughts on paper is labeled as a failure. It is very unfair. Is this how the America became the world economic leader? No.

Just think about our university system. Because of this semester wise exams the university students do not have time for entertainment, or even they do not have time think about a problem in the country. They do not have time to analyze the current situation in the country.

Actually this process will never produce a real university student, who can think and do something, a person who is sensitive to the problems in the country. Actually this education system will convert students to machines.

Is this what we expect from our education? These people will anyhow contribute to the economic development, but not to the social or ecological development. That's why I say this education system should be changed. But how?

As we all know five fingers in our hand is not equal, same as that you me and each of us are not equal. We have our own abilities, our own talents. So a quality education system should identify the talents of each and every person and should do something to improve those. The next thing is our education system should be more practical, rather than memorizing all the theoretical aspects. We should practice those theories in our day today lives. Not only that we should promote more vocational training institutions and new inventions. Think about Bill gates the owner of Microsoft, Steve Jobs and one of co-founder of face book Mark Elliot, they succeeded because of their creativity.

There is another important point we should talk. That is the government influence on education. As we all know we got the opportunity of free education in 1945 thanking to Dr. C W. W. Kannangara. Because of such good policies taken by the government our literacy level is now at 91.2 %.

According to UNESCO's institute for statistics public spending on education as a percentage of GDP are 2.15 in 2012. But our government should think more about this. If we do not take the competitive advantage from our educated people, the other countries will take the real benefit from them.

Not only that on the other hand as products of free education we should do something for the sustainable development of this country.

For that we should be more creative, Can you remember the Abraham Lincoln's letter to his son's teacher?

Let him learn early that the bullies are the easiest to lick... Teach him, if you can the wonder of books... But also give him quiet time to ponder the eternal mystery of birds in the sky, bees in the sun, and the flowers on a green hillside.

Actually this is not an order from a president; its value is greater than that. It's a kind request from a great father. This is what we expect from our education system.

As we all know Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world!

So keep a vision, make an action, and change the world, for a sustainable development.