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## Ethics for Sustainable Development

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**Abstract:** The aim of this Paper is to bring some reflections on how the Vision / Approach of Interdisciplinary Education can help build the attitude necessary towards a new global Ethics for sustainable development. Reverence for Life and space for the creative aspects of the Being can bring innovations aligned to the sense of sustainability beyond the mere need to comply with regulations, but rather, the spontaneous will to adopt Universal Ethical Principles. Research has shown that this attitude is the result of inner transformation, an opportunity which is offered to both, teachers and students, through Interdisciplinary Education, in an environment of mutual trust and respect, helping develop awareness of the Being during the creative process. This attitude will be carried to the personal, academic and professional performance in any field of knowledge, bringing long lasting effects for humanity, as a whole.

**Key Words:** Creativity; Ethics; Interdisciplinarity; Sustainability.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

For centuries, humanity has been striving to find a proper attitude towards the use of resources: material, human and economic. A more utilitarian view has often prevailed, despite the efforts of many, like Ashoka in India 23 centuries ago, for a more respectful view of Life, when he wrote the Dharma.

Eagerness for short time material results was accentuated during the Industrial Revolution, turning men into a mere part of a big production machinery. Natural resources, as well as human efforts have been used to exhaustion in a frenetic rush for more and more production of things: a very counter productive attitude!

In the sixties, a big concern with the outcome of such attitudes moved the people around the world and Sweden proposed the United Nations Organization to arrange an international conference on the issues related to the human environment. In 1972, the Conference in Stockholm gathered 113 countries, 250 non governmental organizations and the United Nations Organization. The outcome was the Statement of Stockholom and an Action Plan for the Environment.

Development could not proceed in the pattern of *single bottom line* - only economical one, in which *bottom line* represents the planet health, without which neither the economic activity, nor life itself are feasible. The *triple bottom line* related to economical, social and environmental development was the result of the Brundtland Comission – the World Comission of Environment and Development WCED in 1988 with the report on “Our Common Future”, in which sustainable development is one which assists the present needs without preventing future generations of doing the same, seeking for new postures, objectives and processes to be adopted by society.

In 1992, at ECO 92 in Rio de Janeiro – Brazil, a document called ‘Agenda 21’ was elaborated with regional, national and international efforts to stop and revert the deterioration process going on in the environment, together with principles to guide sustainable development stated in the Earth Charter. In chapter 36 of the “Agenda 21” the basic principles of education are restated, recommending: reorientation of Education for Sustainable Development / expansion of public awareness and encouragement for continuous improvement.

In 1997, Rio + 5, a complementary agenda was elaborated, called *Millenium Development Goal* with focus in globalization policies and poverty eradication, adopted by 199 countries in an Assembly at the UNO, in New York, in the year 2000. In 2002, Rio +10, ‘Johannesburg Summit’ was produced in South Africa. In 2012, there was Rio +20 strenthening the commitment towards a new attitude to Life. ‘Earth Charter International’ launched a Campaign in Rio +20 with the slogan: “See the World through the Earth Charter Lenses. Embrace and Live the Earth Charter.” Action is expected in all fields of knowledge. Despite lots of resistance, there have been many achievements all over the world. Students from University of Georgia, in Athens, for instance, have written essays about how the Earth Charter is being put into practice, “Earth Charter in action at University of Georgia”.

We have been in the international UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) (2005 – 2014). Education is expected to bring a new Vision and Approach to develop an attitude of Reverence to Life, starting in the Being. Since 2001, with Jacques Delors report in connection to UNESCO, there should be 4 pillars in Education: Knowing to know, Knowing to do, Knowing to interact, and Knowing to be.

## 2 DEVELOPMENT

The Interdisciplinary Vision / Approach to Education can be valueable in the development of a new attitude to Life for Sustainable Development, in tune with the four pillars for Education by Jacques Delors and UNESCO.

### 2.1 Some Ethical Aspects of the Interdisciplinary Vision / Approach to Education

Interdisciplinarity, according to Fazenda (2002 ) does not have only one definition. It is an attitude towards knowledge: considering the visible and invisible aspects of studies and research. It takes into consideration the epistemological, praxiological and ontological aspects of knowledge – knowing, doing and being, and the various relations that arise – one with oneself, one with the others, and one with knowledge. It resets the position of the Being to a central one, regarding the many possibilities of development, as each one finds his /her own Ethics and Aesthetics, in a creative way, along the process.

Professionals and scholars are welcome to work together in a common project, integrating knowledge, coming out of the process of fragmentation of knowledge, which prevailed for a long time. Creation of Knowledge, rather than reproduction of knowledge is encouraged, letting each one detect and construct meaning, from inside out, not the other way around. That is how consciousness of the Being emerges, bringing about a sense of worth for Life, as a whole.

It uses the phenomenological approach, as considered by Husserl, suspending judgement - “epoche”, as perceptions give way to more clear understanding, which in turn, becomes knowledge. All this process leads to knowing to know, knowing to do, knowing to be and knowing to interact.

The principles of Interdisciplinarity, by Fazenda (2008) are: Humility to recognize we build the world, Coherence between what we think and do, Respect for oneself and the other, who may be different, but not in opposition; Unnataachment of intellectual and material elements, being open to new ideas; Maturation - observation of phenomenon in time and space, reflection, and action taking in the most adequate time.

In a lecture by Bruce Rich at PUCSP, on April 13th, 2012, – based on his book: “To Uphold the World – a Call for a New Global Ethic from Ancient India”, we had a historical example of how the ruthless Indian Emperor Ashoka learned from his own experience, the futility of war and violence, in an empire prioritizing material wealth, over 22 centuries ago. The book relates to Ashoka’s diagnosis of what was necessary to make the world a better place: Ashoka’s focus was on mutual respect and sensitive deliberation that can generate it. A big transformation of consciousness showed ‘Reverence for Life’ to be an essential factor. Based on some Universal Ethical Principles of non violence, religious tolerance, species protection, human rights, compassion, promotion of peace, he set human life out of the utilitarian purpose, by depicting the ‘Dharma’ on Orissa rock edicts.

‘Dharma’ from the sanscrit, is related to what sustains Existence, associated to the universal direction, which does not consider only the visible reality. ‘Dharma’ in India, ‘Tao’ in China, and ‘Logos’ in the Western world are related to the universal principles permeating everything, from the creation of Galaxies to the interaction of people. Education that helps move the inner perceptions, in tune to this harmonious dynamics of Life, has long reaching effects.

Pineau (2004) considers that self development, together with hetero development and eco development constitute what he calls permanent development in temporalities. Self development is related to the inner process of transformation, taking place day and night; whereas hetero development is associated to development in connection with a facilitator, or teacher, in a particular time. Eco development being how you interact with the environment, and the influences you receive. These are the three movements going on along the time of the day, and the time of the night.

In the case of Ashoka, self development played an essential part, taking him out of an action which lost meaning. With Humility, he recognized we can build the world, therefore he adjusted his action to his new thinking, to reach Coherence. He could Respect different forms of religious beliefs, as he was Unnatached of the previous beliefs, and because of his own Maturation, he knew when to take action. He was aware of timing. Recognition of the worth of Life permeated his doings, after the big consciousness expansions. He applied the Ethical attitude of worth of Life to all living creatures: Being, doing and knowing were interwoven.

Peter Singer, a philosopher of the present time, also concerned with preservation of Life in the different dimensions, offers what he calls 'Practical Ethics', the application of Philosophy to situations of everyday life. He believes that we can rationally choose to take an ethical action everyday, with autonomy, developing consciousness of the Being, in order to stop suffering to any living creature. That would help connect Mind and Heart, building an attitude of what he calls 'Effective Altruism', making each of us committed to, directly or indirectly, bring some effective contribution to the whole.

Sustainability requires urgent action taking, as there are millions of Beings inflicted with suffering.

## **2.2 Temporalities, Self Knowledge and Knowledge Creation for new Ethics**

Knowledge development that allows for consciousness of the Being, in perceptions of the moment, help show the worth of Life in each of us – a starting point for an attitude towards new Ethics.

In what concerns Temporalities, Gaston Pineau (2004, p.13) reminds us that:

“Time is a measure of movement, not only its accounting, quantification, its average, but also the tuning, rhythm, tone, quality and meaning”.

We can start developing some awareness of rhythm, by allowing ourselves to perceive the beat of our heart, our breath, the pace of our walk, the way our thoughts flow, as well as our speech. The awareness of our inner rhythmical movements makes us contact our inner flame: Life and Creation inside ourselves. According to Espírito Santo (2007), the educator who has this inner flame lit as a result of self knowledge, so important in his development, will be aware of the importance in activating that in the pupil, creating mutual trust for the process to take place – an open ended process in continuous expansion. In such environment of trust, Creation can take place, as the inner beat finds its way out.

Gaston Pineau (2004, p.19) stresses the importance of involving the personal time in education, when he says that:

“Each moment one takes possession of his or her time, he or she takes over the temporal development as a condition to one's evolution. Eminently personal appropriations which also express potentialities of all human kind. A big field of research is open on “Temporalities on Development”.”

He keeps on valuing (2004, p.220) the ontological development as a permanent one for the human evolution, putting together, in rhythm, the three sources of movement: development with yourself, the others and the things. Allowing this time during the process of development brings about autonomy, which otherwise would not show. That is what Pineau calls “Chrono – Development” (2004, p.15). He says that:

“Saving time without gaining your time is a race against the clock, rather compulsive than formative.”

Fazenda and Pessoa ( 2013, p. 18), in their book on Care, show affection as the first element that helps student and teacher walk side by side;

“ The deepening of the knowledge of the teacher on the universe of the student takes place through a process of unveiling... Through an embrace it is possible to see the inner eye of the student. Something coming from inside, very deep, essential, but still not shown clearly. Only after the unveiling of the first veil is it possible to approach other factors in the life of the student which are exposed in the written and spoken productions... It is through the speech of the students that the teacher can more clearly see what was hidden in the Being in the beginning of the relation.”

With such care, what was hidden comes forth, opening way to a flow of speech coming from deeper inside, through which Knowledge Creation can take place. There is a flow of inner rhythms transforming what was tacit in an explicit way. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) wrote about the Knowledge Creating Company, where constant interactions among the collaborators of the company on particular topics, helped bring to light what was not apparent. Professionals from different departments got together around common projects, integrating knowledge, opening way to the creation of more knowledge, in a spiraling, continuous process: an interdisciplinary attitude.

If the Being is engaged in Knowledge Creation, fully Present in the moment, aware of his/her internal rhythms, the Creation process will bring Self Knowledge too. Temporalities help integrate the four pillars in Education: Knowing to know, Knowing to do, Knowing to be and Knowing to interact.

### **2.3 An Interdisciplinary Approach to Creation**

Being engaged with the spoken /written expression in a foreign language, I had the challenge to help professionals and scholars create and present innovative proposals on a topic. I observed that language understanding and expression took place in a rhythmical pattern.

Indeed, Understanding of a listening or reading comes rhythmically, as the stress of the key words is recognized. Practice through rhymes, poems and songs can help the Being tune his/her own ‘inner beat’ to that of the message, becoming conscious of the own beat. Equally, in the spoken and written expression, the flow comes with the beat in key words. The Being sustains the flow in a movement from inside out.

In more proficient levels of language development, when ideas are discussed or a point has to be made on a philosophical topic, it is essential to have the chance to expand the perceptions on the topic without getting lost, by registering only words, or pictures first. The correlations of the words or pictures will generate meaning, which can be articulated individually, or in groups.

Then, decision follows on what direction to develop the topic. In this process, feelings, perceptions, possible courses of action are evaluated, for the proposal to gain full flow. Achievement, in offering an innovative proposal comes with self realization, encompassing the Being, doing, knowing and interacting.

Below, I share the 12 'shades' involved from the Creation to the Presentation of a proposal on a topic, considering it a possibility, within the Interdisciplinary Vision / Approach:

<b>Creation</b>	Registering Perceptions on a Topic – through words or pictures Correlating the Perceptions - by putting words / pictures together Detecting the Meaning of the Correlations – through sentences reflecting the ideas
<b>Unity</b>	Selecting some of the ideas or pictures for the Proposal Defining the Position of the pictures / ideas for the Proposal Enriching the Proposal – with examples to illustrate each idea
<b>Way</b>	Adjusting / Confirming the Proposal Rehearsing the Proposal – pictures / ideas on a poster Naming the Specific Proposal
<b>Realization</b>	Defining the Style for spoken / written expression Sharing Joy – feeling happy for being able to create/show your proposal Offering the Proposal – Written / Spoken / Visual Presentation

Fig. 01 - "12 shades"

This approach to Creation can take place after a favorable environment is built, with the Interdisciplinary Vision of Education. The different colors represent attitudes and actions involved in the process.

The three first shades concern the Creation of a proposal: blue refers to the attitude of determination to start *collecting words or pictures in relation to a topic*; pink is related to the *loving* attitude which enables *correlations* to be made; yellow represents *wisdom* to *let ideas emerge*.

As for the definition of the Unity of the proposal, which is essential to proficiency, the white shade represents the *selection of the ideas for the proposal*, together with a feeling of *peace*. Even if not all the elements are used in this proposal, they have been registered, and are, therefore, saved for another proposal. Green represents the *organization of the proposal with the ideas chosen*, with *coherence*. Red is related to the attitude of *devotion in bringing illustrations which relevant to the topic*, for the development of each idea.

There are not two proposals which are the same. Each one has a specific Way to treat a topic. Richness comes while sharing the various ways. The Purple refers to the possibility to *perform adjustments to the proposal*, if there is a feeling that *something does not fit the proposal well*. Acqua marine represents *clarity*, enabling the proposal *to be in tune with the author/authors*. Magenta means *harmony*, to assure a *good flow during development*.

For the presentation of the proposal, be it written, verbal or visual, *special brightness* is reflected *in the style*, represented by the golden color. A feeling of *joy* will arise for the evidence of *being able* to come from the creation to the presentation of a proposal, represented by the salmon color. All this is *achievement* with a sense of *self realization*, represented by the emerald color.

The moment the Being is not only engaged in knowledge reproduction, but realizes that Knowledge Creation is possible, individually and collectively – making explicit what was tacit, with time to make adjustments and reach clarity and harmony in relation to him / herself, to the others and the environment, a more respectful attitude to Life may be developed, guiding his / her innovative proposals to Reverence for Life. And each one can be perceived as an instrument of Creation – part of a much bigger process that we all share, in a dance, in tune with the beat of the Cosmos, for we have had glimpses of what sustains Existence in ourselves - we share the Logos, The Tao, the Dharma...

### 3 CONCLUSION

The Interdisciplinary Vision / Approach of Education does not produce these glimpses, but allows us to come to a position to get them, as it regards the infinite possibilities of the Being through the loving eyes of the facilitators, who have had the opportunity to become conscious of their own worth, first. Encouragement of the others to do the same is continuous, with full respect to the individual time, providing the possibility to contact the Essence of the things.

Through the Qualitative Research, Interdisciplinarity approaches Human Nature and the Nature of things for significant learning, awakening the inner sensors to detect meaning, reorienting action. Consciousness of the Being expands and care for Life becomes part of the permanent development.

Sustainability seeks for a new global Ethic, for which the Interdisciplinary Vision / Approach has a contribution to bring, by allowing each of us to awaken the perception of how better we can do our part. Like a fertile soil, it offers itself for the natural unfoldings of those who are open to take place.

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