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Is the grass really greener on the other side? The intricacies of getting the green light on sustainable education for Sri Lankan International schools.

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Abstract International schools worldwide are known for being neo-liberal drivers of change. They are educational businesses that have potential to cater for an affluent clientele. In Sri Lanka, international schools have already unified a fragmented society by being co-educational havens for people from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds as long as they can afford the school fees. This fee-levying structure attempts at segregating society into those that can afford an English medium education with global access and those unable to do so. The standard and quality of international schools however, vary significantly. This paper examines the potential of Sri Lankan international schools to be advocates of global citizenship and thereby drivers for sustainable development. While the envisioned Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) goals of most international schools were admirable in intention, the actual affluent lifestyle choices of international school stakeholders were often hindering sustainable development. This paper therefore highlights the strengths and weaknesses of ESD at Sri Lankan international schools and highlights some of the potential avenues for improvements in sustainability.

Keywords Table, Figure, Manuscript Format

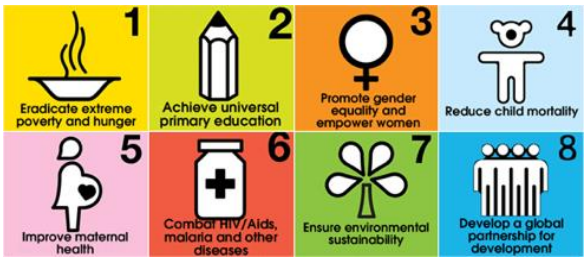
1. Sustainable Development

With the dawn of the new millennium, mass production, expeditious urbanization, increased population growth, rapid economic growth and the intensive use of natural resources for human benefit led to an increased awareness of the fragility of the natural environment. With forests lost, rivers polluted, infertile land, the depletion of natural resources and the loss of fauna and flora, questions about environmental preservation and sustainability were born in the late 1900s.

The commission for the Future, in 1987, first defined sustainable development as 'development that meets

the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. Stemming from this initial awareness, a series of international conferences around the topic of sustainability commenced in the 1990s. In 1992, the Rio Declaration, for example, included agenda 21, an unprecedented global plan of action for sustainable development (UNCED). In 1994, the United Nations Global Population Conference held in Cairo highlighted the importance of population growth distribution, economy, equity, equality and empowerment of women in achieving sustainable development. This notion was then reinforced just a year later in the 1995 United Nations Fourth Women's Conference held in Beijing that pointed out the significance of women's education and empowerment in alleviating poverty. Poverty, at this conference, was deemed a major cause and consequence of unsustainable livelihood.

The trend continued with the 1997 Kyoto Protocol marking a significant step forward in the history of sustainability with 37 countries signing an international agreement to reduce emissions and clean up the environment. Just three years later, in September 2000, the world saw the largest gathering of world leaders in history adopt the UN Millennium Declaration at the Millennium Summit, committing their nations to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty by setting up a series of 8 targets with a deadline of 2015.



Source: http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/

While these 8 targets, collectively known as the Millennium Goals were a starting point, by 2015 the goals were not met as envisioned. What was realized was that the Millennium Development Goals had heavy emphasis on social and economic aspects, there was less emphasis on the environment and in a nutshell, ample room for improvement.

Post 2015 saw the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to a series of newer targets known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs saw the introduction of 17 goals with specific agendas for improving sustainability for both developing and developed countries. The SDGs had 6 key areas of focus; People, Planet, Prosperity, Dignity, Justice and Partnerships. Compared with the Millennium Development Goals that had just 60 indicators for measuring progress, the new Sustainable Development Goals had 169 indicators. While the MDGs adopted a vertical approach to development, the SDGs took on a more horizontal role.

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Source: http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2015/12/sustainable-development-goals-kick-off-with-start-of-new-year/

A detailed look at the 17 goals

1. Poverty eradication-in addition to improving the income level of the population the United Nations proposed developing access to education, gender equality and also dignified living conditions.

2. Eliminate hunger by the year 2030- Food production provides employment to nearly 40% of the global population and is a main source of income. Eliminating hunger therefore not only contributes to employment opportunities but addresses the broader more crucial scope of preventing disease and health issues caused by malnutrition. Another main concern within this goal is the increase of agricultural productivity with minimum damage to the ecosystem and to improve soil quality to ensure future successful food yields.

3. Improved health and overall wellbeing - This particular point is concerned with the reduction of easily transmitted diseases and improved life expectancy through affordable and accessible healthcare facilities. Meanwhile another major concern is to reduce health issues related to pollution. The UN furthermore, expects to reduce maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births, reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births by 2030 and also defeat AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. Another health-related initiative is to take steps to prevent substance abuse. By 2020 the UN also expects to halve the number of deaths caused by road traffic accidents. Moreover, ensuring improved access to sexual / reproduction healthcare products and services by 2030 is yet another sub-goal of improved health and overall wellbeing.

4. Access to quality educational facilities- the intention behind this point is to provide everyone with access to quality and relevant education. While Universal Primary Education has been achieved in many countries, the transition rate of students, particularly girls attending secondary and higher education is still alarmingly low.

5. Gender equality- Violence or discrimination based on gender is to be eliminated. This point also gives attention in eliminating forced marriages, practices of genital mutilation and

encourages participating in important decision-making activities like politics, corporate world and also having a say in economic policy making thereby ensuring that assets/ resources are equally distributed.

6. Sustainable water and sanitation management – The goal here is to achieve universal access to drinking water and acceptable sanitation facilities by the year 2030. While the global population has steadily risen over the years, the amount of water available remains the same. It is estimated that at current rate of growth, by the year 2030, we would need 50% more water than is currently available. This is because even though 70% of the world constitutes of water, only 1% of it is suitable for consumption. Water is a potentially renewable resource, with its renewability depending largely on pollution mitigation.

7. Provide affordable and sustainable energy – at the moment the majority of the energy sources we use in this world are non-renewable, highly polluting and unsustainable. Therefore, this goal seeks access to universal sustainable energy by the year 2030. To achieve this target, there has to be significant improvements of energy efficiency, and also increased corporation among innovators.

8. Decent work for all- Eradicating child labour by 2030, promoting just and decent work conditions, freeing workers from discrimination, ensuring health and safety at the workplace are all targets addressed within this goal.

9. Increase investments in infrastructure, transportation, information technology and irrigation to provide greener solutions is the key intention of this goal.

10. Reduce income inequalities – 25% of the global population hold claim to 75% of the worlds resources. While overall poverty rates have declined, the gap between the rich and the poor is ever increasing. This goal aims to reduce that gap through the provision of better resource allocation and reduced inequality.

11. Sustainable cities / habitats- Rapid Urban Sprawl has seen the growth of slums, overcrowded, unsafe and unsightly cityscapes, intense congestion and pollution. This goal aims to promote sustainable city design in both developing and developed countries.

12. Responsible production and consumption – The ecological footprint refers to the area of biologically productive land and water required to produce the goods consumed and to assimilate the wastes generated. Developed counties have massive ecological footprints. If everyone consumed at the same rate, we would need more than 5 planet earths to support the current population. The carrying capacity of the earth would soon be reached and we would witness an overshot that would result in wars over resources and an ultimate population crash. This goal attempts to avoid reaching the carrying capacity by encouraging all nations, and individuals to

produce and consume resources ethically as well as responsibly.

13. Combating climate change – Rising sea levels, melting icecaps, changing weather patterns, global warming as a result of increased emission of greenhouse gases are some of the problems this goal tries to tackle.

14. Conserving marine life and its resources – the ocean is an immense contribution to our ecosystems. It regulates our rain, provides food, and is a source of energy with vastly untapped natural resources and marine life. The oceans around the planet have been severely punished as a consequence of sewage and waste disposal. This goal aims to conserve and prevent the pollution of oceans, thereby conserving marine life and its resources

15. Conservation of forests, land and biodiversity – damage to forests and other natural landscapes has caused immense problems like desertification, loss of fauna and flora and loss of farmlands. Therefore, these goals aim at reducing deforestation and encouraging reforestation while trying to incorporate the importance of nature into urban planning activities.

16. Just and peaceful societies – another important key to building a sustainable future is the functioning of a just and fair society in which the assessment systems, judicial system and policy making is accountable and transparent.

17. Develop partnerships - Sustainable development requires constant collaboration between different social groups, different governing bodies at global, national, regional and local scales as well as public and private partnerships. It requires individuals recognizing their role in global sustainability and pitching in.

With the shift to sustainable development goals, more emphasis was placed on environmentally sustainable development. Ecologically sustainable development, which places the biophysical environment at the centre of the development agenda, was promoted. Australia's National Strategy for Sustainable Development (Department of Environment and Energy 1992) for instance declared sustainable development as 'using, conserving and enhancing the community's resources so that the ecological process on which life depends, are maintained, and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased'. Such action requires synergy between the economic, social and ecological spheres. The need for action at all levels, particularly the need for education in sustainable development thus commenced an era of advancements in education for sustainable development.

2. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

Education for Sustainable Development is a shared effort by schools and one or more partners in society to achieve the educational goals of sustainable

development promote school development and contribute to a sustainable world. The merging of pupils, society and schools in this instance helps achieve the complex learning goals of sustainable development and helps to improve the capacity of society as a whole in contributing to sustainable development. ESD thus is about bringing the schools and students out into the society and at the same time about drawing society into the school environment.

As the Gothenburg Recommendation on ESD state, it is about 'participation and involvement with an emphasis on ''empowerment'' and agency for active citizenship, human rights and societal change' (SWEDSD, 2008). It requires a re-orientation of education and training systems to address sustainability concerns at national and local levels but also to recognize that the priorities of sustainability goals vary based on a country's level of development. For instance, the focus of ESD on developing countries should be economic growth without damaging the biosphere and implementing of strategies to break the poverty cycle whereas in developed countries where the living standards are already high, the focus of ESD should be on managing the economy through fair trade and responsible business practices as well as ensuring environmental protection. The control of consumption and proper waste management are two other focus areas of ESD in developed countries.

Education for Sustainable Development moreover should not be merely about education that highlights the impending doom. Instead, it should be about realizing the dangerous and detrimental lifestyle we are all contributing to, and instead focus on positive approaches to mitigating the adverse effects. The work of ESD is thus transformed from a 'depressing message of gloom to an inspiring opportunity for hope'.

3. Globalization, International Education and ESD

Globalization explores the concept of interconnectedness in detail. It is not just about technology but also about 'international movements of people', formation of 'global societies' and 'linguistic, cultural and ideological convergence' (Marginson 1999). At present, for Held et al (1999), three views on globalization exist. The 'hyper-globalist' view talks of the demise of the nation state as the world becomes increasingly interconnected. The second view; that of the skeptical approach, sees globalization as bringing about greater polarization and stresses the significance of the nation state in managing capitalism. The third view, that of the transformationalist, sees greater integration but also greater fragmentation where some are 'increasingly enmeshed' in the global order while others are 'increasingly marginalized' (Held et al 1999). Green (1997:171) states that this intense interconnectedness and increased mobility has resulted in the 'partial internationalization' of education with 'attempts to enhance the international dimension of curricula'.

Globalization affects ESD in three distinct ways. First of all, financially, there is pressure to reduce public spending with the rise of privatization. Sustainable development therefore increasingly becomes the responsibility of private organizations as opposed to public institutions and governing bodies. Next, in terms of the labour market, the payoff to higher levels of education is rising often at the expense to our environment. Finally, with a shrinking of space and time, national education systems are increasingly compared with international systems (Carnoy 1998). This provides opportunities for us to learn and adopt different approaches to sustainable development. It also gives us a wider platform from which to invest in ESD. As Marginson (1999:30) quotes, 'the globalization of certain education institutions themselves provide one avenue whereby national fiscal limits can be overcome through fee based international education'.

A distinct feature of globalization is the neoliberal ideology of free market capitalism. Neoliberalism involves an emphasis on the open market where privatization in favour of cost recovery and efficiency, deregulation for the elimination of unnecessary state expenditure through subsidies, and liberalization that relinquishes domestic protection takes place (Stromquist 2002). 'Neoliberal globalism constructs active, self actualizing individuals who optimize a narrow sense of the good life by their own decisions regarding consumption and prepares students to be global citizens and global consumers' (Apple, Kenway and Singh 2005:11). In light of the new era of globalization, Carnoy (1995) notes that education needs to change from merely teaching students how to 'manage and reproduce facts' to one that fosters 'problem solving' and 'critical thinking'. Privatization and competition therefore are an inevitable outcome of neoliberal policies (Stromquist 2005). It is those who are creative and flexible and can come up with innovative entrepreneurial skills that succeed the most today. Tackling the adverse effects of global warming therefore becomes both a challenge and a platform for innovation. Neoliberal policies also encourage commodification and encourage people to exert choice (Berry 2008). Since the new economy is global, there are high rates of return for those that invest in sustainable development.

The juxtaposition of private international schools with public national schooling systems therefore also helps, as Lee (2006) observes, to fill the gaps left by policy makers. Pearce (1998:28) states that international schools are a 'free market response to a global need' while Fraser and Brickman (1968) view international education as an instrument that prepares youth for all the interconnectedness that globalization has to offer. However, the origins of many international schools are 'community driven' with concerns far more prosaic than based on some philosophical disposition of internationalism (Richards 1998). As the world steps into this so called 'cult of technology', education is said to be 'losing ground as a public good to become rather

another marketable commodity' (Stromquist 2000: 15). As Carnoy (1998: 28) concludes, 'globalization enters the education sector on an ideological horse and its effects on education are largely a product of that financially driven, free market ideology, not of a clear conception for improving education'. My previous research conducted on Sri Lankan international schools concludes that while there are opportunities for cross cultural learning, the incentive driven, opportunistic ethos of international schools tends to shadow their potential for achieving global citizenship.

4. Defining the International School

Research on international schools is still in a nascent stage (Dolby and Rahman 2008) and finding an agreed definition is like finding the 'holy grail for international educators and academics' (Richards 2004). International schools, Bagnall (2008:1) observes are not 'static institutions' but rather 'living organisms' that continue to develop and change as the world changes. For Hayden and Thompson (1995), their focus on international schools were those schools that catered for third culture kids (TCKs), usually the children of foreign diplomats and expatriates that were based temporarily in major global cities. Consequently, international schools were places that celebrated the diversity. They were also institutions that had an embedded element of quality in them, particularly because the private fee levying international school was accountable to its 'customers' (Fertig 2007).

Leach (1969) observes that the main contestation of defining an international school lies in the fact that there is a distinct notion of hierarchy among these schools. Bagnall (2008) elaborates on this hierarchy by outlining some of the major international school networks that exist within this system. From the top ranked United World Colleges and function specific schooling organizations such as the NATO and US Military Schools or the Aga Khan Foundation of International Schools to French, British and Japanese international schools that act as replications of national schooling systems in foreign lands, the existence of international schools along various organizational clusters is evident. In Sri Lanka, The International Schools of Sri Lanka (TISSL) was set up in February 2013 with 23 elite member schools.

Both national and international schools alike can provide an international education but what sets international schools apart is the presence of a more culturally varied student population that allows for greater interaction between different groups. While national schools strive to unify the population around a civic responsibility, international schools realize the limitation in doing so when the average number of years the international school student attends one international school is about three years. However, all schools have imagined communities that they

wish to envision for their students (Bagnall and Cassity 2012). When schools foster intercultural tolerance, it is likely to manifest in society at large as well. For Gellar (1981), international schools represent their all-inclusive nature by welcoming pupils from many different places. As he later observes, they are places that 'build bridges and not walls' (Gellar 1993). Thus, international schools can act as 'agents for change' where the hidden curriculum of friendships and cross-cultural communication contribute in creating multicultural societies (Bagnall 2008). Yet no two schools share exactly the same characteristics (Hayden and Thompson 2000). As Renaid (in Jonietz and Harris 1991:6) points out, international schools are similar to 'educational department stores' that cater for a varying audience with varying needs.

In an attempt to define international schools, Terwilliger (1972) came up with four prerequisites for a school to be defined as international. He notes that not only should a school have a certain percentage of foreign students, but the administration board should also comprise and deal with a local and foreign blend. Furthermore, teachers should have experience with cultural adaptation and the curriculum should be one that enables university entrance to other parts of the world. However, international schools in Sri Lanka are defined as fee levying schools registered under the company's act that teach foreign or local curriculums entirely in the English medium. An alternate approach to international education is proposed by Heyward (2002) who suggests that the focus of international schools should be on the 'inter-cultural' rather than the 'international'. It is important to not defy the local culture but to focus on intercultural literacy through the curriculum as well as the institutional structure. Heyward (2002:10) thus defines intercultural literacy as the 'understandings, competencies, attitudes, language proficiencies, participation and identities necessary for successful cross-cultural engagement'.

International schools are also a 'global multi-billion-dollar industry' where the lines between education and business are blurred (MacDonald 2006). As Cambridge (2002) notes, international schools are 'brands' where the concept of branding distinguishes them from the rest of the national schools that are its competitors. This idea is further emphasized by Canterford's (2003) article titled 'segmented labour markets in international schools' where he talks of how in the international school industry the term 'school' is replaced with 'company' and 'students/parents' are replaced with 'customers. MacDonald (2006) speculates as to whether Canterford's interchange of the words signifies the complex intertwining of business and education within the international school system. MacKenzie, Hayden and Thompson (2003) follow on this dual focus of profit versus service in international schools when

they investigate how the degree of differentiation between international schools defines competition within markets. In an ideal scenario there should be perfect competition. However, what is observed is that a few 'top-tier' international schools form an oligopoly within most countries while in other cities, the international school industry may even be limited to a monopoly (Baye and Bell 2000).

As Leach (1969:2) summarizes, '*the problem of definition lies in the dichotomy between expatriate and local populations, in the decision as to which language is to be used as the language of instruction, in the gap between privilege and under privilege and in the tension between attachment to known national systems of examination for university entrance and the desire to experiment with genuine multilaterally international certificates'*. Hence, such varying definitions can be problematic when it comes to education for sustainable development since it is unclear as to whose views on sustainability are being promoted, whether promoting ESD is profitable in the business sense and most importantly whether ESD within Sri Lankan international schools have any relevance locally.

Bagnall's (2010) study of the International Baccalaureate (IB) for instance highlights that the IB is a form of global cultural capital that acts like trumps in a game of cards, which 'define the chances of profit in a given field'. Thus, 'Schooling is a social process with implications for a student's social status – it is a link between a child's social origins and their social destination' (Bulman 2004:514)

A study of school choice in the UK by Ball et al. (1996) showed that it is an environment of competition and consumerism where schools compete for students and parents 'shop' for quality. Schools are also places where power is reproduced among young citizens; places where the power of selecting a worthy school is reflected in the future status that one is able to attain (Levin-Rasky 2007). Power explains the emergence of 'bodies, discourses, gestures and desires that have come to be identified as individuals. Thus, individuals are the 'vehicles of power, not its application' (Foucault 1980:98). Bridge and Blackman (1978) observe that the more educated the parents are, the more access to networks of information they have through which they can activate school choice. Thus, parental education is an indication of the value a family places on education (Schneider et al., 1998). In Sri Lanka, well-educated parents such as doctors and engineers tend to send their children to good national or private schools because of a long-standing history of good reputation. International schools are a new phenomenon and therefore often associated with the noveau riche who want to buy an English education and thereby gain social prestige. However, international schools are also becoming a proxy option for those that do not want to go through the hassle of placing a child at a reputed local school where gaining admission is a highly competitive and tedious procedure.

Reay, David and Ball (2005:21) note that 'economic capital or wealth that is either generated or inherited can be ''converted'' into cultural capital by buying an elite education'. This cultural capital can then be converted into social capital via 'social networks'. What is meant by cultural capital in this sense are the 'values, norms, institutions and modes of thinking to which successive generations in a given society have attached primary importance' (Brown, Hayden and Thompson 2002:67). By investing in cultural capital, individuals can thus maximize their upward mobility (Bourdieu 1986). In educational settings, this form of cultural capital is established via hierarchies of linguistic competence, fee paying, socio-economic status and educational credentials; a term that Dore (1997) refers to as the 'diploma disease' where everyone strives to collect qualifications to outdo their rivals.

The emerging division of labour has redefined core-periphery relationships. The division of core and periphery in light of globalization exists therefore not only between nation states but also across national boundaries. As Hoogvelt (1997) denotes, the core is made up of the elites in poor nations while the periphery includes the poor of many affluent states too. International schools, within this framework, act as 'big businesses' that cater to the richest 5% of the non-English-speaking world (ISC 2009) where Cambridge (1998:205) defines international schools as 'private islands of plenty in contrast to an impoverished local public education system' in developing countries.

Since international schools have better resources, smaller classes, greater autonomy and more selective intake (Forestier 2006), most parents' choice in sending their children to an international school have more to do with academic achievement than a philosophy of producing internationally sound offspring (Fox 1985). In Hong Kong, Ng (2012) observes that the decision to attend international schools have to do with social prestige and a general dissatisfaction with the local system while Jayawardena (2000) in her book titled 'Nobodies to Somebodies' observes that in Sri Lanka, education and particularly English education can buy a person 'class' in society.

5. Sri Lankan International Schools

In recent times, a new set of co-educational (most of the time), fee-levying private schools that teach foreign curriculums (and more recently the Sri Lankan Curriculum) in the English Language have emerged to be known as International Schools. They have diverse modes of instruction, fee structures, curriculums and standards. However, one thing that all Sri Lankan International Schools share in common is that their medium of instruction is English. Sri Lankan International Schools hence are primarily a language driven response to education with a secondary finance driven element that is a response to increasing competitiveness. Although English was initially viewed as a legacy of colonization, it has now become more of a response to globalization as far as Sri Lankan International

Schools are concerned (Jenkins et al. 2005).

Since the establishment of the first international school in Sri Lanka in 1957, in recent times there has been a profusion of institutions in Sri Lanka that claim to be 'International Schools'. Yet, a few distinguished schools mainly located within two major cities stand out (ISC 2011). Lately, hundreds of international schools have emerged with the International Schools Research Centre (ISC 2012) recognizing 39 international schools in Sri Lanka. The student populations of these schools vary from several thousand to less than a hundred in some cases. NEC (2003) estimates the number of international schools in the island to be between 150 and 200 with an approximate student population of 70000. The majority of these schools have very few if any foreign students. Rather, they cater solely for local students who wish to study in the English medium. The teacher composition of these schools is also mainly Sri Lankan.

One of the functions of these international schools is to downplay ethnic differences by welcoming students from all religious and ethnic backgrounds. These schools encourage religious and cultural tolerance and promote multiculturalism. Nevertheless, by imposing very high school fees, these schools accentuate class-based discrimination. The average term fees of Sri Lankan International Schools vary from Rs.8000-40000 (approx. USD 65-300) to even those institutions that charge even higher rates in US dollars. As Wickramanayake (2009:111) observes, 'students from strictly English-speaking homes, those of ethnic minorities or with parents of mixed races, found these schools a haven'. Class, in this instance, can be purchased if one possesses enough capital (Jayawardena 1984). Thus, international schools cut across the traditional schooling system by producing socially constructed knowledge of what it means to be classy, global knowledge in English and co-educational institutions. They are criticized by some for creating a new kind of privilege.

6. ESD in Sri Lankan International Schools: imagined versus reality

The envisioned ESD goals of most international schools researched for this purpose were indeed admirable. The schools advocated for a sustainable Sri Lanka, promoting activities that fostered collective action such as participating in clean-up activities, campaigning for forest and beach preservation, donating old clothes to charity, providing funding for innovation in the field of sustainability and proactively placing recycling bins throughout the school premises. The curriculum at these schools also promoted students to be global citizens, aware of the widespread international environmental issues such as the enhanced greenhouse effect, global warming and climate change. Most students could proactively engage in stimulating conversations about the need to switch to

renewable sources of energy, reduce our emission of greenhouse gasses or the need to recycle plastic waste and prevent it from causing damage to our marine ecosystems. As co-educational schools that accepted students from all religious and ethnic backgrounds, these schools actively promoted multiculturalism and strived to break gender stereotypes and barriers that disadvantaged females from reaching their full potential.

However, a more detailed look at the lifestyle of these students painted a very different picture. The so-called 'trump card' of being able to afford an elite education usually came at the expense of the environment. Often, this was a case of viewing ESD as something 'out there' instead of a concept that could be tackled from 'within'. While the schools as well as its stakeholders made great steps to aid the problem of environmental pollution within their locality, their everyday lifestyles and choices were contradicting their noble efforts. For example, students would often complain about the poor condition of public transport and opted instead to travel to school by school-vans, tuk tuks or private vehicles. In more wealthy schools, the concept of 'carpooling' or in this particular case travelling by school buses or vans was seen as almost embarrassing. Instead travelling to school became a ground for 'showing off' one's wealth. The more expensive their mode of transport, the more social status that came about with it. Being able to afford a private and more luxurious mode of transport meant that the carbon footprint was often disregarded with their choices justified with claims of convenience. Hence, the use of public transport and ride sharing were disregarded with claims of it being 'stressful', 'unsafe' and something for 'others' rather than 'us'.

Similarly, when it came to consumption patterns, international school students were more susceptible to a lavish and rather extravagant lifestyle with little to no efforts of recycling or saving energy. It was observed that the school buildings would often have Air Conditioning switched on in empty rooms, the computer labs often had very cool temperatures with some students even having to wear sweaters indoors in the 30 degree weather! The physical building design of these school buildings also lacked investment on sustainable design concepts. For example, the use of natural light through the possibility of building atriums or skylights was disregarded and seen as a waste of space. Smaller windows, closed spaces and non-LED lights were a common and unfortunate occurrence. There were no recycle water systems in place and some schools did not even have separate re-cycling and landfill waste bins.

None of the international schools researched promoted the concept of sustainable agriculture. There were no compost bins, community gardens for growing fruits and vegetables or vertical gardens. Students were also largely unaware of the concept of 'food miles' and largely due to their ability to afford comparatively expensive food options, these students preferred foreign imported foods at the expense of local products. These students were also

able to afford foods that were not in-season and therefore transported from longer distances. Packaging of foods they brought to school was another downside. While sustainable options such as banana leaves is widespread in Sri Lanka, the students at international schools that brought lunch from home almost always opted for disposable plastic containers. It was observed that the school canteens too made little effort to ban plastic.

Students too would actively participate in the consumer culture, unaware and obsolete to their contributions to increasing the ecological footprints. For instance, it was common and as one student mentioned, 'mandatory' for students to be up-to-date with technological as well as fashion trends of the 21st century. Branded clothes imported food and clothing items, frequently changing phones and other personal items to be trendy was seen as an essential part of standing out from the masses. Whilst students actively donated their used items to charity, they were reluctant to reduce, re-use and recycle their personal belongings. This reluctance stemmed from a culture of consumption where class was equated to the goods you possessed, and consumption made you stand out from the crowd. This concept of 'othering' is a whole other concept, which will not be discussed in detail in this paper. However, what the authors would like to highlight in this case is the shifting of responsibility and making excuses for sustainable development, which undermines the true purpose of sustainable development. The future generations would ultimately have to bear the consequences of such actions.

7. Possibilities for the future: how to make the grass greener while saving the planet

It is ironic that these international schools indeed had greener lawns with gardeners continuously tending to the little green spaces that they have. However, what are some initiatives that these schools could adopt to be more sustainable? Firstly, as far as the school infrastructure is concerned, schools could actively invest in building rainwater tanks that could collect and utilize recycled water to tend to the school grounds and gardens. These schools could also use grey water for flushing toilets, install dual flush systems, waterless urinals and low flow taps to ensure water wastage is kept to a minimum.

As a country that has plenty of sunshine, investors could look into the possibility of investing in solar panels to provide electricity during the daytime. Unlike residences that require storage of solar electricity for nighttime use, these schools that operate primarily during daylight hours would not need to bother with installing expensive storage devices. Schools can also switch to LED lights, install sensor lights in classrooms and laboratories so that they automatically switch off when no one is using a room. Simple measures like setting the thermostat of air conditioners to a reasonable temperature, designing buildings to allow more airflow and

natural light to enter could ultimately reduce energy consumption significantly. Instead of focusing on maximizing space to have classrooms, the building designs could incorporate atriums, large windows, glass ceilings and skylights to bring in natural light. They could also utilize curtains, blinds and trees to provide shading and cooling. Most schools are being constructed on cleared land whereas the potential for blending the natural environment and strategically fitting existing trees and plants into the architectural plans has much potential.

International schools as drivers for change could also actively encourage recycling and composting within their school premises. They could implement rules that ban plastic bag usage, more stringent discipline to ensure students learn to place garbage in recycle, landfill and organic waste bins. As institutions that shape young minds, these schools are an ideal platform from which to impart knowledge about consumer culture. Constantly emphasizing about the importance of minimizing wastage as well as leading by example could help create a more conscious culture. One under-utilized avenue that these schools could invest in is the concept of school community gardens where you grow food. It is important to encourage students to consume less packaged, more organically produced, in season fruits and vegetables as opposed to imported produce that have a large carbon footprint. The meat industry consumes gallons of water whereas vegetarian options use up much less water in comparison. Therefore, making students aware of such concepts and actively encouraging students to make simple lifestyle changes could go a long way. Most international schools in the major Sri Lankan cities are high-rise vertical buildings and therefore could perhaps incorporate rooftop gardens and vertical gardens as a method of being eco-friendlier.

It is vital that these schools create a culture of inclusivity not just in terms of multiculturalism but also in terms of consumption patterns. Students often struggled in these schools of fitting in, being torn between the global and local cultures. However, it is important to teach them that it is not always ‘cool’ to succumb to a consumerist culture. Schools should frame young minds to realize that it is not the brand of clothes you wear, the country from which your snacks are imported or the type of transport you use to get to school that determine your place in society. Their ideal of what it means to be international and ‘modern’ is often flawed and entangled with false values that encourage wastage. Fear of social exclusion from peers sometimes forces students and thereby the parents of these students to engage in extravagant consumerist patterns that are unsustainable. It is an issue that needs to be tackled sensitively. These international schools market themselves on their brand image and exclusivity. However, there is great potential to market and frame (or rather re-frame)

sustainability in a more positive, trendy and fashionable light. Sri Lankan international schools should therefore actively strive to implement goals that attempt to re-shape and market sustainability. The economic, social and environmental payoffs of investing in sustainability is certainly as gratifying as the holistic satisfaction that can be achieved by ensuring we accommodate this planet for future generations.

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