

Making a Case for Value based Sustainability Leadership for Pre-service Teachers

Meenal Arora

IASE, F/O Education, Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi
E-mail: meenalar18@gmail.com

Abstract—The values of pre-services secondary level teachers were explored to understand their leadership behavior in the context of achieving 2030 agenda of sustainable development. The social change model of leadership was used, as it integrates seven values pertinent for sustainability, falling into three groupings: personal or individual values (consciousness of self, congruence, commitment), group values (collaboration, common purpose, controversy with civility), and a societal and community value (citizenship). The data was collected administering the standardized Socially Responsible Leadership Scale which is a 5-point rating scale having 103 items and was analysed using frequency and percentages. The results show pre-service teachers have virtues of citizenship, as they expressed that they frequently participate in community-based activities and believe that they can make a positive impact in the community, but they lack congruence as they do not have clearly identified roots, or reasons for core personal values. They performed slightly better in group values when compared to individual values. Overall, it can be said that though pre-service teachers are developing and even achieving the values necessary to unsustainable practices but they are not excelling in it. Teacher education institutes can empower teachers to be sustainability leaders by embedding compulsory sustainability related projects in their respective subjects and collaborating with green schools or with non-governmental organizations in their programs.

1. INTRODUCTION

World is facing insurmountable challenges, an economy which is promoting inequality, and is failing to provide a decent employment to majority of its population. A society which is corroded by discrimination, violence, intolerance and insecurity. And an environment, which is dealing with complex issues like climate change, loss of biodiversity, natural resource depletion, food insecurity, and increasing levels of pollution resulting in negative consequences on human health and livelihood. The only way to address these challenges is to put sustainability into the very heart of education. And for this monumental task, teachers play a pivotal role, to bring the change in the society. In this 21st century, teachers must exhibit socially responsible leadership, by developing crucial individual (or personal) values, group values and societal values, to empower the young generation with a desire for social change.

At an individual level, these problems appear enormously large and beyond control. Ironically, these are all human-induced, resulting due to the cumulative effect of our choices and decisions. Even though most of us know that the way we are living today is beyond the planetary boundaries, this knowledge is not resulting in any action. Thus, challenge today for our education system is to bridge this knowledge-action gap [8]. What is needed is strong value driven leadership in pre-service teachers, so that they can lead students to act purposefully, collaboratively and committedly.

2. IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP FOR PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

Education is considered as the key to a more sustainable world, and thus since the 1990s, UNESCO has been highlighting the crucial role of teacher education institutes to bring the required transformation in society. In 1998, the ‘Commission on Sustainable Development’, urged UNESCO to prepare guidelines for teacher education institutes to reorient teacher training towards sustainability. While reorienting the curriculum, a framework of five components was used, namely: knowledge, issues, skills and values and their interrelationship [5]. Moreover, time and again, it has been recommended, that instead of making sustainability education an additional subject, often called infused model, and making it sole responsibility of one teacher, every discipline and ever teacher should contribute to sustainability education, known as infusion model or strengths model. Thus, teachers must identify potential content areas in their respective subjects and add examples that illustrate sustainability [14]. For example:

Mathematics teachers can instil sensitivity towards inequality in our society, while teaching the concept of percentages or normal distribution, or even while formulation algebraic expressions.

Science teachers get many opportunities to make their learners aware about food waste, water scarcity and pollution, waste management and why it is important to conserve resources and use it judiciously.

Social studies teacher can help learners understand their role in the society in which they live and how the societal forces govern their life. It provides teachers with occasions to engage students thinking critically on issues like discrimination, gender inequality and stereotypes, injustice, diversity, democracy and others.

Language and Arts teachers can play a vital role in helping students reflect on their understandings about climate change, consumerism, exploitation of natural resources and can help them become critical readers, writers, actors, and performers [12].

3. ROLE OF VALUES IN SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP

In the recommendations produced by UNESCO in 2005, it was suggested that student-teachers be provide with “opportunities to explore their own values and attitudes towards local sustainability problems and those of the surrounding region” [10]. Understanding one’s own values, the values of the society in which one lives, and the values of others around, is essential part of educating for a sustainable future. Understanding values is a critical part of appreciating an individual’s own worldview and that of other people around. Every nation, cultural or ethnic group and individual must learn to recognize their own values and how to assess these values in the context of sustainability [11]. The seven values of the social change model are crucial for sustainability in the following way.

Consciousness of self which is demonstrated through the awareness of one’s own beliefs and values, which in turn determines one’s attitudes, and emotions to act for the sustainable living. Unless one develops a strong belief and emotional association for environmental conservation, or wildlife protection, it is less likely that one will act for it.

Congruence means having consistency in thoughts, feelings and behaviour. With clear thoughts, and genuine emotions, honest and authentic action for sustainable future is natural.

Commitment needs perseverance and passion to drive oneself to put our energies for the betterment of wider society comprising of human and non-human beings.

Collaboration constitutes empowering oneself and others to work towards common goal. It is crucial for sustainability as everyone needs to contribute for the better world envisioned.

Common purpose entails having shared vision and aim. It facilitates everyone in collective analysis of the sustainability issues or crisis being faced and steps to be taken to address them.

Controversy with civility implies difference in opinions are inevitable, but for addressing the complex and often unforeseen sustainability crisis, it is advantageous to have variety of ideas or inputs.

Citizenship demands a belief in interconnected and interdependent community and this value is extremely important for sustainability as one needs to examine the linkages and interactions between the various component parts of what we as individuals do. For example, while purchasing a product if people can see the raw materials gone into it, the processes involved in making of the product, waste and pollution generated, then better consumer behavior can be stimulated [1].

4. METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive in nature as it measures the values of secondary level pre-service teachers, to understand their prevailing leadership behavior. The data is collected from two of the colleges offering B.Ed. under University of Delhi. The pre-service teachers were randomly selected for the survey. The standardised Socially Responsible Leadership Scale was administered on 60 pre-service teachers. The Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS) is a five-point rating scale prepared based on Social Change Model (SCM) of leadership development. It scores the sample under study on seven values of SCM, namely consciousness of self, congruence, commitment, collaboration, common purpose, controversy with civility, and citizenship. There are 103 items in total to measure these values as defined by the SCM, with 14 or 15 items to assess each of the value [4].

5. RESULTS

The table below show the results of the assessment of 60 secondary level pre-service teachers on the seven core values of social change model. The ‘Excelling’ category below most closely corresponds to a ‘strongly agree’ of the SRLS. The ‘Needing Improvement’ category most closely corresponds to ‘strongly disagree’ of the SRLS. Here, F is the average frequency or average number of pre-service teachers who can be said to be excelling in a particular value or average number of pre-service teachers needing improvement in a particular value, and so on, and P is the percentages. F i.e. the average frequency is calculated by adding the frequency on each of the item under a particular value, divided by the total number of items for that value (which is either 14 or 15).

Table 1: Analysis of Values of Social Change Model

SRLS		Excelling		Achieving		Developing		Needing Improvement	
		F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
Individual Values	Consciousness of Self	7	11.66	31	51.66	20	33.33	2	3.33
	Congruence	5	8.33	17	28.33	27	45	11	18.33
	Commitment	6	10	30	50	16	26.66	8	13.33

Group Values	Collaboration	19	31.66	22	36.66	16	26.66	3	5
	Common Purpose	17	28.33	17	28.33	25	41.66	1	1.66
	Controversy with Civility	12	20	22	36.66	26	43.33	0	0
Social Value	Citizenship	25	41.66	22	36.66	13	21.66	0	0

6. ANALYSIS

This section presents the careful inference of the result shown in the table above.

6.1 Individual Values (or Personal Values)

The findings reveal the sampled pre-service teachers are aware of and understand their social and personal identity but may struggle to articulate their sense of self and values they uphold to others. They are also able to acknowledge the feedback presented to them but does not put in efforts to seek out positive and negative feedback from others. They recognize the benefit of personal reflection and may introspect on different experiences.

For the second individual value, which is congruence, it is found that teachers are exploring their belief systems, and they do not have clearly identified roots, or reasons, or questions, or issues regarding their core personal values. They understand one’s self and recognizes conflict in aligning actions with values and does not always behave in agreement with their beliefs. They also sometimes find it difficult to work towards a common purpose in a group as they are not able to alignment their own values with the values of the group, they are in.

For the last individual value, which is commitment, pre-service teachers conveyed that they are doing well in this value. Their responses indicate they complete most of the projects and prioritize the tasks at hand. They are willing to take ownership for one’s work and mistakes and recognizes the reasons for their involvement in the projects. However, they have not dedicated time to issues bigger than one’s self and does not have a defined purpose in life. Though they sustain meaningful engagements but have little direction for what they consider important in life [2].

6.2 Group Values

Beginning with the first group value, collaboration, the responses on the items under this value reveal, pre-service teachers connects interpersonally with each other, understand themselves and how they are perceived by others. They are aware about the strengths of other group members and actively works on the strengths to improve the team dynamics. They work to create positive group experience for all members by

respecting and considering the diverse thoughts and opinions of everyone involved. To try to uphold the commitments made to the group but may need assistant to complete complex projects.

For next value, common purpose, analysis show pre-service teachers understand a shared vision of the group and work towards achieving it. They are willing to listen to the diverse ideas of group members and tries to find common ground to facilitate everyone towards the purpose and mission of the group. They share the mission with others but may not be able to communicate its importance. They recognize the misalignment in the vision and actions of the group members but fails to see how personal values of group members govern their action, which thus becomes crucial for the successful accomplishment of the vision of the group.

The responses of the pre-service teachers on the items related to controversy with civility indicates, they respect differences in opinions and like to engage in dialogue with others who hold opinions different from their own, as they know they will be better able to form their own ideas and opinions, after having understood the ideas of diverse group of people. They try to understand why one has arrived at the thoughts they have and may challenge the opinions of others in a productive and non-hostile manner. They sometimes see controversy as having a negative consequence on collaborative process thought it is an important tool to engage the group in problem-solving and decision-making [3].

6.3 Social Values

Pre-service teachers performed extremely well on the value of citizenship, as they expressed that they frequently participate in community-based activities, and believe that they can make a positive impact in the community. They accept societal and individual differences, and questions general assumptions. They advocate on behalf of others, and values the need for change.

7. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

In conclusion, it can be said that though pre-service teachers are developing and even achieving the values necessary to change the society to accomplish the 2030 agenda of sustainable development, but they are not excelling in it, which is necessary to exhibit socially responsible leadership behaviour. The Sustainability crisis that the humanity is facing today, witnessed through extreme poverty, loss of biodiversity and, incessant exploitation of natural resources, need proactive leaders and change makers to bring the necessary transformation. Teachers have the potential to lead the nation through the young generations they can reach [13]. Thus, there is an urgent need to develop ways to nurture and empower teachers to be leaders, so that they can create ripple effect by empowering thousands of students they will teach in their lifetime, with values that is crucial to transform unsustainable practices, into sustainable living.

Some probable ways of improving sustainability leadership among pre-service teachers include, updating the syllabus of the optional paper environmental education in teacher education curriculum, as the discourse has moved away from Environmental Education (EE) to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), engaging pre-service teachers in hands on problem solving collaborative projects in their institutes like composting, recycling, gardening, harvesting rain water, etc., and linking up teacher education institutes with non-governmental organizations working in the area of environment, where pre-service teachers can volunteer for the cause.

When the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) - 2000 and National Curriculum Framework - 2005 recommended EE as one of the core concerns to be integrated into the curriculum, an infusion approach was suggested to weave the environmental concerns into all curricular areas at all levels. For the infusion to be effective, pre-service teachers can be asked to design projects related to sustainability in their respective subjects. And, these projects can be implemented with school students during their school internship program.

Pre-service teachers can also visit and observe the practices adopted in many schools to make their school green, these vary from maintaining kitchen garden, harvesting rain water, and waste management to street plays and rallies for community awareness, and Eco quiz and pledge for life. So that they can also take up similar initiatives in their own capacities. Possibilities of collaboration with Green Schools can also be explored.

The landmark judgment of the Honourable Supreme Court (2003) made it obligatory for the States and UTs in India to comply with the implementation of environment aspects through education from primary to higher stages wherein the strategies of making it as a separate subject area of infusion and integration were adopted by the States and UTs. Then onwards, it has become mandatory for schools to have Eco-Clubs and for undergraduate courses to have a paper on EE. Similar mandatory program should also be incorporated in teacher education institutes to develop the values of social change model.

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