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# Intellectual Sustainability in a Time of Change: Challenges and Perspectives

ABSTRACT

We are living in a world characterized by change in all aspects of life, complexity with different types and levels, and paradox with different classes and degrees – education must also change. When the ultimate aim of education is to prepare engaged, reflecting, open-minded, culturally literate, skilled, creative, and tolerant global citizens who are able to map the road to a greener, safer and fairer planet for all, for everyone toward a global common good, sustainability becomes the key to survival on earth. This is because changes that occur in education - as one system of interrelated, and interconnected global systems – may affect them in ways that result in something more than the sum of parts. Therefore, getting sustainability into education is vital, specifically that is devoted to creating sustainable futures for all in all fields – whatever they are. That is intellectual sustainability. For elaborating how to bring it into focus, this research paper addresses six dimensions in order to achieve the aims of the study which are: initiating the support for research on intellectual sustainability (IS), providing opportunities for novel thinking the unthinkable, and creating new paths for IS in teacher education programs in Egypt. The dimensions of this article are seen as: (1) a world of change, (2) about intellectual sustainability, (3) some theoretical points of departure, (4) challenges of intellectual sustainability (5) keeping challenges in perspective (coping strategies), and (6) embedding intellectual sustainability in teacher education programs.
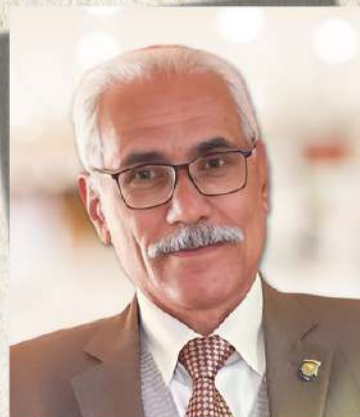
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A world of change

In one of his speeches, J. Kennedy says: change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past and present are certain to miss the future. Therefore, change is to be the norm of life. No progress can be achieved without change. No minds can be sharpened without change, and no true life can be lived or even improved without change. Looking here and there, the world is changing and no one tiny place and no one living at the furthest end of the world has not been changing. Approaches, choices and goals, relationships and lifestyles change due to the ever changing astronomical achievements and developments in science, technology, communication and all other fields. With all those developments, there are some negative effects. In order to maintain the positive changes and cope with the negative ones, intellectual standards should arise seeking for logic, depth, width, and significance to ensure one's sustained intellectual growth.

The creation of the word **CHANGE** – to the author's belief – can imply the aspects and reasons for change; **C** may stand for challenges to be overcome, conditions to be specified or improved, or chances to be grapped. **H** may stand for hindrances to be dealt with, hardships to be faced, or habits to be acquired or cultivated. **A** may stand for awareness to be created or fostered, attitudes to be shaped, changed or adopted, or assumptions to be tested or questioned. **N** may stand for needs to be met or satisfied, necessities to be emphasized, or norms to be established or accepted. **G** may stand for givens to be tested, goals to be achieved, or growth to be maintained.

E may stand for emergencies to be coped with or handled experiences to be acquired or shared, or expectations to be managed or heightened. Thus, change is a must regardless of the type of change you want to make; it is inevitable whether we feel a need for it or not, accept it or reject it, adopt it voluntarily or be imposed by force. Whatever the field and type of change, scale and scope of change, the change process has to include planning, implementing and solidifying changes in the field targeted to ensure how effective change management is. If this can be applied with the tangibles, how will the case be with the intangibles: visions, thoughts, notions, perspectives, and hissings of the mind … etc.?
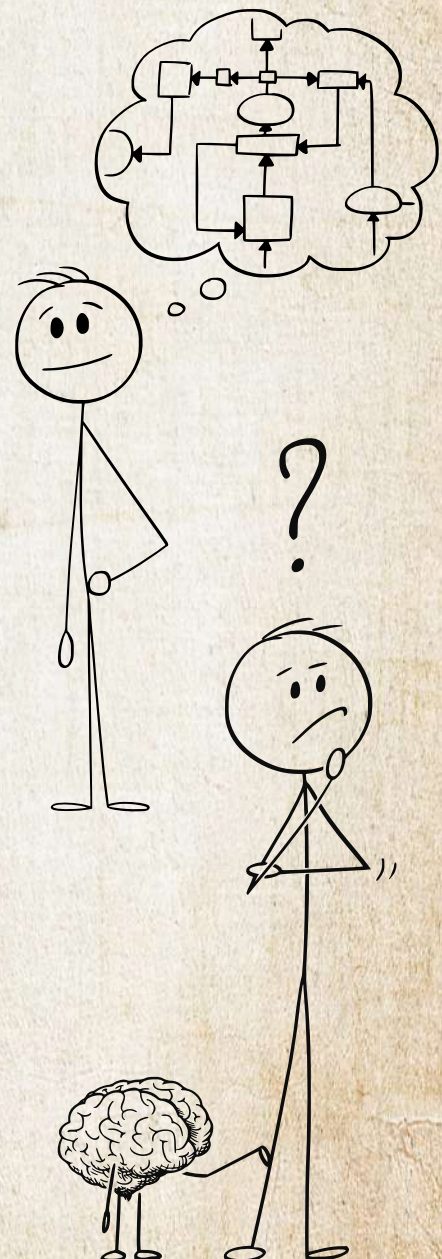
Intellectual Sustainability

Sustainability is a broad concept used in different sciences with different theories and practices. But intellectual sustainability is a new term viewed by the author as a continuous, ongoing, deep process of incentifying innovative ideas for creating new knowledge of an added value and maximizing opportunities for sustainable practice of that knowledge. Following that definition, intellectual sustainability can have an intellectual framework of different components: human capital, intellectual capital, psychological capital, economic value, economic environment, social development, innovation, and quality. To build connections between those components, knowledge construction, sharing, using, and management can be fully invested. Different knowers – specially the constructivist ones – can be identified, cognitive conflict can be resolved, intellectual stress can be pacified, and ideation can be stressed.

Therefore, intellectual sustainability – in turn – can be researched and practiced. And intellectualists should, then, have a say to change what is subject to change.

There are guidelines on how to formulate relevant information and knowledge on intellectual capital, human capital and psychological capital to improve intellectual sustainability since the intellectual capital is its pith, the human capital is its container and the psychological capital is its context. In the realm of that, the author proposes six theoretical points of departure to go through his paper towards achieving its goals. These points are seen as:

1. *A sustainable future for all is possible.*
2. *The intellectual capital is the pith of intellectual sustainability.*
3. *Information flooding cannot be prevented.*
4. *The impurities of mind are all around.*
5. *The weaponization of information is leading the way.*
6. *All communities have got some false elites.*

Challenges of Intellectual Sustainability

The author holds a strong belief that the intellectual sustainability has got many challenges to highlight. Among them are the following:

- Cognitive war – according to Mukherjee (2023) - is a powerful, invisible battle of minds that leverages psychological manipulation, disinformation, and technology to exploit human behavior, reshape public perception, and destabilize institutions. It focuses on attacking and degrading rationality, and targets people's minds and emotions to influence their behavior and gain an advantage over adversary, (X. com, 2024). Thus, those who are easily influenced by others cannot achieve their intended aims, especially what is concerned with intellect.

- Emotional fallacies: Emotional fallacies constitute a big challenge for intellectual sustainability. Because they are psychological fallacies in which claims rest on emotional appeals rather than logic and evidence (Northwest University Information Technology Office, 2021) and playing on emotions, argument by vehemence, appeal to pathos … or placing reason or valid logic with emotions in an attempt to win the argument (Brinton, 1988), those who are emotionally affected by what others say would make them in a mould with no way to innovate or even to think divergently.

- Impurities of mind: In Melwani's belief (2023), "the impurities of the mind encompass negative thoughts, distractions, and emotional disturbances that obstruct spiritual progress and clear perception. These impurities manifest as obstacles like greed, anger, hate, and delusion. They hinder an individual's ability to understand reality and achieve spiritual development. Overcoming these impurities is essential for mental clarity and progression on the spiritual path, often through practices like meditation and self-recollection." Although the impurities of the mind are mainly concerned with a spiritual path, handling the negative energy within an individual leads to the imbalance of the the human mind, which in turn leads to suffering. Consequently, it will not be easy or fair to someone to have and maintain keen intellect to examine assumptions or relationships, to construct knowledge or even use it, to evince interest or signal willingness in a certain notion, or to reflect in, on, for and about an issue given or a situation in hand.

- The rape of the mind. Meerloo's *The Rape of the Mind* stresses that he who dictates and formulates the words and phrases we use … is master of the mind. We are forced to think about what other people think. Each one of us should repeat "ready-made slogans and propaganda catchwords without understanding what they really mean or what forces stand behind them." This means that we are not to have straight thinking minds of our own. We should be, in the eyes of those who have force and power, coercion, mass delusion, semantic fog, and the use of fear, just parrots or objects. Only brainwashing, thought control, and menticide exist. Consequently, our minds cannot be free to think; our ideas get frozen, imagination is suppressed, inquiry is hindered, our desires are patterned, intellectual exchange is imprisoned, mental plans are attacked, and finally, hope disappears or is even killed.

- One-sided thinking: One-sided thinking is seen by Starbuzz (2020) as "thinking in one direction, one aspect, one side, without fully grasping the issues and various aspects. Those who think one-sidedly often only perceive one aspect of a problem, lacking a comprehensive, profound understanding that encompasses everything." This view considers that a singular perspective often neglects or dismisses alternative viewpoints and consequently leads to biased reasoning and a lack of comprehensive understanding. Moreover, thinking about an issue becomes distorted; the process of problem solving becomes incomplete and ineffective; and one's cognitive abilities get restricted.

* Keeping Challenges in Perspective (Coping Strategies)

Securing and exercising the intellectual freedom: Article 19, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations states that: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. Banking on that, Wayne State (2024) explains: Intellectual freedom is the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. It provides for free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question or movement may be explored. Such actions help you express ideas, explore thoughts, test arguments, consider notions, access, and share information.

- Developing the intellectual capital: To Cabrita, Machado, & Grilo, (2012), intellectual capital is the capacity to transform knowledge and intangible assets into wealth, and its management is the process of deriving value from the same information. And according to Edvinsson and Malone (1998), intellectual capital is the formalized, preserved, and used to produce more valuable properties intellectual content. It produces knowledge that can be converted into values. Therefore, the intellectual capital can be known to be the result of mental processes that form a set of tangible objects involving cultivating intangible assets, primarily through fostering a culture of knowledge sharing, continuous learning, and one's engagement in what one is assigned to do. It necessitates also analytics and sometimes technology to manage and enhance this capital, ultimately boosting innovation and competitiveness.

- Fostering thinking the unthinkables. The aim of this process is to investigate why an existing thing exists. It requires one to follow the motto that says *"Make Anything Possible",* or to anticipate what is thought to be unexpected. This means that broad minded alternatives can and do work despite clear and definite givens. Such an action triggers new ideas to exist, new facts to unveil, new models to follow, and new experiences to find their way to be broadened.

- Psychologization of intellectual suppression. When examining the psychological motives behind the suppressors' actions and practices towards thinkers' ideas, thoughts, beliefs, views and opinions, one can find out why the mentalities of the suppressed are hindered, their thinking is shaped or reshaped or even forcibly directed, their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, views and opinions are trivialized and consequently their intellectuality is threatened. On the other hand, when the suppressed feel that they cannot make a difference, they stop thinking deeply, or even just thinking, They get blocked ears, locked tongues and absent-minded!

* Intellectual Sustainability in Teacher Education Programs

In responses to calls to develop teacher education programs in Egypt as for reforming the conditions for schooling, emphasizing different traditions of practice and building deep and various knowledge bases in different educational institutions, the author holds a strong belief that those outcomes cannot be reached without intellectual sustainability. Therefore, he suggests some practical strategies to be considered not only to tackle the most historically dominant challenges, but to apply the most necessarily programmatic implications. Among them are: Designing learning commons, Planning for research data management, Embracing knowledge literacy, Empowering navigationists, Caring about constructivist knowers, Operationalizing the knowledge process wheel, Engaging in problematization and Building a network of different discoursization.
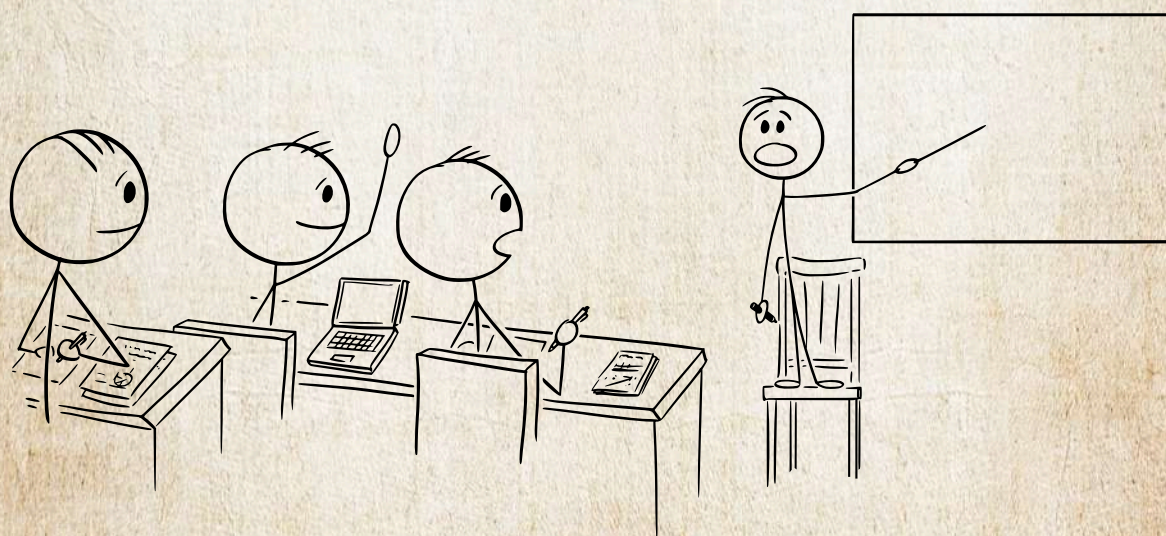
Conclusion

In this paper, the author tried to get a new term in focus, i.e., *Intellectual Sustainability* that seems to be absent in teacher education programs, though it can be effectively experienced to prepare teachers for improving the quality of education in this ever-changing world. The current paper, while serving a road map to energize intellectual sustainability in education is probably sustainable on a large scale for three reasons. First, it clarifies what intellectual sustainability refers to. Second, it defines some challenges of intellectual sustainability and how to cope with them, departing from pre-determined points. Third, it suggests some definite and easy-to-do strategies that can be carried out in different contexts. This finding is important because of its potential impact on future education program policy. It is conceivable that when the issue of sustainability is dealt with in any field, intellectual sustainability may become the main source and the primary base on which those fields stand.
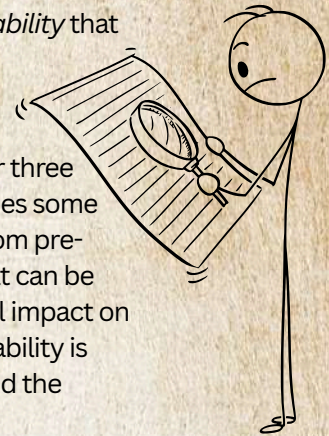
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