

Education and cultural biodiversity

What is cultural biodiversity

Cultural biodiversity denotes the link between biodiversity and human diversity. It recognizes the role-played by human diversity in biodiversity conservation because biodiversity represents a source of raw material on which the process of evolution depend.

Cultural biodiversity also includes the invisible socio cultural context of knowledge systems. The importance of recognizing the traditional values of indigenous and local people in forest and biodiversity conservation has been officially recognized by the Convention for Biological Diversity in its article 8j and 10C. Following this a UNESCO report states that "Sacred groves have served as important reservoirs of biodiversity, preserving unique species of trees, forest groves, mountains, rivers, caves, and temple sites and should continue to play an important role in the protection of particular ecosystems by local people". Cultural biodiversity also exist in towns as people use traditional medicine, eat traditional food, wear traditional cloth and can also have an intricate knowledge on culture and biodiversity.

Cultural biodiversity knowledge and practices are also considered important for development. The deliberate maintenance of diversity in domesticated and non-domesticated plants and animals characterizes farming systems across African continent as well as in most other parts of the world, providing an important opportunity for systematic in situ maintenance of genetic resources.

Contribution of cultural biodiversity knowledge to education

In whatever form the cultural biodiversity knowledge and practices may exist, it has the potential of impacting on the teaching/-learning situation in significant ways. Since this knowledge arises out of the children's real life experiences, its incorporation into schoolwork can serve to motivate the students as they begin to see that recognition is given to what they do and say in their communities. It should be noted, too, that the inclusion of student's prior knowledge on the school curriculum squarely fits in the constructivist philosophy that learners abstract understanding from experience. Thus, the experiences that the students bring to the classroom are an important component of the learning equation.

Effect of formal education cultural biodiversity

Even though formal education has helped a lot in transferring knowledge created, organized and accumulated by humanity to the next generation and has improved the life of people, it has been recognized for some time that uniform and centrally designed examinations, curricula and courses tend not to be sensitive to local circumstances, needs and historical precedents. When established, formal education systems may be exclusionary of those of different cultures and those not accustomed to the methodology of conventional science.

Formal education can compete and replace in classrooms many traditional stories about lands, mother earth, water sources, good behavior, respect for elders, the environment, and so on. The introduction of fables in to schools from outside can interrupt local/ indigenous knowledge. In most of the cases traditional stories were ignored and replaced by European based literacy education. Knowledge systems about the traditional institutions of customary law, land tenure systems, inheritance rights, and rituals, were guarded and preserved not through westerns systems but through stories, legends, folklore, fairy tales, trickster tales, and in some occasions, petrographic art. This is highly compromised because of formal education. As cultural knowledge and biodiversity are closely linked, the destruction of one may cause the significant declining of the other.

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