

2016 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – Honorable Mention]

## **Education - A panacea for our problems?**

(Original)

*Chulan Rishikesh  
(Age 16, Mauritius)*

“By education I mean the drawing out of what is best in child and man- body, mind and spirit.”  
–Mahatma Gandhi.

On his recent visit to Mauritius, the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon emphasized on the importance of education. He talked about how education was linked to climate change, gender equality and sustainability. This surely made me ponder how education was related to the sustainability concept.

Later on I realized that the coin had a dark facet. Had our education system be so good, why were wars prevalent across the globe? Why there was bullying? Why adolescents committed suicide? Why delinquent behaviours were increasing? Why people could not live sustainably with the nature and animals? Why gender inequality still persisted? Undeniably those questions were worth thinking about. Was our education system to be blamed?

Education has always been a major concern in the agenda of the Mauritian government. In May 1975, there was a student strike after which the government was compelled to make education free at secondary level. Education was democratised but no one truly reckoned the actual meaning of an education system. An education system could be described as a system whereby all stakeholders, peers, teachers and atmosphere would be encompassed. However like most education systems in the world, loopholes were present. Our system can be tantamount to one whereby only the best remains and the others are left behind. The system is competition-ridden and no one took any sanctions against the disincentive effects that this had on some students who were not made for academic education. What is the need of such an education which plunge someone in limbo?

I am grateful to my school who gave me the opportunity to participate in the Model United

Nations conference. There we had to assume roles of delegates and fight for a particular cause and I was posted in the UNESCO commission where we had to figure out what a holistic education would have be like. I concluded that the concept of "one size fits all" could not be applied to education. Instead the education system should be one that inculcates culture education, environmental education, carpentry and mechanics study and other non-academic studies in the curriculum. Sexual education which was once considered as a taboo should be involved as it can have ample benefits. During the conference I learnt about the importance of involving women in the whole process. Not only gender parity would have decreased but women would have learnt about their rights and they could war against any prejudice against them. Our education system should be able to mould the youth as the leaders of tomorrow.

Our education has not taught us how to be at par with our counterparts and how to live sustainably with the nature. No wonder why humankind has swept away most animals and depleting natural resources at an alarming rate. For example in Africa, yearly 30000 to 40000 elephants are poached for their ivory and now, noting with deep regret only 400000 are left. With climate problems persisting, the year 2016 marked the hottest summer in many countries. All those issues was caused by "educated" folks. The education system should teach us how to preserve the environment for the incoming generations. We all know that if we cannot live sustainably on earth and if we cannot learn to share space and accept others, the future is in oblivion.

Education which was the cradle of development now needs reforms. Today I am campaigning in my school itself about how we should change our mindsets to secure a better future for all of us. The focal point is to sensitize people about the key aims of education according to UNESCO:

1. Learning TO KNOW
2. Learning TO BE
3. Learning TO DO
4. Learning TO LIVE TOGETHER

I believe that we must involve everyone in a big strong partnership to achieve our objectives. Personally I think that attitudes must change as it is a question of attitude rather than aptitude about how to reach to high altitudes. If we tread on the path pf sustainability and view education holistically leaving no one aside, education can a panacea to all our problems!