COGNITIVE ORIENTATION AS A DETERMINANT OF QUALITY LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how cognitive orientation of people influences their learning experiences, particularly in early childhood. Sustainable development goals adopted in 2015 clearly captured the importance of early childhood development, health and education since it has a greater impact on people's later life. Therefore, countries around the world have started some programmes for providing good and quality education in early childhood, though globally accepted policies should be carefully adopted at the local level. A phenomenological research with a case study reveals that cognitive orientation is an influential determinant of early childhood education, as parents and significant others have to play a major role than what children should do. Internalized discriminatory attitudes would be another aspect of the cognitive orientation among estate sector communities in Sri Lanka. In addition, community readiness for early childhood education can be strengthened through public, private and community partnership.

KEYWORDS: *Cognitive Orientation, Early Childhood Education, Marginalization, Social Exclusion, Sustainability*

1. INTRODUCTION

'Sustainability' is one of the latest concepts to have emerged in the latest developments of a wide range of literature in development, and it has been strived to integrate even with community development. Sustainable Community Development (SCD) is without a doubt, a viable alternative conceptualization of the community development process (Ronald, 1999). It firmly specifies the significance of localizing globally accepted sustainable development goals into local contexts, consequently, the community contribution to the local policymaking is highly admired by the policy advocates. Moreover, mundane governance came in to play as a sustainable alternative for mainstream governance, and which calls for community leadership which in turn harness the localizing process of global agenda – 2030 (UN, 2015). Though sustainable community development is important for both developed and non-developed

communities, it is more crucial for the poor and disadvantaged (Bokova, 2017; Rao & Sun, 2015). This research, therefore, has focused on the fourth sustainable goal – Quality Education for All, and explored how the goal can be localized into Sri Lankan context. The scope of this research constricted to the second target of the goal which signifies the importance of promoting quality and equal *life-long learning*. Although learning is appeared to be a matter of education, one that requires a pedagogical intervention, (in this research) learning will be considered to be a matter of complex social process, one that requires a rigorous social analysis. Moreover, learning is highly influenced by the place where it occurs, and hence in order to achieve the target (UN, 2015; Unesco, 2015a), it requires a high level of community consciousness particularly in most disadvantaged and excluded communities (Unesco, 2013).

On 25th September 2015, the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which redirects human potential toward a sustainable future. The core of the agenda on sustainable development goals describes prioritized development challenges for humanity (Unesco, 2017). The goals address different challenges the world experiences and are crucial for even the survival of humanity. The post debates and discussion on the agenda clearly specifies the importance of the '*survival of humanity*' alongside '*survival of the human beings*'. The ideology behind the agenda is twofold, i.e. preserving human beings with humanity (Unesco, 2015a, 2017). As United Nations' Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) asserts, "embarking on the path of sustainable development will require a profound transformation of how we think and act" (Unesco, 2001, 2017).

Furthermore, UNESCO clearly argued that in order to make a more sustainable world and to tackle the sustainability-related challenges, individuals are required to become change-makers (catalyst agents) aiming at the sustainability of the society. This is the point where life-long learning comes forth. Even though the government intervention and private sector involvement are important, it is the community (People/Civic) who are profoundly responsible in transforming the world for a better place, since at last they become sole beneficiaries. It signals that the expected future can be constructed as long as the community is partnered in the present situation (Chambers, 1997).

Change makers or catalyst agents of the sustainable development process required to have the *necessary* knowledge, skills, values and attitudes which empower them to contribute to sustainable development (Unesco, 2017). *Necessary* knowledge, skills, values and attitudes can be acquired in many ways, but it is the education accepted to be more viable and effective. Education can, therefore, be considered as crucial for the achievement of sustainable development. But nevertheless, not all kinds of education supports this, and hence it is the education which promotes economic growth and empowers learners to take "informed decisions" and "responsible actions" for environmental integrity, economic viability and just society which are inseparable, not only for the present, but also for future generations (Unesco, 2017). This research therefore endeavoured to understand how mostly disadvantaged and marginalized communities are engaged in making change makers for sustainable development which is more unique and specific to their communities, and to identify more specific 'informed decisions' (means reflective activities or conscious activities) and 'responsible actions' that the communities have performed and can be performed so that globally defined goals can be adopted at the local levels which makes sustained communities.

Every stage of the way toward a better life of a person is enlightened by education, especially for the poor, marginalized and the most vulnerable. Education is the key that will allow many other Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved. When children are able to get a quality education they can break the cycle of poverty. Education, therefore, helps to reduce inequalities. It also empowers people everywhere to live more healthy and sustainable lives. Education's unique potential to act as a catalyst for wider development goals can only be realized, however, if it is equitable, means making special efforts to ensure that all children regardless of their family income, the place they live, gender, ethnicity can benefit equally from its transformative power. Education empowers children, in particular, by increasing their chances of getting jobs, staying healthy and participating fully in society. Some argue that children are a common basis for all dimensions of sustainable development and no advances in sustainable development will occur without multiple generations contributing to social development in the coming years. This makes it clear that public, private and community partnership in realizing sustainable development goals are predominant, and of course, sustainable community development and sustainable community organizing are of vital importance particularly to the people who are most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Education is known as a fundamental right and is essential for realizing all the other human rights and sustainable development goals since it is the cornerstone on which the well-being of all the human beings is founded (OCHR, 1989). As in the public discourse, education is not only a process in which the knowledge is transferred from one generation to another, but a complex process which empowers people by helping to acquire skills, values and attitudes which are some of the essentials to secure their socio-economic needs (Unesco, 2013). Education itself has no any substantiality in a society, but it is the quality education which enables the communities to stabilize their fundamental rights. Quality Education, therefore, has of vital importance to communities, especially for the people those left out from the main-stream due to social exclusion. The *quality education* provides the necessary means toward a better life for every people on the planet, but this is predominantly relevant for the people who are left behind (Unicef, 2016).

Although different cultures define education and required skills and knowledge in different ways, it is believed that students everywhere must acquire some basic skills such as how to interpret written pages, basic calculations, understanding how numbers are work et cetera. As the World Bank specified "people must learn how numbers work or some logical abilities

so that they can buy and sell in markets, set family budgets, interpret loan agreements" (World-Bank, 2017, p. 4). Furthermore, socio-emotional skills such as perseverance and the ability to work on teams, that help people acquire and apply the foundational and other skills in a more sustainable manner (UNESCO, 2015b). The education which does not support students preparing for a better life has no any value or a meaning and hence it is just a waste of time and resources. Quality education, therefore, should equip students with skills, knowledge and attitudes with are essential for a better life.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development succeeds the MDGs, but sustainability was given tremendous importance and which is identified as an organizing principle for global development that supports the well-being of both people and the planet (Unesco & Unesco, 2016). Environment, Economy and Equality of the society in the developing process given an equal prominence and compromise might cause a disaster and may harm the sustainability. Once the 2030 Agenda was declared, some of the sensitive issues such as environmental sensitivity, social equality were given serious attention alongside economic development.

At the very beginning of the Sustainable Development discourse, it was defined as "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Bruntland, 1987). With dramatic changes in the society sustainable development has recently been defined in-line with modern arguments, and which says "eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. To this end, there must be a promotion of sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth, creating greater opportunities for all, reducing inequalities, raising basic standards of living, fostering equitable social development and inclusion, and promoting integrated and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems" (UN, 2017). This identifies a wide are of the sustainable development paradigm and 'Poverty', the most prioritized problem of the world to be wiped out, called the international communities' attention through 17 sustainable development goals by 2030.

Education captured in one goal – sustainable development goal 4 – calls for the international community to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030 and UNICEF has been appointed as the supporting and facilitating institution for achieving the goal. Goals itself denotes and specifies the wide area of issues pertinent to the field of education. The goal comprises of 7 different targets. Each one of the targets addresses specific and broad area of education, and this research basically considers Target No. 4.2 which captures the early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education.

The fourth goal of the agenda-2030 : 'Quality Education for All' – is strategically a complex policy statement since it furthers the education process by integrating *life-long learning* which comprises of all learning activities undertaken throughout life with the intention of improving knowledge, skills, competencies within personal, civic, social and employment-related perspectives (Uil, 2016). Life-long learning is not solely a matter of education, but it is considered to be a matter of a complex social system.

The 2030 Agenda conceives the importance of lifelong learning one that begins at birth and carries through all stages of life (Unesco & Unesco, 2016). Furthermore, the agenda distinguishes the learning that of education which is more formal, and both are equally important through all stages of life. The strategic global plan for quality education amalgamates learning and education together, which formally facilitate the task of acquiring knowledge to conceive a sustainable life without any interruptions which demean the quality of the stages of the lifespan. Learning begins before the birth and continues on toward the end of the life, and hence every aspect of learning on every stage must be considered very carefully and should be planned organized interventions with a multi-disciplinary approach that bring sustainable solutions for pertaining issues (Uil, 2016).

The quality life-long learning and education which is more inclusive and equitable, begins at the age of pre-natal era in which the parent's and some other family members' support is needed. Social structure in which the parent's knowledge and awareness about the future born child are encompassed is important in this stage since it impacts on the offspring. The very beginning stage of the life-long learning, therefore, has been widely influenced by the social structure since the prenatal stage is a stage where decision making about him/herself is not quite possible, and this continues to early childhood. Children more often than normal would not be able to make grounded decisions with prudence, and hence providing parental or societal support to the offspring (New Born Child) will bring positive effects by later stages of the life (Santrock, 2011).

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) asserts "education and lifelong learning cut across all levels of society" (Uil, 2016, p. 15). It is, therefore, important to understand and recognize those strata and levels clearly so that opportunities are available for all without any discrimination and exclusion. Learning as specified by the UIL intersects with the different strata in a society, and consequently, inequality and exclusion might emerge within it. Based on different

criterion (for example birthplace or the gender) which are made solely by the society over the course of their cultural history interact and intersect with the learning process thereby excluding some of the communities from the major stream which has devastating effects particularly on the early childhood care, development and education.

This research mainly focused on the community and social workers' involvement in early childhood development, care and education which is phenomenal in achieving a prosperous life through life-long learning and education. The 2030 Agenda signifies that early childhood development (ECD) will be of highest priority for the sustainable development of the twenty-first century. The target 4.2 explicitly mentions that "by 2030, all the member countries should ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education" (UNESC, 2016). Life-long learning begins and is strengthened in early childhood and hence investments and awareness on this stage is critical in many respects. Recent researches on ECD have found that the critical care and investment in early childhood leads to empowerment, better health and education outcomes, improved skills which are necessary for future education and career life, narrow the income, ethnic and gender gaps, and mostly is a cost-effective strategy for eliminating disadvantage (Woodhead, 2016).

The importance of good care for children in their earliest years has emphasized not only by academics and policy specialists, but this belief itself is embedded in many cultural traditions. "Belief in the need for proper care is also grounded in the recognition that children are the next generation; they represent the continuity of tradition as well as the hope for, and fear of, change" (Mayers, 1992, p. 3). Early childhood care, therefore, concerns about nutrition, psychosocial well-being, safe environment, stimulation of children, and it is obviously critical to child well-being. Furthermore, it is argued that there seems to be a positive relationship between sustainable early childhood and upcoming stages of life (Young, 2000). Early childhood begins with the conception and continues on toward the age of eight years, here the first five years are more important in strengthening the child's well-being. ECD involves ensuring that the children are physically, psychologically and socially ready for primary education, and it is highly considered that the development in early childhood is multi-dimensional, dynamic and more complex (Young, 2000).

Sri Lanka, a developing country has shed light on early childhood care and development as a major part of its welfare policies, and there seems to have some improvements particularly in urban and rural areas, however, some of the remote areas of the country still experience several difficulties in early childhood care, development and education. Recently, the government of the country while involving private and community sectors have endeavoured some of the programmes to uplift the child well-being through ECD programmes in the estate sector which is identified as an excluded societal sector in several dimensions (Gunetilleke, Kuruppu, & Goonasekera, 2008), and there seems to have some improvements.

The estate sector in Sri Lanka, despite having some socio-economic improvements, still suffers from severe societal problems including issues around early childhood development, care and education. Moreover, the importance of early childhood care and education is considered to be a prerequisite for national development (Unicef & Health, 2013), consequently which contributes to the achievement of global expectation of Quality Education for All. This research, therefore, strives to understand the obstacles which severely influence early childhood development, care and education particularly in most disadvantaged and excluded communities. Furthermore, understanding the extent to which the toddlers are developmentally ready for primary education and how would sustainable community development make a possible platform for that would be another intention of the research.

2. PROBLEM

Good and quality education is one of the inviolable rights of people, which starts from the birth and continues on toward adulthood and beyond. However, acquiring a quality education in early childhood seems to be difficult in some regions of the world, which includes disadvantaged and excluded communities like Estate sector in Sri Lanka. As acquiring a good and quality education is not just a pedagogical activity but a complex process which embedded in the culture, making a conducive environment is a decisive fact in the achievement of sustainable development goals. Though different domains in the society have influenced attitudes toward early childhood learning, socio-cultural determinants are crucial as that might overpowers and redirect influences from other different domains. So that, the research strived to understand how lay reflection of life satisfaction is interrelated with early childhood education.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

There are three objectives of this research as follows,

1. to construct a context-specific theory on the interpretation of life satisfaction among people in the estate sector, Sri Lanka.
2. to explore how the estate community reflect their needs and justify relevant action initiations.
3. to examine the relationship between cognitive orientation and early childhood education.

4. METHODOLOGY

There are several types of case study designs of which embedded- multiple case study design has been employed here. Any social phenomenon always emanates from a particular context in which the phenomenon's roots are integrated. A case, therefore, placed within a context which requires a clear and comprehensive delineation in the research process as to understand the multidimensionality of the case (Yin, 2003). Cases can be selected using whatever sampling method, and it can be analyzed as a whole. Interpreting a case as a whole is not necessary for this research, and hence embedded design has been employed. Cases are most of the time comprised of small elements which are necessarily embedded into the whole case. This research has mainly strived to identify sustainability characteristics of a particular community drive toward early childhood development through community development. As specified in the problem statement, the research is constricted into the estate sector in Sri Lanka, and hence the context of the case in this research is covered by estate sector norms and societal facts. Within the commonly accepted estate-sector social context, different estates unites are included and each and every unit has unique characteristics.

Studied estate units:

Labukele Estate – Nuwara eliya District

Ury Estate – Badulla District

Fortoft Estate – Nuwara eliya District

Glasow Estate – Nuwara Eliya District

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

A highly influential determinant of early childhood education is the community's vision and the cognitive orientation that is related to their life satisfaction and well-being. Life satisfaction is an experiential state of an individual on well being. Conceptualization of life satisfaction being a member of an estate community is different from experts definition on it. Reflections of how people perceive their life satisfaction would determine the way in which they make decisions. Construction of individual habitus has, therefore, influences their reflections of life satisfaction. Even though different socio-cultural determinants would affect early childhood learning, cognitive orientation is one of the prime factors, which affect early childhood education and learning, to a greater extent.

Cognitive orientation, Foster (1965) describes as "a universalized, implicit expression of their understanding of rules of the game of living imposed upon them by their social, natural and supernatural universes" (p. 293). It comprises several different perspectives and reflections of people concerning their social and personal life. Even though structural determinants would cause the success or neglect of early childhood education, cognitive orientation is

highly influential even for conditioning the socio-cultural determinants of quality education. Identity and sense of belongingness among community members are associated with the cognitive orientation (Udayanga & Kunaratnam, 2017), and hence pre-conditions for quality early childhood education is inlined with that cognitive orientation of the people.

The cognitive orientation of community well being among the estate sector people has been widely influenced by their self-discriminated identity. Self discriminatory attitudes are widely prevailed, in the sense without any proper reference or stable justification, estate sector communities tend to distinguish their identity from the mainstream society, which in turn construct discriminatory cognitive orientation among them.

Discriminatory identity construction is a complex process, which involves political, economic, social and many other reasons. Internalized discriminatory cognitive orientation deprives people of their access to benefits passed down from the main stream society, that would result in internalized marginalization. This marginalization and self-discriminatory cognitive orientation define how people perceive their life satisfaction. Marginalized and discriminatory cognitive orientation, furthermore, is associated with different types of community interrelationships, such as administrative ties, market and interpersonal relationships. As internalized discriminatory attitudes and marginalized identity would influence the construction of estate sector identity among people, that would ultimately result in continuous detachment from the mainstream while rebasing the quality of life, consequently, early childhood education might be out of concerns since other different needs and wants have become prominent.

> "We are always distinguished from the main stream, consciously or unconsciously. When a child born, the name shall be registered by the government registrar, though that person more often registers children's name differently that of what parents expect. For example, if I say "Rasina", they would write it as "Rasna". Though this seems to be a minor mistake, it represents the cultural gap between us and them". (An estate doctor aged 48)

Discriminatory attitudes are unconsciously internalized by estate people, that results in severe disadvantages for their life satisfaction and well-being. This is associated with their decision making process at the ground level concerning different life activities. So that, making a better platform for early childhood education has not been that concerned, as internalized discriminatory attitudes and marginalized identity diverts people from acting toward success to

crystalizing Tamil-estate-identity that requires a set of activities including trade union arrangements in estate communities, identity-related cultural continuation and so on. Therefore, parents and community members do not consider early childhood education as an essential activity in their daily chores.

Comprehension of life satisfaction involves several interdependent factors, that helps to identify and to define relatively essential needs in regard to peoples' survival and satisfaction. Identification and reflections of self-satisfaction have been highly influenced by their identity being a member of an estate sector. Then, they would search for better possible paths toward identified needs, though at last community would select one of them. Selecting one of the best possible paths is a cognitive decision making activity, which has more often been conditioned by socio-cultural determinants.

"Many men of this community have migrated to Colombo to find jobs, but other family members still remain at their houses. Since these men think that they cannot find a decent job here due to their mentality that

they are estate people, the best option is to migrate". (Woman aged 58)
"My husband does not like to work as a labourer here, so he went to Colombo. He at least finds it more comfortable than here. But I have to stay here since I should look after our children and parents. I can just work as a labourer here in this estate". (Woman aged 28)

When community members strive to satisfy identified needs, again socio-cultural facts would influence it. Constructed community mores, values and behavioural patterns are more important to this process. Even though, there are needs and priorities individual determine individually, the well-being of a community is depended upon community needs agreed upon by every member of that community, so that community needs are given priority than individual needs. This might influence early childhood education, since though individuals have a positive attitude toward early childhood education, the community does not consider it to be a prioritized activity, since identity construction and maintenance have given the top priority.
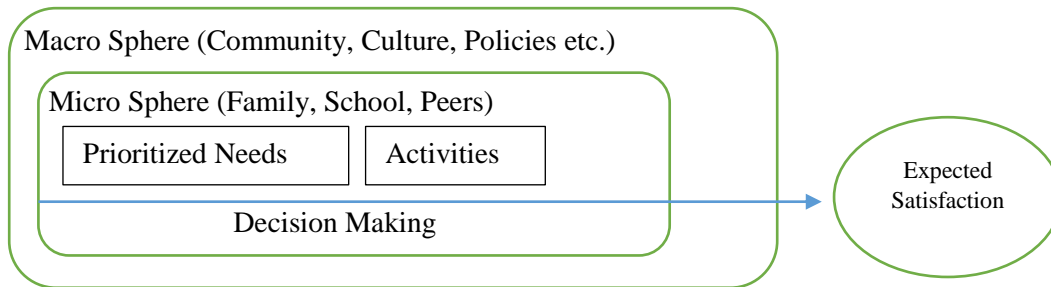

Figure 1: Community decision-making process

As many estate communities are marginalized and disadvantaged, those societies seem to have been functioning in isolation at least partially, in spite of having a little relationship with local townships or the mainstream society. Townships or cities close by are prominently dominated by the mainstream have been changed and transformed adopting modern values, mores and behavioural patterns, whereas estate communities still reluctant to the change and transform in line with townships, as sometimes they are compelled to resist change due to their identity perseverance could result in a cultural lag and that might affect cognitive orientation of those people that

harm even some community level initiatives toward early childhood education.

However, as these communities have not been open to the changing socio-cultural situation in mainstream societies, their cultural principles have been conditioned through South Indian traditions, means a high level of psychological attachment with South Indian movies and dramas would condition peoples' cognitive orientation in that they are acculturated intact with more all as the same South Indian behavioural and cultural patterns. Estate culture is unique in nature, and acculturation is too quite different from what happens in mainstream society, contemporarily. This is a decisive fact of identity

construction, and that affects how people make justifications of their decisions.

Selection of the best possible path toward identified goal/need is justified in line with cultural norms and internalized individual identity.

"One of my daughters became a psychiatrist… It was because I understood that education is the only way to go forward in the modern day. Unlike others, I value education much, so that my children were given a good education, even in early childhood. But this is quite impossible for the people who struggle with poverty, which prevent them from thinking beyond their economic situation and pathetic life." (Woman aged 55)
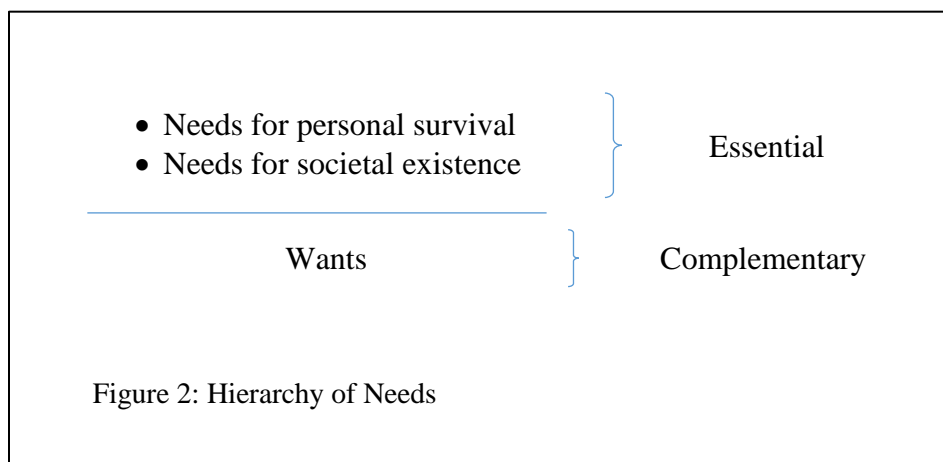
Community characteristics are more similar, in the sense, they share common characteristics as they were integrated together through bonded labour. "Bonded labour" is as some argue, a modern form of slavery, though that is a legalized bond which connects community labour with the estate sector or industry. This somehow contributes to making a common identity which distinguishes those people from another estate or the mainstream society. At least one of the member of a family must have a bond with the estate company in order to secure their living place, in the sense house of the family is given to them as long as they have the bond with the estate. Therefore, bonded labour is another influential fact which affects cognitive orientation of the people, which in the end impacts on peoples' mode of thought, which in turn affect early childhood education. Most of the time the ideology prevailed in the estate sector reflects that "children are for work", that would another way demean the value of education, particularly pre-primary or early childhood education. As community members give priority to bonded labour, concern on education would become less concerned.

"We provide remunerations if they have more children. They are our future labour. There was a policy at earliest times that promoted childbearing and rearing as that produced labour needed in the estate industry. Now some government policies promote small families and that reduced the labour needed over the past few years. However, still we have a remuneration package for childbearing and rearing". (Man aged 36)

Action justification is an ethno method, which is the foremost step of an action performed in society. Action justification involves different societal processes, though this might be influenced by the identity of people in the community. How people justify their actions and following decisions is highly important when it comes to understanding the nature of early childhood education in the estate sector, Sri Lanka. Early childhood education, as noted above has been highly affected by the socio-cultural factors, and hence the contribution and the readiness of significant others is too a conducive fact which ultimately related to good and quality early childhood education.

Providing education in early childhood can be considered as a need among many, but here need-prioritization seems to be a factor that demeans the value of early childhood education. Action-justification is closely related to need-prioritization, as position of the need must be commonly justified and accepted by the society. According to lay reflections of life satisfaction, needs prioritization makes a hierarchy of needs of which income generation has the highest priority, while education, particularly in the early childhood, has been given a very low level.

Figure 2: Hierarchy of Needs

- Needs for personal survival
- Needs for societal existence

Essential

Wants

Complementary

As noted above, needs are the driving force of society and are of two types i.e. essential needs and complementary needs. Essential needs are inviolable though complementary wants are sometimes given highest priority. Essential needs then can be divided into two based on their purpose, means there are needs for personal growth and survival, whereas needs for societal survival facilitates the society to better perform with social structure. Needs for personal survival, on one hand, are non-compromisable, on the contrary reflections suggest that needs for social survival are compromisable at least at the micro level or individual level. Needs for personal survival includes food, shelter, water, clothes and other inalienable needs which affect human survival largely, whereas Needs for Social survival comprises of belongingness, pleasure, freedom, integration and so on. Ideally needs for personal survival are considered to be the top priority over needs for societal survival.

Every need is associated with actions/ activities through which needs are achieved. Individuals in the society perform selected specific actions, and that might be influenced by the cognitive orientation of them as noted above. So that when they initiate any action, a justification is too provided. That justification is conditioned by their marginalized social identity. This process influences the early childhood education tremendously, as the conducive environment toward early childhood education is a result of those relevant activities performed by community members.

In the local level hierarchy on needs, needs for personal survival are given prominence in general, as a result, activity toward early childhood development, health and education have been neglected to a greater extent. Making a conducive environment for proper and quality early childhood education is a task of the community, though early childhood education has not been considered among prioritized needs, so that endeavours toward early childhood education has not been justified by lay reflection in general. Resource utilization is one of the essential tasks that must be performed with careful attention in order to achieve any need as specified above, which requires an acceptable social justification. Any resource that can be utilized in the preparation toward early childhood education more often cannot be justified as that is not considered a prioritized need.

Since needs are related to particular actions, actions of prioritized needs are given prominence over other wants and needs, which deprives children of their education though this can be intervened through proper advocacy and strategic planning. Education does not seem to be a vital fact that affects estate sector people as they reflect, though the reality is different. Even though it is clear that early childhood education impact upon persons' later lives, estate communities are not aware much on that since they conscious more on immediate needs.

Furthermore, needs for personal satisfaction can be divided into two parts i.e. essential and complementary. Complementary needs are not inviolable, though it has become prioritized and hence recourse for any other development have spent on complementary needs while children and toddlers have been deprived of their education since that might suffer lack of resources.

Conducive environment for a better early childhood education, development and even health is a result of community readiness. The readiness of the community is the extent to which community members are prepared individually and socially for the expected end. Readiness and preparedness toward early childhood education with good quality is, therefore a consequence of that preparedness and readiness which assist their cognitive orientation to be aligned with sustainable development goals. Although, it is difficult to assess the direction of cognitive orientation whether it directs toward a positive end or a negative end as community member reflect, that should be aligned with directions of sustainability if global goals to be localized in the ground level. Moreover, properly organized cognitive orientation would help communities to be ready and prepared for good and quality early childhood education.

Figure 3: Contextualized process of localizing sustainable development goals
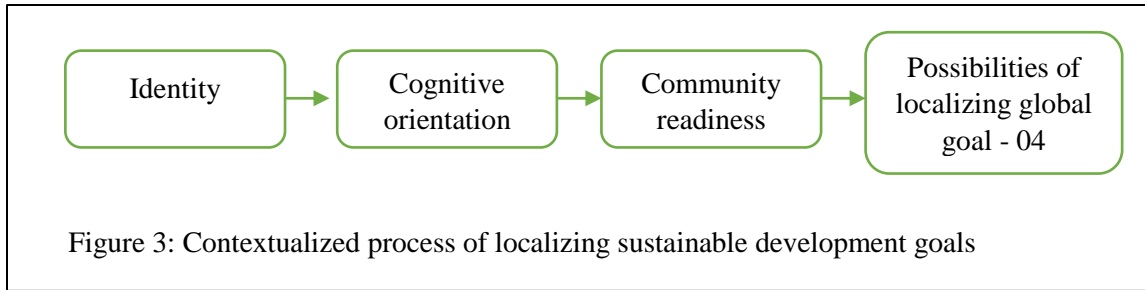
Cognitive orientation assists people to prioritize needs while executing related actions/activities to achieve expected needs, particularly sustainable development goals. Although individuals believe that early childhood education is essential and important, cognitive orientation affected by marginalized identity and discriminatory attitudes prevent them from prioritizing early childhood education, while putting reflected community needs which are totally or partially unrelated in the achievement of good and quality education in early childhood.

6. CONCLUSION

Early childhood education is one of the areas which has been captured by sustainable development goals as it impacts upon the lifelong learning of people which has a relationship with other key areas of human life satisfaction. Early childhood education is understood as a key area of the fourth sustainable development goal, and international policy agencies including UNICEF asks countries to localize that goal into ground level since global agreements of policies would fail in local levels when they encounter particular socio-cultural determinants. Even though it is easy to articulate, implementation and adopting policies at local levels has been a difficult task, since how locals reflect those policies which have a tremendous impact on them and respond to those initiatives might unexpectedly unpredictable. So that this paper focused on understanding how estate communities in Sri Lanka respond to sustainable development goals, particularly to the fourth goals which include good and quality early childhood development, education and care. In addition, the research aimed at developing a theory about how locals respond to making a conducive environment toward good-quality early childhood education.

As analyzed above, social identity of the community has been a significant fact which affects early childhood education. Provision of early childhood education is a responsibility of parents those who are members of a community with a specific identity. Therefore, nature of the identity of community members impacts on how they make decisions and take action in order to accomplish their expected needs. Any action, which is performed toward achieving an expected need, might be influenced by the community identity that has been conditioned by socio-cultural dynamics. The identity of estate communities seems to have been discriminated and marginalized, and hence they demonstrate an internalized marginal and discriminatory identity that more often influence how people make decisions and initiate actions. Therefore, communities are being prepared for the maintenance of their identity which harms the process of making a conducive environment for a good and quality early childhood education.

This research, furthermore, identified cognitive orientation or the way in which people's psychological directions are landed, a decisive fact which affects early childhood education tremendously. If global goals to be localized, policy makers shall consider people's cognitive orientation and its influence on their decision-making process, as all cultural and social determinants are amalgamated in the cognitive orientation of people.

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