
HIGHER EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



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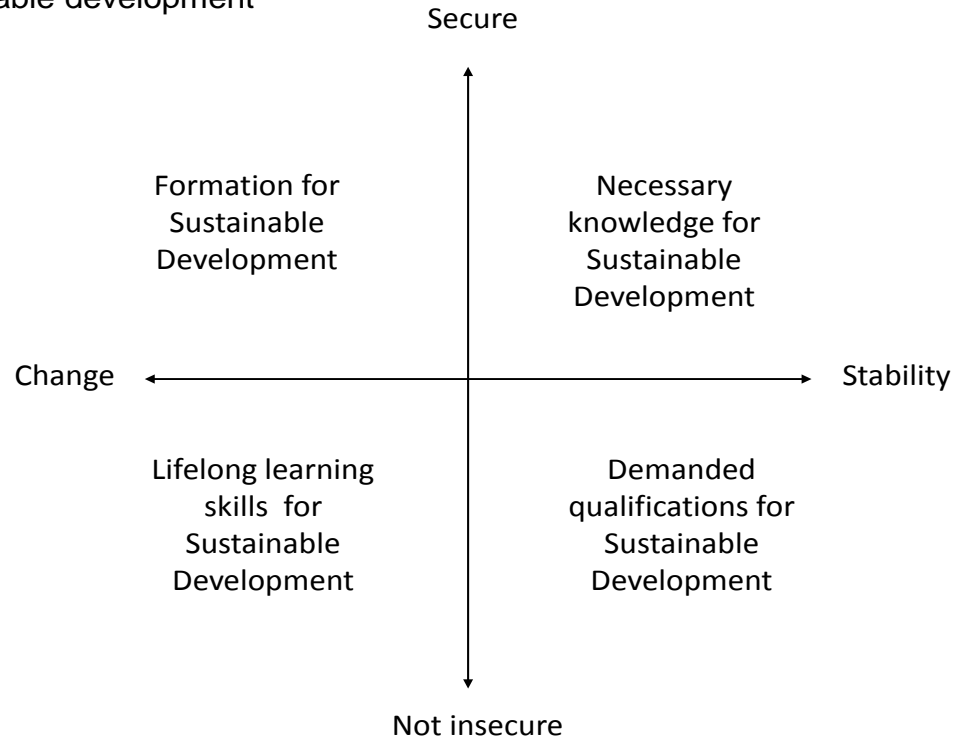
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THESIS

There is a tendency that a global discourse named "lifelong learning skills for a resilient life" is shaping the university's contribution to sustainable development and at the same time establishing itself as a perspective of a current major conflict with another discourse called "necessary knowledge for a secured life".

Figure 1: Four approaches to the relationship between higher education and sustainable development



NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- This discourse is connected with a notion that scientific research can provide evidence for what necessary knowledge is needed to have a sustainable development: Solutions are found through scientific enquiry, communication of this can then take place and appropriate behaviour is expected to follow.
- This approach does not only value knowledge that comes from higher education institutions, it is also often connected to the desire to conserve certain aspects of particular environments that have meaning or value for specific people, and is therefore also defining what kind of knowledge is necessary.

DEMANDED QUALIFICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- Knowledge produced by higher education institutions, first of all, only has value if it is converted to standardized/interchangeable (stable) ability!
- And higher education institutions' responsibilities is a matter of delivering demanded qualifications for sustainable development that have value seen from a societal perspective.

FROM A STABILITY PERSPECTIVE TO A CHANGE PERSPECTIVE

- The perspective of sustainable development no matter if you look at ‘the necessary knowledge approach’ or ‘the demanded qualification-approach ‘ is that the value of sustainability is fixed, predetermined and stabilized by specific hegemonic authorities. Of course you need to analyze and identify which of these authorities, policy-makers, industry and/or academic experts, that are the stabilizing hegemonic authorities .
- But the thinking related to both the two fields of the overall ‘education discourse’ is connected to the idea, that you can identify stable knowledge solutions and that higher education institutions is in principle able to educate graduates that are precisely qualified to deliver/to perform these solutions.

FORMATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- An example of a democratic formulation of an updated classic formation approach to the relationship between higher education and sustainable development: “...one in which choices about how each individual life should be lived are best left to the individuals concerned and general propositions about how everyone should collectively behave require collective consent” (Gough and Scott, 2007, pp. 14-15)
- Besides the ideological reason for taking this position you could also say that there is a more objective reason; that is stating that the requirements for sustainable development is dependent on numerous factors, some of which are uncertain and other unknown. In fact, the university in itself is one of these factors as a university is eager to clarify what we know and how we know it, but first and foremost the university insists on this incompleteness of knowledge, both in the present and in the future (Gough and Scott, 2007). So the safest is to be open to new knowledge

LIFELONG LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – WHY?

- Because higher education in a complex risk society must find a new balance between a reproductive view of knowledge in which students learn to see the world in the ways known by their teachers (Boud, 2000, p. 154) and a learning-to-learn-view of knowledge that prepares students for "a lifetime of assessing their own learning" (Boud and Falchikov, 2006, p. 400)

- Because the risk society is 'only' connected to an arbitrary notion of sustainable development. This means that development towards a completely safe living situation becomes secondary in favour of thinking about resilience as something that constantly evolves - through learning - to become. ideal of resilience.

CONCLUSION

- The learning discourse identifies higher education with a certain freedom of curriculum, assessment and learning which relates to the idea of change and higher education delivering sustainable, resilient, local and temporary, solutions. The education discourse identifies higher education with the necessary knowledge and/or qualifications required to create sustainable, stable, secure and final, solutions.
- If my thesis – my diagnosis of the contemporary situation – is bulletproof, it opens the possibility that higher education, that universities, are being designed according to a historic – and especially university historic – new ideal of the resilience of the individual, the community and the world made possible by a lifelong approach to learning.



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