SDGs involvement introducing graduates participation in rural sustainability

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Abstract. Most of the developing countries like China, India, Malaysia, Bangladesh, and others are insisting on higher education in nation’s development. It is admissible to say that the urgency of higher education comes intending to retain continuity of economic growth. In developing counties- the job market awaits knowledgeable workers, hence a need for quality education; besides, parents believe that a bright future could only be ensured through higher education. Nevertheless, the higher education system and its global context transformed youth into a product for a competitive market. This product has more value in urban context than the rural. There arise difficulties for the youth (of rural areas) to retreat, backed by an intention to share the fruits of his/her higher degrees with his local people. This study tends to uproot the intended consequences, which are regulating and become significant barriers to graduates’ participation in rural sustainability. In this context, this paper addresses the question: Do SDGs agendas introducing graduates' participation in rural sustainability? The answer could be explored observing and analysing institutional (Governmental) and organizational (NGO) activities with (local) graduates in rural areas. SDGs involvements almost reach the root level to aid the rural people, and these goals are a part of community development in the rural area. Graduates’ aspiration to work for rural sustainability and against this, the opportunities to be available, is a challenge for developing countries. To achieve SDGs by 2030, developing nations must overcome this challenge. Moreover, SDGs agencies are cooperating with developing nations to overcome this challenge.

1. Introduction
In Bangladesh, tertiary education holders are still a small minority [1]. Here, Graduates are more concerned about professionalism. When a graduate is run after professionalism to build up his/her career, he/she chooses those areas with maximum facilities. This trend is a more hardened barrier for a local graduate to retreat after his graduation to invest his/her knowledge in rural sustainability. The total number of tertiary education students in Bangladesh is about 2.92 million in 2017 [2]. World Bank report says that only about one-third of the graduates (32 percent) are currently located in rural areas indicating high rural-urban migration contributing to rapid urbanization and urban concentration of jobs [2].

Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) is also a vast field for fresh graduates. Zahir [3] claims that most NGOs engage in group-formation and provide financial services to group members; some even engage in providing social services- health, education, water and sanitation, training and skill development, and awareness building. Those NGOs are engaged in providing social services regulating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agendas. Some public sectors are also regulating the SDGs agendas [4], like institutions under- health and family welfare, social welfare,
agriculture, and other ministries. It is hardly difficult for fresh graduates to engage in rural sustainability programs under any public administration. Though it is easier to engage with the NGOs' activities (on rural sustainability), there is no such space to share this privilege among a high number of graduates.

2. Background

Nelson Mandela said “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” All nations (from developed to least-developed) are much concerned about education. Education is a basic ingredient in nation-building. As a result, it has a positive relation with development agendas. We have seen in MDG (Millennium Development Goals), and later, education has achieved a place of global concern. In developing nations, the conceptualization of education as a weapon to break the poverty chain is a conceptualization of modernity.

In Bangladesh, higher education, also called tertiary level education, is generally used to comprehend the entire range and dynamics of post higher secondary education. Here, graduates are denoted as degree holders from the tertiary education level. When the whole world is concerned about sustainability and if there is no such scope to retreat local graduates to rural areas, there arise questions against the universal education system. However, this study tends to analyses the little scope providing by the NGOs in sustainability agendas for graduates. Lacking of graduates performances in rural sustainability is not a case of developing countries.

Sustainable Development Goal 4 is about ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The targets of SDG 4 are centring equal access to all level of education for the people from all spheres [5]. Sustainable Development Goal 11 prime statement is [6] “More than half of us live in cities. By 2050, two-thirds of all humanity — 6.5 billion people—will be urban. Sustainable development cannot be achieved without significantly transforming the way we build and manage our urban spaces, Making cities sustainable means creating career and business opportunities, safe and affordable housing, and building resilient societies and economies. It involves investment in public transport, creating green public spaces, and improving urban planning and management in participatory and inclusive ways.”

The other goals are related to basic human rights; some of them are to protect nature, environment, and climate. So, rural sustainability doesn’t own any separate goal and targets; rather, it is included in other goals and targets of the SDGs. A small number of NGOs are performing the SDGs agendas. Zahir [3] noted a point that principal activities of NGOs are related to access to credit for poor and people in a distant area. Performing SDG agendas are not concerned with being a part of the principal activities of NGOs. Though it is small in number, local graduates from rural areas get privileges to engage in SDG activities with NGOs in their local areas.

3. Literature Review

The Guardian [7] published an article titled ‘The job’s aren’t there: why graduates are leaving northern town’, where professor Paul Miller of University of Huddersfield stressed that close dialogue between universities and local businesses is essential to make sure graduates have the skills they need to work locally. However, he warned, “small businesses don’t have absorptive capacity.”

Trivelli and Morel [8] claimed that though engagement of youth has gained a high profile among international organizations, governments and NGOs, rural young people are still one of the groups least engaged in the policy-making process in the developing world. Trivelli and More [8] further argued that many governments engage young people only for “youth-related issues” (such as volunteering, sports, and ludic activities) instead of integrating them in a wider range of topics of their concern like- employment; sexual and reproductive rights policy, etc. Jennings, et al. [9] commented that young people should be integrated with activities that promote “meaningful participation”, that is, “activities relevant to their own lives, ones that excite and challenge them and count as real”.

Benfica, et al. [10] concluded a work titled Rural Youth Employment under the supervision of the World Bank and IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development). They are claiming those young people from rural areas are often excluded from policy-making processes. Besides, they argue that a large share of youth in developing countries lives in rural areas, and rural youth have a higher
likelihood of migrating to urban areas. According to international development agencies, the barriers for youth participation in development in developing countries are poor education and training, weak infrastructure, inequality, and exclusion.

Gella and Tadele [11] study of rural youth aspirations in Ethiopia revealed that “aspirations are not just about economic opportunity- status is important: agriculture is unappealing to young people because it does not bring status regardless of economic outcomes.” Fuller [12] study on Thailand revealed that young rural people report agricultural work as “hot and exhausting” and that many are lured to large cities in search of more sophisticated lifestyles [11]. Lundius and Suttie [13] claimed that rural-urban migration is part of the structural transformation needed to achieve economic development. As agricultural productivity increases, migration contributes to rural transformation by releasing surplus labor from agricultural to higher productivity non-farm and urban sectors [14]. Graduates are the torchbearer of rural areas. If we can’t retreat local graduates to rural areas, then we are missing a major part of the rural future.

4. Theoretical framework
This study is proceed with Robert King Merton’s ‘Unintended Consequences’ theory as the theoretical framework of this study [15]. Merton published his work titled ‘The Unanticipated Consequences of purposive social action’ published in 1936 [15]. There are five principal features of this theory - i) ignorance, ii) error, iii) imperious immediacy of interest, iv) Basic value and v) self-defeating prediction. Merton’s concept summarization might look like- an actor foresees an objective to be gained or an outcome to be avoided. The actor creates a plan of action designed to achieve the objective or advert the undesired outcome. The plan is based on a theory of the causal and social processes that govern the domain in question and the actions that other parties may take. The plan of action also creates an unforeseen or unintended series of developments that lend to a result that in contrary to the actor’s original intentions.

Ignorance; situations which demand (or what is for our purposes tantamount to the same thing, appear to the actor demand) immediate action of some sort, will usually involve ignorance of certain aspects of the situation and will bring about unexpected results Error; may include in self, of course, in any phase of purposive action: we may err in our appraisal of the present situation, in our inference from this to the future objective situation, in our selection of a course of action, or finally in the execution of the action chosen.

Imperious immediacy of interest; refers to instances where the action’s paramount concern with the foreseen immediate consequences excludes the consideration of further or other consequences of same act. Basic value refers to instances where there is no consideration of further consequences because of the felt necessity of certain enjoined by specific fundamental values. Self-defeating prediction stands in the way successful social predictions of future social prediction and planning. Public predictions of future social developments are frequently not sustained precisely because the prediction has become a new element in the concrete situation, thus tending to change the initial course of development.

Some in-depth interviews are organized to collect relevant data for the improvement of this study. Those intensive interviews took place with: the fresh graduates from rural areas who are working in urban areas and also with them who are investing their knowledge and time in their respective areas, the stakeholders who are providing to engage in rural sustainability activities, local authorities and with local people. Those interviews were arranged informally. Furthermore, some FGD (Focus Group Discussion) is performed among graduates, fresh graduates, under-graduates, local guardians. More so, some content analysis regarding this topic is put forward in this study.

5. The world is more cantered on urban than rural
The discourse of modernity, advanced technology, science, knowledge, and education, imposed an idea in our cognition that urban is the source of everything. A common conceptualization of living in an urban area would be like getting maximum privileges; on the contrary, those living in rural areas are marginal haunting us in this dichotomy, which is responsible for significant barriers for the local graduates to retreat and engage in rural development activities.
On the other hand, in a developing country like Bangladesh, the infrastructure of education in rural areas is very weak. So, students from rural areas hardly reach the tertiary level. Though some graduates come out and work with NGOs SDG related activities, no one can expect to get an average amount of graduates from rural areas. The myth of urban as a source of maximum opportunity and facilities attracted rural graduates to urban. Though rural areas contain minimum ‘facilities’ in the urban context, the untold truth is that rural area consists of maximum opportunities. The ignorance is seeded in our cognition, and modernity furnished this conceptualization.

5.1. Graduates have no platform in local areas
Graduates are denoted as a first-degree holder from a university or college. In developing countries like Bangladesh, a common misconception regarding rural and urban dichotomy is that rural tends to agro-based. This misconception leads us that there is no such reliable platform for graduates except agriculture small scale businesses. Also, the existence of weak infrastructure in rural areas contributes regulating misconceptions. Moreover, this is why people from rural areas having tough experiences when they are facing administrative works.

Literate parents of graduates from rural areas dreamt about their offspring would bring honor. To attain a respective honor, their offspring must be engaged in the prominent activities in nature which are not available in rural areas. Even the illiterate parents whose offspring got graduates, they also tend to think about honor. However, the concern of honor comes when their offspring are getting graduated. Therefore, the thought of migration to urban areas unintentionally imposed from family.

5.2. NGOs principal activities surrounding financing poor and people from rural areas
The discourse of ‘upgrading livelihood by financing poor and people from rural’ areas has significant influences over NGOs activities. Most of the NGOs are engaged in micro-credit after the success story of the Grameen Bank. NGOs are one of them to make aware rural people about finance. Rural people from developing countries like Bangladesh are not capable of that financial thought. NGOs bring ‘produce more earn more’ concept to rural people. Meanwhile, the state is getting more benefit from this concept and patronizes NGOs to continue and extend their missions regarding this concept. As a result, rural people get more marginalized by this concept.

5.3. Sustainability means development within bounds
Discourses of development marginalizing rural people continuously. NGOs are more often related to agricultural activities in rural areas. As if micro-credit is the universal model of sustainability, financial solvency individually does not count as sustainability.

In the name of development, NGOs are aiding and financing to rural areas. However, there is a small account where NGOs are involved in and are not bringing aid from an external source instead of engaged in refining the indigenous ideas with modern equipment. The principal values of NGOs have shifted from social services to financial services in the early 1990s and the trend is continuing in the name of development.

5.4. The inclusion of modernity
Modernization is involved in every sphere of our lives. Even in rural lives, the influence of modernity is transparent. Students often migrate to urban areas for attending a tertiary level of education. The surrounding environment of the urban area influenced them, even provides them with new gestures. The gestures are exotic in a rural sense. In developing countries, rural areas' cognition goes with collective thoughts. Here, the first time a student living in an urban area enjoying the supremacy of independence. He/she is absorbing a new ideology. Urban activities, movements, independence these factors are rectifying his morality. These facts influence local graduates to remain in the urban area instead of getting back to his/her rural area.

5.5. Undesired effects are not always undesirable effects
A graduate could engage in NGOs activities; however, most of them are not academically relevant. There is a point to be noted that graduates from science background have less opportunity than the arts
or social sciences. Those graduates could engage in sustainability activities. They are the critical moderator to refine the indigenous knowledge with modern science. Sustainability is not a common approach; rather, it is particular within universality. Leave no one behind is a universal goal, but we should take a particular approach for the individual to ensure equity. Graduates’ participation in rural areas has undesired effect, but there are also positive sides to this participation. Local graduates could refine the modernity, which can quickly get acceptance from rural people. There is no doubt that between rural and urban people, a gap exists. This gap creates by modernity, which does not have easy acceptance among rural people. However, graduates can solve this problem if they only retreat to their local rural areas and refine indigenous ideas with modernity.

6. Conclusion

Education is a fundamental human right, which is central to achieving many other sustainable development outcomes. Graduates are denoted as a part of the tertiary level of education. The state has to provide a platform for graduates in rural areas. Local graduates are the key moderator of refining modernity, which could be acceptable for rural peoples. In the name of development, modern science brought up to rural areas. To maintain a good harmony of sustainable development projects in the way where mass people from rural areas get easy access and also their acceptance is inevitable. The rural sustainability is not only about economic solvency. There must be a platform where youth from the tertiary level of education could easily involve in rural activities. The hoax of the ‘next world is the urban world’ must come to an end to retain rural sustainability. Rural areas were sustainable before the world imposed modernity [16]. NGOs are providing a platform for local graduates from rural areas. It might be very little in the account, not academic relevant, but somehow they are engaging local graduates in rural sustainability; as Robert K. Merton quoted [15], “undesired effects are not always undesirable effects”.

7. References

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