# Chapter 8

# Education

## Chapter Overview

It has been said that if education does not teach us to live well on this planet then we should wonder what the purpose of education is all about. For too long it has been mainly about improving an individualized human standard of living, but more recently it has been changing to think about the planet as something more than resources to maintain the current lifestyle. The transformation to a more holistic idea of connections requires that the population learn more about sustainability. By necessity, educational systems must focus on more than disciplinary information and work toward different ideas of what it means to be literate in a sustainable world.

People must recognize the many myths about educational systems. They must recognize the interconnectedness of all things such that sociocultural systems, environmental systems, and economic systems on how to obtain and manage resources are part of informed and mindful decision making in a sustainable world. Many cultural assumptions exist that are also barriers to creating a new mindset. How people think about the present and what progress means is heavily influenced by ideas that the economic bottom line and better technology are the only things that matter. The cultural commons are a crucial component of how people define themselves and what contributes to overall physical and psychological health. The language used in education is part of a linguistic history where words have unwritten assumptions behind them. This marginalizes much of the commons. Once people begin to mindfully think about what they are learning, they start to see how transforming education is not about changing what is taught, but more about how people actually learn it. Facts are facts, but the values placed on facts greatly affect how people think about their importance in the larger scheme of things.

## Vocabulary Terms

affective domain

causation

challenge education

cognitive domain

correlation

emotional rhetoric

emotional triggers

empowerment

frame

hegemony

linguistics

multiliterate

nature-deficit disorder

nurturant parent model

propaganda

psychomotor domain

rheostat switch

social intelligence

strict father model

taxonomy

transdisciplinary value systems

variables

## Terms With Definitions

**affective domain—**While often connected to the motivational aspects of learning, it encompasses all the emotional aspects that influence people’s values, beliefs, and attitudes.

**causation—**Used in research to describe the effect that is observed because of an action on a defined system.

**challenge education—**A general term to define education experiences that challenge people to be outside of their comfort zone. The general goal is to empower people to be more resilient in how they react in life and to create more empathic and introspective feelings about events outside themselves.

**cognitive domain—**Generally refers to the intellectual aspects of the mind such as how knowledge is gathered, comprehended, and applied.

**correlation—**The statistical description of how two or more factors or variables are related to each other. Since cause–effect cannot be established, a meaningful connection is established through logical reasoning and then validated by statistical association.

**emotional rhetoric—**A form of persuasion that uses emotional appeal instead of logical ideas to drive its points home.

**emotional triggers—**Events, people, or communicative messages that consistently create intense, emotional reactions within an individual.

**empowerment—**When an individual or group gains confidence in their capacity to effect some change.

**frame—**The mental process by which information is processed through a sociocultural worldview; that is, the biases and perceptions may distort the reality one expects to see and so everything is framed through this perspective.

**hegemony—**Where a dominant group exerts a social, cultural, ideological, or economic influence on another less dominant or more passive group.

**linguistics—**The study of language and its use, with specific reference to language form, meaning, and context.

**multiliterate—**A person who is able to function effectively in various categories of literacy.

**nature-deficit disorder—**A nonmedical term used to describe how separation from nature can create numerous behavioral and even psychological problems.

**nurturant parent model—**A mental model of parenting where the parents nurture and protect, and establish rational criteria for cooperative behavior.

**propaganda—**Denotes persuasion by using selected information that supports one position of preference and benefit to the user.

**psychomotor domain—**The innate physical abilities and motion skills that can be developed for greater physical articulation.

**rheostat switch—**A physical electrical switch that can increase or decrease electrical current.

**social intelligence—**The ability to understand and manage complex social relationships effectively.

**strict father model—**A mental model of parenting where the father is seen as an authoritarian who is always correct, establishes right from wrong, and uses discipline to establish compliance to correct ways of thinking that are rewarded.

**taxonomy—**A method used to classify data into hierarchical levels of connectedness.

**transdisciplinary—**The connection of multiple disciplines at the same time while respecting disciplinary expertise.

**value systems—**The set of personal and cultural ethics that make up the moral framework for how a person decides right from wrong.

**variables—**A set of factors that can have discrete properties. For example, gender is generally a variable with two discrete categories, male and female.

## Extended Learning Activity

Contact a local chapter of an environmental organization (e.g., Nature Conservancy) or the local Division of Wildlife to get a schedule of public meetings being held to discuss environmental issues in the community. Attend one of the meetings and write an analysis of the effectiveness of the meeting. You could include the following questions in your analysis: Was the problem clearly identified? Did the problem get resolved? Were short-term and long-term goals discussed and agreed upon? Did all stakeholders have a voice? Was the meeting emotionally based? Did all participants use good communication skills? Was the strict father model or the nurturant parent model evident?

## Research and Response Questions

1. Research a local public school that incorporates environmental education into its curriculum. Describe this curriculum and how it fosters sustainability. Interview the principal to determine whether he or she thinks it is a vital part of the curriculum and how the teachers and students respond to the curriculum.
2. Research a nongovernmental organization that promotes environmental literacy. Determine how this organization educates the public about the environment and how it deciphers whether or not the programs are effective.

## Web Links

[The Environmental Literacy Council](http://www.enviroliteracy.org/)

[Institute for Applied Ecology](http://appliedeco.org/)

[National Communication Association](http://www.natcom.org/)

[North American Association for Environmental Education](http://www.naaee.net/)

[Outdoor Education Research and Evaluation Center](http://wilderdom.com/research.php)

[The Talloires Declaration: University Presidents for a Sustainable Future](http://www.iisd.org/educate/declarat/talloire.htm)

[U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](http://www.epa.gov/)