

SUSTAINIBILITY IN EDUCATION - THE INDIAN SCENARIO

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable Development is the development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs. It also means the economic development that is conducted without depletion of natural resources .Keeping in mind the sustainable development the SDG goals were made to transform the world. And sustainable development is different from sustainability as SDG are methods to achieve the goal of sustainability. One such SDG is quality education. Here I have attempted to see whether India has attained sustainability in education which is an important aspect of social infrastructure of a developing nation.

KEYWORDS: Sustainability, education, women’s education, progress, enrolment ratio, gender parity.

According to widely accepted definition ,”sustainable development’ is a development approach that aims to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs ,essentially balancing economic growth ,social equity and environmental protection. This concept was popularized by the Brundland Report 1987 which helped to make the concept of Sustainable development better known.

When looking deeply into the matter we can see that it encompasses three key dimensions environmental sustainability, social equity and economic viability which are interconnected and need to be considered together.

It focuses on future generations and ensures that current actions do not deplete resources or damage the environment to the detriment of the future generations. Sustainable development aims to use natural resources efficiently and responsibly, minimizing waste and promoting renewable energy sources. Social justice is also emphasized while addressing issues like poverty, inequality and access to basic needs (Health, Education) to achieve a more equitable society.

Now when talking about sustainability, there is a slight difference between the terms ‘Sustainability’ and ‘Sustainable Development’. Sustainability is the goal while Sustainable Development is the process of getting there. Both terms are closely related and are often used interchangeably. Sustainable Development overlaps with the idea of sustainability which is a normative concept. UNESCO formulated a distinction between the two concepts as follows. ”Sustainability is often thought of as a long term goal while Sustainable Development refers to the many processes and pathways to achieve it.

The Rio Process that began at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janerio has placed the concept of sustainable development on the International Agenda. Sustainable Development is the foundational concept of the Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs).These global goals for the

year 2030 were adopted in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly(UNGA).They address the global challenges including for example poverty, climate change, **education**, health, bio-diversity loss and peace to mention a few.

So to achieve sustainability in **education** is a major development issue today in the developing economies of the world, India being one of them. Therefore how we can achieve sustainability in **education** is a big challenge to the policy makers of the nations, as only through proper initiatives and suitable projects we can achieve Sustainable Development of the country.

EDUCATION SECTOR IN INDIA

The education sector is supposed to be one of the most important segments of the India's tertiary sector. It comprises of education services provided by the school, colleges, universities, research and development institutes .It is believed that people of a country can be made more knowledgeable, skillful, and productive through better education and training facilities. Thus formation of "human capital" (i.e educated and skilled people) depends to a great extent upon the expenditure made particularly by the government towards the expansion of education service in a country. In Indian economy, the education sector has also received due importance during the last few decades and occupies an important position in the social infrastructure of the country. And so with the expansion of education service, the social infrastructure of our country has been strengthened.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION SECTOR IN INDIA

The education sector assumes special importance for a country like India. The importance of this sector can be well - understood from the following discussion.

(a) **Improvement of knowledge and consciousness:** Better education is needed for improving the knowledge and consciousness of the common people, so that they can express their views on the evils of social oppression and resist it.

(b) **Reducing gender-oriented discrimination:** Expansion of elementary and vocational education is needed to empower the members (particularly the female members) of the backward and poor community. Such education increases their income earning capabilities. As a result, the difference between the average earnings of the male and female workers can be reduced to a large extent. So education is the most important tool for gender empowerment and for reducing gender oriented discrimination.

(c) **Reducing infant mortality rate:** Adequate expansion of educational facilities among the female population of any society can reduce the infant mortality rate and even the birth rate.

(d) **Creating better income-earning capabilities:** Better educational facilities for the common people also help in reducing the incidence of poverty in any society. Better education means higher income-earning capabilities .If the average productivity of the labour-force can be raised through improved educational facilities (particularly technical education) then national output and income will rise. This also means higher per capita income along with a better distribution of income among different individuals within a society. This will lead to a reduction in the incidence of poverty.

(e) **INITIATING PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE IN DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES:** People with some educational background can easily participate in the local developmental

activities undertaken by the panchayats or other local authorities. It strengthens the civil institutions in a society.

(f) Improving the quality of human resources: Better educational facilities also improve the quality of human resources in a less developed country like India.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR PROMOTION OF EDUCATION IN INDIA

(a) DISTRICT PRIMARY EDUCATION PROGRAMME (DPEP): DPEP is a special thrust to achieve Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE). The programme takes a holistic view of primary education development and seeks to operationalise the strategy of UEE through district special planning.

(b) NON-FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME (NEEP): To achieve the goal of UEE, the NEEP has put into operation in 1979-80 to provide educational facilities to children who do not/ cannot attend school, school-dropouts, etc.

(c) NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR NUTRITIONAL SUPPORT TO PRIMARY EDUCATION (NPNSPE): This programme popularly known as the “Mid-day Meal Scheme” was launched on 15th August, 1995 with the intention of improving the nutritional status of students in primary classes.

(d) WOMEN’S EDUCATION: The National Policy for Education Document made a strong commitment to a “well-conceived edge in favour of women”. The Operation Blackboard Scheme (OBS) introduced during the Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97), had some special provisions for educational facilities for women in India. The programme like “Mahila Samakhya” (MS) aims at the empowerment of women through education. By the end of the Ninth Plan (1997-2002), MS would cover 35 districts. In July 2003, Government of India approved a new programme called ‘National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level’(NPEGEL).It aims at providing additional support to the underprivileged girls in educationally backward districts. Apart from NPEGEL, a new scheme called Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) has been approved during 2004-05 for setting up 750 residential schools (with boarding facilities) at primary level for girls belonging to SC,ST and other backward communities.

(e) VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: The National Policy on Education (1986) accords high priority to vocationalisation of education at the secondary stage. It aims at achieving diversion of about 25 percent students at the +2(HS) level to the vocational stream. A Joint Council for Vocational Education (JCVE) was set up in April 1990, for policy formulation and coordination at the national level. A Central Institute of Vocational Education (CIVE) was set up at Bhopal in July 1993, to provide technical and academic support to the vocational education programme in the country.

(f) COMPUTER LITERACY AND STUDIES IN SCHOOLS (CLASS): A pilot project, “CLASS” was started in 1984-85 in collaboration with the Department of Electronics to inculcate interest among the students about computer programming and operations.

(g) ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL OPEN SCHOOL (NOS): The NOS was established in November 1989, as an autonomous organization in pursuance of the National Policy of Education (1986) by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. The NOS was established to facilitate drop-outs and those who could not attend regular

classes. During the Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002), 15 State Open Schools were planned to be established.

(h) ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATION RESEARCH AND TRAINING (NCERT): The NCERT was established in September 1961, as an autonomous body for the qualitative improvement and excellence in school education and teacher education.

(i) EXPANSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION: Higher education is imparted through 712 Universities and about 36000 colleges in the country. In 1956, the University Grants Commission (UGC) was established to take measures for the promotion and coordination of university education and for maintaining standards in teaching. For widening the access of higher education to larger segments of the population, the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) was established in September 1985.

(j) SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN: In 2001-02, the Government of India, in partnership with the states, has launched a programme of "Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan" (SSA) for achieving the goal of universalisation of elementary education. This programme will subsume all existing programmes in due course and it will be implemented through decentralized planning. The major objectives of this programme are:

- (i) All children of age 6-14 years, should complete five years of primary education by 2007.
- (ii) All children of age 6-14 years, should complete eight years of schooling by 2010.
- (iii) Quality of elementary education should be improved.
- (iv) All gender and social category gaps at the level of primary education should be bridged by 2007.
- (v) All such gaps at elementary education level should be bridged by 2010.

(k) CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT: 93 Amendment of the Indian constitution was passed in the Lok Sabha on November 28, 2001, to make the right to free and compulsory education for children of the age group 6-14 years a Fundamental right.

(l) LIBERALISATION: Since the 1990's the Government of India has been following a liberal policy environment and has allowed foreign investment in the education sector of India to make the sector more competitive and efficient. As a result, several service providers and private sector investors have started investing in the education sector of India. However some economists feel that the process would make higher education more costly to the common people and so they are of the opinion that Government intervention to monitor the fees charged by the private service providers while delivering education service.

Apart from these various other programmes were undertaken by the Government to promote educational facilities for backward and minority communities.

All these efforts made by the government led to a continuous growth in the number of both educational institutions and the number of students at different stages of education.

PROGRESS OF EDUCATION IN INDIA

The progress of education in India over the last few decades has been on the following lines:

(a) INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS:

It is observed that the number of primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary schools in India has increased from about 2.29 lakhs in 1951 to about 14.09 lakhs in 2016. Similarly the number of colleges has also increased from about 500 to about 39,000 during the same period. Within these colleges, the number of colleges providing professional

education (engineering, medical, management) has also increased. Student enrolment at several levels of education has also increased over years.

(b) INCREASE IN GROSS ENROLMENT RATIO:

Along with the increase in the number of educational institutions in India, the gross enrolment ratio has also increased at different levels of education. GER signifies total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the eligible official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education in a given school year. The GER at the elementary level was biased against the female- students during 1950-2011. However, since 2011, the trend has been reversed. In 2010-11, the GER is more than 100. The GER at Higher education level has also improved over the years.

(c) Gender Parity has been established:

The gender –based inequality in the GER is measured in terms of an index, called the Gender Parity Index (GPI) based on Gross Enrolment Ratio. This GPI is the ratio of female students enrolled at Primary, Secondary and Tertiary levels of education to the corresponding ratio of male students at that level. If GPI tends towards a value 1 then it implies gradual decline in gender-based inequality in GER. The GPI has been found to be improving for both primary and higher education in India during 2005-16.

(d) Improving Student-teacher Ratio: The teacher-student ratio indicates the average number of students per teacher. In primary education this ratio gradually increased from about 24 in 1950-51 to about 43 in 2010-11, but after that it has declined to 23 in 2015-16. This implies that the shortage of teachers at the primary level of education could be met to some extent. On the other hand, in higher education, this ratio remained in between 24-26 during 2010-16.

(e) Growing public expenditure in education: Public expenditure in education means the expenditure made by the respective State Governments as well as the Central Government towards the development of education sector. In 1951-52, only about 0.64% of India's GDP was spent by the government (at the Central and State levels) for the development of education sector. This has gradually increased to about 4% in 2015-16. However, it is desired that the Government spending on education sector should rise further for the benefit of the common people.

From the above analysis it can be seen that Government of India has undertaken a number of projects in order to ensure quality education to her people. The Government has been successful in increasing the number of educational institutions and also the Gross Enrolment Ratio. This has been achieved not only in elementary level of education but also in higher education department. As strengthening the education sector means strengthen the social infrastructure of the economy it helps to build a strong sustainable future. A sound education system and a sound educated population can ensure sustainability and lead the path to quality education, the SDG of education.

The SDG in education, in addition to free primary and secondary schooling for all boys and girls by 2030, aims to provide equal access to affordable vocational training, eliminate gender and wealth disparities and achieve universal access to quality higher education. Apart from this education financing must become a national investment priority. Furthermore measures such as making education free and compulsory, increasing the number of teachers, improving basic school infrastructure and embracing digital transformation are essential.

CONCLUSION

Thus education is the key that will help achieve many other SDG. When people are able to get quality or minimum education they can break from the vicious cycle of poverty. Education helps to reduce inequalities and reach gender equality. It also empowers people everywhere to live more healthy and sustainable lives. Education is also crucial in fostering tolerance between people and contributes to more peaceful societies.

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