

**THE IDEA OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ITS IMPLICATION
FOR TEACHER EDUCATION IN INDIA**

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Abstract:

There is no doubt that Education is considered as a prime tool for social development and the role of teachers is very important for this purpose. At present, sustainable development is an inseparable part of social development and onus of its implementation lies on our teachers. It is obvious that the teachers would only be able to effectively educate their learners if they have been informed well about the idea of sustainable development. So, there is a need to focus on the concept of Sustainable development in the light of Teacher Education. This paper will try to examine the status and role of Teacher Education in India with historical and contemporary perspectives, both in the context of sustainable development. The paper will also try to present the major challenges and the basic impediments before the Teacher Education for promoting sustainable development. The paper will also look in to the meaning and contexts of sustainable development, and how to reorient Teacher Education to promote the idea of social sustainability. The paper concludes with some observations, suggestions and solutions to reorient Teacher Education in our country for inculcating the value of sustainable development.

Key words: *Teacher, Sustainable development, Teacher Education*

The concept of Sustainable development is considered as an umbrella term with its horizons addressing various issues such as Environment, Education, Economy, Polity, Constitution etc. This has been found that the core meaning of Sustainable development is very implicit in nature however there is a need to understand it contextually always. So, this paper is primarily discussing the idea of sustainable development with its relation to Education, specifically to Teacher Education. The focus of discussion is very significant because Education is considered as one of prime tools for promoting the idea of social sustainability.

Over the past decade, sustainable development has become a global concern. The term was first coined by Barbara Ward, the founder of the International

Institute for Environment and Development in the mid 1970s (Holmberg 1992). Then, the idea of Sustainability was also strongly underpinned during the World Conservation Strategy in 1980, with stress on the interdependence of conservation and development (IUCN, 1980). However, in the decade of eighties, after the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, commonly called as Bruntland Report, that sustainable development has gained world attention. The Bruntland report defined sustainable development as; “*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*” (WCED, 1987). This can be also said that the development is essential to satisfy human needs and for the betterment of the quality of human life. At the same time, development must be based on the efficient and environmentally responsible utilization and conservation of society’s all valuable resources as well as the protection of the cosmos which is very significant for the continuity of all species.

So, in this concern, the idea of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is becoming increasingly significant at all levels of the educational system, including Teacher Education. The UN International Environmental Education Programme (1975–1995) has introduced the notion of sustainability in higher education first time, and then all countries have been motivated to address ESD by making first and second decade of 21st century as decade of ESD. The UN declaration, ‘*there has been a common consensus that education as a driving force for the change needed*’ has made UNESCO as the lead agency to promote the decade of ESD. Member States have been invited to implement the decade in their national educational plan. Especially, Agenda 21 has advocated for collective efforts on multiple fronts to create a more sustainable world. In one of its chapters i.e. “*Promoting Education, Public Awareness and Training*”, the high potential of education has been realized to extensively spread the idea of sustainable development in present generation. However, this concern has also raised that

education alone cannot do everything. The other sectors must share the responsibility for more sustainable societies through good government, enlightened policy, civic participation, and commitment.

Agenda 21 explores the role of education in fostering more sustainable societies. According to this, *“Special attention should also be paid to the training of teachers, youth leaders and other educators. Education should also be seen as a means of empowering youth and vulnerable and marginalized groups, including those in rural areas, through intergenerational partnerships and peer education. Even in countries with strong education systems, there is a need to reorient education, awareness and training so as to promote widespread public understanding, critical analysis and support for sustainable development.”* Why Teacher Education is so important for addressing the issues related to sustainable development? It’s a question of inquiry. As we know that teacher as a profession is historically full of responsibilities of taking our society ahead. So, the promotion of sustainable development must be an innate part of those responsibilities because without sustainability no society can move ahead. This has been seriously reflected in the value of Indian Education system since ancient time.

The history of Sustainability in Indian education can be traced from the ancient period of Vedas, where the spot of education was *Guru’s Ashrams* situated in the lap of nature. The place of education was itself a lively source to inculcate the harmonious relation with nature to the human. The concept of sustainable development is an implicit part of *Upnishadas* also, which can be shown evidently in their *shlokas*. In the modern era, particularly during the Indigenous system of education, the major emphasis was on the sustainability of culture and knowledge base of the society. The Basic Education system of Ghandhi Ji has again illustrated a great model to implement sustainable development at that time. After independence, various education commissions and committees have given their

concerns about environmental education and human development.

As told earlier the word “Sustainable Development’ came into light in the seventies of twentieth century with the increasing concern about the changing environmental conditions. Thus, in 1986, National policy of Education has taken the concept of Universalization of Education and the crucial role of quality education was recognized for addressing the concept of sustainability effectively. The National Curriculum Framework of Teacher Education (2009) states that: *“In order to develop future citizens who promote equitable and sustainable development for all sections of our society and respect for all, it is necessary that they should be educated through the perspectives of gender equity, the perspectives that develop values for peace, respect the rights of all, and respect and value work. In the present ecological crisis, promoted by extremely commercialized and competitive lifestyles, teachers and children need to be educated to change their consumption patterns and the way they look at natural resources.”* So, the importance of Education for Sustainable Development has been recognized with great commitments.

While many efforts raised around the country have embraced the need for education to build capacity to achieve sustainability, only limited progress has been made on any level. This lack of progress stems from many sources. One of them is rooted in inefficiency of our education system to transact the social values effectively. Teachers are currently a very unenthusiastic community of professionals with overworked, somewhere underpaid and socially unappreciated mode in India. The decade of education for sustainable development can be an opportunity to help and revive the morale and roles of teachers by providing a space and context for them to explore their conditions and situation by linking them to the concerns of sustainability. It will be very appropriate to introduce ideas and discussions on transformative sustainable development and its relationship with the roles and contribution of teachers.

The challenges for schools and Teacher Education in responding to calls for prioritizing and implementing ESD are considerable. Some previous studies have identified teachers' beliefs and attitudes as barriers to the implementation of sustainability initiatives in higher education. The major impediments in the path of ESD be, the lack of emphasis on Sustainable development in Teacher Education Programme, the rigidity in nature of taught disciplines, the perceived irrelevance of ESD to some disciplines, lack of time in the curriculum transaction, teachers' beliefs and ambiguous understanding about ESD. It is of prime concern that even now, ESD is not an important part of ongoing educational reforms. Prevalence of traditional disciplinary curriculum frameworks makes hindrance for incorporating sustainability. ESD programs are often developed without local community participation or involvement of other stakeholders leaving the program without local context or relevance. Coordination of efforts between acting bodies of environment, education, health, agriculture, etc. is inadequate. The main problem arises with the lack of awareness and understanding of the concept of sustainable development among our faculty members. The efforts to engage academics in ESD were hampered by the lack of a shared understanding and language for discussing sustainability issues, and a lack of enthusiasm for incorporating them into the curriculum in some cases. There are too many disparate initiatives, too little time for thinking about innovative ideas, and too little encouragement to think "outside the box" or make links between initiatives, particularly where cultural norms or existing mission statements don't mention sustainability.

Teacher Education Programme can become an important means of fostering the idea of Sustainable development in our society, but with rigorous and effective reorientation of its structure. Reorienting Teacher Education to address sustainability will affect faculties and administrative units beyond the faculty of education. Policy level intervention is required for reformations in the curriculums

of Teacher Education Programme. To begin the process of reorienting Teacher Education to address sustainability, faculties of education around the country must draw their own thematic guidelines based on descriptions and ideals of sustainability. There should be a common platform also for gradual interaction and to underpin the concepts of thematic guidelines with shared ideas of ESD. Emphasis on reformation within the curriculums, programs, practices, and policies is needed to ensure that teacher-education programs fit the environmental, social, and economic conditions and goals of their communities, regions, and nations. For this reason, it is important to undertake researches in this field for considering sustainable development as a worthwhile and appropriate addition to the higher education curriculum.

Two areas for action can be primarily discerned to re-orient Teacher Education to address sustainability arising from the implications delineated in the previous section. The first area deals directly with the content component of what and how to re-orient Teacher Education for sustainable development specifically, the agenda of mainstreaming the social and ecological issues in education for sustainable development as a strategy to address and attain socially sustainable development. The second field identifies pertinent pedagogical aspect to deal with those issues. To enable teachers to explore issues of sustainable development and to understand the context and scope of sustainable development it will be useful to expose teachers to the various possible methodologies. The issues of sustainable development are many and diverse. To enable teachers to identify and work through some of the issues that are relevant to and pertinent to their society it will be useful to incorporate into Teacher Education the knowledge and practices of participatory analysis to enable them to recognize the inter-relationships of issues which impede sustainable development. Through these activities, teachers will be able to use participatory tools to chart the various levels of the contexts of their society and environment.

The classroom observations can effectively improve the teaching-learning process but intervention by teachers to teach or promote sustainable development is not only confined to the classroom or curricula only though these are the usual spaces given attention. Teaching sustainability at the classroom level is a good starting point but for education for sustainable development to be effective the whole school must be involved, engaging the active participations of students and teachers beyond their classroom curricula as well as the assimilation of principles of sustainability in the organization, management and whole culture of the school. Other levels and members of the school community like parents should be equally involved to spread the idea of sustainability at higher social levels. At Teacher Education level, compilation and documentation of the stock of resources on education for sustainable development should be primarily done for teachers' reference. The resources will enhance the efficiency of Teacher Education Institutions to deal with the concept of Sustainability.

Any sustainable system requires a sustainable process, the same way education at school level requires a sustainable Teacher Education Programme. As we have discussed earlier there is direct link between School Education and Teacher Education Programme, so it is needed to provide a sturdy base to our Teacher Education institutions with relation to sustainable development. In this way the teachers who will evolve with a new perspective of sustainable development must contribute in the process of sustainability of our society. The role of teachers in fostering the concept of sustainable development can't be neglected. The idea of sustainability encompasses all dimensions of human life. Poverty alleviation, justice, solidarity, attainment of peace, population stabilization, women's empowerment and empowerment of all marginalized vulnerable groups, human rights observance and equitable distribution of income, equitable access to opportunities, resources and social services within and between

nations, etc. should be integrated into the notion and practice of sustainable development.

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