

Teacher Education as a Catalyst for Achieving Sustainable Development: Indian Scenario

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Abstract:

Humans are social creatures and strongly depend on a social structure for survival. All natural systems depend on a strong equilibrium between man and the environment. The ecological cycle of sustainable development has an impact on all life, including people, in order to protect the welfare of present and future generations. A sustainable process develops and lasts for a long time. A society that focuses on the future must strive for sustainable development. In this context, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), education is essential. Education and sustainable development (SD) are closely related, as they both address a number of challenges pertaining to social advancement, equity and justice of the society, well-regulated lives and sustainable economic growth. It is a widely known fact that the 'Teacher' or 'Guru' is the torchbearer for society. They help students practice social norms, become responsible citizens, and develop a deep connection with their roots. The paper emphasizes the important role of teacher education in accomplishing sustainable development goals. Further, this study emphasizes the significance of education for sustainable development (ESD) and the need to educate teachers as well as students about sustainable development to create a sustainable future.

Key Words: Teacher Education, Sustainable Development (SD), Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), NEP, 2020.

Introduction:

Nowadays, there is no such effective transformative force than high-quality education. It is essential to the development process and ensuring a bright future for everyone. It allows individuals to choose their own destiny. The biggest asset of any educational system is its teachers. They are situated at the point where values, skills, and knowledge are transmitted. A teacher can act as a key agent for educational and social change. Thus, teacher education is enriched in the sense that the qualitative progress of society largely depends on quality teachers and their teaching methods. Teacher education is founded on the idea that "teachers are made, not born," as opposed to the idea that "teachers are born, not made." A teacher imparts education, which is a potential weapon of man-making. Therefore, it is the responsibility of teachers to create more sustainability sensitized citizens for developing a

sustainable future. If a teacher with proper training and education is aware of their commitment and responsibility, they can pass on all these qualities to future generations.

The concept of sustainable development (SD) is not newly invented. This notion of sustainable development holds that resource usage should be well maintained so that people can fulfill their present requirements and simultaneously preserving resources for coming generations. Sustainability refers to anything that can be efficiently and sustainably maintained over a long period of time in such a way that it does not harm anyone or cause any inconvenience but benefits everyone equally. Sustainable development ensures a quality of life for both present and future generations, and education is key to achieving such development for future generations. In a broad sense, education for a sustainable future includes raising public awareness, rethinking education to address sustainability, improving the quality of basic education, and imparting training to various sectors of society. Moreover, teacher education is a significant factor in guiding the development of a more sustainable future.

The National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) proposes revising and reforming all aspects of the educational framework, including its regulations, governance and to develop a new system aligned with the ambitious goals of 21st-century education as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the context of teacher education, particularly two-year teacher education programme (B.Ed.), the NEP 2020 states that “*B.Ed. programmes shall appropriately integrate environmental awareness and sensitivity towards its conservation and sustainable development so that environmental education becomes an integral part of the school curriculum*” (NEP, 2020; p. 23). Hence, teacher education programmes and teacher education institutions (TEIs) play an important role in reassessing and reshaping education to address sustainability.

Major Objectives:

- To study the contextual relation between teacher education and sustainable development.
- To explore possible approaches for teacher education programmes to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Need for Teacher Education:

Education plays a significant role in the effective growth and development of the individual, and teachers have an important role in imparting education to the students (Sagar, 2019). Teacher education is an integral part of the entire educational community and is closely related to the improvement of education in general by producing competent teachers. Teacher education, especially at Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs), plays an important role, as they have the potential to effect changes in the education system that will shape the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and perspectives of coming generations. To make such a vision a reality, teacher education institutions are essential to social and educational reform. In addition, teacher-education institutions do much more than just train prospective teachers; they also develop curriculum materials, provide professional development to both in-service and pre-service teachers, contribute to textbooks, consult with local schools, and frequently provide their expert advice to regional and national ministries of education.

What is Sustainable Development?

'Sustainable development' is an evolving concept, and very difficult to define. It is divided into two categories: sustainability and development. The first word sustainable is derived from the Latin word 'sustainer', which means to maintain existence and refers to viability or long-term support. The second word, derived from the French word 'developer', refers to the state of being developed, constructed, or developed. WCED (The World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 43) first came out with the definition of sustainable development (SD) as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". By way of explanation, sustainable development is the utilization of resources—both renewable and non-renewable—in such a way that it meets our current needs without compromising their availability in the future. Sustainable development is usually considered to comprise three components: environment, social, and economic. These three dimensions of sustainable development are as follows:

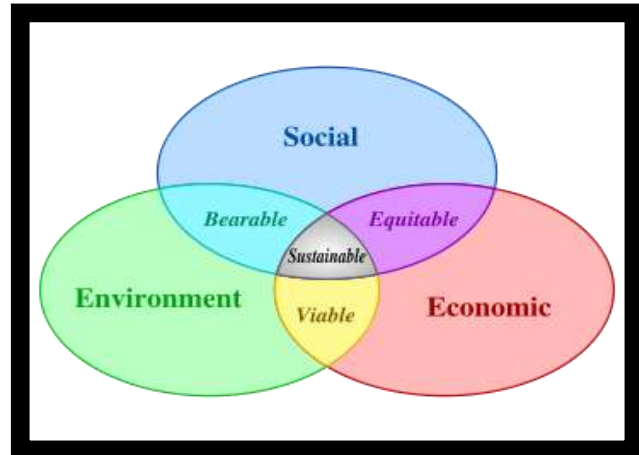


Figure 1: *Different Components of Sustainable Development*

These three groups are interdependent, not mutually exclusive, in their well-being. For example, a prosperous society requires a healthy environment to provide its people with adequate food and resources, clean air, and safe drinking water. The notion that environmental and social degradation is an inevitable and acceptable side effect of economic progress is rejected by the sustainability paradigm (Paul et al., 2016). Hence, sustainability is seen as a paradigm for thinking about the future that considers sustainable environmental, social, and economic development along with improved quality of life (Cantell, 2006).

To achieve a sustainable society, some major issues of sustainable development have been decided by UNESCO, such as:

- Reduction of poverty as well as hunger in society.
- Proper sanitation, fresh and pure water, and overall good health and well-being.
- Assuring inclusive and good-quality education for everyone, promoting lifelong learning, a decent work force, and economic growth.
- Achieving gender equality, empowering all women and girls.
- Constraints on clean and affordable energy and energy resource use.
- Industrial innovation and infrastructure.
- Environmental conservation and climate change, as well as biodiversity conservation.
- Reducing inequality among all groups.
- Resource consumption and production in a responsible manner.

History of Sustainable Development: Emergence of Education for Sustainable Development

The notion of '*sustainable development*' is now central to the development agenda. The United Nations General Assembly initially adopted sustainable development (SD) in 1987 and has also addressed the parallel concept of education for sustainable development (ESD). But, the evaluation of the concept of education for sustainable development was developed between 1987 and 1992, when the committee discussed and wrote 40 chapters of Agenda 21. But initially, the fundamental concern regarding ESD is captured in Chapter 36 of Agenda 21, "*Promoting Education, Awareness, and Training*" (Paul et al., 2016). When the concept of sustainable development is discussed and formulated, it becomes clear that sustainability gives vision to education, and education is essential to achieving sustainability. In Johannesburg, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) was held in 2002, where they reiterated the importance of education in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and international cooperation to promote strategies for sustainable development (SD) and adopted Resolution 57/254, which announced 2005-2014 as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). UNESCO was selected as a leading organization to develop a framework and implement the outcomes of the World Summit in Johannesburg '02 globally. According to UNESCO 2005, "*Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), considered a key tool for achieving sustainability, is an educational process for achieving human development in an inclusive, equitable, and secure manner. Poverty alleviation, human rights, gender equality, climate change, global environmental protection, ESD cultural includes capacity for diversity, international harmony, peace, and natural resource management.*" Major UN member states want to use the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to direct their political agendas over the course of the next 15 years (2015–2030). They are expected to achieve sustainable development in three dimensions: environmental, social, and economic—ESD gains significance. The SDGs must be accomplished through various institutions and programmes in a balanced and integrated manner (Mehrotra, 2015).

The final report on DESD by UNESCO (2014) defines ESD as "*education for sustainable development enables every person to acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary to shape a sustainable future; it includes the fundamentals of sustainable development in teaching and learning. For example, consider climate change, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, poverty reduction, and sustainable consumption. It also requires participatory teaching and learning approaches that motivate and empower students to change their behaviour and take action for long-term development.*" Furthermore, ESD fosters skills such as creative and critical thinking, envisioning future scenarios, participatory learning, collaborative decision-making, etc. Consequently, rather than replacing current thinking and practice, ESD often seeks to extend it (Singh, 2010).

The Importance of Sustainable Development in Teacher Education:

The status of any country largely depends on the standard of its citizens. The standard of citizens is determined by the quality of education, and the quality of education highly depends on the standard of teachers. Therefore, teacher education is an important investment (Sagar, 2019). In the Indian education system, primarily teacher education plays a major role

in preparing future teachers for future generations of our country. It marks the initiation of a new entrant into the calling and has enormous capability to impress the prospective teacher with ambition, a knowledge base, a repertoire of pedagogical skills, a humanistic outlook, etc. It is now widely recognized that the best way to improve student academic learning achievement depends on effective and high-quality teaching, especially the ability of teachers to motivate and encourage such learning. A teacher must be a cultivator of ideals and moral values for all students, which are the most important components of a student's long-term development. Hence, student education can develop values like social awareness, economic concern, environmental sensitivity, the value of cultural diversity, etc. If teachers are well aware of these issues, they are concerned about sustainable development in a roundabout way. Teacher training programme is considered to be the most powerful weapon for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), so a high-quality teacher education programme is urgently needed in India for a sustainable future. Characteristic of a good teacher is only determined by their effective teaching. Consequently, teacher education programmes provide properly trained and excellent teachers who promote student-centered and lifelong learning to ensure a sustainable future (Singh, 2010).

Possible Approaches for Teacher Education Programmes to Achieve the SDGs:

Education is an essential and effective key to establishing a more sustainable future. Promoting education for sustainable development in teacher education enhances practice of responsible citizenship, which is crucial for preparing future teachers to be key agents of social change and the transition to sustainability. Some possible approaches that teacher education programmes can use to integrate education for sustainable development (ESD) in hopes of achieving SDGs are:

1. Choose what emphasis should be placed on their curriculum and practice.
2. Appropriate policies to ensure that teacher training programmes are appropriate and adequate to meet the economic, socio-cultural, and environmental conditions as well as local needs.
3. Ensure that teachers, as well as teacher educators and administrators, are familiar with the evolving concept of sustainability, as well as its various aspects and principles.
4. Avoid curriculum overload and limit ESD to a few disciplines.
5. Be open to a variety of teaching strategies for effective incorporation and the appropriate implementation of ESD principles and content during the transition to the classroom.

Conclusion:

Teachers help students solve problems, make decisions, analyze situations, and manage them. All these contribute to the development of more knowledgeable and enlightened citizens who can make decisions about their own lives and the lives of their families. (Mishra, 2017). W.H. Kilpatrick states "*teacher education includes teaching skills, good educational theory, and professional skills*". A truism about teacher education is "*If you educate a boy, you educate a person. When you educate a girl, you educate the whole family; when you educate a teacher, you educate an entire community*" (Mishra, 2017). The NCFTE, 2009, has established certain goals for teacher education, one of which is "*to develop a vision of equitable and*

sustainable development". It unequivocally highlights the need for educators to be educated from the perspectives of gender equality, peace, social justice, respect for human rights, etc., in order to enhance the long-term, sustainable and equitable development of all these facets of our community. ESD can inspire teachers' educators as well as prospective teachers. This leads to effective teaching and learning that achieves a number of predetermined educational goals. Every student should be equipped with knowledge, skills or abilities, attitudes, perspectives, and moral values in the field of sustainable development so that they can participate as full members of society and strive to solve sustainable development problems and challenges.

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