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INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABILITY

Dr. Sunita Shaw

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Author Details:
Assistant Professor in Education, Bidhan Chandra College, Rishra, West Bengal, India

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Sunita Shaw

Abstract

Higher education is very important for a developing country like India and it is encouraging to increase human development. Sustainability describes how a system remains diverse and productive. Education at higher level for sustainable development is the process of equipping students with knowledge, understanding and skills. It teaches how to live in a way that safeguards environmental, social and economic well-being, both the present and the future. So we can consider education as an institution that is both an ingredient as well as an instrument of sustainable development. National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in recent times very much effective and academic quality enhancement policy to equip with new skill based and practical aspects of education. Reasons for linking higher education to sustainable development is quality assurance, employability, accountability and moral obligations. The National Policy On education was framed in 1986 and modified in 1992. Since the several changes have taken place. In past efforts had already been done for primary and secondary education. It is the higher education which is to be looked upon if India wants to grow. A sustainable development could not be achieved if higher education is neglected at any cost. University and higher education institutions are facing the reality to produce effective mindsets as they need a meaningful contribution to sustainability. Higher education institutions are leading social and cultural changes from the forefront through teacher –based findings and also through the education for intellectuals, leaders and future makers (LOZANO, 2006). Indian higher education system is third largest in the world. The role of Indian higher educational institutes such as colleges and universities in present time is to provide quality based education in the field of education, research etc. to empower youth for self-sustainability. This paper includes the key challenges that India is facing in higher education and also includes some initiatives taken by the Government to meet those challenges.

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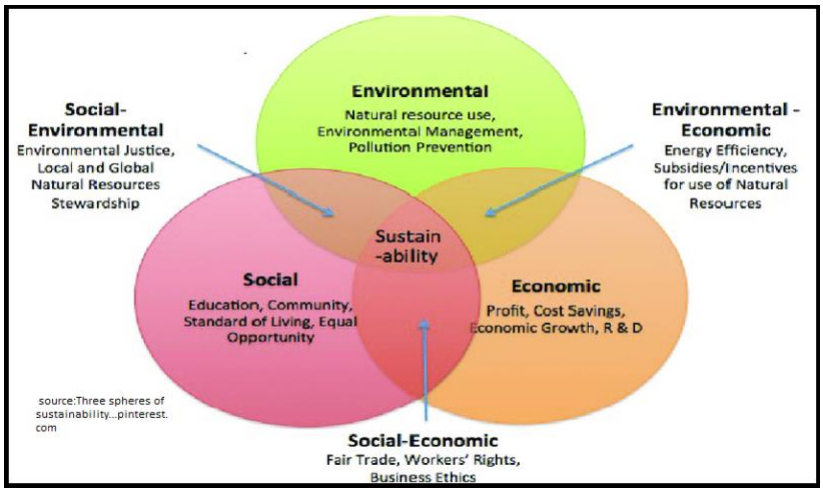
Introduction

It is important to remember that 'education' includes literacy, but it is not confined to literacy alone. In July 2003, Nelson Mandela said " Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world". He also viewed that education as a fundamental pillar of liberation, national development and human dignity. Higher education is very important for a developing country like India and it is encouraging to increase human development. Higher education is the process becomes static, it leads to stagnation, which must be avoided. Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee had aptly described the meaning and purpose of higher education in his Convocation Address (1922) at the Calcutta University: He said: *" To my mind the University is a great store house of learning, a great bureau of standards, a great workshop of knowledge, a great laboratory for training as well of men of thought as of men of action. The University is thus the instrument of the state for the conservation of knowledge, for the discovery of knowledge, for the distribution of knowledge, and above all, for the creation of knowledge-makers".* . Sustainability describes how a system remains diverse and productive . Education at higher level for sustainable development is the process of equipping students with knowledge, understanding and skills. It teaches how to live in a way that safeguards environmental, social and economic well-being, both the present and the future.

Meaning of Sustainabilty

- Sustainability is the process of maintaining change in a balanced environment, in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations.

- The term Sustainable Development was introduced by Bruntland Report for the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987).



Spheres of Sustainability

There are three interconnected spheres of sustainability that describes the relationships between the environment, economic and social aspects of our world. Natural resources are preserved, the environment is protected, the economy isn't harmed, and the quality of life for our people is improved or maintained. Below is a diagram showing the three spheres nd how they are related:

Why Higher Education for Achieving Sustainability

Higher education is the primary engine for human capital development, green innovation and structural policy reform.

- To secure the nation's future through knowledge creation and innovation.
- To drive the National Education Policy (NEP) mandate for moving beyond rote learning.
- To develop green human capital and clean tech innovation in higher education through curriculum evolution and research hubs.
- To transfer research from universities to specialised research institutions.
- To build human capacity for gaining a competitive edge in global economy.
- To foster socio-economic inclusion and equity for upward social mobility.
- To focus on improvement of quality infrastructure and teachers.
- To develop and nurtures the values.

Sustainable Development Goals

The 17 sustainable development goals(SDG) to transform our world:
Source:www.isglobal.org/-/sdgs



Indian Higher Education Scenario

- India has third largest network in the world and has achieved unprecedented global visibility, established itself as the 4th most represented country in the elite global ranking tables of higher education.
- Number of colleges and universities in India reached according to the latest data from the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 1438 universities and 53636 colleges in 2026.
- Total higher education enrolment of India scaled to 4.50 crore nowadays. Gross enrolment total 30% where female leading at 31.2%.
- The gender parity index of higher education is 1.08, conforming a steady upward trend in women's higher education entry.
- India has become the second largest position for e-learning for using AI for personal education and learning (57%) and future skill index after US.

Higher Education & Challenges Of Sustainability

The NEP 2030-2035 Target, it is estimated that India's higher education for achieving sustainability will:

- Adopt transformative and innovative approaches in higher education.
- Have an augmented Gross Enrolment Ratio(GER) of 50 percent by 2035. India will need to reach roughly 8.6 crore (86 million) total higher education seats.
- Emerge as a single largest provider of global talent, with one in four graduates in the world being a product of the Indian higher education system.
- Be among the top five countries in the world in terms of research output with an annual R & D spent of US$ 140 billion.

- Have more than 20 universities among the global top 200.
- Various government initiatives are being adopted to boost the growth of distance education, besides focusing on new education techniques, such E-learning and M-learning.
- The Government of India has taken several steps including opening of new IIT & IIM in new locations as well as allocating educational grants for research scholars.
- Government of India has released a draft of "Three Years Action Agenda" by NITI Aayog covering years 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20.
- In August 2018, Govt. Of India launched the 2nd phase of "Unnat Bharat Abhiyan" which aims to link higher educational institutions in the country with at least 5 villages. The scheme covers 750 such institutions.
- Between 2023 and 2025, the focus on sustainable development in Indian higher education transitioned from National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 guidelines to institutional enforcement and measurable outcomes.
- Recently the most prominent new policy frameworks and dedicated schemes targeting sustainable development in higher education in India are the UGC Green Campus Guidelines and PM- USHA (Pradhan Mantri Uccharar Siksha Abhiyan) both heavily driven by the overaching mandates of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Recommendations

- Access to each and every individuals in the society for admission in any institutes meant for higher education.
- NEP 2020 introduces a strong baseline for holistic and value – based education, key gaps remain in structural monitoring, equity and institutional practice.
- Develop regional, national and international networks of academicians engaged in research field of sustainability in higher education.
- International university networks and partnerships should be developed to promote high quality research and develop internationally teaching practices and innovativeness.Government of India must promote collaboration between Indian higher education institutes and top international institutes.
- Learning related to Sustainable Development should principally be incorporated through the use of new teaching methodologies with emphasis upon use of ICT in learning.
- To link between national research laboratories and research centres for better quality and collaborative research.

Conclusion

By this paper we can conclude that Indian higher education institutes such as colleges and universities in achieving sustainability plays an important role for the country's overall development which includes industrial, social, economical etc. NEP 2020 plays a vital role for achieving sustainable development in higher education in India. To meet the challenges of sustainability some initiatives have been taken by the Govt. of India. In recent times, sustainability challenges the current paradigms, structures as well as effective practices in higher education. University and higher education institutions are facing the reality as they need a meaningful contribution to sustainability. A.P.J. Kalam (2003) recently noted, "Empowerment of Higher Education" is the critical need of the hour.

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