

HIGHER EDUCATION: PARADIGM SHIFT FOR SUCCESSFUL ATTAINMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



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BACKGROUND

Higher education plays a critical role towards 'sustainable development goals' implementation and triggers the timeline to achieve the 2030 target for which we are less than a decade away. There is still a need to create awareness and sensitivity in the society towards the achievement of sustainable goals. This cannot be done for the society as a whole but can be achieved by developing change ambassadors who will go out and bring the transitional outcomes in this direction. These ambassadors will be the product of HEIs who will get exposed to the sustainability aligned curriculum and would have an assurance and convictions towards the future requirements for sustainable, peaceful, prosperous and equitable life on earth for everyone now and ahead. The Incheon describes education as a fundamental right and basis for guaranteeing the realisation of other rights. Higher education can bring reform in this direction by cascading curriculum and research, emphasizing upon sustainability that would develop the academic communities in a manner that they would start contributing in society bringing the shift in the mind set with sustainability consciousness. UNESCO has already emphasized upon education as the key instrument in achieving a sustainable future by increasing the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, critical thinking, competencies, systematic thinking and empower the future generations to have the capacity to make necessary transformational change in our world. Quality Education (Goal 4) is the key to achieve all goals and higher education is the key for attainment of Goal 4 to make a sustainable future.

INTRODUCTION

In coming days awareness and knowledge in order to live a sustainable life would be a key factor. In many surveys and reports it has been claimed that by year 2050 the global population will be 970 crores. A figure that is indicative that it is high time that consciousness to be developed towards the

pattern of energy consumption and reduction of ecological footprints. Today can be sustained somehow but if tomorrow is not planned then the misbalance in the ecosystems can lead to tragic conclusions. To deal with such critical scenario, adequate knowledge to make sensible utilization of resources and develop a bent towards realization of importance of sustainable development goals and its achievement is becoming the dire necessity. With the same view in December 2002 the period from 2005 to 2014 UN declared as "Decade of Education for Sustainable Development".

This initiative was taken with an intent to align academics with principles of sustainability for a more viable future. This span brought out in record time the utmost awareness in global systems towards sustainability goals and initiatives, it also triggered lot of significant research in the area. It was then realized that education could be key to make the world aware about these targets and SDGs achievements. 2015 was an iconic year when 17 SDGs declared not in restriction to UN but any country could adopt its own framework to deliver in this area. THIS shadowed UNs Millennium Goals as by the year 2015 as there was significant changes across the globe was witnessed in context of complexity in governance systems, increasing inequality, high impact of human on physical earth and rapid change in technology.

THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN A SUSTAINABLE WORLD

The on-going research in the area of understanding the catalytic role of higher education institutions towards a sustainable future, many significant findings were highlighted and was concluded that the nations where the enrolments in higher educational institutions are more there are more social, economic and environmental benefits. For an instance, people have better employability, mortality rate is

low, better earnings contributing in GDPs, awareness towards pollution and controls on the same, controlled CO2 emissions, gender equality perspective. Higher education gives well-paid jobs and a better societal contribution at the same time also becomes source to the creative ideas which is ultimately required for the sustainable outcomes. The higher educational institutions can be instrumental through various sustainability oriented campus initiatives to set example by practice, HEI's can take projects in this field and derive better outcomes, HEI's can support research in this area, various outreach activities can be planned and executed, SDG volunteers who can speak out loud in this context and can create awareness in the society can be prepared and motivated to move ahead flagging this area, many demographically secluded regions be reached out by HEI's and can be developed with the perspective of SDGs so that these regions in coming time support other underprivileged regions. It is also realized that if the principles of sustainability are introduced at right age for further propagation then it brings relevant outcome. As in the HEI's students enrol themselves by the age of 16 to 18 years, this seems to be the right age as they as an individual already getting exposed to transitional phase of their lives and they are more open to accept various ideologies to understand if can be imbibed in their lives and career can be perused following that. At this state if they are exposed to the curriculum influenced with sustainability principles they adapt and propagate this ahead despite of the students at their conclusive phase of HEI program, by when they already develop friends circle, areas of interest and focus. Secondly, it is very important for effective implementation of the sustainability principles to have the knowledge in interdisciplinary areas. This way the complexity in achievement of sustainability state can be well addressed, since a solution to a concern leaves by-

product of cascaded concern. This can be exemplified as, if someone wants to produce sugar, then sugarcane is the raw material, knowing this limited would not suffice the knowledge requirement. Once the sugarcane is ready and cut, the fields have to be ready again for next crop, for which normally the fields are burnt that highly impacts the air quality index, so one must be aware to deal such adverse outcome. Next, once the sugar is made then the molasses of the sugarcane has to be re-utilized as by-product for producing paper. Entire process is interlinked to avoid loses and environmental adverse impacts, one must know these repercussions and can't restrict to limited goal of producing sugar. Another aspect is, the reluctance at times of society to allow the ambassadors of sustainability to work, perform and bring outputs. This way, it can be clearly understand that HEIs does act as catalyst towards attainment of sustainable future by bringing out the ambassadors of change who are developed at right age with appropriate knowledge of the diverse fields, motivation to deal and conclude the societal friction against adoption of the sustainable principles and implementation and go on adding the team to become significant in size and bring remarkable change to get a sustainable life of all.

