# A Study on the Role of Education in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

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**Abstract**

Learning is the key to creating a peaceful and sustainable world. Change towards sustainability depends on a change of mind. The quality of learning that is imparted in the next 10 to 20 years will definitely determine the move towards or away from ecological sustainability. If the quality or depth of learning is good, the world will move towards sustainable development. If the quality or depth of learning is not up to the mark, the world will move towards unsustainable development. Sustainable Development is all about three facets, society, environment and economy. These three are interrelated. A prosperous and healthy society depends on the good and healthy environment to provide resources, food, clothing, shelter, water, etc. It is the need of the hour that we should all work together to remove poverty, reduce illiteracy, make the environment pollution-free, health for all, education for all, and for many other fields. The present study analyse the dimensions of sustainable development. The paper presents constructive suggestions for sustainable development. The paper also highlights the Global Education 2030 Agenda of UNESCO. The study concludes with the fact that as the education is increasing, so the pollution, the ecological disturbances are increasing. So, there is a need to transform education which can create awareness towards sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Sustainability, education, learning, UNESCO, global education agenda

## Introduction

In every field of the world, there is a need of sustainable development whether it is education, health, environment, etc. For sustainable development, research and innovation in the field of education is the need of the hour. Education plays an important role in achieving the goals of sustainable development. It is the duty of all teachers to teach students at all levels about the importance of sustainable development. The colleges and universities should include in their syllabus the concept of sustainable development so that all the students whether at primary level, secondary level or higher level should be made aware about the importance of sustainable development. This will inculcate in the minds of students that we all should work towards a live able world in the present and the future for self and for other human beings and other livestock. It is the need of the hour that we should all work together for removing poverty, reducing illiteracy, making environment pollution free, health for all, education for all, and for many other fields.

Sustainable Development is all about three facets, society, environment and economy. These three are interrelated. A prosperous and healthy society depends on the good and healthy environment to provide resources, food, clothing, shelter, water, etc.

## Review of Literature

The concept of sustainable development was introduced by the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission) and gave the definition of sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

As per UNEP, IUCN, and WWF, 1980, sustainable development is the ability to make development choice that respects the relationship between the three "Es"-economy, ecology, and equality. It aims at improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems.

According to Singh (2010) training and skills development, promotion as well as improvement of basic education, development of public understanding and awareness about sustainability, and reframing existing education at all the levels primary, secondary, and higher are the major thrust areas in education for sustainable development.

## Research Methodology

The present study has been undertaken to analyze the different facets of sustainable development.

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**Objectives of the Study**

The study is undertaken with the following objectives:

- To analyze the dimensions of sustainable development
- To highlight the Global Education 2030 Agenda of UNESCO;
- To present constructive suggestions for sustainable development;

**Dimensions of Sustainable Development**

Sustainable Development has five dimensions which are explained below:

**Table 1:** Dimension of Sustainable Development

| S. No. | Dimensions | Details |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Ecological Sustainability | Conserving an ecological environment so that life as well as economic production should continue. |
| 2 | Social Sustainability | Promoting social justice by fulfilling basic needs of everyone. Reducing inequalities and social conflicts among the residents of the society. |
| 3 | Cultural Sustainability | Promoting and appreciating cultural diversity. Encouraging knowledge about the diverse culture. |
| 4 | Economic Sustainability | Promoting wellbeing of the residents by generating wealth where there is no place for recession or boom. |
| 5 | Personal Sustainability | Promoting wellbeing of the residents by promoting mental as well as physical health. |

**Essential Elements of Education for Sustainable Development**

The education should be such as to promote sustainable development in the world. The various essential elements of education for sustainable development are mentioned herein below:

i). Education should promote lifelong learning to the people of the country and the world;

ii). Education should be relevant to the local residents as well promote culture in the society;

iii). Education should be based on the values and principles underlying sustainable development.

iv). Education should encourage sustainable development especially in three areas i.e. society, environment and economy. Education should promote wellbeing of the three.

v). Education should fulfill basic and local needs of the residents. Also, it should be based on the conditions and perceptions of the residents.

**The Global Education 2030 Agenda**

United Nation's agency specialized for education, UNESCO is assigned a task to coordinate and lead the Education 2030 Agenda. This is done with a view to eradicate poverty through seventeen SDG by 2030. In order to achieve all these seventeen goals, education has its own dedicated Goal 4, whose objective is to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". Here, the three dimensions have been taken into account:

- Cognitive Learning Dimension: In this dimension attempt is to be made to understand the challenges of sustainability, explore various disruptive ideas and find alternative solutions.
- Social and Emotional Learning Dimension: In this dimension, attempt is to be made to have harmony and empathy among the people, compassion for other people, and build attitudes and core values for sustainable development.
- Behavioural Learning Dimension: In this dimension attempt is to be made to take practical action rather than talking theoretical, regarding sustainable transformations in the various spheres such as political, personal and societal.

The objective of Education for Sustainable Development is to raise awareness, knowledge and action in order to achieve the following:

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**Table 2:** Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

| S. No. | SDG | Details |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | No Poverty | • Addressing the issue related to the unequal distribution of wealth<br>• Promoting life skills for earning livelihoods |
| 2. | Zero Hunger | • Addressing the causes of hunger<br>• Addressing the consequences of hunger<br>• Addressing the causes of Malnutrition<br>• Addressing the consequences of Malnutrition |
| 3. | Good Health and Well-being | • Securing resilience psychological and physical both.<br>• Securing well being |
| 4. | Quality Education | • Emphasizing on quality learning contents.<br>• Ensuring contribution of learning contents to the prosperity and survival of humanity. |
| 5. | Gender Equality | • Promoting gender equality.<br>• Looking for specific gendered sustainability challenges. |
| 6. | Clean Water and Sanitation | • Providing adequate water.<br>• Providing equitable access to water as a global common good. |
| 7. | Affordable and Clean Energy | • Promoting green lifestyles.<br>• Promoting affordable, clean and sustainable energy. |
| 8. | Decent Work and Economic Growth | • Fostering alternative values as well as economic models to ensure harmony, sufficiency, fairness. |
| 9. | Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure | • Encouraging green technologies.<br>• Encouraging equitable transition towards sustainable industries. |
| 10. | Reduced Inequalities | • Tackling and removing inequalities of all types while giving importance to environmental justice. |
| 11. | Sustainable Cities and Communities | • Supporting cities and communities and emphasizing their role in transformative actions. |
| 12. | Responsible Consumption and Production | • Transforming the culture of consumption and production to have sustainability. |
| 13. | Climate Action | • Fighting with climate change by creating awareness.<br>• Fighting with climate change by improving education. |
| 14. | Life Below Water | • Protecting the resources below ocean<br>• Protecting the oceans by creating awareness and literacy programmes. |
| 15. | Life on Land | • Promoting restoration of biodiversity<br>• Promoting biodiversity conservation which is essential for human prosperity and survival. |
| 16. | Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions | • Ensuring Inclusion<br>• Ensuring Peace<br>• Ensuring justice as a basis of sustainability. |
| 17. | Partnerships for the Goals | • Mobilising resources<br>• Mobilising partners for the transformation of society, community, and world for sustainable development. |

**Suggestions for Sustainable Development**

In order to have sustainable development following suggestions are noteworthy:

i). It is the duty of the policymakers of each and every country and United Nations to bring about a major global transformation desired to stimulate sustainable development. They have the responsibility of creating an environment for the successful scaling up of ESD in educational institutions, communities, and other places where learning takes place.

ii). Learning institutions need to be changed in order to encourage learners to become change agents who have the means and knowledge, are also willing, and have the courage to take transformative action for sustainable development. All educational institutions should be aligned with sustainable development principles so that learning material and pedagogies are armored by the way services are managed and how decisions are made in the institution.

iii). In an internet age where information is available everywhere, educators are assumed as key actors in facilitating learners' transition towards sustainability. Educators in educational institutions help students and learners understand the complexity that is required by sustainable development and motivate to transform themselves and society. For all this, educators should be equipped with the skills, knowledge, behaviour, and values that are required for creating awareness about sustainable development. Educators should understand the 17 sustainable development goals and their interlinkages.

iv). Today's young generation and following generations to follow are the ones who will face the consequences of unsustainable development. Empowering youth and mobilizing them is the main part of Education for Sustainable Development implementation. Youth are now smarter and equipped with the latest devices can be a part in changing the present scenario. They have to give solutions to sustainability challenges. Young people have

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to look at their consumption patterns while moving towards sustainable development.

v). Attempts for sustainable development should be started at the local level such as society or the community. It is in the daily lives of the learners and people to make decisions and choices for sustainable development and take action. Active cooperation is required between educational institutions and the community so that the latest practices, processes, and knowledge can be utilized for sustainable development.

## Conclusion

To conclude we can say that as the education is increasing, so the pollution, the ecological disturbances are increasing. So, there is a need to transform education which can create awareness towards sustainable development. The depth and quality of education should be improved so that we can move towards a better world where nobody remain hungry, nobody should die with pandemic, nobody should remain illiterate, everybody should have access to clean drinking water, everybody should have good health and well-being, no poverty prevails, etc.

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