



DIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN PRIMARY AND PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION

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Abstract

Sustainable development is the idea that human societies must live and meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Specifically, sustainable development is a way of organizing society so that it can exist in the long term. Considering both the imperatives present and those of the future, such as the preservation of the environment and natural resources or social and economic equity. In the light of above-mentioned paradoxes, numerous questions arose in the mind of the researcher. We start to educate children about sustainable development goals and diversity, but we are not dealing with some sort of sustainable development goals in our education. So, the researcher tried to understand how it has been done in Indian primary and pre-primary schools. For this the researcher reached out to teachers, Anganwadi workers/ECCE teachers and headmasters/headmistress to understand about the syllabus/curriculum taught in schools of Delhi. This research is guided by the idea of qualitative research methods which help us to know the feelings and expressions in the own words of the respondents. Further which lead to understanding the perception of teachers, Anganwadi workers/ECCE teachers and administrators about sustainable development goals and diversity. A convenient sampling was used, and thirty people were selected which included 20 primary teachers along with 2 headmasters and 8 Anganwadi worker/ ECCE teachers. For data analysis, theme-based analysis was chosen. It was found that there was a continuum of no awareness to moderately aware about sustainable development and diversity and its place in the classroom through the syllabus/curriculum. After giving some prompts they were only able to relate with basic knowledge of reading and reciting. On the other hand, teachers and administrators from primary schools found it difficult to amalgamate sustainable development and diversity in their schools as they felt it should be in the syllabus/curriculum which is generally prescribed to teach in those schools. And they were also quite affirmative about its in- service training where they could learn about sustainable development and diversity in their daily teaching and learning processes.

Key Words: Sustainable development, ECCE teachers, teaching and learning processes



Introduction:

The archaic definition of “Sustainable Development” talks about the development which is not compromised with the resources for future generations. It also talks about the inseparable element of environmental, societal and economic considerations that are balanced in the pursuit of an improved quality of life. A society, for example, progresses equally in a safe and sound environment. But the question arises, doesn't it need to be changed? It still hovers around the parameters which SHOULD BE ACHIEVED not HOW TO ACHIEVE or who all need to be included first and who and what can help to achieve those goals. As a participatory country of the UN, India is also buckled up with so many provisions to tackle the serious issues of inequality, non-representation of diversity, problems with inclusion. If one tries to see our constitutional provisions, i.e., 14 to Article 18, Right to equality, Part III – Fundamental Rights, the Constitution of India, gives Equality before law, Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, Sex or place of birth, Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment, Abolition of Untouchability and Abolition of titles (The Constitution of India); we have a lot. But does it have any ground in our educational systems which are supposed to be one of the mediums to improve, achieve, enhance, inculcate any system in the entire world?

The quest for this research started when the researcher was pursuing a degree i.e., ‘Masters of education’ opted for a paper in diversity and educational issues and research in diversity and education. During that journey researchers came across several policy documents which talk about quality of education and the role of diversity in education. Reading those arouse a curiosity of knowing about the PRESENT STATUS OF DIVERSITY & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN INDIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM, i.e., our schools and curriculum. Going through the work done in this area of sustainable development goals, it is important to understand the role of sustainable development goals in diversity and equality to bring quality of education. In this study, researchers tried to review the curriculum of primary schools with the lenses of teachers and administrators. To know the real grasp and loose ends of the curriculum in primary schools.

Diversity

Greater Good Science Center says, “Diversity” refers to both an obvious fact of human life—namely, that there are many different kinds of people—and the idea that this diversity drives cultural, economic, and social vitality and innovation. Indeed, decades of research suggest that intolerance hurts our well-being—and that individuals thrive when they are able to tolerate and embrace the diversity of the world. Diversity is also known as the general practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations, etc.



Sustainable Goals

As Brundtland reports in its official definition of Sustainable Development (1987) says "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". NCERT textbook says, "Sustainable development is a way of organizing society so that it can exist in the long term. This means taking into account both the imperatives present and those of the future, such as the preservation of the environment and natural resources or social and economic equity". Youmatter says, "Sustainable development can be defined as an approach to the economic development of a country without compromising the quality of the environment for future generations".

Significance of the Study

Findings of this study would help education stakeholders to understand about the sustainable development goals usage in schools and develop guidelines in this regard. Findings of this study would also help education stakeholders to look for sustainable development goals awareness from the eyes of teachers and administrators in schools.

Rationale of the study

"Education for Sustainable Development allows every human being to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future. Education for Sustainable Development means including key sustainable development issues into teaching and learning; for example, climate change, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, poverty reduction, and sustainable consumption. It also requires participatory teaching and learning methods that motivate and empower learners to change their behaviour and take action for sustainable development. Education for Sustainable Development consequently promotes competencies like critical thinking, imagining future scenarios and making decisions in a collaborative way. Education for Sustainable Development requires far-reaching changes in the way education is often practiced today." This statement by UNESCO about ESD and its impact on various 'important for all issues has enabled me to know about the education and Sustainable development in syllabus and curriculum of ECCE and Primary classes and review it. And it gives a perspective of rethinking about the importance of SDGs and to know its place in our education system. However, it is not possible to see it in one go or to know it at once, so the researcher tried to start from the earlier inventions of curriculum and syllabus in the lives of our future, i.e., our students. My current research **Diversity and Sustainable Development Goals in primary and pre-primary school education, Delhi** is an attempt to see the curriculum and syllabus through the glasses of educational stakeholders, i.e., teachers and administrators. The context of the study is delimited to Delhi schools only.



Objectives of the Study

To point out the shortcomings of the curriculum and syllabus of ECCE and Primary education from the lenses of teachers and administrators.

1. To find out the gaps in the curriculum and syllabus of ECCE and Primary education?
2. To study the perspective of teachers about curriculum and syllabus as per the Diversity and SD?
3. To understand the perspective of administrators about curriculum and syllabus as per the Diversity and SD?

Research questions

1. What are the gaps of the curriculum and syllabus of ECCE and Primary education?
2. What is the perspective of teachers about curriculum and syllabus as per the Diversity and SD?
3. What is the perspective of administrators about curriculum and syllabus as per the Diversity and SD?

Literature Review:

CURRICULUM AND DIVERSITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The concept of 'curriculum' includes not only content, but also delivery, assessment, aspects of classroom interaction and support services; in effect a 'whole learning environment' (Bird). In its position statement National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) defines Curriculum; "Curriculum is a complex idea containing multiple components, such as goals, content, pedagogy, or instructional practices. Curriculum is influenced by many factors, including society's values, content standards, accountability systems, research findings, community expectations, culture and language, and individual children's characteristics". Diversity is one of the most intrinsic attributes of ECE Curriculum.

DIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Brundtland Commission report defines sustainable development as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. 'Sustainable development is a perspective or a vision rather than a definition and provides room for many different starting points' (Chalmers Annual Report).

Sustainable development concerns a process of change and is heavily reliant upon local contexts, needs and interests. Thus, sustainable development is an 'emerging concept' (UNESCO). Among the original three dimensions of sustainable development -the



Economy, Social equality and Environmental balance, Cultural diversity is recognized as the fourth pillar, as it not only creates solid bridges with the other three dimensions of development, but is also central to them and is compatible with each of them. The members of United Cities and Local Governments share the vision that culture is the fourth pillar of sustainable development. In the April 2010 UNESCO Chicago Meeting they suggested UN bodies and its member states to 'explicitly integrate culture into programmes on sustainable development'.

United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, Brazil noted - Culture and Cultural Diversity plays an important role in sustainable development. Culture fosters economic growth, helps individuals and communities to expand their life choices, is important to adapt to change and raises the resilience of social-ecological systems.

DIVERSITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

India has not only ratified the Articles of UNCRC, but has also followed the concepts UNCRC in framing its other laws. National Policy on Children seeks guidelines and borrows concepts from UNCRC. The Law Commission of India also refers to the principles of UNCRC. Thus, while we discuss diversity in ECE, the Articles of UNCRC hold great significance for us. India is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Article 2 of UNCRC states -

1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each

Child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

Thus, Parents, Children, and educators have the right to good quality in early childhood education services, free from any form of - overt and covert, individual and structural - discrimination due to their race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status (Diversity in Early Childhood Education and Training).

Dogaru (2012) explained that Sustainable Development should be an effort made by the whole community and there should be a clear understanding of long and short term goals that are required to be fulfilled. The changes that occur in the daily lives of human beings should comply with the rules of the biosphere, and never cause harm to the natural world. To manage a durable way of life, people should progress with the rhythm of the natural world and see the protection capacity that the planet possesses.



Bangay (2016) examined the role of school education in sustainable development in India, and suggested that the Paryavaran Mitra Programme launched in 2008 could help in creating better understanding between environmental protection and people's responsibilities toward it. Paryavaran Mitra has five central themes: Explore, Discover, Think, Act and Share. The children in schools are to be guided to look for local environmental issues, pick out an issue, think about the issue from a different perspective, take action to solve the problem and at the end share the experience with others. PM could also help in better development of communication between students and how they can effectively present their ideas without any problems.

Mensah (2019) stresses that the government is largely responsible for promoting practices that support the ecological processes of the planet and help in its good health. The governments should regulate pollution policies and enforce laws that encourage people to maintain a good relationship with their natural surroundings. The United Nations need to come together and educate their fellow countries on the importance of Sustainable development. By partnering with government, private sectors, civil society organizations, UN can help in providing strong financial support to the research organizations and the development of important techniques that could count as a blessing in health and education areas.

Methodology

Sample of the Study:

The participants of this study included the teachers who teach in the government primary schools in Delhi and mother teachers of ECCE. This had included the teachers and mother teachers of state-owned government schools and ECCE centres, centre-owned government schools and MCD schools in Delhi. For the present study, government school teachers and anganwadi workers have been selected for the study and their responses were taken through a questionnaire. The detail of the selected samples given below: .

Number of respondents

1. Principal/administrators 2 (1 FEMALE; 1 MALE)
2. Teachers 20 (10 FEMALE)MALE; 10
- 3 Anganwadi Workers 10 (FEMALES ONLY)

Sampling Technique:

In the present study, the researcher has collected the data through convenient sampling. In the process schools were selected through convenient sampling. Twenty teachers were selected through heterogeneous sampling (Purposive Sampling). Primary teachers have also been selected which includes 10 males and 10 females and between two males one will be experienced and one will be young. Between females one will be experienced and one will be young. In the same way trained-primary teachers will be selected.



Tool used for the study:

After selecting the sample for the study, another task left with the researcher was the selection of suitable tools to be used for the data collection. For the present study, the Semi- Structured Interview Schedule used to know the views of teachers and administrators. A Semi- Structured Interview Schedule is prepared for the study to interview the teachers and administrators of ECCE and primary classes by the researcher himself. The question asked in this interview schedule involves essential questions on the themes i.e. Awareness about ‘diversity and sustainable development goals’ of government school teachers. Both these themes together include fourteen items in the semi-structured interview schedule. The language of the interview schedule was Hindi and English only.

Administration of the Tool:

The investigator visited government schools, anganwadi centres personally for the collection of data. First of all, the investigator approached the Head of the department and the purpose of the data collection was explained to them. The anganwadi workers, teachers and principals/administrators were informed that their responses will be kept confidential and therefore they should be frank, honest, bold, and sincere while answering the questions. The researcher went to meet the principals/administrators, the teachers and anganwadi workers personally and distributed the copies of the questionnaire to principals/administrators, teachers and anganwadi workers. Every attempt was made to remove their doubts and difficulties. After filling the responses, the text booklet was collected back. In this way, the test was administered. There were 24 staff members including a Principal, 5 HODs and 18 Lecturers.

Data Analysis

Theme Based Analysis: The analysis of themes will be extracted from the data collection from a semi-structured Interview schedule. The data have been described under these themes which are given below:

Theme Based Analysis of Primary Schools

1. Forms of Implementation in Primary Schools: It was seen that in the responses of the administrators and teachers of primary schools, while filling the questionnaire they mentioned that to include diversity and SDGs in school curriculum they often do similar things such as organising Eco clubs in their schools to spread awareness about increasing pollution, types of pollution, reason of pollution who are the contributors of it. Along with this there are initiatives like “Go green drives”, “Water conservation”, “reuse, refuse, recycle”. Their projects and activities eventually come on paper with no objects and aims, there might be learning, but it does not sustain. All of these seem quite mundane; we do just for the sake of doing not for actual worth. I feel that the tradition of doing things just for the sake of doing, should be changed. While talking to them I also



got to know that they organise or give such projects to create some awareness among young minds. But I feel this should not be contracted to the awareness only, it should go far up to learning, a permanent behavioural change (behaviourism).

2. Difficulties faced by them in implementing SDGs in primary schools: These people also feel that there are No guidelines as such to change the pattern of these activities or at least add some newness to these projects and activities. I feel that if we need to revise our syllabus as per the requirements then we also should revise our curriculum as per the needs of SDGs also. When we know the importance of SDGs why we do not put them in our curriculum at least. One of the teachers mentions that there is “No direct mention of SDGs in textbooks/syllabus/curriculum which they are supposed to deal with”. It feels me ironic that we want to make our economies to match the global standard, but we do not want to apply the ways which can help to attain that.

Theme based analysis of ECCE’s

1. Forms of Implementation in primary Schools: It has been seen while talking to the people who work in ECCE centres that they use different kinds of naming charts, poem recitation, and rhymes to make children familiar with their surroundings. They also use playing cards, charts and TLM (teaching –learning materials) to teach the younger minds. They also use ‘circle poem’ recitation where all the children participate with their hands in the other child and kind of sing the poems. This way they include all the children and do their favourite act at the end of the day. And I also feel that there, children enjoy their creativity as per their time, mood and age. And one more thing can be added here, that at this age things like (we have seen in primary schools’) Eco clubs, Go green drives, Water conservation projects, 3Rs are not in use perhaps due the cognitive levels of these younger kids.

2. Difficulties faced by them in implementing SDGs in ECCE: Yes, it is true that these people get training, simulation lessons by their supervisors but it is said that there were “No guidelines as such” so these people are totally dependent on supervisors. And there is “No direct mention in textbooks/syllabus/curriculum” or such things mentioned in the form of guidelines. So, they are totally dependent on the training and simulation lessons given by their supervisors. Hence, in their later lives they might be getting mature/knowledgeable enough to teach those young minds.

Conclusion

This research adds to the growing amount of the research done on SDGs and its importance. Although Sustainable Goals have been extensively studied for decades, there has been little research on how to inculcate it in the curriculum/syllabus of ECCE and Primary schools. In particular, there has been a dearth of work on knowing about the ways with which SDGs can actually be an essential part of our education system. To effectively address the issue of Sustainable development (SD), educating citizens within



the formal schooling system comes up as a hope. The launch of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) overseen by UNESCO is driven by this hope. To promote SD, ESD was launched as an approach to teaching and learning during this decade. Even though the present study did not develop a theory, the findings contribute to the need of curriculum/syllabus and awareness of the important role played by teachers and administrators. Further, it can enhance the place of school teachers and administrators in policy making and curriculum planning. It also contributes to the importance of grass-root level to achieve the goals for the people who exactly are at the last point of getting and doing things for these people actually might enhance the achievement of the sustainable goals for long term. I feel that in current scenario, things are planned on paper and remains on those only and for exact effect and desired result we need practical implementation of the policies and curriculum in education of ECCE and Primary schools and students. This can be done with the bottom-up approach only because ground level implementation and check with regular and prolonged contribution can only ensure the implementation of sustainable goals to complement the education and the life of the students. To develop the awareness and understanding about sustainable development goals in teachers and administrators. It is a must that various sustainable development goals awareness programmes should be initiated so that they can provide quality of education to all children and ensure 100% gross enrollment ratio in our Indian education system. Administrators of schools as well as curriculum developers and policy makers examine this research and garner ideas regarding accommodation for students and creating opportunities for students as SDGs. There is a need to change the attitude of the teachers as well as the administrators towards sustainable development goals and make them aware about these goals, as they will be aware there will be more chances towards the implementation of these sustainable goals. It is worthwhile to mention here that no or less or improper awareness is the reason that the teachers and administrators have less contribution in the achievement of sustainable goals in education for our students.

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