

A Paradigm Shift in Digital India for Sustainable Education System Part 1 – (Basic Aspects, Challenges & Road Map)

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In September 2015 the UN Country Team will jointly carried out the Joint Advocacy Month to promote the UN Secretary-General's Global "Education First" Initiative (GEFI) in India, led by UNESCO and UNICEF. The Joint Advocacy Month activities will be run under the slogan "Sustainable Development Begins with Education".

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act or Right to Education Act (RTE) had been enacted on 4 August 2009 by the Parliament of India. It describes the modalities of the importance of free and compulsory education for children between 6 and 14 in India under Article 21A of the Indian Constitution. India became one of 135 countries to make education a fundamental right of every child when the act came into force on 1 April 2010.

In September 2000, India was also among 189 member states of the United Nations came together at the Millennium Summit and adopted the Millennium Development Goals, which acknowledged education as an indispensable means for people to realize their capabilities, and prioritized the completion of a primary school cycle.

"Education is a fundamental right and the basis for progress in every country. Parents need information about health and nutrition if they are to give their children the start in life they deserve. Prosperous countries depend on skilled and educated workers. The challenges of conquering poverty, combatting climate change and achieving truly sustainable development in the coming decades compel us to work together. With partnership, leadership and wise investments in education, we can transform individual lives, national economies and our world". - BAN KI-MOON, UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL[1]

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) V/S Sustainable Education System

A) Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is simultaneously a sub-field of education and a conceptual tool to aid policy makers in authoring educational policies that take into account the present environmental, societal and economic

challenges. According to the UNESCO[2], it is based on all levels and types of learning - learning to know, learning to be, learning to live together, learning to do and learning to transform oneself and society."

B) Many education systems around the world have launched ambitious programs aiming to raise academic standards and to reconcile concerns for excellence with concerns for equity. However, many of these programs have failed to reach their ambitious goals. Meanwhile, the rapid changes taking place in the globalising world call for major educational reform in which the needs of all students are taken into account, the natural resources of the educational environment are not depleted, and the young generation is optimally prepared to meet the demands of the future world. Concerted action, comprising policy measures with regard to curriculum design, teaching methodology, teacher training, and equity-enhancing programmes will be needed to raise the extent to which the educational domain produces sustainable output – that is Sustainable Education System (SES)

Sustainable Education Road Map:

An Education System runs on the energy of students, teachers, administrators, parents and all others involved in educating. The balance we need to draw up is how much of that energy turns into actual learner development and how much into other things, like frustration, irritation, school dropout and failure. This may well be the pivotal question any education system, and any individual teacher, must answer. If the energy learners invest in classroom activity leads to successful learning, this, in turn, may release new energy for learning. In essence, learning fuels further learning [4]. From a socio-emotional perspective, if people's energy turns into successful learning, this may enhance their self-confidence and social well-being and may motivate them to put effort in further learning. If people participate in activities they find worthwhile and learn new things from, their willingness to engage in similar activities in the future may grow. Cognitively, too, learning is a springboard for further learning: all of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that people successfully acquire can be used to confront new

challenges, new ideas and new opinions. Concurrently, learning proceeds when what is new can be built upon what is already known. That is how learning works and how the mind works.

Therefore, if energy invested into learning turns into actual development, then that successful learning experience may unleash new motivational, social, emotional and cognitive energy for learning. In this way, energy for learning becomes renewable energy. The wheel keeps on turning. If this happens on a regular and systematic basis and for every single student in the education system, energy for learning is exploited in a sustainable way, rather than being depleted. Then, Education System becomes Sustainable Education System.

A World-Wide Challenge

Many education systems around the world currently fail the test of sustainability [4]. In these systems, valuable proportions of energy, time and talent go to waste: an unacceptable proportion of students fail to realize their learning potential, leaving compulsory education without obtaining a degree or without developing competencies that are vital to their present and future lives[4]. Policy makers are quick to point out the economic cost of educational failure: for instance, students who do not graduate from secondary education run a higher risk of becoming unemployed or having to live on social welfare; conversely, students who hold a degree of higher education have been shown to contribute more, on average, to the gross national product of their country.

Education prepares the next generation to become the workforce of the future and much more than that. Education prepares the next generation to become the guardians of our planet, the stewards of democracy and the peaceful co-existence among different peoples and races, the custodians of society, the inventors and explorers of the future, the caretakers of their own children. We cannot allow the energy, talent and time that fuel our education systems to be wasted.

If the features of an education system meet the following three crucial criteria then it can be termed as Sustainable Education Systems:

- No talent is wasted: education should work for every single student in the system, irrespective of the students' background;
- Energy for learning is renewed: the energy that students and teachers invest in education is maximally turned into learning and development, which produces new energy for learning;

- Crucial needs are addressed: students develop the competences that are crucial for their future lives and for the future of our planet.

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