



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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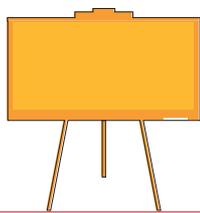
Indian Network on
Ethics & Climate Change



Relevant and Meaningful Education

The policy brief focuses on the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: “Ensure equitable, inclusive quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030. While education is a complex concept, an attempt was made to understand its meaning in a holistic perspective, with specific relevance to the goal.

Education to be relevant and meaningful needs to focus on an integrated approach to learning required in response to different contexts and times. Since formal education emphasises certain types of knowledge to the neglect of others that are essential to sustaining human development, it is important that equal attention should be paid in all organized learning. More specifically, education may be understood to mean learning that is deliberate, intentional, purposeful and organised. Formal and non-formal educational opportunities suppose a certain degree of institutionalisation. A great deal of learning, however, is much less institutionalised, if at all, even when it is intentional and deliberate.



Education governance in India post-independence

The Government of India has made efforts since Independence to develop access to general and technical and other relevant types of education. History of education in India post-independence: relevant legislations, number of commissions, periodic policies, national and state institutions, diversity of relevant programmes and education financing. As a result of these initiatives there is expansion in general education and higher education. Efforts have been made to spread non-formal and adult education among all sections and all regions of the country.

Still the problems in our education governance system persist: poor access to village schools in hilly tracts of Adivasi areas; dropouts and out of school children: recruitment procedures, training, quality and accountability of teachers; relevance of content and pedagogy; access to adult literacy; relevant technical and vocational training; low budgetary allocation; data and information systems on education, especially to assess learning outcomes; role of private sector in education; lack of a relevant forward looking policy etc.





Key Challenges

What is the way forward: should we continue with business as usual? Or more importantly, focus on the role of relooking education with focus on the key challenges of unemployment, fast-paced technological changes, all forms of intolerance, violence, fundamentalism, environmental degradation and climate change. If we need to progress towards the achievement of the SDG 4, then we need to examine the key issues that affect education today. Some of these major challenges are highlighted below:

Education and employment

Education alone cannot solve the problem of unemployment. This requires reconsidering the dominant model of economic development, which would also be an opportunity to rethink the link between education and the world of work. Lifelong learning is critically important to coping with new employment patterns.



Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

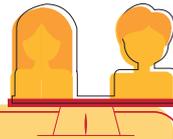
The current multiple systematic crises faced by the environment, economy and society are a reflection of approaches to education that do not foster a sustainable future for all. Thus, ESD fundamentally challenges current unsustainable approaches and requires a reconceptualisation about the how, what, whom and why of education.

ABC

Critical thinking

There is a need to develop critical skills, especially among our youth to interrogate power structure, policy and politics of our society. They must be supported to develop a deeper understanding of oppressive power bases, and to challenge social arrangements that perpetuate intergenerational poverty and its associated inequalities.





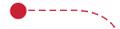
Gender disparity

From an equity perspective, men and women should be empowered for differential competencies that lead to the construction of another possible world, where family is the equal responsibility of men and women. While remunerated activities in all fields of knowledge must be performed while remunerated equitably for women and men.



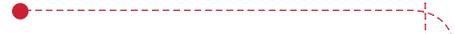
Disability

Children, youth and adults with disabilities are often denied their right to education. As far as children are concerned, little is known about their school attendance patterns. The collection of data on children with disabilities is not straightforward, but data is vital to ensure that policies are in place to address the constraints that these children face.



Digital technology

The emergence of digital technology has drastically changed the nature of educational processes. Lightweight and portable devices ranging from mobile phones, tablet, PCs, to palmtops have liberated learning from fixed and predetermined locations, changing the nature of knowledge in modern societies. Learning has thus become more informal, personal and ubiquitous.



Privatization of education

Education is the responsibility of the state and therefore a public good. However, the primary responsibility of the Government in the provision of public education is increasingly being contested with calls for reduced public spending and greater involvement of non-state involvement in public-private partnerships. The rapidly changing relationship of society, state and market is creating a dilemma.



Crisis of Education Financing

The percentage of Government expenditure, GDP on education, has been falling for the last 3 years. India's education system is creaking at the seams, family spending on education is rising, quality is speedily deteriorating, and a quarter of students are dependent on private tuitions for getting through. If the system is starved of cash, it could be a disaster in the making.



SDG Goal 4 (Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning) and related targets and indicators



The Education 2030 Framework for Action, May 2015 (the Incheon Declaration) - Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all - was adopted in Paris in November 2015. This agenda builds on the achievements and unfinished work attendant to the 'Education for All' (EFA) commitments and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) on education, while confronting the more contemporary challenges to education and learning the world faces.

It is an integral part of the post-2015 development agenda as expressed in 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets adopted in September 2015. 'Education' is one of the 17 SDGs: Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning. SDG 4 is further expressed in 7 targets and 3 means of implementation spanning early childhood care and education, primary and secondary education, youth and adult literacy, skills for decent work and TVET, tertiary education, education for sustainable development, global citizenship education, human rights education, with commitments to advance gender equality, equity, inclusion, and education quality, especially through well-trained, motivated teachers and effective learning environments for all. It also commits to increased scholarships for least developed countries in higher and tertiary education. As a stand-alone goal in the new development agenda, education enjoys a prominence, which favours financing and policy priority. Education 2030 strongly affirms education as a human right and a basis for the realisation of other rights. It locates education's role as core in achieving overall human development, dignity, social justice, poverty eradication, peace, and sustainable development.



Targets and Observations on the National Indicators of Sustainable Development Goal 4

In the proposed 32 National Indicators as compared to the 11 of the UN and the awaited addition of the indicators for 4.7, there is no indicator that focuses on quality education. Even the target of free, and quality education has been reduced to mere proficiency in (a) reading and (b) mathematics. A crucial aspect of health care in schools and preschools institutions has been ignored: safe drinking water and sanitation facilities. Also monitoring of learning and psychosocial well-being aspects of children has been excluded.

In terms of assessing the imparting of skills in computer literacy and technical and vocational education, focus is not given to the basic skills related to entrepreneurship in the unorganized sector, and self-employment in rural and remote areas, especially agriculture and allied activities. There is an overemphasis on skills related to employment in the industrial sector.

As regards literacy, the focus on numeracy skills is not stated explicitly. There is no indicator to monitor the adult literacy rate in adults beyond the age of 24 years, when the target clearly specifies 'a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy'?

On a crucial area of education for sustainable development, national indicators are being developed. This target challenges the very foundation of education: education for what? Rather than reduce education to employability, it needs to focus on values and principles that underlie lifelong learning in being an active citizen, critically assess sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights at all levels.

Overall what is missing is an indicator to assess inclusive education along parity indices - female/male, rural/urban/remote/hilly and conflict affected locations, disability status, scheduled castes/scheduled tribes/other backward classes and minorities. More specifically, since there is rightly an emphatic on the elimination of gender disparities, a dedicated indicator to monitor gender disparities is needed. Finally, on monitoring of the public expenditure on education, it is not clearly stated what aspects will be monitored.





Recommendations

- 1 There is a need for a contextual and holistic approach in the National Policy on Education to view education as a lifelong process with relevant emphasis on promoting adult education, which includes all areas of life and work. This will contribute to the recognition that education is a human right and essential for the success of all sustainable development goals. This approach to education will help to contribute to both sustainable social and economic development, including employability and decent work.
- 2 No policy formulation is possible without a robust database, which is periodically updated. Learning outcomes, as part of inclusive education, need to be assessed along parity indices - female/male, rural/urban/remote/hilly and conflict affected locations, disability status, scheduled castes/scheduled tribes/ other backward classes and minorities.
- 3 Civil society should be accorded full representation in all policy and decision bodies related to the monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs. Alternative reports should be encouraged and supported to get the perspectives of civil society actors, and to provide spaces for meaningful participation of and input from all disadvantaged and marginalized groups of society.
- 4 Education for Sustainable Development needs to be integrated in the school and other curricula as much broader than just environmental education alone but also how we need to focus on a sustainable future through harmony between society, environment, the economy and culture.
- 5 In assessing the imparting of skills in computer literacy and technical and vocational education, apart from the skills related to employment in the industrial sector, focus needs to be given also to the basic skills related to entrepreneurship in the unorganised sector, and self-employment in rural and remote areas, especially agriculture and allied activities.
- 6 There is a need for adequate financing by the Central and State Governments in prioritising education in the national budget. In the shortage of funding, adult education, especially non-formal education is neglected.



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