



e-ISSN: 2455-7013

**Asian Journal of Management, Engineering & Computer Sciences  
(AJMECS)**

Vol. 2(3), July 2017: 8-19

URL: <http://www.crsdindia.com/ajmeecs.html>

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## RESEARCH PAPER

### Understanding the Importance of Quality Education for Sustainable Development

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#### ABSTRACT

*In today's world, the importance of sustainable development must be known by all the people. All the activities regarding sustainable development depend upon the sensitization of every citizen of the country and the best way to sensitize people about this concept is to educate them, i.e. the reason behind the presence of quality education among sustainable development goals. This study highlights the importance of education in sensitizing people about the concept of sustainable development. It also clarifies the difference between education and exclusive education for sustainable development. This paper clearly identifies the role of corporate and civil societies along with educational institution in providing education as one of the sustainable development goals and exclusive education about the concept of sustainable development.*

**Key words:** Sustainable Development, Sensitization, Exclusive Education, Development Goals.

*Received: 8<sup>th</sup> Apr. 2017, Revised: 27<sup>th</sup> Apr. 2017, Accepted: 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2017*

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#### How to cite this article:

Khan A.M. (2017): Understanding the Importance of Quality Education for Sustainable Development. AJMECS, Vol. 2[3]: July, 2017: 8-19.

#### INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development is one of the most discussed global issues among researchers, academicians and policy makers at the current time. Sustainable Development is usually perceived as the intersection between environment, society and economy. (Giddings, Hopwood, & O'Brien, 2002).

The term, sustainable development, was popularized in Our Common Future, a report published by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987. Also known as the Brundtland report, Our Common Future included the "classic" definition of sustainable development: "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

The sustainable development embodies integration, and understanding and acting on the complex interconnections that exist between the environment, economy, and society. This is not a balancing act or a playing of one issue off against the other, but recognizing the interdependent nature of these three pillars (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

Since the path-breaking deliberations of the Brundtland Commission, the expression 'sustainable development' has been used in a variety of ways, depending on whether it is employed in an academic context, or that of planning, business or environmental policy. As a result, during the last eighteen years we have been confronted with several different discourses of 'sustainable development', some of which are mutually exclusive. For example, campaigners for greater global equality between nations, huge international corporations, and local housing associations, have all had recourse to the term

'sustainable development' to justify, or embellish, their actions. It is often unclear whether these different perspectives are complementary or mutually exclusive. Exasperation with the limitations of much of the discussion has not been confined to the political (Redclift, 2006).

### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN INDIAN CONTEXT

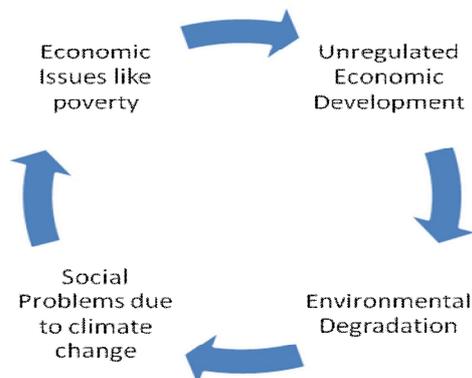
India is presently emerging as an economic superpower, but in contrast, there is another profile of India. We constitute around 17% of the world's population, but account for about 35% of the poor and 40% of the illiterates in the world. Experiences from the economic reform indicate that while there have been improvements in economic growth, foreign exchange, IT revolution, export growth, and so on, inequality in income distribution has been growing simultaneously (Kurian, 2007).

A trench has been created in our society because the urban people are getting benefited from the development of industries and other economic factors but a major chunk of our society has lost their livelihood because of the unbalanced development. For example ratio of urban to rural income is 4.5 and agriculture's share in GDP has been reduced to half, with no decrease in dependent population in the agricultural sector (Kurian, 2007). Actually in present scenario the economic growth creates more opportunities for the more educated section of the society and does not make any such impact on the weak or poor class of society. Economic development creates some opportunities for the rural or uneducated people also but not in that proportion in which it should create.

In India around 700 million people belongs to rural areas and directly dependent on the natural resources for their livelihood. The crisis of fresh water is a very alarming issue and its main reasons are zonal disparity in distribution, major land use changes, long term water level decline, and increase in salinity and pollution. It is because the policies of the government are more economic growth centric rather being focused on social and environmental issues (Sharma 2009).

The economic growth is not a problem for India; the actual problem is unregulated economic growth. The unregulated economic development means economic development which is not according to the norms and regulations of the government. It causes climate change e.g. ozone layer depletion is among the major results of unregulated economic development. It is an illusion that even unregulated economic development helps in reducing social issues like poverty, actually on the other hand it is also responsible for environmental degradation like deforestation, excessive air and water pollution etc. Natural calamities (up to some extent) are also caused by the environmental degradation like draught, excessive rainfalls, floods etc. These natural calamities again generate the social problems of unemployment, poverty etc. In short we can say that the unregulated economic development creates an interrelated system which ends at the place, where is begins. The Fig. 1 (below) is explaining the same system-

**Fig. 1: Interrelated System**

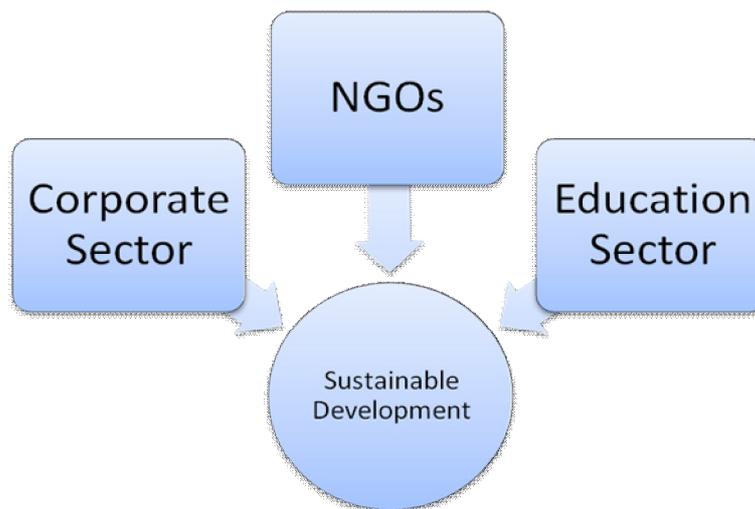


Many policies and regulations are being implemented by the government regarding sustainable development. These efforts should be strengthened at domestic level. As per the guidelines of Agenda 21 the action plan of the United Nations with regard to sustainable development, the Indian government made many efforts to cope up with the issues of sustainability development. Numerous programs had been developed by the Indian government for poverty eradication and educational improvements. But instead of doing it all, there still remains a gulf between Indian standards and rest of the world. The problem is that the sustainability development cannot be done by using existing technologies and shifting of technology requires higher capital investments (United Nations, 1992).

In this paper we are going to discuss the role being played by the educational institutions, civil societies and corporate sector in promoting the concept of sustainable development through education. The corporate sector is mainly dependent on the natural resources so the corporate sector is being supposed to take care of the environment and society. It became mandatory for them from FY 2014-15 to spend at least 2% of their average net profit in the previous three years on CSR activities (India P, 2013). Numerous measures have been taken by the civil societies for the expulsion of social issues, to protect the environment, to promote education among the most deprived sections of our society. It is a fact that civil societies reach those areas in which even the government doesn't get through (Agarwal, 2008).

The only way to sensitize every citizen about the concept of sustainable development is "education". They become aware by the problems only after getting educated. Quality education is also a part of sustainable development goals. Education doesn't mean that it should be in a formal way or a person must possess a degree or diploma. In fact it can be imparted informally by setting some practical examples which are for the benefit of society and environment (M.K, 2014). It is absolutely true that imparting education is the responsibility of the education system only but the concept of sustainable development is such a diversified issue in itself that only education sector is not enough to take the responsibility of sensitizing people about the concept of sustainable development.

**Fig. 2: Sustainable Development**



It is also a debatable topic that whether educating the people is enough or educating them exclusively about sustainable development. Being educated is very much helpful to understand the concept of sustainable development. Even an engineer or a doctor can take part in sustainable practices without having any degree in courses on sustainable education. The thing is just to sensitize them about this problem and an educated person

understands it easily as compared to an uneducated person. In fact quality education is a part of sustainable development goals; it doesn't mean that the education should be exclusively about understanding sustainable development.

In the present study we are elaborating the activities which are responsible for the sensitization among people and the role which has been played by the corporate and civil societies along with the educational institutions in India to promote the concept of sustainable development either by educating people (SDG), promoting exclusive education regarding it or by spending on sustainable practices. It can be said that the sustainable development is the collaborative effort of all these sectors. (Fig. 2)

### **Responsibility of Indian Corporate Sector in promoting the concept of Sustainable Development through Education:**

"The rich should ponder well as to what is their duty today.... But understand that your wealth is not yours, it belongs to the people. Take what you require for your legitimate needs, and use the remainder for society", well said by Mahatma Gandhi. In fact the entire structure of our society is interdependent and interrelated to each other. Manpower, raw material and peaceful environment, all these are the mandatory requirements for functioning of any corporate. Some surveys also show that consumers also prefer to be associated with those corporate who are participating in Sustainable Development and involved in the welfare of society. So the corporate requires blending their vested interests with the public interest and for that they should not be compelled by the law but they must have to understand that it is mandatory for them to participate in sustainable practices for their own well being (Dodh, Singh, & Ravitha, 2013).

Corporate Sustainability is derived from the concept of sustainable development which is defined by the Brundtland Commission as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland Commission's Report, 1987). It actually defines the role that companies have to play in fulfilling the requirements of sustainable development and ensures a balanced economic, social and environmental development. The importance of sustainable practices gave birth to the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility. While there may be no single universally accepted definition of CSR, each definition that currently exists underpins the impact that businesses have on society at large and the societal expectations of them. In short it can be said that the roots of CSR lie in philanthropic activities of corporations such as donations, charity, relief work, etc (India P, 2013).

According to the UNIDO, "Corporate social responsibility is a management concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders. CSR is generally understood as being the way through which a company achieves a balance of economic, environmental and social imperatives (Triple-Bottom-Line Approach), while at the same time addressing the expectations of shareholders and stakeholders. In this sense it is important to draw a distinction between CSR, which can be a strategic business management concept, and charity, sponsorships or philanthropy. Even though the latter can also make a valuable contribution to poverty reduction, will directly enhance the reputation of a company and strengthen its brand, the concept of CSR clearly goes beyond that" (India P, 2013).

In India, the concept of CSR is governed by clause 135 of the Companies Act, 2013, which was passed by both Houses of the Parliament, and had received the assent of the President of India on 29 August 2013. The CSR provisions within the Act is applicable to companies with an annual turnover of 1,000 crore INR and more, or a net worth of 500 crore INR and more, or a net profit of five crore INR and more (India P, 2013).

The corporate sector can take part in any of these activities like environmental protection, social benefits and promoting education through its CSR funds in both ways either formally or informally. They can either provide grants for academic institutions, environmental protection agencies or they can provide opportunities for their employees

or other people to get sensitized by organizing a different kind of program regarding sustainable development. In the field of CSR the following organizations are taking part:-

**Table 1: Key CSR Areas of Companies**

Companies	Key CSR Areas
Wipro	Educational Institutions
Delhi Land & Finance (DLF)	Free School Education
Siemens	Environmental Initiatives
TATA	Financial support to students and civil societies
Aircel	Environment (Tiger Protection)
Aditya Birla Group	Education & Health Care
Mahindra & Mahindra	Education, Public Health & Environment
Larsen & Toubro	Water & sanitation, Education and Health Care
Bharat Petroleum	Education & Water Conservation
Infosys	Education & Health

### CSR IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Educational institutions are indeed mandatory for human progress, societal development and for creating a healthy economic environment. That's why education is getting international recognition as a driver of long term development of developing countries. Its growing importance has made it a part of sustainable development goals (SDGs) (Gupte & Jadhav, 2014). In fact the table-1 clearly shows that most of the companies in India also spending a major part of their CSR fund on education.

Education is an important part for many businesses as there exists a need for all kinds of people and education has both the capacity and ability to make a real difference for all the players involved in the education sector, for a number of reasons such as: improved financial performance; building up of a positive good will and reputation among consumers and other stake holders; increased ability to attract employees; development of brand recognition; increased consumer loyalty; improvement in sales; building up of a more educated workforce; enhancing consumer awareness on a particular issue and fulfilling the company's mission or mandate. On the other hand faculty, students and educational institutions can also benefit from the experience and expertise that the Corporations bring (Gupte & Jadhav, 2014).

Today CSR has gone beyond mere charity and donations and has become an integral part of corporate strategy. Corporate giants like the Tata Group, Aditya Birla Group and Indian Oil Corporation have been involved in serving the community ever since its inception.

#### Benefits of CSR to Higher Education:

1. Complementing government efforts in providing grants for higher educational institutes.
2. Enhance the quality of education by establishing their institutions (TIS, TISS, BIMTECH)
3. They make education, accessible for the weaker section of society.
4. Reducing the menace of poverty would help in strengthening the economy.
5. Investing in human capital is very much productive.
6. Higher education institutes exclusively for education regarding the parameters of sustainable development (TATA Eco Technology Centre).

Finally it can be said that the CSR provides a bridge between organization and societies and helps in reducing the gap between privileged and disadvantaged sections of society by providing the access to the higher education.

### CONTRIBUTION OF CIVIL SOCIETIES IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

It is a well known fact that government is not able enough to enforce laws (environment protection, poverty eradication, consumer benefits) related to sustainable development.

They must have to depend on other organizations as well. Among these organizations civil societies play a pivotal role in promoting the concept of sustainable development especially at grass root level (Agarwal, 2008).

Although the primary focuses of civil societies is the overall development of the society, the environmental aspect has also been fulfilled because many civil societies are working on environmental issues such as harvesting, recycling of products, GHG emission and biodiversity (Agarwal, 2008).

**Table 2:** List of some Prominent Civil Societies Working in India

Civil Societies	Area of Working
World Wildlife Fund (India)	Environment Protection
Kirti	Welfare of Women
M C Mehta Foundation	Protecting environment & cultural heritage
Centre for Environmental Education	Pollution, Wildlife, Forest etc
Green Future Foundation	Environment Protection & Ecological Conservation

The requirement of awareness related to different ways of sustainable development and its enforcement is more demanding and urgent than ever before. The emergence of civil societies represents an organized response by civil society especially in those areas in which the state has either failed to reach or working inadequately. The importance of public awareness and civil society's involvement in environmental protection is acknowledged worldwide. NGO's have been taking a number of steps to promote discussion and debate about environmental issues, outside the broad spheres of popular media and the educational system. Advocacy and awareness is especially crucial in promoting concepts such as sustainable development, natural resource conservation and the restoration of ecosystems (Agarwal, 2008).

#### **CIVIL SOCIETIES AND EDUCATION**

Civil societies can impart education and to the most deprived section of the society. Even to those people for whom the access of secondary or higher education is almost impossible. The civil societies can nurture the educational system the following ways: - (Agarwal, 2008).

1. Sensitize policy makers about the current problems and priorities of the society.
2. Provide education and training facilities, both at community and government levels.
3. They can also contribute significantly by undertaking research and publication on sustainable development related issues.
4. Conduct citizen awareness programs in the field of sustainable development.
5. Government collaborated projects for organizing the capacity building and promotion of community participation in activities related to sustainable development.
6. Working out at the grass root level and reaching far – flung areas with or without the government invitation.
7. Provide factual and reliable information to the government with a network of professional expert staff.
8. Conduct latest researches and experiments in those areas which are not easily accessible by government agencies.

The Civil societies can also start different projects for imparting exclusive education and training about the concept of sustainable development among the rural people. A case study of Samvardhan:- (Chhokar, 2010).

In 1988 Centre for Environmental Education (CEE) in collaboration with the UK Field Study Councils started a project known as Samvardhan for providing exclusive education on sustainability practices in Rural Higher Education Institutes (RHEI) in the state of

Gujarat. Samvardhan was based on the concept of educating rural youth about the environmental and social issues.

For educating the youth it became mandatory to design a proper curriculum and framework of the study. So that the CEE's Samvardhan team analyzed the curriculum of the RHEIs, identified suitable areas where environmental and sustainability concepts, issues and perspectives could be infused, and developed approaches and methods to achieve it.

The RHEI students benefited from a series of well-planned, intensive training programs, field visits, exposure tours and participatory exercises over the three years. They were also involved in designing new curriculum content and pedagogic approaches, which enabled them to build their abilities and skills, to transform their existing programs and focus them upon the activities related to sustainable development.

The success of this project was a result of focused approach, working closely with the faculty and students to build their capacity and making them primary stakeholders in this innovative program with the result that they felt responsible for its success. Creating graduates with a clear and professional outlook and utilizing their capabilities for rural development has made Samvardhan an alternative approach to rural development.

At present Samvardhan has become a diversified organization and working on many projects like save disappearing wetlands, save degrading rivers, erosion of biodiversity, spread the invasive alien species, irrigation and agriculture etc. In short now it is a known name in the field sustainable development.

#### **ROLE OF EDUCATION IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

In India, education, and especially higher education, has been acknowledged as an important driver of development. In 1964, the Education Commission appointed to advise the government on principles and policies for educational development recognized that this task was most vital and relevant to economic, cultural and spiritual development in (Kothari, 1966).

Education is one of the key solutions for developing the concept of "sustainable development" in India. It provides skills which makes an individual competent enough to solve various problems in the society. Education is the backbone of a country and it plays a very important role in forming the basic structure of the society (Jadhav A.S., 2014).

*Higher Education:* - The higher education is the final part of academia, as after getting it a person becomes competent enough to survive in the society. Higher education generally includes three stages or steps such as graduate, post graduate and doctoral program (Jadhav A.S., 2014).

The Indian Government has acknowledged environmental education (EE) as a crucial element of its development strategy (Government of India, 1981, 1998). In 1991 India had set an unusual educational example when the guardian of constitution i.e. Supreme Court of India, responded to a public interest litigation, to make Indians more environmentally sensitive and responsible citizens by ruling that environmental education should permeate all levels of education. (Supreme Court of India, 1991). The court mandated an undergraduate environment course as the first step, providing an opportunity to introduce sustainable development issues to higher education (Chhokar, 2010).

The term "education for sustainable development" emerged primarily out of the Rio Summit but for many educators it is more important than "environmental education" because include issues of international development, cultural diversity and social and environmental equity (Sharma B, 2014).

Sustainable development requires higher education to develop new thinking and integrated ways about the coordination between economic, natural and cultural environments. To fulfill this agenda the United Nations declared 2005-2014 as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) (Sharma B, 2014).

#### **OBJECTIVES OF HIGHER EDUCATION REGARDING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

The basic responsibility of higher educational institutions is to develop new methods and approaches to explain the sustainability to everyone. The role of higher education for the sustainable development is very important and should be focused on these following objectives:-

1. Enlighten the knowledge seekers about the negative aspects of current development.
2. Develop the concept through the case studies technique.
3. Build a clear vision of teaching and research for sustainable development.

### CURRENT SCENARIO OF EDUCATION IN INDIA

According to the Census 2011, the literacy rate is 74.04% and rising constantly and is estimated 82.14% for men and 65.46 percent for women. (Google All, n.d.). It is true that India is developing its higher education system but this development is not up to the mark. Actually for achieving the sustainable development goals, we need to have the latest approach and technology.

Let's have a look at the statistics of higher education system in the country:-

**Table 3:** Educational institutes in the country (Source: UGC)

University/Institute/College	No.
Central Universities	46
State Universities	344
Private Universities	228
Institute of National Importance	74
Deemed to be University	130
Total No. of Universities	822
Colleges in Higher Education Sector	33023

**Table 4:** Centrally funded institutes for Technical & Science Education (Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, n.d.)

Institute Name	No.
National Institute of Technology	30
Indian Institute of Management	19
Indian Institute of Technology	16
Indian Institute of Science	1
Indian Institute of Science Education & Research	7
Indian Institute of Information Technology	15
National Institutes of Technical Teachers Training & Research	4
Others	11
Total	101

Instead of having a large number of universities in the country, only a few of them are providing education related to environmental issues or by and large about the concept of sustainable development. In fact the University Grant Commission should form a statutory council for the sustainable development same as other councils has been formed for medicine, law, agricultural research, nursing etc. The council would be responsible for the development and functioning of the universities and institutions exclusively meant to cater the needs for sustainable development (UGC, n.d.).

In India some institutes have introduced components of sustainable development into existing programs. IITs and IIMs have introduced courses on sustainable development. Jadavpur University, University of Madras, TERI University, Jammu University, Anna University are some prominent universities providing education on sustainable development (Chhokar, 2010).

Apart from imparting education about the concept of sustainable development, the universities and institutions can also take part in sustainable development practices. They

should take some initiative for the welfare of society and conservation of biodiversity. They can do it either with the help of civil societies or in collaboration with the government or directly on their own. Because at the end of the day it's the responsibility of every academic institution to sensitize people whether formally through education or informally through their sustainable practices.

Some institutions are already working on the projects for the sustainable developments in India are as follows:-

IIM Ahmadabad's Centre for Management in Agriculture undertakes research studies for the Ministry on various facets of agricultural and allied sectors and provides policy advice to the union government. CMA has done significant amount of research in the areas of agro-food policy, procurement, marketing, and processing of agro-based commodities, farm input systems, irrigation and water management etc (Centre for Management in Agriculture, IIM Ahmedabad, n.d.).

The IGCS aims at developing the capacity and the capability to promote sustainable development in Germany, India and South Asia. An essential component of the IGCS's trans-disciplinary approach is the cooperation with other institutions and organizations in order to make use of existing information, research, capacity, (best practice) experience and ongoing initiatives in the different areas of sustainable development. The research of this centre will help to meet the challenges of the global change regarding water and energy in the future (Home, IGCS, n.d.)

Teri University has developed a model green campus in terms of building, energy conservation, water harvesting and conservation and water waste recycling. It was one of the few universities worldwide where the Master's in Sustainable Development Practice has been started and now it is the part of the Global Master's in Development Practice. Its main aim was to develop professionals who would be well equipped to tackle problems of extreme poverty, climate change and ecosystem vulnerability (Chhokar, 2010).

At the University of Pune, individual instructors have worked with local civil societies to identify projects that could help students to learn in real-world settings whilst providing assistance to the civil societies (Sharma B, 2014).

Aligarh Muslim University is also working on many research projects on sustainable development funded by different agencies both national and international. Its current projects are as follows:- Seismic Assessment and Safety of Masonry Heritage Building, Integrated Sustainable power generation from Enhanced Biomass for Rural and Semi Urban Areas of India, Performance level benchmarking for sewage treatment plant in collaboration with IIT Delhi, Integrated system for sewage treatment: A sustainable approach in collaboration with Tohuko University Japan, Study for Comparative Survey for Performance and Cost Effectiveness of Sewage Funding Agency JICA Japan (AMU, n.d.)

Although many important steps had been taken by universities and academic institutions with the help of government to spread the awareness about the concept of sustainable development, still a lot of work has left to be done in this area. Some other strategies which must have to be formed in higher education for sustainable development:-

On the part of the government:-

1. Sensitize the students and faculty regarding sustainable development.
2. Develop national coordination and supporting networks.
3. Develop exclusive funding agencies for promoting exclusive education about the sustainable development.
4. Proper check on the working of organizations related to sustainable development.
5. Promoting new research avenues in sustainable development.
6. On the part of existing academic institutions:-
7. Develop the concept of green campuses or convert the existing campuses into green campus.
8. Monitor the use of different environmental factors like water consumption, electricity consumption and solid waste management in the campus.

9. Understand the importance of Carbon Sequestration.
10. Develop the techniques for water conservation.
11. Establishment of Energy Parks in the campus to popularize the non conventional energy sources (solar parks and wind parks).
12. No pollution in campuses to save fossil fuels and reduce carbon foot prints.

## CONCLUSION

It can be assessed by the above discussion that the importance of all three sectors is no less than one another and the government alone is unable to implement the policies or laws for sustainable development without the help of all these sectors. The Magna Charta of all the activities regarding sustainable development is the sensitization of every citizen of the country and the only way to sensitize all the people about it is to let them know the consequences of current policies and practices. The best way to sensitize people about this concept is to educate them, i.e. the reason behind the presence of quality education among sustainable development goals.

The government has bound the corporate sector to spend some amount of their profit on sustainable activities and the corporate are spending their profits on the activities included in the sustainable development goals. But still there is a need for more participation from the corporate sector in promoting "sustainable education" because the corporate sector is spending on the simple education which helps but not focus exclusively for sensitizing people about sustainable development.

Civil societies are doing a remarkable job regarding sustainable development in India. Majorly their concern is either for the betterment of society or conservation of biodiversity and environmental protection. The development of education or sensitization of people is somehow not getting done in a way in which it should be done. We have discussed the concept of Samvardhan which had been started by CEE, many other Civil societies should also start the same kind of projects exclusively for promoting the concept of sustainable development among the socially or economically downtrodden sections in our country.

If we take the case of education in the current scenario, we must have to form and implement certain policies for successful promotion and growth of sustainable development in India. As yet the sustainable development is generally getting considered along with some other major disciplines but a major transformation is required to make it a separate discipline. A separate council should be formed for the regulation of sustainable development so that all the education meant for sensitizing people about sustainable development should be designed in a separate way. Exclusive and premier institutions should be set up for imparting sustainable education. The infrastructure of all the education institutes must be strictly according to the laws of sustainability. It should be mandatory at least for all the major universities to take a certain number of projects for social and environmental development.

This study has highlighted the importance of education in sensitizing people about the concept of sustainable development. It also clarifies the difference between education and exclusive education for sustainable development. This paper clearly identifies the role of corporate and civil societies along with educational institution in providing education as one of the sustainable development goals and exclusive education about the concept of sustainable development.

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