

# Role of Teachers and Higher Education in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

**Dr. Rajesh Dhaka**

Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Jagannath University Bahadurgarh, Haryana

## Abstract

Teachers and Higher Education play vital roles in working towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a set of 17 global objectives established by the United Nations to address challenges like poverty, hunger, climate change, and inequality. Educators hold a significant responsibility in educating students about the SDGs and their significance. This entails integrating SDG-related concepts into lessons, employing SDG-themed activities and projects, and encouraging students to critically consider sustainable challenges and solutions. Concurrently, educational establishments contribute by supporting teacher development on the SDGs, aiding teachers' comprehensive understanding and effective integration. Additionally, institutions offer resources promoting sustainability awareness to students, such as educational materials and online sources. They also endorse student-driven sustainability projects by providing financial backing, space, and resources. Moreover, institutions set an example by adopting eco-conscious practices such as reducing energy consumption and waste generation. Through collaborative efforts, teachers and institutions shape a generation capable of addressing global issues and creating a sustainable future. For instance, teachers inform students about the SDGs, emphasizing their importance, discussing specific goals, challenges, and solutions, and prompting analytical thinking to brainstorm ideas. Institutions assist educators through specialized professional development focused on the SDGs, aiding educators' understanding and integration of these goals. They also make resources available, including books, articles, websites, and educational visits to sustainable initiatives. Additionally, institutions support student-led sustainability endeavours through financial assistance, space, and resources. By demonstrating sustainable practices like energy conservation and supporting local businesses, institutions lead by example. Together, the combined efforts of teachers and institutions drive tangible global transformations, fostering an informed and motivated generation equipped to tackle pressing issues and forge a more sustainable future.

**Keywords:** Teachers, Higher Education, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

## Introduction:

Sustainable development emphasizes the significance of utilizing resources in a balanced way to meet present needs while preserving them for future generations. *As per Brundtland (1987), the former Director of the World Health Organization and the Prime Minister of Norway, sustainable development involves "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."*

The term 'sustainable' signifies viability and the ability to persist in the long term without causing harm but rather benefiting all members of society. 'Development' refers to the evolution and transformation of

the dynamic interplay between the environment, economy, and society. Sustainable development, therefore, revolves around the aspiration to enhance the quality of life for everyone in the present while ensuring the well-being and prosperity of generations yet to come. It is a holistic approach that seeks to balance economic progress, environmental conservation, and social equity, thereby fostering a harmonious and prosperous future for humanity.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a comprehensive framework for addressing pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges worldwide. They are designed to guide global efforts to achieve sustainable development by 2030 and provide a shared blueprint for governments, organizations, and individuals to work together toward a more equitable, prosperous, and sustainable future.

Education plays a very important role in the progress and societal development of any nation. It is an indispensable component of human life, and the Indian Constitution recognizes this fact by making education a shared responsibility of the national and state governments, highlighting the significance of high-quality education. The teacher is an important part in the educational system. Teachers and institutions are instruments in imparting education, a potent tool for shaping future generations. A well-educated and trained teacher knows his duties very well and he accepts this responsibility with ease. Education often referred to as the backbone of society, by which advancements are made in a variety of fields, including technology, business, economics, peace, social justice, and human rights. The success of these developments depends on an educated population. This paper explores the pivotal role of teachers and educational institutions in advancing the SDGs, emphasizing the importance of education as a catalyst for positive change on a global scale. Teachers, teacher education and institutions are the main focused areas of education, and they play a crucial role in the pursuit of sustainable development and the achievement of the SDGs, they are interconnected.

### **1. Quality Education:**

Teacher plays a very important role in delivering quality education that goes beyond just facts and figures. They help students understand complex topics like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and how they relate to the world. Through effective teaching, teachers equip students with not only knowledge but also the skills needed to make a positive impact on issues like poverty, climate change, and inequality. This prepares students actively contribute to achieve the SDGs and create a more sustainable and equitable future. For example, teaching about climate change and its impact on the environment and society.

Educational institutions are also center to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all. For example: Providing access to education for marginalized communities and ensuring educational quality through trained teachers.

### **2. Promoting Global Citizenship:**

Encourage a global perspective, promoting understanding and empathy for diverse cultures and contexts. Teachers play a key role in encouraging their students to learn about the world from different viewpoints. They help students understand and appreciate diverse cultures and situations. This is important for promoting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in schools because it builds empathy and a sense of global cooperation. When students understand and respect different backgrounds, they are more likely to work together to make progress towards the SDGs, creating a more inclusive and sustainable school community.

For example: Including global literature or cultural exchange programs in the curriculum. Teachers inspire students to become active global citizens and motivate them to take action on SDGs. They do this by fostering a sense of responsibility for the world and motivating students to take action on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through their guidance and encouragement, teachers empower students to engage in activities and initiatives that address global challenges like poverty, climate change, and inequality. This inspiration helps students see themselves as change-makers, contributing to a more sustainable and equitable planet. For example: Encouraging students to participate in local environmental clean-up projects.

Educational institutions nurture a sense of global citizenship by encouraging students to think beyond their local communities. For example: Encouraging students to participate in international exchange programs or engage in discussions about global issues.

### **3. Fostering Awareness and Understanding of the SDGs:**

Teachers play a vital role in raising awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among their students. They help students understand what the SDGs are, why they are essential, and how they relate to everyday life. Through engaging lessons and discussions, teachers ensure that students recognize the significance of the SDGs in addressing global challenges like poverty, climate change, and equality. This awareness equips students with the knowledge needed to make informed choices and contribute to a more sustainable and equitable world. For example: Organizing awareness campaigns about the SDGs within the school and then those rallies outside the school to spread awareness among community.

Educational institutions serve as platforms for introducing students to the SDGs and explaining their significance. For example: Incorporating SDG-related content into curricula and organizing awareness campaigns within schools.

### **4. Innovation in Teaching Methods:**

Teachers are central to this aspect, as they are responsible for creating engaging and effective learning experiences. Through innovative teaching methods, personalized instruction, and a focus on critical thinking, teachers can improve learning outcomes, equipping students with the knowledge and skills needed for the 21st century.

### **5. Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving:**

Teachers develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills among students. These skills are essential for addressing complex global challenges and adapting to a rapidly changing world. They encourage students to think deeply, ask questions, and examine global challenges like poverty, climate change, and inequality from different angles. By doing so, teachers help their students to develop the ability to analyze complex issues and come up with innovative solutions. This empowers students to address real-world problems, fostering a sense of agency and preparedness to tackle global challenges. For example: Assigning projects where students must find sustainable solutions to local issues.

Educational institutions can innovate in their teaching methods to ensure that students are equipped with the skills necessary to address complex global challenges. For example: Implementing problem-based learning approaches that encourage critical thinking and problem-solving related to the SDGs.

## **6. Digital Education:**

Teachers integrate technology into their teaching methods, making learning more engaging and accessible. Educational institutions can offer online courses and resources that reach a broader audience, including those in remote areas.

## **7. Multicultural Education:**

Teachers and institute both incorporate multicultural education into their classrooms, exposing students to diverse cultures, traditions, and histories. This not only promotes tolerance but also prepares students to interact respectfully with people from different backgrounds in an interconnected world.

## **8. Health Education:**

Teachers can play a significant role in promoting health literacy among students. Health education can cover a wide range of topics, including nutrition, sexual health, mental well-being, and disease prevention. Educated individuals are more likely to make informed decisions about their health, leading to better overall health outcomes in society.

Educational institutions can promote health and well-being by providing students with access to health education and services. For example: Offering health education programs and access to healthcare facilities on campus.

## **9. Gender Equality:**

Teachers can adopt gender-responsive pedagogical approaches that take into account the unique needs and experiences of girls and boys. By creating a supportive and inclusive classroom environment, teachers can ensure that both genders have an equal opportunity to thrive academically and socially.

Educational institutions can actively work towards achieving gender equality by eliminating gender disparities in education. For example: Implementing policies to increase female enrollment and promoting gender-sensitive teaching practices.

## **10. Environmental Education**

Teachers should incorporate sustainability and environmental education into the curriculum or arrange some special lectures on these topics. This means including topics like how to protect the environment and use resources wisely in the lessons. By doing this, teachers help students understand the importance of taking care of the planet and how their actions can make a positive impact. It prepares students to be responsible global citizens who care about the environment and are ready to contribute to a sustainable future. For example: Teaching about the importance of recycling and reducing waste.

Educational institutions can integrate environmental education into their curricula to raise awareness about water scarcity, pollution, and sanitation challenges. This education can inspire future generations to take action and implement sustainable water and sanitation solutions in their communities.

## **11. Fostering Student Advocacy for Sustainability and Social Justice:**

Teachers inspire students to champion sustainability, social justice, and responsible consumption. They teach recycling, fairness, and appropriate consumption, empowering students to be active citizens who strive for a better and more responsible future. For example: By organizing a debate on sustainable agriculture and food choices.

**12. Community Engagement:**

Promote community engagement and service-learning projects related to SDGs. Teachers can encourage their students to get involved in their communities and participate in projects that align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They can organize activities like volunteering at local charities, cleaning up public spaces, or raising awareness about global issues. By engaging in these projects, students not only learn about the SDGs but also develop a sense of social responsibility and empathy. They see how their actions can make a positive impact both locally and globally. This promotes active citizenship and helps students understand the value of working together to create a better and more sustainable world. For example: Collaborating with a local organization to plant trees for reforestation.

Educational institutions can engage with their local communities to address urban challenges and improve living conditions. For example: Collaborating with local authorities to develop sustainable urban planning strategies.

**13. Role Modeling:**

Teachers serve as role models by practicing sustainable behaviors and ethical values. They can show students how to reduce waste, conserve energy, and make eco-friendly choices. By doing so, teachers not only teach about the importance of these actions but also inspire students to adopt similar practices. Additionally, they model ethical values like fairness, kindness, and respect in their interactions with others. This helps students understand the significance of these values in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and guides them to become responsible and compassionate individuals who contribute positively to society and the world.

For example: Demonstrating eco-friendly habits like conserving energy and reducing waste.

**14. Monitoring Progress:**

Teacher can monitor and evaluate progress toward SDGs within the school community and encourage accountability. They motivate and keep track of how well their school and community are doing in working towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They do this by measuring and assessing the progress made on important issues like reducing waste, promoting fairness, or saving energy. By doing this, teachers help everyone see if they are moving in the right direction. They also encourage people to take responsibility for their actions and work together to make sure they are doing their part to achieve the SDGs. This monitoring and accountability help ensure that everyone is working towards a more sustainable and fair world.

For example: Tracking and reporting on the reduction of the school's carbon footprint.

Educational institutions can monitor and report on their efforts to align with the SDGs, setting benchmarks for accountability. For example: Publishing annual sustainability reports that detail progress toward SDG-related goals.

**15. Lifelong Learning:**

Teachers promote a culture of lifelong learning and continuous education on SDGs for both students and themselves. They create an environment where learning never stops. They do this by encouraging students to keep exploring and discovering new things about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) even after they leave school. Teachers themselves also continue to learn about these goals and share their knowledge. This helps everyone stay informed about important global issues like poverty, climate change, and

fairness. It shows that learning is a lifelong journey, and by staying curious and informed, both teachers and students can keep working towards a better and more sustainable world. For example: Attending workshops or webinars on sustainable development topics.

### **16. Mapping challenges and finding suitable learning materials to achieve SDGs**

Teachers play a vital role in understanding the challenges related to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and finding the right materials to help their students learn about these challenges. They research and identify what issues need attention, such as poverty or environmental problems. Then, they find educational materials like books, videos, or websites that explain these issues in a way that students can understand. This way, teachers can provide their students with the knowledge and tools they need to make a positive impact on the world and work towards the SDGs effectively. It's like being a guide on a journey to solve important global problems.

Educational institutions can serve as hubs for collaboration and networking. They can facilitate partnerships between students, faculty, and external stakeholders, creating opportunities for joint initiatives that address specific SDGs. These partnerships can mobilize resources, expertise, and innovative solutions to advance the goals.

### **17. Research and Innovation:**

Teachers play a critical role in encouraging students to engage in research and innovation to support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They inspire students to explore new ideas and create innovative solutions for global challenges. For example, teachers can guide students in developing projects that address SDG-related issues like clean water access or renewable energy.

Educational institutions are hubs of research and innovation, contributing to technological advancements and economic growth. For example: Research projects aimed at finding sustainable solutions to global challenges like climate change or poverty.

Educational institutions can form partnerships with governments, NGOs, and businesses to advance SDGs collectively. For example: Partnering with NGOs to support community development projects aligned with SDGs.

### **18. Ethical Leadership and Responsible Consumption:**

Teachers play a significant role in promoting ethical leadership and responsible consumption, which contribute to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They teach students about making ethical choices and consuming resources mindfully. For example, teachers can incorporate lessons on fair trade practices and responsible consumer behavior into their curriculum. This equips students with the knowledge and values needed to become responsible leaders and consumers, contributing to a more sustainable and equitable world in line with the SDGs.

Educational institutions play a role in shaping ethical leaders and responsible consumers who can influence sustainable practices. For example: Incorporating ethics and sustainability into business and management curricula.

### **19. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions:**

Teachers play a vital role in promoting peace, justice, and strong institutions, which are essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They teach students about the importance of

fairness, rule of law, and good governance. For example, teachers can organize discussions and activities on conflict resolution and human rights issues. This helps students understand their role in creating a just and peaceful society and contributes to the SDGs by fostering strong and accountable institutions that ensure justice and equity for all.

Educational institutions contribute to the development of strong, accountable institutions by fostering a culture of transparency and integrity. For example: Teaching students about the importance of rule of law and good governance.

## **20. Urban Planning and Sustainability**

Teachers play a significant role in educating students about urban planning and sustainability, which are crucial for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They help students understand how cities can be designed to be more sustainable and inclusive. For example, teachers can involve students in projects that focus on creating eco-friendly urban spaces, such as designing green parks or sustainable transportation solutions. This prepares students to contribute towards SDGs by promoting sustainable urban development and ensuring that cities are environmentally friendly and accessible to all.

Educational institutions can offer programs that emphasize urban planning and sustainability. Students can learn about infrastructure design, transportation solutions, affordable housing, and green building practices, all of which are essential for creating sustainable cities and communities.

## **21. Realizing the philosophy of "no one left behind"**

Teachers play a significant role in ensuring that everyone, regardless of their background or abilities, can contribute for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They do this by creating an inclusive and fair learning environment where every student has an equal chance to understand and engage with the SDGs. Teachers provide extra help and support to students who may need it, making sure that no one is left behind in the learning process. This philosophy of "no one left behind" means that everyone's ideas and efforts count, and teachers are key in making sure that everyone can be part of the journey to achieve the SDGs and create a better world for all.

Educational institutions play a pivotal role in shaping the future of societies and nations. Beyond their traditional role of imparting knowledge and skills, these institutions also have a crucial responsibility in advancing global agendas such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## **22. Collaboration and Networking**

Collaborate with other educators, institutions, and stakeholders to amplify SDG efforts. Teachers work together with other teachers, schools, and people who care about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to make their efforts even stronger. They share ideas, resources, and experiences to find better ways to achieve the goals. They might also partner with organizations or businesses that support SDGs. This collaboration helps bring more attention and support to the goals, making it easier for everyone to work together towards a more sustainable and fair world.

## **Summary**

Teachers and institutions hold a crucial role in shaping the attitudes and values of students, guiding them to become informed and responsible citizens. Teachers impart problem-solving, decision-making, and critical thinking skills, empowering students to make educated choices, while institutions provide support

to help achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This underscores the importance of teachers and institutions in nurturing values like quality education, gender equality, peace, environmental awareness, and respect for the rights of all within society. Education and institutions are pivotal in making the world a better place through SDGs. Quality education equips us to comprehend the world and tackle problems, thus contributing to SDGs such as ending poverty. Education also plays a role in reducing inequalities by ensuring equal opportunities for everyone and promoting good health by teaching healthy practices. Schools and institutions educate about clean water, sustainable cities, and responsible consumption, aligning with various SDGs. They also address climate change, foster peace and justice, and establish partnerships to achieve these global goals. In essence, Education and institutions aren't just places of learning; they're key players in achieving SDGs by providing quality education, fighting inequalities, promoting health, and embracing sustainability for a brighter and fairer future.

### REFERENCES:

1. Thakur, G. Challenges and problems in teaching higher education in India, Sanjay Prakashan, New Delhi, India.
2. Siddiqui, M.A., Sharma, A.K., Arora, G.L., Teacher education reflection towards policy formulation, NCTE, New Delhi, India.
3. MHRD. All India Survey on Higher Education, MHRD, Govt. of India, New Delhi; 2017.
4. MHRS. "National Education Policy" MHRD, Govt. of India, Accessed January 12, 2022
5. NITI Aayog. India VNR 2020 Decade of Action: Taking SDG from global to local MHRD, Govt. of India, Accessed, 2022 January 12.
6. Report on SDG4 [indiancteindia.org.in/wp](http://indiancteindia.org.in/wp)
7. Rajesh Tandon. Agenda SDGs for Higher Education Institution in India, University News a weekly journal of Higher Education, Association of Indian universities. 2022 March.
8. Rashika Sharma, Sylila Monteiro. Creating Social Change: The Ultimate Goal of Education for Sustainability, International Journal of Social Science and Humanity. 2016 January.
9. Spotlight Report on SDG4 INDIA-2019, Coordinated by NCE India,
10. <http://nceindia.org.in/wpcontent/uploads/2019/11/Spotlight-Report-on-SDG4-India-2019.pdf>
11. UNESCO Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development clearinghouse: <https://www.gcedclearinghouse.org/sites/default/files/resources/248081e.pdf>
12. UNESCO. Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives. Paris: UNESCO; c2017.
13. <https://bangkok.unesco.org/content/education-sustainabledevelopment-goals-learning-objectives>
14. UNESCO. Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4. Paris: UNESCO; c2015.
15. University Grant Commission. "Educational Framework and global Citizenship in Higher Education" Accessed January 12, 2022. <https://www.ugc.ac.in/>
16. Yadav SK. Cultural Sensibility through Teacher Education Programmes, University News a weekly journal of Higher Education, Association of Indian universities. 2018 May.
17. Yadav S.K. Sustainable Development Goals 4- Through Teacher Education Programmes, University News a weekly journal of Higher Education, Association of Indian universities. 2022 March.
18. <https://www.unesco.org/en/education/education2030-sdg4>
19. <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>



20. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/175429/CM-7980.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175429/CM-7980.pdf)
21. [http://futurescholars.rutgers.edu/FutureScholars/Images/The\\_Importance\\_of\\_Training\\_Highly\\_Skilled\\_Teachers.pdf](http://futurescholars.rutgers.edu/FutureScholars/Images/The_Importance_of_Training_Highly_Skilled_Teachers.pdf)
22. <http://nepc.colorado.edu/blog/why-teacher-education-important-and-how-make-it-better>
23. <http://www.sens-public.org/article667.html?lang=fr>
24. <https://www.slideshare.net/AMRITAROY26/teacher-education-in-india>
25. <http://unicef.in/Whatwedo/15/Teacher-Education>
26. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360080465\\_Role\\_of\\_Teachers\\_in\\_Education\\_for\\_Sustainable\\_Development/citation/download](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360080465_Role_of_Teachers_in_Education_for_Sustainable_Development/citation/download)
27. [file:///C:/Users/HP/Downloads/IJRRSS%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/HP/Downloads/IJRRSS%20(2).pdf)
28. <http://www.academicresearchjournals.org/IJARER/PDF/2015/January/Anees.pdf>
29. [https://www.iges.or.jp/en/publication\\_documents/pub/bookchapter/en/4931/05\\_Ch5\\_Achieving\\_the\\_SDGs\\_.pdf](https://www.iges.or.jp/en/publication_documents/pub/bookchapter/en/4931/05_Ch5_Achieving_the_SDGs_.pdf)