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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### THE BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NAGALAND, INDIA

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#### Abstract

Nagaland's geographical location, combined with the lack of human and physical infrastructure, has been a hurdle to the growth and development of education. The ecological make-up of the state as a resource-filled frontier, belonging to people who place great importance on their culture and tradition, has framed the backdrop against which they have experienced changes brought about not only by climate change but also by modernization. This poses an important question that this paper aims to answer, which is, what is the role of education in a society with varying notions of "sustainability" shaped by differing experiences?

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#### Introduction:-

The United Nations, an inter-governmental organization adopted the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 and has ever since called on its member nations to adopt practices that promote sustainable development for the welfare of the planet as a whole. Consequently, education for sustainable development became a growing need to instil attitudes of sustainable developmental practices among students and learners of all ages.

In the state of Nagaland, India, education for sustainable development faces a range of hurdles that hinder its implementation and growth. In addition to having restricted access to the resources of the rest of the country due to its geographical location which impacts the state's rate of growth in development, the region consists of communities that depend on traditional and customary methods for their survival and lifestyles. The contrasting effects of its traditional practices blended with its efforts at modernization and development have made the understanding of 'sustainable development' a complex matter.

It, hence, becomes contested as to what role would education play in the efforts to promote sustainable development in areas where anthropogenic factors complicate the way people understand the concept. This paper highlights the various aspects which need to be taken into consideration while understanding the position of education in the state, its present capacities and limitations, and possible growth opportunities.

#### Education For Sustainable Development:-

Education for sustainable development, as per the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, prioritizes imparting education that instils a sense of responsibility among the students to ensure that they make informed decisions in the interest of the protection of the environment, the economic security of individuals, as well as a just society.

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As such, a problem-assessment-and-solution-directed approach is advocated wherein the learners are constantly exposed to information regarding the ongoing crises surrounding the different aspects of their lives and are also taught to be adept at constructing solutions for them.

**Socio-Ecological profile of Nagaland:-**

The state of Nagaland, located in North-East India, is known as a major biodiversity hotspot. It has a blend of various communities residing in it many of whom continue to depend on its forest and agriculture-related practices for sustenance. Additionally, Nagaland's forest cover has been depleting due to the combined effects of the customary slash-and-burn or Jhum cultivation, deforestation due to timber needs, and cutting through mountains to build roads and connect villages. The various crises sought to be addressed are experienced at the forefront in this region as the effects of climate change, efforts towards development and the lack of adequate structural support threaten the livelihoods of many.

Primarily, the notion of what is 'sustainable' has varying meanings for people of different communities. For communities who engage in slash-and-burn or 'Jhum' agriculture, it may include increasing the area they have access to in order to ensure enough time for the burned area to re-grow vegetation, while for communities practising settled agriculture, it could be bringing the former to a complete stop to ensure clean water and healthy soil.

Particularly, since the environment-related practices of the Naga community are a matter of custom and tradition, it can be understood that the idea of what they deem as "sustainable" as a whole, disconnects from the idea of "sustainability" for outsiders. For instance, even the practice of collecting firewood is an observed tradition, however, only after taking into context the increasing population and the spread of urbanization, does the practice seem unsustainable to an onlooker.

While, therefore, the general notion of "development" may surround technological and infrastructural advancements, this notion may come into conflict with what the Naga community has deemed as "sustainable" through its history of tradition since the question of sustainable development not only comprises the scientific and economic aspects of the "development" but is also being influenced by the socio-cultural identity of the different communities residing in the state.

The complexity of the problems faced by the residents further perturbs one against the question of the role education has to play to achieve the goals of sustainable development due to technical and logistical hurdles, as well as socio-economic conditions.

**Present Status of Education in Nagaland:-**

Placed against this backdrop, the current status of education in the state also comes with its complications. According to the Nagaland Vision 2030, a document published by the Government of Nagaland consisting of the state's plan of action to achieve the 17 Sustainable Developmental Goals listed by the United Nations, there has been significant growth in the number of schooling infrastructure from 690 educational institutions to 2996 schools and 63 colleges, the quality of education of some schools across the state remains inadequate.

In addition to the dissatisfactory quality of infrastructure, the methods of teaching and learning remain stagnant and in need of upgrading. There continues to exist a lack of institutional techniques and tools to measure the learning outcomes of the existing school systems. Similarly, research regarding the capabilities and capacities of the teachers remains a need of the hour since there are no recorded surveys aimed at the same.

The government of the State of Nagaland aims to improve the quality of the teachers in the state by implementing the standards designed by educational authorities such as NCERT, and the District Institution of Educational Training (DIETS). However, even in this regard, there exists a lack of a mechanism to ensure that these standards are upheld across the institutions in the State.

With regard to the academic focus of the institutions in the state, the Nagaland Vision 2030 states that presently there is a profusion of Arts or Humanities colleges (46 colleges) which easily outnumber those offering Science (9 colleges) and Commerce (16 colleges). Additionally, the availability of courses and programs of study in the existing colleges remain subpar when compared to that required in the other North-Eastern States as well as the country. The distribution of these institutions is also uneven as most of the colleges are concentrated in the relatively urban and larger towns;

Kohima and Dimapur. This lack of uniformity poses another hurdle for the development and dissemination of education aimed at achieving sustainable development.

An enduring obsession with governmental jobs in the region as well as a lack of industries and other organized private sectors are other factors that indirectly affect the quality of education as individuals are not encouraged to explore different courses which could provide alternative ways to achieve the listed sustainable development goals.

Furthermore, there is an overwhelming lack of information in official records as well as in research regarding the dissemination of education directed towards the sustainable development goals in the state.

**Possible Outcomes:-**

Education in Nagaland must be reconfigured in a way that is not only on par with the rest of the country and the world but also takes into account the specific contexts created by the geographical, social, economic, and political environment of the state.

Educators need to be trained to impart knowledge to the students that go beyond the existing curriculum, and act as an enabler for students to consistently adapt to the changes brought about in their environment, as well as have solution-oriented approaches to overcome the issues these changes may bring about.

While the technical issues and socio-cultural aspects continue to complicate the educational scenario of the state, rather than focusing on any specific issue, a multi-pronged approach would be most recommended to help uplift the situation. In addition to the need for governmental support in terms of infrastructure, collaborations with non-governmental parties on various aspects such as research, training of teachers, and the like would prove to be fruitful for the development of education within the state.

Presented with these conditions, the scope for education for sustainable development is one that requires a careful approach. In particular, education for sustainable development must first address what the notion of 'sustainability' encompasses for the community. Accordingly, it must curate a curriculum, method of teaching and learning, and a space within academia that allows learners access to pertinent information regarding their environments while also tailoring it to the ecological and cultural background of the learners. This is imperative in order to create a foundational perspective for the learners to further act on by allowing them to relate what they learn to what they experience beyond the classroom.

Furthermore, given the stronghold of traditional and cultural practices in the state, education for sustainable development must also extend to various vocational training to create awareness on all fronts and as close to the ground reality of the learners as possible.

**Conclusion:-**

One of the primary barriers to achieving education for sustainable development within the state remains the present condition of education itself. Furthermore, the ethnocultural and ecological make-up of the state can lead to varying and even conflicting notions of "sustainability" of the communities in contrast to those of relatively industrial states which needs to be accounted for.

Therefore, while one cannot argue with the fact that there has been a growth of education within the state, one can agree that education as a whole, and education for sustainable development in particular, continues to face a number of barriers in its efforts to reach national and global standards.

This notwithstanding, given the novel and infant stage of the education that is oriented towards sustainable development, the conditions open up the opportunity to revise the educational courses and programs taught at present to allow scope for an educational system that promotes sustainable developmental activities and groom learners into making informed, responsible decisions.

In a region about which available literature is limited, a detailed analysis of the educational system could also lead to possible areas of research and literature publications that would strengthen the efforts to develop the education sector further.

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