Sustainable Development Goals 2030 for Education- Role of Private Educational Service Sector

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Abstract

Service sector plays a significant role in economic, environmental and social transformation of the society. This paper aims to understand the role of Service sector private enterprises in achieving Sustainable Development Goals 2030 for Education (SDG 4) in India. The introduction of National Education Policy 2020 in India has bought a revolution in the education sector. Taking this into purview the paper also aims to highlight the significance of private sector service enterprises in relevance to NEP 2020. It shall also facilitate the private sector enterprises identify and evaluate their stand in successful and effective implementation of NEP 2020 in India.

Index Terms: Service sector, Private enterprises, Education, Sustainable Development, SDG 4

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Sustainable Development Goals 4- Education

The existence of limited resources and their voracious use by the homo sapiens has been a matter of great concern for the past few centuries. Sustainable Development goals 2030 stands to address these issues touching on all the significant global challenges including sustainable economic growth, gender equality, environmental protection, better health and climate change, etc. At present there are 17 SDG's to be achieved by 2030 and among them there are some multidimensional goals which shall support the achievement of other goals. One such exuberant goal is SDG 4 i.e., Sustainable Goal for Education. This goal focuses on making quality education available to all and promotes lifelong learning ensuring inclusion of all the sectors of the society. It plays a key role in creating comprehensive, sustainable and resilient societies. Achieving this goal shall help to build the knowledge base required to deal with other complex SDG goals. Bringing education and sustainability together SDG 4 primarily focuses on enabling the education structure and the agents in the process to develop a comprehensive education system (Shava et al., 2021). The role of macro factors like educational institutions and managers needs significant consideration to implement policies which are inclusive and sustainability oriented (Boeren, 2019). Providing opportunity to learn and educate without social tags shall positively affect poverty reduction, response to climate change, spread of diseases, tackling child mortality rates among many other SDGs. The achievement of this goal along with the contribution of multiple sectors and agents of the economy might pave the way for realising other goals of SDG 2030.

The Indian education system has come a long way from state jurisdiction over education policies in 1976 to three tier management of educational structure and functioning at central, state and local levels at present. The system has drastically evolved as a result of the contributions made by various commissions appointed by the British government pre-Independence and the Indian government in the post-Independence era. India has always focused on quality and inclusivity with regards to education, prior to the adoption of SDGs. Several initiatives like Right to Education (RTE) and Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 were remarkably significant steps taken by India enabling the country to improve the enrollment rates across the country and upsurge the completion rates of girls in both primary and elementary school. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme or "Education for All Movement" has also been adopted by the country as an effort to ensure that no child in the age group of 6-14 years remains deprived of school education. From 2016 onwards India too joined the march towards Sustainable Development Goals, along with the rest of the world, with its effort to embrace and integrate action-oriented SDG framework. With respect to SDG 4, the focus of all educational schemes and policies has shifted towards achieving quality and inclusive education across the country. Some worth mentioning steps in this regard include re-orienting Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, development of School Education Quality Index (SEQI), Technical Education Quality Improvement Programme (TEQUIP), development of Diksha Platform, Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN), Pandit

Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission for Teachers Training (PMMMNMTT), Inter University Centre for Teacher Education and the most recently implemented National Education Policy 2020 (NEP,2020). However, imparting quality education and maintaining the same is still a major challenge. Given that it is difficult to define and measure the term 'quality', and the various limitations related to the process like geographical imparities, low per capita income, low standard of living, the country seeks to achieve SDG 4 with the introduction of NEP 2020. This initiative focuses on inclusive and holistic development of children and youths, stressing on skills, attitude, practical knowledge, self-reliability and much more. Even with a huge number of obstacles relating to poor infrastructures, unavailability of safe drinking water, ineffective medium of instruction and lack of awareness about significance of education in rural areas, the country thrives to make it to achieve SDG 4 by 2030

1.2 Service sector enterprises and Education

The service sector represents enterprises which produce both tangible and intangible services. Commonly called the tertiary sector, this sector includes a wide variety of areas namely hotels, restaurants, financing, communication, transport, health and education etc. Educational service industry comprises of institutions that provide academic education, career, vocational and technical instruction, and other professional education and skill training to millions of students. In some countries, firms/enterprises in the education sector are expected to provide inclusive and complementary education services, enabling the general public to access educational services. These enterprises are the agents which actually undertake the responsibility of dispersing education. Education itself refers to a service primarily linked to the consumer market and as such it is classified as a consumer service. Service sector enterprises which comprise of both public and private ones are the carriages of such services.

The Indian services sector is the engine of growth for India's economy as in the FY 21-22 it contributed 53% to India's Gross Value Added. It increased from Rs. 68.81 trillion (US$ 1,005.30 billion) in FY16. to Rs. 101.47 trillion (US$ 1,439.48 billion) in FY20. The GVA composition of India for 2020-2021 as per the Ministry of Statistics and Programme implementation includes 53.89% from service sector, 25.92% from Industry sector and 20.19% from Agriculture and allied sector. Not only the largest contributor to the Indian economy, the service sector is one of the fastest growing sectors. The service sector private enterprises/ organizations as a part of this sector have a mighty contribution to the GDP of the country as well as an impact on the local economies. They stand as the most powerful driver of growth even with the barriers of lack of capital and sustainable work.

India as a developing nation witnesses scarce financial resources due to large population, relatively low per-capita income and vast geographical spread. Irrespective of such limitations, India commits itself to achieving universal rural electrification, connectivity for all, housing, sanitation and elementary education for all. As the service sector in India holds a strong position in the economy of the country, it has become imperative to understand how the educational service sector enterprises contribute towards SDG4. The report entitled Localising SDGs (2019), states that the engagement of private sector with civil society is significant for bringing transformation across various sectors pertaining to SDGs. Businesses and Small and medium enterprises have been recognised as one of the vital local actors in implementing and monitoring SDGs (UNDP, 2015).

This study is an attempt to understand the role of Service sector (privately operated educational institutions and NGOs including allied education products & services providers) in achieving Sustainable Development Goals 2030 for Education in India. Here private operated educational institutions include private schools/HEIs/Universities. It also focuses on assessing the required participation and opportunistic involvement of this sector in relevance to NEP 2020. Revealing the role of such enterprises shall enable all stakeholders to support and complement them in providing quality education across all states in India. The study shall help to delve into proposed participation and changing role of service sector private enterprises in implementing the NEP 2020 in India. Researchers may further investigate the real-life scenarios with the help of case study and get insight into how such enterprises are adapting to this change.

2. OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE

Since the origination of the concept of sustainable development, researchers have been attracted to the area. Available literatures are more focused on the evolution of sustainable development goals, the development of integrated framework for achieving such goals and the challenges involved in achieving the goals. The phenomena have also been studied with respect to specific goals like climate goals, energy goals, goals relating to zero hunger and even educational goals. To indulge into the exploration of areas related to SDG 4, the author has overviewed the available literatures in this area. Through database such as Jstor and Google Scholar, literatures focused on SDG 4 as well as on role of service sector in achieving educational goals were selected and reviewed with an expectation to find the gap in research studies conducted in this area. The existing body of knowledge on SDG 4 shows how the concept has been explored in terms of their achievement and the challenges faced by all the stakeholders along the way.

(Sayed, 2020) stressed on studying the relevance of learning over access to education. The SDG 4 involves a pseudo- technical approach where a limited range of metrics are used for measuring equality and lifelong learning. As such quality-based understandings are marginalized and delegitimized. Though Educational quality is interpreted as instrumental, and yet there is no comprehension of the teaching and learning process.

The case studies of Pakistan and Senegal, (Diemer, A., Khushik, F., & Ndiaye, A., 2020) forwarded that SDG 4 is positioned as a major reason for change, a shift that is more qualitative than quantitative since it presupposes that sustainable development (and its teaching) leads to actual changes in individual behavior.

Exploring the link between inclusive growth and human capital in Nigeria, (Oluwadamilola, O., Akinyemi, O., & Adediran, O., 2018) found that human capital is statistically significant and has a long-term relationship with the measure of inclusive economic

growth. The tools provided by SDG-4 can help the government achieve more inclusive economic growth through quality education, skills acquisition and human capital development.

(Ferguson, Therese & Roofe, Carmel. 2020) attempted to demonstrate how higher education may advance SDG 4 in a practical and substantial way. Opportunities and constraints relating to SDG 4 and higher education institutions (HEIs) are identified and explained using literature and case study experiences implementing education for sustainable development-related activities within an SOE.

(Nakidien, T., Singh, M., & Sayed, Y., 2021) Based on two related empirical studies, one focused on social cohesion and citizenship and the other on the implementation of learning assessment at two different educational levels in a developing country, it was found that schools are not prepared to provide quality education as well as teachers need additional training to be able to articulate SDG 4 ideals.

Aiming to understand the complexity of achieving ESD in the SADC region,(Shava et al., 2021) found that Institutions which have greater financial aid reflect a rosier picture towards the achievement of SDG4.

(Yeh et al., 2022) found that among all the SDGs the ones studied alone were SDG 3, SDG 6 and SDG 7. Moreover, most literatures involve analysis without assigned countries and continents.

(Abbott & Bernstein, 2015) A report on Forum on sustainable development states only one third of the countries spend 15% to 20% of total government expenditure on education. This results in resource constraints. Involvement of Institutional leaders and other representative organisations along with other stakeholders is a must for progressing towards SDG4.

Available literatures reflect how significant is the achievement of SDG 4 in terms of overall growth of a country. The positioning of quality over quantity as presupposed by SDG 4 is quite challenging to be achieved due to the presence of infrastructural, financial, administrative and executional constraints. As per the literatures reviewed, SDG 4 remains to be quite unexplored section among all the SDGs. Moreover, the role of Private Educational Service sector in achieving SDG 4 in India has not attracted the attention of researchers yet.

The education sector in India is operated by both government and private educational institutions and service providers. The private players may have a role to play in dealing with the existing inadequacies of the Indian education sector hindering the achievement of SDG 4. As such this paper aims to understand the role of Private Educational Service sector in achieving Sustainable Development Goals 2030 for Education in India. Here Private Educational Service sector includes private schools/HEIs/Universities and other product and service providers. Since the introduction of NEP 2020 is one of the major initiatives taken by the country to achieve SDGs by 2030, the paper shall also focus on assessing the required participation and opportunistic involvement of private sector in relevance to NEP 2020. Understanding the latter's contribution in moving towards the achievement of SDG 4 may provide insight into the contribution of private sector in the creation of human capital in a knowledge-based economy like India.

3. METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on descriptive approach. The researcher employed document survey and analysis method to fill the gap identified in reviewed literature. The study aims to answer two research questions:

RQ1 - What is the role of private players in the achievement of SDG 4 with special reference to India.

RQ2 - How dynamic this role shall be with the introduction of New Education Policy 2020 in India.

Both primary and secondary sources of information have been used in the paper. Primary sources include the official website of Sustainable Development Goals 2030, National Education Policy 2020 and the official website of certain companies working in the education sector in India. Secondary sources include journals, reports and articles.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A firm's core business activity can be its way towards contributing to SDGs. The private players have the potential to make profound contribution to the development of the education sector. These entities contribute towards education by directly entering the field as a business or by forming partnership to support the sector by offering financial, intellectual or other kind of support. In India, the private education sector and ed-tech industry has experienced a raise in funding since 2014-15. This is also followed by support from the government in the form of programmes like Startup India, Atal Innovation Mission and Atma Nirbhar Bharat. To answer *RQ1 - What is the role of private players in the achievement of SDG 4 with special reference to India?* in the first two sections the researcher has tried to analyse and highlight the participation and contribution of private enterprises including Ed tech enterprises in the education sector in India.

4.1 Change makers Contribution

The Indian education sector evidenced significant participation of both organized and unorganized private parties (Bhalerao and Mishra 2018). Private players and entrepreneurs' investment in this market have supported the government efforts to modernize the market. These include businesses and individuals offering educational services through schools, coaching centers, professional course providers, tuition centers, private universities and college, language training, corporate training, content providers, etc. India has a high degree of privatization right from the primary level. These service sector firms are always up for providing quality services and in constant effort to adopt technological upgradation. With 3,73,621 number of private educational institutions in FY 2021, the sector is expected to expand at a CAGR of 3.69 % during the FY 2022 – FY 2027.

Contribution of some top service sector private enterprises
- Advaita Gurukul: The school has developed a strength of 1700+ students in 7 years and continuously drives to equip students with a comprehensive pedagogic program to meet the demands of the growing changes of the education system of the country.
- Erocon: India's only turnkey school consultants serving over 791 school projects in India and abroad enabling them to become sustainable.
- Barefoot College: A voluntary organization working in various fields for uplifting rural people. The college runs night schools allowing students to balance their work to support family and get training at the same time.
- The Kalinga Institute for Social Sciences: KISS school, college and university facilitate more than 30,000 indigenous tribal students to access free education.
- City Montessori School: Recorded as the world's largest school in the year 2019 with 55,547 students, the school hosts a number of international events annually facilitating students to exchange their creativity and knowledge.
- Kangaroo Kids: Started when the pre-school concept was new in India, this network works to make children addictive to learning promoting creativity and imagination in their early childhood education.

Source: *Researchers survey*

4.2 Ed- Tech Industry in India

With the advent of COVID 19, the Ed-tech industry has been rigorously expanding in India. Even though technological solutions were used in this sector in the past, the shift from offline to online mode revolutionized the education sector. The Indian Ed-tech industry have attracted fundings since the year 2013 with a total of 256 million dollars, it became the most funded startup segment in the year 2021 with an investment of 4.743 billion dollars. Some of the famous ed-tech companies in India are:
- Next Education: SaaS based educational solutions to K-12 stakeholders covering more than 12,000,000 students and 18,000 schools.
- BYJU: A multinational ed-tech company with over 150 million registered students.
- CultureAlley: Provides language learning platform to facilitate people learn new languages. It has over 400 thousand users around 220 countries.
- Simpililearn: A platform simplifying learning for working professionals, individuals and businesses offers more than 400 courses and has trained more than 5,000,000 professionals around the world.
- Edukart: Higher education enrolment platform facilitating distant and online courses in various fields.
- Vedantu: Online tutoring platform for students from grade 4 to 12 with more than 2.2 million enrolled students from more than 30 countries.

Source: *Researchers survey*

In India, right from the primary level of education, the private sector has successfully introduced innovative and effective ways of teaching learning. This has led to the growth of such enterprise facilitating the coverage of a major share of the student community around the country. The opportunistic approach of these enterprises has enabled its beneficial contribution towards educating and enriching indigenous groups, backward communities and rural India. Some private voluntary organizations have successfully adopted business models for increasing their operations throughout the country and contribute towards upliftment of the society. As such, the private sector has been an integral part of the education system and with time they have emerged as the major contributors towards providing quality education and learning experience to students. They are in a constant quest to improve their services for their urge to become best service providers which in turn leads to adoption of innovative and advanced teaching learning techniques.

Technology and digital education are integral to achieve SDG 4 and the companies operating in the ed tech industries are playing the role of the medium through which this is becoming a reality. These industries are paving the path for providing affordable and quality education to all irrespective of various forms of barriers and promoting equal opportunity for various classes of people in India and abroad. The growth of Ed- tech industry in India has facilitated the access of high-quality education at anytime from anywhere. Some rural parts of the country remain deprived of formal education as well as skill enhancing education due to infrastructural, communication and transportation barriers. Ed- Tech companies has made it possible for the learners to go for requisite knowledge they seek to acquire. The contribution of such companies was witnessed by various section of the society during the COVID 19 pandemic, when schools, HEIs, Universities and other educational institutions experienced disruption and these companies were the only means of keeping the education system steady.

4.3 NEP 2020 and role of Service sector private enterprises

This section focuses on *RQ2 - How dynamic this role shall be with the introduction of New Education Policy 2020 in India*?

The introduction of NEP 2020 is aligned to achieving Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and the role of private sector service enterprises is highly emphasized in the policy. The emerging trends in Higher Education calls for participation of private enterprises not only as academic service providers but also as skill enhancers and enablers of seizing exposure and opportunities. About 45% of the children are enrolled in private schools and 45.2% in colleges. Under NEP 2020, the private sector shall be able to operate in same terms as the public sector enterprises. The policy has liberated private players from earlier specified norms providing them the scope to voluntarily engage in philanthropic activist. The private service sector is expected to provide scope of accessing quality higher education.

These entities are required to provide 30% scholarship and 20% free-ship in each course to the meritious students under NEP 2020. Higher Educational Institutions in the sector has to recognize their responsibilities regarding educational philanthropy (Banerjee et al., 2021).In relevance to this revolutionary policy, the Service sector-private enterprises would resort the following:

Public Private Partnership: The role of private schools is shifting from providers of quality education, to target groups, to providers of learning experience to a greater fraction of the society with the inclusion of the concept of twinning or pairing in NEP2020. Here, one public school shall be paired with a private school which will enable sharing of knowledge, resources and experiences among the stakeholders. This shall also enable adoption of best practices of Private schools in public schools.

Research and innovation: Inclusion of private sector in creating multidisciplinary research and innovation-oriented ecosystem is clearly reflected in the policy. With their highly effective education delivery model, private sector shall enable quality research and innovation by giving way for pooling of funds and resources to this area.

Financial support and assistance: With the requirement of providing free ships and scholarships to meritious and underprivileged sections of the society, the private higher educational institutions shall play a huge role in making education accessible by all. Service sector players like financial service and financial technology providers shall act as significant agents by collaborating with National scholarship portals and educational institutions to support and foster the disbursement of scholarships.

Indian/local languages: NEP 2020 stresses over the adoption of local languages as a medium of instruction. The involvement of the private HEIs in this regard shall strengthen and preserve local Indian languages along with increasing the GER. This might also promote the need for enterprises providing certificate courses in certain local languages. Content developers and providers shall also play a huge role in developing textbooks, learning materials, assessment materials, question banks and teacher capacity building materials in local languages.

ICT transformation: Extensive use of technology in teaching learning is highly emphasized in the policy. NEP recommends adoption of blended mode of teaching learning. Private educational institutions at all levels are equipped with resources to support this transformation. The rise in number of ed-tech companies and the ease of accessing knowledge that such companies provide has contributed a lot to promote equitable learning in the society. Private sector participation in technology provision, capability development and infrastructure set-ups are a significant for both academic and administrative aspects in this sector.

Skill Development and Vocational Education: NEP 2020 aims to achieve SDG 4 by emphasizing on employable and vocational skill. Vocational and skill development training providers and institutes including Ed-techs shall have the opportunity to collaborate with HEIs and develop tailored programs to transform the higher education ecosystem to align with market needs. Moreover, the call for interaction and linkage between industry and academia further signifies the role of the private sector in creating a skilled workforce.

5. CONCLUSION

The accomplishment of Sustainable Goal 2030 for Education is highly dependent on the Private service sector enterprises, their core activity being facilitating the access to quality education and skill enhancement to attain sustainable lifestyle. In India, these enterprises have been successfully covering a large part of the population, extending themselves as providers of a wide range of educational services. From primary level of education to the highest levels these enterprises have established themselves not only in India but in other part of the world too. The Indian population being diverse in nature, such enterprises facilitate equitable and quality education for all to a substantial extent. They play the role of catalyst bringing all the stakeholders of the educational society together. In this regard, the contribution of the Indian Ed-tech companies is noteworthy. The emergence of Ed Techs enterprises has bought pragmatic change in the education industry. It has led to substantial increase in the ways education was given and taken. Irrespective of time and place, education and knowledge has become easily accessible for all. In the Indian context, with prevailing economic and regional disparities, Ed Techs has facilitated a large part of the population to proclaim their educational rights thereby taking India a step forward in the quest to achieve SDG 4.

The Indian government's endeavor to accomplish SDG 4 with the introduction of National Education Policy 2020 shall require a lot of support from the private sector players. Their role may transform requiring them to work in diverse areas and ways. With their opportunistic approach and the ease of regulations under NEP 2020, these enterprises shall be able to extend their services in more innovative forms to contribute towards achievement of Sustainable Goal 2030 for Education. Future researchers may indulge into further exploration into the areas that this study have revealed. Investigations aiming at factors that influence the role of such enterprises in facilitating education and accomplishing SDG4 within 2030 are also significant. Along with this, the shift from conventional role of these enterprises, as providers of education, to becoming facilitators, transformers and the ultimate pillars of educational ecosystem in India can be further explored after the full implementation of the policy at all levels of education.

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