Greening the Education Sector

Source: UNESCO

Why in News?

Recently, UNESCO launched two new tools, the **Greening Curriculum Guidance (GCG) and the Green School Quality Standards (GSQS)** under the **Greening Education Partnership.**

What are UNESCO's New Tools for Greening Education?

- **Greening Curriculum Guidance (GCG):**
  - **Purpose:** Establishes a common understanding of climate education.
  - **Scope**: Outlines how countries can integrate environmental topics into curricula.
  - **Learning Outcomes**: Provides detailed learning outcomes for age groups from 5 years old to 18+.
  - **Teaching Methods:** Emphasizes active learning and hands-on activities.
- **Green School Quality Standard (GSQS):**
  - **Objective**: Sets minimum requirements for **creating "green schools" with an action-oriented approach.**
  - **Governance:** Recommends establishing **green governance committees** including students, teachers, and parents to oversee sustainable management.
  - **Teacher Training:** Calls for **comprehensive training for teachers** on environmental issues.
  - **Resource Audits:** Advocates for **conducting audits of energy, water, food,** and waste within schools.
  - **Community Engagement:** Encourages stronger ties with the wider community to help students address environmental issues at the local level.

What is the Greening Education Partnership?

- **About**: The Greening Education Partnership is a global initiative comprising 80 member states to take a whole-of-system approach to support countries to tackle the climate crisis **by harnessing the critical role of education.**
  - It aims to transform at least **50% of schools, colleges, and universities into Green Schools by 2030,** preparing learners to become climate-ready and active participants in

sustainability initiatives
- It also aims to achieve green national curriculum in 90% countries by 2030.
- **Pillars:** It is structured around **four key pillars** of transformative education aligning with [Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)](#) Target 4.7
    - **Greening schools**
    - **Greening curriculum**
    - **Greening teacher training and education systems' capacities**
    - **Greening communities**
- **Need:**
    - **70% of the youth surveyed** in a recent UNESCO study stated they had **limited understanding about climate change** based on what they had learned in school.
    - UNESCO's research on how climate change is integrated in the national curriculum frameworks of **100 countries revealed several challenges** that need to be addressed.
        - Almost **47% of the curricula examined did not feature climate change.**
- **Green School**: According to UNESCO, a Green School is a learning institution committed to **Education for** [Sustainable Development](#) **(ESD)**, with a specific focus on addressing climate change.
    - **Principles of a Green School:**
        - **Holistic Education:** Prioritizing holistic development by nurturing critical thinking, creativity, self-awareness, empathy, and ethical values in learners.
            - It incorporates **personalized and experiential learning, interdisciplinary approaches**, and community engagement to **address climate change challenges** effectively.
        - **Sustainability Practices:** Green Schools implement sustainable practices in areas such as **energy, water use, waste management, canteen and building and school yard design** thus **reducing greenhouse gas emissions** and environmental impact, ensuring the health and well-being of learners and staff.
        - **Sense of Responsibility:** Integrating **Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) into the curriculum** to develop critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and global citizenship among learners.
    - **Alignment with Comprehensive School Safety Framework (CSSF):** The Green school quality standard aligns with CSSF to integrate safety, resilience, and sustainability principles within educational settings.
        - The **Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector (GADRRRES)** launched the **Comprehensive Safe School Framework (CSSF)** 2022-2030 on 12th September 2022.

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A climate-ready green learning environment should…

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE	TEACHING AND LEARNING
…entrust the Green Committee to develop a Green School vision and policy and cover 1/3 of suggested activities on ▶ Cultivating sustainable practices ▶ Ensuring daily sustainable practices ▶ Resilience and climate proof governance ▶ Establishing a green community	…develop lesson plans on ESD and climate change education and cover 1/3 of suggested activities on ▶ Integrating ESD with an emphasis on climate change in teaching and learning ▶ Fostering meaningful connections beyond the school ▶ Hands-on projects and initiatives ▶ Leadership and capacity building
FACILITIES AND OPERATION	**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**
…set up a monitoring team and cover 1/3 of suggested activities on ▶ Climate education, awareness and training ▶ Developing a climate-friendly infrastructure ▶ Ensuring climate resilience and disaster preparedness ▶ Promoting school safety and educational continuity management ▶ Promoting green procurement and ethical purchasing	…organize awareness campaigns for the school and the surrounding community and cover 1/3 of suggested activities on ▶ Building climate resilience in the community ▶ School's contribution to community resilience to climate change ▶ Local community support for education responses to climate change ▶ General community-based climate awareness

Note

The National Education Policy 2020 underscores the importance of making environmental education an integral part of school curricula at all stages.

What are the Major Challenges in Greening the Education Sector in India?

- **Lack of Comprehensive Sustainability Policie**s: While there have been some initiatives to promote sustainability in education, **India lacks a comprehensive national policy framework** that mandates and guides the integration of environmental sustainability principles across all levels of education.
- **Infrastructure Deficiencies:** Many educational institutions in India, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, **lack basic infrastructure facilities,** making it challenging to implement sustainable practices.
- **Limited Integration of Sustainability in Curricula:** While environmental studies are part of the curriculum in many Indian schools and colleges, the **integration of broader sustainability concepts and practices** into mainstream disciplines remains limited.
- **Inadequate Teacher Training and Professional Development:** Effective integration of sustainability education requires teachers to be well-versed in the **principles, pedagogies, and practical applications** of environmental sustainability.
    - However, many teacher education programs lack comprehensive training modules or resources to equip educators with the necessary knowledge and skills.
- **Limited Availability of** Green Building Materials **and Technologies:** India's construction industry is still in the **process of transitioning towards sustainable building materials and**

technologies.
- The limited availability and higher costs of green building materials, renewable energy systems, and water-efficient fixtures can **impede the adoption of sustainable practices in educational institutions,** particularly in remote and rural areas.

Way Forward

- **Eco-Influencer Campaigns**: Leveraging the power of **social media influencers and student leaders** to promote sustainability awareness and inspire eco-friendly behaviours through engaging content, and campaigns that resonate with the student community.
- **Green Pedagogy Workshops** Organizing workshops and training programs for educators to learn about effective pedagogical approaches for **integrating sustainability concepts into their teaching methods.**
  - Explore innovative techniques such as **project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and experiential learning** to make sustainability education more engaging and impactful.
- **Sustainability-Linked Procurement Policy**: Schools can be encouraged to deploy energy-efficient appliances and for promoting eco-friendly purchases among students, like **notebooks made from recycled paper.**
  - This reduces environmental impact, teaches students about **responsible choices, and might even lead to cost savings in the long run.**
  - However, challenges like **supplier availability in rural areas** need to be addressed for successful implementation.
- **Environmental Entrepreneurship Competitions**: Conduct environmental entrepreneurship competitions where students develop **innovative solutions to local environmental challenges.**
  - This fosters creativity, problem-solving skills, and a spirit of green innovation.

Drishti Mains Question:

Examine the significance of greening the education sector in promoting sustainability. What measures can be adopted to effectively implement this in India?

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Mains

Q1. How have digital initiatives in India contributed to the functioning of the education system in the country? Elaborate on your answer. **(2020)**

Q2. Discuss the main objectives of Population Education and point out the measures to achieve them in India in detail. **(2021)**

PDF Refernece URL: https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/greening-the-education-sector