



## Greening the Education Sector

**For Prelims:** [UNESCO](#), [National Education Policy 2020](#), Greening Education Partnership, Education for Sustainable Development, Comprehensive Safe School Framework (CSSF) 2022-2030, Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector, Green Building Materials.

**For Mains:** Greening Education Partnership, Major Challenges in Greening the Education Sector in India.

[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 12<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

## A climate-ready green learning environment should...

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE	TEACHING AND LEARNING
<p>...entrust the Green Committee to develop a Green School vision and policy and cover 1/3 of suggested activities on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Cultivating sustainable practices</li> <li>▶ Ensuring daily sustainable practices</li> <li>▶ Resilience and climate proof governance</li> <li>▶ Establishing a green community</li> </ul>	<p>...develop lesson plans on ESD and climate change education and cover 1/3 of suggested activities on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Integrating ESD with an emphasis on climate change in teaching and learning</li> <li>▶ Fostering meaningful connections beyond the school</li> <li>▶ Hands-on projects and initiatives</li> <li>▶ Leadership and capacity building</li> </ul>
FACILITIES AND OPERATION	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
<p>...set up a monitoring team and cover 1/3 of suggested activities on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Climate education, awareness and training</li> <li>▶ Developing a climate-friendly infrastructure</li> <li>▶ Ensuring climate resilience and disaster preparedness</li> <li>▶ Promoting school safety and educational continuity management</li> <li>▶ Promoting green procurement and ethical purchasing</li> </ul>	<p>...organize awareness campaigns for the school and the surrounding community and cover 1/3 of suggested activities on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Building climate resilience in the community</li> <li>▶ School's contribution to community resilience to climate change</li> <li>▶ Local community support for education responses to climate change</li> <li>▶ General community-based climate awareness</li> </ul>

### 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 Policies:** 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)**