Higher Education and SDGs

Why in news?

Educational institutions have to rethink their approach so that it is in tune with the National Education Policy which will be crucial in realising the 2030 deadline for SDGs.

United Nations SDGs
• The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of *17 goals with 169 targets* • **Member countries**- All 193 UN member states • **Target year**- 2030 • **Purpose** - To provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future • **Agenda 21**- It is a comprehensive plan of action that was adopted at the *Earth summit in Rio de Janeiro* to build a global partnership for sustainable development. • **Millennium Declaration**- It was adopted at the Millennium Summit in 2000 at New York leading to the elaboration of 8 *Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)* to reduce extreme poverty by 2015. • **Johannesburg Declaration**- It reaffirmed the global community's commitments to poverty eradication and the environment. • **Rio+20-** It adopted the outcome document "*The Future We Want*" at the UN Sustainable Development and launched a process to develop a set of SDGs to build upon the MDGs. • **2030 agenda for SDGs**- It was adopted in *2015 with 17 SDGs* at its core. To know about SDG summit 2023 click here

Why focus on higher education is vital?

SDG 4 pertains to access to quality education

- Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) can integrate SDGs into their curriculum, campus operation, idea incubation and creation of start-ups to one or a combination of more goals under the SDGs.
- NEP 2020 has been prepared in tune with most of the SDGS.
- **Employability-** As per OECD data, people with a higher education degree are more employable and earn an average of 54% more than those who only have completed senior secondary education.
- **University inclusive education-** It will help improve SDGs

- **Promotes research**- HEIs are at the forefront by integrating them into teaching-

learning-research processes. Students will become direct benefactors of the knowledge generated from research.

- **Innovative solutions-** Multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary systems of education produce multitalented people who can pursue research, and find innovative solutions to global challenges such as
    - Affordable and clean energy (SDG7),
    - Sustainable cities and communities (SDG11),
    - Climate change and global warming (SDG13).
- **Community engagement**- HEIs have an institutional responsibility to engage with communities for information, communication, education, and transformation purposes.
- **SDG as reality**- Sustainable development is possible only if we radically change the way we produce and consume.
- **Sustainability based recognition**- Certifications like Green Campus Program (GCP) launched by Climate Reality India and rankings launched by UI Green Metrics from the University of Indonesia and Impact Rankings from the Times Higher Education (UK) have revolutionized the sustainability-based recognition landscape for HEIs.
- **Green campus**- It becomes a laboratory for students to learn, innovate and be inspired to become change-makers.
- **Value based education**- It will help citizens become responsible towards self, society and the planet and help our nation achieve "*Life on Land" (SDG15).*
- **Eco-friendly**- Universities have started adopting bicycles and Electric Vehicles (EVs) into campus lifestyle.
- **Digital technology-** This has made virtual education a reality which led to reducing carbon footprint thereby contributing to sustainability by going paperless.

What lies ahead?

- **Align with SDGs**- NEP 2020 demands that Indian higher education be committed to mapping its day-to-day operations with SDGs.
- **Sustainability Ranking**- Ranking universities according to the achievement of SDGs is a welcome move.
- **Cooperation-** To accelerate the progress towards achieving 2030 agenda, stakeholders of higher education should be educated and oriented so that none of the activities leave any SDG behind.
- **University culture**- Community health, energy-saving measures, efficient resource allocation, waste reduction, development of local skills, sharing of services and facilities with other universities should become a culture in universities.
- **Sustainability-** Sustainability can be embedded into life skills education, value-based education and campus happiness index.
- **Institutionalisation-** Embedding HEIs into SDGs will help them gain respect among peers, students, parents, academic and industry partners and policymakers.
- **Integration**- It has been realised that higher education cannot work in isolation rather it must be directly integrated with socio-economic development where each activity and transaction has meaningful and multiple impacts on SDGs.

References

1. The Hindu- Align higher education with SDGs
2. India Today- How colleges and universities can help achieve SDGs
3. United Nations- About SDGs

