

EMERGING DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY IN INSTITUTES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

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The institutions of higher education provide role models for excellence in education. But also have the added responsibility of providing guidance to the community for social upliftment and preservation of ecosystem. It becomes imperative, therefore to assess the extent to which sustainable practices have been adopted in these institutions and their adequacy. It is anticipated that a holistic assessment will pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in sustainability practices so that effective measures can be taken to initiate the creation of a more sustainable environment. To achieve the foregoing objective three basic parameters which have been identified were the Energy, Water and the Waste.

Data was collected from the residence of different institutions (online and offline) with regard to their perception about the importance of each parameter and the adequacy of the measure adopted by their institutions to deal with sustainability aspects of each. Further, data was collected from administrators and service providers with regard to the quantities associated with each parameter and the measures adopted to make the environment sustainable. The data so collected, especially with regard to quantification of parameters was lacking consistency. Since each institute had maintained records based on past practices and only a few had adopted a data centric approach in keeping with emerging trends. ANN was used extensively to create a more cohesive database on which subsequent conclusions could be drawn.

An Analysis of the basic sustainability parameters with regard to the various institutional surveys indicates the changing trend over the years. The trend reflects institutional growth, improvement in the economy and growing awareness of sustaining the ecological environment. However the extent to which each parameter is addressed varies from institution to institution, as well as the geographical location and climatic variations due to the diverse nature of these two factors in the Indian context.

Increasing awareness issues pertaining to sustainability in institutions of higher education is reflected by relevant practices adopted, however it is expected that initial movement generated in this direction will lead to further adoption of sustainable practices consisting with the cultural geographical and socio economic scenario prevailing.