

## **India's ties with UNESCO: A fruitful cooperation in education: A study**

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### **Abstract**

UNESCO works mainly in the fields of education, natural sciences, social and human sciences, culture, and in field of communication. The Organization's Constitution outlines UNESCO's fundamental mission of promoting access to, and the transfer and sharing of knowledge. India and UNESCO are natural partners from the origin of Organization and both try to build peaceful and sustainable world through education, science, culture, heritage and in information technology. UNESCO's renewed emphasis on using education as an agent for transformation becomes especially vital in this regard. The Government of India's focus on the youth and skill development resonates closely with the vision of UNESCO for the country, and the larger education agenda of the future.

**Keywords:** India, UNESCO, education, budget, activities

### **Introduction**

Near about 1.27 billion people, diverse regions, and a vibrant democracy, India has been making progress on a scale, size and pace that is unprecedented in its own history. In the 70 years since its independence, the country has been successful on a number of fronts. It has maintained electoral democracy, reduced absolute poverty by more than half, done away with famines, and greatly improved health conditions and literacy rates. India has become one of the world's fastest growing economies, with average growth rates of 8% over the past three years. It is now a global player in information technology, business process outsourcing, telecommunications, and pharmaceuticals, and is the world's fourth largest economy in purchasing power parity terms.

India's population is enormously diverse, differentiated by language, religion, caste and class. A significant political divide exists between Hindus (81% of the population) and other religious groups, including Muslims (13%), Sikhs (2%) and Christians (2%). Another important distinction exists between the primarily Hindi-speaking north and the south, where a number of vernacular languages are in use, together with English.

India has been an associate with UNESCO since its inception in 1946 and is the only United Nations body in which India has retained a permanent place on its governing body. Over the years India has received considerable technical and material support from UNESCO; at the same time it has rendered the services of experts to other developing nations. India has played a leadership role in supporting the execution of the priorities of UNESCO in its different agendas relating to education, science and culture. As a pluralistic, democratic, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural State, the world's largest democracy, we have been and will continue to be a bridge between differing ideologies, cultures and civilizations as we have demonstrated in different periods of UNESCO's

tumultuous history.

Indian leadership position is broadly acknowledged and has never been challenged. We have been constantly re-elected to the UNESCO Executive Board since 1946, including for the 2014-17 period. We are a large contributor to its budget, despite our developing country status. Government of India's annual financial contribution amounts to 0.5% of UNESCO's total budget, and in 2014 stands at INR 14 crores annually, which is approximately US Dollars 2.25 million. The National Commission for India's Cooperation with UNESCO is headed by Human Resource Minister (HRM), Smt. Smriti Irani. India's Permanent Delegation to UNESCO is headed by a senior Foreign Service Officer, Ambassador/Permanent Representative Ruchira Kamboj.

India is presently a member of 19 of its UNESCO's Conventions, including those on natural and cultural heritage, education, and intellectual property rights. Among the more recent ratifications include the Convention of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003, the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in 2005 and the Convention against Doping in Sports in 2005.

UNESCO has two Offices in India, the New Delhi cluster office for eleven countries in South and Central Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) and most recently the MGIEP – the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development, a Category I UNESCO Institute established and fully supported and funded by the Government of India. This is of particular significance since it is the first Category 1 Institute in the Asia-Pacific region and was approved by the Executive Board and General Conference within an unprecedented time frame of six months.

The Office under its Director Shigeru Aoyagi from Japan is committed to working with other partners in Government and

outside to help achieve Government of India's inclusive, sustainable and impartial development priorities by introducing innovative ways of tackling problems, proposing evidence-based policy options and promoting adherence to international norms and standards. This is based upon the United Nations Development Action Framework (UNDAF) 2013-17 which guides the collective work of the United Nations in India. Under UNDAF, collective engagement by the UN in India is intended to focus on nine priority states: Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Building tools for education for peace and sustainable development: Establishment of MGEIP (Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development)

The Asian Group in UNESCO under India's leadership had long emphasised that the Asian region, despite its diversity and assurance to promote education lacked an UNESCO Category I Institute in education. India put forward in early 2010, to the Executive Board and General Conference a well structured proposal to locate in New Delhi, India, an UNESCO Category I Institute dedicated to education for peace and sustainable development and named after the Father of the Indian Nation, Mahatma Gandhi. The proposal was generally supported and adopted by acclamation by the General Conference in October, 2009. It was formally established in 2012 in a solemn ceremony presided by Rashtrapati HE Pranab Mukherjee in the presence of DG, UNESCO. It is extremely generously funded by the Government of India which has committed 40 million USD towards the Institute's infrastructure and programme activities for the first 5 years. India is therefore the Institute's most crucial partner and stakeholder in the Asia-Pacific region.

UNESCO and India are natural partners in the quest to build a more peaceful and sustainable world through education, science, culture, heritage and information technology. UNESCO's rehabilitated emphasis on using education as an agent for transformation becomes especially vital in this regard. The Government of India's focus on the youth and skill development resonates closely with the vision of UNESCO for the country, and the larger education agenda of the future.

### **Important Activities of India for Cooperation with UNESCO**

The UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme consists of the establishment of UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks in higher education institutions. Because of the nature and flexibility of the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme, universities can respond more readily and with greater autonomy to the demands for new learning and research in a world undergoing rapid economic, social and technological change.

### **Associated School Project (ASP net) Education for International Understanding**

58 schools and Teacher Training Institutions from India have been enlisted with UNESCO under its ASP-Net Programme. In addition, 253 Clubs are registered with INCCU as UNESCO Clubs. 5 New Indian schools have recently been included in the Associated Schools Project (ASP net) in

August 2013. India as the Chair of E-9 Countries for the Biennium- India assumed the chair of the E-9 for the biennium 2012-14. India hosted the Ninth

E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting in New Delhi on 9 & 10 November 2012 on "Inclusive, relevant quality Education for All" identified as the thematic focus for cooperation for the two coming years. The overall theme of the Ninth E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting comprised of three interrelated components. These are promoting inclusive approaches in education, enhancing the relevance of the content and processes of education, and improving educational quality to facilitate the achievement by all learners of the expected/specified learning outcomes. A Technical meeting of the E-9 for Education for All was also organized at New Delhi on 27-28 June, 2013 to develop an outline for an action plan that will contribute to the broader thematic of Inclusive Relevant Quality Education in the E-9 countries. Pakistan would take over as the E-9 Chair from India in November, 2014.

India Heads the International Task Force on Teachers for EFA India has been assigned the role of Head of the international task force on Teachers for Education for All for the two years (Till 2014).

### **International Conference on Achieving Literacy for All**

A three-day International Conference on Achieving Literacy for All, which focused on effective and innovative approaches to scaling up literacy, reducing gender disparities and creating a literate world, was organized by the National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA), India along with UNESCO and UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), at India Habitat Centre in New Delhi from 18-20 July 2013. Around 100 delegates from India and other countries, namely; Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, Nepal, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka and Timor Leste participated in the conference.

### **Global meeting on Education for All (EFA), 2014**

The last Global meeting on Education for All (EFA) before the 2015 World Education Forum was held in Muscat, Oman from 12-14 May, 2014. The Indian delegation led by Ms. Vrinda Sarup, Additional Secretary and PRI participated in the meeting. The focus area during the meeting were basic education with focus on the most marginalized, equity, inclusion, gender equality, quality education, TVET and quality life-long learning, global citizenship education, education for sustainable development, ICTs as enabler for education and education in conflict situations and schools under attack. India's position on the need to balance of GDP spending from National Budget on the part of the developing countries with a similar commitment to ODA by the donors, elicited groundswell support from the delegates. The progress made by India in meeting the education challenge by providing enhance access to schools was acknowledged and well appreciated by DG (UNESCO) during the meeting.

### **Education Policy of UNESCO in India**

UNESCO's actions cover a very wide spectrum in the broad fields of Education, Science, Cultural and Communication. Education has always been the major sector of UNESCO

activity from its very inception. Inauguration with help to reconstruct the war-torn education system in Europe and carrying out isolated modest projects in a different place, UNESCO has moved to large scale undertakings in line with world trends. These aim to attain education as a human right, to democratise it, to benefit from new technology and reform methods in order to keep abreast of fast changes and fulfil the goals of education for all.

At the institutional and policy levels, UNESCO has supported India in numerous of its reform endeavours. The Education Commission under the Chairmanship of D.S. Kothari (1964-66) had the benefit of UNESCO experts; the mission of the Commission was to make recommendations for the realisation within the shortest period of a well balanced, integrated and adequate system of national education capable of making an influential contribution to all spheres of national life.

A Centre for Educational Technology was set up at NCERT with the help of UNDP and UNESCO. Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) of 1974-75 was an aspect of the product of the establishment of this centre and had a great impact on the, development of software and technology using the audio-visual medium of TV network spread throughout the nation, UNESCO supported these efforts too through seminars, workshops and project funds.

In another important contribution, UNESCO helped establish the Delhi Public Library, It was the first library established under the UNESCO Public Library Project in 1951.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) of the United Nations declared that "Everyone has the right to education. Education will be free at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory". UNESCO was foremost among the UN bodies to focus efforts of nations at this significant declaration. It sponsored a number of regional meetings in Lima (1956), in Santiago (1963), in Karachi (1960), in Tokyo (1962), and in Addis Ababa (1961). It was due to these untiring efforts of UNESCO that primary education became an important focus of attention.

But maybe one of the more significant contributions of UNESCO to education in India has been its advocacy of the concept of educational planning. A regional centre for the training of educational planners, administrators and supervisors in Asia was set up under the agreement of Government of India in 1962. It was re-designated as the Asian Institute, of Educational Planning and Administration in 1965. The functions of this Institute were the following:

- a) To provide short in-service training courses for the officers of the various ministries or departments of education of participating Asian member states and associate members of UNESCO.
- b) To undertake and promote research in the techniques of educational planning, administration and supervision and to place the results at the disposal of, such states, and
- c) To assist such states, upon request, in organising educational planning services and in holding national training courses.

UNESCO supports the Institute by provision of international staff members, fellowships for trainees, equipment, books and publications. This Institute organised regional seminars on significant topics such as educational planning, educational

statistics, life- long education, modern management techniques and their relevance to education, etc. This was possible because of the cooperation and support that the Institute received from UNESCO.

After the direct financial support by UNESCO to the Asian Institute ended in 1972, the Government of India decided to continue the important work started by it and did not let it close down. National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) took form and continues to function with full support from Government of India. The idea of planning and management of education as a vital tool for improving educational performance was clearly established. NIEPA has continued to get support from UNESCO and particularly from its International Institute of Educational Planning (IIEP), Paris which has collaborated with it in various programmes and activities. Over the years it has come to be recognised as a premier institution in India as well as in Asia.

In recent times IIEP and NIEPA have collaborated to create an Asian network of research and training institutions (ANTRIEP). At a conference held in December 1995 in Delhi, NIEPA decided to become the nodal agency for this purpose and is now preparing activities of cooperation in the field of educational planning and management among similar institutions in Asia.

Arising from Jomtien and the E9 Summit, UNESCO has been supporting major initiatives in the field of education. NIEPA is actively participating in many of these efforts by providing expertise, research back up and training Programmes to build capacities of planning among local level administrators and institutional, heads.

It is evident that in the area of educational policy and building institutions India has benefitted considerably from the support and initiatives of UNESCO. India has always had a special regard for UNESCO and for the great, ideals that this Organization stands for. Today at the close of 20th century, we face die great challenge of making our population fully literate and we hope to continue to derive sustenance from the work of UNESCO.

### **Contribution to UNESCO's Budget**

**Regular budget:** Each Member State of UNESCO contributes to UNESCO's regular budget for each biennium. This contribution is at a fixed percentage approved by the General Conference from time to time. India's share of contribution is 0.534 percent of the total budget of UNESCO. Government of India had contributed Rs. 944.80 Lakhs during the year 2012. Since 2013 the contribution has been improved to 0.666 percent and it comes to about Rs. 14.00 crore. India has contributed the entire share towards the annual contribution till 2013.

### **Hosting UNESCO New Delhi Office and construction of new premises**

India is responsible for providing free office accommodation to UNESCO Office in New Delhi. At present, it is housed in a rented building for which the Indian Government is paying a rent of Rs. 6.00 lakhs per month (from the financial year 2008-09). It has been decided to construct a building for housing the UNESCO Office in Chanakyapuri, New Delhi.

The construction has started and is expected to be completed in 2012-2013. The building is coming up at an approximate cost of Rs. 22.67 Crore. The building is now at the furnishing stage

#### **UNESCO's World Heritage Fund**

India's contribution to the UNESCO's World Heritage Fund was to the tune of 17,435 US Dollars in 2011- 2012. However, India also made, on UNESCO's request, an extra budgetary contribution of 100,000 US Dollars to the World Heritage Committee for specific projects, which was widely appreciated, this being a pioneering effort in this regard. India's contribution during the year 2014 stands at USD 21,745.

#### **International Oceanographic Commission**

India's is in the process of setting up an international training centre 'School of Operational Oceanography' at Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) in Hyderabad. Building, the envisaged infrastructure, construction of faculty blocks, state-of-art class rooms, service building and an international standard hostel and guest house to accommodate the trainees and guest faculty will take approximately two to three years. The approximate cost for the centre would be about 33 million US Dollars (Rs. 150 Crores).

#### **International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC)**

India has been contributing annually 30,000 US Dollars to IPDC to support its various mandates activities. During the year 2010-2011, one-time special contribution of 500,000 US Dollars was also made to IPDC. As a whole, India has contributed a total; amount of 19, 30,000 USD for IPDC.

#### **Conclusion**

India has received considerable technical and material support from UNESCO through its regular and extra- budgetary sources. Several projects have been launched, and some of them have achieved outstanding results. India asked for UNESCO's assistance mainly in the fields of science and technology. The Indian Institute of Technology in Bombay, which was launched and developed with UNESCO's aid, is one of the best institutions of its kind in Asia. UNESCO has assisted centres of advanced study at Indian universities and in reorganising science teaching in secondary schools.

UNESCO has also helped various programmes of book development. The Delhi Public Library was established as joint UNESCO-India project. Indian classics have been translated and works of art reproduced and published in the UNESCO series. Recordings of Indian music have been popularised by the International Music Council. The Asian Theatre Institute, the Asian Institute of Educational Planning and Administration and the South Asia Science Cooperation Office in Delhi were established and operated with assistance from UNESCO. Thus India has continued to be a dynamic and prominent member of UNESCO. It has given to it its loyalty and commitment and received valuable assist for development. Ultimately, in the field of international cooperation, especially concerning things of the mind, what

we give is even more important than what we receive. India has all along strove to elevate the role of UNESCO in the family of the United Nations and there by strengthen the forces of peace, cooperation and development. This cooperation between India and UNESCO has revealed recent vistas and avenues. The concepts of education, development and humanism have undergone profound changes, through the UNESCO's action.

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