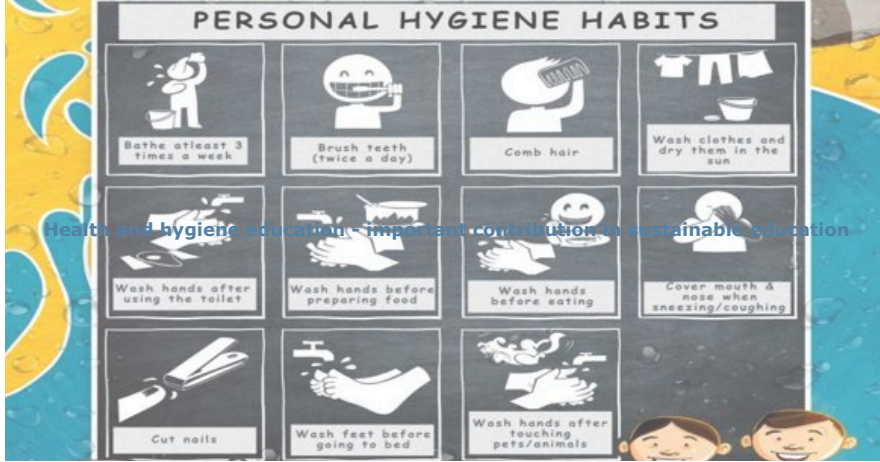


## Health and hygiene education - important contribution in sustainable education

Sachdeva S<sup>1\*</sup> 



### Abstract

Health is a state of an individual in which he is physically, mentally, and socially well and not just the absence of disease or infirmity as explained by WHO. In present times of such rapidly evolving life circumstances, its impact on children's health and well-being, cannot be ignored or ruled out of the system. All the modern environmental and human development of recent times revolves around the conception and maintenance of healthy homes, schools, and communities. Education has a main and vital role in developing people's behaviour and habits in a more responsible and sustainable direction. Health education included in the school curriculum is often on a very basic level, but it should be an important part of the education as much important time of learning the essential concepts in life is done in the period of schooling. During this period students need to receive health education to a level that provides the scientific basis for sustainable health literacy. Hygiene Education helps to increase the knowledge of people about things and practices resulting in good health and bad health. Healthy living, eating practices, and hygiene maintenance practices should be a part of regular school curriculums and be taught to students through continuous training and development programs so that it becomes a part of their daily living habits. Theoretical research on health education can provide a framework for making students understand that healthy habits are part of their overall growth and development and they should incorporate these and always opt for making decisions that are towards positive lifestyle choices.

This paper explores the complex health, environmental, and social challenges confronting sustainable and improved educational approaches need of the hour is to reform, make advancements in our education system, and make efforts to remove the present patterns of under education for unhealthy lifestyles and surroundings. A holistic approach to the treatment of diseases should be taught to young minds so that they know how to tackle their ailments in a better and harmless way. Nevertheless, school education can be a powerful tool to achieve this as children's minds and body is shaped during the schooling period. However, embedding healthy living and sustainability principles into schools involves much more than reforming existing programs and practices.

The concept of Health Education being taught by teachers in institutes should be developed according to the present scenarios of the everchanging world. Teachers should be continually educated and upgraded for recent challenges to healthy behaviours and the recent lifestyle disorders being prevalent in the society. Academic programs should include the knowledge and skills that are required to face the challenges of the recent trends and disorders in healthy lifestyles.

**Keywords:** Health education, Hygiene education, Theoretical research, Holistic approach, Curriculum, Continuous Training, Sustainable

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### Declaration

**15.31%** Plagiarism. Authors state no conflict of interest. Non Funded. The conducted research is not related to either human or animals use. All authors have accepted responsibility for the entire content of this manuscript and approved its submission.

### Evidence in Context

**What Know:** Health education and education for sustainable development (EFSO) is a important component for education at all levels.

**What New:** School hygiene and sanitation play a crucial role in fostering a conducive learning environment for students.

### To view

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## Introduction

According to the recent concepts of health, health is recognized as more than the absence of disease. The holistic concept of health is contained in the expression of wholeness. Health is a state of body in which it functions well in all spheres of life i.e. physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "Hygiene refers to conditions and practices that help to maintain health and prevent the spread of diseases." Keeping themselves and their environment clean and disinfected would help in creating a barrier for infections and restricting their spread. The importance of health and hygiene practices has been endorsed by many international health policies drafting organizations and many global commitments are made to implement them. Health education and education for sustainable development (EfSD) is an important component for education at all levels. Innovative, inquiring teacher education has a significant role in educating people for a sustainable future (Rajakorpi & Salmio, 2001, 7; Guidelines and recommendations..., 2005). Educators play a very important role in implementing the healthcare policies in educational institutes. A definition by UNESCO asserts that "Education for Sustainable Development empowers learners to make informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability, and a just society, for present and future generations, while respecting cultural diversity."

As explained by UNICEF, the consequences of unsafe water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) on children can be fatal to them. Diarrhoeal diseases due to unhygienic environment contribute to the 9% of the death rate of children under the age of 5 yrs. Lack of appropriate WASH services is the main reason behind it. Ensuring adequate WASH in schools is critical for Sustainable Development Goals 3 (Good health and well-being) 4 (education) and 6 (clean water). The various environmental, climate, sociocultural and economic factors affecting health and hygiene need to be understood in detail so that their bad effects on health can be prevented.

The goal of health education is to inculcate innovative research ideas, education and practice that can help individuals to better cope up with the challenges of rapidly changing environments and opt for healthy behaviours and choices in their lifestyle. This will also help individuals to more effectively engage in evidence-based practices. The more practical approaches to the health policy initiatives would protect and promote population health. While the recognition of the importance of health education in sustainable development is evident and is rapidly growing, so it comes with its own challenges. The purpose of health education is to positively change the individual behaviour through variety of techniques, educational process, motivation and encouragement among the communities. The component of health education should be amalgamated into continuing training of the teachers in spite of the any subject they are teaching. The curriculum of health education should be created by keeping in mind the recent challenges faced by society in adopting the healthy habits and to have the deep understanding knowledge and importance of health education.

The study is a qualitative case study

## Aims and Questions

The study aims to understand the importance of health education in continuous teacher training and education in schools from the perspective of sustainable development. We can also explore the new ideas and concepts for developing study and training material for health education among teachers and students.

We would also understand the various challenges in society and education systems and try to propose some feasible strategies to implement the health policies. Various areas for improvement and transition are explored, which are both suitable to educators and beneficial to takers.

The various questions concerning Health education conceptions to be discussed are:

01. What is Holistic approach in healthcare to be included in sustainable education?
02. What are various initiatives taken by Organizations on global level and by Government of India?
03. What strategies can be proposed in promoting pupil's welfare and health in schools?
04. What are the various challenges in implementing health education policies?
05. What are the objectives and matter of Health education that should be the crucial part of teacher education?

### FACTORS EFFECTING HEALTH AND HYGIENE

**ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS:** Environmental factors are the factors that are present in the physical environment of a person and these have a strong damaging effect on the physical, mental or social wellbeing. The issue of environmental health is now a global matter which is also brought into notice as a matter of concern by the World Health Organization also.

Environmental health is associated with recognizing, assessing, understanding and controlling the impacts of people on their environment and the impacts of the environment on the public. Throwing of garbage, plastic wastes, open defecation, living near sewage and polluted areas contribute the rise in infectious diseases.

**CLIMATE CHANGES AND GLOBAL WARMING:** Global warming is considered as one of the biggest threats to human health in this generation. Global warming effects include frequent drought, intense heat waves, poor air quality, rising sea levels which further give rise to infectious diseases, vector borne diseases, allergies, mental health disorders.

Infectious diseases include bacterial, viral, and fungal infections causing various respiratory, abdominal, and skin ailments. Allergies like childhood asthma and dermatitis are increasing day by day. Mental disorders are related to the psychological impacts of trauma, stress and tolerating extreme temperature variations. Education about how to tackle these changes and how to prevent diseases and be safe in harsh environments is important.

**INDIVIDUAL AND STRUCTURAL FACTORS:** Sanitation and hygiene habits basically depends on individual factors, such as level of education and awareness, past habits which might be developed due to individual personal interests and social media influence, gender and habits being inherited within families.

**SOCIO-BEHAVIORAL FACTORS:** Perceptions and beliefs are greatly influenced by the friends and peers, as we will know the habits of alcohol, tobacco, drug abuse is mainly due to influence of social circle. The youths supposed to be a part of emerging culture and indulge in such activities.

**LIMITED RESOURCES:** Lack of resources such as nonavailability and incapability of maintenance of toilets, lack of cleanliness, non-availability of sanitary products (i.e., soap, hand wash agents, sanitizers, etc.) due to low socioeconomic status are major constraints in adoption and inculcation of good hygiene practice at homes and organisational settings.

**ECONOMIC FACTOR:** In developing countries like India where poverty & unemployment are still a major concerns, people don't tend to spend their money on maintaining hygiene, improving health. Healthy lifestyle and good eating habits are still not in their priorities of living styles. Adequate food supplies, basic educ., clothing is all what they can only afford.

**IRRATIONAL PRACTICES IN HEALTHCARE:** Irrational use of medications is also a major concern in healthcare industry nowadays. People tend to consume antibiotics, painkillers without consulting doctors and their overuse give rise to other diseases, for example overuse of painkillers can cause stomach ulcers and even kidney damages, overuse of anti-allergens and antibiotics for children can further low down their immunity and expose them to other infections. And chronic ailments. Irrational practices are also commonly noticed in private hospital settings also, to collect large amount of bills from patients some not so important and even not required procedures are done, medicines are prescribed. Educating the community about the basic knowledge of diseases, diagnosis and interventions can help them in getting treatments in a judicial manner. Having adequate knowledge can help them in participating in their healthcare decisions.

**HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICES AFFECTING HEALTH:** Old belief and Traditional cultural practices are prevalent and passed onto generations. Menstrual taboos, nutritional taboos at early age are still prevalent in many countries. Adding the knowledge in curriculum and textbooks will not only help, but interacting with these communities living in false beliefs, educating the young pupils so that they can break this chain of wrong and harmful methods in their generations is important.

**FACILITATION:** Facilitation simply means making life easier and this is the most powerful factor why communities develop new hygiene practices. Hence, it is essential to know what factors the people find important and not essentially what is important in the eyes of officials or educators. For instance, villagers' tent to travel long distance to get the basic water needs but if there is availability of safe drinking water in their own areas, they don't have to exert themselves, and they would happily adapt the habit of drinking safe water.

## CONCEPT OF HOLISTIC HEALTHCARE

Holistic health is an approach to health that addresses all the components of health the physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual in a collective manner. These approaches are used in combination with conventional medicine to provide a holistic and integrated approach to health. This approach is increasingly being embraced globally to provide a complete healthcare solution. It integrates all the alternative systems of medicine like AYUSH system which includes Ayurveda, Yoga, Siddha and Homoeopathy which is also promoted by GOI. The holistic approach highlights on each person's own decision-making capability for his or her own health care and society's responsibility for considering and promoting this concept of healthcare. One of the major benefits of holistic health education is that it helps in prevention of chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and obesity, by promoting healthy lifestyle practices, individuals can reduce their risk of developing these illnesses and improve their overall quality of life. This approach is also economic, feasible and more accessible to society. Through health education practices, we can promote this holistic concept and increase awareness that for treating the chronic illnesses, lifestyle disorders and for mild diseases, how other systems of medicine rather than typical allopathic practice are actually beneficial to society. Especially in cases of mild and recurrent illnesses of children, these systems are more helpful and beneficial in building the immunity and overall growth of the children.

## HEALTH AND HYGIENE PROMOTION INITIATIVES

**WHO's Global School Health Initiative:** This was launched in 1995, and its main aim was to mobilize and strengthen health promotion and education activities at the local, national, regional and global levels. This was started to bring the positive change in the health behaviours of school students, their families, educators and communities.

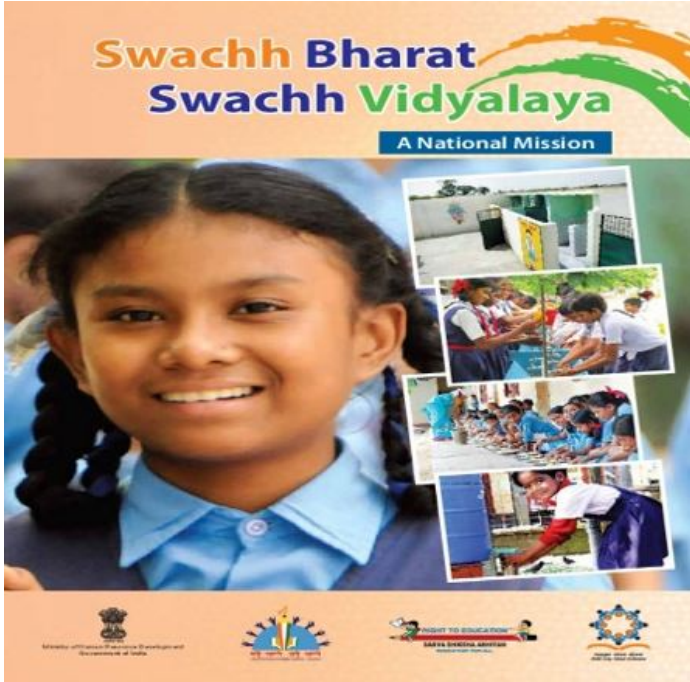
**SSHE- Sanitation and Hygiene Education (SSHE):** This is a globally recognized program to promote children's right to health and clean environment. It was developed in the context of the School Water and Sanitation Towards Health and Hygiene (SWASTHH) program in India. The main objective of this program is to develop a secure and healthy environment for the children and also help them to learn how to face the challenges of healthy lifestyle and how to cope up with the recent changes in the environment. This program would also help to make children understand their role in making surroundings clean in present and future times.

**The WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene):** This is an initiative by WHO and it has been widely adopted by various countries with intention of top providing safe drinking water, proper sanitation facilities and clean and safe environment to its people. This program greatly emphasizes on hand wash practices in schools and promote safe water supply and hand hygiene practices.

**Swachh Bharat: Swachh Vidyalaya** is the national campaign driving 'Clean India: Clean Schools'. The main objective of this campaign is that every school in India should have a functioning and well-maintained water, sanitation facilities.



Its main components includes safe drinking water, hand wash, provision of soap and water in schools



Various School health Programmes are also implemented at States and district levels under National Health Mission

**CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTING HEALTH EDUCATION POLICIES**

- 1. RESOURCE ALLOCATION DECISIONS:** As many schemes and programs are initiated by governments, NGOs, and local bodies, but allocation of resources is still a major hindrance in their implementation. Many times, the resource persons don't have enough knowledge of the programs and their influences.
- 2. LOW COMPLIANCE:** Communities don't tend to be compliant with the programs as they don't find it much beneficial to their own needs. Due to a lack of motivation, lack of knowledge, and skills, it becomes difficult to engage people in good practices. Continuous training and monitoring are required for the successful implementation of the policies
- 3. RESISTANCE TO CHANGE:** Long-standing habits, traditional practices, and disagreement to come out of comfort zones and adopt new policies and practices have always been a challenge.
- 4. LACK OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** Addressing the masses and reaching out to communities through engaging activities. Educating them in their languages and creating a material that suits them and which they can easily adopt is crucial in making policies.
- 5. LACK OF CONTINOUS COMMUNITY AWARENESS:** Implementing any new policy cannot be a one-time process, continuously reaching out to people, keeping vigilance, and assessing the progress of the programs are very crucial in their effective implementation



INDIAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

# CHALLENGES IN THE NATIONAL HEALTH POLICY IN INDIA

The National Health Policy in India faces several challenges, addressing which require comprehensive policy reforms & prioritising preventive healthcare measures. Here are some of the key challenges:

- Health Education & Awareness**  
Limited health education hampers preventive healthcare. Promotion of health literacy, disease prevention awareness, and healthy lifestyles is needed.
- Access to Healthcare**  
Limited healthcare infrastructure & a shortage of healthcare professionals make it difficult for many people to receive timely and affordable healthcare.
- Healthcare Financing**  
High cost of healthcare services and a lack of sufficient financial resources to cover medical expenses, leads to financial barriers & limited access to necessary healthcare.
- Inequitable Distribution**  
There is an imbalance in the distribution of healthcare resources and services across different regions and socio-economic groups.
- Infrastructure and Technology**  
Insufficient infrastructure and outdated technology in healthcare facilities hinder the delivery of quality healthcare services.

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What Are The Challenges In The National Health Policy In India?

**6. INADEQUATE TRAINING AND POOR SUPPORTIVE SUPERVISION:** There must be monitoring activity regularly about the tasks done, tasks pending, challenges faced & things that are on the right track & the way forward. Only task delegation should not be the responsibility of the leaders rather following with their subordinates and helping and guiding through whole is needed.

**7. FINANCIAL CONSTRAINT:** Financing healthcare is a major challenge, due to limited budget allocation and resources, low remunerations of the staff, less available resources, effective implementations, and sustaining the services becomes a big challenge

**8. INFRASTRUCTURE AND TECHNOLOGY-** Insufficient infrastructure and outdated technology in healthcare programs always hinder the delivery of quality services.

### STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING HEALTH AT INSTITUTES LEVEL

**1. Hygiene Awareness Campaigns** Hygiene awareness camps are organised in schools for students, which acquaint them the value of cleanliness and personal hygiene. This is more important to the adolescence girls as they encounter physiological changes in body, and they have to come up with emotions and personal hygiene. These are always helpful as these campaigns address the masses and provide a message to a bigger scale. Reaching out to communities through these campaigns is easier. Awareness campaign for hand hygiene, toilet habits, environment sanitation and menstrual hygiene are important themes to be taken into account.

**2. Promotion of Student Health.** For health promotion among students an open, supportive, and good atmosphere is required to be maintained by educators so that students are motivated to express their concerns to the educators and counselling and support is provided at proper time The students should be educated that their good health is very important for having a good academic score.

**3. Build Healthcare policies at Institute's Level-Building** the practical and feasible policies for the institutes and giving responsibilities to all the stakeholders for maintaining a healthy and hygienic atmosphere in schools. The policies should be made in accordance to the needs of community and their practical implementation should be kept in mind.

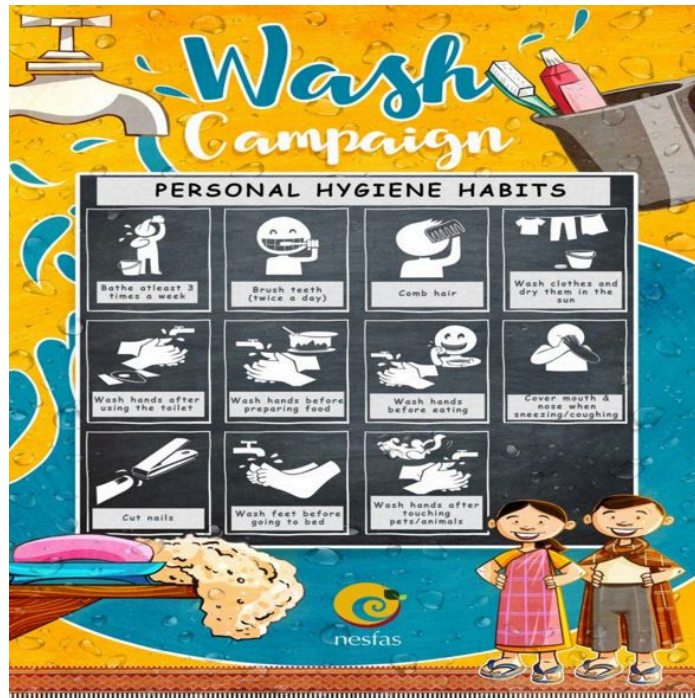
**4. Engage parents and community:** Parents should be informed and awaked of any changes or abnormalities noticed in students during their school hours. Educate the community about the basic healthy and hygienic habits.

**5. Active participation of students in Health promotion activities-Students** should be encouraged and motivated to do healthcare activities and reach out to communities and uneducated peoples and help them understand the concept of preventing diseases and maintaining hygiene.

**6. Regular visits by physicians of all various systems of medicine:** Institutes should empanel doctors from various systems of medicine like specialties, alternative systems, yoga etc so that a comprehensive healthcare facility can be provided to pupils.

**7. Continuous Training sessions:** Training given to all the stakeholders should be given at regular intervals to maintain the quality of healthcare educations and continuous developments.

**8. Evaluating effectiveness of health education programmes:** Although many campaigns and programs being initiated by global and local organisations but without their effective implementations, they cannot be accessed by the program's beneficiaries. Thus, evaluating the success of these programs is important to fill the gap areas in their complete implementation.



## Domains of Health and Hygiene

As explained earlier health consist of all the spheres including mental, emotional and sociocultural, it is important to include the topics related to all these in the education system. In today's time still the mental health, sexual health and social traumas are considered not to be expressed to anyone, but these are actually the root causes of many mental, behaviour and even physical illnesses. By adding these issues in our regular health education curriculum and explaining these at an early stage of life that these need not be suppressed rather these issues are to be addressed with utmost importance so that their deep impact on the mind and body is prevented.

Teachers and all the stakeholders in education system should possess the basic knowledge, skills and values that are required to understand and teach these aspects. By learning about health and hygiene by all these dimensions can help in a great way in overall development of children. These are briefly explained in the table 1

## Discussion

Health and hygiene awareness is not a recent concept in education, many plans, programs, initiatives had been started globally to promote this education and make this a part of sustainable development. Organizations like UN, WHO, UNICEF, NHM in India all are making efforts since long time to sustain this important part of education. However, due to modernization, increasing population,

Table 1: The various skills and contents which can be added to the curriculum is as follows:

Objectives	Contents		
	Physical health	Mental health	Social and cultural health
Expertise Required knowledge about health	Environmental and external factors - Lifestyle - Healthy eating habits - physical fitness - Good sleep - Cleanliness - Education about addictions - Sex education - Congenital - Disorders of children	Environmental and external factors - Mental health and building up of good behaviour - Grief events, bad history.	- Environmental and external factors. -Public health - Health coverage and medical assistance - Race, culture, and medical awareness -Availability of medical facilities
Skills Fostering health and cultivating solutions	- Treatment and prevention of children's diseases - Knowledge of prevalent and national diseases - Risk evaluation - First aid and preventing accidents	- Significance of strengthening community - Identifying and preventing work exhaustion and stress	- Identification of child's inherited problems, addictions, domestic violence, Trauma, neglected and maltreated children - Regular traditions
Values Establishing good culture system	- Take responsibility and make mind to change to good conduct	- Healthy self-confidence and self-empowerment - Responsibly taking good care of self and setting benchmark for others - Emotional intelligence and understanding	Empathy towards others and helping people to adapt healthy living styles.

Global and climate changes, deforestation activities, health concerns are on rise, so there is an urgent requirement of embedding the concept of health and hygiene education in the sustainable education curriculum so that healthy practices become a part of our daily living lifestyles. By understanding it as an important part of education it would definitely contribute to the overall wellbeing of the community.

In spite of having suitable, sufficient and practical knowledge, the clean environment and hygiene practices are noticed remarkably low. As we tend to adopt new approaches, implement new policies, with them, we would also get new challenges related to them. Effectively handling these challenges and barriers and focusing on the goal of achieving the good health target should be priority. There can be no better place than educational institutes for implementation of these rules. If good health and hygiene practices are included in a regular curriculum of studies, this can become a part of daily habits of future generations. As India is gearing up for New Education Policy it is a high time to give utmost priority to this important contribution to the sustainable education.

## Conclusion

Health and hygiene education in sustainable education is about fostering an environment that cultivates good hygiene and healthy lifestyle practices among students and teachers for their well-being, and academic growth. School hygiene and sanitation play a crucial role in fostering a conducive learning environment for students. By implementing good health and hygiene practices in the curriculum of studies would be a good contribution to the sustainable education.

In consideration with many factors, challenges and barriers affecting the health and hygiene education which we have discussed it is not an easy task to do rather it can be concluded that it is an ongoing and continuous process with matching

The steps with the advancements of the present times and scenarios in healthcare technology. Quality improvement processes are required to be amalgamated with the goal of sustainable education.

While the challenges in implementing health education in sustainable education are multifaceted, practical, feasible measures and collaborative efforts can pave the way for transformative change. By addressing traditional curricular barriers, fostering a culture of understanding and good values is the ultimate goal. Interventions are crucial at all levels starting from regular supply of materials and mediums, upgradation to budget friendly resources, close vigilance of sanitation practices, encouraging healthy behaviour at the individual level, and establishing infrastructure that is gender-sensitive may be beneficial for advancement of sanitation and hygiene practices among education facilities. Practical knowledge approaches to the study curriculum are needed to have an advanced, relevant to modern times and effective education system that promotes and maintains Health and hygiene at all levels of system.

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