

Sustainability, Just Transition, and Educational Responses: Baseline Perspectives on Educational Equity and Inclusion Across South and Southeast Asia

¹Biplob Kumer Deb*, ²Sabyasachi Majumdar, ³Ha Thi Hai Nguyen

^{*1}Assistant Professor, Notre Dame College Dhaka, Bangladesh

²Faculty, Adamas World School, Kolkata, India.

³Faculty, University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University, Vietnam

Abstract:

In the Global South, where climate vulnerability, rapid technological change, and systemic educational injustice converge, the need for sustainability, a just transition, and educational equity is more urgent than ever. This multinational baseline study examines how education communities in Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Vietnam, and Thailand view, understand, and are equipped to address these interrelated issues.

This study was based on four key objectives that includes (1) to evaluate the baseline knowledge and perceptions of sustainability, just transition, and educational equity among education stakeholders in five Asian countries; (2) to investigate how respondents comprehend the connection between the pursuit of a just and sustainable transition, education policy reform, and the integration of artificial intelligence (AI); (3) to investigate the role of green practices, climate literacy, and youth stewardship in shaping sustainable futures within educational institutions; and (4) to identify the factors that influence institutional preparedness for equitable, inclusive transitions in education systems.

68% of the respondents identified just transition concerns specifically within the domains of AI integration and education policy reform, underscoring the anxieties and opportunities that technological and governance shifts present for frontline educators and learners. About 74% of respondents affirmed their belief that the new wave of transitions — technological, environmental, and institutional — holds genuine potential to support a more sustainable world, and that empowered youth stewardship is central to restoring ecological and social balance.

Using a mixed-methods study approach, webinars, structured questionnaires, focus groups, and in-person interviews were used to gather data from 390 participants, including 240 students, 100 teachers, and 50 school administrators. The depth of understanding across many educational and cultural contexts was guaranteed by this triangulated method. A complex picture of awareness and aspiration is shown by baseline results. Although 76% of respondents said they were familiar with the idea of sustainability, the great majority said they were unsure of how to operationalize it, including where to start and what workable options were available in their institutional settings. Despite this disparity, 83% of respondents showed a strong personal and professional commitment to starting a sustainable journey, indicating that motivational preparedness is high even in situations where capacity is still lacking.

68% of respondents particularly mentioned the transition issues in the areas of AI integration and education policy reform, highlighting the opportunities and problems that frontline

educators and students face as a result of technological and governance changes. Most remarkably, 74% of respondents agreed that empowered young stewardship is essential to reestablishing ecological and social balance, and that the next wave of transitions—technological, environmental, and institutional—holds real potential to create a more sustainable world. All of these results point to the need for structured, contextually relevant educational interventions to translate widespread awareness of sustainability into action. Targeted capacity-building, inclusive policy frameworks, and innovative pedagogy that prioritizes equality and justice are necessary to close the knowledge gap. This study adds to the increasing amount of evidence showing that educational institutions in the Global South are active, albeit underfunded, agents of just transition rather than passive beneficiaries of sustainability objectives. In order to create a fairer and more sustainable educational future, the presentation will address implications for curriculum reform, teacher professional development, cross-cultural competence, partnership, and international policy discourse.