



EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: TEACHER EDUCATION IN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:

Sustainable development is a way of developing that meets the needs of the present without compromising the future. The Global Action Programme (GAP) on Education for Sustainable Development in its priority action area III aims at building capacities of educators. One of the proposed actions in this area is to integrate Education for Sustainable Development into pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes (UNESCO 2014). This remains a humble attempt at reviewing the theoretical framework, needs, benefits and challenges of integrating sustainable development into teacher education.

Key Words: sustainable development, goals, practice, teacher education

Introduction:

Sustainable development is a way of developing that meets the needs of the present without compromising the future. It is a framework that aims to balance economic growth, social well-being, and environmental protection. The Brundtland Report defines sustainable development as - "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Sustainability is the foundation for today's leading global framework for international cooperation—the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In June 2022, environmental leaders from around the world met to take stock of where we've been and where we are heading, with the goal of galvanizing momentum for the United Nations Decade of Action for achieving the SDGs. Adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals—or SDGs or Global Goals as they are sometimes called—have 169 targets that countries are attempting to reach by 2030 at the latest. This is why the Goals are also referred to as the 2030 Agenda, which countries resolved to undertake with "bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path. As we embark on this collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind." The goals and targets are universal, meaning they apply to all countries around the world, not just developing countries. Reaching the goals requires action on all fronts—governments, businesses, civil society, and people everywhere have a role to play.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) sees education as the key to unlocking progress in all the global development goals. It teaches individuals to make informed decisions and take action, both individually and

collectively, to change society and protect the planet. It equips people of all ages with the knowledge, skills, values, and ability to tackle issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, overuse of resources, and inequality that impact the well-being of people and the planet.

Education for Sustainable Development advocates for learning that is:

1. Cognitive: Improving how we think and understand information.
2. Socio-emotional: Building social skills, empathy and emotional intelligence.
3. Behavioral: Encouraging positive actions and behaviors.

Education for Sustainable Development is a powerful strategy to transform education, covering what we learn, how we learn it, and the environment in which we learn. It is a lifelong learning process that is an integral part of a quality education. Teacher education is a key requirement for promoting Education for Sustainable Development at school. Teachers are powerful change agents for delivering the educational response needed for achieving sustainable development. Whether school education processes and the schools themselves as educational institutions can become more sustainable depends on the knowledge, competencies, attitudes and values of the teachers, but also on the interaction with institutional frameworks and curricular structures. Teacher education must meet this challenge by reorienting itself towards Education for Sustainable Development as demanded by international declarations, such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (UNECE 2005) and the Bonn Declaration (UNESCO 2009), as well as various educational policy papers at the national level. The monitoring and evaluation of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) has shown that there are many good examples of integrating Education for Sustainable Development in teacher education and that the support of teachers has been a key condition to the successful adoption and implementation of Education for Sustainable Development (UNESCO 2014). However, efforts to prepare teachers to implement Education for Sustainable Development have not advanced sufficiently. Therefore, more work still needs to be done to reorient teacher education to approach Education for Sustainable Development in content and teaching and learning methods.

Ways of Integrating Sustainable Development into Teacher Education

The Global Action Programme (GAP) on Education for Sustainable Development in its priority action area III aims at building capacities of educators. One of the proposed actions in this area is to integrate Education for Sustainable Development into pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes (UNESCO 2014). Some of the some of the ways of implementing the same is as follows:

- i. Curriculum integration: Incorporating sustainability topics across various subjects like science, social studies, and even math, teaching students about climate change, resource conservation, biodiversity, and ethical consumption.
- ii. Pedagogical approaches: Utilizing active learning methods like project-based learning, community engagement, and outdoor education to encourage critical thinking and hands-on experiences related to sustainability issues.
- iii. Teacher awareness and capacity building: Providing teachers with training on sustainability concepts, including the latest research, best practices for teaching sustainability, and how to address complex environmental and social challenges in the classroom.

- iv. School-wide sustainability initiatives: Encouraging schools to adopt environmentally friendly practices like waste reduction, energy conservation, and sustainable food sourcing, and involving teachers in implementing these initiatives.

Different concepts have been elaborated on how Education for Sustainable Development can be integrated into teacher education and thus also the acquisition of appropriate competencies for teachers can be fostered. For facilitating the development of Education for Sustainable Development competence in teacher education, changes concerning the content and structure of pre-service and in-service teacher education are necessary. Education for Sustainable Development should be a cross-cutting concern for teacher education as well as for the in-service training and should provide fundamental orientation. In the first phase of teacher education, the concept should be integrated into the compulsory modules of the subject disciplines, subject-related didactics, educational sciences and practice-oriented studies (National Platform Education for Sustainable Development 2017), where close cooperation of the areas is important. At the same time, interdisciplinary work should be promoted. In the sense of a comprehensive competence development, the students should also be given opportunities for situated learning.

Benefits of sustainable development in teacher education:

- Empowered students: Students become informed and responsible citizens equipped with knowledge and skills to make sustainable choices in their personal and professional lives.
- Community impact: Teachers can engage with local communities to address sustainability challenges and promote positive change.
- Holistic learning: Integrating sustainability into education promotes a broader understanding of interconnected issues, encouraging critical thinking and systemic change.

Challenges in implementing sustainable development in teacher education:

Integrating sustainable development in to teacher is not a facile process but encounters several challenges. Some of them are summarized below:

- Curriculum overload: Integrating sustainability topics into existing curriculum can be challenging due to time constraints.
- Lack of teacher training: Some teachers may not have the necessary knowledge or confidence to effectively teach sustainability concepts.
- Policy and systemic barriers: Systemic changes might be required within education systems to fully support sustainability education.

Conclusion:

Teacher education should aim at developing teachers in such a way that they can move beyond traditional teaching methods in order to engage learners in meaningful, practical, and forward-thinking ways that directly address the complex challenges of sustainability in the Anthropocene era. There should be an emphasis on participatory and experiential learning approaches, which empower learners to take responsibility of their own learning and connect theoretical knowledge with real-world applications. Teacher education should reflect a shift towards sustainable education requires systemic change at all levels, such as educational policy, curriculum design, professional development and institutional practices. It involves creating, teaching and implementing

frameworks that prioritize sustainability as a core principle, ensuring that teacher-students not only acquire knowledge but also develop the skills, attitudes, and values needed to navigate more sustainably in the world.

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