

Advancing Sustainable Development in the Global South: Aligning Education with the SDGs for Lasting Impact

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ABSTRACT

This research paper delves into the imperative of harmonizing educational objectives within the Global South with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development underscores the pivotal role of education in realizing global sustainability, particularly stressing Target 4.7. Despite advancements in monitoring SDG progress, persistent challenges hinder human advancement, particularly within education. This study critically examines the viability and effectiveness of crafting educational curricula for the Global South that integrate sustainable methodologies into existing systems. Furthermore, it scrutinizes significant impediments hindering the alignment of education with SDGs and provides recommendations for stakeholders, employing a meticulous approach encompassing critical content analysis and an extensive literature review. Through a thorough analysis of peer-reviewed literature, policy documents, and pertinent articles from diverse sources, complemented by data triangulation to enhance reliability, this study elucidates that customizing educational curricula for the Global South is achievable and imperative. Fostering environmental consciousness and action necessitates seamlessly integrating sustainable practices and educational principles into prevailing frameworks. However, challenges such as infrastructural inadequacies and cultural heterogeneity mandate strategic interventions. Collaborative efforts among stakeholders, including governments, educational institutions, international organizations, educators, and communities, are imperative to propel sustainable development through education. Recommendations span from curriculum adaptations and resolution of infrastructural deficiencies to fostering respect for cultural diversity and implementing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Ultimately, this study enriches stakeholders with knowledge essential for their endeavor toward societal progression and sustainable development in the Global South.

INTRODUCTION

According to Zhao et al., in 2022, the United Nations (UN) adopted "The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," a comprehensive framework that includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Goal 4 of these objectives emphasizes Target 4.7, which promotes Education for Sustainability, as mentioned by Giangrande et al. in 2019, and highlights the need to obtain a high-quality education. It's important to remember that, as Rieckmann stressed in 2017, education serves as a specific objective and a critical enabler for accomplishing the SDGs. While there have been significant improvements in measuring and tracking the existing levels of SDG accomplishment using various indicators and benchmarks, as detailed by Moyer & Hedden (2020), it is crucial to integrate education with the larger 2030 Agenda. Global aspirations in this era of globalization include sustainable development and societal advancement through education. These goals can only be advanced with the help of the Global South's diverse nations, each battling its own set of opportunities and obstacles. According to Kyle, tackling issues like poverty, inequality, climate change, and other global challenges necessitates a steadfast dedication to sustainable development (Kyle, 2020).

In the Global South, education aligned with the SDGs can greatly improve creativity, inclusion, and resilience. With a focus on modifying educational curricula and incorporating sustainability principles, this

study explores the significance of integrating education with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Global South, ultimately supporting societal advancement and sustainable development in the area. In order to achieve the target, the study is based on four main objectives. Research Questions and Significance

The overarching objective of this study encompasses the following aims:

1. To investigate the viability and efficacy of tailoring educational curricula for the Global South, focusing on determining feasibility and measuring success in this context. Studying this objective is vital because it recognizes that a one-size-fits-all approach to education may not be productive or appropriate in various Global South situations, so tailoring educational curricula is crucial. Knowing whether changing curricula is practical and whether doing so results in better educational outcomes and a more motivated and qualified workforce is essential.
2. To Explore strategies to integrate green practices and sustainability education into existing educational frameworks to promote sustainability awareness and action.

Sustainability is a global issue, and incorporating green practices into education helps develop a more environmentally aware population. It is crucial to look into integration techniques since they can reveal how education can contribute to solving urgent environmental problems in the Global South. It is for these reasons that studying this objective is vital.

3. To identify and understand the obstacles and challenges specific to the Global South that hinder the alignment of education with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In order to accomplish the SDGs, it is crucial to acknowledge and comprehend the particular difficulties faced by the Global South. Many nations in this region experience social, cultural, and infrastructure challenges that may not exist elsewhere. Finding these barriers can help with interventions that are more focused and successful.

4. To provide comprehensive recommendations and insights to stakeholders on fostering sustainable development through educational initiatives and practices.

The overarching ambition of this study is to scrutinize the practicability and effectiveness of adapting educational curricula to suit the unique context of the Global South. Ultimately, the study strives to empower a broad spectrum of stakeholders, encompassing governments and educational institutions, international organizations, educators, and communities, in their collaborative endeavors to advance sustainable development through education. This empowerment is achieved through rigorous research and meticulous analysis. Ultimately, this research seeks to elevate academic progress and broader sustainable development and social advancement objectives by contributing to a more informed and strategic approach to education in the Global South.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The main goals of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are to eradicate poverty, promote peace, and achieve universal prosperity on a sustainable planet by 2030 (Zhao et al., 2022). This agenda was unveiled in 2015 and specified 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Goal 4 and Target of this framework emphasize the importance of high-quality and sustainability education, respectively (Giangrande et al., 2019). Additionally, it is acknowledged that education is a key enabler for achieving all other SDGs (Rieckman, 2017).

Nevertheless, despite significant attempts to track and monitor progress through multiple indices and benchmarks, worries still need to be addressed regarding the world's present trajectory in reaching numerous SDGs relating to human development, including education (Moyer & Hedden, 2020). These

issues highlight the need to assess how well the current educational systems foster social advancement and sustainable development, particularly in places like the Global South, characterized by distinctive difficulties and opportunities.

It becomes urgently necessary to assess the sustainability and efficacy of modifying educational curricula to correspond with regional realities and the SDGs in the context of the Global South. For instance, Kioupi and Voulvoulis (2019) explain how teachers and students can recognize obstacles and favorable circumstances, choose necessary skills, create appropriate curricula and pedagogies, adopt a whole-institution strategy, and gauge progress toward sustainability as determined by the SDGs. While dissuading a one-size-fits-all strategy, other research supports integrating cultural experiences into training, acknowledging the necessity to modify education to suit region-specific difficulties (Wyatt, 2015).

Green practices and sustainability education must be included in current educational systems to promote sustainable development. According to Sterling (2011), particular learning experiences are an emergent characteristic of transformational learning, and the curriculum must be revised to incorporate sustainability ideas into educational settings effectively. Incorporating sustainability education fosters transformative learning and increased commitment to sustainability by providing information, empowering individuals, and changing societal mindsets (Iyer-Raniga & Andamon, 2016). Developing responsible and forward-thinking people who can spark significant change in their communities and beyond and work towards a more sustainable and prosperous future depends on aligning educational curricula with sustainability concepts (Bell et al., 2016).

Nevertheless, the Global South has many difficulties integrating education with the SDGs. The distribution of funds required to improve educational infrastructure, prepare teachers, and provide high-quality instructional materials needs to be improved by financial constraints (Tikly & Barrett, 2013). Access to education is severely hampered by a lack of infrastructure, especially in rural and undeveloped areas (Martens et al., 2020; Charles & Mkulu, 2020). In addition, the varied sociocultural makeup of the nations in the Global South calls for an educational approach that honors and incorporates regional expertise and traditions (Wyatt, 2015). For significant advancement in sustainable development through education, removing these barriers and providing fair access and culturally appropriate instruction is essential.

In order to promote sustainable development through education, a variety of stakeholders are essential. As the principal builders of education policy, governments significantly influence how educational systems are run and how resources are allocated (Glover & Levai, 2020). Institutions of higher learning implement educational strategies that call for curriculum and instructional method changes to promote sustainability goals. International organizations and NGOs use their worldwide expertise and reach to enhance collaboration, resource mobilization, and knowledge sharing (USAID, 2022). Teachers are responsible for teaching sustainability, emphasizing the value of continual teacher preparation as frontline change agents (Lozano et al., 2015). In order to effectively advance sustainable development through education, stakeholders need to have supportive policy environments, investments in teacher training, and community involvement. The recommendations by UNESCO in 2017 also highlight this work's collaborative and multifaceted nature.

In conclusion, this literature review emphasizes the value of incorporating the SDGs into educational systems in the Global South, establishing the groundwork for future studies examining the feasibility, difficulties, and potential solutions for accomplishing this alignment. The project hopes to provide a more comprehensive and strategic approach to education in the Global South, ultimately promoting social advancement and sustainable development. This study aims to enhance the conversation about education and sustainability in the Global South while addressing the precise linkages between the difficulties and the research goals by thoroughly evaluating the body of previous work.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study's methodology includes a thorough examination and analysis of the literature. The necessity to conclude prior research and scholarly conversations in order to contribute to the continuing discussion about changing educational goals to achieve sustainable development in the Global South is the basis for using this technique. A thorough analysis of peer-reviewed academic literature, policy papers, reports, and other publications from international organizations, governmental organizations, and educational institutions was required for the literature review portion of this study. Specific search strings and keywords were used, including "Sustainable Development Goals," "education for sustainability," "Global South," and "curriculum alignment" to find relevant sources from electronic and governmental databases, such as Google Scholar. To improve readers' understanding of the literature search process, examples of specific search strings, such as "Sustainable Development Goals in Global South curriculum," were utilized.

It is vital to note that the gathered material underwent a comprehensive review to extract major results, discover patterns, and investigate alternative viewpoints to increase the transparency of our technique. Utilizing the triangulation method, our findings' robustness was validated. Triangulation included systematically comparing and cross-referencing the literature review and content analysis findings. The validity and trustworthiness of our findings are increased by using the triangulation technique. For instance, we compared the outcomes of our content analysis and the literature study when examining how educational objectives and sustainable development in the Global South align. This procedure ensured that conclusions and emergent themes were supported by numerous information sources, thus enhancing our findings' validity.

While conducting a literature review and analysis are useful research techniques, it is important to be aware of any biases and potential limits that may be present. The uneven distribution of materials across various areas and themes is one potential drawback of a literature review. This can result in an inaccurate portrayal of the current literature. The thoroughness of the review could also be impacted by publication bias, which occurs when research with positive outcomes is more likely to be published (Ferrari, 2015). It is crucial to be aware of these limitations.

FINDINGS

The outcomes of this study have yielded pivotal insights into the intricate realm of harmonizing educational objectives with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Global South. This research has meticulously addressed and expounded upon four primary research concerns, delineated as follows:

- 1. Feasibility and Success of Tailoring Educational Curricula:** The research unequivocally affirms that not only is it plausible but also imperative to achieve sustainable development by customizing educational curricula to suit the contextual exigencies of the Global South. Propounding locally appropriate and culturally sensitive educational frameworks can significantly propel the realization of SDGs. Striking a delicate equilibrium between personalization and the steadfast alignment with overarching global sustainability objectives emerges as paramount. Such an approach ensures that sustainability education not only imparts individuals with pertinent skills but also capacitates them to actively contribute to the broader global sustainability agenda and foster equitable progress.
- 2. Integration of Sustainable Education and Green Practices:** The study emphasizes the profound significance of seamlessly embedding Sustainable Education and Green Practices within extant educational systems. Environmental and sustainability education have unequivocally enhanced students' comprehension of prevailing environmental challenges and their capacity to proffer viable solutions. This integration must permeate the educational curriculum, transcending the confines of a singular, isolated subject.

- 3. Challenges in the Global South:** This research diligently identified a spectrum of impediments to integrating the SDGs into the educational landscape of the Global South. These challenges encapsulate the dire need for increased funding to bolster educational infrastructure, address the pervasive issue of inadequate access to high-quality education, especially in rural hinterlands, and the critical imperative of respecting and incorporating indigenous knowledge and cultural traditions. Overcoming these formidable obstacles is crucial for enhancing sustainable development through education.
- 4. Stakeholder Recommendations:** The research has not only brought forth cogent insights but also proffered sagacious recommendations for stakeholders championing the cause of sustainable development through education. Government entities have been fervently implored to shape educational policies and judiciously allocate resources actively. Institutions of higher learning have been fervently urged to adapt and reshape their academic curricula and pedagogical strategies to align seamlessly with sustainability objectives. By acknowledging the expansive potential of international organizations in fostering collaboration, mobilizing resources, and facilitating knowledge dissemination, the study unequivocally underscores their indispensable Educators, recognized as frontline change catalysts, were rightfully underscored for their pivotal responsibility in inculcating sustainability awareness in pupils, underscoring the perpetual need for continuous teacher preparation.

CONCLUSION

This research underscores the critical necessity of harmonizing educational objectives with the Global South's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), offering profound perspectives on specific strategies and policies pivotal for fostering inclusive and high-quality education. It accentuates the adaptability of academic programs, integration of sustainability education, resolution of endemic challenges, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders. The study also underscores the importance of embracing cultural diversity and instituting robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Additionally, it emphasizes the exigency of enhancing teacher preparedness, efficient resource mobilization, integration of indigenous knowledge, cross-sector collaboration, and ensuring the enduring sustainability of educational initiatives in support of the SDGs. Ultimately, the common global aspiration for a sustainable and prosperous future necessitates the harmonious integration of education with the SDGs in the Global South—an endeavor not only plausible but also profoundly imperative. The insights from this research provide a foundational understanding and an invaluable roadmap for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in the Global South as they work towards aligning educational objectives with the SDGs, fostering sustainable development and societal progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings, stakeholders are proffering recommendations to foster sustainable development within educational institutions across the Global South. The ensuing suggestions are pivotal for strategically aligning educational goals with the ambit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- 1. Adaptation of Educational Curricula and Integration of Green Practices for Sustainable Education:** The imperative of tailoring educational curricula to local contexts while upholding alignment with global sustainability goals is resoundingly emphasized. Governments and educational institutions in the Global South are urged to meticulously calibrate educational frameworks, balancing personalization and adherence to the SDGs. Policymakers must advocate for flexible curricula infused with regionally pertinent content that addresses each locality's unique opportunities and challenges. Furthermore, it is imperative to deliberately integrate Green Practices and Sustainable Education across the educational landscape, permeating various domains beyond isolated subjects. This

multidisciplinary approach empowers students to comprehend environmental challenges and actively participate in devising sustainable solutions.

2. **Mitigating Educational Challenges in the Global South:** Addressing the pressing issue of inadequate educational infrastructure within the Global South is fundamental for educational alignment with the SDGs. Substantial investments by governments and international organizations are indispensable for the construction and refurbishment of classrooms, provision of safe and reliable transportation, and assurance of top-tier instructional materials. The dearth of adequate infrastructure is a formidable educational obstacle, particularly in remote and underserved regions. Overcrowded classrooms resulting from insufficient space impede effective learning, while unreliable transportation deters students from attending schools often situated far from their residences. Elevating access to high-quality instructional resources is vital to enhancing the efficiency of teaching and learning processes, contributing to economic growth via prioritized infrastructure development
3. **Stakeholder Collaboration:** The collaborative involvement of a diverse array of stakeholders—comprising governments, educational institutions, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), educators, and local communities—is quintessential to propel sustainable development through education within the Global South. Governments are entrusted with the crucial responsibility of formulating educational policies and judiciously allocating resources to prioritize sustainability goals. Creating an enabling policy environment and involving regional communities in decision-making is paramount. Simultaneously, educational institutions must exhibit proactive engagement by adapting curricula and pedagogical approaches to align seamlessly with sustainability objectives. Ongoing teacher development is essential to equip educators as dynamic agents of change. Cross-sector collaboration serves as a linchpin for information dissemination, resource mobilization, and the innovation of pioneering pedagogical strategies. Through unified efforts, stakeholders can substantially contribute to a sustainable and equitable future, amplifying the impact of endeavors to attain the SDGs.
4. **Respect for Cultural Diversity:** Acknowledging and embracing the multifaceted sociocultural tapestry of the Global South is pivotal for an effective and inclusive educational paradigm, transcending mere cultural awareness. Educational institutions, educators, and policymakers must collaborate in designing curricula that resonate with the diverse local knowledge, customs, and experiences shaping community identities. This approach positions education as a conduit for intergenerational bridging and the preservation of cultural heritage. Culturally relevant education, achieved through approachable and captivating curriculum content, enhances learning outcomes, fostering a robust sense of identity and belonging among students. By empowering students to embrace their cultural heritage while cultivating an understanding of diverse perspectives and customs, this pedagogical approach cultivates social cohesion, understanding, and unity across the Global South.
5. **Robust Monitoring and Evaluation:** Ensuring effective alignment of education in the Global South with the SDGs necessitates establishing rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems. Integral components of these mechanisms encompass routine assessments of student achievements, curriculum adaptability, and the infusion of sustainability themes. Comprehensive data collection and analysis enable stakeholders to glean invaluable insights into the progress and efficacy of educational initiatives. This data-driven decision-making framework facilitates the identification of effective strategies and areas for improvement. Additionally, it enables the swift identification and mitigation of emerging challenges. Moreover, such methods promote accountability and transparency, ensuring prudent utilization of funds and the agility of educational programs in catering to evolving student and community needs. By continuously monitoring and reviewing educational activities, the Global South can advance toward SDG attainment, thus propelling sustainable development through education.

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