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LOCAL AND GLOBAL PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES**

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## **Higher Education for Sustainability: A Global Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

The present study aims to study the essential role of higher education institutes in sustainability. Higher education organizations have an essential act in sustainability. They are key powers in the education of future directors that will cause the profitable Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) exercise. Higher education plays a crucial duty in forming the psychology and nature of future officers, which in proper sequence has a meaningful effect association's ability to solve these aims. The geopolitics of SDGs in this place of implementation is very miscellaneous, but it is clear that university organizations donate certainly to creating a psychology that speeds the distribution of SDG standards. This perspective paper studies the impacts of the university on sustainability and the challenges and obstacles that guide this process. Higher education provides decisively to the SDGs exercise, but particularly to Goal 1 (end want fully its forms far and wide), Goal 3 (guarantee athletic lives and advance welfare for all at all ages), Goal 5 (masculine similarity), Goal 8 (appropriate work and business-related growth), Goal 12 (mature use and result), Goal 13 (trend change) and Goal 16 (harmony, justice, and forceful organizations). As a life-changing power, the higher education subdivision has an overwhelming effect on undergraduates' habits and offerings to fortunate humankind. However, to organize the necessary change in education, sustainability law is expected to be basically a taller institution's plan and is



key to being included in the administrative idea. Only by the chief by example will the extrinsic influence in the organization be attainable (such as implementing SDGs key facets in the way that neuter condition, waste decline, and energy use). For this expected matter, various communication designs accompanying graduates are wanted. Nevertheless, detracting challenges need to begin in the organizations inside and outside the organization's surroundings, such as combining sustainability law, governmental atmosphere, and stakeholders' interests.

*Keywords:* higher education institutions, sustainability, organisational culture, communication

## **Introduction**

The global population is projected to reach 9.7 billion by 2050. To support the current levels of resource consumption, energy use, and waste production, around 2.3 planets Earth would be required. To reduce the ecological footprint is vital to produce more knowledge and find effective forms to effectively transfer the information created to the broader public to be implemented effectively.

In December 2002, it was declared the period from 2005-2014, the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development emphasized the importance of education to increase world sustainability. The overall objective was to integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning and to create a more sustainable future in terms of environmental integrity, economic viability, and just society for present and future generations.

This initiative was key to promoting global education for sustainability at all levels. Several vital advances were achieved under this strategy, such as the convergence between education and sustainability agendas, the inclusion of sustainability issues in education systems, the engagement of a large number of stakeholders, the increase of legal commitments, the inclusion of sustainability issues in the entire learning environment, the promotion of critical thinking, participatory and problem-based learning, and the integration of education for sustainability in formal education. Overall, after the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, there was an increase in the research focused on education for sustainability and high recognition in the international arena that education is key to sustainability and that many countries are committed to establishing a solid education for sustainable development.

In 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030. The aim of these seventeen goals is “*to secure a sustainable, peaceful, prosperous and equitable life on earth for everyone now and in the future*”. The report of the Open Working Group Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals highlights four “critical shifts” that made the fifteen-year period of the Millennial Development Goals different from the current period of the SDGs: “(i) a drastically higher human impact on the physical Earth; (ii) rapid technological change; (iii) increasing inequality; and (iv) a growing diffusion and complexity of governance”.

This perspective paper aims to overview the impact of higher education on sustainability, especially on

- the role of high education institutions in a sustainable world

- their relevance to achieving SDGs
- the challenges and barriers associated.

## **The Role of Higher Education Institutions in a Sustainable World**

### **The Importance of Higher Education for Sustainability**

Education is the driving force of establishing sustainability since it is one of the main communication vehicles and the basis for the “sustainability mindset”. This concept includes “*a systemic approach to understanding, one which goes beyond technical knowledge and even understanding the basics of a healthy ecosystem and a thriving society*”.

In last years a considerable number of works assessed the impacts of higher education in sustainability and, usually, higher education institutions are viewed as “changing agents” and “catalysts” in the development of sustainability-related issue. Overall, a sustainability-based education affects education contents and the associated process and outcomes.

Higher education institutions have a decisive impact on shaping mentalities. The impact of higher education in adult life has an average of fifty to sixty years after graduation. In society, this effect can continue for centuries.

Higher education institutions have a key role in the implementation of education for sustainability:

- teaching and research centres can improve sustainability by project development and incorporation of sustainability principles across the disciplines



- the practice carried out by different educators can influence broader opinions through outreach activities
- an institutional culture of sustainability increases the awareness of university staff, local and broader communities
- high education institutions are responsible for the formation of next-generation professionals, which will have a decisive impact on their different professional contexts and social engagements
- by implementing sustainable campus practices

### **High Education is a Key Aspect of Achieving Un Sustainable Development Goals**

The capacity of high education institutions to influence the transformation to a more sustainable society is tremendous. By considering sustainability principals, teachers and the students are actively working towards a sustainable world. Nevertheless, several challenges are essential to consider in high education future. Access to higher education increases students' skills and open their horizons regarding the different opportunities, which is key to find decent jobs. Higher education increases students' skills, entrepreneurship and capacity to have decent jobs. In the countries where higher education is consistently established, there is a more sustainable lifestyle, respect for human rights, gender equality, peace culture and global citizenship. Directly or indirectly, higher education is related to all the SDG's. Higher education institutions have a great responsibility for the achievement of all SDG's, through innovation, knowledge production and human capital formation.

## **Challenges and Barriers to Implementing Sustainability in Higher Education**

Numerous challenges and barriers at different levels affect the successful contribution of higher education to creating a sustainable future. Overall, without depth and fundamental change in the academic world, there is a threat that Universities will lose their essential role in research and knowledge. SDGs are forcing higher education institutions to change to respond to a world in crises. There is a need for a transformation in the attitude and ethical practices to solve our time's most critical challenges.

The effective implementation of sustainability policies is highly dependent on the willingness and commitment of the masses. The unwillingness and society lack of commitment could be explained because the investments required for implementing sustainable policies are often perceived as a barrier, while the benefits are overlooked.

Colleges and universities need to adhere to external influences, such as stakeholders. The complexity of the matter can be summarised by the fact that universities are expected to follow two very different paths: market logic, *“which means that they need to be responsive to external pressures and expectations stemming from increased competition, accreditation, funding, etc.”* and state logic, *“which means that they need to be accountable to society and create public value for current and future students and other stakeholders”*

## **Conclusion**

Higher education institutions have a great responsibility to form future sustainability leaders and support the ambitious SDGs targets implementation. Sustainability is also an

essential aspect of a university's reputation and prestige globally. Higher education establishes the mindset of adult people and is considered a “changing agent” towards sustainability development. Nevertheless, the geography of mindset change is not equal, and not all have equal access to higher education. Despite this, it is clear that there are several indicators associated with higher education levels, such as low employment vulnerability, mortality rate under 5 and low pollution, on the one hand, and high access to clean energy, the participation of woman in higher education and external commerce. Besides, higher education contributes to high paid jobs.

Higher education institutions need to be drivers of a culture change and develop curricula based on sustainability principles. This start at the campus, where the culture of university staff is key to alumni transformation. For this, proper and tailored communication is needed for different audiences. Overall, education is the basis for the achievement of all the SDGs and have an essential contribution to the formation of society willing to support different SDGs aspects (e.g., global citizenship, gender equality, respect for human rights). Despite the key role in social transformation, several challenges and barriers need to be tackled inside the higher education institutions (e.g., curricula, ethical principles) and externally (e.g., different type of audiences, political environment, stakeholders' interest), that need to be tackled for the realisation of the world that we want.

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