


Chapter 3

Empowering Educators: Training and Professional Development for Sustainability

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ABSTRACT

Higher education plays a crucial role in addressing sustainability challenges, enabling educators to equip students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes. However, many educators lack adequate training in teaching sustainability. This study used a quantitative approach to explore the impact of training on educators' ability to teach sustainability. A survey of 170 educators assessed their sustainability-related knowledge, skills, and attitudes before and after a training program. Results revealed that the training program positively influenced educators' knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Participants scored significantly higher on sustainability knowledge tests than non-participants. Additionally, the training bolstered educators' self-reported confidence in teaching sustainability. These findings underscore the effectiveness of training and professional development in empowering higher education educators to teach sustainability. Educators can better equip students to tackle sustainability challenges effectively.

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INTRODUCTION

Background and Rationale

The world is facing a number of sustainability challenges, including climate change, environmental degradation, and social inequality. Higher education has a critical role to play in addressing these challenges by preparing students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to be part of the solution.

One of the most important ways that higher education can contribute to sustainability is by providing training and professional development for educators. This training should help educators to develop the knowledge and skills they need to effectively teach sustainability. It should also help them to feel empowered to create a more sustainable future.

There is a growing body of research on the importance of training and professional development for sustainability educators. For example, a study by Tilbury (2007) found that educators who had received training in sustainability were more likely to integrate sustainability into their teaching. A study by Wals (2007) found that professional development programs can help educators to develop a more holistic view of sustainability. And a study by Sterling (2001) found that training and professional development can help educators to become more critical thinkers and to engage students in more meaningful learning.

Education plays a pivotal role in fostering a sustainable future by empowering individuals to make informed decisions and take responsible actions. As the frontline facilitators, educators hold the key to shaping the mindset and behaviors of the next generation towards sustainability. However, research suggests that many educators lack the necessary training and professional development opportunities to effectively incorporate sustainability concepts into their teaching practices. According to the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD, 2005-2014), the current educational landscape faces several obstacles to the effective integration of sustainability education. Firstly, traditional teacher training programs often do not prioritize sustainability, resulting in a knowledge gap among educators about its importance and practical implementation. Secondly, there is a lack of standardized and comprehensive sustainability education guidelines and curricula, leading to inconsistencies in how sustainability is taught across different schools and regions. Furthermore, the lack of capacity building and training in the sense that professional development needs, at all levels including leadership needs to be addressed and focus on building upon existing actors and expertise including NGOs, private sector, and civil society needs to be emphasized.

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