


Chapter 4


University Functions and Sustainable Practices: A Path to a Greener Future

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ABSTRACT

The significance of sustainability in higher education cannot be emphasized as the globe struggles with issues of social inequality, environmental degradation, and climate change. Universities are essential in advancing sustainable practices because of their operations, community involvement, research, and teaching. Thus, the objective of this chapter was to discuss university functions in the light of sustainable practices and how this can be a pathway to greener future for the university and society at large. The authors articulated that the universities have an obligation to give students the values, information, and abilities they need to tackle sustainability issues. Although adopting sustainable methods has numerous advantages, it was

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opined that there are drawbacks that must be considered as well. In conclusion, universities have a big role to play in encouraging sustainable habits, and their sustainability efforts can bring about positive change and create a greener future.

1 INTRODUCTION

The need for sustainable development is more critical than ever, with global environmental issues such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, pollution, and depletion of resources posing significant threats to both human and ecological health (Gabriela et al., 2018; Barnett-Itzhaki et al., 2025; Muluneh, 2021; Shivanna, 2022). In response, the United Nations, in September 2015, established a groundbreaking set of global objectives aimed at addressing the most urgent challenges faced by humanity (United Nation, 2015). These 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a comprehensive framework for addressing major global issues, including poverty, inequality, climate change, and the pursuit of peace, while promoting prosperity and ensuring the sustainability of the environment (United Nations, 2015). The SDGs represent a universal call to action to enhance the well-being of all people while protecting the planet. They are organized into targets and indicators that assess progress toward specific goals (United Nations, 2015). The interconnected nature of the SDGs tackles diverse issues such as education, health, gender equality, environmental protection, access to clean water, and the pursuit of sustainable economic growth (Sokan-Adeaga et al., 2018).

Nonetheless, there is still a lack of sustainability and a desire for short-term intra-generational equity, sustainable development has gradually evolved from an ambiguous definition to a global action with greater practical wisdom. From standard goals that focused on ecological sustainability to the Millennium Development Goals and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, today, the goal of sustainable development has become more inclusive and universal. Additionally, considering local cultural aspects, strengthening governance capacity, and putting more emphasis on life support systems are all crucial elements in promoting long-term growth (Shi et al., 2019). Whether these changes were imposed from the top down or perhaps developed more slowly from the bottom up through the daily activities of ordinary people as they adapted to their unique environments and needs, the UN system and other decision- and policy-makers have started to recognize that, historically, all human development has depended on shifting social norms and cultures (Millard, 2017). In addition to strong public and corporate support, the UN now acknowledges the necessity of social innovation techniques as a mainstream way to accomplish sustainable development (Adeyemi and Sokan-Adeaga, 2024).

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