

UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

INNOVATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHING AND LEARNING

Series Editor: Patrick Blessinger

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INNOVATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHING
AND LEARNING VOLUME 20

UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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SERIES EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

INNOVATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHING AND LEARNING

The purpose of this series is to publish current research and scholarship on innovative teaching and learning practices in higher education. The series is developed around the premise that teaching and learning are more effective when instructors and students are actively and meaningfully engaged in the teaching–learning process.

The main objectives of this series are to:

- (1) present how innovative teaching and learning practices are being used in higher education institutions around the world across a wide variety of disciplines and countries;
- (2) present the latest models, theories, concepts, paradigms, and frameworks that educators should consider when adopting, implementing, assessing, and evaluating innovative teaching and learning practices; and
- (3) consider the implications of theory and practice on policy, strategy, and leadership.

This series will appeal to anyone in higher education who is involved in the teaching and learning process from any discipline, institutional type, or nationality. The volumes in this series will focus on a variety of authentic case studies and other empirical research that illustrates how educators from around the world are using innovative approaches to create more effective and meaningful learning environments.

Innovation teaching and learning is any approach, strategy, method, practice, or means that has been shown to improve, enhance, or transform the teaching–learning environment. Innovation involves doing things differently or in a novel way in order to improve outcomes. In short, innovation is positive change. With respect to teaching and learning, innovation is the implementation of new or improved educational practices that result in improved educational and learning outcomes. This innovation can be any positive change related to teaching, curriculum, assessment, technology, or other tools, programs, policies, or processes that lead to improved educational and learning outcomes. Innovation can occur in institutional development, program development, professional development, or learning development.

The volumes in this series will not only highlight the benefits and theoretical frameworks of such innovations through authentic case studies and other empirical research but also look at the challenges and contexts associated with

implementing and assessing innovative teaching and learning practices. The volumes represent all disciplines from a wide range of national, cultural, and organizational contexts. The volumes in this series will explore a wide variety of teaching and learning topics such as active learning, integrative learning, transformative learning, inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, meaningful learning, blended learning, creative learning, experiential learning, lifelong and lifewide learning, global learning, learning assessment and analytics, student research, faculty and student learning communities, as well as other topics.

This series brings together distinguished scholars and educational practitioners from around the world to disseminate the latest knowledge on innovative teaching and learning scholarship and practices. The authors offer a range of disciplinary perspectives from different cultural contexts. This series provides a unique and valuable resource for instructors, administrators, and anyone interested in improving and transforming teaching and learning.

Series Editors

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FOREWORD

Education for sustainable development (ESD) is now an international trend. Thousands of colleges and universities globally are including sustainable development (SD) in courses, as majors and minors, and as graduate degrees. While this trend is positive, more progress is needed. Partnerships are key to creating this progress.

Higher education's mission includes preparing students to help create a better society. Colleges and universities can fulfill this mission by researching and teaching SD pathways for environmental, social, and economic responsibility, and by helping students learn how to engage in sustainability solutions in their adult roles as community members, workers, and consumers. The extent to which higher education embraces the sustainable development goals (SDGs) may determine the quality of life that all humanity enjoys in the decades ahead. The habitability of the planet and the suffering of hundreds of millions of people if not billions are at stake.

From developmental psychology, we know young children first participate in solitary play, then parallel play, and finally, collaborative play. The same pattern has occurred in the emerging world of ESD. Many people initially worked as the solitary sustainability champion on campus, with enthusiasm, but without collaboration for a larger and more impactful plan. As individual colleges and universities developed sustainability initiatives, there was little collaboration between institutions and almost no collaboration with other societal sectors. Parallel play was occurring as the sectors of business, government, education, and non-profits developed their own sustainability initiatives but rarely reached out to each other. Redundancies occurred as similar tools and analyses developed in the separate sectors and synergies were lost. Humans do not have the time or the luxury to be so redundant and inefficient. Our societal sustainability challenges are too great. Our timelines to create solutions to prevent massive human suffering is too short.

Higher education has a unique and important role to play in the creation of a more sustainable society, and this role requires quality collaborative structures and incentive systems across all sectors of society. Partnerships between higher education and government, non-profits and businesses are key to creating these collaborative synergies and scaling up the pace of sustainability implementation.

Students and staff are generally aware that we are exceeding the carrying capacity of the planet and our ecosystems are degrading. After learning about our sustainability challenges, including but not limited to climate change, students often feel worried and disempowered. The components of a quality sustainability education include promoting understanding beyond doom and gloom; focusing on potential solutions; and empowering students with knowledge, skills, and informed attitudes to produce systems change.

Students need to learn how to be change agents for systems change. These change agent skills include the abilities to: create a shared vision of sustainability with

multiple stakeholders, understand formal and informal power structures to identify leverage points for change, build coalitions of support, manage the momentum and emotional climate of a change effort, and institutionalize the changes for long-term impacts. These skills cannot be just described; skill development takes practice. High-impact learning practices have long identified that students learn most when they learn by doing. Universities need to help students move beyond doom and gloom by including in their curricula and co-curricular activities multiple real-world, problem-solving opportunities, so students learn how to help create sustainability solutions. Partnerships are key to providing these opportunities.

Examples abound of universities infusing real-world, problem-solving opportunities about sustainability into curricula, co-curricula, professional development, standards (e.g., tenure, promotion, and accreditation criteria), informing legislation, and community education about how to help create a sustainable future. The challenge is now to move from exciting examples to establishing these practices as the new norm in higher education. If we don't do this, higher education risks wasting the opportunity we have to solve our urgent sustainability challenges and threatens increased and unnecessary human suffering and irreversible ecosystem damage.

To scale up the use of university–community partnerships as the part of this new norm, there are a few crucial components that have to be addressed. Professional development and support are needed for faculty and support staff to create quality partnerships with clearly defined roles and scope for partnership success. Recognition toward tenure needs to include publishing in applied journals and publishing in venues designed to assist/empower the practitioners in the community in addition to peer-reviewed journal articles. To incorporate the teaching of (sustainability related) change agent skills and mindsets into curricula, development of new course-learning outcomes and standards for the major are required.

The chapters of this book reflect the need for these crucial components.

This book also helps identify the main actors to institutionalize university and community quality partnerships. At the campus, these changes can be made and facilitated by the provost, student services, faculty, the sustainability office, department chairs, civic engagement staff, the co-curricular student affairs, and housing officers and staff. At the national and international systems levels, the changes can occur within the academic societies and at the accreditation level for both undergraduate and graduate programs. Journal editors have a particularly important role to play to connect effectively with practitioners working on the front edge of the SDGs, identifying the issues to be addressed and highlighting those topics regularly into journal issues.

The chapter authors provide examples and key insights about how to create successful partnerships. This book will inspire sustainability champions throughout higher education. More importantly, may this book inspire the scaling up of these ideas to the establishment of new norms that help higher education reach its fuller potentials. The need to attain these potentials is beyond a wish; it is a societal necessity.

Debra Rowe

PART I

INSTITUTIONALIZING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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INTRODUCTION TO UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Enakshi Sengupta, Patrick Blessinger and
Tasir Subhi Yamin

ABSTRACT

The aim of sustainable development goals (SDGs) announced in 2015 by United Nations was to ensure that all students and scholars are being able to acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development. The role of higher education is important when it comes to educating students in sustainability and sustainable developments. Universities can have a great influence on achieving social and economic progress of a country as well as protecting the environment and addressing complex issues that plague society. The role of universities is not only restricted to exchange of knowledge but also in playing a leading role as an active member of society. Universities have come out of their isolation to accommodate and be a part of social change and actively engage in community's life and activities and not being confined to only classrooms and laboratories. Universities need to work closely with industry and non-governmental and non-profit bodies to identify the needs of society and address them productively and work toward achieving common goals and objectives. In this book, authors have explored various facets of SDGs and how well universities have been able to integrate those goals into their curriculum and to institutionalize those goals into their strategic plans and institutional culture. Authors from Nigeria, sub Saharan Africa, Italy, and Middle East have elaborated how to achieve this in the face of shifting expectations, student debt, and graduate mobility. As a result, this volume shows how some universities are cultivating SDGs both on- and off campus.

Keywords: Sustainable development; sustainability; university partnership; higher education; research; economic progress; social development; environment; industry partnership; students; social change

INTRODUCTION

The sustainable development goals (SDGs) announced by United Nation in 2015 provided a common ground and a framework which was adopted by 193 countries with 169 targets to be achieved which were divided among 17 goals ([European University Association, 2016](#)). These goals were all aimed at reducing poverty, saving the existing planet, and ushering in prosperity by 2030. International bodies agreed in unison that they will work toward achieving such goals. Access to quality education is one of the means of achieving sustainable development and that is possible only through access to higher education which helps facilitates social mobility, empowers people through their ability to think critically and make ethically based judgments, and provides the younger generation with the tools and skills they need in a rapidly changing labor market.

Universities can promote sustainable development through the goals specified in 2015. Universities provide cutting-edge research, high-quality education, and ground-breaking innovations (Goal 4 and 9). Strong universities are an important part of civil society (Goal 16) and they are excellent promoters of global and local partnerships (Goal 17). Through their contributions to these four goals, universities facilitate the achievement of all the other goals ([European University Association, 2016](#)).

Universities have helped students to understand science and develop a scientific mind-set with a bend toward entrepreneurship to help solve some of the pertinent issues required for sustainable development. University researchers, students, and teachers are expected to work in partnership with the public and private sectors and civil society to cocreate knowledge to provide solutions toward reduction of poverty and saving the planet. These core efforts that are ingrained in a university give it a cutting edge to achieve the SDGs. Many universities are beginning to adopt the SDG goals and make them part of their institutional strategies both in teaching methods and in implementing their research agendas. Sustainable campus management is also taking precedence over traditional methods and is now considered a responsibility of the university. Energy-saving methods, efficient allocation of resources, zero wastage, and end of the pipe solutions are now a part of the infrastructure and institutional policies and a key stakeholder issue that involves both internal and external stakeholders of the university.

The International Association of Universities has called on all universities to undertake a more decisive role in imparting knowledge on sustainability and take a proactive role in the driving process toward achieving a more sustainable future. Contribution of higher education toward sustainability is not only through its institutional practices but also through its curriculum. Education can be a powerful tool toward social change and poverty reduction through job creation and job allocation. Proper education creates health awareness and societal benefits from being healthy and working toward general well-being of everyone. Medical institutions and university hospitals create awareness on health-related issues, facilitate research, and play a key role in public healthcare system. A new generation of trained healthcare professionals provides care to millions and finds innovative

solution toward the prevention of diseases ([European University Association, 2016](#)). Universities have undertaken extensive research to save the ecosystem and maintain an eco-balance. Research conducted by students helps students understand the developments of climate change and global warming and in identifying trade-offs to balance SDG goals. Therefore, the partnership between universities and civil society is crucial in promoting SDGs.

The Association of Commonwealth Universities, the Agence universitaire de la Francophonie, and the International Association of Universities at the UN High-level Political Forum on sustainable development held in July 2019 emphasized that the United Nations' SDGs such as the internationally agreed framework for tackling poverty, inequality, disease, and climate change will remain unachieved without the involvement and contribution of higher education through research, teaching, and community engagement ([Malley, 2019](#)). During a High-level Political Forum organized by the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative, the three higher education organizations having representation of more than 2,000 different universities globally voiced the cause to champion the importance of higher education for the SDGs and call for partnerships within and beyond the sector to achieve the goals.

[Blessinger, Sengupta, and Makhanya \(2018\)](#) argued that sustainable development not only deals with environmental issues, but concerns itself with economic, social, and cultural issues as well. Societies have been burdened with increasing demand along with the environment for various reasons such as increased human migration, increased urbanization, and industrialization coupled with ongoing depletion of non-renewable resources. There has been an urgent call for global action which is needed to create a more sustainable future. Higher education as a knowledge provider can serve as a powerful means to help create a more sustainable future. Thus, the concept of "education for sustainable development" has taken precedence as one of the core educational initiatives to help address the problems associated with human development in a sustainable manner. Higher education's role in creating a sustainable future will assume a greater importance as the world continues to become increasingly globalized and interdependent. Thus, students in institutes of higher education should be trained to cultivate critical and creative thinking skills, engage in authentic interdisciplinary learning activities, and help develop a value system that emphasizes responsibility to self, others, and the planet.

The International Higher Education Teaching and Learning Association supports the SDG initiative and encourages heads of non-profit colleges and universities, associations, and institutes to sign the Declaration on University Global Engagement and adopt the SDGs as a framework for organizing their global engagement activities to address complex global challenges.

The declaration expresses a commitment to global engagement through a series of actions, including:

- developing the global competence of all students so they have the skills to productively engage with individuals from different cultural and national backgrounds;

- increasing students' understanding of the most pressing economic, social, and environmental challenges facing the world today;
- significantly increasing students' physical and virtual mobility across nations so that many more students experience realities outside their domestic contexts and deepen their understanding of challenges and opportunities in other parts of the world;
- committing to cross-border and cross-sector research, knowledge sharing, and innovation in collaboration with institutions' public and private stakeholders in pursuit of novel solutions to the SDGs; and
- communicating publicly about the progress and importance of higher education's global engagement.

The ability to continually learn and to pass the product of that learning (knowledge and skills) to future generations is what has allowed humans to progress politically, economically, socially, and technologically.

In short, the development of modern democracies, universal educational systems, and universal rights has allowed societies to evolve very rapidly. In contemporary society, the one type of renewable resource that is also needed for continued human progress is the resource of lifelong learning (Blessinger, Sengupta, & Yamin, 2018).

Irina Bokova, former director-general of UNESCO, put it this way:

We are convinced that in a world full of limitations – in terms of our resources and our means – humanity can count on the renewable resources of its intelligence, creativity and ingenuity. This wealth, fostered by the moral requirement to respect the rights and dignity of each individual, represents an infinite source of progress.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been several attempts to define the concept of sustainable development, but the most widely accepted definition has been the one that appeared in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development by Brundtland, which was published in 1987, and it states that sustainable development is one that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland Commission, 1987). Academics have made different interpretation of sustainable development and one of the common one is the one based on three pillars of economy, environment, and society (Parkin, 2000). While the study of three dimensions is equally important in most cases, it has been seen that the environment dimension is highlighted and in some the social dimension is overrated (Salzmann, Jonescu-Somer, & Steger, 2005). Other dimensions such as that of cultural and institutional can be found in several literature (Pfahl, 2005).

The contribution of education, mainly higher education, toward achieving sustainable development has been agreed by all. UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development emphasized the requirement of education toward sustainable development, which means including key sustainable development

issues in the paradigm of teaching and learning (Lindberg, 2005). UNESCO (Resolution 57/254 United Nations General Assembly) has urged to mobilize educational resources to develop a sustainable future (Mula & Tilbury, 2009). In universities, the importance of sustainable development and its inculcation through different activities at colleges and universities is becoming mandatory and a commitment which is being recognized by universities all around the world. In Europe, the European University Association has created the Cooperation Program in Europe for Research on Nature and Industry through Coordinated University Studies (COPERNICUS) program, which published the University Charter for Sustainable Development in 1994. The charter was endorsed by 520 European universities:

universities should train the coming generations of citizens and have expertise in all fields of research, both in technology as well as in the natural, human and social sciences. It is consequently their duty to propagate environmental literacy and to promote the practice of environmental ethics in society. (Filho, Manolas, & Pace, 2015, p. 129)

Even after all good intentions, the notion of global sustainable development still remains a major challenge for colleges and universities to fully integrate it into their mainstream teaching and learning goals and processes.

The Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE) in 2002 created a working group focused on environmental quality and sustainable development. The purpose of this group was to introduce sustainable development in universities not only in the academic but also at the institutional level. The conference wanted to introduce the concept in a holistic manner so that students are well aware of sustainability and its application throughout their professional career. Curriculum in higher education tends to undertake an isolated viewpoint (Lozano, 2010). Hence, efforts are being undertaken by some institutes of higher education to incorporate sustainable development in a holistic manner, which will help prepare students to address complex global problems.

CONCLUSION

Global apex bodies are trying to integrate sustainability at all levels in the universities including their strategic plans. Yet a lot needs to be done. The collaborative work between industry and university partnership is still a poorly explored terrain. Creation of channels that can help in coordinate and cooperate between different universities and simultaneously fostering an industry partnership will help in the flow of knowledge and sharing of experience that will ultimately result in general well-being. A spirit of innovation needs to be adopted by the institutes of higher education to create a knowledge base that will solve the issues of sustainability. Universities need to create a holistic curriculum with a vision toward the future that will train the students and make them ready for the future. The role of higher education is undeniable when it comes to educating students in sustainability and sustainable developments. Universities can have a great influence on achieving social and economic progress of a country, saving the environment, and addressing complex issues that are plaguing society. The role of universities is not

restricted to mere exchange of knowledge but is taking on a more complex role as an active member of society. By and large, universities have come out of their isolation to accommodate and be a part of social change and actively engage in community life and activities and not being confined to only classrooms and laboratories. Universities need to work closely with industry and non-governmental and non-profit bodies to identify the needs of the society and address them productively and work toward achieving common goals and objectives.

CHAPTER OVERVIEWS

“Globalization and Sustainable Development in Nigeria: Integrating Cooperativism into University–Society Partnerships” by Ajibola Anthony Akanji talks about globalization that comes with gains–contents and losses–discontents. In response to agitations from losses–discontent, the Brundtland Report 1987 gave birth to what unarguably is the most resounding concept on sustainable development. The Report majors the integration of the concerns about strands of development as experienced and projected across divides, and concerns about their interrelationship and effects on people and the environment. It seeks to reconcile the future with current development. This materialized into the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in January 2000, which metamorphosed into the SDGs in January 2016. The bulk of the SDGs is to be achieved in the global south as countries within this categorization including Nigeria have more to do within their territories in its actualization. A major challenge in Nigeria is how to institutionalize the mobilization for the actualization. Against this backdrop, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) was launched to bring on board academic institutions, civil societies, non-governmental organizations, and businesses, and mobilize their activities into fewer but more efficient units. Therefore, this chapter contextually explored the purpose and roles of the SDSN in Nigeria and conceptualized how it is to play out for both sustainable development and qualitative participation in globalization. It identified and explored the interface between the three variables of universities: cooperativism; cooperatives, cooperation, and solidarity economics; and communities as integral to the actualization of the SDGs, and proportionate participation in globalization. Deficiencies were identified and remedial actions proffered.

“University Partnership for Sustainable Development” by Cătălin Popescu and Lazăr Avram speaks about universities having a difficult mission to adapt continuously their knowledge, the personnel abilities, and qualifications to the challenges posed by a complicated global context: the depletion of primary energy resources, increased environmental pollution, uncontrolled industrial development, technical and technological evolution, lack of water and food, demographic explosion, poverty in many areas of the planet, and the struggle for obtaining conventional primary resources. In such a situation, local or regional or even global punctual solutions can help to create the premises for sustainable development. That is why to make known the experience and good practices generated by implementing an international project carried out within an academic partnership between