

# Education and Awareness Creation on Sustainability Practices, the Role of Teachers in Business Schools

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**Abstract:-** The aim of the research paper is to understand the role of teachers in business schools in enforcing sustainability practices in their respective schools with concentration on curriculum design, teaching in the classrooms and providing support and encouragement to their students to actively make sustainability a part in their day-to-day activities since they will graduate from schools to join societies. There are a lot of campaigns and advocacy by the international community and governments like the USA, UK, and the EU with respect to sustainability and its practices, the problem is whether, these advocacies could translate into equal levels of acceptance by the faculty members and reflect in student's enrollment, addressing this dilemma could help solve sustainability challenges in societies and industries as well. The researcher seeks to make clarity on the need for proper collaboration on curriculum designs, and full commitment by faculty members in business schools on sustainability. In lieu of this, clear suggestions and recommendations are presented at the conclusion part based on a case study analysis of Australian universities. The stakes of sustainability in UK universities were also taken into consideration in a report by the People and Planet Universities League. It is therefore recommended that; all stakeholders should accept, collaborate, and encourage students to enroll in studying programs relating to sustainability and its practices in building a better society for the benefit of the majority and save our planet.

**Keywords:-** Sustainability Practices, Sustainable Development Goals, Curriculum Design, Student Enrolment.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In recent times, pandemics and economic crisis has taught corporations around the world lessons with respect to sustainability practices and thus to remain relevant in business, corporate organizations need to prioritize, incorporate sustainable practices and actions into their corporate strategy to remain competitive and survive. (Fowler and Hope,2007)

This implies that, the onus of responsibility lies with teachers in business schools in encouraging their students to practice sustainability, focusing on the relevance of curriculum design, creating awareness and advocacy in their respective schools as they prepare their students for the world of work.(Springett, 2010;A.Barber et al 2014) This

will help in achieving proper shared value for both shareholders and stakeholders who have direct or indirect interest in the operations of a specific business unit. (Friedman,2007)

Practicing sustainability has become very challenging in the world today, of which Business schools are no exception. It is therefore relevant for teachers in business schools to set clear examples in teaching and encouraging students to be well equipped in embracing practical sustainable principles whiles in school, to serve as a motivation to all stakeholders in their effort to protect the planet, since sustainability is practice driven. Neglecting sustainability and its practices in our daily lives would mean putting the lives of many including biodiversity at risk meaning waste, emissions, irresponsible usage of energy, carbon, and environmental footprints would be on the rise. (Foo and Tan 2016; Denedo et al 2019). In lieu of this background, the research question will be:

**What role(s) do teachers play in helping to design a practice-based curriculum, that could encourage and train business students on sustainability practices in saving the planet for the benefit of societies?**

## II. DEFINITION OF SUSTAINABILITY

According to the Brundtland Commission (WCED)1987" sustainability is defined as meeting the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs". Emphasis on sustainability is normally laid on individuals, societies, businesses, and corporate bodies to be careful with their actions and practices in protecting the planet for the benefits of the majority. (Pearce and Atkinson 1998; Gray and Bebbington,2000).

### ➤ *Concepts of Sustainability*

Sustainability considers the social, environmental and governance paradigms of corporate bodies and how these measures create value for the benefits of the majority. These dimensions of sustainability clearly tread on the triple bottom line theory which is about the people, planet, and profit (3P, s) in connecting the environment and social wellbeing of the people, a responsibility for the benefits of the majority. It can be argued from the point of view that, despite the growing campaign about sustainability practices, there is the need for teachers in business schools to be on deck in finding absolute solutions through proper teaching and learning procedures. (Elkington,2004). This is possible

when students are properly enrolled in specific sustainable areas of study and are exposed to their responsibilities at an early stage in helping to make the world a better place.

### III. CURRICULUM DESIGN BY TEACHERS ON SUSTAINABILITY

According to UNESCO 'curriculum is a description of what, why, how, and how well students should learn in a systematic and intentional way. Indeed, curriculum is not an end but rather a means to fostering quality teaching and learning in students in an educational institution.

Curriculum therefore carries educational ideas, that are carried out by facilitators in an educational institution, an idea which helps in developing what is to be taught by teachers including values, beliefs and standards which will help shape the perspectives of learners. (Smith, 2010). It is in this background that, calls for curriculum integration is needed an option that specifically deals with subjects, that are closely related to individual perceptions, norms, and attitudes about the environment. This indeed will help both schools and individual learners in their capacity in contributing their quota to SDG, s and sustainability. Curriculum can also serve as a panacea in dealing with sustainable practices and its challenges, a responsibility that teachers need to encourage in helping students to learn international best practices about the environment, this responsibility cannot be neglected. (Galea, 2017) The mentioned are only possible if sustainability becomes an integral part of the curriculum design and student life. One of the key functions of curriculum is that it indicates the steps in between, the role of learners in achieving set objectives using their cognitive, emotional, and physical abilities, an indication of making them responsible through proper instructional design (Briggs, 1991; O'Neill, 2015).

### IV. TEACHING SUSTAINABILITY IN BUSINESS SCHOOLS

According to UNESCO, there are 235 million students enrolled in universities around the world. (UNESCO, 2008). These students will graduate to join societies and the working population in contributing their quota to the success of the mentioned. (Walker, 2016; Lubin and Esty 2010), it is therefore advisable for teachers in business schools to lay emphasis on the roles of the younger generation especially those under their supervision, in adhering to best environmental practices, since sustainability is practice driven and needs to be embraced by the learners. (Von Der Heidt and Lamberton, 2011)

It is of no doubt that, teachers in business schools have a responsibility in the classroom to help students get prepared for the tasks ahead of them on sustainability and clearly teach with examples to make an impact after students graduate to join the working population. Obviously, this achievement can only start from the classroom when much emphasis is laid on sustainability because teachers are seen to have both direct or indirect influence on subjects and students as well. (Shah et al 2022)

### ➤ Awareness and Advocacy on Sustainability Amongst Students

Awareness creation, which involves community engagement and advocacy on sustainability can be in the form of innovation, adopted by faculty members in collaboration with students' associations, thus actively engaging in school and community-based activities like tree planting, education, campaign on proper waste collection and disposal. (O'Meara et al 2011) These are very significant activities in communities and can be achieved when students are encouraged by teachers to actively participate in school and community-based activities in creating awareness and addressing challenges of specific environmental practices and its repercussions on the citizenry. (Saltmarsh, 2017; Garrecht, et al 2018) In doing this, it will foster good relationship between the community and the specific schools this is likely to contribute to building trust between the schools, community, and other stakeholders in fighting unsustainable practices. (Denedo et al 2019)

### V. AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES APPROACH TO SUSTAINABILITY

Between 2008 and 2010, the campaign to engage all stakeholders especially those in the education sector into having a positive perception about the environment in Australia has increased, it was realized that the transition to sustainability can start from business schools whose core duty is to train students for the community. It is a fact that, most of the populace accepts this assertion, but the question that remains unanswered is the readiness of the business schools in Australia to take up this responsibility and make it reflect in their enrollment and other sustainability related activities in preparing students for careers in sustainability. (Shah et al 2022; Bar et al 2008) The transition to sustainability, therefore, will represent a major shift in public thinking and in business practice taking into consideration students' enrolment in Australia, available data shows that only one third of students are enrolled in Business Management and Business-related disciplines, a figure that is growing around 4% Per Annum on average. It is also indicated in the study that mixed programs of study, including other disciplines that are related to sustainability in Australian universities are experiencing an abysmal growth of about 43% p.a. According to the Australian Department of Education, Skills and Employment, this growth is significant, in both private and public universities, but stakeholders need to do more to incorporate sustainability into their academic calendar in encouraging a lot of students pursuing the subject in question. (Tilbury et al 2005; Von Der Heidt and Lamberton, 2011).

### ➤ Enrolment Statistics of Australian Universities on Sustainability

The table below shows the aggregation of students enrolled in both undergraduate and graduate programs from 2008 to 2010 relating to data available on sustainability in Australian universities.

Table 1 The Aggregation of Students Enrolled in Both Undergraduate and Graduate Programs from 2008 To 2010

Level	Subjects	Years		
		2010	2009	2008
Undergraduates	Ethics and Sustainability	467	503	511
	Sustainable Business Management	71	87	42
Graduates	Managing Sustainable Organizations	2	8	NA
	Critical Issues in Management	20	32	50

Source: Von der Heidt and Lamberton (2011).

The report above clearly identifies a dilemma on the number of students enrolled in sustainable related programs in Australian universities and the number of students completing sustainability units from 2008 to 2010. The study indicated a decline in enrolment of specific business-related subjects at the universities. An example of this is the decrease in undergraduate subjects in Ethics and Sustainability from 511 to 467 between 2008 to 2010 and even worse on the part of graduate subjects taken into consideration the figures listed in the table above. This is likely to have a replicated effect on the planet and the people as well, when it comes to sustainability and its practices like waste, environmental carbon footprints, emission, and pollution control which is supposed to be keen in students' life. The situation is even worse when there are no records of student pursuing sustainability related courses or as part of school's curriculum at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, a clear indication of lack or low motivation from stakeholders like teachers and faculty members in dealing with the problem. (Budihardjo, 2021, Von Der Heidt and Lamberton, 2011, Bar et al, 2008).

A challenge which needs to be dealt with is how students can engage or campaign in their various communities on sustainable practices if they are not enrolled in the subject or offered a program relating to sustainability in helping them gain interest in the subject matter. (Fisher and Bonn, 2011) This situation identifies a gap in enrollment, at the colleges and business schools in Australia, a threat to sustainable development, students on their part may be motivated or interested in reading sustainability related courses at the schools. (Eagle et al, 2015). However, given the low enrolment levels in Australian colleges and universities, there is a strong indication that, most business schools are lagging on sustainability focus, which is likely to have a negative impact on societies and corporations where students may find themselves after graduation (Fisher and Bonn, 2011)

## VI. EFFORTS BY THREE UK UNIVERSITIES TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY AND ITS PRACTICES

In the UK, one of the students campaigning networks, People and Planet, an organization that encourages sustainable practices in societies and schools ranked 154 UK universities on sustainability in 2021. This is based on programs offered at the various universities, enrollment, and community engagements in reducing environmental carbon

footprints, achieving sustainability targets and strategies. (Latter and Capstick, 2021).

Three universities that had higher scores in sustainability related issues are Manchester university, Kings College, and Nottingham Trent University.

Manchester University is ranked with a high score of 86.3% and according to the Vice Chancellor of the University, Professor Malcolm Press, the University's efforts are on research, designing carbon literacy program and incorporating climate education into the school's curriculum including a construction of £4.1 million hydrogen fuel cell innovation Centre to produce sustainable fuels for the larger community in helping to achieve zero carbon emissions.

With respect to Kings College, Professor Shitij Kapur the president of the College laid emphasis on the university's effort on sustainability through research education, community engagement, in establishing a Climate Action Network teams and coordinators. The college believes these initiatives will bring together students and staff of the college to actively engage in sustainability related practices. It is of no doubt that since 2005 there has been a reduction of emissions in the college by 53% which has contributed to sustainability score of 79.5% when the college was ranked in recent times by the People and Planet University league. The college also initiated over 100 climate change and sustainability related subjects for all students in understanding climate related issues in addition to their area of studies, in helping students to practice sustainability both in their communities and at the workplace after graduation (People and Planet university league table, 2021; Redfern and Zhong, 2017.)

In relation to the above, the head of sustainability, Charmaine Morrell of Nottingham Trent University, elaborated on how they have invested time and resources into research and inclusion of sustainable development in the school's curriculum, and the establishment of committed teams whose work is to help in the reduction of emissions on school's buildings. This initiative has resulted in 99% of their waste being managed well without been sent to the landfills. The University has also launched an initiative of rewarding both students and staff who are noticed to engage in sustainable practices to serve as motivation for others to emulate. There are also 14 student societies at the University serving as Ambassadors in practicing sustainability in the external environment where students would be recognized

especially, communities in helping to achieve sustainability goals. (People and Planet university league table,2021; Eagle et al,2015). Indeed, all these are done in collaboration with teachers, major stakeholders of every educational establishment.

## VII. METHODOLOGY

Primary and secondary data sources are used in the study coupled with comparative analysis of a case study of Australian undergraduate and postgraduate business curriculum of a regional universities carried out by Southern Cross University and the ranking of People and Planet university league in UK in making inferences and analysis on sustainability practices in respective academic institutions specifically business schools (Von Der Heidt and Lamberton, 2011)

Therefore, the scope of this paper is focused on the following: an introduction, hypothesis, research question, Sustainability and its concepts, curriculum design relating to sustainability, teaching sustainability in business schools, awareness creation and advocacy on sustainability related issues amongst students in business schools, a highlights on Australian universities approach and statistics on sustainability, while other part deals with efforts by three UK universities on Sustainability, clear suggestions and a conclusion. This analysis provided a better understanding of the research problem at hand.

## VIII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is obvious that, sustainability is a new dimension that cut across all sectors of the economy including the educational sector. The societal relevance of the research paper is focused on how students will inculcate the habit of protecting the environment through community engagements in proper waste disposal, control of environmental carbon footprints and control of emissions in their day to day lives, This is possible through proper educational curriculum and awareness creation by respective business schools and faculties. Searching through literature and related works it was realized that, there should be much effort by other stakeholders in achieving this and the SDG's. Clear evidence and emphasis were laid on the role of teachers in motivating students in various business schools, which in the long run will be a benchmark to be replicated in the industry when students finally graduate to join the workforce. (Tilbury et al 2005; Svensson,2008)

Although there is the evidence of a decline in enrolment of students in sustainability related subjects in specific jurisdictions like Australia (Fisher and Bonn,2011), onus of responsibility lies with stakeholders to make sustainability an integral part of various faculties, schools and a part of student life as indicated by the People and Planet University league in the UK. (Redfern and Zhong, 2017)

Indeed, a big challenge is thrown to teachers and faculty members, major stakeholders in educational institutions especially in business schools to embrace sustainability and its practices as well as recommendations by the international organizations like UNESCO and EU in the structure of new courses relating to sustainability at both undergraduate and graduate levels at an early stage. It is also important that they consider in the structure of their programs a sustainability-based curriculum, taking into consideration the relevance of SDG, s. This would serve as a guide, especially during the initial stages of student enrolment in schools. (Daly, 2017, Marshall and Harry 2005) It is also recommended that an emphasis is placed on sustainability in the various universities, thus assigning at least a sustainability related course to a student in a department or school, this will make students appreciate the need of the subject, in making them responsible to the environment. (Barth and Rieckmann 2016).

Teachers are encouraged to use appropriate teaching techniques in impacting best practices for the benefits of their students. It would be better to engage in student-teacher initiatives, motivating students in forming alliance with their colleagues, engaging in community-based activities, an indication of students practicing what they learn especially, in the control of waste, environmental carbon footprints in saving the planet from destruction.( Weitz et al 2002,) There is also the need to incorporate SDG's, activities, games like one poster one per SDG to portray facts about the subject, the responsibility of both teachers and students, in achieving of SDG's irrespective of area or industry they find themselves after they graduate(Nhamo and Mjimba,2020).

It is of no doubt that the debate on the role of both scholarly and non-scholarly communities about sustainability is not ending anytime soon. This calls for further studies into the roles of industry players on sustainable practices.

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