



A Study of Sustainable Applications at Educational Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable practices are currently the newest buzzword in business, and educational institutions are realizing how important it is to incorporate them into their curricula and the general development of their students. In an effort to prepare their pupils for demanding tasks in the future, they are attempting to incorporate sustainable methods. The environment and society are being impacted by these actions in both the short and long term. The educational institutions are setting the stage for this younger generation to lead sustainable initiatives in the future. The industry is also eager to hear from academics who possess deeper knowledge in this field of sustainability. Many sustainable methods have been noted in educational institutions.

The leaders and managers of the future would be far more informed if educational institutions implemented sustainability practices. New sustainability efforts are being adopted by educational institutions in a number of fields. The environment and society at large are being impacted by these activities. These programs are gaining traction and must be appropriately directed to get the intended results. Following sustainable practices is the general expectation from all stakeholders and is currently the new focus of environmental, social, and economic performance. According to sustainable development, communities should be able to meet their requirements without sacrificing the capacity of coming generations to do the same.

Keywords: *Sustainable, Educational Institutions, Sustainable practices.*

Introduction:

The condition of causing little or no damage to our environment and thereby able to continue for a long time. Sustainable practices care for ecological, human, & economic health and vitality. Sustainability supposes that reserves are limited and should be utilized conservatively and prudently with a view to long-term significances and outcomes of the ways in which reserves are used. In simple terms, sustainability is about our next generation and the planet we will leave for them.

Sustainability has an impact on university missions, organizational strategies, profiles, and modes of operation as well as how knowledge is disseminated to stakeholders and society at large. An educational institution should adopt the sustainability concept as a moral way to grow and engage with the local and global communities. Sustainable ecological, economic, social, environmental, and technological growth of society is promoted by this strategy. It can be carried out through the academy's responsible administration of education, employment, and environmental effect; by offering instruction, research, and services; and by maintaining open lines of contact with the business community and other relevant parties. As members of the university community on the inside, students also serve as its public face.

Students' attitudes toward and understanding of the sustainability idea are crucial for both the present and future of our relationships with the environment. Currently, it is crucial for business and the environment at large to train future managers who understand the necessity and significance of the sustainability idea.

Objectives:

- a. To understand Sustainability and its pillars.
- b. To study sustainable practices adopted by Educational Institutes.
- c. To understand the Benefits of Sustainable practices.
- d. To have insights into the Challenges faced during Implementation of Sustainable practices.

Research Methodology:

Findings of this research paper are the outcome of the review of the secondary data. Secondary data has been reviewed from multiple sources to understand the concept of Sustainability. The researcher did a survey of literature in Sustainability, SDG's, its pillars, Sustainable practices by educational institutes, benefits, Challenges faced during adopting Sustainability practices. Sustainable Development Practices by different educational institutes were explored. A few articles, Blogs and research papers on Sustainability and Sustainability development Practices were referred from various websites. Relevant keywords were used through different search engines to get the appropriate information.

Literature Review:

Sustainability Definitions:

Sustainability implies meeting the requirements of the present day without conceding the ability of forthcoming generations to meet their personal needs [12].

In 1987, the UN Brundtland Commission described sustainability as “meeting demands of the present day without compromising the capability of upcoming generations to meet their personal needs.”[13]

Pillars of Sustainability:

Sustainability has three key pillars: economic, environmental & social. These three pillars are also informally referred to as people, planet, and profits.

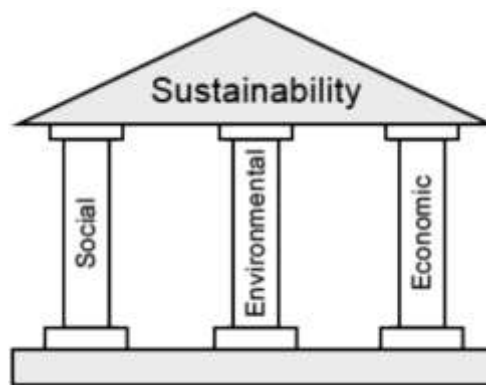


Figure no. 1: Three pillars of sustainability (Adapted from Bogdan-Vasile Cioruța 2018)

Sustainability comprises of three main pillars: economic, environmental & social also informally referred to as profits, planet, & people [14].

a) The Environmental Pillar

The environmental pillar getting the most attention. Most of the businesses are concentrating on decreasing their [carbon footprints](#), packaging waste, water consumption, or other damages to environment. Apart from helping our planet, these applications have an encouraging fiscal impact. For example, reduction in consumption of packaging materials leads to lesser spending, and better fuel efficiency thereby helping the company's profitability.

One meaningful challenge with the environmental pillar is that the business's influence is frequently not always fully costed, indicating that the [externalities](#) are not reflected in the final consumer prices. The [total costs](#) of wasted water, land reclaimed, carbon dioxide, and other waste are not easily calculated because businesses are not always the ones responsible for the waste produced. This is where [benchmarking](#) comes in for trying and quantifying these externalities, so that progress in lessening them can be traced and stated in a significant way.

b) The Social Pillar

The social pillar tying back into another inadequately defined concept: [social license](#). A sustainable organisation should have the assistance and endorsement of its employees, [stakeholders](#), and community in which it operates. The methods to securing and maintaining this support are numerous, but it boils down to fair care of employees and being a good community associate, both locally & globally.

On the worker side, businesses need to refocus on retention & engagement strategies, inclusive of more responsive benefits like better maternity/family benefits, flexi scheduling, learning & development opportunities. For the community engagement, organisations producing several ways of giving back like fundraising, sponsoring, scholarships, & investing in local community projects.

On the social dimension, the businesses need to be more conscious of how its supply chain is being implemented. Whether any child labour is going into the final product? Whether employees are being paid fairly? Is the working environment really safe?

c) The Economic Pillar

The third pillar of economic sustainability is where most of the organisations feel that they are on stronger ground. To be sustainable the organisation must be repaying. But that said, profit cannot surpass the other two pillars. In fact, profit at whatever cost is not the least what this economic pillar is about. Activities fitting under economic pillar consist of compliance, correct [governance](#) & [risk management](#).

Sometimes, this pillar is also referred as the governance pillar. This implies that managing board needs to line up with shareholders' interests as well as that of the society, value chains & end-consumers.

Regarding governance, shareholders may want to know that the company is using precise and visible accounting methods, and the investors are given an opportunity for voting on key issues. They may also want assurances of businesses avoiding conflict of interest, not using political influences for obtaining unduly beneficial treatment and of course, not engaging in illegal procedures. This inclusion of economic pillar & profit makes it possible for organisations to come on board with appropriate sustainability strategies.

Despite the comparative shortage of literature searching 'sustainability' & 'sustainable development' theoretically, the one conceptualization that of 'three pillars' - environmental, economic & social has gained widespread footing. This is typically realized as balancing of the trade-offs between apparently similarly desirable goals amongst these three categorizations [2].

Sustainability Development Goals

The Agenda for Sustainable Development till 2030 is "a blueprint of actions for the people, planet & prosperity". It consists of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). All these goals are indivisible & incorporate economic, social, & environmental attributes [16].

Sustainable Development Goal 4

Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) is the education goal whose principal aim is to "making sure comprehensive & equitable quality education & supporting lifelong education opportunities to all." [18]

SDG 4 is made up of ten targets:

Seven Objective Goals by 2030

1. Free public elementary and secondary education

Ensuring that every boy and girl receives a free, unbiased, high-quality primary and secondary education that produces learning results that are relevant and effective.

2. Early childhood development and free pre-primary education for all

To prepare them for primary education, ensuring that all boys and girls have access to high-quality early childhood development, care, and education.

3. Fair access to higher education and technical/vocational programs

Granting equitable access to technical, vocational, and postsecondary education—including university education—for all men and women at reasonable costs.

4. Skills necessary for respectable work

Increase the proportion of young people and adults with relevant skills—both technical and vocational—for employment, respectable careers, and entrepreneurship by a significant margin.

5. Inclusion and gender equality

Gender inequality in education must stop, and all disadvantaged groups, including those with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable circumstances, must have equal access to all educational and occupational opportunities.

6. Youth literacy that is universal

Ensuring the attainment of literacy and numeracy among all children and a significant portion of adults, both male and female.

7. Teaching for sustainable development and global citizenship.

Make sure that every student has the knowledge and abilities necessary to promote sustainable development. These include teaching about sustainable lifestyles and development, human rights, gender equality, and the promotion of nonviolent, peaceful cultures. Additionally, emphasize global citizenship, appreciation for cultural diversity, and the impact of diversity on sustainable development.

Three means of implementation

a. Effective learning environments

Build / upgrade education amenities that are child / disability / gender sensitive & are

providing safe, non-violent & effective learning environments for all people

b. Scholarships

By year 2020, substantially increase the number of scholarships globally available to developing countries, particularly to less developed countries / developing States & African countries, enrolment in higher education /vocational training /information and communications technology, technical, engineering & scientific programs, in developed & other developing countries.

c. Teachers and educators

Significantly increase the quantity of qualified teachers, including collaboration for teacher training in developing countries / least developed countries / small island developing States.

Sustainability: Search Trends

The Google trend search for the word 'Sustainability, over last 5 years (March 2017 to March 2022) shows a jump from 40 to 100 a growth of 150 percent for India. This is an indication of the high inquisitiveness of people towards this topic. Similar trend search for the same word Sustainability over the same period of 5 years shows a jump from 62 to 82 a growth of 32 percent for overall World. This is also an indication of the increased inquisitiveness of people towards this topic.

Sustainable Practices by Education Institutes

Sustainable development is the idea that human cultures must live meeting their requirements without compromising ability of upcoming generations to meet their needs. This definition of sustainable development was given in the Brundtland Report of 1987. The 17 SDGs were adopted by UN Members in 2015 giving a universal call for stopping poverty, protecting earth, and ensuring that all communities enjoy peace & prosperity by the year 2030. They know that development is having a balance of social, economic & environmental sustainability [22].

Sustainable development is about fulfilling human improvement goals while simultaneously sustaining the capability of natural systems of providing natural resources/ecosystem services on which our economy and humanity depend. It is the development meeting requirements of the current generation without compromising ability of forth coming generations for fulfilling their needs. SDGs are addressing the global challenges of inequality/poverty/environmental degradation/climate change peace and justice. Schools have several opportunities for promoting sustainability, whether it is by setting example or delivering education on the subject. Educational institutions can be helping students into environmentally responsible people. The immediate environmental impacts of these institutions, such as energy consumption and materials, are also significant.

Ecological, social, and environmental contents of sustainability are not entirely unique ideas in educational world. Rather, they are discussed under different educational themes like environment, consumer education & tolerance. What makes sustainability in schools radical is that it combines all viewpoints under one roof. A common issue in implementing education for sustainable development is that there is not a methodical approach. Teachers are not familiar with one another's work and nice ideas are often not shared. It could be a wonderful idea to implement the permanent quality development model for sustainability education.

Making the sustainable development holistic:

The constant quality improvement model known as a Deming's Circle, consisting of four parts: Plan, Do, Check/Evaluate, and Act/Improve.

Plan

For practicing sustainability in schools, the initial step is of integrating environmental issues into the curriculum including contents, methodology & learning targets. Also important for ensuring ample resources of teaching material and teachers' skills/ knowledge.

Do

Teaching needs to offer relevant and current information on sustainable development, including environmental problems, social/economic issues, the impacts of human behaviour on the environment, human and natural environment, along with viable solutions and prevention.

Additionally, the goal of teaching should be to develop an understanding of sustainability rather than recalling of individual facts. It should also encourage understanding all aspects of all environmental issues helping students to improve their ability to deal with the complexity of this subject. Teaching would be successful when students truly start understanding the issues from an individual viewpoint and are able to analyse/interpret information looking for feasible solutions.

Check/evaluate

When the most important goal is of systematically implementing education for sustainability, then the development of education & evaluation becomes critical. Whether or not your school has considered sustainability / has already integrated it, it becomes necessary to review the provisions on a consistent basis for considering the main points of sustainability been consolidated effectively. The evaluation might focus on two primary contexts: classroom and whole school.

Act/improve

Once the current structure has been assessed, it is time for creating new targets. To determine the targets, it could be helpful to look at ways for improving learning contents, teaching methodology, and teaching resources. Furthermore, good practices & ideas can always be shared amongst teachers.

Sustainability is everyone's responsibility! It is important we all do our part to care for our environment sharing the idea of sustainability. Presenting sustainable practices in early on education means creating sustainable future citizens & ensuring they do have a future [25].

Sustainability habits should be implanted in daily activities of children, it all starts with toddlers watching their parents and people around them. It is essential for early schooling centres to promote sustainable practices. Parents can also persuade schools to propose these values if they are not a core for the school. Plenty of resources are available online and with supportive communities for providing tips and techniques on sustainability in the schools. From the materials used for activities to the composting and growing of vegetables to suggestions on reduction of energy consumption, there are numerous ways which can contribute to a new sustainable future.

Promoting sustainability at schools means working with the kids, families, and larger community. Here are few ways for promoting sustainability at schools:

1. Using recyclable materials wherever possible.
2. Encouraging children for using half flush on toilets.
3. Encouraging children to turn off water after washing hands.
4. Encouraging children for recycling at their rooms/ home and in wider community.
5. Talking with children about saving electricity and encouraging to turn off lights.
6. Educating children about the natural decomposition cycle through participation in gardening / composting food scraps. Including children in activities of garden to plate.
7. Educating children on caring of plants and waterways i.e., recycling of water from water play into gardens.
8. Use natural resources wherever possible – e.g., drying and washing out in the sun.
9. Assisting children in developing of understanding and respect for environment and encouraging critical thinking.
10. Working with children and families to do research of the local wildlife.
11. Planning of excursions and incursions focussing on sustainable systems.
12. Asking families for bringing recyclable items for arts & craft.
13. Using environmentally friendly products wherever possible.
14. Reducing lunch waste. Bringing own food and drinks in reusable containers. Avoiding pre-packaged items.
15. Using both sides of paper.
16. Printing only whenever must.
17. Setting up exchange sale where you can trade books / other items with classmates.
18. Turning off lights by the last one leaving a room.
19. Conducting a waste audit.

Today many colleges have made an environmental revolution. No more plastic bottles to buy on the campus, implementation of different eco-friendly projects & campaigns.

The effects of climate change are markedly frightening. In many colleges, the initiatives of the activities to make our planet safer comes from the administration faculties. However, every little action of each student would help to protect our planet. Let us see how green we may become for making our college green [6].

1. Energy supply

Using of Solar power in buildings with effective environmentally friendly windows and panels for making the colleges eco-friendlier. Promoting conservation qualities using composting bins.

2. Using electronics in place of paper

Having digital focused computer classrooms, electronic libraries, and online examinations. Taking notes electronically for saving paper and money for buying notebooks. Preferring borrowing to buying only when necessary.

3. Opening a Food Joint with a local eco food

Having Organic food from local gardens produce wherein students can work showing their faith-based actions by growing vegetables / fruits that are used in the campus kitchen for preparation of healthy food. Use of smaller serving plates to prevent students from over-eating and wasting food.

4. Having a proper place for refilling water bottles

Normally only 20% of plastic bottles would be recycled. The problem is where did other 80% go to? Taking specific measures for fighting this issue is by not selling the plastic bottles on campus. An alternative is using reusable water bottles and providing water filling stations.

5. Special campaigns for students

Having few green project ideas for students to take concrete actions for ecology protection. It could be tree plantation, street cleaning or other environment-themed campaign. An effective way for making more environmentally sustainable community is by communication between students and management. Every student may have his/her fresh ideas of going green, and it would be good if the management could encourage by helping to realize.

6. Transportation

It is not a new secret that cars are the biggest reason of air pollution. Using a public transport or a bicycle will not only save our planet but also will save money. Offering carpool boards allowing pairing riders and drivers and a shuttle bus running on biodiesel is much safer for our planet.

7. Effective old recycling methods with recycling bins and trash cans on its territory. The faculty/staff should be responsible for what /where they throw away – they will be a good example for every student.

8. Creating eco-friendly rules in a campus: Turning off everything, Using LED bulbs, Reduce, reuse, recycle, Controlled water-usage (only a 5-minute shower), Buying recyclable/ eco products, Wash cups/plates and avoiding disposable paper / plastic utensils.

The likelihood is high of university campuses ending up producing far greater waste than other types of residences, simply on account of the high population they are catering to [5]

How can we incorporate a little green mindedness into our daily student's life helping to create a more sustainable campus? Herewith given are few ways to get started with:

1. Stopping using disposable items

One of the largest sources of waste are disposable articles such as plastic forks, spoons, knives, cups, water bottles and all articles which get used only once and then sent to the trash. Usually, things made from paper are biodegradable, but most plastic disposables plastics are not. This means they sit in landfills for hundreds of years before they break down.

Buy yourself a good reusable water bottle, rather than buying water every time when you go out. Some universities have banned sale of bottled water on their campus for encouraging everyone to contribute to a better sustainable campus.

2. Buy second-hand, buy local, and re-sell

First, try buying second-hand items. This means giving a new life to something that still has lot of years left. Second, buying locally, if possible, instead of ordering from far off places. This helping to support the regional economy and creating lesser carbon footprint. Third, when you are moving out try reselling what you do not need, or even donate it to charity. Some universities are organizing collection of unneeded items at each yearend, which could be passed on to the newer students.

3. Embrace a minimalist lifestyle

The most effective way to live sustainably is by embracing a minimalist lifestyle. This means only buying something new when you are genuinely needing it. Getting used to this minimalist lifestyle while at university could be a great preparation for the coming years when your possessions really start to pile up.

4. Do not get sucked in by student offers

One of the incentives of being a student is that you may often get lots of offers for different kind of free stuff. Accept what you really need and will use and avoid filling your rooms with things you will only end up throwing out.

5. Go digital

Switching over doing things more digitally. Taking advantage of technology for reducing paper usage. Making notes on computer, and only printing things really needed. To have even a bigger impact encourage classmates / staff also to go digital.

6. Get cycling

Riding a bike is the most sustainable forms of local transportation, as the only energy used is the amount your legs are putting into it. It also helps you in remaining healthy and fit.

7. Holding off on the heating/air

Trying the other alternatives first. If it is just a little chilly then putting on few extra layers of clothing. If getting warm, then opening some windows. Of course, there could be times when you really need the heating /air conditioning systems, but you try to minimise it.

8. Recycle

The easiest method to create a more sustainable campus is by recycling as much as one can. Whether it is paper, plastic, electronics, or clothing encourage your friends to do recycling. If your university is not having a well-developed recycling program, then take the lead in getting a new one developed.

Universities and Colleges offer the best hope for increasing the awareness regarding climate crisis and other related environmental threats. Many college / university administrations need proper guidance about the path of sustainability. Mitchell Thomashow, formerly a college president, provides inputs on a Sustainable campus. Drawing on his past experiences at Unity College in Maine, he has identified nine elements for the sustainability agenda: energy, food, and materials (the aspects of infrastructure); governance, investment, wellness (aspects of society); curriculum, explanation, aesthetics (aspects of learning). He describes how Unity college puts these elements into actual practice.

Benefits of Sustainable Practices [7] :

- Reduced Operational/Transportation/Energy costs.
- Longer Shelf life of products
- Reduced carbon emissions
- Cleaner Environment/Improved air quality.
- Reduced resources & Landfill requirements
- Improved Brand and Public Image
- Additional Revenue
- Improved Bottom Line
- Cheaper Products
- Getting Energy from Waste

Barriers to Adoption of Sustainability practices by Educational Institutes [3]

- Lack of adequate funding and support from top management
- Lack of participation from necessary Students/Staff/Faculties
- Environmentally unconcerned institutional cultural
- Lack of Awareness
- Lack of training/education from Institutes
- Environmental effects not considered as important
- Lack of motivation among faculty/staff/student at institutes.
- Lack of Government strict Regulation
- Lack of good procurement practice at education institutes
- Inadequate Research & Development Activities

Findings:

Summarised findings from reviewed literature:

- Whereever there are people Environment is affected and Colleges are no exceptions.
- Educational Institutes have begun to incorporate Sustainaiblity in the Curriculum.
- Many Educational institutes have initiated several Sustainable practices.
- Students community postively responding to Sustainability projects/ initiatives.
- Educational institutes creating a constructive platform for tomorrows business leaders.
- All three pillars of Sustainability are intertwined and need attention by all stakeholders.

- Educational institutions frequently assist business with sustainable projects and efforts.
- Schools, both primary and secondary, now recognize the value of incorporating sustainability into the education of their students.
- Sustainability initiatives have enhanced educational institutions' reputations.
- Teachers and the student body have a favorable outlook on sustainability.
- Educational institutions receiving industry funding for their sustainability initiatives.
- Greater visibility is required for educational institutions' sustainability initiatives and practices.
- In India and elsewhere, numerous colleges have started offering sustainability courses.

Limitations:

Research paper based on Secondary data. Hence few limitations could be mentioned here. The primary sources /authors / scholars could have different objectives than those intended in this research paper. The author of this paper does not own the primary sources of data and has no control over the same. They is no control on the biases of the primary sources data if at all present. The same data could be used by other researchers for other similar / non aligned studies beyond the control of this researcher. The data represents information collected over past periods which could change or may not be applicable in current times.

Suggestions

1. Corporate houses to collaborate with Academia for Sustainability projects.
2. Government to enact effective Fiscal and Business Laws for motivating Sustainable practices.
3. International Trade Agreements to incentivize Sustainable Development practices.
4. Sustainable Development Initiatives promotions through fairs and events.
5. Organizations to plough back proportion of profits for Sustainable Development Initiatives.
6. Creating Awareness about Sustainability and its positive impacts.
7. Special Economic Zones norms for ensuring Sustainable Development Practices.
8. Society to be more responsive/caring by buying Products/Services made by Sustainable Development practices.
9. Citizens to prefer Sustainable transport options.
10. Businesses to go Digital for reducing paper consumption.
11. Sustainable initiatives to be adopted by Educational Institutes fostering a climate of Sustainability.
12. Awards by Government / Chamber of Commerce for acknowledging contributions towards Sustainable Developments.
13. Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, and Recycle philosophy to be adopted by all.
14. All Academic Institutions to include Sustainability in Syllabus.
15. Startups to be incentivized to pursue Sustainable Projects.
16. Sustainability Innovations to be encouraged.
17. Global partnerships for sustainable development.

Conclusion:

Sustainability isn't just in vogue. It's not a temporary trend. It's not going to go away. We're not ever going to go back to doing business like we did in the past. Sustainable practices are helping the Environment, Customers and Bottom line. They are beneficial for a sustainable economy by supporting the Triple Bottom Line Approach of Profits, People and Planet.

Educational Institutes have an important role to play in shaping the future generations for sensitizing them about the importance of Sustainability. The Sustainable practices adopted at this stage are going to have a larger and long-term impact on the mindsets of tomorrow's managers and leaders. This will really assure the coming generations that they have been handed over to a safer planet to leave on.

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