

A Comparative Analysis between the UK and Türkiye from Recent Past to the Future on the UN SDGs on Employability: Global Graduates for Global Careers

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Abstract

This study is the outcome of a project which is based on the idea that higher education is a driver for sustainable development and plays a vital role in enhancing the talent capacity of the current learners and developing new skills for the next generation graduates who would be able to lead the efforts towards tackling global sustainability and green challenges. Thereby, higher education sets the research agenda for both public and private sectors and plays a critical role in shaping the direction of national economies. Contrary to this understanding, academic programs offered at higher education institutions are not inclusive enough to embed and transfer the sustainable development concept into students' potential careers. The study argues that university students in all disciplines should be trained with the awareness of embedding SDGs into their profession and thus their future careers. Therefore, the project aims to empower university students so that they discover how to integrate SDGs into their profession and eventually create a green career. To achieve this objective, the project envisages robust activities for this purpose and some of them are listed as designing a program of learning with the joint work of British and Turkish experts; designing a series of joint virtual-online workshops by co-creation with British and Turkish students to flourish innovative initiatives that will provide green career pathways for students and to design a virtual collaboration platform for higher education students to develop ideas using the learning from workshops covering key innovative implementations and initiatives focusing on SDG 13 Climate Action; SDG 10 Reduced inequalities and SDG 5 Gender Equality. The results of the project obtained so far suggest that higher education students in UK and Türkiye are very enthusiastic about being global graduates and they are well aware of the need for embedding sustainable development concepts in their professions.

Introduction

As reported by UNDP, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end

poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The 17 goals are integrated closely with each other; action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability¹.

Accordingly, the 2030 Agenda was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, presenting an ambitious vision of transformative change towards reaching a more sustainable future².

The 2030 Agenda that includes 17 goals (SDGs), 169 related targets and more than 230 indicators for monitoring the progress has a distinguishing feature as universal and indivisible. Universality implies that the Agenda applies to all nations and actors around the globe, regardless of current level of income or sustainability challenges. However, the principle of indivisibility means that the implementation of the Agenda should be based on integrated approaches rather than on siloed knowledge and policy-making³.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are on a unique position to be at the forefront of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) promotion and in realizing the indivisible feature of the SDGs. They educate and train decision makers, thus play a key role in building more sustainable societies and creating new paradigms; implying the need for revising teaching content to respond to global and local challenges and promoting teaching methods that enable students to acquire skills such as interdisciplinary thinking, understanding complexity, cooperating with others in decision-making processes, and participating in local, national and global processes towards sustainable development⁴.

Serafinib, P.G., Morais de Mouraa, J., Almeida, M.R., and Dantas de Rezende, J.F sought an answer for how SDGs and the 2030 Agenda are being addressed and incorporated into HEIs around the world⁵. As a result of conducting a systematic review of the literature through forty-five articles and analyzing experiences of the HEIs across different fields of activity related to the SDGs, the authors reported that there is no consensus among HEIs on implementing the SDGs. However, it was observed that a set of initiatives can be adopted by HEIs, the most important of which being systematizing the implementation of SDGs.

¹ “Sustainable Development Goals”, UNDP, accessed July 15, 2023, <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>.

² “United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015”, accessed July 21, 2023, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/summit>.

³ Mark Elder, Magnus Bengtsson, and Lewis Akenji. "An Optimistic Analysis of the Means of Implementation for Sustainable Development Goals: Thinking about Goals as Means." *Sustainability* (Basel, Switzerland) 8, no. 9 (2016): 962.; Måns, Nilsson, Elinor Chisholm, David Griggs, Philippa Howden-Chapman, David McCollum, Peter Messerli, Barbara Neumann, Anne-Sophie Stevance, Martin Visbeck, and Mark Stafford-Smith. "Mapping Interactions between the Sustainable Development Goals: Lessons Learned and Ways Forward." *Sustainability Science* 13, no. 6 (2018): 1489-1503.

⁴ “Assessments of Higher Education’s progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals: Vol 1 : For Creators of Assessment”, *Higher Education Sustainability Initiative*, (October 2020): 9. Also can be accessed: <https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/HEI%20assessment%20for%20the%20SDGs%20-%20Volume%201%20Assessors1.pdf>

⁵ Paula Gonçalves Serafini, Jéssica Morais de Mouraa, Mariana Rodrigues de Almeida, Júlio Francisco Dantas de Rezende, “Sustainable Development Goals in Higher Education Institutions: A systematic literature review,” *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 370, (2022), 133473.

Education for green jobs is crucial for the SDGs come true. The Education for Green Jobs focuses on supporting curricula and updating to build the workforce we need for a sustainable and inclusive future, as well as improving education, career advising and job placement processes to promote green and sustainability careers.

Within this framework, the main objective of this study is to develop university students' skills and prepare graduates who will be able to lead the efforts towards tackling global sustainability, green challenges and equality. Through a structured programme of learning and teaching that combines online lectures, facilitated learning workshops and collaborative team-based learning, the programme aims to deliver a measurable set of skills and attributes focused on SDGs 13 (Climate Action), SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). The design of the programme, delivered content and assessment is based on specific measurable criteria to ensure that the programme delivers its objectives. Accordingly, the key outputs set to be produced are;

- a. A course and related learning and teaching and assessment material created and delivered to prepare students for a) Green Careers, and b) careers that specialize in quality diversity and inclusion.
- b. A virtual web platform to support the course delivery, connect students and facilitate virtual collaborative working and knowledge exchange between British and Turkish Academics and Students.
- c. Access to an adapted version of the unique Career Booster initiative developed by FoMLSS (at the University of Bradford - UK) to support students to develop relevant applied and interpersonal skills needed for Green Careers.

Methods

The activities presented in Table 1 are the designed activities and methods of implementation to help university students discover to integrate SDGs into their profession and create a green career:

Table 1. Project Activities and the related methodology

Target	Method	Measurement of success
1. A programme of learning entitled "Global Graduates for Green Careers"	A course content developed according to the template prepared in line with the targets.	a. Expert views on the course content. b. Pilot implementation results
2. A virtual-web platform for creating innovative initiatives that will provide green career pathways for students.	Developing a web platform.	Number of visits to the platform.
3. A virtual collaboration platform for students to develop ideas using the learning from step 2 covering key	Career Booster web platform (https://www.bradford.ac.uk/mlss/careerbooster/)	Students' opinions on the platform for developing their skills to integrate

innovative implementations and initiatives focusing on SDG 13, 10 and 5.		SDGs into their professions.
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Results

Global Graduates for Green Careers

The content of the course titled “Global Graduates for Green Careers” developed by the experts is presented in Table 2 below. The status of the course is planned to be an elective at the beginning. The future plan, on the other hand, is to make the course a “requirement” for graduation for all faculties of the university.

Table 2. The content of the Course “Global Graduates for Green Careers”

Title
Introduction to Sustainable Development Goals
Introducing SDG 13, SDG10, SDG 5
Gender equality in contemporary work organizations: Are we there yet?
Pro-environmental behavior at work
Women and Engineering
Leadership for transformational change
Business models for achieving UNSDGs
Digitalization to achieve UN SDGs
Serious Gaming for Behavioral Change
The Positive and Negative Effects of AI on Climate Change
How AI and Digital Transformation abilities effect inequalities?

Career Booster web platform

The Career Booster Programme (<https://www.bradford.ac.uk/mlss/careerbooster/>) is a distinctive and uniquely valuable resource available to all students in the Faculty of Management, Law & Social Sciences in the Bradford University (UK) and the Middle East Technical University (METU). The program has been redesigned to include SDGs 5, 10 and 13 in line with the targets of this study. The Programme consists of two, week-long sessions consisting of more than 60 workshops, masterclasses, webinars, presentations, lectures and panel sessions which are all free for faculty students. The sessions are delivered by sector experts, industry partners, guest speakers and alumni.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study is based on the idea that, higher education as a driver for sustainable development, plays a vital role in educating the current and next generation of leaders,

driving the research agenda for both the public and private sectors, and playing a critical role in shaping the direction of national economies. However, higher education programs are not inclusive enough for transferring the sustainable development concept into student's careers. University students of any major shall be aware of embedding SDGs into their profession and thus their career. Therefore, there is a need to help university students discover to integrate SDGs into their profession and create a green career through the following activities:

- a) Create/design a programme of learning entitled "Global Graduates for Green Careers" to help students from any major to discover the SDGs they can help to realize through their career.
- b) Design a series of joint virtual-online workshops for creating innovative initiatives that will provide green career pathways for students.
- c) Develop a virtual collaboration platform (Career Booster) for students in the programme to develop ideas using the learning from step 2 covering key innovative implementations and initiatives focusing on SDG 13 Climate Action; SDG 10 Reduced inequalities and SDG 5 Gender Equality.
- d) The results of the project obtained so far suggest that higher education students in UK and Türkiye are very enthusiastic about being global graduates and they are well aware of the need for embedding sustainable development concepts in their professions.

The results of the project obtained so far suggest that higher education students in UK and Türkiye are very enthusiastic about being global graduates and they are well aware of the need for embedding sustainable development concepts in their professions.

In line with the above-mentioned idea, we propose that HEIs are on a unique position to be at the forefront of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as promoting Education for Green Careers. As the literature says there is no consensus, strategy or a trend for global graduates for green carriers. We propose Career Booster as a '*one-of-a-kind*' opportunity to get ahead, with the developed new version especially for SDG education.

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