



HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

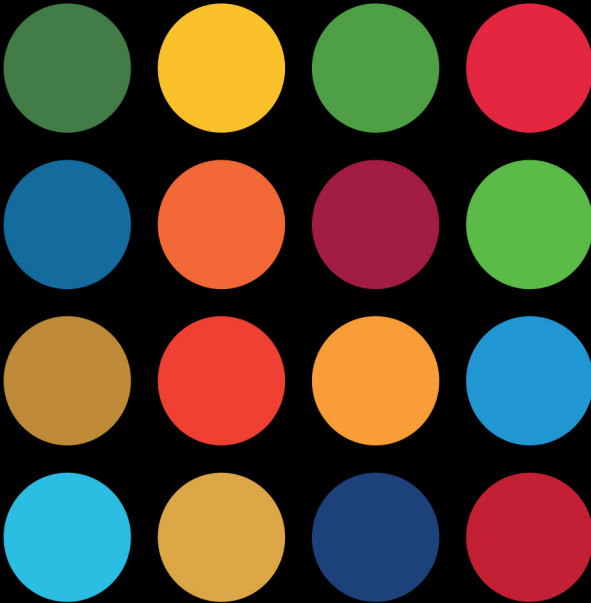


WENDY PURCELL
SERIES EDITOR

HIGHER EDUCATION AND SDG10



REDUCED
INEQUALITIES



EDITED BY
PRIYA GROVER, NIDHI PHUTELA,
AND PRAGYA SINGH

HIGHER EDUCATION AND SDG10

HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Series Editor

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About the Series

Higher Education and the Sustainable Development Goals is a series of 17 books that address each of the SDGs in turn specifically through the lens of higher education. Adopting a solutions-based approach, each book focuses on how higher education is advancing delivery of sustainable development and the United Nations global goals.

Forthcoming Volume

Higher Education and SDG12: Responsible Consumption and Production edited by Romas Malevicius and Beatriz Acevedo

Higher Education and the Sustainable Development Goals

HIGHER EDUCATION AND SDG10

Reduced Inequalities

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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SERIES EDITOR PREFACE

Professor Wendy Purcell, PhD FRSA

Higher education (HE) makes an important contribution to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Teaching and learning support the development of responsible citizens as scholars, leaders, entrepreneurs, and professionals. Curiosity-driven and socially impactful research and innovation help advance knowledge frontiers and find solutions for the world's most pressing issues. As anchor institutions, universities and colleges are also active in civic and community settings, working in partnership with other stakeholders. Given the fierce urgency of (un)sustainable development, the climate crisis, and widening inequity within countries and across the globe, HE institutions (HEIs) need to do more and go faster to deliver fully on their potential to help achieve the SDGs.

This book series focuses on the role of HE in advancing the SDGs, identifying some actionable and scalable initiatives and pointing to opportunities ahead. In sharing the ways and means universities and colleges across the world are engaging with the SDGs, the series seeks to both inspire and enable those in the HE sector and stakeholders beyond to transform what they do and how they do it and thereby hasten progress towards Agenda 2030. Insights gleaned from case studies, reflective accounts, and student stories can help the HE sector both deepen and accelerate its engagement with the SDGs. Each book seeks to capture examples of how HEIs are fulfilling delivery of their academic mission *and* progressing the SDG concerned. Illustrating the work of students, faculty, and staff of the institution, and that undertaken in collaboration with others, positions HE as a change agent operating at a systems level to help create a world that leaves no one behind.

This book explores HE and SDG10 'Reduced Inequalities' and highlights the work of universities and colleges in achieving this goal to 'Reduce inequality within and among countries'. Inequality

is a threat to long-term social and economic development, harms efforts to tackle poverty, and is a barrier to human flourishing. It can exist within a country and across countries, with the divide between the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ widening – being both a source of, and fuel for, social unrest and conflict. SDG10 is intimately entwined with many of the other SDGs, with equity a key outcome of achieving the goals.

Here, the co-editors have adopted a particular stance on the role of HE in contributing to the delivery of SDG10 – namely through internationalization of HE and HEIs, with a focus on the global South. Given the seriousness and pervasive nature of inequality, HE’s role to uphold human dignity relies on extending access to the benefits of HE as well as collaboration with others to diffuse its impact into society. The book highlights intersectionality and the interconnectedness of disparities as a major limiting factor, and calls for HE to find new ways and scale current efforts to ensure all those who can benefit from HE are enabled to do so. For example, by embracing internationalization at home efforts given that international is a catalyst for sustainable development. Concluding the book, the voices of students support the call for HEIs to do more to connect their mission with advancing the SDGs and offer good and sensible ideas for those in HE.

Universities and colleges play a critical role in developing new systemic and transformative solutions through interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder collaboration and a purposeful focus on the SDGs. As organizations that have stood for many centuries in some cases, this demands that they adapt with new models of learning, research partnerships, and leadership and governance frameworks. Immersive engagement with the SDGs can catalyze pedagogic innovation, serve to refresh curricula, and stimulate new program development. It can also open new avenues for research, attract new sources of funding and energize people to deliver on the academic mission.

SDG10 is an enabler of sustainable development and vital to the pursuit of sustainability and the health of people, planet, and shared prosperity. This book illustrates this approach with HEIs bringing their key assets of curiosity and the pursuit of knowledge and its application to partners seeking solutions and driving

innovation, operating in both local and global networks, and connecting the worlds of learning, work, and entrepreneurship in support of more sustainable development. Sustainability is a goal for today and sustainable development an organizing principle for universities and colleges.

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INTRODUCTION – HIGHER EDUCATION AND SDG10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Nidhi Phutela, Priya Grover and Pragya Singh

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Inequality is a pervasive and serious issue that plagues societies at national and international levels with the gaps widening in relation to economic instability, social disparities, demographic challenges, political inequalities, job security, and income gaps (Mdingi & Ho, 2021). Inequality represents a fundamental violation of human rights and dignity (Gilabert, 2018) and affects individuals on a personal level and society at large. Inequality among people or countries can lead to social unrest, political instability, and increased crime rates, hindering growth and overall sustainable development (Topuz, 2022). Persistent inequalities in income, education, healthcare, and employment can prevent people from being part of mainstream society (Pechdin et al., 2023) thereby depriving society of people's talents and ideas. Economic inequality limits social mobility and hinders poverty alleviation and prosperity (Peterson, 2017), especially among women (Orazaliyev et al., 2023). Social inequalities, including gender inequalities and racial discrimination, limit the full participation of all individuals in society (Hazel & Kleyman, 2019) thereby impeding sustainable development. Environmental inequalities obstruct sustainable development with marginalized communities and Indigenous groups often those impacted

first by environmental degradation and climate change that in turn exacerbates inequality (Encompass, 2022). A growing number of researchers and economists observe a strong link between reducing all forms of inequality and sustainable long-term growth (Ali & Asfaw, 2023).

Education is a fundamental right of all human beings and plays a powerful role in enabling inequalities in the society to be tackled (Zendeli, 2017). It empowers those people who can access it and be supported to benefit from it with the knowledge and skills to reduce various forms of economic, social, gender, and environmental inequalities. The quality of education enhances the socio-economic status of people in society (Goczek et al., 2021). However, educational inequity is common across the world with some people denied full access to quality education (Allotey et al., 2023). Related to social stratification, marginalization denies opportunities to individuals living on the margins while providing access to others (Alam & Halder, 2018). Marginalization may be related to gender, culture, location, poverty, or special groups including differently abled, gifted children and children suffering with HIV, AIDS, etc. (Musthafa et al., 2019). Therefore, societies need to provide tailored educational opportunities to marginalized communities to bridge economic and societal gaps and promote sustainable development. Even where access is available, underrepresented groups may not be enabled to succeed with educational inequality an emergent concern (Garcia & Weiss, 2017).

Education can help reduce inequalities in societies and promote sustainable development. The emerging concept of education for sustainable development (ESD) (Pandey & Vedak, 2010) emphasizes four major actions, namely development and advancement of basic education, reorienting current education to attain sustainable development, building awareness of sustainability among people, and ensuring that all those in the workforce have the necessary knowledge, skills, and competence to perform their tasks in a sustainable manner (Breßler & Kappler, 2017). Research indicates that ESD acts as a catalyst towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, n.d.) by empowering learners with the requisite competencies to become citizens of a sustainable

world (Kioupi & Voulvoulis, 2022). This makes the importance of education crucial for the attainment of sustainability and the SDGs.

In the education sector's effort to promote sustainable development, higher education institutions (HEIs) play a prominent part. Through their institutional policies and activities, HEIs play a crucial role in offering sustainable development programs (Blessinger et al., 2018). They enhance the quality of education through an enriched curriculum that empowers students with the knowledge, skills, and values to be effective global citizens (Patfield et al., 2022). Launching new courses on sustainability related issues, internships, research, fieldwork, and community engagement projects can guide learners towards a more sustainable future and attainment of the SDGs thereby helping to reduce inequalities in society (van Niekerk, 2020). HEIs can help empower students as change agents to create a positive impact in their communities.

Universities and colleges of higher education, through the dimensions of education, research, and outreach, are part of the work needed to achieve SDG 10 'Reduced Inequalities'. HEIs have the potential to drive innovation, inspire action, and foster collaboration among stakeholders to address the pressing challenges in sustainable development and help achieve the SDGs. This book explores the role of HEIs in pursuit of SDG 10. It addresses a broad range of initiatives that draw on teaching, research, social outreach, and international student mobility that can help reduce inequalities within and among countries. The book is unique as it exclusively focuses on the role of higher education in attaining some of the targets underlying SDG 10 in reducing inequalities and presents examples and cases that embed SDG 10 in academic initiatives. The work of HEIs in helping to address inequalities is explored in:

- Approaches to realizing internationalization at home;
- Development of strategic international partnerships;
- A focus on global social responsibility;
- The wider contribution of SDG 10 to sustainable development and the role of higher education.

The book comprises chapters from authors across the world covering major inequalities present in society globally. The role of higher education in research in reducing inequality has also been highlighted.

Chapter 1 focuses on the complex ways skill development courses offered by HEIs in developing nations can promote equality and help the attainment of SDG 10. HEIs offer a significant ability to reduce inequality in underserved communities through skill development courses. Therefore, providing equal opportunities to underserved communities through these courses can help the attainment of Target 10.3 of SDG 10, provide equal opportunity, and reduce inequalities of outcome.

Chapter 2 analyzes how university education helps reduce social inequality in India along with other developing nations, thereby contributing to attainment of SDG 10. Based on literature review analysis, the authors propose a conceptual model that identifies critical factors contributing to the reduction of social inequalities in research and innovation, partnerships with industry and government, diversity and inclusion initiatives, mentoring and support services, flexible learning options, financial assistance and government policy, and education quality, access, and inclusivity. Together, these foster a more equitable and inclusive society by addressing the complex dimensions of social inequalities. This chapter highlights those factors that influence inclusivity and reduce inequalities in society and its findings can help the attainment of Target 10.2 of SDG 10 by empowering social inclusion in society.

Chapter 3 highlights the changing dynamics of international partnerships in higher education in developed and developing countries and their contribution to sustainable development. It analyzes the different Internationalization at Home (IaH) initiatives and explores their role in ensuring equality and inclusivity of students in terms of exposure to international initiatives. The findings outlined in the chapter will help government and higher education policy makers to rethink the way international partnerships are changing and design more equitable international policies accordingly. As such, this chapter will help in attainment of Target 10.3 of SDG 10 to ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory

laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies, and action in this regard.

Chapter 4 explores the role of HEIs in advancing gender equality. Through promoting gender-sensitive policies, providing equal access to education, pursuing research and collaboration globally with various stakeholders, HEIs can lessen gender inequality in the society. HEIs can also cultivate a more inclusive campus environment by ensuring leadership positions are held by women. In these ways, HEIs can help in the attainment of Target 10.2 of SDG 10 to empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status.

Chapter 5 proposes a few impactful practices to attain SDG 10 through financial literacy and financial inclusion in higher education in developing countries. The high cost of education can result in students dropping out and families suffering financial poverty, thereby propelling the cycle of poverty. HEIs can play a vital role in developing a financial culture among young students in universities in higher education to learn and further impart financial knowledge to others. This chapter throws light on attainment of social and economic inclusivity through financial literacy and financial inclusion in HEIs thereby leading to attainment of Target 10.2 of SDG 10 to ensure that social, economic, and political inclusion is advocated irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, religion, or financial position.

Chapter 6 focusses on internationalization in higher education and analyzes the complex interplay of HEIs as agents of change by motivating students to acquire more socially responsible thinking in order to reduce social disparities. This chapter suggests ways for policy makers to reduce inequality through internationalization and connects with Target 10.4 of SDG 10 to ensure policies are adopted that seek to achieve greater equality.

Chapter 7 focuses on the student voice with students from developed, developing, and least developed countries across the world voicing their opinion on the varied facets of higher education and how it can help overcome the different types of inequalities in society. It offers global student opinions on different issues and concerns highlighted in the book. This last chapter also summarizes

the other chapters and acts as a visioning exercise with students as one of the major stakeholders of HEIs offering advice on how HEIs should carry their sustainability initiatives forward to attain the various targets of SDG 10.

Notwithstanding the curation of global examples and cases, the book offers a solutions-based approach towards the challenges faced in attainment of SDG 10 that can be contextualized to local conditions wherever appropriate. It serves as a guide to HEIs in addressing inequality in its various forms. Addressing inequality is a pressing concern across all countries and their societies and requires a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach to address its root causes as well as to promote policies and practices that tackle its impact. Higher education is a powerful agent, alongside immediate and concerted action from governments and society at large, to work towards creating a more equitable and inclusive world and attain social justice to build a more sustainable and prosperous future for all.

We, the editors, have thoroughly enjoyed the journey undertaken in bringing this book to fruition and have learned so much. It has been very humbling to see our passionate authors working so hard on their respective chapters. We would like to thank them all as well as the management of the educational institutions where the editors are working/or have worked for their ongoing support and motivation. We are extremely grateful to the Series Editor of 'Higher Education and the Sustainable Development Goals' for her constant mentorship that helped us in bringing forth our book as a part of the series. We also extend our heartfelt gratitude to the management and editorial team of Emerald Group publishing for their support in achieving our dream of publishing a book on *Higher Education and SDG 10* as a part of this book series.

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