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Grassroot Power of Communities of Practice – The Case of SDG Literacy

Olivia Freeman

Technological University Dublin, olivia.freeman@tudublin.ie

Lucia Walsh

Technological University Dublin, lucia.walsh@tudublin.ie

Cormac McMahon

Technological University Dublin, cormac.mcmahon@tudublin.ie

See next page for additional authors

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Authors

Olivia Freeman, Lucia Walsh, Cormac McMahon, and Alacoque McAlpine

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With emerging consensus on an urgent need to address the potentially catastrophic issues of climate change, threats to the natural world and social injustice, Generation Z is spearheading a quiet revolution, elevating sustainability from desirable to essential. Achievement of the UN SDGs has emerged as a megatrend (Mittelsaedt et al., 2014) and universities are playing a key role in developing graduates' sustainability knowledge, skills and mindsets (Andrews and Soares, 2017). To empower our students to solve 'wicked sustainability problems' (Levin et al., 2012) we, as educators, need to move beyond our discipline silos and develop cross-disciplinary collaborations that lead to innovations in our teaching, learning and assessment.

We will present exemplars in practice emerging from a university-wide Community of Practice (CoP) (Wenger, 2015) in sustainability literacy called SDG Literacy which was established in 2020. The comprehensive nature of the SDG framework has brought colleagues from various disciplines together, such as business, engineering, chemistry, tourism, culinary arts and social work. The SDG Literacy CoP focuses on and promotes the enhancement of sustainability literacy and organically developing some of the key competencies listed under the new European GreenComp framework (Bianchi et al., 2022) among faculty and student cohorts. These growing impactful initiatives are aligned with Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and the broader strategic aims of the university.

Collaborative initiatives emerged such as co-creation of CPD in Education for Sustainability for staff, sustainability focused modules for students from different disciplines, creation of open educational resources (OERs), regular showcases of excellence of practice events, integrated assessments and development of collaborative industry-based partnerships. The SDG Literacy CoP and its growing influence within the university is an excellent example of the power of grassroot cross-disciplinary communities of practice to catalyse the promotion of sustainability strongly supported by our students - future leaders - and matched by the strategic university focus on people, planet and partnerships. In a call to action, we hope to inspire participants, by our story, to apply ideas of interdisciplinarity in practice.

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