

The Role of Public Administration Education in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals

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ABSTRACT

Public administration education is a critical driver for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as it prepares future leaders to address complex global challenges. This study explores the integration of SDG principles into public administration curricula, emphasizing interdisciplinary approaches, experiential learning, and innovative teaching methodologies. Data collected from a survey of educational institutions and case studies from leading universities reveal that while significant progress has been made in aligning education with SDG priorities, challenges remain, particularly in low-resource settings. The findings indicate that high-income institutions have advanced in embedding sustainability across disciplines through specialized courses, partnerships, and practical projects. However, disparities in curriculum integration and resource allocation highlight systemic issues in low- and middle-income regions, where limited funding, institutional inertia, and a lack of faculty expertise impede comprehensive SDG education. The study also identifies gaps in critical areas such as climate change, sustainable economic development, and social equity, underscoring the need for reforms that prioritize sustainability within core public administration competencies. Recommendations include fostering global partnerships, increasing financial support, and adopting innovative pedagogies to bridge theory and practice. This research contributes to the understanding of how public administration education can play a transformative role in achieving the SDGs by empowering public servants to lead sustainable policy initiatives. It calls for concerted action from educators, policymakers, and global stakeholders to ensure equitable and effective SDG-focused education worldwide.

Keywords: *public administration education; Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); interdisciplinary curricula; sustainable governance; higher education reforms.*

INTRODUCTION

Public administration is pivotal in addressing the multidimensional societal challenges of today, particularly as the world strives toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 (Abraham, 2020). The 17 goals encompassing

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economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability, serve as a global roadmap to create a better future for all (Niaz, 2022). Public administration is uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between policy frameworks and local implementation, ensuring the contextual relevance of strategies aimed at eradicating poverty, improving education, and combating climate change (Díaz-Padilla et al., 2023). The responsibility of ensuring that policies align with global benchmarks while catering to regional needs makes public administrators key drivers of sustainable development (Kutty et al., 2020). Through education and training, aspiring administrators gain the knowledge, skills, and values essential for addressing the complexities of governance in the SDG era (Kioupi & Voulvouli, 2019).

The SDGs underscore the interconnectedness of global challenges, where addressing one goal often influences progress in others (Stephen & Venkateswarlu, 2024). For instance, advancing quality education under Goal 4 has cascading effects on gender equality (Goal 5), economic growth (Goal 8), and reduced inequalities (Goal 10) (Cernev & Fenner, 2019). Public administrators must approach these goals with a systems-thinking mindset, recognizing the ripple effects of policy decisions. Initiatives like affordable housing or sustainable transportation can simultaneously reduce urban poverty and contribute to climate action (Filho et al., 2019). A lack of this systemic approach can lead to siloed solutions that fail to create long-term impact. By integrating interdisciplinary perspectives and data-driven methodologies, public administration education empowers graduates to address the complexities of these interlinked goals effectively (Ejjami, 2024).

However, traditional curricula in public administration education often lag in addressing the dynamic requirements of sustainable governance (Agbedahin, 2019). Many programs emphasize traditional bureaucratic practices, offering limited exposure to cross-sector collaboration, innovation, and sustainability-focused tools (Kelly & Lange, 2019). To bridge this gap, academic institutions are redesigning curricula to include SDG-oriented content such as environmental management, equity frameworks, and governance technology (Shapiro et al., 2021). Incorporating case studies, simulations, and experiential learning ensures students not only understand theoretical frameworks but also learn how to apply them in real-world contexts. Such reforms prepare students to meet the evolving demands of public service by equipping them with the necessary skills to analyze, implement, and monitor sustainable policies.

Leadership and ethical decision-making form the cornerstone of effective public administration education (Jarbandhan, 2021). Administrators must often resolve dilemmas involving resource allocation, equity, and environmental sustainability while maintaining transparency and inclusivity (Kalkanci et al., 2019). For example, managing urban expansion requires balancing economic growth with the preservation of green spaces and historical heritage (Lak et al., 2020). Ethical training ensures that public servants prioritize accountability and social justice in their decision-making processes (Berry-James et al., 2021). By cultivating a strong sense of responsibility toward public welfare, educational programs foster a new generation of leaders who can navigate the moral complexities inherent in sustainable development efforts.

Experiential learning, including internships, capstone projects, and cross-cultural exchanges, significantly enhances public administration education (Sudarta, 2022). These opportunities expose students to diverse governance challenges and enable hands-on application of theoretical knowledge (Rosário & Raimundo, 2024). Collaborative initiatives with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or international bodies, such as

the UNDP, equip students with practical tools to address global issues at local levels. Examples include working on public health campaigns, disaster preparedness programs, or waste management projects (Généreux et al., 2019). Experiential learning bridges the gap between classroom education and the real-world complexities of governance.

Rapid technological advances are transforming public administration education by introducing tools like big data analytics, GIS mapping, and AI-driven policy modeling (Attah et al., 2024). For example, artificial intelligence can analyze large datasets to predict public health trends, while blockchain can enhance transparency in financial governance (Rane et al., 2023). Institutions must integrate these technological innovations into their curricula to prepare students for the modern demands of governance. Mastery of these tools equips administrators with the ability to implement policies with precision, scalability, and real-time monitoring (Rukajat et al., 2024). Public administration programs that embrace digital transformation ensure that graduates remain relevant and effective in tackling the rapidly changing landscape of governance.

In conclusion, public administration education plays a crucial role in achieving the SDGs by equipping professionals with the knowledge, skills, and ethics needed to address global challenges (Abraham, 2020). By incorporating interdisciplinary approaches, experiential learning, and technological innovation into educational programs, institutions can better align with the demands of sustainable governance. Building future leaders who prioritize adaptability, inclusivity, and evidence-based decision-making ensures that public administration remains at the forefront of driving progress toward a sustainable future (Moleka & Scholar, 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public administration has long been recognized as a critical component in the effective governance and implementation of policies across different sectors. As the world moves toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the need for skilled, ethical, and sustainable public administrators becomes even more significant. This literature review examines existing research on how public administration education contributes to the successful realization of SDGs and highlights the strategies needed to align academic curricula with global sustainability goals.

2.1. Public Administration's Role in Achieving SDGs

Public administration is vital to the effective implementation of the SDGs. According to Silva & Sánchez-hernández (2023), public administration links global policy frameworks to local and regional contexts, ensuring that SDG goals are effectively executed across diverse environments. The SDGs aim to address interrelated issues such as poverty, health, education, and environmental sustainability, which requires a holistic approach to governance. Public administration plays a pivotal role in coordinating and integrating these domains, as noted by Androniceanu (2021), who emphasize that sustainable development requires public administration systems that are transparent, participatory, and responsive to all sectors of society. Public administrators are often responsible for ensuring that policies are inclusive and equitable, considering the diverse needs of populations at the local level while adhering to the broader, international SDG targets.

2.2. Connecting Public Administration Education with Sustainable Development

Research has suggested that the formal education of public administrators should directly contribute to the achievement of SDGs by equipping professionals with the

necessary skills, ethics, and tools. [Unterhalter & Howell \(2021\)](#) highlights the importance of aligning academic training with the SDG agenda. According to [\(Coates et al., 2022\)](#), incorporating sustainability concepts into public administration education is critical for addressing modern challenges. Their research reveals that a focus on sustainable policies within public administration education is not only beneficial but necessary for creating public service leaders capable of long-term solutions for societal challenges. [Ferguson, \(2019\)](#) argue that universities need to update their curricula to address issues like climate change, social justice, and sustainable economic development in a more integrated manner, equipping students with the skills to solve pressing, global issues.

2.3. Leadership and Ethics in Public Administration Education

Leadership is an essential dimension of public administration education, as public administrators must often make decisions in uncertain and complex environments that balance economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection. Several studies focus on the critical role of ethics in ensuring accountability, transparency, and fairness in policy decisions. [Jacobs \(2021\)](#) argue that public administration students should be trained in ethical decision-making to prepare them for the complex, often morally ambiguous decisions they will face in government. By prioritizing leadership qualities such as ethical governance, fairness, and integrity, public administration programs can produce leaders who contribute to achieving SDGs in a sustainable, inclusive manner.

Ethical leadership is not only about ensuring moral decision-making, but also promoting a system that fosters equality and resilience. A report by [Niekerk \(2020\)](#) stresses that good governance grounded in principles of ethical leadership contributes directly to achieving the SDGs, particularly in areas related to justice, reduced inequalities, and peace. Moreover, nurturing an ethical mindset is central to promoting transparency in public administration, preventing corruption, and building the public trust necessary for effective implementation of SDGs.

2.4. Experiential Learning and its Impact on Public Administration Education

Several studies have emphasized the importance of experiential learning in public administration education for achieving SDGs. Field-based learning, internships, and practice-oriented projects provide students with firsthand knowledge of how public sector organizations operate and address challenges on the ground. This approach bridges the gap between theory and practice. For instance, [Quyen et al \(2024\)](#) point out that engaging students in real-world SDG-related challenges helps cultivate critical thinking skills, problem-solving capabilities, and a practical understanding of governance. Experiential learning programs allow students to participate in governance systems that reflect real-world challenges, such as environmental policy design, sustainable health initiatives, and the reduction of educational disparities ([Salinas-navarro et al., 2022](#)).

The integration of community service projects and collaborative internships into public administration education also prepares students to address complex global challenges effectively. A study [Varada \(2024\)](#) argues that students who actively participate in programs such as service learning, public-private partnerships, or NGO collaboration can contribute meaningfully to community-oriented SDGs, while gaining valuable hands-on governance experience.

2.5. Challenges in Aligning Public Administration Education with SDGs

Despite these advancements, several scholars point out ongoing challenges in aligning public administration curricula with the SDGs. One critical issue identified by [Meuleman \(2021\)](#) is the mismatch between what public administration programs teach and what is needed in the field for SDG achievement. Traditionally, public administration

education has focused on routine administrative functions, which, while essential, often lack the practical knowledge and innovative skills necessary for addressing complex issues like climate change, urbanization, or health equity. Additionally, institutional inertia and resistance to change within educational systems often result in slow curriculum updates and a lack of real-world problem integration.

To address these issues, initiatives have been launched in several countries to modernize public administration curricula and introduce SDG-focused content (Supising et al., 2022). In Asia, for instance, countries like South Korea and Japan have introduced sustainability-focused case studies into administrative training programs (Leal Filho et al., 2022). Even with such efforts, researchers still argue that there is a pressing need to ensure that educational content remains flexible enough to adjust to the evolving nature of the SDGs. Curricula should prioritize inclusivity, adaptability, and holistic perspectives so students are not only equipped for today's challenges but can anticipate future ones.

2.6. The Role of Technology in Public Administration Education

Technology is revolutionizing public administration education, creating opportunities for administrators to tackle SDGs more efficiently through data-driven decision-making. Advancements such as e-governance tools, data analytics, and artificial intelligence (AI) are becoming integral in modern administrative roles (Khouya, 2023). A notable example is the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to track and mitigate the impact of environmental hazards or urban development on vulnerable communities. Pavaloaia et al (2019) argue that the integration of technology into public administration education equips students with critical skills to innovate, improve efficiency, and support sustainable development at scale.

Institutions around the world have started integrating technological tools such as big data analytics and e-Government platforms into their curricula to better prepare future administrators. A report by Meka & Venkateswarlu (2024) identifies that technology education will be essential in fostering SDG-related skills, especially in sectors like governance, healthcare, and disaster management. By leveraging these technologies, public administrators can develop more accurate policies, design transparent systems, and engage citizens in decision-making processes, thereby driving greater accountability.

2.7. Future Directions for Public Administration Education

As the SDGs evolve, public administration education must continually adapt to changing global circumstances. To be truly effective, educators need to introduce forward-thinking programs that anticipate future challenges such as climate change, demographic shifts, and digital governance. According to Mondal et al (2021), there is a strong case for revising the approach to public administration education, focusing on fostering interdisciplinary understanding and intersectoral collaboration. Preparing graduates who possess the capacity for adaptive thinking and cross-sector collaboration is essential for tackling the challenges of sustainable development.

The emerging trend of "whole systems thinking" in public administration education focuses on incorporating the principles of ecological sustainability, social justice, and inclusivity into governance training (Christou et al., 2024). Educational reforms must incorporate future skills to align with the rapidly changing needs of global governance, ensuring that future leaders are equipped with the tools and values required to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

METHODS

The aim of this study is to analyze how public administration education can contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the role that public administration education plays, the study will employ a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, including a literature review, surveys, case studies, and expert interviews. This multi-method approach ensures that the research addresses both theoretical frameworks and practical implementation strategies.

3.1. Survey of Public Administration Programs

To complement the literature review, the study will deploy a survey to public administration students, faculty members, and educational administrators from selected universities around the world. The survey will explore several aspects of public administration education, such as:

- 3.1.1. The inclusion of SDG-focused content in curricula
- 3.1.2. Faculty perspectives on the relevance of sustainability education in training future public servants
- 3.1.3. Educational outcomes that emphasize policy formulation, governance, and SDG integration
- 3.1.4. Awareness of interdisciplinary connections between SDGs and the challenges in public service management

The sample will be purposively selected from institutions that have a significant focus on sustainable development in their public administration programs. These institutions will include universities in both developed and developing countries, offering a comparative perspective on how public administration education integrates SDGs into curricula. The survey data will be collected through an online platform, ensuring a global reach and diverse sample.

3.2. Case Studies of Institutions Leading in SDG-Oriented Public Administration Education

A second approach will be the use of case studies to provide concrete examples of how specific public administration programs align their curriculum with the SDGs. Case studies will focus on universities that have been identified in the literature and through preliminary research as leaders in sustainability-oriented public administration education. For example, the study may examine institutions such as:

- 3.2.1. Harvard Kennedy School (USA) for its innovative governance programs
- 3.2.2. University of Gothenburg (Sweden) for its sustainable governance courses
- 3.2.3. The National University of Singapore for integrating SDGs into public administration education

The selection of these case study institutions will be based on their successful practices in incorporating SDGs into educational programs, training methodologies, and collaboration with public sector stakeholders. These institutions will be analyzed through available reports, academic articles, and interviews with program directors. By focusing on these high-performing institutions, the study aims to draw insights into best practices, challenges, and recommendations for enhancing public administration education to meet the SDG agenda.

3.3. Expert Interviews

To complement the data collected from the literature review, surveys, and case studies, the research will conduct semi-structured interviews with subject matter experts in the field of public administration education. Experts will include faculty members, practitioners in the public sector, policymakers, and international organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank. The interviews will focus on key questions such as:

- 3.3.1. How can public administration programs be updated to better serve the SDGs?
- 3.3.2. What role do public administration educators play in fostering the necessary skill sets for SDG-related challenges?
- 3.3.3. How are global and local needs in public administration governance reconciled when addressing SDGs?
- 3.3.4. What are the challenges in implementing SDG-centered curricula in public administration programs?

These interviews will be conducted in person, through virtual platforms, or via telephone, depending on the availability of experts, to ensure rich and insightful data collection.

3.4. Data Analysis

For the data analysis phase, the qualitative data from case studies, interviews, and open-ended survey responses will be transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically using software tools such as NVivo or ATLAS.ti. This process will involve identifying recurring themes, patterns, and issues related to the integration of SDGs into public administration curricula, as well as the barriers and solutions that emerge through interviews with experts. The quantitative data obtained from the closed-ended survey questions will be analyzed using statistical methods. Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize responses, and inferential statistics (e.g., chi-square tests or ANOVA) will help identify relationships or differences among groups based on geographic location, institution type, and educational background.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings from the mixed-methods research conducted on *The Role of Public Administration Education in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*. The data collected through surveys of public administration students, faculty members, and administrators, case studies of selected institutions, and interviews with experts were analyzed to understand how public administration education contributes to achieving SDGs.

4.1. Integration of SDGs into Public Administration Curricula

The survey results revealed a growing acknowledgment among academic institutions worldwide regarding the importance of integrating SDG-focused content into public administration programs. Over 80% of respondents from participating universities stated that SDGs were included, at least partially, in their curricula. Notably, curricula that addressed SDGs were most often found in public administration programs from universities in Europe and North America. However, many respondents from universities in low-income countries mentioned that SDGs were only occasionally referenced within certain elective courses rather than being fully integrated into core courses. This discrepancy highlights the disparity in the resources and institutional support for SDG-focused education across regions.

A thematic analysis of survey responses indicated that institutions with strong SDG integration tend to offer specialized courses on sustainable development, ethical governance, and public sector innovations. For instance, a significant percentage of faculty members (75%) acknowledged the necessity of including sustainability topics in subjects related to governance, urban planning, public policy, and leadership, to align public administration training with SDG agendas. This supports the findings from the literature review, which emphasized the role of public administration in achieving the SDGs through adaptive, forward-thinking governance and policy decisions.

4.2. Curricular and Pedagogical Practices that Support SDGs

The case studies of selected universities revealed that leading institutions have made significant strides in aligning their public administration curricula with SDGs. For example, Harvard Kennedy School (USA), University of Gothenburg (Sweden), and National University of Singapore have embedded SDGs not only within individual courses but also as overarching principles in their entire public administration departments. The curriculum incorporates real-world challenges, including climate change, inequality, and social justice, providing students with tools to design policies and lead initiatives to address these issues at local, national, and global levels.

Case studies from these institutions highlighted that pedagogy includes a combination of classroom instruction, fieldwork, and interdisciplinary collaboration. For example, the National University of Singapore's "Sustainable Governance and Policy" course required students to work on live policy projects that contributed directly to local sustainable development initiatives, including waste management and urban environmental policies. Such field-based approaches offer students the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge to address practical challenges related to SDG achievement. Additionally, 70% of the case study institutions reported fostering partnerships with governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international bodies to provide students with real-world insights and opportunities to contribute to SDG initiatives.

4.3. Perceptions of Public Administration Educators and Practitioners

Expert interviews revealed varying opinions on the current state of public administration education's contribution to the SDGs. More than half of the experts emphasized that public administration education is increasingly being seen as a foundational element for driving SDG implementation. Several respondents highlighted that educators play a pivotal role in equipping future leaders with the capacity for sustainability-oriented decision-making. Experts also reported the importance of emphasizing leadership skills such as transparency, ethical governance, and stakeholder engagement, which are critical for achieving SDG targets in public administration practice.

However, while many experts expressed optimism about the evolution of public administration curricula, they also identified barriers. A recurrent theme was the tension between traditional administrative functions and the complexity of SDG integration into governance systems. One prominent expert noted that traditional public administration programs still prioritize bureaucratic efficiency over sustainability. This gap means that many future public administrators are ill-equipped to handle the nuances of climate change, public health, and inequality within governance structures, which may slow down the progress toward SDG achievement. Moreover, despite the importance of SDGs, several faculty members noted that curricular revisions to incorporate sustainability-

based teaching often face institutional resistance, with financial and curriculum design challenges at the forefront.

4.4. Skills and Knowledge Gaps in Current Public Administration Education

A major finding from the survey and interviews was the identification of skills and knowledge gaps in current public administration education. Many students and educators acknowledged that public administration programs generally focus heavily on procedural knowledge related to law, finance, and public policy but lack substantial emphasis on sustainability principles. Specifically, skills related to environmental sustainability, sustainable economic development, and climate resilience were flagged as inadequate in many traditional public administration programs. 65% of the survey participants from developing countries mentioned a lack of technical expertise in climate-related policies or sustainable urban management courses.

According to expert interviews, students need more training in areas such as impact assessment, climate change adaptation, and environmental justice. Several respondents called for the introduction of interdisciplinary approaches that would bridge the gap between public administration and fields like environmental science, economics, and social work, fostering the development of holistic policies that reflect sustainability considerations. A 2023 report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) emphasized the role of interdisciplinary education in building the capability of public servants to respond to complex, multi-dimensional global challenges, including those embodied in the SDGs.

4.5. Challenges and Barriers to SDG Integration in Public Administration Education

While progress has been made, several challenges in aligning public administration education with SDG goals emerged from the research. Key barriers reported by survey respondents and case study participants included insufficient funding for curriculum reform, limited faculty expertise in sustainable development, and the often fragmented approach to SDG integration in educational institutions. In developing regions, issues like limited access to technology, lack of sustainability-focused teaching materials, and institutional constraints were highlighted as significant obstacles to effective integration. Moreover, a significant portion of students (approximately 40%) mentioned that while the SDGs were acknowledged in their coursework, these discussions remained largely theoretical and disconnected from practical government work. This further reinforces the importance of incorporating hands-on projects and collaboration with real-world entities that work on SDG-related issues, as seen in the case studies of successful institutions like Harvard Kennedy School and University of Gothenburg.

4.6. Recommendations for Enhancing Public Administration Education to Achieve SDGs

Based on the findings, several recommendations emerged to improve the contribution of public administration education to SDG achievement. First, there is a need for curriculum reforms that explicitly integrate SDGs as core components of public administration training. This includes developing specialized courses focused on sustainability, ethical leadership, and inclusive policy-making. Additionally, institutions should offer interdisciplinary courses that connect public administration to fields like environmental science, economics, and urban studies.

Second, fostering partnerships with public and private sector organizations, as well as international bodies, will enable students to engage directly with SDG-related challenges. By collaborating with local and international NGOs, students can take part in field-based research projects that offer concrete contributions to SDG achievement,

providing a unique learning opportunity that translates classroom knowledge into real-world impact.

Finally, public administration educators should be provided with more professional development opportunities to build expertise in teaching SDG-related topics. Institutions may also consider allocating funds to introduce cutting-edge digital tools and sustainable governance frameworks to enhance the learning experience.

DISCUSSION

This research aimed to investigate the role of public administration education in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by examining the integration of SDGs into academic curricula, pedagogical practices, perceptions of educators and practitioners, and the barriers to effective SDG training. The findings suggest that while significant strides have been made, challenges remain in fully realizing the potential of public administration education in advancing sustainable development agendas. These insights have implications for both educators and policymakers seeking to align public administration education with SDG priorities.

5.1. Integration of SDGs into Curricula

The survey and case study results revealed that an increasing number of public administration programs are now incorporating SDGs into their curricula. The recognition that SDGs are central to the public sector's role in policy development and governance is gaining momentum in higher education worldwide. Leading institutions, such as Harvard Kennedy School and the University of Gothenburg, have developed specialized courses to address sustainability, ethical governance, and inclusive public policy, underscoring the importance of providing public administration students with the tools to engage with global challenges.

However, there is still a notable gap in the extent to which SDGs are incorporated into public administration education, especially in low-income and developing countries. In these regions, SDGs are often referenced only in elective courses or as standalone topics rather than embedded across core public administration subjects. This observation echoes the findings of previous studies that call for a more consistent and widespread incorporation of sustainability principles into public sector education to equip public servants with the knowledge required to address multi-dimensional issues such as poverty, inequality, and climate change (Abraham, 2020).

The gap in SDG integration in lower-income countries highlights the structural challenges these nations face, including resource constraints, institutional inertia, and limited access to high-quality educational resources. Therefore, it is crucial for international organizations such as the UNDP and World Bank to support the development of SDG-focused curricula and provide the necessary funding and technical expertise to help public administration schools in these regions.

5.2. Curricular and Pedagogical Innovations

The positive examples set by high-performing institutions emphasize that the integration of SDGs requires innovative pedagogical strategies that are active, experiential, and interdisciplinary. Programs such as those at the National University of Singapore, which integrate real-world SDG challenges into the curriculum, reflect the growing recognition that education should not be confined to theoretical learning but should include practical problem-solving approaches. Students involved in sustainability-

focused courses gain hands-on experience working on policies that directly impact local communities, such as urban environmental management and waste reduction initiatives.

The use of fieldwork, case studies, and collaborative projects with external stakeholders, as shown in the case studies, allows students to bridge the gap between theory and practice. This finding supports the argument put forth by earlier research emphasizing that sustainable development education should be hands-on and interactive, involving collaborative efforts between students, faculty, local governments, and international agencies to address pressing social, economic, and environmental issues (Finger et al., 2021). However, the reality is that not all universities have the resources or infrastructure to provide such opportunities, which further points to the need for strategic partnerships and external funding to support these initiatives, especially in developing countries.

5.3. Skills and Knowledge Gaps

The findings also revealed significant gaps in the specific skills and knowledge needed to address SDGs effectively. While public administration programs emphasize policy analysis, governance, and management, they do not often adequately cover areas such as climate change mitigation, sustainable economic development, and environmental justice, which are essential to the SDG framework. Experts identified that to truly integrate sustainability into governance systems, students must gain a deeper understanding of interdisciplinary topics, including environmental economics, climate resilience, and social equity.

As identified in the literature review, these gaps in public administration education risk hindering the progress of the SDGs, as future public administrators will lack the technical and conceptual knowledge to make sustainable decisions. This underlines the need for substantial curricular reforms that prioritize sustainability education across all levels of public administration training (Grimm & Bock, 2022). Incorporating these subjects into public administration curricula would not only provide students with the tools to tackle SDG challenges but also ensure that policy-makers are equipped with the necessary expertise to address the evolving nature of sustainability issues in governance.

5.4. Barriers to Effective SDG Integration

Several barriers to the successful integration of SDGs into public administration education were identified, particularly institutional and financial constraints. In many low-resource settings, the adoption of SDG-oriented curricula was hindered by the lack of adequate infrastructure, faculty expertise, and instructional resources. Moreover, despite global efforts to push for SDG integration, public administration programs often remain rooted in traditional models of governance that prioritize bureaucratic efficiency over sustainability.

The literature has long highlighted the challenge of integrating SDGs into existing educational systems, particularly when institutional resistance to change or lack of awareness of the long-term benefits of SDG-focused curricula remains high (Aghajani et al., 2024). A recent study by (Widianita, 2023) found that many universities are unable to fully embrace the SDGs because of the high costs associated with revising curricula and retraining faculty, compounded by existing curricular commitments that may not accommodate such fundamental shifts.

Institutional resistance and financial constraints are systemic challenges that cannot be solved by individual universities alone. They require collective efforts from governmental, regional, and global agencies to advocate for sustainable education policy, align funding mechanisms, and encourage institutional collaboration. Partnerships with

international organizations, NGOs, and private sector actors will be key to providing the necessary resources and support to drive SDG-based education reforms.

5.5. Recommendations for Future Improvements

The research findings suggest several areas where improvements could help public administration education contribute more effectively to the SDGs. First, universities need to further align curricula with SDG objectives by prioritizing interdisciplinary approaches that combine sustainability education with core public administration skills, such as governance, leadership, and ethics. The incorporation of specialized courses that explore topics such as climate governance, sustainable development policy, and social equity is vital to equipping students with the knowledge to take on SDG-related challenges.

Second, the establishment of strong partnerships with governments, international agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will provide students with practical, real-world experiences through internships, fieldwork, and collaborative projects that contribute directly to SDG initiatives. By linking public administration education more closely with the actual workings of SDG-related governance at local and global levels, students can gain invaluable insights into the complexities of achieving sustainable development.

Lastly, policymakers must focus on fostering an environment where institutional resistance to change can be addressed. Efforts should include professional development programs for faculty members, increased funding for SDG-related education, and creating incentives for institutions to innovate. By addressing these systemic challenges, public administration education can play a more prominent role in achieving the SDGs.

CONCLUSION

Public administration education plays a pivotal role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by equipping future leaders with the knowledge, skills, and ethical framework to address complex global challenges. This study underscores significant progress in integrating SDG principles into public administration curricula, with many programs embracing interdisciplinary approaches and experiential learning to address issues such as poverty, climate change, and gender equality. Leading institutions have demonstrated that incorporating sustainability into education can prepare students for the multi-dimensional governance challenges of the 21st century. However, disparities persist, particularly in low-resource settings where limited financial support, institutional resistance, and faculty expertise hinder the comprehensive integration of SDGs. While programs in developed regions often showcase innovative practices, such as partnerships with external organizations and real-world problem-solving initiatives, institutions in developing countries struggle with resource constraints. Addressing these challenges requires collaboration among universities, governments, international organizations, and private stakeholders to fund and support curriculum reforms, faculty training, and resource development. Future improvements must focus on enhancing interdisciplinary content, expanding practical training opportunities, and fostering institutional commitments to sustainability. Moreover, overcoming structural barriers demands targeted policies and strategic alliances to enable equitable access to SDG-focused education globally. Public administration programs must align more closely with sustainability principles to empower future public servants to lead effective governance initiatives that align with the SDGs. By addressing these gaps, public administration education can serve as a transformative force, ensuring that global sustainability

challenges are met with innovative solutions and collaborative actions, building a just and equitable future for all.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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