Knowledge hub
-
Collection of best practices

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

Global Schools Program, SDSN

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Global

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

☐ Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools

☐ Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development

☑ Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession

☐ Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation

☐ Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

Sustainable Development Solutions Network

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

Education for Sustainable Development, Global Citizenship, Primary Students, Secondary Students, SDGs, Climate Action, Youth

6. What makes it a best practice? *

Global Schools (GS) believes teachers are at the heart of the classroom, with the potential to inspire hope and solidarity in future generations. GS' mission is to ensure every primary and secondary student receives education for sustainable development in order to build resilient and prosperous communities, address local sustainability problems, and act upon climate change risks. To do this, GS employs a data-driven and multi-pronged approach that includes bottom-up and top-down strategies: 1) evidence-based professional development for teachers 2) research programs targeting educational policy and curriculum mapping.

Description of the best practice

7. Introduction (350-400 words)
   This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:
   i) Which population was affected?
   ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
   iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? *

Global Schools (GS) is a flagship program of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network, in support of UNESCO's Roadmap for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The mission of Global Schools is to create a world where every primary and secondary student is equipped with the knowledge, skills, and values to tackle the problems of the 21st century. Research shows that Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), with its core pedagogical features, can be a highly effective tool for enhancing educational outcomes, while also supporting social and environmental objectives. Literature reveals that teachers are critical to achieving ESD, but most lack the training and resources to promote ESD in their classrooms and schools. The Global Schools Program (GS) promotes transformative change in classrooms by integrating education for sustainable development concepts directly into teacher training and curriculum. GS training programs are founded on the tenants that state of the art teacher training should be (a) accessible to low-resource communities; (b) adapted to local realities; (c) focused on both pedagogy and content; (d) supported by high-quality curriculum resources; (e) designed to provide pathways for individual development and recognition, and (f) promote a long-term community of practice and knowledge sharing. In 2021 alone, GS trained 504 teachers (53.5% female) through its comprehensive training program spanning 92 countries, with a specific focus on the developing world and under-resourced schools (85% of the participants were from the developing world, and 48% were from Africa). Within one year, teachers and school leaders collectively engaged nearly 108,112 students in 7,300+ classroom lessons and activities on ESD and trained 12,300+ additional teachers via the program's trainers-of-trainers model. Additionally, to date, over 1,500+ schools committed to fully integrating sustainable development into their operations by signing the GS "Commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals" pledge. This pledge encompasses 1,360,668+ students and 113,488+ teachers. In addition, GS trained 450+ youth to complete outreach on sustainable development education to 8,000 schools.

8. Implementation (350-450 words)
Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:
i) What are the main activities carried out?
ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation? *

Global Schools (GS) promotes transformative change in classrooms by integrating ESD concepts into curricula and teacher training to improve student learning. GS' flagship initiative is the GS Advocates Program, a 6-month training program for teachers. The training includes 30+ lectures, original readings, and comprehensive assessments. 17 supporting documents assist teachers in ESD implementation via a specific action-research methodology to incorporate ESD in schools and improve education delivery. The training is currently ongoing, and in recruitment for the 3rd cohort of teachers.

GS teachers have extended their work into local communities, engaging and training over 30,000 community members, admins, and parents on sustainable development. For example, a teacher from Pakistan reported that "Health Awareness" lessons made many parents quit smoking; a teacher from Kenya scaled up their community garden program to three additional schools; a teacher from Hong Kong convinced 10 other schools to install solar rooftop farms.

Finally, GS carried out an intricate 6-phase research project on curriculum localization in Ghana, Morocco, and Turkey. The research process involved 5 host institutions, 60+ researchers, and 80+ stakeholders working across 4 languages. Research teams spent 18 months conducting curriculum audits to align their national curriculum with ESD. They formed national committees, adapted lesson plans, and tested these lessons. GS provided 100+ pages of methodology and a comprehensive analytical tool with over 250+ indicators to support the project. Each country team produced 2 reports, and hundreds of data sheets outlining the prevalence of transformative education in their curriculums. To date, GS has published 4 draft reports on the results of its national research projects in Morocco, Ghana, and Turkey.

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)
   To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:
   i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
   ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
   iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

Global Schools (GS) tracks additional indicators on school change. Survey data from GS-trained teachers reveals the program's long-term, positive impact extends to school-wide practices and students' perceptions of climate and sustainable development. For example, 98% of teachers believe the program has increased students' awareness of social and environmental issues; 99% believe GS has positively impacted students' learning.

A teacher from Nigeria says, "[Global Schools] activities changed the manner at which [students] speak and relate with themselves. They became more conscious and deliberate about not harming nature and it was beautiful to watch."

A teacher from Latvia reported, "The main impact I can see on students [were]... new skills and developing self-confidence."

A student from Uganda realized that "Boys can also cook and do household roles, we shall start to exchange roles with our sisters."

Teachers and school leaders engaged with Global Schools have also integrated long-term strategies within school operations to support sustainable development outcomes. In the 2021-2022 cohort, 62% of schools improved litter or waste management; 59% made sustainability a strategic goal of the school; 56% have made sustainability a strategic goal/vision of the school; 52% have integrated sustainable development into staff development in order to educate future generations of teachers.

A teacher from Kazakhstan says, "the feedback has been that sustainability has been put onto the agenda not just by declaring it an official strategic goal of the school but in classrooms and amongst pupils and teachers."
A US teacher stated that, "We will start the school year with a presentation on SDGs for new teachers every year from now on."

Indicators and verifiable, qualitative surveys reveal that the initiative has been successful in promoting long-term changes that will remain integrated into individual school systems, after only 6 months of implementation. To date, over 1,500+ schools committed to fully integrating sustainable development into their operations by signing the GS "Commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals" pledge. This pledge encompasses 1,360,668+ students and 113,488+ teachers. In addition, GS trained 450+ youth to complete outreach on sustainable development education to 8,000 schools.

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)
    To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:
    i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
    ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
    iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

    There were many enablers that played into Global Schools' (GS) success including: 1) research-informed program design 2) participatory, community-based approaches 3) access to stakeholders and partners, and 4) demand for training and research programs.

    First, GS has garnered local and expert feedback to design an appropriate delivery strategy for its program design. The training program was developed after surveying 220 local ESD champions and 40 educators.

    Second, GS adopts a participatory approach to decision-making in its programs. Teachers are encouraged to carry out workshops with their schools and create community buy-in. Local researchers are encouraged to recruit national committees and propose their own scale-up roadmaps that GS will support.

    Third, Global Schools is able to capitalize on its positioning in the Sustainable Development Solutions Network and the organization's established relationships with education Ministries all over the world. The SDSN network includes 1,110 partner organizations. This positioning gives Global Schools access to government leaders to forge partnerships and integrate sustainable development education in classrooms.

    Lastly, Global Schools has created a strong brand identity with loyal alumni who are continuously creating impact and spreading the program via local networks. Between the first and second training cohorts, demand to participate in the training increased by 162%. Already, Global Schools has received requests from organizations in 23 countries to carry out local programs.

    Some barriers to implementation included: COVID-19's impact on the education sector, time constraints for teachers, and limited financial resources to support implementation.

11. Conclusions (250 words)
    Please describe why may this intervention be considered a "best practice". What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented "best practice" or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

    This can be considered a best practice because Global Schools has successfully created a world-class teacher training on ESD with the potential for world-wide scalability. Other organizations can learn from this model and adopt the curriculum resources, case-studies, and lessons learned which are on Global Schools' website. Lessons learned and recommendations are compiled in our case study book, and include: the importance of supportive school leadership, the need for more translations, the success in unified team culture and community partnerships, the significance of teacher autonomy in success cases, and the need to quantity data on the benefits of ESD. Global Schools also partners with organizations/schools to guide them and give them advice on integrating sustainability in school communities.

12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the "best practice" for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. *

https://www.globalschoolsprogram.org/_files/ugd/2ed9b9_7795e7bc79d84721aabada32dab26c78.pdf
https://www.globalschoolsprogram.org/_files/ugd/2ed9b9_68b92ed0ebbd46a3aba06a2d17630b94.pdf
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