English Language Teachers' Knowledge of SDGs and their Attitudes towards Incorporating SDGs in ELT in Myanmar

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Abstract

In Myanmar, with the intention of developing educational solutions to reduce poverty within the nation-state and promote respect for everyone, EFL teachers are currently teaching literature with a focus on SDG 4 target. For them to have a say in the social, cultural, economic, and environmental development of their societies and their own lives, today's learners must acquire a thorough awareness of local, national, and international issues. This research aimed to explore English Language Teachers (ELTs' knowledge of SDGs and their attitudes towards the incorporation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into English Language Teaching (ELT) in Myanmar. A survey was administered to 19 ELTs from different universities, colleges, and language centers in Myanmar. The findings revealed that the majority of the respondents had limited knowledge of the SDGs framework, but they recognized the importance of incorporating the SDGs into ELT. The study further highlighted the need for more training and professional development for ELTs to enable them to integrate SDGs into classroom instruction effectively. Finally, Knowledge and attitudes of Myanmar teachers to a stronger integration of sustainability issues into educational programmes still need to be improved. A change of perspective is urgently needed, whereby sustainability education should be seen as a collective responsibility.

Keywords: Attitudes, English Teachers, Knowledge, Myanmar, Sustainable development goals (SDGs)

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Introduction

English Language Teaching (ELT) plays a crucial role in facilitating sustainable development across the world. In recent years, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have emerged as a global framework for promoting sustainable development and addressing issues such as poverty, climate change, and inequality. The SDGs emphasize the need for inclusive and equitable education, which includes the acquisition of 21st century skills necessary for sustainable development.

Myanmar is a developing country that faces numerous challenges in achieving sustainable development, including inadequate infrastructure and limited access to education. The role of ELT in promoting sustainable development in Myanmar has yet to be explored fully. The knowledge and attitudes of ELTs towards the SDGs can influence the students' progress in the integration of sustainable development into the ELT curriculum.

This study aims to explore the knowledge and attitudes of ELTs towards the incorporation of SDGs into ELT in Myanmar. The research is significant because it addresses the gaps in the current literature on ELT and sustainable development in Myanmar and highlights the potential opportunities and challenges for the integration of the SDGs into ELT. The findings from this study can inform policymakers, educators, and other stakeholders on strategies to integrate sustainable development into ELT curriculum and promote sustainable development in Myanmar. In a linked, globalized society, there are new trends and development difficulties and their effects on education and training. In Myanmar, escalating problems like global warming, and inequality have compelled authorities to adapt their approaches, resulting in structural change that would promote inclusive and people-centered development. Future education policy must look at how educational systems might change to meet new problems and support sustainable development and peace. This calls for reconsidering the types of knowledge, competencies, and learning processes, as well as the policies and reforms that will support the achievement of new objectives (UNESCO 2014a).

In this situation, UNESCO has been supporting transformative education while advocating education for peace and sustainable development as the overriding purpose of its education programme. According to the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL 2010), adult education has historically been heavily focused on improving and developing workers' skills and abilities. In recent years, the goals of adult and lifelong learning have been the only ones to embrace the broader benefits of education, such as health, personal fulfillment, citizenship, and social and democratic involvement. However, in today's higher education, human resource development for economic growth is at the forefront.

The Role of Education in Agenda 2030

In an effort to "end poverty and set the world on a path of peace, prosperity, and opportunity for all on a healthy planet," the United Nations General Assembly established the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (also known as Agenda 2030) in 2015. All 193 of the United Nations' members approved and adopted it. It defined 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets that must be fulfilled for the goals to be accomplished, as well as articulating the broad commitment to sustainable development shared by all adoptees (.).

Each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets major areas for enhancing sustainable development by 2030, with SDG 4 focusing on education with the goal of "ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting opportunities for lifelong learning for all" (Ibid., 17). The seven aims of SDG 4 are broken down as follows: "Ascertain that, by 2030, all students possess the knowledge and abilities required to promote sustainable development." Including, among other things, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, the promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, promotion of global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and culture's contribution to sustainable development" (Ibid., 17). Despite not being specifically mentioned in the Agenda 2030 Declaration, global education (GE) plays a crucial role in achieving SDG 4. It is also significant to remember that the Incheon Declaration, the original "Framework to Action" document for SDG 4, explicitly states that GE is necessary for the achievement of all SDGs and is at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Education should be a part of the plans to accomplish each of the SDGs because it can hasten the process of achieving them all (UNESCO, 2015, p. 24). Therefore, SDG 4—along with the other 168 SDG targets—is significant not simply as an aim to raise the quality and accessibility of education. But it is made clear in both Agenda 2030 and the original SDG 4 implementation framework that the achievement of SDG 4's aims is necessary for the fulfillment of all other SDGs. Therefore, Agenda 2030 clearly states that fulfilling SDG 4 and, consequently, SDG 4.7, is necessary for the achievement of all other SDGs.

Research Objective

The purpose of this study was to examine the key elements that motivate the English language teachers to integrate the SDGs into their curricula. By looking into their efficacy during the implementation, the predictors of the future directions of ESD in language learning are the personal and contextual variables for a successful implementation of SDGs in English language teaching. The need of multidisciplinary in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), where language teachers do not just concentrate on language skills, may also be addressed by an SDG perspective.

With the aim stated above, the research is guided by two research questions.
1. What are the teachers' attitudes towards SDG Goals?
2. What is the teachers' knowledge of SDG Goals in ELT?

Methodology

This study was conducted between January and February 2023 through an online survey. The target group of the study was 19 public university teachers working in universities. It was conducted among English teachers in universities to investigate their knowledge of SDGs and attitudes towards the incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into English language Teaching (ELT) in Myanmar. The survey consisted of 3 sections: (1) Knowledge (14 questions), (2) Attitudes (14 questions) and (3) Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents (12 questions). The questionnaire was completed by 19 teachers.

The survey investigated teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda to integrate sustainability into educational activities. The items and structure of the questionnaire were selected by the researchers from concepts, indicators, documents, and models found in the existing literature on the SDGs.

The online survey was made available using a Google Form, which completely protected the participants' identities. Teachers who willingly answered the questionnaire as part of the study granted their consent for the data to be used in an anonymous manner. At the conclusion of the survey's validity period, all replies were removed from the Google form, and the data was only used in aggregate.

Results

This study offers insights that can help English instructors become more effective in their current roles while also highlighting the need for critical reflection on the theoretical underpinnings of existing approaches to the SDGs. Many academics argue that we should think outside of the box in which the SDGs and related educational strategies have been developed. The three phases of the results are discussed. We begin by examining the university professors' awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Myanmar. In the second stage, we look into how university professors feel about these objectives. The third stage investigates general and biographical information about university professors.

1. Phase 1: Knowledge

Knowledge of university teachers in Myanmar concerning the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) presented for each item has been mentioned in table 1.

Table 1

Levels of Teachers' Knowledge Concerning the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Sr No	Knowledge	Knowledge Level					Calculation		Interpretation
		None	Limited	Fair	Good	Very Good	M	SD	
1	SDGs and 2030 Agenda	5.26%	57.90%	21.05%	10.53%	5.26%	2.53	0.94	Limited knowledge
2	Ecological footprint	0.00%	73.68%	10.53%	10.53%	5.26%	2.47	0.88	Limited knowledge
3	Greenhouse effect	0.00%	0.00%	5.26%	15.79%	78.95%	4.74	0.55	A very good knowledge
4	Resilience	0.00%	0.00%	73.68%	15.79%	10.53%	3.37	0.67	Fair knowledge
5	Social gradient	0.00%	0.00%	68.42%	21.05%	10.53%	3.42	0.67	Fair knowledge
6	Determinants of health	15.79%	68.42%	10.53%	5.26%	0.00%	2.05	0.69	Limited knowledge
7	Green Gross Domestic Product	5.26%	78.95%	10.53%	5.26%	0.00%	2.16	0.59	Limited knowledge
8	Human Development Index (HDI)	10.53%	73.68%	10.53%	5.26%	0.00%	2.11	0.64	Limited knowledge
9	Index of Sustainable Economic welfare (ISEW)	0.00%	10.52%	78.95%	10.53%	0.00%	3.00	0.46	Fair knowledge
10	Equitable and sustainable well-being (BES)	15.79%	68.42%	10.53%	5.26%	0.00%	2.05	0.69	Limited knowledge
11	Brundtland Report (1987)	42.10%	47.38%	5.26%	5.26%	0.00%	1.74	0.78	No knowledge
12	Kyoto Protocol (1997)	0.00%	78.95%	15.79%	5.26%	0.00%	2.26	0.55	Limited knowledge
13	Paris Agreement on climate change (2015)	0.00%	10.52%	78.95%	10.53%	0.00%	3.00	0.46	Fair knowledge
14	Doughnut Economy	5.26%	63.16%	26.32%	5.26%	0.00%	2.32	0.65	Limited knowledge
	Average	7.14%	45.11%	30.45%	9.40%	7.90%	2.66	1.01	Fair knowledge

Descriptive analysis of the levels of teachers' knowledge was presented for each item as percentage. The university teachers' lack of knowledge was indicated mainly in item 11, the Brundtland Report (1987) (mean=1.74), followed by item 6, determinants of health (mean=2.05), and equitable and sustainable well-being (mean=2.05). A very good knowledge was indicated in item 3, greenhouse effect (mean=4.74).

2. Phase 2: Attitude

Attitude of university teachers in Myanmar concerning the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) presented for each item has been mentioned in table 2.

Table 2

Teachers' Attitudes Concerning the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Sr No	Knowledge	Attitudes					Calculation		Interpretation
		I do not think it should be taught in school.	It should be taught in designated hours.	It could be taught in lessons of the subject I teach, but for personal culture.	It could be taught in lessons of the subject I teach, as basic part.	It could be taught in lessons of the subject I teach, as essential part.	*M*	*SD*	
1	SDGs and 2030 Agenda	0.00%	5.26%	0.00%	78.95%	15.79%	4.05	0.60	It could be taught in lessons of the subject I teach, as basic part
2	Ecological footprint	0.00%	0.00%	5.26%	68.42%	26.32%	4.21	0.52	It could be taught in lessons of the subject I teach, as essential part
3	Greenhouse effect	0.00%	0.00%	5.26%	84.21%	10.53%	4.05	0.39	It could be taught in lessons of the subject I teach, as basic part
4	Resilience	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	84.21%	15.79%	4.16	0.36	It could be taught in lessons of the subject I teach, as basic part
5	Social gradient	0.00%	10.53%	78.95%	5.26%	5.26%	3.05	0.60	It could be taught in lessons of the subject I teach, but for personal culture
6	Determinants of health	0.00%	0.00%	5.26%	78.95%	15.79%	4.11	0.45	It could be taught in lessons of the subject I teach as basic part
7	Green Gross Domestic Product	0.00%	0.00%	10.53%	63.15%	26.32%	4.17	0.59	It could be taught in lessons of the subject I teach, as basic part
8	Human Development Index (HDI)	0.00%	0.00%	63.16%	10.52%	26.32%	3.63	0.87	It could be taught in lessons of the subject I teach, as basic part

Table 2 (Continued)

Sr No	Knowledge	Attitudes					Calculation		Interpretation
		I do not think it should be taught in school.	It should be taught in designated hours.	It could be taught in lessons of the subject I teach, but for personal culture.	It could be taught in lessons of the subject I teach, as basic part.	It could be taught in lessons of the subject I teach, as essential part.	M	SD	
9	Index of Sustainable Economic welfare (ISEW)	0.00%	10.53%	68.42%	10.52%	10.53%	3.21	0.77	It could be taught in lessons of the subject I teach, but for personal culture
10	Equitable and sustainable well-being (BES)	0.00%	0.00%	63.16%	10.52%	26.32%	3.63	0.87	It could be taught in lessons of the subject I teach, as basic part
11	Brundtland Report (1987)	0.00%	63.16%	10.53%	10.52%	15.79%	2.79	1.15	It could be taught in lessons of the subject I teach, but for personal culture
12	Kyoto Protocol (1997)	0.00%	57.89%	10.53%	15.79%	15.79%	2.89	1.17	It could be taught in lessons of the subject I teach, but for personal culture
13	Paris Agreement on climate change (2015)	0.00%	68.42%	10.53%	10.52%	10.53%	2.63	1.04	It could be taught in lessons of the subject I teach, but for personal culture
14	Doughnut Economy	0.00%	21.05%	21.05%	31.58%	26.32%	3.63	1.09	It could be taught in lessons of the subject I teach, as basic part
	Average	0.00%	16.92%	25.19%	40.22%	17.67%	3.59	0.97	It could be taught in lessons of the subject I teach, as a basic part

Item 2, ecological footprint, was most frequently chosen by the teacher participants. (mean= 4.21). According to them, this knowledge could be taught in lessons of the subject they teach, as essential part. According to the data found in items 1,3,4,6 and 7, teacher participants mentioned that SGDs could be taught in lessons of the subject they teach, as basic part. Participants mentioned that Paris Agreement on Climate Change (2015) could not be taught in the subject they teach but they could teach them for personal culture (mean=2.63).

3. Phase 3: General and Personal information

Table 3
Age of Participants (completed years)

	Age	Percentage
a.	$30 \leq n \leq 40$	63.16%
b.	$40 \leq n \leq 50$	36.84%

The population of the participants of the study are at the age between 30 and 40 is 63.16% and between 40 and 50 is 36.84.

Table 4
Gender of Participants

	Gender	Percentage
a.	Male	21.05%
b.	Female	78.95%

The majority of the participants were female (78.95%) and the minority is male (21.05%).

Table 5
Educational Attainment of Participants

	Education Attainment	Percentage
a.	Post Graduate Diploma	00.00%
b.	Master's degree	73.68%
c.	PhD degree	26.32%

Among the participants, 73.68% were master's degree holders and 26.31% got Ph.D. degree.

Table 6
The Teaching Area of Participants

	Teaching Area	Percentage
a.	Science	15.79%
b.	Humanities	0.00%
c.	Language	63.56%
d.	Law	0.00%
e.	Technical-professional Area	10.53%
f.	Others(medicine)	10.53%

The population of the participants who are in science area is 15.79%, technical- professional area 10.53% and medicine 10.53%. Most of them are in the field of literature.

Table 7

Educational Level of Participants

	Educational Level	Percentage
a.	Undergraduate level	10.53%
b.	Postgraduate level	0.00%
e.	Both level	89.47%

The minority of the participants teach undergraduate level (10.53%) and the majority both level (89.47%).

Table 8

Geographical Area of the Participants' University

	Geographical Area	Percentage
a.	Upper Myanmar	63.16%
b.	Lower Myanmar	36.84%

According to the geography, 63.16% lives in Upper Myanmar and 36.84% in lower Myanmar.

Table 9

Area of Participants' University

	University's Area	Percentage
a.	Urban Area	63.16%
b.	Rural Area	36.84%

The percentage of the participants' university in urban area is 63.16% and 36.84% is in rural area.

Table 10

The Category of the Participants' University

	Category of University	Percentage
a.	Language university	0.00%
b.	Arts and Science university	78.95%
c.	Health university	10.53%
d.	Technology university	10.53%
e.	Engineering university	0.00%
f.	Forestry university	0.00%
g.	Agriculture university	0.00%
h.	Arts and Science university	0.00%

Table 10 (Continued)

	Category of University	Percentage
i.	Veterinary university	0.00%
j.	Distance Education university	0.00%
k.	Economics university	0.00%
l.	Marine university	0.00%
m.	Defence services university	0.00%
n.	Computer university	0.00%

The majority of the participants' university are arts and science university 78.95%. Another 10.53% is medicinal university and 19.53% in technology university.

Table 11

The Number of Students Attending Participants' University

	The Number of Students	Percentage
a.	≤2000	0.00%
b.	2001-4000	21.05%
c.	4001-6000	21.05%
d.	≥6001	57.89%

Many of the participants' university have the number of students greater than 6000(57.89%).

Table 12

Participants' University Promoting the Integration of Sustainability Issues in Educational Programmes

	Promoting Integration of Sustainability Issues in Educational Programmes	Percentage
a.	Yes	73.68%
b.	No	26.31%

Most of the participants' university promote the integration of sustainability issues in educational programmes (73.68%).

Table 13

The Kinds of Initiatives and Activities Used to Integrate Sustainability Issues into University's Educational Programmes

	Kinds of Initiatives and Activities	Percentage
a.	Classroom-taught lessons	73.68%
b.	Interactive workshops	57.89%
c.	Active citizenship projects	36.84%
d.	Experiences	26.31%
e.	Other (please specify)	0.00%

Classroom-taught lessons are mainly used to integrate sustainability issues (73.68%).

Table 14

The Participants' Participation in Activities or Courses related to Sustainable Development or the Sustainable Development Goal

	Participation in the Activities or Courses	Percentage
a.	Yes	52.63%
b.	No	47.37%

Many university teachers participated in activities or courses related to sustainable development or sustainable development goals.

Discussion

Our research reveals that even though the majority of the teachers believe that sustainable behaviour is a good thing and that it is crucial for both their teaching and personal stance in life, they prefer not to act because they are either unaware of what to do or because they feel obligated by society to engage in a particular behavioral attitude. However, they assert that they are willing to incorporate SDG Goals into their lessons if given the proper training. As a result, the overwhelming majority of the teachers stated that it is crucial to integrate SDG Goals into teacher education of university departments. Their ability to teach about SD would therefore be directly impacted by incorporating SDG Goals into the curricula.

Recommendations

According to the obtained results, the following points are recommended as follows:
(A)   University's teachers are encouraged to teach SDG in their classroom.
(B)   For researchers, future investigation should be conducted on their sustainable and environmental development.
(C)   It's informed to organize that workshops and training course for university's teachers on sustainable development.

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