

# Perception and understanding of sustainable development education essay

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## **4. 0 Introduction**

This chapter presents findings from the data collected from Home Economics teachers and analyses using SPSS 15. 0. The results obtained are explained in relation to other related studies which have been carried out by researchers and academics. The findings are presented in descriptive statistics in four sections with respect to the research objectives and questions. The findings are presented as follows: 4. 1 Respondents demographic information. 4. 2 Respondents' perception and understanding of sustainable development. 4. 3 Current practices and attitudes towards sustainable development. 4. 4 Respondents' education and training as Home Economics teachers.

## **4. 1 Respondents' demographic information**

### **4. 1. 1 School type of respondents**

Table 4. 1 demonstrates the respondents' school type.

#### **Table 4. 1 School type**

##### **School type**

##### **Frequency**

##### **Percent**

Private 92 56. 4 State 71 43. 6 Total 163 100. 0 The results depicted in the table, show that out of 163 teachers who participated in the survey, 56. 4 % are from private schools while 43. 6% are from state schools.

#### **4. 1. 1 Number of years of experience as a Home Economics teacher**

##### **Number of years**

##### **Frequency**

##### **Percent**

1-54326. 44-10159. 211-15106. 116-208954. 621-2563. 7Total163100. 0The results show that most of the teachers who participated in the survey had between 16-20 years of teaching experience as Home Economics teachers.

#### **4. 1. 2 Highest qualification of respondents**

##### **Highest qualification**

##### **Frequency**

##### **Percent**

Post Graduate5131. 3Degree6036. 8Master10. 6Diploma5131.

3Total163100. 0The results indicate that most of the respondents had a degree as highest qualification followed by postgraduate qualification and diploma. These results are not startling as the entry requirement to teach Home Economics in secondary school is a degree in the field. Teachers recruited in the past had A level qualifications or diploma only.

## **4. 2 Perception and understanding of Sustainable Development**

### **4. 2. 1 Defining Sustainable development**

#### **Defining sustainable development**

##### **Frequency**

##### **Percent**

Preservation of the environment 7948. 5 Proper use of resources to meet present and future needs 4125. 2 Welfare of society 4326. 4 Total 163100. 0 The results depict that most of the respondents defined sustainable development in relation to preservation of the environment (48. 5%) while some respondents stated that it is related to the proper use of resources to meet present and future needs (25. 2%) and some defined it in relation to welfare of the society. The results mirror the findings of Dobson (2005) who observed that despite being a popular concept, it is difficult to define. Holmen (2001) complements that the term sustainable development means different things to different people. In their definition, the teachers failed to capture the 3 dimensions of sustainable development, that is Economy, Social and Environment. Most of the definitions were centred around environment while little was defined in terms of social and economy.

### **4. 2. 2 Responsibility for teaching sustainable development**

The bar chart above illustrates that most of the respondents (67%) stated that the responsibility to teach sustainable development rest on the teacher. A few indicated that the responsibility goes on to the media, parents and internet. Teachers play a key role in embedding sustainable development in

education. This finding goes in line with Munno and Reid (2009) who found that teachers are willing to take responsibility to teach sustainable development. Many countries have taken actions to integrate sustainable development formally in schools. These findings are also in line with Dewhurst and Pendergast (2011), whereby most of the respondents agreed that teachers are responsible for the teaching of sustainable development.

### **4. 2. 3 Positioning Sustainable development**

#### **Statement**

#### **Mean**

#### **Std. Deviation**

#### **t-value**

#### **Sig.**

#### **(2-tailed)**

School should prepare pupils to deal with sustainable development issues<sup>3</sup>.

98. 909-. 345. 731The current school system prepares pupils to deal with

sustainable development issues<sup>2</sup>. 381. 150-17. 974. 000Pupils need to learn

about sustainable development issues in Home Economics<sup>3</sup>. 94. 673-1. 164.

246I feel confident teaching about sustainable development issues<sup>2</sup>. 13.

659-36. 266. 000All t-values significant at  $p < 0.05$  level; SD = standard

deviationRespondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement on a

5 point Likert scale with four statements about sustainable development. It

was interesting to note that most teachers agree with the statement " School

should prepare pupils to deal with sustainable development issues" (mean=

3. 98) and " Pupils need to learn about sustainable development issues in

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Home Economics" (Mean= 3.94). These results show that teachers believe that schools particularly Home Economics subject should prepare students to deal with sustainable development issues. These results reflect the findings of Dewhurst and Pendergast (2011) who observed an overpowering agreement to the same statements among Scottish, Australian, Canadian and Maltese Home Economics teachers. The results further revealed that teachers tend to disagree with the statement "The current school system prepares pupils to deal with sustainable development issues" and "I feel confident teaching about sustainable development issues" both statements scored a mean of 2.38 and 2.13 respectively. It is thought-provoking to note that teachers do not agree that school system prepares pupils to deal with sustainable development issues. Dewhurst and Pendergast (2011) revealed that only a few Canadian and Australian teachers agreed with the statement "The current school system prepares pupils to deal with sustainable development issues". Most of the respondents showed a lack of confidence in teaching sustainable development. The results concur with the work of Gruver and Luloff (2008) who found that non-environment were not confident with teaching environmental issues as they were not prepared and felt frustrated. Blackwell et al (2003) observed that teacher's confidence is directly linked with how effectively they deliver the teaching in sustainable development. The results above show that although Mauritius has showed its commitment to include sd in education, there has not been much involvement of teachers which is highly important to embed sd correctly.

### **4. 3. 1 Respondents' reported practices related to sustainable development education**

The figure illustrates the reported practices of Home Economics teachers with respect to sustainable development education. It was encouraging to note that most of the respondents (60%) would like to be more involved in both planning and teaching aspects of sustainability in Home Economics. A few respondents (13%) affirmed that they regularly teach about sustainability issues in Home Economics while some admitted that their planning and teaching never include any aspects of sustainability. These shortcomings can be explained by the fact that Home Economics teachers lack the confidence to teach sustainable development issues.

### **4. 3. 2 Themes that are related to sustainable development**

#### **Themes**

#### **Mean**

#### **Std. Deviation**

#### **t-value**

#### **Sig.(two tailed)**

Overcoming Poverty<sup>3</sup>. 91. 878-1. 249. 213Gender equality<sup>2</sup>. 23. 865-26. 086. 000Health promotion<sup>1</sup>. 99. 716-35. 784. 000Recycling waste products<sup>3</sup>. 94. 918-. 768. 444Human Rights<sup>1</sup>. 84. 909-30. 331. 000Cultural Diversity<sup>2</sup>. 01. 762-33. 320. 000Environment protection and conservation<sup>4</sup>. 04. 748. 733. 465All t-values significant at  $p < 0.05$  level; SD = standard

deviation Respondents were asked to rate their degree of agreement on the themes being related to sustainable development. It should be noted that all

the themes above are related and are found in the Home Economics curriculum. From the respondents perspectives, the themes that were highly rated are " Environment protection and conservation" (mean= 4. 04), followed by " Recycling waste products" (mean= 3. 94) and " Overcoming Poverty" (mean= 3. 91). Table \_ also revealed that teachers had poorly rated " Human Rights" (mean= 1. 84), " Health promotion"(mean= 1. 99) Gender equality (mean= 2. 23) and Cultural Diversity (2. 01). The results of this study clearly indicate that much need to done to improve both the knowledge and confidence of teachers to successfully implement sustainable development in Home Economics teaching. The findings of this study are not consistent with Haapala et al (2012) who revealed that teachers had already adopted the ideas of sustainability.

### **4. 3. 3 Attitudes as described by teachers towards sustainable development**

Based on the results presented in Fig, most of the respondents picked for " I think it is a good thing" (40%) with respect to their attitudes toward sustainable development. Moreover 20% of the respondents opted for " I am a passionate advocate". These results indicate a favourable attitude towards sustainable development. A small portion of the respondents opted for " I think it's a waste of time" (6%), " I am not really bothered" (14%) and " it is ok if others want to do it" (13%) , which are not favourable attitudes. This means that the education system must strive shape the attitudes of the teachers and make it more favourable towards sustainable development.



## **4. 4 Respondents' education and training as Home Economics teachers**

### **4. 4. 1 Extent to which teachers' undergraduate course include sustainable development concepts**

**Extent**

**Frequency**

**Percent**

a small part of the course 87 53. 4 no part of the course 76 46. 6 Total 163 100. 0

### **4. 4. 2 Extent to which professional development course is related to sustainable development**

**Extent to which professional development course is related to sustainable development**

Not at all Somewhat A great deal Total Following or had followed professional development course Yes 77 61 84 Total 77 61 84

### **4. 4. 3 Professional development course followed**

Course followed Frequency Percent PGCE at MIE 3035. 7 PGCE UNISA 2833.

3 Educator's Licence MIE 2631. 0 Total 84 100. 0 The literature has

demonstrated how teacher education is important in delivering sustainable

development education. Table \_\_, \_\_ and \_\_\_ examines Home Economics

teachers education with respect to sustainable development. Out of 163

respondents, 87 stated that " Sustainable development as a small part of the

course" and 76 stated that " Sustainable development was no part of the

course". Moreover teachers were asked if they had followed any professional

development course and to what extent the course is related to sustainable

development. 84 teachers stated they had followed professional development courses and most of them (77) stated that "sustainable development was no part of the course". The courses followed are Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and Educators' Licence at the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) and at University of South Africa (UNISA). The results clearly display a knowledge gap among Home Economics teachers with respect to sustainable development. This can explain the lack of confidence teachers demonstrated on previous results. Blackwell et al (2003) observed that teachers confidence is directly related to how effectively they deliver sustainable education teachings. The findings indicate that there must be changes in teachers education in order to make sustainable development in Home Economics a successful reality. The gap of lack of knowledge in teachers can be filled by embedding sustainable development concepts in teachers education (Huckle, 2001).

#### **4. 4. 4 Willingness to be trained on sustainable development**

One of the positive significant findings from this study is that most of the Home Economics teacher (73%) showed willingness to gain training on sustainable development. This also tallies with section 4. 3. 1 where most Home Economics teachers stated that they would like to be more involved in teaching sustainable development. An overall favourable attitude has been perceived towards teaching sustainable development in Home Economics. As observed by Ferreira et al (2007), it is easier to involve teachers who already have an interest in sustainable development. IFHE (2012) advocates the role of Home Economics in promoting sustainable living stating that ' Home

Economics education not only focuses on the context of the home and household, but also includes the wider living environments'

#### **4. 4. 5 Enablers and inhibitors in teaching sustainable development issues**

##### **Factor**

##### **Enabler**

##### **Inhibitor**

**N**

**Mean**

**N**

**Mean**

1Current curriculum guidelines542. 931092. 712Personal knowledge of sustainability451. 911182. 703School Policy/development planning342. 761293. 124Pupil interest603. 031032. 835School timetabling1042. 29593. 026Available classroom resources1113. 19522. 287Personal interest1192. 70442. 938Funding1152. 91483. 049Taught in other curriculum areas1072. 67562. 84The respondents were asked to identify enablers and inhibitors that affect their teaching of sustainable development in Home Economics. They were also asked to rate the degree to which these factors act as enabler or inhibitor on a scale of 1-5 (1 is low, 5 is high). From table \_\_\_\_ it can be observed that factors 1-4 have been identified as inhibitors by most of the teachers. " School policy and planning" has been identified as a strong inhibitor (mean= 3. 12) followed by " pupils interest" (mean= 2. 83), " current curriculum guidelines" (2. 71) and " personal knowledge of

sustainability" (mean= 2.70). A study by Yuto and Naoko (2010) also identified curriculum as an inhibitor among others. Gough (2002) observed that one of the greatest inhibitors in embedding sustainable development in education crops up because the school curriculum is organised into subjects. "Personal knowledge of sustainability" has been identified as an inhibitor which concurs with Oulton et al. (2004) who noted that teachers are not prepared to teach sustainable development concepts. Table shows that Factors 5-9 have received a more positive rating making them enablers to teaching sustainable development. "School timetabling" was rated as an enabler by most teachers. This result does not reflect with Summers (2003) Hartsell (2006) who identified timetabling as a major inhibitor. "Personal interest" (N= 119, mean= 2.70) was found to be an enabler which goes in line with the previous results where teachers demonstrated a favourable attitude towards sustainable development. Marhadass (2003) maintains that there is a priority to motivate teachers to build trust, without which sustainable development in education will not be meaningful.