

# **Integrating Social Innovation Education Into Higher Education Curricula to Address the Agenda for the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals**

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## **Abstract**

The 2030 agenda for sustainable development is described as a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity that seeks to strengthen universal peace. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Agenda calls for a “revitalized Global Partnership for Sustainable Development”, which includes the participation of all countries, stakeholders and people. While Goal 4 of the SDG Agenda focuses on equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all, education is the panacea that will ensure the realisation of the seventeen universal goals that would transform developing and developed countries alike. Therefore, educational institutions have a fundamental role to play in the realisation of these goals. Technological innovation in recent times has pervaded educational institutions and has been high on the list of strategic intents in every Higher Education Institution (HEI). To be a global partner of sustainable development and realise the universal goals HEIs must align technological innovations with social innovations. The concept of social innovation is becoming increasingly evident in policy, scientific and public debates. There is a growing consensus among practitioners, policymakers, and the research community that widespread social innovation is required to cope with the significant challenges societies face now and in the future. The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent HEIs are using technology as an enabler for social innovation and to explore how HEIs can integrate social innovation education to transform their curricula to realise the SDG Agenda. A qualitative case study research design was adopted for this study. The target population for this study consisted of teaching and learning specialists, lecturers and students. Purposive sampling was used. Data was collected using semi-structured individual interviews and focus group interviews and analysed using content analysis. This study called to attention the significant role that HEIs play in realising the SDG Agenda through the integration of social innovation education into HEI curricula. HEI students believe that social innovation education integrated into the curriculum will provoke impactful discussions about the current environment, and existential and

socio-economic crisis. This belief is validated by teaching and learning specialists and lecturers who further expressed the importance of teaching global and digital citizenship. Graduates must be competent in technological innovation, social innovation and global citizenship to prepare for the world of work and life. They must be socially and ethically responsible, as well as emotionally intelligent innovators, leaders, and communicators. To mobilize and expedite these competencies, HEIs must redesign their pedagogical models and curricula to align with the needs of future generations. The creation of new a model for higher education, social innovation education, will promote the development of more critical and socially impactful graduate attributes.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Development Goals, Private Higher Education Institutions, technological innovation, social innovation, graduate attributes