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From Policy to Practice: Education for Sustainable Development in Norwegian Early Childhood Education

Norway has long prioritized sustainable development (SD) in education, beginning with its response to Our Common Future (St. Meld. 46 (1888-89), environment and development), National strategy entitled “Knowledge for a Common Future” (Meld. St. 24 (2012-2013)), and the 2017 National Framework Plan for Kindergarten, which made SD a core kindergarten value. The 2021 amendment to the Universities and Colleges of Higher Education Act further mandated integrating sustainability into higher education. Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL) aligns with these goals through its 2023–2026 action plan, promoting SD in education, research, and operations.

Despite strong policy frameworks, SD implementation in kindergartens remains uneven, highlighting the need for standardized strategies. For the objectives of the SDGs to be realized in practice, kindergarten teachers must possess relevant competencies. This includes knowledge about sustainability, the ability to critically reflect on their own consumption choices, serving as role models for children in attitudes and practices, and being aware of how individuals can contribute to fostering engagement for actions that lead to a sustainable future. Initiatives like “Sustainability Week” in teacher education enable future kindergarten teachers to think critically and design practical, hands-on activities, thereby bridging theory and practice.

This study examines Norway’s policy-to-practice journey, highlighting the role of higher education institutions in preparing teachers as SDG change agents. It calls for deeper collaboration between policymakers, universities, and kindergartens to ensure that the SDGs translate into visible outcomes for young learners, thereby fostering a generation equipped to address global challenges.

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