

# SDG-Driven Internationalisation: Transforming Scottish Higher Education for Social Impact

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In the contemporary landscape of higher education (HE), the pursuit of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has emerged as a transformative force, driving higher education institutions (HEIs) to reevaluate their missions and practices (Chinnasamy and Daniels, 2019). Despite global crises have intensified doubts about achieving the SDGs by 2030 (Leal Filho et al., 2023), highlighting the crucial role of HE in addressing these challenges. Scottish universities are integral to this effort, addressing these challenges through enhanced service quality (Guo et. al.,2023) and a commitment to corporate social responsibility (Khan et. al., 2020), and contributing to Scotland's vision, and actively pursuing the achievement of the UN SDGs by 2030. Scotland's Economic Strategy prioritizes Internationalisation as one of four key areas to enhance Scotland's strength, fairness, and prosperity.

However, traditional top-down approaches in policy formulation often neglect the nuanced insights and expertise of educators, leading to a significant disconnect between policy ambitions and their execution, which can exacerbate social inequalities and hinder social justice. To address this, our study proposes a shift towards a bottom-up approach in policy development, focusing on empowering educators as pivotal agents in the successful implementation of SDG-driven internationalisation within Scottish HEIs. Our research aims to examine how prioritising educator involvement can enhance service quality and fulfill corporate social responsibility within Scottish HEIs. We identified a gap in the literature regarding the role of educators in policy development and their potential impact on SDG implementation within HEIs. To achieve this, our study will utilise a mixed-methods approach, including one to one in-depth interviews and questionnaire survey, to gain comprehensive insights into educator involvement in policy development. We will also identify effective mechanisms for ongoing dialogue and engagement between educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the literature by addressing the gap in understanding the role of educators in SDG-driven internationalisation within HEIs. By positioning educators as central stakeholders and decision-makers, we aim to foster a culture of ownership, innovation, and collective action towards SDG attainment by 2030. This research presents a strategic investment in the long-term sustainability and resilience of Scottish HE. The anticipated outcomes include enhanced educational practices aligned with global sustainability goals, a robust platform for educators to influence policies that reflect their experiences and expertise, and a significant contribution towards societal transformation and the global sustainability agenda.

**Keywords:** Internationalisation; Scottish Higher Education; Sustainable Development; Social Inequalities; Social Justice