

An evaluation of the alignment between the senior secondary geography curriculum of Sri Lanka and Sustainable Development Goal 15: A textbook-based content analysis

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Geography education is crucial for equipping students with the knowledge and skills needed to understand and address sustainability challenges. Geography textbooks serve as essential tools for integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 15, into education. They help students grasp key environmental issues such as biodiversity, land use, and conservation. By providing consistent exposure to sustainability themes, textbooks connect global goals with local challenges. Research indicates that aligning geography education with SDG 15 can positively influence students' attitudes and behaviours towards environmental responsibility. Therefore, enhancing textbook content is vital for promoting environmental sustainability through education. This study evaluates the extent to which Sri Lanka's senior secondary geography curriculum aligns with the principles and targets of Sustainable Development Goal 15 (SDG 15: Life on Land), with a strong focus on promoting environmental sustainability. The main objective is to critically assess how well SDG 15 concepts are integrated within the geography textbooks used in government schools for Grades 10, 11, and in teachers' guides for Grades 12 and 13. A qualitative content analysis method was employed to systematically examine the textbook content, guided by a coding framework based on SDG 15's specific targets, which include themes such as biodiversity conservation, forest protection, sustainable land use, and ecosystem restoration. The analysis evaluated the frequency, depth, and context of these sustainability themes throughout the textbooks. The findings revealed that while some elements related to SDG 15 are present, the overall integration across the curriculum is limited and often superficial. Key areas like biodiversity conservation and sustainable land management were either underrepresented or addressed in a fragmented manner. Additionally, there was a lack of practical, place-based, or experiential learning activities that could help students connect more meaningfully with real-world environmental issues. These findings underscore the necessity for curriculum and textbook revisions to ensure a more comprehensive and coherent integration of SDG 15 principles. The study also highlights the importance of enhancing teacher training to effectively deliver sustainability content. Strengthening geography education in this manner supports both national and global efforts to achieve the goals outlined in SDG 15.

Keywords: *Geography curriculum, Sustainable Development Goal 15, Environmental sustainability, Textbook content analysis*