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Cultivating intercultural competency: The role of sustainability in pre-service teacher professional development

Abstract. Cultivating intercultural competency and sustainability within teacher training is essential for preparing educators to address the challenges of a rapidly changing world and to create inclusive, socially responsible, and environmentally conscious educational environments. The purpose of the present study was to examine the role of sustainability in pre-service teacher professional development and its influence on cultivating intercultural competency. In the study, two key methods to bring sustainability to the core of education strategy were used: an analytical method and a method of exploratory interviews as an instrument to collect data. The main ways of sustainable professional development of cultivating intercultural competency were continuing pedagogical practice, internal and external academic mobility, informal/non-formal education, and cooperation with stakeholders. The aforementioned activities were meticulously designed to provide a well-rounded professional experience for the pre-service teachers, facilitating their growth in the field of English teaching and fostering cultural understanding. The findings proved

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that the integration of targeted professional development initiatives significantly contributed to the enhancement of participants' capabilities and preparedness for their future roles as English teachers. The increased engagement observed underscores the practical relevance and applicability of the implemented strategies within language teacher preparation programs. The research results validated the theoretical frameworks, providing empirical support for the positive outcomes of professional development interventions in language teacher preparation programs. The observed improvements in linguistic and sociocultural dimensions underscore the programme's success in shaping proficient and culturally aware pre-service English teachers. The findings of the study can be used by higher education institutions that train future teachers, as well as organisations that implement professional development programs for teachers, in order to develop intercultural competence and introduce sustainability principles into the educational process

Keywords: preparation programme; pedagogical practice; internal and external academic mobility; informal/non-formal education; cooperation with stakeholders

INTRODUCTION

The modern field of education is undergoing significant changes, with an increasing focus on the concepts of sustainable development. In our increasingly interconnected society, it is more important than ever to develop intercultural competency among educators. The incorporation of sustainable development principles into education has gained traction as countries confront environmental concerns and the imperative for global citizenship. Within this particular environment, the advancement of pre-service English language teachers becomes a crucial domain for establishing enduring methods. These educators have a vital role in influencing the thinking of the next generation, and their ability to handle intercultural difficulties is quite important.

Effective professional development for teachers entails ongoing education that not only improves teaching skills but also adheres to the concepts of environmental, social, and economic sustainability. It surpasses brief training sessions and focuses on continuous development that enhances both personal and professional welfare. Simply having deep subject knowledge and practical skills is not enough for a modern teacher of any specialty. A 21st-century educator embodies intense spiritual life, a creative approach to pedagogical activities, and scientific research for innovative technologies that enable the successful achievement of educational goals while working with the children of a new generation.

Adapting the idea for upcoming English teachers, sustainable professional development entails training educators who possess both expertise in language education and the ability to incorporate sustainability principles into their teaching methods. This includes the promotion of multicultural comprehension, environmental accountability, and ethical discourse. Intercultural competency pertains to the aptitude to proficiently interact and involve oneself with others from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. It requires not just verbal competency but also a profound comprehension and admiration of diverse cultural norms, values, and views. Intercultural competency plays a vital role in promoting collaboration on global challenges within the framework of sustainable development.

The relationship between sustainable professional growth and the development of intercultural competency

is mutually beneficial. Interculturally-focused professional development programmes, which prioritise sustainability, equip prospective English teachers with the necessary expertise and abilities to effectively handle language and cultural variations. On the other hand, promoting intercultural competency becomes a crucial result of long-lasting professional growth as educators acquire the ability to assimilate varied viewpoints, encourage diversity, and integrate global matters into language teaching. This paradigm suggests that by incorporating sustainability principles into teacher development programmes, educators can improve their pedagogical skills and make a positive impact on sustainable development objectives, such as promoting intercultural competency. The interdependence of these notions emphasises the possibility of a mutually beneficial interaction where sustainable practices in teacher training work as catalysts for the development of intercultural competency, thereby enhancing the educational experience for both instructors and learners.

As noted by I. Žalėnienė & P. Pereira (2021), higher education institutions play a fundamental role in sustainability, serving as key agents in the education of future leaders who will contribute to the successful implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Higher education holds a distinctive position in spearheading efforts toward sustainable development. The sustainability promotion involves universities and colleges in endeavors such as promoting interdisciplinarity, adopting participatory pedagogies, conducting "real-world" research, and breaking down institutional boundaries. Several studies focused on higher education's role in implementing sustainability curricula, professional practices, and outreach activities in particular, the work by M. Weiss & M. Barth (2019). Other works, such as C.S. Seatter & K. Ceulemans (2017) and P. Hallinger & C. Chatpinyakoo (2019) have delved into challenges relating to implementing pedagogy teaching strategies for sustainability in higher education the influence of higher education institutions on sustainability, and the administration of educational programmes. Overall, institutions are often seen as "agents of change" in the advancement of sustainability, with sustainability-based education shaping both the content of the education and the related processes and outcomes (Gatti *et al.*, 2019).

The study aimed to explore the impact of sustainability on pre-service teacher professional development and its influence on intercultural competency development. The object of the research was the process of cultivating intercultural competency of pre-service teacher while the subject was the role of sustainability in pre-service teacher professional development and its influence on cultivating intercultural competency. The two research objectives guiding that inquiry were what participants' responses were to sustainability in pre-service teacher professional development in their teacher preparation programme and how sustainability in pre-service teacher professional development affected the intercultural competency development as EFL teachers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The primary theoretical underpinning of this research is the Ecological Systems Theory, which was proposed by Bronfenbrenner (Soyer, 2019). This theory contends that interactions between various systems, ranging from the immediate microsystem to the larger macrosystem, have an impact on humans. Within the realm of pre-service teacher professional development, the ecological systems framework offers a perspective on how sustainable practices can spread across many levels of impact, ranging from the individual teacher to the institutional and social contexts. Sustainable development in education goes beyond the conventional emphasis on environmental preservation. This paradigm adopts a comprehensive approach that incorporates economic, social, and environmental aspects. Education serves as a catalyst for change, promoting a sense of global belonging, moral consciousness, and a dedication to the long-term welfare of society.

A significant block of work and reviews has explored the impacts and incorporation of sustainability principles in higher education establishments, including degrees, course contents, learning methodologies, inclusion and acknowledgment of sustainability issues in higher education (Fuertes-Camacho *et al.*, 2019; Sanchez-Carracedo *et al.*, 2021). In a study conducted by G. Tejedor *et al.* (2019), five key strategies for teaching sustainability in higher education were defined: project-oriented learning, simulation games, problem-based learning, service learning, and case studies. K. Mintz & T. Tal (2013) found that participatory learning methods result in higher learning outcomes compared to traditional lectures. Integrating sustainability principles into higher education institutions and their curricula enriches students' knowledge, perspectives, awareness, and attitudes towards sustainability. When sustainability principles are included in academic programmes and research, both university staff and students contribute actively to the goal of creating a sustainable world (Pica-toste *et al.*, 2018). Several studies (Dmitrenko *et al.*, 2023; Svyrydiuk *et al.*, 2024) have observed that higher education plays a crucial role in enhancing students' skills, professional development, fostering entrepreneurship, and increasing their capacity to secure decent jobs. Higher education

institutions can significantly contribute to the achievement of sustainable development's targets by creating inclusive spaces and safe learning environments for various sensitive groups, including indigenous people, and individuals with disabilities (Dmitrenko & Voloshyna, 2018).

Threats to these processes are being recognised in numerous studies addressing obstacles of incorporating sustainability in higher educational institutions (Dyment & Hill, 2015). These challenges often originate from the conventional departmental and compartmentalised structure of universities, as well as their rigid disciplinary boundaries. The shift should extend to other aspects of professional practice that, instead of hindering, encourage interdisciplinary collaboration (Orlovic-Lovren, 2016). In attempts to reconcile the disparities between the conventional and innovative roles of universities, a number of researchers perceive the remedy found in enhancing teaching quality, thereby increasing substantial responsibility to the already complex and multifaceted role of teachers.

I. Franco *et al.* (2019) highlighted deficiencies in higher education regarding sustainable development policies, curricula, and practices across various continents. Key subjects, including integration problem-solving, anticipation skills, and systems thinking, should be embedded in all university curricula. An integrating approach should be the driving force behind the development of sustainability practices. These authors summarised the challenges associated with the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals. Key issues include: under-educated audience, ineffective and irrational learning methods, curriculum irrelevance, and motivational crises; a target audience that lacks awareness of global issues like climate change; consumption habits shaped by diverse cultures and environmental beliefs; social identity theory, which highlights individual perspectives; elitism and lack of diversity in educational and employment opportunities; and cognitive dissonance theory, where actions do not match beliefs.

Various authors have underscored the necessity of incorporating non-traditional facets of sustainability into the discourse. T.B. Ramos *et al.* (2015), for instance, highlighted the significance of delineating sustainability frontiers to encompass novel issues and paradigms in addition to traditional ones. Values play a pivotal role in shaping how academics respond to proposals for educating sustainable development and influencing the evolution of their disciplines. There is a call for a new generation of professionals capable of thinking and making decisions within this evolving perspective, necessitating the modernisation of educational frameworks for sustainability in higher education (Leal Filho *et al.*, 2015).

The shift in higher education towards sustainability should promote interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches, blending theory with practice, fostering individual commitment and collaborative group actions, encouraging ethical discussions and reflections, and embracing critical thinking (Pepper & Wildy, 2008). Addressing these issues necessitates and drives innovation in

teaching methodologies (Brundiers & Wiek, 2017). Practice and theory integration can be realised in two main ways: fostering collaboration between universities and communities, and using the campus as a learning laboratory. Educators and students can apply the theoretical knowledge from their disciplines to address real-world projects. Moreover, involving students in dialogues with communities provides possibilities to acquire knowledge and comprehend various perspectives.

It is noteworthy to highlight that P. Bamber & L. Hankin (2011) have emphasised the significant transformative potential of student engagement through service-learning with local communities. This approach not only challenges students' stereotypes and personal values but also promotes their professional development (Sylenko, 2024). Comprehensive university approaches, integrating various activities such as teaching instruction, research, campus management, practice, and approaches meant to engage both community and stakeholder, have been identified as fundamental incorporating sustainability in higher education institutions (Jokikokko & Uitto, 2017). While many universities traditionally believe that students acquire theoretical knowledge on campus and are supposed to seek practical experience elsewhere, the initial exposure to hands-on experience can definitely be realised within the university environment. M. Louren & A.I. Andrade (2018) investigated strategies through which teacher education programmes can equip student teachers to incorporate sustainable concepts and practices into their teaching development.

Professional development is a broad term that encompasses various learning experiences, which can include anything: from single workshops to extensive curricula and communities of practice. These initiatives focus on the education, training, and development of professionals, with the ultimate goal of enhancing students' developmental and educational outcomes. Professional development is an ongoing and lifelong learning process for teachers, necessitating continuous updates to their methods, particularly when dealing with multiethnic classes (Biasutti *et al.*, 2019). These advancement practices should shape pre-service teachers' knowledge, practical skills, and the formation of their professional identities, including their beliefs, values, and attitudes towards classroom teaching activities (Syahrin *et al.*, 2023). Encouraging teachers to reflect on their attitudes (Tejedor *et al.*, 2019) and engaging in discussions and negotiations within a professional community facing similar challenges are significant aspects of this process (Romijn *et al.*, 2021).

Intercultural competency pertains to the capacity to effectively communicate with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds by leveraging one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Intercultural competency is characterised as a developmental process aimed at achieving proficiency in interacting with cultural diversity, encompassing "effective and appropriate behavior and communication in intercultural situations" (Ovcharuk *et*

al., 2020). The cultivation of intercultural competency is essential for educators aiming to be globally competent, emphasising the significance of integrating such preparation within teacher education. The intercultural framework developed aligns with the OECD's definition of global competencies, which entails the capacity to analyse local, global, and intercultural issues, appreciating and valuing diverse perspectives and worldviews. It highlights the importance of engaging in open and constructive dialogue with individuals from various cultures and taking action for collective well-being and sustainable development. Intercultural education promotes cultural exchanges, fostering democratic and peaceful coexistence among people. Becoming intercultural individuals involves developing responsible attitudes toward sustainable citizenship (Kalinina & Prokopchuk, 2023).

In the face of contemporary societal challenges, teachers are required to navigate the multicultural environment. They need to be prepared to introduce innovative methods of learning, communication, and investigation to their students. This approach aims to prepare pre-service teachers for the labor market, entrepreneurship, and citizenship. To foster the sustainable professional development of pre-service teachers of English in the educational process, it is important to provide it in multilevel quasi-professional activities of students. Recognising and valuing the diversity among students is essential for creating an inclusive and effective educational space (Dmitrenko & Voloshyna, 2018).

In summary, the literature underscores the critical role of sustainability in higher education, emphasising the need for interdisciplinary collaboration, practical application, and continuous professional development. The integration of sustainability principles into curricula not only enriches students' knowledge and skills but also fosters their global and intercultural competencies. Moreover, professional development initiatives equip pre-service teachers with the necessary strategies to navigate diverse educational environments and address contemporary challenges. By blending theory with hands-on experiences, universities can cultivate a new generation of educators who are both socially responsible and professionally competent, ensuring meaningful contributions to sustainable development in education.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The analytical method provided the analysis of the current scientific research and practices including Ukrainian and world experience of the pre-service teacher professional development as well as finding the ways of enlarging pre-service teacher's professional competency at the level of intercultural competency. The analytical method was based on the availability of data that gave the possibility to create a framework for measurement of the level of pre-service teacher's professional competency. This research employed *the qualitative case study* to cultivate intercultural competency in Ukrainian university students. The study adopted a qualitative case study approach, using a *method of exploratory interviews* as an instrument to

collect data. To clarify the role of sustainability in pre-service teacher within their teacher preparation programmes, a questionnaire containing 10 statements with “Yes”, “No” answer options including “Do you understand the notion of the phrase “sustainability in professional training?”; “Are you satisfied with the sustainability in your pre-service teacher programme preparation?”; “Do you approve of the organization of practice in your university?”; “Do you feel more confident and independent having different practice as the part of your teacher training programmes?”; “Can you find the problem for your research as a part of sustainability in the pre-service teacher training and define its difficulties and milestones?”; “Do you feel confident selecting proper sociocultural material, teaching tools and activities for pupils of different school age?”; “Are you satisfied with the results of your sustainable teacher training programme at the university?”; “Are you positive about the level of internal and external academic mobility in your university?” were developed.

All ethical standards specified in the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) were observed and followed during the study. The research was organised during April, 2022 – December, 2023. It should be noted that 86.3% of respondents

who participated in the research were in Ukraine at that time, and 13.7% lived abroad, mostly in Europe (the UK, France, Portugal, Spain, and other countries) as they had to leave Ukraine because of the Russian-Ukraine war. Their age range was between 18 and 21 years. All participants had graduated in the subject “The Methodology of Teaching English” and “The Methodology of Teaching Foreign Literature”. The participants of the present studies included pre-service teachers (N = 150) who were learning English at different higher education institutions of Ukraine (N = 3) (i.e., Mariupol State University (50 participants), Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University (70 participants), and Hryhorii Skovoroda University in Pereiaslav (30 participants). All of the participants completed the questionnaire and nine students agreed to give an unstructured informal interview. They were juniors and seniors at Bachelor’s degree (Table 1). The participants were all Ukrainian natives but they were with different levels of education and professional activity. For this reason, they were required to obtain a higher level of English language competency and cultivate intercultural competency. Before the assessment of the students’ proficiency they were told it would be on a voluntary basis and the interview wouldn’t affect their results.

Table 1. Participant Relevant Information

| University | Number of Participants | | | Completed Questionnaires | Interviews | Year of Study | |
|---|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|------------|---------------|----------|
| | Home located | Internally displaced | Externally displaced | | | 1-2 year | 3-4 year |
| Mariupol State University | 0 | 20 | 30 | 50 | 3 | 15 | 35 |
| Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University | 30 | 10 | 30 | 70 | 4 | 20 | 50 |
| Hryhorii Skovoroda University in Pereiaslav | 15 | 7 | 8 | 30 | 2 | 10 | 20 |
| Total | 45 | 37 | 68 | 150 | 9 | 45 | 105 |

Source: compiled by the authors

The main ways of sustainable professional development of cultivating intercultural competency were continuing pedagogical practice, internal and external academic mobility, informal/non-formal education, and cooperation with stakeholders. At the end of the research, a questionnaire and an unstructured informal interview were conducted to gather information connected with the research questions. Instructors from three universities, who had integrated four main ways of cultivating intercultural competency, were incorporating sustainability in teacher professional development with their pre-service teachers. At the conclusion of training, a dedicated 60 minutes were allocated for interviewing nine participants, who expressed their opinions on the expediency of applying sustainability in pre-service teacher professional development and its influence on cultivating intercultural competency. During these interviews, instructors from the participating universities communicated with pre-service teachers to learn their attitude. On the basis of the obtained information the instructors designed the collaborative online platform to

unify the results and accept a common point of view, the role of sustainability in pre-service teacher professional development and its influence on cultivating intercultural competency. Furthermore, instructors systematically were collecting the pre-service teachers’ outcomes, such as reflection essays, observation journals, e-portfolios, course certificates, etc. Such practice of data collection not only facilitated the assessment of individual progress but also enriched the collective understanding of the outcomes achieved through the incorporation of sustainability in pre-service teacher professional development and its influence on cultivating intercultural competency.

For thorough analysis of the obtained data its key patterns were identified by multiple scanning, interview scripts were added to the research questions, and conclusions of its validity were drawn. For this purpose, verification strategies were used, namely, each of the instructors analysed the obtained findings individually and with other instructors to check and validate that the results were precise. This method made the instructors certain of the

results they have got, which stressed the role of sustainability in pre-service teacher professional development and its influence on cultivating intercultural competency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As essential aspect of fostering intercultural competency in education is integrating diverse strategies that enhance students' cultural awareness, adaptability, open-mindedness, empathy, and communication skills, so that must be a multifaceted approach that integrates different experiences. In the study, four main ways of cultivating intercultural competency were implemented in the educational process: continuing pedagogical practice; internal and external academic mobility; informal and non-formal education; cooperation with stakeholders. These approaches reflected the increasing importance of sustainability in teacher education, particularly in the context of global challenges and ongoing transformations in the educational landscape. The description of four main ways of cultivating intercultural competency highlighted how these methods contribute to building a more inclusive, innovative, and resilient educational framework, particularly in the Ukrainian context, where teachers must navigate the complexities of war, displacement, and educational reform.

1) Continuing pedagogical practice. To make access to continuing pedagogical practice is the priority task to guarantee sustainable development in education. The ways of realisation of continuing pedagogical practice are getting more and more complicated. Many high schools have mixed or online forms of education. Pre-service teachers must adapt to learn and teach under the conditions of the state of war. The new generation of teachers ensures holistic pedagogies by finding ways forward in teaching and learning.

2) Internal and external academic mobility. The internal and external academic mobility is carried out within the framework of the bilateral University cooperation agreements. This cooperation became a good practice at Hryhorii Skovoroda University in Pereiaslav, Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky Vinnytsia State Pedagogical University, Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University and others. In 2023-2024 the

students of the Ukrainian and Foreign Philology Faculty (Hryhorii Skovoroda University in Pereiaslav) attended the courses of lectures and completed practical assignments in Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University and Sumy A.S. Makarenko State Pedagogical University. External academic mobility has a great impact on sustainability in education. Students acquire international experience and form intercultural competency by studying in a foreign country. The student mobility groups were created at Hryhorii Skovoroda University in Pereiaslav to go to the University of West Bohemia in 2017. The students had the chance not only to study but also to travel around the Czech Republic and beyond. Neither the COVID-19 pandemic nor full-scale war has stopped this project.

3) Informal and non-formal education. Informal and Non-Formal Education is a part of holistic sustainability education. As practice shows, during the war pre-service teachers join many teachers' associations. For pre-service English teachers in Ukraine, the most popular of them are IATEFL (based in Britain) and TESOL (based in the USA). Webinars, conferences, conventions, meetings and workshops allow the pre-service teachers to know the latest trends in the education field, take part in interactive workshops, and enter into debates about sustainable development issues in theory and practice.

4) Cooperation with stakeholders. University cooperation with stakeholders provides guidelines and metrics for students to orient on the labor market. The universities and stakeholders must build sustainability systems of cooperation. The importance of cooperation with stakeholders is evident because of the necessity of postwar recovery.

The methods and four ways mentioned above enabled a holistic understanding of the interplay between sustainability in pre-service teacher professional development and cultivating intercultural competency, contributing to nuanced insights into challenges and successes in the studied context. Subsequently, 150 students of Mariupol State University, Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University, and Hryhorii Skovoroda University in Pereiaslav, who participated in the research, were asked to respond to questionnaire statements and comment on some of their answers (Table 2).

Table 2. The questionnaire: "The role of sustainability in pre-service teacher professional development in their teacher preparation programme"

| № | Questionnaire Statements | Yes | | No | |
|----|--|-----|----|----|----|
| | | N | % | N | % |
| 1. | Do you understand the notion of the phrase "sustainability in professional training"? | 144 | 96 | 6 | 4 |
| 2. | Are you satisfied with the sustainability in your pre-service teacher programme preparation? | 138 | 92 | 12 | 8 |
| 3. | Do you approve of the organisation of practice in your university? | 123 | 82 | 27 | 18 |
| 4. | Do you feel more confident and independent having different practice as the part of your teacher training? | 114 | 76 | 36 | 24 |
| 5. | Can you find the problem for your research as a part of sustainability in the pre-service teacher training and define its difficulties and milestones? | 96 | 64 | 54 | 36 |
| 6. | Do you feel confident selecting proper sociocultural material, teaching tools and activities for pupils of different school age? | 114 | 76 | 36 | 24 |
| 7. | Are you satisfied with the results of your sustainable teacher training programme at the university? | 123 | 82 | 27 | 18 |
| 8. | Are you positive about the level of internal and external academic mobility in your university? | 128 | 85 | 22 | 15 |

Source: compiled by the authors

On the whole, 92% of the respondents were positive about the sustainability of their pre-service teacher programme preparation. They spoke in favor of the interactive workshops which enabled them to share their experience with other students, to compare their points of view and to express their attitude towards the actual methodological problems studied. Moreover, more than 76% of students approved of organising different kinds of professionally oriented practice with increasing the portion of pre-service teachers' independence as a characteristic trait of sustainability. Thus, it started with observation practice, then teacher assistantship practice, then guided language and methodological practice and finally independent practice at school. The respondents claimed that such practice allowed them to observe foreign language teaching in real pedagogical situations, to try their hand at doing microteaching.

Students learnt to skillfully conduct observations: analyse, compare, logically link teaching methods and issues, process results, and formulate conclusions in the form of their generalised conclusions (Kalinina & Prokopcuk, 2023). Yuliia, the third-year student, explained: "I liked observation practice a lot because it allowed me to see sustainability in practice better than our discussions in class workshops found reflection in teaching. For me, it's a great showcase of theory and practice". Nazar, the fourth-year student, supported her idea saying "Such kind of practice, especially teacher assistantship, enabled me not only to learn a lot from school teachers but also to avoid methodological mistakes in my independent practice at school". The most important thing is that I believed in my teaching abilities". Besides, each module of the teacher training programme was focused on the development of students' cultural awareness. For example, in the workshops which touched upon the problems of spoken production and interaction, students analysed the cultural manifestation of culture in the English language and compared them with those of the mother tongue.

One of the questions dealt with the ability of learners to find the problem for their research as a part of sustainability in their pre-service teacher training. Importantly, more than half of the students (64%) defined the difficulties of different ages of schoolchildren learning English and decided to research the problem to find some techniques and strategies that might be effective for school children. The results of the findings were presented either at the annual students' scientific conferences by publishing the findings of the research or writing and defending their action research. Given blended learning and due to online learning the students got the possibility of internal mobility as a part of their professional training. One of the latest examples was the online pedagogical tandem of fourth-year students who had just completed their independent school practice. The students of all the universities mentioned appreciated the use of that form of teacher training as they could share information about their insights into profession. 76% of students confirmed that school learners evinced great interest in sociocultural material and teaching

tools as well as activities based on intercultural issues. Mostly, it concerned senior learners who had their own experience communicating with representatives of other cultures. The majority of the students (82%) also expressed their delight at sharing their experience and were satisfied with the results of their sustainable teacher training programme at the universities.

As for the university practice supervisors, they also admitted the benefits of a 3-year sustained pre-service teacher training. All of them agreed that the pre-service teachers they were supervising, demonstrated not only highly developed and thoroughly chosen classroom English but also their professionally oriented teaching skills, the use of innovative techniques and digital tools. The obtained study results were consistent with previous research, for example: a positive link between higher education and sustainable development was emphasised contributing to graduates obtaining well-paid jobs and fostering stable, prosperous societies (Fehlner, 2019); the importance of embracing interpretive flexibility and accommodating variations in practices had been emphasised as crucial for integrating sustainability development into the university context (Tejedor *et al.*, 2019; Sanchez-Carracedo *et al.*, 2021). W. Leal Filho *et al.* (2015) proved that higher education institutions played a key role in implementing education for sustainability through various facets: teaching and research centers where institutions can promote sustainability by initiating projects and integrating sustainable practices; influence through outreach activities: the practices implemented by educators could have a wider impact by influencing public opinions through outreach activities; cultural impact: the establishment of an institutional culture of sustainability increased awareness among university staff and the local and broader communities; formation of professionals: higher education institutions bore the responsibility of shaping the future specialists who would play a leading role in various professional settings and social activities. By implementing sustainable practices on campuses, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting the variety of fauna and flora, and using energy efficiently, institutions could lead by inspiring their members.

The results of the research confirmed the theoretical frameworks presented in the analysed sources. For example, the works by O. Ovcharuk *et al.* (2020) showcased instances of commendable techniques to use in the effort to transform universities towards sustainability and insisted on viewing the campus as a means of developing students' environmental awareness. Universities ought to function as laboratories for experimenting with sustainable behaviors. Sustainability of any university showcases its environmental policy.

Concerning the 2nd question: "How did sustainability in pre-service teacher professional development affect the intercultural competency development as EFL teachers?" nine students who were parallelly studying at the above-mentioned universities and higher educational institutions in Europe and the USA were interviewed. The aim was to determine whether a sufficient level of

professional training, including their sociocultural competency development, had been provided to them at their universities in Ukraine. One of them, Valeriia, said she felt comfortable in France and due to her sociocultural competency she managed to avoid sociocultural shock. Moreover, the student focused on her ability to participate in the dialogue of culture freely with students with different cultural backgrounds which spoke of her cultural awareness. The other student, Nastya, who studied at York University in Britain responded that thanks to her sustained teacher preparation programme in Ukraine she could cope with all the tasks and generally didn't face difficulties communicating with native speakers. Nevertheless, the student admitted that at times she lacked confidence in choosing correct verbal or non-verbal communicative behavior patterns in some situations of non-academic spheres. Overall, all the students interviewed said they succeeded in their professional and sociocultural competency development due to the sustained pre-service teacher development programmes at their universities.

The obtained study results accorded with the framework proposed by S. Syahrin *et al.* (2023), where intercultural competencies comprised all components which were interconnected and mutually reinforced. Knowledge encompassed understanding oneself by means of intercultural communication as well as broader awareness of the world (e.g., politics, law, human rights, cultures, religion). Skills crucial for intercultural competencies include listening and observing, cooperation and problem solving skills. The model also highlights the importance of developing analytical and critical thinking skills as essential skills for reflecting on personal biases. Finally, intercultural competencies involve actions aimed at promoting learners general well-being and sustainable development, on both local and global scales (Romijn *et al.*, 2021).

The results derived from both qualitative and quantitative analyses of the conducted research unequivocally affirmed the effectiveness of professional development within language teacher preparation programmes. The comprehensive assessment revealed a discernible positive impact on participants, as evidenced by heightened engagement in language-teaching activities. Notably, there was conspicuous growth across all facets of communicative competency, with a particular emphasis on linguistic and sociocultural proficiency among pre-service English teachers.

The findings suggested that the integration of targeted professional development initiatives significantly contributed to the enhancement of participants' capabilities and preparedness for their future roles as English educators. The increased engagement observed underscores the practical relevance and applicability of the implemented strategies within language teacher preparation programmes. Additionally, the noticeable advancements in linguistic and sociocultural competencies pointed to the programme's effectiveness in fostering a well-rounded and culturally sensitive approach to language instruction. In conclusion, the research outcomes validated the theoretical frameworks

presented in the analysed sources, providing empirical support for the positive outcomes of professional development interventions in language teacher preparation programmes. The observed improvements in communicative competency, particularly in linguistic and sociocultural dimensions, underscored the programme's success in shaping proficient and culturally aware pre-service English teachers. The positive responses and increased intercultural competency among participants proved the potential benefits of integrating sustainability into the curriculum for aspiring EFL teachers. Thus, the study conducted with 150 pre-service teachers from three Ukrainian higher education institutions proved that the incorporation of interactive workshops, professionally oriented practices, and a gradual progression towards independence in teaching activities were particularly well-received by the students. The study also revealed the positive impact of cultural awareness development within each module of the teacher training programmes. Students expressed appreciation for the integration of sociocultural material and activities based on intercultural issues.

CONCLUSIONS

The research highlighted that more than half of the participants identified challenges faced by different age groups of schoolchildren in learning English and actively engaged in research to find effective techniques and strategies. This research showcases the students' commitment to sustainability and their contribution to the academic community. The implementation of blended and online learning, especially through initiatives like the online pedagogical tandem, provided opportunities for internal and external academic mobility and knowledge sharing among students. The positive feedback from students and university practice supervisors in this regard emphasised the value of sustainable pre-service teacher professional development.

The second part of the study focused on how sustainability in pre-service teacher professional development affected the intercultural competency development of EFL teachers. Interviews with students highlighted the success of their professional and sociocultural competency development, indicating the effectiveness of sustainable pre-service teacher preparation programmes in the noted universities. The findings align with the framework proposed by Pastori and others, emphasising the interrelated nature of knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, and actions in intercultural competencies. In conclusion, the study provides compelling evidence that integrating sustainability into pre-service teacher professional development positively influences the development of intercultural competency among aspiring pre-service teachers. The results suggest that a continuous focus on sustainability within teacher preparation programmes also enhances linguistic and sociocultural competencies and contributes to a more holistic and globally aware generation of English language educators. The further research should address the core issue of training educators who possess the ability to effectively traverse the intricacies of a globalised world while

demonstrating cultural competency and environmental mindfulness what require collaborative efforts to create specific strategies and evaluation methods, to ensure that sustainability is not only recognised but also properly incorporated into language teacher education.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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Розвиток міжкультурної компетентності: роль сталості у професійному розвитку вчителів переддипломної освіти

Анотація. Розвиток міжкультурної компетентності та сталого розвитку в процесі підготовки вчителів є важливим для підготовки педагогів до вирішення проблем швидкозмінного світу та створення інклюзивного, соціально відповідального та екологічно свідомого освітнього середовища. Метою цього дослідження було вивчити роль сталого розвитку у професійному розвитку вчителів та його вплив на формування міжкультурної компетентності. У дослідженні було використано два ключові методи, які допомогли зробити сталий розвиток ядром освітньої стратегії: аналітичний метод та метод розвідувальних інтерв'ю як інструмент збору даних. Основними шляхами сталого професійного розвитку вчителів міжкультурної компетентності були безперервна педагогічна практика, внутрішня та зовнішня академічна мобільність, інформальна/неформальна освіта та співпраця зі стейкхолдерами. Вищезазначені заходи були ретельно розроблені, щоб забезпечити всебічний професійний досвід для викладачів, сприяючи їхньому зростанню в галузі викладання англійської мови та сприяючи культурному взаєморозумінню. Результати дослідження довели, що інтеграція цілеспрямованих ініціатив з професійного розвитку суттєво сприяла підвищенню спроможності учасників та їхньої готовності до майбутньої ролі вчителів англійської мови. Зростання активності учасників підкреслює практичну значущість і застосовність впроваджених стратегій у програмах підготовки вчителів англійської мови. Результати дослідження підтвердили теоретичні засади, що забезпечують емпіричну підтримку позитивних результатів втручань з професійного розвитку в програмах підготовки вчителів англійської мови. Покращення в лінгвістичному та соціокультурному вимірах підкреслюють успіх програми у формуванні кваліфікованих і культурно обізнаних майбутніх учителів англійської мови. Результати дослідження можуть бути використані закладами вищої освіти, які готують майбутніх учителів, а також організаціями, що впроваджують програми професійного розвитку вчителів, з метою розвитку міжкультурної компетентності та впровадження принципів сталого розвитку в освітній процес

Ключові слова: програма підготовки; педагогічна практика; внутрішня та зовнішня академічна мобільність; інформальна/неформальна освіта; співпраця зі стейкхолдерами