WHY DO SCHOOL TEACHERS ENGAGE WITH SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION?

Exploring the Role of Personal, Group and Organizational Influence Factors

Problem Background

Consumption is a key theme in education for sustainable development (ESD). However, it lacks institutional integration in school curricula, subjects and teacher education programs. Against this backdrop, the motivation of teachers to deliberately engage with sustainable consumption issues professionally is of crucial importance. There is, however, a paucity of research on factors explaining teachers’ engagement with sustainable consumption issues. This study adds to this largely underexplored field.

Research Design and Analysis

Based on previous research drawing on

- **Personal variables (P1 to P5)** covered the teacher’s personal commitment to the promotion of sustainable development and his or her interest in the concept of ESD [1].

- **Group variables (G1 to G6)** comprise the perceived support climate for SCI activities in the organisation and the estimated proportion of teachers who are regularly working on sustainability issues in their classes [2].

- **Organizational variables (O1 to O5)** operationalized the (in)transparency of information flows at school and the extent to which ESD feature in inner-organizational communication [3].

Research Question

What role do personal, group and organizational factors play in explaining teacher engagement with sustainable consumption issues (SCI)?

Findings

Results of regression analysis (using listwise deletion, n=83) show that the overall model of personal, group and organizational factors explains 45% of the variance in teacher engagement with SCI. Three factors are particularly influential: personal interest in ESD (P2), perceived interest of students in SCI (G6), and inner-institutional communication on SCI (O1).

Implications

Possible implications of the study and its findings could be to focus professional development more thoroughly on reexamining individual norms, ethics and values, explore ways to connect SCI to the experiences of students and to utilize not only outward bound, but internal communication strategies more systematically in whole-school-approaches to ESD.

References


Project BINK

This study was conducted as part of the project BINK (German acronym for Educational Institutions and Sustainable Consumption, carried out between 2008 and 2012 with financial support of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research).

The aim of BINK was to design, implement and evaluate transdisciplinary organizational change processes towards a more sustainable culture of consumption in six educational institutions [4]. The change process in each institution was managed by teams of teachers, students and other stakeholders.

In the course of the project, more than 34 intervention measures have been planned and implemented with the participation of teachers, students and other stakeholders [5].

Contact

Prof. Dr. Daniel Fischer
daniel.fischer@leuphana.de

Dipl.-Psy. Anna Sundermann
anna.sundermann@leuphana.de

Working Group SuCo*
Sustainable Consumption & Sustainability Communication
Leuphana University Lüneburg
Institute for Environmental & Sustainability Communication (IFEU)
Scharnhorststr. 1, D-21335 Lüneburg