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Abstract

How far have higher education institutions progressed towards integrating sustainable development at an institutional level and are they responding to the societal need for transformation? Can the pace of transformation be accelerated, given the urgency of the issues our world is facing? As a practice-oriented contribution to this broader debate — still open despite progress achieved during the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014) — this article discusses a mainstreaming strategy applied to teaching at a higher education institution in Switzerland, the University of Bern. We analyse the traps of institutionalizing sustainable development (SD) in a higher education institution and clarify the policies and approach to change management needed to navigate these traps, based on an analysis of our experience as an education for sustainable development team. We propose (1) using a combined top-down and bottom-up policy to increase motivation, (2) prioritizing and sequencing target groups and helping them to find the link between their discipline and SD, and (3) offering tools, support, and professional development to help lecturers

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to move towards a more competence-oriented form of teaching. Concrete support needs to take place at four levels: the level of formulating competences for SD; the level of shifting towards a learner-centred approach; the level of designing their learning environments; and the level of becoming a community of practice. An impact chain explains the logic from concrete activities (tools, courses, workshops, etc.) to the desired impact of helping lecturers and graduates to become agents of change capable of playing a key role in society and helping to shape our future. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)