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**The Role of Teachers in Promoting Sustainable Practices
in Preschool: A Case Study of Eureka School**

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Abstract

Sustainable education has become an essential component of early childhood education, as young children develop habits that shape their long-term attitudes toward the environment. Education is one of the most effective strategies to achieve sustainability. Preschool education plays a crucial role in shaping children's unique personalities and beliefs. Given the increasing concerns about climate change and environmental sustainability, integrating sustainable education within the preschool system is becoming increasingly important for preparing future generations to address global environmental challenges. Eureka School's integrated educational content is aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. This research aims to explore the role of teachers in promoting sustainable practices in preschool education, with a particular focus on the Eureka School. The research examines the strategies teachers use to instill sustainability concepts in young learners, the challenges they face, and the overall impact of their efforts on students' knowledge and adoption of sustainable behaviours. The research emphasises the need for professional development programs and institutional support to enhance teachers' capacity for sustainable education. The Eureka School environment, unique instructional materials and expert educators not only inspire children to explore the world with confidence, but also foster an understanding of the human-nature relationship. This research focuses on Eureka School's preschool teachers. Data was collected using a qualitative research approach, including teacher interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The findings contribute to the growing discussion on early childhood environmental education and provide practical recommendations for strengthening sustainable practices in preschool settings. The research underscores a rising interest among educators in sustainable education. It also highlights the growing emphasis on sustainability in early childhood education and the significance of equipping teachers with the necessary tools to foster environmental awareness among young learners. Future research could

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explore comparisons between different Lithuanian preschools or analyse children's varying responses to sustainable education initiatives.

Keywords: Eureka School, preschool, sustainable practices, teachers.

1. Introduction

In this era of globalisation, education has an accountability to construct a human capital that incorporates future experts and decision-makers, and liable citizens. Education for Sustainable Development facilitates learners to develop knowledge, understanding, beliefs, and expertise (Pacho, 2020). The period from 2005 to 2014 has been declared the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development by the United Nations. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), at the meeting of ministers for education and environment held in Vilnius, March 17-18, 2005, accepted the strategy for education for sustainable development (UNESCO Education Sector, 2007). UNESCO (2017) recognises education as a means, a driver and an essential strategy for achieving sustainability, which should begin in early childhood, and following the presented goals, contents, themes, and activities, and recommends the creation of educational programs for preschool age (UNESCO, 2017).

Education for sustainable development (ESD) is increasingly understood as an important component of education at all levels of education. This is especially important in the younger school years. Teachers and teacher training institutions should make a significant contribution to the education of children and young people for sustainable development (KNE Institute, 2025).

Eureka School founded the first early education school in Lithuania in 2018. They think that the basis of the world's sustainable development is learning evolution. They believe that Eureka contributes to this global change by providing modern education and continuous improvement. At Eureka school, waste is carefully sorted and recycled materials are used to create interesting and useful educational activities for preschool children. All Eureka communities conserve energy together while also caring for and nurturing the school's green spaces (Eurekamokykla, 2025). Moreover, Eureka used paper sparingly, writing on both sides, and storing unused paper in separate boxes so that it can be used in the future. Eureka always chooses environmentally friendly cleaning products to maintain a clean and healthy environment.

The objective of this research is to explore the essential role of teachers in promoting sustainable practices in Eureka preschool settings. It highlights how educators can integrate sustainability into daily routines, curriculum, and classroom activities, fostering a lifelong respect for the environment. By adopting sustainable teaching strategies, preschool teachers can inspire young learners to become responsible global citizens. Through innovative methods, hands-on experiences, and community engagement, teachers can create a foundation for sustainable habits that children carry into the future. This research emphasises the role of teachers in promoting sustainable practices in Eureka preschool.

In Eureka, the integrated educational content is based on the sustainability goals set by the United Nations. Eureka school learns sustainability principles through a connection with nature and the environment, the use of recycled materials, and project-based activities. Eureka's environment, unique educational tools, and professional teachers encourage children not only to boldly explore the world but also to understand the importance of friendship between humans and nature (Eurekamokykla, 2025).

2. Literature Review

The price of inspiring cheerfulness, contribution, and coordination in schools is something that teachers and educational professionals everywhere understand immediately. Additionally, many are adept at fostering positive attitudes and environments in their classrooms (UNESCO, 2024). Through the development of creative policies, teacher preparation programs, and studies that promote innovation, institutions of learning should cultivate creativity in the educational setting (Ramlackhan et al., 2024). Education is one of the main tools for achieving sustainability. A more sustainable society may be ensured by public awareness, education, and training since people worldwide realise that the existing tendencies in economic growth are unsustainable (Lamanauskas & Malinauskienė, 2024).

Sustainability is a complicated, multidimensional concept (Višnjić-Jevtić et al., 2022), deep-rooted in the early Brundtland definition, which refers to it as development that meets the desires of the existing generation without cooperating the competency of future generations to meet their own requirements. This concept interweaves economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection (Šindić & Vodopivec, 2024). The Sustainable Development Goals (2016–2030) include 17 goals, 169 marks, and 303 indicators (United Nations, 2014). Thus, the parallel idea of education for sustainable development (ESD) has also arisen since the UN General Assembly first established sustainable development in 1987 (Kahrirman-Öztürk et al., 2012). There are three pillars (Environmental, Economic, and Social Cultural) of education for sustainable development (Teksöz, 2015), which are based on 7R's (reduce, reuse, respect, reflect, rethink, and redistribute).

Preschool education is a crucial time in the formation of children's individual personalities and values. In the perspective of ontogeny concerns about climate change and environmental sustainability, integrating sustainable education into the preschool system is becoming a critical choice for training new generations for global environmental challenges (Constantin et al., 2024).

Environmental education is a new type of education that aims to develop environmentally responsible citizens. The primary objective is "to raise the human awareness of the ecosystem in which they work, to optimise the relationship between man and the surrounding nature" (Anghel & Neculau, 2022). Now, one of the main problems brought forth by global difficulties is the development of GREEN talents. The development of this set of new abilities for pupils has become a means of

addressing the escalating issues of damage to the environment and global warming. They are vital in training people and cultures to deal with environmental problems and help produce a more sustainable future (Anghel & Anghel, 2022). Children are trained to take responsibility for their conduct, notably how they use resources and affect their surroundings. They learn to save energy and water, in addition to minimising, reuse, and recycle (Constantin, et al., 2024). Children learn that every action matters in the fight to safeguard the environment through practical activities like establishing and caring for greenhouses or gathering recyclable rubbish (Constantin et al., 2024).

The teachers' commonplace activities show a mindful effort to participate in social and cultural components of sustainability in the classroom. To encourage sustainable habits among preschoolers, especially in lowering the use of food, paper, and water, a variety of tools for visualisation, including graphical representations, charts, and data visualisations, were used (Kahrیمان-Pamuk & Samuelsson, 2024).

3. Methodology

To achieve the objective of this research, the research tool used was interviews from preschool teachers to uncover participants' behaviours and attitudes, classroom observations, and document analysis method. This research is based solely on qualitative data. Interviews provide less specific but more useful information about how people think and interact (Anghel & Neculau, 2022).

A detailed interview form is used to analyse the data for this research. The interview form consists of 40 questions. This research has a sample size of 24 respondents. The interview was conducted solely from the preschool teachers at Eureka School working in different branches in two big cities (Kaunas and Vilnius) of Lithuania. Because this research is conducted typically for Eureka school. During the interview, also some demographic questions were also asked from the preschool teachers before moving to the sustainability section.

Furthermore, classroom observations were used to analyse the situation and to get familiar with the sustainable practices used by the teachers with the kids.

Document analysis is often used in combination with other qualitative research methods as a means of triangulation—'the combination of methodologies in the research of the same phenomenon' (Bowen, 2009). This method was also used to have in-depth analysis of the topic that how the role of teachers promotes sustainable practices in Eureka preschool. Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material. Like other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Service, 2008).

4. Analysis/Results Interpretation

4.1 Demographic Traits

Table 1. Demographic analysis

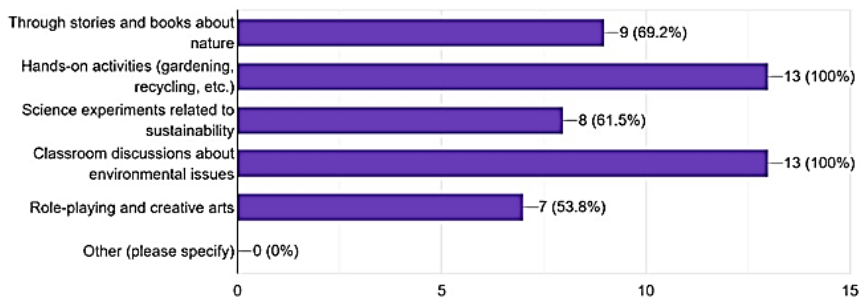
Gender	Male	0%
	Female	100%
Age Group	20-30	61.5%
	31-40	23.1%
	41-50	15.5%
	51 & above	0%
Highest level of Education	Diploma in Early Childhood Education	7.7%
	Bachelor's Degree	69.2%
	Master's Degree	15.4%
	PhD	7.7%
Years of experience in preschool education	Less than 1 year	23.1%
	1-5 years	69.2%
	6-10 years	7.7%
	More than 10 years	0%
Size of preschool class (No. of Students)	Less than 10 students	7.7%
	10-15 students	76.9%
	15-20 students	15.4%

Source: developed by the authors.

4.2 Graphical Analysis

While conducting the interview, the question was asked from preschool teachers of Eureka that “what methods they include in everyday lessons for integrating sustainability?”. Most of the teachers answer that they used hands-on activities such as planting vegetable, fruits flowers etc. with the kids or by recycling wastes and used recycled material for the activities to do crafts. They also said that they talk about environmental issues during class discussions as seen in Figure 1.

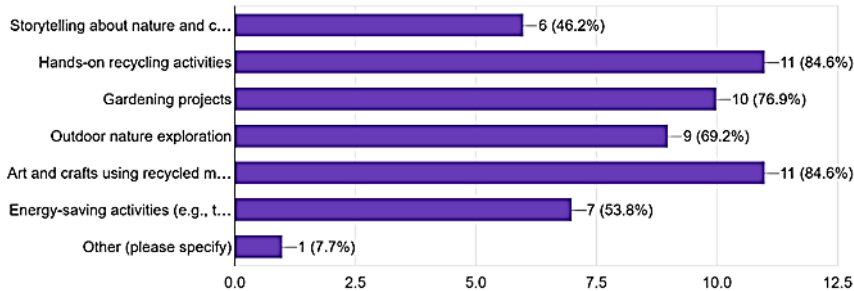
Figure 1. Methods of integrating sustainability into everyday lessons



Source: Waqar (2025).

Secondly, it was also asked during the interview what specific activities Eureka preschool teachers used to promote sustainability in the classroom. These answers were that mostly (84.6%), they do hands-on recycling activities and use recycled materials for arts and crafts. Whereas 53.8% do energy-saving activities, as they remind preschoolers to switch off the light every time they come back from the toilet, close the tap when they are washing their hands to save water etc. Last but not the least 76.9% were doing gardening projects as always, they are growing something especially in Vilnius Valakampi branch as they have a big green space. This is also seen in Figure 2. below.

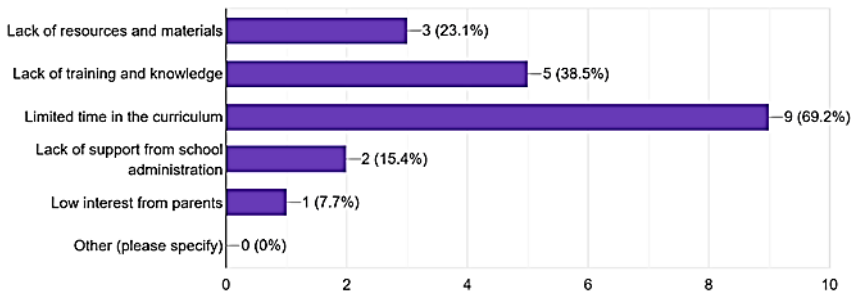
Figure 2. Activities used to promote sustainability in Eureka preschool



Source: developed by the authors.

Thirdly, during the interview when it was asked what challenges were faced in implementing sustainable practices in Eureka preschool, the main issue was limited time in the curriculum, as they do not have any time for sustainable practices to implement, which hinder their expertise. The other reasons were lack of resources and materials (23.1%) and lack of training and knowledge (38.5%) as some teachers are not familiar with this method of education. This is also seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Challenges faced in implementing sustainable practices in Eureka preschool



Source: developed by the authors.

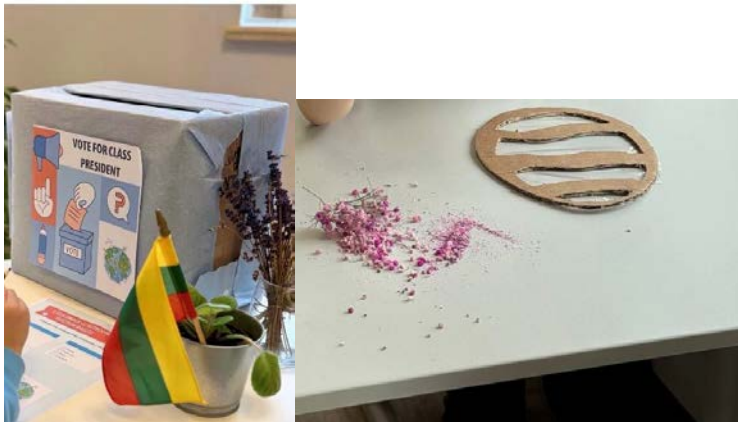
Last but not the least, the other main issue which was asked during the interview was what kind of support Eureka preschool teachers need to promote sustainability in preschool classes in all the branches. So, 84.6% need more teaching resources and materials to implement sustainability practices in preschools in Eureka, whereas

76.9% require more training and workshops to get familiar with sustainable practices. 69.2% suggested collaboration with environmental organisations to incorporate ideas with preschool children.

4.3 Preschool Teacher's Views

Preschool teachers perceive EfS (Education for sustainability) primarily as preserving and nurturing nature, aligning with the environmental dimension of sustainability. They also perceive various ways to promote sustainable education in preschool, which include encouraging students to trade gently by used books or supplies instead of buying new, having clearly labelled bins for paper, plastic encourages mindful disposal, and using digital platforms to submit work reduces paper use. Additionally, Eureka preschool teachers promote sustainable education by following methods, including sustainability lessons in curriculum, performing gardening projects, outdoor lessons, saving light, reducing paper waste, recycling paper, plastic, etc., minimal plastic use, reusing classroom materials such as binders, folders, and even decorations with preschool kids to promote sustainability. Moreover, secondary raw materials are used to create art works/crafts to reduce paper use. Every week the children have projects and they try to make things by using secondary raw material. Some examples are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Every day projects using second-hand raw materials



Source: developed by the authors.

However, currently Eureka preschool kids are engaged in a project “Save the Baltic Sea”. They also attend a workshop about sustainability with teachers about that project, as seen in Figure 5 below. Children create handmade items sell in the fair held at school, the total money raised was 300 euros, which was donated to an organisation responsible for cleaning the Baltic Sea. Furthermore, teacher’s talk about green transportation and encourage preschool kids to use bikes or come to school by walk. Also, teacher’s read books about nature and environmental pollution at least once in a week to get kids familiar about environmental pollution and how

to save nature. Eureka preschool kids twice per year going outside in nature and clean by removing waste and trash from the streets and parks to save the earth.

Figure 5. Workshop about sustainability “Save the Baltic Sea”



Source: developed by the authors.

Teachers always include a daily reminder about the importance of recycling. According to the topic, sustainable practices were implemented in the class by the preschool teachers. Recycling, planting, saving paper/energy are frequent practices that are implemented in the preschool class every day in Eureka. All the school use digital platform like ClassDojo application for self-assessments of kids and communication with parents, which helps reduce paper waste. Activities like eco-craft projects, classroom gardening or planting, field trips or virtual tours, sustainability-based art, and sustainable science experiments are all part of learning at Eureka School.

In the preschool group, the children participate in various sustainability projects, such as picking up trash during travel days, planting herbs, vegetables, and flowers in our school garden, and sorting waste. These activities help them develop responsibility and learn the importance of resource conservation from an early age. Every week on Thursday, children go on nature walks to observe nature and collect litter. In this way, preschool teachers are teaching children to respect the environment and understand the impact of pollution.

One of the most inspiring experiences was when a parent organised a river clean-up by boat and a forest camp, involving other families from the class; it showed how sustainability can bring our community together. Events organised by the city and visits from guests further deepen the children’s understanding. According to one preschool teacher, “I always aim to promote hikes and plan trips where children can explore nature and build environmental awareness. I truly hope that these young explorers grow up knowing how important it is to love nature, protect the environment, and avoid wasting water and food”.

However, preschools play a crucial role in teaching sustainability because early childhood is the perfect time to shape children's values, attitudes, and habits. At this stage, children are naturally curious and learn best through hands-on experiences. By integrating eco-friendly practices into daily routines—like turning off lights when leaving a room, reusing materials during crafts, or using compost and recycling bins—preschools help children build lifelong habits of responsibility and care for the environment. Moreover, outdoor learning activities such as gardening, nature walks, bug hunts, or simply watching clouds foster a deep respect for nature. Introducing basic concepts like saving water, caring for animals, and not wasting resources gives children the awareness and they need to understand their future impact. However, it is important in today's world that sustainability education can begin at early age and over time, these consistent practices will help shape children's behaviour. Preschools are not just teaching sustainable education, but they are also implementing in their everyday life by planting the seeds for future environmentally conscious individuals who understand why it all matters.

4.4 Document Analysis

Teaching sustainability to preschoolers should be rooted in play, exploration, and hands-on experiences. Setting up a weekly “Nature Detective” day, where children explore bugs, leaves, or clouds and record their findings, sparks curiosity and helps build a connection with nature. Additionally, starting a classroom garden or even a simple windowsill herb pot allows kids to water, observe, and harvest. Furthermore, preschool teachers can also incorporate engaging activities like eco-themed treasure hunts, sustainability bingo, DIY recycled crafts, gardening stations, sorting games, and interactive eco-focused storybooks. Recycled-material STEM challenges and nature-based projects give children practical ways to see how their actions impact the environment. However, digital technologies like augmented reality nature exploration or virtual eco-tours can make learning even more exciting. Using tools like solar panels at school is a great way to introduce sustainable energy concepts. Personally, I would love to have a proper school garden project and see more children walking to school, especially since so many live nearby but are still driven by car. Encouraging walking is one simple yet impactful way to promote eco-conscious behaviour in families and build a stronger connection between children, their environment, and their community.

To create a lasting impact, preschools should actively involve both children and their families in sustainable education. Building strong home-school connections helps reinforce eco-friendly habits beyond the classroom. One effective approach is to send home simple weekly challenges such as turning off lights when leaving a room, packing a zero-waste lunch, reusing paper for drawing, or using a reusable water bottle. Starting a classroom garden and sending home mini seed kits or “Grow at Home” bags encourages shared experiences, and parents can be invited to share photos of their child watering or observing plant growth. Preschools can also organise sustainability workshops, eco-friendly events like “Green Day,” and park clean-up outings where families collect trash together. This helps encouraging

parents to be responsible role models by creating sorting areas at home, conducting small experiments with recycled materials, or participating in sustainability campaigns helps children see that caring for the environment is a shared family value. Regular newsletters, sustainability tips, and collaborative projects further strengthen this connection and ensure that the message of environmental responsibility is consistent, fun, and meaningful both at school and at home.

4.5 Classroom Observations

The unstructured observation was carried out to gather data on how preschool teachers at Eureka implement sustainable practices in their classrooms. The four preschool classes in Eureka: Amerigo Vespucci, Kristupo Kolumbo, Martynas Starkus, and Vldas Vitkauskas were observed. As Eureka school implement Discovery Based Education, that is why even the names of the classes differ from the usual ones and are named with the famous world discoverers or of people who contributed to history and development of Lithuania, the main purpose for that is to motivate children to learn more about researchers and discoverers and make them a role model in their education.

On observing Eureka preschool classes, it was noted that the teachers incorporate sustainable education naturally as part of everyday learning practices. The classroom itself exhibited a strong focus on ecological consciousness, active citizenship, and action practice. Some of the projects created by students along with teachers are discussed as follows:

Teachers made a project with children such as “Little Inventors, Big Change” in which children with teacher make a water fountain using recycled plastic bottles and they are able to see how water can move without electricity as seen in Figure 6. Children learn to create environment friendly project. They explore simple science ideas, build creative project and prompting teamwork.

Figure 6. Sustainability project made by kids about “Saving Electricity & Water”

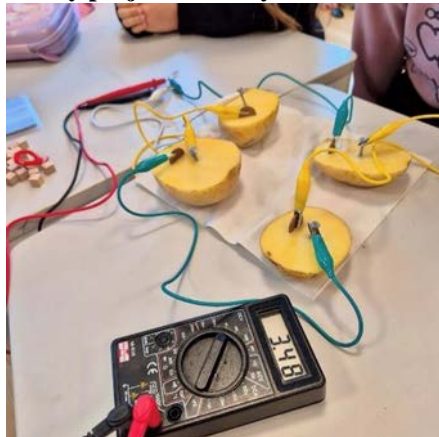


Source: developed by the authors.

Another project was dedicated to wastewater treatment plant working model, in which children, by stacking large stones, small stones, coal, sand, and cotton in cups, create a model that filters out debris, particles, impurities, and fine sediments in a step-by-step process to produce clear water. Children observe how each medium's porosity and density filter out different-sized impurities, modelling actual wastewater treatment processes. Drawing the clean water at the end illustrates the effectiveness of sequential filtration. Through the project, the children learn fundamental filtration concepts and the role that staging plays in treatment plants. Designing, building, and testing in teams also enhances problem-solving, collaboration, and environmental responsibility skills among children.

Furthermore, another project was devoted to the topic of electricity Energy School, a project created and implemented with preschool and primary teachers and kids – covering the English, natural sciences, and civic education – focused on the energy profession, electricity and energy independence as seen in Figure 7. Using the Discovery Based Education approach, the project earned the Professional nomination for its tangible results among more than 100 amazing project and won the prize of 400 euros.

Figure 7. Sustainability project made by kids about “Saving Energy”



Source: developed by the authors.

Every month, there is a competition held at Eureka among classes dedicated to sustainability project. Every month, each class sends their projects photos or video to the sustainability education coordinator. And in the end of every month, the best project gets prizes for the class. Which in turn motivates both children and teachers to implement sustainable education in their daily routine and teach kids about sustainability.

Another preschool class makes bird feeders from natural materials using fat and various seeds and hang them on trees during walks near the river to feed birds in the winter, when it is hard for them to find the food.

It was also observed that children used recycled materials to construct items that are practical and helpful in classrooms, such as pencil holders, napkin holders, pots

for plants, etc. Moreover, the teachers always initiate talk about minimising waste and conserving natural resources during the lessons. Students were asked to give suggestions on how they would make their school and home eco-friendlier.

On the other hand, the teachers incorporate sustainability interdisciplinary theme as well. For example, in Lithuanian lesson, they learned a short tale about a forest and how human actions helped or hurt nature. During math lesson, they figured out how much water could be saved by not leaving the tap running when they brushed their teeth or wash their hands.

Furthermore, what was most notable in the classroom environment are that how the teacher created an environment with a sense of collective responsibility and critical thinking. The students looked at their daily routines and created practical strategies for modifying them. For example, Wall posters displayed the 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), and a “Green Corner” in class contained sustainability-projects and a houseplant maintained by the children. However, this strategy not only fostered environmental literacy, but also enabled children to act, demonstrating how sustainability can be integrated into day-to-day teaching in imaginative and impactful ways.

5. Conclusions

The teachers play a significant role in promoting sustainable practices in classrooms in Eureka School. They are implementing sustainable education in their curriculum, daily lessons and making children aware of these practices. The children were taught daily about saving energy, water and electricity, recycling, reuse etc., so that they can build an environmentally friendly future and implement in their daily life to protect the earth. Moreover, Eureka Preschool children are engaged in various projects to promote sustainability such as “Save the Baltic Sea” etc. They also won a prize for the project that was devoted to the topic of electricity Energy School.

Moreover, Eureka preschool teachers used various activities to promote sustainability in the classroom, which include hand-on recycling activities and use recycled materials for arts and crafts, energy-saving activities, gardening projects etc.

Furthermore, there were several challenges faced by preschool teachers in implementing sustainable practices in classroom which are lack of resources and materials and lack of training and knowledge about sustainability education.

Eureka School is rooted in Discovery Based Education (DBE). They also implement DBE steps in daily learning. In Eureka, the unified educational content is constructed on the sustainability goals set by the United Nations. Eureka school discovers sustainability principles via a connection with nature and the environment, the use of recycled materials, and project-based activities. Eureka’s atmosphere, exceptional educational tools, and skilled teachers urge children not only to confidently discover the world but also to value the importance of friendship between humans and nature

Some of the limitations of the research include that sustainable events are carried out in inadequate numbers, some teachers do not have adequate information on

sustainable education, and they tend to ask for training or workshops to get experience that they can implement in their classrooms. Finally, we conclude that there is a growing interest in the sustainable activities that are being implemented in preschool.

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