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ACTION FOR AGRICULTURE

EMPOWERING EDUCATORS
A PATH TO GLOBAL COMPETENCE

YOUNG FARMING CHAMPIONS
connect-collaborate

the ARCHIBULL PRIZE

KREATIVE KOALAS
Design a bright future

YOUNG ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPIONS

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INTRODUCTION

In the evolving landscape of modern education, particularly under Action4Agriculture's 21st-century learning approach, the critical role of educator support is paramount. Educators are not isolated agents; they are vital components of a broad educational ecosystem thriving on collaboration and mutual support.

Today's educational challenges are multifaceted, necessitating innovative thinking, a sustainability focus, technological integration, global perspectives, and interactive learning. Educators are tasked with imparting knowledge and, more importantly, shaping globally competent, technologically adept, and environmentally conscious individuals. To meet these ambitious goals, they require a robust support system encompassing ongoing professional development, access to advanced resources, collaborative networks, and a school culture that champions continuous learning and innovation. Recognising and addressing educators' diverse needs is crucial, enabling them to effectively nurture students in a rapidly changing global landscape.

As the song 'Greatest Love of All,' written by Michael Masser and Linda Creed, poignantly states, "I believe the children are our future, Teach them well and let them lead the way." This line encapsulates the profound role of education in shaping our world's future. Teachers do more than impart knowledge; they are pivotal in nurturing the qualities that enable young people to become empowered leaders and innovators.

Empowerment in education is a complex, multifaceted process. It involves instilling hope in young people, fostering their belief in a brighter future, and equipping them with the skills, knowledge, and critical thinking abilities to navigate and shape their world. Most importantly, empowerment grants young people the authority to act, make decisions, and effect change. In this context, understanding and addressing complex global issues, such as the intricacies of the Israel-Gaza conflict, becomes essential components of a globally competent education.

The role of the community in this empowerment process is invaluable. When a community collectively supports its young people's growth, it creates an environment where learning is valued, opportunities are abundant, and support is readily available. This backing is crucial in fostering the confidence and resilience of young people as they explore, experiment, and engage with the world.

At the heart of this empowering ecosystem are our educators. More than teachers, they are mentors, guides, and role models. They have the unique opportunity to ignite curiosity, inspire aspiration, and instil a sense of responsibility in young minds. However, fulfilling this role effectively requires that educators themselves receive adequate support.

This support manifests as consistent, contextually relevant professional learning – training that addresses the unique needs of their students and evolves with the educational landscape. Such professional development ensures that educators are not just well-informed and skilled but are also confident and equipped with the necessary tools to support young people. This includes proficiency in integrating technology, understanding global issues, applying innovative teaching methods, and creating inclusive learning environments. Empowered educators are key catalysts in nurturing a generation capable of building a future we all aspire to. By teaching them well, we enable our young people to lead the way towards a more hopeful, capable, and empowered future.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GLOBAL COMPETENCE

GLOBAL COMPETENCE IS INCREASINGLY VITAL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN TODAY'S INTERCONNECTED WORLD. IT REFERS TO THE ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND AND ACT ON ISSUES OF GLOBAL SIGNIFICANCE.

THIS COMPETENCE IS CRUCIAL FOR SEVERAL REASONS:

1. Understanding Complex Global Issues:
In an era marked by complex international challenges, such as climate change, economic interdependence, and technological advancements, global competence enables young people to comprehend these issues deeply. For instance, the longstanding conflict between Israel and Gaza serves as a prime example of a complex international issue. Understanding its historical context, political nuances, and humanitarian impact requires a level of global awareness and sensitivity that global competence fosters.

2. Promoting Peace and Tolerance:
Global competence encourages empathy, cultural sensitivity, and tolerance among young individuals. In the context of Israel and Gaza, possessing global competence would mean understanding the perspectives and experiences of both Israelis and Palestinians. This understanding is crucial for fostering dialogue, reducing prejudices, and ultimately contributing to peaceful resolutions in such conflicts.

3. Enhancing Problem-Solving Skills:
Global competence equips young people with the skills to think critically and creatively about world issues. By analysing the dynamics of the Israel-Gaza situation, young people can learn to identify underlying causes, evaluate the effectiveness of different interventions, and propose innovative solutions.

4. Preparing for a Globalised Workforce:
In a globalized economy, employers increasingly value individuals who can navigate diverse cultural contexts and understand international markets and political landscapes. Knowledge about regions like Israel and Gaza, for example, can be crucial for various roles in international relations, journalism, and humanitarian work.

5. Fostering Global Citizenship:
Global competence helps young individuals see themselves as part of a broader global community. Understanding global issues, such as those faced by people in Israel and Gaza, can inspire a sense of responsibility and a desire to contribute positively to the world.

CHALLENGES FOR TEACHERS

In order to comprehensively understand the support needs of teachers, we carried out a detailed survey in October 2023. The findings from this survey, particularly focusing on three key questions, are presented in this report. These insights offer a revealing look into how schools are currently fostering global competence and identify critical areas that require ongoing attention and enhancement.

In Question 1 survey respondents were asked to rate their schools on a scale of 1 to 5 based on the learning environment's ability to nurture students' inclination to think about and act on issues of global significance in informed ways.

THE SURVEY ASSESSES FIVE KEY AREAS:

1. **Vision, mission, and school culture:** Expectations, attitudes, traditions, and values promoting global competence within the school.

2. **Curriculum, instruction, and assessment:** Systems guiding internationally focused, problem-based curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments. World languages are highlighted as a crucial part of globally focused schools.

3. **Relationships organised for global learning:** Structures enhancing student engagement and connection between adults and students in the school, and its globally focused mission.

4. **Professional learning communities:** Professional development focused on international content in various locations and cultural contexts.

5. **Family and community partnerships:** Initiatives for maintaining relationships with families, businesses, universities, and community organisations to support the learning mission.
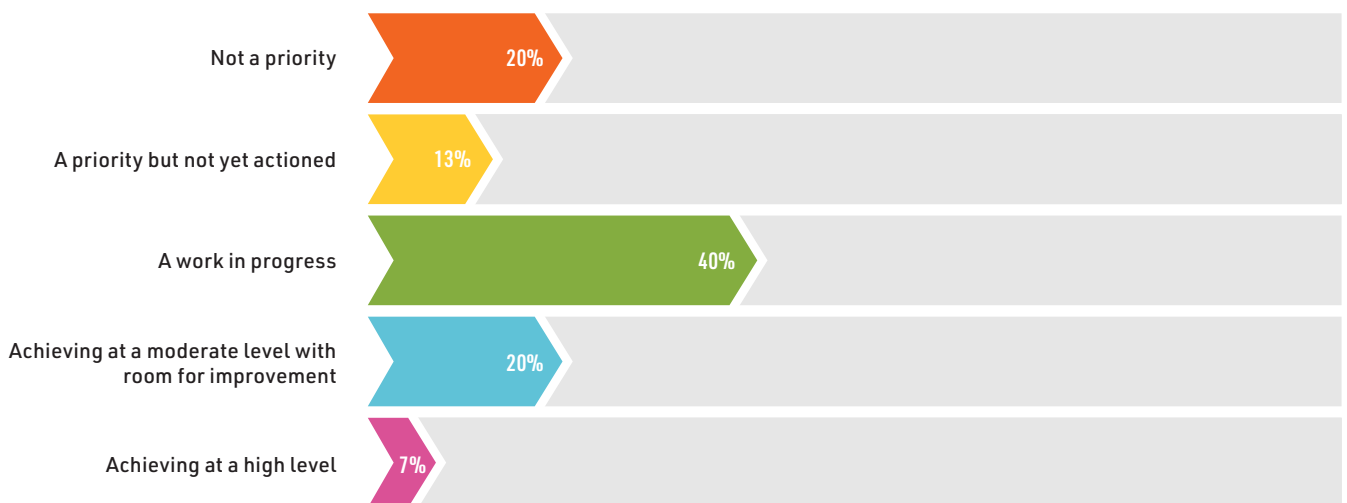
The survey results for each area are categorised into different levels of priority and achievement:

- Not a Priority
- A Priority but Not Yet Actioned
- A Work in Progress
- Achieving at a Moderate Level with Room for Improvement
- Achieving at a High Level
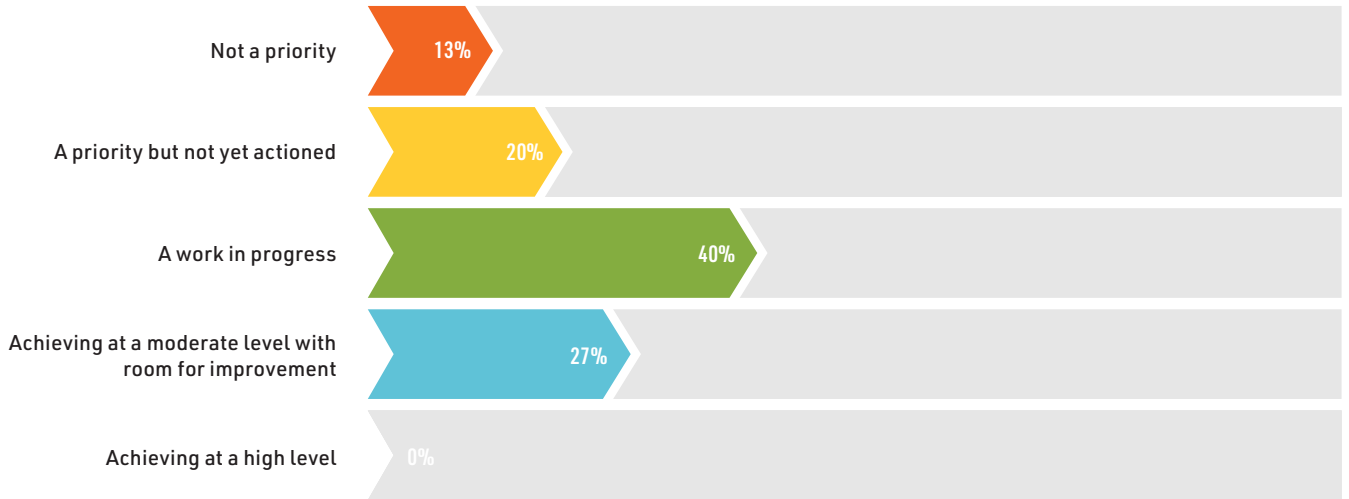
KEY FINDINGS:

VISION, MISSION & SCHOOL CULTURE:

The expectations, attitudes, traditions and values that promote global competence within the school.

Not a priority	20%
A priority but not yet actioned	13%
A work in progress	40%
Achieving at a moderate level with room for improvement	20%
Achieving at a high level	7%

Scored a weighted average of 2.88. This indicates a moderate level of achievement with room for improvement. A significant portion of responses (41.18%) categorize this as a work in progress.
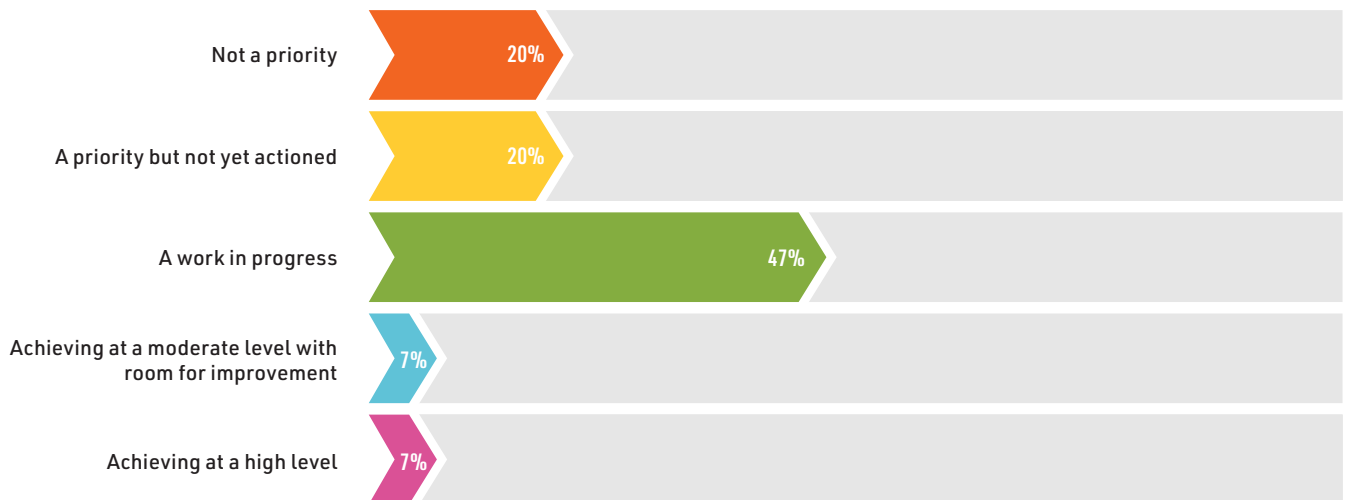
CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT:

The systems that guide the creation of an internationally focused, problem-based curriculum and the related instructional strategies and assessments necessary to deliver it effectively. World languages are an especially important component of globally focused schools.

Category	Percentage
Not a priority	13%
A priority but not yet actioned	20%
A work in progress	40%
Achieving at a moderate level with room for improvement	27%
Achieving at a high level	0%

Scored a weighted average of 2.88. This indicates a moderate level of achievement with room for improvement. A significant portion of responses (41.18%) categorize this as a work in progress.
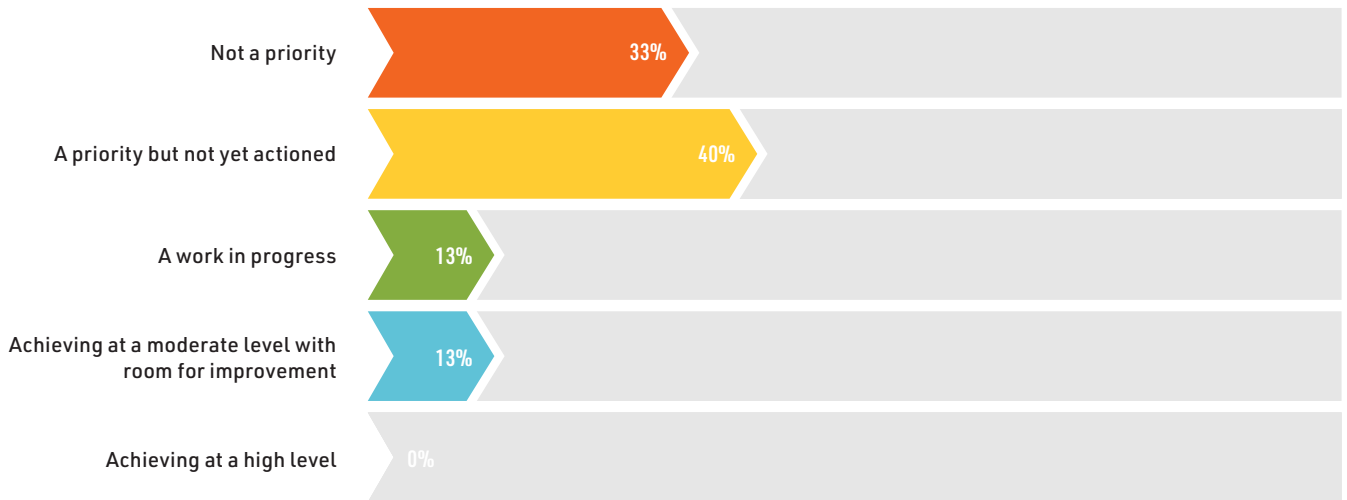
RELATIONSHIPS ORGANISED FOR GLOBAL LEARNING:

The structures that enhance student engagement and connection between adults and students in the school and to its globally focused mission.

Category	Percentage
Not a priority	20%
A priority but not yet actioned	20%
A work in progress	47%
Achieving at a moderate level with room for improvement	7%
Achieving at a high level	7%

Received a weighted average of 2.65. This area has the highest percentage (52.94%) of respondents viewing it as a work in progress, indicating significant ongoing efforts but also room for growth.
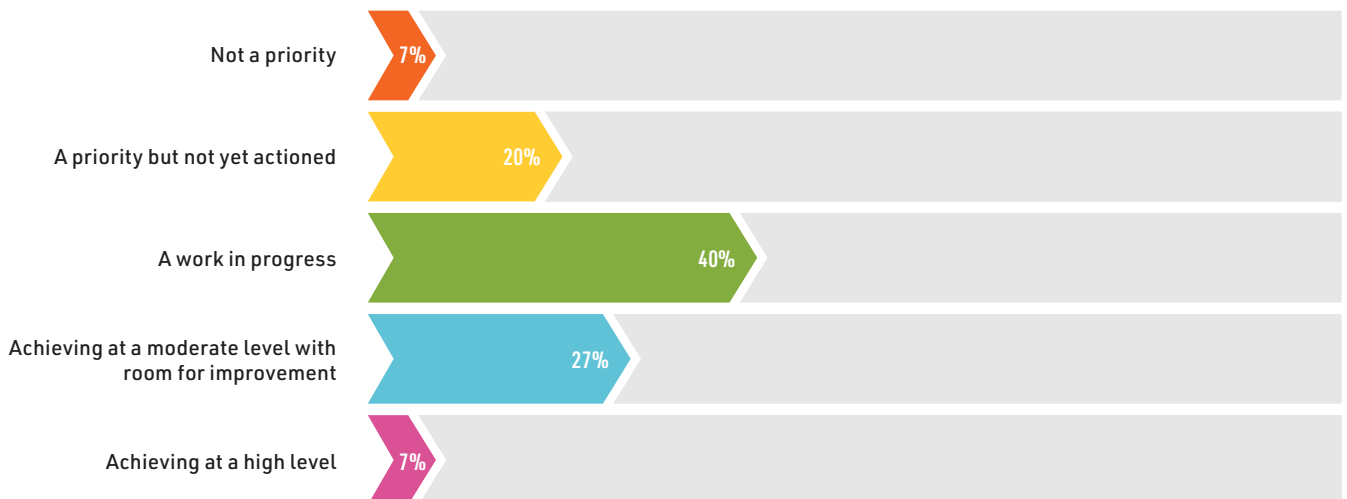
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES:

Professional development specifically focused on international content in varied locations and cultural contexts.

Not a priority	33%
A priority but not yet actioned	40%
A work in progress	13%
Achieving at a moderate level with room for improvement	13%
Achieving at a high level	0%

Scored the lowest with a weighted average of 2.12. This suggests that professional development in international content is a significant area needing improvement.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS:

The ways in which a school can initiate and maintain relationships with families as well as with a range of business, university and community organisations to support its learning mission.

Not a priority	7%
A priority but not yet actioned	20%
A work in progress	40%
Achieving at a moderate level with room for improvement	27%
Achieving at a high level	7%

Scored the highest with a weighted average of 3.00. While this is the best-performing area, the majority of responses still see this as a work in progress or achieving at a moderate level, indicating potential for further enhancement.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Highlight Ongoing Efforts: The areas classified as "A Work in Progress," indicate that the school is actively working towards improvement in these aspects.

Focus on Professional Development: Given the lower score in professional learning communities, it is recommended there is an increasing focus and resources on professional development related to international content.

Enhance Curriculum and Assessment: Provide strategies to strengthen the curriculum and assessment methods, as this is a crucial element in fostering global competence among students.

Strengthen Community Ties: Although family and community partnerships scored relatively high, further strengthening these relationships can support and enhance the school's global learning mission.

Build on Positive Aspects of School Culture: Leverage the relatively higher score in vision, mission, and school culture to further promote global competence.

Engage in Continuous Feedback and Improvement: Encourage regular surveys and feedback mechanisms to monitor progress in these areas and adapt strategies as needed.

Question 2, an open-ended query, invited respondents to share their current frustrations or factors limiting their career progression.

The data can be summarised into four main themes:

CHALLENGES IN EDUCATING AND ENGAGING STUDENTS:

Many responses reflect difficulties in getting students interested and engaged, particularly in global learning and agriculture. This includes issues like domestic students not seeing the necessity of global learning, difficulties in managing classroom behaviour, and challenges in inspiring students to take an interest in agriculture and global issues.

RESOURCE AND FUNDING CONSTRAINTS:

Several respondents are concerned with financial and resource limitations. This includes direct mentions of funding issues, limitations put on educational programs by administrations, and the time and resources needed to implement new initiatives or construct educational facilities like outdoor classrooms.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TIME MANAGEMENT:

Respondents expressed concerns about their own professional development and the struggle to manage time effectively. This includes issues like finding time for creative endeavours, managing the workload of daily tasks while planning long-term programs, and the personal challenge of managing all necessary tasks within limited timeframes.
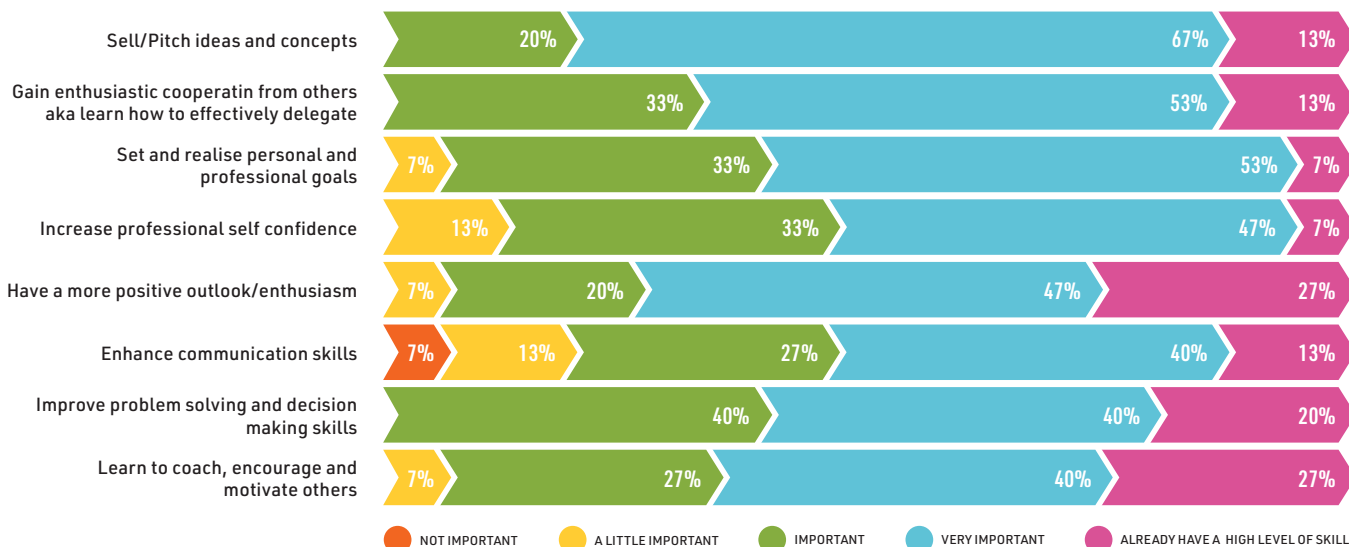
CURRICULUM AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION CONCERNS:

Concerns related to curriculum development and program implementation are evident. This includes worries about whether educators and community members will be motivated to use new curricula, struggles with micromanagement in classrooms which hinders teaching freedom, and challenges in integrating global food security topics into existing educational efforts.

These themes reflect a range of challenges faced by educators and professionals in the field, from engaging students in meaningful learning to managing resources and personal professional development.

Question 3 required respondents to evaluate their interest in enhancing a variety of skills. The survey encompassed numerous skill areas, with participants rating their interest on a scale from 1 (Not Important) to 5 (Very Important). Utilizing weighted averages for each skill area, the outcomes have been distilled into four principal themes:

PLEASE RATE THE SKILLS AREAS YOU WOULD LIKE TO IMPROVE ON

Skill	Not Important	A Little Important	Important	Very Important	Already Have a High Level of Skill
Sell/Pitch ideas and concepts			20%	67%	13%
Gain enthusiastic cooperatin from others aka learn how to effectively delegate			33%	53%	13%
Set and realise personal and professional goals		7%	33%	53%	7%
Increase professional self confidence		13%	33%	47%	7%
Have a more positive outlook/enthusiasm		7%	20%	47%	27%
Enhance communication skills	7%	13%	27%	40%	13%
Improve problem solving and decision making skills			40%	40%	20%
Learn to coach, encourage and motivate others		7%	27%	40%	27%

Legend: ● NOT IMPORTANT ● A LITTLE IMPORTANT ● IMPORTANT ● VERY IMPORTANT ● ALREADY HAVE A HIGH LEVEL OF SKILL

COMMUNICATION AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS:

High interest in enhancing communication skills (3.88 weighted average) and gaining enthusiastic cooperation from others (3.53), indicative of a desire to improve leadership and team dynamics.

Significant interest in improving active listening skills (3.47) and the ability to sell/pitch ideas and concepts (3.94), showing a focus on effective communication and persuasion.

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Strong emphasis on self-improvement, as seen in the desire to increase professional self-confidence (3.41) and have a more positive outlook/enthusiasm (3.35).

Interest in expanding comfort zones (3.47) and setting and realising personal and professional goals (3.59) reflects a focus on personal growth and ambition.

PROBLEM-SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING:

A significant interest in improving problem-solving and decision-making skills (3.76) indicates a desire to enhance critical thinking and analytical abilities.

STRESS MANAGEMENT AND ADAPTABILITY:

Notable interest in reducing stress, worry, and fears (3.18) and in managing and dealing with change (2.53), which points towards a need for better stress management and adaptability in a changing environment.

Time management skills also emerged as an area of interest (3.35), emphasizing the need for efficient organisation and prioritisation skills.

Overall, these themes reflect a strong desire among respondents to enhance their communication and leadership abilities, develop personally and professionally, improve their problem-solving and decision-making capabilities, and manage stress and adaptability more effectively in their professional lives.

CHALLENGES FOR TEACHERS
– ISRAEL-GAZA CASE STUDY

Teaching and facilitating dialogue about intricate international issues such as the Israel-Gaza conflict in educational settings presents several challenges:

COMPLEXITY OF THE ISSUE:

The Israel-Gaza conflict, akin to many international issues, is deeply complex and has roots in extensive history. Educators must possess a comprehensive understanding of the historical, political, religious, and cultural dimensions to present the topic accurately.

EMOTIONAL SENSITIVITY:

These topics often evoke strong emotions and personal connections. Teachers must create a safe and respectful environment where students feel comfortable expressing their views, whilst being sensitive to the emotional impact these discussions may have.

DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES:

Students come from varied backgrounds and may hold differing, even conflicting, perspectives. Teachers must balance these views and encourage respectful dialogue without alienating or marginalising any group.

MISINFORMATION AND BIAS:

The prevalence of misinformation and biased perspectives, especially from social media and unverified sources, can influence students' understanding. Educators need to teach critical thinking skills to discern facts from opinions and biases.

CURRICULUM CONSTRAINTS:

Integrating such topics into the existing curriculum can be challenging, particularly with standardised testing and other educational mandates that may limit flexibility.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Teachers may require additional training and resources to effectively handle these topics. Professional development in global education, conflict resolution, and intercultural communication is crucial.

PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY REACTION:

Educators may face resistance or backlash from parents or community members who have strong opinions about these issues. Navigating these external pressures while maintaining an educational focus is a significant challenge.

FOSTERING GLOBAL COMPETENCE:

Teachers must not only inform students about the specifics of the conflict but also foster global competence – the ability to understand and act on issues of global significance. This requires teaching skills like critical thinking, empathy, and cross-cultural communication.

BALANCING OBJECTIVITY AND ADVOCACY:

Finding the right balance between presenting an objective view of the conflict and advocating for human rights or peace can be difficult. Teachers must navigate this balance carefully to avoid perceived bias.

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT:

Discussions on conflicts, especially those involving violence and human suffering, can have a psychological impact on students. Teachers need to be mindful of this and provide support as needed.

EMPOWERMENT AND COMMUNITY ROLE

THE COMMUNITY PLAYS A PIVOTAL ROLE IN SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE TO BECOME GLOBALLY COMPETENT, A NECESSITY IN TODAY'S INTERCONNECTED WORLD. GLOBAL COMPETENCE, THE ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND AND ACT ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES, IS NOT JUST AN EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVE BUT A SOCIETAL ONE. IT EXTENDS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM, REQUIRING ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND SUPPORT FROM THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY.

1. Exposure to Diverse Perspectives:

Communities are melting pots of cultures, beliefs, and viewpoints. By engaging with different community groups, young people can gain first-hand experience of diverse perspectives. This exposure is crucial in developing empathy, cultural sensitivity, and an understanding of global issues. Community events, cultural festivals, and local initiatives provide platforms for young people to interact with and learn from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

2. Real-World Learning Opportunities:

Communities offer a wealth of real-world learning experiences. Local businesses, organisations, and community leaders can provide practical insights into how global issues affect the local context. For example, local environmental projects can illustrate the tangible impact of global climate change, making the concept more relatable and understandable for young people.

3. Mentorship and Role Models:

Members of the community can serve as mentors and role models, offering guidance and inspiration. These individuals can share their experiences, knowledge, and skills, providing young people with a broader understanding of the world and their potential role in it. Mentorship can take many forms, from formal program to informal guidance and support.

4. Support for Educational Institutions:

Community support for schools and educational institutions is fundamental. This can include funding, resources, or volunteer time, all of which enhance the educational experience. When schools are supported by their community, they are better equipped to provide a globally focused education, incorporating resources and experiences that they might not otherwise have access to.

5. Creating an Environment of Empowerment:

Empowerment in education is about enabling young people to feel confident in their ability to make a difference. A supportive community fosters this by valuing education, encouraging critical thinking, and providing opportunities for young people to engage in meaningful activities. When young people feel supported by their community, they are more likely to take initiative, express their ideas, and feel empowered to contribute positively to society.

6. Advocacy and Awareness Raising:

Communities can advocate for and raise awareness about global issues. This can help in creating an informed and engaged populace, starting from a young age. Community campaigns, discussions, and events focused on global challenges encourage young people to become informed and active citizens.

In conclusion, the community's role in fostering global competence and empowerment in education is indispensable. By providing diverse experiences, mentorship, support for educational institutions, and creating an environment that values learning and activism, communities can significantly contribute to preparing young people for the challenges of the global stage. This collective effort not only benefits the individuals but also strengthens the community as a whole, leading to a more informed, empathetic, and proactive society.

CONCLUSION

"*UNDERSTANDING THE TEACHERS' ENVIRONMENT AND SUPPORT PERCEPTIONS: KEY TO ACTION4AGRICULTURE'S 21ST-CENTURY LEARNING APPROACH.*"

Grasping the environment in which teachers work and their perceptions of support is vital, particularly within the framework of Action4Agriculture's 21st-century learning approach. This approach prioritises innovative thinking, a focus on sustainability, technological integration, global perspectives, and interactive, collaborative learning. Presenting a Concise Summary:

ALIGNING WITH EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY:

1. **Innovative Thinking Relevance:**
   Teachers' insights into their work environment shed light on the practical challenges and opportunities they encounter in nurturing critical and creative thinking, crucial for addressing real-world challenges in line with Action4Agriculture's mission.

2. **Practical Sustainability Focus:**
   Understanding teachers' perspectives helps assess how sustainability is being woven into teaching practices and identifies areas where additional support could enhance this integration.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND GLOBAL INTEGRATION:

3. **Effective Technology Use:**
   Feedback from teachers on their use and comfort with technology guides the integration of digital tools into learning, highlighting areas needing further training or resources.

4. **Fostering Global Perspectives:**
   Teachers' experiences reveal the implementation of global perspectives in education and the challenges in promoting cultural awareness and global citizenship.

PROMOTING INTERACTION AND COLLABORATION:

5. **Interactive Learning Dynamics:**
   Insight into teachers' environments and support systems unveils the adoption of collaborative and interactive methods and the hurdles in moving away from traditional teaching.

SURVEY INSIGHTS AND ACTION4AGRICULTURE'S APPROACH:

The survey's findings align with key aspects of Action4Agriculture's philosophy:

1. **Vision, Mission, and School Culture:**
   Moderate achievements here suggest a need for further alignment with the ethos of innovative and global thinking.

2. **Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment:**
   Progress is vital for effectively integrating sustainability and technology into the curriculum.

3. **Global Learning Relationships:**
   Strengthening global learning relationships is essential, in line with the focus on global perspectives.

4. **Professional Learning Communities:**
   Improvement in this area is crucial for professional development in innovative thinking, sustainability, and technological adeptness.

5. **Family and Community Partnerships:**
   Despite being the highest-scoring area, there remains room for enhancing these partnerships, crucial for a comprehensive educational approach.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION4AGRICULTURE:

- **Targeted Professional Development:** Emphasise training in technology, sustainability, and global perspective building.

- **Innovative Curriculum Support:** Aid teachers in creating curricula that encourage critical thinking and practical problem-solving.

- **Enhancing Collaborative Learning:** Provide resources for more interactive and collaborative classroom dynamics.

- **Boosting Community Engagement:** Promote initiatives for stronger links with families and the wider community.

In conclusion, comprehending teachers' work environments and support perceptions is key to effectively realising and enhancing Action4Agriculture's educational approach. This understanding directs improvements in professional development, curriculum design, teaching methods, and community involvement, ensuring the philosophy's practical application in classrooms.

Moreover, fostering global competence is indispensable for young people in our interconnected world. It equips them to understand and engage with complex global issues, promotes peace and tolerance, hones problem-solving skills, readies them for the globalised workforce, and nurtures a sense of global citizenship. Educating about complex international issues like the Israel-Gaza conflict requires meticulous preparation, sensitivity to diverse viewpoints, and a commitment to fostering a respectful and informed dialogue among students.

FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

(beyond the scope of the current project)

1. **Feedback and Evaluation Mechanisms:**
   a. Introduce a framework for regular feedback collection from educators and students.
   b. Use surveys or interviews to assess the effectiveness of new teaching methods.
   c. Implement data analytics to track progress and identify areas for improvement.
   d. Encourage peer reviews among educators to foster collaborative learning and self-assessment.

2. **Case Studies and Examples:**
   Include real-life examples or case studies that demonstrate successful implementation of the recommended strategies.

3. **Practical Guidelines:**
   Provide actionable and detailed steps for implementing the recommendations, catering to different educational contexts.

4. **Engagement with Recent Educational Trends:**
   - Discuss the integration of AI and machine learning in personalised learning.
   - Highlight the importance of digital literacy in modern education.
   - Explore the role of virtual and augmented reality in immersive learning experiences.
   - Examine the impact of remote and hybrid learning model's post-pandemic.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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