

Education for Sustainable Development: Its relevance in fostering student commitment to sustainability

Educación para el Desarrollo Sostenible: su relevancia para fomentar el compromiso del alumnado con la sostenibilidad

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ABSTRACT

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Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is a lifelong process of acquiring values, knowledge, and skills in childhood, youth, and adulthood so that people are able to find solutions to the socioeconomic and environmental problems that affect them. It is understood as a holistic and transversal education for all stages and levels of education. Its main objectives are to provide knowledge, improve skills, and develop positive attitudes in students regarding sustainable development. Students are made aware of the role of citizens, businesses, and public administrations in finding solutions to the various problems facing the countries and their institutions around us. ESD plays an important role in disseminating the concepts associated with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On the one hand, students must be aware of the SDGs being developed in many countries, especially in European countries, and, on the other, they must know how citizens, businesses, and public administrations could contribute to achieving them. This article raises some questions about specific aspects of ESD and presents some results from the European ECCOPS project focused on these topics.

RESUMEN

Palabras clave:

Educación, desarrollo sostenible, participación cívica.

La Educación para el Desarrollo Sostenible (EDS) es un proceso a lo largo de la vida de adquisición de valores, conocimientos y habilidades en la infancia, la juventud y la edad adulta para que las personas sean capaces de encontrar soluciones a los problemas socioeconómicos y ambientales que les afectan. Se entiende como una formación holística y transversal para todas las etapas y niveles educativos. Sus principales objetivos son proporcionar conocimientos, mejorar habilidades y desarrollar actitudes positivas en el alumnado sobre desarrollo sostenible. concienciando sobre el papel de la ciudadanía, las empresas y las administraciones

públicas en la búsqueda de soluciones a los diversos problemas que afrontan los países que nos rodean y sus instituciones. La EDS desempeña un papel importante en la difusión de los conceptos asociados a los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS). Por un lado, los estudiantes deben ser conscientes de los ODS que se están desarrollando en muchos países, especialmente en los países europeos, y, por otro, deben saber cómo los ciudadanos, las empresas y las administraciones públicas podrían contribuir a la consecución de los ODS. Este artículo plantea algunos interrogantes sobre aspectos específicos de la EDS y presenta algunos resultados del proyecto europeo ECCOPS centrado en estos temas.

Introduction

As a result of the various crises that have occurred at the beginning of the 21st century, there is a growing need to reconsider the values on which the current development model is based. Achieving a certain level of economic growth coordinated with social progress and environmental protection seems to be the most appropriate path to sustainable development. The lines of public action aimed at families, companies and public administrations help in this process, with actions aimed at the educational system being of particular relevance. Governments set objectives and public institutions can adopt four positions: regulate, facilitate, collaborate and promote (Fox et al., 2002).

Since 2005, UNESCO (n.d.) has emphasized that Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) requires lifelong learning to acquire the values, knowledge and skills necessary for children, youth and adults to seek new solutions to current problems. It is understood as a holistic and transversal training that should be incorporated in all educational stages and levels. One of the most important objectives is to transmit knowledge, enhance skills and develop positive attitudes in students towards sustainable development. Awareness must be created of the role of citizens, companies and public administrations in the search for solutions to the different problems faced by the countries of our environment and their institutions.

The purpose of this article is to reflect on these issues. It analyzes the state of the art on the subject of sustainable development, the way in which the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are introduced as tools for raising awareness and the consideration of ESD from the coordinates of civic education. The aim is to provide guidelines on how to structure the learning of these concepts in the classroom, define the key competencies that students should learn in this regard, and describe the role that youth participation plays in this process. Thus, the following research questions are posed.

How can the concept of sustainable development be integrated into educational curricula?

How have the SDGs influenced the conceptual and methodological evolution of ESD?

To what extent does civic education contribute to the development of key competencies for sustainability?

How do teachers approach ESD in the classroom?

What does the ECCOPS project contribute to the teaching of active citizenship and sustainability?

How does the multiperspective approach contribute to the prevention of radical attitudes among students within the ECCOPS project?

State of the Art

The publication of the SDGs has brought about a change of direction in ESD, addressing the issue from a comprehensive and multidimensional perspective. The 2030 Agenda proposes 17 SDGs, including the goal dedicated to Quality Education (SDG 4), which seeks to ensure inclusive, equitable and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Different sub-objectives are proposed in this regard, highlighting sub-objective 4.7, which focuses on ensuring that, by 2030, students acquire the necessary theoretical and practical knowledge on sustainable development that will lead to new lifestyles (INE, n.d.).

While there are numerous definitions of ESD (Murga-Menoyo, 2021), it is UNESCO that has established the dominant approach, promoting it since 1992 through notable interventions such as the UN Decade of ESD 2005-2014 (UNESCO, 2005), the Global Action Programme on ESD 2015-2019 (UNESCO, 2014) and the ESD 2030 Agenda (UNESCO, 2019; 2020).

ESD represents an evolution and an extension of what was defined in the past as environmental education (Baena-Morales & Ferriz-Valero, 2025). The latter, from its origins, was involved with ecological, social and economic approaches that proposed a development respectful of the biosphere and social equity (Novo, 2009). However, the development of these concepts has been heavily criticized for their limited progress towards sustainability (Bautista-Cerro et al., 2019). The most recurrent criticisms focus on its ambiguity, derived from its broad perspective, and the changing nature of sustainability issues. For greater specificity, UNESCO (2020) proposes to refer explicitly to the SDGs and considers that all ESD activities contribute to their achievement. Other critics question the need to qualify education and the neglect of its intrinsic value for human development, and propose rethinking the SDGs as a tool at the service of education (Carrillo et al., 2018). Rejero and Gil (2019) point out that what is relevant about the SDGs is that they improve the concept and practice of education, considered an essential part of human development.

There are other terms with similar meanings to ESD, such as education for development, education for a sustainable future, education for sustainability and education for the SDGs, although they have some differences in terms of themes, objectives and methodologies. Guevara-Herrero et al. (2023) conducted a bibliometric study on how environmental education has been approached and provide a broad overview of the evolution of the term.

This article uses the term ESD because it represents a comprehensive and transformative approach to education that incorporates formal, non-formal and informal education throughout a lifelong learning process. ESD contributes to the training of professionals capable of meeting the challenges of forming citizens with ethical awareness and civic responsibility, who think critically and act sustainably (De la Rosa et al., 2019; Jucker & Mathar, 2015; Kyburz-Graber, 2013; Michelsen, 2015). To be agents of change and transform society, people must first transform themselves (Alonso-Sainz, 2021; Boni et al., 2012; UNESCO, 2017).

In short, the aim is to ensure that schools' educational projects integrate ESD in line with the European strategy. In this sense, the role of the center's management team is fundamental, establishing specific annual objectives and informing and training teachers, who must design curricula consistent with the objective proposed by the center (Acud et al., 2025; Hamid et al., 2025).

ESD from the Coordinates of Civic Education

In Europe, citizenship education is part of the curriculum of non-university educational institutions. Through this course, students acquire knowledge and skills related to citizenship, as well as practical experience in activities within the educational institution or the social field. Citizenship education helps students understand that they are part of multiple communities (local, national, European and global). It also seeks to equip students with skills that promote their community interests, fostering harmony in their development (Bombardelli et al., 2014; Damiani & Fraillon, 2025; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017; Santana Vega & Feliciano García, 2017; Santana-

Vega et al., 2021). The teaching of concepts and skills related to sustainable development is, to some extent, linked to citizenship education.

There are numerous national and international initiatives by educational institutions to implement sustainability in teaching, research, social leadership and governance (Alcaraz and Alonso, 2019; IAU, 2020; Miñano and García-Haro, 2020; SDSN Australia/Pacific, 2017). A first step in demonstrating institutional commitment involves incorporating sustainability competencies into teaching projects (Wiek et al., 2011), helping students achieve the learning outcomes needed to meet the SDGs (unesco, 2017) (UNESCO, 2017). Many universities are working on the inclusion of sustainability in the curriculum, examining the presence of sustainability competencies in the curricula and proposing tools to assess the acquisition of these competencies (Azcárate et al., 2016; Bautista-Cerro and Díaz, 2017; Murga-Menoyo and Novo, 2015; O'Byrne et al., 2015; Segalas and Sánchez, 2019). They also focus on teaching-learning strategies and methodologies (Busquets et al., 2021) (Busquets et al., 2021).

At the curricular level, the integration and assessment of sustainability competencies is complex, due to the diversity of proposals (Azcárate et al., 2016; Aznar et al., 2013; Rieckmann, 2012). This complexity influences the limited presence and assessment of sustainability competencies in university studies (Bautista-Cerro and Diaz, 2017; Murga-Menoyo and Novo, 2015). Considering the holistic view of sustainability from the perspective of the SDGs, a simpler instrument has been developed to assess the acquisition of sustainability competencies, which has been incorporated by a small number of Spanish universities (Albareda-Tiana, 2018).

The integration of social competency learning outcomes into curricula is even more scarce and poorly developed. The UNESCO (2017) proposal establishes learning outcomes for all SDGs according to three levels of mastery: the cognitive domain (understanding and acquisition of knowledge related to the SDGs and sustainability, thinking tools and exploration of disruptive ideas and alternative solutions); the socioemotional domain (social skills that enable students to collaborate, negotiate and communicate); and the behavioral domain (skills that put into practice transformative actions in favor of sustainability, related to the individual and social spheres). Considering that teaching actions should be evaluated to ensure a real contribution to sustainability (UNESCO, 2014), these learning outcomes could constitute the benchmark for assessing practices for introducing knowledge of the SDGs. At the instrumental level, ESD requires the adaptation of teaching-learning strategies. The types of learning should be learner-centered (participatory and collaborative), based on real problems and adopt a critical approach.

It is clear that there is room for improvement in the teaching area, as is confirmed by the CRUE-Sustainability-GESU (2021). This assessment is also shared by Spanish university students. Students consider that the training received in sustainability is insufficient to apply it to the professional field (Valderrama-Hernández et al., 2020) and that sustainability competencies are not adequately worked on (Segalas and Sánchez, 2019). While progress is being made in the development of homogeneous frameworks and the implementation of formal operational proposals for curricular sustainability, committed teachers are driving voluntary initiatives, whose contribution to learning outcomes must also be evaluated.

How to Approach the Learning of Concepts Related to Sustainable Development in the Classroom?

Regardless of the level of education at which ESD is taught, it is a priority to teach students to go to the source of the data and not to accept information that does not come from reliable and recognized sources.

First, students should know that the concept of sustainable development is a political concept, developed by the World Commission on Environment and Development, known as the Brundtland Commission (United Nations, 1987). Sustainable development is considered to meet current needs without compromising the ability to meet the needs of future generations. One issue that should be made clear to students is the difference between the concepts of growth and sustainable development. Growth refers to quantitative aspects, while sustainable development also considers qualitative aspects of quality of life in a broad sense.

Second, the focus is on the SDGs. Students should know that the United Nations forum (United Nations, 2015) adopted the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development at the international level to respond to global trends and challenges. It proposes 17 objectives to be met by all countries that have committed to achieving them. In Spain, for example, the National Statistics Institute (INE) lists 17 objectives with 169 targets. To monitor them, 232 indicators were designed that can be measured with the statistical data they collect. These indicators are updated annually. The availability of data in Excel, graphs and analysis documents allows students at any educational level to analyze the status of these indicators. Learning situations will vary according to the level, subject matter and maturity of the students. Collaboration between different subjects enhances the learning of these concepts.

Thirdly, the focus is on the role of companies. They play a key role in changing economic models towards sustainability. It is worth noting that in recent decades, both voluntarily and at the urging of public administrations, an increasing number of companies have included aspects that contribute to it. This contribution is embodied in the actions integrated within what is called Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and more and more companies are considering the 17 SDGs as an integral part of their objectives, competitiveness and growth strategies. This results in benefits for business and society at large (European Commission 2019a; 2019b; Kang et al., 2010). Although business decisions are conditioned by economic, social, environmental, technological and political-legal factors of the business environment. In Europe, the European Commission (European Commission, 2001; 2011) defined CSR for the first time in 2001 and has been developing the concept ever since. Students need to know what dimensions and aspects are included in the concept of CSR. Students are invited to reflect on the internal and external dimensions of the company. In the internal dimension, students think about the actions that the company can take in aspects related to human resources management, occupational health and safety, adaptation to change and management of environmental impact and natural resources. In the external dimension, they discuss how the company can take measures that contribute to the development of the local community where it is located, how to collaborate with partners, suppliers and consumers, actions related to respect for human rights (adoption of codes of conduct) and how companies can help mitigate certain global ecological problems. Individual or group exercises can be performed.

Fourth, how public administrations can contribute to sustainable development can be analyzed in the classroom. In this case, a two-pronged approach is observed. On the one hand, public administrations that act in a socially responsible manner are an example

of good practice for the business sector. On the other hand, public administrations can encourage socially responsible actions by companies (awards, quality certificates, etc.); they can also create open meeting spaces where companies can share their good business practices (forums, websites, etc.).

Fifth, in relation to consumer behavior, it is necessary for students to know what the circular economy is. The European Parliament (European Parliament, 2023) considers it a model of production and consumption that involves sharing, renting, reusing, repairing, renewing and recycling existing materials and products for as long as possible. It is necessary to consider the role of the traditional linear economic model, based on the pattern of take, make, consume and throw away. Planned obsolescence is also part of this model, i.e. when a product has been designed with a limited useful life to encourage consumers to buy it again. As a result of the above, classroom practices focus on responsible consumption, understood as the attitude of consumers towards conscious and critical consumption. Being a socially responsible consumer involves:

- Behave responsibly when purchasing products and services
- Be responsible when using products and services
- Evaluate whether products and services are offered by socially responsible companies
- Do not purchase products and services whose production or use negatively affects the environment.

In 2021, the European Commission (European Commission, 2021) launched a commitment to responsible consumption and companies pledged to adopt concrete measures to achieve greater sustainability.

Key competencies of Sustainable Development

Civic competence is related to this topic. It is the result of a complex combination of different learning outcomes derived from different school subjects. It is necessary to analyze how young people can acquire this civic competence and what types of problems can be analyzed in the classroom so that students participate, exchange ideas and practices, learn to document themselves and make motivated decisions.

UNESCO (2014) defines a set of key competencies for sustainable development, focusing on critical thinking, systems thinking, collaborative decision-making and responsibility towards present and future generations. Patta Tomás and Murga Menoyo (2020) state that compulsory secondary education curricula should include the formation of this type of competencies as an educational objective. They compare the competencies required by the official curriculum of the biology and geology subject of the first year of compulsory secondary education and the competencies needed to comply with the United Nations 2030 Agenda. The results show the absence, in the official program, of the concepts of sustainability and sustainable development. There is a marked deficit in systemic competence that affects the acquisition of all other competencies. The effect is a student body capable of understanding concepts, facts and isolated situations, but with insufficient knowledge of the interrelationships that occur in the ecosocial reality, an essential issue for the achievement of the SDGs. It is necessary to reorient the teaching practice that deepens the competency-based education approach. This purpose requires articulating the teaching-learning process with a methodological approach that seeks to integrate knowledge and emotions through the experience of interaction with the context.

Various educational proposals have been presented to promote these skills in compulsory secondary education and high school, using different tools and learning situations. The game is a way to bring these concepts closer to young people. In recent years, gamification has been used in different fields, including education (Gómez

Trigueros, 2018; Moßbrucker et al., 2025). Gamification is understood as the use of game techniques and strategies in non-game contexts (Deterding et al., 2011) (Deterding et al., 2011). Its effect on student motivation and engagement has been investigated, both at a general level (Alsawaier, 2018) as well as on topics such as climate change and sustainability (Ouariachi et al., 2018; Wu & Lee, 2015). It has been concluded that they are educational tools that promote participation and engagement. González-Robles and Vázquez-Vílchez (2022) present a board game type educational resource used with secondary school students to contribute to the education and knowledge of environmental issues through the SDGs. In addition, they evaluate the ability of the game to enhance motivation and generate commitment to the environment in students.

All of the above requires that teachers take training courses to guide them in their pedagogical work. This training should be aimed at in-service and future teachers, and it is advisable to use an interdisciplinary and ecosystemic approach (Lateh & Muniandy, 2013; Matos & Flores, 2020). Matos Meléndez (2022) analyzed the influence of environmental education on the perception of sustainable development in secondary school teachers and found that it has a significant influence. Social integration, social contribution, social actualization and consistency significantly influence teachers' perception of sustainable development, but not social acceptance. Examples of initiatives implemented can be found in López Esteban (2022), an author who analyzes the importance of teacher training and proposes zero MOOC courses on education and SDGs.

Sustainable Development and Youth Participation

The participation of young people in political life and institutions is a fundamental factor in building more sustainable societies. Young people can be key agents of change through education and their familiarity with technology. New forms of social organization and interaction, such as social networks, so popular among the younger generations, can be an excellent means of proposing concrete alternatives for achieving the SDGs.

Likewise, citizen participation in favor of the defense and expansion of fundamental rights and collective well-being is the way to reverse political distancing, distrust in institutions and the spread of hate speech (United Nations, 2021). Citizen participation plays a dual role in society. On the one hand, it allows the population to express their opinions and concerns and contribute to the development of policies that affect their lives; on the other hand, it contributes to improve transparency and responsible decision making in public institutions and businesses (Almagro, 2016; Claramunt, 2022).

The participation of young people in the fundamental issues of their community is crucial in a communication scenario where digital networks encourage the global dissemination of simplistic and reductionist messages about complex phenomena. Fake news is not a recent phenomenon. The problem with the dissemination of false information lies in the fact that such information is spread among large audiences through social networks and platforms that facilitate the creation of disinformation bubbles. This generates informative biases and nullifies the desire to contrast the information (Ardèvol-Abreu et al., 2019; Ardèvol-Abreu et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Ferrándiz, 2019).

The European Union, together with the United Nations, makes it clear that promoting youth participation is a key factor in ensuring the advancement of democracies. Therefore, the United Nations has devoted numerous efforts to create specific conditions and tools to involve citizens in the decision-making process and promote a truly participatory democracy (Luena López, 2022; Pérez de las Heras, 2020).

The climate emergency and the adoption of sustainable consumption patterns are two of the issues in which the European Union is trying to involve citizens, especially young people. The Council of Europe supports youth participation in policy formulation in different fields and in democratic processes at the institutional level, through the Council of Europe Youth Department (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth>), which operates through a co-decision process between youth organizations and representatives of member states. Also, the European Union and the Council of Europe have shown their support for the activities of youth NGOs dealing with environmental measures. However, there is still much to be done in the legislative framework of all member states (Macanović, 2016).

There are numerous experiences that demonstrate how the exercise of citizen participation from an early age favors personal and social change, a greater understanding of the environment, a change in behavioral patterns in relation to the environment and a greater involvement in the real problems of local communities (Boulahrouz, 2021; Letouzey-Pasquier et al., 2025; Moreno Fernández and García Pérez, 2015). But it is not possible to implement specific and successful participation models or mechanisms, if the educational institution and the entire educational community are not rooted in the local context, nor are they involved in local sustainable development. Therefore, it is necessary for the local community and the educational community to activate mechanisms for the participation of schools and students in the construction and promotion of a local sustainability program (Rodríguez-Zurita et al., 2025) (Rodríguez-Zurita et al., 2025).

Development of These Skills in the ECCOPS Project

As an example of the application of the contents developed in the previous sections, the results of the ECCOPS project (Education for Civic Competence, Participation and Sustainability) are presented in summary form. It was funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 Program. Three partners participated: UCIIM-Unione Cattolica Italiana Insegnanti Medi (Italy), University of La Laguna (Spain) and Inspectoratul Académico Buzau (Romania), between 2021 and 2023 (Bombardelli, 2024).

This project is based on the premise that, in order to contribute to sustainable development, citizens of a democratic society must possess civic competence, be able to make informed judgments in the civic-political sphere and make informed decisions. However, there is a large gap between theory and practice in most European countries.

The overall objective of the project was to promote essential competencies for active and responsible citizenship in young people through a special teacher training program. Innovative strategies and tools were developed for teaching civic education in secondary schools. Inclusion, participation and sustainable development were considered from a European perspective. Specifically, the following specific objectives were established:

- To deepen the teaching dynamics of civic and citizenship education.
- Promote an active attitude in students with learning strategies focused on them and attentive to their individual needs.
- Pay attention to the content, cognitive (knowledge, reasoning, application) and affective-behavioral dimensions, especially civic competencies.

- Promote citizen participation and the assumption of responsibilities among young people by encouraging forms of representation at school and in the community.
- Strengthen the quality of teaching civic education and active citizenship through international cooperation.

The project involved several schools, whose teachers developed a pilot course with their students. Teaching activities were linked to sustainable development and active citizenship. Methodological strategies and evaluation and self-evaluation methods agreed upon by the three partners were used. Classroom work was mutually supervised according to shared criteria and using a toolkit developed by the partners. More information about its development can be found on the project's website: <https://eccops.uciim.it/en/project-overview-2/>

Tools Developed by the Project's Research Partners

The development of appropriate tools for teaching and learning was a priority. To this end, the partner countries organized training courses for secondary school teachers in the field of civic education and sustainable development (12-hour webinars); a working guide (toolkit) was also published in four languages (English, Italian, Romanian and Spanish) and teaching materials for testing among students in the partner countries (13 hours of classroom work). These materials can be used in different school subjects, especially civics, geography, history, law, economics, religion, art, mother tongue and foreign language, with an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach. The ECCOPS tools, in digital format, are the Toolkit, one for teachers and one for students, the student competency sheets and the teacher competency matrix. These materials are conceived as part of a general school learning offer and do not exclude existing textbooks. Specifically, the partners developed a manual, a teacher's guide with teaching guidelines, a skills matrix and skills cards.

- Manual. It contains the five themes of the ECCOPS project (Human Rights, Global Citizenship, Democratic Citizenship, Sustainable Development and Corporate and Consumer Social Responsibility). The handbook is linked to the student skills cards and guidelines prepared for faculty. The added value of ECCOPS is to link the European dimension with cross-border cooperation, active participation and self-assessment of students with a "multi-perspective" view of the problems. To facilitate inclusive learning, the material was structured according to the main questions: who, what, why, when, where. Learning objectives, outcomes and their assessment are interconnected and integrated, differentiating between the cognitive domain (knowledge and understanding), values, attitudes and the affective-behavioral domain of citizenship (dispositions to actively participate in community life, behavior, actions, practical application and commitment). Teachers can use the manual by choosing what is most appropriate for their national and local context, adapting the materials to the interests and learning level of their students. The manual is designed for use with students in the last years of primary school, compulsory secondary education and, in depth, in the last two years of secondary school (Bachillerato). Civic and citizenship education necessarily involves addressing controversial and sensitive issues at school. Students participate in peaceful debates on controversial issues and accept them as a normal and necessary part of democracy. The "multiperspective" view of controversial issues aims to

prevent and combat forms of radicalism and fanaticism, which feed on emotional states and rigid ideological positions, rather than on knowledge and reasoning.

- Teaching guidelines. These reflect the partners' shared vision on educational styles, monitoring and evaluation strategies for teaching/learning. The target group is secondary school students (13-19 years old), teachers, trainers, headmasters, principals, researchers, school authorities, school policy makers, inspectors, authors and publishers of school books, youth associations and local institutions.
- Competency matrix questionnaire. A tool for teacher self-reflection. This matrix describes the competencies necessary to achieve the best possible teaching quality in the field of Civic and Citizenship Education and ESD, fostering student participation and sustainable development.
- Skill cards. A tool for student self-assessment. Through them, students record and promote knowledge, skills and values that enable them to better understand what constitutes effective civic participation and a commitment to sustainable development. Working with the cards individually provides a framework for students to be aware of their own progress. The indicators on the cards refer to the 2018 EU key competencies and the national standards of the partner country's school systems.

Tools Applied in Schools

The implementation of the topics and the use of the tools by the schools yielded very interesting results.

The pilot course faculty recorded videos of some of the teaching/learning activities conducted in the classroom. Group observation was conducted by peers. The objective of the observation was to improve the approach to Civic and Citizenship Education. The observation of recorded educational work provided an excellent opportunity to exchange knowledge, collaborate, evaluate each other as "critical friends" and improve teaching practice. Nineteen videos were recorded in different Spanish, Italian and Romanian educational centers.

Events were organized to disseminate the good practices developed in the classrooms. At these events, teachers explained their educational experience. The activities were very varied. These include the design of posters on environmental issues, debates on human rights, a short story contest, rap music compositions, talks, meetings with public administrations and testimonials from volunteers dedicated to environmental protection. Recycled materials were also used in handicrafts. First, there was a discussion on how to recycle, and then it was explained to the students how they could make, for example, decorative cushions, pet coats, cell phone covers, etc., and where to get the materials. Each group had to explain how to make the product assigned by the teacher, recycling other old products that could have been discarded. Finally, each group presented their idea to the others and everyone discussed other ways to recycle.

Similarly, World Water Day was used as an opportunity to carry out a learning situation. This learning situation was implemented in different courses and different subjects (Economics and Entrepreneurship, Social and Personal Economics, Plastic, Visual and Audiovisual Education, Geography and History, Spanish Language and Literature, Mathematics, First Foreign Language, Technology and Digitalization).

The simultaneous use of the skills cards helped students to self-assess, which does not involve grading themselves, but working together on assessment criteria and quality indicators. It is important to provide constructive feedback and discuss content, motivations and learning processes with students.

Conclusions

ESD is proposed as a fundamental tool to face the socioeconomic and environmental challenges of the 21st century. Through holistic and cross-cutting education, ESD seeks to instill values, knowledge and skills that enable people to think of new solutions to the problems affecting our society.

This article highlights the importance of ESD in integrating knowledge of sustainable development into the educational system (formal, non-formal, informal). The 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs, in particular SDG 4, dedicated to Quality Education, provide a clear and concrete framework to guide education policies towards sustainability. It is essential that students are aware of the SDGs and understand how they can actively contribute to their achievement. The participation of citizens, companies and public administrations is crucial to achieve these objectives and promote sustainable development.

Despite the criticisms of ESD, its holistic and transformative approach makes it a key element in the formation of citizens committed to sustainability. Education must go beyond theoretical knowledge, fostering awareness and values that empower people as agents of change. Therefore, the effective implementation of ESD in the classroom is an indispensable step to achieve environmentally friendly development and social equity.

The integration of ESD into educational curricula is essential to prepare students as responsible citizens who are aware of their role in diverse communities. The inclusion of sustainability competencies in the curricula is proposed, although their implementation and evaluation present challenges due to the variety and complexity of the proposals. Despite these difficulties, the need to improve sustainability training at all educational stages is widely recognized. While homogeneous frameworks are being developed and formal operational proposals for curricular sustainability are being implemented, committed faculty will continue to promote voluntary initiatives that contribute significantly to sustainability education.

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