

Interdependent, Co-responsible: The 2030 Agenda as an Educational Resource

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Abstract

In collaboration with the Barcelona City Council, the Solidarity Foundation and the Professional Development Institute (IDP-ICE) of the University of Barcelona have been rolling out the *Interdependent, Co-responsible: Research for Global Citizenship* programme. The main objective of the scheme is to spread the possibilities of the 2030 Agenda as an educational resource to understand the interdependence of seemingly distant problems and promote the co-responsibility in its resolution. The programme supports high school students in carrying out research work around the 2030 Agenda; and, in turn, trains teachers about the potential of research to educate in global citizenship. In this way, the programme furthers target 7 of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which, by 2030, seeks to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development through global citizenship education.

Keywords: global challenges, university, sustainable development, education, human rights

Introduction

The *Interdependent, Co-Responsible: Research for Global Citizenship* programme works together with public high schools to support student research projects focused on education on human rights and global citizenship. The scheme highlights the ethical implications of research, as well as the key role played by scientific knowledge in human rights and sustainable development on a global scale. Originally launched by the Solidarity Foundation and the Institute for Professional Development (IDP-ICE) of the University of Barcelona, in collaboration with the Barcelona City Council, the programme is currently being deployed in other municipalities of the same province, with several municipalities and the Diputació de Barcelona now on board.

1. Some context

All post-16 high school students in Catalonia, regardless of their choice of branch (Arts/ Sciences and Technology/ Humanities and Social Sciences), must work on a research project during their baccalaureate. Work starts in the first year and the completed project is submitted for grading in the second year. Every student's research project is considered a

learning subject. It does not have a slot in the school timetable, but students must allocate 70 hours to complete it (Decree 142/2008) and it makes up 10% of the final grade. This percentage is explained by the importance given to students' research projects in providing them with the autonomous learning skills they will be asked to deploy in higher education. While working on their high school research projects, students are in turn putting into practice basic competences acquired during compulsory secondary education. Therefore, research projects are also an opportunity to consolidate learning and evaluation for educational improvement.

In the 2005-2006 academic year, just a few years after the implementation of the research project, we promoted the Research for Peace Award, which the University of Barcelona has since then presented to authors of those high school research projects found to best illustrate and foster peace culture. From its first edition, the Research for Peace Award has proved the great educational potential of research in the field of human rights, with dozens of participating students seeking fair responses to local and international problems. Furthermore, the Research for Peace Award initiative has provided us with an opportunity to identify difficulties in sourcing information and methodological deficits that prevent educational potential from developing fully. In evaluating projects, juries noticed that some students had prioritised amount of information over accuracy; others had completed their projects without having contacted local organizations, either public or private, in search of specific expertise.

We held our first seminar for secondary school teachers, "Research for Peace in a Violent and Unequal World", in 2010. Ideas were exchanged from the early organization stages and throughout the seminar, and the *Research for Global Citizenship* programme was born as a result. This programme works a support network for students, allowing them to carry out formative research in the field of human rights and international solidarity.

The support network, which is made up of schools, the University of Barcelona and global justice NGOs, focused on providing equal access to information sources. Early on, contact with first users led to external supervision of assignments and, over time, to a whole programme of activities designed for students and teachers hand in hand with schools.

Over the 2012-2018 period, 31 public high schools in Barcelona city have at some point taken part in the programme, more than 200 teachers have completed training, and more than 500 high school students have asked for advice, mainly in the initial stages of their research.

As of 2019, the *Research for Global Citizenship* programme joins the list endorsed by the Barcelona Education Consortium and establishes itself further as one of the official Educational School Projects. In the 2019-2020 academic year, 6 high schools in the city are taking part in the programme and 5 city councils in the province are also promoting it in their municipalities. These partnerships have been greatly facilitated by the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

2. Our experience

2.1. Education in human rights and global citizenship as a goal for high schools

In our democratic system, successive education laws together with relevant curricula developed at regional level have considered education in human rights and global citizenship to be the purpose and objective of education. Key competences, contents of learning subjects and, generally, all school activities aim at developing those skills which allow students, among other things, "to exercise democratic citizenship from a global perspective and to embrace civic engagement in a responsible way, under the inspiration of human rights and the values stated in the Spanish Constitution, so as to foster co-responsibility in building a fair and equitable

society." (LOE, 2006, art. 33) The challenge is in transferring these goals to school life and specific curricula.

According to the conceptual framework of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2015), educating in human rights and global citizenship requires educational processes to touch on three areas of development:

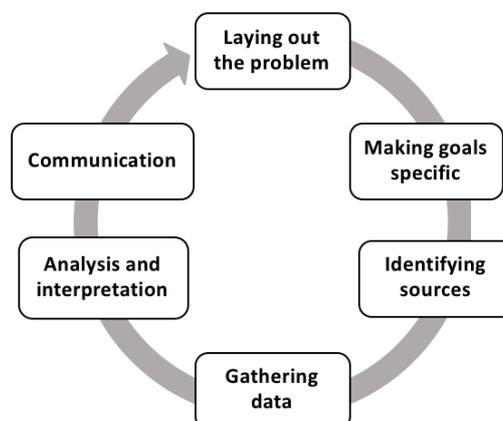
- **Cognitive:** Developing critical knowledge and understanding of local, national and international issues, as well as of the interdependence of different countries and population groups. This includes the ability to enquire and critically analyse questions such as world systems (political, economic...), the assumptions and dynamics of power, etcetera.
- **Socioemotional:** Fostering and managing identities, relationships and feelings of belonging to a common humanity, sharing values and responsibilities, empathy, solidarity and respect for differences on the basis of human rights. This involves addressing issues such as multiple identities, belonging to different communities, interrelationships and respect for diversity.
- **Behavioural:** Acting effectively and responsibly for a more peaceful and sustainable world. This involves developing the skills, motivation and commitment needed to take action, both individually and collectively, towards the achievement of human rights and sustainability.

Formative research is often associated with the development of the cognitive dimension and so projects based on research learning for the development of scientific competence abound. However, every scientific discipline has an ethical and social dimension to it that should be made explicit lest it remains hidden.

2.2. Educating in human rights and global citizenship through formative research

Throughout this experience, six key moments have been identified where we can have and influence on the cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural spheres of education in global citizenship.

Figure 1. Six key moments to educate in human rights within formative assessment projects.



Source: Authors' work.

2.2.1. Laying out the problem.

High school research tends to be exploratory in the face of problems perceived by students in their environment. This environment does not only refer to the local level, but often includes global problems known through the media, non-governmental organization campaigns or directly through globalization experienced in consumption, commercial offer available, cultural industries, social networks, migrations, expressions of patriarchy, etc. Frequently, secondary research projects are oriented towards applied research, given the will of the students to contribute to social change through making it known, understood, respected ...

At this vital stage, supervisors must pose those questions which will allow students to establish a connection between their concerns, on the one hand, and human rights and the fight for global justice, on the other. In order to achieve this, in this initial phase of the research students can be asked two questions:

First, ‘What human right might be relevant for this research project?’. Take, for example, a reflective discussion on a project dealing with river pollution. During the seminar, one student may identify the right to health; another one, the right to development (because of the economic effects of pollution); another one, the right to the environment, and so on. Identifying the relevant human right will help to pose complex problems that will, in turn, contribute to the social relevance of the research beyond the individual student’s personal interest.

En segundo lugar, ¿qué parte del problema estamos planteando? ¿La investigación busca describir o cuantificar el problema, sus causas o sus efectos? ¿Efectos sobre qué derechos? ¿Derechos de quiénes? ¿Qué agentes aparecen en el planteamiento del problema? ¿Qué lugar ocupan los titulares de derechos, de responsabilidades y de obligaciones en el planteamiento del problema? ¿Qué dimensiones del derecho se tienen presentes?

Second, ‘Which part of the problem are we raising?’. Does the research seek to describe or quantify the problem, its causes and effects? Effects on *what* rights? On *whose* rights? Which agents does the problem statement refer to? What role do holders of rights, responsibilities and obligations play in the approach to the problem? What dimensions of the right in case are being considered?

2.2.2. Making goals specific

Students have very limited time to work on their research projects: 70 hours, in the case of high school students. Therefore, every research project must have a specific goal and a single object of study, as well as perfectly defined sample and context. At this point, students can join forces with local social agents working to protect or defend the human right in case, so that the ongoing research projects can attract the interest of these groups, NGOs or public services. In this way, research projects can become service-learning initiatives.

Beyond communicating and disseminating research, high school projects can provide services to the community, such as diagnoses, assessment, mapping, systematizing initiatives and experiences, documenting testimonies, participant observation while volunteering, participatory action research in educational centres, experimental designing of materials, applications and activities, etcetera.

2.2.3. Identifying sources

In addition to making their goal specific, students must prepare and get familiar with the state of affairs. This can be achieved by establishing a theoretical framework that will in turn

delimit the conceptual framework within which the students' research will be conducted. In order to do this, students must identify academically relevant bibliography and create a workable reading list.

In addition to using digital libraries and archives, the task of searching for these sources on the Internet can be sped up by identifying relevant public organizations -appointed to protect the right in case- and private non-profits -existing to protect and defend it-.

In order to fulfil their functions, institutions and organisations publish documentation that collects the consolidated scientific knowledge on a given subject. For example, a formative research project on a given health issue will use bibliography edited by: in the public sphere, the city public health agency, the regional health authority, the ministry of health, professional associations, the competent European body (EMA, ECDC, EU-OSHA...) and the World Health Organization; in the private non-profit sphere, foundations, associations of affected parties, European federations, etc. By identifying those sources that generate bibliography a critical view of the social system at its local, national, international or global scale is gained.

2.2.4. Gathering data

Assessing a research project involves reviewing its procedures from an ethical point of view. Formative research is not a simulation; it involves real processes in which people and other living beings intervene and uses resources that can have an impact on the environment.

While working on their methodological design, students must bear these issues in mind and see that their research project is sustainable. They must also take good care of the people and other living beings involved while also minding the environment.

This is particularly important when a given research project involves interacting with people. Research provides students with an opportunity to recognize the importance of data protection in a digitized society. Although high school research projects are not supposed to be published (and yet many assignments end up on the internet), it is essential to collect completed informed consent forms from each and every person who takes part in the research, as well as releases from all institutions and organisations participating in the project.

On the other hand, within the scope of a formative research project students are not allowed to directly approach people who are vulnerable or find themselves in critical circumstances. Instead, the analysis sample will be provided by professionals who have daily contact with such cases or with the relevant associations (these will be in a better position to participate in the research). Often, testimony is requested about situations that may have been traumatic for people. If such is the case, students will proceed with the outmost care and respect towards those sharing painful past experiences.

Complying with the ethical requirements of the process is not about abiding by regulations (Higher Council for Scientific Research [CSIC], 2019) or applying standard protocols; it is about fostering and putting into practice values that are coherent with human rights and sustainability, even if these may not be at the core of a given project.

2.2.5. Analysis and interpretation

Research is defined in the Catalan curriculum as a method of solving problems. However, all research leads to new questions and uncertainties, which in turn require new research.

Analysis of available data can put students' convictions regarding the viability of human rights to the test. While analysis must always be accurate, values, purposes and subjective

factors are at play in the interpretation of the results. Thus, those conducting research for peace should not be satisfied with findings that might be used to justify violence or jeopardise rights even for some. This nonconformist attitude is akin, for instance, to that of scientists who do not give up trying to find a cure for currently chronic diseases.

Once the stage of interpretation and discussion of results is attained, it is necessary to exercise critical thinking regarding the research itself (laying out the problem, making goals specific, establishing a theoretical framework...). It is also a good time to consider new research projects leading to find solutions respectful of human rights.

2.2.6. Communication

Scientific research must be published and circulated. In the case of high school research, this is the stage at which projects are evaluated: students write a report on the conducted research and then make a presentation before a panel -made up of teachers of their high school- using the available technology. However, this communication does not have to be limited to the educational centre. In addition to awards, fairs and other forums, results can be shared with the community through research posters displayed in group exhibitions held in libraries and other local community centres.

Furthermore, it is essential to give back to individuals and organisations that collaborated in the process. This task, often neglected at high school level, constitutes a good example of the ethically responsible behaviour to which we aspire.

2.3. The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development as a space for interdisciplinary communication

In the context of the developing *Interdependent, Co-responsible Programme: Research for Global Citizenship*, the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, endorsed by the United Nations (UN, 2015), has worked as a sort of meeting point between the three branches of the baccalaureate (Arts/ Sciences and Technology/ Humanities and Social Sciences). At a high school level, proper scientific research was often restricted to the Natural Sciences (Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geology...), while assignments for other learning subjects were deemed to fall in a "different category" and to be devoid of any scientific accuracy. This dated approach conveyed the dangerous idea that disciplines such as History or Geography are totally subjective, opinionable and, therefore, questionable.

The 2030 Agenda establishes a common framework that connects problems in the natural and social spheres and asks for informed solutions and progress in all areas: health, environment, economy, politics, culture, etcetera. It is a political agreement aimed at advancing the realization of human rights, based on international treaties that, unlike the 2030 Agenda, do legally bind those States that have ratified them. As an educational resource, the 2030 Agenda helps to understand the global dimension of the research problems identified by students, as well as to discern their impact on human rights.

The 2030 Agenda highlights the interdependence between territories, communities and individuals, linking inequality and violence to environmental problems. Most high school research projects are easily related to one or more of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda, and also contribute directly to some of its 169 goals for research. In this way, the specific research conducted by a given student can be considered part of a global project in which her classmates, her local and global community all participate. Research projects become more relevant from a social point of view, and can be shared with the

community via group exhibitions that help circulate internationally recognized global challenges as well as ongoing social struggles.

This 2019-2020 academic year, some high schools in the city of Barcelona are developing a learning project shared by two first-year subjects: Sciences for the Contemporary World and Philosophy. Sciences for the Contemporary World deals with human sustainable development, while Philosophy addresses latent conflicts in today's world. The expected outcome of the project is an exhibition on the 2030 Agenda made up of posters showcasing the students' research projects. The posters will help illustrate the motto "Think global, act local" for human rights.

Figure 2. Poster edited by the Solidarity Foundation of the University of Barcelona (2019). It is based on research projects conducted within the *Interdependent, Co-responsible* programme.

INTERDEPENDENTS CORRESPONSABLES

GLOBALITZACIÓ CULTURAL EN EL CINEMA MUSICAL INFANTIL
Com han evolucionat els gèneres musicals en els llargmetratges infantils més taquillers del segle XXI?
Quins elements musicals originals de cultures minoritzades s'hi troben?
S'identifiquen estereotips culturals en el tractament d'aquests elements?
Dret a la cultura (Art. 27)
META: 11.4

LA DECISIÓ D'EMIGRAR
Quines són les causes de l'emigració de persones paraguaianes residents al municipi?
Quines n'eren les motivacions?
Han complert les aspiracions inicials?
Dret a migrar (Art. 19)
META: 10.2 i 10.7

FUTBOL FEMENÍ, FUTBOL MASCULÍ?
Hi ha diferències tècniques i tàctiques entre equips de futbol integrats per noies i equips de nois?
Quina és l'experiència envers aquesta qüestió d'integració i entrenadores d'equips de futbol integrats per dones?
Igualtat de drets i llibertats (Art. 2)
META: 5.1 i 5.C

LA CONTAMINACIÓ DELS RIUS I EL SEU IMPACTE EN ELS VEGETALS
Com afecta la contaminació de les aigües amb metalls pesants el creixement de les plantes?
Quina és la presència de metalls pesants a l'riu Besòs?
Quin impacte té la contaminació en la vegetació de ribera i els conreu?
Quins efectes genera en el creixement d'un producte agrícola (mongeta del ganxo)?
Dret a la satisfacció dels drets econòmics, socials i culturals (Art. 22)
META: 6.3, META: 12.4, META: 15.1

LA INTEGRACIÓ LABORAL DE PERSONES AMB SÍNDROME DE DOWN
Quines oportunitats per trobar feina tenen les persones amb síndrome de Down?
Com valoren la formació ocupacional que realitzen en dues universitats catalanes?
Com estan valorades aquestes persones al món laboral?
Amb quins suports, públics i privats, compten per arribar a trobar una feina digna i en condicions d'igualtat amb la resta de la població?
Dret al treball (Art. 23)
META: 8.5, META: 10.2

EL BENESTAR EMOCIONAL DE FAMILIARS DE PERSONES AMB ALZHEIMER
Com afecta l'Alzheimer els nets i les netes de la persona malalta?
Quines estratègies els han permès cuidar el seu benestar emocional?
Amb quins suports han comptat per tenir cura de la seva salut psicològica i emocional?
Dret a la salut (Art. 25)
META: 3.4

LA PERCEPCIÓ SOBRE LES DONES POLÍTQUES
Quina és la percepció de l'alumnat de l'institut sobre les dones polítiques catalanes?
Quines dones polítiques són més conegudes?
Per què són conegudes aquestes dones?
Es manifesten estereotips masculistes i racistes en aquesta percepció?
Dret a la participació política (Art. 21)
META: 5.5

L'ACCÉS A LES VACUNES A L'ÀFRICA
Com és l'accés a les vacunes de dones i infants a Mauritània, el Senegal i Mali?
L'edat és un factor influent en la decisió de vacunació?
Quins agents governamentals i no governamentals contribueixen a la protecció del dret d'accés a les vacunes?
Dret a un ordre social i internacional que protegeixi els drets humans (Art. 28)
META: 3.3 i 3.8

L'ACOLLIDA DE PERSONES REFUGIADAES A CATALUNYA
Quina és la resposta a la crisi del dret d'asil?
En quina mesura les institucions públiques compleixen amb les seves obligacions sobre el dret d'asil?
Com participen les ONG en l'acollida de persones refugiades?
Quines limitacions troben per donar compliment al dret d'asil?
Dret d'asil (Art. 14)
META: 10.7

L'OPINIÓ SOBRE L'ESPORT FEMENÍ
Què n'opina l'alumnat de l'institut sobre el futbol jugat per noies?
Com influeixen els mitjans de comunicació en aquesta opinió?
Quins prejudicis i estereotips s'hi identifiquen?
Ha canviat aquesta percepció els darrers anys?
Dretes envers la comunitat (Art. 29)
Igualtat de drets (Art. 1)
META: 5.1

AGENDA 2030 DE DESENVOLUPAMENT SOSTENIBLE

UN ACORD POLÍTIC MUNDIAL
Al setembre de 2015, 193 països del món, reunits a l'Assemblea General de les Nacions Unides, acordaren treballar conjuntament per assolir 17 Objectius de Desenvolupament Sostenible (ODS) durant els següents 15 anys.

REPTES COMPARTITS
Amb l'Agenda 2030, els governs del món reconeixen la interdependència entre persones, comunitats i amb el planeta, i es comprometen a prendre les mesures necessàries per erradicar la pobresa i cuidar el medi ambient.

DE SOSTENIBILITAT
Es tracta d'evolucionar cap a societats que satisfacin les necessitats del present, sense comprometre la supervivència de les generacions futures.

DE DRETS HUMANS
L'Agenda 2030 cerca fer realitat el respecte a la dignitat de totes les persones del món. Les seves accions s'han d'avaluar sobre la base dels avals que generen en la protecció dels drets humans: alimentació, salut, educació, participació...

PENSA GLOBAL, ACTUA LOCAL
L'Agenda 2030 compromet els governs però també les universitats, les entitats, la ciutadania... Els reptes globals requereixen accions locals. Els treballs de recerca de Batxillerat d'aquesta exposició il·lustren algunes de les qüestions que cal abordar per assolir els ODS i les seves 169 metes.

PER LA JUSTÍCIA GLOBAL
L'Agenda 2030 ha estat possible gràcies a les lluites socials i ambientals arreu del món. Des dels moviments socials es continua treballant perquè s'actui sobre les causes estructurals dels reptes globals: les desigualtats en l'accés al poder (capacitat de decidir i de dur a terme aquestes decisions) i als recursos (naturals i socials).

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Source: Authors' work.

2.4. University as a privileged space for research, training and social change

As a public institution, the University of Barcelona (UB) has among its objectives the promotion of critical thinking and the transmission of the values of a democratic society; the provision of services to society, and continuous training throughout life (Statute of the University of Barcelona, 2003, art. 3).

The Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE, 2018) has declared its will to put universities at the service of the 2030 Agenda, in order to "make a critical and constructive contribution to sustainable development" through the generation, transfer and dissemination of open knowledge.

Beyond the provision of services, the Interdependent, *Co-responsible: Research for Global Citizenship* programme contributes to these purposes by creating a meeting space with high school teachers for the curricular deployment of education in human rights and global citizenship.

The challenges and opportunities of formative research at high school level are shared by higher education. Therefore, the programme contributes not only to better prepare future university students, but also to create new educational resources that can then be transferred to higher education.

Among other initiatives, possible meeting spaces are being explored between university and baccalaureate students who are conducting research in SDGs in order to develop service-learning projects that give back to the community and improve the quality of teaching.

3. Conclusion

When conducted according to scientific research criteria, research projects constitute an opportunity for students to learn about problem-solving on a local scale. Since, in the process, human rights will always be found to be relevant, a human rights approach helps making research goals specific and socially relevant while keeping them within students' reach.

Currently, the programme focuses on helping high schools develop formative assessment and final grading systems that are both sustainable and evidence-based. These systems must take into account the ethical and social dimensions of scientific research, and they must place education in human rights and global citizenship at the core of education. This is just one of the ways in which the University of Barcelona is contributing to the fulfilment of target 4.7 of the 2030 Agenda, transferable to university studies.

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