



REAP

Revista Española
de Pedagogía

Vol. 84, n. 293, January-April 2026

DIRECTORS:**Elías Manuel Said Hung**

Associate Professor, Universidad Internacional de La Rioja.

Juan Luis Fuentes Gómez-Calcerrada

Associate Professor, Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

EDITORIAL BOARD:**José María Ariso**, Professor, Universidad Internacional de la Rioja (Spain).**Francisco Esteban Bara**, Associate Professor, University of Barcelona (Spain).**José Antonio Caride**, Professor, Universidad of Santiago de Compostela (Spain).**James Conroy**, Professor, University of Glasgow (United Kingdom).**Mario Alberto González Medina**, Research Professor, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León (Mexico).**Mercedes González Sanmamed**, Professor, Universidad of A Coruña (Spain).**Kristján Kristjánsson**, Professor, University of Birmingham (United Kingdom).**Ernesto López Gómez**, Associate Professor, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (Spain).**David Luque**, Assistant Professor, Universidad Complutense de Madrid.**Urszula Markowska-Manista**, Assistant Professor, University of Warsaw (Poland).**Robert Mason**, Associate Professor, Griffith University (Australia).**Concepción Naval**, Professor, University of Navarra (Spain).**Anna Pagès Santacana**, Associate Professor, Universitat Ramon Llull (Spain).**Andrew Peterson**, Professor, University of Birmingham (United Kingdom).**Jordi Planella Ribera**, Professor, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Spain).**Leticia Porto**, Associate Professor, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos (Spain).**Ana Rivour**, Associate Professor, Universidad de la República (Uruguay).**Julio Rojas**, Associate Professor, Universidad Santo Tomás (Colombia).**Miguel Ángel Santos Rego**, Professor, Universidad of Santiago de Compostela (Spain).**Sonia Santoveña Casal**, Associate Professor, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (Spain).**Ademilde Silveira Sartor**, Associate Professor, University of Santa Catarina (Brazil).**Vanessa Smith-Castro**, Associate Professor, Universidad of Costa Rica (Costa Rica).**ADVISORY BOARD:****Hanan Alexander**, Professor, Universidad de Haifa (Israel).**Antonio Bernal Guerrero**, Professor, Universidad de Sevilla (Spain).**Isabel Cantón Mayo**, Professor, Universidad de León (Spain).**Wilfred Carr**, Professor, University of Sheffield (United Kingdom).**Randall Curren**, Professor, University of Rochester (United States of America).**M.^a José Fernández Díaz**, Professor, Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Spain).**Bernardo Gargallo López**, Professor, Universidad de Valencia (Spain).**Gonzalo Jover Olmeda**, Professor, Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Spain).**Gerald Le Tendre**, Professor, Pennsylvania State University (United States of America).**Antonio Medina**, Professor, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (Spain).**Aquilino Polaino-Lorente**, Professor, Universidad San Pablo-CEU (Spain).**María Dolores Prieto Sánchez**, Professor, Universidad de Murcia (Spain).**David Reyero**, Associate Professor, Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Spain).**Doret de Ruyter**, Professor, University of Humanistic Studies (The Netherlands).**Javier Tourón**, Professor, Universidad Internacional de la Rioja (Spain).**Conrado Vilanou Torrano**, Professor, University of Barcelona (Spain).**ACADEMIAC SECRETARIAT:****Carmen Caro Samada**, Associate Professor, Universidad Internacional de La Rioja (Spain).**EDITORIAL COORDINATION****COORDINACIÓN EDITORIAL:****Alicia Carmen López Mendoza**, Universidad Internacional de La Rioja.**Ángela María Porras Ruiz**, Universidad Internacional de La Rioja.**INDEXING AND METRICS:****Álvaro Cabezas Clavijo**, Universidad Internacional de La Rioja.**Mercedes Contreras**, Universidad Internacional de La Rioja..



Revista Española de Pedagogía
year 84, n. 293, January-April 2026

Table of contents*

Sumario**

Guest articles

Artículos invitados

José Antonio Ibáñez-Martín

Luxury and temperance in character education today

Lujo y templanza en la educación actual del carácter

7

Monográfico

Monograph

Fernando M. Reimers, Marta Ruiz Corbella & Miguel Ángel Santos Rego

Introduction to the monograph - Guest Editors

Introducción al monográfico - Editores Invitados

21

Mar Beneyto-Seoane & Yasmina Khatala Azzayakh

Reconstructing rural memory in urban contexts: a service-learning experience from the Degree in Social Education

Reconstruir la memoria rural en contextos urbanos: una experiencia de aprendizaje-servicio desde el Grado de Educación Social

25

Miguel-Ángel Santos-Rego, Ígor Mella-Nuñez, Jorge Soto-Carballo & Xosé-Manuel Malheiro-Gutiérrez

Revaluing the community in university service-learning: A faculty-led scale

Revalorizar la comunidad en el aprendizaje-servicio universitario: una escala con visión del profesorado

39

* All the articles are published in English on the journal's website: <https://revistas.unir.net/index.php/rep>

** Todos los artículos están publicados en inglés en la página web de la revista: <https://revistas.unir.net/index.php/rep>

Marta Ruiz-Corbella, Iñaki Celaya, Victoria Vázquez-Verdea & Concepción Naval	
The role of community in service-learning projects in Spanish universities: a systematic review (2015 – 2024)	
<i>El rol de la comunidad en los proyectos de aprendizaje-servicio de las universidades españolas: una revisión sistemática (2015 – 2024)</i>	59
A. Brozmanová, I. Culcasi, N. Mikelic, B. Paz, R. Laven, J. Navarro, F. Paudel & Z. Heinzová	
From recipients to co-creators: Rural voices in e-Service-Learning course design	
<i>De destinatarios a cocreadores: las voces rurales en el diseño de experiencias de Aprendizaje-Servicio virtual</i>	75
Anna Escofet & Mireia Esparza	
The educational impact of partnerships in university service-learning experiences: Education for critical citizenship and social responsibility	
<i>El impacto educativo del partenariado en experiencias de aprendizaje-servicio universitario: formación para la ciudadanía crítica y la responsabilidad social</i>	97
Vicent González-Pérez, Marta Rivas-Muro, María Jesús Perales-Montolío & Gemma Cortijo-Ruiz	
University, community and culture: service-learning in the face of refuge and immigration	
<i>Universidad, comunidad y cultura: el aprendizaje-servicio ante el refugio y la inmigración</i>	111
Antonio Bernal-Guerrero & Antonio Ramón Cárdenas-Gutiérrez	
Social entrepreneurship and Service-Learning in higher education: A systematic review	
<i>Emprendimiento social y aprendizaje servicio en la educación superior: una revisión sistemática</i>	125

Studies

Estudios

Pilar Jara-Coatt, Fabiola Sáez-Delgado, Jaime Constenla-Nuñez & Javier Mella-Norambuena	
Socioemotional competencies and resilience of primary education teachers: a predictive model	
<i>Competencias socioemocionales y resiliencia del profesorado de educación primaria: un modelo predictivo</i>	151
M. González-Sanmamed, L. Corral Fachal, M. M. Ferradás Canedo & C. Freire Rodríguez	
Self-efficacy, motivation, and use of digital resources in Secondary Education: A mediation analysis	
<i>Autoeficacia, motivación y uso de recursos digitales en educación secundaria: un análisis de mediación</i>	171

**Pablo Rodríguez, Agustín De La Herranz, Victoria De Miguel
& Bianca Fiorella Serrano Manzano**

The Pedagogy of Death and the pandemic. Leading educationalist' views

*Pedagogía de la Muerte y pandemia. Reflexiones de científicos de referencia
en Ciencias de la Educación*

187

Books reviews

Kristjánsson, K. & Flowers, B. J. (2023). *Phronesis: Retrieving Practical Wisdom in Psychology, Philosophy, and Education.* OUP Oxford. 352 pp. **Danesi, M. (2024).**

AI in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching: Theory and Practice. Nova Science Publishers. 147 pp. **Mínguez-Vallejos, R. & Linares-Borboa, L. (coords.) (2023).**

La pedagogía de la alteridad. Un compromiso ético con otro modo de educar.

Octaedro. 192 pp. **Jover, G. & Quiroga, P. (2024).** *Nacidos para jugar. Perspectivas educativas en torno al juego en la infancia.* Ediciones Complutense. 266 pp.

203

Instructions for authors

Instrucciones para los autores

213

ISSN: 0034-9461 (Print), 2174-0909 (Online)

<https://revistadepedagogia.org/>

Legal deposit: M. 6.020 - 1958

INDUSTRIA GRÁFICA ANZOS, S.L. Fuenlabrada - Madrid



Guest articles

José Antonio Ibáñez-Martín

Luxury and temperance in character education today

Luxury and temperance in character education today

Lujo y templanza en la educación actual del carácter

Dr. José-Antonio IBÁÑEZ-MARTÍN. Emeritus Professor of Philosophy of Education, Universidad Complutense de Madrid and UNIR (*josibama@ucm.es*).

Abstract:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises parents' right to educate their children, which entails the right to choose the type of formal education and, above all, the right to determine the desired course of education provided within the family. There is currently widespread concern about protecting children and adolescents from the harmful influence of hatred, addiction, and pornography. However, there is also an urgent need to recognise the negative influence on minors of the environment of luxury in which many live. Therefore, this study addresses the historical evolution of the concept of luxury, in both Spanish and English, and the importance of early education in temperance.

This article will conclude by presenting several methods for teaching temperance, while asking parents to seek imaginative solutions according to their circumstances, bearing in mind the new directions in which luxury is headed today. Although it may seem presumptuous to predict any aspect of the future, luxury has clearly entered a process of economic slowdown, making it essential to address the flight of numerous aspirational consumers within the current social environment. Indeed, a quiet and discreet kind of luxury has become fashionable, one that considers the quality of products, but also their sustainability and simplicity, with attention suitably tailored to the most important customers.

Keywords: luxury; temperance; character education; family education; moral education.

Resumen:

La Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos reconoce a los padres el derecho a la educación de sus hijos, lo que implica el derecho a escoger un tipo de educación escolar y, sobre todo, el derecho a determinar el cauce deseado a la educación impartida en el seno de la familia. Actualmente hay una preocupación muy extendida para prevenir a niños y adolescentes de la nefasta influencia del odio, las adicciones o la pornografía. Pero, además, es urgente reconocer la mala influencia que tiene sobre los menores el ambiente de lujo en el que no pocos viven. Por ello se trata de estudiar la evolución histórica del concepto de lujo, tanto en español como en inglés, y la importancia de una temprana educación de la templanza.

Este artículo concluirá presentando varios métodos para enseñar la templanza, a la vez que se pide a los padres que busquen soluciones imaginativas de acuerdo con sus circunstancias,

Date of receipt of the original: 08/11/2025

Date of approval: 08/11/2025

Please, cite this article as follows: Ibáñez-Martín, J. A. (2026). Luxury and temperance in character education today [Lujo y templanza en la educación actual del carácter]. *Revista Española de Pedagogía*, 84(293), 7-18.

<https://doi.org/10.9781/rep.2026.2351>

teniendo en cuenta los nuevos caminos que está recorriendo hoy día el lujo, pues, aunque sea algo presuntuoso señalar el futuro de cualquier cosa, es evidente que el lujo ha entrado en un proceso de desaceleración económica, siendo imprescindible hacer frente a la huida de numerosos consumidores aspiracionales dentro del actual ambiente social. En efecto, hoy se ha puesto de moda un lujo tranquilo y silencioso que tenga en cuenta la calidad de los productos, pero también su sostenibilidad y simplicidad, con una adecuada atención personalizada a los clientes más importantes.

Palabras clave: lujo; templanza; educación del carácter; educación familiar; educación moral.

1. Introduction

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children, which clearly means that the State cannot impose a specific kind of education. However, it also means that they are entitled to foster a certain type of education at home and can use means to shield their children from the main enemies that arise in their education. Thus, they may avoid social pressures that have a negative impact on the character education of their children. For this reason, there are laws that regulate the behaviour of children and adolescents, in an effort to prevent them from being influenced by hate, addictions or pornography in social media.

A fact that is perhaps less well known, however, is that living in a setting of excess luxury also negatively influences the character of many children and adolescents. Aristotle noted the importance of cultivating moderation in children in his book *Nicomachean Ethics*:

Children in fact live at the beck and call of appetite, and it is in them that the desire for what is pleasant is strongest [...] Hence they should be moderate and few, and should in no way oppose the rational principle—and this is what we call an obedient and chastened state — and as the child should live according to the direction of his tutor, so the appetitive element should live according to rational principle (Aristotle, 1999, Book 3, Chapter 12, p. 53).

Therefore, this paper is divided into three parts. The first outlines the traditional concept of luxury in Spanish and in English. Next, the complex relationship between luxury and the cultivation of temperance, which is essential in achieving human fulfilment, is analysed. Temperance is increasingly necessary to overcome the social discontent that has been fostered by diverse ideologies such as relativism. Finally, new problems related to luxury, which have generated new perspectives on its evolution, will be addressed.

2. The wide-ranging concept of luxury

The well-known expression *traduttore, traditore* aims to highlight the problems involved in any translation. But this expression actually has a deeper meaning, referring to the idea that the same words do not always mean the same thing in modern languages, as their meanings change over time and a proper literal translation may not refer to the same situation in different languages.

A paradigmatic example of this is the term 'luxury', translated as *lujo* in Spanish. Indeed, the Spanish *lujo* is not equal to luxury in English, and the meaning of luxury in both languages has changed significantly over time. Below are a few observations about the meaning of luxury in each of these two languages.

2.1. *Lujo* in Spanish

According to the 1992 edition of the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española de la Lengua* [Dictionary of the Spanish Royal Academy of Language], *lujo* has three meanings: 1. '*Demasía en el adorno, en la pompa y en el regalo* [Excessive adornment, pomp and delight]; 2. *Abundancia en cosas no necesarias* [Abundance of unnecessary things]; and 3. *Todo aquello que supera los medios normales de alguien para conseguirlo* [Anything that surpasses the normal means of a person to achieve it]'.

A brief analysis of these meanings leads to the following conclusions. In the first definition, *lujo* refers to something that is wrong. In fact, the same dictionary defines *demasía*, as excess, audacity, insolence or wickedness. One insightful example of the embodiment of *lujo* can be found in the life of Mariano Téllez-Girón (1814-1882), 12th Duke of Osuna, Infantado and Arcos, to name just a few of his titles, and Grandee of Spain twenty times over. The duke was:

The highest payer of provincial taxes in Spain in 1855, paying this tax in twenty provinces, and in 1863 the territorial assets of the ducal estate of Osuna were equal to 0.5% of the national territory, spanning 230,000 hectares (Comas y Arqués, 1885, p. 93).

Mariano's predecessor and brother, the 11th Duke of Osuna, Pedro de Alcántara, was the eldest son of the previous duke, meaning that, according to the principle of primogeniture still in force at that time, the younger brother was not meant to inherit anything. Therefore, in 1833, Mariano embarked on a military career, taking part in numerous battles in Spain and later acting as a member of parliament and senator. In 1844, his brother died childless at the age of 34 and Mariano inherited the title and possessions of the duchy of Osuna, subsequently undertaking numerous political and diplomatic activities. Mariano stood out for his extraordinary amiability and intelligence, but especially for his lavish spending capacity, which reached its peak during his time as *chargé d'affaires* in Russia and, later, as ambassador from 1860 to 1867.

It was in Russia where Osuna's luxurious lifestyle exploded. The stories about throwing the silver dinner service into the river after being used by the czar or the servants clothed in the same fabric as the czar are legendary. But the fact remains that all his assets were mortgaged and sold off before he died. Having died without heirs, his administrators explained the bankruptcy of the House of Osuna by stating:

Sustained competition in opulence with the aristocracy in Russia, where there are families that own virtually entire provinces and rely on a vast system obtained for free in virtue of feudal rights, was only possible for someone as disinterested as the late Duke of Osuna: while they were no match for him in terms of distinguished, powerful forebears, he refused to give them the upper hand in the magnificence of costly modern luxury (Comas y Arqués, 1885, p. 93).

The sad fate of the assets of the House of Osuna contributes significantly to the largely negative nature of the first definition of *lujo*.

The second definition provided by the dictionary is not particularly apt either, despite the famous words of Coco Chanel (1883-1971), so often repeated in luxury circles, that luxury is a necessity that begins where necessity ends. These words were based on Werner Sombart's important work, published in 1912, which states, at the beginning of the paragraph entitled *Concept and essence of luxury*, that: 'Luxury is any expenditure that goes beyond the necessary. This is obviously a relative concept that makes sense only insofar as we have a notion of what is "necessary"' (1912, 2009, p. 49). The problem lies in the difficulty of defining the limits of necessity, given that human beings are not necessary.

The third definition describes luxury as something that surpasses the normal means of a person. However, this definition does not objectively address what luxury is either, but rather notes, subjectively, that luxuries may be highly diverse things, simply depending on the financial circumstances of each individual.

These definitions have changed over time. In the definition found on the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* website (20 August 2025), the entry for *lujo* is quite different, perhaps in response to the Royal Academy's standard of receiving suggestions from numerous users and 'thoroughly examining all the issues raised, endeavouring to assess the definitions as fully as possible so that they are not gratuitously biased or offensive' ('Preámbulo', *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*, 2023). The term *lujo* currently has the following definitions:

1. 'Abundancia en el adorno o en comodidades y objetos suntuosos [Abundance of adornment or comforts and lavish objects];
2. *Abundancia de cosas y medios* [Abundance of things and resources];
3. *Aquello que supera los medios normales de alguien para conseguirlo* [Something that surpasses the normal means of a person to achieve it];
4. *Elevada categoría, excelencia o exquisitez que posee* [High standing, excellence or exquisiteness possessed by something];
5. *Persona o cosa valiosa, excepcional o extraordinaria* [Valuable, exceptional or extraordinary person or thing].

The differences in the entries by the Royal Academy from 1992 and those currently found on the Royal Academy's website are considerable. In fact, the most striking aspect of this latest edition is that it avoids any negative interpretation of luxury. Indeed, *demasia* [excess] has nothing to do with abundance, for abundance merely entails a *large quantity*, whereas excess has a different meaning to the one above. Therefore, not all abundance can be classified as excess. What's more, when classical Roman authors like Cicero criticised luxury —according to Casinos Mora— it was by no means a criticism of wealth on principle, but rather merely 'to the extent that its possession, display or acquisition are revealed to be contrary to *decorum* (the term *decorum* generally means appropriate and suited to individuals and their circumstances). Their disapproval was therefore restricted to *extravagant* luxury, since moderate and decorous luxury is not only socially acceptable but even deemed *secundum mores*, 'appropriate and worthy of admiration' (Casinos Mora, 2015, p. 63).

The difference between extravagant luxury and authentic luxury is not merely a matter of quantity, because one's personal circumstances must also be considered. The generosity we expect of those with high social standing does not have the same value as that of those who use their newly obtained wealth ostentatiously to climb the social ladder. Generosity must not be confused with lavishness and wastefulness.

2.2. *Luxury in English*

Having analysed the Spanish definitions of *lujo*, a brief reflection must now be made on the definitions of *luxury* in the English language.

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* provides two essential definitions: 1. 'The fact of enjoying special and expensive things, particularly food and drink, clothes and places; and 2. A thing that is expensive and pleasant but not essential'. Other dictionaries provide other definitions, such as those characterising luxury in terms of something *unusual* or something that *cannot be done often*, classifying it not only as *pleasant* but also *beautiful*. However, the definitions found to be most accurate in this case are the two fully transcribed above.

Both definitions coincide in describing luxury as referring to expensive and pleasant things. In addition, one of the entries notes that 'food and drink, clothes and places' are special luxury items, while the other indicates that, for something to be luxurious it must not be essential, thus circumventing the more confusing term *necessary* found in the definition by Coco Chanel.

3. The diverse faces of temperance and its relationship to luxury

It is interesting to note that the aforementioned reference to food and drink in luxury also appears in relation to *temperance*. For example, the *Cambridge Academic Content*

Dictionary defines temperance as ‘the habit or practice of avoiding extremes of behaviour, esp. not drinking too much alcohol’. Obviously, drinking too much alcohol is not the same as drinking a moderate amount. In any case, mentions of temperance now conjure up images of sordidness.

This could have something to do with the ease with which one may overstep boundaries when drinking and the harsh campaign against alcohol championed by numerous associations in the United States, including The Temperance Movement and the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, which were prevalent from 1830 to 1933.

However, human nature has not actually changed. Alcohol was banned in 1920 under the 18th Amendment of the US Constitution, sparking the creation of a network of gangsters to distribute alcohol and prompting numerous murders. Therefore, a new movement took shape in 1933, with the 21st Amendment, based on the idea that temperance has diverse facets and that prohibition by law is not the best way to achieve temperance. Indeed, this vision of temperance, which is tied to sordidness, strays vastly from that of those who consider it one of the necessary strengths for fulfilment in the life of ordinary people (Peterson and Seligman, 2004). Ever since the era of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, the dual nature of temperance has been addressed, and it is clearly developed in the depictions by Raphael and the Pre-Raphaelite Edward Burne-Jones. The former painted *The Cardinal and Theological Virtues in the Stanza della Segnatura* in the Apostolic Palace of the Vatican between 1508 and 1511. There, Temperance is portrayed as a young goddess holding a bridle that restrains a putto bearing the fire of passion. The latter, in turn, depicted temperance in 1872 as a young woman standing on flames, pouring water on them from a pitcher in her arms. Coinciding with Frey (2021), one might say that temperance can be seen from two perspectives. In the first, it is seen as self-possession or dignity, in which the person has learnt not to be led astray by passion, but that the boundaries are set by reason. In other words, there are evil passions, like wanting to strike someone who laughs at us, but it is not wrong to reject their friendship even if we forgive their evil deed, or to drink half a glass of whiskey on a holiday. In the second, temperance is seen as self-control: it is not swayed by obstinate, rebellious sensual appetites, but it is unable to teach goodness, meaning that evil is not rejected at its source but rather only when it becomes necessary to use the fire of intelligence in order to avoid being overcome by the wrong pleasure.

FIGURE 1. Raphael. *Cardinal and Theological Virtues and the Law* (Stanza della Segnatura, Vatican, 1511).



Source: Wikimedia Commons, 2011.

FIGURE 2. Edward Burne-Jones. *Temperantia*.

Source: Wikimedia Commons, 2018.

Having observed the numerous facets of temperance, it is now time to study its relationship to luxury. Perhaps the best place to commence this study is in the writings of Marcus Aurelius (121-180 AD), whose *Meditations* combine the depth of his ideas with the extraordinary nature of his circumstances, for it must not be forgotten that he was emperor of the Roman Empire for nearly twenty years. All eleven books in this series are interesting, but 'Book I' is probably most relevant to the topic at hand. Throughout this book, he shows gratitude to a wide range of people—from his grandfather Verus to the gods—for all that he has learnt from them, thus showing us the importance he places on 'simplicity in my way of living, far removed from the habits of the rich' (Marcus Aurelius, 2005, 'Book I', 3), the 'endurance of labour, and to want little' (I, 5), the 'impression that my character required improvement and discipline' (I, 7), having 'never showed anger or any other passion, but was entirely free from passion, and also most affectionate' (I, 9), 'self-government, and not to be led aside by anything' (I, 15), and having 'preserved the flower of my youth, and that I did not make proof of my virility before the proper season' (I, 17).

It would be easy to disregard these ideas, accusing Marcus Aurelius of acting as a representative of stoicism. But philosophy shows us that, rather than allowing ourselves to be influenced by prejudices based on labels, we must instead search for the truth in what we hear. It may seem like Marcus Aurelius wished to feel no passion, but his stance is actually akin to that of Aristotle in the words quoted above from *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Perhaps, by comparing Marcus Aurelius' ideas above and the definitions of luxury, it is possible to conclude that he was no lover of luxury. However, a more in-depth analysis of the texts by Marcus Aurelius reveals that they harbour highly diverse viewpoints. The first is quite clearly his condemnation of the habits of the rich. Obviously, there was no one richer than the emperor. But the scandalous lifestyles led by many have prompted the enactment of sumptuary laws to put limits on luxury on more than a few occasions throughout the centuries.

His words about the need to improve and discipline his character are also highly significant. Whereas temperament is more closely tied to one's nature, character can be formed in many ways. And the first way is the importance of paying attention to reason

and not allowing ourselves to be led astray by an insatiable desire for pleasure, listening to those raising us, which is a sign of proper future development.

The methods for building a moderate character today will now be assessed.

4. What needs to be considered today in building a moderate character?

The first thing to bear in mind is that parents' responsibility in cultivating a moderate character, as described above, is not limited to families with above-average incomes. I recall a teacher at a school with very poor students who told me about a conversation he had had with the mother of an adolescent who forced her to get a second job cleaning stairs to fulfil her son's desire for famous designer jeans and expensive shoes, of the kind that are popular among young people. In any case, parents and educators could reflect on these ideas and on their specific circumstances.

We could start by saying that the place of temperance within character is often the result of the place held by money in our hearts and lives, observing the money we give others, starting with our children. It is a mistake to think that money is the devil's dregs. But an even greater mistake is to forget what Saint Paul said: 'For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil' (1 Tim. VI, 10), because this love culminates in literary figures like Mr. Scrooge or Scrooge McDuck. In fact, if we want to teach our children temperance, we must pay more attention to our expenses than to our words. Marcus Aurelius thanked his father for true moderation and sobriety in all things, among other things (I, 16). Of course, as pointed out before, the measure of moderation is greatly dependent on the circumstances. The example of our parents has the ability to teach us limits through their actions better than the discourse of the most experienced teacher.

Furthermore, in educating young people it is important to explain that what pleases the senses contributes to well-being, but well-being and happiness are not the same thing. Many people are unhappy because their lives lack meaning, despite the fact that they live in an environment of luxury and well-being.

We could also point out that an abundance of luxury leads children and adolescents to believe that Instagram is real life, rendering them incapable of bearing the hardships and difficulties we all go through in life.

From another perspective, we observe that Marcus Aurelius thanked his brother Severus for having conceived 'the idea of a polity in which there is the same law for all, a polity administered with regard to equal rights and equal freedom of speech, and the idea of a kingly government which respects most of all the freedom of the governed' (I, 14). One good practice in this life is to give to the poor the same amount as you have spent on luxury brands each month.

We might highlight that, whenever possible, it is also highly educational to grow up in a family with several members. The number of children could be a paradigm for the generosity of the parents. Experience shows that when children learn to look after their siblings first, they will be more willing and open to helping the needy later. Obviously, no one should be forced to have children, no matter how rich they are, and the circumstances today are not favourable to having large families. But we must not forget that the gross domestic product is currently much greater than a century ago and yet our fertility rate today is much lower. It is logical to aspire to 2.1 births per woman, the rate needed for survival of the community as a whole. Unfortunately, Western civilisation offers other figures: it is sad to read in *The Guardian* that 'the total fertility rate across England and Wales fell to 1.49 children per woman in 2022' (Inman and Otte, 2024), or to read an article stating that Spain 'has the lowest European fertility rate outside Malta' and 'in Madrid, there are more cats and dogs than children under 10' (Eberstadt, 2024).

Clearly, having children is expensive. But is it more economical if the investment in each child consists mainly in providing the money needed to offer them a good education, limiting young people's spending on unpaid recreation for their work.

A profound reflection on how to educate in temperance in today's circumstances could lead us to conclude that it is necessary to cultivate imagination so that our children do not grow up surrounded by excessive luxury, which could prompt them to make serious mistakes or to develop addictions that did not exist in the past. In this regard, it is interesting to note the initiatives of a group of highly wealthy people in the United States, like Mark Zuckerberg and George Lucas, who have decided not to let their children inherit the vast fortunes they have amassed. Thus, their children will receive a modest inheritance, but most of their fortunes will be allocated to institutions that seek to help people in need.

Finally, a brief reflection on the future of luxury, i.e., the proposed response to a sector clearly showing signs of economic slowdown, is offered.

5. Luxury in the future

We have witnessed the evolution of the concept of luxury over time and the complex relationship between luxury and temperance. However, the reality of luxury changed in 2024. An interesting report was published by McKinsey & Company in January 2025, entitled: *The State of Luxury: How to navigate a slowdown*. The report asserts the following:

Over the past five years, the luxury industry experienced a period of exceptional value creation. Between 2019 and 2023, unprecedented demand for personal luxury goods—fashion, leather goods, watches, and jewellery among them—combined with a deep well of supply allowed the sector to achieve a 5 percent compound annual growth rate [...] Now, as we step into 2025, the luxury industry is facing a significant slowdown that has hit even top brands hard (Balchandani, D'Auria and Grunberg, 2025, pp. 1-2).

And a look at the May and June 2025 issues of *Fashion Network* magazine shows us that Benetton lost 230 million euros in 2023 and 100 million in 2024 and is planning to close hundreds of shops; Ferragamo lost 16 million in 2025, Hermès witnessed a 5 % decrease in profits last year, etc. Obviously, each major brand has presented a wide variety of options to turn the situation around.

This new range of options includes what we have called *new luxury*, which focuses mainly on *experiences*: breaking away from routines and saving, feeling pampered, showing spending power. It is striking to note the desire for authenticity in luxury items today: behind this we can see that humans have fewer points of reference for knowing who we are and who we want to be, turning to luxury for a sense of living intensely, thus seeking distinctive and meaningful treatment.

Luxury has also entered the realm of the politically correct, moving away from power and promoting its integration into social and environmental issues such as sustainability, like Tiffany's campaign against coral harvesting, which damages marine ecosystems, or Rolex's new slogan, in which it is no longer the watch of those who guide the destinies of the world, but one featuring optimal legibility and durability even in the darkest places thanks to a luminous substance patented by Rolex.

To conclude this section, designing what luxury will be like in the future is too ambitious of an endeavour. For many, it will certainly continue to be the means for satisfying their desires for splendour, distinction and pleasure, or at least their desire for superiority and disdain for others. Luxury has become accessible to many people, taking on a social presence that would have been inconceivable in other eras, with astronomical rates of international spending or even simulating the desires of certain adolescents who:

In search of solitude and closer contact with nature, seek refuge in the treetops, putting into practice Thoreau's idea that we must free ourselves from the encumbrances imposed by society. Except that this desire is belied by the fact that these tree houses have hot water, king size beds and every other modern convenience. 'Glamping' is the name that the media has given to this new form of luxury camping (Medialdea, 2024, p. 50).

It is also true that inequality in terms of financial resources has become much more pronounced. The negative effects of this inequality can be especially severe if those at the bottom perceive certain expressions of great luxury not only as an unnecessary expense but as a means of scorning them. In reality, we are somewhere between brands abandoning numerous aspirational customers, as noted by Muret (2025), and the complaints of *Very Important Clients* who do not receive adequate personalised attention.

However, the most innovative moment could well be the so-called *quiet luxury*. Luxury was first defined in this simple, innovative way in an article published by the journal *Luxonomy* in 2023. Far from pompousness, luxury is based on quality, simplicity and intrinsic value. The concept of quantity and high prices is replaced with tranquillity, simplicity, the genuine value of exquisite attention to detail and a commitment to sustainability. *Quiet luxury* loves the authenticity of craftsmanship, of things that are unique and special, removed from mass production. It is a lifestyle that appreciates the essential and the authentic. Although it is not exactly a luxury item, the film *Perfect Days*, nominated for an Oscar in 2024, offers an approach to that contemplation of the beauty of everyday life. A simple existence, carried out to perfection, which is sensed in both the beauty of a sunrise and in the wonder of the universe, expressed in a tiny plant or in the work well done by those who built the public toilets in Tokyo and those who keep them clean.

It is also worth recalling the success of the South Korean author living in Germany, Byung-Chul Han, who has published several highly acclaimed books (*The Burnout Society*, *The Scent of Time: A Philosophical Essay on the Art of Linger*, *Vita contemplativa: In Praise of Inactivity*, etc.), in which he argues the need to overcome the hyperactivity of our time, the excess information and hyper-consumerism, championing the importance of silence, knowing how to close one's eyes and work less, devoting more time to contemplation. Related to this, there is also talk of something called *quiet ambition* (Adamczyk, 2023), as many young people are tired of a work ethic that destroys their personal life, and even *silent trails* (González-Hontoria, 2024), on which to take long bicycle rides through quiet areas of the planet, considering calmness and solitude to be a means for finding oneself.

In this context, *quiet luxury* moves away from today's economism, seeking a rational control over time, the quest for high quality materials, respect for nature and work well done, in addition to devoting time to activities that help us progress in the discovery of the deeper meaning of human existence. This type of luxury is akin to temperance rather than major luxury.

6. Conclusions

The concept of luxury has a complex history; it does not have the same meaning in Spanish and in English and its meanings have also changed greatly over time, and will continue to do so in the future. Perhaps the most well-known definition is the one provided by Werner Sombart, who, in 1912, related luxury to something beyond a necessity. However, the problem with this definition, which he hinted at, is that it is not possible to define what is necessary to human beings, which are not necessary. In Spanish, the definitions of luxury have changed vastly over the years. Even in the short amount of time spanning between 1992 and 2023, we see quite disparate meanings offered by the Real Academia de la Lengua Española. The greatest achievement made in this time may be the fact that all negative interpretations of luxury are now rejected, insisting on abundance, which is a large quantity, but not mentioning excess, which lends negative connotations to abundance. The English definition, in turn, refers to the pleasure of enjoying special, expensive things, and includes an interesting reference to food and drinks, which is absent from the Spanish definition. This relationship was highly significant in the US, where there was a major campaign against alcohol since at least 1870, which ended in its prohibition by law from 1920 to 1933.

However, the negative impact of this fight against alcoholic beverages was that it lent a certain sordid air to temperance. On the other hand, history shows that temperance has taken two quite different forms: one depicted by Raphael in the early 16th century, showing a young goddess holding reins that restrain a putto bearing the fire of passion, and the other by Burne-Jones, who, in 1872, painted temperance as a young woman standing on flames and pouring water on them. Frey (2021) offered a good interpretation of these differences, asserting that temperance can be seen from the perspective of self-command, when individual guides each action with the decisiveness of reason, or from the perspective of self-control, when evil is not rejected at its source, but reason must be used to overcome the force of evil passions.

A reading of Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* reveals how the emperor managed to live with the sort of moderation that makes us masters of ourselves, overcoming the force of evil passions. It is important to start early to achieve a moderate character because, as Aristotle said, children live according to their desires. For this reason, luxury may jeopardise the development of a good character, so parents must be imaginative in order to learn how to act according to reason, which makes it paramount to teach children the place the money has in our hearts and in our lives.

Finally, a reflection has been made on the future of luxury, given that we are entering a new era, moving away from the unprecedented demand for personal luxury items seen from 2010 to 2025. Top brands are facing a serious slowdown, with significant losses and a changing social mentality. Therefore, perhaps the future lies in *quiet luxury*, thinking more about calmness, simplicity, genuine value and a commitment to sustainability. Many young people are tired of the hyperactivity of our times, which ruins personal and family life, seeking instead contemplation and solitude as a means of finding themselves and discovering the deeper meaning of human existence.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

The author did not use artificial intelligence (AI) to prepare this article.

Funding

This research was carried out without any type of funding.

References

- Adamczyk, B. (2023). Americans are in the era of quiet ambition: No longer 'chasing achievement for achievements' sake' [Los estadounidenses están en la era de la ambición silenciosa: ya no buscan el logro por el logro mismo]. *Fortune*. <https://fortune.com/2023/04/16/americans-enter-quiet-ambition-era/>
- AFP (2025). Hermès posts growth well above the market in the first half [Hermès registra un crecimiento muy por encima del mercado en el primer semestre]. *Fashion Network Journal*. <https://dk.fashionnetwork.com/news/Hermes-posts-growth-well-above-the-market-in-the-first-half,1753641.html>
- Aristóteles. (1970). *Ética a Nicómaco*. Instituto de Estudios Políticos.
- Balchandani, A., D'Auria, G. y Grunberg, J. (January 13, 2025). The State of Luxury: How to navigate a slowdown [El estado del lujo: cómo afrontar una desaceleración]. *McKinsey & Company*. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/state-of-luxury>
- Bolelli, G. (2025). Ferragamo slows down, impacted by wholesale and Asia-Pacific [Ferragamo se desacelera, impactado por el comercio mayorista y del Asia-Pacífico]. *Fashion Network Journal*. <https://www.fashionnetwork.com/news/Ferragamo-slows-down-impacted-by-wholesale-and-asia-pacific,1754547.html>

- Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary.
- Casinos Mora, F. J. (2015). Pasión por el lujo y renovación moral en los inicios del Principado. *Estudios Clásicos*, 147, 53-68. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=5191243>
- Cicerón. (2015). *Sobre los deberes*. Alianza Editorial.
- Comas y Arqués, A. (1885). Casa de Osuna e Infantado: consulta y dictamen de los señores letrados Comas, Pi y Margall, Pedregal, López Puigcerver y Ojea y Somoza. En: Pajarín Domínguez, J. (2021). El XII Duque de Osuna entre el espíritu aristocrático y el Dandi. La embajada rusa como cuestión de honor. *Cuadernos Iberoamericanos*, 9(2), 80-95. <https://doi.org/10.46272/2409-3416-2021-9-2-80-95>
- Eberstadt, M. (2024). The Baby Bust Isn't Just Political, It's Personal [La caída de los bebés no es solo política, es personal]. *First Things*. <https://firstthings.com/the-baby-bust-isnt-just-political-its-personal/>
- Ellis, K. (2023). Quiet Luxury: The Definitive Guide [Lujo silencioso: la guía definitiva]. *LUXONOMY*. <https://luxonomy.net/quiet-luxury-the-definitive-guide/>
- Frey, J. A. (2021). Temperance: Self-Control or Self-Possession? [Templanza: ¿Autocontrol o autodomínio?]. En: Pettigrove, G. y Swanton, C., (2021). *Neglected Virtues [Virtudes descuidadas]*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429435201>
- González-Hontoria, M. (2024). El secreto a voces de la Laponia española: ya es oficialmente uno de los lugares más silenciosos del planeta. *El Mundo*. <https://www.elmundo.es/viajes/espana/2024/07/03/667ab73efdddf66388b45ac.html>
- Han, B-C. (2015). *The Burnout Society*. Stanford University Press.
- Han, B-C. (2017). *The Scent of Time: A Philosophical Essay on the Art of Lingerin*g. Polity Press.
- Han, B-C. (2023). *Vita Contemplativa: In Praise of Inutility*. Polity Press.
- Inman, P. y Otte, J. (2024). The baby bust. How Britain's falling birthrate is creating alarm in the economy. [La caída de la natalidad. Cómo la caída de la natalidad en Gran Bretaña está generando alarma en la economía.]. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/article/2024/jun/30/the-baby-bust-how-britains-falling-birthrate-is-creating-alarm-in-the-economy>
- Lombraña, V. (2025). Redefiniendo el concepto de lujo. *ABC*.
- M. C. (Abril 29, 2025). La lección de vida. *ABC*.
- Marco Aurelio (2005). *Meditaciones*. Editorial Gredos (traducido por R. Bach Pellicer). (El orden de los párrafos en cada uno de los once libros difiere dependiendo del traductor).
- Medialdea, S. (2024). Madrid ya incluye el 'grampín', las acampadas de lujo en la regulación los campamentos turísticos, *ABC*. <https://www.abc.es/espana/madrid/madrid-incluye-glamping-acampadas-lujo-regulacion-campamentos-20240214183004-nt.html>
- Muret, D. (2025). Benetton halves its losses in 2024 [Benetton reduce a la mitad sus pérdidas en 2024]. *Fashion Network Journal*. <https://be.fashionnetwork.com/en-be/news/Benetton-halves-its-losses-in-2024,1728519.html>
- Muret, D. (2025). El lujo hace frente a la huida de los clientes aspiracionales y la insatisfacción de los "Very Important Clients". *Fashion Network Journal*. <https://es.fashionnetwork.com/news/El-lujo-hace-frente-a-la-huida-de-los-clientes-aspiracionales-y-la-insatisfaccion-de-los-very-important-clients-,1747384.html>
- Naciones Unidas (1948). *Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos*. <https://www.un.org/es/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>
- Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definitions/english/luxury1>
- Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of English* (1977). Oxford University Press.
- Peterson, C. y Seligman, M. (2004). *Character Strengths and Virtues*. Oxford University Press.

- Real Academia Española (1993, 2023, 2025). Diccionario de la Lengua Española. <https://dle.rae.es/contenido/preambulo>
- Sagrada Biblia*. (2016). Universidad de Navarra.
- Sombart, W. (1912). *Luxus und Kapitalismus*. Verlag von Duncker & Humblot München.
- Sombart, W. (2009). *Lujo y capitalismo*. Ed. Sequitur.

Author biography

Having earned a PhD in Philosophy from Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Spain), he remained there in the Faculty of Education as a professor of philosophy of education from 1980 to 2013. He later acted as vice-rector of Universidad Internacional de La Rioja (UNIR). He is currently an emeritus professor at both universities. His research has focused on analysing the anthropological foundations and critical-philosophical assumptions of educational processes, on educational aims and how they are expressed in the different curricular subjects in educational policy and educational legislation in reference to the European sphere in particular, on civic and moral education in democratic systems, on the ethics of education, and on character education, creating and leading until 2023 the first master's course in Spain on the subject. He has received numerous prestigious awards and medals in Spain, such as the Gran Cruz de Alfonso X el Sabio [Grand Cross of Alfonso X the Wise]. For forty years — until 2023 — he was the editor of *Revista Española de Pedagogía* (JCR and Scopus), and is a member of the editorial boards of other journals.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1171-7117>



Monograph

Fernando M. Reimers, Marta Ruiz Corbella & Miguel Ángel Santos Rego

Introduction to the monograph - Guest Editors

Mar Beneyto-Seoane & Yasmina Khatala Azzayakh

Reconstructing rural memory in urban contexts: a service-learning experience from the Degree in Social Education

Miguel-Ángel Santos-Rego, Ígor Mella-Nuñez, Jorge Soto-Carballo & Xosé-Manuel Malheiro-Gutiérrez

Revaluing the community in university service-learning: A faculty-led scale

Marta Ruiz-Corbella, Iñaki Celaya, Victoria Vázquez-Verdea & Concepción Naval

The role of community in service-learning projects in Spanish universities: a systematic review (2015 – 2024)

A. Brozmanová, I. Culcasi, N. Mikelic, B. Paz, R. Laven, J. Navarro, F. Paudel & Z. Heinzová

From recipients to co-creators: Rural voices in e-Service-Learning course design

Anna Escofet & Mireia Esparza

The educational impact of partnerships in university service-learning experiences: Education for critical citizenship and social responsibility

Vicent González-Pérez, Marta Rivas-Muro, María Jesús Perales-Montolío & Gemma Cortijo-Ruiz

University, community and culture: service-learning in the face of refuge and immigration

Antonio Bernal-Guerrero & Antonio Ramón Cárdenas-Gutiérrez

Social entrepreneurship and Service-Learning in higher education: A systematic review



Higher Education, community and Service Learning: Towards a new centrality of community partners

Educación Superior, comunidad y aprendizaje-servicio: hacia una nueva centralidad de los socios comunitarios

Dr. Fernando M. REIMERS. Director of the Global Education Innovation Initiative. Harvard University (fernando_reimers@gse.harvard.edu).

Dr. Marta RUIZ CORBELLA. Associate Professor. Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (mruiuz@edu.uned.es).

Dr. Miguel Ángel SANTOS REGO. University professor. Universidade de Santiago de Compostela (miguelangel.santos@usc.es).

At this time in history —when universities are being questioned about tremendously complex social challenges such as persistent inequality, the ecological crisis, the fragility of community ties, the discrediting of public institutions or political polarisation, as well as questioning the social value of the university itself— we must reconsider the ties between universities and the communities in which they exist. This context, in turn, forces us to re-examine the role of the community in service learning (SL) activities in Higher Education. SL is a type of pedagogy capable of combining, in an integrated fashion, the three main missions of the university: quality training, knowledge generation and civic engagement with the surroundings.

However, not every aspect of SL has progressed equally. In research and practice, the university's inward focus has often been prioritised: the impact on the student's learning, teacher innovation, the institutionalisation of programmes or the assessment of competences. Until recently, the systematic analysis of the role of the community in these processes has been much less visible. How is SL conceived and experienced by social organisations, local entities, rural communities or vulnerable groups? What are their expectations, resources, tensions and possibilities when becoming involved with the university world?

This monographic issue of *Revista Española de Pedagogía*, entitled 'Higher Education, Community and Service Learning', aims to contribute to that much-needed conceptual development, thus enabling an in-depth understanding of the transformative power of SL while placing the community at the heart of the analysis. Rather than viewing the community as a 'practice context' or a 'target population' for the students' actions, the studies included in this issue highlight how the organisations and groups we work with in the field are actually co-educators, co-creators and jointly responsible for the formative process.

Date of receipt of the original: 05/12/2025

Date of approval: 10/12/2025

Please, cite this article as follows: Reimers, F.M., Ruiz Corbella, M., Santos Rego, M.Á. (2026). Higher Education, community and Service Learning: Towards a new centrality of community partners [Educación Superior, comunidad y aprendizaje-servicio: hacia una nueva centralidad de los socios comunitarios]. *Revista Española de Pedagogía*, 84(293), 21-24. <https://doi.org/10.9781/rep.2026.3545>

1. From recipients to co-educators: a necessary change of paradigm

Recent research has shown that—*de facto*—community partners take on a much broader range of functions than is typically recognised. Not only do they show a willingness to host projects, but they also design or co-design interventions, supervise the students' work, guide their performance, contribute local expertise and take part in assessing the processes and results. They act as tutors, mentors, assessors, cultural mediators and 'translators' of academic language and social reality.

In addition to these formal roles, there are others of a more relational and symbolic nature: the community as a 'guide' that accompanies awareness-raising processes, as a 'farmer' that sows the seeds of engagement and social responsibility, or as a 'bridge' that connects worlds that rarely interact on equal ground. This invisible but crucial dimension, from a pedagogical standpoint, makes these social entities authentic educational stakeholders that decisively contribute to the creation of the professional and civic identities of the university student body.

At the same time, the literature shows that community agency is unevenly distributed depending on the context. While control over implementation of the service, everyday oversight or organisation of the internships tends to fall heavily on the entities, their influence on the curriculum design, the learning objectives or institutional policies is quite limited. This results in a 'segmented' power map: the university retains the strategic and regulatory initiative while the community takes on operational and relational responsibility.

In spotlighting these imbalances, the aim is not to question the value of SL, but precisely to strengthen it. If we acknowledge that the pedagogical quality of SL depends on both what happens in the classroom and on what occurs in the field, then it becomes imperative to progress towards more democratic partnership models and joint responsibility, in which the voice of the community is present from the design phase through to the assessment, not just during execution. Thus, the aim of this monographic issue is to contribute to a change of paradigm: from the community as a recipient to the community as a co-author of the university education project.

2. The urgency and relevance of advancing knowledge about the community and SL

There are at least four compelling reasons that support the need for further pedagogical research on the relationship between Higher Education, community and service learning.

Firstly, as a matter of epistemic justice. For years, scientific output about SL relegated communities to the role of 'secondary respondents', sometimes even omitting their point of view completely. Retrieving and analysing their experiences, expectations, benefits and challenges is not merely a gesture of academic courtesy: it is an ethical and methodological requirement for constructing more thorough, less biased knowledge about what actually occurs in SL projects.

Secondly, out of pedagogical motivation. The type of learning that SL promises—integration of theory and practice, critical thinking, civic engagement, social responsibility—depends greatly on the quality of the ties established with the surroundings. Projects designed without community participation tend to be more superficial, less relevant and less sustainable. By understanding what entities need and what they have to offer, it is possible to design richer, more pertinent and transformative experiences.

Thirdly, on organisational and political grounds. The so-called 'third mission' of the university, related to knowledge transfer and social engagement, can only take shape if there is a lively community landscape in which to construct long-term projects. Therefore, it is essential to understand the conditions that foster stable reciprocal partnerships: time, communication, recognition, institutional support, aligning expectations, etc. Research on the role of the community in SL offers specific clues for guiding fairer, more effective university policies on civic engagement.

Finally, there is the inevitable matter of context. Rapid digitalisation, the experience of the pandemic, increasing precarity and vulnerability across broad layers of society and rural depopulation, to name just a few phenomena, are reconfiguring the relationships between the university and its surroundings. Within this new scenario, virtual or hybrid SL experiences are emerging, community stakeholders are becoming more diverse and traditionally marginal spaces (like rural settings or juvenile justice systems) are becoming more visible. It is crucial to advance the understanding of how the community participates and engages in these changing circumstances to avoid reproducing past inequalities under apparently innovative formats.

As a whole, the eight articles contained in this special issue mark a path that ranges from rural memory to social entrepreneurship, from an analysis of university policies to an examination of specific partnerships, from in-person experiences in highly vulnerable settings to virtual proposals co-designed along with rural communities. This diversity of scenarios bolsters, rather than blurring, the underlying message: that university SL can only fully deploy its potential when it acknowledges and cultivates the community as an educational agent, not a mere setting for intervention.

We hope this monographic issue helps consolidate a research agenda in the Spanish-speaking and European spheres in which the relationship between Higher Education, the community and service learning is placed at the centre of the pedagogical debate. To a great extent, in order to progress towards more equitable, more inclusive universities committed to the common good, we must learn to listen to—and to learn with—those in the field who co-construct educational projects with us: the communities and their diverse stakeholders.

Hopefully, these articles will serve not only to describe experiences and outcomes, but also to imagine new alliances between the university and the community, in which SL offers a privileged pathway for joint reconsideration of what education means in and for democratic citizenship today.



Reconstructing rural memory in urban contexts: a service-learning experience from the Degree in Social Education

Reconstruir la memoria rural en contextos urbanos: una experiencia de aprendizaje-servicio desde el Grado de Educación Social

Mar BENEYTO-SEOANE. Associate Professor. University of Vic-Central University of Catalonia
(mar.beneyto@uvic.cat).

Yasmina KHATALA AZZAYAKH. University of Vic-Central University of Catalonia
(yasmina.khatala@uvic.cat).

Abstract

This study presents how a Service-Learning (SL) experience connects the community and the university for the common good, addressing topics such as rural oral memory, community identity, neighbourhood struggles, and children's imagination of the urban future through an audiovisual project. The aim was to understand the role of the community and the university in this project, and to identify aspects that reflect situated learning and the ecology of knowledge, going beyond the typical competencies of SL projects. It also explores the impacts of SL in the field of Social Education, which still lacks scientific literature. **METHOD.** A qualitative approach was adopted, with a single case study design and a deductive strategy based on community action and service-learning. Data collection included participant observation and document analysis. The analysis was structured around four theoretical categories: community action for the common good, the role of the university, the role of the community, and the learning generated. **RESULTS.** The results show that both the community and the university play a significant role in the co-construction of situated knowledge. Through dialogical processes, learning was generated that transcends conventional competencies, integrating memory, territory and the appreciation of intangible heritage. **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.** The experience shows that SL strengthens a pedagogy committed to social justice and activates processes of social transformation through co-responsible participation between the university and the community. The projects analysed strengthen territorial roots, promote a critical collective narrative, legitimise diverse voices, and make local memories visible.

Keywords: University Service-Learning (USL); community action; co-creation of knowledge; collective memory; university; social education

Date of receipt of the original: 30/06/2025

Date of approval: 31/10/2025

Please, cite this article as follows: Beneyto-Seoane, M. & Khatala Azzayakh, Y. (2026). Reconstructing rural memory in urban contexts: A service-learning experience from the social education degree [Reconstruir la memoria rural en contextos urbanos: una experiencia de aprendizaje-servicio desde el Grado de Educación Social]. *Revista Española de Pedagogía*, 84(293), 25-38. <https://doi.org/10.9781/rep.2026.214>

Resumen

Este estudio presenta cómo una experiencia de aprendizaje-servicio (ApS) articula la comunidad y la universidad para el bien común para abordar temáticas como la memoria oral rural, la identidad comunitaria, las luchas vecinales y el imaginario infantil del futuro urbano a través de un proyecto audiovisual. El objetivo fue conocer el papel de la comunidad y la universidad en dicho proyecto, e identificar aquellos aspectos que nos hablan de aprendizajes situados y de la ecología de saberes, que van más allá de las competencias propias de los proyectos ApS. Además, explora los impactos del ApS en el ámbito de la Educación Social, el cual carece aún de literatura científica. **MÉTODO.** Se empleó un enfoque cualitativo, con un diseño de estudio de caso único y una estrategia deductiva basada en torno la acción comunitaria y el aprendizaje-servicio. La recogida de datos incluyó la observación participante y el análisis documental. El análisis se estructuró alrededor de cuatro categorías teóricas: acción comunitaria para el bien común, rol de la universidad, papel de la comunidad y aprendizajes generados. **RESULTADOS.** Los resultados evidencian que la comunidad y la universidad tienen un papel relevante en la coconstrucción del conocimiento situado. A través de procesos dialógicos, se generaron aprendizajes que trascienden las competencias convencionales, integrando la memoria, el territorio y la valoración del patrimonio inmaterial. **DISCUSIÓN Y CONCLUSIONES.** La experiencia demuestra que el ApS consolida una pedagogía comprometida con la justicia global y activa procesos de transformación social mediante la participación corresponsable entre la universidad y la comunidad. Los proyectos analizados fortalecen el arraigo territorial, promueven una narrativa colectiva crítica, legitiman voces diversas y visibilizan memorias locales.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje-servicio universitario (ApSU); acción comunitaria; cocreación de saberes; memoria colectiva; universidad; educación social

1. Introduction

In a global scenario marked by political, social, ecological, democratic and educational crises, higher education institutions are being challenged to re-evaluate their role in contemporary society. This context opens the way to the concept of the university as a space for knowledge production, and also as a common good that can actively contribute to strengthening the social and territorial fabric (Collet-Sabé and Castillo Adrián, 2023).

From this perspective, university service-learning (USL) is presented as a pedagogical path that enables the integration of academic knowledge with transformative action in the environment. This methodology promotes comprehensive student training, while also serving as a strategic tool for moving towards a university committed to equity and democratic participation, and which fosters processes of social engagement that go beyond the classroom and are rooted in community realities (Puig *et al.*, 2007; Tapias, 2007; Santos Rego, 2025). As part of this approach, the community is not merely a passive context, but rather becomes a key element, with the university, in the co-creation of services for the common good.

The ways in which communities become involved in these processes and the scenarios that enable such participation remain relatively unexplored aspects in both theory and practice (Collet-Sabé and Castillo Adrián, 2023; Ruiz-Corbella and Bautista-Cerro, 2016). In this regard, this article is an example of how the university and the community can collaborate for community action for the common good. Through the recovery of life stories and rural memories, the project studied highlights non-formal knowledge, which is often overlooked by institutions, even though it is necessary for sustaining community processes and training critical and committed individuals. This article shows how the community can become an active player in knowledge production and recognises the value of situated learning, collective

memory and community participation. It also contributes to scientific production, especially in the still relatively unexplored field of USL in Social Education (Redondo-Corcobado and Fuentes, 2020).

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is organised into three main areas that allow us to understand the pedagogical and community scope of the USL project. Firstly, community action is addressed as a transformative practice focused on the common good and based on the shared responsibility of social actors in the construction of collective projects. Secondly, USL is presented as an educational philosophy that connects the university and the community in situated knowledge co-creation processes. Finally, intangible heritage and collective memory are explored as content that recovers popular knowledge, strengthens community identity, and allows historically silenced voices to speak. These areas shape the conceptual framework from which the presented experience is interpreted.

2.1. Community action: setting the commons in motion

The term action, from the Latin *actio*, means «to carry out» or «to set in motion». This etymology reveals that action is not limited to the mere performance of tasks, but rather implies an intentionality focused on change, a will to intervene in the world. This understanding is relevant in the field of critical pedagogy, where action is conceived as praxis, that is, as a dialectical synthesis between reflection and action (Freire, 1970). In this context, acting is not simply doing, but rather doing so with critical awareness, with an understanding of the historical, social and political conditions that shape reality. This connection between thought and practice is not without tensions. When action is devoid of reflection, it can lead to unthinking activism, incapable of questioning the structures of domination that it seeks to transform. Likewise, reflection without action runs the risk of becoming a sterile intellectual exercise, disconnected from the specific struggles of individuals and communities. Therefore, praxis demands a constant and dynamic coordination between thinking and doing, focused on transforming reality and building a fairer society. From this perspective, action takes the form of a political and ethical act, insofar as it implies taking a stance on the world. It is about intervening in reality, and doing so from a critical stance committed to human dignity.

For its part, the concept of community, from the Latin *communitas*, consists of the prefix *com-*, denoting «with» or «in common» and the noun *munus*, which can be translated as «obligation» or «duty». This etymology indicates a dual dimension of the concept: on the one hand, the idea of what is shared, of that which is collectively constructed; and on the other, the notion of mutual responsibility, of a bond that implies both rights and duties among its members. This perspective is complemented by Bauman's (2000) view, who points out that community is perceived as a space of belonging, security and warmth, in contrast to the uncertainty and fragmentation of the modern world. The community is therefore represented as an emotional refuge and a social network that offers meaning and stability. From this perspective, the community becomes an active agent of transformation, capable of generating processes of change from its own internal dynamics. This vision implies recognising community members as social actors with the capacity for reflection, organisation and collective action. In this context, people inhabit the community and actively build it, negotiating identities, creating shared memories, and coordinating common projects that fulfil their collective needs and aspirations.

Thus, community action, understood as setting the commons in motion with reflection and responsibility, takes the form of a participatory, dialogical and transformative process that involves both individuals and groups. This approach is based on the co-responsible participation of diverse social actors within the community (citizens, organisations, public and private institutions, among others), who not only intervene but also co-construct the

processes of change. Far from conceiving of the community as a mere recipient of external aid, this perspective recognises it as an entity with the capacity of an agency, capable of organising, deliberating and acting according to its own interests and aspirations. In this regard, community action is part of an ethic of mutual care and solidarity, which challenges the individualistic and competitive logics prevalent in many contemporary contexts. By placing the commons at the centre, community action promotes more inclusive and equitable forms of coexistence, and is oriented towards the transformation of the structural conditions that lead to exclusion, inequality or vulnerability.

2.2. University SL as a proposed community action

In the context of multiple contemporary crises (political, social, ecological, democratic and educational), the university faces the challenge of redefining its role in society. From governance models focused on efficiency or competitiveness comes the notion of the university as a common good, understood as an academic institution co-responsible for the sustainable development of territories (Collet-Sabé and Castillo Adrián, 2023).

This approach is aligned with the concept of university social responsibility (USR), which transcends the logic of accountability or institutional projection, positioning itself in an ethic of care, interdependence and the co-construction of knowledge (Santos Rego *et al.*, 2025). From this perspective, the university is called to play an active role in social transformation, integrating ethical commitment into its substantive functions (Ruiz-Corbella and Bautista-Cerro, 2016). Along these lines and as proposed by Collet-Sabé and Ball (2024), it is about rethinking education as a commoning activity, that is, as a collective practice developed in open, diverse and sustainable social infrastructures, where we learn to live in common and take care of ourselves, others and the planet.

In this context, university service-learning (USL) is a pedagogical strategy that operationalises this responsibility by coordinating academic training with community action and by being focused on the common good (Martínez, 2008; Tapias, 2007; Tinkler and Tinkler, 2020). This proposal necessarily implies a disposition towards social transformation, shared responsibility between the university and the community, and the generation of educational spaces where theory and practice, emotion and cognition, are intertwined (Puig *et al.* 2007). Far from being conceived as a one-off intervention, USL is understood as an educational philosophy that integrates intellectual training, social commitment and community action in a dialogical, transformative and contextualised process (Escofet *et al.* 2016). In this regard, it promotes action built on dialogue with the community (Lau *et al.* 2021; Lumillo, 2025), becoming a political and ethical tool that allows us to build a university for the common good. This vision avoids reproducing logics of exclusion or hierarchy, and promotes participation, equity and sustainability as guiding principles of its educational action.

However, although community action, and in particular USL, seeks social transformation and the strengthening of the collective fabric, it is not without challenges. Power relations go through their internal and external dynamics, affecting aspects such as the distribution of resources, decision-making, the legitimisation of knowledge and the representation of interests.

Therefore, it is essential that community action is built on a dialogue of knowledge, recognising the validity of popular knowledge and avoiding the colonial logic of academic knowledge (Santos, 2009). This perspective rejects welfarism and promotes horizontal relationships, where all the actors involved participate on equal terms and with mutual respect. When guided by principles of social justice, community action can help transform systems that perpetuate exclusion and inequality.

2.3. Intangible heritage and collective memory as educational and community content

Community action is a privileged space for the production, circulation and validation of diverse knowledge. In this context, knowledge is not limited to academic or technical

knowledge, but also includes popular, experiential and situated knowledge that emerges from collective practice and dialogue between social actors (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

This concept is linked with the USL approach, which is framed within an «ecology of knowledge» that recognises the legitimacy of multiple forms of knowledge, especially those that emerge from subaltern and community contexts (Santos, 2009). Participating in community projects allows us to experience real ethical dilemmas, develop moral judgements and commit to social transformation. From this perspective, learning is understood as a situated process, where the community is not only a context of intervention, but also a space for generating knowledge (Santos Rego *et al.*, 2021).

In this context, intangible heritage, and in particular oral memory linked to local contexts, is a pedagogical resource of great value in university education, especially in disciplines focused on social and educational intervention. The use of local historical narratives allows students to develop critical historical consciousness and an in-depth understanding of social contexts (Barton and Levstik, 2004). Working with oral memory facilitates the connection between academic knowledge and the experiences of people and territories, generating socially committed learning (Freire, 1970). The incorporation of local history and community narratives encourages critical thinking, invites us to question hegemonic discourses and recognises the diversity of historical experiences (Seixas, 2006). Furthermore, this approach facilitates contact with traditionally invisible people and groups, which favours the understanding of social and cultural inequalities. At the same time, it allows us to visualise processes of urban and social transformation that directly affect communities, reinforcing the link between university and global justice.

Together, the lines of community action, USL and intangible heritage provide a perspective on the transformative potential of higher education in community contexts. Community action provides the ethical and political horizon of commitment to the commons; USL offers a methodology that coordinates academic and popular knowledge in dialogical and co-responsible processes; and intangible heritage constitutes educational content that roots learning in the living history of territories and their people.

3. Methodology

The case study presented is part of an USL project developed in the Degree in Social Education at the University of Vic-Central University of Catalonia (UVic-UCC). This project promoted community action processes led by students and territory actors, with the challenge of reconstructing the rural memory of a neighbourhood located in a city in the province of Barcelona (Spain).

The objective of the case study was to analyse the role played by the community and the university in building shared knowledge within the framework of the USL project. Likewise, it seeks to identify the diverse knowledge that emerges as situated learning, that transcends the academic competencies of USL projects, and that is based on the interaction between the different actors involved in the project.

3.1. Context

The project is located in a neighbourhood of the city of Vic (Barcelona, Spain), marked by profound urban and social transformation over the past decades. Of rural and agricultural origin, with the historical presence of farmhouses and orchards, the rural spaces and green areas of the neighbourhood have been heavily developed. Furthermore, successive waves of migration, from the 1960s to the present day, have changed the social morphology of the neighbourhood. Currently, the neighbourhood concentrates approximately 18% of the city's population, which is equivalent to about 8,800 people out of a total of 49,333 inhabitants. Of these, around 45.9% are of immigrant origin, 29.8% earn less than 10,000 euros per year and 8.6% live in extreme poverty. These figures reveal a context of high population density, cultural diversity and economic vulnerability.

This scenario is where the USL proposal was raised by the Degree in Social Education at the UVic-UCC, where 33 students participated. In addition, the Social and Digital Innovation Laboratory (LISD) from the same university, the neighbourhood association (AVV), two local historians, five neighbourhood residents, and ten children from a social entity that cares for people at risk of exclusion and social vulnerability collaborated. The historians and local residents were proposed by the AVV based on their knowledge of the neighbourhood and their connection to local memory. The children were selected by experts from the participating entity based on criteria of availability, interest and diversity. This entire choice corresponds to a criterion of contextual convenience, based on direct knowledge of local actors. The purpose of the project was the recovery, reconstruction and preservation of the rural memory of the neighbourhood through the co-creation of audiovisual capsules and the use of digital tools. For this, four teams were formed, with each one assigned a specific objective that triggered different sub-projects, which developed their own audiovisual capsules and websites (table 1).

TABLE 1. Participants, objectives and products of the projects.

P	Title	Participants	Objective	Product
P1	Reconstruction of the rural past of the neighbourhood	Local historians	Locate the urban and anthropological history of the neighbourhood	3 videos (urban change, 1st migratory wave and 2nd migratory wave) + trailer + descriptive website of the project
P2	Rural oral memory	Local residents	Document the oral memory of people who have grown up in the neighbourhood	4 videos (4 local residents who have grown up in the neighbourhood) + trailer + descriptive website of the project
P3	Community identity and struggling spaces	Neighbourhood association	Draw attention to spaces of neighbourhood struggle and their symbolic significance	4 videos (4 members of the AVV who talk about 4 emblematic spaces in the neighbourhood) + trailer + descriptive website of the project
P4	Imagine the future of the neighbourhood	Social entity	Empower children to imagine the future of the neighbourhood	2 videos (2 groups of boys and girls imagining the future of the neighbourhood) + trailer + descriptive website of the project

Notes: P means project.

Source: authors' own compilation.

Each sub-project was organised according to the availability of the participants and had its own particularities. However, they all followed a shared organisational scheme (table 2). From the reference subject (Social Projects and ICT) the schedules were made more flexible to facilitate project development.

TABLE 2. Project development sessions and activities carried out.

Session	Activities carried out
First contact	Presentation of the community project to all participants: students and territory actors
Interviews and exploratory activities	Interviews and activities to explore knowledge about the territory and participation interests
Participatory meetings to select spaces	Dynamics with objects, stories and images to identify symbolic and significant spaces
Exploratory route through the neighbourhood	Identification of vestiges of the rural past and dialogue on the transformation of the territory
Recordings in historical locations	Interviews, open conversations about life stories, childhood and neighbourhood transformation, and audiovisual documentation in spaces with heritage value
Validation of stories	Joint review of content to ensure fidelity and respect
Presentation of audiovisual capsules	Visualisation of the audiovisual capsules at a public event in the city

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Beyond documenting the rural memory of the neighbourhood, the use of audiovisual tools for documentation and the use of information and communication technologies for web creation, this initiative also required: preserving the oral stories of the participants; generating links between different generations; and creating audiovisual products that will help strengthen the sense of belonging and identity of people in the place they live. In this regard, the audiovisual resource had to be transformed into a tool at the service of territorial learning and social cohesion.

3.2. Approach, methodological design and data collection techniques

This research falls within the interpretive paradigm, since its objective was to understand a specific socio-educational project in a contextualised manner (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). The approach adopted is qualitative, since it makes it possible to explore and analyse the subjective, symbolic and relational dimensions of the project, as well as capture the complexity of its impact on the different actors involved. Regarding the methodological design, a single case study is chosen to analyse a specific project in depth, considering its characteristics, development, context and results, and allowing practices and relationships to be identified, and to generate transferable knowledge to other similar contexts (Yin, 2018). Defining the case in qualitative research involves delimiting a phenomenon that helps us understand relevant processes in a given context. In this study, it was defined as an experience of university community action focused on the recovery of rural memory in an urban neighbourhood in transformation. It was chosen for its pedagogical value, the diversity of actors involved and its ability to connect the university, the community and intangible heritage.

Participant observation and document analysis were used for data collection. On the one hand, participant observation was carried out during the seven development sessions of the project. This made it possible to collect qualitative information on group dynamics, interactions between participants and the atmosphere generated during project activities, capturing non-verbal aspects, attitudes, emotions and spontaneous behaviours. The collected information was documented through field notes, including descriptions of observed situations, direct quotes, reflections and possible interpretations. On the other hand, for the document analysis,

the four websites generated with the USL were reviewed, each corresponding to one of the four projects. From these websites, information on the objectives, activities, participants, results and pedagogical values of each project was analysed. In addition, the audiovisual capsules documenting rural history and participants' testimonies were viewed. The sufficiency of the information was assessed based on its capacity to offer a rich and contextual understanding of the case. This involved reviewing whether the data allowed us to explore the dimensions of the study, reflect the diversity of voices involved, identify tensions, and establish connections between the observed practices and the research objectives. This review was not based solely on the quantity of data, but also on its interpretive richness and its potential to generate knowledge in other contexts.

The data analysis was carried out manually, without using specific qualitative analysis software. For this, spreadsheets were used to compile the content obtained from participant observation and document analysis. These data were organised into categorization matrices constructed from key dimensions of the theoretical framework (Table 3).

TABLE 3. Analysis codes, subcategories, descriptors, indicators and references.

Code	Subcategories	Description	Indicators	References
Activating commons	Participation dynamics Shared responsibility practices Creating commons	Practices that promote the joint involvement of social actors	Shared decision-making Collective design of activities	Bauman (2000); Santos (2009); Puig <i>et al.</i> (2007); Tapias (2007)
Role of the university	Presence in the territory Social and ethical function Role in community processes	The university as an active force in the territory driving educational and social processes	Collaborations with social entities Accompaniment	Collet-Sabé and Castillo Adrián (2023); Ruiz-Corbella and Bautista-Cerro (2016); Martínez (2008); Santos Rego <i>et al.</i> (2025)
Role of the community	Citizen participation Co-creation of projects	Citizen participation in project creation	Initiatives proposed by local residents or entities Participation in project phases	Martínez (2008); Puig <i>et al.</i> (2007); Tapias (2007); Santos Rego <i>et al.</i> (2025)
Knowledge acquired	Non-formal learning Historical memory Understanding of the territory Appreciation of intangible heritage	Learning that transcends academic competencies, including knowledge of the territory and its history	Narratives about local history Recognition of rural knowledge Critical reflections on inequalities	Freire (1970); Seixas (2006); Santos Rego <i>et al.</i> (2021); Lave and Wenger (1991); Barton and Levstik (2004)

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The analysis followed a deductive strategy, which allowed the data to be interpreted based on predefined categories, without overlooking the emergence of unforeseen elements. After initial coding, the categories were reorganised and refined to build a coherent analytical structure. Methodological triangulation facilitated the comparison of different types of data, enhancing the interpretation. Finally, the data were interpreted in relation to the theoretical framework and research objectives, identifying patterns, tensions, and relevant contributions of the project.

The validity of the results was supported by three strategies: triangulation allowed for the comparison of different types of data; systematic coding provided interpretive coherence; and external validation with the LISD ensured well-founded and representative conclusions of the phenomenon studied.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Forms of community action: reflection, narrative, projection and collective imagination

The results show that the four projects developed set in motion diverse forms of community action, where knowledge and action are constructed in a dialogical, situated and co-responsible way.

In Project 1 (P1), which brought to light the social and rural history of the neighbourhood through interviews with two local historians, the approach initially focused on historical data was reformulated after collective reflection by the group. «We saw the need to seek a more meaningful pedagogical perspective on history, one that didn't focus solely on data or concrete facts, but rather valued human experiences, stories and social transformations» (P1 student). In Project 2 (P2), which focused on recovering the oral history of the neighbourhood through interviews with elderly local people who were born and raised there, community action was key from the start. The interviewees not only shared their stories but also participated in defining the narrative approach for the final product. «We wanted participants to be not only the protagonists of the video but also active in constructing its narrative» (P2 student). This intergenerational collaboration has resulted in an audiovisual resource which, in addition to documenting the rural past, strengthens the transmission of popular knowledge between generations. In Project 3 (P3), the collaboration with the neighbourhood association also exemplifies community action. Neighbourhood struggles to preserve spaces of local interest were documented. Furthermore, it was the association members themselves who proposed the spaces to be documented and selected the people to be interviewed. As noted in the document analysis, «we emphasised that their opinion was very important and that we weren't there to tell them what to do» (P3 student). In Project 4 (P4), the children were the protagonists in exploring and imagining the future of the neighbourhood. Through participatory activities, visits and interviews, the children expressed their ideas about the neighbourhood's green spaces. «This participation has been essential for them to become protagonists in the project» (P4 student). Although some of the children did not live in the neighbourhood, the project allowed them to develop a fresh outlook on the area and feel part of its transformation. The experience became an exercise in active citizenship and collective imagination.

The results show that all the projects presented included spaces for community action, where the community is not the object, but rather the subject of the educational process, whether to reflect on the action, narrate it, plan it or imagine it. In this type of community action, individuals not only receive knowledge, but also construct it through dialogue with their reality and with others (Freire, 1970). This logic of collective action strengthens the community fabric through practices of care, listening, and mutual recognition, and allows for the reconstruction of a sense of belonging and shared identity, given the fragility of social bonds in contemporary societies (Bauman, 2000).

4.2. The role of the university: facilitator, mediator, co-responsible and inclusive

Document analysis shows how the university positions itself as an actor committed to the territory and plays an active role in facilitating community processes, producing situated knowledge, and generating social impact. For example, in P1, the university promoted a collaborative social research process to reconstruct the neighbourhood's history. «When I began studying the rural history of the neighbourhood and the community gardens, I never imagined that my work could attract the interest of others and continue in the documentation proposed by this project» (P1 historian). In this regard, the university acted as a facilitator to integrate and enhance academic and popular knowledge by producing audiovisual capsules and websites that document processes of social transformation, migration and daily life in the territory. Through the document analysis of P2, it can be seen how the university acts as an intergenerational mediator, facilitating a process of recovering the neighbourhood's oral history. The project was built around a logic of shared responsibility. «This project has been an opportunity to reflect on the value of the neighbourhood's rural history and to cultivate a sense of belonging, which is very important in a neighbourhood like this» (P2 resident). In this regard, in community action, the university does not impose knowledge, but rather accompanies the community in building a collective archive, recognising the value of local knowledge and promoting intergenerational learning. Likewise, P3 has made it possible to document neighbourhood struggles and territorial defence processes. «This project is very interesting for the association and for the neighbourhood. It gives value to our collective memory and captures the voices of our local residents. And it helps us to advocate for a greener and more socially-conscious neighbourhood» (member of the P3 association). The university therefore becomes a space of empowerment, where students develop civic and ethical skills, and where the community finds a channel to make its demands and memories known. The P4 results show that the university becomes an agent of inclusion when it generates resources that amplify children's voices and strengthen the bond between children's and youth organisations, the community, the university and the territory. «This project is a significant experience that promotes participatory, inclusive and transformative education. It is motivational for the children» (P4 entity educator). In this regard, the results show that in this type of action the university can become a facilitator of community processes, presenting itself as an actor committed to the territory that provides technical, pedagogical and emotional support to local actors (Collet-Sabé and Castillo Adrián, 2023), and not imposing knowledge, but rather engaging in dialogue with the territory and recognising the legitimacy of local voices, promoting processes of co-construction of knowledge (Santos, 2009).

4.3. The role of the community: source of information and memory, restorer and co-creator and validator

Based on the results of participant observation and document analysis, it is observed that the community is not simply a recipient, but rather a co-creator of educational, narrative and territorial processes. For example, the historians (P1) helped build a story that links memory, urban changes and daily life. «When the road was built, everything changed. In the past, people would meet in the street, there were community gardens, life... now everything is faster and colder» (P1 historian). In the case of the elderly, «we wanted each person to feel valued, heard and respected. Not only as a source of oral memory, but as a local resident with a history and a life that has much to contribute to the neighbourhood» (P2 student). This approach enabled the recovery of stories about rural life, local festivals and urban changes from a lived perspective, strengthening intergenerational bonds and a sense of belonging. The four members of the association helped define the people and spaces to be documented. «I've already thought about who will participate in the interviews. I think they should be older local residents who know the neighbourhood well because they've always lived here and grown up here. We must capture their voices, or when they're gone, the rural memory of the neighbourhood will go with them» (P3 association member). The children's voices (P4) opened a space for collective imagination about the territory, reinforcing the idea that children also have the right to shape

and transform their environment. «We'd like this space to have more trees and a place to play because right now it looks abandoned» (P4 social entity child).

The results of participant observations show that these types of projects recognise the community as an active party in the process. Participants said they felt heard and appreciated, especially in a context where rural memory has historically been ignored. On various occasions, they expressed their feelings at seeing themselves reflected in the videos, highlighting the respect and care with which their stories were handled. For many of them, especially the older adults, the project represented a way to be heard, appreciated and recognised by younger generations, thus strengthening the community fabric and collective self-esteem, as well as recognising community knowledge as legitimate and valuable (Santos Rego *et al.*, 2025; Tapias, 2007). Compared to other USL experiences, this study looks at the role of the community as a knowledge validator, a relatively unexplored dimension in literature.

4.4. Learning beyond social and civic competence: non-institutionalised knowledge

The results of the various data collection instruments indicate learning that goes beyond the social and civic competencies of USL. The work with intangible heritage, and in particular with oral memory linked to local contexts, is revealed as a pedagogical resource of great value in university education, especially in disciplines focused on social and educational intervention. For example, the work with historians provided access to a critical narrative about urban and migratory transformation processes at both a local and global level. «The changes that were experienced, and are being experienced locally, invite us to contemplate global changes. They are closely and broadly linked» (P1 historian). This type of reflection allows us to question hegemonic discourses on progress and to value social history as a tool for territorial analysis. Similarly, documenting the voices of older people (P2) allows us to understand the history of the territory from a lived perspective. «They remember how they played ball in the streets free from danger, because there were no cars. The neighbourhood had a different pace to it, and children grew up with different opportunities than today» (P2 student). This type of story not only provides historical information, but also sparks reflection on social changes, the loss of community spaces and the importance of preserving living memory. The process of documenting neighbourhood struggles (P3) helps us understand the political and symbolic value of public spaces. «I just wanted people to know that this space has a history. There has been and there is life, struggle and hope here» (P3 association member). This testimony generated learning about community agency and shared responsibility. The proposals arising from children's imagination (P4) invite us to rethink urban planning from an inclusive perspective and from the needs of the very youngest citizens. «I want the Horta de la Sínia to be a space with trees, flowers and animals, where we can play and create a garden» (P4 social entity child).

The results therefore show that this type of project makes it possible to: value non-institutionalised knowledge; foster critical thinking, since they incorporate local history and community narratives into the curriculum and encourage the questioning of hegemonic discourses and recognise the diversity of historical experiences; enhance empathy and an in-depth understanding of social and cultural inequalities by being in contact with traditionally invisible people and groups (Puig *et al.*, 2007; Escofet *et al.*, 2016; Santos Rego *et al.*, 2025); and strengthening civic awareness and the capacity for territorial analysis (Collet-Sabé and Castillo Adrián, 2023; Tapias, 2007).

5. Conclusions

This study aimed to analyse the role of the community and the university in a community action project for documenting rural historical memory, and to identify the resulting knowledge that goes beyond the established competencies of USL projects. The most relevant findings of this research indicate that USL is a community action that promotes the common good, as

it generates spaces for co-responsible participation and enables the dialogical construction of knowledge between the university and the community. The results obtained also confirm that, in this type of project, the community goes from being a passive recipient to an active participant in the pedagogical process. The co-creation of projects enables the construction of a collective narrative around the past, present and future of a territory. At the same time, the university assumes a role of facilitation and commitment, avoiding the imposition of academic knowledge in order to promote an ecology of knowledge where understanding is built on dialogue with the community and local memory.

In line with previous studies, our results show that the impact of these types of projects is not purely symbolic (Ruiz-Corbella and Bautista-Cerro, 2016). The public dissemination of the final products (audiovisual capsules and web materials) helps to strengthen identity and a sense of belonging. The websites created by each group offer audiovisual content, timelines, interviews, images, and explanatory materials that can be used by schools, organisations and the community as memory preservation, awareness-raising and training tools. In this regard, the study reveals that this type of USL acts as a catalyst for popular education processes, collective memory and social cohesion. But beyond the product itself, what it consolidates is a model of educational intervention and community action where the territory is not a setting, but rather a living agent of learning, reflection and action. Furthermore, this concept of community action aligns with the principles and challenges of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015). In particular, it meets local needs and is part of a global agenda for transformation, which recognises the interdependence between the local and the global, contributing across the board to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by promoting citizen participation, equity and social justice.

Despite the observed potential, the project also highlights structural tensions inherent in community USL experiences. These most notably include the difficulty of reconciling academic schedules with community life, as well as the need to guarantee institutional continuity to help consolidate the ties forged. Likewise, the importance of carefully managing feedback and closure processes was identified to prevent the community from perceiving the project as a one-off intervention without any follow-up. These results encourage continued rethinking of the university's role in terms of ethical commitment and relational sustainability.

The findings presented have significant implications for the field of social education. As Redondo-Corcobado and Fuentes (2020) point out, there is a lack of systematic research on Service-Learning in the Degree in Social Education, making this experience a significant contribution to both pedagogical practice and scientific production in higher education. Furthermore, this study is part of the contemporary academic debate that highlights the urgent need to open the university to the territory and to recognise non-institutionalised knowledge as legitimate sources of learning. This openness broadens the educational horizon and allows us to move towards educational transformation, where knowledge is built on dialogue with communities and in response to their realities.

Author contributions

Mar Beneyto-Seoane. Conceptualisation, data processing, formal analysis, research, writing-proofreading and editing.

Yasmina Khatala Azzayakh. Drafting, project management, resources, visualisation.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

In accordance with the editorial policy of the *Revista de Educación y Pedagogía* (REP), it is stated that artificial intelligence tools were used during the preparation of this article. Specifically, Copilot was used to support specific writing and linguistic revision tasks, under strict human supervision and observing ethical principles and academic integrity.

Funding

This research has not received any specific funding from public or private agencies.

References

- Barton, K. C. y Levstik, L. S. (2004). *Teaching history for the common good*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Bauman, Z. (2000). *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World*. Polity Press.
- Collet-Sabé, J. y Ball, S. J. (2024). The school is irredeemable: Proposing discomfort for a different future for education. En Beasy, K., Maguire, M., te Riele, K., Towers, E. (eds.). *Innovative school reforms. Education, Equity, Economy* (pp. 185-199). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-64900-4_11
- Collet-Sabé, J. y Castillo Adrián, J. (2023). De la “gobernanza instrumental mutua” a la “gobernanza del bien común”: hacia unas nuevas relaciones entre universidades y ciudades. *Revista de Educación a Distancia (RED)*, 23(74). <https://doi.org/10.6018/red.539891>
- Escofet, A., Folgueiras, P., Luna, E. y Palou, B. (2016). Elaboración y validación de un cuestionario para la valoración de proyectos de aprendizaje-servicio. *Revista Mexicana de Investigación Educativa*, 21(70), 929-949. https://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1405-66662016000300929
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogía del oprimido*. Siglo XXI Ediciones.
- Guba, E. G. y Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. En N. K. Denzin y Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105-117). Sage Publications
- Lau, K. H., Chan, M. Y. L., Yeung, C. L. S., Snell, R. S. (2021). An Exploratory Study of the Community Impacts of Service-Learning. *Metropolitan Universities*, 32(2), 106-128. DOI: 10.18060/25482
- Lave, J. y Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lumillo, I., Escofet, A., Solà, M. y Morín-Fraile, V. (2025). What is the social impact of university service-learning projects on citizens and community organizations? A scoping review. *International Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement*. <https://doi.org/10.37333/001c.146138>
- Martínez, M. (2008). *Aprendizaje-servicio y responsabilidad social de las universidades*. Octaedro
- Naciones Unidas. (2015). Transformar nuestro mundo: la Agenda 2030 para el Desarrollo Sostenible. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/es/2015/09/la-asamblea-general-adopta-la-agenda-2030-para-el-desarrollo-sostenible/>
- Puig, J. M., Battle, R., Bosch, C. y Palos, J. (2007). *El aprendizaje-servicio: una propuesta metodológica para aprender haciendo un servicio a la comunidad*. Graó.
- Redondo-Corcobado, P. y Fuentes, J. L. (2020). La investigación sobre el Aprendizaje-Servicio en la producción científica española: una revisión sistemática. *Revista Complutense de Educación*, 31(1), 69-83. <https://doi.org/10.5209/rced.61836>
- Ruiz-Corbella, M. y Bautista-Cerro Ruiz, M. J. (2016). La responsabilidad social en la universidad española. *Teoría De La Educación. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 28(1), 159-188. <https://doi.org/10.14201/teoredu2016281159188>
- Santos Rego, M. Á., Lorenzo Moledo, M. del M. y Sáez Gambín, D. (2025). *La universidad y el aprendizaje-servicio: Lo que importa es la calidad*. Narcea Ediciones.
- Santos Rego, M. Á., Mella Núñez, I. y García Álvarez, J. (2021). Educación moral y ética de la acción en el aprendizaje-servicio universitario: La sombra de John Dewey. *Perfiles Educativos*, 43(173), 166-182. <https://doi.org/10.22201/iisue.24486167e.2021.173.59818>
- Santos, B. de S. (2009). *Una epistemología del Sur: La reinención del conocimiento y la emancipación social*. CLACSO y Siglo XXI Editores.

- Seixas, P. (2006). What is historical consciousness? En R. Sandwell (ed.), *To the past: History education, public memory, and citizenship in Canada* (pp. 11-22). University of Toronto Press.
- Spear, A. y Chapman, N. (2020). *Measuring the impact of an international service-learning project through community assessment in Rwanda*. Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 26(1). <https://doi.org/10.3998/mjcsloa.3239521.0026.110>
- Tapias, M. N. (2007). *Aprendizaje y servicio solidario: en el sistema educativo y las organizaciones juveniles*. Editorial Ciudad Nueva.
- Tinkler, A. y Tinkler, B. (2020). *Building social capital through community-based service-learning in teacher education*. Journal of Community Engagement and Higher Education, 12(2), Article 4. <https://scholars.indianastate.edu/jcehe/vol12/iss2/4>
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge University Press.
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods*. Sage Publications.

Author biographies

Mar Beneyto-Seoane. PhD in Educational Innovation and Intervention, Master's Degree in Inclusive Education, Degree in Psychopedagogy, Diploma in Social Education, and Degree in Early Childhood Education. Associate Professor in the Department of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Education, Translation, Sport and Psychology of the University of Vic-Central University of Catalonia (UVic-UCC). She gives classes on the Social Education and Early Childhood Education degree courses, as well as on the Master's Degree in Inclusive Education, Democracy and Cooperative Learning. She is a member of the Educational Research Group of the University of Vic (GREUV). She is also a researcher at the Social and Digital Innovation Laboratory (LISD) at the same university. Part of her research is focused on analysis of social and educational inequalities, inclusion and digital participation in educational and community contexts. She has developed projects related to community action and the implementation of service-learning (SL) methodologies as a strategy to promote citizen participation and social transformation. She also supports initiatives aimed at reducing the digital divide and promoting equitable access to technology, especially for vulnerable groups. Her work combines action research seeking to generate impact in both educational and social practice.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5946-2670>

Yasmina Khatala Azzayakh. Collaborator in research and activities at the Social and Digital Innovation Laboratory (LISD) of the University of Vic-Central University of Catalonia (UVic-UCC). The extracurricular internship she completed at LISD allowed her to carry out in-depth research and innovation in the socio-educational field. Here she participated in projects aimed at reducing the digital divide and promoting technological equity, working on initiatives that combine social intervention with the use of digital tools to foster inclusion. Fourth year of the Degree in Social Education at UVic-UCC. Her professional field is characterised by an interest in community dynamics, social inclusion and Service-Learning (SL) methodologies as a strategy to promote participation and social transformation. In addition to her experience at the LISD, she has collaborated on community projects, where she has gained first-hand knowledge of the importance of social education as a force for change and community cohesion.

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-4709-3242>



Revaluating the community in university service-learning: A faculty-led scale

Revalorizar la comunidad en el aprendizaje-servicio universitario: una escala con visión del profesorado

Dr. Miguel-Ángel SANTOS-REGO. Full Professor. Universidade de Santiago de Compostela
(miguelangel.santos@usc.es)

Dr. Ígor MELLA-NÚÑEZ. Associate Professor. Universidade de Santiago de Compostela
(igor.mella@usc.es)

Dr. Jorge SOTO-CARBALLO. Associate Professor. Universidade de Vigo (hesoto@uvigo.gal)

Dr. Xosé-Manuel MALHEIRO-GUTIÉRREZ. Associate Professor. Universidade da Coruña
(jose.malheirog@udc.es)

Abstract

Modern societies expect higher education to engage actively in addressing and resolving problems that are found in the community. Consequently, political agendas must promote the social dimension within the university's spheres of action, emphasising the value of methodologies that align with this objective. One such approach is service-learning, a pedagogical strategy that integrates academic learning with community service. Given that research on this methodology has not extensively addressed the role of the community, this study's aim is to validate a scale designed to assess the level of involvement of collaborating entities in service-learning, based on faculty perceptions. The instrument was administered to 147 faculty members from nine Spanish universities that use this methodology. The data collected underwent both exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. The final outcome was a scale comprising 16 items distributed across three factors: the entity's engagement with students; the project's intended impact on the community; and the entity's commitment to the project's organisation. The solution obtained is satisfactory in terms of both factorial structure and the levels of internal consistency evaluated. In conclusion, we highlight the distinctive contribution of this study, which lies in grounding the instrument's development in faculty perspectives on this subject.

Keywords: service-learning; university; community; social entities; reciprocity; faculty

Resumen

Las sociedades modernas esperan de la educación superior que se comprometa en el afrontamiento y resolución de problemas existentes en la comunidad. En consecuencia, la

Date of receipt of the original: 08/07/2025

Date of approval: 27/08/2025

Please, cite this article as follows: Santos Rego, M. A., Mella-Núñez, I., Soto Carballo, J. & Malheiro-Gutiérrez, X. M. (2026). Revaluating the community in university service-learning: A faculty-led scale [Revalorizar la comunidad en el aprendizaje-servicio universitario: una escala con visión del profesorado]. *Revista Española de Pedagogía*, 84(293), 39-58. <https://doi.org/10.9781/rep.2026.395>

agenda política ha de promover la dimensión social presente en las esferas de acción universitaria, poniendo en valor aquellas metodologías acordes con tal propósito. Es el caso del aprendizaje-servicio, pedagogía en la que se combina el aprendizaje académico con un servicio a la comunidad. Y puesto que el énfasis en la comunidad no se ha prodigado en la investigación sobre la citada metodología, el objetivo del artículo es la validación de una escala diseñada para analizar el grado de implicación de las entidades que colaboran en el aprendizaje-servicio a partir de la percepción del profesorado. El instrumento se aplicó a 147 docentes de nueve (9) universidades españolas que hacen uso de la metodología. Los datos obtenidos se sometieron a un análisis factorial exploratorio y confirmatorio. Lo que resultó, finalmente, fue una escala de 16 ítems distribuidos en tres factores: implicación de la entidad con las/os estudiantes, pretensiones del proyecto en la comunidad, y compromiso de la entidad en la organización del proyecto. La solución obtenida es satisfactoria, tanto en la estructura factorial como en los niveles de consistencia interna evaluados. Concluimos subrayando la marca diferencial que supone basar la elaboración del instrumento en la visión que el profesorado tiene sobre el particular.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje-servicio; universidad; comunidad; entidades sociales; reciprocidad; profesorado.

1. Introduction

Since the end of the last century, the world has undergone a series of rapid social, economic, political, and environmental transformations that have significantly affected the lives of all groups and communities. These include, among others, questions such as increasing migratory flows, the climate emergency, transformations in the labour market, the need for lifelong learning, the dizzying advances in information and communication technologies, the exponential growth in the creation and dissemination of knowledge, and the new scenarios that define relations between individuals.

Naturally, universities are no strangers to this situation, as it is expected that they will help address global challenges in collaboration with other social and political institutions and bodies. In our context, the development of the European Higher Education Area, alongside organisational and pedagogical reform, also reinforced the social dimension of the university, a key element in the regulatory development of this supranational framework since the Berlin Communiqué (2003).

However, in recent years this question has become the focus of European higher education policies. One example of this is the Rome Communiqué (2020), which calls for greater involvement of universities with their communities in shared, mutually beneficial, and socially responsible activities. This meeting at the highest ministerial level led to a document that set out a series of principles to strengthen the social dimension of higher education (EHEA, 2020).

Here we refer to one of the aspects of university life that has attracted the most attention among academic and civic entities in recent years: University Social Responsibility. This concept, which is also known by several related terms, calls on universities to adopt an explicit social commitment in their policies, initiatives, and activities. This focus is not limited to a vision of sharing science and knowledge with society, but also refers to the establishment of formative connections between the student body and community life, in order to facilitate the exercise of a more participatory citizenship in a framework of democratic life (Coelho & Menezes, 2021).

In the pedagogical development of universities, one of the most beneficial methodologies for this model is service-learning (SL), owing to its clear potential to situate learning processes within community contexts. More specifically, we define this as a:

pedagogical proposal that addresses the search for concrete formulas to engage the students in the daily life of the communities, neighbourhoods, and nearby institutions. It is conceptualised within experience-based education and is characterised by: a) student protagonism; b) addressing a real need; c) connection to curricular objectives; d) execution of the service project; and e) reflection. (Naval et al., 2011, p. 88)

Such is the weight of the community as an educational stakeholder in SL that many of the characteristics that define the methodology itself derive from the community's relationship with the university. This is the case of addressing real needs within the community, encouraging students' active participation in social service projects, fostering ongoing and shared reflection, and ensuring the reciprocity essential to this combination of learning and service (Hernández-Barco et al., 2020).

However, even though the community is an essential element in the conceptualisation of service-learning, it has not received the attention it deserves in research. More studies and reports have focused on describing students' academic achievements and, to a lesser extent, their civic and social outcomes (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Rodríguez-Izquierdo & Lorenzo, 2023).

We believe these grounds are sufficient to justify considering the community's role in service-learning as the central aim of our research. The aim of this work is therefore to validate a scale designed to evaluate university teachers' perceptions of the involvement of social entities in SL projects.

1.1. What is community in service-learning?

Perhaps the greatest challenge when speaking of the community in service-learning is to define what we mean by it. An initial approximation to the term leads to the analysis by Ferdinand Tönnies, recognised for its distinction between community and society. This German sociologist suggests that, while community (*Gemeinschaft*) refers to a life that is organic and real, society (*Gesellschaft*) alludes more to an imaginary and mechanical structure (Tönnies, 2011). His perspective can be interpreted as meaning that the community is a more natural grouping, characterised by bonds of reciprocity, mutual understanding, and interdependence based on unity and cohesion, whereas society is a more impersonal and artificial grouping, as its formation is more rational and depends on people's capacity for deliberation.

In relation to what concerns us when discussing community in service-learning, both concepts and Tönnies' (2011) corresponding analysis contribute to the epistemic development of the term. His vision of community is certainly the one that comes closest, although we must not forget the intentional, volitional, and deliberative character of his notion of society. Thus, within the framework of SL, the community could be defined as the group of people who reciprocally identify with a series of characteristics, as well as with objectives to be pursued, which may come to be shared in moments and spaces of shared life; something which, in addition to a sense of belonging, requires commitments that are undertaken and actively shared by a majority of individuals in a real-world context (Santos Rego et al., 2023).

It is well documented that the social dimension in this methodology aligns closely with the direct influence of John Dewey's ideas about the community and, in particular, with the educational potential attributed to it (González Geraldo et al., 2017; Santos Rego et al., 2020; Santos Rego, Mella-Núñez & García-Álvarez, 2021). What the American philosopher proposed –and this constitutes his main contribution to SL is to understand the community as the perfect medium for the experiential development of the student body, as it becomes a formative and educational stakeholder, since it is where the activities characteristic of everyday life take place (Dewey, 1995).

It is in his idea about the connections between education, community, and democracy that much of the epistemic and pragmatic construction of SL resides. In the case of higher education, this intellectual prism could be supported by the argument that it is within the community itself that knowledge not always accessible in university classrooms can be found.

Nonetheless, a minimum of rigour in the training process requires access to such knowledge to be produced in a systematic, formal, and even institutionalised way. Social entities must act as partners that are able to mediate and foster contact with the community, all within a functional organisational structure that recognises students' academic and professional realities (Sotelino et al., 2019).

However, SL research has faced the inherent difficulty of defining what and/or who the community is from a structural and organisational perspective. Cruz and Giles (2000) identify two recurring issues in this regard. The first is that the community can be understood either as an entity that is linked to and collaborates with the university, or as the set of people or social group at which the service is directed. The second concerns whether the community is viewed, on the one hand, from a geographical perspective (for example, a neighbourhood close to the campus) or, on the other hand, as a reality that can be intentionally created and constructed.

Bringle et al. (2013) explore this idea in greater depth by analysing specific variables that help define what or who constitutes the community in service-learning. They first highlight the location, since the service may be offered within the university itself, at local, provincial, state, or even virtual levels; secondly, they consider the range of institutions in which it may be represented: governmental entities, organisations connected to grassroots movements such as associations or cooperatives, and non-governmental organisations, among others.

It is clear that the epistemological debate about the community remains open, and not just from a sociological perspective, but also a genuinely pedagogical one. This should not limit or slow down analyses of its role in SL. Turning again to Cruz and Giles (2000), perhaps we should not put too much effort into discussing the community as a social or geographical reality, but instead concentrate more on studying the partnership relations that it establishes with the university; something that strategically entails giving greater consideration to the role that community partners play, or should play, in the dynamics of these projects.

1.2. What should the community's role be in SL?

Community stakeholders should undoubtedly be regarded as partners who collaborate actively in the project's construction (especially when setting its objectives), otherwise the project would be a sort of "laboratory" where students put their knowledge into practice without genuine relations of exchange (Compare et al., 2022). The research by Miron and Moely (2006) is evidence in this line. They conclude that the greatest benefits are reported by institutions that have a voice in the management of the project, and where there have been particularly good relations with students.

It is therefore important to define the functions that can be expected of the entities collaborating in a service-learning project, noting the tasks that have an academic aspect and, of course, not limiting them to activities in which they act merely as passive receivers of a service. It is clear that community partners must be involved in matters such as joint planning with teachers, looking for direct connections with the reference curriculum, supporting and monitoring students, creating moments dedicated to reflecting on the experience, participating in the evaluation of learning, or organising a closing event or project celebration event, among others (Rubio, 2015).

They should therefore be regarded as an additional educating agent, whose clear involvement in students' education must be sought. Indeed, Compare et al. (2022) noted that the organisations themselves sometimes view their participation in training and guiding students as the most important of all of the tasks that they carry out in the SL projects.

However, other studies, such as Arribas-Cubero et al. (2022), have established that social entities have a reduced scope in the different activities. This low participation might be due to the challenges they encounter in relating to the university and engaging with the student

body. In this regard, they highlight issues such as coordinating schedules and calendars, limited capacities (for example, resources and the availability of engaging activities for students), and the educational responsibilities that SL entails (motivating, supervising, and evaluating students) (Karasik, 2020).

It is beneficial for teachers to support their partners in carrying out their tasks with the desired quality, something that helps students recognise the competence and professionalism of the entities they work with, as the effect that this conduct might have on the partners' motivation and feeling of self-efficacy as co-educator stakeholders is not insignificant (Compare et al., 2022). It is a question of teachers and entities working together to establish learning objectives, determine the relationships between students and entities, and even select methods to evaluate learning and monitor the project (Rinaldo et al., 2015).

However, apart from their participation and involvement in the development of these initiatives, there is a central element that defines the role to be played by the community in service-learning. We are talking about reciprocity. In other words, the university-community relationship should be established under the principles of effective reciprocity, based on respect, trust, genuine commitment, balance of power, shared resources, and fluent communication between universities and community stakeholders (Jacoby, 2015).

There are even those who elevate reciprocity to a central characteristic of the methodology (Petri, 2015). Adopting this principle has come to be regarded as an important quality criterion for service-learning (Santos Rego et al., 2025), even though it entails a transformation of the relationships to be established and of the roles that both parties –the academic and the community– must play.

In short, it would be a pathway for reformulation that is explained in the three pillars, which, according to Dostilio et al. (2012), would support reciprocity in SL: first, the exchange of benefits, resources, and actions between universities and entities; second, the bidirectional influence of the personal, social, and environmental contexts of the different stakeholders, which recommends taking into account the interests and ways of being and doing of both parties; and thirdly, generative capacity, insofar as this guides social innovation, as university-community relations should pursue new knowledge, experiences, and learnings that might contribute to social transformation.

The move from more traditional service-learning (where responsibilities and decision-making are located primarily in the university) to a type that is more reciprocal and based on exchange and collective participation involves reformulating the roles played by the different stakeholders, making reciprocity a distinguishing feature in the quality of the projects (Santos Rego et al., 2025).

1.3. Research into/on the community in SL

Despite what we have previously reviewed and established regarding the central role of the community in SL, research assessing students' learning outcomes and competence development has been considerably more prolific (Santos Rego, Mella, Naval & Vázquez, 2021). Furthermore, the attention paid to the community in this field of study has primarily focused on exploring its satisfaction with the results, or, more specifically, on examining the factors that either encourage participation or, conversely, restrict and hinder involvement (Chika-James et al., 2022; Compare et al., 2022; Cronley et al., 2015).

A first pathway that is apparent in the literature relates to the information collected directly from the community itself, i.e. through the organisations with which there is collaboration. What predominates are qualitative instruments, such as interviews (Chika-James et al., 2022; Gerstenblatt, 2014; Miron & Moely, 2006; Rinaldo et al., 2015) and discussion groups (Cronley et al., 2015; Sandy & Holland, 2006). This could be explained by the small samples used, or by the open character of the information that is sought. Naturally, there are also studies that use

questionnaires (Karasik, 2020; Shek et al., 2021) or mixed studies (Compare et al., 2022; Paulson & Davis, 2024).

Given that these entities are central to the project, we have noted above that most of the works revolve around their perception and satisfaction, especially in terms of benefits obtained and difficulties experienced. However, there are also studies in which the instruments explore realities such as the voice and role of the entities or the interactions established (Miron & Moely, 2006); the relationship of the students with the (local) community in a broader sense (Gerstenblatt, 2014); or questions relating to the role of the teachers that could be improved in the opinion of social entities (Karasik, 2020). The questionnaire designed by Compare et al. (2022) deserves special mention for its breadth, as it asks the entities for information about their general perception of the project, the responsibilities and role assumed by the person who tutors the students (evaluation, monitoring, etc.), their motivations for participating in SL, the difficulties encountered in organisational and pedagogical terms, and the results obtained.

There are also works in which the community's participation in the projects is analysed from the perspective of the teachers. This is the case of the proposal by Gelmon et al. (2001). In their renowned work, they propose a multidimensional model for assessing SL (teachers, students, community, and university as an institution). It includes an interview and a questionnaire for the teachers, which, among other aspects, seeks information about the community's participation in the projects. These are studies where teachers provide information about the extent to which the entities are involved in questions such as assessment, reflection, or their own training in this educational methodology (Sáez, 2024; Santos Rego & Lorenzo, 2018).

This second route is undoubtedly (and by some distance) the one that is less explored, hence all the more reason for us to base this contribution on the teachers' view of the participation of the community in the service-learning projects. Having instruments intended for teachers to collect information about the role of social bodies will enhance our understanding of how universities perceive the community's educational and social role in developing and evaluating service-learning.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

We used convenience sampling to select the participants. We found teachers who use the service-learning methodology by analysing the calls for educational innovation projects at the universities involved in the research, and by using publications and participation in conferences on this topic.

The final sample comprised 147 academics from 9 Spanish universities: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha (10.9%), Universidade da Coruña (13.6%), Universidad de Jaén (2.7%), Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (9.5%), Universidad de Navarra (9.5%), Universidad Pablo de Olavide (3.4%), Universidade de Santiago de Compostela (30.6%), Universitat de València (7.5%), and Universidade de Vigo (12.2%). These academics are primarily from the fields of Social and Legal Sciences (56.5%), Experimental Sciences (16.3%), and Health Sciences (12.2%), with a smaller presence from Engineering and Architecture and Art and Humanities (7.5% each). The majority were women (66%), and the mean age was 50.25 years ($SD = 9.30$), with a minimum of 31 years and a maximum of 72.

They have stable posts as civil servants (49%) or as permanent statutory staff (e.g. tenured or permanent academic staff) (25.9%). They have extensive university teaching experience ($M = 18.7$; $SD = 9.83$), and in the last 2 years have participated in teaching innovation courses (85%), primarily relating to teaching-learning methodologies and strategies. Furthermore, 71.4% collaborate, or have collaborated, with civic-social organisations. They are trained in

SL (97.3%), and their motivation for using this methodology stems from the results it can achieve in students' learning.

2.2. Measurement instrument

Within the framework of the research project, a questionnaire was designed with the goal of identifying the nature and scope of community participation in university SL projects. It includes a total of 32 questions, of which 4 use Likert-type scales. Here we will focus on the scale used to analyse teachers' perspectives on the role of the community in these projects. For its design, we drew on an instrument previously developed by the team in another study (see Sáez, 2024), together with the works of Chong (2014) and Santos Rego et al. (2023).

The first version of the questionnaire was prepared by the team from the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, who coordinated the project. It was then sent to the rest of the researchers from the universities involved in the study, with each university preparing a report to improve the wording and eliminate or incorporate items. All contributions were reviewed by the initial team to determine their inclusion or rejection, based on a criterion of agreement or disagreement. Finally, the decisions were communicated to all the universities, together with the reasons for them. The four scales were also sent to four experts in SL and research methodology, who were asked to evaluate them based on a correction template considering criteria of validity, placement, intelligibility, and unambiguity.

2.3. Procedure

The questionnaire was administered in the second semester of academic year 2023–24 (March–June) in the nine universities (eight public and one private), having received a favourable report from the Bioethics Committee of the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela (code USC 45/2023). Once authorised by the data protection officer of the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, the instrument was sent with a covering letter to the teachers who use SL. It was completed individually online using the SurveyMonkey software.

2.4. Data analysis

First, we calculated the descriptive statistics of the sample, analysing the properties of the items. We then performed an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with the IBM-SPSS 29 software package, using principal component extraction and the Varimax rotation. From there, we calculated the reliability of each factor using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Finally, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was carried out to evaluate the model's fit (IBM-SPSS AMOS 29).

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive indices

The initial scale comprised 17 items (see Annex) with five answer options, from not at all to a lot. After the reliability analyses, these were reduced to 16 (eliminating item 3). Table 1 shows the results. The statistics are acceptable, as values greater than 2.00 indicate extreme skew and lower values represent normality, while values between 8.00 and 20.00 would also reflect extreme kurtosis. The sample then has a normal distribution, which justifies the use of parametric tests.

TABLE 1. Descriptive Statistics and Indices of Skew and Kurtosis for the Community Participation in SL Projects Scale

Item	M	SD	Skew		Kurtosis	
			Standard error	Standard error	Standard error	Standard error
1	4.48	.668	-1.112	.226	.823	.449
2	3.23	1.530	-.275	.227	-1.395	.451
4	3.58	1.294	-.693	.227	-.585	.451
5	3.28	1.428	-.392	.229	-1.197	.455
6	4.31	0.772	-1.316	.229	2.704	.455
7	3.70	1.381	-.794	.228	-.617	.453
8	2.79	1.514	.118	.228	-1.468	.453
9	3.34	1.443	-.437	.229	-1.149	.455
10	3.90	1.267	-1.126	.227	.292	.451
11	3.78	1.163	-.873	.229	.167	.455
12	4.46	.758	-1.868	.228	4.764	.453
13	3.86	1.122	-.960	.228	.329	.453
14	3.85	1.179	-.840	.228	-.153	.453
15	3.71	1.219	-.771	.228	-.226	.453
16	3.56	1.286	-.633	.228	-.588	.453
17	4.15	1.161	-1.545	.229	1.676	.455

As Table 2 shows, all of the item–total correlations are significant.

TABLE 2. ITEM-TOTAL CORRELATIONS FOR THE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN SL PROJECTS SCALE

	Total	1	2	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Total	1																
Pearson.	147																
N																	
1		.444**	1														
Pearson.		<.001															
Sig.	147	147															
(2-tailed)																	
N																	
2		.590**	.151	1													
Pearson.		<.001	.068														
Sig.	147	147	147														
(2-tailed)																	
N																	
4		.632**	.046	.461**	1												
Pearson.		<.001	.581	<.001													
Sig.	147	147	147	147													
(2-tailed)																	
N																	
5		.768**	.300**	.560**	.470**	1											
Pearson.		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001												
Sig.	147	147	147	147	147												
(2-tailed)																	
N																	
6		.578**	.361**	.138	.310**	.394**	1										
Pearson.		<.001	<.001	.097	<.001	<.001											
Sig.	147	147	147	147	147	147											
(2-tailed)																	
N																	
7		.522**	.246**	.180*	.395**	.314**	.337**	1									
Pearson.		<.001	.003	.030	<.001	<.001	<.001										
Sig.	147	147	147	147	147	147	147										
(2-tailed)																	
N																	
8		.646**	.283**	.457**	.492**	.686**	.189*	.224**	1								
Pearson.		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	.002	.006									
Sig.	147	147	147	147	147	147	147	147									
(2-tailed)																	
N																	

3.2. Dimensionality

The exploratory factor analysis (EFA), using the principal components extraction method and Varimax rotation, enables us to determine the dimensionality of the scale, with the following descriptive statistics: $KMO = .84$; $\chi^2(136) = 1186.6$; $p < .001$. The initial extraction gave three significant factors that explain 58.24% of the variance. Factors one and three contain five items and the second six (Table 3).

TABLE 3. Rotated Factor Loadings, Community of Each Item, and Variance Explained by Each Factor in the Scale of Community Participation in SL Projects

Item	Factor I	Factor II	Factor III	Communality (h ²)
8	.771			.640
2	0.762			.606
5	.738			.706
4	.602			.514
9	.594			.636
15		.883		.787
11		.781		.647
16		.693		.664
14		.542		.399
12		.527		.526
1		.434		.313
10			.680	.615
6			.665	.583
7			.657	.487
17			.578	.531
13			.544	.550
% explained variance	40.16	10.92	7.16	

Factor I, which we have called “involvement of the entity with the students”, describes core activities that the entity carries out with students who participate in the projects: evaluation (item 8), training (item 2), supervision (item 5), designing activities (item 4), and facilitating processes of reflection (item 9). Factor II includes 6 items that define the “project’s objectives in the community”: supporting its development and not just providing a temporary service (item 15); addressing its needs in a sustainable manner (item 11); benefiting the community (item 16), recognising and valuing its members (item 14); strengthening relations between the university and the community (item 12); and adaptation to the circumstances of the community (item 1). Factor III, for its part, groups items on “involvement of the entity in the organisation of the project”: university and entity/organisation celebrate/share the benefits (item 10); defining the functions of each group involved (item 6); identification of social needs (item 7); giving their opinion on the project and its results (item 17); and evaluation of perception of the fulfilment of the entity’s objectives (item 13).

3.3. Reliability

We then calculated the Cronbach α coefficient based on the analysis of the internal consistency of the final version of the scale and all of its components. The analysis of the 16 items gave an alpha coefficient of .89 (indicating high internal consistency) which did not increase when eliminating any of the items. Table 4 shows the homogeneity index and alpha coefficient for each of the factors that comprise the scale. As for the internal consistency of the items that comprise Factor I, the α coefficient was .84, which indicates good reliability. The value of the items from Factor II is .81, while the consistency of Factor III falls to .77. If we consider the table, we can see that the alpha does not increase when eliminating any of the items.

TABLE 4. HOMOGENEITY INDEX (HI) OF THE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN SL PROJECTS SCALE

Item	HI	Cronbach's α if the item is removed
Factor I		
2	.627	.825
4	.547	.839
5	.759	.799
8	.680	.814
9	.636	.823
Factor II		
1	.389	.814
11	.633	.764
12	.562	.788
14	.478	.803
15	.705	.746
16	.708	.745
Factor III		
6	.523	.750
7	.450	.775
10	.633	.699
13	.614	.708
17	.578	.720

3.4. Estimation of parameters and evaluation of fit

After analysing the construct validity and reliability of the scale, we performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using the IBM-SPSS AMOS 29 programme, estimating the parameters of the original model under the maximum likelihood estimation criterion, in order to test the adequacy of the three-factor model. This is the model shown in Figure 1, where the standardised regression weights can be seen, as well as the covariances (all of them are significant: $p < .01$).

FIGURE 1. CFA MODEL FOR THE SCALE OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN SL PROJECTS..

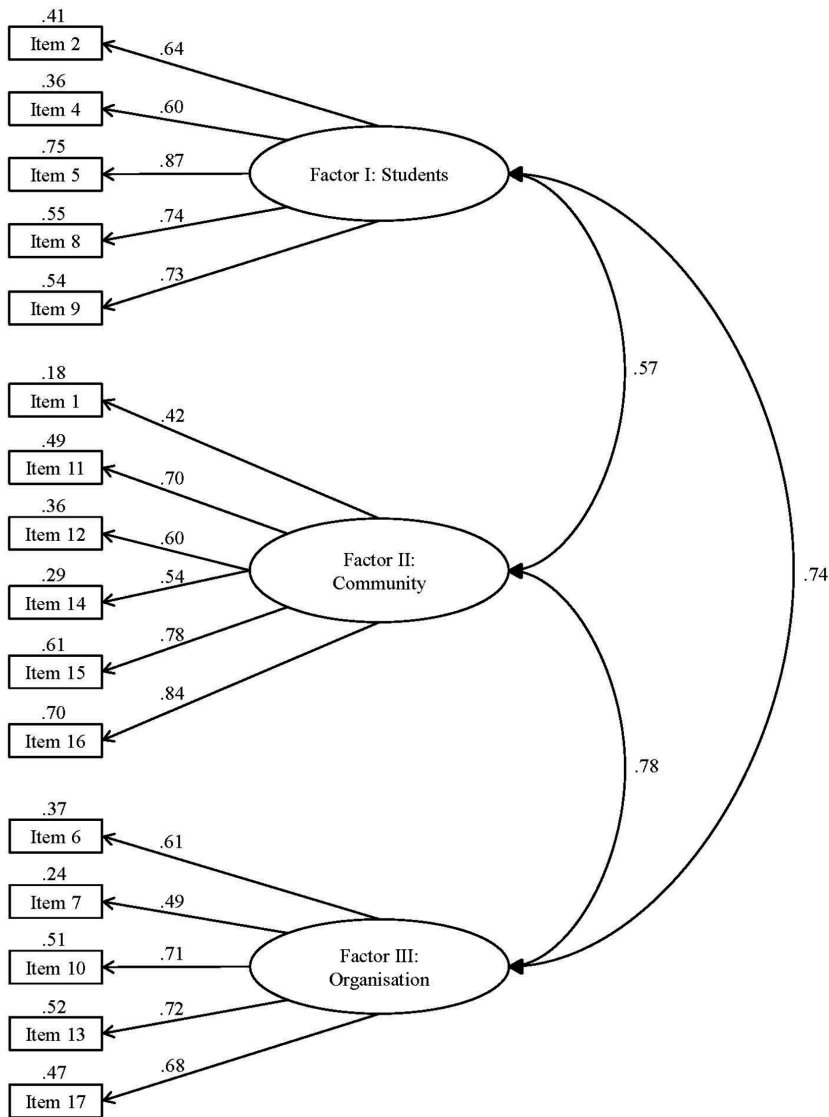


Table 5 presents the fit indices, which enable us to confirm that the proposed model is adequate to explain the role of the community in SL projects. This is consistent with the theoretical structure that guided the preparation of the scale and its items.

TABLE 5. FIT INDICES OF THE INITIAL AND FINAL MODELS OF THE SCALE

χ^2	df	p	$\chi^2 (p)$	GFI	CFI	RMSEA [CI]	SRMS
296	114	.000	2.60	.828	.835	.105 [.090-.119]	.070

4. Conclusions

This work has focused on service-learning from a community vision, as the literature has frequently shown the central role of social entities and groups in the epistemic and practical construction of this educational strategy (Hernández-Barco et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Izquierdo & Lorenzo, 2023). However, to date research has generally prioritised the study of students' academic results (Santos Rego, Mella, Naval & Vázquez, 2021) to the detriment of the attention to the community in the framework of this methodology (Cruz & Giles, 2000). For this reason, this study proposed a model to measure community participation in SL from the teachers' perspective.

The proposal consists of a three-factor scale based on a rigorous theoretical framework whose central focus is the advisability of evaluating the involvement of the community beyond the results obtained (Chika-James et al., 2022), valuing the processes and the configuration of relationships based on reciprocity and, of course, on the participation of the entities as educational stakeholders (Compare et al., 2022; Santos Rego et al., 2023).

Under this premise, the three factors of the scale collect information about the entity's involvement with the students, the project's objectives in the community, and the involvement of the entity in the organisation of the project. In short, it is a scale designed to determine the nature of the partnership relations established between the entities and the universities, rather than the level of satisfaction with the results obtained (Miron & Moely, 2006; Rinaldo et al., 2015). More specifically, the exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses indicate that the solution of the scale is satisfactory in both its factorial structure and the evaluated levels of internal consistency.

What our study makes very clear is that, without the community –strategically viewed through social entities of different natures and contextual relevance (Sotelino et al., 2019)–, university service-learning would not attain the levels of theoretical consistency and practical functionality that its contribution is frequently reported as providing to high-quality competency training in higher education (Santos Rego et al., 2025).

Such a consideration is backed on this occasion by the sense and formative scope given to community commitment in these projects by university teachers who have experience in the use of service-learning and whose recognised motivation in this regard is the potential optimisation of results that the methodology can demonstrate in a large proportion of the students.

With this expectation (which we have confirmed in previous studies) and supported by extensive contributions from the literature on the subject, we validated a scale designed to measure the involvement of civic and social organisations in service-learning programmes or projects. The distinguishing feature here is that the instrument's development is grounded in faculty perspectives on this subject. Indeed, the analyses performed to validate the scale highlight that the lowest scores are found in items from Factor I (the entity's involvement with students), reflecting the entity's limited participation in activities such as evaluation, reflection, or monitoring (Arribas-Cubero et al., 2022; Karasik, 2020).

While we remain wary of any inclination towards idealisation, the fact that the teaching staff are individuals who recognise the requirements and/or conditions to take into account in the participation of the community as an educational stakeholder in higher education is of extra value for the advance of good service-learning in universities. We should not forget that this is where we can find a crucial example of the theoretical effectiveness of a methodology whose epistemic credentials, which derive from pragmatism, need constant pedagogical legitimation in the situated practice provided by the community or communities, making service a magnificent opportunity for personal and professional learning.

In the contemporary society of algorithms and of the inevitable digital tension linked to their obvious entry into campus life, maybe service-learning will, here and now, open dialogic pathways so that, in the community, some of the best proposals for realising the creative potential arising from our cooperative nature as social beings can be taken up again. It is no coincidence, and with good reason, that it has been said that we are dealing with a pedagogy of and for common action.

As an academic work, this one has limitations and opens new possibilities to continue to advance in this line of research. On the one hand, the self-reported nature of our data could introduce social desirability bias, which would suggest a need to reinforce the teachers' perspective and contrast it with that of decision makers at the entities involved in the projects. On the other hand, given the specificity of the participants and the conditions under which the research was carried out, we had to opt for convenience sampling of the participants within the universities involved in the study when selecting them. However, it would be opportune to expand the sample by using a probability method, which would permit increased external validity.

Author contributions

Miguel Ángel Santos-Rego. Conceptualisation, data curation, formal analysis, funding acquisition, investigation, methodology, project administration, resources, supervision, validation, visualisation, writing-original draft, writing-review & editing.

Ígor Mella-Núñez. Conceptualisation, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, resources, validation, visualisation, writing-original draft, writing-review & editing.

Jorge Soto-Carballo. Conceptualisation, investigation, methodology, resources, validation, writing-review & editing.

Xosé Manuel Malheiro-Gutiérrez. Conceptualisation, investigation, methodology, resources, validation, writing-review & editing.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

The authors declare that they have not used artificial intelligence (AI) in the preparation of this article.

Funding

This work stems from the project "The impact of the university on the community through service-learning projects: A study centred on reciprocity" (Ref. PID2021-122827OB-I00). Knowledge Generation Project 2021, funded by the Agencia Estatal de Investigación (Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades) (State Research Agency, Ministry of Science, Innovation, and Universities) - www.usc.es/apsuni

References

- Arribas-Cubero, H. F., Gómez-Pintado, A., Martínez-Abajo, J., Vizcarra-Morales, M. T., Gamito-Gómez, R., & Monjas-Aguado, R. (2022). La ausencia de voz de las entidades en los proyectos de aprendizaje-servicio: propuesta de una herramienta para analizar y mejorar su participación. *Revista Iberoamericana de Aprendizaje Servicio*, 13, 40-59. <https://doi.org/10.1344/ridas2022.13.3>
- Bringle, R. G., Clayton, P. H., & Hatcher, J. A. (2013). Research on service-learning. An introduction. In P. H. Clayton, R. G. Bringle, y J. A. Hatcher (Eds.), *Research on service-learning. Conceptual frameworks and assessment. Volume 2A: students and faculty* (pp. 3-25). Stylus.

- Chika-James, T. A., Salem, T., & Oyet, M. C. (2022). Our Gains, Pains and Hopes: Community Partners' Perspectives of Service-Learning in an Undergraduate Business Education. *Sage Open*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211069390>
- Chong, C. (2014). Service-Learning Research: Definitional Challenges and Complexities. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 15(4), 347-358
- Coelho, M., & Menezes, I. (2021). University Social Responsibility, Service-learning, and Students' Personal, Professional, and Civic Education. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.617300>
- Compare, C., Pieri, C., & Albanesi, C. (2022). Community-university partnership in service-learning: voicing the community side. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 26(2), 79-102
- Cronley, C., Madden, E., & Davis, J. B. (2015). Making Service-Learning Partnerships Work: Listening and Responding to Community Partners. *Journal of Community Practice*, 23, 274-289. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10705422.2015.1027801>
- Cruz, N., & Giles, D. E. (2000). Where's the community in service-learning research? *Michigan Journal of Community Service-learning*, 7(1), 28-34.
- Dewey, J. (1995). *Democracia y educación* [Democracy and education]. Morata.
- Dostilio, L. D., Brackmann, S. M., Edwards, K. E., Harrison, B., Kliewer, B. W. & Clayton, P. H. (2012). Reciprocity: Saying What We Mean and Meaning What We Say. *Michigan Journal of Community Service-learning*, 19(1), 17-32. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.3239521.0019.102>
- EHEA. (2020). Rome Ministerial Communiqué Annex II. Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA. https://eha.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique_Annex_II.pdf
- Gelmon, S. B., Holland, B. A., Driscoll, A., Spring, A., & Kerrigan, S. (2001). *Assessing service-learning and civic engagement. Principles and techniques*. Campus Compact.
- Gerstenblatt, P. (2014). Community as Agency: Community Partner Experiences with Service-learning. *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*, 7(2), 60-71. <https://doi.org/10.54656/VTKX3458>
- González Geraldo, J. L., Jover, G., & Martínez, M. (2017). La ética del aprendizaje servicio en la universidad: una interpretación desde el pragmatismo. *Bordón*, 69(4), 63-78. <https://doi.org/10.13042/Bordon.2017.690405>
- Hernández-Barco, M., Sánchez-Martín, J., Blanco-Salas, J., & Ruiz-Téllez, T. (2020). Teaching Down to Earth-Service-Learning Methodology for Science Education and Sustainability at the University Level: A Practical Approach. *Sustainability*, 12(542), 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12020542>
- Jacoby, B. (2015). *Service-learning essentials*. Jossey-Bass.
- Karasik, R. J. (2020). Community Partners' Perspectives and the Faculty Role in Community-Based Learning. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 43(2), 113-135. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1053825919892994>
- Miron, D., & Moely, B. E. (2006). Community agency voice and benefit in service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service-learning*, 12(2), 27-37.
- Naval, C., García, R., Puig, J. M., & Santos Rego, M. A. (2011). La formación ético-cívica y el compromiso social de los estudiantes universitarios. *Encounters on Education*, 12, 77-91.
- Paulson, L. R., & Davis, C. (2024). Amplifying Community Partner Voices in Rural Community Service-Learning Partnerships. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 28(1), 5-25.
- Petri, A. (2015). Service-learning from the perspective of community organizations. *Journal of Public Scholarship in Higher Education*, 5, 93-110.

- Rinaldo, S. B., Davis, D. F. & y Borunda, J. (2015). Delivering Value to Community Partners in Service-Learning Projects. *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*, 8(1), 115-124. <https://doi.org/10.54656/VTKX3458>
- Rodríguez-Izquierdo, R. M., & Lorenzo, M. (Eds.). (2023). *El giro comunitario en el aprendizaje-servicio universitario. Inclusión y sostenibilidad* [The community-based turn in university service-learning. Inclusion and sustainability]. Octaedro.
- Rubio, L. (2015). Implantar el aprendizaje servicio en una entidad social supone reconocer su dimensión pedagógica y definir un servicio útil y formativo. In J. M. Puig (Coord.), *11 ideas clave. ¿Cómo realizar un proyecto de aprendizaje-servicio?* (pp. 91-102). Graó.
- Sáez, D. (2024). *Qué es la calidad y cómo medirla en los proyectos de aprendizaje-servicio universitarios* [Doctoral thesis, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela]. <http://hdl.handle.net/10347/33588>
- Sandy, M. & Holland, B. (2006). Different Worlds and Common Ground: Community Partner Perspectives on Campus-Community Partnerships. *Michigan Journal of Community Service-learning*, 13(1), 30-43.
- Santos Rego, M. A. & Lorenzo, M. (2018). *A Guide for the Institutionalization of Service-Learning at University Level*. Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, Servizo de Publicacións e Intercambio Científico. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15304/op.2018.1165>
- Santos Rego, M. A., Lorenzo, M. & Mella, I. (2020). *El aprendizaje-servicio y la educación universitaria. Hacer personas competentes*. Octaedro.
- Santos Rego, M. A., Lorenzo, M., & Sáez, D. (2025). *La universidad y el aprendizaje-servicio. Lo que importa es la calidad*. Narcea.
- Santos Rego, M. A., Mella-Núñez, I. & Míguez-Salina, G. (2023). El aprendizaje-servicio universitario y el desarrollo educativo de la comunidad: el desafío de la reciprocidad [University service-learning and community educational development. The challenge of reciprocity]. In R. M. Rodríguez-Izquierdo & M. Lorenzo Moledo (Eds.), *El giro comunitario en el aprendizaje-servicio universitario. Inclusión y sostenibilidad* (pp. 33-48). Octaedro.
- Santos Rego, M. A., Mella, I., Naval, C. & Vázquez, V. (2021). The evaluation of social and professional life competences of university students through service-learning. *Frontiers in Education*, 6(606304). <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.606304>
- Santos Rego, M. A., Mella-Núñez, I. & García-Álvarez, J. (2021). Educación moral y ética de la acción en el aprendizaje-servicio universitario. La sombra de John Dewey. *Perfiles Educativos*, 43(173). <https://doi.org/10.22201/issue.24486167e.2021.173.59818>
- Shek, D. T. L., Yang, Z., Ma, C. M. S. & Chai, C. W. Y. (2021). Subjective Outcome Evaluation of Service-Learning by the Service Recipients: Scale Development, Normative Profiles and Predictors. *Child Indicators Research*, 14, 411-434. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-020-09765-1>
- Sotelino, A., Mella, I., & Rodríguez, M. A. (2019). El papel de las entidades cívico-sociales en el aprendizaje-servicio. Sistematizando la participación del alumnado en el tercer sector. *Teoría de la Educación. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 31(2), 197-219. <https://doi.org/10.14201/teri.20156>
- Tönnies, F. (2011). *Comunidad y Asociación: el comunismo y el socialismo como formas de vida social*. Biblioteca nueva.

Author biographies

Miguel A. Santos Rego

Doctor of Philosophy and Educational Sciences from the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, where he is currently University Professor in the Department of Pedagogy and

Didactics (Faculty of Educational Sciences). He has been a visiting researcher and visiting professor in the universities of Florida International University, the University of Illinois, Johns Hopkins, and the University of Texas in the USA. He is the author of forty books and some two hundred articles in journals of accredited quality in the field of the educational sciences, and he has supervised 37 doctoral theses and directed 23 research projects. National Educational Research Prize. He was Vice-Rector for Faculty Affairs at the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela. He is currently head of the Comisión Gallega de Informes, Evaluación, Certificación y Acreditación (Galician Reports, Evaluation, Certification, and Accreditation Commission, CGIACA-ACSUG), as well as coordinating the ESCULCA Research Group, recognised as a Competitive Reference Group in the Galician R&D system.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8593-6881>

Ígor Mella-Núñez

International Doctorate in Education and Special Prize from the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, where he is currently Associate Professor in the Department of Pedagogy and Didactics (Faculty of Educational Sciences). He is a member of the ESCULCA Research Group, the RIES (Immigration, School, and Society Network) research network, and the UNIASC (University, Innovation, and Learning in the Knowledge Society) Excellence Network. His principal research interests are higher education, service-learning, and competence development. In relation to these topics, he has participated in various research projects with regional, national (State R&D&I Programme), and European (Erasmus+ Programme) funding.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0189-4619>

Jorge Soto-Carballo

Doctor in Educational Sciences from the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, degree in Pedagogy, and three-year degree in Teaching. He was Vice-Rector of the Universidade de Vigo (2018–2022) and Secretary of the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia in Pontevedra (2002–2005). He is currently a professor in the Faculty of Educational Sciences and Sport at the Universidade de Vigo (Pontevedra campus). His research focuses on teacher training and the use of smart educational technology in educational contexts. He has participated in research projects with regional, national, and international scope and is the author of numerous scientific publications in the field of education. He is part of the Editorial Committee of the Revista de Investigación en Educación and of the Advisory Committee of the Revista Galega do Ensino. He is a member of the Sociedad Española de Pedagogía (Spanish Society of Pedagogy) and of the Society of Transnational Academic Researchers (STAR), and is also an assessor in high impact academic journals.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6768-4078>

Xosé M. Malheiro-Gutiérrez

Doctor in Philosophy and Educational Sciences from the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela and Professor in the Department of Pedagogy and Didactics of the Faculty of Educational Sciences of the Universidade da Coruña. He was previously a professor at the University of Vigo (2001–2002) and the University of Santiago (2003–2008). He has published different works on educational intervention of Galician emigration to the Americas and won various prizes relating to historical educational research. He is a member of the ESCULCA (Universidade de Santiago de Compostela), GICPEC (Universidad Complutense de Madrid), and the Política educativa, Historia e Sociedade (Educational Policy, History and Society) (Universidade da Coruña) research groups. He belongs to the SEDHE (Spanish Society of the History of Education) and is a member of the Nova Escola Galega pedagogical renovation movement. He researches migratory processes and their implications on the school; the content of school textbooks; the use of photography and film for studying the school memory, and the development of SL projects in the university setting.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5992-9522>

Annex. Scale of community participation in SL projects

Indicate, on the scale provided (with 1 being not at all and 5 a lot), how developed each of the following aspects is in relation to the service-learning project/experience in your subject:

	1	2	3	4	5
The project is flexible and can adapt to the circumstances of the community					
The students receive training from the entity/organisation					
The entity/organisation receives training in the SL methodology					
The entity/organisation participates in the design and structuring of the project activities					
The entity/organisation participates in the supervision of the students					
The functions of each group involved are defined (teachers, students, and community)					
Work is carried out with the entity/organisation to identify social needs					
The entity/organisation participates in the evaluation of the students					
The entity/organisation facilitates the students' processes of reflection					
The university and the entity/organisation celebrate/share the benefits of the project					
The project addresses the needs of the community in a way that is sustainable in the long term					
The project strengthens relations between the university and the community					
The evaluation of the project takes into account whether the objectives of the entity/organisation are being met					
The members of the community are recognised and valued for their participation					
The project was designed to support the development of the community and not just to provide a temporary service					
There is continuous feedback to ensure benefits for the community					
The members of the entity/organisation have the opportunity to give their opinion about the project and its results					

Note: Item 3 was eliminated following the analyses of the reliability of the scale.

The role of community in service-learning projects in Spanish universities: a systematic review (2015 – 2024)

El rol de la comunidad en los proyectos de aprendizaje-servicio de las universidades españolas: una revisión sistemática (2015 – 2024)

Dr. Marta RUIZ-CORBELLA. Associate Professor. Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (mruiz@edu.uned.es).

Dr. Iñaki CELAYA. Assistant Professor. Universidad de Navarra (icelaya@unav.es).

Dr. Victoria VÁZQUEZ-VERDERA. Associate Professor. Universidad de Valencia (toya.vazquez@uv.es).

Dr. Concepción NAVAL. Professor. Universidad de Navarra (cnaval@unav.es).

Abstract:

Service-learning (SL) has become established in higher education as a methodology that integrates academic training and social engagement. However, much of the scientific output concerning it has focused on the benefits of SL for students, without observing how it impacts the community. As a first step to examine the study of community participation in SL projects, this article focuses on analysing how the community is conceived, involved, and evaluated in SL projects implemented in Spanish universities. To this end, a systematic review of literature from between 2015 and 2024 was performed, following the PRISMA protocol and using four reference databases in Spain as information sources: WoS, Scopus, Dialnet, and TESEO. The systematic review's search strategy returned 26 studies. These were analysed in depth and found to display limited explicit conceptualisation of the term community, as well as limited active participation by the community in the design and evaluation of SL projects. An instrumental or welfarist vision of the community predominates, which hinders the reciprocity and joint design inherent to the SL approach. There is also a lack of systematic studies on the real impact of these projects in the participating communities. The discussion suggests that it is necessary to move towards more horizontal models of collaboration, where the community is configured as a co-responsible agent and not just a recipient. It is concluded that effective community integration requires the role of the community to be clarified, strategic alliances to be fostered, and systematic evaluation of the effects of SL beyond the university environment.

Keywords: service-learning; community; higher education; University; systematic review; Spain

Date of receipt of the original: 08/07/2025

Date of approval: 10/11/2025

Please, cite this article as follows: Ruiz-Corbella, M., Celaya, I., Vázquez-Verdera, V. & Naval, C. (2026). The role of community in service-learning projects in Spanish universities: a systematic review (2015-2024) [El rol de la comunidad en los proyectos de aprendizaje-servicio de las universidades españolas: una revisión sistemática (2015-2024)]. *Revista Española de Pedagogía*, 84(293), 59-74. <https://doi.org/10.9781/rep.2026.408>

Resumen:

El aprendizaje-servicio (ApS) se ha consolidado en la educación superior como una metodología que integra la formación académica y el compromiso social. Sin embargo, gran parte de la producción científica ha centrado su atención en los beneficios del ApS para el estudiantado, sin observar cuál es su impacto en la comunidad. Como primer paso para abordar el estudio de la participación de la comunidad en los proyectos de ApS, este artículo se centra en el análisis sobre cómo se concibe, se involucra y se evalúa la comunidad en los proyectos de ApS desarrollados en las universidades españolas. Para ello, se llevó a cabo una revisión sistemática de la literatura entre 2015 y 2024 siguiendo el protocolo PRISMA utilizando como fuentes de información cuatro bases de datos de referencia en nuestro territorio: WoS, Scopus, Dialnet y TESEO. El resultado de la estrategia de búsqueda de la revisión sistemática seleccionó 26 estudios que fueron analizados en profundidad, que evidencian una escasa conceptualización explícita del término comunidad, así como una limitada participación activa de esta en el diseño y evaluación de los proyectos de ApS. Predomina una visión instrumental o asistencialista de la comunidad, que dificulta la reciprocidad y el codiseño propios del enfoque ApS. Asimismo, se constata la falta de estudios sistemáticos sobre el impacto real de estos proyectos en las comunidades participantes. La discusión sugiere que es necesario avanzar hacia modelos más horizontales de colaboración, donde la comunidad se configure como agente corresponsable y no solo receptor. Se concluye que una integración efectiva de la comunidad exige clarificar su rol, fomentar alianzas estratégicas y evaluar de forma sistemática los efectos del ApS más allá del entorno universitario.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje-servicio; comunidad; educación superior; universidad; revisión sistemática; España

1. Introduction

As a result of social demands and changes to regulatory frameworks, experiential methodologies have acquired an important role in university education, especially with regards to the link between theory and practice. These methodological proposals are supported by linking learning to reflection and comprehension in action (Baena, 2019). One of these experiential strategies is service-learning (SL), which facilitates learning in which students and the community participate in a process of transformation. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that this action only provides an educational dimension if it promotes active engagement and shared responsibility between all of the agents involved, both educational and social. Participation that entails acting jointly and in coordination in real situations and contexts with the aim of improving and transforming situations and/or people.

Following the implementation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in Spain, universities have intensified the adoption of active student-centred methodologies. The Bologna Process set 2010 as its target date for implementation after the ministerial agreement of 1999, and over the following decade practices were consolidated that were especially promoted by the drive given to teaching innovation. This scenario spurred the modernisation of methodological strategies in teaching, including active and experiential methods in the classroom: problem-based learning, project-based learning, flipped classroom, field work, oral presentations, etc. The aim was to connect theory with practice in real settings, allowing students to collaborate, reflect, and contribute knowledge, and so create meaning in what they learn, as is also the case with the service-learning or SL methodology.

SL requires coordinated participation between students and the community to which the activity is directed. Achieving this relies on the involvement of both as it is based

on cooperation in topics that affect and interest them. In this way, a formative space is generated where “learning adds quality to the service provided and the service makes the learning meaningful” (Battle & Escoda, 2019, p. 5, authors’ own translation). It is this participation that can create spaces for authentic learning, spaces where answers are given and alternative solutions are pursued for problems, challenges, or interests that are proposed. Interconnection of nodes that can bridge the gap between the classroom and the territory in which the university and the community are located. Or, as Puig Rovira (2022) notes in another work, in SL “there is no simulation; rather it is a true and authentic activity that conserves all of the strength of what is directly experienced” (p. 26, authors’ own translation). Students and community enrich one another in continuous mutual benefit facilitated by a process that is necessarily bidirectional and dialogic (Araya-Pizarro & Verelst, 2023). This requires us to consider both pillars – learning and service – to examine, consolidate, and substantiate this methodology. And, especially, in its essential reciprocity, one of the key features that distinguish it from other experiential methodologies, to move from designing projects for the community to projects with the community (Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2023). Designs in which both, with joint-responsibility, commit to the shared objectives.

When reviewing the scientific output about SL, we found many studies of its impact on students’ learning, curriculum design in certain modules, or the social dimension of the universities involved (Redondo-Corcobado & Fuentes, 2020). However, the volume of research that centres on the community’s perspective in these designs or the impact they have on it is considerably smaller (Araya-Pizarro & Verelst, 2023; Gandara, 2022). If both aspects, learning and service, are necessary elements to ensure the quality of these projects, it is telling that they are not addressed in the same way. This leads us to argue that there is a need to examine in depth what each of them involves and requires, and what impact they achieve. Therefore, we believe it is necessary, in this case, to consider studies of the “service” component and of the key stakeholder that makes it possible: the community to which the action is directed. According to our data, this has received less attention than its counterpart “learning” and the curriculum designs that make it possible. “Especially nowadays, when universities have both the responsibility to form citizens with a sense of social responsibility, and to contribute to addressing the social and environmental challenges facing our society” (Gandara, 2022, p. 302, authors’ own translation). In view of all of this, the aim of the present study is to identify and analyse how community is considered and understood in the SL projects that are implemented in Spanish universities, as well as its function in these designs and its presence in our scientific output with the aim of valuing and making visible the essential task of the community.

2. The construct of “community” in SL projects

As a first step in this study, we analysed what we understand by “community” as a key stakeholder in SL projects. This term has a long history in the social sciences, albeit with different meanings as it relates to the value hierarchy of each author (Bond, 2022). We define this concept as “the group of individuals or people who reciprocally identify themselves with certain features, characteristics, and even objectives, that can be shared in certain spaces of life in common” (Santos Rego *et al.*, 2023, p. 36, authors’ own translation). This makes sense given that, as Bär *et al.* (2021) note, we live and coexist in a community, we shape ourselves as part of it, and we contribute to its maintenance and development. However, we are also aware that “the difficulties and impediments that this life in common entails are neither few nor unknown” (pp. 244–245, authors’ own translation).

In the service-learning methodology, this term is closely related to “service” as a construct as it represents the group to which the formative intervention is directed. The peculiarity of SL is that it requires “the establishment of strong links with the community to provide teaching that goes beyond the four walls of the university” (Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2023, p. 13, authors’ own translation). Without this collaboration it is not possible to understand that

university and community perform a joint activity in which both contribute to achieving a shared goal (Bär *et al.*, 2021). All of this indicates to us the importance of considering in depth what a community is and who constitutes it, as well as the role it plays – or can play – in the education of our students. Not ignoring the fact that this conceptualisation is also mediated by the theoretical models of the learning process under which each SL project is conceived, given “the high heterogeneity found in the concepts involved, the interpretation of its function, how it can be addressed, and the impacts it can generate” (Araya-Pizarro & Verelst, 2023, p. 146).

If we consider the etymology of the term, this indicates links between people to fulfil shared and reciprocal obligations, something that demands joint responsibility (León, 2017). It refers to a dynamic human group in the sense that it emerges, becomes established, maintains itself, evolves, and can disappear. Space and time are shared in the community, and in them interests, problems, objectives, and needs coalesce, which we seek to address collectively. This situation favours the creation of a particular shared identity that facilitates the system of relations that constantly define – and redefine – it. A community is never something static, and conflicts among its members can also occur. It requires the implementation of more or less visible communication, mediation, and negotiation strategies, which work together in the material expression of its identity and sustainability over time.

Based on this idea, we understand that we all belong to various communities, united by invisible bonds that facilitate social relations at the different levels – micro, meso, and macro – at which we move. These are the nodes that shape society, whether physical or virtual, that shape our world from their invisibility. Its fragility derives from the fact that, as it is so habitual, we forget it exists and we end up putting the individual before the collective, which wears away or diminishes its strength. Hence the requirement for continuous cooperation by everyone to maintain and develop it (Puig Rovira, 2021). The university cannot remain distant from this task as it is part of it, interacting in a dialogic process in which both work to achieve common interests.

When reviewing research on SL, the community is included in one form or another. So, do we achieve a link between university and community? Is the community incorporated into these curriculum designs in a participatory and negotiated way? Do we interact with it to achieve the learning and service objectives that we propose? These questions lead us to ask how we define and understand it in our SL projects, and to ask about the role it finally performs. To answer these questions, we used a systematic review of the scientific literature on inclusion and the role of this construct in the SL projects implemented in Spain.

3. Methodology

To address these questions, a systematic literature review (SLR) was performed regarding the concept of community in the framework of the SL projects carried out by Spanish universities. The stages of the process of this review, based on the guidelines of the PRISMA statement, are described below. This protocol, of an iterative nature, provides recommendations to ensure that reviews are adequately founded and are replicable in other research, which requires rigorous documentation of the systematic process of literature searching, screening, and analysis. In particular, PRISMA includes a checklist that makes it possible to establish whether the recommended parameters have been fulfilled (Page *et al.*, 2021), thus helping prevent possible biases.

In the present SLR, a number of research questions about the construct to be studied were established and a search strategy based on Boolean operators and keywords was used and applied to several academic databases. The academic works found were filtered using inclusion and exclusion criteria agreed by the research team, as set out below.

3.1. Research questions

First, the following three research questions were established, which focussed the search strategy:

1. How is the concept of community conceived in SL projects carried out in Spanish universities?
2. What was the level of participation of the community in the framework of the application of these projects?
3. What impact did the SL have on the community?

Secondly, to answer these questions, a search strategy was designed that was limited to works contained in the following databases: Web of Science (sub-bases sci-e; ssci; a&hci); Scopus; Dialnet, as it is the largest and most established database in Spain; and TESEO, a central index of doctoral theses from Spain. These resources were chosen considering the nature of the object of study to encompass the largest possible number of SL projects, as these are distributed across different types of scientific publication: journals, books, book chapters, and doctoral theses.

3.2. Boolean search strings

Search strings were used comprising Boolean operators principally based on the keywords “*aprendizaje servicio*” (service-learning) and “*comunidad*” (community), adding other associated terms and/or synonyms such as “*agentes sociales*” (social stakeholders), “*entidades sociales*” (social entities), “*partenariado*” (partnership), “*partner*”, “*territorio*” (territory), “*educación superior*” (higher education), or “*entorno*” (setting) to address the object of study more comprehensively. Table 1 shows the raw results obtained from the search strings. The fields selected were title, abstract, and key words. The search term “ApS” was rejected as, in the test carried out in the study’s design phase, it retrieved a concept from the field of medicine, giving false positives.

TABLE 1. Search strings applied to Scopus, WoS, Dialnet, and TESEO

Databases	Boolean search strings
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY((ApS OR <i>aprendizaje-servicio</i>) AND (comunidad OR “ <i>entidades sociales</i> ” OR “ <i>tercer sector</i> ” OR <i>partenariado</i> OR <i>partner</i> OR “ <i>agentes sociales</i> ” OR <i>territorio</i> OR <i>entorno</i>))
Web of Science (WoS)	TS=((ApS OR <i>aprendizaje-servicio</i>) AND (comunidad OR “ <i>entidades sociales</i> ” OR “ <i>tercer sector</i> ” OR <i>partenariado</i> OR <i>partner</i> OR “ <i>agentes sociales</i> ” OR <i>territorio</i> OR <i>entorno</i>))
Dialnet	Integration of the following successive searches in the search engine of the database: (ApS AND <i>comunidad</i>) + (ApS AND “ <i>entidades sociales</i> ”) + (ApS AND “ <i>tercer sector</i> ”) + (ApS AND <i>partenariado</i>) + (ApS AND <i>partner</i>) + (ApS AND “ <i>agentes sociales</i> ”) + (ApS AND <i>territorio</i>) + (ApS AND <i>entorno</i>)
TESEO	The search was done using the database’s search engine combining the key words: <i>aprendizaje-servicio</i> , <i>comunidad</i> , and “ <i>educación superior</i> ”

Source: Prepared by the authors.

3.3. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The inclusion and exclusion criteria proposed for filtering the original sample were agreed by the researchers in response to the need to ensure the relevance, quality, and

coherence of the documentary corpus in the systematic review of SL in Spanish higher education (Table 2).

On the one hand, the review was restricted geographically to the Spanish university system as the regulatory framework and degree of implementation of the EHEA have distinctive features that shape the conceptualisation of the community, the forms of collaboration, and the evaluation of SL. On the other hand, the restriction of the search to databases mentioned above ensures the inclusion of academically rigorous works from Spain, and including articles, books, book chapters, and doctoral theses allows for exhaustive analysis of diverse contributions to the field. Restricting the language to Spanish, English, and Spain's co-official languages favours accessible coverage without compromising the depth of the analysis and sufficiently encompasses the universe of publications generated in Spain.

The 2015–2024 temporal limitation was adopted for methodological and substantive reasons, as it ensures an up-to-date focus, capturing recent trends in the implementation of SL (Helbach *et al.*, 2022). In particular, this limitation made it possible to capture the most recent contributions regarding the implementation of SL in Spanish universities, in line with the consolidation of experiential methodologies in the framework of the EHEA (López-Cirugeda, 2025). The temporal limitation was explicitly applied in all of the databases and was established as an inclusion criterion in the protocol following the PRISMA Statement's guidelines on transparency in restrictions and search strategies (Page *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, the requirement that the academic works address community involvement and the SL methodology made it possible to keep a precise focus on the object of study, excluding tangential research.

Similarly, prioritising open-access publications facilitates the availability of the material, while the limitation to the context of Spanish universities ensures that the results are applicable to Spain. It was decided to prioritise items from open-access sources, as this facilitates the circulation of research data among researchers and ensures the reproducibility of the studies (García-Peñalvo, 2017).

TABLE 2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Articles, books, book chapters, and doctoral theses indexed in Web of Science (WoS), Scopus, Dialnet, and TESEO	Works with no connection to the field of higher education or relating to non-Spanish universities
English and Spanish languages	Works that do not consider involvement of the community (social entities, partners, social stakeholders, territory, setting, third sector)
Works published between January 2015 and March 2024	Works that do not include the SL methodology
Works published in open-access sources, including embargoed works	Works published in closed access sources
Works confined to the context of Spanish universities	

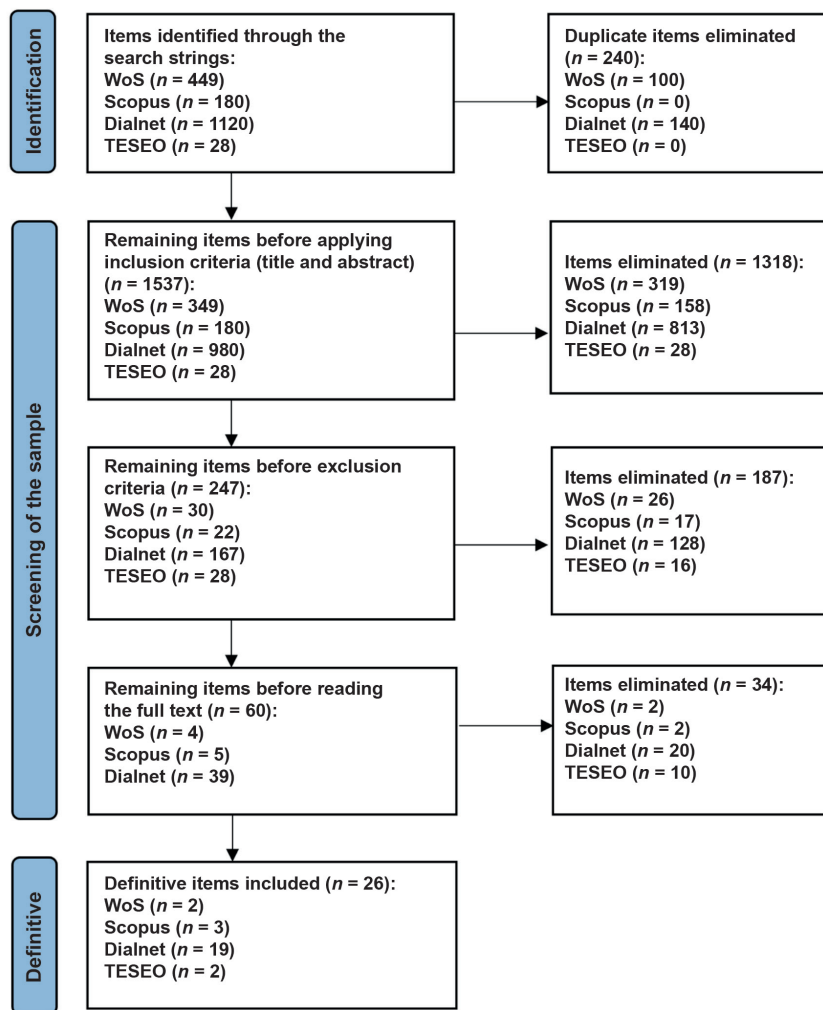
Source: Prepared by the authors.

4. Results

With the parameters described above, an aggregate total of 1777 initial items was found: 449 in WoS, 180 in Scopus, 1120 in Dialnet, and 28 in TESEO. From these, a total of 240 items

duplicated in different databases were eliminated. After applying the inclusion criteria using the search engines' filters, the title and abstract of each of the 247 remaining items were analysed, 187 of which were rejected when applying the pre-established exclusion criteria (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1. PRISMA Flow diagram with the steps for filtering the results.



Source: Prepared by the authors based on Page et al. (2021).

As a result of this screening process, an initial aggregate total of 60 works was obtained. The research team then read their full texts in depth to identify each work's contributions to each of the research questions. Based on this in-depth reading of the full texts, it was established that in some cases the content of these works, despite fulfilling the pre-established criteria, did not address any of the constructs set out in the formulated questions, and so they were rejected. In this last screening step, 34 additional items were eliminated, giving a final sample of 26 references: 2 in WoS, 3 in Scopus, 19 in Dialnet, and 2 in TESEO.

5. Analysis of the results

Based on in-depth readings of the selected documents, their content was discussed in light of this study's three research questions: How the concept of community is conceived in the SL projects designed in bachelor's or master's modules. What level of community participation is facilitated and what are the roles entrusted to it. And identifying studies that focus on evaluating the impact in the receiving community. Ultimately, how – in the 26 works selected – the community to which the service is directed participates in the design, development, and evaluation of the SL project implemented. Before progressing in the analysis, we must note that of the 1537 non-duplicate items that address SL in Spanish universities, 1511 only consider the community as service recipient. It is also striking that it can be inferred from the excluded works that the community's presence is limited to a utilitarian focus which is restricted to exchange of goods and services or to field work.

5.1. How do SL projects conceive the concept of community?

The largest percentage of the selected publications concentrates on this question in one way or another. Their concern is not so much with defining what is understood by community, but with how to articulate this relationship so that it is *de facto* reciprocal. A large proportion of the articles analysed focus on illustrating that the service is not defined as a donation, as happens in volunteering activities, but rather is the result of a collaboration. Nevertheless, “although at present it is common to consider the need for joint and coordinated work by the different agents who have an educational impact on the community, even today, this approach is frequently more theoretical than real” (Arriaga *et al.*, 2021, p. 102).

When they attempt to describe what “community” comprises as a construct, they agree in one way or another that it is a constantly evolving concept that requires a feeling of belonging in the people who comprise it, which facilitates their engagement (Santos Rego *et al.*, 2023). “The starting idea is to travel together and build something shared. In this sense, the recognition and construction of a joint project go hand in hand” (Romañá & Campo, 2022, p. 149, authors' own translation). In these articles, we find recognition of the importance of integrating students into real situations where they confront their social situation, something that boosts the sense of belonging to the community when observing the impact of their participation (Arriaga *et al.*, 2021; Gezuraga, 2016). This confirms the relevance of coordinating communities in the same setting to generate authentic ecosystems that make it possible to enrich their social capital. Something that involves connecting the different nodes in a single territory while accepting their horizontality, joint design, transversality, and joint responsibility in a process of collaboration between all of the social stakeholders (Baig *et al.*, 2023; Graell, 2015). They emphasise that the university also learns and benefits from these collaborations by expanding and diversifying its perspective thanks to the contributions of local stakeholders. The need to unite the community's knowledge with academic-professional knowledge to be able to propose solutions for the community's problems is also considered (Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2023). As Gandara (2022) states, “as well as the support that SL can give to the community, much can also be learnt from it” (p. 307, authors' own translation).

This involves knowing, recognising, connecting, and working jointly, bringing together the needs and/or interests of the territory from a local perspective. “In a context where all of the stakeholders and spaces are necessary to educate successfully, it is vital to establish mutual links of joint responsibility and reciprocity in them to build shared educational projects” (Bär *et al.*, 2021, p. 247, authors' own translation). And also to recognise that one is not only part of the problem, but also of the solution (Rubio i Serrano, 2015). Links that describe a relationship characterised by closeness, equity, and integrity (Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2023), necessarily united with reciprocity. Accordingly, projects are generated based on the principles of respect, trust, engagement, shared resources, and clear communication between participants (Santos Rego *et al.*, 2023; Arriaga *et al.*, 2021). Without these principles,

it will be hard to implement SL projects where all agencies contribute to the development of society (Sotelino *et al.*, 2019).

To answer this research question, we reviewed the terms that are used as synonyms for community, finding constructs such as partnership, social entities, third sector, social stakeholders, or territory, and so these were also included in this analysis. However, we should note that the social entity, social stakeholder, or third sector are not “community”, even though without them it would not exist. They are part of it at the micro, meso, and macro level, and it is in these constructs that on most occasions the projects are developed. For example, Rubio i Serrano (2015) notes that social stakeholders are part of the community, but their role in the project is to serve as a way to connect with the individuals to whom each project is directed. Through them, the partnership – the alliance or the association to achieve the objective proposed between the two parties – is put into practice. Further evidence of this same conceptualisation is found in other articles, as in the case of Graell (2015), who champions the need for alliances between different people or organisations that share the same objective. Or relations of partnership based on being able to have “two or more organisations coming together to create something new, something that they could not achieve alone and which is even more than the sum of their actions” (Sotelino *et al.*, 2019, p. 199, authors’ own translation).

In fact, the selected articles are in line with the experience of Santos Rego *et al.* (2015), who argue that the community often serves as an active educational stakeholder by providing real needs and situated knowledge, thus enriching the students’ formative process. Gozálviz and García-García (2020), for their part, observe that the students’ engagement promotes critical and jointly responsible participation that strengthens ethical and civic competences. In addition to this, Arbués *et al.* (2020) note that in a society marked by hyperconnectivity and weakened social ties, SL is proposed as a way to revitalise civic engagement and rebuild community bonds through higher education.

On the other hand, the expression territory also appears, and opens up some very interesting options for SL projects as it underlines the value of the setting where the community is located, where different social stakeholders act, coming together in shared projects. Knowing the setting, or in other words, “‘territorialising’ education and ‘educationalising’ the territory” (Collet & Subirats, 2016, authors’ own translation). “It is these setting-based educational practices with a community character that must make it possible to overcome individualism and generate strong communities based on their social capital” (Bär *et al.*, 2021, p. 247, authors’ own translation). In essence, connecting the different times, spaces, and social, educational, and community stakeholders in shared projects, so that, as Baig *et al.* (2023) emphasise, “the territory is not merely decoration, a resource with which to generate particular interactions, but an intelligence with which to design and jointly produce” (p. 16, authors’ own translation). Ultimately, the community is conceptualised as a territory that is present as a starting point to identify the communities that comprise it, as well as the entities and stakeholders within it, in order to progress towards the idea of a networked effort (Rubio i Serrano, 2015; Bär *et al.*, 2021).

Finally, it is also essential to mention the limitations and problems identified when mentioning community. Among others, there is a disconnection “between what the university regards as collaboration and what is generated in my organisation as a result of collaboration through SL” (Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2023, p. 23, authors’ own translation), as teachers are concerned with students’ learning. And the community, logically, is concerned with the service it provides to the general public. This situation means that the use of different languages between the two groups has still not been overcome. Something else that stands out, especially among teachers, is lack of time as an obstacle to building relationships of trust that develop into equitable agreements in this encounter. Another problem that hampers the implementation of SL projects is the breakdown of the sense of community, causing “a personal and vital relocation with regards to not feeling like part of the framework of a particular territory along with others” (Sotelino *et al.*, 2019, p. 201, authors’ own translation). This situation is reflected in the disregard for key values for the development of the community, such as

cooperation, solidarity, reciprocity, and recognition of the other. And this could ultimately undermine the community itself and, consequently, affect the individual.

5.2. Does the community participate actively in SL projects?

When addressing the second and third questions posed in this research, we observed a significant reduction in the number of publications that address both of them.

As has already been observed, the perspective of teaching designs and the voice of the students dominate, while the community, with its different entities and groups, remains the service recipient that is offered. This is a weakness of many SL projects, where the community is present solely as a recipient of students (Gezuraga, 2016).

They also consider students' learning, but without addressing the community's participation in evaluating students' learning achievements. One surprising work, among other examples, is a recent article (Díaz-Iso *et al.*, 2025) which features as explicit exclusion criteria: "They report on instruments with the aim of measuring different stakeholders' perception of the experience", and/or "they report on the experience's impact in the community" (p. 574, authors' own translation). Nonetheless, we have found research that asserts "the need to involve all of the people affected to foster their participation in projects of this type" (Arriaga *et al.*, 2021, p. 102, authors' own translation). To do so they propose flexible roles and diverse spaces for participation as key elements to generate mutual interest and respect as stakeholders involved in achieving shared goals (García-Romero, 2018). They first require the university to understand and recognise these entities and groups with which it will develop a project as the best way to generate mutual trust, to present a shared responsibility that can respect the time, situations, and languages of both parties (Graell, 2015). This will be achieved if we provide spaces for dialogue about the design, implementation, and evaluation of the projects that we want to develop in a given context. Keeping an open mind, accompanying, training, being flexible in times, in objectives, making the participation of these entities visible. In essence, recognising them (Romañá & Campo, 2022), as:

How we collaborate with the community is a defining aspect of SL, going beyond the idea of projects for the community to projects with the community. Such a collaboration requires constant communication between the partners [...], clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the project's partners; and a shared vision of the results. (Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2023, pp. 16-17, authors' own translation)

This author adds another relevant requirement so that the community is fully integrated in SL projects: training them in this methodology. To know what is intended and what is expected of them in such a way that they can set out what SL means for them. However, "it is its deployment in the local field and with diverse material expressions that makes it possible to mobilise different stakeholders in the territory and create local educational networks that take shape in the potential of the neighbourhood, the town, or the city" (Bár *et al.*, 2021, p. 245, authors' own translation).

Being aware that they are part of a network that contributes to the development of the community they form part of and that the community requires something more than individual commitment (Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2023). And, even, "seeing SL not just as a learning methodology, but also as a channel for building a fabric with the social entities and bringing in other collaborations" (Gandara, 2022, p. 309, authors' own translation), from which proposals to consolidate new projects emerge.

An example of this type of approach can be found in the work of Miró-Miró *et al.* (2021), where they confirm the educational possibilities of digital narratives in the processes of designing and implementing community actions to exercise a citizenship that is committed to its own reality. They involve the whole of the educational community and they favour frequent and regular communication between all of the participants that can keep all of the parties collaborating and establishing a shared vision. In this way they are able to propose common goals to work on the needs of that community, they

establish plans of action to achieve the specified objectives, and they share knowledge and resources.

5.3. Do we evaluate the impact of our SL projects in the community?

There was very little evidence to answer this third research question: “There is no consistent research on the impact of SL [...] and much less on the relationships established between the two parties” (Santos Rego *et al.*, 2023, p. 39, authors’ own translation). In this case, what we can report centres more on the silences. Rodríguez-Izquierdo *et al.* (2023) also consider this idea in depth, complaining that “too many SL projects provide more benefits for the university than for the community, a situation regarded as evidence of an unequal association” (p. 14, authors’ own translation). They also argue that going into greater depth in knowledge, needs, and mutual interests with the aim of improving the designs to implement in each territory is the only way to progress in the connection between the two (Arriaga *et al.*, 2021, authors’ own translation), given that:

Service-learning projects have an impact on the community in that the partnerships created between the organisations involved, with the aim of improving the community and learning from real-life experiences in a controlled manner (Graell, 2015, p. 89).

And this is achieved if both parties have proof of the benefits obtained, of the improvements and transformations achieved (Santos Rego *et al.*, 2023). This challenge cannot be avoided if we are to advance in the sustainability of our SL projects, which will help to continue building this essential network that “generates communities that are stronger and less isolated, providing active participation in the setting” (Rubio i Serrano *et al.*, 2021, p. 128, authors’ own translation). Universities and those of us who support SL cannot allow ourselves to ignore our impact in the community. It is our responsibility to ensure that our actions and/or theoretical considerations do not give the message that the community’s participation is irrelevant.

6. Conclusions

There is no doubt that we are facing a shift in the pedagogical model in the university and that the SL methodology is a proposal that has gradually established itself in our classrooms. Its presence in all areas of knowledge reflects its capacity to combine theory and practice, knowledge and experience, in real contexts. That said, in the scientific output about the SL proposals implemented in higher education, studies of students’ learning, of the innovative experiences based on this methodology are predominant. But not studies of the community or the entities with which SL is developed. Despite the small number of publications that focus on the community, there is no doubt that over recent years a very interesting line of research has begun, which, on the one hand, seeks to define and clarify what is understood by this construct, who forms it and makes it possible and sustainable over time, along with their necessary involvement in achieving agreed common goals. And, on the other, to identify the nature of its collaboration in SL projects, its functions and roles, and the elements that facilitate joint responsibility in achieving the proposed objectives. Studying its impact and how it is identified in the short and long term, who should participate in its design, implementation, and evaluation in each phase of the project, its sustainability, problems and limitations of the service, the roles of each member, etc., are essential topics to consolidate this methodology which we will address in future research. As well as considering in depth the role of universities in the territories of which we form part.

In this study we have been able to illustrate the benefits that SL provides for the university and the community, but it is still necessary to address its limitations and offer more practical applications and future lines of research that will allow us to set out more precisely how to change the focus of our attention in SL. In a way that shows that the presence of universities in the territory is filled with ethical and civic sense.

Another area that remains unresolved is the need to identify, and at the same time interconnect, the role of the people who take part in these projects and the impact they generate in universities, social entities, the community, and even society itself. Each of these objectives requires a different form of analysis, different categories and evaluation tools, without losing sight of the interconnected nature of all of the elements that comprise each project. As well as to relate them to the university's role in the community, in its more or less immediate territory, a true commitment to the community by the university. And to its capacity for openness and engagement in social problems through various actions rooted and supported in time, among which SL occupies an increasingly recognised role. This is the case thanks to the radically transformational capacity of SL as it boosts the convergence and participation of all of the agencies and stakeholders from a territory. But this will not be possible if relationships of partnership are not forged between entities and the university that facilitate a new ecosystem, a network that interacts in the interest of the common good. Relations of learning and service that mutually support one another on a plane of horizontality, joint design, transversality, and joint responsibility.

Author contributions

Marta Ruiz-Corbella. Conceptualisation, data analysis, writing – original draft, review and editing of final version, supervision.

Iñaki Celaya. Methodology, data curation, revision of the fourth draft and of the final version.

Victoria Vázquez-Verdera. Data analysis, revision of the third draft and of the final version.

Concepción Naval. Data analysis, revision of the second draft and of the final version.

AI Statement

The authors state that they have not used any artificial intelligence (AI) tools in the process of preparing this manuscript.

Funding

2021 Call - R&D&i Knowledge Generation projects. “El impacto de la universidad en la comunidad a través de los proyectos de aprendizaje-servicio. Un estudio centrado en la reciprocidad” (The impact of the university on the community through service-learning projects: A study centred on reciprocity). Aps(C) 2022 – 2026. Ref. PID2021-1228270b-100.

References

- Arbués, E., García, S. I. & Naval, C. (2020). Responsabilidad social universitaria: Práctica docente con sentido de comunidad. In: J. L. Fuentes, A. Bernal Guerrero, C. Naval, G. Jover, & A. R. Cárdenas, *Una acción educativa pensada* (pp. 39-47). Dykinson.
- Araya-Pizarro, S. & Verelst, N. (2023). Community engagement: Un análisis bibliométrico en el contexto universitario. *Revista de Educación*, 402, 141-175. <https://doi.org/10.4438/1988-592X-RE-2023-402-598>
- Arriaga, C., Cabedo, A., Chiva, O. & Moliner Miravet, L. (2021). Una mirada comunitaria en la escuela: el diagnóstico del barrio como motor de arranque para proyectos de Aprendizaje-Servicio. *Márgenes: Revista de Educación de la Universidad de Málaga*, 2(2), 100-115. <https://doi.org/10.24310/mgnmar.v2i2.10574>
- Baena, V. (2019). *El Aprendizaje experiencial como metodología docente. Buenas prácticas*. Narcea.

- Baig, M., González-Ceballos, I. & Esteban-Guitart, M. (2023). Universidades 360. La vinculación de tiempos, espacios y agentes sociales, educativos y comunitarios. *Revista de Educación a Distancia*, 23(74). <https://doi.org/10.6018/red.540591>
- Bär, B., Campo, L. & Rubio i Serrano, L. (2021). Líneas de acción y principios para la incorporación del aprendizaje-servicio en el ámbito local. Trabajo en red en el territorio. *Teoría de la Educación. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 33(1), 243-263. <https://doi.org/10.14201/teri.23660>
- Battle, R. & Escoda, E. (coords.) (2019). *100 buenas prácticas de aprendizaje-servicio*. Santillana.
- Bond, N. (2022). Comunidad y normatividad en las ciencias sociales y humanas. *Diferencias(s). Revista de teoría social contemporánea*, 1(14), 11-30.
- Collet, J. & Subirats, J. (2016). Educación y territorio: 15 años de Proyectos Educativos de Ciudad (PEC) en Cataluña (España). Análisis, evaluación y perspectivas. *Scripta Nova*, 532, 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1344/sn2016.20.15794>
- Díaz-Iso, A., Ferreira-Lopes, L., Alaez, M. & Bezanilla, M. J. (2025) ¿Quién, cómo, dónde y cuándo se evalúa el aprendizaje-servicio? Una revisión sistemática. *Revista Española de Pedagogía*, 83(292), 571-589. <https://doi.org/10.9781/rep.2025.391>
- Gandara, M. (2022). *Institucionalización del aprendizaje-servicio en la Educación Superior: experiencia de la Universidad de Deusto como estudio de caso* [Tesis Doctoral]. Universidad de Deusto.
- García-Peñalvo, F. J. (2017). *Revisión sistemática de literatura para artículos*. Grupo GRIAL. <http://repositorio.grial.eu/handle/grial/756>
- García-Romero, D. (2018). *Una mirada dialógica al aprendizaje-servicio. Relatos sobre sentido, agencia y mutualidad en la quinta dimensión* [Tesis Doctoral]. Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.
- Gezuraga, M. (2016). Estableciendo puentes entre la universidad y la comunidad: el *service learning* en la Universidad del País Vasco. In: M. Á. Moreno Yus & E.M. González Barea (eds.), *Aprendizaje-servicio, desarrollo y comunidades profesionales de aprendizaje en educación superior* (pp. 259-263). Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Murcia.
- Gozálvez, V. & García-García, F. J. (2020). Aprendizaje-servicio y participación crítica en la comunidad. En J. L. Fuentes, *De la teoría a la práctica en el compromiso cívico* (pp. 77-96). Octaedro.
- Graell, M. (2015). El proceso de partenariado en el proyecto de aprendizaje servicio del Banco de Sangre y Tejidos. *RIDAS. Revista iberoamericana de aprendizaje servicio*, 1, 76-90. <https://doi.org/10.1344/RIDAS2015.1.5>
- Helbach, J., Pieper, D., Mathes, T., Rombey, T., Zeeb, H. & Allers, K. (2022). Restrictions and their reporting in systematic reviews of effectiveness: An observational study. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 22, 230. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-022-01710-w>
- León, J. J. (2017). Etimología subversiva del verbo ‘comunicar’. *Quórum Académico*, 14(1), 115-125.
- López-Cirugeda, I. (2025). Institucionalización del aprendizaje-servicio en la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha: Un proyecto de compromiso social y académico. *Revista Educación, Investigación, Innovación y Transferencia (REIIT)*, 1, 58-78. https://doi.org/10.26754/ojs_reiit/eiit.2025111202
- Miró-Miró, D., Jordi Coiduras Rodríguez & Molina-Luque, F. (2021). Aprendizaje-Servicio y Formación Inicial Docente: una relación transformadora entre Escuela Rural y Universidad para la promoción de las tecnologías digitales. *Revista Complutense de Educación*, 32(4), 593-603. <https://doi.org/10.5209/rced.70859>
- Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., et al. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *British Medical Journal*, 372:n71 <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71>

- Puig Rovira, J. M. (2021). *Pedagogía de lo común*. Grao.
- Puig Rovira, J. M. (2022). Aprendizaje-Servicio, cambio de paradigma y revolución educativa. *RIDAS, Revista Iberoamericana de Aprendizaje-Servicio*, 14, 12-35. <https://doi.org/10.1344/RIDAS2022.14.2>
- Redondo-Corcobado P. & Fuentes J. L. (2020). La investigación sobre el Aprendizaje-Servicio en la producción científica española: una revisión sistemática. *Revista Complutense de Educación*, 31(1), 69-82. <https://doi.org/10.5209/rced.61836>
- Rodríguez-Izquierdo, R. M. (2023). El valor de la colaboración en los proyectos de aprendizaje-servicio: La perspectiva de los agentes sociales. In: R. M. Rodríguez-Izquierdo & M. Lorenzo Moledo (eds.), *El giro comunitario en el aprendizaje-servicio universitario* (pp. 13-32). Octaedro.
- Romañá, B. & Campo, L. (2022). Les entitats socials en l'aprenentatge servei. *RIDAS. Revista Iberoamericana de Aprendizaje-Servicio*, 14, 145-155. <https://doi.org/10.1344/RIDAS2022.14.8>
- Rubio i Serrano, L. (2015). Implantar el aprendizaje servicio en una entidad social supone reconocer su dimensión pedagógica y definir un servicio útil y formativo. In: J. M. Puig Rovira (coord.), *¿Cómo realizar un proyecto de aprendizaje servicio?: 11 ideas clave* (pp. 91-102). Grao.
- Rubio i Serrano, L. R., Kwast, B. & Cano, L.C. (2021). Acciones y principios para el arraigo de redes que fomentan la incorporación del Aprendizaje-Servicio en un territorio. In: M. A. Santos Rego, M. Lorenzo & A. Quiroga-Carrillo (eds.), *La educación en red. Realidades diversas, horizontes comunes* (pp. 55-61). Universidade de Santiago de Compostela Publicacións.
- Santos Rego, M. Á., Sotelino, A. & Lorenzo, M. (2015). *Aprendizaje-servicio y misión cívica de la universidad: una propuesta de desarrollo*. Octaedro.
- Santos Rego, M. A., Mella, I. & Míguez, G. (2023). El aprendizaje-servicio universitario y el desarrollo educativo de la comunidad: El desafío de la reciprocidad. In: R. M. Rodríguez-Izquierdo & M. Lorenzo Moledo (eds), *El giro comunitario en el aprendizaje-servicio universitario* (pp. 33-48). Octaedro.
- Sotelino, A., Santos Rego, M. A. & Lorenzo Moledo, M. (2016). Aprender y servir en la universidad: una vía cívica al desarrollo educativo. *Teoría de la Educación. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 28(2), 225-248. <https://doi.org/10.14201/teoredu282225248>
- Sotelino, A., Mella, I. & Rodríguez, M. Á. (2019). El papel de las entidades cívico-sociales en el aprendizaje-servicio: sistematizando la participación del alumnado en el tercer sector. *Teoría de la Educación. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 31(2), 197-219. <https://doi.org/10.14201/teri.20156>

Author biographies

Marta Ruiz-Corbella

Associate professor in the Department of Theory of Education at the UNED (area of Theory and History of Education). Member of the Educación Superior Presencial y a Distancia – ESPYD (In-Person and Distance Higher Education) research group, in which she researches the current role of the university. She is also a member of the Desarrollo de la Competencia Ética y Cívica y las metodologías basadas en la Comunidad en la Educación Superior – COETIC (Development of Ethical and Civic Competence and Community-Based Methodologies in Higher Education) teaching innovation group. In this role, she promotes projects on the service-learning methodology. In a second line, following her experience as editor of *Educación XX1*, journal of the Faculty of Education (2003–2021), she works on the consolidation and future of academic journals in education. On both lines, she has delivered seminars, lectures, and training workshops, and has recorded radio and television programmes.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5498-4920>

Iñaki Celaya

Assistant professor in the Department of Education of the Universidad de Navarra (Spain). He teaches in the Faculty of Education and Psychology, primarily in the area of didactics of mathematics and also in other courses relating to educational technology. His main research interests, within the work of the GIECC research group of which he is a member, are educommunication and the use of ICT in educational settings, areas in which he has published various academic articles and book chapters. He also takes part in research projects related to service-learning. He has done research residencies at the Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey (Mexico) and at the Universidad de los Andes (Chile).

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0384-3575>

Victoria Vázquez-Verdera

Extraordinary Award for her Licentiate Degree and Doctorate. She started her research career by obtaining a university personnel training bursary from what was then the Ministry of Education and Science and she has done various research residencies at Rutgers University (USA), UNAM (Mexico), and the University of Cambridge (United Kingdom). Her main research interests include service-learning, competences for sustainability, and learning to learn in higher education. She is currently associate professor in the department of Theory of Education at the Universitat de València, with three five-year teaching periods and two six-year research periods. She has participated in various R&D&i activities and projects with both autonomous community funding and national funding and national and international events and conferences, and has published articles in academic journals, book chapters, and books.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4364-3893>

Concepción Naval

Chair in Theory of Education. She joined the Universidad de Navarra in 1993. From 1996 to 2001 she was head of the Department of Education. From 2001 to 2012, she was vice-rector. She spearheaded the Educational Innovation group. Dean of the Faculty of Education and Psychology from 2013 to 2022.

Postdoctorate as Visiting Research Scholar: Harvard University, University of Notre Dame (USA), and the International Bureau of Education, UNESCO (Geneva).

Oliver Smithies Lecturer, Oxford University; Visiting Professor, Columbia University; guest professor, Universidad Panamericana, and Fellow at the Salzburg Seminar.

She is the director of the journal *Estudios sobre Educación*.

Her research centres on citizenship education and social participation, the social impact in young people of communication technologies, educational innovation in higher education, and character education.

She leads the *Educación, Ciudadanía y Carácter* (Education, Citizenship, and Character) research group: <https://www.unav.edu/web/educacion-ciudadania-y-caracter>

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5927-9398>



From recipients to co-creators: Rural voices in e-Service-Learning course design

De destinatarios a cocreadores: las voces rurales en el diseño de experiencias de Aprendizaje-Servicio virtual

Alžbeta BROZMANOVÁ-GREGOROVÁ, PhD. Director of UMB Engage – University Centre for Community Partnerships. Matej Bel University, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia. (alzbeta.gregorova@umb.sk)

Irene CULCASI, PhD. Researcher in Education. LUMSA University of Rome, Italy. (i.culcasi@lumsa.it)

Nives MIKELIC-PRERADOVIC, PhD. Head of the Chair for Knowledge Organisation. Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, Croatia (nmikelic@m.ffzg.hr)

Berta PAZ-LOURIDO, PhD. Institute for Educational Research and Innovation. Department of Nursing and Physiotherapy. Director of the Innovation Unit in sustainable development, health and global justice through service-learning, University of the Balearic Islands, Spain (bpaz@uib.es)

Dr. Rolf LAVEN. Institute for Teaching Qualification in Secondary Education, University College of Teacher Education Vienna, Austria (rolf.laven@phwien.ac.at)

Dr. Joan NAVARRO. Head of the Cloud and Edge Computing research line. La Salle Campus Barcelona – Universitat Ramon Llull, Spain (jnavarro@salleurl.edu)

Dr. Florentine PAUDEL. Centre for Research Management, University College of Teacher Education Vienna, Austria (florentine.paudel@phwien.ac.at)

Zuzana HEINZOVÁ, PhD. Head of the Psychology Department. Matej Bel University, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia. (zuzana.heinzova@umb.sk)

Abstract

Introduction: Digital technologies in service-learning enable the development of this pedagogical approach in contexts such as rural areas, giving rise to distinctive community-campus relationships in higher education.

Objective: To identify perceptions and considerations regarding the co-creation process in virtual service-learning (e-SL) between universities and rural partners, focusing on their characteristics, interactions, and functioning.

Date of receipt of the original: 29/06/2025

Date of approval: 19/11/2025

Please, cite this article as follows: Brozmanová-Gregorova, A., Culcasi, I., Mikelic-Preradovic, N., Paz-Lourido, B., Laven, R., Navarro, J. Paudel, F. & Heinzová, Z. (2026). From recipients to co-creators: Rural voices in e-Service-Learning course design [De destinatarios a cocreadores: las voces rurales en el diseño de experiencias de Aprendizaje-Servicio virtual]. *Revista Española de Pedagogía*, 84(293), 75-96. <https://doi.org/10.9781/rep.2026.156>

Method: Exploratory qualitative research based on an ethnomethodological approach, carried out through semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The purposive sample consisted of 16 participants: 8 university teachers and 8 rural community partners from Italy, Croatia, Spain, Austria, and Slovakia, all with experience in virtual service-learning courses. The interviews explored co-creation dynamics, roles, benefits, challenges, digital contexts, power dynamics, and sustainability, and were analysed using thematic analysis.

Results: The initial proposal for the design of e-SL courses involving rural participation often began informally through personal networks and evolved into structured processes based on shared decision-making, joint planning, and needs assessment. Benefits included the empowerment of community voices, the alignment of course content with community needs, the revitalisation of curricula, and enhanced university-community collaboration. Challenges included digital access, time constraints, and communication barriers. Ownership was distributed through shared decision-making, fostering trust and mutual respect.

Discussion: The findings emphasise reciprocal relationships, participatory behaviours, and the possibilities afforded by digital platforms. Co-creation in e-SL was regarded as a transformative practice, shifting epistemic authority toward a horizontal, relational, and reciprocal process. The sustainability of the process relies on ongoing commitment, trust, and technological infrastructure, aligning with theoretical models of co-creation and promoting long-term impact in the community.

Conclusions: e-SL co-creation enhances relevance and impact, both in learning and in rural development. It has the potential to foster rural engagement, enrich student learning, and align projects with local priorities. Digital platforms facilitate collaboration but may introduce barriers that need to be overcome to ensure sustainability.

Keywords: virtual service-learning, rural, community, partnerships, university, co-creation.

Resumen:

Introducción: Las tecnologías digitales en el aprendizaje-servicio permiten el desarrollo de este enfoque pedagógico en contextos como el rural, lo que implica relaciones comunidad-campus singulares para la educación superior.

Objetivo: Identificar percepciones y consideraciones sobre el proceso de co-creación en las experiencias de aprendizaje-servicio virtual (ApS virtual) entre socios universitarios y rurales, abordando sus características, interacciones y funcionamiento.

Método: Investigación cualitativa exploratoria basada en un enfoque etnometodológico desarrollado a través de entrevistas semiestructuradas en profundidad. La muestra intencional consistió en 16 participantes, 8 docentes universitarios y 8 socios comunitarios rurales de Italia, Croacia, España, Austria y Eslovaquia con experiencia en cursos virtuales de aprendizaje-servicio. Las entrevistas indagaron sobre las dinámicas de co-creación, los roles, los beneficios, los desafíos, los contextos digitales, las dinámicas de poder y la sostenibilidad, y se analizaron mediante análisis temático.

Resultados: La propuesta inicial para el diseño de experiencias de ApS virtual que involucran la participación rural a menudo comenzó informalmente a través de redes personales, evolucionando hacia procesos estructurados basados en la toma de decisiones compartida, la planificación conjunta y la evaluación de necesidades. Los beneficios incluyeron el empoderamiento de las voces de la comunidad, la alineación del contenido de los cursos con las necesidades de la comunidad, la revitalización de los planes de estudio y una mayor colaboración entre la universidad y la comunidad. Los desafíos incluyeron el acceso digital, las limitaciones de tiempo y las barreras de comunicación. La propiedad se distribuyó a través de la toma de decisiones compartida, fomentando la confianza y el respeto mutuo.

Discusión: Los hallazgos enfatizan las relaciones recíprocas, los comportamientos participativos y las posibilidades de las plataformas digitales. La co-creación en ApS virtual fue considerada una práctica transformadora, que cambió la autoridad epistémica a un proceso relacional y recíproco horizontal. La sostenibilidad del proceso se basa en el compromiso continuo, la confianza y la infraestructura tecnológica, alineándose con los modelos teóricos de co-creación y promoviendo el impacto a largo plazo en la comunidad.

Conclusiones: La co-creación en el ApS virtual potencia la relevancia y el impacto, tanto en los aprendizajes como en el desarrollo rural. Tiene el potencial de fomentar la participación rural, enriquecer el aprendizaje de los estudiantes y alinear los proyectos con las prioridades locales. Las plataformas digitales facilitan la colaboración, pero pueden introducir barreras que deben superarse para garantizar la sostenibilidad.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje-servicio virtual, rural, comunidad, asociaciones, universidad, co-creación.

1. E-Service-Learning in a Rural Context

Service-learning (SL) is an academic, credit-earning experience where students engage in structured service activities addressing community needs while reflecting on their experiences to deepen their understanding of course material, appreciate their field of study, and develop personal values and civic responsibility. SL promotes experiential learning infused with civic values through collaborative projects that combine education, service, and critical reflection, ensuring mutual benefits for students and community partners (Waldner et al., 2012). It integrates classroom learning with community service, emphasizing both student learning and community impact, tailored to the cultural and regional context where it is implemented.

Digital technology has been integrated into SL to help ensure smooth implementation, mediate learning and service processes, and lend new meaning to what was previously relegated to face-to-face and local contexts (Paz-Lourido & Benito, 2021). This technological mediation in SL is known as e-service-learning (e-SL), which has been described as an experiential educational approach that enables students to integrate the use of technology in order to actively engage with their community, critically reflect on their lived experience, and learn on a personal, social, and academic level (Aramburuzabala et al., 2024). In other words, e-SL is the digital version of SL, leveraging the Internet and advanced technologies to enable remote collaboration among students, faculty, and community partners in organised, experiential activities that foster civic responsibility and meet community needs (Malvey et al., 2006).

Waldner et al. (2012) categorise e-SL into four types: Hybrid Type I (online instruction and on-site service), Hybrid Type II (on-site instruction and online service), Hybrid Type III (both components partially online and on-site), and extreme e-SL (both components entirely online). Culcasi et al. (2022) describe four levels of technology use in e-SL:

- Type I – Instrumental Channel: Technology acts as a fundamental tool for remote outreach, not tied to project goals (e.g. video calls for remote support).
- Type II – Integrated Channel: Technology is purposefully linked to project objectives (e.g. using social media to share guidelines on identifying fake news).
- Type III – Instrumental Objective: Technology is part of the project's output, using existing digital tools (e.g. creating a podcast or website to raise community awareness).

- Type IV – Integrated Objective: Technology is the project’s primary goal, requiring advanced expertise to create innovative solutions (e.g. developing an AI platform to match rural needs with university expertise).

The COVID-19 pandemic, which restricted in-person interactions and shifted education online, brought e-SL into focus globally (Culcasi et al., 2021a; García-Gutiérrez et al., 2021; Leung et al., 2021; Meija, 2020; Tian & Noel, 2020). Pre-COVID studies focused on hybrid e-SL, while extreme e-SL became dominant during the pandemic due to social distancing and university closures.

According to Avello Sáez et al. (2024), in today’s educational landscape, the e-SL educational strategy, by merging the core values of traditional SL with the potential of digital platforms, places strong emphasis on inclusivity, adaptability, and the sustainability of learning pathways. It plays a pivotal role in engaging students within virtual environments where they can collaboratively address identified social issues. The relevance of this empowered SL approach (e-SL) is further supported by recent studies demonstrating its effectiveness in higher education settings, particularly in fostering the development of students’ soft skills (Culcasi et al., 2021b). Comparative research has even shown that e-SL is just as effective as traditional SL in promoting student development (Wong & Lau, 2023).

1.1. Rural (e-)Service-Learning

The concept of rural is not only determined by geographical parameters, but also by social ones (Halfacree, 1993). That is why rural can be considered different depending on culture, but also on personal experience, which adds complexity to a general definition (MacGregor-Fors & Vázquez, 2020). Previous studies with university prospects located in the countryside suggest that rural education is often explained through discursive representations of distance and their expectations in terms of the possibilities higher education can offer, which can vary from one region to another (Björkum & Basic, 2024); on the other hand, with regards to the deployment of organisations that set up educational actions in rural areas (Martínez-Scott et al., 2019), articulating SL projects together can be a good alternative in order to prevent rural areas from being overshadowed by cities.

The landscape of Rural SL earning, and what it teaches us all (Holton et al., 2017), encompasses a collection of practices, research, and insights on rural SL, developed primarily in the USA. It highlights three key distinctions from urban SL: distance (geographical, cultural, and resource-related), partnership building, and community gain. Distance poses challenges, but also offers learning opportunities for students to understand rural-urban differences and adapt to informal settings. Rural partnerships rely on trust and individual networks rather than formal agencies, with relationships often rooted in kinship or community ties. Community gain in SL livelihoods relies on the principle of working “with” communities rather than “for” them, prioritising empowerment over service delivery.

Subsequent literature explored rural SL in the European Union (Saraiva et al., 2021). Rural SL differs from urban SL due to unique challenges and opportunities (Cannon et al., 2016) and supports sustainable rural development (Modić Stanke & Mikelić Preradović, 2024). Rural areas face issues like ageing populations, youth migration due to limited education and job opportunities, inadequate infrastructure, and higher poverty risks. Rural SL can increase engagement with local government leaders, businesses, and advocacy organisations, thereby contributing to social change and rural community empowerment (Zastoupil, 2021). Although reliance on physical presence in rural SL tends to be vital, it seems that hybrid e-SL models are taking root, prompting a call for strategies to strengthen future practice, including improved technology access and hybrid engagement models (Shumka, 2023).

2. Models of Co-Creation in e-Service-Learning

Co-creation in SL and e-SL is a multidimensional and collaborative process that helps generate mutual value among students, educators, and community stakeholders. The dynamic nature of this pedagogical approach necessitates structured frameworks to guide participation, decision-making, and shared outcomes. Several co-creation models from SL and related fields offer theoretical and practical foundations that can be adapted to digital learning environments and rural contexts.

One foundational framework is the *Praxis Model of Co-Creation*, which emphasises actor roles, engagement procedures, and contextual inhibitors and enablers of co-creation in professional services. Developed through a systematic literature review, this model provides a structured approach to identifying the criteria and factors essential for effective co-creation, particularly in improving service design in digitally mediated environments (Ahmed et al., 2022). The model is highly relevant to e-SL in rural areas, as it provides actionable insights into how different stakeholders can collaboratively create value through digital platforms.

Complementing this, *meta-models of co-creation* provide a higher-order classification system for understanding co-creation across diverse contexts. De Koning et al. (2016) synthesised 50 co-creation models into four meta-models: the joint co-creation space, the co-creation spectrum, co-creation types, and co-creation steps. These meta-models provide conceptual clarity, enabling educators and researchers to structure e-SL initiatives along dimensions such as intensity of participation, stages of engagement, and typologies of collaborative action.

In the realm of educational technology, Uden's (2011) *service-driven model of e-learning* applies principles of service science to instructional design. This model focuses on the interaction between learners and instructors as a service system, emphasising knowledge co-creation and learner satisfaction. In e-SL rural contexts, this model underlines the importance of technological infrastructure in enabling and enhancing collaborative learning experiences.

Further integrating pedagogy and social engagement, the *Collaborative-Based Research Model* proposed by Mould (2014) positions research as a form of service. This model promotes ethical, reciprocal partnerships between students, faculty, and community organisations. When adapted to online settings, it can serve as a framework for virtual participatory research projects that support both civic engagement and academic inquiry.

Finally, the *Service Co-Creation Behaviour (SCB) Model* by Bidar (2018) explores co-creation behaviours in multi-actor systems. It identifies key environmental stimuli such as platform capabilities and actor competencies, as well as relational dynamics that foster collaborative and citizenship behaviours. This model provides a behavioural lens to analyse how actors interact in digital co-creation spaces, offering valuable insights into enhancing engagement and value formation in e-SL.

Collectively, these models offer diverse yet complementary perspectives on co-creation, each contributing to a more nuanced understanding of how e-SL in rural areas can be designed, implemented, and assessed. While their origins vary –from service science to participatory design–, they converge on the principle that meaningful co-creation requires intentional design, ethical collaboration, and responsive systems that can accommodate diverse stakeholder needs in digital environments.

Our research study aims to contribute toward understanding the co-creation process in e-SL with community partners from rural areas. Through collaborative study and shared reflection, we aim to foster reciprocity, as highlighted by Woods et al. (2013), as one of the main challenges in SL. Our research questions are:

RQ1: What are the features, roles, contributions, and goals of the co-creation model in e-SL?

RQ2: What do community partners and university teachers perceive as the benefits, challenges, and barriers of co-creation?

RQ3: What is the sustainability and impact of co-creation?

3. Methods

This research is part of a wider research project carried out in parallel to the development of the European collaborative Erasmus+ project “E-Service-Learning for Boosting Academic Civic Engagement in Rural Areas” (CIVENHANCE, 2024–2027). The objectives are to enhance the capacity of higher education teachers for rural e-SL projects, fostering civic engagement in students; to facilitate collaboration between universities, teachers, and rural partners through digitalisation; and to ensure the sustainability of e-SL results for social inclusion, civic engagement, and prosperity.

Grounded in an interpretative paradigm (Flick, 2018) and following the ethnomethodological approach proposed by Garfinkel (2006), as revisited by Cheng (2012), the research enables us to explore the conditions and rules assumed by social groups in the development of social functions and practices. Ethnomethodology emphasises how everyday actors construct meaning and navigate uncertainty through practical reasoning, requiring ongoing reflexivity (Finlay, 2002; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). The existence of rules or agreements to navigate uncertainty requires a process of permanent reflexivity, which can be investigated in different ways. In this case, the paper presents part of this ongoing research process.

Instruments and Procedure

The research procedure, design, instruments, and researcher roles were jointly defined, in line with the principles of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). A purposive sampling strategy (Patton, 2023) was employed, including university teachers and rural community partners with experience in e-service-learning within the last three years. Recruitment was facilitated through direct contact with partner universities in the CIVENHANCE consortium. Regular e-SL practice environments were selected to ensure rigour and ecological validity in the interviews (Vaivio, 2012).

Additionally, various products (such as field labs, workshops for retirees or unemployed women, a database of agrarian court decisions, and educational tools for place-based learning, nanolearning, or storytelling) were co-created in these e-SL practices.

The semi-structured interviews (Vaivio, 2012) were conducted with teachers and community partners in May 2025. These aimed to investigate the process of e-SL course co-creation and the roles of teachers and community partners within this process, along with its benefits, challenges, digital contexts, power dynamics, and sustainability. Participants’ consent interviews were conducted in person or virtually, lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Matej Bel University (No. 315/2025).

3.1. Participants

The participants (see Table 1) were eight university teachers and eight rural community partners involved in various models of e-SL courses from different organisations across Europe (Italy, $n = 2$; Croatia, $n = 3$; Spain, $n = 4$; Austria, $n = 4$; Slovakia, $n = 3$). The majority were cisgender females ($n = 8$), while the number of cisgender men was $n = 4$. The remaining participants ($n = 4$) did not specify their gender.

TABLE 1: OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS

No.	Country	Gender	Role	e-SL Course
1	Italy	M	Community partner in the senior centre	Didactics and Special Pedagogy for Social Inclusion
2	Italy	F	University teacher in Pedagogy	
3	Croatia	F	Community partner in Local Action Group	Urban and Rural Service-Learning
4	Croatia	M	Community partners in the Archive Collection Centre	
5	Croatia	F	University teacher in Information Sciences	
6	Spain	F	University teacher in Architecture	Thinking and Creativity
7	Spain	M	Community partner in Local Action Group	
8	Spain	M	Community Partner in Agroecology	
9	Spain	F	University Teacher in Physiotherapy	Community Physiotherapy
10	Austria	NA	Community partner in Expanded Gardens	Living classrooms Service-Learning for Rural Development e-SL and Curriculum
11	Austria	NA	Community partner in Expanded Gardens	
12	Austria	NA	University Teacher in Teacher Education	
13	Austria	NA	University Teacher in Teacher Education	
14	Slovakia	F	University teachers in Psychology	Positive Psychology and Applied Psychology
15	Slovakia	F	Community partner in Prison	
16	Slovakia	F	Community Partners in Social Facility	Counselling

3.2. Analysis

Interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim for analysis in the national languages, after which they were translated into English. Following an iterative inductive-deductive approach, qualitative data were coded for thematic analysis using a shared Excel matrix, which was aligned with the research questions (Miles et al., 2019; Braun & Clarke, 2022). Central themes were outlined for the coding matrix: *co-creation process, roles and contribution, goals and course content, benefits of co-creation, challenges and barriers, digital*

context, power and agency and sustainability, and impact. Each author conducted open coding, and the results were put in the matrix (Saldaña, 2025). Four authors outlined results from the open coding. The final version of the data analysis was agreed upon by the research team (Nowell et al., 2017).

4. Results

The results are presented below following the thread of the analysis topics. The name of the country is used to help locate the universities and their rural counterparts, without implying any form of generalisation.

4.1. Models of Co-creation in e-SL: an Adaptive, Cyclical, and Relational Process

The interviews conducted across the participating countries reveal that co-creation in e-SL was often initiated informally (through personal contacts or pre-existing networks) and subsequently evolved into more structured, semi-formal or institutionalised processes. Co-creation primarily took shape through shared decision-making, in which the roles of the involved actors, the spaces for dialogue, and the alignment of thematic and social goals were collaboratively defined. These participatory dynamics enabled partnerships to grow and consolidate through joint planning meetings, needs assessments, and shared commitment.

A particularly significant dimension that emerges from the interviews is the shift in perception of community partners: no longer seen as mere “case providers”, they are recognised as authentic co-creators capable of contributing meaningfully to course design and implementation. While this ideal aligns with foundational SL theory, it often remains aspirational in practice. Several projects, however, demonstrate a deliberate move in this direction through the co-design of themes and methods, the joint development of place-based educational tools, co-facilitated workshops and field labs, and integrated evaluation and storytelling practices.

Various tools and strategies supported this process of co-design, including walk-in room formats (e.g. TOZOMIA), mapping and embodied learning techniques, shared reflection spaces, artistic documentation, and a range of digital collaboration tools (such as AI-based platforms, Miro, Padlet, and videoconferencing software). Both analogue and digital instruments were deployed to support participation, depending on local contexts and levels of accessibility.

Across all cases, co-creation unfolded throughout the entire course lifecycle –from planning to evaluation– as an iterative, non-linear process. It was marked by adaptability, trust, flexibility, and mutual listening. As noted in one Spanish interview, “*We aimed to create a realistic and respectful meeting point, where the university could contribute without creating unnecessary burdens*”. The process of co-creation not only fostered reciprocal learning but also reshaped power dynamics, giving rise to learning environments rooted in real-world experiences and shared responsibility. As one faculty member in Spain stated, “*The involvement of the community partner was essential in giving meaning to the very structure of the course*”. This emphasis on meaning-making underscores the transformative potential of co-creation, enriching both individual and collective learning.

Additional enabling conditions identified across the interviews include regular meetings, continuous dialogue, active listening, openness to negotiation, informal initiatives by faculty or community members, sensitivity to contextual factors (e.g. digital or rural settings), and access to concrete tools that sustain participation.

4.2. Roles and Contributions in e-SL: Shared Agency and Valued Knowledge

The analysis of interview responses highlights a recurring theme across all national contexts: the co-creation process in e-SL was made possible by a fluid and negotiated

distribution of roles, grounded in mutual respect, reciprocity, and recognition of diverse forms of expertise. Community partners were not mere recipients or logistical supporters, but active co-designers, educators, and evaluators whose experiential and situated knowledge was essential in shaping the learning experience.

In Italy, for example, Luigi Re of the Senior Centre acted as both initiator and “*cultural bridge*”, bringing forward community knowledge. At the same time, the faculty adopted a facilitative, non-directive approach. As one faculty member recalled, the approach was one of “*accompaniment with delicacy*”, aiming to decentralise academic authority and promote shared agency. The project explicitly valued “academic (pedagogical theory), experiential (life stories), emotional-relational, and technical (AI, storytelling, music)” knowledge, illustrating a multidimensional understanding of expertise.

Similar dynamics were reported in Croatia, where the collaboration was perceived as a “*two-way street*” in which “*student energy and our experience blended perfectly*”. The community partners clearly stated that they were treated as equals, “*co-educators, not just beneficiaries*”, and that “*everyone’s contributions mattered*”.

In Slovakia, the prison education context introduced specific constraints, yet the partnership remained collaborative. Community partners contributed essential legal and procedural knowledge, which university instructors “*were literally required to respect*”. The course design was continuously refined through “*weekly joint supervisions*” and post-session reflections, a form of iterative co-governance in which practitioners’ knowledge shaped pedagogical decisions in real time.

The Austrian cases strongly emphasised equity of contribution and mutual legitimacy. Community members brought place-based and embodied expertise (e.g. “*students learned from the soil, the body, the dialogue*”), while academic staff framed and connected these practices to broader theoretical paradigms. One faculty member noted: “*We communicated on equal terms and incorporated feedback throughout*”, while another observed that co-creation succeeded “*because roles were not fixed, but fluid and negotiated*”.

In Spain, interviews revealed a complex, well-balanced distribution of tasks and contributions. The university’s role as the initiator and bridge builder was complemented by the community partners’ roles as co-designers, mentors, evaluators, and need identifiers. Their insights shaped both content and structure: “*Our observations and suggestions were instrumental in refining the programme*”. The collaboration was sustained by an attitude of “*respectful, humble, and flexible*” engagement, aiming to “*contribute without creating unnecessary burdens*”. As one stakeholder put it, “*The goal was never to intervene, but to co-create: to put university knowledge at the service of the territory, and to let the territory transform us in return*”. For another one, the type of collaboration was satisfactory because “*We had never experienced such a respectful way of taking ourselves into account, of feeling heard by the university*”.

4.3. Goals and Course Contents Co-Creation: Join Negotiation, Decision-making and Collaboration

Across all interviews, goals were described as the result of “*joint negotiation*”. Both university and community partners emphasised shared decision-making in setting learning aims. Community partners helped define what students should explore based on real local challenges and site-specific knowledge. Community challenges (e.g. digital inequality, youth engagement, and sustainable agriculture) directly shaped the learning objectives, supported rural development goals through the course, addressed community needs (loneliness, inclusion, digital literacy), and aligned with course objectives (inclusion, network building, educational planning). As described by the Spanish community partner: “*We worked closely with faculty members from the university to ensure that the course objectives aligned with both the academic curriculum and the real-world needs of the communities*”.

Course Content Development evolved through open collaboration and co-design. The university teachers did not predefine the whole content of the e-SL courses, because they were *“deeply grounded in local realities: rural life, community farming, ecological practices, and social inclusion”*. Alternatively, the course content was unchanged and predefined by the university, but *“local ecosystem data was integrated into student projects to address community needs”*. Community partners actively participated in planning and preparing students to work with the target group or beneficiaries, as well as in the assessment. There is repeated evidence in all involved countries of adaptive course planning, assessments, and formats that have been adjusted to reflect real-world relevance better.

Clear consensus on a flexible, adaptive project, with the university and community open to adapting to emerging interests. *“What is developed with the partner is not so much about ‘what’ to teach, but rather ‘why’ the service matters”*. Learning became a two-way street: students gained insight into community issues, while the community gained visibility, support, and educational tools rooted in shared experiences. Open negotiations ensured alignment between course activities and community goals.

4.4. Benefits from Co-creation in e-SL for Community Partners and University Teachers

The interviews reflect a broad consensus: co-creation created value for both university and community stakeholders. It led to outcomes beyond traditional course goals, fostering deeper learning, empowerment, and stronger social ties. Trust and long-term collaboration were viewed as central outcomes for both community partners and university teachers. Relationships deepened over time, sustained by shared effort, care, and meaningful dialogue. Community partners expressed feeling heard, respected, and equal. Their voices shaped the process, and their uncertainties were welcomed, not hidden. Co-creation was not just a method, it redefined what learning means. It made academic experiences more relevant, relational, and real. Because communities were meaningfully involved, everyone, especially students, learned more and in different ways.

Community partners involved in co-creating the e-SL course gained several key benefits from the process: They were *“empowered to take ownership of project outcomes”*. The co-creation process *“ensured that the community’s needs were at the centre of the project”*, thereby increasing its relevance and impact. Partners also gained a stronger understanding of the importance of connecting academic knowledge with practical, real-world applications, influencing *“the view of cooperation with the university”*. Cooperation fostered the exchange of *“new perspectives, information, and skills, injecting new energy and enthusiasm into the community”*. Furthermore, their knowledge and practices were validated and valued. The cooperation strengthened local networks and improved access to European educational frameworks. The partnership with the university *“strengthened ties with the academic sector, opening avenues for future collaborations”*.

The benefits for the individuals involved were also related to improved self-esteem, emotional energy, and motivation to overcome challenges. One Slovak community partner also mentioned personal benefits and influence on the practice: *“... in my personal life, it gave me a lot and also in my entire practice”*.

For university teachers, the co-creation process within the e-SL courses, in collaboration with community partners, revitalised course content, enhanced the impact of the third mission, and strengthened local community ties. Working together brings multiple benefits for university teaching, *“because the course was more realistic”*. As stated by one of the teachers from Spain, *“Having a counterpart that is real, which is an entity that exists in the community and not only ‘society in general’, brings practicality and relevance to the course, learning many more things than what is initially expected. Another important learning was the respect, reciprocity, and collaborative attitude”*.

4.5. Challenges and Barriers of Co-creation

The challenges and barriers of co-creating e-SL courses can be categorised into several subcategories concerning technology, time, and communication.

Technological and digital barriers are connected to the digital component of the e-SL course and to the integration of technologies into both the course and the co-creation process. Unstable Internet, digital divides, and access issues, as well as limitations due to distance, were present. As mentioned by one of the university teachers, *“You cannot feel the soil via Zoom”*.

Rural community partners reported time constraints and different institutional rhythms. The university calendars conflicted with community rhythms and the shortened timeframe for the co-creation. *“We also felt rushed by project timelines linked to the academic semester”*.

Another set of challenges in co-creation is communication and language barriers.

Academic language was inaccessible to some community partners, *“scientific terms were hard to follow”*. Academic jargon and specialist terms were at times inaccessible to community partners. There was a need for “translation” across different knowledge systems, as mentioned by the Austrian community partner: *“We needed more spaces that translate between worlds”*. Translating this knowledge into effective, culturally sensitive restoration practices required additional guidance and adaptation.

4.6. Digital Context of Co-creation

On the one hand, digital technology supported the co-creation process and enabled the creation of the course and project plan; while, on the other hand, it was perceived as a challenge, as mentioned above. The integration of digital tools, such as using Zoom for meetings, provided flexibility in connecting community partners and the university, and *“enhanced collaboration between the organisation and the academic team”*. *“Virtual meetings, shared online platforms, and digital communication channels allowed for more frequent and efficient exchanges, bridging the geographical gap”*. Digital tools supported the asynchronous work. However, the digital divide excluded some of the less tech-savvy rural community partners, which was a real barrier. Hybrid formats were therefore seen as a promising option to ensure continuity and prevent disconnection. In any case, it was considered that *“agreeing on an action plan in case of technical problems must also be included in the course design prior to its implementation”*.

4.7. Power and Agency in the Co-Creation Process

In the interviews, both university teachers and community partners emphasised shared power and agency in the co-creation of e-SL courses, using language that reflects values of equity, mutual respect, and participatory decision-making. The thematic analysis of how power and agency are conceptualised and expressed encompassed several themes.

Language such as *“shared ownership,” “co-authors,” “co-creators,” “not consulted, but equal partners,”* signals a flattened hierarchy where power is intentionally distributed. University teachers and community partners were involved in all stages of co-creation, from planning to evaluation, indicating a deep and sustained engagement. *“We decided together what would work, and changed plans as needed”*. Agency is described as both individual and collective, emerging from mutual respect and participation, *“everyone was a subject of the process”*. University teachers worked explicitly to decentralise their authority: *“The University worked to include our perspectives”*. Community partners were not treated as beneficiaries or passive participants but as knowledge holders: *“We were not a target group, but fellow travellers,” “Our knowledge was not added on, it was foundational”*.

While power was shared, structural asymmetries (e.g. in technology access, institutional resources) were acknowledged: *“Universities held more institutional power”*. These were not

ignored but addressed through dialogue and mutual adjustment. Perhaps most notably, power was not merely shifted: it was reimagined through trust, humility, and continuous reflection, viewing co-creation as “a *shared responsibility*” and adapting concepts of time and participation to community rhythms and realities: “*We felt a strong sense of connection and shared purpose with the academic team*”.

4.8. Sustainability and Impact as Effects of Co-creation

Nearly all participants described intentions or actions to sustain partnerships beyond the course or project’s formal conclusion. “*The experience planted seeds for future co-creation and curricular innovation*”. Co-creation in e-SL courses fosters infrastructure, trust, and capacity for follow-up initiatives, which may already be underway.

The co-creation process also led to pedagogical and civic transformations in higher education. University teachers observed the deepening of university-community ties, curricular innovation, pedagogical growth, and the emergence of civic responsibility as a core educational aim. Co-creation serves as a model for integrating civic engagement into academic practice and reshaping the relationship between universities and society.

Both university teachers and community partners noted a paradigm shift: “*Universities as open spaces, not ivory towers*” and “*Communities gained confidence in contributing to academic discourse*”. These shifts supported sustainability and created environments where collaborative, socially engaged education becomes the norm.

The co-creation process does not automatically bring sustainability into e-SL practices or university-community partnerships. The challenges for sustainability include limited resources and administrative burdens on both sides. Sustainability therefore depends on systemic support and continuous adaptation to local needs and constraints, and this includes “*leadership and a willingness to promote and institutionally recognise these types of learning practices*”. Co-creation is seen not only as an educational or service process, but also as a political and social innovation tool: “*Promote political advocacy so that the needs are made visible and public entities can also join*”. The potential of co-creation extends to influencing policy, driving institutional reform, and fostering social change.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that co-creation in e-SL experiences within rural contexts represents a process that alters the traditional relationship between universities and communities. The integration of rural perspectives in e-SL course design necessitates a paradigm shift, moving away from the traditional top-down model where rural communities are passive recipients of knowledge and services toward a collaborative framework where they actively co-create the learning experience. This conceptual change aligns with Mitchell’s (2008) call for a critical SL model that challenges power asymmetries and foregrounds authentic partnerships. A space for innovation is required where rural partners are no longer just recipients of academic knowledge but active contributors to the design and development of courses (Mitchell, 2008; Holton et al., 2017).

While digital technology facilitated the co-creation process and enabled the development of the course and project plan, it also presented specific challenges related to equipment or connectivity. Other challenges to be overcome were time, communication and language barriers. These challenges are also reflected in the work of Villani et al. (1992), Bovill et al. (2015), and Durall et al. (2020). Our analyses showed that the co-creation process in e-SL courses created specific benefits valued by both community partners and university teachers. Empowering community voices, ensuring a connection between course aims and content and community needs, a changed view on cooperation with the university, revitalised course content, an enhanced impact of the third mission, and a strengthened local community were some of the mentioned effects. Co-creation

in e-SL also demonstrated high potential for systemic impact across communities and universities. It could be seen as a catalyst for long-term transformation. It should therefore be considered among the constituents for a community-engaged university in quality management and accreditation processes (Paz-Lourido, 2024).

Digital tools play a dual role in this process. They enable communication and continuity in collaboration, but they also reveal inequalities related to access, digital literacy, and available infrastructure. These aspects highlight the importance of institutional support that ensures fair participation and ongoing technical guidance. Recent research confirms that digital co-creation in rural areas depends on the integration of local resources, mutual interaction, and shared knowledge (Wu, Xu, Lin & Ghani, 2023). Other studies highlight the need for human-centred and inclusive e-SL practices that foster engagement and sustainability (Derreth, 2024).

Power and agency were articulated through dimensions of shared ownership and decision-making, mutual respect, co-authorship, and reflexivity. Importantly, co-creation is framed as both a philosophical stance and a practical process of shared reflection, co-evaluation, open planning sessions, and role fluidity that requires humility and ongoing negotiation. This understanding aligns with the findings of Bovill et al. (2015), which emphasise the importance of transparent and inclusive approaches to co-creation in higher education. They note that successful co-design hinges on navigating institutional barriers and fostering mutual trust. The relationships based on trust, reciprocity, and mutual respect observed in this study demonstrate that co-creation fosters shared learning environments where academic and local knowledge are interconnected. These dynamics point to a model of e-SL in which epistemic authority is distributed, and learning becomes a relational, co-constructed process grounded in trust and mutual recognition (Paz-Lourido, 2023). Co-creation therefore supports not only student learning and community needs but also the civic and social role of universities, moving them toward more cooperative and engaged models (Bovill et al., 2015). Community-centred innovation models, such as Living Labs, also offer a relevant framework for these dynamics, as they promote multi-stakeholder participation and experimentation in real-life rural settings (European Network of Living Labs, 2020).

Our empirical findings related to the co-creation process in e-SL with rural community partners are in line with this shift and resonate with key theoretical models of co-creation (e.g. Praxis Model, Co-Design Model, SCB), particularly in terms of the centrality of reciprocal relationships; the definition and sequencing of co-creation steps; the activation of participatory behaviours across stakeholders; and the strategic use of digital platforms to mediate communication and collaboration. These findings are further supported by Durall et al. (2020), who emphasise the importance of stakeholder engagement and iterative design practices in digitally supported co-creation processes. From a theoretical perspective, these findings extend previous co-creation models and demonstrate their relevance for digitally mediated rural settings. The study provides evidence that co-creation can link participatory design with critical pedagogy in ways that fit local European rural contexts (Durall et al., 2020). Recent work also suggests that co-creation in territorial planning requires practical tools to connect local processes and institutional resources, particularly in regions facing depopulation or inadequate infrastructure (Christiaanse, 2025). In this sense, the institutionalisation of SL practices is essential to establish stable structures that facilitate the identification, continuity, and evaluation of co-creation partnerships (Ribeiro et al., 2021).

Finally, recent studies on university participation in rural development have demonstrated that long-term partnerships between universities and local communities help build stable forms of collaboration and innovation, thereby reinforcing trust and social cohesion (Pandey & Choudhary, 2025). Overall, the present study reinforces the notion that co-creation in e-SL is not only an innovative educational practice but also a means to promote social transformation, empower rural communities, and revitalise the

civic mission of higher education. Looking ahead, the development of digital platforms to facilitate matchmaking and co-creation between universities and rural partners must consider the environmental, socioeconomic, and cultural singularities of what is considered rural in each context (Stjernberg et al., 2023). Meanwhile, this study provided a platform for rural community partners and university teachers to share their voices and perspectives on co-creation in e-SL experiences.

6. Conclusion

This study highlights that involving rural partners in the co-design of e-SL courses increases their relevance and sustainability. Integrating local perspectives and knowledge into course planning helps align academic goals with real community needs, making learning more meaningful for students and more valuable for rural development. Co-creation promotes reciprocity, shared responsibility, and collaboration between universities and communities, strengthening the civic role of higher education.

As our study highlighted, by valuing and empowering rural voices in the co-design process, e-SL can become a more relevant, impactful, and sustainable approach to community development and education. Incorporating this local expertise into the curriculum not only enriches the learning experience for students but also fosters critical thinking, problem-solving skills, a sense of belonging and otherness, ensuring that the e-SL project aligns with local priorities and contributes to the community's long-term well-being. Overall, the findings confirm that co-creation in e-SL can serve as both an educational and social innovation strategy. Fostering horizontal relationships and mutual learning supports long-term partnerships, contributing to the sustainability of rural engagement. Promoting these practices within institutional frameworks can help consolidate universities as agents of transformation and as active participants in community development.

7. Limitations and Further Research

This study represents an exploratory phase aimed at understanding the co-creation process in e-SL courses with rural communities. The limited number of participants and the diversity of national and institutional contexts mean that the results cannot be generalised, but they do open a line of research. Differences in technological access, language, and local conditions also affected the extent of participation and collaboration.

Future research could expand the scope by including a larger and more diverse sample, as well as incorporating the perspectives of students to examine how co-creation influences their learning outcomes, civic awareness, and sense of belonging. Longitudinal studies could also explore the long-term sustainability of partnerships and the institutional changes that support them. Moreover, future initiatives should consider the design of inclusive digital platforms that facilitate equitable collaboration between universities and rural partners, taking into account the environmental, socioeconomic, and cultural specificities of rural contexts.

Author contributions

Alžbeta brozmanová-Gregorová. conceptualisation, data curation, investigation, methodology, formal analysis, project administration, supervision, writing – original draft, writing – review & editing

Irene Culcasi. conceptualisation, data curation, investigation, formal analysis, writing – original draft, writing – review & editing

Nives Mikelic-Preradovic. conceptualisation, data curation, investigation, formal analysis, writing – original draft, writing – review & editing

- Berta Paz-Lourido.** conceptualisation, data curation, investigation, formal analysis, writing – original draft, writing – review & editing
- Rolf Laven.** conceptualisation, investigation, formal analysis, writing – review & editing
- Joan Navarro.** investigation, formal analysis, writing – review & editing
- Florentine Paudel.** investigation, formal analysis, writing – review & editing
- Zuzana Heinzová.** investigation, writing – review & editing

Artificial intelligence (AI) policy

AI was used for the grammar correction and translation of interviews from national languages.

Funding

The research was co-funded by the European Union as part of the Erasmus+ project CIVENHANCE e-Service-Learning for Boosting Academic Civic Engagement in Rural Areas (number: 2024-1-SK01-KA220-HED-000245367).

References

- Ahmed, S., Nabi, M. N. U., Misbauddin, S. M., & Akther, F. (2022). Co-creation framework in professional service context: Toward a praxis model. *Khulna University Studies*, 19(2). <http://kus.ku.ac.bd/kustudies/article/download/61/1494>
- Alvesson, M., & Sköldbberg, K. (2018). *Reflexive methodology: new vistas for qualitative research* (Third edition.). SAGE.
- Aramburuzabala, P., Culcasi, I., & Cerrillo, R. (2024). Service-learning and digital empowerment: The potential for the digital education transition in higher education. *Sustainability*, 16(6), 2448. <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/16/6/2448>
- Avello Sáez, D. M., Culcasi, I., Sepúlveda Maulén, J. I., & Estrada-Palavacino, L. A. (2024). Explorando la evolución y tendencias del aprendizaje en línea: Un análisis bibliométrico de dos décadas de investigación (2004–2023). *Revista Electrónica Diálogos Educativos*, 21(41–43), 109–119. <https://revistas2.umce.cl/index.php/dialogoseducativos/article/download/2881/2967>
- Bidar, R. (2018). *Service co-creation behaviour in actor-to-actor co-creation systems: From service-dominant logic to socio-service dominant logic* [Doctoral dissertation, Queensland University of Technology]. QUT ePrints. <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/119156/>
- Björkum, K., & Basic, G. (2024). Conditions for higher education study: The perspectives of prospective students from rural areas. *Educational Research*, 66(4), 448–465. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2024.2382111>
- Bovill, C., Cook-Sather, A., & Felten, P. (2015). Students as co-creators of teaching approaches, course design, and curricula: Implications for academic developers. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 20(2), 133–145. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2011.568690>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE.
- Cannon, B., Deb, S., Strawderman, L., & Heiselt, A. (2016). Using service-learning to improve the engagement of industrial engineering students. *International Journal of Engineering Education*, 32, 1732–1741.
- Cheng, L.Y. (2012). Ethnomethodology reconsidered: The practical logic of social systems theory. *Current Sociology*, 60(5), 581–598. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392111426193>
- CIVENHANCE. (2024–2026). *e-Service-Learning for boosting academic civic engagement in rural areas* (Project No. 2024-1-SK01-KA220-HED-000245367). <https://civenhance.eu/>

- Christiaanse, S. (2025). Conditions for co-creation: Lessons from a planning tool for rural facility decline. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 113, Article 103512. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2024.103512>
- Culcasi, I., Brozmanová Gregorová, A., & Cinque, M. (2021a). State of the art of e-S-L development in European universities: An exploratory study. In A. Ribeiro, P. Aramburuzabala, & B. Paz-Lourido (Eds.), *2021 Annual Report of the European Association of Service-Learning in Higher Education* (pp. 31–50).
- Culcasi, I., Romano, L., & Cinque, M. (2021b). Aprendizaje-servicio virtual 100% online: Un estudio de caso en una muestra de estudiantes universitarios italianos. *EDUTEC. Revista Electrónica de Tecnología Educativa*, 78, 180–195. <https://doi.org/10.21556/edutec.2021.78.2255>
- Culcasi, I., Russo, C., & Cinque, M. (2022). E-service-learning in higher education: Modelization of technological interactions and measurement of soft skills development. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 26(3), 39–56. <https://openjournals.libs.uga.edu/jheoe/article/view/2653>
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2018). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications
- De Koning, J., Crul, M., & Wever, R. (2016). Models of co-creation. In *ServDes.2016 – Fifth Service Design and Innovation Conference* (pp. 266–278). TU Delft, Delft University of Technology.
- Derreth, T. (2024). Human-centered community engagement in online education: Developing a critical online service-learning pedagogy. *Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning*, 30(2), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mjcs1.4381>
- Durall, E., Leinonen, T., & Rodríguez-Triana, M. J. (2020). Co-creation and co-design in technology-enhanced learning: Systematic literature review. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 51(4), 1081–1099.
- European Network of Living Labs. (2020). *Living labs and rural innovation*. <https://enoll.org>
- Finlay, L. (2002). Negotiating the swamp: the opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice. *Qualitative Research: QR*, 2(2), 209–230. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146879410200200205>
- Flick, U. (2018). *An introduction to qualitative research* (6th edition). Sage.
- García-Gutiérrez, J., Ruiz-Corbella, M., & Manjarrés-Riesco, Á. (2021). Virtual Service-Learning in Higher Education: A theoretical Framework for Enhancing its Development. *Frontiers in Education*, 5, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2020.630804>
- Garfinkel, H. (2006). *Seeing Sociologically: The routine grounds of social action*. Paradigm Publishers.
- Halfacree, K. H. (1993). Locality and social representation: Space, discourse and alternative definitions of the rural. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 9(1), 23–37. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0743-0167\(93\)90003-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/0743-0167(93)90003-3)
- Holton, N. G., Casey, K. M., Fletcher, C., Ganzert, C., Hammerlinck, J., Henness, S., Proulx-Curry, P., Ross, J. A., Stevenson, H. A., Stoecker, R., Tullier, S., & Wood, S. D. (2017). The landscape of rural service-learning. In R. Stoecker, N. Holton, & C. Ganzert (Eds.), *The Landscape of Rural Service-Learning, and What It Teaches Us All*, (pp. 3–14). Michigan State University Press.
- Leung, H., Shek, D. T. L., & Dou, D. (2021). Evaluation of service-learning in Project WeCan under COVID-19 in a Chinese context. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(7), 3596. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18073596>
- MacGregor-Fors, I., & Vázquez, L. B. (2020). Revisiting ‘rural’. *Science of the Total Environment*, 741, 132789. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2019.06.135>
- Martínez-Scott, S., Monjas-Aguado, R., & Torregio-Egido, L. (2019). Development education in European rural areas: The work done by NGOs. *Iberoamerican Journal of Development Studies*, 8(2), 70–85. https://doi.org/10.26754/ojs_ried/ijds.367

- Malvey, D. M., Hamby, E. F., & Fottler, M. D. (2006). E-service-learning: A pedagogic innovation for healthcare management education. *Journal of Health Administration Education, 33*(2), 181–198. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16700443/>
- Meija, A. (2020). Community-engaged learning in times of COVID-19 or why I'm not prepared to transition my class into an online environment. *Public Philosophy Journal, 3*(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.25335/PPJ.3.1-3>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2019). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (4th ed.). SAGE.
- Mitchell, T. D. (2008). Traditional vs. critical service-learning: Engaging the literature to differentiate two models. *Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning, 14*(2), 50–65.
- Modić Stanke, K., & Mikelić Preradović, N. (2024). Service-learning tackling educational inequality. In *Springer eBooks* (pp. 1–28). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-68127-2_392-2
- Mould, T. (2014). Collaborative-based research in a service-learning course: Reconceiving research as service. *Partnerships: A Journal of Service-Learning and Civic Engagement, 5*(1), 72–95. <http://libjournal.uncg.edu/prt/article/download/893/568>
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16*(1), 1–13.
- Pandey, A., & Choudhary, N. (2025). University Participation in Rural Development in India: Tensions and Challenges in Unnat Bharat Abhiyan. *The International Journal of Community and Social Development, 0*(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/25166026251385621>
- Patton, M. Q. (2023). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice* (Fourth edition). SAGE Publications, Inc. (US).
- Paz-Lourido, B. (2023) *The Butterfly of Service-Learning*. Asociación de Aprendizaje-Servicio Universitario. <https://doi.org/10.61005/APSUMARI2023>
- Paz-Lourido, B. (2024, 14-16 November). More than Words: An Integrative Approach to Cooperation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education through Service-Learning [Paper Presentation]. European Quality Assurance Forum, Twente, Netherlands. <https://www.eua.eu/publications/conference-papers/more-than-words-an-integrative-approach-to-cooperation-and-quality-assurance-in-higher-education-through-service-learning.html>
- Paz-Lourido, B., & de-Benito, B. (2021). Editorial of the special issue: Service-learning in digital technology environments. *EduTec. Revista Electrónica de Tecnología Educativa, 78*(1), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.21556/edutec.2021.78.2317>
- Ribeiro, A. Aramburuzabala, P. & Paz-Lourido, B. (2021). *Guidelines for the Institutionalization of service-learning in European higher education*. European Association of Service-Learning in Higher Education.
- Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (5th ed.). SAGE.
- Saraiva, L., Padrao, J., & Čalić, M. (Eds.). (2021). *Rural service-learning and social entrepreneurship*. School of Education, Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo.
- Shumka, L. (2023). Rural community engaged learning? Rethinking practice in a pandemic. *Journal of New Brunswick Studies / Revue d'études sur le Nouveau-Brunswick, 15*(1), 33–47. <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/JNBS/article/view/33430>
- Stjernberg, M., Norlén, G., Vasilevska, A., Tapia, C., & Berchoux, T. (2023). *Scoping report on European rural typologies*. GRANULAR. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13767183>
- Tian, Q., & Noel, T. (2020). Service-learning in Catholic higher education and alternative approaches facing the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Catholic Education, 23*(1), 184–196. <https://doi.org/10.15365/joce.2301142020>
- Uden, L. (2011). Toward a new model of co-creation of value in e-learning service systems. *International Journal of Innovation in the Digital Economy, 1*(1), 36–49. <https://doi.org/10.4018/IJICST.2011010103>

- Vaivio, J. (2012). Interviews - Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing [Review of *Interviews - Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*]. *The European Accounting Review*, 21(1), 186–189. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638180.2012.675165>
- Villani, P. J., Malmstadt, S., & Roberto, K. A. (1992). Teaching older adults in a rural setting. *Activities, Adaptation & Aging*, 16(4), 39–50. https://doi.org/10.1300/J016v16n04_04
- Waldner, L. S., McGorry, S. Y., & Widener, M. C. (2012). E-service-learning: The evolution of service-learning to engage a growing online student population. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 16, 123–150.
- Woods, L., Willis, J., Wright, D. C., & Knapp, T. (2013). Building community engagement in higher education: Public sociology at Missouri State University. *Journal of Public Scholarship in Higher Education*, 3, 67–90. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1120257.pdf>
- Wong, M. M. L., & Lau, K. H. (2023). E-service-learning is equally effective as traditional service-learning in enhancing student developmental outcomes. *Interactive Learning Environments*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2023.2200817>
- Wu, Y., Xu, L., Lin, J., & Ghani, M. I. (2023). Subject embedding, relationship interaction, and resource integration: The value co-creation mechanism in rural communities. *Systems*, 11(10), 507. <https://doi.org/10.3390/systems11100507>
- Zastoupil, G. (2021). Social change in rural communities: A pilot study of liberating service-learning with rural higher education. *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*, 13(2). <https://doi.org/10.54656/dqrt3631>


Author biographies

Aľžbeta Brozmanová-Gregorov. Director of UMB Engage – University Centre for Community Partnerships. Matej Bel University Banská Bystrica, Slovakia.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8559-8512>

Aľžbeta Brozmanová Gregorová is a professor at the Department of Social Work, Faculty of Education, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, and currently serves as the director of UMB Engage – University Centre for Community Partnerships and as the president of the Platform of Volunteer Centres and Organisations. In her research, she focuses primarily on volunteering, service-learning, the nonprofit sector in Slovak conditions, and participatory approaches in social work. She has been actively working in advocacy and the development of volunteering and service-learning since 2002. She has coordinated several international and national projects. In practice, she also works as a trainer, consultant, and supervisor. She is a graduate of the Fulbright program, a member of the Government Council for Nongovernmental Organisations, a member of the Board of Directors of the European Association for Service-Learning in Higher Education, the Service-Learning Network for Central and Eastern Europe and the Academy for Community Engagement Scholarship.

Irene Culcasi. Researcher in Education. LUMSA University of Rome, Italy.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0033-9883>

Irene Culcasi is a Researcher in General Didactics, Service-Learning and Special Pedagogy at LUMSA University in Rome. She coordinates the Research and Projects area of the LUMSA Postgraduate School EIS (“Educating for Encounter and Solidarity”). She is a founding member of the European Association of Service-Learning in Higher Education (EASLHE, 2019), where she has served as elected Secretary since 2023. Since 2025, she has been part of the Board of the Italian University Association for Service-Learning (UNiSL). She is also a founding member of the Service-Learning in European Schools and Organizations Network (SLESON, 2022) and a member of the Editorial Board of the *Revista Iberoamericana de Aprendizaje-Servicio* (RIDAS). She holds a Ph.D. in Contemporary Humanism (Education

track) from LUMSA University, with a dual degree earned in partnership with the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile.

Nives Mikelić-Preradović. Head of the Chair for Knowledge Organization. Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, Croatia

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9087-0074>

Nives Mikelić Preradović is a full professor with tenure at the Department of Information and Communication Sciences, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb. She obtained her MA in Croatian language and literature and Information sciences at the University of Zagreb and her MPhil in Natural Language Processing at Cambridge University, UK. She obtained her PhD in 2008 at the University of Zagreb. In 2006 she spent a semester doing research and service-learning at George Washington University, USA. She is the Head of the Chair for the Knowledge Organization at the Department of Information Sciences. From 2021 to 2024, she was the President of the Scientific Field Committee for Information and Communication Sciences. She was the first to introduce service learning in Croatia in 2006 and has mentored and administrated over 100 SL projects with the local community since then. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the European Association for Service-Learning in Higher Education and was the national coordinator of 8 EU projects. Her research expertise includes natural language processing, service-learning, instructional design and computer-assisted learning.

Berta Paz-Lourido. Institute for Educational Research and Innovation. Department of Nursing and Physiotherapy. Director of the Innovation Unit in sustainable development, health and global justice through service-learning, University of the Balearic Islands, Spain.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0660-4908>

Dr. Berta Paz Lourido is an Associate Professor in the Area of Physiotherapy within the Department of Nursing and Physiotherapy. She holds a PhD in Education with *European Mention*, and Bachelor's degrees in Physiotherapy, Pedagogy and Audiovisual Communication, as well as several postgraduate and master's qualifications.

She is the principal researcher of the Education, Communication and Quality in Health Research Group. She has led or participated in more than fifty national and international projects on research, teaching innovation, internationalization, and cooperation, including Erasmus+ programs. She has undertaken numerous knowledge transfer activities through contracts with public and private institutions.

She was a founding member and is currently President of the Spanish University Service-Learning Association (ApSU), Vice President of the European Association of Service-Learning in Higher Education (EASLHE), and Coordinator of the Service-Learning Group in the Balearic Islands. She promoted and coordinated both the APSU Network of the Group of 9 Universities and the ApSUIB program.

She is a member of the Board of Directors of the International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement (IARSLCE) and actively participates in committees and award juries related to service-learning. She regularly publishes and delivers training within the framework of the European Universities Initiative.

Rolf Laven. Institute for Teaching Qualification in Secondary Education, University College of Teacher Education Vienna, Austria.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0033-9883>

Rolf Laven is an artist, researcher, and full professor of Art and Design Didactics at the University College of Teacher Education Vienna (PH Wien). He also lectures at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and the University of Applied Arts Vienna. Trained in sculpture in Maastricht and Vienna, he completed his Ph.D. on Franz Čížek and the development of Viennese art education.

His research and teaching focus on socially engaged art, community-based learning, visual literacy, and interdisciplinary collaboration between art, design, and civic education. He has coordinated and contributed to several Erasmus+ research projects in the fields of service-learning, visual competence, drama pedagogy, and arts-based education, including **SOUNDWORDS**, **SLUSIK**, **SLIDE**, **SL4DC**, **CIVENHANCE**, **ART-ECO**, and **RURAL 3.0**, **EDULANDS**. Laven is a member of the interdisciplinary doctoral consortium **STE[A+]JM**, which links art, design, technology, and natural sciences, and is actively co-developing its academic framework in collaboration with TU Wien.

Joan Navarro. Head of the Cloud and Edge Computing research line. La Salle Campus Barcelona – Universitat Ramon Llull, Spain

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3916-9279>

Holds a PhD in Information and Communication Technologies from La Salle - Universitat Ramon Llull (URL) since 2015. Also, he received his MSc. degree in Telecommunications Engineering in 2008, and his BSc in Telematics in 2006. He is currently an Associate Professor at the Computer Engineering Department of La Salle - URL and the coordinator of the Cloud and Edge Computing area of the Group of Research in Smart Society at the same university. Additionally, he is the Program Coordinator of the Master in Big Data Engineering, where he exports the knowledge generated in his research area to graduate students. His research integrates computer engineering and telecommunications, architecture and urban systems, and digital technologies to enable intelligent, efficient, and socially responsible services. The applications domains in which he has worked extend to urban infrastructure management, mobility systems, environmental monitoring, industrial processes for Industry 4.0, and smart cities, contributing to the development of sustainable, resilient, and people-centered built environments.

Florentine Paudel. Center for Research Management, University College of Teacher Education Vienna, Austria

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9256-0667>

Florentine Paudel is a professor of School Pedagogy with a focus on Diversity and Inclusion at the University College of Teacher Education Vienna (PH Wien). She holds degrees in educational sciences, psychology, primary education, logopedagogy and information technology, and completed her PhD in Education at the University of Vienna. Her teaching and research focus on inclusive education, literacy and language development, diversity-oriented teaching, and practice-based teacher education. She coordinates the accompanying research on the Iplus inclusive school classes in Vienna and contributes to national and international research initiatives, including Erasmus+ projects such as SLIDE and CIVENHANCE. Florentine Paudel is actively involved in university development and internationalisation, serving on the Equal Opportunities Working Group and coordinating institutional collaborations with Nepal. She presents her work regularly at international conferences and serves as reviewer for several academic journals. She is also a board member of both the European Dyslexia Association and the Austrian Dyslexia Association.

Zuzana Heinzová. Head of the Psychology Department. Matej Bel University Banská Bystrica, Slovakia.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2274-2772>

Zuzana Heinzova is an assistant professor and the head of the Department of Psychology at the Faculty of Education, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia. She graduated in Psychology and History from Matej Bel University, where she also completed her PhD in Psychology in 2004. She is a member of UMB Engage – the University Centre for Community Partnerships – and a member of the European Association for Service-Learning in Higher Education (EASLHE). Since 2013, she has been part of the university's service-learning implementation team and has served

on evaluation committees for national (Engaged School, Slovakia) and international (UNISERVITATE Global Award 2024) service-learning projects. She has participated in ERASMUS+ projects focused on service learning, including SLIHE, SLUSIK, SLIDE, ENHANCE - GSL and CIVENHANCE. Her research focuses on social and personal responsibility, trait emotional intelligence, emotion regulation and flexibility, and the effects of service learning on students.



The educational impact of partnerships in university service-learning experiences: Education for critical citizenship and social responsibility

El impacto educativo del partenariado en experiencias de aprendizaje-servicio universitario: formación para la ciudadanía crítica y la responsabilidad social

Anna ESCOFET. Lecturer. Universitat de Barcelona (annaescofet@ub.edu).

Mireia ESPARZA. Lecturer. Universitat de Barcelona (mesparza@ub.edu).

Abstract:

The transformation of university learning environments demands pedagogical models that connect academic knowledge with social engagement. In this context, service-learning is established as an educational approach that integrates disciplinary learning with community action. The aim of this study is to analyse, from the students' perspective, the educational impact of partnership relations established with social organisations within the framework of university service-learning projects. A quantitative, descriptive, ex post facto study was conducted based on the analysis of evaluation questionnaires completed by 212 students from the Faculty of Education at the Universitat de Barcelona, who participated in service-learning projects between 2016 and 2024. The instrument used evaluates the factors influencing student participation, their perceived usefulness of the service, and their satisfaction. Based on a correlation analysis, the results show that the active involvement of community organisations has an impact on student satisfaction, their personal engagement, and perceived learning. A high value is attributed to the development of ethical and social competencies, alongside a positive assessment of work on values, responsibility, and social engagement. The study concludes that partnerships play a key educational role in service-learning projects, broadening university learning environments and contributing to the development of critical, reflective, and socially engaged citizenry. It also identifies certain challenges related to the curricular integration of service-learning and the need to strengthen coordination mechanisms between universities and communities.

Keywords: service-learning; university; partnerships; community; learning environments; engagement.

Date of receipt of the original: 27/07/2025

Date of approval: 14/11/2025

Please, cite this article as follows: Escofet, A. & Esparza, M. (2026). The educational impact of partnerships in university service-learning experiences: Education for critical citizenship and social responsibility [El impacto educativo del partenariado en experiencias de aprendizaje-servicio universitario: formación para la ciudadanía crítica y la responsabilidad social]. *Revista Española de Pedagogía*, 84(293), 97-110

<https://doi.org/10.9781/rep.2026.153>

Resumen:

La transformación de los entornos de aprendizaje universitario exige modelos pedagógicos que conecten el saber académico y el compromiso social. En este contexto, el aprendizaje-servicio se consolida como una propuesta educativa que articula la formación disciplinar con la acción comunitaria. El objetivo de este estudio es analizar, desde la perspectiva del estudiantado, el impacto educativo de las relaciones de partenariado establecidas con entidades sociales en el marco de proyectos de aprendizaje-servicio universitario. Se ha desarrollado una investigación de enfoque cuantitativo, *ex post facto* de carácter descriptivo, basada en el análisis de cuestionarios de evaluación respondidos por 212 estudiantes de la Facultad de Educación de la Universitat de Barcelona, participantes en proyectos de ApS entre 2016 y 2024. El instrumento utilizado evalúa los condicionantes de participación, la valoración de la utilidad atribuida al servicio y la satisfacción del estudiantado. A partir de un análisis de correlaciones, los resultados muestran que la implicación activa de las entidades incide en la satisfacción del estudiantado, su implicación personal y la percepción de aprendizajes alcanzados. Se constata un alto valor atribuido al desarrollo de competencias éticas y sociales, y una valoración positiva del trabajo sobre valores, la responsabilidad y el compromiso social. Se concluye que el partenariado desempeña un papel clave como agente educativo en los proyectos de aprendizaje-servicio, ampliando los entornos de aprendizaje universitarios y contribuyendo a la formación de una ciudadanía crítica, reflexiva y socialmente comprometida. Se identifican también algunos retos relacionados con la integración curricular del aprendizaje-servicio y la necesidad de fortalecer los mecanismos de coordinación entre universidad y comunidad.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje-servicio; universidad; partenariado; comunidad; entornos de aprendizaje; compromiso.

1. Introduction

1.1. Learning environments at university: from the classroom to the educational ecosystem

The concept of learning environments in the university context has undergone a profound transformation in recent decades, moving from a perspective confined to the physical classroom towards a holistic view that acknowledges the university as an integral part of the educational ecosystem. This transformation has been driven by the emergence of student-centred pedagogical approaches, the accelerated development of digital technologies applied to education, and a more nuanced understanding of the processes of knowledge construction, competence development, and the shaping of students' academic and professional identities (Doğan and Arslan, 2025; Hotar *et al.*, 2024; Lu *et al.*, 2014; Valtonen *et al.*, 2021).

From this perspective, learning environments are no longer understood exclusively as physical spaces—classroom, laboratory, library—or virtual spaces—digital campus, cloud-based collaborative tools—but rather as interconnected, dynamic educational ecosystems. They integrate multiple interrelated elements: people (faculty, students, support staff, external agents), institutional and socio-cultural contexts, material and digital resources, pedagogical practices, curricular frameworks and shared values that shape and give meaning to learning experiences (Nguyen, 2022; Shah *et al.*, 2024).

The university educational process is no longer understood as a mere transmission of knowledge from the teaching staff to the students, but as a collective and situated construction. Learning emerges from dialogue, interaction, reflective practice and connection

to real problems, transcending the traditional instructional paradigm centred on expository teaching and standardised assessment, and promoting educational models that are more dialogical, experiential, and engaged with the social and cultural context (O'Brien *et al.*, 2022; UNESCO, 2021).

Consequently, the contemporary university must be thought of as a strategic node in a network of knowledge, practices and institutions committed to social justice, equity and sustainability. Its role as a generator and disseminator of knowledge has expanded to include the formation of critical, creative, and socially engaged citizens. Thus, learning environments should be intentionally designed to foster student agency, critical reflection on their role in the world, and transformative action in collaboration with other social actors (Elkington and Dickinson, 2025; Rodríguez-Zurita *et al.*, 2025; Yang *et al.*, 2024).

1.2. Service-learning and partnership: a pedagogy of reciprocity

In this context of university openness and transformation, service-learning is established as a particularly relevant pedagogical strategy, since it integrates academic learning with socially responsible action in community contexts. It is not a complementary methodological resource, but a proposal that redefines the meaning and social function of higher education, based on an ethical, political and epistemological understanding of knowledge as a situated, relational and transformative practice (Hamilton, 2024; Lang, 2024; Puig *et al.*, 2006).

Service-learning assumes that knowledge is not an accumulation of decontextualised content, but the result of dialogue between the university and the community. Through this interaction, students acquire academic, professional and personal competencies, while developing a critical understanding of their role as active citizens, capable of identifying social problems, working collaboratively to address them, and reflecting on the learning resulting from the experience. Thus, service-learning is consolidated as a formative tool with high potential for holistic student development and for the construction of a more permeable, engaged and socially responsible university (Esparza *et al.*, 2018; Herrera, 2020; Luna *et al.*, 2024).

One of the pillars of service-learning is partnership, understood as the sustained, horizontal collaboration between the university and local social actors. Partnerships break with the traditional asymmetry between the academic institution and the community, recognising the legitimacy of community knowledge and integrating their perspectives throughout all stages of the educational process, from needs assessment to outcome evaluation. Collaboration is based on co-responsibility, transparency and mutual trust (Benneworth *et al.*, 2022; Capece *et al.*, 2023; Hall *et al.*, 2021; Hart and Northmore, 2023; Robinson and Hudson, 2024).

These relationships of reciprocity not only sustain the practice of service-learning, but also reshape the forms of interaction between university and society. They foster institutional openness to the diversity of social contexts, encourage the decentralisation of knowledge, and strengthen enduring alliances oriented towards the common good. The university ceases to occupy a hegemonic position in the production of knowledge and becomes an organisation that learns with others, undergoes transformation through its engagement with the community, and actively contributes to community development and social justice (Bringle and Clayton, 2022; Mitchell and Latta, 2020).

1.3. Service-learning as a strategy for building educational community within universities

Beyond its methodological value, service-learning constitutes a comprehensive strategy for fostering a more cohesive and participatory university community oriented towards the common good (Valenzuela and Fernández, 2023). Its implementation reconfigures the relationships between the different university bodies and reasserts the collective purpose underlying academic practice (Bringle and Hatcher, 2002; Mitchell, 2015).

Service-learning facilitates coordination and engagement among the different groups—students, teaching staff, technical staff, partner organisations—by creating spaces for engagement, dialogue and co-responsibility. Projects require joint planning, shared decision-making and participatory evaluation, which fosters horizontal dynamics within the institution, strengthens university identity and consolidates mutual recognition. Furthermore, critical reflection on experiences promotes a deeper understanding of each member's role in the community and strengthens commitment to shared goals (Luna et al., 2024, Mitchell, 2015).

The participation of external actors expands the boundaries of the university and turns it into an extended learning community, connected with the local context and with social organisations, local administrations and citizen movements. This openness, beyond its instrumental value, has a strong political and ethical significance: it recognises the university as part of a wider social ecosystem, with shared responsibilities for sustainability, equity and quality of life (Furco, 2010; GUNI, 2019).

Partnerships help to establish lasting links with the local context, based on respect, ethics and the will to transform. These partnerships feed back into education, enrich the curriculum and strengthen the university's social mission (Bringle and Clayton, 2022; Saltmarsh and Hartley, 2011).

Service-learning also fosters a profound cultural transformation. Values such as solidarity, empathy and social justice are integrated transversally into educational practice, reshaping institutional roles: students become agents of change; the teaching staff, facilitators of learning; and the university, an institution committed to generating useful and socially relevant knowledge (Butin, 2010; Rodríguez-Zurita et al., 2025; Tapia, 2012).

Knowledge is no longer conceived as a commodity or individual capital, but as a “common good”, collectively constructed and oriented towards social well-being. This reconceptualisation challenges neoliberal models based on competitiveness and individual excellence, and proposes a relational, democratic and critical university, where learning is at the service of community transformation and the common good (Locatelli, 2024; UNESCO, 2021). In this framework, partnerships are consolidated as the structuring core of this new participatory and dialogic university governance (O'Brien et al., 2022).

Thus, the research presented below set out to explore, from university students' perspective, the educational role of partnerships in service-learning projects, and to analyse how this relationship contributes to strengthening the connection between students and their environment.

2. Methodology

2.1. Approach and design

Based on the general objective of the study—to analyse the relationship between the quality of partnerships and the satisfaction of students participating in service-learning projects—a non-experimental, ex post facto, descriptive-correlational design is proposed. This approach allows for a rigorous examination of reality without intervening in it, observing the relationships between variables as they occur in their natural context.

The study combines a quantitative analysis of the closed responses to the questionnaire and a qualitative analysis of the open-ended responses in order to identify the mechanisms through which partnerships operate as educational agents and the conditions that facilitate or hinder their educational impact.

2.2. Research hypothesis

The central hypothesis guiding this study is as follows:

The higher the quality of the partnership between the university and social organisations, the greater the students' satisfaction, both academically and personally.

2.3. Conceptualisation of variables

- Independent variable: Partnership quality.

This is defined as the degree of effective and sustained collaboration between the university and the participating organisations considering three dimensions: involvement of the organisations, sustained coordination, and continuity of the relationship.

- Dependent variable: Student satisfaction.

Understood as the extent to which the service-learning experience is positively valued, both academically and personally.

- Control variables: degree studied and academic year.

These variables are included to detect any potential structural differences influencing student perceptions.

2.4. Population and sample

The reference population is comprised of all students participating in the projects coordinated by the Office of Service-Learning in the Faculty of Education at the Universitat de Barcelona, between the academic years 2016-2017 and 2023-2024.

The sample consists of 212 valid questionnaires, representing approximately 75% of the total number of participants. Table 1 shows the distribution according to degree and academic year. Note the absence of data in academic year 2019-2020, which was due to the interruption of projects as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

TABLE 1. Number of students who responded to the questionnaire according to academic year and degree.

Degree	Year						
	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Pedagogy	15	4	19	3	10	6	2
Early Childhood Education	2	2	1	0	0	0	2
Primary Education	7	6	4	8	3	3	5
Early Childhood and Primary Education	0	0	7	2	1	0	1
Social Education	13	1	6	4	6	2	0
Social Work	12	3	17	12	12	9	2
TOTAL	49	16	54	29	32	20	12

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Furthermore, about 70 % of students are in their first year, 16 % in their second year and 13 % in their third year. Students in their fourth year and those on international mobility programmes account for the remaining 1%. The sample is predominantly female (95 %).

2.5. Context and description of the programme

Service-learning projects grant students between three and six credits and are carried out in collaboration with social and educational organisations linked to the fields of Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, Social Education, Pedagogy and Social Work.

Each academic year begins in October with a fair of partner organisations, where they present their proposals and needs to students. Subsequently, a project catalogue is compiled and disseminated via the heads of studies. Projects may take place over the whole academic year or one semester.

The process includes:

- Initial training session at the university.
- Welcome session at the partner organisation.
- Personal reflective diary, with regular educational feedback from the Office of Service-Learning.
- Final evaluation questionnaire, along with submission of the diary upon completion of the project.

The participating organisations include both formal education institutions (schools, educational reinforcement and reading associations) and non-formal education institutions (socio-educational organisations, projects involving children, adolescents, the elderly, and adults with disabilities).

2.6. Instrument

The instrument used for data collection is a validated questionnaire (Escofet *et al.* 2016), designed to assess the levels of and factors influencing participation, the competencies developed, the educational relationship established with the organisations, and student satisfaction with the experience.

It consists of 16 items, which are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = “strongly disagree” - 5= “strongly agree”). This article analyses the items related to the factors influencing participation, perceived usefulness of the service, and student satisfaction (see items in table 2).

2.7. Analysis procedure

The data obtained from the questionnaires were analysed quantitatively using the software Jamovi 2.6.26. On the one hand, a descriptive analysis of the variables was carried out, obtaining the mean, median and standard deviation of the variables analysed. Some of the questions posed in relation to participation have a lower number of responses due to the fact they were omitted in some of the questionnaires for the 2016-17 academic year. On the other hand, the correlation between students’ assessment of the level of involvement of the organisation in the project and their perception of the impact of the project on different aspects of their personal development was analysed. To this end, the correlation between the independent variable “involvement of the organisation” and various dependent variables related to relevant aspects of student involvement and education (student involvement, learning achieved, service performed, being more responsible for one’s own actions, understanding social needs, helping to improve society, knowledge of the professional field, relating theory and practice, reflecting on the content worked on at university, being more motivated to study, participating in the faculty, neighbourhood, population) was calculated using Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient, after verifying that the variables were not normally distributed (in all cases Shapiro-Wilk $W > 0.538$; $p < 0.001$).

Finally, a qualitative analysis was carried out as a preliminary exploration of the short-written responses provided by the students in response to the questions “indicate what you liked most about the experience” and “indicate what you liked least about the experience”. The term “organisation” was sought in the responses to check the role of the organisation in each participating student’s satisfaction with the development of the project. This analysis was carried out using the software ATLAS.ti 25.0.1. The gender of students was not considered in the analysis of the responses due to the low participation of male students.

2.8. Ethical considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of educational research and the policies of the Universitat de Barcelona, in accordance with the Code of Good Practice in Research (University of Barcelona, 2023) and the guidelines of the Ethics Committee for Research in Social Sciences and Humanities (CEI-CSH).

No authorisation was sought from the ethics committee, as this was not a mandatory requirement at the time the study was initiated (2016–2017 academic year). Even so, all phases of the process were carried out in accordance with established institutional and international ethical standards.

Informed consent was obtained from the participating students and from those who provided unpublished data or testimonies, thus guaranteeing anonymity, confidentiality, and secure storage of the data in institutional repositories of the Universitat de Barcelona, in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR) and Organic Law 3/2018.

The research team declares that it does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, age, religion, social status or functional diversity, nor does it have any conflicts of interest. The research adheres to the principles of integrity, transparency and respect for diversity, in accordance with the guidelines of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE, 2023) and the journal's own ethical policies.

3. Results

Table 2 shows the medians, means and standard deviations of the variables analysed, classified according to the different items assessed: factors influencing participation, perceived usefulness of the service, and student satisfaction.

TABLE 2. Descriptive data for the variables obtained via the questionnaire and related to the items analysed. *N* = number of responses to each item.

Variable	N	Mean	Median	Standard deviation
Factors influencing participation				
I like the type of project	172	4.59	5	0.65
Being able to participate in an organisation/association	172	4.09	4	1.07
Putting the content of the degree programme into practice	172	4.04	4	1.16
Helping/collaborating	172	4.61	5	0.633
Being part of an organisation/association	172	3.82	4	1.1
Helping to improve society	172	4.46	5	0.866
Perceived usefulness of the service				
Understanding social needs	212	4.4	5	0.726
Collaboration with an organisation/association	212	4.34	5	0.813
Interest in social problems	212	4.48	5	0.733
Participation in the faculty/neighbourhood/population	172	3.7	4	1.08
Motivation to study	212	4.03	4	0.981
Responsibility for one's own actions	212	4.54	5	0.74
Putting professional competencies into practice	172	4.36	5	0.877

Helping to improve society	211	4.35	5	0.8
Ability to relate theory and practice	212	3.93	4	0.982
Reflecting on the content worked on in the degree programme	212	3.85	4	1.02
Work on values	212	4.69	5	0.635
Student satisfaction				
Involvement of the organisation	212	4.24	4.5	0.931
Involvement of the student him/herself	212	4.57	5	0.609
Learning achieved	211	4.29	4	0.81
Relationship between theory and practice	212	3.77	4	0.992
Service performed	212	4.44	5	0,755

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The results show that the main motivations of students when deciding to carry out a service-learning project are related to the possibility of helping and contributing to the improvement of society, and that the type of project is a determining factor in their choice.

These motivations are also reflected in the students' most frequently mentioned opinions regarding the perceived usefulness of the service: the possibility to work on values, the acquisition of responsibility for one's own actions, and the development of an interest in social problems and an understanding of these problems. Thus, alongside the possibility of putting into practice the professional competencies they are acquiring in the degree programme, students value the opportunity to develop aspects of their education related to social responsibility, an aspect clearly enhanced by interaction with the organisations, thereby emphasising their role as educational agents.

Finally, with regard to the elements with which students feel most satisfied, all analysed variables are generally rated highly, with somewhat lower values for the relationship between theory and practice, thus indicating an area for improvement in the projects.

Regarding the correlations analysis (table 3), a positive relationship between moderate and high can be observed between student satisfaction with the involvement of the organisation and their own involvement, in addition to with satisfaction regarding the learning achieved throughout the project, satisfaction with the service performed, and improvement of responsibility taken for their own actions. A positive, albeit somewhat weaker, relationship is also observed between this perception of the organisation's involvement and aspects such as the students' improved understanding of social needs, their feeling of contributing to the improvement of society or their knowledge of the professional field covered by their studies. Therefore, the involvement of the organisation in the project is crucial for it to make a significant contribution to the acquisition of learning, competencies and attitudes that foster social responsibility. Their role goes beyond that of mere collaborators in service-learning projects, since they act as an additional educational agent in student development, thus broadening the learning environment and strengthening essential elements of their education.

TABLE 3. Correlations between students' perception of the organisation's involvement and their perception of other relevant aspects.

	Involvement of the organisation		
	Spearman's Rho	df	p
Student involvement	0.546	160	< 0.001
Learning achieved	0.475	159	< 0.001

Service performed	0.467	160	< 0.001
Being more responsible for one's own actions	0.425	160	< 0.001
Understanding social needs	0.358	160	< 0.001
Helping to improve society	0.337	159	< 0.001
Knowledge of the professional field	0.285	160	< 0.001
Relating theory and practice	0.270	160	< 0.001
Reflecting on the content worked on at university	0.238	160	0.002
Being more motivated to study	0.266	160	< 0.001
Participating in the faculty, neighbourhood or population	0.157	111	0.098

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Finally, a qualitative analysis was carried out on the short-written responses provided by the students in response to the questions “indicate what you liked most about the experience” and “indicate what you liked least about the experience”. The term “organisation” appears 13 times in the answers, six in the first question and seven in the second. Among the positive aspects related to the organisation that students value regarding the experience, they highlight the relationship with the people and professionals who form part of it: “I would highlight the cohesion and the group that we volunteers have formed with the organisation’s staff and the children who give it meaning” (student 7, Pedagogy 2022), “I would highlight the organisation’s professionals and the fact that I felt total freedom to carry out the activities in the classroom” (student 55, Primary Education, 2024), and the opportunity to work with them as a team and to learn about their daily activities and how the social fabric to which they belong is structured: “What I enjoyed the most was being part of an organisation that sparked a lot of curiosity in me. I have been able to learn and discover more about this world” (student 46, Primary Education, 2022). They highlight the fact that feeling part of this team serves as recognition of their work in the project: “The warm welcome from the team, both the educators and the people they work with. From the first day, I felt part of the group” (student 31, Social Education, 2021).

Regarding negative aspects, students express the need for improved communication and follow-up from the organisation: “What I liked least about the experience was that the organisation forgot quite a few times that I was going to take the class” (student 52, Social Work, 2017), “the scarce communication with the organisation, I had no assigned point of contact and sometimes felt lost” (student 71, Primary Education, 2024). And greater support from some of the organisations: “Sometimes I didn’t receive enough support from the organisation” (student 75, Social Education, 2022), in addition to prior and more comprehensive knowledge of their activities: “I wasn’t able to participate on some occasions in which the figure of a pedagogue was required, and therefore I didn’t have the opportunity to fully understand certain functions of the organisation” (student 60, Pedagogy, 2021).

4. Discussion and conclusions

The evolution of university learning environments reflects a significant shift from closed institutional models focused on the transmission of knowledge to more open, collaborative and socially engaged conceptions. For decades, universities have been considered ivory towers, far removed from the real problems of their environment and with dynamics that prioritised academic excellence measured in terms of scientific productivity or international competitiveness. However, the growing emphasis on social responsibility, civic engagement and the need for active citizenship has led to a paradigm shift that redefines the role of the university in the 21st century (UNESCO, 2021; O’Brien *et al.*, 2022).

In this new scenario, the university is no longer understood as an exclusively academic space, but as a key actor in the construction of fairer, more sustainable and cohesive societies. This transformation entails a comprehensive reassessment of learning environments, from being conceived as closed physical spaces to being understood as broad educational ecosystems, interconnected with the community and underpinned by relationships of reciprocity. In this context, university-community partnerships take on a central role not only as a methodological resource, but also as the ethical and political foundation for higher education committed to the common good (Loh, 2016; Tshishonga, 2022).

The results obtained in this research provide solid empirical evidence of the educational value of service-learning in this new university framework. In particular, the role of the partnership is emphasised as the core element that connects meaningful learning experiences. The analysis of students' perceptions shows that the quality of the link established with the social organisations has a direct impact on their involvement, satisfaction and perception of the learning achieved, especially in the field of social, ethical and professional competencies. This finding coincides with the postulates that understand service-learning as a pedagogy of reciprocity (Tapia, 2012), where knowledge is built based on dialogue between academic and community knowledge, and within the framework of collaborative, horizontal relationships.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings allow us to affirm that partnerships not only provide a logistical framework for the development of projects, but also create a broader educational environment. Here, social organisations act as educational agents that facilitate learning experiences that are experiential, relevant and deeply connected to reality. This educational function is expressed on multiple levels: as transmitters of contextualised and practical knowledge, as generators of social awareness, and as spaces where values such as empathy, solidarity, justice and responsibility are experienced. The fact that students particularly value the possibility of collaborating with these organisations, understanding real social problems and working on fundamental values reinforces the transformative dimension of service-learning and positions the partner organisations as active participants in the educational process.

These results align with theoretical perspectives that propose a reconfiguration of university learning environments through the lens of an educational ecosystem. In this model, the university is not a closed space for knowledge production and transfer, but a node in an interdependent network of actors, knowledge and practices. Service-learning is thus consolidated as a privileged pathway to articulate these connections, bringing together formal and non-formal contexts, connecting theory and practice, and promoting critical, situated, and action-oriented learning (O'Brien *et al.*, 2022).

Nonetheless, the study also identifies areas for improvement. The lower scores in dimensions such as the ability to relate theory and practice, or active participation in the local context, show a certain disconnection between the experiences undertaken and the academic curriculum. This gap can be attributed to multiple factors: partial integration of service-learning into curricula, insufficient coordination between teachers and organisations, or limited preparation of students to reflect critically on their experiences. Furthermore, some open responses point to difficulties in communication or support provided by organisations, which reinforces the need for more stable, transparent and shared frameworks for collaboration (Tijmsma *et al.*, 2023).

From a methodological point of view, the study also has certain limitations that need to be considered when interpreting the results. First, the *ex post facto* correlational design does not allow us to establish causal relationships between the variables analysed, only significant associations. Second, the use of self-assessment questionnaires implies a subjective component that may be influenced by social desirability biases or by the overall positive assessment of the project. Moreover, the sample, although large and representative of various degree programmes, is confined to a single faculty and a

specific institutional context, which limits the generalisability of the findings to other university settings. Finally, the absence of triangulation with data from teachers or partner organisations reduces the possibility of contrasting perceptions and enriching the understanding of the phenomenon from a more holistic perspective. These limitations suggest the need to complement future studies with mixed methodologies, longitudinal analyses and a multi-level approach that includes the voices of all actors involved.

From an institutional point of view, the data collected call for a reconsideration of university policies in relation to community engagement. In order for service-learning to unfold its full potential, it is necessary to establish support structures that guarantee the quality, sustainability and pedagogical coherence of the projects. This involves developing specific technical offices, providing systematic training for teachers and organisations, and ensuring academic recognition of students' social commitment. Furthermore, it requires a deeper cultural change that places the social function of the university at the centre of its mission, moving beyond the logic of knowledge commodification and embracing relational, collaborative models oriented towards social justice (Bringle and Clayton, 2022; Saltmarsh and Hartley, 2011).

While community partnerships offer many benefits, they also present significant challenges. Power asymmetries, scarcity of resources or the difficulty of sustaining participation over time can hinder the development of equitable and effective partnerships. However, as Preece and Manicom (2015) point out, when there is careful planning, honest dialogue and an explicit willingness for mutual benefit, these partnerships can become privileged spaces for transformative learning and educational innovation.

In short, service-learning and the partnership relations that underpin it are a strategic way of renewing the university from within, endowing it with ethical meaning, social relevance and transformative capacity. They are experiences that not only have an impact on those involved, but which also contribute to the construction of sustainable and inclusive learning communities oriented towards the common good. Through them, the university opens up to the surrounding community, recognises the plurality of knowledge, and actively engages with collective challenges.

Therefore, it is necessary to continue researching and strengthening this approach, broadening the perspective to include the experiences of other actors involved, such as the social organisations themselves, the teaching staff or the people who receive the service, and exploring how these links can contribute to the structural transformation of the university.

Author contributions

Anna Escofet. Formulated the central idea and research objectives, and defined the theoretical framework and methodological design. Prepared the original draft of the manuscript and supervised the entire writing and editing process.

Mireia Esparza. Coordinated the management of the questionnaires, the data cleaning and organisation, and the creation of tables for correlational analysis. Integrated the results and conducted the final review of the manuscript.

AI Statement

Perplexity was used for the search and retrieval of sources.

Funding

This article has not received any public or private funding.

References

- Benneworth, P., Pinheiro, R., Sánchez-Barriluengo, M. & Vidal, J. (2022). *Universities and regional engagement: Reframing the third mission through multi-level governance*. *Regional Studies*, 56(5), 823-837. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2021.1977963>
- Bringle, R. G. & y Clayton, P. H. (2022). Conceptual frameworks for partnerships in service learning: Implications for practice and research. *International Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement*, 10(1). <https://journals.sfu.ca/iarslce/index.php/journal/article/view/511>
- Bringle, R. G. & y Hatcher, J. A. (2002). Campus-community partnerships: The terms of engagement. *Journal of Social Issues*, 58(3), 503-516.
- Butin, D. W. (2010). *Service-Learning in Theory and Practice: The Future of Community Engagement in Higher Education*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Capece, G., Costa, R. & Di Pillo, F. (2023). *Co-creation in university-community partnerships: Exploring models of collaboration for sustainable impact*. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 45(2), 144-160. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2022.2104376>
- Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). (2023). *Principles of transparency and best practice in scholarly publishing* (4th ed.). COPE. <https://doi.org/10.24318/cope.2019.11>
- Doğan, M. & Arslan, H. (2025). Graduate student engagement and digital governance in higher education. *Educ. Sci.*, 15(6), 682. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15060682>
- Elkington, S. & Dickinson, J. (2025). Reimagining Higher Education learning spaces: assembling theory, methods, and practice. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 44(1), 8-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2024.2438587>
- Escofet, A., Folgueiras, P., Luna, E., & Palou, B. (2016). Elaboración y validación de un cuestionario para la valoración de proyectos de aprendizaje-servicio. *Revista Mexicana de Investigación Educativa*, 21(70), 929-949.
- Esparza, M., Morín, V., & Rubio, L. (2018). La incorporación del aprendizaje-servicio en la universidad: la experiencia de la Universidad de Barcelona. *RIDAS, Revista Iberoamericana de Aprendizaje Servicio*, 6, 97-114. <https://doi.org/10.1344/RIDAS2018.6.10>
- Furco, A. (2010). The engaged campus: Toward a comprehensive approach to public engagement. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 58(4), 375-390.
- GUNI (2019). *Higher Education in the World 7: Humanities and Higher Education*. Global University Network for Innovation.
- Hall, B. L., Tandon, R. & Tremblay, C. (2021). *Strengthening community university research partnerships: Global perspectives and practices*. *Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement*, 14(1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.5130/ijcre.v14i1.7775>
- Hamilton, E. R. (2024). Centering reciprocity: Lessons learned from a university-school partnership. *Schools: Studies in Education*, 17(4), 403-418. <https://doi.org/10.1086/729783>
- Hart, A. & Northmore, S. (2023). *Revisiting community-university partnerships: Governance, ethics and impact in an age of complexity*. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 24(2), 367-385. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-02-2022-0064>
- Herrera, D. (2020). Aprendizaje Servicio. Análisis de una experiencia universitaria. *Investigación en la Escuela*, 102, 154-164. <http://doi.org/10.12795/IE.2020.ii02.11>
- Hotar, N., Baran, B., Tokuç, A., Güzel, E. B., Akdoğan, F. S., Karagöz, E., Güney, L. Ö., Yıldız, C., Yacı, Ş. N., Eraslan, D., Dizdaroğlu, A., Apdik, S. N., Tanaslan, M. & Bozdağ, Ö. (2024). Designing Adaptive Learning Space by Integrating Technology to a Sustainable Classroom. In T. Minh Tung (Ed.), *Adaptive Learning Technologies for Higher Education* (pp. 126-163). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-3641-0.ch006>
- Lang, W. (2024). Community co-creation through knowledge (co)production: University expertise and rural development. *Journal of Rural Studies*. 112(4):103455. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2024.103455>

- Locatelli, R. (2024). Renewing the social contract for education: Governing education as a common good. *Prospects*, 54(1), 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-023-09653-w>
- Loh, P. (2016). Community–University Collaborations for Environmental Justice: Toward a Transformative Co-Learning Model. *NEW SOLUTIONS: A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy*, 26(3), 412-428. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1048291116662690>
- Lu, G., Hu, W., Peng, Z. & Kang, H. (2014). The Influence of Undergraduate Students' Academic Involvement and Learning Environment on Learning Outcomes. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 2(2), 265-288. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22125868-12340024>
- Luna, E., Gezuraga, M. & Legorburu, I. (2024). Aprendizaje-servicio universitario. Participación estudiantil, servicio y desarrollo de competencias. *Contextos Educativos. Revista de Educación*, 33, 239-260. <https://doi.org/10.18172/con.5141>
- Mitchell, T. D. (2015). Using a Critical Service-Learning Approach to Facilitate Civic Identity Development. *Theory Into Practice*, 54(1), 20-28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2015.977657>
- Mitchell, T. D. & Latta, M. (2020). From Critical Community Engagement to Partnership: Advancing Equity and Justice in Service-Learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 26(1), 19-31. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mjcsloa.3239521.0026.103>
- Nguyen, L. T. (2022). Digital learning ecosystem at educational institutions. *Cogent Education*, 9(1), 2111033. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2022.2111033>
- O'Brien, E., Čulum Ilić, B., Veidemane, A., Dusi, D., Farnell, T. & Šćukanec Schmidt, N. (2022). Towards a European framework for community engagement in higher education: A case study analysis of European universities. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 23(4), 815–830. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-03-2021-0120>
- Preece, J. & Manicom, D. (2015). The Pedagogic Contribution of Community Spaces and Environments in Service Learning Projects. *Alternation*, 16, 115-140.
- Puig, J. M., Martín, X., Batlle, R., & Rubio, L. (2006). *Aprendizaje-servicio. Educación para la ciudadanía*. Graó.
- Robinson, C. & Hudson, R. (2024). *Trust, reciprocity and equity in university–community partnerships: Lessons from participatory engagement*. *Studies in Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2024.2421793>
- Rodríguez-Zurita, D., Jaya-Montalvo, M., Moreira-Arboleda, J., & Raya-Díez, E. (2025). Sustainable development through service-learning and community engagement in higher education: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 26(1), 158-201.
- Saltmarsh, J. & Hartley, M. (2011). *“To Serve a Larger Purpose”: Engagement for Democracy and the Transformation of Higher Education*. Temple University Press.
- Shah, R., Keevy, J. & Bateman, A. (2024). Learning as ecosystems: Shifting paradigms for more equitable and effective learning systems. *Computers & Education*, 210, 104904. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2023.104904>
- Tapia, M. N. (2012). El aprendizaje-servicio en la universidad: Hacia una pedagogía de la reciprocidad. *RIDAS, Revista Iberoamericana de Aprendizaje Servicio*, 3, 7-20. <https://revistes.ub.edu/index.php/RIDAS/article/view/14936>
- Tijmsma, G., Volman, M. & Admiraal, W. (2023). Embedding engaged education through community service-learning: A systematic review of design principles for integration in higher education courses. *Educational Research*, 65(2), 218-240. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0131881.2023.2181202>
- Tshishonga, N. S. (2022). Advancing Community Engagement Scholarship as a Teaching and Learning Strategy in Higher Education. In B. Bromer & C. Crawford (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Learner-Centered Approaches to Teaching in an Age of Transformational Change* (pp. 287-307). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-4240-1.ch015>

- UNESCO (2021). *Reimaginar juntos nuestros futuros: Un nuevo contrato social para la educación*. UNESCO.
- Universitat de Barcelona (2023). *Codi de bones pràctiques en recerca*. Universitat de Barcelona. https://www.ub.edu/web/ub/ca/universitat/transparencia/normativa/documents/cbp_recerca.html
- Valenzuela, M. H. & Fernández, C. (2023). Contribución al bien común de una experiencia de intervención universitaria desde el aprendizaje-servicio. *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios Educativos*, 53(1), 73-98. <https://doi.org/10.48102/rlee.2023.53.1.317>
- Valtonen, T., Leppänen, U., Hyypiä, M., Kokko, A., Manninen, J., Vaartiainen, H., Sointu, E. & Hirsto, L. (2021). Learning environments preferred by university students: a shift toward informal and flexible learning environments. *Learning Environments Research*, 24, 371-388. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10984-020-09339-6>
- Yang, L., Lee, S. & Oldac, Y. I. (2024). A Cross-Cultural Exploration of Student Development in Higher Education: Acknowledging, Exercising, and Enhancing Agency. *ECNU Review of Education*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/20965311241238233>

Author biographies

Anna Escofet. PhD in Educational Sciences from the University Barcelona. Lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the University of Barcelona, where she co-directs, together with Mireia Esparza, the Office of Service-Learning. Lead researcher of the research group “Learning Environments and Materials”, consolidated by the Regional Government of Catalonia. Director of the UB Chair in Service-Learning. Editor of the *Revista Iberoamericana de Aprendizaje-Servicio* [Ibero-American Service-Learning Journal].

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2230-8802>

Mireia Esparza. PhD in Biology from the University of Barcelona. Senior Lecturer in the Department of Linguistic, Scientific and Mathematical Education forming part of the Faculty of Education at the University of Barcelona. She co-directs, together with Anna Escofet, the Office of Service-Learning. She is a member of the research group “Learning Environments and Materials”, consolidated by the Regional Government of Catalonia and the UB Chair in Service-Learning. She coordinates the consolidated teaching innovation group DSambApS and is part of the EduCiTS Group, both focusing on the integration of sustainability in university education.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3925-4142>

University, community and culture: service-learning in the face of refuge and immigration

Universidad, comunidad y cultura: el aprendizaje-servicio ante el refugio y la inmigración

Vicent GOZÁLVEZ-PÉREZ. Associate Professor at the Universitat de València (vicent.gozalvez@uv.es).

Marta RIVAS-MURO. Coordinator for Advocacy and Global Citizenship Education at the Spanish Committee for UNHCR- Valencian Community (mrivas@eacnur.org).

María Jesús PERALES-MONTOLÍO. Associate Professor at the Universitat de València (maria.j.perales@uv.es).

Gemma CORTIJO-RUIZ. Assistant Professor at the Universitat de València (gemma.cortijo@uv.es).

Abstract

The aim of this article is to describe and evaluate the service-learning experiences undertaken by university students and implemented in secondary schools, designed to address a specific educational need: to identify and reduce prejudices and distorted representations of refugees and immigrants. Through the mediation of the Spanish Committee for UNHCR, university students design and deliver an educational service intended to foster a more accurate and well-grounded understanding of the phenomenon of refuge and migration. A mixed-methods research methodology was used (both qualitative and quantitative), focusing particularly on the community receiving the service, but also collecting the evaluation completed by the university students who performed the service. The results of the interviews and questionnaires show the effectiveness of this approach, which embraces a comprehensive view of education and of the individual as an active participant in the educational process, while also promoting a sense of citizenship, the creation of an open community and social cohesion in a diverse context. Considering the results of the research and theoretical reflection on service-learning, it is concluded that this approach to educational innovation meets the essential requirements of a university model that transfers knowledge to society and draws on this transfer as a driving force for teaching and learning processes in higher education.

Keywords: higher education; educational innovation; social cohesion; service-learning; civic education; knowledge transfer.

Resumen

El objetivo del presente artículo es describir y evaluar las experiencias de aprendizaje-servicio desarrolladas por estudiantes universitarios y aplicadas en centros de educación

Date of receipt of the original: 29/07/2025

Date of approval: 22/11/2025

Please, cite this article as follows: Gozálviz-Pérez, V., Rivas-Muro, M., Perales-Montolío, M. J. & Cortijo-Ruiz, G. (2026). University, community and culture: service-learning in the face of refuge and immigration [Universidad, comunidad y cultura: el aprendizaje-servicio ante el refugio y la inmigración]. *Revista Española de Pedagogía*, 84(293), 111-124 <https://doi.org/10.9781/rep.2026.155>

secundaria, orientadas a atender una necesidad educativa específica: identificar y reducir los prejuicios y las representaciones distorsionadas hacia las personas refugiadas e inmigrantes. A través de la mediación del Comité Español de ACNUR, los estudiantes universitarios diseñan y llevan a cabo un servicio educativo destinado a promover una comprensión más ajustada y fundamentada del fenómeno del refugio y la migración. Se ha utilizado una metodología de investigación mixta, cualitativa y cuantitativa, centrada especialmente en la comunidad receptora del servicio, pero recogiendo también la evaluación llevada a cabo por parte del alumnado universitario que lo realizó. Los resultados de las entrevistas y los cuestionarios muestran la eficacia de este enfoque atendiendo a una visión integral de la educación y de la persona como sujeto de la educación, favoreciendo igualmente el sentido de ciudadanía, la creación de una comunidad abierta y la cohesión social en un contexto diverso. Teniendo en cuenta los resultados de la investigación y la reflexión teórica acerca del aprendizaje-servicio, se concluye que este enfoque de innovación educativa reúne los requisitos fundamentales de un modelo de universidad que transfiere el conocimiento a la sociedad y que se nutre de esta transferencia como motor para los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje en Educación Superior.

Palabras clave: educación superior; innovación educativa; cohesión social; aprendizaje-servicio; educación cívica; transferencia del conocimiento.

1. The university as a space for social and cultural cohesion: service-learning in the Spanish Committee for UNHCR

In this article we describe and evaluate the service-learning projects (hereinafter SL) that the University of Valencia has carried out in the surrounding community, specifically in schools in the city of Valencia itself, with the aim of promoting the value of diversity in education by welcoming people from other cultural contexts. This is precisely the fundamental objective of such projects, which have been carried out within the framework of the “UNESCO-UV Chair in Global Education in the Mediterranean. Studies for Peace, Interculturality, and Sustainability”, and in collaboration with the Spanish Committee for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The regional office of the Spanish Committee for UNHCR in the Valencian Community (hereinafter, Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC) has been working with this Chair since it was founded in 2022, and is one of its preferred partners along with Save The Children-VC. Indeed, since the Chair was approved by UNESCO (Paris), one of its main objectives has been the implementation of SL projects in partnership with different civil associations. In this framework, SL projects have been designed and carried out in collaboration with the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC, on the basis that it is an approach or methodology that combines meaningful and practical learning in higher education with (based on) the performance of a service for the community, especially in the areas of civic education and education in values such as solidarity, social justice, equality, and dignity—values which, when applied to people from different cultural contexts, help expand the concept of community and foster intercultural or global citizenship.

The SL projects in collaboration with the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC have been designed and implemented at the Universitat de València since 2022 in the subjects Intercultural Pedagogy and Philosophy of Education, forming part of the Bachelor's Degrees in Pedagogy and Social Education, both worth 6 ECTS credits. Such projects are structured into the following phases: (1) Contact the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC to establish which university students can participate in the projects, given the availability of the schools where the service will be performed. (2) Invite university students, in the aforementioned

subject areas, to voluntarily participate in the service activities managed by the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC and carried out in schools in the city of Valencia as part of a SL project. (3) Establish communication between the volunteer students and the coordinators of the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC, especially to initiate the process and to schedule training sessions prior to performing the service. (4) Training delivered by the NGDO in different sessions, aimed at informing, reflecting on, and raising awareness about the reality of refuge, asylum, immigration and its causes, its national and international regulation, in addition to the serious difficulties faced by refugees and migrants to achieve a life without persecution, without insecurity due to armed conflicts, and without danger to life due to extreme poverty. In the training phase, educational actions are learnt and also designed for primary or secondary school students, actions that will be the core of the service within the SL project. (5) Perform the service in different schools accompanied and guided by the technical staff of the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC. (6) Evaluation of the service by specialised staff from the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC, taking into account the evaluation or assessment completed by students at the schools (recipients of the service or community receiving the service) following the actions or activities carried out. (7) Construction of the learning acquired by university students from the service experience, always in relation to the contents and competencies of the subjects of Philosophy of Education or Intercultural Pedagogy, ensuring that university learning contains a hands-on, practical and experiential component from which to build the knowledge and values specific to educational professions such as Pedagogy and Social Education.

The service-learning experiences carried out include a series of pedagogical objectives aimed at strengthening both the academic training and the civic-social competence of university students. Specifically, the aim is to: (1) apply the knowledge acquired in the subjects of Intercultural Pedagogy and Philosophy of Education to a real context; (2) develop professional competencies related to the design, implementation and evaluation of educational interventions; (3) promote critical reflection on the phenomenon of refuge and migration based on service experience; and (4) promote attitudes of social responsibility, civic engagement and sensitivity towards the inequalities and prejudices present in the school context.

In addition to the learning in relation to the aforementioned subjects, the SL experience has promoted the development of civic-social competencies that go beyond theoretical content. Students developed specific skills according to their degree programme. More specifically, students on the Bachelor's Degree in Pedagogy applied competencies related to the design and implementation of educational programmes, the evaluation of schools, the design of educational resources and institutions, the planning of study techniques, and the development of didactic and methodological strategies adapted to different educational contexts. At the same time, students on the Bachelor's Degree in Social Education developed skills related to facilitating group dynamics and the promotion of social inclusion and participation—skills that urgently need to be promoted if we observe the growing trend in the mobility and temporary movement of people forcibly displaced from their country of origin (Estrada and Palma-García, 2020).

According to Sotelino *et al.* (2019), these practices create a significant impact on the student's personal development, fostering deeper and more authentic learning, in which theoretical content is consolidated thanks to its application in real contexts. These experiences also foster values, and lead to increased motivation, self-esteem and personal expectations, as they see that their contribution has a direct effect on a specific environment.

1.1. Service in the area of refuge and migration as an axiological component in Higher Education

Higher Education has undergone a redefinition in Spain following the approval and publication of Organic Law 2/2023 on the reform of the University System (LOSU).

In particular, Title IV states, referring to research and the transfer and exchange of knowledge and innovation, that universities shall promote research, innovation and knowledge transfer structures that may be carried out, fostering multidisciplinary, in other bodies, and other public or private organisations and companies, and similarly in the field of the social economy (article 11, paragraph 4). SL projects address this aim in that they foster innovative learning based on the transfer of knowledge to society, which is applied to organisations and bodies with social aims such as the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC.

Similarly, the LOSU specifies in Title V the need for Spanish universities to cooperate with other civil society organisations and bodies in order to create strategic partnerships and collaboration networks (article 14), networks which, as we understand, we are strengthening by means of SL projects. Continuing with Title VI, perhaps the one that concerns us most, the current university law refers precisely to the relationship between the university, society and culture, a relationship established as one of the major objectives of Higher Education and which, ultimately, aims to develop the axiological side of scientific, technical, humanistic and artistic knowledge inherent to universities. Indeed, article 18 (paragraph 1) states that universities shall foster social cohesion by encouraging the participation of the university community in projects related to the promotion of democracy, equality, social justice, peace, and inclusion. In paragraph 4, explicit reference is made to SL projects as projects that fit in with these aims, promoting the participation of the university community with a view to equitable, inclusive and sustainable economic and social development—development that can promote the creation of quality employment and improve the well-being standards of the local community. There is no better way to express the purpose of SL projects in partnership with the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC and within the framework of the “UNESCO-UV Chair in Global Education in the Mediterranean”, always guided by a model of social cohesion that is inclusive, radically supportive and in line with the ethical principles of our democratic Constitution, the Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) and the 2030 Agenda for the Promotion of Sustainable Development Goals. To this we must add what is laid down in paragraph 5 of the aforementioned article, which states that universities shall promote university volunteering in accordance with Law 45/2015, of 14 October, on Volunteering.

Moreover, the third mission of the university, better known as “university social responsibility”, highlights the need to address social problems by adopting an ethical and active commitment to society (Hernández, 2021). In this sense, the university is conceived as an agent fostering reflective and critical citizens who are engaged, participatory and supportive in the construction of a democratic and just society (Ruiz-Corbella and Bautista, 2016). The university, as a key social institution, has the responsibility to educate future citizens who, guided by ethical and social principles, can assume a transformative role in today’s societies, undertaking actions to promote social justice (García-Aracil *et al.*, 2014). Students need to be prepared not only to carry out their profession well, but also to think and act as just citizens and human beings. Furthermore, students are less likely to act in a way that contributes to social well-being if they do not take on this responsibility with determination during their time at university (Bernal, 2017).

As a result, recent years have seen an increase in the development of SL projects in the university context related to refugees and immigration (Hawkins and Kaplan, 2016; Hooli *et al.*, 2025; Ludwig and Campbell, 2023). The proliferation of these innovative initiatives not only addresses the ethical commitment of academic higher education institutions to contemporary social issues, but also reflects a desire to position the university as an active agent in the formation of critical citizens (Ruiz-Corbella and García-Gutiérrez, 2023). From this perspective, SL responds to the principles established by the LOSU, by promoting a university that participates in society in an engaged manner, and contributes to the development of a more just and, ultimately, more humane community.

1.2. Creating culture, citizenship and an open community through the University

Knowledge is primarily built upon the foundations of experience connected to practical action, particularly when that action occurs collaboratively rather than individually, and is aimed at social transformation (Lorenzo *et al.*, 2020; Santos-Rego *et al.*, 2025). As is well known, the theoretical framework underpinning this theory of learning comes from John Dewey's pragmatism, although we defend pragmatism in its more social and axiological side, insisting on the intimate relationship and continuous interaction between knowledge and values for progress and social transformation (Jover and Gozávez, 2024). Therefore, the SL projects carried out are associated with a pragmatism that goes beyond the axiologically neutral interpretation that is usually given to it, as if the question of the values that drive action and learning disappeared in favour of a constant revision of such values as a result of the changing practical interests of social and educational agents. That is to say, as if there were no axiological foundation prior to action, as one might infer from Dewey's own writings (González-Geraldo, Jover and Martínez, 2017; Dewey, 2010). According to Dewey, what is important from an ethical and moral education point of view is to understand that it is not so much about learning abstract principles, but about learning from human relationships in action. The aim of moral education is not for children and youth to learn rules and precepts, but to acquire the habit of mentally constructing a real human interaction scenario and examining it thoroughly to decide on a course of action (Dewey, 2010) in the most acceptable and consensual way. However, learning from a social and community action project inherently assumes values that must be consolidated, nuanced, materialised and embraced through shared practical action (Jover and Gozávez, 2024). Such values, which function as fundamental premises for action in SL projects, include respect for equal dignity, compassion or empathy for community issues (and thus solidarity), dialogue and active listening to other perspectives, and, of course, freedom understood as participation, autonomy, and human development (García-Gutiérrez y Ruiz-Corbella, 2022; Santamaría-Goicuria y Martínez, 2018; Sotelino *et al.*, 2019). The experience derived from praxis in relation to the community strengthens such values, instilling them in participants' civic mindset and promoting critical reflection as they are confronted with the realities of service practice (Santos-Rego and Lorenzo, 2012; Adarlo *et al.*, 2024).

One thing that is certain is that, as the SL projects were scheduled and carried out in collaboration with the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC, these values not only served as a basic premise for action, but also gave rise to axiological learning for active, democratic and intercultural citizens. The notion of "community" that has been fostered points to an openness beyond borders, insofar as it fosters cohesion with asylum seekers and, on that basis, advances an understanding of community as open and welcoming to refugees fleeing war contexts, violence against women, political or religious persecution, etc., as established in Article 14 of the Declaration of Human Rights, which states that everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. The training and pedagogical intervention actions of university students, and the educational actions received by primary and secondary school students as recipients of the service, are oriented towards, as we will show later, reinforcing cosmopolitan citizens in a global context, capable of broadening the meaning of the common to the whole human community; a meaning, as Huerta and Martínez-Virto (2023) point out, capable of questioning the limitations of a conventional and nationalistic view of societies, and undoubtedly capable of growing in awareness and sensitivity towards problems, perhaps tragedies, suffered by people whose only 'crime' is having been born in a political and cultural context of intolerance and violence.

Thus, the SL projects we describe aim to introduce innovative educational approaches in Higher Education based on a broad idea of community, valid for multicultural societies. In current educational innovation, the concept of community is understood as a collaborative ecosystem where teachers, students and social agents co-create improvement processes. Recent research highlights that sustainable innovations depend less on incorporating technology or methodologies in isolation and more on strengthening collaborative networks for joint learning (Fullan and Quinn, 2016).

2. Training held by the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC and service actions in the field of education

2.1. Training context in the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC

There are currently over 123 million people who have been forced to flee their homes because of war, persecution and violence. Each year, UNHCR reports show an increasing trend in this figure as new emergencies are added to the multiple protracted crises.

The reality of forced displacement impacts people differently depending on their gender, age and other diversity issues. It is further exacerbated by climate change and environmental degradation, which can lead to conflict and scarcity of resources, increase the frequency and magnitude of extreme weather events, and increase the vulnerability of communities.

Moreover, mass forced displacement takes place in a context marked by misinformation and fake news, which promotes prejudices, negative stereotypes and attitudes of fear and rejection towards people who arrive in our communities or who are perceived as foreigners.

These xenophobic attitudes, which can occur during all stages of displacement, are particularly critical when they occur in host societies, since they jeopardise the entire international protection system.

It is thus essential to promote critical thinking and foster co-responsibility that leads to reflection and action both in higher education and in secondary schools, where processes are articulated that enable an understanding of the interconnections between forced displacement on a global scale and the attitudes affecting displaced persons locally.

2.2. Training agents of social transformation

The self-perception of people as agents of change in this globalised context is essential to strengthen international solidarity and social cohesion. This perception as agents of change is especially important among educators and future educators due to the multiplier potential of their actions.

The Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC includes, in its strategy from 2021, work through SL processes aimed at educators, placing at their disposal the educational resources and lessons learned throughout the history of the organisation, which began implementing projects regarding Global Citizenship Education in 2007. The aim is to provide teachers and future educators with tools and resources that facilitate the development of civic competence through content related to forced displacement.

The Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC identifies in its assessments (based on regular surveys) that secondary and higher education students show a low level of knowledge regarding refugee and migration issues. It is also identified that their primary source of information is social media, where fake news and hate narratives towards migrants and refugees proliferate. The lack of reliable and contrasted information is at the root of the construction of prejudices that damage intercultural coexistence. Based on this observation, the SL projects implemented attempt to meet the need for citizen and ethical education in relation to the phenomenon of racism, xenophobia and hate crimes in our society. These considerations, together with the requests received from the schools with which the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC collaborates in the field of Global Citizenship Education (GCED), lead us to identify secondary school students as the target group for SL actions.

2.3. Training pathway

The training pathway for these SL processes seeks to strengthen the relationship between “knowing” and “doing”, fostering the capacity to integrate knowledge and attitudes so as to convey, from a critical perspective, the realities of forced displacement. The stages of the pathway are:

1. Empathy: connect with university students' prior knowledge and with the emotions evoked by this reality.
2. Understanding: foster knowledge and critical thinking through guided reflections on the causes and consequences of forced displacement, with particular emphasis on the importance of having strong sources of truthful information.
3. Creation: prepare a service project, linked to what has been learnt, which helps improve the reality of refugees, migrants or people perceived as foreigners. It is articulated through the design of an awareness-raising workshop. Each group chooses a topic to focus on.
4. Action: implement the designed project. Students carry out an awareness-raising workshop on inclusion, justice and sustainability approaches in schools, especially at secondary school level.
5. Evaluation: the impact of the actions implemented in secondary schools is analysed, as is the knowledge acquired and the skills applied during the process.

Stages 1 and 2 usually include a meeting with a refugee, as these dialogues are a catalyst for empathy and understanding in the group. Stages 3 and 4 are guided and accompanied by the technical staff of the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC.

Therefore, the SL projects carried out in relation to refugees and forced immigration were not improvised, since the different service actions were preceded by a training session given by the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC, aimed at service agents. Since the partnership between the "UNESCO-UV Chair in Global Education in the Mediterranean" and the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC began, 12 SL actions have been carried out by different groups of university students and applied to the same number of groups in both primary and secondary education.

3. Results and evaluation of the process: the perspective of the service agents and recipients

The evaluation of any SL project should reflect the complexity of the project as well as the perspectives of the different groups involved. As in any programme evaluation process, depending on the object and purpose of the evaluation, very different processes involving different audiences can be identified (Perales *et al.*, 2022; Ruiz-Corbella and García-Gutiérrez, 2019). In addition to analysing the overall SL project, the evaluation process must address the specificity of its two constituent phases. In the case of the experience with the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC, particular care has been taken in this regard.

The overall SL project, focused on university students, should enable the integration of knowledge and attitudes about the situation of forced displacement through a critical lens. It includes training sessions ("empathy and understanding"), but also support in the design and implementation of the service project. Furthermore, in this case the service stage focuses on secondary school students, with whom workshops on reflection and awareness-raising regarding forced displacement were carried out.

Specifically, in this case, the Stufflebeam systematic evaluation model was used, in its adaptation with reference criteria (Perales *et al.*, 2019; Perales *et al.*, 2022). Quantitative and qualitative information was collected, using instruments appropriate both to the type of information to be collected and, above all, to the different groups:

- Evaluation of the university students themselves:
 - The final report of the SL project, presented as a product of learning in the subjects Intercultural Pedagogy and Philosophy of Education, describes the process

undertaken and the learning acquired through a reflective and critical dynamic. Moreover, it allows teachers to make their own assessment of these two elements.

- The evaluation sheet succinctly summarises students' assessments of the learning acquired, along with reflections on the design and implementation of the workshop, and especially on the SL project as a learning experience.
- Evaluation carried out by primary and secondary school students:
 - A colourful sticker dynamic was used to gather secondary school students' perceptions of their level of knowledge, before and after the workshop, regarding the key issues addressed.
 - In addition, a post-it note activity enabled us to discover the impact of the workshop through brief reflections on the changes perceived in their way of seeing foreign people (changes in feelings, reflections, doubts, etc.).
- Evaluation carried out by primary and secondary school teachers: through a questionnaire with open questions and a short satisfaction scale, their perception of the effectiveness of the workshop and its potential impact was gathered, analysing in this case its potential link with the Tutorial Action Plan.
- Evaluation carried out by the technical staff of the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC: based on the presentation of a project report with their assessment of the implementation of the whole SL project, and their view of how successfully the students met the project objectives.

Thus, a fundamental contribution of this study is the inclusion in the evaluation process of the perspective of the community receiving the service (Ruiz Corbella and García Gutiérrez, 2019). The central figures in this SL project are obviously the university students; nevertheless, the project would be meaningless without the equally central inclusion of the community where the service is carried out, in this case secondary schools as educational communities. The SL process is only meaningful if the service is relevant to the community that receives it, and relevant to the education of the university students. And a fundamental way of recognising this key role is by including their voice in the assessment of the SL project, in this case through its two fundamental groups: the school's teaching staff and the secondary school students themselves.

Particularly significant is the evaluation of the workshop carried out by the 225 participating students. In fact, this evaluation is also an educational task in itself, because it allows primary (Colegio Sagrado Corazón Vedruna in Valencia) and secondary (IES Ramon Llull in Valencia) students and teachers to reflect on the learning acquired and, more importantly, on how this learning translates into students' real understanding of the issues discussed, or into teaching practice via the Tutorial Action Plan (for teachers).

Given that this involvement of the community in the evaluation process of SL projects is less common, the presentation of the results of this experience will focus on this point, leaving the presentation of the rest of the results for another time. Their analysis focused on descriptive statistics of the quantitative variables, complemented by qualitative data.

The number of participants whose assessments were collected in the evaluation process is shown in the table below:

TABLE 1. Number of information items collected in the UV [Universitat de València] Refugee Project.

	SL Project (UV students in groups of 4-5 members)	Service stage (secondary school students)	
Students	Intercultural Pedagogy 22 Philosophy of Education 34	S. C. Vedruna 100 IES Ramón Llull 125	Students

Groups	Intercultural Pedagogy 4 Philosophy of Education 8	S. C. Vedruna 4 IES Ramón Llull 6	Groups
Technical	1	5	Teachers

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The secondary school students expressed their perceived learning and their assessment of the workshop through a sticker-based activity. Before starting the workshop, they were asked to record their perceived knowledge of five global concepts in a grid (scale of 0 to 5) and, at the end of the workshop, they were asked the same question.

TABLE 2. Secondary school students' ratings of their perceived knowledge of the topics related to the workshop.

	Pre-test. Perceived knowledge			Post-test. Perceived knowledge		
	Total	S. C. Vedruna	IES Ramón Llull	Total	S. C. Vedruna	IES Ramón Llull
Refugees	2.27	3.13	1.60	3.97	4.41	3.56
Xenophobia	2.31	2.41	2.23	4.04	4.24	3.85
Climate change	3.47	3.44	3.50	3.95	4.10	3.79
Gender perspective	2.15	2.26	2.06	3.44	3.67	3.20
Agenda 2030	2.61	3.54	1.89	3.42	3.66	3.17
N (approximate)	200	98	102	200	98	102

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The results shown in table 2 show a clear increase in their perceived knowledge of refugees and xenophobia (from an average of 2.27 to 3.97 and from 2.31 to 4.04, respectively). The smaller increase observed in the other topics, which are addressed less intensively in the workshop, demonstrates the effectiveness of the information-gathering strategy, as it distinguishes between these two levels of intervention, and mitigates (at least partially) the effect of social desirability.

In addition, based on the reflections gathered through the post-it note activity on the effects of the workshop on their perceptions, feelings, and knowledge, statements such as the following can be highlighted:

"I really liked the workshop and have noticed changes; from now on, I will try not to spread negative content on social media, put myself in the other person's shoes, and think about what I say first".

"I liked it. I learned how people feel when they have had to leave their home."

"I really liked the workshop and it changed my opinion about foreigners."

"I have noticed changes regarding foreigners, for example, their situation in complicated cases".

The secondary school students' ratings of the workshop's effectiveness are also positive, as shown in table 3, highlighting their general satisfaction and the usefulness of the content. In the two schools where the workshop was carried out, despite the positive assessment given to methodologies, students indicated participation as the dimension with the least favourable assessment.

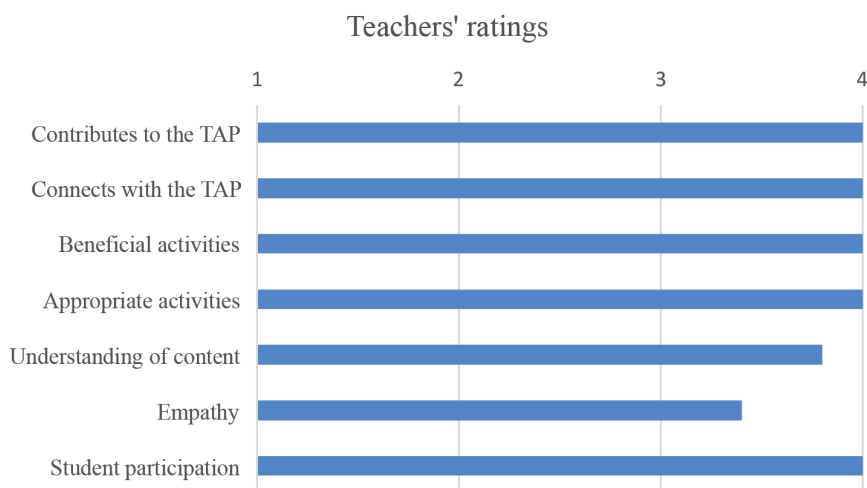
TABLE 3. Students' ratings of the workshop's effectiveness.

	Total	S. C. Vedruna	IES Ramón Llull
Satisfaction	4.44	4.65	4.24
Usefulness of the content	4.44	4.40	4.47
Methodologies	4.38	4.48	4.28
Participation	3.74	3.88	3.60
Improved understanding	4.21	4.32	4.09
N (approximate)	200	98	102

Source: Prepared by the authors.

With regard to teaching staff, a total of five teachers from the secondary school completed the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC questionnaire, with likewise positive ratings, as shown in figure 1 (scale of 1 to 4).

FIGURE 1. Secondary school teachers' ratings of the workshop on awareness-raising and reflection carried out with their students.



Source: Prepared by the authors.

In the open-ended questions, teachers highlighted the importance of the workshop in dealing with issues such as empathy, tolerance and respect, which they consider "important and which are not addressed through other channels". Regarding suggestions for improvement, the contributions are also rated positively, as participants suggest "accompanying the activity with proposals to continue working on these same objectives in tutorial sessions (to expand or supplement them)" and propose "that the group's tutor be present".

SL projects are usually rated positively by the participants. In this case, these data show that the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC Refugee SL projects are also positively rated by the host community. Given the limited duration of the workshop (only one and a half hours), this positive assessment is particularly relevant, as it demonstrates a positive (immediate) effect and an openness towards topics that, according to one teacher, "primarily contribute to educating citizens for both the immediate and long-term future".

4. Conclusions: the transformative perspective of SL in refugee and immigration contexts

The SL projects focusing on the issues of refugees and immigration described in this article create channels for collaboration between university students and the educational community targeted by the awareness-raising and reflection activities. In this sense, future university-trained specialists in Education (Pedagogy and Social Education) engage in a service of an educational nature, while at the same time providing a valuable and effective opportunity for all parties involved (students and teaching staff at different educational stages) to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of migration, so critical in our global and intercommunicated world. Thus, these are projects which, as analysed, contribute in an experiential way to fostering global civic awareness and to broadening the sense of community, while at the same time forging social cohesion in multicultural and diverse contexts such as ours.

Although such projects have been designed and implemented since 2022, owing to the link between the “UNESCO-UV Chair in Global Education in the Mediterranean” and the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC, this article reports the evaluation of the 12 projects carried out in the 2024-25 academic year, drawing on data gathered using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The results clearly show the positive and significant learning for the community receiving the service, in this case one primary and one secondary school, with a total of 225 students, as reflected in the article. However, the university students, acting as service agents ($n = 56$), likewise expressed an equally positive assessment, as reflected in the SL reports drawn up per group (a total of 12 reports). In said reports, students acknowledge having worked experientially on the competencies and content of the degree programme and the subjects involved (Intercultural Pedagogy and Philosophy of Education), particularly with regard to the design and implementation of educational projects, participation in cooperative working groups, the design of educational resources and institutions, the planning of study techniques, and the development of didactic and methodological strategies adapted to different educational contexts, as well as learning about global citizenship and Human Rights education.

In short, the results of the study show the effectiveness and validity of the SL projects in question, projects which, in collaboration with social organisations such as the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC, build bridges between the university and society, in accordance with the third mission of the university, with the objectives of knowledge transfer, and with the current university reform, which stresses the importance of higher education contributing to social cohesion, the creation of culture, and the idea of an open community, through university volunteering projects. The SL projects between the UV and the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC embody, as outlined above, such aspirations in their understanding of the mission of higher education.

Nevertheless, there is scope to continue advancing in this direction by further developing university transfer processes in collaboration with the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC so as to implement SL projects in other primary and secondary schools. The aim would be to detect potential limits in other socio-economic contexts with a higher incidence of xenophobic and racist prejudices, in order to improve the design and implementation of subsequent service learning projects.

Author contributions

Vicent Gozálvarez Pérez. Conceptualisation, data processing, supervision, writing, review.

Marta Rivas. Writing, data management, funding acquisition, review.

María Jesús Perales Montolió. Data management, research methodology, validation, writing, and review.

Gemma Cortijo Ruiz. Visualisation, conceptualisation, writing, and review.

Funding

This initiative was funded by the “UNESCO-UV Chair in Global Education in the Mediterranean. Studies for Peace, Interculturality and Sustainability”.

References

- Adarlo, G., Amor, U., Garciano, A. & Dalagan, J. (2024). Civic-Mindedness as an Enduring Influence of Service Learning. *Journal of College Student Development*, 65, 299-315. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2024.a929244>
- Bernal, A. (2017). La educación como capacidad fértil. In J. A. Ibañez & J. L. Fuentes (coords.), *Educación y Capacidades: Hacia un nuevo Enfoque del Desarrollo Humano* (pp. 71-86). Dykinson.
- Dewey, J. (2010/1934) Character training for youth (Obra original publicada en 1934). In: J. Simpson & F. Stack (eds.). *Teachers, Leaders, and Schools: Essays by John Dewey* (pp. 88-95). Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Estrada, I. S. & Palma-García, M. O. (2020). La Universidad como instrumento para la inclusión social de personas refugiadas. Aportaciones desde el Trabajo Social. *Alternativas. Cuadernos de Trabajo Social*, 27, 27-43. <https://doi.org/10.14198/ALTERN2020.27.02>
- Fullan, M. & Quinn, J. (2016). *Coherence: The right drivers in action for schools, districts, and systems*. Corwin.
- García-Aracil, A., Neira, I. & Lozano, J. F. (2014). The Challenges of Higher Education: Improving Graduates, Employability and Social Cohesion. *Journal of the European Higher Education Area*, 4, 15-32. <http://hdl.handle.net/10261/132067>
- García-Gutiérrez, J. & Ruiz-Corbella, M. (2022). La idea de Universidad desde un enfoque humanista: la contribución del aprendizaje-servicio como filosofía de la educación superior. *Teoría De La Educación. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 34(2), 159-176. <https://doi.org/10.14201/teri.27887>
- González-Geraldo, J., Jover, G. & Martínez, M. (2017). La ética del aprendizaje servicio en la universidad: una interpretación desde el pragmatismo. *Bordón. Revista de Pedagogía*, 69(4), 63-78. <https://doi.org/10.13042/Bordon.2017.690405>
- Hawkins, L. & Kaplan, L. (2016). Helping the Me Generation Decenter: Service Learning with Refugees. *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 17(2), 157-175. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nhcjournal/531/>
- Hernández, J. M. (2021). ¿Qué Universidad para el siglo XXI? *Revista Lusófona de Educação*, 52(52), 133-152. <https://revistas.ulusofona.pt/index.php/rleducacao/article/view/7972>
- Hooli, E. M., Santos-Pastor, M. L., González-Fernández, F. T., Ortega-Martín, J. L., López Vallejo, M. Á., Martínez-Muñoz, L. F., Corral-Robles, S., García-Carmona, M., Rodríguez Jiménez, C., Carrero-Segura, V., Oplatka, I. & Ruiz-Montero, P. J. (2025). Intercultural Education, Language Learning and Physical Activity of University Students through Service Learning with Migrants in Europe’s land border with Africa: The INCLUSO Project. *Espiral. Cuadernos del Profesorado*, 18(37), 32-46. <https://doi.org/10.25115/ecp.v18i37.10364>
- Huerta, M. & Martínez-Virto, L. (2023). Una experiencia de Aprendizaje-Servicio entre estudiantes de Trabajo Social y jóvenes migrantes. In: C. Cucinotta., C. Molina & B. Sáenz (coords.), *Educación en valores y normas: innovación docente y transferencia de conocimiento en cuestiones de equidad y derecho* (pp. 352-367). Dykinson.
- Jover, G. & Gozálviz, V. (2024). Service learning and the just community: Complementary pragmatist forms of civic character education. *Theory and Research in Education*, 22(1), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14778785241227076>
- Lorenzo, M., Ruiz, C., Arbués, E., Martínez, M. J., Buenestado, M. & Mella, I. (2020). Aprendizaje-servicio en el sistema universitario español. Un estudio enfocado en la evaluación de los proyectos. *Aula Abierta*, 49(4), 353-362. <https://doi.org/10.17811/rifie.49.4.2020.353-362>

- Ludwig, B. & Campbell, C., (2023) Changes in Students' Attitudes Toward Service Learning and Immigrants/Refugees in the U.S.: Insights from Comparing First Year Learning Communities, *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 29(1). <https://doi.org/10.3998/mjcs1.2888>
- Perales Montolío, M. J., Ortega-Gaite, S. & Bakieva-Karimova, M. (2022). El valor de la evaluación en los proyectos socioeducativos. *Crónica*, 7, 121-133. <https://revistacronica.es/index.php/revistacronica/article/view/134>
- Perales, M. J., Cascales, J. & García-Romeu, B. (2019). Evaluando con creatividad. Técnicas creativas para la evaluación de programas socioeducativos. In: M.C. Bellver & I. Verde (coords.). *Educación social y creatividad. Fundamentación, estrategias de intervención y experiencias en diferentes ámbitos*. Tirant lo Blanch.
- Ruiz-Corbella, M. & Bautista, M. J. (2016). La responsabilidad social en la universidad española. *Teoría De La Educación. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 28(1), 159-188. <https://doi.org/10.14201/teoredu2016281159188>
- Ruiz-Corbella, M. & García Gutiérrez (2019) (eds.). *Aprendizaje-Servicio. Los retos de la evaluación*. Narcea.
- Ruiz-Corbella, M. & García-Gutiérrez, J. (2023). *Aprendizaje Servicio. Escenarios de aprendizaje éticos y cívicos*. Narcea.
- Santamaría-Goicuría, I. & Martínez, A. (2023). El aprendizaje servicio, interculturalidad y justicia social: Experiencias disruptivas y transformadoras con futuras maestras de Educación Infantil y Primaria. *QURRICULUM - Revista de Teoría, Investigación y Práctica Educativa*, (31), 97-118. <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.qurricul.2018.31.005>
- Santos-Rego, M. A. & Lorenzo, M. (2012). *Estudios de Pedagogía Intercultural*. Octaedro.
- Santos-Rego, M. A., Lorenzo, M. & Sáez, D. (2025). *La universidad y el Aprendizaje-Servicio. Lo que importa es la calidad*. Narcea.
- Sotelino, A., Santos-Rego, M. A. & García-Álvarez, J. (2019). El aprendizaje-servicio como vía para el desarrollo de competencias interculturales en la Universidad. *Educatio Siglo XXI*, 37(1), 73-90. <https://doi.org/10.6018/educatio.363391>

Author biographies

Vicent Gozávez Pérez

Vicent Gozávez holds a PhD in Philosophy and Educational Sciences from the Universitat de València. He is currently associate professor in the Department of Education Theory at the UV. Director of the "UNESCO-UV Chair in Global Education in the Mediterranean. Studies for Peace, Interculturality and Sustainability". Research and teaching specialist in the areas of Philosophy of Education, Citizenship Education, Intercultural Pedagogy and Media Education. Author of *Inteligencia moral* (2000, Desclée de Brouwer) and *Ciudadanía mediática. Una mirada educativa* (2012, Dykinson). He is co-author of two handbooks on Philosophy of Education (*Repensando la educación. Cuestiones y debates para el siglo XXI*, Brief; *Una Filosofía de la Educación del siglo XXI*, Síntesis).

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7952-8347>

Marta Rivas

Marta Rivas Muro is Coordinator for Advocacy and Global Citizenship Education at the Spanish Committee for UNHCR in the Valencian Community. She holds a degree in Architecture from the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, and is an expert in Cooperation for the Development of Precarious Human Settlements (Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, 2018) and in Humanitarian Action (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, 2020). She began her career in the third sector with 'Arquitectura sin Fronteras', working in Mozambique on the rehabilitation of disaster-affected infrastructure, and in Spain facilitating workshops on the right to housing. Since 2020, her work has focused on Global Citizenship Education, coordinating the

programmes of the Spanish Committee for UNHCR since 2021, which seek to foster welcoming societies free of xenophobia through three lines of action: UniRefugees (fostering university activism), Refugi 4.7 (educator training) and raising awareness of the UNHCR's cooperation and humanitarian action projects.

María Jesús Perales Montolío

María Jesús Perales Montolío is an associate professor in the Department of Research Methods and Educational Assessment at the Universitat de València. She is a member of GemEduco (Evaluation and Measurement Group for Social Cohesion, GIUV2016-290, focusing on educational test design, and system and programme evaluation) and of the Ibero-American Network for Research on Teaching Evaluation (RIED). She holds a PhD from the Universitat de València (2000, special doctoral prize). Supervisor of eleven doctoral theses. Coordinator of several evaluation and research processes in collaboration with social organisations (Entreculturas, Save the Children, the Spanish Committee for UNHCR-VC). Director of the Official Master's Degree in Social and Educational Action. Her research focuses on the evaluation of socio-educational programmes and the development of evaluation instruments.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2033-2750>

Gemma Cortijo Ruiz

Gemma Cortijo Ruiz holds a PhD in Education from the Universitat de València and currently works as an assistant professor in the Department of Education Theory at the UV. She held a research trainee position in the Department of Education Theory at the University of Valencia through the "Atracció al Talent" programme. She studied a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education, followed by a Master's Degree in Policy, Management and Organisation of Educational Institutions, also at the University of Valencia. Her research focuses on the capabilities approach and its role in promoting the principles of human development in education.

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1729-7114>



Social entrepreneurship and Service-Learning in higher education: A systematic review

Emprendimiento social y aprendizaje servicio en la educación superior: una revisión sistemática

Antonio BERNAL-GUERRERO. Professor, Universidad de Sevilla (*abernal@us.es*).

Antonio Ramón CÁRDENAS-GUTIÉRREZ. Associate Professor, Universidad de Sevilla (*acardenas1@us.es*).

Abstract:

Higher education institutions, through University Social Responsibility (USR), are increasingly driven to assume a transformative role in society. In this context, Social Entrepreneurship (SE) and Service Learning (SL) emerge as university-level educational approaches with strong civic impact. This study presents a systematic review of 33 scholarly articles (2000–2025) that jointly address SE and SL, aiming to analyse their interrelations, applications, and educational significance. The PRISMA 2020 guidelines were used in the selection of empirical and theoretical studies indexed in reputable academic databases. A mixed-methods approach was employed: a descriptive analysis to systematically map relevant trends, and a qualitative analysis to explore relational patterns, dimensions developed, fields of application, and predominant meanings. The findings reveal a recent surge in scholarly output, primarily concentrated in the U.S. and Spain, with a notable preference for empirical research. The analysis shows that SL is predominantly framed as a methodology used to support SE, focusing on a wide range of themes across environmental, cultural, and social fields. The relationship between SE and SL is primarily interpreted through methodological and pedagogical lenses. However, a robust integrative framework linking the two constructs is missing. Dispersion and a lack of theory highlight the need to develop a solid research agenda to explore the convergence and substantial formative potential of SE and SL.

Keywords: social entrepreneurship; service learning; higher education; university social responsibility; systematic review; educational social innovation.

Resumen:

Las instituciones de educación superior, mediante la responsabilidad social universitaria (RSU), están abocadas a asumir un papel transformador en la sociedad. En este sentido, el emprendimiento social (ES) y el aprendizaje-servicio (ApS) emergen como propuestas

Date of receipt of the original: 08/07/2025

Date of approval: 20/11/2025

Please, cite this article as follows: Bernal Guerrero, A. & Cárdenas Gutiérrez, A. R. (2026). Social entrepreneurship and Service-Learning in higher education: A systematic review [Emprendimiento social y aprendizaje servicio en la educación superior: una revisión sistemática]. *Revista Española de Pedagogía*, 84(293), 125-148. <https://doi.org/10.9781/rep.2026.409>

educativas universitarias con alto impacto cívico. En esta investigación se realiza una revisión sistemática de 33 artículos científicos (2000-2025) que acometen conjuntamente el ES y el ApS, con el propósito de analizar sus interrelaciones, sus aplicaciones y sentido educativo. Se empleó el protocolo PRISMA 2020 para seleccionar investigaciones empíricas y teóricas indexadas en bases de datos reconocidas. Se aplicó un análisis mixto: descriptivo, para mapear sistemáticamente tendencias relevantes; y cualitativo, para examinar patrones de relación, dimensiones desarrolladas, dominios de aplicación y sentido predominantemente conferido. Los resultados indican un auge reciente en la producción científica, concentrada principalmente en EE. UU. y España, así como la preferencia mayoritaria por estudios empíricos. Se desprende del análisis realizado que El ApS se concibe en la mayoría de las investigaciones como una metodología al servicio del ES, denotándose una variedad notable de focos temáticos que abarcan lo ambiental, lo cultural y lo social. Las relaciones entre el ES y el ApS se enmarcan principalmente dentro de una lógica metodológica y pedagógica. Se advierte, por otra parte, una carencia de fundamentación robusta que integre ambos constructos. La dispersión y la escasa teorización existente demandan la necesidad de elaborar una agenda sólida de investigación que indague en la convergencia entre ES y ApS y en su considerable potencial formativo.

Palabras clave: emprendimiento social; aprendizaje-servicio; educación superior; responsabilidad social universitaria; revisión sistemática; innovación social educativa.

1. Introduction

Higher education is paramount when it comes to preparing new social actors capable of guiding and implementing the changes needed to construct a world that is more hospitable and more equitable. Both the Talloires Declaration (2005) on the Civic Roles and Social Responsibilities of Higher Education and the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education (2010) could be considered milestones in this global shift in focus. Since the turn of the century, social responsibility has evolved into one of the cornerstones of organisations today (Almagro, 2010; European Commission, 2001). Within this context, the current version of university social responsibility (USR) has emerged.

Universities in the 21st century proactively accept their commitment to society by driving social responsibility, collaboration and positive impact on local and international communities. This social and community impact is reflected in the specific attention paid to sustainable development, social inclusion, gender equality, environmental protection, innovation and social entrepreneurship. USR integrates a complex web of elements in which the local and the global are interwoven. In the new university management models, there is a dynamic fluidity in the diverse demands: formal education, professional training, knowledge transfer and social engagement (Santos-Rego, 2020).

In the field of higher education, the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation contains a specific agenda for university transformation, with a focus on inclusion, innovation, connectivity, digital and green readiness and international competitiveness, fundamental academic values, employment and employability, as well as high ethical principles (Council of the European Union, 2022).

USR now features a much broader and more in-depth approach, with intermingling and mutually supportive university missions, breaking with their traditionally dispersed vision. Thus, for example, international inter-university networks reflect the concern for implementing responsible education aimed at a new civic approach within a new diverse and interconnected international setting (Vázquez and Escámez, 2022; Martínez-Odria *et al.*, 2024). Red Iberoamericana de Universidades por la Responsabilidad

Social Empresarial (the Ibero-American Network of Universities for Corporate Social Responsibility, or REDUNIRSE, 2018), in which Spain is a member, represents one example of USR, as a scholarly organisation aimed at connecting the diverse stakeholders in society, focusing its interests on higher education, corporate social responsibility and social issues.

This new university awareness is due to the evolution of the so-called third mission, linked to university outreach. It also finds clear justification in certain legislative amendments introduced, in keeping with this new spirit, such as those enacted in Europe with the creation of the European Higher Education Area under the Sorbonne Declaration in May 1998, seeking to make education more inclusive and accessible and at the same time more attractive and globally competitive.

Not surprisingly, within this framework, educational initiatives, experiences, programmes, materials and resources have multiplied with a view to promoting and bolstering the social dimension advocated with new energy (Corrales and Andrade, 2021). Under the international approach to competency training, these new aims are to be achieved by developing competencies in general (Guerrero and Cebrián, 2024) and, specifically, in certain areas such as civic competency and entrepreneurial competency. Two examples stand out from the numerous contributions made.

In terms of attempting to solve social or environmental issues in an innovative manner, social entrepreneurship (SE) has gradually developed with the intention of generating social value in addition to financial returns. In turn, a concept called service learning (SL), which seeks to align formal education with a response to the actual needs of the surrounding community, has gained extraordinary traction. SE and SL share an explicitly social mission and their transformative nature.

However, both SE and SL have also received criticism (Enos, 2015): for focusing too heavily on social justice, neglecting formal education, failing to critically examine the origins of inequality and power, being predominantly based on business viewpoints, and underestimating other means of social transformation, etc. However, despite the wealth of critical nuances, the fact remains that both SE and SL in higher education highlight the benefits of pedagogical practices that place the community at the centre, in keeping with the general direction taken by universities. Their widespread success bears witness to this.

1.1. Social entrepreneurship and service learning

There are an estimated ten million social enterprises in the world, generating some two trillion dollars in revenue annually and creating nearly two hundred million jobs (Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, 2024). SE combines philanthropy with business models, but it also contains non-profit models.

The data found in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (Bosma *et al.*, 2016) indicates that innovation-driven economies are more inclined to participate in SE, harbouring institutional support mechanisms and cultures that value post-materialism (Welzel, 2013). Western Europe, Australia and the United States, the regions with the highest average levels of economic welfare and institutional development, show the highest rates of SE in both the initial and operational phases. Furthermore, there is evidence that people with higher educational levels are more likely to participate in SE activities, and the gender gap is smaller in SE than in commercial entrepreneurship.

Everyone can, in some way, learn the entrepreneurial spirit and, what's more, it is not limited to the field of economics or the workplace (OECD, 2005). Entrepreneurial competence harbours a fundamental ethical and civic dimension. In this regard, SE seeks to transcend the economic dimension in order to develop social welfare (Alourhzal and Hatlabou, 2021). Entrepreneurial competence training is not linked solely to economic growth and wealth generation, but may also be tied to environmental, cultural and social improvement projects (Karatas-Ozkan *et al.*, 2023).

Problems that may exist in the community are a special focus of concern in the development of social entrepreneurship initiatives (Bhatt, 2022). SE aspires to benefit the community by implementing innovative solutions to the needs and deficiencies detected, thus fostering sustainable social change (Ndou, 2021). Through SE, universities promote the entrepreneurial training of students as agents of social change (García-Jurado *et al.*, 2021). Their impact can be seen in the subsequent development of the community and in the consolidation of strategies that reduce existing inequalities (Parga *et al.*, 2023).

SE is often introduced as a key to solving numerous persistent social problems. Thus, SE has taken shape as an excellent means for addressing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and promoting the resulting objectives. Educating socially responsible entrepreneurs is linked to the acquisition and enhancement of problem-solving skills, empathy, application of knowledge and a sense of responsibility.

In response to today's economic and social challenges, SE, as an innovative approach, acts in favour of sustainable, equitable development, in which higher education is a driver of change, empowering social entrepreneurs capable of creating a positive impact in social settings (Mugarra-Elorriaga *et al.*, 2024).

Thus, SE can be considered a pedagogical approach that not only teaches technical skills but also generates awareness and the necessary capabilities for tackling complex social problems (Ng *et al.*, 2024). Furthermore, SE seems to contribute directly and indirectly to 'professional adaptability' through the construction of perceived self-efficacy (Elwakil, 2023). By emphasising entrepreneurial competence as a resource for social change, SE encourages the development of more critical education with a greater social impact.

In turn, starting in the second decade of this century, the concept known as service learning (SL) has become widespread in higher education, in keeping with new demands on education focusing on student activity and university outreach into the surrounding communities (Ruiz-Corbella and García-Gutiérrez, 2020), although it was previously implemented at diverse educational levels, with theoretical foundations dating back to the early 20th century (Bringle *et al.*, 2004; Sigmon, 1979).

In the broadest sense, SL's global expansion can be seen not only in Europe and North America but also, especially, in Latin America, where the success of the solidarity model offered by SL has great potential due to its civic orientation toward active engagement in the construction of social cohesion, the strengthening of democracy, the fight against social and educational exclusion, environmental degradation and the defence of cultural diversity (Tapia *et al.*, 2023).

Although it is influenced by volunteering, community service and community-based learning, SL is clearly distinct in that it combines service to the community with formal and academic learning, thus giving rise to related terms such as 'learning and service', 'learning and civic engagement' and 'curricular community engagement', to name a few (Sotelino *et al.*, 2016). The rise of Dewey's pragmatism in SL today, the fundamental epistemic cornerstones of which are experience, action and reflection, is plain to see (Maddux and Donnett, 2015). 'Experiential learning' (Kolb and Kolb, 2005) can be gleaned from this pragmatic approach, giving the educational experience a strong central community component.

Although the terminology is widely accepted, it is not necessarily unambiguous. The predominant interpretation is perhaps foundationally restricted to the methodology or the field of methodological strategies, but SL can also be classified as pedagogy, a harmonic way of viewing education, and even as philosophy, a comprehensive view of human and community development (García-Gutiérrez and Ruiz-Corbella, 2022). The different perspectives (technical, cultural, political and post-structuralist) often cited in epistemological analyses seem to find space and pertinence in an SL approach that shies away from any dogmatic versions to embrace the complexity of all the factors involved (Santos-Rego *et al.*, 2020).

1.2. Defining the problem and the research aims

Under international scientific and economic policies, funds are earmarked for the generation and promotion of social innovation, business development is closely tied to it and research funding plans use it as a decisive vector. Faced with issues stemming from digitalisation, the fourth industrial revolution, migratory movements, natural resources and more, the collective gaze turns to the autonomy wielded by organisations to develop new service models (Schröer, 2021).

Educational institutions and social services are heavily involved in this. Higher education institutions, as pioneers in knowledge and knowledge transfer, are destined in particular to have a leading voice in this process (Belcher *et al.*, 2022). Rather than a top-down influence from the university to society, it is more like a complex network of interacting forces in which the roots of the problems, which are often external, require innovative alternatives and solutions capable of generating social value. Thus, it is not hard to recognise the intimate relationship between learning, creativity and innovation. The participants (primarily students and teachers), teams and even the organisations learn to solve problems creatively with a view to generating original products and services. Social innovation can be encouraged through a number of approaches and, given its relevance at both the individual and collective levels, it is important to take a closer look at the factors that promote and hinder it. Both SE and SL seem to be moving in this direction.

Given their parallel social focuses and orientation toward transformative action, one particularly interesting point to look at is the body of studies that have discussed SE and SL.

The intention of this systematic review is to explore the possibilities and limitations of SE and SL in higher education, observing how the relationship between the two is expressed and attempting to highlight the prevailing development of the two in the same research agenda on educational social innovation, the points at which they are likely to intersect based on the detection of specific domains, the integration models used and the orientation or meaning predominantly bestowed on them.

Therefore, the aim of this research is to conduct a systematic review of the scholarly articles published from 2000 to 2025 that discuss the relationship between SE and SL within a shared research framework. The time frame was chosen because SE emerged in the early years of this century and SL developed gradually over this period.

This general aim is broken down into the following specific aims:

1. To identify scholarly articles that include research reporting on both SE and SL from any perspective.
2. To create a description of the documents, distinguishing their contents based on the geographic region in which they were produced, the original sources of the publication, methodologies applied and their frequency and timeline.
3. To develop a critical assessment of the findings, focusing on the nature and magnitude of the relationships found between SE and SL.

2. Method

The PRISMA 2020 guidelines were used to conduct documentary research based on a systematic review of an educational topic (Page *et al.*, 2021). The procedure is based on an analysis of identifying features and subject matters by mapping and reviewing the research. Specifically, bibliographic references, contents, characteristics, typology and the meaning of the relationships between SL and SE are examined. An analysis of the data afforded a general overview of educational social innovation in relation to the SE-SL binomial, endeavouring to discern deviations and similarities.

2.1. Research questions

Five research questions are raised, the first of which is of a descriptive and quantitative nature, aimed at mapping the current state of the research (PMS, *Pregunta de Mapeo Sistemático* or Systematic Mapping Question). The remaining four questions are of a qualitative and epistemological nature, the purpose of which is to understand how the relationships between these two concepts are arranged by means of a literature review (PRS, *Pregunta de Revisión Sistemática* or Systematic Review Question).

PMS-1. How is the relationship between SE and SL expressed in the research as a whole?

PRS-2. What dimensions are being cultivated through the relationship between SE and SL?

PRS-3. What patterns are featured in the relationship between SE and SL?

PRS-4. What is the meaning given to the relationship between SE and SL?

PRS-5. What specific domains stand out in the relationship between SE and SL?

2.2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

In the selection of the studies, the following inclusion criteria were taken into account: (1) empirical and theoretical studies, (2) published between 2000 and 2025, (3) written in English and/or Spanish (4) study focus: SL, SE and higher education, and (5) indexed in Web of Science, Scopus, ERIC and Dialnet. In turn, the exclusion criteria were: (1) systematic reviews, (2) published before 2000, (3) written in languages other than Spanish or English, (4) study focus does not include the three descriptors, (5) lower educational levels, and (6) publications that are not indexed articles.

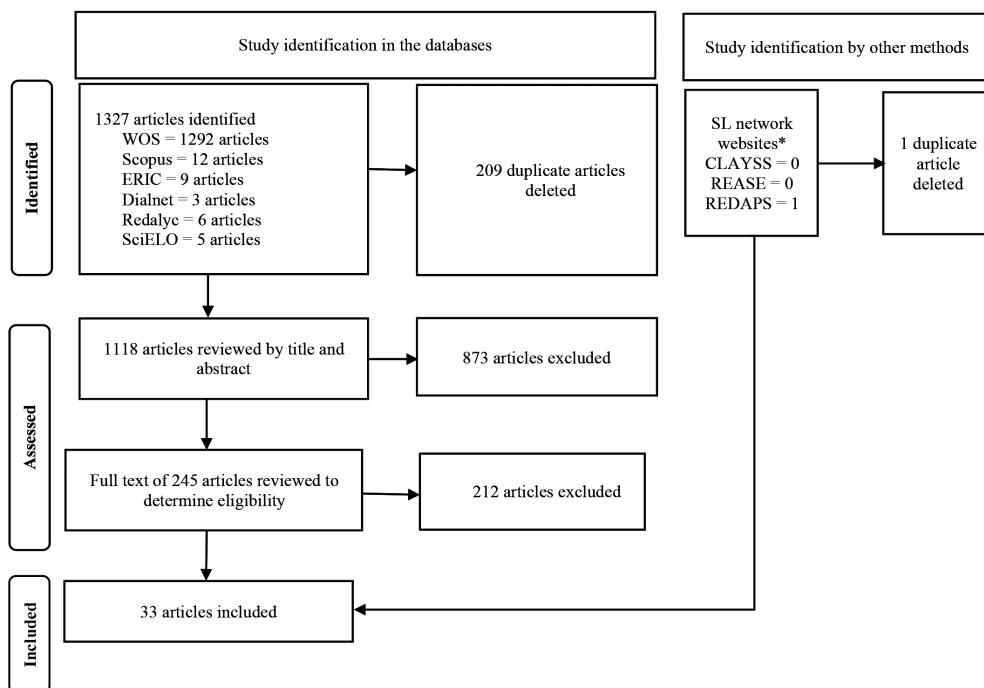
2.3. Research strategy

In the first phase of the research questions, the keywords were identified: social entrepreneurship, service learning, university and higher education. Next, the search string was defined for the WOS, Scopus, ERIC and Dialnet databases: (TITLE-ABS-KEY (Social entrepren*) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (service learning) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (Service Learning) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (service-learning) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY(Service-Learning) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY(University) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (higher education)).

The second phase began in March 2025, involving the search process in the four databases. Two further databases (Redalyc and SciELO) were added in November 2025. The search string for Redalyc, using the Google search engine, was: “Aprendizaje Servicio” (Service Learning) + “Emprendimiento Social” (Social Entrepreneurship) site:redalyc.org; and for SciELO: ab:(ti:(“Aprendizaje Servicio” AND “Emprendimiento Social”)) (*Service Learning / Social Entrepreneurship*). In addition, a manual, iterative, directed search was conducted of three websites of SL networks in Ibero-America and Spain recommended by diverse experts. Once the data were saved in the reference manager, all the duplicates were deleted.

2.4. Inter-rater selection and reliability

Phase three involved an initial screening by reading the titles and abstracts in an inclusive manner. To achieve interjudge agreement in the inclusion and exclusion criteria, Cohen’s kappa coefficient was used (Cohen, 1960), and a value of $\kappa = .76$ was obtained, which is considered excellent. Once this screening was complete, phase four, involving a more in-depth reading of the texts, was carried out to obtain the final sample (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram (Page *et al.*, 2021).

Note: Latin American Centre for Service Learning (CLAYSS): <https://www.clayss.org/>

National Network of Service Learning Chile (REASE): <https://www.rease.cl/>

Spanish Service Learning Network (REDAPS): <https://www.aprendizajeservicio.net/>

Source: Page *et al.*, 2021.

2.5. Coding system, data extraction and analysis

The information was classified by codes arranged into two blocks: first, descriptive codes related to the systematic mapping (PMS-1): publication year, first author's affiliation, methodology and journal in which it was published. The data was systematically mapped by means of percentage analysis. The second block consisted of qualitative codes related to the systematic review of the contents: SE and SL conceptualisation, theoretical foundations and conclusions about the relationship between the two concepts. In this case, a qualitative analysis was conducted using a system of emergent categories of an inductive nature (Table 1). The main themes of the contents, patterns, fields and the meaning of the relationship between SE and SL were identified. The researchers verified and discussed the data extracted in an iterative reflection and comparison process during the data analysis phase. Afterwards, a descriptive percentage analysis of the themed contents detected was drawn up (Table 1).

TABLE 1. Inductive emergent category tree.

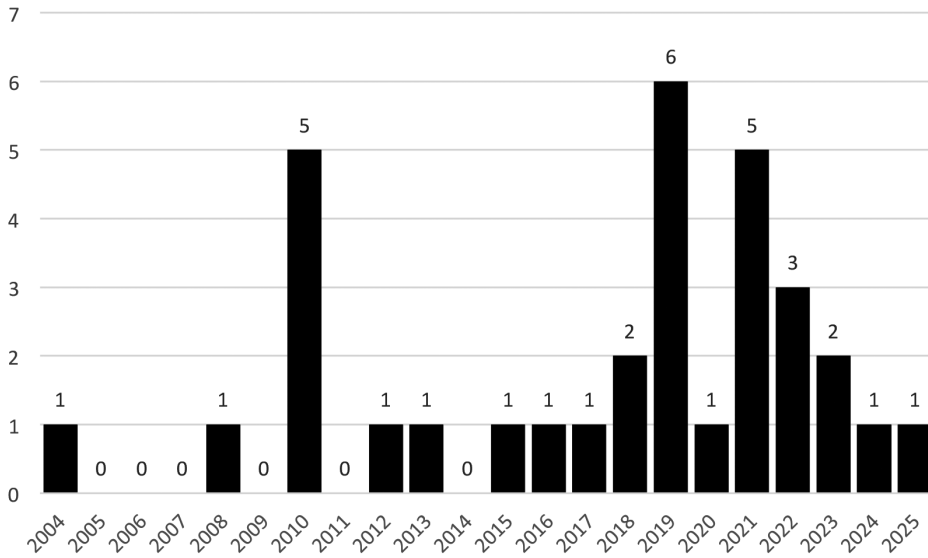
Research questions	Category	Subcategory	Codes
PRS-2	Dimensionality	Social	Social engagement
			Interpersonal communication
			Solving social problems
		Personal	Responsibility
			Proactivity
			Volunteering
			Transformational leadership
			Critical Thinking
			Business management
		Professional	Innovation and social impact
			Generic competences
			SE-sl
PRS-3	Relational patterns	Subordination	se-SL
		Juxtaposition	SE+SL
		Equivalence	SE=SL
PRS-4	Meaning	SL meaning	Methodological SL
			Pedagogical SL
		SE meaning	Pedagogical SE
			Philosophical SE
PRS-5	Specific domains	Cultural	Physical Education (PE), international learning and technological literacy
		Environmental	Sustainability
		Social-enterprising	Consulting, labour management and employment
		Social-community	Poverty, marginalisation and diversity assistance

3. Results

3.1. Systematic mapping

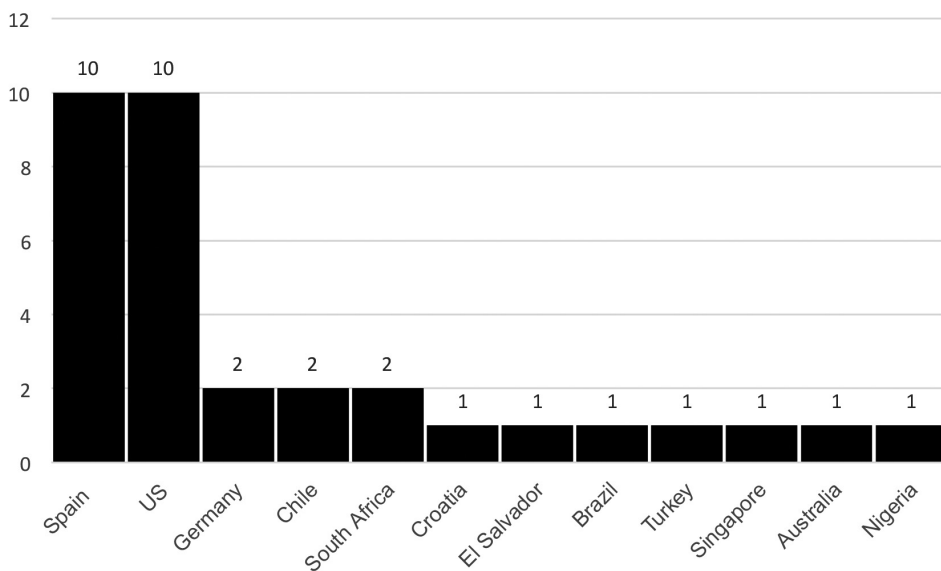
No studies were found on the relationship between SE and SL prior to 2004. Chronologically, the scholarly output can be divided into two periods. The first spans from 2004-2014, representing 27.17 % of the studies, with the greatest number of studies published in 2010. In this period, there is limited continuity in the research, with a single publication in some years, while others have none at all. The second period spans from 2015 to 2025, representing 72.74 % of the studies, with the greatest number of studies published in 2019.

FIGURE 1. Timeline of publications.



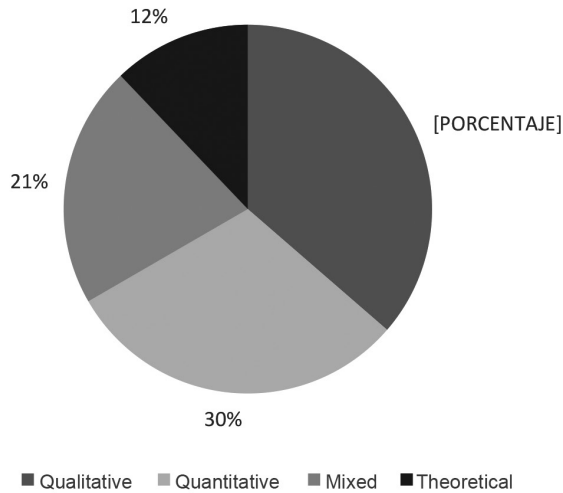
The origin of the studies, based on the first author's affiliation, is as follows: the main contributions come from Spain and the United States, with ten publications, respectively, representing 60.61 %. Germany, Chile and South Africa follow, with two publications per country, reaching an overall sum of 18.18 %. Croatia, El Salvador, Brazil, Turkey, Singapore, Australia and Nigeria contributed just one publication each, representing 21.21 %.

FIGURE 2. Breakdown of output per country.



In terms of the methodology used, 87.87 % of the studies were empirical: 36.36 % qualitative (1, 3, 5, 8, 12, 14, 19, 21, 26, 28, 29, 33), 30.30 % quantitative (7, 9, 11, 13, 17, 20, 22, 23, 27, 31) and 21.21 % mixed (2, 4, 6, 10, 15, 16, 32). The remaining 12.13 % are theoretical (18, 24, 25, 30).

FIGURE 3. Methodological representativeness.



The papers were published in thirty different journals, with the greatest number of articles about SE and SL being published in *Sustainability* and *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* (two each). The other journals contained just one article each.

3.2. Relational analysis

This section outlines the findings of the content analysis, structured around the four aforementioned research questions.

3.2.1. What dimensions are being cultivated through the relationship between SE and SL?

From an evaluation standpoint, three dimensions are described in the studies analysed: social, personal and professional (Table 2).

TABLE 2. Dimensions per type of research.

Setting	Type of research	Dimensions	%	No.
Business and non-business	Evaluative		39.3	1, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 20, 21, 26, 29, 31
		Social-personal	39.3	2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 12, 15, 16, 18, 22, 23, 28, 33
	Theoretical		6.07	24, 30
		Applied	3.03	17
	Descriptive	Social-personal	12.3	19, 25, 27, 32

By comparing how SL was applied in business and non-business settings, we found differences in the composition and relevance of these dimensions. In both cases, the social and personal domains are strengthened. In the social domain, attention is paid to 'social engagement', to 'interpersonal communication' and to 'solving social problems', which is reflected in the community collaboration. In the personal domain, on the other hand, the focus is on 'responsibility', 'proactivity' and 'volunteering' to implement projects, in addition to 'transformational leadership' and 'critical thinking'.

However, there are distinctions in the professional domain. In business settings, elements linked to 'business project management' of a social nature are explicitly mentioned, such as identifying needs, applying economic management and planning principles for social purposes, and developing 'innovation and social impact' processes aimed at meeting needs in a financially feasible way. In non-business settings, in contrast, the analysis does not explicitly reflect these characteristics related to knowledge and skills inherent to classical business entrepreneurship. The data indicate that the participants in SL projects in these settings acquire 'generic work-related competences' such as teamwork, managing execution timeframes and spaces, human and material resources and assessing community projects.

In addition, the theoretical research analysed corroborates this three-fold structure, highlighting the interest in building skills in economic aspects of SL applied in business settings, in contrast with non-business settings. As noted in article 30, 'considerable emphasis is placed on income creation and management processes' (p. 6). Similarly, the applied research (17) confirms this dimensional arrangement, validating a scale for evaluating SL in SE in training for PE teachers, the factor structure of which contemplates these dimensions. The descriptive research on this matter discusses SL project characteristics that complement social and personal dimensions linked to SE.

3.2.2. What patterns are featured in the relationship between SE and SL?

Four categories, arranged according to the predominant educational aim in the relationship, have been established to answer this question (Table 3).

TABLE 3. Types of relational models.

Models	%	No.
Subordination 1: SE-sl	63.64	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 22, 24, 26, 29, 31
Subordination 2: se-SL	15.15	4, 15, 28, 2, 33
Juxtaposition: SE+SL	9.09	20, 21, 23
Equivalence: SE=SL	6.06	25, 27

Note: Articles 17 and 30 are excluded because they are a test validation and a theoretical reflection.

In the first relational pattern, the aim of the SE —to generate social transformation and impact— guides the development of the SL: 'SL is an ideal methodology for stimulating social entrepreneurship competence' (2, p. 368). Thus, SL is added as a methodological component of SE training. The relationship is reversed in the second category: the SL aims vary according to the setting in which it is applied and are prioritised over the SE aims, thus shaping the educational process. SL here is deemed to feature components linked to social entrepreneurship skills.

A relationship of equivalence is established in the third category, meaning that neither the aims of SL nor of SE are prioritised, but instead granted the same relevance. The case of

the non-profit organisation Enactus is significant, because projects are implemented to meet local community needs through SL and SE experiences integrated into the curricula of diverse university degrees (21). A juxtaposed relationship is observed in the fourth category, in which the aims of SL and SE remain completely separate. Article 27 shows how the institutional university settings in which the SL and the SE take place are shaped independently in two distinct organisational areas.

3.2.3. What is the meaning given to the relationship between SE and SL?

The conceptualisation of both SE and SL can be identified in a semantic area in which three main meanings are found: 1) methodological: a systemic or strategic procedure is followed in the research; 2) pedagogical: related to a comprehensive, coherent perspective on education; and 3) philosophical: a holistic approach to reality, encompassing human and social development (Table 4).

TABLE 4. Meanings in the relationship between SE and SL.

Concepts	Meanings	%	No.
SL	Methodological	87.5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 29, 31, 32, 33
	Pedagogical	12.5	25, 27, 28, 30
SE	Pedagogical	84.38	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33
	Philosophical	15.62	5, 7, 22, 23, 24

Note: Article 17 is excluded because it is a validation.

Looking at the meaning of each concept separately, the study shows that SL is mainly approached from a methodological perspective. Proof of this orientation is repeatedly found in numerous studies: 'SL is a methodology [...] that combines curricular, professional and civic and social development [...] with the provision of a service to a community' (11, p. 85). To a lesser extent, SL appears to have a pedagogical meaning: 'SL is positioned as pedagogy [...], as a reflexive form of inquiry drawing from Dewey's principles' (28, p. 134).

The research fundamentally acknowledges the pedagogical nature of SE, given that it articulates a view of learning that promotes training in certain competences such as strategic management and action, systemic thinking, normative, foresighted and interpersonal competences (5, p. 3). In turn, the articles highlight that the meaning of SE boasts a philosophical dimension. From this approach, SE can be viewed as a holistic human development process aimed at training students in areas such as critical capacity, ethical engagement and sensitivity to social challenges, beyond the mere acquisition of business techniques (6, p. 1929).

Thus, a two-fold meaning is identified in the relationship between SL and SE, depending on the weight given to each concept. Initially, a methodological and pedagogical orientation is dominant, in which SL is viewed as a teaching and learning method, while SE is a pedagogical objective to be met: 'The findings [...] show that SL projects for Sustainable Entrepreneurship can contribute to overall training (10, p. 17). To a lesser extent, there is a pedagogical and philosophical meaning in the relationship between the two concepts. Under this approach, SL is often viewed as a kind of 'transformative pedagogy, since it prompts the participants to thoroughly examine their beliefs' (28, p. 135), while SE is identified as a broader approach related to the training of critical citizens capable of becoming agents of change.

3.2.4. What domains stand out in the relationship between SE and SL?

Four domains and their respective themes are found, depicted in Table 5.

TABLE 5. Domains in the relationship between SE and SL.

Domains	Themes	%	No.
Cultural	PE	18.18	2, 9, 14, 15, 16, 17
	International learning	3.03	1
	Technological literacy	3.03	3
Environmental	Sustainability	21.22	5, 10, 11, 18, 19, 21, 26
Social-business	Consulting, labour management	24.24	4, 6, 8, 13, 24, 31, 32, 29
	Employment	3.03	7
Social-community	Poverty, marginalisation and diversity assistance	24.24	12, 20, 22, 23, 25, 27, 28, 33

Note: Article 30 is excluded because no domain was identified.

In the cultural domain, the studies on PE are focused on the development of psychomotricity in students with special educational needs. Projects related to 'international learning' and 'technological literacy' are linked to students who are unable to participate in international education proposals and those with limited access to information technologies, respectively.

The articles categorised in the environmental domain discuss proposals geared towards protection of the ecosystems, rural development and the creation of 'sustainable' projects.

The social and business domain refers to SL activities aimed at students in business-related fields for 'consulting' in marketing projects and 'business advising and job creation' through the development of competences for the participants' inclusion in the job market.

In the social and community domain, the training focuses on 'poverty support' through activities related directly to eradicating 'marginalisation and supporting diversity' among vulnerable groups, developing teamwork and leadership skills.

4. Discussion

A chronological examination of the literature reveals two periods: the first, spanning from 2004 to 2014, is defined as an exploratory phase, featuring a limited, sporadic number of articles and publication dates. The second, from 2015-2025, can be deemed a consolidation phase, given the consistency over time and the increase in the number of studies published.

The studies were conducted across numerous geographic regions, with scholarly output falling into three groups: The majority come from Spain and the United States, followed by a moderate number from Germany, Chile and South Africa, while other countries offered a single article. A noteworthy concentration is found in Spain and the United States while distribution in the rest of the world is disparate, with limited numbers of articles from Latin America. Recent bibliometric studies show a similar breakdown in the evolution of scholarly output on SL in indexed databases (Salazar-Botello *et al.*, 2023).

In terms of the methodologies used, most are empirical studies, encompassing nearly 90 % of the total number, two thirds of which are evenly divided between qualitative and quantitative methods. The limited number of theoretical studies indicates an interest in empirical research aimed at assessing and understanding the impact of the link between SE and SL, rather than the foundations on which that relationship is built.

Sustainability and the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* are the journals with the greatest number of studies on the subject matter, with two articles each. The other journals feature just one article each. Thus, a strong degree of dispersion is seen, both in terms of scholarly journals and in the areas of knowledge in which research on this subject is done (PMS-1).

SL linked to SE promotes the social, personal and professional dimensions, irrespective of the setting in which the activities are applied (PRS-2). The development of personal and social aspects coincides with SL studies that do not bear a link to SE in university settings (Luna *et al.*, 2024). Thus, SL is found to be highly versatile in meeting community needs and providing university training more akin to USR. However, the employment dimension features a specific trait that distinguishes it: SL applied to SE in business settings fosters professional competences geared toward project design and management, adding the economic sustainability variable. This finding suggests the emergence of a business training component that combines social impact and economic feasibility. In this regard, recent research has highlighted the demand for a more inclusive educational framework that also features wide-ranging economic theories, particularly social and solidarity-based economics (Arcos-Alonso *et al.*, 2025).

In terms of prevalence, four relational patterns were detected: subordination 1 (SE-sl), subordination 2 (se-SL), juxtaposition (SE+SL) and equivalence (SE=SL) (PR-3). The data indicate that the preferred relationship is subordination 1, in which SL is perceived as a methodology within SE. This contribution is aligned with a widespread, sometimes tacit, interpretation of SL as a methodological practice. In the field of entrepreneurship education, SL, as experiential learning, falls within the methodologies for entrepreneurship competence (Hammoda and Winkler, 2024). This range of relationships shows just how complex it is to coherently define how the relationships between the two terms converge (*cf.*, 30).

The meaning attributed to the relationship between SE and SL is determined by the specific orientation of each concept (PRS-4). SL is predominantly defined by its methodological function, acting according to the operational logic of the teaching and learning process. SE, on the other hand, is supported by a pedagogical framework aimed at student training for social impact (Blanco-Cano and García-Martín, 2021). This conceptual distinction creates an asymmetrical relational meaning in which SL, understood methodologically, is interpreted as being subordinate to the pedagogical concept of SE, as the defining core of social impact learning elements.

The risk of theoretical and practical reductionism of SL, consisting in viewing it exclusively as a methodology, is clearly revealed here. Considering SL as an instrument in the service of SE reduces its critical, reflective and community potential. Perhaps the most effective way to deter this risk is to unequivocally link SL to social transformation and understanding (Deeley, 2016; Kawai, 2020). Furthermore, by harmonising projects that include SE and SL based on critical, transformative epistemological assumptions, the risks of relational subordination between the two are minimised.

In the relationship between SE and SL, a balanced distribution among themes pertaining to the cultural, environmental, social-enterprising and social-community domains is found, drawing a complex picture. The social-enterprising domain, in which entrepreneurship is combined with social engagement and impact, provides a suitable space for the development of entrepreneurial competences with ethical significance (Rodríguez-Gallego *et al.*, 2025). In this regard, the emphasis on fostering the capacity to design economic projects with social impact has led to the growth of a new field of action. Likewise, the cultural domain, PE and technological innovation in the virtual SL mode in international settings emerge as innovative avenues that broaden the scope of SL. In turn, the environmental domain, focusing on sustainability issues, has also become an emerging area, as a reflection of environmentally-favourable political, cultural and ethical frameworks (Rodríguez-Zurita *et al.*, 2025). The social-community domain features themes —poverty, marginalisation and diversity assistance— that are recognised in other SL approaches.

Both SE and SL have a significant bearing on general well-being dimensions focusing on social progress. Investing in social development, improving basic human needs and opportunities for individuals, has an unequivocal impact on society as a whole, including the economic dimension. As Berdieu and Saunoris (2025) have shown, improvements in social progress clearly reduce the size and functionality of the underground economy. This progress is seen as an antidote to structural and functional imbalances in social systems. As Bauman noted (2020, p. 270) in reference to the importance of education, as a cornerstone and means of progress, in the world today, what is needed is 'the reconstruction of a public space in which men and women can participate in a constant ebb and flow of individual and shared, private and community interests, rights and duties'.

5. Conclusions

The scholarly output is limited, focusing primarily on the assessment of SL experiences, and spread out considerably across the published media. Furthermore, the sources of the articles published are scattered across numerous geographic regions, with a significant concentration of articles from the United States and Spain (PMS-1). This is suggestive of an emerging line of research, featuring a noteworthy lack of theoretical analysis of these constructs, which are often used with little meaningful nuance, thus generating terminological confusion and hindering relational studies. There is an evident need to create a well-defined research agenda to thoroughly explore the joint possibilities of SE and SL.

The personal, social and professional dimensions are involved in the relationship between SL and SE. The inclusion of business management in the professional dimension spotlights the tensions existing between the social impact and the economic sustainability of the projects (PRS-2). However, their differential nuances do not conceal the points that social impact and economic sustainability have in common, in which ethical and strategic responsibility are clearly intertwining dimensions. Professionals in today's settings not only acquire technical competence, but also an awareness of the social repercussions of their work. All of this has led to a vision of professional development measured not only in terms of profits or productivity, but also by the capacity to build a more just, inclusive and sustainable society, as repeatedly stated from a critical perspective (Enos, 2015).

The main relational pattern is represented by a subordination model in which SL is viewed as a method aimed at achieving the goal of social innovation, consubstantial to SE (SE-sI). This model coincides with the widespread idea that SL is a teaching method, at the expense of other types of relationships identified: subordination of SE to SL (se-SL), juxtaposition (SE+SL) and equivalence (SE=SL) (PRS-3). For the most part, SE is conceived as a framework for pedagogical action, while SL is deemed a community-based experiential learning method (PRS-4). This type of relationship has been implemented in a nearly uniform manner in the cultural, environmental, social-enterprising and social-community domains (PRS-5).

It seems necessary to find feasible formulas for the creation of SE and SL projects that encompass all three areas: methodological, pedagogical and philosophical meaning. If SE offers a framework for innovation and sustainable development while SL contributes to the integration of knowledge and social engagement, the continuing educational experience sparked by the two together is bound to promote and strengthen the ethical and civic dimension, thus fostering a truly transformative educational process (Bernal-Guerrero *et al.*, 2025; García-Gutiérrez and Ruiz-Corbella, 2022).

This pioneering systematic review describes, for the first time, the essence and scope of the simultaneous presence of SE and SL in the global scholarly field. This research spotlights the need for a more in-depth examination of interactions among participants, the degree of curricular integration and the learning principles applied, among other aspects related to existing research. But above all, it reveals an urgent need for a thorough conceptual definition that can counteract theoretical ambiguities, offer more critical guidance and inform the connections and undeniable potential that may be found between SE and SL. This study has

certain methodological limitations, such as the language bias, given that only documents written in English and Spanish are included. In future studies, it is advisable to extend the search string to include terms like sustainable entrepreneurship or community service in order to gain a broader vision. While not the focus of this research, the abundant documentation found on SL network websites suggests that it would be beneficial to conduct studies on grey literature, thus expanding the geographic coverage to include Latin America and reducing the potential bias of the databases used.

Author contributions

Antonio Bernal-Guerrero. Concept creation, data cleaning, formal analysis, garnering funding, research, methodology, project management, resources, oversight, validation, writing the first draft, review and proofreading of the text.

Antonio Ramón Cárdenas-Gutiérrez. Concept creation, data cleaning, formal analysis, research, methodology, resources, validation, display, writing the first draft, review and proofreading of the text.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

The authors state that they did not use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to prepare this article.

Funding

This publication is part of the R&D&i project PID2019-104408GB-I00, funded by MCIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033/.

References

- AA.VV.(2005). *Declaración de Talloires* [Talloires Declaration]. Recuperado el 10 de mayo de 2025 de <https://talloiresnetwork.tufts.edu/wp-content/uploads/DECLARACIONDETALLOIRES.pdf>
- Almagro, J. G. (2010). *Responsabilidad social: una reflexión global sobre la RSE*. Prentice Hall.
- Alourhzal, H. y Hattabou, A. (2021). Social entrepreneurship education: A systematic review of curricula contents and teaching methods [Educación empresarial social: Una revisión sistemática de los contenidos curriculares y los métodos de enseñanza]. *African Scientific Journal*, 3(7), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5651821>
- Arcos-Alonso, A., De la Cuadra-Liesa, I.F., García-Azpuru, A. y Del Horno, M. B. (2025). Rethinking economics education: Student perceptions of the social and solidarity economy in higher education [Repensando la educación económica: Percepciones estudiantiles sobre la economía social y solidaria en la educación superior]. *Education Sciences*, 15(1). <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15010027>
- Bauman, Z. (2010). *Mundo consumo. Ética del individuo en la aldea global*. Paidós.
- Belcher, B. M., Claus, R., Davel, R. y Jones, S. M. (2022). Evaluating and improving the contributions of university research to social innovation [Evaluar y mejorar la contribución de la investigación universitaria a la innovación social]. *Social Enterprise Journal*, 18(1), 51-120. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SEJ-10-2020-0099>
- Berdieu, A. N. y Saunoris, J. W. (2025). Navigating the shadows: Exploring the interaction between social progress and the shadow economy [Navegando entre las sombras: Explorando la interacción entre el progreso social y la economía sumergida]. *World Development*, 192. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2025.107042>

- Bernal-Guerrero, A., Santos-Rego, M. A. y Azqueta, A. (2025). Liderazgo transformador de la educación para un mundo nuevo. En C. Naval, y A. Bernal (eds.), *La educación transformadora, luces y sombras* (pp. 131-165). Eunsa.
- Bhatt, B. (2022). Ethical complexity of social change: Negotiated actions of a social enterprise [Complejidad ética del cambio social: Acciones negociadas de una empresa social]. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 177(4), 743-762. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-022-05100-6>
- Blanco-Cano E. y García-Martín J. (2021). El impacto del aprendizaje-servicio (ApS) en diversas variables psicoeducativas del alumnado universitario: las actitudes cívicas, el pensamiento crítico, las habilidades de trabajo en grupo, la empatía y el autoconcepto. Una revisión sistemática. *Revista Complutense de Educación*, 32(4), 639-649. <https://doi.org/10.5209/iced.70939>
- Bosma, N., Schøtt, T., Terjesen, S. y Kew, P. (2016). *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2015 to 2016* [Monitor Global de Emprendimiento 2015-2016]. *Special Topic Report Social Entrepreneurship*.
- Bringle, R. G., Philips, M. A. y Hudson, M. (2004). *The measure of service learning. Research scales to assess student experiences* [La medida del aprendizaje servicio. Escalas de investigación para evaluar las experiencias de los estudiantes]. American Psychological Association.
- Cohen, J. (1960). A Coefficient of Agreement for Nominal Scales [Coeficiente de acuerdo para escalas nominales]. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 20(1), 37-46. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001316446002000104>
- Comisión de las Comunidades Europeas (2001). *Libro Verde. Fomentar un marco europeo para la responsabilidad social de las empresas. COM (2001) 366 final*. Recuperado el 30 de abril de 2025 de [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/committees/deve/20020122/com\(2001\)366_es.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/committees/deve/20020122/com(2001)366_es.pdf)
- Consejo de la Unión Europea (2022). *Conclusiones del Consejo sobre una estrategia europea de capacitación de las instituciones de educación superior para el futuro de Europa*. Diario Oficial de la Unión Europea, (2022/C 167/03). Recuperado el 30 de marzo de 2025 de [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ES/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022XG0421\(02\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ES/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022XG0421(02))
- Corrales Gaitero, C. y Andrade Zapata, J. S. (2021). La institucionalización del Aprendizaje-Servicio como camino para la Universidad socialmente responsable. *Estudios Pedagógicos (Valdivia)*, 47(4), 109-126. <https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-07052021000400109>
- Deeley, S. J. (2016). *El Aprendizaje-Servicio en educación superior: Teoría, práctica y perspectiva crítica*. Narcea.
- Elwakil, F. R. (2023). Social entrepreneurship and career adaptability: The mediating effect of pre-service teachers' self-efficacy [Emprendimiento social y adaptabilidad profesional: El efecto mediador de la autoeficacia de los profesores en formación]. *Educational Studies*, 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2023.2255343>
- Enos, S. L. (2015). *Service-learning and social entrepreneurship in higher education: A pedagogy of social change* [Aprendizaje-servicio y emprendimiento social en la educación superior: Una pedagogía del cambio social]. Community Engagement in Higher Education. Palgrave.
- García-Gutiérrez, J. y Ruiz-Corbella, M. (2022). La idea de la Universidad desde un enfoque humanista: la contribución del aprendizaje-servicio como filosofía de la educación. *Teoría de la Educación*, 34(2), 159-176. <https://doi.org/10.14201/teri.27887>
- García-Jurado, A., Pérez-Barea, J. J., y Nova, R. J. (2021). A new approach to social entrepreneurship: A systematic review and meta-analysis [Un nuevo enfoque de la iniciativa empresarial social: Una revisión sistemática y un metaanálisis]. *Sustainability*, 13(5), 2754. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13052754>
- Guerrero, E. y Cebrián, S. (coords.) (2024). *Recursos educativos para la formación de competencias básicas en la universidad*. Octaedro. <http://doi.org/10.36006/09585-1>

- Hammoda, B. y Winkler, C. (2024). Active methods in Entrepreneurship Education: a case study with engineering students [Métodos activos en la enseñanza del espíritu empresarial: estudio de un caso con estudiantes de ingeniería]. *European Journal of Engineering Education*, 49(6), 1203-1226. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03043797.2024.2384893>
- Karatas-Ozkan, M., Ibrahim, S., Ozbilgin, M., Fayolle, A., Manville, G., Nicolopoulou, K., Tatli, A. y Tunalioglu, M. (2023). Challenging the assumptions of social entrepreneurship education and repositioning it for the future: wonders of cultural, social and symbolic capitals [Desafiar los supuestos de la educación emprendedora social y reposicionarla para el futuro: maravillas del capital cultural, social y simbólico]. *Social Enterprise Journal*, 19(4), 98-122. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SEJ-02-2022-0018>
- Kawai, T. (2020). A theoretical framework on reflection in service learning: Deepening reflection through identity development [Un marco teórico sobre la reflexión en el aprendizaje servicio: Profundizar en la reflexión a través del desarrollo de la identidad]. *Frontiers in Education*, 5, Article 604997. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2020.604997>
- Kolb, A. Y. y Kolb, D. A. (2005). Learning styles and learning spaces: enhancing experiential learning in higher education [Estilos y espacios de aprendizaje: potenciar el aprendizaje experimental en la enseñanza superior]. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 4(2), 193-212. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2005.17268566>
- Luna-González, E., Gezuraga-Amundarain, M. y Legorburu-Fernández, I. (2024). Aprendizaje-servicio universitario: Participación estudiantil, servicio y desarrollo de competencias. *Contextos Educativos*, 33, 239-260. <https://doi.org/10.18172/con.5519>
- Maddux, H. C. y Donnett, D. (2015). John Dewey's pragmatism: implications for reflection in service-learning [El pragmatismo de John Dewey: implicaciones para la reflexión en el aprendizaje-servicio]. *Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning*, 21(2), 64-73.
- Martínez-Odría, A., Avruj, L., Minakata, M. J., Duque, E., Palacios, S., Paz, B. y Villarreal, L. (2024). Red de redes: La Red Iberoamericana de Aprendizaje-Servicio y sus redes nacionales como promotoras del aprendizaje-servicio. *RIDAS. Revista Iberoamericana de Aprendizaje-Servicio*, 18, 72-93. <https://doi.org/10.1344/RIDAS2024.18.6>
- Mugarra-Elorriaga, A., Llorente-Portillo, C. y Moros-Ochoa, M.A. (2024). *Emprendimiento social: el rol de las instituciones de educación superior en el desarrollo de conocimientos, habilidades y destrezas*. Dykinson.
- Ndou, V. (2021). Social entrepreneurship education: A combination of knowledge exploitation and exploration processes [Educación emprendedora social: Una combinación de procesos de explotación y exploración del conocimiento]. *Administrative Sciences*, 11(4), 112. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci11040112>
- Ng, P. H. F., Chen, P. Q., Wu, A. C. H., Tai, K. S. K. y Li, C. (2024). Reimagining STEM learning: A comparative analysis of traditional and service learning approaches for social entrepreneurship [Reimaginar el aprendizaje STEM: Un análisis comparativo de los enfoques tradicionales y de aprendizaje-servicio para el emprendimiento social]. *IEEE Transactions on Learning Technologies*, 17, 2266-2280. <https://doi.org/10.1109/TLT.2024.3492352>
- OCDE (2005). *The definition and Selection of Key Competences. Executive Summary* [Definición y selección de competencias clave. Resumen ejecutivo]. OCDE.
- Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., Shamseer, L., Tetzlaff, J. M., Akl, E. A., Brennan, S. E., Chou, R., Glanville, J., Grimshaw, J. M., Hróbjartsson, A., Lalu, M. M., Li, T., Loder, E. W., Mayo-Wilson, E., McDonald, S., McGuinness, L. A., ... Moher, D. (2021). Declaración PRISMA 2020: una guía actualizada para la publicación de revisiones sistemáticas. *Revista Española de Cardiología*, 74(9), 790-799. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.recresp.2021.10.020>
- Parga, N., Montiel, K. y Romo, C. E. (2023). La Universidad y su papel en el emprendimiento social. *Docere*, 29, 26-31. <https://doi.org/10.33064/2023docere295076>

- REDUNIRSE. Red Iberoamericana de Universidades por la Responsabilidad Social Empresarial (2018). *Red Iberoamericana de Universidades por la RSE (REDUNIRSE)*. Recuperado el 30 de abril de 2025 de <https://intranet.enlacfoundation.org/es/mapeo/red-iberoamericana-de-universidades-por-la-rse-redunirse>
- Rodríguez-Gallego, M. R., Ordóñez-Sierra, R., Domene-Martos, S. y de-Cecilia-Rodríguez, C. (2024). Company-university intersections through service-learning (SL): A systematic review [Intersecciones empresa-universidad a través del aprendizaje-servicio (APS): Una revisión sistemática]. *Frontiers in Education*, 9, 1-10 Article 1501899. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2024.1501899>
- Rodríguez-Zurita, D., Jaya-Montalvo, M., Moreira-Arboleda, J., Raya-Diez, E. y Carrión-Mero, P. (2024). Desarrollo sostenible mediante el aprendizaje-servicio y la participación comunitaria en la educación superior: Una revisión sistemática de la literatura. *Revista Internacional de Sostenibilidad en la Educación Superior*, 26(1), 158-201. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-10-2023-0461>
- Ruiz-Corbella, M. y García-Gutiérrez, J. (2020). Aprendizaje-Servicio en escenarios digitales de aprendizaje: Propuesta innovadora en la educación superior. *RIED. Revista Iberoamericana de Educación a Distancia*, 23(1), 183-198. <https://doi.org/10.5944/ried.23.1.24391>
- Salazar-Botello, C. M., Ganga-Contreras, F., Fossatti, P., Muñoz-Jara, Y., y Monje-Sanhuesa, R. (2023). Evolución del aprendizaje servicio: Un análisis bibliométrico desde la Web of Science. *Bibliotecas. Anales de Investigación*, 19(1), 1-13.
- Santos-Rego, M. A. (ed.) (2020). *La transferencia de conocimiento en educación. Un desafío estratégico*. Narcea.
- Santos-Rego, M.A., Lorenzo, M. y Mella, I. (2020). *El aprendizaje-servicio y la educación universitaria. Hacer personas competentes*. Octaedro.
- Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship (2024). *Global Data. The State of Social Enterprise: A Review of Global Data 2013-2023* [Datos globales. El estado de la empresa social: Una revisión de los datos globales 2013-2023]. World Economic Forum.
- Schröer, A. (2021). Social innovation in education and social service organizations. Challenges, actors, and approaches to foster social innovation [Innovación social en organizaciones educativas y de servicios sociales. Retos, actores y enfoques para fomentar la innovación social]. *Frontiers in Education*, 5, 555624. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2020.555624>
- Sigmon, R. L. (1979). Service-learning: Three principles [Aprendizaje-servicio: Tres principios]. *Synergist*, 8(1), 9-10.
- Sotelino, A., Santos-Rego, M. A. y Lorenzo, M. (2016). Aprender y servir en la universidad: una vía cívica al desarrollo educativo. *Teoría de la Educación*, 28(2), 225-248. <https://doi.org/10.14201/teoredu282225248>
- Tapia, M. N., Giorgetti, D., Furco, A., Maas, K., Vinciguerra, A., González, A., Luna, E., Ma, C. y Bouwman, B. (2023). *Hacia una historia mundial del aprendizaje-servicio*. CLAYSS, Centro Latinoamericano de Aprendizaje y Servicio Solidario.
- UNESCO (2010). *Conferencia Mundial sobre Educación Superior 2009 – Las nuevas dinámicas de la educación superior y de la investigación para el cambio social y el desarrollo*. ED.2010/WS/26. Recuperado el 20 de abril de 2025 de https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000183277_spa
- Vázquez, V. y Escámez, J. (2022). Universidad y sostenibilidad social desde la ética del cuidado. *Teoría de la Educación*, 34(2), 141-158. <https://doi.org/10.14201/teri.27817>
- Welzel, C. (2013). *Freedom Rising: Human Empowerment and the Quest for Emancipation* [El surgimiento de la Libertad. Empoderamiento humano y la búsqueda de la emancipación]. Cambridge University Press.

APPENDIX. List of 33 articles reviewed.

No.	Articles
1	Ballesteros-Sola, M. y Magomedova, N. (2023). Impactful social entrepreneurship education: A US-Spanish service learning collaborative online international learning (COIL) project [Educación en emprendimiento social con impacto: un proyecto COIL de aprendizaje-servicio colaborativo en línea entre Estados Unidos y España]. <i>The International Journal of Management Education</i> , 21(3), 100866. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2023.100866
2	Capella Peris, C., Gil Gómez, J., Chiva-Bartoll, Ò. y Salvador García, C. (2021). Contraste de dos modalidades de Aprendizaje-Servicio en la formación de profesorado de Educación Física. <i>Profesorado. Revista de currículum y formación del profesorado</i> . https://doi.org/10.30827/profesorado.v25i2.9381
3	Ciesielkiewicz, M., Nocito Muñoz, G. y Herrero Pou, Y. (2017). Impacto y beneficios de la metodología aprendizaje servicio para el profesorado de educación superior. <i>Aula de encuentro</i> , 19(2), 34-57. https://doi.org/10.17561/ae.v19i2.2
4	Ganga-Contreras, F., Guiñez-Cabrera, N. y Rodríguez-Quezada, E. (2023). Percepciones de estudiantes y empresarios sobre aprendizaje-servicio en costos y marketing. <i>Human Review</i> , 16(5). https://doi.org/10.37467/revhuman.v12.4681
5	Halberstadt, J., Schank, C., Euler, M. y Harms, R. (2019). Learning Sustainability Entrepreneurship by Doing: Providing a Lecturer-Oriented Service Learning Framework [Aprender emprendimiento en sostenibilidad mediante la práctica: propuesta de un marco de aprendizaje-servicio orientado al profesorado]. <i>Sustainability</i> , 11(5), 1217. https://doi.org/10.3390/su11051217
6	Halberstadt, J., Timm, J.-M., Kraus, S. y Gundolf, K. (2019). Skills and knowledge management in higher education: How service learning can contribute to social entrepreneurial competence development [Gestión de habilidades y conocimientos en la educación superior: cómo el aprendizaje-servicio puede contribuir al desarrollo de competencias en emprendimiento social]. <i>Journal of Knowledge Management</i> , 23(10), 1925-1948. https://doi.org/10.1108/JKM-12-2018-0744
7	Jelinčić, D.A., Baturina, D. y Franić, S. (2022). Impact of Service Learning on Social Entrepreneurship and Youth Employment in Croatia [Impacto del aprendizaje-servicio en el emprendimiento social y el empleo juvenil en Croacia]. <i>Interdisciplinary Description of Complex Systems: INDECS</i> , 20(4), 319-335. https://doi.org/10.7906/indecs.20.4.2
8	Litzky, B.E., Godshalk, V.M. y Walton-Bongers, C. (2010). Social entrepreneurship and community leadership: A service-learning model for management education [Emprendimiento social y liderazgo comunitario: un modelo de aprendizaje-servicio para la formación en gestión]. <i>Journal of Management Education</i> , 34(1), 142-162. https://doi.org/10.1177/1052562909338038
9	Maravé-Vivas, M., Salvador-García, C., Capella-Peris, C. y Gil-Gómez, J. (2021). Influence of socio-demographic factors in the promotion of social entrepreneurship: A service-learning programme [Influencia de los factores sociodemográficos en la promoción del emprendimiento social: un programa de aprendizaje-servicio]. <i>International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health</i> , 18(21), 11318. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph182111318
10	Martínez-Campillo, A., Sierra-Fernández, M.D.P. y Fernández-Santos, Y. (2019). Service-learning for sustainability entrepreneurship in rural areas: what is its global impact on business university students? [Aprendizaje-servicio para el emprendimiento en sostenibilidad en zonas rurales: ¿cuál es su impacto global en estudiantes universitarios de negocios?]. <i>Sustainability</i> , 11(19), 5296. https://doi.org/10.3390/su11195296

- 11 Fernández, M.D.P.S., Campillo, A.M. y Santos, Y.F. (2021). Contribución académica de un proyecto de aprendizaje-servicio soportado en las TIC para fomentar el emprendimiento rural femenino. *Bordón: Revista de pedagogía*, 73(4), 85-100. <https://doi.org/10.13042/Bordon.2021.89544>
- 12 Schmalenbach, C., Monterrosa, H., Cabrera Larín, A.R. y Jurkowski, S. (2022). The LIFE programme – University students learning leadership and teamwork through service learning in El Salvador [El programa LIFE: estudiantes universitarios aprenden liderazgo y trabajo en equipo a través del aprendizaje-servicio en El Salvador]. *Intercultural Education*, 33(4), 470-483. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2022.2090689>
- 13 Scholtz, D. (2018). Service Learning: An Empowerment Agenda for Students and Community Entrepreneurs [Aprendizaje-Servicio: Una agenda de empoderamiento para estudiantes y emprendedores comunitarios]. *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning*, 19(1), 69-79.
- 14 Simó i Algado, S., Ginesta Portet, X. y San Eugenio Vela, J. D. (2013). Aprendizaje Servicio Universitario: Creando empleo a partir de la emprendeduría social. *Historia y Comunicación social*, 18, 627-638. https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_HICS.2013.v18.44265
- 15 Capella-Peris, C., Cosgrove, M.M., Pallarès, M. y Santágueda-Villanueva, M. (2019). Aprendizaje Servicio en la formación inicial docente de Educación Física: Análisis de una propuesta en el contexto norteamericano. *Publicaciones*, 49(4), 49-67. <https://doi.org/10.30827/publicaciones.v49i4.11728>
- 16 Capella-Peris C., Martí-Puig M, Salvador-García C. y Maravé-Vivas M. (2021). Social, Personal, and Innovative Competencies Effect of Service-Learning in Physical Education Teacher Education: A Mixed-Methods Analysis [Efecto del Aprendizaje-Servicio en las Competencias Sociales, Personales e Innovadoras en la Formación del Profesorado de Educación Física: Un Análisis de Métodos Mixtos]. *Frontiers in Education*, 6, 757483. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2021.757483>
- 17 Peris, C.C., Gómez, J.G., Puig, M.M. y Ruiz-Bernardo, P. (2016). Construcción de un cuestionario para medir el emprendimiento social en educación física. *Pedagogía Social. Revista Interuniversitaria*, (28), 169-188. https://doi.org/10.sE7179/PsRi_2016.28.13
- 18 Foster, K. (2010). Teaching environmental entrepreneurship at an urban university: greenproofing [Enseñando emprendimiento ambiental en una universidad urbana: protección ecológica (greenproofing)]. *Metropolitan Universities*, 21(1), 73-87.
- 19 Gundlach, M. J. y Zivnuska, S. (2010). An experiential learning approach to teaching social entrepreneurship, triple bottom line, and sustainability: Modifying and extending practical organizational behavior education (PROBE) [Un enfoque de aprendizaje experiencial para enseñar emprendimiento social, triple resultado y sostenibilidad: Modificación y ampliación de la educación práctica en comportamiento organizacional (PROBE)]. *American Journal of Business Education*, 3(1), 19-28. <https://doi.org/110.19030/ajbe.v3i1.364>
- 20 Paulsen, M.A. (2012). Integrating Social Entrepreneurship with Service and Experiential Learning: A Case Study at the University of Notre Dame [Integrando el emprendimiento social con el aprendizaje-servicio y el aprendizaje experiencial: un estudio de caso en la Universidad de Notre Dame]. *Journal of College and Character*, 13(4). <https://doi.org/10.1515/jcc-2012-1950>
- 21 Rampasso, I.S., Siqueira, R.G., Martins, V.W.B., Anholon, R., Quelhas, O.L.G., Leal Filho, W., Lange Salvia, A. y Santa-Eulalia, L.A. (2021). Implementing social projects with undergraduate students: an analysis of essential characteristics [Implementación de proyectos sociales con estudiantes de grado: un análisis de características esenciales]. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 22(1), 198-214. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-11-2019-0323>

-
- 22 Sonmezoglu, U. (2022). A Research on Individual Social Responsibility and Social Entrepreneurship Tendencies of University Students [Una investigación sobre la responsabilidad social individual y las tendencias hacia el emprendimiento social en estudiantes universitarios]. *Journal of Educational Issues*, 8(3), 69-83. <https://doi.org/10.5296/jei.v8i3.20174>
-
- 23 Bigelow, N. y Rodgers, D. (2019). The SEPA grant-writing program: Regional transformation through engaged service learning [El programa de redacción de subvenciones SEPA: Transformación regional a través del aprendizaje-servicio comprometido]. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 23(2), 79-91.
-
- 24 Wessel, S. y Godshalk, V.M. (2004). Why Teach Social Entrepreneurship: Enhance Learning and University-Community Relations through Service-Learning Outreach [¿Por qué enseñar emprendimiento social?: mejorar el aprendizaje y las relaciones universidad-comunidad a través del aprendizaje-servicio y la proyección social]. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 9(1), 25-38.
-
- 25 Ka, C.M.K. (2024). Reflection of Service-Learning Development and its Network in Asia. *RIDAS* [Reflexión sobre el desarrollo del Aprendizaje-Servicio y su red en Asia. RIDAS]. *Revista Iberoamericana de Aprendizaje-Servicio*, (18), 106-119. <https://doi.org/10.1344/RIDAS2024.18.8>
-
- 26 Thomsen, B., Muurlink, O., & Best, T. (2019). Backpack Bootstrapping: Social Entrepreneurship Education Through Experiential Learning [Emprendimiento Social con lo Puesto: Educación en Emprendimiento Social a través del Aprendizaje Experiencial]. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, 12(2), 238-264. <https://doi.org/10.1080/019420676.2019.1689155>
-
- 27 Clifford, J., Emmerling, D., Widney, E., Hamilton, N. y Malone, D. (2020). Seeing Community Engagement as We Are: Student Perceptions of Service-Learning and Social Entrepreneurship Education [Viendo la participación comunitaria cómo somos: percepciones estudiantiles sobre el aprendizaje-servicio y la educación en emprendimiento social.]. *International Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement*, 8(1), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.37333/001c.18735>
-
- 28 Iyer, R., Carrington, S., Mercer, L. y Selva, G. (2018). Critical service-learning: promoting values orientation and enterprise skills in pre-service teacher programmes [Aprendizaje-servicio crítico: fomento de la orientación en valores y habilidades emprendedoras en programas de formación inicial del profesorado]. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 46(2), 133-147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2016.1210083@tfocoll.2022.0.issue-best-paper-prize-asia-pacific-teacher-education>
-
- 29 Maistry, S.M. y Ramdhani, J. (2010). Managing tensions in a service-learning programme: Some reflections [Gestionando tensiones en un programa de aprendizaje-servicio: Algunas reflexiones]. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 24(4), 555-567.
-
- 30 Jones, A.L., Warner, B. y Kiser, P.M. (2010). *Service-learning & social entrepreneurship: Finding the common ground* [Aprendizaje-servicio y emprendimiento social: Encontrando el terreno común]. *Partnerships: A Journal of Service-Learning & Civic Engagement*, 1(2), 1-15.
-
- 31 Agwu, C.O. y Nziadam, L. (2025). Implementing Service Learning for Creativity and Entrepreneurial Skill Development in Nigerian Higher Education: A Disciplinary-Based Approach [Implementación del aprendizaje-servicio para el desarrollo de la creatividad y habilidades emprendedoras en la educación superior nigeriana: un enfoque basado en disciplinas]. *African Journal of Humanities and Contemporary Education Research*, 18(1), 111-124. <https://doi.org/10.62154/ajhcer>
-

-
- 32 Duffy, J., Barington, L., Moeller, W., Barry, C., Kazmer, D., West, C. y Crespo, V. (2008). Service-learning projects in core undergraduate engineering courses [Proyectos de aprendizaje-servicio en asignaturas troncales de grado en ingeniería]. *International Journal for Service Learning in Engineering, Humanitarian Engineering and Social Entrepreneurship*, 3(2), 18-41. <https://doi.org/10.24908/ijse.v3i2.2103>
-
- 33 Gaete-Quezada, R. (2015). El voluntariado universitario como ámbito de aprendizaje servicio y emprendimiento social: Un estudio de caso. *Última Década*, 23(43), 235-260. <https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-22362015000200009>
-

Author biographies

Antonio Bernal-Guerrero

Having earned his PhD, awarded a special prize, in Philosophy and Educational Sciences at Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, he is a professor of educational theory at Universidad de Sevilla. His research track record is reflected in numerous publications (85 book contributions and over 100 articles in accredited journals in Spain and abroad) and nearly one hundred contributions at scholarly events. He was a visiting professor at Universidad Nova in Lisbon, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla. He leads the 'Pedagógica de la Person' [Pedagogy of the Person] research group. As part of a reconsideration of new demands for the construction of a person-centred educational theory, he has developed a new theoretical approach based on a comprehensive vision of entrepreneurship education.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0387-9538>

Antonio Ramón Cárdenas-Gutiérrez

Associate Professor. Department of Theory and History of Education and Social Pedagogy at Universidad de Sevilla. PhD in Pedagogy awarded a special prize. Member of the 'Pedagógica de la Person' [Pedagogy of the Person] research group. His research interests focus on the entrepreneurial field of personal identity and the evaluation processes in entrepreneurship education. He has participated in R&D&I projects in Spain and has published in prestigious journals.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8799-2860>



Studies

**Pilar Jara-Coatt, Fabiola Sáez-Delgado, Jaime Constenla-Nuñez
& Javier Mella-Norambuena**

Socioemotional competencies and resilience of primary education teachers:
a predictive model

M. González-Sanmamed, L. Corral Fachal, M. M. Ferradás Canedo & C. Freire Rodríguez

Self-efficacy, motivation, and use of digital resources in Secondary Education:
A mediation analysis

**Pablo Rodríguez, Agustín De La Herranz, Victoria De Miguel
& Bianca Fiorella Serrano Manzano**

The Pedagogy of Death and the pandemic. Leading educationalist' views

Socioemotional competencies and resilience of primary education teachers: a predictive model

Competencias socioemocionales y resiliencia del profesorado de educación primaria: un modelo predictivo

Dr. Pilar JARA-COATT. Associate Professor Head of the Master's in Educational Sciences Programme, Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción (*pilarjara@ucsc.cl*).

Dr. Fabiola SÁEZ-DELGADO. Associate Professor Head of the Postgraduate School of the Faculty of Education, Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción (*fsaesz@ucsc.cl*).

Dr. Jaime CONSTENLA-NÚÑEZ. Associate Professor. Head of Programme for Master's in Pedagogy for Higher Education, Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción (*jconsten@ucsc.cl*).

Dr. Javier MELLA-NORAMBUENA. Teacher in the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, Universidad de Las Américas, Concepción (*javier.mella@edu.udla.cl*).

Abstract

Teachers' socioemotional competencies (SEC) are essential for reducing work-related stress, improving teaching, and promoting school well-being. The aim was to analyse the predictive power of socioemotional competencies for the resilience of 223 primary school teachers from the Biobío and Ñuble regions of Chile. Using a quantitative, non-experimental, correlational, and predictive approach, the instruments (SEMS-IT) and teacher daily resilience scale were applied using statistical analysis in RStudio. The results showed moderate levels of socioemotional competencies and resilience; low perception of adverse classroom climate; positive correlation between cognitive management of teacher emotion, teacher empathic concern, teacher-student relationship, and resilience, and a negative correlation with adverse classroom climate; significant differences in teacher-student relationship in favour of women and public schools, and negative perception of adverse classroom climate in private schools; no differences were found according to the School Vulnerability Index; cognitive management of teachers' emotions and empathic concern are positive factors that promote teachers' daily resilience. Furthermore, an adverse classroom climate acts as a significant mediator, especially in the relationships of teachers' empathic concern and teacher-student relationships with teachers' everyday resilience. The teacher-student relationship does not have a significant direct effect on resilience, but it does have an indirect influence through an adverse classroom climate. There is a need to develop SECs, which are shown to be significant in the model. It is concluded that it is important to strengthen

Date of receipt of the original: 12/09/2025

Date of approval: 11/11/2025

Please, cite this article as follows: Jara-Coatt, P., Sáez-Delgado, F., Constenla-Núñez, J. & Mella-Norambuena, J. (2026). Socioemotional competencies and resilience of primary education teachers: a predictive model [Competencias socioemocionales y resiliencia del profesorado de educación primaria: un modelo predictivo]. *Revista Española de Pedagogía*, 84(293), 151-170. <https://doi.org/10.9781/rep.2026.848>

these competencies through teacher training and to consider school contexts that promote resilient and emotionally healthy environments.

Keywords: socioemotional competencies; resilience; primary school teachers; predictive model.

Resumen

Las competencias socioemocionales docentes (CSE) son esenciales para reducir el estrés laboral, mejorar la enseñanza y favorecer el bienestar escolar. El objetivo fue analizar la capacidad predictiva de las competencias socioemocionales sobre la resiliencia de 223 profesores de educación primaria en las regiones del Biobío y Ñuble, Chile. Con un enfoque cuantitativo, diseño no experimental, correlacional y predictivo, se aplicaron los instrumentos (SEMS-IT) y la escala de resiliencia cotidiana docente usando análisis estadístico en RS-tudio. Los resultados indicaron niveles moderados de competencias socioemocionales y resiliencia; baja percepción del clima de aula adverso; correlación positiva entre la gestión cognitiva de la emoción del profesorado, preocupación empática del profesorado, relación docente-estudiante y resiliencia y correlación negativa con el clima de aula adverso; diferencias significativas en la relación docente-estudiante a favor de las mujeres y en escuelas públicas y percepción negativa del clima de aula adverso en escuelas privadas; no se evidenciaron diferencias según el Índice de Vulnerabilidad Escolar; la gestión cognitiva de la emoción del docente y la preocupación empática docente son factores positivos que promueven la resiliencia cotidiana docente. Además, el clima de aula adverso actúa como un mediador significativo, especialmente en las relaciones entre la preocupación empática docente y las relaciones docente-estudiante con la resiliencia cotidiana docente. La relación docente-estudiante no tiene un efecto directo significativo sobre la resiliencia, pero sí influye indirectamente a través del clima de aula adverso. Se necesita desarrollar las CSE que se muestran significativas en el modelo. Se concluye la importancia de fortalecer estas competencias desde la formación docente y considerar contextos escolares que promuevan entornos resilientes y emocionalmente saludables.

Palabras clave: competencias socioemocionales; resiliencia; profesores de escuela primaria; modelo predictivo.

1. Introduction

Socioemotional competencies, which originated in psychology in the 1980s, are a key element of teacher training as they prevent stress, anxiety, and burnout. Emotional intelligence and resilience are essential for professional well-being, although their development in initial training is still limited in Latin America (Lozano-Peña *et al.*, 2022). Resilience, as a protective competency, depends on personal and contextual factors that facilitate adapting to challenges such as the move to online education (Villalobos *et al.*, 2022). High stress levels, exacerbated since the pandemic (Bellei *et al.*, 2021), underline the need to strengthen these competencies to improve teacher well-being, the school environment, and learning in vulnerable contexts (Sáez-Delgado *et al.*, 2023).

A number of theoretical models for developing socioemotional competencies have been implemented. The Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) model stands out among these, and the model that currently inspires the most interest is Social Emotional Ability Development (SEAD), which suggests involving families and other educational professionals in its implementation (Jara-Coatt *et al.*, 2025), bearing in mind that the majority of teachers are women exposed to multiple challenges both at home and at school (Baptista *et al.*, 2020).

Emotions are neither positive nor negative but instead are experiences that are understood and managed by means of self-regulation. However, there has been little research on teachers' emotional state and its influence on their professional performance and the educational environment. Empathy, understood as the capacity to perceive the emotions of others, has a positive impact on the learning environment and on academic performance by facilitating understanding of students' needs (Rodríguez-Saltos *et al.*, 2020). A teacher-student relationship based on empathy, trust, and respect favours the motivation, well-being, and mental health of both stakeholders (Silva *et al.*, 2020), improving students' self-esteem and preventing teacher burnout (Pedditz *et al.*, 2021).

The school environment, shaped by structural and relational factors, has a direct influence on coexistence, motivation, and academic performance. A positive environment, underpinned by emotional support and teachers' interpersonal skills, reduces conflicts and improves relations in the classroom (MINEDUC, 2021). In contrast, a negative climate reduces students' motivation and well-being; therefore the emotional attitude of the teachers is of vital importance. Factors such as stress, workload, and violence at school affect teacher well-being (Cleary *et al.*, 2022; Allen *et al.*, 2021), while resilience is a protective factor that improves performance and reduces emotional exhaustion (Fan *et al.*, 2021). Developing resilience makes it possible to deal with adversities and promote self-care, avoiding depressive symptoms and the syndrome of burnout (López-Angulo *et al.*, 2022; Segovia-Quesada *et al.*, 2020; Sáez-Delgado *et al.*, 2023). Chilean educational policy emphasises creating positive school environments that favour the well-being of teachers and students (MINEDUC, 2024).

Since 2015, teacher attrition in the first five years has doubled, driven by low pay and a lack of institutional support (UNESCO, 2024). This pressure causes exhaustion and reduces the quality of education. Therefore, strengthening socioemotional competencies is key for psychological well-being, resilience, and coexistence (Organización Mundial de la Salud, 2021). The emotional education promoted by UNESCO (2024) improves emotional management and social harmony, but faces structural obstacles that must be addressed (Rubio & Olivo-Franco, 2020).

In Chile there has been little quantitative research on socioemotional competencies and resilience, and so the present study centres on determining the predictive capacity of teachers' socioemotional competencies on the resilience of primary education teachers in the Biobío and Ñuble regions of Chile. The proposed objectives are: (a) to describe the level of socioemotional competencies and resilience in primary education teachers in the Biobío and Ñuble regions of Chile; (b) to analyse the relationship between the dimensions of socioemotional competencies and resilience in primary education teachers in the in the Biobío and Ñuble regions of Chile; (c) to analyse the differences in levels of socioemotional competencies and resilience of primary education teachers in the Biobío and Ñuble regions of Chile by gender, type of school, and level of vulnerability; (d) to evaluate a predictive model of socioemotional competencies on resilience in primary education teachers in the Biobío and Ñuble regions of Chile.

2. Method

2.1. Design

The study uses a quantitative approach, with a non-experimental, cross-sectional, correlational, and predictive design (Dominion & Mahamed, 2023).

2.2. Participants

The population was the teachers in the Biobío and Ñuble regions of Chile. Non-probability convenience and availability sampling was used (Bae *et al.*, 2022; Rahman, 2023), and the sample included 223 teachers from 73 public and private primary schools. Teachers in initial

training and those with more than 10 hours of socioemotional training were excluded to avoid bias. The sample size was calculated by means of a calculator for structural equation models (Soper, 2024), considering observed and latent variables, effect size, alpha level, and statistical power (Jobst *et al.*, 2023); the parameters were: effect = .3, power = .95, five latent variables, 23 observed variables, and alpha level = .05.

2.3. Instruments

Two data collection instruments were used. The daily resilience scale (Martin & Marsh, 2006), which focusses on the capacity for buoyancy in the educational context. This is a self-report questionnaire that includes 4 items with a 7-point Likert-type scale, where 1 corresponds to “strongly disagree” and 7 to “strongly agree”, the statements (4) are of the type “I don’t let study stress get on top of me”. The instrument’s reliability coefficient is $\alpha = .80$, applying confirmatory factor analysis and a structural equation model. And the socioemotional skills instrument for teachers (SEMS-IT) (Sáez-Delgado *et al.*, 2024), which has 7 points that range from “always agree” to “never agree”, with five (5) dimensions: cognitive management of teacher emotion with four (4) statements of the type “when I want to feel more positive emotions in class (such as happiness or enthusiasm), I change what I am thinking”; teacher empathic concern, with four (4) statements of the type “I often worry about my students who are in a vulnerable situation (emotional, social, financial)”; teacher–student relationship with four (4) statements of the type “my students seek my help when they feel upset in class”; and adverse classroom climate with seven (4) statements of the type “it seems like my students and are always in conflict when we interact”.

The instrument was validated by calculating consequential validity, content validity, response format validity, and factorial structure validity. The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) showed adequate fit of the model to the data, with indicators that fulfil criteria established in the literature: $\chi^2(171) = 354.546$, $p < 0.001$; Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .971; Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = .966; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .061; and Standardised Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMR) = .062.

2.4. Ethical aspects

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción (Acta N.º 1241902), in the framework of Proyecto Fondecyt Regular N.º 1241902. Teachers’ participated voluntarily after giving informed consent electronically through SurveyMonkey. Confidentiality and freedom to withdraw were guaranteed. The data were anonymised and stored on protected servers for one year, in accordance with the applicable regulations. Measures to prevent potential complaints were adopted and the academic purpose of the study was stated. There are no conflicts of interest, and the materials are available on request from the principal investigator.

2.5. Data analysis

A descriptive analysis of the data was performed using measures of central tendency, dispersion, and shape, along with frequencies and percentages for the categorical variables. Normality was tested using the Lilliefors corrected Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and Q–Q plots. Subsequently, Pearson correlations were used to evaluate the relationship between variables. Homogeneity of variance was tested using Levene’s test. As the assumptions of normality were not fulfilled, robust tests were used: Yuen’s t test for two groups and robust ANOVA based on trimmed means for more than two. The analyses were done using the WRS2 package (Mair & Wilcox, 2020).

A cross-sectional predictive model was estimated through structural equation modelling (SEM) to analyse the relationships of dependency between variables and the model’s predictive capacity. Two models were evaluated: one with direct effects (M1) and another with mediation (M2), with the latter being selected for its better fit. The quality of the fit was evaluated through multiple indicators: χ^2/df (Cheung *et al.*, 2024), CFI, RMSEA, SRMR, and

AGFI (Moshagen & Bader, 2024; Savalei *et al.*, 2023). Following criteria established in the recent literature the control of assumptions was done through the equivalent OLS model with identical predictors, evaluating: (a) collinearity through VIF and tolerance (criteria: VIF < 5 and tolerance > 0.20); (b) linearity and homoscedasticity by inspecting the residuals plot compared with fitted and smoothed LOESS values; and (c) approximate normality of residuals with Q–Q plot. The analysis was done using the *Javaan* package in the R statistical environment (version 4.2.2). RStudio (version 2023.03.0) was also used to facilitate the visualisation of results (RStudio Team, 2020). These tools made it possible to guarantee the precision, transparency, and reproducibility of the study.

3. Results

The sample comprised 59 men and 214 women, principally from the Biobío region ($n = 255$) and the Ñuble region ($n = 18$). The school vulnerability index (SVI) had a mean of 84.29, with negative skew (-1.48) and positive kurtosis (1.05), indicating a tendency towards high values and a more pointed distribution.

3.1. Results of hypothesis 1

For H1: The level of socioemotional competencies and resilience in primary education teachers from the Biobío and Ñuble regions of Chile is low. A descriptive analysis of this was performed.

TABLE 1. Descriptive analysis of central tendency, dispersion, and shape of the dimensions analysed

Variables	mean	SD	median	min.	max.	range	skew	kurtosis
SVI	84.29	14.13	90.00	41.00	99.00	58.00	-1.48	1.05
DTR	5.06	1.40	5.25	1.00	7.00	6.00	-0.86	0.25
CMTE	5.14	1.36	5.25	1.00	7.00	6.00	-0.76	0.19
TEC	6.17	1.00	6.50	2.50	7.00	4.50	-1.36	1.24
TSR	5.49	1.03	5.75	2.25	7.00	4.75	-0.75	0.07
ACC	2.78	1.00	2.57	1.00	5.86	4.86	0.76	0.32

Note: SVI: school vulnerability index; DTR: daily teacher resilience; CMTE: cognitive management of teacher emotion; TEC: teacher empathic concern; TSR: teacher–student relationship; ACC: adverse classroom climate.

Daily teacher resilience (DTR) had a mean of 5.06, with negative skew and a slight concentration towards high values. The CMTE, TEC, and TSR variables also had elevated means (between 5.14 and 6.17) and distributions with negative skew, indicating similar trends. TEC stood out for its greater concentration in high values and a more pointed distribution. In contrast, ACC had the lowest mean (2.78), with positive skew, reflecting a greater presence of negative perceptions of the classroom environment.

The reliability of the scales was evaluated, showing adequate to high internal consistency in the majority of the measurements. DTR displayed acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.659$; $\Omega = 0.794$). CMTE, TEC, and TSR displayed solid values (α between 0.765 and 0.845; Ω between 0.819 and 0.865). ACC displayed good consistency ($\alpha = 0.751$; $\Omega = 0.837$). All in all, the results support the reliability of the instruments used.

3.2. Results of hypothesis 2

For H2: there is a significant positive relationship between the dimensions of socioemotional competencies and resilience in primary education teachers in the Biobío and Ñuble regions of Chile. A Pearson's correlation coefficient analysis was performed to explore the relations between the variables studied.

TABLE 2. Correlations between the different variables examined

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. SVI	1						
2. DTR	0.06	0.17**	1				
3. CMTE	0.05	0.03	0.43***	1			
4. TEC	-0.02	-0.09	0.39***	0.46***	1		
5. TSR	0.06	-0.07	0.34***	0.49***	0.55***	1	
6. ACC	-0.02	0	-0.43***	-0.35***	-0.42***	-0.54***	1

Note: SVI: school vulnerability index; DTR: daily teacher resilience; CMTE: cognitive management of teacher emotion; TEC: teacher empathic concern; TSR: teacher–student relationship; ACC: adverse classroom climate. * $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$

The SVI did not display significant correlations with the variables studied. DTR displayed positive correlations with CMTE ($r = 0.43, p < 0.001$), TEC ($r = 0.39, p < 0.001$), and TSR ($r = 0.34, p < 0.001$), and negative with ACC ($r = -0.43, p < 0.001$). CMTE was positively associated with TEC ($r = 0.46, p < 0.001$) and TSR ($r = 0.49, p < 0.001$) and negatively with ACC ($r = -0.35, p < 0.001$). TSR correlated positively with TEC ($r = 0.55, p < 0.001$) and negatively with ACC ($r = -0.54, p < 0.001$).

3.3. Results of hypothesis 3

For H3: there are differences in the levels of socioemotional competencies and in resilience in primary education teachers from the Biobío and Ñuble regions of Chile: by gender in favour of women; by type of school (private and public) in favour of private ones; and by level of vulnerability in favour of those with a lower SVI. Levene's test was applied and homoscedasticity was assumed.

TABLE 3. Differences in socioemotional competencies and resilience by gender

Variables	Male		Female		Levene	Yuen	ES
	Mean (SD)	Lilliefors K-S	Mean (SD)	Lilliefors K-S			
DTR	5.35 (1.43)	D = 0.131*	4.98 (1.38)	D = 0.122***	F = 0.004	T (59.42) = 1.993	
CMTE	5.00 (1.45)	D = 0.161**	5.18 (1.34)	D = 0.101***	F = 0.007	T (63.24) = 0.566	
TEC	5.96 (1.14)	D = 0.21***	6.23 (0.96)	D = 0.213***	F = 2.052	T (51.1) = 1.857	
TSR	5.08 (1.06)	D = 0.112	5.60 (1.00)	D = 0.143***	F = 2.513	T (47.87) = 3.196	0.38
ACC	2.95 (1.10)	D = 0.128*	2.74 (0.97)	D = 0.127***	F = 0.867	T (56.53) = 1.439	

Note: DTR: daily teacher resilience; CMTE: cognitive management of teacher emotion; TEC: teacher empathic concern; TSR: teacher–student relationship; ACC: adverse classroom climate.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Small differences were observed between men and women in the variables analysed, with the only significant difference being in TSR, where the women had a higher mean (5.60 vs 5.08; $p < 0.01$, $SE = 0.38$). In DTR, the men had a slightly higher mean (5.35 vs 4.98), but without statistical significance ($p = 0.051$). Women also displayed slightly higher means in CMTE (5.18 vs 5.00) and TEC (6.23 vs 5.96), without significant differences. No significant differences by gender were found in ACC.

TABLE 4. Differences in socioemotional competencies and resilience by type of school

Variables	State		Private		Levene	Yuen	SE
	Mean (SD)	Lilliefors K-S	Mean (SD)	Lilliefors K-S			
DTR	5.19 (1.53)	D = 0.161***	4.99 (1.32)	D = 0.113***	F = 1.747	T (106.34) = 1.677	
CMTE	5.21 (1.49)	D = 0.141***	5.10 (1.29)	D = 0.111***	F = 2.499	T (101.66) = 1.146	
TEC	6.17 (1.10)	D = 0.242***	6.17 (0.95)	D = 0.194***	F = 0.543	T (112.91) = 0.673	
TSR	5.68 (0.95)	D = 0.154***	5.39 (1.06)	D = 0.131***	F = 2.639	T (137.28) = 2.336	0.20
ACC	2.62 (1.09)	D = 0.153***	2.87 (0.94)	D = 0.129***	F = 2.415	T (93.83) = 2.252	0.22

Note: DTR: daily teacher resilience; CMTE: cognitive management of teacher emotion; TEC: teacher empathic concern; TSR: teacher–student relationship; ACC: adverse classroom climate.

* $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$

Small differences between public and private schools were observed in the variables analysed. Significant differences were only found in TSR (public mean = 5.68, private mean = 5.39; $p = 0.021$, $SE = 0.20$) and ACC (public mean = 2.62, private mean = 2.87; $p = 0.027$, $SE = 0.22$), with small effect sizes. For the other variables (DTR, CMTE, TEC), the differences were not statistically significant. School ownership generally had a limited impact on the scores obtained.

TABLE 5. Descriptive analysis of central tendency, dispersion, and shape of SVI

Group	n	mean	SD	median	min.	max.	range	skew	kurtosis
Q1	72	64.29	12.93	68	41	80	39	0.02	-1.69
Q2	114	88.72	2.49	90	81	90	9	-2.25	3.9
Q3	20	91.15	0.37	91	91	92	1	1.82	1.37
Q4	67	96.18	2.09	96	93	99	6	0.07	-1.4

With regards to SVI, the schools on average displayed 84.29 % ($SD = 14.13$) of vulnerability. In quartile Q1 (lower vulnerability), the mean was 64.29 ($SD = 12.93$), while in quartile Q4 (higher vulnerability), there was a mean of 96.18 ($SD = 2.09$). The intermediate quartiles displayed means of 88.72 ($SD = 2.49$) for Q2 and 91.15 ($SD = 0.37$) for Q3.

TABLE 6. Descriptive analysis by quartile

Variable	Q1 Mean (SD)	Q2 Mean (SD)	Q3 Mean (SD)	Q4 Mean (SD)
DTR	4.90 (1.44)	5.13 (1.24)	5.24 (1.77)	5.07 (1.50)
CMTE	4.96 (1.40)	5.20 (1.26)	5.15 (1.43)	5.22 (1.48)
TEC	6.12 (1.05)	6.18 (0.91)	6.32 (0.98)	6.17 (1.13)
TSR	5.39 (1.10)	5.39 (1.03)	5.84 (0.87)	5.67 (0.97)
ACC	2.87 (1.01)	2.79 (0.96)	2.46 (1.09)	2.78 (1.04)

Note: DTR: daily teacher resilience; CMTE: cognitive management of teacher emotion; TEC: teacher empathic concern; TSR: teacher–student relationship; ACC: adverse classroom climate.

The CMTE means varied between 4.96 (*SD* = 1.40) in Q1 and 5.22 (*SD* = 1.48) in Q4, while in TEC they were between 6.12 (*SD* = 1.05) in Q1 and 6.32 (*SD* = 0.98) in Q3. In TSR, the highest mean was observed in Q3 (5.84; *SD* = 0.87), and the lowest for ACC was also in Q3 (2.46; *SD* = 1.09). The highest DTR was recorded in Q3 (5.24; *SD* = 1.77) and the lowest in Q1 (4.90; *SD* = 1.44).

TABLE 7. Anova results by quartile

Variables	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Levene	ANOVA	SE
DTR	D = 0.138**	D = 0.118***	D = 0.203*	D = 0.137**	F = 1.098	F(3,42.69) = 0.604	n/a
CMTE	D = 0.123**	D = 0.079	D = 0.19	D = 0.134**	F = 0.38	F(3,48.32) = 0.637	n/a
TEC	D = 0.201***	D = 0.191***	D = 0.271***	D = 0.241***	F = 0.281	F(3,46.91) = 0.735	n/a
TSR	D = 0.206***	D = 0.121***	D = 0.15	D = 0.148***	F = 1.147	F(3,42.69) = 2.645	n/a
ACC	D = 0.131**	D = 0.128***	D = 0.116	D = 0.151***	F = 0.257	F(3,44.97) = 1.169	n/a

Note: DTR: daily teacher resilience; CMTE: cognitive management of teacher emotion; TEC: teacher empathic concern; TSR: teacher–student relationship; ACC: adverse classroom climate.

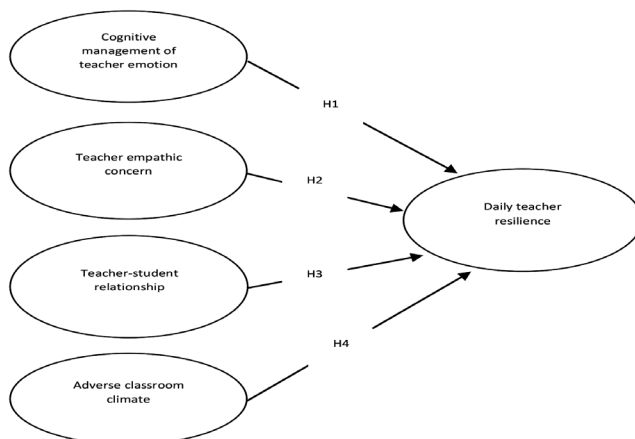
* *p* < .05; ** *p* < .01; *** *p* < .001

Regarding the results of the trimmed means ANOVA test, as Table 7 shows, significant differences between the quartiles of the SVI were not identified in any of the variables.

3.4. Results of hypothesis 4

For H4 – socioemotional competencies predict teacher resilience in primary education in the Biobío and Ñuble regions – two structural equation models were estimated. Model 1 considered direct effects and model 2 incorporated adverse classroom climate as a mediator. Both were calculated through maximum likelihood estimation and were evaluated with fit indices and parsimony criteria (AIC, BIC).

FIGURE 1. Direct effects model hypothesis (M1)



As Figure 1 shows, the direct effects model (M1) considered the following variables as predictors of daily teacher resilience: cognitive management of emotion, empathetic concern, teacher–student relationship, and adverse classroom climate. The model displayed a perfect fit with the data with optimal indicators: CFI = 1.000, TLI = 1.000, RMSEA = 0.000, and SRMR = 0.000. The parsimony criteria were AIC = 822.179 and BIC = 840.227.

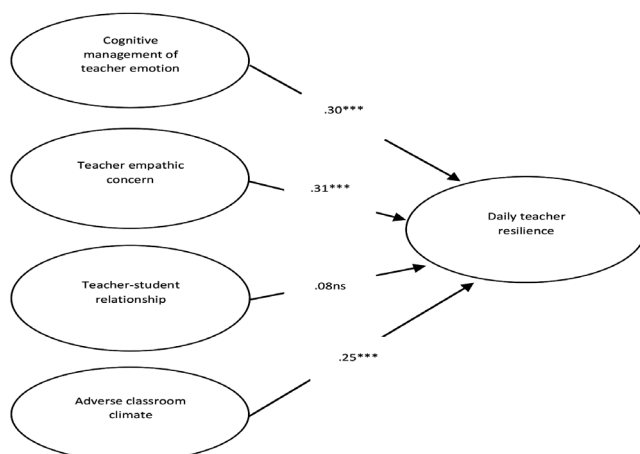
TABLE 8. Results of the direct effects model

Predictor	Estimate (B)	Standard error (SE)	z	p	Standardised estimate (β)
CMTE	0.306	0.063	4.842	< 0.001	0.299
TEC	0.424	0.092	4.600	< 0.001	0.305
TSR	-0.110	0.090	-1.224	0.221	-0.081
ACC	-0.347	0.079	-4.413	< 0.001	-0.249

Note: $R^2 = 0.414$ for daily teacher resilience (DTR). CMTE: cognitive management of teacher emotion; TEC: teacher empathic concern; TSR: teacher–student relationship; ACC: adverse classroom climate.

The path coefficient analysis indicated that cognitive management of emotion (CMTE; $\beta = 0.299$, $p < 0.001$), empathetic concern (TEC; $\beta = 0.305$, $p < 0.001$), and adverse classroom climate (ACC; $\beta = -0.249$, $p < 0.001$) were significant predictors of daily teacher resilience. In contrast, teacher–student relationship (TSR) did not have a significant effect ($\beta = -0.081$, $p = 0.221$). The model explained 41.4 % of the variance in resilience ($R^2 = 0.414$), confirming hypotheses H1, H2, and H4 (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2. Direct effects model estimators



The model's assumptions were verified by diagnosis of collinearity (VIF and tolerance) and residual analysis for linearity, homoscedasticity, and normality. The VIF values varied from 1.482 to 2.056, and the tolerance values from 0.486 to 0.675, indicating absence of multicollinearity and adequate independence between the predictor variables.

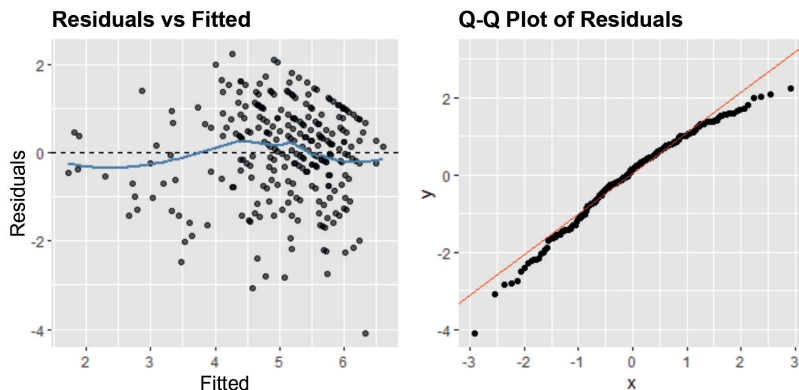
TABLE 9. Diagnosis of collinearity in model 1

Predictor	VIF	Tolerance
CMTE	1.777	0.563
TEC	2.056	0.486
TSR	2.055	0.487
ACC	1.482	0.675

Note: DTR: daily teacher resilience; CMTE: cognitive management of teacher emotion; TEC: teacher empathic concern; TSR: teacher–student relationship; ACC: adverse classroom climate.

To evaluate the assumptions of homoscedasticity and normality, two graphic diagnoses were done for the equivalent OLS model: (i) residuals versus fitted values using a LOESS curve to evaluate linearity and homoscedasticity; and (ii) a Q-Q plot of residuals to evaluate the approximate normality.

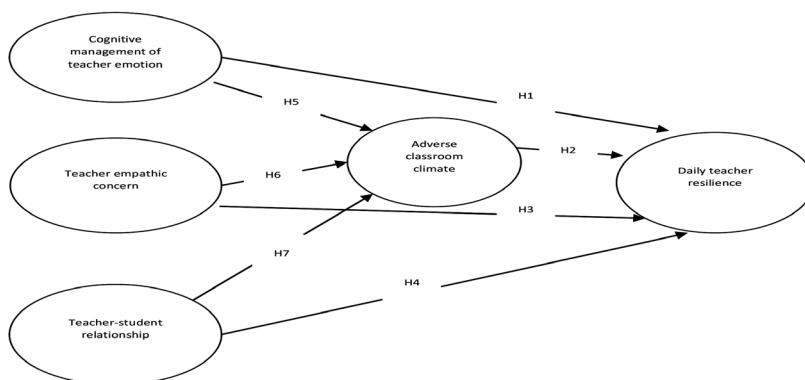
FIGURE 3. Residuals graphs and Q-Q plot



In the first of these, the LOESS curve remains close to zero and does not display systematic patterns, suggesting acceptable linearity and an approximately constant variance, albeit with slightly greater dispersion in the extremes. In the Q-Q plot, the points align well with the theoretical line in the central area and they show moderate deviations in the tails, compatible with somewhat heavier tails. Taken together, the results support the use of the linear model.

Next, a mediation model was calculated which included adverse classroom climate (ACC) as a mediator variable among the predictors (CMTE, TEC, and TSR) and daily teacher resilience (DTR).

FIGURE 4. Mediation model hypothesis (M2)



The mediation analysis was done using maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) and the bootstrap method with 5000 repetitions to estimate the direct and indirect effects. The model explained 41.7 % of the variance in DTR ($R^2 = 0.417$) and 32.5 % in ACC ($R^2 = 0.325$). Given that the model is saturated ($df = 0$), the global fit indices are perfect (CFI = 1.000; TLI = 1.000; RMSEA = 0.000; SRMR = 0.000) and do not discriminate between specifications.

TABLE 10. Results of the mediation model with bootstrap CI

Panel A. Direct effects							
H	Relationship	β std	Est	SE	z	p	95%CIboot
H1	DTR <- CMTE	0.300	0.308	0.066	4.688	< 0.001	[0.174, 0.433]
H2	DTR <- ACC	-0.249	-0.348	0.088	-3.953	< 0.001	[-0.526, -0.174]
H3	DTR <- TEC	0.307	0.427	0.099	4.317	< 0.001	[0.240, 0.615]
H4	DTR <- TSR	-0.081	-0.110	0.092	-1.199	0.231	[-0.283, 0.080]
H5	ACC <- CMTE	-0.060	-0.044	0.047	-0.934	0.351	[-0.136, 0.047]
H6	ACC <- TEC	-0.167	-0.167	0.078	-2.136	0.033	[-0.311, -0.004]
H7	ACC <- TSR	-0.409	-0.397	0.076	-5.240	< 0.001	[-0.552, -0.254]
Panel B. Indirect effects							
H	Effect	Est	SE	z	p	95%CIboot	
H8	Indirect (CMTE → ACC → DTR)	0.015	0.018	0.877	0.381	[-0.015, 0.053]	
H9	Indirect (TEC → ACC → DTR)	0.058	0.032	1.812	0.070	[0.002, 0.129]	
H10	Indirect (TSR → ACC → DTR)	0.138	0.044	3.120	0.002	[0.061, 0.236]	
Panel C. Total effects							
	Effect	Est	SE	z	p	95%CIboot	
	Total (CMTE → DTR)	0.323	0.069	4.682	< 0.001	[0.183, 0.457]	
	Total (TEC → DTR)	0.485	0.105	4.641	< 0.001	[0.282, 0.682]	
	Total (TSR → DTR)	0.028	0.092	0.306	0.759	[-0.143, 0.216]	

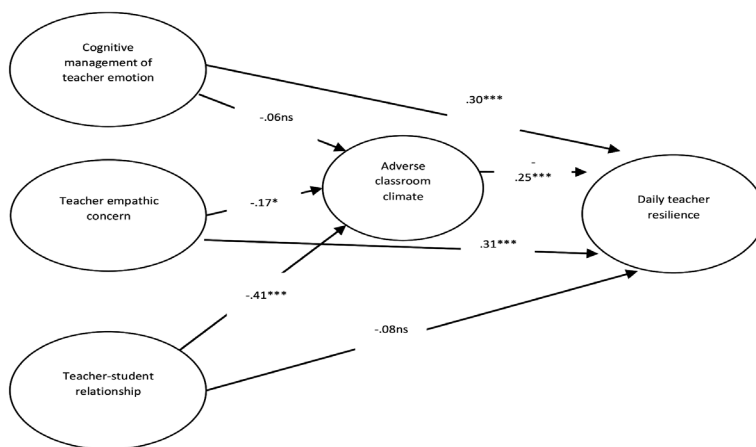
Note: DTR: daily teacher resilience; CMTE: cognitive management of teacher emotion; TEC: teacher empathic concern; TSR: teacher–student relationship; ACC: adverse classroom climate.

Regarding the direct effects on DTR, it was observed that CMTE (β std = 0.300, $p < .001$, 95%CIboot [0.174, 0.433]), TEC (β std = 0.307, $p < .001$, IC95%boot [0.240, 0.615]), and ACC (β std = -0.249, $p < .001$, 95%CIboot [-0.526, -0.174]) were significant. On the other hand, TSR did not display a significant effect (β std = -0.081, $p = .231$, 95%CIboot [-0.283, 0.080]). Next, regarding the effects on ACC, the variables TEC (β std = -0.167, $p = .033$, 95%CIboot [-0.311, -0.004]) and TSR (β std = -0.409, $p < .001$, 95%CIboot [-0.552, -0.254]) displayed significant effects. In contrast, CMTE did not display a significant effect (β std = -0.060, $p = .351$, 95%CIboot [-0.136, 0.047]).

Regarding indirect effects, ACC was only significant for TSR (est = 0.138, $p = .002$, 95%CIboot [0.061, 0.236]); on the other hand, TEC (est = 0.058, $p = .070$, 95%CIboot [0.002, 0.129]) and CMTE (est = 0.015, $p = .381$, 95%CIboot [-0.015, 0.053]) did not present a significant mediation.

Finally, in relation to the total effects on DTR, it could be seen that CMTE (est = 0.323, $p < .001$, 95%CIboot [0.183, 0.457]) and TEC (est = 0.485, $p < .001$, 95%CIboot [0.282, 0.682]) displayed significant total effects, unlike TSR (est = 0.028, $p = .759$, 95%CIboot [-0.143, 0.216]).

FIGURE 5. Mediated effects model estimators



To verify the stability and directionality of the results, two alternative minimum models were calculated and were compared with the original theoretical model (M2). As the saturated models display perfect fit, the analysis focussed on parsimony and stability of the coefficients. In the reversed path model (DTR → ACC), the fit was perfect (CFI = 1.000; RMSEA = 0.000; AIC = 3743.5; BIC = 3797.7), with a significant and negative relationship ($\beta_{std} = -0.269, p < .001$). Nonetheless, this model does not improve the parsimony or provide empirical evidence to favour the inverse directionality over the proposed theoretical model.

On the same line, the competitive partial mediation model that permitted residual covariance between ACC and DTR ($DTR \sim \sim ACC$) showed that the residual dependence was not significant and the information criteria were slightly worse than in M2 (AIC = 3745.5; BIC = 3803.3). The ACC → DTR path remained significant ($\beta_{std} \approx -0.249, p < .001$) and the mediations of TEC and TSR were maintained through ACC ($p = .033$ and $p < .001$, respectively), while CMTE did not display significant mediation.

The collinearity, homoscedasticity, and normality of the measurement model were evaluated. To do this, the two principal regressions of the model were reviewed. (model A. Collinearity: VIF and Tolerance) (Model A: $ACC \sim CMTE + TEC + TSR$), (model B: $DTR \sim ACC + CMTE + TEC + TSR$).

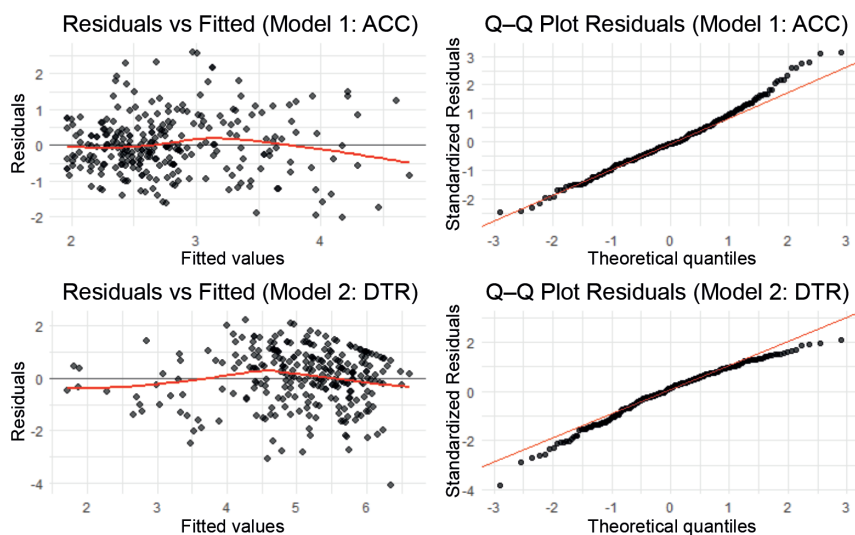
TABLE 11. Diagnosis of collinearity, mediation model

Model	Predictor	VIF	Tolerance
Model A	CMTE	1.772	0.564
	TEC	2.014	0.496
	TSR	1.808	0.553
Model B	ACC	1.482	0.675
	CMTE	1.777	0.563
	TEC	2.056	0.486
	TSR	2.055	0.487

Note: DTR: daily teacher resilience; CMTE: cognitive management of teacher emotion; TEC: teacher empathic concern; TSR: teacher–student relationship; ACC: adverse classroom climate.

The results showed that collinearity was low in both models. Model A ($ACC \sim CMTE + TEC + TSR$) showed VIF between 1.77 and 2.01 and tolerances between 0.49 and 0.56, while Model B ($DTR \sim ACC + CMTE + TEC + TSR$) displayed VIF between 1.48 and 2.06 and tolerances between 0.49 and 0.67, complying with the criteria ($VIF < 5$; tolerance > 0.20).

FIGURE 6. Residual graphs and Q–Q plot.



The graphs showing residuals compared with fitted values with smoothed LOESS indicated approximately linear relations and acceptable homoscedasticity, with slight heteroscedasticity in the extremes. The Q–Q plots displayed approximate normality of the residuals, with moderate deviations in the tails.

Taken together, these analyses indicate that the M2 findings are robust. No improvement in fit or parsimony is observed when modifying the directionality or when permitting additional residual dependency. However, given the transversal design, these results must be interpreted as consistent with the proposed theoretical framework without involving causal inferences.

The results highlight that CMTE and TEC are key factors for strengthening DTR. Moreover, ACC significantly mediates the relationships between TEC, TSR, and DTR, although the last of these does not have a significant direct effect.

4. Discussion

Teachers display moderate levels of socioemotional competencies and resilience, which are sufficient to face the demands of teaching, albeit with individual differences associated with experience and social support (Segovia-Quesada *et al.*, 2020). Teachers display medium levels of emotional management, but some of them report difficulties that could affect their performance. Empathetic concern is high on average, and is key for student well-being and academic performance (Rodríguez-Saltos *et al.*, 2020). The teacher–student relationship directly affects motivation and prevention of burnout, especially in vulnerable contexts (Silva *et al.*, 2020). An adverse classroom climate is perceived in a moderate and heterogeneous way; improving this requires training in emotional self-regulation and conflict resolution (Sáez-Delgado *et al.*, 2025).

The results suggest that teacher resilience is positively associated with cognitive management of emotion, empathy, and the teacher–student relationship, indicating that the most resilient teachers regulate their emotions better, are more empathetic, and strengthen bonds of trust (Villalobos *et al.*, 2022). In contrast, resilience correlates negatively with adverse classroom climate, displaying a protective role against stress. Emotional management and empathy are also related positively with each other and with the quality of the pedagogical relationship, contributing to healthier school environments (Geiger *et al.*, 2025; Brieba-Fuenzalida, 2025). Likewise, adverse environment presents negative correlations with all of the socioemotional competencies, confirming that these act as protective factors (Levi-Keren *et al.*, 2021).

The analysis of differences in socioemotional competencies and resilience by gender, type of school, and level of vulnerability, show slight variations (Concha-Herrera *et al.*, 2025). Men display slightly greater resilience, with no significant differences in emotional management, empathy, or classroom environment (López-Angulo *et al.*, 2022). In contrast, women stand out in the teacher–student relationship, a key factor in student motivation and self-esteem. No significant differences were observed between public and private schools, although greater teacher closeness and a less adverse environment were reported in the former (Villalobos *et al.*, 2022). There were no differences by level of vulnerability, although development of socioemotional competencies is associated with greater emotional management and greater student success (Gebre *et al.*, 2025).

In the direct effects model (M1), teacher socioemotional competencies (cognitive emotional management, empathetic concern, teacher–student relationship, and adverse classroom climate) were evaluated as predictors of daily teacher resilience. The results showed that cognitive emotional management, empathetic concern, and adverse classroom climate are significant factors (Li *et al.*, 2023). However, the teacher–student relationship did not have a significant direct effect, suggesting that other factors—such as environment and emotional management—are more determinative for teacher resilience (Segovia-Quesada *et al.*, 2020). In the mediation model (M2), adverse classroom climate was a mediator between empathetic concern and resilience and between the teacher–student relationship and resilience, confirming the importance of contextual factors (Mikalauskaite, 2024). These findings suggest that teacher resilience is strongly influenced by internal factors such as emotional management and external ones such as adverse classroom climate (Villalobos *et al.*, 2022).

While previous research has mainly considered this relationship as a result or a context (Roorda *et al.*, 2011), these findings position it as a relational and moderating factor that interacts with internal competencies and contextual conditions. Likewise, as significant differences by gender are apparent in this relationship, it is proposed that relational dynamics with gender bias could have an effect on the construction of teacher resilience (Villalobos *et al.*, 2022). Taken together, these results expand existing conceptual frameworks by linking internal, relational, and contextual dimensions of teacher well-being and resilience.

This study has some limitations that must be considered. The transversal design does not allow causality or temporality between the variables to be established, thus restricting interpretation to concurrent associations. The sample, which was mainly female and was obtained through voluntary participation, could involve selection and generalisation biases, as well as limited power in some subgroups. The absence of years of teaching experience as a variable reduces comprehension of the effect of the career path. The use of self-reports might introduce social desirability bias, and the lack of verification of factor invariance limits comparisons between groups. The analytic decisions, such as using robust tests without multiplicity correction, could affect the statistical significance. Similarly, SVI requires greater validation and sensitivity analysis. These limitations shape the findings and should guide future studies towards longitudinal or multilevel designs that enhance the evidence obtained.

5. Conclusions

Developing socioemotional competencies is essential to reduce feelings of adversity and promote healthy school environments. Teacher resilience is strengthened through appropriate emotional management, genuine empathetic concern, and a positive classroom environment, while the teacher–student relationship acts indirectly through this environment. There is a notable need for institutional strategies that boost socioemotional competencies and improve teaching conditions, especially in challenging contexts. Likewise, implementing intervention and continuous training programmes aimed at teacher well-being and emotional coping is suggested. These competencies must be explicitly integrated into initial teacher training curricula in line with teacher training standards, Chile’s Framework for Quality Teaching (Marco para la Buena Enseñanza), and its National Educational Coexistence Policy (Política Nacional de Convivencia Educativa 2024-2030).

Author contributions:

Dr. Pilar JARA-COATT. Conceptualisation, investigation, visualisation, writing – original draft.

Dr. Fabiola SÁEZ-DELGADO. Funding acquisition, project administration, resources, writing – review & editing.

Dr. Jaime CONSTENLA-NÚÑEZ. Formal analysis, supervision, validation, writing – review & editing.

Dr. Javier MELLA-NORAMBUENA. Data curation, formal analysis, methodology, software.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy:

The authors state that they did not use artificial intelligence (AI) in the preparation of this article.

Funding:

This research was part of the doctoral thesis entitled *Efecto de las socioemotional competencies sobre la resilience del profesorado de educación primaria: un modelo predictivo* (The effect of socioemotional competencies on the resilience of primary education teachers: a predictive model), by the researcher Pilar Jara-Coatt, which formed part of Proyecto Fondecyt Regular N.º 1241902, funded by Chile’s Agencia Nacional de Investigación y Desarrollo (National Research and Development Agency, ANID), whose lead investigator is Dr Fabiola Sáez-Delgado.

Acknowledgements:

“Research and Innovation Group in Socioemotional Learning, Well-being, and Mental Health to Foster Thriving (THRIVE4ALL)” at the Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción.

References

- Allen, R., Benhenda, A., Jerrim, J. y Sims, S. (2021). New evidence on teachers’ working hours in England. An empirical analysis of four datasets. *Research Papers in Education*, 36(6), 657-681. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2020.1736616>
- Bae, I., et al. Park, J. y Jeon, H. (2022). Non-probability sampling network for stochastic human trajectory prediction. In *Proceedings of the IEEE/CVF Conference on Computer Vision and Pattern Recognition*, 6477-6487. <https://doi.org/10.1109/CVPR52688.2022.00637>

- Baptista, P., Loeza, C., Almazán, A., López, V., y Cárdenas, J. L. (2020). Encuesta nacional a docentes ante el Covid-19. *Retos para la educación a distancia. RLEE Nueva Época, 1*, 41-88. <https://doi.org/10.48102/rlee.2020.50.ESPECIAL.96>
- Bellei, C., Contreras, M., Ponce, T., Yáñez, I., Díaz, R. y Vielma, C. (2021). The fragility of the school-in-pandemic in Chile. In F. M. Reimers (Ed.), *Primary and Secondary Education during Covid-19: Disruptions to educational opportunity during a pandemic*. Springer.
- Brieba-Fuenzalida, J. (2025). La relación docente-estudiante como una variable predictora del compromiso escolar: el rol mediador del bienestar subjetivo en un modelo de ecuaciones estructurales en estudiantes indígenas de entre 10 y 14. *Revista Española de Pedagogía, 83*(291), 471-489. <https://doi.org/10.22550/2174-0909.4509>
- Cheung, G., Cooper-Thomas, H., Lau, R. y Wang, L. (2024). Reporting reliability, convergent and discriminant validity with structural equation modeling: A review and best-practice recommendations. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management, 41*(2), 745-783. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10490-023-09871-y>
- Cleary, T., Kitsantas, A., Peters-Burton, E., Lui, A., McLeod, K., Slemp, J. y Zhang, X. (2022). Professional development in self-regulated learning: Shifts and variations in teacher outcomes and approaches to implementation. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 111*, 103619-103619. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103619>
- Concha-Herrera, V., Sáez-Delgado, F., Reynoso-González, O. U. y Mella-Norambuena, J. (2025). Bienestar psicológico y resiliencia en el profesorado de educación básica: correlación con la edad y diferencias según sexo y dependencia educacional en Chile. *CienciaUAT, 20*(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.29059/cienciauat.v20i1.1986>
- Dominion, E. y Mahamed, M. (2023). A Guide on Quantitative Research Paradigms, *Theory, and Frameworks in Social Sciences Research*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4417907>
- Fan, L., Ma, F., Liu, Y., Liu, T., Guo, L. y Wang, L. (2021). Risk factors and resilience strategies: Voices from Chinese novice foreign language teachers. *Frontiers in Education, 5*, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2020.565722>
- Gebre, Z., Demissie, M., Yimer, B. (2025). The impact of teacher socio-emotional competence on student engagement: a meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology, 16*, 1526371. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1526371>
- Geiger, E., Pruessner, L., Barnow, S. y Joormann, J. (2025). What empathizers do: Empathy and the selection of everyday interpersonal emotion regulation strategies. *Journal of affective disorders, 370*, 76-89. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2024.10.056>
- Jara-Coatt, P., Constenla-Núñez, J. y Sáez-Delgado, F. (2025). Modelos de competencia socioemocional docente para la innovación educativa. *Revista Espacios, 46*(3), 273-286. <https://doi.org/10.48082/espacios-a25v46n03p21>
- Jobst, L., Bader, M. y Moshagen, M. (2023). A tutorial on assessing statistical power and determining sample size for structural equation models. *Psychological Methods, 28*(1), 207-221. <https://doi.org/10.1037/met0000423>
- Levi-Keren, M., Godeano-Barr, S. y Levinas, S. (2021). Mind the conflict: Empathy when coping with conflicts in the education sphere. *Cogent Education, 9*, 2013395. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2021.2013395>
- Li, L., Huang, L. y Liu, X. (2023). Primary school teacher's emotion regulation: Impact on occupational well being, job Burnout, and resilience. *Psychology in the Schools, 60*(10), 4089-4101. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22982>
- López-Angulo, Y., Mella-Norambuena, J., Sáez-Delgado, F., Portillo, S. y Reynoso, O. (2022). Association between teachers' resilience and emotional intelligence during the COVID-19 outbreak. *Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología, 54*, 51-59. <https://doi.org/10.14349/rlp.2022.v54.6>
- Lozano-Peña, G., Sáez-Delgado, F. y López-Angulo, Y. (2022). Competencias socioemocionales en docentes de primaria y secundaria: una revisión sistemática. *Páginas de Educación, 15*(1), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.22235/pe.v15i1.2598>

- Mair, P. y Wilcox, R., (2020). Robust Statistical Methods in R Using the WRS2 Package. *Behavior Research Methods*, 52, 464-488.
- Martin A. y Marsh H. (2006). Resiliencia académica y sus correlatos psicológicos y educativos: un enfoque de validez de constructo. *Psychol. Sch.* 43, 267-281. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.20149>
- Mikalauskaite, R. (2024). Current Landscape of School Resilience Research: A Scoping Review. *Science & Processes of Education / Mokslas Ir Edukaciniai Procesai*, 1, 22-35.
- MINEDUC (2024). Plan de acción. Política nacional de convivencia educativa 2024-2030 <https://n9.cl/lq0gg>
- Moshagen, M. y Bader, M. (2024). semPower: General power analysis for structural equation models. *Behavior research methods*, 56(4), 2901-2922. <https://doi.org/10.3758/s13428-023-02254-7>
- Organización Mundial de la Salud (2021). *Salud mental del adolescente*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health>
- Pedditz, M., Nonnis, M. y Nicotra, E. (2021). Teacher Satisfaction in Relationships With Students and Parents and Burnout. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.703130>
- Rahman, M. (2023). Sample size determination for survey research and non-probability sampling techniques: A review and set of recommendations. *Journal of Entrepreneurship, Business and Economics*, 11(1), 42-62.
- Rodríguez-Saltos, E., Moya-Martínez, M. y Rodríguez-Gámez, M. (2020). Importancia de la empatía docente-estudiante como estrategia para el desarrollo académico. *Dominio de las Ciencias*, 6(2), 23-50. <https://doi.org/10.23857/dc.v6i3.1205>
- Roorda, D.L., Koomen, H. M. Y., Spilt, J.L. y Oort, F. J. (2011). The influence of affective teacher-student relationships on students' school engagement and achievement: A meta-analytic approach. *Review of Educational Research*, 81(4), 493-529. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654311421793>
- RStudio Team (2020). *RStudio: Integrated Development for R*. RStudio, PBC, Boston, MA URL <http://www.rstudio.com/>
- Rubio, F. y Olivo-Franco, J. (2020). Dificultades del profesorado en sus funciones docentes y posibles soluciones. Un estudio descriptivo actualizado. *Ciencia y Educación*, 4(2), 7-25. <https://doi.org/10.22206/cyed.2020.v4i2.pp7-25>
- Sáez-Delgado, F., Guidotti, D., Henríquez, P., Narváez, G., Romero, V., Jara, P., Mella-Norambuena, J. y Contreras, C. (2025). Agotamiento y regulación emocional: evidencia desde las regiones del Biobío y Ñuble. *Revista Espacios*, 46(4), 300-309. <https://doi.org/10.48082/espacios-a25v46n04p28>
- Sáez-Delgado F., Mella-Norambuena J. y López-Angulo Y. (2024) Psychometric properties of the SocioEmotional Skills Instrument for Teachers using network approach: English and Spanish version. *Frontiers Psychology*, 15, 1421164. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1421164>
- Sáez-Delgado, F., Mella-Norambuena, J., López-Angulo, Y., León-Ron, V. y Contreras-Saavedra, C. (2023). Teacher Self-regulation: Validation of Scales in Chile Applied with an Online Technological Tool. *Revista Costarricense de Psicología*, 42(1), 25-43. <https://doi.org/10.22544/rcps.v42i01.02>
- Savalei, V., Brace, J. y Fouladi, R. (2023). We need to change how we compute RMSEA for nested model comparisons in structural equation modeling. *Psychological Methods*, 29(3), 480-493. <https://doi.org/10.1037/met0000537>
- Segovia-Quesada, S., Fuster-Guillén, D. y Ocaña-Fernández, Y. (2020). Resiliencia del docente en situaciones de enseñanza y aprendizaje en escuelas rurales de Perú. *Revista Electrónica Educare*, 24(2), 411-436. <https://doi.org/10.15359/ree.24-2.20>
- Silva, R., Fernández, S., Mendoza, L. y Christie, O. (2020). Evaluación de la Formación Emocional Inicial Docente en Chile. *Revista de Estudios y Experiencias en Educación*, 19(39), 75-106.
- Soper, D. (2024). A-priori Sample Size Calculator for Structural Equation Models [Software]. <https://www.danielsoper.com/statcalc>

UNESCO (2024). Global report on teachers: addressing teacher shortages and transforming the profession. *Education 2030*. <https://n9.cl/vpzpx>

Villalobos, P., Barría-Herrera, P. y Pasmanik, D. (2022). Teacher-student relationships and teacher resilience in the context of a pandemic. *Psicoperspectivas*, 21(2), 131-143. <https://doi.org/10.5027/psicoperspectivas-vol21-issue2-fulltext-2567>

Author biographies

Pilar Jara-Coatt. Doctor of Education, Universidad Internacional Iberoamericana, Mexico. Master's in Educational Sciences, with a mention in Curricular Evaluation, teacher in general basic education, degree in Education from the Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción, Chile. Associate professor in the Department of Curriculum, Evaluation, and Educational Technologies, Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción. Her research interests are evaluation of learning, entrepreneurship and innovation in evaluation, and teacher socioemotional competencies. She is a member of the "Research and Innovation Group in Socioemotional Learning, Well-Being and Mental Health to Foster Thriving (THRIVE4ALL)" consolidated research group at the Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción, and is currently head of programme for the Master's in Educational Sciences at USCS.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9975-8713>

Fabiola Sáez-Delgado. Doctor of Psychology from the Universidad de Sevilla. She is a member of the Department of Foundations of Pedagogy in the Faculty of Education. She has been deputy director of the Education and Development Research Centre (Centro de Investigación en Educación y Desarrollo, CIEDE-UCSC) and is head of the Master's in Educational Sciences programme. She is currently the head of the Postgraduate School of the Faculty of Education at the Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción (UCSC). Academic category: associate research professor profile. She is the coordinator of the "Research and Innovation Group in Socioemotional Learning, Well-Being and Mental Health to Foster Thriving (THRIVE4ALL)" consolidated research group at the UCSC. Her research interests are immersive technologies in educational contexts; mental health variables in educational communities, and socioemotional competencies. She has led national and international projects with external funding. She has participated in conferences in Chile and internationally. She has obtained recognition in the Outstanding Female Academic in Fundamental Research category of the UCSC for four consecutive years (2022-2025) from the Vice-Rectorate for Research and Postgraduate Studies of the UCSC, Chile.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7993-5356>

Jaime Constenla-Núñez. Doctor of Education from Universidad de Concepción, Chile. Academic category: associate professor. He is a member of the Department of Curriculum, Evaluation and Technologies in Education in the Faculty of Education of the Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción. He has been head of postgraduate studies, head of the Department of Evaluation in the Teaching Directorate of the UCSC, dean of the Faculty of Education, and is currently director of the INNOVAPEDIA Centre and head of programme for the Master's in Pedagogy for Higher Education in the Faculty of Education at the UCSC. Research interests: evaluative concepts and evaluative consistency; evaluating learning; and innovation and entrepreneurship in education. He has been director and principal investigator of various R&D&i projects on innovation and entrepreneurship in primary and secondary education focussing on the area of Professional Technical Education, funded by the Biobío Regional Government, the Production Development Corporation, and the Ministry of Education. He has been a speaker at national and international academic events. He has taught on postgraduate programmes and has run advisory sessions at schools and universities.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3373-6888>

Javier Mella-Norambuena. Doctor of Education from the Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción (UCSC), Chile. Teacher and holder of a Licentiate degree in Education and a Master's in Health Psychology from the Universidad de Concepción, Chile. He is currently an academic in the Department of Sciences at the Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María, where he does teaching and research and is in the process of entering the academic scale. He specialises in research methodology and quantitative data analysis with R, an area where he has also collaborated with the Teaching Directorate of the Universidad de Concepción as an advanced data analyst. His research interests cover analyses of the teaching–learning process and the psychology of physical activity and health. He has participated as a co-investigator, methodologist, and data analyst in externally funded projects at a national level. He is a member of the “Research and Innovation Group in Socioemotional Learning, Well-Being and Mental Health to Foster Thriving (THRIVE4ALL)” consolidated research group at the UCSC.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4288-142X>



Self-efficacy, motivation, and use of digital resources in Secondary Education: A mediation analysis

Autoeficacia, motivación y uso de recursos digitales en educación secundaria: un análisis de mediación

Mercedes GONZÁLEZ-SANMAMED. Universidade da Coruña
(mercedes.gonzalez.sanmamed@udc.es).

Laura CORRAL FACHAL. Universidade da Coruña (laura.corral.fachal@udc.es).

María del Mar FERRADÁS CANEDO. Universidade da Coruña (mar.ferradasc@udc.es).

Carlos FREIRE RODRÍGUEZ. Universidade da Coruña (carlos.freire.rodriguez@udc.es).

Abstract

This article examines the role of digital resources in teaching activities, considering self-efficacy and motivation as potential predictors of their use by teachers in secondary education. Specifically, it analyses whether teaching motivation –both autonomous and controlled– is a mediating variable between teachers’ perceived self-efficacy and the level of integration of digital resources into their educational practice. A mediation analysis was conducted using the PROCESS macro, with the participation of 311 secondary school teachers. The results reveal that autonomous motivation partially mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and different types of digital resources (resources for accessing, searching for, and managing information; for creating and editing digital content; and for interaction and communication). Self-efficacy was found to be a direct positive predictor of autonomous motivation and an indirect predictor (through autonomous motivation) of digital resource use. Consequently, the study highlights the importance of implementing effective training and organisational measures that increase teachers’ perception of their professional competence and their intrinsic motivation, thereby fostering an environment that supports pedagogical innovation and continuous professional development through the use of digital technologies.

Keywords: self-efficacy; motivation; educational technology; professional development; educational innovation; secondary education.

Resumen

Este artículo analiza el papel de los recursos digitales en la actividad docente, considerando la autoeficacia y la motivación como potenciales predictores de su uso por parte

Date of receipt of the original: 20/09/2025

Date of approval: 30/10/2025

Please, cite this article as follows: González-Sanmamed, M., Corral Fachal, L., Ferradás Canedo, M. M. y Freire Rodríguez, C. (2026). Self-efficacy, motivation, and use of digital resources in Secondary Education: A mediation analysis [Autoeficacia, motivación y uso de recursos digitales en educación secundaria: un análisis de mediación]. *Revista Española de Pedagogía*, 84(293), 171-186. <https://doi.org/10.9781/rep.2026.870>

del profesorado de educación secundaria. En concreto, se analiza si la motivación docente, tanto autónoma como controlada, actúa como variable mediadora entre la autoeficacia percibida del profesorado y el nivel de integración de los recursos digitales en su práctica educativa. Para ello, se realizó un análisis de mediación mediante la macro PROCESS, con la participación de 311 docentes de educación secundaria. Los resultados revelan que la motivación autónoma media parcialmente la relación entre la autoeficacia y las distintas tipologías de recursos digitales (recursos de acceso, búsqueda y gestión de la información; creación y edición de contenidos digitales; e interacción y comunicación), de tal modo que la autoeficacia se confirma como un predictor positivo directo de la motivación autónoma, y un predictor indirecto (vía motivación autónoma) del uso de los recursos digitales. En consecuencia, el estudio subraya la importancia de implementar medidas formativas y organizativas eficaces que refuercen la percepción de la competencia profesional del profesorado y su motivación intrínseca, facilitando así un entorno que favorezca su capacidad de innovación pedagógica y su desarrollo profesional continuo a través del uso de tecnologías digitales.

Palabras clave: autoeficacia; motivación; tecnología educativa; desarrollo profesional; innovación educativa; educación secundaria.

1. Introduction

The scientific study of the role of digital resources in teaching practice has received considerable interest over recent decades, as these technologies have become established as a key element for improving student achievement and the efficacy of teaching and learning processes in secondary education (Álvarez-Flores, 2024; Cisneros-Barahona *et al.*, 2024; Riofrio Casa & Peñafiel Villareal, 2022; Wang *et al.*, 2024).

Education is no longer confined to a specific physical or temporal space, and it is recognised that people learn in different ways depending on their needs for accessing knowledge, while at the same time they create and strengthen new networks of communication and learning (Jacome Álvarez, 2021; López-Company, 2021). The appearance of information and communication technologies (ICT) has transformed the role of teachers, who have come to play a guiding role, positioning themselves alongside the students in a more horizontal plane with the aim of fostering meaningful learning and constructing more satisfactory practical experiences (Coll Salvador *et al.*, 2023; Gallego Díaz *et al.*, 2022; Nieto & Vergara, 2021; Otero-Agreda *et al.*, 2023). In this framework, it is possible to distinguish different types of technologies that together contribute to students' development of competences (González-Sanmamed *et al.*, 2020). On the one hand, technologies for accessing, searching for, and managing information enable students to select and critically evaluate various sources of knowledge. On the other hand, technologies for creating and editing content favour the active construction of digital content through the production of texts, images, videos, and presentations. Finally, interaction and communication technologies foster collaboration, teamwork, and the development of socioemotional skills. These three dimensions do not act in isolation, but instead mutually reinforce one another, favouring comprehensive, interactive, and contextualised education, in line with the demands of the current educational environment (Mayorga, 2020).

Nonetheless, despite the advantages of these technologies, integrating them into teaching practice still faces significant difficulties. Some studies have identified challenges such as loss of privacy, lack of training, and social isolation as the primary obstacles for teachers (Area Moreira, 2009; Gómez Trigueros & Yáñez de Aldecoa, 2023; Jordá Fabra *et*

al., 2023; Rodríguez Parrales *et al.*, 2021). In addition to this, there is internal resistance, such as negative attitudes or low confidence of teachers in their capacity to use technologies (Ardıç, 2021). This evidence underlines the importance of considering not only the technical resources available, but also the personal factors that influence teachers' openness towards pedagogical innovation mediated by technology.

In this context, it is necessary to identify the personal factors that would favour a greater willingness among teachers to incorporate technology into their teaching practice. Self-efficacy and motivation stand out among these factors. According to Bandura's cognitive theory (1977), self-efficacy is the conviction in one's own ability to plan and carry out the actions required to attain particular achievements. In the educational context, Marcos-Sánchez *et al.* (2023) interpret it as the teacher's capacity to promote the development of students within the classroom, which involves knowing how to recognise and benefit from the opportunities that the environment offers. Furthermore, teacher self-efficacy is associated with better professional performance (Aytaç, 2022). For its part, teacher motivation, understood as the process that stimulates and maintains the actions aimed at achieving objectives, is a key factor for quality and efficacy in teaching (Estévez *et al.*, 2021; Jean-Roch-Donald & Villanueva, 2025). According to organismic integration theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020), the more autonomous motivations (i.e., intrinsic motivation and identified regulation) favour professional satisfaction and well-being, while more controlled forms of motivation (i.e., external regulation and introjected regulation) can negatively affect engagement with work (Fernet *et al.*, 2012; In de Wal *et al.*, 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2020; Slemp *et al.*, 2020).

Various theoretical and empirical studies have explored the relationship between self-efficacy and motivation of secondary education teachers, finding a close interdependence (Canrinus *et al.*, 2012; Barni *et al.*, 2019). In particular, it has been observed that secondary education teachers with intrinsic and altruistic motivations tend to display higher levels of self-efficacy, while motivations of an extrinsic character (i.e., controlled motivations) display a much weaker relationship with it (Calkins & Wiens, 2024; Roa & Prados, 2020). This relationship has also been observed in other educational stages. For example, in the university setting it has been found that professionals with a more autonomous motivation tend to perceive themselves as more effective and, conversely, those with greater self-efficacy display higher levels of motivation (Rodríguez *et al.*, 2009).

Similarly, the self-efficacy of the teacher is highly related to the use of technological resources in secondary education. Teaching professionals with greater teacher efficacy consider themselves more competent to integrate technology in the classroom and tend to display a greater command of pedagogical-technological knowledge, while those who feel less secure or insufficiently qualified make much more limited use of these tools (Bakar *et al.*, 2020; Barton & Dexter, 2020; Grimalt Álvaro, 2015).

Finally, the motivation of secondary school teachers is also significantly related to the integration of digital educational tools. Teachers with intrinsic motivation and adequate training in technology display a high predisposition to use digital resources in the classroom (Gómez-Fernández & Mediavilla, 2022; Guzey & Roehrig, 2012). In this sense, autonomous motivation has been identified as a key factor in the integration of technologies in teaching (Chiu, 2022), while controlled motivation did not display a significant relationship with the use of digital resources (Gorozidis & Papiroannou, 2014). In turn, the technologies themselves can have a positive effect on teachers' motivation (Munguía Hoyo, 2013).

1.1. Objectives and hypotheses

The available evidence on self-efficacy identifies it as a possible personal resource with strong potential to favour both autonomous motivation and the use of digital resources by secondary education teachers. Furthermore, in view of the studies reviewed, the type of motivation appears to be related to the extent to which teachers engage with the use of

digital resources. Nonetheless, to the best of our knowledge, there is a lack of studies that jointly analyse the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy, motivation, and use of digital resources. This gap is especially significant in secondary education, given that at this stage there could be a greater need for digital literacy in teachers to meet current educational demands adequately (Sepúlveda *et al.*, 2022).

In this context, and based on prior research, the main aim of the present study is to analyse whether self-efficacy and motivation act as personal psychological resources that are significantly related to the use of digital resources by secondary education teachers. The following specific objectives are proposed: a) to examine the direct effect of self-efficacy on the use of different types of digital resources; b) to evaluate the direct effect of self-efficacy on teacher motivation; c) to explore the direct effect of motivation on the use of technological resources; d) to analyse the mediating role of autonomous motivation and controlled motivation on the relationship between self-efficacy and the use of digital resources. Based on prior research, the following hypotheses are formulated (see Figure 1):

H1: self-efficacy will display a direct positive effect on use of digital resources (accessing, searching for, and managing information; creating and editing content; and interaction and communication).

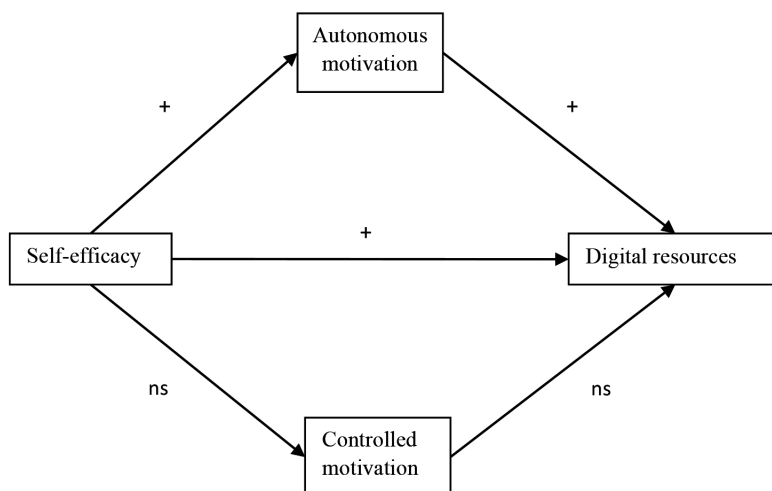
H2: self-efficacy will have a direct positive effect on autonomous motivation, while a significant relationship with controlled motivation is not expected.

H3: autonomous motivation will present a direct positive effect on the use of the three types of digital resources (accessing, searching for, and managing information; creating and editing content; and interaction and communication).

H4: controlled motivation will not have a significant effect on any of the different types of digital resources (accessing, searching for, and managing information; creating and editing content; and interaction and communication).

H5: autonomous motivation will partially mediate the relationship between self-efficacy and types of digital resources, while a mediating effect of controlled motivation is not expected.

FIGURE 1. Hypothesised Relationships between Self-Efficacy, Types of Motivation, and Use of Different Digital Resources (Accessing, Searching for, and Managing Information, Creating and Editing Content, and Interaction and Communication)



Note: ns = not significant.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The research was conducted in A Coruña, a region located in the north of Spain, and it included the collaboration of 31 secondary schools. To select the participants, an exhaustive list of schools in the city that provide compulsory secondary education (ESO), Baccalaureate, and Vocational Training was first elaborated, considering them as primary sampling units. This list was organised according to the geographic areas officially established by the council of A Coruña (Xunta de Galicia, 2022). The aim was to obtain a representative sample of schools by area through a process of quota sampling. Each school was allocated a computer-generated random number, determining the order of contact. In this way, the management teams were invited in sequence to communicate the proposal for participation to the teachers (secondary sampling units).

However, problems with ensuring involvement by schools from all of the geographical areas resulted in the final sample being configured through non-probability convenience sampling, comprising the schools and teachers who voluntarily agreed to participate. To test whether the number of cases was adequate for the planned statistical analysis, a prior power analysis was done using the program G*Power 3.1 (Cárdenas & Arancibia, 2014). This calculation was based on a one-factor ANOVA with four groups (digital profiles), considering a medium effect size ($f = 0.25$), a significance level of $\alpha = .05$, and a power of 95 %. The results indicated that at least 280 participants were required, a figure that the sample selected exceeded.

A total of 311 teachers participated in the study (57.88 % female), aged between 25 and 68 years ($M = 48.07$; $SD = 9.37$). As for the type of school, 67.5 % ($n = 210$) worked in public schools, 25.7 % ($n = 80$) in state-supported private schools, and 6.8 % ($n = 21$) in private schools that do not receive state support. Regarding the subjects they teach and the professional families to which they belong, 82.99 % ($n = 258$) taught subjects in the Obligatory Secondary Education or Baccalaureate stages, 16.05 % ($n = 50$) worked in Vocational Training, and 0.96% ($n = 3$) in Adult Education. The most common subject areas of the teachers in Obligatory Secondary Education and Baccalaureate were mathematics (13.18 %, $n = 41$), geography and history (9.32 %, $n = 29$), and physics and chemistry (7.72 %, $n = 24$).

2.2. Tools

To measure teachers' use of digital resources, the resources scale developed by González-Sanmamed *et al.* (2020) was used as a reference point. This instrument evaluates three principal dimensions: resources for accessing, searching for, and managing information (comprising 13 items, for example, "video tutorials"); resources for creating and editing content (8 items, such as "audio editing tools"); and resources for interaction and communication (6 items, such as "mobile messaging"). The responses were collected using a five-point Likert-type scale, where 1 indicated "never" and 5 "always". In the present study, the analyses of the questionnaire's internal consistency returned adequate values for all of its dimensions: $\alpha = .839$ and $\Omega = .832$ for access resources, $\alpha = .781$ and $\Omega = .788$ for creation resources, and $\alpha = .737$ and $\Omega = .740$ for interaction resources.

Teacher self-efficacy was measured using the teacher self-efficacy scale of Rodríguez *et al.* (2009) was used as a reference point. This is the version validated for the Spanish context of the *Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale* (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk, 2001). This scale comprises 23 items (for example, "help students to think critically"). A Likert-type response scale is used, ranging from 1 to 5 (1 = never and 5 = always). The analyses of internal consistency of the instrument evinced adequate levels of reliability: $\alpha = .933$ and $\Omega = .934$.

Finally, with the objective of evaluating teacher motivation, the Spanish version of the *Self-Regulation Questionnaire-Academic* scale was used (Ryan & Connell, 1989), validated by Rodríguez *et al.* (2009). This instrument evaluates two dimensions: autonomous motivation, which includes five items (e.g. "because it is an important objective in my life"); and controlled

motivation, which comprises five items (e.g. “because I am expected to do it”). The answers are graded on a Likert-type scale from 1 = disagree completely to 5 = agree completely. The internal consistency of the instrument was adequate in both dimensions: autonomous motivation ($\alpha = .747$; $\Omega = .744$); controlled motivation ($\alpha = .727$; $\Omega = .760$).

2.3. Procedure

Initial contact was made by emailing the different participating secondary schools. The schools’ management teams acted as intermediaries in the distribution of the questionnaire, asking the teachers to complete the form that was sent to their institutional emails. This email detailed the objectives of the research as well as the conditions of participation, drawing special attention to its voluntary, anonymous, and confidential character, in accordance with the ethical principles of research with human beings. In addition, a link to an online form created in Google Forms was provided and an informed consent sheet was attached, guaranteeing compliance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki and the ethical guidelines established by the ethics committee of the Universidad de A Coruña (code 27/02/2019).

Given the low response levels initially obtained, it was decided to make in-person visits to the schools to invite teachers personally to collaborate in the study. During these visits, QR codes that gave direct access to the questionnaire were provided. The confidentiality of the data and anonymity of the participants were guaranteed at all times. The estimated time for completion of the form was between five and ten minutes.

2.4. Data analysis

As preliminary analyses, the descriptive statistics of the variables were first calculated (mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis). Similarly, Pearson’s correlation coefficient analyses were performed to examine the associations between the variables. Prior to this, the assumption of normality of the data was tested by analysing the coefficients of skewness and kurtosis, the values of which were within the acceptable ranges to assume a normal distribution according to the criteria of Finney and DiStefano (2006). This testing justified the use of the Pearson correlation coefficient in the subsequent analyses.

Secondly, mediation analyses were carried out using the PROCESS macro in the SPSS statistics package. In accordance with the hypothesised measurement model (Figure 1), teacher self-efficacy was established as an independent variable, while the three types of digital resources (resources for accessing, searching for, and managing information; creating and editing content; and interaction and communication) were treated as dependent variables of the model. Autonomous motivation and controlled motivation were introduced as mediating variables of the effect of self-efficacy on the three types of digital resources.

3. Results

3.1. Preliminary analyses

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the variables and their correlations. In general terms, the means for the variables that comprise the types of digital resources display relatively similar values. The skewness and kurtosis values reflect distributions without significant presence of outliers, in accordance with the criteria of statistical normality proposed by Finney and DiStefano (2006).

In the case of the personal variables, self-efficacy ($M = 3.94$) and autonomous motivation ($M = 4.34$) displayed higher means, while controlled motivation ($M = 2.76$) presented a similar value to resources for interaction. The skewness and kurtosis values were within the acceptable ranges to assume normality, according to the criteria mentioned.

All of the types of resources correlated positively and significantly with the self-efficacy and autonomous motivation variables ($p < 0.01$, in all cases), while controlled motivation only correlated significantly (positively) with autonomous motivation, and did not display relevant associations with use of digital resources.

TABLE 1. Descriptive and Correlational Statistics of the Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1AccessR	-					
2CreationR	.756**	-				
3InteractionR	.661**	.673**	-			
4SelfE	.234**	.312**	.287**	-		
5AutoM	.194**	.343**	.282**	.352**	-	
6ControlM	.042	.069	.068	.060	.160**	-
<i>M</i>	2.62	2.98	2.75	3.94	4.34	2.76
<i>SD</i>	.680	.760	.791	.50	.557	.81
<i>Skewness</i>	.398	.123	.394	-.238	-1.70	-.089
<i>Kurtosis</i>	.246	-.049	.065	.926	5.88	-.559

Note: AccessR = access resources; CreationR = creation resources; InteractionR = interaction resources; SelfE = self-efficacy; AutoM = autonomous motivation; ControlM = controlled motivation. ** $p \leq .001$.

3.2. Mediation analysis

The mediation effect of motivation was analysed using the bootstrapping estimation method. Following the guidelines of MacKinnon *et al.* (2004), a bootstrap sample of 5000 cases and a 95 % confidence interval were used, as, in general terms, estimates of indirect effects do not usually follow a normal distribution. Table 2 shows the direct, indirect, and total effects of the mediation analysis on the relationship between self-efficacy and use of access resources.

As Table 2 shows, self-efficacy positively predicts use of digital resources for accessing, searching for, and managing information ($b = .319$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.170, .467]), with a moderate effect size ($d = 0.59$). When reviewing the indirect effects, the results indicated that autonomous motivation plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between self-efficacy and use of digital resources for accessing, searching for, and managing information ($b = .060$, 95% CI [.005, .120]), while controlled motivation did not play a significant mediating role ($b = .001$, 95% CI [-.016, .018]). In both cases, the effect size was small, with values of $d = 0.19$ and $d = 0.10$, respectively.

Likewise, self-efficacy showed a positive association with autonomous motivation ($b = .393$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.276, .510]), but not with controlled motivation ($b = .098$, $p = .290$, 95% CI [-.084, .281]). In this case, the size of the effect was large for autonomous motivation ($d = 0.88$) and small for controlled motivation ($d = 0.22$). In turn, autonomous motivation directly contributed to resources for accessing, searching for, and managing information ($b = .153$, $p = .035$, 95% CI [.011, .296]), while controlled motivation did not show a significant direct effect ($b = .009$, $p = .853$, 95% CI [-.083, .100]). In both cases, the effect size was small, with values of $d = 0.36$ and $d = 0.12$, respectively.

These findings indicate that autonomous motivation partially mediates the relationship between perceived self-efficacy and use of resources for accessing, searching for, and managing information, as the direct effect continues to be significant including when considering the indirect paths ($b = .258$, $p = .002$, 95% CI [.100, .415]). The effect size was medium ($d = 0.49$).

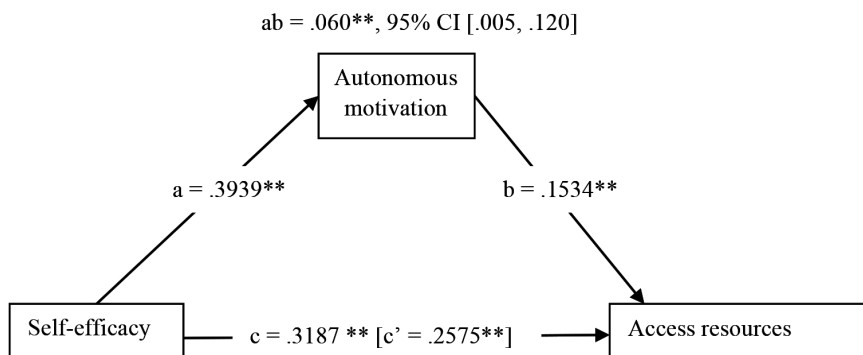
TABLE 2. Standardised Results of the Mediation Analysis

	Coef.	SE	t	p	d	LCI	UCI
Direct effect							
SelfE \square AccessR	.258	.080	3.21	.002	0.49	.100	.415
SelfE \square AutoM	.393	.060	6.60	.000	0.88	.276	.510
SelfE \square ControlM	.098	.093	1.06	.290	0.22	-.084	.281
AutoM \square AccessR	.153	.073	2.12	.035	0.36	.011	.296
ControlM \square AccessR	.009	.047	.186	.853	0.12	-.083	.100
Indirect effect							
SelfE \square AutoM \square AccessR	.060	.029	—	—	0.19	.005	.120
SelfE \square ControlM \square AccessR	.001	.007	—	—	0.10	-.016	.018
Total effect	.319	.075	4.23	.000	0.59	.170	.467

Note: SelfE = self-efficacy; AccessR = access resources; AutoM = autonomous motivation; ControlM = controlled motivation; IC = confidence interval (95 %); LCI = lower confidence interval; UCI = upper confidence interval.

Figure 2 displays the proposed mediation model graphically, including the coefficients of the direct and indirect paths estimated through mediation analysis.

FIGURE 2. Multiple mediation analysis estimated through bootstrap regression



Note. $^{**}p < .001$; c = total effect; c' = direct effect; ab = indirect effects; 95% CI = 95 % confidence intervals.

Regarding the use of resources for creating and editing content, as Table 3 shows, this variable also saw a significant direct effect of perceived self-efficacy ($b = .331$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[.164, .498]$), with a medium effect size ($d = 0.56$). As in the previous model, autonomous motivation was a significant mediator in the relationship between self-efficacy and resources for creating and editing content ($b = .141$, 95% CI $[.074, .221]$), while controlled motivation did not play a relevant role ($b = .001$, 95% CI $[-.013, .019]$). The effect size, in both cases, was small ($d = 0.29$ and $d = 0.10$, respectively).

Similarly, self-efficacy displayed a direct positive effect on autonomous motivation ($b = .393$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[.276, .510]$), but not on controlled motivation ($b = .098$, $p =$

.290, 95% CI [-.084, .281]). The effect size observed was large in the case of autonomous motivation ($d = 0.88$) and small for controlled motivation ($d = 0.22$). Furthermore, only autonomous motivation directly predicted the use of resources for creating and editing content ($b = .360, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [.208, .510]$), while controlled motivation did not display a significant relationship with this variable ($b = .013, p = .793, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.084, .110]$). The size of the effect was medium for autonomous motivation ($d = 0.66$) and small for controlled motivation ($d = 0.13$).

The total effect of self-efficacy on resources for creating and editing content was significant ($b = .473, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [.312, .635]$) with an effect size very close to the values indicating a large size ($d = 0.78$). These results confirm that autonomous motivation partially mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and use of digital resources for creating and editing content.

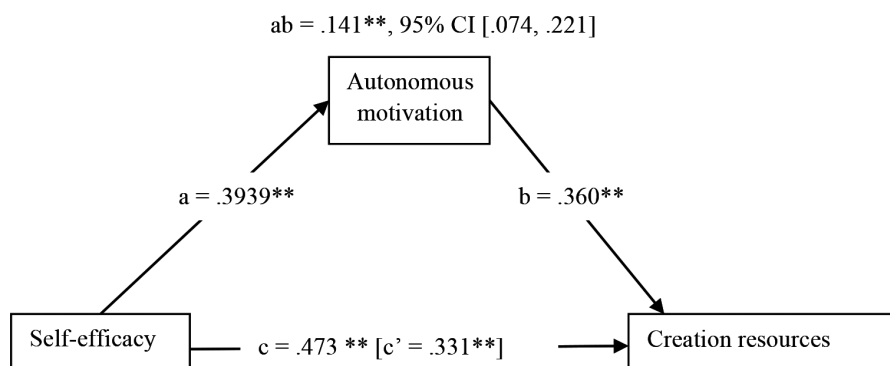
TABLE 3. Standardised Results of the Mediation Analysis

Variables	Coef.	SE	t	p	d	LCI	UCI
Direct effect							
SelfE \square CreationR	.331	.085	3.90	.000	0.56	.164	.498
SelfE \square AutoM	.393	.060	6.60	.000	0.88	.276	.510
SelfE \square ControlM	.098	.093	1.06	.290	0.22	-.084	.281
AutoM \square CreationR	.360	.077	4.68	.000	0.66	.208	.510
ControlM \square CreationR	.013	.049	.263	.793	0.13	-.084	.110
Indirect effect							
SelfE \square AutoM \square CreationR	.141	.038	—	—	0.29	.074	.221
SelfE \square ControlM \square CreationR	.001	.008	—	—	0.10	-.013	.019
Total effect	.473	.082	5.76	.000	0.78	.312	.635

Note: SelfE = self-efficacy; CreationR = creation resources; AutoM = autonomous motivation; ControlM = controlled motivation; CI = confidence interval (95 %).

Figure 3 shows the proposed mediation model, with the coefficients corresponding to the direct and indirect routes obtained through the mediation analysis.

FIGURE 3. Multiple mediation analysis estimated through bootstrap regression



Note. ** $p < .001$; c = total effect; c' = direct effect; ab = indirect effects; 95% CI = 95 % confidence intervals.

Finally, in relation to the use of digital resources for interaction and communication, Table 4 again shows a direct and positive effect of self-efficacy ($b = .340, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [.162, .519]$), with a medium size ($d = 0.55$). As for the indirect effects, autonomous motivation was found to have a significant positive mediating effect on this relationship ($b = .113, 95\% \text{ CI } [.049, .193]$), while controlled motivation did not display a relevant impact, as its effect did not achieve statistical significance ($b = .002, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.013, .023]$). In both cases, the effect size was small ($d = 0.244$ and $d = 0.10$, respectively).

Similarly, self-efficacy was positively associated with autonomous motivation ($b = .393, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [.276, .510]$), and did not have a significant relationship with controlled motivation ($b = .098, p = .290, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.084, .281]$). The effect observed was large for autonomous motivation ($d = 0.88$) and small in the case of controlled motivation ($d = 0.22$). In turn, only autonomous motivation predicted use of digital resources for interaction and communication ($b = .288, p = .006, 95\% \text{ CI } [.126, .449]$), while controlled motivation did not display a significant link ($b = .022, p = .681, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.082, .125]$). Specifically, the effect size was medium for autonomous motivation ($d = 0.52$) and small for controlled motivation ($d = 0.14$).

Finally, it was confirmed that the total effect of self-efficacy on resources for interaction and communication was also significant ($b = .456, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [.285, .626]$). The effect size was medium, with a value of $d = 0.72$. Taken together, these findings indicate that autonomous motivation acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between self-efficacy and the use of digital resources for interaction and communication.

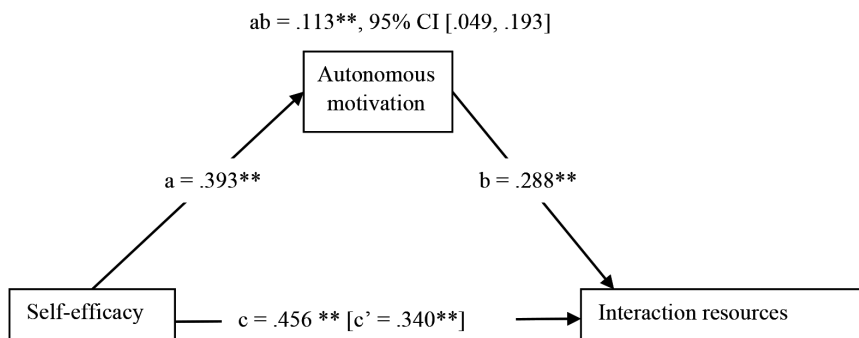
TABLE 4. Standardised Results of the Mediation Analysis

Variables	Coef.	SE	t	p	d	LLCI	ULCI
Direct effect							
SelfE \square InteractionR	.340	.091	3.75	.000	0.55	.162	.519
SelfE \square AutoM	.393	.060	6.60	.000	0.88	.276	.510
SelfE \square ControlM	.098	.093	1.06	.290	0.22	-.084	.281
AutoM \square InteractionR	.288	.082	3.50	.006	0.52	.126	.449
ControlM \square InteractionR	.022	.053	.411	.681	0.14	-.082	.125
Indirect effect							
SelfE \square AutoM \square InteractionR	.113	.036	—	—	0.24	.049	.193
SelfE \square ControlM \square InteractionR	.002	.008	—	—	0.10	-.013	.023
Total effect	.456	.087	5.27	.000	0.34	.285	.626

Note. SelfE = self-efficacy; InteractionR = interaction resources; AutoM = autonomous motivation; ControlM = controlled motivation; CI = confidence interval (95 %).

Figure 4 illustrates the proposed mediation model, including the estimated coefficients for the direct and indirect paths through mediation analysis.

FIGURE 4. Multiple mediation analysis estimated through bootstrap regression



Note. ** $p < .001$; c = total effect; c' = direct effect; ab = indirect effects; 95% CI = 95% confidence intervals.

Discussion and conclusions

The aim of the present research was to analyse the relationship between self-efficacy, types of motivation, and the use of digital resources in secondary education teachers. Specifically, it explored the potential mediating role of autonomous motivation and controlled motivation on the relationship between self-efficacy and the use of digital resources.

In line with the first hypothesis, the results obtained indicate that self-efficacy exercises a direct positive effect on use of digital resources for accessing, searching for, and managing information, creating and editing content, and interaction and communication. In other words, the greater teachers' perceived personal competence, the greater the frequency and diversity with which they use digital resources in their educational practice. These findings agree with the research of Bakar *et al.* (2020), Barton and Dexter (2020), and Grimalt Álvaro (2015), who highlight the positive and significant impact of self-efficacy on the use of the different types of digital resources.

The results also confirm the second hypothesis, according to which self-efficacy was expected to have a positive effect on autonomous motivation, while no significant relationship was established with controlled motivation. These findings are in line with prior evidence regarding the relationship between self-efficacy and different types of motivation (Calkins & Wiens, 2024; Roa & Prados, 2020, Rodríguez *et al.*, 2009). It seems, then, that while self-efficacy is related to teachers' perception of autonomy and inner satisfaction, it is not necessarily linked to being involved in teaching for extrinsic reasons.

The third hypothesis of the present study was that autonomous motivation would have a direct positive effect on use of the different types of digital resources. The results obtained ratified this expectation, with teachers who are involved in their profession for personal interest (e.g. Improving as teachers) tending to integrate the different types of technological resources more frequently. In line with the findings of other studies (Chiu, 2022; Gómez-Fernández & Mediavilla, 2022; Guzey & Roehrig, 2012; Munguía Hoyo, 2013), the key role of autonomous motivation in use of digital resources appears to be confirmed, consolidating itself as a determining factor in the teaching–learning process.

The fourth hypothesis was also confirmed, as no significant effect on types of digital resources was found for controlled motivation, in line with the research by Gorozidis and Papioannou (2014). This result suggests that use of these resources driven by external pressure, institutional rules, or other people's expectations does not necessarily result in less integration of them in teaching practice. Therefore, the idea that motivation driven by intrinsic factors is more determinative than controlled motivation in this context is reinforced.

Finally, the fifth hypothesis was confirmed, as a mediation effect of autonomous motivation in the relationship between self-efficacy and the use of the different classes of digital resources was found. To the best of our knowledge, this finding is unprecedented among secondary education teachers. Specifically, it was observed that teachers with greater self-efficacy tend to develop more solid autonomous motivation and, in turn, more frequently integrate technologies for searching for, managing, and accessing information, creating and editing content, and social interaction and communication.

From a theoretical position, the results obtained appear to support the argument that teacher self-efficacy is related to teachers experiencing autonomous motivation, and both factors (self-efficacy and autonomous motivation) are personal elements linked to high use of technological resources in the classroom. This suggests that the teachers who perceive themselves more competent at doing their job tend to experience greater autonomous motivation and so more often integrate digital tools for creation, interaction, and access into their teaching practice. Nonetheless, self-efficacy did not display a significant relationship with controlled motivation, which also did not display a significant relationship with the use of these resources. Therefore, when external factors motivate teachers to use technology, this does not necessarily result in more or less frequent use of digital resources, nor is it associated with a greater or lesser perception of efficacy. Similarly, it has been observed that self-efficacy is directly related to use of technological resources, suggesting that this construct is a factor that directly and indirectly – mediated by autonomous motivation – has an effect on the integration of digital technologies. In other words, teachers who perceive themselves as more capable in the performance of their professional role not only strengthen their intrinsic motivation, but more actively use a variety of digital tools.

From a practical standpoint, if the aim is to promote use of technological resources in the field of education, the results suggest that fostering teacher self-efficacy would be an effective means as it has a positive effect on autonomous motivation and, ultimately, on the use of these technologies. Consequently, it is necessary to implement training and organisational measures that improve teachers' perception of their professional competence (e.g. designing training experiences that integrate digital resources across the curriculum and permit teachers to choose and personalise their learning), thus creating an environment that favours both their personal development and their pedagogical innovation (Grant *et al.*, 2024; Palacios-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2025).

Although the results of this research offer relevant contributions from the theoretical and practical perspectives, it is important to recognise some limitations that make it advisable to interpret the findings cautiously. One of the main limitations is the sample size and the procedure used to select the participants. Accordingly, it would be recommendable for future studies to attempt to replicate these results using larger and more representative samples of teachers. It would also be advisable to expand the scope of the research into other stages of the education system. Another aspect to consider is the cross-sectional nature of this study's design, which makes it difficult to establish causal relations between the variables involved. Therefore, longitudinal research studies should be carried out that allow for examination of the evolution of self-efficacy and teacher motivation over time and their possible impact on the degree of involvement with technological resources. Finally, the use of self-report instruments could introduce measurement biases. Consequently, the inclusion of qualitative methodological focuses – such as in-depth interviews or direct observations – could offer a richer vision of the role of motivational factors in teachers' participation in continuous training processes.

Author contributions

Mercedes González-Sanmamed. Conceptualisation, supervision, writing – review & editing.

Laura Corral Fachal. Investigation; writing – original draft; validation.

María del Mar Ferradás Canedo. Writing – review & editing; software.

Carlos Freire Rodríguez. Writing – review & editing; supervision; software.

AI use statement

The authors state that they did not use artificial intelligence (AI) to prepare their articles.

Funding

This work was not funded by any public or private institution. The results form part of the doctoral thesis of one of the authors of the study.

4. References

- Álvarez-Flores, E. A. (2024). Integración de las TIC en la enseñanza y aprendizaje en estudiantes del nivel Secundario en una provincia de la República Dominicana. *RiITE Revista interuniversitaria de investigación en Tecnología Educativa*, 17, 101-115. <https://doi.org/10.6018/riite.621161>
- Ardıç, M. A. (2021). Three Internal Barriers to Technology Integration in Education: Opinion, Attitude and Self-Confidence. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 9(1), 81-96. <https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v9iS1-May.4004>
- Area Moreira, M. (2009). *Introducción a la tecnología educativa*. Universidad de La Laguna.
- Aytaç, A. (2022). A Study of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, motivation to teach, and curriculum fidelity: A path analysis model. *International Journal of Contemporary Educational Research*, 8(4), 130-143. <https://doi.org/10.33200/ijcer.898186>
- Bakar, N. S. A., Maat, S. M. y Rosli, R. (2020). Mathematics Teacher's Self-Efficacy of Technology Integration and Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge. *Journal on Mathematics Education*, 11(2), 259-276. <http://doi.org/10.22342/jme.11.2.10818.259-276>
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavior change. *Psychological Review*, 84, 191-215. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.84.2.191>
- Barni, D., Danioni, F. y Benevene, P. (2019). Autoeficacia docente: el papel de los valores y motivaciones personales para la enseñanza. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01645>
- Barton, E. A. y Dexter, S. (2020). Fuentes de autoeficacia docente para la integración de la tecnología desde el aprendizaje profesional formal, informal e independiente. *Education Tech Research Dev*, 68, 89-108. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-019-09671-6>
- Calkins, L. y Wiens, P. (2024). Motivación y autoeficacia docente: ¿Cómo se relacionan las motivaciones específicas para ingresar a la docencia con la autoeficacia docente? *Revista de Educación*, 204(2); 427-438. https://eric.ed.gov/?q=MOTIVATION&ffl=dtYSince_2006&id=EJ1416064#:~:text=This%20study%20explores%20the%20motivations,motivations%20had%20limited%20relationships%20to
- Canrinus, E. T., Helms-Lorez, M., Beijaard, D., Buitink, J. y Hofman, A. (2012). Autoeficacia, satisfacción laboral, motivación y compromiso: exploración de las relaciones entre los indicadores de la identidad profesional docente. *Revista Europea de Psicología de la Educación*, 27(1), 115-132. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ957484#:~:text=This%20study%20investigates%20how%20relevant,and%20senior%20teachers%20in%20a>
- Cárdenas, M. y Arancibia, H. (2014). Potencia estadística y cálculo del tamaño del efecto en G* Power. *Salud & Sociedad: Latin American Journal on Health & Social Psychology*, 5(2), 210-224. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=4945415>
- Chiu, T. K. F. (2022). School learning support for teacher technology integration from a self-determination theory perspective. *Educational Technology Research and Development: ETR & D*, 70(3), 931-949. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-022-10096-x>
- Cisneros-Barahona, A. S., Marqués-Molíás, L., Samaniego-Erazo, G. y Mejía-Granizo, C. (2024). Assessing Teacher Digital Competence. An analysis integrating descriptive,

- inferential, and multivariate perspectives. [Evaluación de la Competencia Digital Docente. Un análisis que integra las perspectivas descriptiva, inferencial y multivariada]. *RIED-Revista Iberoamericana de Educación a Distancia*, 27(2), 185-221. <https://doi.org/10.5944/ried.27.2.39122>
- Coll Salvador, C., Díaz Barriga Arcedo, F., Engel Rocamora, A. y Salina Ibáñez, J. (2023). Evidencias de aprendizaje en prácticas educativas mediadas por tecnologías digitales. *RIED-Revista Iberoamericana de Educación a Distancia*, 26(2), 9-25. <https://doi.org/10.5944/ried.26.2.37293>
- Estévez, J., Souto-Seijo, A. y Romero, P. (2021). Ecologías de aprendizaje y desarrollo profesional docente. Oportunidades y retos en un contexto formativo cambiante. *Publicaciones*, 51(3), 71-89. <https://revistaseug.ugr.es/index.php/publicaciones/article/view/19541>
- Fernet, C., Guay, F., Senécal, C. y Austin, S. (2012). Predicting intraindividual changes in teacher burnout: The role of perceived school environment and motivational factors. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 28(4), 514-525. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2011.11.013>
- Finney, S. J. y DiStefano, C. (2006). Non-normal and categorical data in structural equation modeling. En G. R. Hancock & R. O. Mueller (Eds.), *Structural equation modeling. A second course* (pp. 269-314). Information Age Publishing.
- Gallego Díaz, J. M., Fernández Ramos, M. D. y Mediana Castillo, A. L. (2022). Alfabetización digital en el aula: TIC, TAC, TEP, TRIC. En *Conference proceedings. CIVINEDU 2022 6th International Virtual Conference on Educational Research and Innovation* (pp. 546-551). Adaya Press. <https://civinedu.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/CIVINEDU2022.pdf>
- Gómez-Fernández, N. y Mediavilla, M. (2022). Factores que influyen en el uso de las TIC por parte del profesorado en clase: Evidencia de un modelo logístico multinivel. *Matemáticas*, 10(5), 799. <https://doi.org/10.3390/math10050799>
- Gómez Trigueros, I. M. y Yáñez de Aldecoa, C. (2023). La brecha digital en el contexto educativo: formación y aprendizaje de la ciudadanía digital. *Research in Education and Learning Innovation Archives*, 30, 39-45. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=8748990>
- González-Sanmamed, M., Estévez, I., Souto-Seijo, A. y Muñoz-Carril, P. (2020). Ecologías digitales de aprendizaje y desarrollo profesional del docente universitario. *Comunicar*, 62, 9-18. <https://www.revistacomunicar.com/index.php?contenido=detalles&numero=62&articulo=62-2020-01>
- Grant, S., Qi, G. Y., Lan, Y. J. y Cheng, P. Y. (2024). Fostering academic citizenship through ubiquitous technologies in an online academic conference. *Educational Technology & Society*, 27(1), 18-34. [https://doi.org/10.30191/ETS.202401_27\(1\).RP02](https://doi.org/10.30191/ETS.202401_27(1).RP02)
- Grimalt Álvaro, C. (2015). *La tecnología a les classes de ciències de secundària: anàlisi dels processos de canvi en el professorat*. [Tesis Doctoral, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona]. UAB.
- Guzey, S. S. y Roehrig, G. H. (2012). Integración de la tecnología educativa de ciencias en secundaria. *Revista CITE*, 12(2), 162-184. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ982229#:~:text=contributed%20to%20their%20uses%20of,and%20content%20knowledge%3B%20beliefs%3B%20identity>
- In de Wal, J. J., den Brok, P. J., Hooijer, J. G., Martens, R. L. y Van den Beemt, A. (2014). Teachers' engagement in professional learning: Exploring motivational profiles. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 36, 27-36. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2014.08.001>
- Jacome Álvarez, O. (2021). Las Tecnologías Emergentes en la Sociedad del Aprendizaje. *Revista Científica Hallazgos* 21, 6(1), 101-110. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=8276846>
- Jean-Roch-Donald, A. y Villanueva, J. D. (2025). Motivación del profesorado de secundaria y calidad de la enseñanza de ELE en Costa de Marfil: un estudio correlacional. *Porta Linguarum*, 43, 47-58. <https://doi.org/10.30827/portalin.vi43.30361>

- Jordá Fabra, T., Mas García, V. y Agustí López, A. I. (2023). La importancia de la creación de recursos digitales de calidad destinados a docentes. Una propuesta para su evaluación y mejora. *Praxis educativa*, 27(1), 1-18. <https://cerac.unlpam.edu.ar/index.php/praxis/article/view/7022>
- López-Company, J. V. (2021). Las TIC TAC TEP en tiempo de crisis. *INFAD Revista de Psicología*, 1(1), 349-355. <https://doi.org/10.17060/ijodaep.2021.n1.v1.2073>
- Marcos-Sánchez, R., Manzanal, A. J. y Gallego, C. (2023). Las competencias socioemocionales y la gestión del aula del profesorado de Educación Secundaria, Bachillerato y Formación Profesional. *Profesorado*, 27(2), 287-307. <https://revistaseug.ugr.es/index.php/profesorado/article/view/287-307>
- Mayorga, M. (2020). Conocimiento, Aplicación e Integración de las TIC – TAC y TEP por los Docentes Universitarios de la Ciudad de Ambato. *Revista Tecnológica-Educativa Docentes 2.0*, 9(1), 5-11. <https://doi.org/10.37843/rted.v9i1.101>
- MacKinnon, D. P., Lockwood, C. M. y Williams, J. (2004). Límites de confianza para el efecto indirecto: Distribución del producto y métodos de remuestreo. *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 39(1), 99-128. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327906mbr3901_4
- Munguía Hoyo, F. (2013). *Estudio de la influencia de las TIC en la motivación del profesorado de secundaria en la Comunidad Autónoma de Cantabria*. [Trabajo Fin de Máster, Universidad Internacional de la Rioja]. UNIR.
- Nieto, M. y Vergara, D. (2021, 16 de noviembre). *La desconocida evolución de las TIC: TAC, TEP y TRIC*. [The unknown evolution of ICT: TAC, TEP and TRIC]. Magisterio. <https://acortar.link/IWXNTY>
- Otero-Agreda, O., Esteves-Fajardo, Z., Suarez-Merchán, D. y Montalván-Campoverde, M. (2023). Estrategias TIC, TAC, TRIC y TEP para la innovación tecno-pedagógica en docentes universitarios. *CIENCIAMATRIA*, 9(16), 90-101. <https://doi.org/10.35381/cm.v9i16.1027>
- Palacios-Rodríguez, A., Llorente-Cejudo, C., Lucas, M. y Bem-haja, P. (2025). Macroevaluación de la competencia digital docente. Estudio DigCompEdu en España y Portugal. *RIED-Revista Iberoamericana de Educación a Distancia*, 28(1), 177-196. <https://doi.org/10.5944/ried.28.1.41379>
- Roa, J. M. y Fernández, C. (2020). La motivación de los docentes en la enseñanza secundaria. *Revista Reflexión e Investigación Educativa*, 2(2), 66-77. <https://doi.org/10.22320/reined.v2i2.4122>
- Rodríguez, S., Núñez, J. C., Valle, A., Blas, R. y Rosario, P. (2009). Auto-eficacia Docente, Motivación del Profesor y Estrategias de Enseñanza. *Escritos de Psicología*, 3(1), 1-7. https://scielo.isciii.es/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1989-38092009000300001
- Rodríguez- Parrales, D. H., Orellana-Rosado, J. M., Moreno-Lozano, D. y Pincay-Reyes, K. D. (2021). Ventajas y desventajas de las herramientas tecnológicas en las actividades académicas. *Dominio de las ciencias*, 7(5), 182-195. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=8383838>
- Ryan, R. M. y Connell, J. P. (1989). Perceived locus of causality and internalization: examining reasons for acting in 2 domains. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57(5), 749-761. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.57.5.749>
- Ryan, R. M. y Deci, E. L. (2020). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation from a self-determination theory perspective: Definitions, theory, practices, and future directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 61, 101860. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2020.101860>
- Riofrío Casa, D. M. y Peñafiel Villarreal, R. E. (2022). Impacto de la tecnología en el rendimiento académico de los estudiantes. *Revista Multidisciplinar de Estudios Generales*, 1(2), 9-16. <https://doi.org/10.70577/reg.v1i2.17>
- Sepúlveda, J. J., Cortés, W. y Jaramillo, F. R. (2022). Medición y evaluación de la alfabetización digital: una revisión de literatura y análisis bibliométrico. *Publicaciones E Investigación*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.22490/25394088.5444>


- Slemp, G. R., Field, J. G. y Cho, A. S. H. (2020). A meta-analysis of autonomous and controlled forms of teacher motivation. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 121, 103459. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2020.103459>
- Tschannen-Moran, M. y Woolfolk, A. (2001). Teacher efficacy: capturing an elusive construct. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17, 783-805. https://mxtsch.people.wm.edu/Scholarship/TATE_TSECapturingAnElusiveConstruct.pdf
- Wang, C., Chen, X., Yu, T., Liu, Y. y Jing, Y. (2024). Reforma educativa y cambio impulsado por la tecnología digital: un estudio bibliométrico desde una perspectiva global *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11, 256. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-02717-y>
- Xunta de Galicia. (2022). *Resolución de delimitación de áreas de influencia do concello de A Coruña*. Xefatura Territorial da Coruña. <https://www.coruna.gal/descarga/1453869781961/A-CORUNA-2022-Resolucion-A.I.-A-Coruna.pdf>

Author biographies

Mercedes González-Sanmamed. Full Professor of Didactics and School Organisation with 6 six-year periods (five research and one transfer). Doctorate in Educational Sciences with Special Degree and Doctorate Prize. She has participated in 41 research projects, coordinating 18 of them. She is the author of more than 200 publications. She has supervised 23 doctoral theses. Her research interests centre on teacher training, the integration of ICT, and innovation in teaching.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3410-6810>

Laura Corral Fachal. Doctorate *cum laude* with International Mention, awarded the Special Bachelor's and Master's Prize, as well as the Galician Prize for Academic Excellence in the Bachelor's Degree and Baccalaureate. From October 2017 to May 2018, she was an intern in the Department of Specific Didactics and Education Research Methods. From September 2019 to July 2020, she was student representative on the committee of the Social and Legal Sciences Branch of the Agency for the Quality of the University System of Galicia (ACSUG). Since September 2022 she has been a career public servant in the Early Childhood Education specialism, teaching in public schools in A Coruña.

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-6620-6810>

María del Mar Ferradás Canedo. Associate Professor with two six-year research periods. She has a Doctorate from the Universidad de A Coruña with a Special Degree Prize. She has participated in 10 research projects (six at the autonomous-region level and four national ones). She is the author of 50 scientific articles (29 of them indexed in JCR) and more than 40 books and book chapters (the majority of them indexed in the SPI ranking). Her main research interests focus on study of teachers' and students' psychological well-being and stress, as well as on academic motivation.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9716-8306>

Carlos Freire Rodríguez. Associate Professor with two six-year research periods. He has a doctorate from the Universidad de A Coruña with the Special Diploma, Degree and Doctorate Prize. She has participated in 10 research projects (six at the autonomous-region level and four national ones). He is the author of 55 scientific articles (30 of them indexed in JCR) and more than 40 books and book chapters (the majority of them indexed in the SPI ranking). His main research interests focus on study of teachers' and students' psychological well-being and stress, as well as on academic motivation.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6252-4016>

The Pedagogy of Death and the pandemic. Leading educationalist' views

Pedagogía de la Muerte y pandemia. Reflexiones de científicos de referencia en Ciencias de la Educación

Pablo RODRÍGUEZ HERRERO. Senior lecturer in the Department of Pedagogy at the Autonomous University of Madrid (pablo.rodriguez@uam.es).

Agustín DE LA HERRÁN GASCÓN. Senior lecturer in the Department of Pedagogy at the Autonomous University of Madrid (agustin.delaherran@uam.es).

Victoria DE MIGUEL YUBERO. Lecturer at the CES Don Bosco (vdemiguel@cesdonbosco.com).

Bianca FIORELLA SERRANO MANZANO. Senior lecturer in the Department of Family, School and Society at the International University of La Rioja (bianca.serrano@unir.net).

Abstract

The recent COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a worldwide increase in fatalities and the overall visibility of death. Some academic disciplines have redefined their principles and paradigms in the wake of this crisis. This study enquires into whether pedagogy has made any changes in the area of education on death as a result of the pandemic experience. Thirteen leading Spanish academics from the education field, chosen according to their number of citations in *Web of Science*, were interviewed. A qualitative phenomenographic design was adopted, using scripted semi-structured interviews centred on participants' views. The main conclusions were: (1) the pandemic had caused participants to make reflections that might lead to an enhanced awareness of the educational value of death and finitude; (2) their relationships with their students had become closer, gaining in understanding and empathy, and thus fostering more compassionate educational spaces; (3) participants had made no significant changes in their teaching or research in relation to death; and (4) they highlighted the importance for education of treating death as a normal topic and including it in school curricula. These findings indicate the need to provide opportunities to analyse the impact of the pandemic on pedagogy in the area of radical issues such as death, and with regard to developing education policies aimed at systematically including death in education.

Keywords: Pedagogy of Death; pandemic; education sciences; university faculty; educational change.

Date of receipt of the original: 08/07/2025

Date of approval: 06/11/2025

Please, cite this article as follows: Rodríguez Herrero, P., De La Herrán Gascón, A., De Miguel Yubero, V. & Serrano Manzano, B. F. (2026). The Pedagogy of Death and the pandemic. Leading educationalist' views [Pedagogía de la Muerte y pandemia. Reflexiones de científicos de referencia en Ciencias de la Educación]. *Revista Española de Pedagogía*, 84(293), 187-200. <https://doi.org/10.9781/rep.2026.400>

Resumen

En los últimos años, la pandemia causada por la COVID-19 ha incrementado la presencia de la muerte y los fallecimientos a nivel mundial. Algunas disciplinas científicas han redefinido sus principios y paradigmas a raíz de la pandemia. Esta investigación aborda los posibles cambios en la Pedagogía, en relación con la pertinencia de una educación que incluya la muerte desde la experiencia de la pandemia. En el estudio se entrevista a trece académicos de referencia en España en Ciencias de la Educación seleccionados por el número de citas recibidas en *Web of Science*. Se opta por un diseño cualitativo de tipo fenomenográfico, centrado en las perspectivas de los participantes, creando un guion para las entrevistas semiestructuradas. Las conclusiones principales son: (1) la pandemia ha generado en los participantes algunas reflexiones que pueden sustentar una mayor conciencia de educatividad de la muerte y la finitud; (2) la relación con los estudiantes universitarios se ha intensificado, en términos de comprensión y empatía, promoviendo espacios educativos más compasivos; (3) no se aprecian cambios relevantes en la docencia y la investigación en relación con la muerte en los académicos participantes; y (4) los participantes destacan la importancia para la educación de que la muerte se trate con normalidad y perspectiva curricular en las etapas escolares. La investigación tiene implicaciones como la necesidad de promover espacios reflexivos sobre el impacto de la pandemia en la Pedagogía y, concretamente, en temas radicales como la muerte, o en la definición de políticas educativas que normalicen la muerte como elemento formativo.

Palabras clave: Pedagogía de la Muerte; pandemia; Ciencias de la Educación; profesores universitarios; cambio educativo.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic had a global impact, affecting both the individual and family lives of millions of people. Declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11th March 2020, the pandemic increased the visibility of death in society and, consequently, in our schools. The period of the pandemic, then, can be considered one of the greatest shocks for humanity in the last century. These exceptional circumstances have led to the redefinition of academic disciplines (Cárdenas-González and Álvarez-Buylla, 2020) and given rise to numerous studies identifying shifts in the paradigms and centres of interest of fields such as economics (Mahi et al., 2021), psychology (Ağirkan, 2023) and law (Murdie, 2022). We can also reflect on pedagogy as a fundamental science that studies education—following the Central European and Latin tradition, which distinguishes the discipline, i.e., pedagogy itself, from the field of application, i.e., education (Herrán et al., 2024). Thus, the experience of the pandemic may have prompted a reassessment of education and the figure of the educator (Hill et al., 2020).

While initially education studies were oriented towards problem-solving, for example in technological adaptation and online teaching (Amaya et al., 2024), the current period, with a more distanced and rational view of the worst months of the pandemic, can contribute to a deeper understanding of the pedagogical foundations underpinning educational action by identifying gaps and contradictions in our current educational model. One such gap is teaching that exploits the educational potential of death, a topic that is not normally addressed in the curricula of the countries where research has been conducted (Herrán et al., 2019; Paul et al., 2023; Rodríguez et al., 2022a; Sonbul and Çelik, 2023), despite the fact that the educational community recognizes its pedagogical value (Rodríguez et al., 2022b; Rodríguez et al., 2024; Serrano et al., 2024).

Since we find ourselves in a particularly interesting period for rethinking educational issues, this article set out to ascertain the opinion of leading Spanish education sciences scholars on the potential relevance of the Pedagogy of Death in the wake of the pandemic.

1.1. The pandemic and its impact on education

In their article “Preparing educators for the time of COVID... and beyond”, Darling-Hammond and Hylter (2020) made the following observation: “While learning in the time of COVID has been challenging for students and prospective teachers alike, this moment of disruption has created the opportunity for rethinking and reinventing preparation, as well as schooling itself” (p. 463). Several years later, with the worst of the pandemic over, Assunção and Craig (2023) raised the possibility of reimagining teacher education in the wake of the pandemic: “The aftermath of the pandemic may be a time to rethink the purpose of teacher education and its role in transforming education” (p. 785). According to these and other scholars, the pandemic and the reflections it has given rise to are likely to bring about shifts in concepts and paradigms in pedagogy and education, as has happened in the other fields mentioned above. In this regard, Hudak (2023) characterizes COVID-19 and its effects on humanity as a transformative event in redefining the essence of education.

The pandemic, therefore, may have caused profound changes in our understanding of education, involving advances in both methodology and teaching resources, especially in terms of online teaching, which was largely retained once face-to-face classroom teaching had been resumed (Sharma and Saini, 2023). Ibáñez-Martín and Ahedo (2023) point to four significant issues arising from the pandemic which have implications for the purposes of education: (1) we should bear in mind that there can be no authentic education without reflection on the meaning of life; (2) vulnerability is a condition characterizing all human beings; (3) the pandemic revealed our deep dependence on nature; and (4) the pandemic highlighted the negative consequences of the individualism that pervades contemporary society.

As Ibáñez-Martín and Ahedo (2023) argue, the awareness of human vulnerability, and therefore our relationship with our own death and that of others, can help us rethink the principles and purposes of education and ask ourselves what its key subject matter should be: for example death, due to its radical nature for humanity (Herrán *et al.*, 2019).

1.2. The Pedagogy of Death and the pandemic

The relationship between death and education has been addressed through the approaches of two different epistemological traditions (Herrán *et al.*, 2024). In English-speaking countries, it has been explored and analysed in the field of death education, which studies the teaching of death-related topics in the social, healthcare and education fields. In the Central European and Latin tradition, on the other hand, a distinction is made between the Pedagogy of Death, which is the discipline of study, and its field of application, i.e. education that encompasses death. The Pedagogy of Death is seen as the scientific field that studies the inclusion of death in education for a more conscious life (Rodríguez *et al.*, 2022a). Therefore, in accordance with the objective of this article, this study adopts the Pedagogy of Death approach.

From studies into the inclusion of death in curricula conducted in countries such as Spain (Herrán *et al.*, 2019; Rodríguez *et al.*, 2022a), Turkey (Sonbul and Çelik, 2023) and Scotland (Paul *et al.*, 2023), we can deduce that death is not normally or intentionally addressed in teaching. Education systems underwent the pandemic without having envisaged an education that would foster an awareness of death, either by preparing students to deal with it by addressing it in the curriculum, or through educational support for bereavement (Herrán *et al.*, 2019). Students, teachers and administrative staff in schools returned to the classroom while still living under the shadow of death in their immediate surroundings and

the media (Smilie, 2022). Rarely has death hit schools around the world so hard, with the pandemic providing an opportunity to realise the value of an education that encompasses death (Herrán, 2020).

Despite this urgent natural and social situation, the Pedagogy of Death and its relationship to the pandemic have not been subjects of significant scientific interest, compared to studies on virtual teaching, communication technologies and mental health in the education community. In higher education, some studies have assessed the effects of death education programs on reducing anxiety around death (Weisskirch and Crossman, 2022). In schools, addressing death in the curriculum could respond to death-related concerns and anxieties in the wake of the pandemic and, from a broader perspective, contribute to a more comprehensive and humanistic education.

Since this study adopts the perspective of the Pedagogy of Death, i.e. the scientific discipline that studies the inclusion of death in education (Rodríguez et al., 2022a), we set out to ascertain the views of leading Spanish education scholars on the relevance of education that encompasses death, and its implications for improving education in the wake of the pandemic.

2. Method

In order to address the research objective, a qualitative phenomenographic design was chosen (Murillo et al., 2022), an approach that assumes that significant knowledge can be found in participants' views and perspectives (Marshall and Rossman, 2016). The relevance of this study design stems from its focus on exploring the varying ways in which participants understand the phenomena studied (Murillo et al., 2022). In this case, the aim was to determine, from both present and retrospective standpoints (Bolívar et al., 2001), how participants were influenced by their personal and professional experiences with respect to the object of study, i.e., the relationship of the Pedagogy of Death to the pandemic and the improvement of education.

This qualitative phenomenographic design, then, seeks to deepen our understanding of the phenomena studied (Krause, 1995). It is an effective approach to the problem when the aim is to examine the way in which people perceive and experience the phenomena under investigation, through exploring their interpretations, points of view and the meanings they assign to events (Lichtman, 2013; Punch, 2014). The phenomenographic design thus orients researchers towards participants' subjective experiences and meaning construction. It is suitable to this study, since, rather than seeking generalizable results, here we set out to investigate the views of leading educationalists and their pedagogical implications regarding the emerging field of the Pedagogy of Death in relation to the recent pandemic.

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the coordinating university. The research team that carried out both the interviews and the data analysis consisted of four researchers.

2.1. Participants

The study population consisted of tenured teaching and research staff (professors and tenured lecturers) from education faculties at Spanish universities with a high number of citations in journals indexed in the databases *Education and Educational Research*, *Education*, *Scientific Disciplines*, and *Education, Special, Web of Science (WoS)*. The purpose of choosing this specific group was to garner the views of leading Spanish scholars in the education field. Although currently the debate around how scholarly work should be assessed acknowledges that academic success cannot be reduced to the number of publications and citations registered in these international databases, for the purposes of this study it was chosen to employ clear, objective inclusion criteria, whilst accepting any limitations that this may have on sample selection. A complementary further criterion,

ensuring better selection of participants, was the choice of academics in the highest positions (professors and tenured lecturers).

The sampling was random, using a list of scholars ranked according to their number of publications in WoS from 2012 to 2022. A list of 170 educationalists meeting the criteria was drawn up, the highest-scoring with 63 citations and the lowest eighteen. The research team sent invitations in batches of ten until a sample of thirteen lecturers and professors was reached. The final number of interviewees was justified by saturation in the data analysis and the recommended phenomenographic research sample size of close to fifteen (Murillo et al., 2022). A total of 132 scholars were invited, with 119 declining or not responding to the invitation (an acceptance rate of almost 10%).

The final sample of thirteen scholars comprised eight women and five men. Five were professors and eight senior lecturers. Seven were from the area of Didactics and School Organization, three from Specific Didactics, one from Education Research Methodology and Analysis, and one from Evolutionary and Educational Psychology. Scholars from eight regions of Spain took part. Participants are identified in the data analysis with the letter *P* for participant followed by an identification number (1 to 13).

2.2. Research technique and instrument

The study was conducted through semi-structured phenomenographic interviews. An ad hoc script of twenty questions was drawn up, based on the theory and prior studies discussed in the introduction to this article, and divided into four parts: (1) demographic data on participants' research and teaching; (2) an introductory section with questions on personal experience of the pandemic; (3) an exploratory part with questions on the Pedagogy of Death and the pandemic; and (4) a closing section featuring questions on the conclusions of the interview. An example of a question from the introductory part is: "Do you know if any of your students lost loved ones during the pandemic? How did you find out and, if you did, what did you do?" In the exploratory section, questions such as the following were asked: "Do you think that if death were a normal educational topic, the reaction to the pandemic would have been different? Why?" Lastly, an example of a question in the closing section is: "Has this interview led to any changes/reflection/learning? If so, can you specify?" Validation was carried out by four experts in the Pedagogy of Death with more than five years' research experience in the field each, and through a pilot study with two participants who met the criteria for the sample. This resulted in some questions being omitted and others reformulated for the final script. The interviews, with an average duration of 45 minutes, were conducted from March to July 2023, and were carried out online, since interviewees were based in different regions of Spain.

2.3. Data analysis

Once the interviews had been conducted, they were transcribed and imported into the NVivo 14 program, which was used to perform the content analysis. The rationale behind the data analysis was based on a complementary twofold approach. On the one hand it was deductive, starting from the pre-established topics and questions in the script (while also being open to the emergence of other topics and questions in the course of the interview, given its semi-structured nature) and based on existing theory and knowledge about the Pedagogy of Death. On the other hand it was also inductive, since the main categories were created through ongoing analysis of the data, redefining some initial questions as a result of the experience gained in the interviews, and saturating the information through the thirteen interviews. In accordance with the phenomenographic approach (Murillo et al., 2022), the analysis was performed while new data was still being collected, thereby leading to saturation once no substantially different meanings appeared in relation to the research objective. The units of meaning that gave rise to the final categories corresponded to the core areas of study, and taken as a whole provided

answers to the central research questions. Finally, triangulation was addressed through the participation of the whole research team in analysing every interview.

3. Results

Before discussing the data and its organization into the categories and subcategories that emerged during the interpretation of participants' testimonies, we present the terms they used most frequently. These indicate, firstly, the importance of the topics covered in the interviews and, secondly, the direction of participants' discourses. Thus the most-used terms were "pandemic" (n = 259), "death" (n = 164) and "university" (n = 99), as we would expect, given the topic and the setting. Also there appeared other terms enabling an initial approach to the focus of participants' discourse. These included "meaning" (n = 80), "teaching" (n = 73), "staff" (n = 70), "students" (n = 64) and "changes" (n = 62).

The initial categories were based on the three areas mentioned above (introduction, exploration and closure), and refined during the data analysis into the following definitive classification: (a) experiences during the pandemic; (b) changes in teaching and research around death as a result of the pandemic; and (c) the relevance of the Pedagogy of Death in the light of the pandemic. The results in these categories and, where applicable, in related subcategories, are presented below.

3.1. Experiences during the pandemic

This category groups together the responses from the first interview questions, referring to personal and professional experience during the pandemic.

With regard to its impact on participants' personal lives, some comments mentioned the difficulty of the period, partly due to its association with loss and death. For example, P1 remarked that the pandemic "was tough, a really tough experience". Another participant (P2) talked about the difficulties faced by students during the pandemic: "I remember the effect the state my students were in had on me." However, in contrast to the sometimes frenetic pace of today's society, some participants also referred to the opportunities presented by the lockdown: "For me, it was a gift, and one that I'll always remember. I never felt disconnected from anything or anyone, and I really cherished the silence, the peace, and being able to slow down, read and think about what I'd read, reflect, meditate, write" (P3). In the same vein, P4 commented that "It was a very productive time for research". Participants commented not only on opportunities to devote more time to certain aspects of their work, such as research, but also to others relating to well-being and personal development. For example, one participant (P3) described the time as an "encounter with myself"; while another explained, "[I've] become even more sensitive than I was [...] I think about what's really important" (P3); and lastly, another linked the pandemic to self-knowledge: "The pandemic helped us to find out a bit more about what our limits are" (P1).

One of the major challenges during the period, having precisely to do with limits, was people's relationship to bereavement. Some participants mentioned experiencing death at the university: "Unfortunately, we lost some colleagues. It's very sad" (P1). In these situations, one participant stated that the university "enacted homages [to deceased colleagues]" (P1). Others referred not only to losses in the professional environment, but also in the family, reflecting the global impact of the pandemic on society.

3.2. Death-related changes in teaching and research resulting from the pandemic

This category gathers together results relating to any changes made by participants in their teaching and research as a result of their experiences during the pandemic. First, the

subcategory titled “Closer teacher-student relationships” is discussed, followed by “The inclusion of death in education research”.

3.2.1. Closer faculty-student relationships

During the pandemic, participants noticed a change in their relationships with students, characterized by greater intimacy and openness. For some, the transition to online teaching not only altered the medium, but also transformed the dynamics of teacher-student interactions. For example, participant P5 recalled that “I had to completely adapt my teaching style, moving from face-to-face to virtual classes. This not only involved using of new digital tools, but also a change in the way I interacted with students”. The perception of invading students’ privacy became evident to others, who expressed concern about intruding in the personal sphere: “Also, there was the feeling that I was invading their private space [...] For me, this view of videoconferencing is really common, but I had the feeling that I was invading part of their home life and that they were a little out of place” (P2). This change in the medium of education led participants to rethink the nature of the teacher-student relationship and created greater sensitivity to the boundaries of personal space in a virtual environment.

Similarly, online teaching provided a platform where students seemed more willing to share their thoughts and emotions. As one participant (P6) remarked, “online classes, although challenging, provided a platform where students seemed more willing to share their thoughts and emotions, perhaps because they felt they were in a safer and more personal space, their own home”. This observation shows that the shift to virtual teaching not only brought technical challenges, but also created an environment that was sometimes conducive to greater emotional openness among partners in the educational process.

In terms of interaction with their colleagues, informants also noted significant shifts, since “The pandemic helped us reassess the relationship between our work and our emotional wellbeing and mental health” (P1). The need to understand the individual circumstances of both colleagues and students became a priority. Flexibility and empathy were highlighted in these new work dynamics: “I think a bit more about the particular situations in the setting, of other people, including my colleagues and my students” (P1). The pandemic served as a catalyst for valuing human relationships in the professional sphere and recognizing the importance of the human factor and the system of personal and professional values. This change in perception underscores the need for a more holistic approach to university teaching, where emotional connection and the wellbeing of all those involved are taken as fundamental principles.

3.2.2. The inclusion of death in educational research

In general, participants stated that to date they had not researched the Pedagogy of Death and did not plan to do so in the near future. This may be due to various factors, such as the cultural taboo surrounding death, the lack of teacher education in this area, and the perception that the subject is alien or irrelevant to certain fields of knowledge. As one (P1) remarked, “It isn’t one of my areas of research [...]. In fact, until we had this interview, I hadn’t thought that research such as yours could be carried out in such a particular context”. The same participant added: “It’s difficult for me to talk about anything related to death because of the subjects I teach. They’re purely technological subjects”. In the same vein, P7 commented that “It isn’t one of my areas of research [...] I’ve never considered it.”

The fact that neither the Pedagogy of Death nor other related topics featured amongst the participants’ lines of research may be due to death being excluded from both the curriculum and teacher education. As P5 indicated, “[We’re not prepared] in terms of infrastructure and teacher education”. These testimonies highlighted the need to address cultural, curricular and educational barriers in order to make death an accepted, normal topic in education research.

3.3. The relevance of the Pedagogy of Death in the light of the pandemic

The last category groups together interviewees' views on the relevance of death as a normal topic in education in the light of the pandemic. First, the subcategory titled "The Pedagogy of Death in university teaching" is discussed, followed by "The Pedagogy of Death in schools".

3.3.1. The Pedagogy of Death in university teaching

Participants' testimonies revealed a need for faculty to be trained in the Pedagogy of Death. Thus, P7 stated: "I think that as teachers we're somewhat lacking in training". This comment underscores the importance of educating teachers, including university teachers, on how to address the topic of death with their students, not only in the context of a pandemic, but also in the face of the numerous loss-related situations that students experience. As P7 commented, "Our students have many [death-related] problems".

With regard to pre-service university teacher education, a need to integrate the Pedagogy of Death into the curriculum was evidenced. One participant (P8) stated: "I support drawing up educational plans on different topics, but at one point I suggested a plan to address the Pedagogy of Death, and the trainees were like, 'What are you talking about, are you mad?' But of course, just as we need to plan how technology will be used in the school, [or] how the library will be used in the school [...], why not a plan to address the Pedagogy of Death?" This comment highlights the importance of including death in the pre-service teacher education curriculum for faculty.

3.3.2. The Pedagogy of Death in schools

In general, participants were in favour of incorporating death as subject-matter in schools, stressing that it is currently taboo: P8 remarked "I think that as a society we avoid all topics related to death, in general terms. Hiding it, concealing it and not dealing with it does us no favours as a society". The same participant added: "It's taboo to talk about death. So we're probably not prepared to deal with the death of a loved one", thereby emphasizing the importance of education and openness in treating death as a normal educational topic.

The social and educational taboo surrounding death is reflected in its absence in curricula; as P1 stated: "It's not included at any stage of education". Regarding its inclusion in curricula and teaching methodology, the importance of cross-curricular and multicultural approaches to education on death from an early age was highlighted: "[Death] is quite cultural and social, and sometimes it also comes out in religious issues" (P1); "I think we should deal with it in some way from childhood or adolescence on" (P5).

4. Discussion

The results of the study afford insights that are of pedagogical interest in all three categories analysed. In relation to experiences during the pandemic (category a), we found that the academic setting, in this case in the field of the education sciences, was not exempt from the challenges of the most critical months of the pandemic. Participants referred to the loss of colleagues and difficulties in coping with death, including on a personal level. These experiences were common to most people in the global crisis caused by the pandemic. Perhaps the most relevant finding, from a pedagogical standpoint, had to do with some comments focusing on personal changes which, given the close relationship between teachers' personal and professional development (Imbernón, 2020), transcended the private sphere and consequently acquired pedagogical and educational significance. Some participants were grateful for "the silence, the peace, and being able to slow down" during the pandemic (P3), or "finding out a bit more about what our limits are" (P1). The study was based on the analysis of personal and professional experiences during the pandemic

and their relationship to the understanding of the Pedagogy of Death among academics who, due to the impact of their publications, are leaders in the education sciences. These testimonies, therefore, are key, since they connect personal experiences with the professional development of university lecturers who educate teachers (Burns et al., 2023). Although these views cannot be generalized to all participants, they suggest that periods of crisis such as the pandemic can be transformed into an opportunity to overcome the personal-professional split in teacher development, including among teacher educators such as the participants in this study. In relation to death, the connection between the personal and teaching or academic practices may make even greater sense, considering its private but also social nature.

These issues perceived by some participants relating to the awareness of vulnerability or silence may be relevant to changes made in teaching and research around death as a result of the pandemic (category b). Thus, some comments pointed to greater intimacy and openness in the pedagogical relationship between faculty and students. Some participants even remarked that online teaching may have something to do with this openness to their feelings. In short, it seems that vulnerability, influenced by the heightened presence of death, can represent a way of opening up to the world (Butler et al., 2016). Universities and their communities were exposed to forms of individual and collective vulnerability that contributed positively to reassessing some fundamental educational values and principles (Ibáñez-Martín and Ahedo, 2023) in order to address pain and suffering. It is worth mentioning here the “compassionate universities” movement, which, although it began before the pandemic (Maratos et al., 2019), later gained momentum as a result of it (Lemon et al., 2023). According to research conducted among students and faculty by Bakelants et al. (2024), a “compassionate university” can be defined as an institution that has clear, transparent, compassionate policies; offers support services for serious illness, death, and bereavement; makes these issues visible through fomenting community awareness; and fosters healthy attitudes towards end-of-life experiences. Compassion can be understood not only in terms of promoting the psychological health of members of the university community, but also, and complementarily, in the context of teacher-student relationships (Andrew et al., 2023), thus strengthening the affective aspects of teaching and learning.

Aside from these testimonies, we did not find that participants had made any changes in their teaching regarding death, nor did they have any particular interest in researching the Pedagogy of Death. In general terms, this line of study was unknown to them, perhaps since the most-cited scholars tend to be engaged on more established lines of research. Although Spain is a leading country in academic production around the Pedagogy of Death (Herrán et al., 2024), the field is still an emerging and relatively unknown line of research.

The third and final category addressed was that of participants' ideas on the relevance of the Pedagogy of Death in the light of the pandemic (category c). Based on their experiences during the pandemic, participants highlighted the importance of educating university teachers in the Pedagogy of Death. Some also emphasized the importance of including it in their pre-service teacher education. The Pedagogy of Death is a field that has barely been explored in university teaching. Although there are studies on university students' education around death in the social sciences (Pitimson, 2021), health (Baykara et al., 2022) and education fields (Rodríguez et al., 2023), we did not find any research or theory in the scholarly literature advocating the comprehensive inclusion of death in university teaching. The “compassionate universities” movement mentioned above is consistent with teaching that takes death and the awareness of finitude into account, and goes beyond the culture of care in situations of pain caused by bereavement or illness. This broader perspective on university teaching, which can be approached through the discipline of university didactics (Zabalza, 2007), defined as the study of general or transdisciplinary processes of teaching and learning, could contribute to the formation of more mature and conscious citizens (Giroux, 2010) with an education affording them greater awareness of death and finitude.

With regard to addressing death in schools, although participants did not pursue this line of research, they were in favour of the incorporation of death as a standard topic in the curriculum. This finding coincides with those of studies into the views of the education community, such as schoolteachers (Rodríguez et al., 2022b), families (Serrano et al., 2024) and students (Rodríguez et al., 2024). Despite this, the curriculum does not include death as subject-matter, nor does it address education on the awareness of death and finitude as a goal, objective, or competence within the framework of what has been termed “holistic education”, as studies in different countries have found (Herrán et al., 2019; Paul et al., 2023; Rodríguez et al., 2022a; Sonbul and Çelik, 2023). This may be due to multiple factors: the taboo on death and topics related to it; the adoption of a competency-based approach to the curriculum; the lack of teacher education; or the resistance to educational and curricular change. Although the general attitude among participants, reinforced by their experiences during the pandemic, was one of openness towards the Pedagogy of Death, we did not find any broad, proactive discourse on why, for what purpose, or how to include death in teaching. Our interpretation of this is that even the most high-profile education scholars also require training on radical topics such as death, which, due to their characteristics, are not normally researched or analysed, although this may seem paradoxical, given their importance for humanity and our education.

5. Conclusions and limitations of the study

At the beginning of the article, we asked ourselves, similarly to Darling-Hammond and Hyler (2020) and Assunção and Craig (2023), whether the pandemic had given rise to new visions of education that might, in this case, include death as a formative element. To answer this question, leading Spanish academics in the education sciences were interviewed based on their number of citations in WoS.

Analysis of the interviews enabled us to draw a number of conclusions. (1) The pandemic had increased the visibility of death, prompting participants to make reflections that could underpin a greater awareness of the educational value of death and finitude. (2) As a result of the pandemic, participants’ relationships with their students had become closer, in terms of understanding and empathy; and this could encourage the development of a Pedagogy of Death also in university teaching, giving rise to more compassionate educational spaces. (3) Participants reported no significant changes in their teaching and research around death, which leads us to the conclusion that, even for leading scholars, further training is required, aimed at integrating the core human topic of death in teaching, student counselling and support and, where appropriate, research. (4) Lastly, participants highlighted the importance of treating death as a standard topic in the curriculum at all stages of schooling.

These conclusions have professional implications for educational change. The first is that we may not yet have analysed sufficiently how education could be reimagined in the wake of the pandemic, integrating it as a radical element of human formation (Herrán, 2020). Hence, it may be of interest to create opportunities for such analysis in the academic context. Secondly, the Pedagogy of Death requires greater political commitment, given the evidence that both the educational community (Rodríguez et al., 2024; Serrano et al., 2024) and academics in the education sciences have called for an education that encompasses death.

This study also has certain limitations that should be mentioned in order to interpret the results and conclusions more rigorously. One of these is that the selection of participants, based mainly on the number of citations in WoS, could be enhanced by including other criteria of academic recognition or impact on educational development. We should also note the bias (potentially positive towards the research topic) that may be inherent in the participation rate of less than 10% of the scholars originally invited. Another is that the research was carried out in the Spanish context; thus, both studies in other countries and

comparative research would be required to broaden the perspectives analysed. Despite this, the study opens up a line of research in the field of the Pedagogy of Death that centres on listening to the voices of those who, in the academic world, conduct research and create educational theory.

Authors contributions

Pablo Rodríguez Herrero. Participation in all phases of the article's development (funding, conceptualisation, theoretical basis, methodology, fieldwork, data analysis, writing, revision).

Agustín de la Herrán Gascón. Participation in all phases of the article's development (funding, conceptualisation, theoretical basis, methodology, fieldwork, data analysis, writing, revision).

Victoria de Miguel Yubero. Participation in the theoretical basis, methodology, data analysis and writing.

Bianca Fiorella Serrano Manzano. Participation in the theoretical basis, methodology, fieldwork, data analysis and writing.

Declaration of AI use:

The authors declare that AI was not used in the preparation of the article.

Funding

The research was funded through the 2021 Knowledge Generation Projects Call, reference PID2021-122904OB-I00 (AEI/FEDER, EU).

References

- Ağirkan, M. (2023). The reflections of COVID-19 pandemic to counselling: Bibliometric analysis of online psychological counselling research. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 51(4), 558-573. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2023.2170981>
- Amaya, A., Cantú, D. & Hernández, J. A. (2024). Factores que potencializan la educación virtual en una etapa Post-Covid. *RELIEVE - Revista Electrónica de Investigación y Evaluación Educativa*, 30(2). <https://doi.org/10.30827/relieve.v30i2.27503>
- Andrew, M. B., Dobbins, K., Pollard, E., Mueller, B. & Middleton, R. (2023). The role of compassion in higher education practices. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, 20(3). <https://doi.org/10.53761/1.20.3.01>
- Assunção, M. & Craig, C. J. (2023). Reimagining teacher education in light of the teacher shortage and the aftershock of COVID-19: Adjusting to a rapidly shifting world. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 46(5), 772-788. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2023.2294697>
- Bakelants, H., Van Droogenbroeck, F., Chambaere, K., Vanderstichelen, S., De Donder, L., Deliens, L., De Gieter, S., et al. (2024). A compassionate university for serious illness, death, and bereavement: Qualitative study of student and staff experiences and support needs. *Death Studies*, 48(5), 442-453. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2023.2233495>
- Baykara, Z. G., Keles, S., Karabulut, S. D., Gul, S., Eren, H., Iskender, M. D., Yildiz, A., et al. (2022). The effect of professional education on medical and nursing students' attitudes toward death. *Death Studies*, 46(7), 1728-1740. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2020.1850546>

- Bolívar, A., Domingo, J. & Fernández, M. (2001). *La investigación biográfico-narrativa en educación. Enfoque y metodología*. Muralla.
- Burns, A., Taylor, L. K., Hamilton, E. R. & Leonard, A. E. (2023). COVID conversations: A collaborative self-study of four teacher educators. *The Teacher Educator*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08878730.2023.2273368>
- Butler, J., Gambetti, Z. & Sabsay, L. (2016). *Vulnerability in Resistance*. Duke University Press.
- Cárdenas-González, M. & Álvarez-Buylla, E. R. (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic and paradigm change in global scientific research. *MEDICC Rev.*, 22(2), 14-18. <https://doi.org/10.37757/MR2020.V22.N2.4>
- Darling-Hammond, L. & Hylar, M. E. (2020). Preparing educators for the time of COVID ... and beyond. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 43(4), 457-465. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2020.1816961>
- Giroux, H. A. (2010). Bare Pedagogy and the scourge of neoliberalism: Rethinking higher education as a democratic public sphere. *The Educational Forum*, 74(3), 184-196. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2010.483897>
- Herrán, A. de la (2020). La Pedagogía de la muerte en el contexto de la pandemia: Una mirada radical e inclusiva. *Revista Electrónica Educare*, 24, 1-4. <https://www.scielo.sa.cr/pdf/ree/v24s1/1409-4258-ree-24-s1-12.pdf>
- Herrán, A. de la, Rodríguez, P., & Miguel, V. de (2019). ¿Está la muerte en el currículo español? *Revista de Educación*, 385, 201-226. <https://doi.org/10.4438/1988-592X-RE-2019-385-422>
- Herrán, A. de la, Rodríguez, P. & Miguel, V. de (2024). Beyond death education? A study of its epistemological traditions. *Teoría de la Educación. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 36(1), 183-204. <https://doi.org/10.14201/teri.31511>
- Hill, C., Rosehart, P., Helene, J. & Sadhra, S. (2020). What kind of educator does the world need today? Reimagining teacher education in post-pandemic Canada. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 46(4), 565-575. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2020.1797439>
- Hudak, G. M. (2023). Putting the pandemic on the table: What does this crisis reveal about the essence of education? *Ethics and Education*, 18(1), 86-100. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449642.2023.2188720>
- Ibáñez-Martín, J. A. & Ahedo, J. (2023). Presentación: Una educación renovada del carácter tras la pandemia y la invasión de Ucrania. *Revista Española de Pedagogía*, 81(284). <https://www.revistadepedagogia.org/rep/vol81/iss284/10>
- Imbernón, F. (2020). Desarrollo personal, profesional e institucional y formación del profesorado. Algunas tendencias para el Siglo XXI. *Revista Currículum*, 33, 49-67. <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.qurricul.2020.33.04>
- Krause, M. (1995). La investigación cualitativa: Un campo de posibilidades y desafíos. *Revista Temas de Educación*, 7(7), 19-40.
- Lemon, N., Harju-Luukainen, H. & Garvis, S. (2023). *Practising Compassion in Higher Education: Caring for Self and Others through Challenging Times*. Routledge.
- Lichtman, M. (2013). *Qualitative Research in Education*. SAGE.
- Mahi, M., Ashraful, M., Habib, M. & Akter, S. (2021). A bibliometric analysis of pandemic and epidemic studies in economics: Future agenda for COVID-19 research. *Social Sciences and Humanities Open*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2021.100165>
- Maratos, F.A., Gilbert, P. & Gilbert, T. (2019). Improving well-being in higher education: Adopting a compassionate approach. In P. Gibbs, J. Jameson & A. Elwick (eds.), *Values of the University in a Time of Uncertainty* (pp. 261-278). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-15970-2_18
- Marshall, C. & Rossman, G. (2016). *Designing Qualitative Research*. SAGE.

- Murdie, A. (2022). Hindsight is 2020: Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic for future human rights research. *Journal of Human Rights*, 21, 354-364. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14754835.2022.2071106>
- Murillo, F. J., Hidalgo, N. & Martínez-Garrido, C. (2022). El método fenomenográfico en la investigación educativa. *Revista Interuniversitaria de Investigación en Tecnología Educativa*, 13, 117-137. <https://doi.org/10.6018/riite.549541>
- Paul, S., Carpio, L. E. del, Rodríguez, P., & Herrán, A. de la (2023). Death in the Scottish curriculum: Denying or confronting? *Death Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2023.2283450>
- Pitimson, N. (2021). Teaching death to undergraduates: exploring the student experience of discussing emotive topics in the university classroom. *Educational Review*, 73(4), 470-486. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2019.1646706>
- Punch, K. F. (2014). *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. SAGE.
- Rodríguez, P., Herrán, A. de la, & García, P. (2023). Impact of a teacher-training MOOC on the Pedagogy of Death during the pandemic. *Death Studies*, 47(7), 804-813. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2022.2132549>
- Rodríguez, P., de la Herrán, A., & de Miguel, V. (2022a). The inclusion of death in the curriculum of the Spanish Regions. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 52(1), 37-55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2020.1732192>
- Rodríguez, P., de la Herrán, A., Pérez-Bonet, G., & Sánchez-Huete, J. C. (2022b). What do teachers think of death education? *Death Studies*, 46(6), 1518-1528. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2020.1817176>
- Rodríguez, P., Serrano, B. F., & Herrán, A. de la (2024). 'Death livens you up': Death education through the eyes of adolescents. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 32(5), 1535-1548. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2023.2230965>
- Serrano, B. F., & Rodríguez, P., & Herrán, A. de la (2024). "Mum, when we die, what do you think happens?" A qualitative study of views on death education among Spanish families. *Death Studies*, 48(1), 64-74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2023.2186536>
- Sharma, S. & Saini, J. R. (2023). Understanding the impact of online teaching on students' learning and performance: A post-pandemic analysis. *Interactive Learning Environments*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2023.2209787>
- Smilie, K. D. (2022). Death education's "period of popularity": Lessons for contemporary P-12 schools in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Death Studies*, 46(1), 65-77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2021.1902427>
- Sonbul, Z. F. & Çelik, R. (2023). The place of death in elementary and secondary school curricula in Turkey. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 117. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2022.102106>
- Weisskirch, R. S. & Crossman, K. A. (2022). The impact of death and dying education for undergraduate students during the COVID-19 pandemic. *OMEGA – Journal of Death and Dying*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00302228221089818>
- Zabalza, M. A. (2007). La didáctica universitaria. *Bordón*, 59(2-3), 489-509. <https://recyt.fecyt.es/index.php/BORDON/article/view/36676>

Author biographies


Pablo Rodríguez Herrero is a senior lecturer in the Department of Education at the Autonomous University of Madrid and coordinator of the research group University, Innovation and Social and Educational Inclusion (UNINC). His main lines of research are inclusive education, university teaching, and teacher education.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2152-0078>

Agustín de la Herrán Gascón is a senior lecturer in the Department of Education at the Autonomous University of Madrid and coordinator of the Pedagogy, Training and Awareness (PFC) Research Group. He is the creator of the radical and inclusive approach to education.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9156-6971>

Victoria de Miguel Yubero is a lecturer at CES Don Bosco University and recipient of the Extraordinary Doctorate Award. Her main lines of research are the Pedagogy of Death, the prevention and detection of radicalisation in schools and the impact of terrorism and barbarism on education.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8054-6286>

Bianca Fiorella Serrano Manzano is a senior lecturer in the Department of Family, School and Society at the International University of La Rioja, and coordinator of the Systems, Environment and Educational Relations (SARE) research group. Her main areas of research are teacher education, systemic pedagogy and family education.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1094-3021>



Books Reviews

Kristjánsson, K. y Flowers, B. J. (2023).

Phronesis: Retrieving Practical Wisdom in Psychology, Philosophy, and Education.

Danesi, M. (2024).

AI in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching: Theory and Practice.

Mínguez-Vallejos, R. y Linares-Borboa, L. (coords.) (2023).

La pedagogía de la alteridad. Un compromiso ético con otro modo de educar.

Jover, G. y Quiroga, P. (2024).

Nacidos para jugar. Perspectivas educativas en torno al juego en la infancia.

Book reviews

Kristjánsson, K. & Flowers, B. J. (2023).

Phronesis: Retrieving Practical Wisdom in Psychology, Philosophy, and Education.

OUP Oxford. 352 pp.

Phronesis is jointly written by Kristján Kristjánsson, a philosopher specialising in character education, and Blaine Fowers, a psychologist known for his work on virtue ethics and psychology. This book tackles the recuperation of the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, a fundamental intellectual virtue. The recovery of *phronesis* is no coincidence in a context shaped by ideological polarisation and a lack of comprehensive approaches for making moral decisions, since in addition to academic motivations, there is also a political impetus for its reconsideration. Therefore, the authors argue that *phronesis* is an essential tool to guide the virtuous life and informed moral action.

This work is set out in twelve chapters, each of which addresses *phronesis* from a different perspective. Throughout the book, not only is an effort made to bring Aristotle's theory up to date, but also to incorporate a multidisciplinary focus. This attempt to revitalise the discussion about practical wisdom is set out in the proposal for a new theoretical model, the Aristotelian Phronesis Model (APM), and in a reflection on its practical implications.

The first two chapters introduce the concept of *phronesis* in its philosophical and historical context. It is compared with other forms of wisdom, such as *sophia* or *deinotes*, and some alternatives and adaptations to the Aristotelian discourse are presented to integrate it with contemporary and practical evidence. In addition, Chapters 3 and 4 address *phronesis* from a psychological perspective. In this context, as well as being a virtue, the concept is presented as a metacognitive capacity with moral aspirations.

Chapter three reviews the history of research into wisdom, noting above all the lack of attention to emotionality in favour of cognitive aspects, as in the Common Wisdom Model (CWM). Nonetheless, this question is not exclusive to CWM and, in general, academics have not considered *phronesis* or other key aspects, such as measuring wisdom. The fact is that while a debt is owed to positive psychology for having brought character and virtues back into the field, the tendency in the social sciences to avoid moral language and commitments has existed since the times of Weber and Allport.

Ultimately, literature on wisdom and its models criticises them harshly for: (I) a tendency to sideline emotions in favour of cognition and metacognition; (II) a lack of attention to substantive objectives, favouring formal objectives or even the absence of objectives; (III) an emphasis on psychological processes and subjective evaluations instead of action or objective elements,

such as values; (IV) and ignoring the moral component of wisdom, which has led to it being confused with cleverness (*deinotes*).

Therefore, the APM is presented from Chapter 4: a multidimensional model that, with its four functions, seeks to provide a comprehensive framework that addresses the relationship between cognition, emotion, and morality in different practical and research areas. In emphasising the importance of emotional regulation, APM contrasts with the majority of models, also providing a dynamic interaction between moral reasoning and affective experience. In this way, it is argued that integrating emotion, motivation, and cognition can offer a fuller understanding of morality.

Chapter five analyses the persistent gap between knowledge and action, which has been a challenge in moral psychology since the works of Kohlberg and also since the Bible: "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate" (Romans 7:15). With this, APM is suggested as a solution to this problem, as its combination of cognition, affect, and action allows a fuller understanding of practical wisdom, contrasting with single-component models, which have contributed to the persistence of the gap. Furthermore, even with the difficulties of operationalising the model and applying it in practice, the potential of *phronesis* to close the gap between moral knowledge and moral action is not reduced.

Chapters six and seven present various empirical studies that support the validity of APM, underlining its relationship with prosocial behaviour on one hand and with the practical implications of APM for professional ethics and education on the other. The model adapts particularly well to training professionals in medicine, education, and economics, providing a foundation to improve the capacity to resolve complex ethical dilemmas. Emphasis is placed on the importance of fostering the right *phronesis* for each context, considering the ethical particularities of each discipline with the aim of shaping individuals who are able to make wise decisions. To this end, a number of philosophical differences are also reviewed, comparing the perspectives of Aristotle and MacIntyre.

Chapter eight goes on to explore *phronesis* in education, considering the tensions between moral and civic virtues in Aristotle's thought. A comprehensive development of the two is suggested, as while character education lays the ethical foundations, civic education expands them towards a more advanced and sophisticated social and political commitment. Therefore, there would be no historical or substantive grounds to consider character and civic education as competing approaches. As a result, the need for an educational approach that promotes personal and community flourishing, in line with the Aristotelian idea of the human being as a "political animal", is stressed.

Chapter nine analyses collective *phronesis* taking *philia* (friendship) as its starting point. As Aristotle's description of collective *phronesis* is limited, the authors present speculative hypotheses to expand understanding of it. The value of well-trained groups, which exceed individual capacities, particularly for decision making, is highlighted. This suggests a need for education that is more linked to and applicable to the ethical and civic life, an education that strengthens both individual character and social cohesion and the capacity to act in favour of the common good.

Post-*phronetic* pain, covered in Chapter 10, refers to the complex and painful emotions that result from wise decisions. In contrast with the traditional view, it is argued that this suffering is not only natural and inevitable when exercising practical wisdom, but that it is beneficial as the absence of ambivalence or emotional conflict after a decision would indicate an inhuman degree of emotional regulation, even for a *phronimos* (wise person). The authors invite us to consider negative emotions as necessary for ethical growth, challenging the idea that *phronesis* leads to a total equilibrium.

Chapter eleven examines education in *phronesis*, reviewing Aristotelian ideas in light of current research and scientific evidence. The analysis finds that although there are many character education programmes, few focus on *phronesis* in particular, and they tend to centre on emotional intelligence and social learning, something that limits their

impact on the comprehensive development of practical wisdom. As such, the authors identify the need to specify educational methods and experiences to progress from habits to a sophisticated virtuous agency. To this end, they suggest lines of research that integrate *phronesis* into specific professional contexts – such as training police or economists – that require an education beyond technical skills that incorporates ethical judgement.

The book concludes with a reflection on the importance of *phronesis* for human flourishing. Although the philosophical debate on the interrelationship between virtues, *phronesis*, and *eudaimonia* has a long history, the effort to give it meaning from other fields is recent, making it a controversial field where translating philosophical concepts into empirically manageable frameworks is still a challenge.

On balance, this work makes a valuable contribution to the debate on practical wisdom by proposing a multidisciplinary focus that goes beyond the traditional limits of philosophy and psychology. It emphasises the importance of *phronesis* as a metavirtue that can integrate cognition, emotion, and morality, providing a robust theoretical framework for ethical decision making in personal and professional life. Nonetheless, gaps and contradictions are also recognised that hinder the journey towards a full and applicable understanding of *phronesis*, which will be fundamental for developing a practical ethics that can respond to the challenges of a constantly changing world.

The proposed model offers an enriching perspective that addresses some of the existing limitations, although there are challenges for its implementation. Furthermore, APM not only has implications for psychology and education; integrating practical wisdom into the training of professionals is vital.

One limitation of this book is in that it has a critical focus on gaps in *phronesis* but does not offer concrete solutions and leaves the task of addressing these to future researchers. The authors could have enriched the work with a deeper analysis of certain aspects, such as operationalising the components of APM, applying the model in specific contexts, or providing concrete examples of educational and practical interventions intended to foster *phronesis*, instead of attempting to include so many domains.

In conclusion, *Phronesis* is an essential work for academics, professionals, and educators who are interested in virtue ethics, moral psychology, or character education. Its interdisciplinary focus and proposal for a model of practical wisdom make it recommended reading for anyone seeking a deep understanding of morality in the contemporary context, as well as for readers who are interested in identifying gaps that lead to new lines of research.

Ana de la Peña Barroso

Universidad Internacional de La Rioja (España)

Danesi, M. (2024).

AI in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching: Theory and Practice.

Nova Science Publishers. 147 pp.

The advent of AI-powered technologies has dramatically revolutionized the whole of foreign language teaching and learning. AI-driven technology undoubtedly offers great promise in addressing the unique challenges of foreign language learning (Polakova & Klimova, 2024).

The application of AI-generated technologies in foreign language learning covers a wide variety of tools, such as writing assistance (Quillbot, Grammarly), translation services (Doubao, Google, DeepL), second language teaching apps (Duolingo, Babbel), conversation practice via AI chatbots, etc. The utilization of AI-assisted tools as virtual tutors to help improve language proficiency and communicative competence in the target language has grown significantly (Zhang et al., 2023). In recent years, AI has become

a significant research area owing to its broad applicability in foreign language teaching and learning.

In his work "AI in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching: Theory and Practice", Marcel Danesi offers researchers comprehensive guidance for evaluating the crucial impact of technological developments in language learning. The author meticulously presents the key challenges that AI-powered tools have led to in the field of language acquisition, offering a well-structured and insightful analysis of the topic.

In his book, Marcel Danesi outlines the historical foundations of technology-driven language learning, emphasizes the importance of global integration of AI-powered tools in language learning, reviews the current status and challenges, and provides readers with a solid foundation for understanding developments in this field.

Danesi's book "AI in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching: Theory and Practice" is highly valuable for language teachers, language policy-makers, teacher educators, and linguists.

Structurally, the book is divided into six chapters, each further divided into subchapters. Notably, each chapter begins with a prologue and concludes with an epilogue.

The first chapter, entitled 'Technology in Foreign Language Teaching', briefly presents the development and integration of language laboratories into mainstream foreign language teaching, the application of the Audio-Lingual Method as a keystone for these laboratories, and the role and relationship of the native language to this method. The author goes on to concisely cover the historical background of computer-assisted learning (CALL pedagogy), as well as the role of AI technology in FL teaching, and its main characteristics.

The main topics in Chapter 2 are theories and models of foreign language learning (Universal Grammar Method, Direct Method, Interlanguage Theory, Pragmatic Models, Machine learning, etc.). Following a thorough description of these methods and theories, the author summarizes the chapter by emphasizing the primary concern of conventional language acquisition theories, namely conceptualization. These theories and models are unable to adequately decode the conceptual differences found across languages.

Chapter 3 discusses the overall potential and practical pedagogical uses of ChatGPT in developing foreign language learning competences, specifically learners' ability to employ phonology, grammar, writing, vocabulary and other language skills appropriately. The author comprehensively highlights the strengths and weaknesses of ChatGPT and draws parallels between conventional foreign language learning methodologies and AI-assisted language learning. Danesi identifies personalization, gamification, real-time feedback, and real-world examples as the primary advantages of AI-powered tools, while their principal drawback is the absence of interpersonal communication.

In Chapter 4, Marcel Danesi explores issues concerning the communicative competences of chatbots in greater depth. The author outlines tailored-conversational input based on students' individual needs as the key strength of AI-assisted learning. As stated in the book, AI dialogue practice can effectively develop learners' communicative competences in foreign language learning, although integrating AI dialogue practice into conventional classroom-based activities remains a major obstacle for many educators.

Chapter 5 attempts to identify the advantages and disadvantages of ChatGPT and other AI-generated tools within the framework of conceptual fluency. Developing conceptual fluency requires specific pedagogical exposure and approaches in the classroom. Danesi uses translation analysis to examine how accurate ChatGPT's understanding of concepts is. By presenting examples of inaccurate translations of metaphors, irony, and metonymy, the author highlights that ChatGPT requires improvement in this respect.

In the final chapter, Danesi emphasizes the importance of integrating AI-powered tools within conventional classroom pedagogy. The author assesses the evolving roles of learners, teachers, and AI chatbots from the perspective of blended learning, emphasizing the need for

a paradigm shift in foreign language learning. He also provides a number of references from different researchers to support his perspectives.

Overall, the book “AI in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching: Theory and Practice” deserves appreciation in many aspects. First and foremost, the book’s key strength lies in its clear writing style and language, which facilitate readers’ understanding of concepts related to AI. Another notable aspect is the author’s effective use of evidence to substantiate his arguments. Rather than presenting ad hoc data, Danesi draws upon findings from prior studies to strengthen his arguments. The link between the author’s ideas and existing literature enhances the appeal of this book. An additional noteworthy aspect of the book is that it provides a thorough overview of study themes, models, designs, and instruments, alongside practical and theoretical guidance on integrating AI-centered blended learning into traditional pedagogy.

The book also presents certain drawbacks. Specifically, it does not sufficiently explore the contested attitudes of researchers towards using ChatGPT in foreign language learning, focusing predominantly on analyzing the shortcomings of AI-powered tools. In particular, many scholars note the inadvertent rise in plagiarism, disruption of motor skill development, over-dependence on technology, encouragement of laziness, diminished capacity for acquiring language knowledge through problem-solving, and the dehumanization of creative thinking as substantial drawbacks.

Furthermore, there is insufficient focus on the importance of reinforcing language policies and ethical standards, maintaining academic integrity, and ensuring consistency during the integration of AI in English writing classes.

Additionally, the book places limited emphasis on research methodology. More specifically, the author does not employ a scientific methodology to establish a firm foundation for his research. Danesi has shown a relatively strong preference for the descriptive style of writing.

The section “Directions for Future Research”, which is highly recommended for inclusion after each chapter in order to encourage additional research, is also absent.

Despite these limitations, this insightful book merits praise for offering fresh, in-depth perspectives on AI research methods and practice in foreign language learning. By exploring various AI-centered research trends and methodologies, the book makes a significant contribution to advancing teaching pedagogy.

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or non-profit sectors.

Ph.D. Gevorg Grigoryan

Jiangxi Tellhow Animation College, Nanchang, Jiangxi Province (China)
Ph.D. lecturer at Yerevan Brusov State University of Social Sciences and Languages,
Yerevan (Armenia)

Ph.D researcher JingJing Shi

Taizhou Vocational and Technical College China, Zhejiang Province, Taizhou
Ph.D researcher in Mara Teknologi University (Malaysia)

References

- Polakova, P., & Klimova, B. (2024). Implementation of AI-driven technology into education – a pilot study on the use of chatbots in foreign language learning. *Cogent Education*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186x.2024.2355385>
- Zhang R., Zhang, D. Zou, & G. Cheng. (2023). A review of chatbot-assisted learning: Pedagogical approaches, implementations, factors leading to effectiveness, theories, and future directions. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 1-29.

Mínguez-Vallejos, R. y Linares-Borboa, L. (coords.) (2023).

La pedagogía de la alteridad. Un compromiso ético con otro modo de educar
Octaedro. 192 pp.

Education is in crisis and the school is at a difficult crossroads. Faced with this, a new publication has appeared, *La pedagogía de la alteridad*, which offers a valuable lifeline to rescue education from dehumanisation.

This work is coordinated by Ramón Mínguez Vallejos, who has a doctorate in Philosophy and Educational Sciences from the Universidad de Valencia and holds a chair in the field of Theory and History of Education at the Universidad de Murcia, along with Luis Linares Borboa, a doctor in Education and Values from the Technical and Higher Education Centre (Centro de Enseñanza Técnica y Superior, CETYS Universidad, Mexico).

With a prologue by Dr Pedro Ortega Ruíz, who sowed the seed of this innovative proposal, it comprises six chapters, written by prestigious researchers from the field of values education.

The hypertechnologisation of societies, the lack of absolute certainties, and the presence of widespread uncertainty have had a great impact on our philosophy of life and on relations between members of the educational community. Individualistic and egocentric attitudes currently dominate in opposition to sincere acts of responsibility and commitment. As a result, the pedagogy of otherness has emerged, fruit of nonconformity and of the aspiration to change the direction of the wind. Based on the postulates of the philosophical thought of Levinas, Linares defines it as:

A pedagogical approach that seeks to recognise that any educational action creates an ethical relationship between the teacher and the students, and that this relationship is asymmetrical, not because the teacher has more power, but because in this relationship the student is automatically a responsibility for the teacher. (2023, p. 40)

After a detailed description of the relevant concepts and of the origins of this theory, Marta Gutiérrez Sánchez and Marina Pedreño Plana, both professors at the Universidad de Murcia, introduce us to one of its pillars: responsibility. Taking the etymological sense of the word, they relate it to a duty: the duty to respond to something or for someone. When it takes form in educational reality, it must permeate the teacher–student relationship, the concept of the curriculum, and the methodology. So, they identify a series of implications: the adoption of an empathetic attitude by the teacher; the existence of a curriculum that includes the stories of suffering of our ancestors, adapted to the needs and concerns of the students and open to the testimonies of various social stakeholders, and the application of organisational and methodological strategies that favour intersubjective relationships, for example, project-based learning and service-learning.

Welcoming is another of its core pillars. Doctors Pedro Ortega Ruíz and Eduardo Romero Sánchez link this to hospitality. This is a gesture that does not expect anything in exchange. In educational actions, this means that the teacher must be sensitive to the unique life circumstances and experiences of each learner to be able to accompany them as they construct their life project. From there, she will abandon the reductionist idea that identifies the learner as a depositary of knowledge and will be in a position to guide the learner's process of personal growth and maturity. In this sense, it would go a step beyond merely incorporating an individual into a group by adapting the surrounding space. Nonetheless, they warn us that implementing it is no easy task, as it demands a prior exercise of introspection in which the educator considers who the learner is to her. From there, she will abandon the reductionist idea that identifies her as a depositary of knowledge and she will be in a position to guide the learner's process of personal growth and maturity.

As we pass the half-way point in the book, Ramón Mínguez Vallejos and José Luis Espinosa Garza present the third component of the pedagogy of otherness: compassion. Rejecting unjust situations that cause other people pain and suffering is part of our DNA. This firm rejection unleashes feelings of compassion. At the same time, this emotion becomes effective when it crystallises in an action that humanises the victims. With the concept positioned within

the ethics of Levinas, the researchers resolve the question of how to educate in compassion. In this regard, they express the need to step out of the classroom to observe the different realities of people who suffer; to reflect on the feelings of one and another party and on how to act; to favour closeness; and to guide the selection of the most appropriate response and support the action and revision of the whole process.

Testimony is the last element in the bedrock of this new paradigm. With Professor Carlos Antonio González Palacios (CETYS Universidad), we discover the essential nature of testimony as a vehicle for lived experiences. In this context, testimony would fulfil a function of structuring thought that enables us to understand the world around us. Moving this category into education, it is argued that the teacher, as the person bearing testimony, does not have to be a model or exemplary individual but that she has to show her errors and imperfections, transmitting credibility in the narration of her experiences. Equally, in her education programme she will integrate activities that make clear the relationship between testimony, memory, heritage, and human rights. González identifies some didactic proposals relating to this point: explaining historical facts from the perspective of the vanquished; inviting older people and survivors of catastrophes into the classroom; visiting natural and cultural sites (museums, concentration camps, etc.); considering the legends and customs of a community and analysing the testimonies from research into social problems (labour exploitation, economic crises, delinquency, etc.).

The work closes with a paean to hope. Alberto Gárate Rivera and Doris Elizabeth Becerra Polío, also from CETYS Universidad, call on the Graeco-Latin myth of Pandora's box to encourage teachers to fight all of the evils that blight education in these moments, adopting a true pedagogy of otherness in their day-to-day work.

Paloma Rosauero-Moragues

Primary School Teacher, specialist in Therapeutic Pedagogy and Hearing and Language.
CEIP Rafael Nicolás Raya (España)

Jover, G. y Quiroga, P. (2024).

Nacidos para jugar. Perspectivas educativas en torno al juego en la infancia.
Ediciones Complutense. 266 pp.

The monograph *Nacidos para jugar. Perspectivas educativas en torno al juego de la infancia* [Born to Play: Educational Perspectives on Play in Childhood], edited by Gonzalo Jover and Patricia Quiroga from the Theory and History of Education area at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, is a very up-to-date work in the field of contemporary pedagogy, addressing the role of play in childhood development from a multidisciplinary perspective.

Across eight essays, the authors present play as not just a playful and recreational activity, but also as an essential component that contributes to the all-round development of children of all genders.

The methodology they use is marked by a focus that combines two elements: description and commentary regarding theoretical frameworks that focus on the pedagogy of childhood, and the effective practice of different contemporary pedagogies. Broadly speaking, it is based on a commentary on theoretical assumptions and key concepts, which allows the authors to base their arguments on solid educational theories, as can be seen in the reference lists used. The text's structure also allows each chapter – written by different professionals from the field of education with opposing viewpoints that interweave the conservative, with regard to the conceptualisation of gender, and the liberal, in the case of the democratisation of human development – to provide a coherent narrative about the role of play in children's agency, enriching the debate and offering more than one necessary vision of childhood. This focus not only provides an acceptable theoretical foundation, but also invites readers to reflect on

and rethink the practical application of these ideas in the different Spanish and supranational educational contexts.

The case is also made for unforced inclusion of play through specific examples and references to recognised pedagogies, such as those of Montessori, Steiner, or Piaget among others, and the connection between the two centuries of constructed institutional education is facilitated, providing useful tools to understand adults' conception of childhood. Furthermore, the work underlines the importance of cultural and social context in education, something that is fundamental in an individualistic, diverse, and globalised world that "is not, but is becoming". The case is also made for dialogue and reflection on how to integrate different theoretical-cultural perspectives into complex and heterogeneous ludic experiences, promoting an inclusive and respectful setting in the interest of transforming children's autonomy.

The book can be subdivided into three blocks of content dedicated to philosophical-pedagogical thinking, pedagogical praxis, and critical analysis. From the start, the book establishes a firm commitment to regarding play as a fundamental right of children, supporting this assertion with a theoretical-referential framework. It argues that play is a crucial aspect of humanity, closely linked to care and the inherent human propensity to socialisation, connecting the theories of classic thinkers such as Piaget and Vygotski with an ontological reflection that puts play at the heart of affective and cognitive development. The idea that play is not just a way of learning but also a space where children can explore their identity and establish meaningful links with their surroundings is a focus that prompts us to reconsider current pedagogical practices. This has practical implications that can transform how education is done in classrooms.

The notion of "everyday aesthetics" is introduced as a concept that enriches this discussion. Through play, the possibility of cultivating democracy and cultural plurality is raised, suggesting that play-based experiences can be fundamental for developing an active and conscious citizenship, as well as treating children as active subjects in everyday life. This focus considers how play can help build a school setting where respect and diversity are core values.

In this context, the book also considers pedagogies that integrate play, as a central pillar of learning. Through commentary and critique, educational approaches are highlighted such as those of Montessori, who excluded play from her school, and Steiner, who incorporated it as the centre of his practice. The argument is clear: play should not be seen as a secondary element, but as an essential pedagogical tool that facilitates meaningful and deep learning. Integrating elements of play in the classroom does not just promote curiosity and discovery; it also allows learning that is more connected to children's lived experiences. This represents a paradigm shift in education, where play, as an inherent element of the development of agency that is being built, becomes an ally in the construction of individual and social knowledge. Likewise, the concept of "slow education" is introduced, which challenges traditional educational structures. This idea suggests that play can be a democratic and subversive act, inviting educators to rethink the time and space in which the interaction occurs. The suggestion that play should be an inalienable right of childhood is a brave and necessary position, which advocates for a change in how education is conceived. This focus is not only optimistic, but also critical, as it recognises the limitations of the current education system and proposes alternatives that can enrich the learning experience.

Another crucial aspect that is addressed in the book is the influence of cultural context on the social development in childhood. It is emphasised that play is a universal phenomenon that reflects the cultural wealth of each community, as well as being an element that provides cohesion and dignity. This anthropological focus is novel, as it provides a synthetic framework to understand how human experiences can be inclusive and representative of cultural diversity considering plurality. According to the author, and starting from an active large-scale syncretism, including different cultures in experiences of play is not only desirable but also necessary to promote respect and integration in the school environment. This analysis leads educators to see play as an opportunity to foster dialogue on cultural norms and values,

helping children develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding of their surroundings, something that is meaningful in the construction of a society that is active in relation to decision making.

Finally, the book addresses the intersection of play and technology, analysing how the incorporation of video games and gamification in education can transform learning. However, it also issues a warning about the hazards of superficial integration of technology, emphasising the need for a critical focus that ensures that these tools are genuinely beneficial for the educational process. This call to discern between the educational and the commercial is essential in a context where children are ever more exposed to digital content. The work suggests that, while technology can offer new opportunities for learning through play, it is vital that educators remain alert to the risks of excessive dependency on these tools.

All in all, a variety of convincing arguments are presented in an informative way, and they agree on the importance of play in children's development, inviting everyone involved in education to integrate these perspectives in their practices, especially students who are training in bachelor's and master's programmes focussing on the field of education. This work is recommended reading for anyone interested in promoting children's development, as it provides a solid theoretical framework and practical proposals that can transform how we understand and apply play in primary and secondary contexts of socialisation. It is a call to reflect on how play can and should be conceived inside and outside the classic educational setting, emphasising its relevance in the formation of identities, socialisation, and learning and development of a young citizenship.

María F. De la Torre

Universidad Complutense de Madrid (España)

Instructions for authors

A. Purpose of the journal

Revista Española de Pedagogía was created in 1943 and its search for excellence has always distinguished itself. It has been the first journal of pedagogical research in Spanish that has been indexed in the most relevant international databases. It accepts only original, high quality submissions from anywhere in the world that help advance pedagogical knowledge, avoid mere opinion polls, and are of general interest. Articles must follow commonly accepted ethical criteria; in particular, in cases of plagiarism and falsification of data, the author will be penalized by the rejection of their submissions. Articles with more than three authors will only be accepted if a reasoned explanation is provided, and in any case, the intellectual collaboration of all the signatories must be certified, not just data collection. Three issues a year are published.

B. Languages used in the journal

REP publishes all scientific articles and bibliographic reviews in Spanish and English.

When an article is accepted for publication and in order to guarantee the use of correct academic language in both languages, an agreement will be reached with the authors for the translation of their article into English or Spanish. If necessary, the translation will be made by professional experts who are native speakers of each language according to the conditions described in **H. Article Processing Charges (APCs)**. All contents of the original article, including tables and graphs, must be translated.

Texts cited in the article that were originally published in Spanish, even if they were later published in an English translation, must also be included in their original language. In this way, translators will not have to translate these texts again. In particular, it is preferable for a classic text to be cited with both versions: that of its original and that of the printed translation.

C. Requirements of originals

C.1. The publication of research articles must be in accordance with the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association 7th Edition, 2020*, (www.apastyle.org). Here are some basic points which must be strictly followed by the authors.

- 1) The length of the contributions, including all sections, will be between 6000 and 7500 words, using the Times New Roman font.
- 2) Articles should be submitted following the structure and formats indicated in the template that can be found on the journal's website (https://www.revistadepedagogia.org/rep/plantilla_articulo_eng.docx).
- 3) In cases where authors have compound names or use more than one last name, such as Hispanic authors, they should be connected with a hyphen. Example: María-Teresa Calle-Molina.

- 4) The authors must indicate the role of each one using **CREDIT taxonomy** (example available in the template).
- 5) 6 to 8 keywords should be included.
- 6) Following the APA model, the References list will be at the end of the article, in alphabetical order by surname, naming all the authors up to a maximum of twenty, with the second line indented.

The translation into English or Spanish should be included in square brackets next to the original title of the publications, since in the Spanish version of the article, the Spanish translations of the titles of the works published in English will be provided. **DOI of publications should be always included whenever possible.**

Some examples are given below:

• **Books:**

Genise, N., Crocama, L., & Genise, G. (2019). *Manual de psicoterapia y psicopatología de niños y adolescentes [Manual of Psychotherapy and Psychopathology of Children and Adolescents]*. Editorial Akadia.

• **Journal articles:**

Siegel, H. (2002). Philosophy of education and the Deweyan legacy. *Educational Theory*, 52 (3), 273-280. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5446.2002.00273.x>

• **Chapters in multiauthor books:**

Mendley, D. M. (2005). The research context and the goals of teacher education. In M. Mohan & R. E. Hull (Eds.), *Teaching Effectiveness* (pp. 42-76). Educational Technology Publications.

• **References to web page:**

Guarino, B. (2019, January 3). How will humanity react to alien life? Psychologists have some predictions. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/speaking-of-science/wp/2017/12/04/how-will-humanity-react-to-alien-life-psychologists-have-some-predictions>

U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). *U.S. and world population clock*. U.S. Department of Commerce. Retrieved July 3, 2019, from <https://www.census.gov/popclock/>

- 7) References in the body of the article are written in an abbreviated way that differs from what is used in the Reference list. Specifically, if the reference is a direct quotation, the text must be enclosed in quotation marks and, usually at the end, the author's last name, year and page number are placed in parentheses: "(Taylor, 1994, p. 93)". If it is not a direct quotation, and so is not enclosed in quotation marks, the page number will be omitted: (Taylor, 1994). When the author's name is given in the text he/she will not be included in the parenthesis: "According to Taylor (1994, p. 93), culture ..." When an idea is supported by several authors, they will be separated by semicolons: "(Taylor, 1994; Nussbaum, 2012)".

To quote several works by one author, only the years will be added after the author, with letters added if it is necessary to distinguish between publications from the same year: "(Taylor, 1994, 1996a, 1996b)".

When citing works by 3 or more authors, only the first one is cited followed by "et al".

Textual quotes will be written in-line if they have fewer than 40 words. If the quotation has 40 words or more, it will be placed in a separate paragraph, without quotation marks, indented by 0.5 cm and in the body text style in a typeface one point smaller. Following the quotation, the author, the year and the page are added in parentheses. The material quoted is reproduced textually, including spelling and punctuation.

Other authors' texts will be quoted following the criterion of consulting the originals that are written in those languages and using their official translation when such text has also been

edited in the other language. If this official translation is not available, the quoted text will be offered to the readers translated by the author of the article (noting that the translation belongs to the author of the article), or by the sworn translator hired by the journal.

The use of endnotes will be limited. They must have correlative numbering, using the automatic system in Word and they will be placed after the body of the article and before the References that list everything cited in the text.

- 8) To highlight a word, italics will be used. Underlining or bold should not be used.
- 9) The number of lists, diagrams, tables and figures in the text should be limited. These will be called Tables or Figures. In any case, they must be where they should be in the article. In tables, columns should be aligned using tabs (only one tab per column). When quoted in the text (e.g., “as we see in Figure 1 on core subjects”), only the first letter will be capitalized, while at the top of the Table or Figure the whole word will be in small caps, in 12 point capital with Arabic numerals, followed by a point, writing the title in normal text.

The text within the table will be written in the same typeface as the normal text and in 9 point. The source of the table or figure will be placed below it, without a space of separation, stating the Source, colon, surnames, comma and year.

Graphs and tables, in addition to appearing where they should in the article, have to be sent in their original editable format whenever possible. Images should always be sent in high resolution (300 dpi).

- 10) Equations will be centered, separated from the main text by two lines. They should be referenced in the text, stating the number of the equation; therefore, they will be accompanied by Arabic numerals, aligned to the right and in parentheses in the same line.
- 11) The article will conclude with a list of the bibliographical references of all the works cited, except for the works cited whose authors include one of the authors of the article. In these cases, these works will be listed in the version with names of the authors, while in the anonymous ones they will not be included in the references, although they will appear in the text, where they will appear as follows: “(Author, 2022, p. 39)”. Citation of publications belonging to journals or publishers considered “predatory”, i.e., those that lack a rigorous and quality scientific evaluation system (e.g., double-blind peer review) and whose main purpose is not to disseminate knowledge but to obtain an economic profit by charging publication fees to authors. Lists of predatory publishers and journals can be consulted at: <https://beallslist.net/>
- 12) Finally, a brief biography of the authors should be included, of a maximum of ten to fifteen lines, which should mention their ORCID and the main aspects of their academic career, current academic situation and the university where they obtained their higher academic degree.
- 13) Authors of published works that have been carried out with research data including the sex variable are encouraged to report whether the conclusions have taken into account possible differences between sexes.

C.2. In addition to research articles, the **Revista Española de Pedagogía** wishes to keep up to date by publishing, in various formats, other works and relevant information in pedagogical science. For this reason, it publishes reviews of books, current news, brief commentaries on educational problems, readers’ comments on articles published in the last year, etc. The reviews, always on recent books from relevant publishers, will be between 1200 and 1700 words. They will be headed by the book’s details as follows:

Villardón-Gallego, L. (Coord.) (2015). *Competencias genéricas en educación superior [Generic competences in higher education]*. Narcea. 190 pp.

Commentaries will be of moderate length. The analysis of published articles will be sent, from the journal, to the author of the analysed article, so that he/she can prepare a response.

D. Policy on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in articles

Authors must follow the AI use policy established by Revista Española de Pedagogía and declare compliance with the following sections before submitting their articles.

- 1) Authorship of the article:
 - Author(s) cannot cite AI as the author or co-author of the submitted articles.
- 2) Use of AI in the writing process:
 - The authors may only use generative AI or AI-assisted technologies to improve the language and readability of this article.
 - If AI is used, authors must cite it in the References section according to the use of APA standards in force in the journal.
- 3) Use of Language Multimodal Model (LMM) or Large Language Model (LLM) in the development of the article:
 - The authors are responsible for reviewing and validating the AI-generated information.
 - The authors should indicate and document the use of LLM or LMM in the Methods section.
- 4) Use of AI-generated images and videos in the article:
 - The use of AI-generated images and videos in articles is not permitted.
- 5) IA Policy Compliance:
 - In the case of non-compliance with the IA policy, the journal may reject (pre-publication), retract (post-publication), or publish an editorial notice on the article.

The acceptance of **this declaration is mandatory** if the authors wish to publish it in the journal.

E. Submissions

Submission of papers is open on a permanent basis. Special deadlines will be established for publicly announced monographic issues.

All papers must be submitted through the journal's web platform by clicking on the following link: [Enviar artículo | Submit Article](#)

After creating the user, the system will guide you through a series of pages in which you will be asked to accept the Submission agreement, the journal's policies, the requirements for papers submitted to the journal, and to enter the data related to the authors and the submitted article. Only papers that comply with these policies and journal requirements will be considered for evaluation.

The system accepts Word or RTF files. The system will automatically generate a PDF for you. Images or graphics should be placed in the article in their proper place in the highest possible quality. If the images are not of sufficient quality (300 dpi), they will be requested again from the authors once their article has been accepted for publication. Tables should be placed in the article in the appropriate place and be editable.

The corresponding author will receive an automatic notification confirming receipt of the article. This notification will indicate the link through which you will be able to access your article on the journal's web platform and make any modifications or send new files that may be necessary during all the evaluation and editing process of the article.

F. Submissions evaluation and editorial processing times

The editors will make an initial assessment of the article based on the suitability of the proposals to the editorial criteria of the **REP**. Authors can consult more information on the type of articles accepted by the journal at the following link: [Scope](#). The result of this assessment will be notified within a maximum period of one month. If a positive first evaluation is received, the paper will be peer-reviewed. Authors will receive the result of the second evaluation within approximately three months.

Each article submitted will be subject to the journal's editorial decision process. The journal is under no obligation to publish the article.

The deadline established for the completion of the evaluation process is four months, counting from the notification of receipt of the article. At the end of this period, the author will normally be informed of the final result of the evaluation. Authors can consult more information on the evaluation procedures followed by the journal at the following link: Submissions evaluation and editorial processing times. An author whose article has not been selected may resubmit other papers at a later date.

Accepted articles will begin the editing process (translation, style correction, layout, etc.), to be subsequently included in the corresponding issue, according to the decision of the editorial direction. Once the editorial process has been completed, the preliminary layout of the text will be sent to the authors for final revision and approval. The editing process usually takes a maximum of two months.

The average time between the receipt of an article and its publication is six months.

Publication of articles does not entitle the author to any remuneration.

G. Publication costs

REP provides diamond open access. Publication is free and open with no costs to authors or readers.

H. Article Processing Charges (APCs)

In order to guarantee the quality of published scientific articles, we follow a policy of only accepting professional translations from accredited translators or translations from authors whose mother tongue is Spanish or English or who have a high level of proficiency in these languages.

Once an article has been approved for publication in the **REP**, in cases where a professional translation into English or Spanish is required, authors must pay for the translation under the following conditions:

- If it is an article supported by a research grant, or similar, the invoice will be paid in full by the body supporting the research. The total cost will generally depend on the number of words translated. If this institution has an accredited professional translation service, translations carried out by the funding body will also be accepted.
- In the case of an article without research or publication support, the author will pay the maximum amount of 400 euros (including 21% VAT), and the journal will be responsible for the rest of the quoted translation costs, which will depend on the number of words translated.

The costs of translating bibliographical reviews or other non-scientific content published in the journal in Spanish and English will be fully covered by the journal.

I. Dissemination of published papers

Once the papers have been published in the **Revista Española de Pedagogía**, authors can contribute to dissemination tasks, both by supporting the ones that the journal itself carries out and by their own initiative.

The **Revista Española de Pedagogía** has profiles on the main social networks (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn), where it disseminates the papers it publishes, consequently we recommend that authors follow the journal on these networks and share their publications.

<https://www.facebook.com/revistadepedagogia>

<https://twitter.com/REPedagogia>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/revista-espanola-de-pedagogia>

To assist in the dissemination of their articles, once approved for publication, authors will be asked to send:

- Two key summary sentences of their article of a maximum of 180 characters for use on social network X.
- A summary of your article of about 90 words for use on Facebook and LinkedIn.
- A video of approximately 1 minute in length, in horizontal format, summarizing the main ideas developed in the article for use on our social networks would also be appreciated.
- Our journal is also part of the academic blog Aula Magna 2.0 (<http://cuedespyd.hypotheses.org/>), where entries on topics of interest for educational research are published periodically, as well as reviews of articles, which contribute to its dissemination. Aula Magna 2.0 publishes an entry dedicated to an article of the **REP** for each published issue, for which the authors will be asked to provide a longer summary, of between 600 and 1500 words, in a language accessible to the general public and a high-resolution photograph.

Authors are also encouraged to deposit or disseminate accepted articles in:

- Institutional repository of their university and public repositories (SSRN, Zenodo, etc.).
- Google Scholar, ORCID, Dimensions, PlumX, etc.
- Scientific social networks.
- Social networks (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.).
- Personal or institutional website, blog, etc.

It is required that all the bibliographic data of the published work be detailed in these publications.

Each author should consider using the most effective means of disseminating their article, obtaining citations and contributing to the advancement of pedagogical knowledge.

Databases and bibliographic directories

Social Sciences Citation Index, Scopus, Cabell's International, Catálogo Latindex, Contents Pages in Education, Dialnet, Dulcinea, EBSCO Academic Search Complete, EBSCO Academic Search Elite, EBSCO Academic Search Premier, EBSCO Academic Search Ultimate, EBSCO Education Full Text, EBSCO Education Research Complete, EBSCO Education Source, EBSCO Education Source Ultimate, EBSCO Serials Directory, Educational Research Abstracts Online (ERA), Fuente Académica, Fuente Académica Plus, Fuente Académica Premier, Google Scholar, IBR Online Internationale Bibliographie der Rezensionen geistes- und sozialwissenschaftlicher Literatur, IBZ Online Internationale Bibliographie der geistes- und sozialwissenschaftlichen Zeitschriftenliteratur, IRESIE. Base de datos sobre Educación, JSTOR, Matriz de Información para el Análisis de Revistas (MIAR), MLA International Bibliography, Periodicals Index Online (PIO), Psycodoc, Redined – Red de información educativa, Social SCIssearch, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory.

Classifications and rankings

Journal Citation Reports (JCR), Scimago Journal & Country Rank (SJR), Scopus Sources, Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione del Sistema Universitario e della Ricerca (ANVUR), Clasificación Integrada de Revistas Científicas (CIRC), Dialnet Métricas, European Reference Index for the Humanities (ERIH).

Library catalogs

Catálogo Colectivo de la Red de Bibliotecas Universitarias Españolas (REBIUN), Catálogo Colectivo de Publicaciones Periódicas (Biblioteca Nacional), Catálogo Colectivo del CSIC, Catálogo de la Biblioteca de Educación (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional), Catalogue Collectif de France (CCFr), Catalogue SUDOC (Francia), Library Hub Discover (Reino Unido), The British Library Current Serials Received, Worldcat (OCLC).

The **Revista Española de Pedagogía** was founded in 1943 by the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas and has been published since issue 259 by the Universidad Internacional de La Rioja. The journal has a research nature and a universal vocation. It was the first journal in Spanish to be indexed in the Education category of the *Social Sciences Citation Index* and the *Journal Citation Reports*.

The **Revista Española de Pedagogía** publishes three issues a year. The authors express the ideas contained in their respective articles under their sole responsibility. A full English version of the articles published from 2017 onwards is available on the journal's website.

Correspondence should be addressed to the Directors of the Revista Española de Pedagogía: Avenida de la Paz 137, 26006 Logroño, La Rioja, Spain.
For more information, please visit <https://revistas.unir.net/index.php/rep>.



Published by the Universidad Internacional de La Rioja