INSTITUTIONAL SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE INITIATIVES OF EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN LATVIA

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***Abstract**. The article deals with the implemented initiatives of education for sustainable development in educational institutions and the evidence of institutional social responsibility in them. The data were collected by the content analysis of 15 homepages of institutions implementing education for sustainable development, questionnaire to 151 students aged 14-19 years and 24 interviews with 12 principals and 12 teachers on the state of the art of sustainability issues in their organisations. The sample of 12 educational institutions, principal and teacher represented the same educational institution: 4 primary schools, 4 secondary schools and 4 state gymnasiums with a wide geographical representation – capital, urban, small town and rural schools, as well as 7 online correspondences with the representatives of organisations implementing education for sustainable development initiatives in Latvia.*
The data show that sustainable development initiatives are not systematically implemented and monitored in educational institutions in Latvia. There is no co-financing at national level to provide targeted methodological support for teachers in implementing practice-based education for sustainable development, instead schools attract funding from Erasmus+ or other projects. There is also a lack of a common understanding of sustainability culture among the members of the education management team, as well as no studies have been carried out on institutional social responsibility in educational institutions and regarding the implementation of education for sustainable development in curricula.
***Keywords:** education for sustainable development, initiatives, institutional social responsibility, sustainable development goals, sustainable team management.*

Introduction

The economic situation in Latvia and the world, the reform of districts in Latvia, and the tendencies of decreasing number of students in the context of the increasing amount of information and knowledge, place higher demands for educational institutions in Latvia, which are characterized by competitiveness, the ability to innovatively integrate into the development processes of the surrounding environment and are oriented towards the implementation of sustainable development.

Education is the means by which each generation passes on its culture, discoveries, successes and failures to the next. Without inter-generational education, very little can be sustained in the human context. Topicality of this study is identified by the role of education in the development of the world vision, which is determined by the crucial development plans and programmes mentioned below:

- United Nations General Assembly (2015) adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that has its core 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 sub-goals (United Nations General Assembly, 2015).
- UNESCO (2016) the Global Action Programme (GAP) on Education for Sustainable Development established Partnership Networks, it serves as a global community of practice and intensifies the partnership between the GAP activities of their members.
- The 40th UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2021) presented the framework for ESD entitled "Education for Sustainable Development: Towards the Achievement of the SDGs (ESD by 2030)".
- Topicality in Latvia is confirmed by The National Development Plan of Latvia 2021-2027 which sets the priority "Knowledge and skills for personal and national growth", with the action line "Quality, accessible, inclusive education" aiming at "Quality implementation of new curriculum in general education and dissemination of best practices in teaching approach, with particular emphasis on entrepreneurship and digital skills, education for sustainable development and future skills" (Cross-Sectoral Coordination Center, 2020, p. 30).

The link between the SDGs and ESD has been established in two ways. Firstly, ESD is identified as an education goal in SDG 4, "Quality education" (Goal 4.7), as it "states that education should enable students to make informed decisions and take responsible actions for the integrity of the environment and the viability of the economy, also, improving the cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural aspects of learning" (UNESCO, 2017, p. 8). Second, the SDGs need to be integrated into education as a subject. ESD enables students to acquire skills such as strategic competence, collaborative competence, global competence, critical thinking, self-awareness and integrated problem-solving (Rieckman, 2012). ESD is acknowledged as an important prerequisite for achieving all the SDGs in their aim to transform society (UNESCO, 2017).

There has been an increasing interest in ESD in Latvian educational institutions, but in the last decade, several terms have been introduced into education: *environmental education, global education, education for sustainable development.*

The aim of this article is to explore the institutional social responsibility in the initiatives of education for sustainable development in educational institutions in Latvia.

Research question: How the implemented sustainable development initiatives in educational institutions in Latvia indicate institutional social responsibility.

Regarding the presence of SDGs in formal education in Latvia, ESD is more implemented according to voluntary initiatives and culture of educational institutions. Study results show that institutions of education do not have a united vision and understanding of sustainable management culture in institutions (Kvelde & Odina, 2023).

Literature review

The term of the sustainability of organisation is used as a synonym of sustainable development (SD) or social responsibility of organisation – it consists of economic, environmental, social (Bagdonienė, Galbuogienė, Paulavičienė, 2009), political and corporate responsibility aspects (Morrissey & Heidkamp, 2022).

Leal-Filho et.al (2016) states that governance for SD is crucially deficient, characterized by fragmented policy implementation and deficiencies in stakeholder cooperation and engagement. Active participation, collaborative learning and democratic decision making is a key factor when considering issues of SD, specifically in relation to SDGs achievement (Glass & Newig, 2019). The above-mentioned aspects are key factors for an institution to integrate a holistic sustainable team management into the culture of the organization (Warner & Elser, 2015).

Morrissey & Heidkamp (2022) recognize the importance and advantages of community engagement and empowerment, especially in educational institutions. ESD, also known as Education for Global Citizenship (EGC), is no longer just a set of educational activities, but a necessity that needs to find a place in curricula, pedagogy, classrooms, educational institutions and society at large. Wals & Lenglet (2016) point out that ESD is a form of education that aims to create "sustainability citizens".

ESD implementation arrangements need to be integrated and monitored at two levels – national and institutional. UNESCO presents the toolbox of ESD for 2030 (2020), it provides an evolving set of selected resources to support Member States, regional and global stakeholders in developing actions, it, also, transforms the governance of the education institution. Priority action areas are: Advancing policy; Transforming learning environment; Building capacity of educators; Empowering and mobilizing youth and accelerating local level actions.

Based on the results of the literature review, two frameworks for effective implementation of ESD and sustainable team management in an educational institution are proposed. It is concluded that ESD frameworks are mostly applied in universities, but there is a lack of research on their implementation in schools due to the lack of quality criteria and monitoring of results.

- Ferrer-Estevez & Chalmeta (2021) proposes a framework to guide sustainability management processes through the SDGs in educational institutions, based on the Deming cycle (Swamidass, 2000), also known as the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle, and strategic planning inspired by the "Participatory Conceptual Framework for Sustainable Transformation through Education" proposed by Kioupi and Voulvoulis (2019), whose steps are based on the Back-Casting methodology, which is considered best practice in long-term planning for sustainable transition (Holmberg & Larsson, 2018).
- Müller, Lude & Hancock (2020) present the concept of the sustainable team management in educational institution, see Table 1.

*Table 1 **Summary of framework for implementation of ESD** (based on Ferrer-Estevez & Chalmeta, 2021; Müller, Lude & Hancock, 2020)*

Framework of integrating SDGs in educational institutions	
Dimensions of implementation of ESD (Ferrer-Estevez & Chalmeta, 2021)	Stages of implementation sustainable team management towards ESD (Müller, Lude & Hancock (2020)
1. Methodology Step 1 Participatory process Step 2 Strategic planning Step 3 Implementation of the actions plans Step 4 Measurement of the indicators Step 5 Evaluation and decision-making	Stage 0: Sustainability is not (yet) an issue: • only individual teachers deal with SDGs topics in their lessons • no evidence on the institutional and management level
2. Resources • Human resources: *Directive, Coordination group, Facilitators and Action groups* • Documentary resources • Physical resources • Information technology resources	Stage I: Projects: • SDGs topics are tackled in the lessons from time to time • initiatives of interdisciplinary cooperation projects • education management is aware of the SD activities
3. Interest Groups or Stakeholders • Internal stakeholders: Board of directors, teachers, administrative staff and those with other occupations at the institution, students and families • External stakeholders: civil society, public administrations, companies, organizations and other academic institutions	Stage II: System: • the teaching staff regularly implements SDGs topics in the lessons • is involved in the development of teaching concepts, projects, cooperation with external partners • education management supports the SD activities in the educational institution

4. Maturity Model (evaluation model)	Stage III: Profile:
• evaluation of the knowledge of the interest groups about the SDGs • evaluation of the quality and scope of the strategy' • evaluation of the achievement of the SDGs integration strategy	• SDGs are integrated comprehensively into teaching and school life • expressly communicated sustainability school profile • education management initiates the SD activities in the educational institution. • the certification according to a formal quality label such as, "UNESCO Project School", Eco-School or other, may have Eco-council

Research of Menzie-Ballantyne & Ham (2022) suggests that an integrated approach using ESD and EGC pedagogy has potential to:

1. enhance the development of literacy and numeracy;
2. hold potential for easing the pressures of a crowded curriculum;
3. provide students the opportunity to engage with their communities on real-world issues;
4. hold the key to fostering the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and actions needed for employment and effective citizenship in a globalized world.

Ssosse, Wagner, Hopper (2021) summarised the main reasons for insufficient implementation of the ESD in educational institution:

- Lack of financial support from government and local authorities to implement reforms;
- Lack of awareness among education teams and stakeholders;
- Lack of quality teacher training;
- Lack of consensus on the methods and nature of ESD;
- Low engagement of society in SD as it is not a national priority;
- No tools developed to assess the effectiveness of ESD in primary and secondary educational institutions, few models used for universities;
- No criteria developed to assess the impact of ESD and set deliverables.

According to study results Ferrer-Estevez & Chalmeta (2021, p.11) state that "there is a need to develop a national framework to guide educational institutions towards the achievement of the SDGs and the promotion of SD has been detected".

The UNESCO Education 2030 Global Framework for Action (2021) highlights the action needed in education curricula – improving teaching methods and learning environments. It is necessary to transform all aspects of the learning environment by taking a whole-institution approach to ESD to ensure that learners learn what they need to know in life and put what they have learned into practice. The new pedagogies of ESD advocate multi-method, experiential, active approaches to facilitate cognitive but above all affective learning, such as concrete learning situations, critical problem-solving and active learning that places the

student at the centre of the process and motivates to take part in the very design of pedagogical approaches.

Sant et al. (2018) state that integration around real-world issues also provides plenty of scope for community engagement at a variety of levels and the opportunity to nurture the types of active and informed community members. ESD has the potential to alleviate rather than add to what is perceived as a crowded curriculum (Koehn & Uitto, 2017). This suggests that rather than a curriculum review of what teachers are required to teach, the emphasis needs to be on developing and implementing appropriate professional development that looks at how teachers' plan and teach the ESD (Menzie-Ballantyne & Ham 2022).

In order to integrate ESD more effectively into teaching and learning processes, it is important for the management of educational institutions to build partnerships with national institutions, non-governmental organisations and support the initiative of teachers to participate in networks.

Institutional Social Responsibility (ISR) in the context of an educational institution, is defined as the ethical practice of transferring knowledge and actively participating in improving the well-being of society. By practicing ISR, also known as corporate citizenship, the community of educational institutions becomes aware of the impact it has on all aspects of society, including the economic, social, and environmental spheres. ISR includes public service activities such as outreach, an ethical framework to instil in students and administrative staff a sense of civic awareness and responsibility, contributing to SD, caring for the environment, conducting research activities that contribute to society and the nation (Risi et al., 2022). Glavic (2020) admits that some institutions are accepting the importance of ISR as an image-building strategy. However, it is also becoming a prominent issue in the educational sector, where education institutions can and should play a role in development of civic values and responsibilities (Glavic, 2020).

In Latvia, Sustainability Index is measured by the Institute of Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility (n.d.). Sustainable Index assessment has become popular also for public institutions, and universities in Latvia are willing to assess their performance against a range of sustainability criteria and use the data for development and improvement. This is also demonstrated by the latest results of the Sustainability Index, higher education institutions of Latvia are increasingly paying attention to ICR, for example, the University of Latvia has applied for assessment in 2023, Riga Technical University since 2018, RISEBA University of Applied Sciences since 2017, in total only 11 % (three out of 27) universities in Latvia.

According to Kvelde and Odina (2023), educational institutions do not sufficiently implement SD initiatives in the management process of educational institutions, which is not in line with Latvia's national policy and vision. One of

the reasons for this is that over the last 10 years, several terms such as *environmental education, global education and ESD* have been introduced into the Latvian curricula. This has hindered the development of a common understanding of ESD, linking it only to environmental issues.

Research design and Methodology

The article deals with one aspect of a larger scale and long-term phenomenological research to explore the concept of sustainable team management in educational institutions. The data were collected by the content analysis of 15 homepages of institutions implementing education for sustainable development, questionnaire to 151 students aged 14-19 years and 24 interviews with 12 principals and 12 teachers on the state of the art of sustainability issues in their organisations. The sample of 12 educational institutions, principal and teacher represented the same educational institution: 4 primary schools, 4 secondary schools and 4 state gymnasiums with a wide geographical representation – capital, urban, small town and rural schools, as well as 7 online correspondences with the representatives of organisations implementing education for sustainable development initiatives in Latvia.

The following limitations were faced during the research process: first, over 20 interview invitations were sent to principals of different educational institutions. Responses were received from 12 principals and 12 teachers in four cities of Latvia (Riga and its district, Rezekne and its district, Ventspils and its district and Limbazi and its district) and represented different levels of education, such as primary, secondary and grammar schools.

The second limitation was faced during content analysis which revealed that not all websites of the organisations implementing ESD initiatives had quantitative data on the number of schools participating in projects or events on their websites, so online correspondence was performed to clarify the data in seven cases. The data received were summarised in the data analysis.

Results and Discussion

Based on the literature review, the role of ESD in the implementation and achievement of the SDGs is viewed positively, but no common criteria have been developed to assess the results achieved by integrating ESD into education, curricula, and culture of organization. As a result, education has not been given a prominent role and there is no clear guidance on how to integrate ESD into the culture and management of an educational institution. Moreover, it is specifically highlighted as one of UNESCO's seven key strategies for scaling up reform, it points to the importance of defining the appropriate, relevant, and measurable

indicators at all levels – local, national, regional, and international – and for each initiative and programme (UNESCO, 2017).

Globally countries have implemented extensive public involvement measures to popularize the SDGs and to discuss the actions to be taken. Audit report says that 73 activities were implemented in Estonia, 249 activities in Finland, and 3,842 activities in Germany in 2020-2022, in comparison, four to eight SDG promotion activities were organized annually in Latvia between 2015 and 2019, but there is no activity in 2020-2022. Audit report states that "no regular, systematic, and inclusive measures are implemented to create a common understanding of the SDGs, their meaning and practical implementation in public and private sectors in Latvia. As a result, public understanding of the SDGs and their importance is still low, within the framework of which public and private sector organizations implement initiatives to promote the SDGs every year in European countries" (Latvijas Republikas Valsts kontrole/ [State Audit Office of Latvia] 2023, p. 5).

Content analysis of homepages of institutions shows that universities start developing a common understanding of the culture of sustainability in organisations, as well as of transformational management processes, while primary and secondary education institutions are not offered a nationally coherent framework for promoting ESD and practising a sustainable team management approach in the institution.

It is important to plan national campaigns to educate citizens about all the SDGs as well. It would be advisable to carry out a national study on the SDGs to analyse where teachers need support and methodological materials. Also, it is important to strengthen cooperation between organizations implementing Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) or other eco-management systems and institutions to raise the awareness among students and teachers of SDGs or to strengthen the understanding of the development of an efficient national and business economy.

There are several organisations in Latvia that promote ESD, offering participation in projects, initiatives and creating a school culture for sustainable development. The Latvian National Commission for UNESCO (UNESCO Latvia) plays a crucial role in integrating sustainable development into education, within the framework of UNESCO's ESD 2030 programme, it aims to achieve personal and societal transformation.

Admittedly, most initiatives operate as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or public organisations, attracting foreign partners/ supporters/ sponsors/ project funds without government funding. At national level, there is currently no targeted programme for the implementation of ESD initiatives in schools, with state support and co-financing, and no common framework and monitoring tool for the results to be achieved. So, participation in ESD projects is based on the strategic vision of the school management team, the initiative of teachers, the

promotion of ESD in society, and rarely the initiatives are initiated by students or their parents, the school community, and the municipality.

The content analysis of websites has been performed on the organisations and ESD initiatives (see Table 2) mentioned in interviews with school principals/ teachers and experts during the study.

Table 2 **Summary of content analysis of initiatives promoting institutional social responsibility in educational institutions in Latvia** *(created by authors)*

Initiatives on Institutional Social Responsibility	Organisation	Performance
Initiatives on ESD	Latvian National Commission for UNESCO **(UNESCO Latvia)**	Associated Schools Network (ASPnet) connects more than 12,000 schools in 182 countries. Implement programmes: *UNESCO Associated Schools Network (ASPnet), since 2015 "The World's Largest Lesson", "The Baltic Sea"*, also, organises educational programmes and ESD development projects.
	European Union programme for education, training, youth, and sport to attract support is Erasmus+ for the period 2021-2027 **(Erasmus+)**	Erasmus+ supports increasing opportunities for more participants and a wider range of educational institutions, focusing on its qualitative impact and contributing to a more inclusive and cohesive, greener, and digitally fit society. Between 2014-2021, over 13 million people have taken part in the programme. Erasmus+ provides funding for a project that contributes to a more effective implementation of the ESD.
	eTwinning	An initiative of the European Commission to promote European school cooperation through information and communication technologies (ICT) by providing the necessary infrastructure (online tools, services, support). eTwinning supports the Erasmus+ priorities. Active institutions can receive the *"eTwinning Schools Label"* as an example of eTwinning's inspiring principles of shared leadership, collaboration and sharing.
	The Education Development Centre **(EDC)**	Leading non-profit nongovernmental organization in Latvia in the field of teachers' professional development, organises educational programmes, ESD development projects and develops methodological materials. Ongoing projects: *Learners as Co-creators of Their Own Learning; Digital Transformation in Adult Learning for Active Citizenship; Participation, Cooperation, Integration: Together in the 21st century; Strengthening a Culture of Tolerance in the School Environment, Global Education Week.*
	Latvian Platform for Development	A national level platform that brings together non-governmental organisations to work for societal resilience and sustainable global development and

	Cooperation **(LAPAS)**	society. Since 2019 Latvian Multistakeholder SDG Coalition. Since 2014, organising an annual *Global Education Week, coordinated by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe.*
	The University of Latvia, Faculty of Education, Psychology and Art **(UL FEPA)**	The initiatives of study programmes and projects in teacher education, regarding the implementation of education for sustainable development initiatives in the educational sector. *Global Education Week, "The World's Largest Lesson",* Erasmus+ project "Interactive Goals"
Initiatives on Environmental Education	Environmental Education Foundation of Latvia in cooperation with Foundation for Environmental Education **(FEE)**	Has implemented the global Eco-School programme since 2011, it is one of the most popular models of environmental education in the world. More than 56,000 schools around the world are involved in the Eco-Schools programme. The symbol is the Green Flag award. Ongoing Eco-school programme: *Eco-schools Days of Action; Eco-schools climate campaign and other.* (Vides izglītības fonds/ *[Environmental Education Foundation]*, n.d.).
	Green Liberty	A non-profit NGO, founded in 1993, aims to raise awareness about social and environmental implications of current trends in consumerism, trade and globalization. Ongoing projects: *"ClimACT: Climate Education and Justice", "Waste as a Resource in Latvia – Promoting Regional Sustainability and Circularity Through the Concept of Waste as a Resource",* etc.
	Associated partner in Latvia of Worldwide Fund for Nature	The mission is to build a future where people and nature live in harmony, working for nature and human well-being. Projects: *"Bring Nature in Your School", "Earth Hour", "Climate Ambassador"*
Initiatives on Sustainable team management	Eco-Management and Audit Scheme **(EMAS)**	EMAS, a whole-school approach, helps to implement sustainability in management, teaching and learning systems. Also, educational institutions can provide learners with consistent opportunities to practise what they learn.

In response to the research question about what ESD initiatives are being implemented in educational institutions have been analysed as there is no single and unified information website that brings together all ESD initiatives implemented in Latvia in which educational institutions could also have an impact on the data collection of the study. The actual data were analysed for the period 2014-2022 (See Figure 1).

Looking at Figure 1, the blue line indicating the total number of educational institutions implementing sustainable development initiatives shows that only 35% of schools (239 out of 660 schools, 2022) are implementing sustainable development initiatives, which can be explained by the impact of the recent Covid19 education reform on the education system, but overall, they partially meet the UN benchmark for quality education. In 2020, there was a peak in

schools' engagement in ESG initiatives, while this had declined during the pandemic, although by 2022 schools were again more engaged.

A limitation of the study is that the same educational institutions participate in several initiatives at the same time and rural schools are more active in several projects.
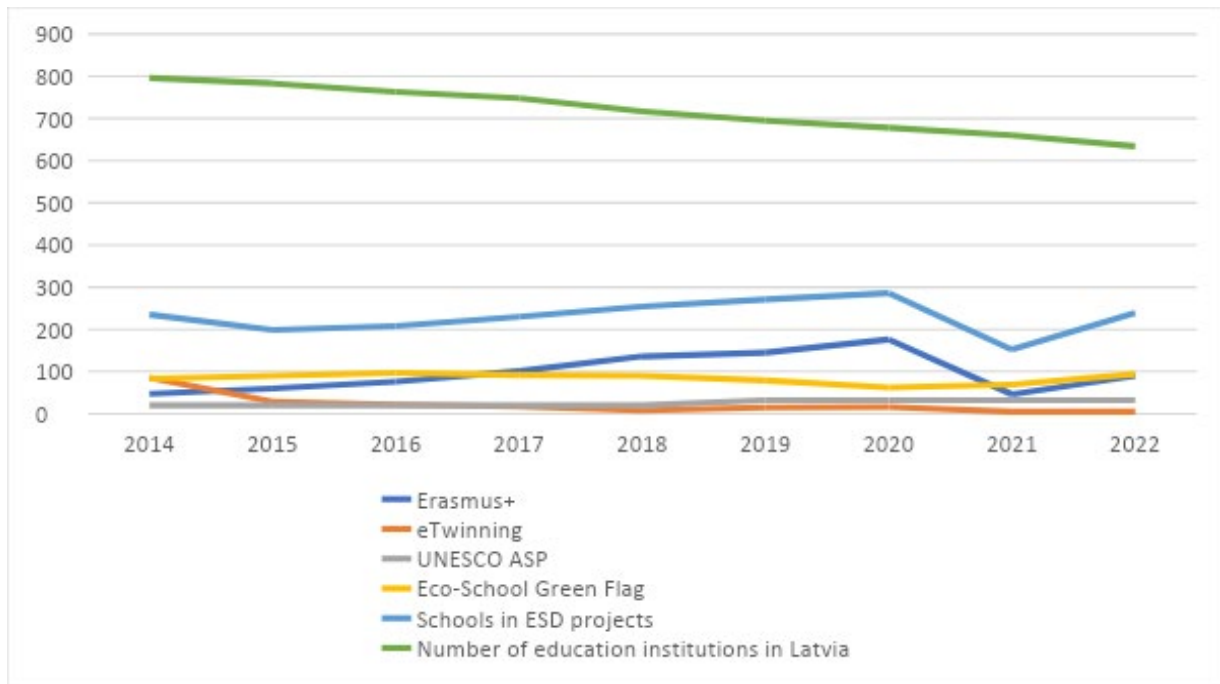

Figure 1 **Summary of number of school Initiatives on institutional social responsibility**
(created by authors)

To find out what fostered Sustainable team management in educational institutions, the principals were asked, "*What is the evidence that your school is performing as a sustainable team*?" in the interview.

33% (four out of 12 educational institutions) named their teams as sustainable teams, emphasized that they promoted SD initiatives, as well, they had received the accreditation of Eco-School programme or had been involved in Erasmus Green Deal projects. They focused on teamwork and cooperation among administration team members, teachers, and student council, and, has the Eco-Council in educational institution. Institutions engage with the community through ICR activities, involvement of neighbouring educational and public institutions and advertising SDGs activities on social networks.

42% (five out of 12 educational institutions) noted that the priority of the educational institution was to implement digital transformation, so, they did not pay enough attention to SD and teamwork cooperation, which was influenced by the frequent change of teachers, COVID-19 pandemic, and the workload of teachers, in connection with what had been happening in the world in the last three years.

According to the findings of the interviews, key elements of sustainable team management related to team performance and ICR activities are: "*sustainable development action plan, active participation, competences of principals and teachers, organisational culture, team culture, team performance, cooperation with students and parents, initiatives comes from students or teachers, change management and adoption to new challenges, real-world relevance, as well, to promote sustainability in society and taking the initiative and participating in youth and NGO conferences and forums regarding sustainability*".

Majority of the interviewed principals indicated that, "*principals and administration teams do not understand how to develop and maintain sustainable team management*", also, the educational institution lacked "*an appropriate environment for the long-term development of their team and organisation*".

Summarizing the data of teacher interviews, it can be concluded that a small number of teachers (four out of 12 educational institutions) integrate SD topics into the curriculum, while most educational institutions participate in projects related to environmental issues and the SDGs to attract funding and build a culture of sustainable attitude within the institution.

According to the questionnaire data to 151 students aged 14-19 years, to find out the level of knowledge about the SDGs in secondary school classrooms, also, to analyse which were the most used and the least used SDGs in education:

- As expected, the most familiar SDGs to secondary school students were those most talked about in the classroom, school, and society: *Good Health and Well-being (51%), Climate action (48%), Gender equality (47%), Quality education (42%)* and *Peace and Justice Strong Institutions (38%)*.
- SDGs about which secondary school students were least informed and used in the educational field were: *Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (44%), No poverty (38%), Life below water (37%), Zero Hunger (35%), Decent Work and Economic Growth, Sustainable Cities (32%)* and *Partnerships to achieve the Goal (30%)*.

The government of Latvia has not allocated funding to primary and secondary educational institutions to integrate the SDGs into everyday practice. According to Audit report, "significant improvements are needed in Latvia both at the national and municipal levels to safeguard all the prerequisites for achieving the SDGs, also, the work with the SDGs takes place without process management, a specific plan, and a specific division of tasks and responsibilities" (Latvijas Republikas Valsts kontrole/ [State Audit Office of Latvia], 2023, p. 4).

Also referring to the data of the Ssosse, Wagner, Hopper (2021) study, the most effective way to integrate ESD in Latvia is to: provide financial support to the state and local governments to implement reforms; adopt a sustainable team leadership framework in Latvian school culture; provide systematic and high-quality teacher training and information on all SDGs; involve the community in

promoting the SDGs, GDP and other SDG initiatives. There is also a need to develop tools at national level to assess the effectiveness of promoting SD in primary, secondary and higher education, as well as criteria for assessing the impact of SD and for setting targets.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Sustainable team management helps principals and their teams to lead educational institutions towards sustainability, as well as to achieve the institution's goals and cultivate a culture that values collaboration, recognition, and teamwork. Institutional social responsibility promotes the integration of the sustainable development goals' initiatives into the curriculum, the strengthening of global and civic competence for students and the team of educational institutions, the integration of ESD into the institutional culture and the preservation of a sustainable mindset.

- The data of the content analysis show that only 35% of educational institutions of Latvia (239 out of 660 schools, 2022) are implementing sustainable development initiatives, which can be explained by the Covid19 impact caused on the education system, but overall, they partially meet the UN benchmark for quality education. In 2020, there was a peak in educational institutions' engagement in ESG initiatives, while this had declined during the pandemic, although by 2022 schools were again more engaged. It has been also noticed that the same educational institutions participate in several initiatives at the same time and rural schools are more active in several projects. The most popular SDG initiatives are Erasmus+ projects, eTwinning projects and Eco-School programme.
- The questionnaire data show that the most familiar SDGs to secondary school students were those most talked about in the classroom, school, and society: Good Health and Well-being (51%), Climate action (48%), Gender equality (47%), Quality education (42%) and Peace and Justice Strong Institutions (38%). Also, the least informed and used SDGs in the educational field were: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (44%), No poverty (38%), Life below water (37%), Zero Hunger (35%), Decent Work and Economic Growth, Sustainable Cities (32%) and Partnerships to achieve the Goal (30%).
- The data of the interviews show that there is no common understanding of ESD, which is mostly associated only with environmental initiatives. ESD is an important aspect of quality education, but only 35% (239 out of 660, 2022) of schools in Latvia are actively building an ESD culture in their schools through ESD initiatives. The priority of the educational institution was also to implement the digital transformation and to

effectively address the consequences of the Covid19 pandemic, so there was no capacity or human capital to make ESD and the SDGs the second priority of the educational institution. Most of the ISR activities were implemented on the initiative of teachers/ students/ parents to take ownership and implement the activities.

Therefore, the following recommendations for effective implementation of ESD in education could be put forward:

- A national political action plan for the effective implementation of ESD should be developed.
- A study on ESD awareness in Latvian educational institutions should be conducted to identify teachers' needs in developing methodological materials.
- In cooperation with public authorities, compulsory SD events in educational institutions should be organised, similar to sports days, career week. For example, as a part of the European Sustainable Development Week (ESDW) or Global Education Week, to make ESD an integral part of the organisational culture and to develop ICR activities in schools.
- The lack of a single information site is a major problem, stagnating the promotion of partnerships between educational institutions, municipalities and NGOs implementing ESD activities and projects. A single information page should be set up on the government website, where educational institutions can find information on projects, initiatives, and methodological materials.
- There is a need to organise a methodological centre for the integration of ESD pedagogical methods and practices to provide teachers with advice and information on the latest trends in ESD.

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