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Sustainable Management of Pre-School Education Centers: A Case Study in the Province of Granada

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Abstract

The following research is aimed to analyze teaching practice related to the sustainable management in Pre-School Education (PE) centers. We understand sustainable management as those behavior patterns related to the treatment of resources in the center which employ them in an environmentally respectful way.

As a qualitative method, we consulted 30 teachers using a semi-structured interview composed of 27 questions organized in 7 different analysis categories. The quantitative counterpart was carried out by means of a Likert scale which scored from 1 to 5 the aforementioned categories.

In most cases, found weaknesses revolve around the energy, the management of water and waste, as well as the mobility solutions. Those aspects in which teachers have a larger scope for action, such as green areas and responsible consumption, obtained a better score and were considered as strengths.

Teachers show a high implication in the greening of the curriculum of regular daily work in the classes and, on the other hand, a low capacity of direct incidence in the management of the resources of the center. This causes difficulties to intervene in environmental problems which require different levels of participation in the decision making process, and which involve multiple agents in the solution of the problems and the adoption of strategic measures.

It is utterly important for the centers to carry out a complete and exhaustive eco-audit to elaborate a set of patterns to follow in order to correct and foster the detected weaknesses and strengths.

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1. Introduction

Current environmental problems such as the loss of biodiversity, soil overuse, draining of resources, introduction of non-autochthonous species and climate change, are forcing educators to get actively implicated in the search of solutions for all these problems which deeply affect citizens. Environmental Education (EE) has become institutionalized as a necessary modality of systematic and structured intervention inside mandatory educational systems, by getting integrated in the curriculum in different modalities and formats in an effort of coordinated strategic planning from different institutional perspectives worried by a common cause: educating critical citizens committed to environmental issues (Gutiérrez, 2011).

Education centers constitute a privileged scenario to work this kind of competences, since peculiar human interactions having special relevance for the involved people, take place in them. On the one hand, given their specific educational function, they have a fundamental role to helping the analysis and comprehension of complex reality, on the other hand, the educational community constitutes itself a miniaturized model of a city in which it is possible to test different procedures and adopt sustainable solutions in a reduced scale. Hence, schools can be a good place to imagine and experiment strategies to live according to the basic tenet of sustainability in the daily practice (Burgos, Gutiérrez y Perales, 2015).

A school including education for sustainability in their curriculum will become an educational community which prepares their agents for the future, and which forms part of the culture of complexity, which fosters critical thinking and which teaches to feel and respect the environment behaving in a responsible way. These centers offer an education based on innovation, participation and local and global collaboration.

2. Objectives

Our research is aimed to discover which measures are being carried out from pre-school education centers through the scope of management. Along this article we explain the procedure followed to the consecution of this main goal together with the different instruments we generated to gather information as well as the findings and conclusions.

3. Research Procedure

We based our study on descriptive research since we aim to discover and interpret sustainable management of schools from the lens of teachers.

3.1. Sample

The sample is composed of 30 pre-school teachers working in different centers in Granada and its province (Spain). In this case, we employed a non-probabilistic sampling of intentional character to select our sample, since we consider this sample as the most representative of the population under study. 86.7% of the interviewees are women, while 13.3% are men.

3.2. Data collection tools

As the data gathering tool we elaborated a protocol composed of 27 questions organized in seven different categories of analysis. The interview contains questions related to the following aspects: Water, Waste, Energy, Mobility, Green areas, Resources and Responsible consumption.

Additionally, to evaluate data in a quantitative way, we developed a value scale in which the subjects scored from 1 (not satisfactory at all) to 5 (very satisfactory) their satisfaction degree with the seven proposed categories.

Therefore, we have followed a twofold methodological approach since we carry out both qualitative and quantitative analyses. On the one hand, we employ quantitative analysis through the value scale to ease the

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