

Transiciones verdes para cambiar los comportamientos con los colegios religiosos a partir de un mejor compromiso medioambiental de las organizaciones

Green transitions for changing behaviour through environmental organizations engagement at religious schools

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Recibido/Received: 19-10-23. Aceptado/Accepted: 12-02-2024

Cómo citar/How to cite: Broets, Aloysius O.S.B and Robina Ramirez, Rafael. 2024. "Green transitions for changing behaviour through environmental organizations engagement at religious schools", *Journal of the Sociology and Theory of Religion*, 16: 233-259. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24197/jstr.1.2024.233-259>

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Resumen: El trabajo de investigación subraya la importancia del compromiso medioambiental de la comunidad, especialmente en escuelas e instituciones religiosas, para cultivar el sentido de la responsabilidad medioambiental en los estudiantes. Aboga por un enfoque educativo bien organizado y profesional para aumentar la conciencia medioambiental de los estudiantes. El trabajo destaca el papel positivo de los colegios religiosos en la promoción de la conciencia medioambiental. Estos están en condiciones de colaborar con los comités interdisciplinarios de sostenibilidad desde a un "enfoque institucional integral" que fomente los valores religiosos entre los estudiantes y la mejora de la conciencia medioambiental de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: Medio ambiente; compromiso con la comunidad; colegio religioso; experiencias de aprendizaje

Abstract: The research paper underlines the importance of the environmental commitment of the community, especially in schools and religious institutions, to cultivate a sense of environmental responsibility in students. It advocates for a well-organized, professional educational approach to increase students' environmental awareness. The work highlights the positive role of religious schools in promoting environmental awareness. These are in a position to collaborate with interdisciplinary sustainability committees from a "comprehensive institutional approach" that promotes religious values among students and improves students' environmental awareness.

Keywords: Environment; community engagement; religious school; learning experiences

1. INTRODUCTION

Environmental community engagement requires active participation and a successful learning process. To raise the student's environmental awareness schools have to develop a well-organised education full of professional experiences. According to Farmer, Knapp, and Benton (2007) environmental education is key to increase the student consciousness towards respecting nature and promote the environmental values.

Students' engagement with organizations needs prepare them to live an intense experience, with joy and well-focused on what they are doing. These are considered as learning experiences. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) has understood by "engagement" as "stream of encouraging experiences", which introduce knowledge and emotions from the engagement with the organization. The goal of environmental education through engagement with organizations is to motivate students to foster environmentally responsible behaviour and decision-making without compromising the needs of the future. The aim of environmental education is to develop environmentally educated and responsible citizens, to mitigate some of the impact of environmental problems that are increasing in the new century (Knapp, 2000).

According to UNESCO's definition, environmental education in contact with organizations aims to develop an environmentally responsible citizen who has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivation, and ability to work individually and collectively towards solutions to contemporary problems, while preventing the formation of new ones (Zak and Munson, 2008).

Engagement with organizations allows students to learn new points of view and procedures to develop values acquired from organizations that are beneficial to them. These values transmitted by companies and institutions ought to become part of the core of religious schools.

Values should be in the core of the emotional contents transmitted by the organizations can be useful to present a healthy and positive lifestyle (Shapiro and Pilsitz, 1995). It is important that environmental education be basically positive, giving hope and offering solutions. An over-emphasis on environmental disasters can be frustrating for students and leave them with a sense of insurmountable gloom. Unfortunately, this is the type of message that environmental institutions often convey.

To counter act those messages, Pope Francis' influential 2015 encyclical, titled “*Laudato Si*”, declared climate change a critical moral issue, arguing protecting nature is an extension of Christian responsibility (Francis, 2015).

Through Catholic Relief Services based on *Laudato Si*’, students apply concepts like solidarity through assisting neighbourhoods to adopt green infrastructure to prevent flooding from climate change (Catholic Relief Services, 2022). With moral authority and influence over youth values development, religious schools can impart strong environmental awareness. Research suggests early value-formation around environmental conservation shapes lifelong stewardship (Shipley, & van Riper, 2022) through peer dialogue with organizations around global threats like climate change fosters critical thinking, civic participation, and impact-oriented mindsets (Persson et al., 2020). These social justice missions affirm faith while building environmental resilience. Those transcendent experiences bonding students with nature while demonstrating environmental stewardship.

Many religious schools now participate in the Eco-Schools network bridging community greening organizations to foster “whole institutional approaches” improving environmental performance (Eco-Schools USA, 2022; Robina-Ramírez, & Cotano-Olivera, 2020). These interdisciplinary sustainability committees conduct campus energy audits, develop conservation initiatives, and liaise regional environmental experts (PIRÓG, 2014; Robina-Ramírez et al., 2020).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The core elements of engagement with environmental organizations

Environmental organizations offer religious schools mutually beneficial partnerships to advance sustainability initiatives informed by spiritual stewardship and ecological expertise. Core elements of effective engagement include student empowerment, communications campaigns, collaboration with professionals and experts and policy advocacy.

Student empowerment sustains engagement by preparing environmentally conscious graduates through action-based initiatives. The Blessed Tomorrow program led by Catholic Climate Covenant and US conservation groups involves over 100 Catholic schools in projects like school gardens, solar installations and habitat restoration enabling students to develop solutions to environmental injustice (DeBerg, 2022). These youth activation models have impact. Jointly developing faith-based environmental lesson plans further assimilates sustainability within religious institutions.

Raising public awareness of ecological challenges also represents a core pursuit. Collaborating with environmental organizations allows religious schools to tap into a wealth of resources and expertise, ensuring that environmental education is seamlessly integrated into the religious curriculum (Cardarelli, et al., 2021).

The collaboration with professionals and experts in environmental sciences is fundamental to bridging the gap between faith and environmental stewardship in religious schools (Leal Filho, et al 2019). Professionals and experts in sustainable architecture and energy management provide invaluable insights and guidance in implementing energy-efficient solutions (Taylor, 2009).

Studies conducted in recent years (Findler, 2018) have consistently highlighted the substantial environmental impact of organizations at schools. These institutions are significant energy consumers, resulting in elevated carbon footprints that contribute substantially to climate change.

While energy-efficient technologies represent a crucial step, a holistic reduction in carbon emissions necessitates a shift towards renewable energy sources. Solar and wind power have emerged as leading contenders in this transition. Solar panels installed on school premises and wind turbines in the vicinity offer a clean and sustainable energy alternative (Renewable Energy Agency, 2022). Not only do these sources significantly reduce carbon emissions, but they also provide educational opportunities for students to learn about and engage with renewable energy technologies. Implementing energy-efficient technologies, such as lighting, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning, presents a tangible and effective strategy for schools to curtail their energy consumption (Zografakis, et al., 2021). Energy-efficient lighting systems, for example, not only reduce electricity usage but also contribute to a healthier learning environment.

2.2. The connection of moral and sustainable values

Religious schools have a distinct opportunity to bridge moral education with sustainability by highlighting aligned values and stewardship duties. Exploring interfaith environmental teachings and sacred texts builds ethical foundations. Experiential learning applying conservation practices and assisting vulnerable communities activates faith.

A literature review on religion and sustainability found key faith associations include exercising morally responsible environmental stewardship, showing compassion to the poor disproportionately impacted by ecological degradation and upholding intergenerational justice to preserve nature for future generations (Huang et al., 2022; Robina-Ramírez, & Pulido-Fernández, 2021).

Scriptural wisdom offers initial connectivity between morality and environment across faith traditions. Pope Francis' seminal 2015 *Laudato Si'* encyclical declared respecting nature as a moral obligation, stating "living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue" (Francis, 2015).

Practical sustainability initiatives allow students to access their moral education in concrete ways. Service opportunities like volunteering with food recovery groups to reduce waste offer applied ethics learning (Derqui, Grimaldi, and Fernández, 2020). Class experiments monitoring campus ecologies facilitate first-hand scientific observation of environmental phenomena like changing seasonal patterns - imparting moral significance to climate change (Evangelical Environmental Network, 2022).

Religious schools can connect morality and sustainability across curriculum exploring allegorical scripture and theology reinforcing conservation duties; experiential lessons immersed in the natural world; and service-learning assisting affected groups in ways that animate faith. This cements environmental stewardship as a moral institutional priority.

2.3. The teaching of social values at students to engage communities.

The teaching of social values among students is part of the personal and moral development of each one (Appiah, 2006). In this sense, education among young people should introduce them to their own traditions, understand the links that unite all people and have empathy for the experiences of others.

According to Walker, (2003) having social values entails learning to be something more than a worker, it means equipping one with skills and

knowledge to be able to develop social justice. Social values help promote social responsibility, global interconnection, and universal human rights (Andreopoulos and Claude, 1997).

Human rights education and development (EDH) emphasizes the promotion of ideals of "global citizenship" by providing high quality learning experiences that transform students for global citizenship and individual excellence.

Learning social values is essential for learning beyond the classroom and connection with environmental organizations. Students should learn the principles of socially and environmentally responsible organization where social values drive towards engagement with socially responsible professionals (Kuh, et al., 2008).

Shared forms of learning relate to the process of learning and evaluating shared knowledge from contact with environmental organizations allows emphasizing community, cooperation and development of social values (Brower and Dettinger, 1998)

On the other hand, the development of social values among students reduces the risk of students dropping out academically (Baker and Pomerantz, 2000; Soldner, Lee, and Duby, 2004), increases their cognitive skills (Dalen, et al., 2008; Zhao and Kuh, 2004), and leads to greater overall satisfaction with their college experience (Arambewela, and Hall, 2011; Zhao and Kuh, 2004).

The development of social values among students allows a more efficient integration of course content, the promotion of deeper learning and greater personal development (Mahoney and Schamber, 2011), allowing students to make basic connections between ideas and empirical observations, or transfer new knowledge to increasingly complex settings inside and outside the university. Although relationship with environmental organizations should not be treated as "magic solutions" to solve all problems, they are recognized as effective tools to address issues related to student success (Zhao and Kuh, 2004).

Engaging with environmental communities is pivotal in driving and sustaining these changes within the educational sector (Robina Ramirez, & Pulido Fernandez, 2018). Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) play a crucial role in advocating for sustainable practices within schools. By fostering awareness and garnering support from parents, PTAs contribute to the momentum required for comprehensive energy reduction initiatives (Al-Hail,

et al., 2021). Involving parents in decision-making processes related to sustainable practices ensures a more holistic and community-driven approach.

Advocacy groups focused on environmental issues contribute to the discourse surrounding sustainable education. Their efforts often involve lobbying for policy changes that incentivise schools to adopt greener practices (Advocates for Sustainable Education, 2021). Through awareness campaigns and strategic advocacy, these groups amplify the urgency of transitioning to sustainable energy practices within educational institutions.

Local government and municipalities play a critical role in creating an enabling environment for schools to adopt sustainable energy practices. Incentive programs, tax breaks, and regulatory frameworks can encourage educational institutions to invest in energy-efficient technologies and renewable energy sources (Local Government Sustainability Initiatives, 2022). Moreover, local governments can set standards for energy efficiency in school infrastructure, furthering the cause of sustainable education.

2.4. Develop social skills and abilities in students to engage with environmental organizations.

Social skills and abilities in students are developed through communication, collaboration, empathy, and leadership competencies. These individual activations lead to advocacy with more impact.

Research on civic sustainability behaviours finds that self-esteem and social support significantly influence youth environmental engagement by building social skills and capabilities (Elche, Ruiz-Palomino, and Linuesa-Langreo, 2020). Service learning assisting affected groups also develops skills (Agyeman, et al., 2016).

Peer collaboration skills are also crucial for Movement building. In the Young Evangelicals for Climate Action 30-day creation care challenge, students work in teams performing daily environmental actions like meatless meals or social media posts, trading motivation and ideas (Young Evangelicals for Climate Action, 2022). Catholic schools can assign students to interview members of the local mosque, synagogue or temple to discuss views on sustainability morality to develop social skills and abilities and make comparisons across faiths (Sherkat, 2010). Understanding alternative world-views spurs open-mindedness.

Furthermore, placing students in leadership roles directing sustainability projects boosts social skills. An environmental stewardship initiative at an school reported greatest gains in variables like student problem-solving confidence and self-efficacy when they independently managed activities like waste audits, presenting to administrators on reduction strategies (Derqui, Grimaldi, and Fernandez, 2020).

Religious schools inculcating social capacities through communication practice, team collaboration, empathy building, and leadership opportunities can equip students to effectively engage wider environmental networks. These skills amplify pro-environmental values.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Preliminary interviews

The aim to measure the perception of students about the importance of building some environmental indicators about environmental community engagement at religious school. According to the literature review five constructs have been analysed correlated with the theoretical sections. The first step has been to measure the engagement of students through environmental organizations and communities. Through the scale from 1 (less important) to 7 (most important) several questions are emerged like:

Will it be helpful to foster teachers' ecological citizenship, by collaborating with environmental organisations in order to develop the student's environmental consciousness? (Question 6) or Will it be helpful to support students' eco-spiritual development nurturing students' spiritual connections to nature through outdoor time, meditation, ecology-themed art, and discussion to increase the respect for nature? (Question 8).

In the second step it has measure the connection of moral and sustainable values by asking three questions: ¿Among factors to strengthen the environmental values of the student, do you think that the connection between spirituality and sustainability in a school's curriculum should be implemented? (Question 1), fostering moral competencies about environmental issues among teachers is important in order to build an environmental awareness at school. Would you agree? (Question 3). Do you think that building teachers' sustainability knowledge helps to spread the respect for nature at school? (Question 4).

¿In the third step have gone through analysing the teaching of social values at students to engage communities by asking will including sustainability in a school's vision and identity by promoting environmental values among families be helpful to foster the student's environmental consciousness? (Question 7), and would you agree that making sustainability tangible through greening of school grounds will help to nurture the student's environmental consciousness? (Question 7).

The fourth step is about develop social skills and abilities in students to engage with environmental organizations. The question asked do you agree that developing an engaged environmental pedagogy could strengthen the environmental values of the student at school should be implemented? (Question 5).

3.2. Sample

A study on greening the students' mindset in religious schools in Spain and South Africa is particularly compelling due to the unique cultural, environmental, and socio-economic contexts of these two countries. Spain, with its rich historical and religious heritage, offers insights into how traditional values and beliefs may influence environmental consciousness among students. The interplay of Catholic teachings and Spain's diverse ecosystems creates a dynamic backdrop for examining how religious education intersects with environmental awareness.

Cáceres, a city steeped in history and rich cultural heritage, is home to several prestigious religious schools that have played a significant role in shaping the educational landscape. Three notable institutions, Sagrado Corazón, Carmelitas, and La Asunción, stand out for their commitment to academic excellence and values-based education. The Sagrado Corazón School, founded in 1912, has a storied history of providing quality education infused with the principles of the Sacred Heart. Guided by a mission to nurture well-rounded individuals, the school emphasizes not only academic achievement but also character development and service to the community. With a vibrant campus and a dedicated faculty, Sagrado Corazón has become a cornerstone of education in Cáceres.

Carmelitas School, another esteemed institution in the city, traces its origins back to 1922. Inspired by the Carmelite tradition, the school places a strong emphasis on spiritual development and intellectual growth. With a commitment to fostering a sense of community and social responsibility,

Carmelitas School has garnered a reputation for producing graduates who excel both academically and ethically.

La Asunción School, founded in 1929, stands as a beacon of educational excellence rooted in the values of the Assumptionist tradition. The school's founders envisioned an institution that not only imparts knowledge but also instils a sense of responsibility and ethical awareness in its students. La Asunción School continues to uphold these principles, providing a holistic education that prepares students for the challenges of the modern world.

On the other hand, South Africa, with its multicultural society and varied religious influences, presents a distinct perspective. The study in South Africa can delve into the impact of religious teachings on environmental attitudes within a diverse cultural landscape. Additionally, given South Africa's ecological challenges and the importance of sustainable practices, understanding how religious schools contribute to greening initiatives is crucial for fostering a global perspective on environmental stewardship in diverse educational settings.

Inkamana High School, Inkamana Benedictine Abbey, Vryheid, Kwa-Zulu Natal Province. Inkamana High School holds a unique position as an institution deeply rooted in the Benedictine tradition. Established by the monks of the Inkamana Benedictine Abbey in Vryheid, KwaZulu-Natal, this school embodies a commitment to holistic education. With a focus on spiritual growth and academic excellence, Inkamana High School has become a cornerstone of education in the region. The school's history is intertwined with the enduring legacy of the Benedictine Order, imparting values of community, discipline, and knowledge.

St. Vincent School, Koelenhof, Stellenbosch Rural, Western Cape: Steeped in tradition, St. Vincent School in Koelenhof, Stellenbosch Rural, Western Cape, stands as a testament to the commitment of the Catholic Church to education. The school provides a nurturing environment where students receive a blend of academic rigour and moral guidance. The history of St. Vincent School reflects its dedication to creating well-rounded individuals, emphasizing the values of compassion, integrity, and academic achievement. The school's serene location in Stellenbosch Rural further adds to the unique educational experience it offers.

3.3. Results of the interview

	Sagra do Coraz ón Scho ol	Josefi nas Schoo l	Carmel itas School	St. Vinc ent Scho ol	Inkam ana High School
1. Connection between spirituality and sustainability in a school's curriculum should be implemented?	7	7	7	6	7
2. Developing an engaged environmental pedagogy could strengthen the environmental values of the student at school should be implemented	6	6	6	7	6
3. Fostering moral competencies about environmental issues among teachers is important in order to build an environmental awareness at school	6	6	7	6	7
4. Building teachers' sustainability knowledge helps to spread the respect for nature at school	5	7	7	7	7
5. Making sustainability tangible through greening of school grounds will help to nurture the student's environmental consciousness	6	7	7	7	7
6. Fostering teachers' ecological citizenship, by collaborating with environmental organizations in order to develop the students'	5	7	7	7	7

environmental consciousness

7. Sustainability in a school’s vision and identity by promoting environmental values among families be helpful to foster the students’ environmental consciousness

5 7 6 7 6

8. To support students’ eco-spiritual development nurturing students’ spiritual connections to nature through outdoor time, meditation, ecology-themed art, and discussion to increase the respect for nature

7 7 6 7 6

Total	47	54	53	54	53
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According to the results in the three Spanish and two religious schools, at South Africa, showcase the impactful role that religious institutions play in shaping the educational landscape of schools. The high level of concern about teaching sustainability at school has motivated us to go ahead in our research by defining the indicators.

3.4. Model, hypotheses and indicators drawn from the literature review

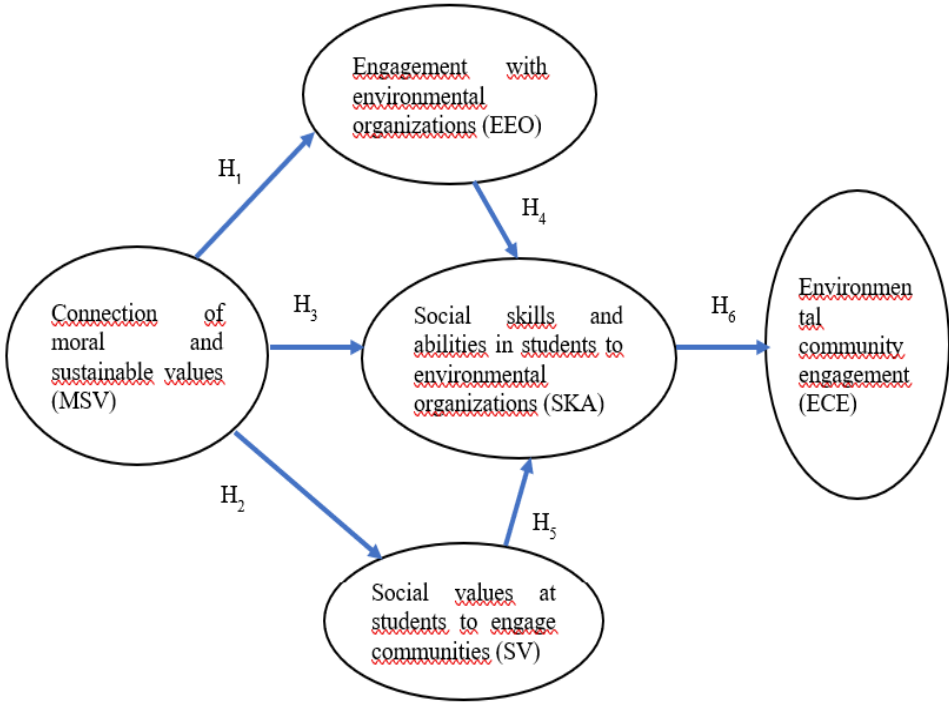


Figure 1. Model

3.4.1. Hypotheses

- Hypothesis 1. Connection of moral and sustainable values (MSV) influence engagement with environmental organizations (EEO)
- Hypothesis 2. Connection of moral and sustainable values (MSV) influence social values at students to engage communities (SV)
- Hypothesis 3. Connection of moral and sustainable values (MSV) influence social skills and abilities in students to environmental organizations (SKA)
- Hypothesis 4. Engagement with environmental organizations (EEO) influence social skills and abilities in students to environmental organizations (SKA)
- Hypothesis 5. Social values at students to engage communities (SV) influence Social skills and abilities in students to environmental organizations (SKA)

Hypothesis 6. Social skills and abilities in students to environmental organizations (SKA)

sustainable responsibility influences Environmental community engagement (ECE)

Indicator	Variable	Author
Environmental community engagement (ECE)		
ECE1	“engagement” introduce knowledge and emotions from the engagement with the organization	Csikszentmihalyi (1990)
ECE2	environmental education in contact with organizations aims to develop an environmentally responsible citizen	Zak and Munson , (2008).
ECE3	Values should be in the core of the emotional contents transmitted by the organizations can be useful to present a healthy and positive lifestyle	Shapiro and Pilsitz, (1995)
Connection of moral and sustainable values (MSV)		
MSV1	compassion to the poor disproportionately impacted by ecological degradation and upholding intergenerational justice to preserve nature for future generations	Huang et al., (2022).
MSV2	respecting nature as a moral obligation, stating “living our vocation to be protectors of God’s	Francis, (2015).

	handiwork is essential to a life of virtue”	
MSV3	Practical sustainability initiatives allow students to access their moral education	Rosenfeld et al., (2022).
Engagement with environmental organizations (EEO)		
EEO1	Environmental projects run by organizations at schools enabling students to develop solutions to environmental injustice	DeBerg, (2022)
EEO2	Collaborating with environmental organizations allows religious schools ensuring that environmental education is seamlessly integrated into the religious curriculum	Green Initiative Network, (2021).
EEO3	Implementing energy-efficient technologies from companies, such as lighting, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning, presents a tangible and effective strategy for schools to curtail their energy consumption	Zografakis, et al., (2008).
Social skills and abilities in students to environmental organizations (SKA)		
SKA1	Research on civic sustainability behaviours finds that self-esteem and social support significantly influence youth	Elche, Ruiz-Palominó, and Linuesa

	environmental engagement by building social skills and capabilities	- Langreo , 2020.
SKA2	Service learning assisting affected groups also develops skills	Agyem an, et al., 2016
SKA3	Catholic schools can assign students to interview members of the local mosque, synagogue or temple to discuss views on sustainability morality to develop social skills and abilities and make comparisons across faiths	Sherkat, 2010
Social values at students to engage communities (SV)		
SV1	The teaching of social values among students is part of the personal and moral development of each one	Appiah, (2006).
SV2	Learning social values is essential for learning beyond the classroom and connection with environmental organizations. Students should learn the principles of socially and environmentally responsible organization	Kuh, et al., (2008).
SV3	The development of social values among students reduces the risk of students dropping out academically	Baker and Pomera ntz, (2000),

		Soldner, Lee, and Duby, 2004;
SV4	The development of social values among students reduces the risk of students dropping out academically leads to greater overall satisfaction with their college experience	Zhao and Kuh, (2004).
SV5	The development of social values among students allows a more efficient integration of course content, the promotion of deeper learning and greater personal development	Mahone y and Schamb er, (2011)

4. DISCUSSION

Religious institutions hold significant sway in Spanish and South African cultures, influencing the dissemination of values and formation of perspectives. In Spain, Catholic doctrine predominantly shapes religious education, employing conventional teaching methods. Conversely, South Africa adopts an interfaith model encouraging dialogue and common values. Despite this, both nations encounter obstacles in incorporating sustainability into religious teachings, with South Africa showing broader involvement in environmental matters. As societal dynamics change, religious education must evolve its ethos and teaching strategies accordingly.

However, the approaches to religious instruction vary significantly between the two nations due to their unique sociocultural, religious methodologies of teaching, and knowledge of teachers (Mavuru, and Ramnarain, 2017). In Spain, Catholicism has held sway over society for generations. As Montero, (2013) contends, the Catholic church has wielded substantial influence in Spain not only within the religious sphere but also in education, culture, and politics. The majority of schools in Spain maintain religious affiliations and

adhere to the Catholic curriculum. This stands in stark contrast to South Africa's religious mosaic, where Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and indigenous African beliefs all enjoy wide adherence. According to Scharnick-Udemans, (2020), South Africa's rainbow nation encompasses a diverse tapestry of cultures, traditions, and faiths.

These sociocultural distinctions manifest in the objectives of religious instruction. In Spain, Catholic schools aim to impart the Catholic world-view and ensure the "comprehensive education of the individual" (Spanish Episcopal Conference, 2020, p.10). Conversely, in South Africa's diverse landscape, the objective is to "strengthen participants' allegiance to their respective religious affiliations" and foster "reconciliation and mutual respect among varied communities" (Department of Education, 2003, p.9).

Teaching methodologies also exhibit variances. Spanish religious education leans towards traditional pedagogical methods focused on theory rather than practical application. According to Biggs, (1999), instruction primarily involves transmission, with minimal student involvement. Conversely, in South Africa, a conversational approach encourages open discourse across faiths. Jackson, (2014) observes that facilitating discussions on religion, cultures, and world-views requires a distinct pedagogical approach.

In Spain, teacher training for religious education falls under the purview of the Catholic Church. Eurostat (2022) reports that over 95% of religion teachers in Spanish schools hold qualifications in Theology or Religious Sciences (para.1). Conversely, in South Africa, there's a prevalent sentiment that teachers lack adequate preparation for the dialogue-centred approach. For instance, Engelbrecht (2015) highlights that the implementation of Religion Studies in South Africa is significantly hindered due to teachers' insufficient skills to facilitate discussions.

Both countries are increasingly focusing on integrating environmental sustainability education into religious instruction, echoing Pope Francis' message in *Laudato Si'*. Progress in Spain has been sluggish. De Corrochano, et al., (2022) observes that spanish educators are calling for more training in environmental education. Conversely, sustainability holds a more prominent place in South Africa's educational framework. The Resource Pack for Learning Area Religion Studies (Department of Education, 2007) incorporates various references to human responsibility toward nature, drawing from diverse faith principles (p.17).

The subject of sustainability has been regarded through a more economic perspective. Academics who wrote on the topic, and many who still do, treat the need for sustainability with a rather anthropocentric approach. Thus, sustainability is seen to be intended to support humanity alone. Yet, the connection between ecology and healthy economy can not be overlooked. Increasingly more authors see the need for ecological care, within the scope of sustainability rather as primarily an issue of justice. (Sen. 2021).

Sustainability involves generational justice, since it pertains to the kind of world we intend to leave to our progeny. Thus, we who are living in this world now, have an obligation to people who might not yet exist. The task of instilling this awareness of the urgency of us leaving a sustainable world to our children, and their children, is a very difficult one. Those who are in their adulthood or late adulthood have not had been made as conscious of the issues and concerns around ecological degradation and sustainability. In order to try and remedy this gap in cognisance, it would be most feasible to start instilling such awareness from early stages of human development. Not only are younger minds more pliable for acquiring positive habits, and ultimately sustained behaviour, the issues are much more present to those children now. Their generation notices more and more the adverse effects that the runaway global technocracy has on the environment. Issues like global warming and climate change are occurring in “real-time”.

Furthermore, the younger generations are much more informed at this present digital age, than what young people had been thirty or twenty years ago in comparison. While this means that there is very little buffering from the ugly realities of the world, than what would have been years ago, it also means that young people are better equipped to make informed decisions. In this respect the sphere of education is a very important training ground for such young minds.

Pedagogies which enable children to identify environmental problems, also serve to enable them to be pro-active in the preservation and conservation of the natural world they live in. The “greening” of the mindset of the youth may just be the only efficient tool available to humanity at present, to try and avert or alternatively at least mitigate disaster on a global scale. Schools, and especially religious schools are in an excellent position to fulfil this task.

In a South African setting, it is especially the religious schools where such sustainability principles can be integrated into the syllabus, because of the

spiritual will to establish a sense of our responsibility, as creatures towards all of Creation.

As societal dynamics continue to evolve, religious education must undergo a transformation to remain relevant and effective in imparting values and shaping perspectives. This evolution necessitates a re-evaluation of teaching methodologies to foster greater student engagement and critical thinking. Additionally, religious institutions must embrace inclusiveness and adaptability to accommodate the diverse religious landscape and changing societal norms.

Celebrating the diversity brings to the table a rich experience.

The influence of religious institutions on societal values and perspectives is profound in both Spanish and South African cultures. While Spain's religious education is predominantly shaped by Catholic doctrine, South Africa embraces an interfaith model promoting dialogue and common values. Despite their differences, both countries face challenges in integrating sustainability into religious teachings. As societal dynamics evolve, religious education must adapt its ethos and teaching strategies to address these challenges and remain relevant in shaping the values of future generations.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Three theoretical as well as empirical conclusions can be drawn from the study

The theoretical conclusions are conveyed in the following sections:

1. **Community Engagement as a Key Factor:** In both Spain and South Africa, religious schools play a pivotal role in promoting sustainability through community engagement. Theoretical perspectives suggest that relying on communities and organizations fosters a collaborative approach to sustainability education. As communities are considered integral components, the exchange of knowledge, practices, and values becomes a two-way process, enriching both the religious schools and the communities they serve.
2. **Moral Learning and Social Values:** Theoretical frameworks emphasize the importance of moral learning and instilling social values in sustainability education. Religious schools, grounded in ethical principles, provide a unique platform for integrating moral teachings into sustainability learning. The infusion of religious values enhances students' understanding of their role as

stewards of the environment, fostering a deeper connection between moral principles and sustainable practices.

3. Skill and Ability Development: Theoretical foundations highlight the role of religious schools in developing students' skills and abilities essential for sustainable practices. By incorporating practical skills, such as environmental stewardship, ethical decision-making, and community engagement, religious schools contribute to the holistic development of students. The integration of these skills aligns with broader educational goals, preparing students to be responsible and environmentally conscious individuals.

The empirical conclusions are the following:

1. Community-Based Initiatives: Empirical evidence from religious schools in Spain and South Africa indicates that community-based initiatives significantly contribute to sustainability learning. Collaborative projects, involving students, educators, and community members, demonstrate tangible impacts on local environments and communities. These initiatives serve as empirical evidence of the effectiveness of community reliance in fostering sustainability awareness and practices.

2. Impact of Moral Learning on Behaviour: Empirical studies reveal that moral learning in religious schools positively influences students' behaviour towards sustainability. The integration of religious values and moral teachings correlates with students adopting environmentally responsible behaviours. Observations and surveys indicate a link between moral awareness cultivated within the religious school environment and the adoption of sustainable practices in daily life.

3. Enhanced Social Values through Education: Empirical data supports the idea that religious schools contribute to the enhancement of social values related to sustainability. Surveys among students demonstrate an increased awareness of social responsibility and environmental ethics. The empirical findings underscore the role of religious schools in shaping a generation that values sustainability not merely as a concept but as an integral part of their identity and ethical framework.

The study has highlighted how theoretical perspectives emphasize the importance of community reliance, moral learning, and skill development in sustainability education at religious schools. Empirical evidence from Spain and South Africa supports these theoretical notions, showcasing the practical impact of community engagement, moral teachings, and skill development on

students' sustainability awareness and practices within religious school settings. Future research lines will be analysed by studying what role environmental organizations play in the students' learning at those five religious schools.

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