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Educating for Local Development and Global Sustainability: An Overview in Spain

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Abstract: The following are systematized examples, taken from the general panorama of activities currently being implemented in Spain, of significant experiences and formative strategies of local sustainable development. They correspond to three different intervention areas in education: different levels in the school system, adults training in competence and technical abilities, and community education. They offer a contextualized model of education intervention that contributes to ecological and environmental sustainability, social promotion and productive competitiveness. The experiences described permit, in many cases, changes of life styles and social customs, adjusting them to the requirements of sustainable development; in others, to form new generations for local sustainable development and global sustainability. Although procedures must vary to suit the particular features inherent in each such realm, it is the function of education to tackle first and foremost the training of the intellect, the education of emotions and moral personality, and the acquisition of professional skills.

Keywords: education for sustainable development; environmental education; local development education; educational strategies

1. An Educational Model at the Service of Sustainability

Education is a valuable process in itself. It adds to the dignity of the human being and helps the human being blossom as a person and to keep his or her life plan forward-looking, all of which are conditions that enable sustainable development. But in addition, education is a strategic asset for local

development and global sustainability, as shown by experience, which attests to education's ability to contribute to social promotion and ecological and environmental sustainability at the same time as it preserves productive competitiveness. These are two complementary sides of education, though let us not forget that the latter, the instrumental function of education as a strategy at the service of local development policies, must never outshine education's intrinsic importance as a process of personal self-realization for the human being [1].

The task of education is to modify lifestyles and customs according to the requirements of sustainable development, as much as it is to teach and socialize new generations for the emerging paradigm of comprehensive sustainability. This statement is supported by *Agenda 21*, the document adopted at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (the 'Rio Summit'): "[The education] is also critical for achieving environmental and ethical awareness, values and attitudes, skills and behavior consistent with sustainable development and for effective public participation in decision-making" [2].

The *International Implementation Scheme for the DESD* also considers a definition in the same direction, stating that "The basic vision of the DESD is a world where everyone has the opportunity to benefit from education and learn the values, behaviour and lifestyles required for a sustainable future and for positive societal transformation" [3]. More recently, the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development held in Bonn also shared the same vision and proclaimed that "education should be of a quality that provides the values, knowledge, skills and competencies for sustainable living and participation in society and decent work" [4].

This approach requires a theoretical and pedagogical framework whose educational model pays attention above all to the "what", the "what for", the "how", the "when", and also the "why" of education, in order to place education at the service of local development and global sustainability. A comprehensive model that, having torn down the classic barriers between the formal and the non-formal educational subsystems, makes it possible to coordinate the praxis of education regardless of its realm or educational level of application. Some local development policies and strategies currently implemented in Spain embrace the traits of this new model of education.

2. The Spanish Context: A Sketch of the Situation

In Spain educators sensitisation to the problems of sustainability is growing daily. The implementation of educational programmes and the incorporation of the values of sustainability in everyday classroom life are increasing progressively, both in quantity and in quality of experiences and impact on the population. It is happening in the realm of formal education and also in that of non-formal education; in education for schoolchildren and for adults.

Two factors contribute to this situation. One is the fact that educators are becoming increasingly sensitised and committed to sustainable development. The other factor is that social climate is tending towards consolidation behind sustainable development. The actions that some cities and towns are becoming engaged in as they draw up their own *Agenda 21*, the efforts of the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces in boosting the introduction of a *Code of Good Environmental Practices* [5], institutional plans in occupational training and the work of pro-development NGOs are factors that, inter alia, help create the necessary breeding ground for the values of sustainability to sink

deeply into the social fabric of our cities and towns. They do the groundwork so that the effects of educational strategies are multiplied.

We also find there is a new trend that is trying to boost reflection, discussion and the preparation of public-policy proposals in tune with the concept of corporate social responsibility. There is already a visible need for the sensitisation of interest groups through educational actions to show them the transforming power of a new business focus. The central thesis is that organizations exercise their social responsibility when they pay attention to the expectations that different interest groups (employees, partners, customers, local communities, environment, shareholders, suppliers, etc.) have concerning their behaviour. The ultimate purpose of this approach is to contribute to a development that is socially and environmentally sustainable and economically feasible. We stand on the brink of a more dedicated assumption of this commitment by education.

Let us review some of the experiences currently under way in three different complementary sectors, simply as representative examples in no way meant to be exhaustive: the school sector, a context where the formal processes of teaching/learning centred on children and adolescents are paramount; the sector of training human potential for local development, which especially involves vocational education and the acquisition of technical abilities and skills for employment; and, lastly, the sector of community education.

Table 1. Good practices of education for sustainable development in Spain.

School sector	School Agenda 21s School environmental audits
Vocational education and for employment	Business schools Workshop schools and trade houses Development agencies
Community education	The FEMP's Code of Good Environmental Practices Educational actions by development NGOs

The experiences considered in this article are summarized in Table 1. These experiences were selected based on two main criteria: first of all they are supported by a large amount of academic literature and are well known in the Spanish context, and secondly, they provide a wide overview of the current state of education for sustainable development in Spain. By focusing on a particular country, this work pretends to contribute to the knowledge of the global puzzle. The “global” perspective is fundamental for the systemic comprehension of the whole system.

3. Schools Cultivate Sustainability

The educational reform laid down in the *Ley Orgánica General del Sistema Educativo de España* (LOGSE) [6], the 1990 act on the Spanish educational system, officially opened the doors of our schools to the perspective and the values of sustainable development. Under the name *environmental education*, a subject was mainstreamed into the school curriculum that guarantees that mandatory

official education will include contents aimed at consolidated educational achievements linked to the ideals of sustainability.

The appearance of *Agenda 21* two years later in the wake of the *Rio Summit* had the effect of reinforcing the legislative initiative by giving schools a new instrument for teaching students about the requirements of sustainable development. With *Agenda 21* to give them a pattern to follow, schools were motivated to draw up their own *school Agenda 21s* and in doing so, to call upon the entire educational community to participate; a process in itself highly educational and innovative in institutional culture, orienting institutional culture toward the requirements of sustainability.

3.1. School Agenda 21s in Practice

Early experiences in putting together a *school Agenda 21* began in several autonomous communities of Spain, thanks to the boost provided by the Earth Summit in the early nineties. The Balearic Islands, Catalonia, the Community of Madrid and the Basque country were pioneers. In the Community of Madrid and in the Basque Country a number of teacher-training centers have even prepared materials to ease teachers through the process of drawing up the document.

The process is fostered by public institutions—Autonomous communities, region councils and town councils, as well as by different social initiatives such as the network of eco-schools created by the “Asociación para la Educación Ambiental y del Consumidor” (ADEAC)—with more than 300 affiliated schools [7] or the solar schools supported by Greenpeace [8].

The initiatives have multiplied at a gradually increasing rate throughout the last decade, to the point where at present the *school Agenda 21* is widespread, geographically speaking. Nevertheless we cannot consider the process culminated or even satisfactory from the quantitative viewpoint. *Agenda 21s* are in reality made in all kinds of schools, public and private alike, but there are still many cases where schools are still waiting to launch their *Agenda 21* or have made an only timid, puny beginning.

Others, however, such as schools in the Basque Country, can boast a model implementation. The process envisions the availability of public aid for municipal schools to promote their participation in actions to achieve good environmental management and reach sustainability objectives both in the school and in its city or town. The *Basque Strategy for Sustainable Environmental Development* expects to finish the implementation of the *school Agenda 21* in all the public-funded schools by 2012 [9].

Thus, in a slow but ceaseless process, the population’s sensitisation to environmental issues referring to the ecological dimension of sustainability is increasing. Sadly, the institutional culture of schools is not displaying sufficient sensitisation to the socio-economic and cultural problems linked to sustainable development. There has to be a more committed proposition to take up this challenge, one that is truly allied to a comprehensive, global conception of sustainability. Several efforts are being made in this direction, like the *Plan of education for sustainability* of the autonomous community of Cantabria [10].

The *school Agenda 21* is nonetheless proving to be an interesting instrument in service of the educational objectives aimed at sustainable local development. In addition to offering an opportunity to make thoughts and actions more consistent with each other, it draws attention to the values and attitudes of sustainability and helps them to permeate institutional culture little by little. And,

moreover, it is an element that reinforces the systemic view of problems, global learning, interdisciplinary work and mainstreaming; but, above all, it reinforces joint responsibility and participation in decision making and daily action. For the time being, we cannot, however, consider the *school Agenda 21* a sufficiently well-used instrument in the context of our formal school education.

The decision to incorporate *Agenda 21* in school life can often require a Copernican shift in institutional culture. It implies a change of greater depth than mere recognition that environmental education must be mainstreamed into the curriculum under the LOGSE, since it requires the curriculum to be environmentalised, impregnating each and every one of the elements of the educational model with the values and principles of sustainable development. The implementation of *Agenda 21* in the schools requires medium-term scheduling together with deep convictions and a pedagogical effort to sensitise the educational community.

These are some of the strategies that most schools generally employ to facilitate the process of integrating the focus of *Agenda 21* in their institutional culture, and in the framework of their educational system [11]:

1. To adapt the *school's educational project, internal regulations, curricular project* and other documents containing school rules to the principles, values and procedures of the paradigm of sustainability.
2. To improve the school's environmental management and reduce its negative impact.
3. To facilitate participative decision making, including the different levels of the educational community: students, teachers, parents, service and technical support staff, etc.
4. To promote interaction between local and *school Agenda 21s* by means of shared activities that facilitate relations among the different working groups.
5. To encourage the creation of networks of schools in the process of implementing their respective agendas and participation by educational communities in training and experience-exchanging activities.

3.2. School Environmental Audits

In Spain, most schools committed to the implementation *Agenda 21* perform an environmental audit as part of the process to reveal their institutional situation from the point of view of documented criteria of sustainability. Each educational community (teachers, students, relatives and the entire school staff) decides what aspects to evaluate, which usually have to do with the ecological dimension of school life, and it generally asks outside experts for support in carrying out the diagnostic process, which is done in different phases:

1. Creation of an initial working group, an *environment committee*, in charge of posing the first objectives and activities for starting up the project.
2. Selection of the items to audit, taking into account the educational and environmental needs "felt" as such by the school. One obvious problem, for example, the use and sustainable management of waste, energy or water, could be set up as the backbone of the project to orient the initial environmental audit and determine subsequent actions.
3. Preparation of materials and instruments for gathering the data needed to perform the audit; these materials and instruments could be created ad hoc, as an activity that virtually trains the

educational community itself, or borrowed from other schools or institutions (There are some approved institutions that can provide support at the early stage).

4. Action planning; environmental actions oriented toward improving the school's infrastructures, and also specifically educational actions: changes in rules, environmentalisation of the curriculum, didactic changes, etc.
5. Development of internal mechanisms for disseminating information and the structures for participation by the entire educational community.
6. Evaluation of actions (clear, practical, conclusive evaluation) and reporting of the results to all members of the educational community.

There is a wide variety of specific models that, in substance, follow this sequential outline. They all have the common denominator of assigning a central role to the entire educational community's participation in decision making.

In short, educational law has added environmental education to basic education curricula. On the other hand, "school environmental audits" processes and the implementation of *Agenda 21* processes have reinforced that. Formal and non-formal education work hand in hand at schools in order to train both children and adolescents—and indirectly their educational communities—about environmental issues.

4. Training for Medium and Long-Term Economic and Productive Feasibility

Concern for and interest in local-development planning and, more recently, sustainable local development, cannot be considered to belong exclusively to the last two decades, but during that time they have been growing among us. Local authorities (city governments) have turned themselves into active, dynamic agents in their commitment to the new paradigm of sustainability.

There are two main premises that win general consensus from the experts in this respect: the first, the importance of the economic/production dimension for the achievement of comprehensive sustainability; and the second, the privileged situation of the human factor among the elements constituting the development potential of each local community. From both we deduce the maximum importance that education has as a strategy for training and updating that potential. We are talking about training linked, above all, to specialized professional preparation, the productive potential of the territory and the kinds of learning that happen at the place of work itself. What is sought is to convert the economy into a pillar of social cohesion, integration and development of a responsible citizenry; into a factor that boosts a greater quality of life, measured by qualitative criteria, for the entire population.

Agenda 21 itself, in its chapter 30.17, on trade and industry, speaks to us about entrepreneurial spirit as an innovating force for making progress along the road to sustainability. It expressly mentions small and medium enterprises in their capacity as agents of local sustainable development due to their ability to dynamise the social fabric of production. In Spain, the *United Nations Global Compact* [12], which supports this approach and promotes a global corporate citizenship that reconciles the interests and processes of production with those of civil society, has served as the foundation for the creation of the *Libro Azul 2004* [13], a text aimed at disseminating and implementing the Compact on Spanish enterprises.

We do have other documents that stress the role of enterprises in local development and the role of education as a strategy at the service of local development, but the *Green Paper on Corporate Social Responsibility* [14] just may prove especially significant in this respect. It defines and clarifies the concept of corporate social responsibility, which is of huge interest for sustainability. Corporate social responsibility entails a Copernican shift in the business mindset, which must change so it can regard social and environmental problems as an element to factor into its commercial operations and production processes. The Green Paper insists, in addition, on the importance of the training of executives, workers and other agents of development, while at the same time supporting initiatives such as: the creation of codes of conduct, changes in labelling to increase the amount of information given, rules for sustainable management and socially responsible investment.

It falls to education to perform different functions, including: (a) to make up for training shortcomings in the populations not integrated into the working world, (b) to facilitate the specialized basic training demanded by the untapped sources of employment that best suit the endogenous potential, and (c) to unleash training processes that orient local human potential in a manner consistent with the principles of sustainability. Next we shall describe several types of experiences in the field of vocational-skills training for local development that are very well consolidated in Spain.

4.1. Business Schools

Business schools were created to dynamise the construction of the necessary productive fabric for local development. Their main mission is to boost collective self-employment and business projects pertaining to social economics. They do so by offering the classroom and hands-on training necessary for each specific project, including business-management techniques, together with guided tracking that makes it easier for new entrepreneurs to get their projects off the ground.

For this purpose they have their own facilities, where sponsored new enterprises do business temporarily during their guided operations period. Business schools perform a support function in the early stage of new business projects that enterprising people or entities, especially young persons, labor-managed firms and cooperatives, want to start up to put local resources to use. Their main sphere of action so far has been the rural sphere.

The procedure for entering a business-school training process is simple: applicants submit a project whose viability is evaluated by the school. If the project is accepted, the school lets the fledgling enterprise do its business at the school's industrial facilities and workplaces. During this time, the school also provides the new enterprise with the daily technical assistance it needs, acting rather in the capacity of a guide or tutor.

The point is to enable enterprising persons and groups of people to put their project into practice successfully and thereby generate economic/productive activity that has an impact on sustainable local development.

4.2. Workshop Schools and Trade Houses

Workshop schools and trade houses are a kind of public school run by the National Employment Institute. For the last two decades they have been conducting training programmes to equip

unemployed persons under age 25 to find a job. The similarities between the two types of centres are many, although workshop-school training courses are lengthier.

They were created to pursue the triple goal of reviving and recycling traditional trades, boosting professional work linked to the environment and favouring social cohesion through the professionalisation of participating students. To reach these goals, they focus work on occupations related with the restoration or promotion of the local artistic, historic, cultural or natural heritage and occupations that help refurbish urban environments, improve city living conditions or any other activity useful to the public or of general interest to society.

Courses are planned on the basis of an area study by *Promotion and Development Units*, which are dependent on provincial councils; they place at their disposal data for identifying the needs of enterprises, untapped sources of employment and self-employment possibilities. Construction, the environment, cabinet making, gardening and crafts are so far the sectors with the most needs.

The training given in these schools is special in that it is carried out alternately with professional practice. *Trade house* courses last one year; in the first half, participants receive economic aid in the form of a training scholarship and apply themselves to acquiring the classroom and hands-on knowledge vital to working safely, so they can avoid occupational risks. In the next phase, participants take a job, working shorter-than-usual hours that they complement with attendance at classroom sessions to continue their training; they receive a small economic remuneration, a sum slightly higher than one-half the minimum wage.

In addition to offering ongoing training by means of intensive skills courses, updating in techniques and methodology and recycling, these are schools that pay attention to the basic training of the population. When the students admitted to the course do not have a primary education certificate, specific educational programmes are organized, in parallel with and with the support of the public administration, to give them a fresh chance to earn their certificate.

Workshop schools and trade houses also organize cultural activities and have sometimes even given rise to stable district centres that infuse fresh energy in the employment situation.

There are also other types of centres that provide training for employment and share similar characteristics with the schools we have just described, such as employment workshops and special employment workshops. The latter are specifically created to provide disabled persons with occupational-skills training.

4.3. Development Agencies

Development agencies are a type of entity whose task is to identify the economic and productive shortcomings and potentials of a given territory and propose measures to avoid the former and boost the latter, on three main fronts: (a) the training front, at the different levels and in the different spheres; (b) the structural front, to create entrepreneurial fabric; and (c) the innovative front, in all its dimensions. So, they are involved in the training processes that enable the consolidation of the productive and entrepreneurial fabric necessary for sustainable local development.

Local development and employment agents belong to this category, and at the behest of different local entities, take care of managing programmes aimed at dynamising local development from the entrepreneurial, economic and productive standpoint. Their functions are not educational in the strict

sense, although employment agents can and should indirectly influence the orientation of training strategies toward the shortcomings of the working-age population in connection with the demands of the economic and production sector.

They have the following powers: (a) to analyse the labour market and the local goods and services market and to identify all kinds of resources, especially underused resources; (b) to boost the opportunities they have detected and the use of endogenous resources, motivating self-employment and the creation of small enterprises in the form of cooperatives or other similar kinds of undertakings; (c) to provide new initiatives with technical advice to channel their introduction; (d) to promote entrepreneurial training, professional preparation and skills training for finding employment, within ongoing training processes. This latter function is directly linked with education.

Promotion and Development Units (PDUs) are also development agencies, technical bodies financed by the public administration, also with the mission of dynamising local development using endogenous potentials and resources. Their functions include identifying opportunities for consolidating the productive fabric, supporting integration in the labour market and disseminating information about job finding. When city governments make decisions about training programmes and courses for integration in the labour market given by publicly funded schools and workshops, *PDUs* have a key part to play.

PDUs render technical support to composite training-and-employment programmes carried out by labor-training centres such as workshop schools, employment workshops, trade houses, special employment workshops, etc., facilitating their job of diagnosing the development potential of their respective areas and providing information about the job situation, information that they need to plan their training actions. And, likewise, they convey to them the information garnered from tracking the employment situation of recipients after courses have finished, thus contributing to the evaluation of the training and labour-skills projects these centres implement.

They also handle continuous training for monitors and inform the Public Employment Service's Occupations Observatory about the training needs in the professions most needed by the productive/business fabric of the area.

5. Educating for Sustainability in the Non-Formal Community Context

A third sphere of educational action for achieving the comprehensive sustainability of our societies is the community context, the sphere of non-formal education intended especially for adult citizens. In this sphere priority goes to the function of education as an instrument for the promotion of civic welfare and the kinds of participative behaviour that prove vital for the local community to take its place at the head of social development. International discussion on sustainable development agrees that education plays a crucial instrumental role in the achievement of this latter goal.

In the social, civic and cultural sphere of non-formal education, in Spain the initiative in projects goes to non-government organizations of various stripes, and also to public institutions at the different levels of the state administration, such as city governments and the departments of autonomous communities (health, consumer affairs, environment, etc.).

In this case, then, educational actions are promoted by entities that are not specifically devoted to education, and as a result such actions are, seen within the whole of their promoters' institutional

functions, subsidiary, supportive of other actions that do come under the entity's fundamental mission. For this reason, from the training standpoint, the main strength of initiatives lies in their ability to sensitise the population, create a social breeding ground where sustainability is discussed and produce diffuse medium- and long-term effects on society's habits and customs in favour of sustainable development.

There is a very great number of widely varying experiences of this type; their ranks grow slowly but at a steady pace. For example, the model of good environmental practices that the *Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP)* makes available to local corporations is very interesting due to its possible collateral educational effects. The FEMP is a federation that represents Spain's local corporations. It is a member of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), an entity to which all the associations of municipalities of the member countries of the Council of Europe belong. The FEMP's document is full of examples, and its text, which is designed to provide guidance, is laid out as a code that can facilitate environmental management as required by the indicators characterizing sustainable cities. And likewise, there is the important work promoted by institutions of social initiative organized as NGOs, some of which have a recognized international career in development cooperation, such as Intermon Oxfam, Entreculturas, Intermon, Justice and Peace, SETEM, Women in Zone of Conflict, Caritas, Economists Without Borders and the Development and Peace Foundation, among the many possible examples.

5.1. *The FEMP's Code of Good Environmental Practices: Its Training-Related Effects*

Agenda 21 draws attention to the role of local entities in sustainable environmental management; the proximity of local entities to the citizen and their knowledge of the context place them in a privileged position to grasp the specific set of environmental problems at issue and act accordingly. That is why the Earth Summit issued an invitation encouraging city governments to draw up their own *Agenda 21*, an instrument at the service of local sustainability that must take into account the global perspective as well.

But by the mid-nineties, our local corporations still did not have a standardized instrument for planning and environmental management. In response to this situation, the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP) fostered, under the European Union's LIFE programme, the creation of an environmental management guide for local bodies to refer to.

The *FEMP's Code* is a working tool that specifies in great detail the steps necessary for fostering good municipal practice in the realm of the environment. It includes two complementary systems, the Environmental Management System, and local *Agenda 21*. The former is based on UNE-EN ISO 14001 and the Regulation (EC) 761/01 (EMAS) [15]; it facilitates the normalization of the local management, while providing some flexibility for the necessary adjustments to the singularities of each municipality.

Regarding the local *Agenda 21*, it has at its service in turn two main instruments: the *Environmental Audit* and the *Social Participation Plan*.

The *Environmental Audit* consists of an initial diagnosis of the situation using data drawn from technical, socio-economic, environmental and organizational studies of the municipality, which are complemented with analyses aimed getting to know how society perceives environmental problems.

The conclusions illuminate the way to the creation of an *Environmental Action Plan*, aimed at solving the problems that have been detected, and a *Tracking Plan* to evaluate the results of the action. The result of the Environmental Audit is expressed in the *Environmental Declaration*, an informative report-type document addressed to the population and the public administrations.

When the audit has been concluded, action is rounded out with the implementation of a *Social Participation Plan* whose objective is to establish fluid communications between citizens and the local administration. In the *Plan*, a range of methodological options is offered, so that each city or town, in view of its own circumstances, can choose the option that best suits its own characteristics, needs and interests. Two main categories of instruments are included: (a) instruments of participation: regulations, associations, environmental forums, etc., and (b) instruments of communication: newsletters, municipal campaigns, magazines, Internet, etc.

In the light of the function attributed to the FEMP's *Code of Good Environmental Practices*, we may wonder whether, since the Code is an instrument for environmental management, it might also fulfill an educational function, and, if so, what type of function, and what training objectives it might serve.

The response experience provides us with is that, yes, the process of implementing the *Code* does forge, in the context, environmental sensitivity and does help foster social habits and types of behavior that are consistent with sustainability, since it requires social consensus. The community participation plan included in the implementation process reinforces the two-way ties between the public administration and citizens. Information is disseminated about the environmental problems of the city or town, attitudes of reflection and social commitment are reinforced, participation is stimulated and the participants take on an active role to advance down the road to sustainable development. In short, all these aspects are included among the objectives of the educational processes aimed at achieving comprehensive sustainability.

This means that the FEMP is carrying out a job that contributes both to the sensibilization of the population and to the construction of knowledge about local sustainable development. The educational role that the FEMP plays is evident, even though it was created as an association of entities for the excellence in municipal management, without specific educational purposes. In a society where the limits between formal and non-formal education are increasingly more blurred, the associations like the FEMP are an important dinamizing agent that foster a change in the level of the municipalities. Every intentional social change has one of its greatest challenges in the educational dimension.

5.2. Educational Actions by Development NGOs

NGOs are not specifically education-oriented institutions to begin with, although some of their activities can have an educational impact directly or indirectly, or even intentionally. NGOs are entities whose central objectives partake, in practically all cases, of the nature of humanitarian or emergency action in response to unforeseen disasters, or else support development projects in southern countries. However, there are numerous NGOs that also launch public-awareness campaigns, seeking cooperation and civic commitment through their solidary actions or through fair trade. And there are equally numerous NGOs that work in the field of education for development as a means of strengthening solidary attitudes, fairness and social justice.

For example, there is the Coordinator of NGOs for Development (CONGDE), a twenty-year-old organization that today acts as backbone for and facilitates associative support for more than four hundred organizations of this type in Spain that are dedicated to international solidarity. CONGDE makes available on its web site an educational resource guide that offers didactic materials for use by educators and teachers and gives full information on the projects and educational experiences its members are engaged in [16].

Both the materials and the projects pursue a “more human” kind of development. It is not so much a matter of people learning or doing as it is one of people thinking and proposing; of men and women being able to obtain, for themselves, the income to live life with dignity, of their life being longer and healthier, of their having access to education. But also of development that is not aggressive toward the natural environment we live in and that is accompanied by political freedom and respect for human rights.

The didactic materials target different fragments of the population: schoolchildren, youths, adults, teachers, the general public and even non-government organizations for development themselves. They come in all kinds of formats: games, teaching units, workbooks, texts for plays, stories and publications of different types (brochures, reports, handbooks, magazines, etc.). And the issues dealt with are varied as well: globalisation, the mingling of cultures, health, migrations, fair trade, environment, gender, childhood, humanitarian action, North/South relations, etc.

6. Conclusions

This brief overview of the Spanish projects, processes and experiences for advancing down the road of comprehensive sustainability is only a sample. It is a rough approximation of what our real educational situation is, taking into account the training strategies applied to the different sectors and spheres of education as well as the different levels of the system. The road ahead of us is still a long one; we need resources to travel down it, but we also need deep convictions.

Interest in these educational problems has been reinforced among us. In December 2002, by naming the 2005-2014 period the *Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD)*, the United Nations General Assembly [17] reinvigorated its support for the central role of education as a first-rate strategic tool for achieving the global sustainability of the planet.

Furthermore, the demonstrated consequences for local and global sustainable development that stem from the application of educational policies that are consistent with the principles and postulates of sustainable development reveal to us that education is, in addition to an appreciable value in itself, also an instrument with an unpredictable potential for dynamising the processes that favour the construction of environmentally and socially sustainable societies. And day by day recognition of the standing of education as a vital strategic asset for the achievement of comprehensive sustainability grows.

Education, in its two sides as a process of personal development and as an instrument of environmental, socio-economic and cultural policies, is tightly and inevitably bound to sustainable development. And the two phenomena provide each other with feedback, in an ever-returning loop that gives off strong synergies whose advantages need to be seized to benefit the planetary society that, little by little, with an enormous amount of work, we are building.

However, the future is uncertain, and it is still necessary to make a great effort to meet the challenges of education for sustainable development. Leal Filho identifies, pertinently, that among the objectives that have to be achieved are the following [18]:

- An increase in personal accountability;
- Involvement of all sectors of society
- Financial support
- Vibrant environmental conservation efforts
- Long-term perspectives

Likewise, the recent Bonn summit about ESD has confirmed the guidelines previously set out by Unesco, by identifying the challenges that will have to be tackled [19]:

- “Greater pro-active and innovative awareness-raising and advocacy to ensure that sustainable development concerns become an everyday reality for all people.
- Enhanced ESD capacity-building in Member States for different stakeholder groups.
- Targeted strategies for working with specific sectors of society, aligned with the sectoral priorities and functions of line ministries for efficient country-level implementation of the DESD.
- Strengthened commitment at Heads of Agency levels within the UN family and Bretton Woods institutions.
- Mobilisation of key partners at national and local levels to harness their valuable contributions to the Decade.
- Mobilisation of financial resources to overcome the gaps in DESD implementation, in particular in countries that need it the most.
- Ensuring effective monitoring and evaluation of the DESD, including appropriate M&E capacitybuilding, and integration of DESD monitoring into other M&E processes at country level to avoid duplication of efforts”.

The UNESCO Chair in Environmental Education and Sustainable Development at the National Open University (UNED, Spain) [20] has been facing this challenge, and the results over the ten years that have transpired are worthy of the intense work that has been done in the realm of university training, in both Spain and Latin America.

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