

Education for Sustainable Development through Geography in Romanian Secondary Schools: A Curriculum Insights

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ABSTRACT: Education for sustainable development (ESD) in schools is a key element added in recent years to the objectives of educational systems through disciplines, targeted to enable students for sustainable development. In this regard, the present paper aims to reveal the ESD purposes of Geography curricula in Romanian secondary schools. It is based on qualitative analysis of the official and research documents. The results highlighted that Geography, as a subject, is appropriate to the sustainability theme, but explicitly the concept is clearly formulated at 8th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades. In all grades, the geography curricula contents refer to different aspects which are linked to 2030 Sustainable Development Goals of United Nation (2030 SDGs-UN). The current geography school curricula stipulate the specific competencies that must be formed at each level of education, involving almost all of Global (UNESCO) or European Union's ESD key competences (GreenComp) even if they are not explicitly formulated in these documents. Also, some competencies are related to the contents of the programs and can be seen as a good basis for their implementation, but many of them depends on teachers' specific pedagogical practices, and professional readiness concerning ESD. That's why, Geography curricula need to be update in consensus with ESD policy, and teachers needs specific training for sustainability competences, in near future.

KEYWORDS: Geography curricula, Global ESD competences, Sustainable development, Romania, secondary education

1. Introduction

Education for sustainable development (ESD) gained attention in recent research. Some of them included ESD through geography in secondary schooling (Martínez-Hernández & Minguez, 2023; Sakaue et al., 2024; Howard-Jones & Hennessy, 2025). However, ESD research remains scattered and does not provide coherent directions (Redman and Wiek, 2021). In this regard, a study about the Geography role for teaching sustainable development (SD) and ESD in Romanian education system may fill some gaps in regional outputs.

Geography refers to the Anthropocene changes (Crutzen, 2002) due to human activity impacts on the Earth seen in resource depletion, loss of biodiversity, climate change, etc., but, also it focuses on humankind attempts to equilibrate economy, society and environment by sustainable development (SD). The sustainable development is a philosophical concept of the last five decades, an integral process of nowadays society, for which, ESD is considered a driving force (Kioupi & Voulvoulis, 2022; Rodrigues da Rocha et al., 2022). ESD was set up globally (GESD), through the United Nations 2030

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