

STUDIES IN CURRICULUM IN CENTRAL- NORTHERN SPAIN

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Global
Education
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STUDIES

GCE
in curriculum





Introduction

Within the framework of Work Package 2 (WP2) of the Global Education Time (GET) project, the Coopera team in central-northern Spain has carried out a detailed analysis of how the four major global challenges of the project – climate change, gender inequalities, global inequalities and migrations – are incorporated into the official curriculum and educational practice in the 11 to 16 age range.

This work combines two complementary approaches. On the one hand, it involves a systematic review of current regulations, with particular attention to the LOMLOE (Organic Law for the Modification of the Organic Law on Education) and the curriculum decrees of the autonomous communities in central and northern Spain. On the other hand, it studies the programs and experiences of educational centers in Navarre, La Rioja, Cantabria, Galicia, the Community of Madrid, and the Basque Country, among other territories within the reference area. The focus is on those subjects that the GET project itself identifies as strategic for Global Citizenship Education (GCE): Geography and History, and Natural Sciences/Biology and Geology, while also considering the cross-curricular role of Spanish Language, Philosophy, and certain elective subjects.

It is important to clarify that, although the LOMLOE (Organic Law for the Modification of the Organic Law on Education) establishes Civic and Ethical Values Education as a compulsory subject in the ESO (Compulsory Secondary Education) stage, the law allows it to be taught in any of the four years, without setting a specific level common to all students or a progression equivalent to that of the core subjects. Precisely because of this flexibility, and in order to guarantee comparability between schools and autonomous communities, the empirical analysis of WP2 has not included a specific study of its implementation, beyond considering it within the general regulatory framework.

Regulatory framework and curricular approach

Within the framework of the LOMLOE (Organic Law for the Modification of the Organic Law on Education), the curriculum is conceived as a set of cross-curricular, competency-based learning experiences. Democratic citizenship, human rights, gender equality, environmental and social sustainability, a culture of peace, and reference to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals are explicitly included as guiding elements of the education system. They do not focus on a single subject, but are distributed across different areas and subjects of ESO and Bachillerato.

The curriculum is structured in three levels of implementation:

- A first level, at the state level, defines the student exit profile, key competencies, basic knowledge, and assessment criteria;
- A second level, at the regional level, adapts this framework to each territory, regulates teaching hours, and incorporates, where appropriate, its own subjects;
- And a third level, at the school level, specifies the educational project, internal organization, and classroom methodologies.

This framework gives the autonomous communities of central and northern Spain—such as Navarre, the Basque Country, Galicia, Cantabria, La Rioja, and Madrid—real leeway to strengthen, refine, or, in practice, lessen the presence of Global Citizenship Education and the four challenges analyzed. Against this common backdrop, the WP2 research focuses on observing how this framework is implemented in core subjects and in the daily life of schools.



Analysis of the presence of Global Citizenship Education and the four challenges in central-northern Spain

The results of WP2 reveal a recognizable pattern: normative recognition of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and Education for Sustainable Development is clear, but its presence in classrooms is uneven. Treatment is more consistent regarding climate change and sustainability; it is more fragmented when addressing global inequalities; and it depends largely on teacher initiative in the case of gender and migration.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

In Geography and History, the curriculum framework provides a particularly suitable ground for integrating the four global challenges identified by GET. The regulations include, among other aspects, the study of the environmental impacts of human activity, globalization processes, the history of colonialism and decolonization, historical and recent migrations, and the construction of collective identities.

The analysis of lesson plans, teaching materials and classroom practices in schools in Navarre, La Rioja, Galicia, Cantabria, the Basque Country and the Community of Madrid allows us to identify some common features:

- Climate change and sustainability are addressed more clearly when integrated into the units of physical and human geography (climates, landscapes, resource exploitation, land use). Curriculum documents and classroom proposals include references to the 2030 Agenda and SDG 13, but analyses of responsibilities, development models, or climate justice are less common and often rely on specific materials from external projects or NGOs.
- Global inequalities are primarily addressed when discussing processes such as colonialism, North-South relations, industrialization, and economic globalization. Even so, a strong European perspective persists: countries of the Global South are often portrayed as recipients of aid or conflict zones, and less frequently as actors with their own voice. Connections between trade policy, debt, extractive models, and inequality appear occasionally, but not systematically, in all the programs analyzed.
- The gender perspective is barely mentioned explicitly in the core knowledge or assessment criteria for the subject. Where teachers incorporate a feminist reading of history, make women visible in key processes, or question the sexual division of labour, they do so primarily on their own initiative, not because the curriculum requires it in detail.
- Migration is addressed with some regularity, both from a historical perspective and in its contemporary dimension. Several centers in the study area have documented experiences working with local data, family histories, media discourse analysis, and debates surrounding racism and xenophobia. However, the predominant interpretive framework remains that of a “social problem” or “integration challenge,” and the connection between migration, climate change, armed conflict, inequality, and gender is still only partially explored.

BIOLOGY AND GEOLOGY

In the field of Natural Sciences, and particularly in Biology and Geology, the presence of Education for Sustainable Development is clear. The LOMLOE (Organic Law for the Modification of the Organic Law on



Education) incorporates content on Earth systems, climate change, biodiversity loss, the energy crisis, planetary health, and sustainable resource management, placing these subjects at the heart of the environmental dimension of the curriculum.

In the centers of the north-central region examined, laboratory work, small school investigations, field trips and projects linked to the environment (river basins, protected natural areas, rural areas, Cantabrian or Atlantic coast) have been identified that allow linking scientific learning with the territory and with practices of caring for the environment.

However, when analyzing how these contents intersect with the other three challenges of the GET project, clear boundaries emerge:

- The dimension of global inequalities appears in some cases when analyzing differentiated impacts of climate change or unequal access to water, energy and food, but it is rarely formulated in terms of climate justice or differentiated historical responsibilities between regions.
- The gender perspective usually appears sporadically, typically associated with health and sexuality content or references to the gender gap in science and technology careers. Issues such as the contributions of female scientists, research biases, or the differentiated effects of the climate crisis on women and girls are rarely addressed systematically.
- Migration is mentioned indirectly when discussing phenomena such as emerging diseases, habitat loss, or food crises, but it is not usually developed as a specific block that allows for understanding forced displacements linked to environmental factors or the interdependencies between human mobility, ecological degradation, and economic organization.

EVALUATION, EXAMS AND SCHOOL CULTURE

Although Spain does not have a specific national test focused on Global Citizenship Education or Education for Sustainable Development, the WP2 analysis shows that major global challenges appear indirectly in assessments of subjects such as Geography and History, Philosophy, and Science. In the case of the EBAU (University Access Assessment), exams in History, Geography, Economics, and Philosophy may include questions related to globalization, inequalities, human rights, or climate change, signaling to schools that these topics are part of the assessment horizon in the final stage of the education system.

In the 11-16 age group, the competency-based assessment promoted by the LOMLOE (Organic Law for the Modification of the Organic Law on Education) opens the possibility, at least from a regulatory standpoint, of a more applied and reflective approach to Global Citizenship Education and ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) through projects, oral presentations, research papers, and rubrics that assess students' ability to analyze global issues, take a stance, and propose solutions. However, research reveals significant differences between schools: where there is a tradition of project-based learning, interdepartmental coordination, and stable collaboration with NGOs, global citizenship is more easily integrated into assessable tasks; in other contexts, a more fragmented approach focused on memorizing content continues to predominate.

CONCLUSIONS

The mapping carried out in central-northern Spain allows us to affirm that the education system is in a moment of transition towards a more consistent presence of Education for Global Citizenship and Education for



Sustainable Development, but still far from a fully coherent and articulated itinerary around the four global challenges raised by the GET project.

From a regulatory standpoint, the LOMLOE (Organic Law for the Modification of the Organic Law on Education) and its regional implementations provide a clear framework that recognizes the relevance of climate change, gender equality, the reduction of inequalities, and attention to migration as components of the curriculum. However, the practical application reveals a clear asymmetry: climate change and sustainability have a relatively solid foundation in Science and Geography; the gender perspective finds its most stable place in certain school practices and in specific co-education policies promoted by some autonomous communities; while global inequalities and the structural approach to migration maintain a limited presence and depend, to a large extent, on initiatives promoted by NGOs, regional programs, or projects funded at the European level.

In this context, Coopera's WP2 in central-northern Spain serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, it contributes to rigorously documenting the gap between the prescribed curriculum and the curriculum actually implemented in classrooms, providing evidence of how the four global challenges are addressed—or neglected—in the 11-16 age group. On the other hand, it opens up a field of opportunity for the GET project to develop learning units, resources and teacher training proposals directly linked to the core and optional subjects of ESO (Compulsory Secondary Education), so that teachers have concrete support to make education for global citizenship a guiding thread of the school experience, not just a formulation present in legal texts.



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Curriculum case studies

Case studies (secondary school, ages 12–16)

Curriculum analysis of three key areas confirms the progressive integration of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in secondary education, in line with the LOMLOE (Organic Law on the Modification of the Organic Law on Education) and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Case study #1:

In Biology and Geology—two to three hours per week during the four years of secondary education—there is a scientific and ethical approach aimed at understanding living and terrestrial systems from the perspective of ecological interdependence. Observation, experimentation, and cooperative work strengthen environmental awareness and responsible action in the face of biodiversity loss, planetary health, and sustainable use of resources, in connection with SDGs 6, 13, 14, and 15.

Case study #2:

In Geography and History—2 to 3 hours per week—the curriculum promotes critical reading of the territory as a social and dynamic construction. Through projects, source analysis, and ICT, students interpret global phenomena—climate change, inequalities, migration, urbanization—developing critical thinking, democratic citizenship, and multiscale understanding, in line with SDGs 10, 11, and 13.

Case study #3:

In Spanish Language and Literature (3 to 4 hours per week), reading, writing, and oral communication are geared toward ethical and social reflection. Through literary and media texts, students work on equality, diversity, and human rights, fostering empathy, argumentation, and dialogue as pillars of coexistence and global commitment.
(Reference: LOMLOE, 2020; RD ESO, 2022)

Main findings Climate Change

- The analysis of the ESO curriculum confirms that climate change is addressed as a cross-cutting theme, especially in Geography and History and Biology and Geology, in line with SDGs 6, 13, 14, and 15. Students study natural and anthropogenic causes, assess environmental and social impacts, and analyze global mitigation and adaptation strategies.
- In Biology and Geology, observation, experimentation, and cooperative work promote scientific understanding and responsible action, developing skills related to sustainability.
- In Geography and History, development models and environmental inequalities are analyzed, promoting critical reading of the territory and global awareness of the climate emergency. Spanish Language and Literature complements this approach with texts on sustainability and environmental justice.
- The aim is to strengthen interdisciplinary projects that articulate knowledge and active student participation in the face of climate change.

Main findings Gender inequality

- ESO addresses international inequality from a critical and global perspective. In Geography and History, students analyze economic and social imbalances between regions, the historical causes of colonialism, and the dynamics of globalization that perpetuate the North-South divide.
- In Biology and Geology, they reflect on the unequal distribution of natural resources, the environmental and health vulnerability of countries in the global South, and ecological interdependence, linking content to SDGs 1, 10, and 13.
- In Spanish Language and Literature, students examine media texts and discourses that reflect stereotypes or unequal power relations between territories, promoting critical awareness and solidarity.
- Although the curriculum framework encourages ethical reflection, it is recommended that the connection between theory and action be strengthened through case studies, school cooperation, and projects that relate local realities to global challenges.

Main findings International inequality

- EESO addresses international inequality from a critical perspective, integrating its analysis into subjects such as Geography and History, Biology and Geology, and Spanish Language and Literature. In line with SDGs 1, 10, and 13, it promotes understanding of the structural causes of poverty, the concentration of wealth, and North-South imbalances.
- In Geography and History, students examine the legacy of colonialism, globalization, and their effects on the unequal distribution of resources and power.
- In Biology and Geology, environmental and health inequalities are studied, linking ecological degradation with socioeconomic gaps and climate justice as the basis for sustainability. In Spanish Language and Literature, narratives that reflect global asymmetries are analyzed, promoting solidarity awareness and responsible communication.
- The analysis recognizes regulatory advances but underscores the need to strengthen strategies that link knowledge and transformative action.

Main findings Migration

- The ESO curriculum incorporates migration as a social, historical, and environmental phenomenon, in line with the SDGs. The LOMLOE promotes a comprehensive approach that allows students to understand the causes and consequences of human displacement and its influence on the cultural diversity of today's societies.
- In Geography and History, students analyze migratory processes linked to conflict, inequality, and climate change.
- In Spanish Language and Literature, literary and media narratives that reflect migratory experiences are addressed, promoting empathy, intercultural dialogue, and the contributions of migrant communities.
- In Biology and Geology, the influence of environmental factors, such as desertification and water scarcity, on human mobility is analyzed, reinforcing the understanding of climate migration as a global challenge.
- It is recommended that intercultural education and human rights be reinforced to promote critical, inclusive, and committed citizenship.



Conclusion and recommendations for education stakeholders in central-northern Spain

An analysis of the Spanish secondary school curriculum confirms progress in incorporating Global Citizenship Education (GCE), although challenges remain in its practical application. Based on the results, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Curriculum integration. Educational projects must link the content and competencies of the LOMLOE with global challenges, ensuring consistency with the SDGs.
2. Teacher training. It is a priority to offer support and training resources that facilitate the use of active methodologies and interdisciplinary materials aligned with ECG.
3. Pedagogical innovation. It is recommended to consolidate strategies based on project-based learning, competency assessment, and critical reflection on global realities.
4. Networking. Encourage the creation of communities of practice among schools and teachers, allowing for the sharing of experiences and strengthening transformative education. Institutional coherence. Align GCE initiatives with national and regional regulatory frameworks to ensure their sustainability and educational impact.

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