



## **Retos actuales para la experiencia y entornos de enseñanza/aprendizaje en educación superior**

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Este libro recoge buenas prácticas académicas y de gestión implementadas por el profesorado de la Universidad de Deusto y otras Universidades Jesuitas (UNIJES).

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**BUENAS PRÁCTICAS DE INNOVACIÓN Y CALIDAD**

**11th University Conference on Innovation and Quality**  
"Challenges in the transformation of teaching-learning environments  
in higher education"

**Education for sustainable development-seeking virtual learning experience**

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**Summary:**

Teacher training students from the University of Deusto (UD), Spain, and the Ruhr University Bochum (RUB), Germany, collaborated on concepts for implementing Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in schools. School practitioners and a policy-making institution presented best practice cases and participated in discussions with the students. From there, the students developed their own ideas, guided by their respective teachers as moderators.

The Virtual Exchange (VE) presented in this practice connected 21 UD professors and students and 25 RUB professors and students through Zoom. The duration of the face-to-face exchange was four hours in total. Sustainable school concepts were presented by representatives from schools in Spain (Jesuitinas and Ayalde) and Germany (Stemweder Bergschule) as well as by representatives from UN Etxea in Bilbao (Spain). We would like to thank our colleagues from RUB for sharing their knowledge: Dr. Henning Feldmann (Ruhr University Bochum, RUB), Lucien Kemper (RUB), Maya Krüger (Kreidestaub e.V.), Jan Miksch (Kreidestaub e.V.), Dr. Marie Vanderbeke (RUB)

**1. Scope of application:**

Name of degree programme involved: BA in Primary Education (UD) and BA and Master of Education programmes (RUB).

Subject involved: *Didactics of Foreign Languages I English* (UD) and *Sustainable Learning Journey with Virtual Exchange* (RUB).

Target group: Third year students (UD) and BA and Master students (RUB).

**2. Aim and conceptual framework:**

After launching a pilot project with RUB within the UNIC alliance, and considering VE as: a practice, supported by research, that consists of sustained, technology-based, person-to-person educational programmes or activities in which constructive communication and interaction takes place between individuals or groups who are geographically separated and/or from different cultural backgrounds, with the support of educators or facilitators. Virtual Exchange combines the profound impact of cross-cultural dialogue and exchange with the broad reach of digital technology (Evolve Project, n.d.).

The authors of this practice believe that VE should be promoted among our students. Moreover, through this experience, students will increase their knowledge of concepts related to sustainability and ESD in schools, have the opportunity to collaborate with students from other universities and cultures, and develop interesting competencies.

In a rapidly changing world, students are increasingly required to employ competencies such as intercultural communication and critical reflection to navigate increasingly diverse communities and workplaces (Ferreira-Lopes et al., 2018).

In recent decades, and especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, Intercultural Virtual Collaboration (IVC) (also known as Virtual Exchange, COIL and telecollaboration) has

proved to be an effective learning strategy to develop these and other relevant 21st century skills (Ferreira-Lopes et al., 2022).

Since VE allows students from different cultures to collaborate together without the need to travel, it is also a powerful tool to foster so-called “Internationalization at home”, benefiting students who are unable to travel due to different reasons, including physical disabilities, financial constraints, or family responsibilities.

Given its great pedagogical potential, IVC has been widely implemented in universities around the world, connecting East to West and South to North (Barbosa & Ferreira-Lopes, 2021). Recently, it has been integrated as part of the European Commission’s flagship educational programme Erasmus+ and has also been considered a pillar in important educational alliances such as UNIC, an alliance of 8 European universities located in post-industrial cities of which the University of Deusto is a member.

Previous research leaves no doubt that VE is a learning strategy that enhances regular courses with international perspectives through intercultural collaboration.

### **3. Objectives:**

The project enabled the students to develop the following competences and objectives:

- **Transversal Competence: Diversity and Interculturality, Level 1 (UD framework):** To understand cultural and social diversity as a human phenomenon and to interact respectfully with people who are different.
- **Generic Competence: Critical Thinking, Level 2 (UD framework):** Analysing the logic of one's own and others’ judgments, weighing their personal and social implications.
- **General objective:** To explore how VE can develop students intercultural competence and critical reflection
- **Specific objectives:**
  - To interact in English
  - To identify own ideal concept of an ideal ESD school.
  - To increase students’ awareness of the different cultures involved
  - To strengthen the relationship between both institutions

### **4. Evaluation indicators:**

Specific objectives:

To interact in English

- Students interact using English as a lingua-franca during all the synchronous and asynchronous interactions

To identify own ideal concept of an ideal ESD school.

- Students analyse sustainable schools.
- Students build their own ESD school based on the following categories: 1) school infrastructure, 2) school governance, 3) classroom practice, and 4) school life and community.

To increase students’ awareness of the different cultures involved

- Students identify the different cultures that are involved in the collaboration and correctly explain the characteristics of such cultures that could be observed during the development of the project.
- Students critically analyze the collaboration from different cultural perspectives, demonstrating a sense of empathy while describing experiences and incidents that might arise.

To strengthen the relationship between both institutions

- Teachers and university staff involved in the Project meet via zoom regularly and share their opinion and ideas.

### **5. Methodology:**

Prior to the on-site VE, the UD and RUB project leaders met regularly and prepared materials to provide students with the necessary information for the exchange. These

materials included brief introductions to the school systems and structures in Germany and Spain and clarifications on the regulations for integrating ESD into the classroom in the respective country. To provide students with practical examples of successful ESD integration in schools, the project leaders recruited representatives from schools that excel in ESD integration. These representatives prepared presentations of their ESD concepts and innovative pedagogical practices at the school level. A timetable was developed in consultation between RUB and UD leaders.

MentiMeter and TaskCards were chosen to ensure that the students from Spain and Germany could work together collaboratively and document the results of the group work. The students were asked to (a) familiarize themselves with the preparatory material and (b) get to know the other group through a TaskCard-board showing the presentations of the teachers and students in the exchange.

As for the on-site VE procedure, the first 20 minutes were used to familiarize the students. In breakout rooms, students talked about their university life and daily routines based on guiding questions, followed by a short introduction about the respective RUB and UD projects, in which the exchange has been integrated. This was followed by a discussion on the intention of the exchange, the different forms of integration and the implementation of ESD. To demonstrate this in a practical way, the Basque representative of UNESCO, UN Etxea, gave a talk on ESD and what materials can help teachers to implement ESD inschool. Then, two Spanish schools (Jesuitinas and Ayalde) and one German school (Stemweder Bergschule) presented their sustainable school concepts and, thus, shared the possibilities to concretely implement ESD in their schools. After the representatives of the Spanish and German school presented their examples of good practice, the students were asked to participate in a simulation game based on the question: "What would my ideal ESD-school looks like?". With the help of material prepared in TaskCards, mixed groups of Spanish and German students discussed the aspects that are important to them in a sustainable school. In doing so, they developed a school concept that referred to selected Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ESD practices. The working groups presented their imaginary school and their ESD concept to the other groups. After the discussion of the school concepts, the students were asked to what extent the VE has helped them in their future teaching practice. To collect the different statements, students entered their comments in the digital tool MentiMeter.

Since the EV Sustainable Learning Journey is based on student teaching, the RUB students were supported by the student group leaders prior to the VE. They observed the groups during the working sessions and acted as mediators and moderators between the RUB and UD students. During the exchange, the project leaders from Deusto and Bochum took on the role of moderators and provided the digital setting for the VE to take place.

## **6. Outcomes after implementation of the good practice:**

The RUB and UD students met in groups and developed their own ideal concept of an ideal ESD school (simulation game) based on information from their previous studies and examples from the participating schools. To do this, each group was assigned two categories. These categories were: 1) school infrastructure, 2) school governance, 3) classroom practice, and 4) school life and community. The Students presented their results in short presentations.

In addition, a final discussion was held on the different preconditions for ESD and its implementation in Spain and Germany.

The students had the chance to share ideas, views and opinions in English on sustainability concepts and how to develop them in schools.

## 7. Outcome transfer:

This experience could serve as a model for similar initiatives in other sectors and academic contexts. The UD has an extensive network of universities and a wide network of contacts that make it possible to implement the VE in different languages.

In fact, this experience has already two identifiable outcomes: first, it has been included in the Unic Handbook on Physical and Virtual Mobility (Tan et al., 2023), and, secondly, a new innovative project on VE based on the previous implementation has been accepted and it is now in progress.

## 8. Conclusions:

Although we consider that, from an overall point of view, the different competencies were developed and the objective achieved, there are some challenges worth highlighting: (a) regarding language and interaction, during the first exercise 'Getting to know each other', students reacted rather with some caution. In addition, it was observed that different approaches to tasks were discussed in the groups; (b) some students valued more personal exchange and socialization, while others focused on a quick solution to the tasks set; (c) a couple of groups faced technical problems that prevented them from establishing clear communication; (d), in general, the planned schedule was too tight.

During the reflection session, it was considered to plan the next VE over several days in the framework of a seminar and to give more time to get to know each other, exchange ideas and reflect on the intercultural aspects of the exchange.

New VE are proposed for next academic year under an innovative project accepted by the Educational Innovation Unit of the UD.

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