

Article

# Sustainable Teacher Training and SDGs Knowledge: A Study from the Reading Perspective

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**Abstract:** This study aims at analysing the relevance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in initial teacher education and the prominence given to reading, as well as the relationship between the two issues. The research modality chosen is non-experimental, descriptive (survey) and mixed. On the one hand, a questionnaire designed for 118 students of the different teaching-related degrees offered at the Faculty of Education of Universidad de Murcia (Spain) was used to collect information. On the other hand, the interview script was prepared for five professors from the University who teach in these degrees or postgraduate studies, also related to teaching. The results highlight the poor treatment and general lack of knowledge about the SDGs and the little consideration given to them in the literature. There is a pressing need to change the approach and to advocate for a cross-cutting approach to both issues, also taking advantage of the relationship between literature and SDGs for the benefit of the education community.

**Keywords:** higher education; teacher education; sustainable development; literature; sustainable development; literature

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Teacher Training and Literary Education

Improving the quality of education is an issue of concern to both education professionals and society at large. So much so that the fourth of the SDGs proposes “ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” [1] (p. 13). In this respect, it should be noted that improving teacher quality is considered a necessary condition for the desired improvement of the quality of education, understood as the most powerful tool to bring about positive and influential changes in the medium and long term [2]. In this same vein, the quality of teacher training has been shown to be a key factor, as it will have a significant impact on student performance and, ultimately, on the learning process [3]. According to Kraft and Papay [4], it is possible to improve the effectiveness of teachers by advocating for the improvement of their initial and in-service training, the most optimal strategy to contribute to the progress and improvement of the education offered in schools [5].

With regard to the aforementioned initial teacher training, if the aim is to model and/or prepare future teachers to become what Giroux [6] calls “transformative intellectuals”, children’s literature is an essential tool. In this same vein, Flores, Vlach and Lamert [7] state that teachers in charge of training future teachers must carefully select the types of children’s literature presented to their students, as this will directly impact their students’ use of children’s literature in their future classrooms. They also note that “if we are to dismantle technocratic approaches to literacy, strengthen our understanding of each other and improve our connections as a global community, we must select books

that challenge assumptions and speak to the possibilities of change" [7] (p. 228). As far as such selection is concerned, it should be noted that teachers must choose texts on the basis of both their literary quality and the values conveyed [8].

All of the above only reinforces the essential role played by literary education in teacher education. In fact, not only the text and the reader are involved in the reading process, but also a third party, the educational agent who mediates between the two [9]. Teachers act as mediators and serve as a bridge or link between books and these early readers, encouraging and facilitating dialogue between the two. Several studies have been conducted aiming at analysing the extent to which future teachers have the relevant requirements to work as mediators, and some of their conclusions are worth highlighting. A low reading habit and a poor level of motivation towards reading [10] have been detected, as well as insufficient interest in literary reading [11], which will inevitably have a negative impact on the teaching mission of transmitting a taste for reading to students, moving away from the reading role model they should be implementing [10].

Broadly speaking, studies conducted along the same lines also identify certain weaknesses in the literary training of students of the Bachelor's Degree in Teaching, reflecting their lack of skills in the selection and evaluation of children's literature texts to be used in the classroom [12]. Similarly, there is evidence of insufficient knowledge of the literature [13] to exercise the function of "informed recommendation" [14]. These shortcomings have an inexorable impact on the way literature is approached in the classroom, which can be described as reductionist according to the results obtained in studies such as that of Gabrielsen, Blikstad-Balas and Tengberg [15], who conclude that "if literature is only a tool for learning something else, it is difficult to claim the value of literature in itself and to establish its position in the curriculum" (p. 27).

### *1.2. Sustainable Development Goals*

The Resolution adopted by the United Nations [1] explicitly reflects the integrated and indivisible nature of the 17 SDGs and their 169 targets, as well as their global scope and universal application. Nevertheless, it is also stipulated that each government will have some freedom to decide how to incorporate these aspirations, considering the circumstances of each country. Links between all SDGs are paramount. In particular, it is worth highlighting the mainstreaming of quality education (Goal 4) as a means to achieve all of the SDGs.

Bernal and Carrica [16] or Sunthonkanokpong and Murphy [17] see it as a social demand that Development Education should be more present, especially in teacher training. The results of Martínez-Lirola's study [18] highlight the shortcomings in terms of teacher training regarding knowledge on the SDGs, with an alarming 87% claiming to have no information about the SDGs before engaging with the proposal in question. In this regard, Aznar, Ull, Martínez-Agut and Piñero [19] conclude that "the literature and research in the field to date show very few examples of large-scale curriculum change and the available experiences are occasional and scarce" (p. 227).

In response to this incongruence, and coinciding with the worrying results presented above, the research by Valderrama-Hernández et al. [20] corroborates the poor training in terms of sustainability on the part of future teachers, and these authors believe that the best thing to do is to take measures to train future generations by modifying curricula so that sustainability is integrated into them, with the need for its presence to be evident in several compulsory subjects, in order to achieve a holistic vision of sustainability. For their part, Ull, Martínez-Agut, Piñero and Aznar [21] believe a specific subject whose content revolves around Education for Sustainable Development should be introduced in the curricula, although they stress that the rest of the subjects should also include competencies for sustainability. They also add that it could be very positive to encourage teacher education institutions to create collaborative networks for research in this respect on good pedagogical practices (formulating applicable strategies for large classes, assessing learning processes, etc.).

### 1.3. Sustainability in Higher Education Curricula

Far from being an isolated opinion, there is an academic consensus that the university is the most appropriate place to lead the creation of enabling environments and/or forms of education for sustainability [22]. The key role of the University in this respect led the Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE, as per its acronym in Spanish) in September 2002 to unanimously approve the creation of the Commission dedicated to the control of Environmental Quality and Sustainable Development in Spanish universities, highlighting the work of the working group in charge of curricular sustainability. In this sense, upon consulting the document *Guidelines for the introduction of Sustainability in the Curriculum*, sent to all Spanish universities, it is worth highlighting (among other specific actions noted) the recommendations regarding the regulation of official degrees, under which the authorities in charge must guarantee:

- The comprehensive revision of the curriculum from the perspective of Sustainable Human Development to ensure the inclusion of basic cross-cutting content in sustainability in all degree programmes, in order to acquire the necessary professional, academic and disciplinary competencies.
- The inclusion of sustainability criteria in university quality assessment systems [23] (p. 3).

Nevertheless, it is worth highlighting some relevant nuances in terms of curriculum sustainability policy in Spain. Unlike what happens in other countries such as Sweden (this objective is included in the law on higher education) or the Netherlands (there is a coordinated national work programme), in Spain, there is no specific programme promoting sustainability in universities, but each university has a considerable degree of freedom and they implement their initiatives in this respect according to their own background, autonomy and criteria [24], since the guidelines issued by the CRUE referred to above are perhaps too lax in nature, being understood as suggestions rather than obligations.

As for the impact of this laxity, it is worth highlighting the results of the research by Aznar, Ull, Martínez-Agut and Piñero [18], which show that the university teaching staff under study are not very active in terms of including activities that favour the development of competencies related to sustainability. The contributions of Serafini, De Moura, De Almeida and De Rezende [25] or Fia, Ghasemzadeh and Paletta [26] to the debate on how higher education institutions develop their path towards the 2030 agenda should also be taken into account.

Considering all the information gathered and the gaps identified with regard to the treatment of the SDGs in the training of future teachers, this study aims to answer the following question from the perspective of reading: What is the consideration given to the SDGs and literary reading in initial teacher training at Universidad de Murcia (Spain)?

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Objectives of the Research

Generally, this study aims at analysing the relevance of the Sustainable Development Goals SDGs in initial teacher education and the prominence given to reading (in the degrees analysed), as well as the link between the two issues. The specific objectives are broken down as follows:

- To find out the conceptions of future teachers regarding their specific vocation, as well as the influence and training they attribute to teaching in general terms.
- To analyse and compare the perception of students of Bachelor's Degrees in Teaching about the level of relevance given to literary reading in the respective degrees, as well as the importance they attach to this issue individually.
- To identify similarities and differences in the information and knowledge that students of the Master's Degrees have about the SDGs.

- To determine and compare the knowledge, beliefs and relevance of the SDGs and literary reading among teachers in charge of initial teacher education in the degree programmes they teach.

Upon listing the research objectives, it should be noted that in those referring to trainee teachers (first three objectives), the variables studied are gender, degree and year. On the other hand, the fourth objective aims at practising teachers at the University, the variables under study, in this case, being the academic profile and/or degree (distinguishing between bachelor's and doctorate degrees) and the years of teaching experience.

## 2.2. Participants and Background

A total of 118 student teachers (Table 1) and 5 university teachers (Table 2) participated in this study.

**Table 1.** Distribution of the students according to the variables studied.

Year	Childhood Education ( <i>n</i> = 57)	Primary Education ( <i>n</i> = 35)	PCEO ( <i>n</i> = 26)
Year	2° ( <i>n</i> = 79)	3° ( <i>n</i> = 26)	4° ( <i>n</i> = 13)

**Table 2.** Distribution of the teachers according to the variables studied.

	Bachelor's Degree	Doctorate Degree	Experience
Interviewee no. 1	Pedagogy	Pedagogy	12 years
Interviewee no. 2	English Philology	Language and Literature Didactics	16 years
Interviewee no. 3	Pedagogy	Education	10 years
Interviewee no. 4	Computer Engineering	Education	6 years
Interviewee no. 5	Pedagogy	Education	6 years

All the participants play their roles (either as students or as teachers) at the Universidad de Murcia (Spain), specifically, in the Faculty of Education, during the academic year 2021/2022. In line with McMillan and Schumacher [27], a non-probabilistic convenience sample was chosen for this study, given that accessibility and the principle of relevance were the main reasons for choosing the groups.

## 2.3. Design of the Research

The research modality chosen is non-experimental, descriptive (survey) and mixed. According to Bisquerra [28], the ultimate aim of descriptive research is to describe a given phenomenon, and, in this case, from among the three types described by the same author (developmental, survey and observational studies), we opted for the survey study, given that the information collection instruments chosen were the questionnaire and the interview.

According to the contributions of Hernández-Sampieri, Fernández-Collado and Baptista-Lucio [29], mixed methods characterise the objects of study through numbers and language in an attempt to construct a wide range of evidence, in order to achieve a broader and deeper perspective of the phenomenon, thus building an integral, complete and holistic view of it [30–32]. Considering the descriptive nature of the study, it has been found appropriate to advocate the mixed approach since, as Creswell [33] argues, it allows for greater richness and variety of perspectives on the phenomenon in question: the

frequency, breadth, magnitude and generalisability provided by the quantitative paradigm, combined with the depth, complexity and understanding offered by the qualitative paradigm, highlight the advantages derived from the complementarity of both approaches.

#### Instruments

- Questionnaire

In this case, the questionnaire was to be useful for gathering information to answer the first three specific objectives (see Supplementary A) and it was considered most appropriate to combine open-ended and closed-ended questions, with the questionnaire consisting of a total of 20 items (see Supplementary B).

From item 1 to item 16 (in the case of item 16 only the first part), the questions are closed-ended, presenting interviewees with a total of four response options in each case, with only one of them to choose from. In the second part of item 16 and in items 17, 18, 19 and 20 (complete), there are open-ended questions.

- Interview

In this study, although a total of 14 questions were asked (based on the questions in the questionnaire), they were simply intended to serve as support, the priority being that the exchange of information with the participants should be flexible in nature. Therefore, the interview conducted can be referred to as semi-structured [34,35].

The purpose of the interviews was to obtain the information required to respond to the fourth objective and, therefore, opinion and knowledge questions were used in accordance with the classification offered by Mertens [36], since the aim was precisely to obtain answers about the beliefs and information available to the key informants (teachers) about the subject under study. A script of the questions asked can be found in Supplementary C.

- Tool validation

Both the questionnaire and the interview were designed ad hoc and, consequently, both instruments underwent a validation process carried out by two expert judges. They both belonged to the field of Didactics of Language and Literature and had a consistent professional career, having published chapters and books, especially in relation to teacher training and linguistic and literary education. Aiken's V-validation coefficient [37] was applied to the scores assigned to the items comprising the questionnaire and the interview, obtaining values ranging from 0.79 to 1 and 0.88 to 1, respectively.

As far as the questionnaire is concerned, it should be noted that a pilot test was also carried out by applying the instrument in advance with the intention of making changes to the questionnaire before it was completed by the bulk of the participants.

#### 2.4. Plan to Analyse Information

Since a mixed approach was chosen, the analysis plan was carried out from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. The procedure followed with each of the tools used is shown below:

- Questionnaire

The questionnaire responses were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively, depending on the nature of the data. With regard to the quantitative analysis, firstly, the information was emptied into Excel, recording the data derived from each and every one of the 118 completed questionnaires, thus facilitating their subsequent processing using IBM SPSS v.28. A descriptive analysis was conducted by using this statistical analysis software, in terms of frequency and percentages, of the closed questions (items 1 to 15 in full and the first question of item 16).

As for the qualitative analysis, it should be noted that the starting point was the literal transcription of the information provided by the students to answer the open questions of

the questionnaire (second question of item 16 and items 17, 18, 19 and 20). Once this was undertaken, the data were dumped into Atlas.ti v.8.4 and the information obtained was reduced and coded. In relation to the latter, it should be noted that in this case, it is an inductive analysis, since it “dispenses with a theory to apply concepts, laws or dimensions to the text being codified” [38] (p. 110). Once this was undertaken, networks were created, understood as explanatory schemes instead of hierarchical schemes, whose ultimate purpose is to clarify the links between the families of codes, thus expanding the information on the subject under study [39]. Finally, it should be noted that only the Degree variable was considered in the qualitative analysis.

- Interview

The analysis of the contributions derived from the interviews was conducted using Atlas.ti v.8.4, a software that facilitates the process of coding and creating semantic networks, thus improving the credibility and/or internal validity of the study [40]. The procedure was identical, the information was transcribed, codes were assigned and the data were organised based on the creation of the networks, in order to obtain what López-Ruiz, Alcaraz-Muñoz, Calvo-García and Alonso-Roque [41] call “a comprehensive map of the results” (p. 47). As mentioned above, as for the interview, the teachers were the key informants and the following variables were considered: academic profile (degree and doctorate) and years of teaching experience.

### 3. Results

In accordance with the specific objectives formulated in the first instance, the results obtained are set out below.

- Objective number one. To find out the conceptions of future teachers regarding their specific vocation, as well as the influence and training they attribute to teaching in general terms.

The data shown in Table 3 reveal the frequency and percentages of responses to items 1, 2 and 3 (grouped in block 1) for both the Degree variable and the course variable.

**Table 3.** Frequency and percentages of the items belonging to block 1 of the questionnaire, according to Degree and year.

	Year						Year					
	Childhood Education <i>n</i> = 57		Primary Education <i>n</i> = 35		PCEO <i>n</i> = 26		Year 2 <i>n</i> = 79		Year 3 <i>n</i> = 26		Year 4 <i>n</i> = 13	
Item	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
(1)	1	1.8%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1.3%	0	0%	0	0%
(2)	53	92.9%	32	91.4%	26	100%	73	92.4%	26	100%	12	92.3%
(3)	1	1.8%	1	2.9%	0	0%	2	2.5%	0	0%	0	0%
(4)	2	3.5%	2	5.7%	0	0%	3	3.8%	0	0%	1	7.7%
Item 2												
(1)	4	7.1%	2	5.7%	1	3.8%	6	7.6%	1	3.8%	0	0%
(2)	53	92.9%	33	94.3%	25	96.2%	73	92.4%	25	96.2%	13	100%
(3)	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
(4)	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Item 3												
(1)	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
(2)	0	0%	1	2.9%	0	0%	1	1.3%	0	0%	0	0%
(3)	2	3.5%	2	5.7%	0	0%	3	3.8%	0	0%	0	0%
(4)	55	96.5%	32	91.4%	26	100%	75	94.9%	26	100%	13	100%

With regard to item 1, the wording of which is “The main reason I chose to study this degree...”, the vast majority of trainee teachers chose the second answer option: “self-interest” as suggested by the data obtained. With regard to item 2, “I believe teaching has a real impact...”, the highest percentages are around the second answer, referring to the social and school environment. With regard to item 3, “I think that in teacher training, it is essential...”, a clear majority (percentages above 90% in this item and the two previous ones) selected the fourth of the possible answers, as explained above.

- Objective number two. To analyse and compare the perception of students of Bachelor’s Degrees in Teaching about the level of relevance given to literary reading in the respective degrees, as well as the importance they attach to this issue individually.

The data in Table 4 show the frequency and percentages linked to the items belonging to block 2 (items 4, 5, 6, 10, 12, 14, 15 and 16) according to the variables under study (Degree and year).

**Table 4.** Frequency and percentages of the items belonging to block 2 of the questionnaire, according to Degree and year.

	Year				Year							
	Childhood Education <i>n</i> = 57		Primary Education <i>n</i> = 35		PCEO <i>n</i> = 26		Year 2 <i>n</i> = 79		Year 3 <i>n</i> = 26		Year 4 <i>n</i> = 13	
Item	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Item 4												
(1)	3	5.3%	3	8.6%	0	0%	6	7.6%	0	0%	0	0%
(2)	44	77.2%	24	68.6%	25	96.2%	56	70.9%	25	96.2%	12	92.3%
(3)	10	17.5%	8	22.8%	1	3.8%	17	21.5%	1	3.8%	1	7.7%
(4)	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Item 5												
(1)	7	12.3%	1	2.9%	0	0%	8	10.1%	0	0%	0	0%
(2)	22	38.6%	12	34.2%	5	19.2%	28	35.5%	5	19.2%	7	53.8%
(3)	27	47.3%	21	60%	17	65.4%	42	53.1%	17	65.4%	5	38.5%
(4)	1	1.8%	1	2.9%	4	15.4%	1	1.3%	4	15.4%	1	7.7%
Item 6												
(1)	3	5.3%	6	17.1%	3	11.5%	8	10.1%	3	11.5%	1	7.7%
(2)	41	71.9%	17	48.6%	12	46.2%	51	64.6%	12	46.2%	7	53.8%
(3)	7	12.3%	9	25.7%	7	26.9%	12	15.2%	7	26.9%	4	30.8%
(4)	6	10.5%	3	8.6%	4	15.4%	8	10.1%	4	15.4%	1	7.7%
Item 10												
(1)	10	17.5%	6	17.1%	2	7.7%	12	15.2%	2	7.7%	4	30.8%
(2)	5	8.8%	0	0%	5	19.2%	3	3.8%	5	19.2%	2	15.4%
(3)	40	70.2%	28	80%	18	69.3%	61	77.2%	18	69.3%	7	53.8%
(4)	2	3.5%	1	2.9%	1	3.8%	3	3.8%	1	3.8%	0	0%
Item 12												
(1)	20	35.1%	14	40%	11	42.3%	26	32.9%	11	42.3%	8	61.5%
(2)	2	3.5%	2	5.7%	0	0%	4	5.1%	0	0%	0	0%
(3)	31	54.4%	15	42.9%	13	50%	41	51.9%	13	50%	5	38.5%
(4)	4	7%	4	11.4%	2	7.7%	8	10.1%	2	7.7%	0	0%

Item 14												
(1)	19	33.3%	10	28.6%	8	30.8%	24	30.4%	8	30.8%	5	38.5%
(2)	3	5.3%	2	5.7%	4	15.4%	3	3.8%	4	15.4%	2	15.4%
(3)	33	57.9%	17	48.6%	14	53.8%	44	55.7%	14	53.8%	6	46.1%
(4)	2	3.5%	6	17.1%	0	0%	8	10.1%	0	0%	0	0%
Item 15												
(1)	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
(2)	42	73.7%	21	60%	22	84.6%	53	67.1%	22	84.6%	10	76.9%
(3)	15	26.3%	14	40%	4	15.4%	26	32.9%	4	15.4%	3	23.1%
(4)	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Item 16												
(0)	1	1.8%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	7.7%
(1)	18	31.6%	3	8.6%	2	7.7%	16	20.3%	2	7.7%	5	38.5%
(2)	1	1.8%	2	5.7%	0	0%	2	2.5%	0	0%	0	0%
(3)	16	28%	9	25.7%	6	23%	25	31.6%	6	23%	1	7.7%
(4)	21	36.8%	21	60%	18	69.3%	36	45.6%	18	69.3%	6	46.1%

With regard to item 4, whether we consider the Degree or the year, most trainee teachers opted for the second option, which indicates that the presence of literary reading in the degree they are studying could be improved, with percentages ranging between 68.6% and 96.2% (depending on the Degree) and between 70.9% and 96.2% (in the case of the year variable).

With regard to item 5, (“In order to pass the subjects of the Degree, I need a reading background...”), the most frequently chosen answer, according to the Degree, was number three (“intermediate”). However, depending on the year, differences were found in the choices made by the participants: although the majority of second- and third-year students also chose this third option, the majority of fourth-year students chose the second option (“high”).

The question that makes up item 6 aims to obtain information on leisure time, the first of the options referring to reading. Whether distinctions are made by Degree or course, the majority of participants have opted for the second option.

Items 10, 12 and 14 are related as they are linked to awareness of different issues through literary reading. With regard to item 10, the answer most frequently chosen by the students of the three Degrees was number three (“yes, although I have not read, I think that as a future teacher I should have access to these resources”), as is the case if we look at the course, this being the option most frequently selected by the students. As for item 12, again, the groups most frequently chose option number three (both at Degree and course level). However, with respect to the course variable, the fourth-grade group interrupts the momentum established by the rest, given that in this case the highest percentage (61.5%) corresponds to the first of the responses (have read books on the subject). As for item 14, in terms of Degree and year (in all cases), the most frequent option was number three, followed by number one.

The question in item 15 reads: “Do you think the SDGs should be included in children’s and young adult literature?” Both by Degree and by year, group members agree on option number two (“yes, it is important for children to be informed about these issues”).

With regard to item 16 (“Which genre do you think would be most appropriate to work on the SDGs?”), the data show a majority tend to opt for answer number four (“comics, graphic novels or picture books”) in terms of both the Degree and year.



On the other hand, the open-ended items of the questionnaire aimed at achieving specific objective two (the second part of item 16 and the whole of item 18) were analysed from a qualitative point of view. Based on student input, two code networks were created and can be found in Supplementary D.

- Objective number three. To identify similarities and differences in the information and knowledge that students of the Master's Degrees have about the SDGs.

The data in Table 5 show the frequency and percentages linked to the items belonging to block 3 (items 7, 8, 9, 11 and 13) by Degree and year.

**Table 5.** Frequency and percentages of block 3 of the questionnaire by Degree and year.

	Childhood Education <i>n</i> = 57				Year Primary Education <i>n</i> = 35				Year PCEO <i>n</i> = 26				Year Year 2 <i>n</i> = 79				Year Year 3 <i>n</i> = 26				Year Year 4 <i>n</i> = 13			
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%						
Item 7																								
(1)	6	10.5%	29	82.8%	6	23.1%	31	39.2%	6	23.1%	4	30.8%												
(2)	2	3.5%	1	2.9%	4	15.4%	3	3.8%	4	15.4%	0	0%												
(3)	7	12.3%	0	0%	3	11.5%	7	8.9%	3	11.5%	0	0%												
(4)	42	73.7%	5	14.3%	13	50%	38	48.1%	13	50%	9	69.2%												
Item 8																								
(1)	55	96.5%	33	94.3%	23	88.5%	75	94.9%	23	88.5%	13	100%												
(2)	1	2.9%	0	0%	1	3.8%	1	1.3%	1	3.8%	0	0%												
(3)	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%												
(4)	1	2.9%	2	5.7%	2	7.7%	3	3.8%	2	7.7%	0	0%												
Item 9																								
(1)	8	14%	7	20%	5	19.2%	14	17.7%	5	19.2%	1	7.7%												
(2)	17	29.8%	2	5.7%	9	34.6%	14	17.7%	9	34.6%	5	38.5%												
(3)	7	12.3%	1	2.9%	0	0%	6	7.6%	0	0%	2	15.3%												
(4)	25	43.9%	25	71.4%	12	46.2%	45	57%	12	46.2%	5	38.5%												
Item 11																								
(1)	17	29.8%	7	20%	10	38.5%	20	25.3%	10	38.5%	4	30.8%												
(2)	7	12.3%	1	2.9%	2	7.7%	7	8.9%	2	7.7%	1	7.7%												
(3)	6	10.5%	0	0%	1	3.8%	4	5.1%	1	3.8%	2	15.3%												
(4)	27	47.4%	27	77.1%	13	50%	48	60.7%	13	50%	6	46.2%												
Item 13																								
(0)	1	1.9%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1.3%	0	0%	0	0%												
(1)	18	31.5%	6	17.2%	7	26.9%	19	24.1%	7	26.9%	5	38.5%												
(2)	5	8.7%	2	5.7%	8	30.8%	6	7.6%	8	30.8%	1	7.7%												
(3)	6	10.5%	0	0%	1	3.8%	5	6.3%	1	3.8%	0	0%												
(4)	27	47.4%	27	77.1%	10	38.5%	48	60.7%	10	38.5%	7	53.8%												

With regard to item 7, in which students are asked whether they have information about the SDGs, there is a predominance of the first response ("yes, they have explained it to me in the Degree") and the fourth ("no, I have no information"). In particular, option number one was the most frequent in the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education (82.8%) and it ranked fourth in the rest of the groups.

With regard to item 8, the wording of which reads “Considering that the SDGs are a UNESCO agreement...”, again, the same trend is identified in all the groups, with the first answer (“I think that the teacher should be informed and trained”) being the one chosen most participants. The same is true for item 9 (“Do you think caring for the environment is an SDG that mainly concerns...”), item 11 (“Do you think gender equality is an SDG that mainly concerns...”) and item 13 (“Do you think reducing inequalities is an SDG that mainly concerns...”), where the fourth option was the most frequent option in all groups. This option offered a space to write comments and the most recurrent answer was “to the whole of society”, with the next most repeated proposal being “to all of the above”, thus combining all the above options.

Following the quantitative analysis of the data, a qualitative analysis of the open-ended items in the questionnaire is considered appropriate. Those aiming to meet specific objective three are items 17, 19 and 20. From the students’ responses, three code networks were constructed, which can be found in Supplementary E.

- Objective number four. To determine and compare the knowledge, beliefs and relevance of the SDGs and literary reading among teachers in charge of initial teacher education in the degree programmes they teach.

A selection of the resulting networks was studied in detail below, and can be found in Supplementary F.

First, the answers to question 4 are presented (see Figure S6), “Do you think literary reading is present in the subjects of the curriculum of the Bachelor’s and/or Master’s degree you teach? Do students need a high level of reading literacy to pass the subjects of these degrees?” With regard to the first of these questions, it is worth highlighting the opinion shared by all the interviewees that there is room for improvement in the presence of literary reading in the studies in which they carry out their work as teachers. Both interviewee 1 and interviewee 4 explained that the relevance given to this issue notably depends on the teacher’s own judgement. Interviewees 2 and 3 believe literary reading is only present in the specific subjects of Didactics of Language and Literature and does not extend to the other subjects. With regard to question number two, with the exception of interviewee 1, the rest of the teachers reported that students require an average reading background in order to be able to pass the subjects of the degree courses in which they teach.

Both question number 7 (Figure S7) and questions number 8 and 9 (Figures S8 and S9) do not refer to the SDGs in general terms, but are more specific, respectively referring to the SDGs on the environment, gender equality and reducing inequalities. Of these, it is worth highlighting question 7, “Who do you think is primarily concerned by the SDGs related to environmental care? Do you think reading literature helps to raise awareness of the current environmental situation? Why?” With regard to question number one, all interviewees noted that this is an issue for society as a whole, with the exception of interviewee 2, who considers that the SDGs related to the environment are mainly a matter for teachers. As mentioned above, questions number 8 and 9 share the same wording, but applied to gender equality, on the one hand, and the reduction in inequalities, on the other. In both cases, the interviewees reiterated that they concern all citizens, with the exception of interviewee 2, who added to his previous answer (teachers) other educational agents on both occasions, i.e., families. With regard to question number two, a common trend can again be found. In this case, the interviewees argued that literary reading is an ideal resource for promoting awareness of the SDGs, enriching knowledge about them, awakening a critical spirit, etc. However, interviewee 4 breaks with this trend by opting for the media, mainly the Internet, stating that these are the main channels that provide information to the population. The answers to question number two are very similar in the following two items, with the exception of a few nuances.

With regard to interview question number 12 (Figure S10), teachers reflected on and responded to the following, “How do you think initial teacher training on the SDGs could

be improved? In this case, both interviewees 2 and 3 were in favour of courses or training sessions on this issue. Similarly, a cross-cutting approach to the SDGs is a measure favoured by interviewee 5 and interviewee 1, and the latter also considered a specific approach as another possible option. Similarly, the inclusion of the SDGs in curricula is a suggestion advocated by interviewees 1, 4 and 5. Likewise, interviewee 4 stated that it would be helpful if a department was responsible for passing on information in this respect to the teaching staff. In this same vein, interviewee 3 advocated for the creation of SDG commissions instead of having such work undertaken by an existing department. Interviewee 5 added that addressing the SDGs in the classroom through real issues is a very successful strategy. On the other hand, interviewee 2 reiterated his lack of knowledge, stating that he also had no information on whether or not training on the SDGs takes place.

#### 4. Discussion

The discussion of the results is arranged according to the specific objectives of the study:

- Objective number one. To find out the conceptions of future teachers regarding their specific vocation, as well as the influence and training they attribute to teaching in general terms.

In this case, the questions that make it possible to respond to this objective are located in block 1 of the questionnaire, with the students' choices showing common as well as defined tendencies, regardless of the variable. Percentages in all cases above 90% show that the students of the different teaching degrees chose to study the degree they are studying for personal interest. These results should be viewed positively since, according to Larrosa [42], vocation is one of the essential requirements for teaching. Once again, percentages exceeding 90% indicate that the participants believe that the influence of teaching work transcends the school environment and also has repercussions in the social sphere, coinciding with the findings of Fernández-Alegre and Casado-Berrocal [43]. Finally, percentages of at least 85% show that most students consider that teacher training should be technical, humanistic and practical, in line with Maslow and Rogers [44] and Castanedo [45].

- Objective number two. To analyse and compare the perception of students of Bachelor's Degrees in Teaching about the level of relevance given to literary reading in the respective degrees, as well as the importance they attach to this issue individually.

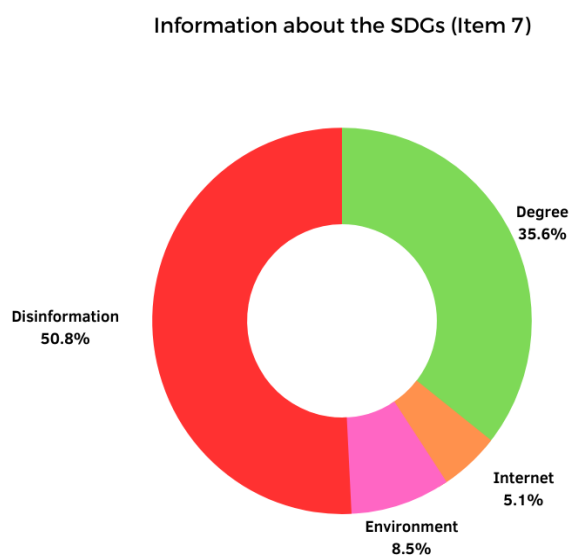
Block 2 of the questionnaire provides information that allows the purpose of this objective to be achieved. This time, small differences are found with respect to the year variable. However, apart from a few discrepancies, the majority tendencies towards certain responses are again common. A clear example of this is the fact that it was unanimously pointed out that reading has an unlikely presence in the different degrees that the participants are studying, which can be described as worrying considering that "literacy training is directly linked to critical thinking and is essential, fundamental, a sine qua non condition in any university degree" [46] (p. 7). Although this is an issue that should be addressed in any degree programme, it is considered unavoidable in the case of future teachers, since they are responsible for acting as mediators [9,47,48]. In order for this activity to be successfully implemented, Contreras [49] highlights teachers need to receive clear guidelines in their initial and in-service training.

Similarly, considering the different variables, in all cases, the number of students who prioritise reading is minimal, in accordance with the results obtained in previous research, in which a low reading habit and a low level of motivation towards literary reading were detected [10,11]. The latter will have a negative impact on the teacher's mission of conveying a taste for reading to students, since the ideal is for the teacher to adopt the role that Delbrayelle and Duszynski [50] call the "didactic reader", which has a twofold dimension as a reader and as the person responsible for promoting the reading experience among

his/her students at the same time [51]. Similarly, regardless of the variable, most of the teacher trainees participating in the study believe the SDGs should be included in Children's and Young Adult Literature (CYL) texts, ignoring the fact that they are already included both explicitly [52] and implicitly.

- Objective number three. To identify similarities and differences in the information and knowledge that students of the Master's Degrees have about the SDGs.

The third part of the questionnaire aims at responding to this objective. Firstly, it should be noted that differences were found according to both variables under study, with those referring to Degree being particularly noteworthy. Most of the members of the Primary Education group stated they were aware of the SDGs thanks to explanations offered in the Degree, compared to the lack of knowledge reported by the rest of the degrees. However, it should be noted that, overall, more than half of the interviewees (50.8%) report that they have no information on the SDGs (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Lack of knowledge of most students about the SDGs.

In the research conducted by Martínez-Lirola [17], 87% of the trainee teachers who took part in the study acknowledged their lack of knowledge about the SDGs. Although the results obtained in this case were somewhat less negative, it is alarming that the figures show such a negligible improvement after two years.

- Objective number four. To determine and compare the knowledge, beliefs and relevance of the SDGs and literary reading among teachers in charge of initial teacher education in the degree programmes they teach.

In contrast to the first three objectives, the answer to this fourth objective lies in the teachers' contributions obtained during the interview. With regard to the variables analysed (degrees and years of teaching experience), it should be noted that no evidence was found to show that these are decisive in terms of the opinion or knowledge of the interviewees about the subjects addressed. Firstly, it is worth noting that one of the five teachers participating in the study admits that he does not know anything about the SDGs, which explains, at least in part, the ignorance detected in most students in this regard, considering contributions such as those of Ní Chróinín and O'Sullivan [53], who conceive it as deeply relevant what and how university teachers teach future teachers. In relation to the latter, the interviewees made multiple useful proposals for improving the initial

training that teachers offer on the SDGs, less frequently opting for a specific treatment and more frequently for a cross-cutting approach, in line with Ull, Martínez-Agut, Piñero and Aznar [20]. Likewise, the most frequently mentioned option (by three of the five interviewees) refers to the relevance of including the SDGs in the curricula, in line with Valderrama-Hernández et al. [19], who also detected a lack of training in terms of sustainability on the part of future teachers, calling also for the modification of the curricula, with the aim of achieving a holistic vision of the subject in question.

As for literary reading, four of the five interviewees believe literature is an ideal resource for raising awareness of SDG issues, given that in parallel to the playful function of the texts, implicit or explicit learning, values and counter-values are implicitly or explicitly present and will influence the reader's thinking [9]. According to most students, all the teachers agree that literary reading could be improved in the courses taught by them: two of them state this issue is subject to the teacher's criteria and another two argue it is only present in specific subjects of Didactics of Language and Literature, in line with what Álvarez-Álvarez and Pascual-Díez [54] have pointed out.

## 5. Conclusions

Although it is true that we must be very cautious with the generalisation of the results, we believe the findings obtained should be taken into consideration, because although this is a descriptive study, the results obtained should be a reason for change in the educational reality. Despite the importance attached to the SDGs by both the UN and educational institutions, the results suggest that these efforts do not seem to resonate with students. In view of these developments, there is a pressing need to change the approach to addressing the SDGs, considering the lack of knowledge of most students and even some teachers. In accordance with the contributions of Aznar et al. [55], it would be urgent to begin the transition towards sustainable societies, which inevitably means that sustainability must be included in teacher training, and the SDGs must be reflected both in the guides and in teaching practice.

Similarly, considering that the vast majority of the students who participated in the study and all the teachers interviewed agree that literary reading could be improved in the degrees they are studying or teaching (respectively), it would also be interesting to consider changes in the syllabuses (significantly increasing the importance given to literary reading) and to advocate for the improvement of university teacher training in this respect, according to Álvarez-Álvarez and Pascual-Díez [54].

As for the educational implications of the study, given that evidence has been collected that reflects the inexistence of any approach to the SDGs and the scant importance given to literature in the degrees under study, it is understood that the close connection between the two issues should be exploited for the benefit of the educational community. In this sense, we are committed to increasing the number of subjects involved in the Didactics of Language and Literature in which the CYL plays a leading role, and it is explicitly stated in the respective teaching guides that the SDGs will be dealt with through literary reading, with priority also being given to advocating a cross-cutting approach thereto.

The point of departure for the didactic work proposal that we suggest in this article is the course description document prepared by our research group, Jerez Martínez, Hernández Delgado, Maestre Espinosa, López-Valero and Encabo-Fernández [56]. It includes literary-reading proposals to be worked with the SDGs. This material is an important starting point for the training of people in general and teachers in particular, as it enables the design of work atmospheres based on literary gatherings. We believe that the extension of this material and its implementation in related subjects is a good didactic proposal as far as a socio-educational intervention is concerned.

In short, everything that has happened points directly to an issue that is clearly substantial in terms of not continuing to postpone the achievement of the SDGs: teacher training, which is considered to be the best instrument for promoting processes of change [57].

It is of little use for higher bodies to chart the way forward; it inevitably requires teachers, who are responsible for guiding the rest of society, to turn what seems a utopia into a reality. While it is true that students will ultimately decide whether or not to follow this path, teachers must be fully aware of the importance of their work, understanding their training as a task that is always incomplete [58], and committing themselves to teaching without ever ceasing to learn.

**Supplementary Materials:** The following supporting information can be downloaded at: <https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/educsci13070663/s1>, Supplementary A: Questionnaire's Structure; Supplementary B. Original Questionnaire Template; Supplementary C. Original Interview Script Template; Supplementary D. Qualitative analysis of the answers to block 2 of the questionnaire; Supplementary E. Qualitative Analysis of the Answers to Block 3 of the Questionnaire; Supplementary F. Semantic Network Selection; Figure S1. Item 16. Qualitative analysis of responses (block 2) by Degree; Figure S2. Item 18. Qualitative analysis of responses (block 2) by Degree; Figure S3. Item 17. Qualitative analysis of responses (block 3) by Degree; Figure S4. Item 19. Qualitative analysis of responses (block 3) by Degree; Figure S5. Item 20. Qualitative analysis of responses (block 3) by Degree; Figure S6. Question no. 4. Qualitative analysis of the responses of the teachers interviewed; Figure S7. Question no. 7. Qualitative analysis of the responses of the teachers interviewed; Figure S8. Question no. 8. Qualitative analysis of the responses of the teachers interviewed; Figure S9. Question no. 9. Qualitative analysis of the responses of the teachers interviewed; Figure S10. Question no. 12. Qualitative analysis of the responses of the teachers interviewed; Table S1. Block arrangement of the questions in the questionnaire.

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