



Promoting social entrepreneurship: The impact of Service-Learning in initial teacher education

Impulsando el emprendimiento social: el impacto del aprendizaje-servicio en la formación inicial docente

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Abstract

The commitment to service learning (SL) in university teaching, especially in initial teacher training, has grown significantly in recent years. This methodological approach not only contributes to the professional development of students, but also promotes training that is more committed to social reality. Through action-oriented learning experiences, SL enables a response to specific community needs and, at the same time, fosters social entrepreneurship, understood as the ability to identify social problems and generate innovative and sustainable solutions through educational practice. In this context, this research analyses the impact of an SL programme on the development of the social entrepreneur profile of Early Childhood Education undergraduate students. The sample consisted of 72 students, selected through non-probabilistic sampling. From a quantitative approach, a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design was adopted where the dependent variable was measured by means of a validated tool created to measure social entrepreneurship. The results show a statistically significant improvement in the experimental group, with evidence that the applied SL programme resulted in changes to the social entrepreneur profile of the participating students, supporting the transformative capacity of SL and a methodology capable of enhancing social entrepreneurship. However, there are still challenges to overcome, and universities must strengthen personal competencies to influence the development of the social entrepreneur profile.

Keywords: service-learning; higher education; social entrepreneurship; teacher training; social responsibility; social transformation.

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Resumen

El compromiso con el aprendizaje-servicio (ApS) en la docencia universitaria, especialmente en la formación inicial del profesorado, ha crecido de manera significativa en los últimos años. Este enfoque metodológico no solo contribuye al desarrollo profesional del alumnado, sino que también promueve una formación más comprometida con la realidad social. A través de experiencias de aprendizaje orientadas a la acción, el ApS permite responder a necesidades concretas de la comunidad y, al mismo tiempo, fomenta el emprendimiento social entendido como la capacidad de identificar problemas sociales y generar soluciones innovadoras y sostenibles desde la práctica educativa. En este contexto, la presente investigación analiza el impacto de un programa de ApS en el desarrollo del perfil emprendedor social del alumnado del Grado en Educación Infantil. La muestra está compuesta por 72 estudiantes, seleccionados mediante un muestreo no probabilístico. Desde un enfoque cuantitativo, se adopta un diseño cuasiexperimental pretest-postest donde la variable dependiente se midió mediante una herramienta validada y desarrollada para medir el emprendimiento social. Los resultados muestran una mejora estadísticamente significativa en el grupo experimental, con evidencia de que el programa de ApS aplicado ha generado cambios en el perfil emprendedor social del alumnado participante, respaldando la capacidad transformadora del ApS y metodología capaz de potenciar el emprendimiento social. No obstante, quedan desafíos por superar y la necesidad de fortalecer las competencias personales desde la universidad, para influir en el desarrollo del perfil emprendedor social.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje-servicio; educación superior; emprendimiento social; formación docente; responsabilidad social; transformación social.

1. Introduction

Social entrepreneurship is a reality in higher education institutions (Minga *et al.*, 2022) that has attracted considerable interest in recent years, both in academia and in business (Mendoza, 2025). Conceived as a tool to address a range of social and cultural issues (Chandra & Paras, 2020; Duque & Ortiz, 2022), social entrepreneurship has positioned itself as a driver of innovation oriented towards the common good. Its impact goes beyond generating economic value, as it fosters the growth of inclusive, sustainable and cohesive communities. In the university context, this approach seeks to shape students capable of identifying social needs, devising viable solutions and driving transformation, underpinned by ethics and civic engagement (Torres-Ortega & Monzón, 2021). Despite the clear lack of agreement on a single definition of the term (Pérez-Briceño *et al.*, 2017), certain common features have been identified in the academic literature. This study adopts the definition proposed by Bloom and Chatterji (2009), who understand social entrepreneurship as the process of using business principles to solve social problems, thus generating social value above economic profit. From this perspective, the chief motivation of the social entrepreneur is not personal gain, but the need to address social and political issues through innovation, sustainability and community engagement (Saavedra-García *et al.*, 2020). Such an assessment makes it clear that social entrepreneurship involves different elements, such as the creation of social value, social innovation, creativity, the quest for opportunities, social change and solutions to social problems (Sigüenza-Orellana *et al.*, 2022). From this standpoint, it is important for higher education institutions to foster and guide attitudes towards social entrepreneurship (Martín 2013) by framing it as a cross-disciplinary topic of interest and competence, rather than limiting it to business faculties (García-González *et al.*, 2020; Mora *et al.*, 2019). Social entrepreneurship is thus characterised by its impact on socio-

economic development, as it seeks to respond to social issues through sustainable social value creation (Lugo-Muñoz & Lucio-Villegas, 2024). These findings demonstrate the potential of education as a prime environment in which to cultivate interest in social entrepreneurship and to foster the potential benefits that its influence can bring to the field of education. As such, there is a need to unite the academic and social spheres and create spaces for reflection that allow the university community to recognise itself as an agent of change and implement social initiatives by applying learning in real conditions (Chambers & Lavery, 2012; Zanotto & Gaeta, 2018).

In this context, service-learning (SL) is seen as a methodological approach of an experiential nature that combines curricular content with community service in a single process (Aramburuzabala *et al.*, 2015; Mayor & Rodríguez, 2016). SL thus arises as the ideal tool and methodology to strengthen competencies in social entrepreneurship, as it integrates community service with teaching and reflection, while fostering the acquisition of social skills and attitudes that students will put into practice in their daily lives. By combining curricular learning objectives with community service objectives, the aim is to improve the communities where the service is performed (Aramburuzabala, 2013), which implies “learning to be competent by being useful to others” (Batlle, 2014, p. 58). This method, framed within experiential learning and underpinned by critical pedagogy (Martínez-Sanz and Durántez-Stolle, 2020), seeks to combine academic learning with civic education to promote the common good (Chiva-Bartoll *et al.*, 2016).

At present, SL occupies an invaluable place in discourse and practice at all levels of education (Martínez-Valdivia *et al.*, 2022), particularly with regard to the teacher training experience (Álvarez *et al.*, 2017). This approach responds to the many challenges posed by modern society and aligns with the guidelines of the new European Higher Education Framework, which promotes university education focused on competency development, employability, social responsibility and the link between theory and practice (Blanco & Lozano, 2024; Martínez-Usarralde *et al.*, 2019). In this context, SL stands as a methodology consistent with these principles by integrating academic learning with social action and civic engagement.

SL serves to achieve meaningful and contextualised learning of curricular content (Lázaro-Cantabrana *et al.*, 2021; Zarzuela and García, 2020) and to foster competencies and values (Folgueiras *et al.*, 2020; Martín *et al.*, 2021; Ting *et al.*, 2025). By linking theory taught in the classroom with hands-on experience in a real environment, the content learned can be applied immediately, which drives motivation and commitment to learning (Salvador-Ferrer *et al.* (2023); Zayas *et al.*, 2019). In this way, SL offers advantages that go beyond simply linking theory with practice (López-Fernández & Benítez-Porres, 2018) by helping to strengthen social engagement (Gómez-Gómez, 2024) as well as the professional and academic development of university students (Chica & Peña, 2024; MacPhail & Sohun, 2019). With regard to initial teacher training, SL supports the acquisition of competencies and attitudes related to teacher professionalism, such as critical reflection, social sensitivity and the ability to intervene in real situations, aspects that can hardly be addressed with the same depth in other modules of Early Childhood Education undergraduate programmes (García & Cotrina, 2015). The European framework, based on the principles of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations (UN, 2015), urges university institutions to promote changes in their teaching, resulting in a shift towards active methods (Lozano & Figueredo, 2021). Consequently, universities are becoming more involved while maintaining an active role as the ideal setting in which to deliver SL programmes. As part of the paradigm shift in the university environment (Gargallo *et al.*, 2017), they are focusing on the achievement and development of competencies conducive to successful development in a changing social and economic context (Villa *et al.*, 2021). Although SL is being implemented at university level, its application is also vital in initial teacher training (De la Torre *et al.*, 2017; Ruiz-Montero *et al.*, 2019). While a growing number of universities are beginning to show commitment to this methodology,

its inclusion in the training offered to future teachers remains a challenge far from being overcome (Martínez *et al.*, 2018).

Considering the potential of SL (García *et al.*, 2024; Lorenzo & Matellanes, 2015; Mayorga-Fernández *et al.*, 2021), our research interest focuses on the acquisition of transformative competencies by university students in their initial training stage as future teachers. Against this background, in order to study the impact of an SL programme on the social entrepreneur profile, we integrated the proposed SL programme into two modules in the curriculum of the undergraduate degree in Early Childhood Education at the Universidad de Burgos. Through practice and action, the programme helps students to acquire competencies in the modules in question, while promoting teacher performance based on a commitment to building fairer, more sustainable and more resilient societies.

With a focus on societal development and improvement, this SL project arises from the need for future teachers to acquire competencies in social entrepreneurship, understood as the set of skills, attitudes and values that allow them to identify the needs of the environment, come up with innovative and sustainable responses, and foster changes with a positive community impact (Capella *et al.*, 2016). These competencies include initiative, creativity, collaborative leadership, ethical commitment and a focus on the common good. The project sought to support the development of this social entrepreneur profile among undergraduate students of Early Childhood Education through the practical application of academic learning in real contexts of educational intervention. Based on an assessment of the real needs identified in the socialisation process of Early Childhood Education pupils, particularly at the age of 3 to 6 years old and with regard to school playground interactions, the project was designed and implemented to promote intercultural and co-educational skills, in order to help tackle the inequalities identified by the Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015). The project required undergraduate students of Early Childhood Education to assess everyday situations in the school playground, identify dynamics of exclusion or inequality, and propose and carry out inclusive educational activities that promote interpersonal competence, equity and respect for diversity. This process is complemented by training seminars and spaces for reflection in which students acquire theoretical tools related to social entrepreneurship, teamwork skills and the ability to design socio-educational interventions. As such, the social entrepreneur profile is developed not merely through participation in the SL experience; rather, it is built through a learning path that combines action, reflection and ethical learning, enabling future teachers to transform any social challenges identified into educational and community opportunities.

In light of the above, with the aim of fostering the social entrepreneur profile through the application of an SL programme, the impact on the participating students will be determined by reference to the following quantitative research hypothesis: the implementation of the SL programme will significantly improve the social entrepreneur profile of the students in the experimental group compared to the pretest scores and those obtained by the control group.

2. Method

From a quantitative approach, with the aim of testing the effectiveness of taking part in an SL project in terms of acquiring entrepreneurial competencies, this study was conducted using a quasi-experimental design based on non-equivalent natural groups. The study involved an experimental group (EG) that was actively involved in the SL project and a control group (CG) that was not. The dimensions of the study were assessed in both groups at two time points: pre-test and post-test. In accordance with the methodological approach, the mean values of the scales and dimensions were taken as dependent variables, while the application of the intervention was taken as an independent variable.

2.1. Sample

This research, which is part of a larger study, was carried out with a total population of 285 students who participated over four academic years (2020/2021 to 2023/2024). After an initial data cleansing to eliminate incomplete records and outliers, the valid sample consisted of 282 people. Ultimately, this study only took into account the group participating in the 2023/2024 academic year, thus forming a final sample of 72 students, aged between 19 and 26 years old ($\bar{x} = 21.1$; $SD = 1.9$). Participants were selected on an intentional, non-probabilistic basis, determined by their enrolment in the module in which the SL project was implemented.

The study was carried out with no differentiation by sex or gender, as this variable was neither relevant for the formation of the groups nor for the comparative analysis of the results, since it was not a specified objective of the study.

Nevertheless, the sample primarily consisted of women ($n = 68$, 94.4%). The participants were second year students at the Universidad de Burgos, specifically from two modules of the undergraduate degree in Early Childhood Education: Intercultural Education for Peace and Equality, and Systematic Observation and Research in Educational Contexts. Students took part on a completely voluntary basis, having been informed about the objectives of the study, the procedures used and the use of their data for academic purposes only. The project received a positive report from the Bioethics Committee at the Universidad de Burgos, which ensures compliance with the ethical standards required for research involving human participants.

2.2. Instrument

To measure the social entrepreneur profile, a questionnaire created and validated by Capella *et al.* (2016) was used, including all the defining traits of a social entrepreneur. This was deemed to be an effective tool for assessing social entrepreneurship through the application of SL programmes with university students in the field of Education. The instrument used for data collection consisted of 30 items, divided into three categories. These were further broken down into 17 traits which, according to the authors of the questionnaire, define the social entrepreneur profile. These categories and their corresponding traits are presented in Table 1, which summarises the structure and content of the instrument.

TABLE 1. Characteristics of the instrument.

Category	Items	Trait in question
Personal and social traits of the social entrepreneur	1–2	Leadership
	10–11	Responsibility
	12	Social networks with access to information and knowledge
	14–16	Social awareness
	15	Cooperation and support
	17	Coherence and commitment
	18	Interpersonal competence and respect for the common good
	19	Creativity
	24–25	Ability to come up with ideas
	29	Ability to learn and evolve
	30	Tolerance of failure

Innovation traits of the social entrepreneur	13	Social networks with access to information and knowledge
	20	Creativity
	21	Ability to identify opportunities
	22–23	Initiative
	26–27	Adaptability
Execution traits of the social entrepreneur	28	Ability to learn and evolve
	3–9	Motivation to achieve
	4–5–6	Risk-taking ability
	7–8	Trust

Source: Peris *et al.* (2016).

The first category, ‘personal and social traits of the social entrepreneur’, consisted of 15 items. The second category, ‘innovation traits of the social entrepreneur’, consisted of 8 items and the third category, ‘execution traits of the social entrepreneur’, consisted of 7 items.

A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the degree of agreement on each item, where 1 meant “strongly disagree” and 5 meant “strongly agree”. Construct reliability was measured using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient, achieving a value of .809, an acceptable value according to George and Mallery’s (2003) parameters.

2.3. Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis of the qualitative variables was carried out using frequencies and percentages. Descriptive results of the quantitative variables were obtained through normality testing, using the Shapiro–Wilk statistic (*w*), mean analysis and the value of the dispersion statistic, namely standard deviation. For the inferential analysis, the variables found to be normal were treated parametrically, while the non-normal variables were treated non-parametrically. Relationships between variables were obtained parametrically using Pearson’s correlation coefficient (*r*) and non-parametrically using Spearman’s correlation coefficient (*ρ*). Through the parametric method in independent groups, a repeated measures comparison of means was performed using the Student’s *t*-test. Through the non-parametric method, it was determined whether the groups in the pre-test were homogeneous using the Mann Whitney U-test. The results at the beginning and end of the intervention were compared using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test (*W+*). An Alpha risk of 5% ($\alpha = .05$) was observed.

3. Results

The results are presented under three headings. The first studies the comparison between the experimental conditions (baseline). The second details the results of comparisons between the experimental time points, and the final heading addresses age comparisons within the experimental group.

3.1. Comparisons Between Experimental Conditions (Baselines)

Prior to studying the differences between groups, baseline equivalence of all tested variables at the pre-test time point were verified (Table 2).

TABLE 2. Pre-test trait differences.

Variables	Experimental group		Control group		U	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Personal and social traits of the social entrepreneur						
Leadership	3.06	0.67	3.25	0.55	549.00	.241
Responsibility	3.86	0.44	3.89	0.40	632.50	.849
Social awareness	3.67	0.46	3.77	0.49	579.50	.418
Cooperation and support	4.21	0.54	4.17	0.57	579.00	.817
Coherence and commitment	4.14	0.59	4.17	0.56	634.50	.856
Interpersonal competence and respect for the common good	4.34	0.59	4.37	0.60	596.00	.826
Ability to come up with ideas	3.69	0.37	3.73	0.37	557.50	.622
Tolerance of failure	4.00	0.00	4.00	0.00	325.00	1
Personal, social and innovation traits of the social entrepreneur						
Engaged in social networks with access to information and knowledge	3.10	0.62	3.08	0.64	633.50	.866
Creativity	3.51	0.54	3.57	0.55	608.00	.635
Ability to learn and evolve	3.59	0.42	3.63	0.43	540.50	.625
Innovation traits of the social entrepreneur						
Ability to identify opportunities	3.58	0.55	3.67	0.63	610.50	.633
Initiative	2.35	0.84	2.43	0.86	-.42(1)	.678
Adaptability	3.32	0.60	3.38	0.59	607.50	.633
Execution traits of the social entrepreneur						
Motivation to achieve	3.88	0.42	3.89	0.43	636.00	.884
Risk-taking ability	3.65	0.40	3.78	0.40	499.50	.169
Trust	3.65	0.39	3.74	0.40	484.50	.407

Note: M = mean, SD = standard deviation, U = Mann-Whitney test, p = significance

(1)- Student's t-test, risk $\alpha = .05$

No differences in any of the variables tested were found between the experimental and control groups at the pre-test time point ($p^3 .05$). Confirming that all participants in both the experimental and control groups obtained statistically equal scores in each variable during the pre-test measurement, ensured that the post-test results would be the consequence of having taken part in the SL programme.

3.2. Comparisons Between Experimental Time Points

Once verified that all participants started from the same baseline, comparative analysis was carried out, group by group, on the scores achieved at each experimental time point (Tables 3 and 4).

TABLE 3. Trait differences in the experimental group.

Variables	Pre-test		Post-test		W ⁺	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Personal and social traits of the social entrepreneur						
Leadership	3.06	0.67	3.43	0.91	-1.80	.072
Responsibility	3.86	0.44	4.43	0.47	-4.32	<.001
Social awareness	3.67	0.46	4.38	0.45	-4.72	<.001
Cooperation and support	4.21	0.54	4.56	0.56	-2.84	.005
Coherence and commitment	4.14	0.59	4.81	0.40	-4.10)	<.001
Interpersonal competence and respect for the common good	4.34	0.59	4.77	0.49	-3.64	<.001
Ability to come up with ideas	3.69	0.37	4.15	0.51	-3.65	<.001
Tolerance of failure	4.00	0.00	4.39	0.65	-3.21	.001
Personal, social and innovation traits of the social entrepreneur						
Engaged in social networks with access to information and knowledge	3.10	0.62	3.63	0.80	-2.84	.005
Creativity	3.51	0.54	3.95	0.52	-2.72	.006
Ability to learn and evolve	3.59	0.42	4.22	0.58	-4.43	<.001
Innovation traits of the social entrepreneur						
Ability to identify opportunities	3.58	0.55	4.36	0.64	-4.24	<.001
Initiative	2.35	0.84	3.54	0.99	-4.01	<.001
Adaptability	3.32	0.60	4.15	0.56	-4.35	<.001
Execution traits of the social entrepreneur						
Motivation to achieve	3.88	0.42	4.58	0.41	-4.96	<.001
Risk-taking ability	3.65	0.40	4.34	0.45	-4.85	<.001
Trust	3.65	0.39	4.33	0.52	-4.48	<.001

Note: M = mean, SD = standard deviation, W⁺ = Wilcoxon test, p = significance, Risk α = .05.

Statistically significant differences were identified in all measurements between the pre-test and post-test time points ($p < .05$), with the exception of the “leadership” variable, which only showed a trend towards significance ($p = .072$). Table 4 summarises these results.

TABLE 4. Trait differences in the control group

Variables	Pre-test		Post-test		W ⁺	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Personal and social traits of the social entrepreneur						
Leadership	3.25	0.55	3.28	0.54	-0.33	.739
Responsibility	3.89	0.40	3.98	0.40	-0.39	.700
Social awareness	3.76	0.49	3.97	0.40	-2.06	.040

Cooperation and support	4.17	0.57	4.23	0.62	-0.39	.697
Coherence and commitment	4.17	0.56	4.24	0.65	-0.80	.425
Interpersonal competence and respect for the common good	4.37	0.60	4.35	0.54	-0.69	.491
Ability to come up with ideas	3.73	0.37	3.82	0.49	-0.77	.441
Tolerance of failure	4.00	0.00	3.79	0.48	-1.63	.102
Personal, social and innovation traits of the social entrepreneur						
Engaged in social networks with access to information and knowledge	3.08	0.64	3.10	0.67	-0.06	.956
Creativity	3.57	0.55	3.71	0.49	-1.07	.284
Ability to learn and evolve	3.63	0.43	3.66	0.47	-0.08	.938
Innovation traits of the social entrepreneur						
Ability to identify opportunities	3.67	0.63	3.71	.84	0.00	1
Initiative	2.37	0.81	2.62	.96	-1.28 ⁽¹⁾	.211
Adaptability	3.38	0.59	3.34	.56	-0.09	.933
Execution traits of the social entrepreneur						
Motivation to achieve	3.89	0.43	4.07	0.40	-1.47	.142
Risk-taking ability	3.78	0.40	3.82	0.43	-0.69	.491
Trust	3.74	0.40	3.79	0.62	-1.01	.312

Note: M = mean, SD = standard deviation, W+ = Wilcoxon test, p = significance

(1) - Student's t-test, risk $\alpha = .05$.

It can be confirmed that no significant differences were identified in the variables between the pre-test and post-test time points ($p^3 .05$), except for that of "social awareness" ($p = .040$).

3.3. Age Comparisons

Possible differences between age groups within the experimental group were analysed. For this purpose, the variable age was recategorised into two categories based on the median (1: up to 21 years old, 2: 21 years old or older). Analysis was carried out on the variable difference between the pre-test and post-test time points. The results of these comparisons are recorded in Table 5.

TABLE 5. Trait differences between age groups.

Variables	Up to 21 years old		21 years old or older		U	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Personal and social traits of the social entrepreneur						
Leadership	0.54	1.38	0.26	1.02	0.69 ⁽¹⁾	.495
Responsibility	0.54	0.59	0.59	0.58	-0.24 ⁽¹⁾	.812
Social awareness	0.88	0.61	0.68	0.48	109.50	.395
Cooperation and support	0.23	0.60	0.48	0.75	109.00	.284

Coherence and commitment	0.62	0.96	0.70	0.56	147.00	.927
Interpersonal competence and respect for the common good	0.36	0.51	0.48	0.59	110.00	.489
Ability to come up with ideas	0.46	0.69	0.50	0.62	121.00	.684
Tolerance of failure	0.63	0.52	0.41	0.62	56.00	.427
Personal, social and innovation traits of the social entrepreneur						
Engaged in social networks with access to information and knowledge	-0.27	1.44	0.98	0.61	63.50	.004
Creativity	0.38	0.88	0.50	0.81	75.00	.654
Ability to learn and evolve	0.96	0.62	0.50	0.56	83.50	.066
Innovation traits of the social entrepreneur						
Ability to identify opportunities	0.92	0.86	0.70	0.70	119.50	.285
Initiative	1.12	1.88	1.24	1.02	-0.26 ⁽¹⁾	.799
Adaptability	0.77	0.93	0.87	0.71	148.00	.960
Execution traits of the social entrepreneur						
Motivation to achieve	0.69	0.52	0.72	0.42	142.50	.805
Risk-taking ability	0.67	0.53	0.74	0.38	141.50	.958
Trust	0.65	0.56	0.68	0.52	129.00	.969

Note: M = mean, SD = standard deviation, U = Mann-Whitney test, p = significance

(1) - Student's t-test, risk α = .05.

A significant difference was observed between the pre-test and post-test time points in the variable “engaged in social networks with access to information and knowledge”, between participants up to 21 years old and those 21 years old or older, with higher scores for the latter (U = 63.50, p = .004). A trend towards significance in the “ability to learn and evolve” was identified among people up to 21 years old and those 21 years old and over. There were no other differences of statistical interest.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The main objective of this research has been to study the impact of an SL programme on the social entrepreneur profile.

In accordance with the initial hypothesis, the results reveal a significant improvement in the social entrepreneur competence of the group that took part in the intervention, which confirms that SL has the potential to serve as a tool for educational and social innovation. In line with Lugo-Muñoz and Lucio-Villegas (2024), the results confirm that SL programmes are essential to shaping entrepreneurial competencies, as they promote active learning, social engagement and the transformation of teaching practice.

From this perspective, and in accordance with Gómez-Gómez (2024), it is reaffirmed that education committed to social transformation makes it possible to shape agents of change, capable of promoting equity, sustainability and innovation in a range of educational contexts. SL therefore stands as a key pedagogical strategy for the promotion of social entrepreneurship, understood as a process oriented towards the common good and meeting social needs (Álvarez-Vanegas *et al.*, 2024; Marín *et al.*, 2012).

The analysis conducted shows that, following the programme, there were statistically significant differences between the pre-test and post-test scores in the experimental

group, while no significant changes were observed in the control group. The only exception was the “social awareness variable”, which showed a slight improvement also in the control group, possibly due to other concurrent learning or personal experiences. In contrast, the greatest increases seen in the experimental group were in personal and social traits (empathy, sensitivity to issues in the environment and ethical commitment) and in innovation and creativity traits, while the dimensions linked to leadership and execution showed milder improvements.

These findings suggest that the programme particularly improved pro-social attitudes, critical reflection and the ability to identify collective needs, while more instrumental aspects, such as planning or project management, would require a longer or additional intervention. As such, the inclusion of specific training activities in social leadership, project design or collaborative management could strengthen future versions of the programme.

It was also found that age was not a determining variable in the observed changes, although older participants (21 years and older) showed a slight tendency towards higher levels of engagement in social networks and access to resources, which may be conducive to a broader outlook on social issues.

Overall, the results confirm the transformative capacity of SL, supporting the findings of previous studies (García *et al.*, 2024; Sigüenza-Orellana *et al.*, 2022; Zarzuela and García, 2021; Mora *et al.*, 2019) that underline the value of active methods in the development of social entrepreneurship competencies. This reaffirms the role of university education as a prime environment for ethical learning and social action, capable of generating real changes in the community and in the professional identity of future teachers. Finally, the results highlight the need to view the teaching and learning process as a holistic experience, in which the acquisition of knowledge is balanced with the development of ethical and social competencies. Advancing along these lines will strengthen university social responsibility and support the development of critical and engaged citizens, while new research explores the mechanisms and conditions that enhance the educational impact of SL (Duque & Ortiz, 2022).

However, the development and use of this type of methodology is not an easy task, and certain limitations may arise, such as limited sample size, time constraints or difficulties coordinating among the different actors involved. The main limitations of the study include the potential influence of uncontrolled extraneous variables, which may have affected the results and were not explicitly described. Another important limitation relates to the timing of the measurements, as the timing of data collection (before, during or after the intervention) may affect the interpretation of the changes identified. Likewise, the small sample size restricts the generalisability of the findings. Future studies could therefore include a larger participant population and use comparative or longitudinal designs to assess the stability and transfer of social entrepreneurship competencies over time. Finally, it is recommended to broaden the qualitative assessment of SL experiences by including the voices of the students and teachers involved. This mixed approach would serve to deepen our understanding of the educational impact of SL on cultivating the social entrepreneur profile of future teachers.

In future research, it would be especially valuable to compare the results obtained with those of other **undergraduate degree programmes** or **teacher training contexts**, in order to assess whether the improvements observed in the social entrepreneur profile are the same or vary based on the characteristics of the students and the field of study. Such comparative studies would identify the factors that enhance or limit the impact of SL in different learning environments, while helping to establish a broader, more transferable model of university education committed to social innovation and sustainable development.

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AI Statement

I hereby confirm that this article is an original piece of work, and that its content has been produced without the assistance of generative artificial intelligence tools for the creation or modification of text, ideas or analysis. All the research, analysis, writing and conclusions presented are the result of intellectual efforts.

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