

Chapter 2

Plogging, Running Towards Sustainability: An Alternative Practice to Improve Planetary Health

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ABSTRACT

Plogging, a combination of running and picking up trash, is a practical activity that contributes to personal and planetary care, aligning with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The benefits of plogging include improving physical and mental health, promoting environmental awareness, and fostering community cohesion. In an educational context, plogging can be integrated into physical education classes as a valuable tool for education for sustainable development (ESD). Despite the limited previous literature, plogging presents fundamentals to grow and become a key component of action towards sustainability. Therefore, in this chapter, the authors analyze the virtues that this physical exercise practice has as an effective tool of the ESD that inspires transformative action towards achieving the SDGs and creating a more sustainable future among young people.

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INTRODUCTION

Did you know that we currently live in the Era of the Anthropocene? This term suggests that to describe the current geological period, human activities have started to have a significant impact on Earth's ecosystems, generating a series of environmental problems that are critical and urgent (Crutzen & Stoermer, 2000; Stevenson et al., 2016). Among these problems, waste pollution stands out as one of the most notorious and visible. Currently, we find ourselves in a situation where terrestrial and marine ecosystems are threatened by the proliferation of waste, much of which is plastic and non-biodegradable (Romanello et al., 2022). Given this context, several global strategies have tried to change the trend, among them, currently, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have recognized the severity of this problem, particularly in SDGs 14 and 15, which focus on life below water and life on land, respectively (United Nations, 2015). Complementary to this global campaign, UNESCO has developed the proposal focused on transferring the virtues of the educational system to the sustainability requirements of the planet. This idea is known as Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which plays a crucial role in the effort to combat these environmental challenges (Kopnina, 2020; Rieckmann et al., 2017). Through proper use of ESD, it is possible to help form informed and conscious citizens who understand the problems of the Anthropocene and are willing to act to mitigate them (UNESCO, 2017). This importance underscores that, with the correct approach, education could provide the necessary context to work innovatively, foster creativity and critical thinking, skills necessary to create novel solutions that allow us to undermine some of the problems of the Anthropocene, among them waste pollution (Alm et al., 2022; Corres et al., 2020). It is therefore essential to develop educational approaches that nourish this innovation and allow us to move towards a more sustainable future. Currently, one of the main environmental problems is pollution caused by poor waste management, especially plastic waste, which has become increasingly pronounced. It is estimated that 300 million tons of plastic are produced each year, and much of this material ends up in our oceans, forests, and streets (Greenpeace, 2018). But this fact is not only harmful to the environment and wildlife but can also have serious repercussions for human health (Alabi et al., 2019).

In this context, some pro-environmental practices have been gaining prominence in today's society, among them plogging has emerged as a creative and active response that goes beyond mere awareness. Plogging is a practice that combines physical exercise with waste collection, it is a movement that is increasingly popular around the world (Morrissey-Swan, 2018). Originally from Sweden, the term "plogging" comes from the combination of the Swedish words "plocka upp," which means to pick up, and "jogging" in English (Klein, 2018). However, despite being a relatively recent

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