



Article

How Sustainable Is a Waldorf School? Exploring the Congruence between Waldorf Education and the Sustainable School Approach in a Greek School Case Study

Maria Daskolia *  and Vassiliki Koukouzeli 

Environmental Education Lab, Department of Educational Studies, School of Philosophy, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 15784 Athens, Greece

* Correspondence: mdaskol@eds.uoa.gr

Abstract: The study reported here aims to explore the relationship between Waldorf education and the sustainable school approach through a small-scale qualitative research study conducted in a Greek Waldorf school. Following a semi-structured interview protocol, four teachers shared their views and beliefs on the congruence between the two approaches as reflected in the philosophy and everyday practice of their school. The study's findings indicate that the Greek Waldorf school manifests several of the quality criteria that define a sustainable school, with pedagogy identified as the most relevant aspect, particularly in terms of the quality of teaching and learning processes. Participants also identified common features between the two approaches on both the social/organizational and physical/technical levels. Although not all the criteria of a sustainable school are fully met, the teachers believe that the sustainability concept is implicitly interwoven with the philosophy and practice of Waldorf education and that their school is moving in the direction of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

Keywords: Waldorf education; sustainable school; quality criteria; environmental and sustainability education; qualitative research



Citation: Daskolia, M.; Koukouzeli, V. How Sustainable Is a Waldorf School? Exploring the Congruence between Waldorf Education and the Sustainable School Approach in a Greek School Case Study. *Educ. Sci.* **2023**, *13*, 403. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13040403>

Academic Editors: Susan Sonnenschein and Michele L. Stites

Received: 6 March 2023

Revised: 2 April 2023

Accepted: 14 April 2023

Published: 16 April 2023



Copyright: © 2023 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Educational theory and practice have always been in search of new and alternative models and approaches to transform the role of school education, to enhance teaching and learning practices and to achieve new social goals and visions. The Waldorf education and the sustainable school approaches are two such examples which, although they emerged at different times and in specific socio-educational contexts, each articulated a new and challenging understanding of the role and practice of schooling.

The study reported here aims to explore the relationship between these two approaches based on a case study conducted in a Greek Waldorf school. The impetus for carrying out this research arose during the short tenure of one of the researchers (second author) as a teacher in this school; however, the shared interest between the authors was strengthened when no previous empirical studies were identified in the literature. The present study is an exploration of the similarities between the two educational approaches, first at a theoretical level, by delineating the principles and specific characteristics of each approach, and second, through a small-scale qualitative research study conducted in a Greek Waldorf school, which explored the teachers' views and beliefs about the congruence between the two approaches as reflected in their school's philosophy and everyday practice.

1.1. A Brief History of Waldorf Education

Waldorf/Steiner education (often also referred to by adding the name of its founder, Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925)) is considered a holistic educational philosophy and pedagogical approach [1]. It originated in Germany immediately after World War I, a significant

historical moment for Europe, given the aftermath of a period of social unrest, disintegration and instability following the failed German Revolution and hyperinflation of 1923 [2].

The first Free Waldorf School (Freie Waldorfschule Uhlandshöhe) was founded in 1919 in Stuttgart, following an invitation by Emil Molt, owner of the Waldorf-Astoria Cigarette Industry, to Rudolf Steiner, at that time a leading member of the Anthroposophic Society, a movement advocating a spiritual approach to science and the world [3]. Emil Molt's dream was to create a new school for the children of his workers, based on a model that would differ from conventional German public schools and would have higher standards. Access to this school would be open to all children, regardless of their social class and without bureaucratic or ideological restrictions [4–6]. Steiner saw this as an opportunity to put into action his philosophical, anthropological, and pedagogical ideas, promoting a phenomenological approach to knowledge, an ethic of love, freedom and self-actualization, and a child-centered pedagogy.

In the years that followed, many more Waldorf schools were founded in Germany and internationally. In Great Britain, the first Waldorf School opened in 1925 in East Sussex, and from 1920 to 1930 Waldorf schools expanded to countries such as Austria, Hungary, the Netherlands, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Norway and Sweden, as well as beyond Europe to the USA and Argentina. In Germany, Waldorf schools grew from a modest number of 25 in 1939 to around 200 in 2008 and over 1000 in 2015, and in the same year more than 70 schools, mostly kindergartens, opened their doors worldwide [7]. A century after the establishment of the first Waldorf school, an international movement with over 3000 active schools and kindergartens in 74 countries has been recorded [3,8]. In Greece, three Waldorf kindergartens were initially established in Athens; however, their development has been rather slow, due to various institutional drawbacks imposed by the Greek legislation. The first Waldorf primary school opened in 2017.

1.2. The Waldorf School Approach

There is a vast literature on Rudolf Steiner's educational philosophy, including Steiner's collected works, as well as a number of theoretical publications and reviews of practice on Waldorf schools [8]. The literature overall suggests that Waldorf education offers an alternative approach to school organization and pedagogy [9], focusing on the personal development of the child [6]. Endorsing a humanistic, human-centered educational paradigm [10], the Waldorf/Steiner approach argues that every child is unique and has the potential to develop within a supportive environment and with the appropriate guidance [11]. Drawing on anthroposophic philosophy and epistemology, it promotes a holistic perspective aiming to foster the students' intellect, emotions and disposition in an integrated way [7]. The "head-heart-hands" approach, as often cited in the literature, supports that the learning engagement and development of students is comprehensive [12] and that teaching is tailored to the priorities set at each of the three developmental stages.

In the first stage (0–7 years), educational processes should focus on engaging students in physical activities and experiences and on meeting their basic needs and impulses. Through play, songs and fables, children become aware of their bodies, develop their sensory skills and forge their self-confidence. In the second stage (7–14 years) the emphasis is on cultivating the students' emotional self through environmental experiences that nurture their imagination and develop critical thinking. In the third stage (14–21 years), learning experiences focus on the students' social awareness and their competence to live with others as prerequisites for becoming active and responsible citizens, with a sense of justice and a determination for democratic participation [12]. At each of these three levels, a Waldorf school is expected to be based on its learning community, where both the students and teachers are supported to pursue processes for their personal development.

A Waldorf school advances freedom, self-actualization and creativity and is responsive to students' needs (i.e., physical, emotional, cognitive, social and spiritual) [13]. Curricula are not strictly prescribed; apart from certain basic concepts and principles, all contents and teaching methods are flexibly structured and constantly updated [7]. Two important

features of the curriculum are “block teaching” and the absence of standardized textbooks. Block teaching involves teaching an interdisciplinary curriculum topic in depth and without interruption for an extended period of time, usually over the course of three to six weeks [9]. Textbooks are artifacts generated by students, and the very process of creating them is used as a strategy to enhance students’ meaning-making and creativity when exploring interdisciplinary topics [13].

Teachers have a great deal of freedom in their teaching practice, and they are encouraged in their personal and professional development [14]. An important dimension of their role is to forge close bonds with their students and create an emotional atmosphere that contributes to quality teaching and learning [9]. This teacher–student relationship and the way teachers organize the “Waldorf classroom” is seen as essential for students to develop a healthy model of how society should function [7]. Fostering a sense of social responsibility in teachers and school administrators will allow them to act as liaisons between students and the real world. It also substantiates a school model of democratic leadership and active citizenship [7].

Art permeates the whole curriculum and students are encouraged to participate in a variety of artistic activities. Fables and stories are used as educational tools across all school levels and are integrated into all subjects, as they are to enhance the children’s free thinking and imaginations and help them to retain and retrieve information [15]. Aesthetics in general is a pervasive feature of Waldorf education and a means of profoundly influencing ways of thinking and learning, so much that it is embedded as a principle in the school architecture and the interior design of school buildings. Thus, Steiner’s view of “organic architecture” has led to some original school facilities [16]. The outdoor physical environment is a key aspect of Waldorf education and is intentionally designed and integrated into students’ learning [7]. Nature is considered to facilitate experiential learning and to nurture children’s inner worlds with health and harmony [12].

1.3. The Sustainable School Movement

Unlike the Waldorf school, the “sustainable school” approach did not originate from a particular thinker or in a particular country. The concept of sustainable schools was first mentioned in the literature in the first decade of the 21st century by members of the Australian [17,18] and British educational traditions of Environmental Education (EE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) [19]; however, it soon gained widespread recognition and developed into an international movement.

Based on the concept and goals of sustainability and guided by the principles and practices of ESD, a significant number of global efforts have been documented since the 1990s and more intensively since the 2000s [20,21] to reorient formal education towards sustainability [22]. Some global efforts worth mentioning include international programs such as the “Eco-Schools” program, in addition to national school initiatives such as the “Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative” (AuSSI), “Sustainable Schools” in the UK, “EnviroSchools” in New Zealand, the “Green Schools Alliance” in the USA, and the “Green School Award” in Sweden, among others, each of which has its own characteristics based on the education system and pre-existing structures of the country in question [22–24]. Furthermore, the combined efforts of two international networks, namely, ENSI (Environment and School Initiatives) and SEED (School Development through Environmental Education), have resulted in a list of proposed “Quality Criteria” for sustainable schools [25].

In Greece, the sustainable school approach has not received equal attention in national education policy and practice. As Flogaitis, Liarakou and Gavrilakis [26] argue, the international initiatives for the introduction of ESD have not brought the expected outcomes in Greece, nor have they led to the longed-for transition to more integrated approaches and changes in schools towards sustainability. At the institutional level, progress is mainly demonstrated through teaching and learning practices as opposed to more comprehensive redesigns and innovations at the school policy and community level. Since 2010, the idea of sustainable schools has been adopted mainly by Greek environmental Non-Governmental

Organizations (NGOs) and has been associated with school initiatives, programs and accreditation awards.

1.4. Criteria for a Sustainable School

The key idea behind the sustainable school approach is to align schools with the concept and goals of sustainability, so that the school itself becomes a model and laboratory for the necessary changes that need to be brought about in society [27,28]. On a practical level, sustainable schools are seen as places of active learning where sustainable lifestyles are both interpreted and practiced, and students are empowered to become future citizens by seeking and integrating the ethos and practice of sustainability into their daily lives [22,29,30]. Following the principles and goals of EE and ESD, the “Sustainable Schools” initiative aims to reform society by involving all educational stakeholders in co-creating a more sustainable world.

As a result of the European project “School Development through Environmental Education” (SEED), the international network ENSI has developed an operational framework for designating a school as “sustainable”, a summary of which is presented in the list of “Quality Criteria for ESD-Schools” [25]. Although not exhaustive, this list is organized into three broad categories, namely, (a) the quality of teaching and learning processes., (b) the school’s policy and organization, and (c) the school’s external relations. These categories are further broken down into fifteen more specific areas (see Table 1). ENSI’s proposal, which has been translated into more than 17 languages, offers a useful tool for teachers and educational stakeholders at a national and international level, to design new school settings and activities for ESD, tailored to the context of each school and guided by their own aspirations and capacities [26,31,32]. The elaboration of these quality criteria aims to promote a discussion and reflection on educational practice, to facilitate evaluation and to promote innovation and transformative processes towards sustainability in schools [31].

Table 1. Quality criteria for ESD-Schools.

Quality Criteria Regarding the Quality of Teaching and Learning Processes	Quality Criteria Regarding School Policy and Organization	Quality Criteria Regarding the School’s External Relations
1. Area of teaching–learning approach	10. Area of school policy and planning	14. Area of community cooperation
2. Area of visible outcomes at school and in the local community	11. Area of school climate	15. Area of networking and partnerships
3. Area of perspectives for the future	12. Area of school management	
4. Area of a ‘culture of complexity’	13. Area of reflection and evaluation of ESD initiatives at a school level	
5. Area of critical thinking and the language of possibility		
6. Area of value clarification and development		
7. Area of action-based perspective		
8. Area of participation		
9. Area of subject matter		

Source: Breiting, Mayer and Mogensen [25].

Another framework for defining categories of quality indicators for sustainable schools is proposed by Posch [33] on the changes a school pursuing “ecologization” should bring about. The term “ecologization” was used by Posch [33] to denote the “shaping of our interaction with the environment in an intellectual, material, spatial, social and emotional sense to achieve a lasting/sustainable quality of life for all” (pp. 341–342). As

Posch [33] himself underlines, ecologization is not “a one-time affair, but an on-going task” (p. 341), and applies to all social institutions, not just schools. Moreover, it encompasses not only the physical and technical environment, but also the social and intellectual environment. Based on the three levels of a school’s operation (i.e., pedagogical, social, and technical/environmental) and the changes that an “ecological school” must undergo, this framework has been extensively adapted and used in school accreditation and award schemes in several countries including Greece [34].

Among the quality indicators proposed by Posch’s framework at the pedagogical level are those highlighting that schools should promote innovative teaching methods and interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches to learning, as well as the advancement of active and experiential learning activities to strengthen the students’ autonomy. Teachers are expected to facilitate and support students to generate their own knowledge about sustainable development, to enhance their critical and creative thinking skills and to engage them in democratic participation that will enhance the students’ action competences.

At the social level, quality indicators lie in building a culture of collaboration and fostering a climate that encourages learning and the exchange of views both inside and outside the school. To this end, social interactions between students and all members of the school community are enhanced with the support of school leadership. The introduction of all these innovations aims at gradually transforming the school into a learning organization, that is autonomous, self-regulating and open to the local community. Finally, as Posch [33] suggests, at the technical/environmental level, a school should promote the sustainable design, management and maintenance of internal and external facilities and services, including the transport of students to and from school. Sustainability at this level should also be promoted through the implementation of energy and resource efficiency schemes.

There are more suggestions in the literature on how sustainable schools should operate. For example, Birney and Reed [35] suggest seven characteristics of a sustainable school, including the social and ecological footprint of the school, the development of an ethos/culture of understanding and collaboration along with shared goals, an emphasis on meaningful learning and participation for all students, integration with other educational policies and initiatives, school improvements with a focus on student learning, and curriculum change with sustainability incorporated as a core concept and principle (pp. 24–32). Each of these characteristics, however, can be classified into one or more of the categories of the ENSI list of quality criteria [25] or into the priorities defined on the basis of Posch’s [33] three-level model.

Following a slightly different perspective, Warner and Elser [36] proposed a metric for measuring and comparing school initiatives towards sustainability by linking the three pillars of sustainability (i.e., environment, economy and society) to three educational scales, the curriculum (e.g., project focus, teacher/student interaction, content, and professional development), the campus (e.g., school-based projects, physical facilities, school grounds, operations and maintenance), and the community (e.g., community focus and influence, partnerships and involvement with social and economic actors, and interaction with government and NGOs, etc.).

1.5. Previous Research

Despite the spread and internationalization of the Steiner/Waldorf educational approach, empirical research on the model is relatively limited [7]. A similar trend can be observed in the research literature related to the sustainable school approach. One possible reason for this may be the inherent complexity of each of the two educational approaches, both on a conceptual and evaluative level, which discourages researchers from empirically investigating them.

Most empirical studies on Waldorf education focus on students’ overall academic performances or on the development of specific skills in countries such as England, Scotland, Sweden, Germany, the United States, Sweden, Germany, and Australia [7]. In addition, studies have been conducted comparing whether and how students in Waldorf schools dif-

fer from students in conventional schools in terms of the development of specific skills and mindsets, such as creative [37,38], political and moral thinking [39], or in terms of student motivation and effective learning [39,40]. Few qualitative studies have explored teachers' views, attitudes and practices regarding the Waldorf philosophy and curriculum [41,42].

Regarding the research on sustainable schools, the literature review has highlighted some studies exploring specific aspects of the performance of these schools, mainly based on teachers' perceptions, such as students' participation in research procedures [43] or how different types of teacher collaboration enable interdisciplinary teaching and contribute to addressing different teaching challenges [44]. The conflicts and contradictions arising from teachers' personal aspirations and visions have also been explored [45], as well as their conceptual understanding of sustainability and how they integrate it into their teaching practice [46]. A particular research tradition has focused on the role of leadership [47], particularly school principals, in orienting their school towards sustainability [48,49] and bringing about change [50]. Finally, some studies examine teachers' perceptions of whether and how their schools meet various sustainability criteria or indicators [34,36], how they personally respond to their schools' visions, how their professional knowledge is developed, and how the quality of their practice is ensured [51], or how they personally define and understand the quality criteria of a sustainable school [52].

Based on our literature review, there is currently no other research focusing on the relationship between Waldorf education and the sustainable school approach. The study reported here attempts to shed some more light on this relationship based on a case study conducted in a Greek Waldorf school.

2. Method

2.1. The Study Context

The school selected as the context of our study is the first Greek, fully licensed, Waldorf school. It was founded in 2017 by a group of Greek teachers who shared the vision of creating a "social cell" that would enclose and protect student agency, allow students to feel emotionally safe and happy, and empower them while maintaining their uniqueness to collaborate with others and respect the world around them (based on personal communication with the school leadership). The school comprises a kindergarten (with 40 children attending it in the school year the study was carried out) and a primary school (respectively, 144 children in the same year). It is located in a suburban setting in the greater Athens area.

Our study was conducted in 2019, two years after the school started operating. The main research question that guided our inquiry was whether and how the Greek Waldorf school meets specific quality criteria that characterize a sustainable school.

2.2. Methodological Approach

The study followed a qualitative methodological approach. The aim was not to study the teachers' general beliefs and opinions about each of the two educational approaches or their affinities, but rather to support a narrative view of their experience and to explore whether and how they perceive and interpret their school's operation and practice as being in line with those of a sustainable school.

Qualitative research does not place extensive value on the quantity of data or the replicability of findings; it focuses on the interesting details that qualitative data may contain, such as how individuals perceive and understand different concepts and situations [53] as they draw on and narrate their experiences. Such interesting and novel details were identified in the collected data of this case study.

2.3. Participants

At first, we contacted all ten teachers working at the school. We explained our intentions and inquired about their availability and interest in participating in the study. Four teachers, namely, three women and one man, expressed interest in participating. Two

of the teachers (women) were in their thirties, while the third (woman) and fourth (man) were in their 50s and early 40s, respectively. All the teachers had degrees in Education, while two also held degrees in Law and Fine Arts. Three participants considered themselves experienced teachers (also confirmed by the school principal) with extensive teaching experience in other public and private schools. Although two of the teachers did not have a high level of knowledge about Waldorf pedagogy before joining the school, they subsequently attended several in-service training courses. None of the participants had been directly involved in EE or ESD projects, although all were aware of EE/ESD practices and goals.

2.4. Data Collection

A semi-structured interview protocol was used for the data collection. An interview guide with open-ended questions allows researchers to obtain the necessary information and enrich it with new or emerging information as the interview progresses [53]. All the interviewees were explained what the purpose of the study was, the type of questions they would be posed and were asked to provide their signed consent to participate and record the interview. They also received a written statement that all personal data would be kept confidential.

The interview protocol was designed by the researchers and included the following questions, in which the participants were invited to freely express their views:

1. When and how did you first encounter the Steiner/Waldorf approach?
2. What are the key elements of this approach and what do they mean to you?
3. Which of the characteristics of Waldorf education are particularly applicable to your school?
4. What does “sustainability” mean to you?
5. Is the concept of “sustainability” in any way related to Waldorf education; and, if so, how?
6. Are any of the quality criteria of a sustainable school evident or inherent in the daily practice and performance of your school?

Regarding Question 6, the participants were presented with the list of quality criteria proposed by Breiting et al. [25] and asked to reflect and comment on whether any of these criteria were being met by their school. After each interview question, the teachers were prompted to express any thoughts they had on the topics.

The second author conducted all interviews in June 2019. Each interview lasted between 30 and 50 min.

2.5. Data Analysis

All the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim and the transcripts were subjected to a thematic analysis [54]. To ensure anonymity, the names of all the participants were changed. The data analysis involved both inductive and deductive coding. It began with the two researchers reading the transcripts line by line several times to familiarize themselves with the data and to take notes on their first impressions and ideas that emerged from the data. An initial coding framework was developed by the two researchers using a deductive approach. This framework was based on the review of previous research and literature related to the two educational approaches (i.e., Waldorf education and sustainable schools), as presented in the previous sections of this article, and structured around each of the 6 interview questions. The framework was used to create a set of initial codes, which were then applied to the interview data. Using this as an analytical tool, the second author looked for key, recurring or emerging themes in the data that should have reflected the interview questions and arisen from the data. The identification and coding of the themes was accompanied by direct quotes from the transcripts to provide evidence and context for interpretation.

Intercoder reliability was established by the first author, who coded 25% of the data (which in practice corresponded to one interview). The similarity in coding between the

two researchers accounted for 85%. Once the analysis was completed and the themes identified, the findings were sent to the interviewees along with relevant extracts from their interviews for them to review and raise any objections. All four teachers expressed their agreement with the researchers' analysis and confirmed that it accurately reflected their shared personal beliefs and views. Both review procedures were used to ensure that the analysis was robust, transparent and credible, to help identify any potential biases and strengthen the conclusions.

In this article we present the combined findings of our analysis applied to the parts of the interviews that addressed the last three interview questions posed to the teachers (namely, Questions 4, 5, and 6).

3. Results

3.1. What Does "Sustainability" Mean to You and How Does It Relate to Waldorf Education?

All the participants agreed that there was some inherent affinity between the concept and goals of sustainability and the principles and practices of Waldorf education. Although they did not explicitly state it, the teachers believed that sustainability is organically embedded in the philosophy of Waldorf education. Specifically, participants defined sustainability by referring to some key principles of Waldorf education. Thus, sustainability was defined as a way of life that seeks to bring out the inner balance and autonomy of the individual, a principle promoted by Waldorf education:

"[Sustainability] is a way of life that leads to freedom, happiness, balance, and harmony. I think all align with one another." (Mary).

The teachers' interpretation of the concept of sustainability as the inner harmony and self-determination of the individual, encompassed for some of the participants an additional dimension, which was that of cultivating a sense of social responsibility and solidarity towards other people and the world as a whole:

"For me, sustainability implies two things. First, it is being able to maintain a steady pace for myself. And secondly, it means not hindering the self-actualization of others by raising obstacles with my own actions. Instead, it involves thinking about what future generations will inherit from me" (Stella).

The participants mostly expressed a person-centered, developmental, and educational perspective of sustainability, in the sense that achieving sustainability goes through personal development based on the principles promoted by Waldorf pedagogy. In fact, sustainability was seen as an educational challenge, focusing on how to achieve personal growth in all dimensions and aspects of one's life and personality, and as a prerequisite for harvesting a deeper connection to the world. It was on this premise that the teachers justified why Waldorf education provides an appropriate and compatible framework for cultivating a more sustainable relationship between the individual and the world:

"This [sustainability] is part of Waldorf education, which actually starts with people's relationship to the world." (Chryssa).

"This [sustainability] is well-embedded in the Waldorf approach, because, essentially, that's the goal, to create a framework so that people can develop in a healthy way to become self-sufficient over the course of their lives." (Antonis).

Similarly, although all agreed that the concept of sustainability was not explicitly mentioned or used in Waldorf's pedagogical resources, they confirmed that it is pursued in the school's everyday practice, through all the teaching and learning processes taking place there:

"As I said earlier, the term itself may not be used explicitly, but the Waldorf curriculum could not be more appropriately structured to encompass sustainability and its pursuit." (Mary).

Importantly, the curriculum highlights how a Waldorf school connects and promotes sustainability, while also acting as a link between children and society, and engaging students in social issues. The participants confirmed that sustainability was closely linked to the orientation of their school, considering it a social issue:

“Nowhere else could [sustainability] be better met than in a school like this one, which allows for constant interaction with society, views itself an integral part of that society and it is involved in all areas of social life.” (Antonis).

Finally, there was some criticism of the technocratic model of conventional schooling, followed by a call for a paradigm shift towards quality education based on principles and processes that value and empower both students and teachers. These principles are promoted in Waldorf education, so it was not surprising that the teachers viewed Waldorf education as essentially ESD:

“... There’s this hectic situation asking us to handle everything: to meet the needs of every child, all the paperwork, the infinite lesson plans ... That’s not what education is all about! Running on a constant treadmill, being the best, beating the competition? Training people how to be effective, instead of educating them how to ‘be themselves’, how to resist, how to take responsibility.” (Chryssa).

“A good school is one that responds to what children really need, instead of what society asks children to serve.” (Stella).

3.2. How “Sustainable” Is Your Waldorf School?

3.2.1. At the Pedagogical Level: Pursuing Quality in Teaching and Learning Processes

All four teachers identified several commonalities between their school and a sustainable school, mainly at the pedagogical level:

“At the pedagogical level, as far as I can tell, [the list of quality criteria for sustainable schools] describes our school perfectly.” (Mary).

Most similarities aligned with the quality criteria proposed by Breiting et al. [25], which relate to the teaching and learning processes. All the participants explained that their school practiced a wide range of alternative and innovative approaches to teaching and learning, as they emphasized that this is the main focus of Waldorf education. They confirmed that their school met the quality criteria in many of the teaching and learning areas of a sustainable school, such as prioritizing the concerns, experiences, ideas and aspirations of students:

“As long as you focus on the child and adapt your teaching to the needs of the child, teaching and learning become very active processes. The teacher interacts with the students. And nothing is more engaging than that.” (Antonis).

“Students are involved in learning based on their interests. Our main teaching approach is active inquiry-based learning.” (Stella).

Another quality criterion mentioned by the participants was that the teachers in their school make use of more “flexible” lesson plans that are open to change, which they can adapt to the needs and interests of their students according to their level of developmental readiness:

“Teachers adjust their teaching approaches to their students’ abilities based on their developmental stage.” (Antonis).

Such approaches put forth an interactive relationship between the teacher and the students, based on mutual trust, respect and the pursuit of an equilibrium, thereby redefining the role of the teacher:

“The most important element for me is the way you approach the children; the respect, affection, and attention with which you surround them... This is so

essential that it affects the life of the teacher, the life of the child and the life of the family.” (Mary).

“The connection between the teacher and the student . . . This makes me see the potential that exists [in the students]. And just like a gardener, I will help them grow it.” (Stella).

Flexibility in the teaching process also applied to the curriculum, allowing the students and teachers to work on different topics throughout the school year. Block teaching is, after all, a distinctive feature of Waldorf pedagogy and curriculum:

“Block teaching involves teaching one topic for 3–4 weeks, for a few hours a day and then changing the topic. In this way the child is given the opportunity to go deeper into the subject, to immerse in it, to think about it along the day, to work on it and to bring it up again the next morning . . .” (Antonis).

The teachers identified several common features between their Waldorf school and a sustainable school in terms of the quality of teaching and learning processes, such as teachers encouraging collaborative and experiential learning. In terms of collaborative learning, the participants felt that this was encouraged by the discussion-oriented approaches promoted by their school and by learning developed within the students’ communities:

“The discussion circle is one such teaching strategy. ‘Teaching’ may not be the right term, but it is definitely for the good of teaching, since it helps to foster a different culture of communication and self-expression . . .” (Stella).

“The community of students in each classroom. Each community discusses issues and resolves conflicts on their own.” (Mary).

Regarding the experiential learning element of the Waldorf approach, the participants noted that:

“ . . . it is at the heart of [Waldorf] pedagogy. The child must experience it.” (Antonis).

Flexible and experiential approaches were also achieved through the use of art, which is another key element of Waldorf pedagogy:

“Art is everywhere in the school.” (Chryssa).

Art promotes not only students’ creativity and imaginations but also “eurythmy”, namely, all the expressive movements that permeate not only people’s physical expressions, but also their speech and states of mind, and in which, as Steiner argues, personalities can be built:

“Our aim is to foster the creativity and imagination of students. And this is where art comes in . . . Art is closely linked to our soul. By promoting art in Waldorf schools, we build on children’s personality.” (Chryssa).

Art leads to more holistic teaching and learning processes, because it facilitates the development of multiple ways of understanding the world, not only through intellectual or academic modes, but also through an appreciation of balance and how to seek that balance in the inner self:

“Hands-heart-mind: thinking, feeling and willing, all-in balance, without prioritizing one over the other.” (Mary).

Experiential learning took place through various school activities. For example, educational field trips provided rich material for discussion, reflection and research. Special emphasis was placed on experiential learning outdoors, and in close interaction with nature, through walks or free play in the wild or in the schoolyard:

“We love nature walks. Instead of doing something structured behind four walls, we prefer children to spend time outdoors either playing or learning.” (Chryssa).

“The outdoors serves as a learning space. It is another type of classroom.” (Antonis).

The schoolyard was used, among other spaces, for teaching and learning. In this way, education becomes more practical, facilitates student participation and provides new learning contexts for developing the students’ ideas and perspectives. As Antonis mentioned, these hands-on activities:

“... put the children in a process that cultivates their attitude of caring for the school building and their classroom and respecting their peers. It becomes a natural part of their daily routine.” (Antonis).

3.2.2. At the Social/Organizational Level: Promoting a Culture of Collaboration and Participation

Another area in which the teachers believed their school has some common ground with a sustainable school is the pursuit of a culture of collaboration and participation. Waldorf education offers many opportunities through which students are involved in school decision-making, such as the student community meetings and the discussions that take place as part of daily scheduled “classroom circles”:

“The students’ communities! Also, what we call the ‘lunch circles’”. (Chryssa)

“The students’ communities ... We have the classroom circles, where students can meet every day and talk about whatever is on their minds.” (Antonis)

The teachers also referred to the school leadership that tried to involve all members of the school community in democratic decision-making procedures. They felt that this contributed significantly to a school climate where everyone felt they had a say in how the school was run and were encouraged to put forward innovative ideas:

“In the teachers’ meetings we discuss both administrative and pedagogical issues. So, in fact, the most important decisions are made by the whole group of teachers” (Mary).

A climate of collaboration among teachers serves also as a strong example for students:

“We try to cultivate in students what we do as teachers.” (Mary).

“Children are inspired when they have people around them who take such initiatives.” (Stella).

The teachers believed that a climate of everyday democracy and participation was achieved at different levels with the involvement of all stakeholders (such as teachers, students and parents). This was also an indication of the school’s efforts to open up to the local community, which is inherent in Waldorf pedagogy:

“... The school is run by teachers, parents and students. The participation of all three groups in a democratic partnership is like interacting with society as a whole and integrating all areas of social life into school practice. This is at the heart of the school’s pedagogy.” (Antonis).

Parents were also involved in various activities of school life, promoting a whole school community in everyday practice:

“We hold a dedicated monthly celebration, and others, where parents and families as well as the general public are invited. [These activities] demonstrate the school’s openness to the local community ...” (Antonis).

“Parents play a supportive role in the school ... They are helpers in every classroom. They will either help the teacher practically or take on the task of communicating with other parents.” (Mary).

However, the school’s cooperation with the local community was limited to the above activities and no other initiatives were recorded, evidencing a more genuine engagement

within the local community either to address the school's concerns or to turn the school into a "community hub". Although the school sought stronger links and set goals to achieve this, they were not quite satisfied with what they had achieved so far:

"In terms of our engagement with the local community, we could have done better. We are nevertheless interested in trying more meaningful things." (Stella).

3.2.3. At the Physical/Technical Level: Building Environmental Sustainability in the School

The teachers reported the school's strong intentions to improve its physical and built infrastructures to achieve more visible environmental sustainability outcomes. They stated that there were some initial ideas as well as some concrete initiatives to make the school buildings more sustainable, involving energy saving or natural resources conservation:

"The initial idea was to make our school more sustainable. We brainstormed, and also developed plans on how to collect rainwater, how not to waste water, how to make the school more energy-friendly, how to make it more self-sufficient." (Stella).

The interviews also mentioned the school's willingness and active efforts to set sustainable consumption and food management standards for the benefit of the students:

"Sustainable food consumption is already taking place in the kindergarten. Not so much in the primary school, because we do not prepare students' meals in-house ... However, we are conscious about what food products we use and how we cook them." (Chryssa).

In addition, various green spaces in the school had been transformed into learning spaces for children. This was seen as another initiative aimed at enabling the students to develop knowledge and cultivate a range of skills for a sustainable lifestyle:

"We have a vegetable garden where we grow vegetables with the children. This is part of our education. Moreover, we are now creating a herb garden. And there's the terrace garden ... We also thought of a beehive ... We offer gardening classes, because we want the children to get in touch with nature. We also teach about recycling and waste reduction ... We already have a compost bin, and we use environmentally friendly detergents ... Of course, we use organic food products, from local crops and plants, because they are the most sustainable ... Through all these ways the children are learning ..." (Antonis).

According to the teachers, the initiatives undertaken by their school demonstrated many steps towards attaining sustainability at the physical and technical level of their school: implementing energy-saving and water management measures, recycling paper, using organic cleaning products, and greening the schoolyard with local trees were some of these steps, which were also seen as *opportunities for teaching and learning*:

"The natural environment is used for learning. For example, we have created an outdoor classroom in the garden. We also try to cultivate a mindset in children to take care of the school building, their classroom, to be caring for their classmates. All these are embedded in the daily school life." (Antonis).

Unfortunately, many of these initiatives had been prematurely discontinued due to maintenance challenges:

"The plans were very ambitious. We got to a certain point, but we did not go any further." (Stella).

4. Discussion

Our research findings provide some important insights into the congruence of Waldorf's educational philosophy with the ethos of the sustainable school movement. The participants in the study, who were all experienced teachers, agreed that their school met

several of the quality criteria of a sustainable school, focusing mainly on the pedagogical level, as well as on the social/organizational and the physical/technical aspects.

The teachers noted the intersection between their Waldorf school and a sustainable school at the pedagogical level, with a focus on the quality of teaching and learning processes. This is in line with the first category of quality criteria proposed by Breiting et al. [25] as well as with more theoretical suggestions on the conceptualization of the sustainable school approach. Similarly, the relevant literature on Waldorf education advocates a meaningful and whole-school educational approach [13], paying attention to student development and placing students and their needs at the center of teaching and learning processes [5,9,55].

Building on a teacher's relationship with students [4], introducing a cross-disciplinary curriculum (i.e., "block teaching") and supporting the integration of different types of knowledge [4,6,13,44] are additional features of Waldorf pedagogy that can be associated with quality teaching and learning in the context of a sustainable school. Moreover, collaborative and experiential learning [55] and the pedagogical use of outdoor school spaces provide further evidence for the congruence of Waldorf education and the sustainable school approach. The participating teachers were aware of these similarities between the two educational approaches.

At the societal/organizational level, our study findings also revealed some similarities between the Waldorf school and a sustainable school, particularly in terms of the contribution of the school community in co-creating a collaborative culture. The relevant literature supports the personal and social developmental benefits of attaining a sense of community with others [12], as well as how collaboration and participation in school life trains students to become active citizens of a democratic society [4,39,47,55]. The participating teachers agreed that their school operated on the basis of learning communities at different levels, and that the school leadership played a decisive role in encouraging and facilitating the participation of the whole school community in decision-making processes [12] and by developing an appropriate learning environment [47].

At a technical/environmental level, the teachers reported that the school had plans for ecologization [33], such as improving its ecological footprint through the sustainable design of its premises or by taking specific measures for its energy and resources [35]. Environmental sustainability at the level of a school's buildings and grounds and its day-to-day operation and maintenance are among the key characteristics of a sustainable school [36].

Although our study shows that some small steps have been taken by the Greek Waldorf school towards sustainability, much more needs to be done. Importantly, any school improvements towards environmental sustainability need to be integrated into educational initiatives with a focus on student learning and curriculum change [35]. In Waldorf education, concerns about the ecologization of school buildings and grounds are not in themselves a priority but rather part of the pedagogy. The relevant literature emphasizes the pedagogical value of the architecture and aesthetics of school buildings [7,16], as well as that of integrating nature in student learning [12]. Our study has indicated the willingness of the Greek Waldorf school to make such changes and to develop concrete initiatives for more sustainable lifestyles, which become part of a more practice-oriented learning.

Although there are many similarities between the Waldorf school and ESD across several quality criteria, this does not imply that the school meets all the characteristics of a sustainable school. Several quality criteria of the Breiting's et al. [25] model were not identified by the teachers interviewed. For example, neither problem-solving nor critical thinking was mentioned by teachers as priorities of their school, nor was engaging students in working on projects or lessons related to imagining alternative futures or lessons dealing with the complexities and uncertainties of the real world. The teachers did not report any concerns or efforts by their school to evaluate student learning in accordance with the teaching and learning approaches advocated by Waldorf education. Moreover, at the social level, the school showed a rather limited engagement with the local community, either

through a lack of use of the community as a resource for meaningful teaching and learning or through the low promotion of genuine community-based initiatives.

In addition, the concept of ‘sustainability’ was not mentioned in the school’s literature on Waldorf education or in the official mission statement. Moreover, sustainability is not taught as a theoretical concept or is it introduced in the curriculum as a learning topic. The Greek Waldorf school does not place a strong emphasis on ESD at the school policy level or encourage students and teachers to work towards it. Likewise, although the school cooperates with other Waldorf schools, networking does not take place specifically in relation to the ESD goals.

However, the participants acknowledged that there was some inherent connection between how they personally perceived sustainability and Waldorf education as implemented by their school. The participants felt that the vision of sustainability was organically interwoven with Waldorf philosophy and the day-to-day practices of their school. Perceiving sustainability as an educational challenge that promotes a value system and way of life based on the inner balance and autonomy of the individual, and a sense of collective responsibility towards others and the world, they believed that sustainability was embedded in their school’s philosophy and practice and that their school was moving towards becoming a sustainable school.

5. Conclusions

The present study aimed to explore the relationship between two educational approaches: the Waldorf education and the sustainable school approach, by conducting a small case study in a Greek Waldorf school. The findings support that there is an association between the two. The teachers interviewed acknowledged that their Waldorf school manifested several of the quality criteria that define a sustainable school, with pedagogy being identified as the most relevant aspect, especially in terms of the quality of teaching and learning processes. The participants also observed common features between the two approaches at both the social/organizational and physical/technical levels. Although not all the criteria for a sustainable school were fully met, the teachers believed that their school was moving in the direction of ESD. They viewed that the concept of sustainability was interwoven with the vision of Waldorf education and permeated all levels of performance in their school.

Although these findings are limited to the views of the four teachers interviewed, they are, nonetheless, significant given that there are no previous studies that illustrate the commonalities between a Waldorf school and a sustainable school. Our qualitative study adds to the educational research by shedding some light on a largely unexplored topic. Focusing on a particular educational and school context provides a useful framework for identifying commonalities between the two approaches. It also serves as a springboard for further exploration of the complementarity between the two types of schools and the inherent potential of combining them. However, neither research in a single school nor the specific methodology followed in this study can in any way aspire to or claim to be able to generalize the conclusions drawn about the similarities and differences between the two approaches. Based on this study, further, more extensive and more in-depth research is needed to understand how Waldorf philosophy and pedagogy contributes to ESD in order to explore the implications for educational policy and to bridge the gap between educational theory and practice. Conducting more studies in different contexts and using more methodological designs will enhance our understanding of each of the two educational approaches and identify ways to harness their potential to enhance quality and innovation in school education.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, M.D. and V.K.; methodology, M.D. and V.K.; analysis, V.K. and M.D.; investigation, V.K.; writing—original draft preparation, M.D. and V.K.; writing—review and editing, M.D.; visualization, M.D. and V.K.; supervision, M.D.; project administration, M.D. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Ethical review and approval were waived for this study since no personal information of the research subjects was reported.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The datasets supporting the reported results are available from V.K. (koukouze@gmail.com) on reasonable request.

Acknowledgments: The authors wish to thank the school and participants in this study.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

1. Miller, J.P. Holistic education: A brief history. In *International Handbook of Holistic Education*; Miller, J.P., Nigh, K., Binder, M.J., Novak, B., Crowell, S., Eds.; Routledge: London, UK, 2018; pp. 5–16.
2. Staudenmaier, P. The Politics of the Unpolitical: German Anthroposophy in Theory and Practice Before 1933. In *Between Occultism and Nazism: Anthroposophy and the Politics of Race in the Fascist Era*; Staudenmaier, P., Ed.; Brill: Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston, MA, USA, 2014; pp. 64–100.
3. Pauli, J.; Hennig, B.; Steiner, R. Education and Waldorf Schools: Centenary World Maps of the Global Diffusion of “The School of the Future”. *J. Soc. Sci. Humanit.* **2020**, *6*, 24–33.
4. Nicholson, D.W. Layers of Experience: Forms of Representation in a Waldorf School Classroom. *J. Curric. Stud.* **2000**, *32*, 575–587. [[CrossRef](#)]
5. Edwards, C.P. Three Approaches from Europe: Waldorf, Montessori, and Reggio Emilia. *Early Child. Res. Pract.* **2002**, *4*, 2–14.
6. Stehlik, T. Thinking, Feeling, and Willing: How Waldorf Schools Provide a Creative Pedagogy that Nurtures and Develops Imagination. In *Pedagogies of the Imagination: Mythopoetic Curriculum in Educational Practice*; Leonard, T., Willis, P., Eds.; Springer: Dordrecht, The Netherlands, 2008; pp. 231–243.
7. Dahlin, B. *Rudolf Steiner: The Relevance of Waldorf Education*; Springer: Cham, Switzerland, 2017.
8. Stehlik, T. A Review of the Literature on Steiner Education and Waldorf Schools. In *Waldorf Schools and the History of Steiner Education: An International View of 100 Years*; Stehlik, T., Ed.; Springer Nature: Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany, 2019; pp. 95–122.
9. de Souza, D.L. Learning and Human Development in Waldorf Pedagogy and Curriculum. *Encount. Educ. Mean. Soc. Justice* **2012**, *25*, 50–62.
10. Dragana, P.; Stanisavljevic, P.Z.; Milan, M. Humanistic Approach to Early Childhood Education in the Educational Philosophy of Rudolf Steiner. *Future Hum. Image* **2017**, *8*, 103–112.
11. Schmitt-Stegmann, A. Child Development and Curriculum in Waldorf Education; ED415990; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION. 1997. Available online: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED415990.pdf> (accessed on 25 October 2018).
12. Easton, F. Educating the whole child. “Head, Heart, and Hands”: Learning from the Waldorf experience. *Theory Pract.* **1997**, *36*, 87–94. [[CrossRef](#)]
13. Nordlund, C. Waldorf Education: Breathing Creativity. *Art Educ.* **2013**, *66*, 13–19. [[CrossRef](#)]
14. Ashley, M. Education for Freedom: The Goal of Steiner/Waldorf Schools. In *Alternative Education for the 21st Century*; Woods, P.A., Woods, G.J., Eds.; Palgrave Macmillan: New York, NY, USA, 2009; pp. 209–225.
15. van Alphen, P. Imagination as a transformative tool in primary school education. *RoSE—Res. Steiner Educ.* **2011**, *2*, 16–34.
16. Mezentseva, O. Creating harmonious school learning environment: Waldorf education perspective. *Int. J. Adv. Res.* **2019**, *7*, 691–696. [[CrossRef](#)]
17. Henderson, K.; Tilbury, D. *Whole-School Approaches to Sustainability: An International Review of Sustainable School Programs*; Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability, MacQuarie University: Sydney, Australia, 2004.
18. Gough, A. Sustainable Schools: Renovating Educational Processes. *Appl. Environ. Educ. Commun.* **2005**, *4*, 339–351. [[CrossRef](#)]
19. DfES. *The Early Years Foundation Stage*; Department for Education and Skills (DfES): Nottingham, UK, 2007.
20. UNECE. UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development, Adopted at the Highlevel Meeting. High-Level Meeting of Environment and Education Ministries; (Vilnius, 17–18 March); (Agenda items 5 and 6). 2005. Available online: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/545239?ln=en> (accessed on 13 April 2023).
21. DCSF. *Fair Play: A Consultation on the Play Strategy—A Commitment from the Children’s Plan*; Department for Children, Schools and Families, Department for Culture, Media and Sport: London, UK, 2008.
22. Rickinson, M.; Hall, M.; Reid, A. Sustainable schools’ programmes: What influence on schools and how do we know? *Environ. Educ. Res.* **2016**, *22*, 360–389. [[CrossRef](#)]
23. Ferreira, J.A.; Ryan, L.; Tilbury, D. *Whole-School Approaches to Sustainability: A Review of Models for Professional Development in Pre-service Teacher Education*; Department of the Environment and Heritage and the Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability: Canberra, Australia, 2006.
24. UNESCO. *Report by the Director-General on the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development and the Bonn Declaration*; UNESCO: Paris, France, 2009.

25. Breiting, S.; Mayer, M.; Mogensen, F. *Quality Criteria for ESD-Schools. Guidelines to Enhance the Quality of Education for Sustainable Development*; Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture; the European Commission in the frame of the EU-COMENIUS 3 network “School Development through Environmental Education” (SEED); in collaboration with the international network “Environment and School Initiatives” (ENSI); StollfußVerlag Bonn GmbH & KG: Vienna, Austria, 2005.
26. Flogaitis, E.; Liarakou, G.; Gavrilakis, C. ENSI’s Quality Criteria and Education for Sustainable Development in Greece. In *Environment and School Initiatives. Lessons from the ENSI Network—Past, Present and Future*; Affolter, C., Varga, A., Eds.; Environment and School Initiatives & Budapest, Eszterhazy Karoly University: Vienna, Austria, 2018; pp. 130–141.
27. Orr, D. *Ecological Literacy: Education and the Transition to a Postmodern World*; SUNY Press: Albany, NY, USA, 1992.
28. Sterling, S. *Sustainable Education. Re-Visioning Learning and Change*; J.W. Arrowsmith Ltd.: Bristol, UK, 2002.
29. DfES. *Sustainable Schools for Pupils, Communities and the Environment*; Department for Education and Skills (DfES): Nottingham, UK, 2006.
30. Huckle, J. Sustainable Schools: Responding to new challenges and opportunities. *Geography* **2009**, *94*, 13–21. [[CrossRef](#)]
31. Mogensen, F.; Schnack, K. The action competence approach and the ‘new’ discourses of education for sustainable development, competence and quality criteria. *Environ. Educ. Res.* **2010**, *16*, 59–74. [[CrossRef](#)]
32. Lechner, C.; Rauch, F. Quality criteria for schools focusing on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). In *Promoting Change through Action Research: International Case Studies in Education, Social Work, Health Care and Community Development*; Rauch, F., Schuster, A., Stern, T., Pribila, M., Townsend, A., Eds.; Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 2014; pp. 65–76.
33. Posch, P. The ecologisation of schools and its implications for educational policy. *Camb. J. Educ.* **1999**, *29*, 341–348. [[CrossRef](#)]
34. Kalaitzidis, D. Sustainable School Indicators: Approaching the Vision through the Sustainable School Award. *J. Teach. Educ. Sustain.* **2012**, *14*, 168–180. [[CrossRef](#)]
35. Birney, A.; Reed, J. *Sustainability and Renewal: Findings from the Leading Sustainable Schools Research Project*; National College for Leadership of Schools and Children’s Services: Nottingham, UK, 2009.
36. Warner, B.P.; Elser, M. How Do Sustainable Schools Integrate Sustainability Education? An Assessment of Certified Sustainable K–12 Schools in the United States. *J. Environ. Educ.* **2015**, *46*, 1–22. [[CrossRef](#)]
37. Ogletree, E.J. The Comparative Status of the Creative Thinking Ability of Waldorf Education Students: A Survey; ED400948; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION. 1996. Available online: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED400948.pdf> (accessed on 23 September 2018).
38. Kirkham, J.A.; Kidd, E. The effect of Steiner, Montessori, and national curriculum education upon children’s pretense and creativity. *J. Creat. Behav.* **2017**, *51*, 20–34. [[CrossRef](#)]
39. Dahlin, B. A State-independent Education for Citizenship? Comparing Beliefs and Values Related to Civic and Moral Issues among Students in Swedish Mainstream and Steiner Waldorf Schools. *J. Beliefs Values* **2010**, *31*, 165–180. [[CrossRef](#)]
40. Woods, P.; Ashley, M.; Woods, G. *Steiner Schools in England*; Research Report RR645; University of West England: Bristol, UK, 2005; Available online: <https://norwichsteinerschool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/woods-report-2005-brief.pdf> (accessed on 17 September 2018).
41. Sobo, E.J. Play’s Relation to Health and Well-Being in Preschool and Kindergarten: A Waldorf (Steiner) Education Perspective. *Int. J. Play* **2014**, *3*, 9–23. [[CrossRef](#)]
42. Hallam, J.; Egan, S.; Kirkham, J. An Investigation into the Ways in Which Art Is Taught in an English Waldorf Steiner School. *Think. Ski. Creat.* **2016**, *19*, 136–145. [[CrossRef](#)]
43. Bergmark, U.; Kostenius, C. ‘Listen to me when I have something to say’: Students’ participation in research for sustainable school improvement. *Improv. Sch.* **2009**, *12*, 249–260. [[CrossRef](#)]
44. Nordén, B. Transdisciplinary Teaching for Sustainable Development in a Whole School Project. *Environ. Educ. Res.* **2018**, *24*, 663–677. [[CrossRef](#)]
45. Vare, P. Beyond the ‘Green Bling’: Identifying Contradictions Encountered in School Sustainability Programmes and Teachers’ Responses to Them. *Environ. Educ. Res.* **2020**, *26*, 61–80. [[CrossRef](#)]
46. Green, M.; Somerville, M. Sustainability Education: Researching Practice in Primary Schools. *Environ. Educ. Res.* **2015**, *21*, 832–845. [[CrossRef](#)]
47. Cook, J.W. Sustainable School Leadership: The Teachers’ Perspective. *Int. J. Educ. Leadersh. Prep.* **2014**, *9*, n1.
48. Zachariou, A.; Kadji-Beltran, C. Cypriot Primary School Principals’ Understanding of Education for Sustainable Development Key Terms and Their Opinions about Factors Affecting Its Implementation. *Environ. Educ. Res.* **2009**, *15*, 315–342. [[CrossRef](#)]
49. Kadji-Beltran, C.; Zachariou, A.; Stevenson, R.B. Leading Sustainable Schools: Exploring the Role of Primary School Principals. *Environ. Educ. Res.* **2013**, *19*, 303–323. [[CrossRef](#)]
50. Zachariou, A.; Kadji-Beltran, C.; Manoli, C.C. School Principals’ Professional Development in the Framework of Sustainable Schools in Cyprus: A Matter of Refocusing. *Prof. Dev. Educ.* **2013**, *39*, 712–731. [[CrossRef](#)]
51. Mogren, A.; Gericke, N.; Scherp, H.-Å. Whole School Approaches to Education for Sustainable Development: A Model That Links to School Improvement. *Environ. Educ. Res.* **2019**, *25*, 508–531. [[CrossRef](#)]
52. Mogren, A.; Gericke, N. ESD Implementation at the School Organisation Level, Part 2—Investigating the Transformative per-Spective in School Leaders’ Quality Strategies at ESD Schools. *Environ. Educ. Res.* **2017**, *23*, 993–1014. [[CrossRef](#)]
53. Willig, C. *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology. Adventures in Theory and Method*; Open University Press: Buckingham, UK, 2001.

-
54. Clarke, V.; Braun, V.; Hayfield, N. Thematic analysis. In *Qualitative Psychology: A practical Guide to Research Methods*, 3rd ed.; Smith, J., Ed.; Sage: London, UK, 2015; pp. 222–248.
 55. Noddings, N. What Does It Mean to Educate the Whole Child? *Educ. Leadersh.* **2005**, *63*, 3–11.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.