World Conference on
Teaching, Learning, and Education

16 - 18 October 2026

Milan , Italy

From Lived Climate to the Curriculum: Is Adaptation Enough? An Educational Interpretation of Citizens' Responses to Climate Variability

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Abstract

Climate variability is experienced in everyday life through changes in the ways people live, travel, consume resources, and respond to the environmental conditions of their region. This paper presents an educational and curricular analysis of the results of a study conducted in Ibagué, Colombia, aimed at analyzing residents' perceptions of climate variability and the resulting changes in their daily practices and routines. The study employed a quantitative approach, using a data collection instrument administered to city residents and comparing some of their perceptions with official climate records.

The results show that residents recognize changes in the climate and have adopted various responses to its effects; however, they reveal tensions between individual adaptation, collective action, and socioeconomic conditions. While reducing water and energy consumption (86%) and recycling and reusing materials (71%) are common practices, tree planting—identified as a collective, long-term practice—accounts for only 28%. Differences were also observed across socioeconomic strata: among participants in stratum 1, 100% reported reducing water and energy consumption and using sustainable modes of transportation, compared to 33% and 0%, respectively, among participants in stratum 6. Added to this is a gap between the identified institutional adaptation strategies and public awareness of them, as approximately 70% of respondents stated that they did not perceive any infrastructure changes aimed at addressing climate variability.

These findings allow us to question an environmental education focused solely on promoting individual behaviors. It is proposed that everyday climate experiences can serve as a framework for developing contextualized curricula that integrate territorial knowledge with scientific knowledge and that,

furthermore, enable a critical analysis of the relationships between environmental practices, socioeconomic conditions, collective action, and institutional responsibility. From this perspective, incorporating lived climate experiences into the curriculum means moving beyond everyday adaptation toward an environmental education that fosters a critical understanding of the territory and active participation in addressing socio-environmental challenges.

Keywords: Climate Variability; Curriculum; Environmental Education; Socio-Environmental Participation; Territory.