

## Why we should integrate SDGs into Philosophy of Life course? Take SDG 14 as an example

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### *Abstract*

This study is focus on the Philosophy of Life course at Fu Jen Catholic University. Given that SDGs are widely advocated and used in Taiwan’s policies and education, college students in Taiwan have learned a lot of theoretical and practical knowledge related to SDGs in school; however, when we investigated the “students’ application of the SDGs to their lives,” we found that there is a common problem: their knowledge of the theories is fragmented, and they don't know how to integrate SDGs into their lives. After exploring this phenomenon, we concluded that there is a need to design lesson plans to help integrate the SDGs into the Philosophy of Life course and the capstone course model so that students can explore these issues in greater depth. Using SDGs 14 as a lesson plan, students learn the experience of purchasing seafood “in compliance with ecological protection and sustainable utilization rules”, trace the processing process of aquatic products, evaluate and reflect on their ecological costs, making them more aware to the multiple relationships between humans and the earth and work together to protect the environment.

**Keywords:** SDGs, Goal 14, Philosophy of Life course, ecological cost, capstone course model

## Why we should integrate SDGs into Philosophy of Life course? Take SDG 14 as an example

### 1. Introduction

Since the re-establishment of Fu Jen Catholic University in 1963, Philosophy of Life has been one of the college's core courses, with the aim of providing a holistic education that equips students with a broad range of knowledge and skills, especially critical thinking, for active citizenship and social action. (Holistic Education Center, 2014). Furthermore, this course covers ten units: Philosophical Thinking and Methods, Holistic View of Life, Know Yourself, Relationships with Others, Marriage and Family, Sense of Beauty and Life, Social Justice, Environmental Change and Development, Life and Death, and Faith and Religion. The aim of the course is to teach students how to apply what they have learned to their own lives.

Some of the content can be linked to the current United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which have received increased attention. Before entering university, students should have a fundamental understanding of the SDGs, and some may even participate in related activities. This is because the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Taiwan incorporated the SDGs into its curriculum in 2017. However, most of the courses are lecture-based. Despite having many opportunities to practice, many students seem to have difficulty applying the SDGs in their daily lives. As a result, we hypothesized that students' knowledge of these theories is fragmented. Therefore, in order to assess students' progress towards achieving the SDGs, a questionnaire containing 30 questions was implemented as part of the "Study of Experiential Learning Theory as an Integration of the SDGs into the Compulsory Core Curriculum of Schools", which is part of a project funded by the Ministry of Education of Taiwan in 2022. The survey was conducted during the sixth week of school in mid-October last year and was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

We randomly selected 110 participants from a total of 5445 students (4,511 in the Day Division and 934 in the School of Continuing Education). These 110 students came from three classes because we had three faculty members participated in the study titled 'A Study of Experiential Learning Theory as an Integration of SDGs into the Compulsory Core Curriculum in Schools,' and all the participants were from our classes. By surveying students' understanding of the SDGs, it will be easier to incorporate the SDGs into the Philosophy of Life course in the second semester, which will also help students better understand the SDGs. Since Philosophy of Life will be using a capstone course model next semester, which is designed to help students understand how the different units of Philosophy of Life relate to their own lives, we are considering incorporating the SDGs into this course model. This will allow students to incorporate what they have learned in the past into the curriculum, and will allow them to more effectively integrate the SDGs into their daily lives.

As a result, after many discussions, members of the "Theoretical Study on Experiential Learning for Integrating Sustainable Development Goals into the Compulsory Core Curriculum of Schools" selected SDGs 10, 12, 14 and 15 as the focuses for designing lesson plans. Therefore, in this study, we will use SDG 14 as the lesson plan for students to purchase seafood that meets the requirements of ecological conservation and sustainable use. They will consider the ecological impact and become more aware of the interdependence between human beings and the earth. In this way, teachers and students will be able to practice the SDGs more effectively in their lives. At the same time, they will be able to recognize that the SDGs and the importance of practicing them are diverse and can be viewed from different perspectives in terms of their connections and deeper meanings.

### 2. Literature Review

Since 2017, the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Taiwan has included the Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs) in the twelve-year compulsory education curriculum. For this reason, students are expected to have a fundamental understanding of the SDGs and even participate in related activities before taking the Philosophy of Life course.

In addition, the Ministry of Education in Taiwan has published the “Sustainable Development Goals for School Learning in Taiwan” (Ho, Fan, Kuo, Liu, Han et Eds, 2020). This publication provides a clear outline of the content and direction that students should learn in the various goals of early childhood education, primary education, and secondary education. In primary and secondary education, students are taught relevant theories and develop necessary competencies in accordance with the stated objectives for each stage. However, many students seem to have difficulty applying the SDGs in their daily lives. We hypothesize that students’ knowledge of the theories is fragmented, and they may not know how to integrate the SDGs into their lives.

Apart from learning about SDGs in school, students can also find relevant books in their daily lives. For example, the book “Goals to Transform Our Future - SDGs Idea Book” (Think the Earth, 2022), originally written in Japanese and now translated into Chinese and English, promotes the SDGs through colorful illustrations and international examples. This makes it accessible to students and helps them understand the importance of sustainable development and its relevance to their lives.

Regarding teachers and corporations, there are two recent references to “The SDGs and Taiwan’s Educational Field Practices” (2022) and “The Future We Want 2: The Most Practical Curriculum Design for SDGs From Explanation, Motivation to Action, the Best Teaching Materials for Campus, Organizational Groups, and Corporate Lectures” (2022) discuss the implementation of the SDGs on Taiwan’s university campuses. The publication is a collaboration of 26 professional scholars from 10 universities, each focusing on a specific goal. Its purpose is to help readers understand the concept of each goal and its connection to related policies in Taiwan. Additionally, it serves as a curriculum development guide to enable students to apply the SDGs in their daily lives. Both resources offer clear and concise guidance and pedagogical inspiration, complete with practical examples and exercises that lesson plan designers can reference and apply to a variety of subject areas.

Obviously, the role of the SDGs in universities is very important. It involves reciprocal relationships that promote knowledge, learning, modeling, impact and collaboration (Australia, New Zealand & Pacific, 2022: 7) The SDGs allow students to learn and practice at the university, align their learning with the future, and leave the university with the knowledge and capacity to face societal challenges. Therefore, it is crucial for students to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to address societal challenges, stay informed about current events, and collaborate with others to achieve the SDGs. To guarantee that all faculty members are acquainted with the SDGs and can proficiently teach them to their students, Fu Jen Catholic University has arranged pertinent studies and seminars. If possible, interviews are also conducted to assess faculty members' knowledge of the SDGs and the University's policies. As inspired by Rocío Jiménez-Fontana (Rocío Jiménez-Fontana, 2022), this information will be utilized to modify curricula and teaching methods, and to increase awareness of the SDGs among faculty members.

When selecting SDG 14 as a teaching direction, we considered the characteristics of this goal and the local community's efforts towards achieving it. Regarding local environmental protection, Taiwan has already implemented several policy and teaching strategies in line with SDG 14’s direction for ocean conservation and understanding of the current crisis. One such strategy is literacy-oriented teaching, which has been recognized as a key approach in 12-Year Basic Education. For example, the cross-campus team known as Attitude Skills Knowledge (ASK) organized workshops in late 2016 that focused on the issue of marine debris. The team explored how this issue can be a tangible manifestation of environmental education and sustainability goals. (Ho, 2023:18) After considering possible activities for students, we design lesson plans related to SDG 14. This approach provides students with a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the goals on their lives.

**Research planning and implementation** - To assess the students’ progress towards achieving the SDGs, we administered a 30- question questionnaire (refer to Annex 1) as part of the study titled ‘A Study of Experiential

Learning Theory as an Integration of SDGs into the Compulsory Core Curriculum in Schools.’ The questionnaire was conducted during the 6th week of school, around mid-October, and was approved by the IRB.

### 3. Research methods

**Experimental design** - In the Taiwanese education system, SDGs are targeted to students who may be studying or participating in practical courses. However, these courses are typically lecture-based, which may result in students having a fragmented understanding of the content. They may only remember participating in related activities, but may not understand the relevance to their daily lives. Therefore, a questionnaire was used to assess students’ understanding of the SDGs in order to identify how to help them.

**Experimental conditions** - The participants in this study were students from Fu Jen Catholic University who were enrolled in the Philosophy of Life course. They were in their sophomore to senior years and had already completed the Introduction to University Studies, which covered some aspects related to the SDGs. This ensured that they had a basic understanding of the topic.

**Observation or Measurement** - At the beginning of the semester, we use this questionnaire as a pre-test to determine the direction of the questions. The course activities are then analyzed and adjusted accordingly. The Philosophy of Life course covers 10 topics that allow us to connect some of the 17 SDGs. Throughout the course, students have the opportunity to explore these topics in depth.

**Statistics and Analysis** - To assess the students’ progress towards achieving the SDGs, a sample of 110 students was randomly selected from a total of 5,445 (4,511 in the Day Division and 934 in the School of Continuing Education) who were enrolled in the Philosophy of Life Course in 2023. The samples were selected from courses taught by members who participated in the study titled ‘A Study of Experiential Learning Theory as an Integration of SDGs into the Compulsory Core Curriculum in Schools.’ The questions were designed to assess three dimensions: Whether they are willing to learn about the SDGs. The test results are summarized in Table 1. How well they understand the SDGs. Table 2 shows the results. Have they had learning experiences related to the SDGs? Table 3 shows the results.

**Table 1**

*Whether they are willing to learn about SDGs.*

	mean	SD	N
7. I am willing to learn more about the SDGs.	3.382	1.0919	110
13. I can recognize the meaning and spirit of the SDGs.	3.491	1.1944	110
16. I think the SDGs can be implemented in my life.	3.482	1.1552	110
19. I am not sure how the SDGs should be implemented, but I am willing to try my best.	3.455	1.0974	110
20. I would be willing to share SDGs-related information or content with friends or family.	3.182	1.1428	110

**Table 2**

*How well they comprehend the SDGs.*

	mean	SD	N
3. I will take the initiative to contact the Internet or other information related to SDGs.	2.273	1.1802	110
4. I have read books that are directly related to the SDGs.	2.009	1.2228	110
11. I know what the numbers and symbols of the SDGs mean.	2.182	1.1267	110
15. I am aware of the theoretical basis of the SDGs.	2.464	1.1144	110

Table 1 shows that students are willing to learn about the SDGs. As indicated by their scores on a scale of 1-5, you can see that students are willing to learn more about the SDGs. Most of them know that the SDGs are important and that there are related things they need help with, and they are willing to share the information with

family or friends. Because they have heard about the SDGs, and some of them have been taking courses since 2017.

Table 2 shows that there is a need to enhance students' understanding of SDGs. However, when we read Table 2, we found that they do not really understand the SDGs from the average numbers. Especially in question 4, you can see that very few students have read books about the SDGs, so we designed the activities so that they might be more receptive to the activity rather than the book. At the same time, students were not entirely sure that they really understood the theoretical underpinnings of the SDGs, as evidenced by question 15 on the average and Standard deviation.

**Table 3**

*Have the students had any learning experiences related to the SDGs?*

	mean	SD	N
2. I have learned about SDGs in the classroom before I entered university.	2.755	1.4283	110
8. I have studied the content of individual items within the SDGs.	2.827	1.3123	110
9. I have completed specialized reports on the SDGs.	2.855	1.5074	110

Table 3 shows whether the students have had learning experiences with the SDGs. Table 3 shows that many students have had learning experiences related to the SDGs where they have read or practiced the information, either in presentations or in writing assignments. Therefore, we can help them better understand the issues of the SDGs through in-depth discussions and try to remind them of their previous experiences during discussions and activities.

**Table 4**

*Presents the descriptive statistics for the three classes.*

	N	mean	Standard deviation	Standard Error	95% confidence interval of the mean value		Minimum value	Maximum value
					lower limit	upper limit		
Mean (@7, @13, @16, @19, @20)	43	3.1070	.99843	.15226	2.7997	3.4142	1.00	5.00
	40	3.4200	.89649	.14175	3.1333	3.7067	1.60	5.00
	27	3.8296	.78780	.15161	3.5180	4.1413	2.00	5.00
Total	110	3.3982	.94839	.09043	3.2190	3.5774	1.00	5.00
Mean (@3, @4, @11, @15)	43	2.0174	.84409	.12872	1.7577	2.2772	1.00	3.75
	40	1.9063	.74612	.11797	1.6676	2.1449	1.00	3.75
	27	3.0556	1.10795	.21323	2.6173	3.4938	1.00	5.00
Total	110	2.2318	.99581	.09495	2.0436	2.4200	1.00	5.00
Mean (@2, @8, @9)	43	2.2946	.98992	.15096	1.9899	2.5992	1.00	5.00
	40	3.1833	1.15458	.18255	2.8141	3.5526	1.00	5.00
	27	3.0864	1.17885	.22687	2.6201	3.5528	1.00	5.00
Total	110	2.8121	1.16658	.11123	2.5917	3.0326	1.00	5.00

There are three classes from different disciplines that participated in this survey, and you can see their responses in Table 4. Overall, students have shown a positive attitude towards learning about the SDGs. However, there is room for improvement in their understanding. To address this, we have developed a lesson plan for students based on their daily lives. This approach will facilitate their connection with and reflection on the content. The semester is scheduled to begin in February 2024.

This lesson plan is based on the location of Fu Jen Catholic University, which is surrounded by many stores and restaurants. The plan aims to promote eco-friendly shopping habits among students and raise awareness about ecological conservation and sustainable use. It emphasizes responsible and sustainable consumption habits. The program focuses on aquatic products that students consume daily. It encourages students to track the processing of these products, assess their ecological impact, and incorporate sustainability goals into their purchasing behavior. Additionally, students are asked to reflect on the ecological costs of their consumption, providing them with an opportunity to learn from everyday life. This lesson plan not only relates to everyday consumption but also incorporates SDG 14.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Based on the results of the questionnaire, it is evident that students' understanding of the SDGs is fragmented. To improve their understanding and practice of the SDGs, they need to reflect on their experiences and learning, which is relevant to the Philosophy of Life curriculum. Lesson plans and activities that explore their lives and life experiences in depth can help them see the broader connections and greater impact of their relationships.

Our plan is to educate students at Fu Jen Catholic University on how consumers can reduce the burden on the oceans and the environment by making conscious choices about seafood consumption, and to advocate for the purchase of environmentally friendly products using the example of SDG 14 on the Conservation of Marine Ecosystems. To address the common consumption behaviors of university students, such as eating out, SDG 14 has been integrated into the Philosophy of Life curriculum activities. This allows students to experience purchasing seafood products that comply with the principles of ecological conservation and sustainable use, trace their processing, and assess and reflect on their ecological costs.

Additionally, the capstone course model is utilized to contemplate and apply various related aspects through Philosophy of Life. *The capstone course model of the integrated curriculum combines self-directed learning, teamwork, problem-solving, and in-depth learning.* (Philosophy of Life Curriculum Planning Team at the Holistic Education Center, Fu-Jen Catholic University, 2019, p.109)

In the "*Handbook for Teaching Philosophy of Life Using the Capstone Course Model*", the Philosophy of Life Curriculum Planning Team at the Holistic Education Center, Fu-Jen Catholic University advocates for the use of a capstone course model to reflect on the interrelationships among the five units: Environmental Change and Development, Know Yourself and Relationship with Others, Faith and Religion, Marriage and Family, and Social Justice. (Philosophy of Life Curriculum Planning Team at the Holistic Education Center, 2019)

The significance of the SDGs in life will be revealed through reflections on different perspectives from the viewpoint of these five modules. The SDGs aim to foster global citizenship among students through education. The Philosophy of Life will help students understand the complex relationship between humans and nature, as well as the environmental impact of their shopping and food choices using the capstone course model. This will encourage them to choose eco-friendly products in their daily lives, take care of their own and their family's health and finances, and work towards preserving the environment and ecosystems for the benefit of all humanity. Therefore, an activity called 'Responsible Fish Trade' was designed to help students understand the connections between SDG 14 and their learning and life experiences in the Philosophy for Life curriculum, using SDG 14 as an example. The activity aims to promote awareness of responsible fishing practices and their impact on the environment. It is designed based on students' interest in learning about the SDGs and their previous knowledge or experience of the topic.

(The following is based on a lesson plan presented by Kuan-Chieh Huang in 2023, June 21 at Fu Jen Catholic University's 'Teaching Achievements of the Philosophy of Life Program Presentation'.)

**Course Objective** - To encourage students to consider the environmental impact of purchasing and consuming seafood that adheres to eco-conservation and sustainable use principles, the concept of SDGs integrated in Philosophy of Life course. A holistic analysis and reflection using the Philosophy of Life can help students gain new insights, such as understanding the potential factors behind legal certification design and whether it reveals frequent illegal actions. For example, we discussed topics such as fishermen's rights, overfishing, species selection, rearing processes, and pollution. Additionally, we recommended that students visit Tamsui Old Street, located in the northwest of Taipei basin, to observe the ecological environment of the riverbanks and the trading conditions of the nearby fish market. It is worth considering whether the fish sold in the market are unsuitable for fishing or aquaculture. During the process, students are required to reflect on their relationship with the world and the potential impact of their behavior if everyone were to act similarly. At the same time, students are encouraged to

adopt an environmentally friendly lifestyle whenever feasible.

**The content of the lesson plan focuses on** - SDG 14 focuses on environmental change and development within the Philosophy of Life unit. The term 'environment' includes not only natural ecology but also changes in the human environment throughout history. SDG 14 explores various details related to national views on the sea, government policies, and the choice of species for capture, in addition to the current global consensus on environmental protection. Environmental protection is also influenced by human environments. This section explores national perspectives on the sea, governmental policies, and delineation of fishing areas. It also considers the current governmental and global consensus. Using the capstone course model with SDG 14, the topic can be approached from various perspectives, including 'Environmental Change and Development', 'Know Yourself and Relationship with Others', 'Faith and Religion', 'Marriage and Family', and 'Social Justice'. Regardless of where the discussion begins, students will ultimately realize that their actions have a significant impact on the environment. This impact is evident in daily life, emphasizing the importance of being a responsible global citizen by making conscious choices and adopting sustainable behaviors.

**Teachers** - In this plan, teachers of the Philosophy of Life course should provide opportunities to study the SDGs, with a specific focus on SDG 14. This goal highlights the significance of environmental protection and encourages students to be mindful of the origin of their food when dining out, choose eco-friendly options, and consider the ecological impact. The purpose of this activity is to prompt students to reflect on the topics of 'Environmental Change and Development', 'Know Yourself and Relationship with Others', 'Faith and Religion', 'Marriage and Family', and 'Social Justice'. It is important to help students to understand the significance of these topics in their lives.

**Students** - Under the guidance of the teacher, students learn about the importance of ecological conservation and understanding the content of SDG 14. They also pay close attention to the current state of Taiwan's oceans. It is recommended that students seek out legally certified seafood and consider the source of their food, including its impact on the environment, such as ecological costs. Studying the connections between 'Environmental Change and Development', 'Know Yourself and Relationship with Others', 'Marriage and Family', 'Social Justice', and 'Faith and Religion,' is crucial. The main objective is to inspire students to choose environmentally friendly products in their daily lives and integrate environmental protection into their lifestyles.

### **Teaching Strategies**

- In this activity students should visit the riverbanks and fish restaurants or snack shops in Tamsui Old Town to observe and reflect on the impact of consumer behavior on the marine ecosystem. The group brought along fish guides for reference. They can observe the docks, Tamsui River, and local ecosystem. They can observe how local people interact with the environment.
- Tamsui Old Street is easily accessible by public transportation. Take the 880 buses to Tamsui or the MRT Tamsui-Xinyi line (code R). Students can purchase locally sourced and sustainably produced aquatic products from fishery stores or restaurants that follow ecological preservation principles. They are also required to take pictures of the purchased products and compile a report.
- This activity is a reminder of the relationship between products and the environment. Students should consider the source, processing, and environmental impact of products when making purchasing decisions.
- Students should be encouraged to include the details of their store visits in their reports as evidence of their commitment to responsible fish trading.
- By participating in the 'Responsible Fish Trade' activity, students can reflect on the interrelationships between the five units: 'Environmental Change and Development', 'Knowing Yourself and Relationships with Others', 'Marriage and Family', 'Social Justice' and 'Faith and Religion'. The five

units are interconnected to encourage students to use their life stories, experiences, and knowledge as a starting point for deeper thinking.

This lesson plan utilizes SDG 14 as a foundation for examining sustainable fishing and its connections to the other four units. For example, students may come across a deity statue enshrined in a store. Does the 'religion and faith' behind it impact business conduct? Does it also influence an individual's dietary preferences or eating habits? When discussing 'Social Justice', it is crucial to take into account the rights of workers, customers, and animals in the product's processing. Similarly, when addressing the issue of 'Know Yourself and Relationship with Others', it is crucial to assess the business owner's awareness of their own business, including their sense of responsibility or mission towards the industry, and how they interact with consumers. Regarding 'Marriage and Family', it is important to consider whether the business owner has experience in managing a family business and if they have developed expertise in this area. Furthermore, it is worth investigating whether consumers have been educated on responsible consumption through their family upbringing...

Thus, the purpose of this capstone course model is to encourage students to use their life experiences and areas of familiarity as a starting point for interconnected thinking. The model prompts them to consider interrelationships and motivates them to think more deeply.

## 5. Conclusion

The results of the student questionnaires support our initial hypotheses. They highlight the need to integrate SDGs content into the core curriculum. Next semester, as part of the "Study of Experiential Learning Theory as an Integration of the SDGs into the Compulsory Core Curriculum of Schools," a project funded by the Taiwan Ministry of Education in 2022, we will integrate SDG 14 into the Philosophy of Life curriculum and use the capstone model to engage students in deeper reflection.

Additionally, our questionnaires also include the implementation of other goals. Students can more easily implement and utilize SDGs 10, 12, and 15 in the context of Philosophy of Life. This is because we hope that through the capstone model, students will be able to apply what they have learned to reflect on issues and think about the relationship between peoples and the world.

Furthermore, the location of Fu Jen Catholic University provides an opportunity to study the relationship between the development of Wenzaizun (an irrigation canal in Xinzhuang District, New Taipei City, Taiwan) and the surrounding environment. What's more, the questionnaire also covers the Mangrove Forest, community development, and living conditions in the shelters, which have been the subject of environmental debate.

The plan for next semester is to introduce these very themes into the Philosophy of Life. This will allow students to reflect on their lives through service learning. The details and teaching strategies for the additional content are being prepared. As a result, with the implementation of SDG 14 next semester, students will have a better understanding of the content and their roles and responsibilities as global citizens.



## Annex 1 Questionnaire

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### Questions

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1. I know the meaning and content of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
  2. I have learned about the SDGs in class before I entered college.
  3. I take the initiative to access the Internet and other information related to the SDGs.
  4. I have read books directly related to SDGs.
  5. I take the initiative to contact information related to SDGs when I need it for my studies or work.
  6. The scope of SDGs is very broad, so I would like my teacher to focus on a few of them in class.
  7. I would like to learn more about the SDGs.
  8. I have studied a single item within the SDGs.
  9. I have completed a special report on the SDGs.
  10. If possible, I would like to obtain a license in ESG Sustainability Management in the future.
  11. I know the meaning of the numbers and symbols of the SDGs.
  12. When I see the main headings of the SDGs, I can clearly understand the content instead of reading from the text.
  13. I can recognize the meaning and spirit of the SDGs.
  14. I am aware that each of the SDGs has its own theoretical basis or corresponding facts.
  15. I am aware of the theoretical basis of the SDGs.
  16. I think the SDGs can be implemented in my life.
  17. I have implemented or practiced the SDGs in my daily life.
  18. I am not sure how to implement the SDGs in my life.
  19. Although I am not sure how the SDGs should be implemented, I am willing to try my best.
  20. I would be willing to share SDGs-related information or content with friends and family.
  21. I can feel the inequality between countries and peoples around the world.
  22. I think inequality can be changed through legislation.
  23. I know that even in Taiwan, there are many unequal classes or things.
  24. I think that a proper vegetarian diet can really help us achieve sustainable development in consumption.
  25. I know that there are things that can be done better in the development of Wenzaizun.
  26. I will check whether seafood comes from legal or appropriate fisheries before I eat it.
  27. I know that there are environmental problems in the Mangrove Forest.
  28. I know that the problems at the shelter are related to community development or the living environment.
  29. I know that marine fishing is related to inequality between countries.
  30. I can explain the above in relation to SDGs 10, 12, 14 and 15.
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