

Education for a Sustainable Future: Transition from Environmental Education to Sustainability Education

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"We don't have to engage in grand, heroic actions to participate in change. Small acts, when multiplied by millions of people, can transform the world."

—Howard Zinn

THE mid-20th century witnessed an accelerated economic development in industrialized countries as a product of the scientific and technological advances. In the meantime, environmental deterioration intensified in the process of development. The ongoing emergence of environmental issues and public hazards awakened people to the fact that the improper exploitation of the environment and ecology is threatening human existence and development. The increased needs to protect and ameliorate the environment have instigated a plurality of environmental education programs.

Lucas (1972) classifies environmental education into three basic classes: education about, for, and in the environment. Educational programs designed to provide information concerning the environment is classified as "education about the environment." Their objectives are mainly cognitive such as comprehension and interpretation of environmental data; synthesis of explanations of an environmental phenomenon; and evaluation of environmental data and phenomena as well as the possible consequences of human manipulations. The programs of "education for the environment" aim to support the preservation or improvement of the environment by inculcating values and attitudes of environmental conservation for the continuation of human life and enhancement of the quality of human life. As the goal of education for the environment is to produce better environment, this category of programs also provides citizens with necessary skills, either professional or general, and intellectual or practical, to achieve this end. By contrast, "education in the environment" is characterized by the use of a particular pedagogical technique. In most cases of this class of environmental education, "environment" usually refers to "outside the classroom."

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The 1992's United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, officially announced the strategy of sustainable development. "Reorienting education towards sustainable development" was listed as one of the action plans in its document "Agenda 21". The critical role of education in promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of people to address environment and development issues was emphasized (United Nations, 1992). In 1997, the UNESCO's International Conference on Environment and Society: Education and Public Awareness for Sustainability released "*Declaration of Thessaloniki*," which reaffirmed that appropriate education and public awareness should be recognized as one of the pillars of sustainability together with legislation, economy, and technology; and that the reorientation of education as a whole towards sustainability should involve all levels of formal, non-formal and informal education in all countries (UNESCO, 1997). Subsequently, sustainable development-oriented environmental education has been incorporated in the national strategy of education development by many countries.

Currently, despite all individuals being impacted by environmental degradation to varied degrees and most of them developing deeper concern for the sustainability of human development, public knowledge and understanding of relevant issues remains inadequate (Reid, 1995). Enhancing sustainability literacy has the potential to increase their ability to form sustainable lifestyles and to engage in environmental conservation. The cultivation of sustainability literacy requires profounder research into its nature. *The Correlation Between Dimensions of Sustainability Literacy: The Case of British and Turkish Students* in this issue aimed to investigate the interrelationships between sustainability attitude (SA), sustainability behavior (SB), and sustainability knowledge (SK), the three crucial dimensions of sustainability literacy and discovered that there are positive correlations between them (Ozdemir, 2024). It makes a significant contribution to the literature by elaborating on the interrelationships between sub-dimensions of SA, SB, and SK, which were revealed as being more complicated than had been generally assumed.

References

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