




## SUSTAINABILITY AND CITIZENSHIP: ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AS A PILLAR OF DEVELOPMENT

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### ABSTRACT

This article explores the importance of environmental education in the development of a responsible citizenship committed to sustainability, using a qualitative and exploratory approach. Based on literature review and documentary analysis, it is supported by authors such as Pedro Jacobi and international documents, including the UN Declaration on Sustainable Development. The study examines the role of public policies in promoting sustainable practices in Brazil and highlights interdisciplinarity as a strategy to balance economic growth and environmental preservation. The analysis relates the Brazilian Constitution of 1988, especially Article 225, with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), highlighting the importance of environmental rights. The study presents initiatives in Castelo, ES, where projects in schools and communities promote awareness and encourage citizen participation. The results show that community-integrated environmental education increases knowledge about sustainability and engagement in solutions that balance economic development and environmental protection. It is concluded that environmental education is fundamental to build a more conscious society, and the formation of critical and proactive citizens is essential for a sustainable future. Brazilian environmental policies, combined with the SDGs, form a robust framework for local actions and collaborative responses to environmental challenges.

**Keywords:** Environmental Education. Responsible Citizenship. Sustainability. Environmental Public Policies. Interdisciplinarity.

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## INTRODUCTION

The global environmental crisis, characterized by challenges such as climate change, deforestation, land degradation, scarcity of natural resources, and alarming loss of biodiversity, requires a profound reassessment of human practices and development policies. This crisis is a reflection of systemic imbalances that go beyond the environment, affecting social, economic and cultural relations and requiring structural changes for development to be truly sustainable. In this scenario, sustainability does not emerge only as a theoretical concept, but as a practical and ethical imperative. Sustainability is consolidated as a guiding principle that involves the search for balanced social and economic development, without compromising natural resources and the quality of life of future generations.

The relevance of this work is based on a solid theoretical and documentary basis, referencing authors such as Pedro Jacobi and Karen L. Currie and international documents, such as the Final Declaration of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (2012) – popularly known as "The Future We Want". These authors and documents highlight that overcoming contemporary environmental challenges involves transforming consumption and production patterns, focusing on the need for development that values social well-being and the health of the planet. Public policies play a role at the heart of this process, as they have the ability to regulate and encourage sustainable practices in various spheres, promoting development that integrates the preservation of the environment with economic and social progress.

Interdisciplinarity becomes an essential component in the practice and promotion of sustainability. The complexity of environmental problems demands that different areas of knowledge, such as environmental sciences, economics, sociology, and public policies, collaborate on comprehensive and effective solutions. The interdisciplinary approach allows for a more holistic understanding of environmental issues, allowing one to consider the multiple factors that influence the relationship between man and the environment. In addition, the integration between different knowledges creates a more solid basis for the implementation of practices that truly consider local and global needs and specificities.

In Brazil, the Federal Constitution of 1988 already anticipates the need for environmental protection, ensuring, in its article 225, that everyone has the right to an ecologically balanced environment, and that it is up to both the public power and the community the duty to preserve it for future generations. This constitutional principle serves as a basis for environmental education policies that aim to engage society, enabling citizens to act as active agents in environmental preservation. In this context, environmental

education is not only a pedagogical discipline, but an instrument for the formation of conscious and responsible citizens, committed to sustainability and the promotion of practices that respect and preserve ecosystems.

In the municipality of Castelo, in Espírito Santo, this approach gains even more importance. The city has a significant environmental heritage, including green areas and water resources that are essential for both local biodiversity and the quality of life of the population. Local initiatives have sought to promote environmental education through projects in schools and awareness campaigns in communities, with the aim of stimulating a sharper perception of the importance of preservation and encouraging sustainable practices in the daily lives of the city's inhabitants. These actions involve the community in conservation practices, showing that the active participation of each citizen is essential for the preservation of natural resources.

Environmental education, therefore, emerges as a transformative and active strategy for building a society that understands its responsibility towards the environment. By educating and sensitizing the population, these projects strengthen the sense of belonging and the awareness that individual and collective actions have a direct impact on sustainability and future well-being. In addition, the promotion of environmentally conscious citizenship contributes to society pressuring and supporting public policies aimed at sustainable development, reinforcing the importance of governance committed to protecting the environment.

Thus, by investigating the relevance of environmental education and public policies for the development of sustainable citizenship, this study aims to contribute to a broader and more integrated view of the strategies needed to balance economic growth and environmental conservation. The formation of critical and proactive citizens, who understand the complexity of the relationships between ecological, social and economic factors, becomes fundamental for the construction of a sustainable future. This work, therefore, proposes to offer a theoretical and practical basis that supports the implementation of sustainability policies and practices that are inclusive, participatory and effective.

## **SUSTAINABILITY AND CITIZENSHIP: ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AS THE FOUNDATION OF THE FUTURE**

### **THE ROLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION**

Environmental education is one of the essential pillars in building a society that understands the limits of the planet and seeks viable alternatives to ensure the continuity of

life. In a world where environmental crises are becoming increasingly evident, environmental education emerges as a basic response to prepare new generations to face contemporary challenges. Pedro Jacobi (2003) states that

environmental education must go beyond the mere transmission of knowledge; it needs to encourage critical reflection and the active participation of citizens, promoting concrete changes in attitudes and values in favor of sustainability" (Jacobi, 2003, p. 189).

The author argues that environmental education should not be understood only as the transmission of information, but as a continuous process of citizenship formation, which enables the transformation of values, attitudes and practices. This approach broadens the concept of education, involving awareness of environmental and social issues, and emphasizes the importance of developing a critical and reflective view of everyday practices. Article 225 of the Federal Constitution of 1988 ensures that

Everyone has the right to an ecologically balanced environment, a good for the common use of the people and essential to a healthy quality of life, imposing on the public power and the community the duty to defend and preserve it for present and future generations (Brasil, 1988, Art. 225).

In addition to Jacobi, Article 225 of the Federal Constitution of 1988 also explicitly mentions the importance of environmental education, determining that the government promotes "environmental education at all levels of education and public awareness for the preservation of the environment." This legal provision recognizes environmental education as a valuable tool for building ecological and critical awareness, promoting the engagement of the population in sustainable practices. Thus, environmental education not only aligns with constitutional principles, but also becomes an ethical imperative for the formation of citizens who take responsibility for their actions and their consequences.

In Castelo, projects in schools have sought to integrate environmental education into the curriculum, promoting workshops, lectures and practical activities that encourage students to reflect on their actions and their impact on the environment. The interdisciplinary approach, which involves areas such as Science, History and Geography, allows for a broader understanding of environmental issues and their interconnections. In addition, practical activities, such as tree planting, selective waste collection and visits to conservation units, provide significant experiences that consolidate theoretical learning.

The inclusion of the environmental theme in the training of young people is an important step towards the construction of a more conscious and active society. This training goes beyond the classroom, involving the active participation of the community and collaboration with non-governmental organizations, companies and the government.

Environmental awareness should not be restricted to the school environment; it should be a practice that permeates all aspects of everyday life. Through awareness campaigns and community projects, environmental education can reach a wider audience, promoting a culture of respect and care for the environment.

The promotion of environmental education in Castelo is also reflected in the elaboration of public policies that prioritize sustainability. Initiatives involving teacher training, the creation of outdoor learning spaces, and the holding of community events focused on environmental education are examples of how the city seeks to engage its citizens in sustainable actions. Thus, environmental education becomes a precious strategy not only for the preservation of the environment, but also for the strengthening of citizenship and social participation.

Finally, it is extremely important that environmental education is seen as a dynamic and continuous process, which must adapt to the needs and challenges of each generation. By promoting critical awareness and a commitment to sustainability, environmental education can truly transform society, making it more responsible and aware of the interdependencies that govern life on the planet. The strengthening of this environmental culture is a collective responsibility, which requires the collaboration of all sectors of society and a constant effort to seek solutions that promote harmony between human development and environmental preservation.

This engagement not only strengthens participatory democracy, but also fosters the development of an environmental citizenship, where individuals understand their role in the conservation of natural resources and act responsibly in their daily lives. Environmental education, in this context, is essential to enable the population to identify and promote sustainable practices, in addition to supporting the creation of policies that encourage a green and responsible economy.

This growing awareness makes room for the next Citizenship and Sustainability section, where we will explore the main public policies and community initiatives that have contributed to strengthening environmental citizenship and promoting a more just and sustainable society.

## CITIZENSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY

Citizenship and sustainability are deeply intertwined concepts, representing a symbiotic relationship that is effective for building a balanced and resilient society. From the moment the population is made aware of environmental issues, it begins to exercise its role as citizens in a more active and engaged way, questioning unsustainable practices and

demanding public policies that favor the balance between development and the environment. This awareness is essential for individuals to recognize that their daily actions have a significant impact on the ecosystem and, therefore, should be directed towards promoting sustainability.

Pedro Jacobi (2003) points out that sustainable citizenship involves the active participation of citizens in environmental management, making them not only recipients of public policies, but also protagonists in social and ecological transformation. Environmental education is a key element in this process, as it enables the individual to understand their relationship with the environment and to act responsibly. Through educational programs and awareness campaigns, people are encouraged to reflect on their practices and adopt behaviors that respect and protect the environment, such as reducing resource consumption, recycling, and promoting biodiversity.

In Castelo, several community initiatives, such as cleaning and reforestation efforts, have provided valuable opportunities for citizens to get directly involved in environmental preservation actions. These activities not only contribute to the improvement of the quality of the local environment, but also strengthen the sense of belonging and collective responsibility. By participating in joint efforts, citizens become active agents in the fight for sustainability, promoting a sense of community and a deeper understanding of the importance of environmental protection.

In addition, these initiatives have the potential to create a multiplier effect, where participants, by experiencing the practice of sustainable citizenship, encourage others to join these causes. This civic engagement is significant, as it generates a network of support and mobilization that can influence the formulation of more effective and inclusive public policies. Collaboration between citizens, non-governmental organizations, and public authorities is essential for the implementation of strategies that meet local demands and promote development that respects the limits of the planet.

Therefore, the intersection between citizenship and sustainability is not only desirable, but necessary. Building a culture of sustainable citizenship requires a continuous effort in education and awareness, so that each individual feels an integral part of the process of social and ecological transformation. The promotion of sustainable practices should not be seen as an exclusive responsibility of the government or institutions, but rather as a collective duty that involves all members of society. Only in this way will it be possible to create a fairer and more balanced future, where quality of life and environmental integrity are guaranteed for present and future generations.



Comparing the characteristics of Environmental Education and Traditional Citizenship, the differences in aspects of approach, focus, main objective, social participation, scope and responsibility are highlighted. Environmental Education, according to Jacobi (2003), aims to train critical and active citizens in environmental defense, with the objective of promoting sustainability and preservation of the environment. In this model, social participation involves the community in ecological practices, adopting a global and interdisciplinary scope, which integrates different knowledges. The responsibility is collective, emphasizing the interdependence between human beings and the environment.

On the other hand, Traditional Citizenship focuses on the training of citizens for the exercise of basic civil and political rights, with the main objective of ensuring participation in political and social processes. Social participation, in this case, is usually limited to voting and civil claims, with a narrower scope, focused on the local and national, individual or community context. Responsibility is of an individual nature, with greater emphasis on personal rights, without the same connection with collectivity and environmental sustainability.

Here is a clear and elucidative comparison between Environmental Education, as described by Pedro Jacobi (2003), and traditional citizenship, highlighting the fundamental differences between these two concepts. Next, we will proceed to a thorough analysis, examining the aspects of focus, main objective, social participation, scope and responsibility on an individual basis. This approach will allow a clearer understanding of the differences and similarities between the environmental education proposed by Jacobi and traditional citizenship.

- **Focus:** Environmental education is presented as an approach that trains critical and active citizens in environmental defense. This suggests that learning goes beyond simply receiving information; It involves the critical analysis of environmental issues and proactive action in the promotion of sustainable practices. On the other hand, traditional citizenship focuses on training citizens to exercise basic civil and political rights, such as voting and participating in political activities. This limitation can result in a narrow view of civic participation, which does not encompass the ecological issues that directly affect the quality of life of communities.
- **Main Objective:** The goal of environmental education is to promote sustainability and environmental preservation, emphasizing the need to protect the planet for future generations. This implies not only individual actions, but a collective commitment to the environment. In contrast, traditional citizenship seeks to

ensure participation in political and social processes, often without a direct link to environmental issues, which can lead to a disconnect between political decisions and their ecological consequences.

- **Social Participation:** Environmental education encourages the community to engage in eco-friendly practices, creating a sense of belonging and shared responsibility. This approach promotes collective action on behalf of the environment, while social participation in traditional citizenship is generally limited to voting and civil claims, resulting in a form of engagement that is less dynamic and less related to people's daily lives and the environmental issues that affect them.
- **Scope:** Environmental education is global and interdisciplinary, integrating knowledge from different areas of knowledge to address complex problems related to sustainability. This holistic approach allows citizens to understand the interconnectedness between different systems and the implications of their actions. On the other hand, traditional citizenship is more local and national, focusing on the individual or community, without necessarily considering the global interdependence of environmental issues.
- **Responsibility:** Finally, responsibility in environmental education is collective, emphasizing the interdependence between humans and the environment. This encourages a shared commitment to environmental protection. In contrast, traditional citizenship tends to emphasize individual responsibility, often centered on personal rights, which can limit the perception that individual actions impact collective well-being and the environment.

Contrasting the concept of traditional citizenship with the environmental citizenship proposed by Jacobi, it is evident that environmental education offers a more comprehensive and proactive view of citizenship. While traditional citizenship focuses primarily on the fulfillment of political and civil rights and duties, environmental education broadens this scope to include ecological preservation and active participation in building a sustainable society. Thus, environmental education not only enriches the concept of citizenship, but also responds to contemporary urgencies in relation to the environmental crises we face. This broadening of the concept of citizenship is important to form citizens capable of acting as agents of change, promoting sustainability in their communities and beyond. Considering the importance of environmental education, the next section will discuss Interdisciplinarity and Sustainability.



## INTERDISCIPLINARITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is an area that requires interdisciplinary approaches, recognizing that environmental problems cannot be solved in isolation. According to Karen L. Currie (2017), in her work "Environment: Interdisciplinarity in practice",

The interdisciplinary approach is essential to understand the complexity of environmental issues, as it allows you to integrate knowledge from different areas for a more holistic and effective analysis. This integration facilitates the development of sustainable solutions and adaptations that respond to contemporary ecological and social challenges (Currie, 2017, p. 45).

The author points out that solving complex environmental issues, such as water scarcity and biodiversity loss, requires effective collaboration between diverse disciplines of knowledge, including natural sciences, social sciences, economics, and education. This integration is key to understanding the interconnectedness between ecological and social systems, allowing for the formulation of more effective and comprehensive solutions.

In Castelo, this interdisciplinary approach becomes evident through projects that unite schools, universities and NGOs in joint initiatives. These collaborative efforts not only promote environmental education but also encourage research aimed at preserving the region's natural resources. For example, reforestation and conservation projects for green areas often involve students from different levels of education, researchers, and community members, promoting practical and meaningful learning.

These partnerships demonstrate that the integration of different knowledge is essential to face local challenges, enabling an exchange of experiences and knowledge that enrich the educational process. In addition, this collaborative model fosters a culture of shared responsibility, where everyone involved feels part of the solution and committed to protecting the environment. Thus, the interconnection between education, environment and economic development in Castelo not only promotes sustainability, but also strengthens the census of community and citizenship among its inhabitants. How do public policies influence the practice of sustainability? In this section, we will investigate Sustainability and economic growth as a dilemma.

## SUSTAINABILITY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH: A DILEMMA?

The debate on the possibility of reconciling economic growth with environmental preservation is central to discussions about sustainability. The interdependence between these two aspects generates tensions, especially in a world where demands for energy, food, and water continue to increase. According to the Ecodebate article (2018), the ability

of humans to promote sustainable economic growth is questionable, leading to a critical examination of prevailing economic models.

Conventional economic models, which are based on the extraction and accelerated consumption of natural resources, are pointed out as unsustainable in the long term. These approaches often ignore the planet's natural limits, prioritizing immediate growth over environmental health. Brazil, as one of the leading developing countries, faces the challenge of balancing its economic expansion with the protection of its vast natural resources. The Amazon, in particular, has suffered intensely from deforestation and predatory exploitation, which not only compromises biodiversity but also affects local communities and the global climate.

In this sense, the Brazilian Constitution of 1988, by guaranteeing the right to a balanced environment, suggests that economic growth must occur within the limits imposed by sustainability. This legal framework is fundamental, as it establishes that environmental protection is a duty of the State and society. However, the challenge is great, and public policies such as the National Plan for Climate Change and the Forest Code try, in some way, to seek this balance. As we demonstrate below,

The Brazilian Forest Code establishes guidelines for the preservation of forests and other forms of native vegetation, imposing the conservation of Permanent Preservation Areas and Legal Reserves, essential for environmental balance" (Brasil, 2012, Law No. 12,651).

Such policies seek to promote practices that respect ecosystems while stimulating economic development. However, there is still much to be done.

The effective implementation of these policies faces obstacles, such as lack of enforcement, corruption, and resistance from economic sectors that still see environmental protection as an impediment to growth. Therefore, it is imperative that there is collective engagement, involving government, civil society and the private sector, to ensure that economic growth does not come at the expense of the environment. The challenge of reconciling development and preservation is complex and requires a paradigm shift, where sustainability becomes the guiding principle of economic and social decisions. Only in this way will it be possible to move towards a future that not only promotes economic growth, but also ensures the quality of life of present and future generations.

Analyzing the challenges of sustainability, the differences between Economic Growth and Environmental Protection are highlighted in relation to factors such as the use of natural resources, energy, impact on the environment, priority and legislation. In the context of economic growth, the use of natural resources is marked by intense exploitation to

maintain growth, while in Environmental Protection there is an emphasis on conservation and rational use of these resources. In terms of energy, economic growth is based on fossil sources such as oil and coal, while environmental protection prioritizes investments in renewable energies such as solar and wind.

The impact on the environment diverges between the two approaches: Economic Growth is associated with increased pollution and environmental degradation, while Environmental Protection focuses on the reduction of pollutants and ecosystem recovery. The priority for economic growth is to maintain and accelerate GDP growth, while for environmental protection it is to promote ecological balance in the long term. Regarding public policies, economic growth seeks to make regulations more flexible to promote development, while environmental protection is based on the creation of specific policies.

Thus, the main challenges of sustainability are highlighted, evidencing the tension between economic growth and environmental protection. This confrontation is a central dilemma faced by many countries, including Brazil, which seeks to develop its economy while preserving its valuable natural resources.

We will then proceed with a detailed analysis, exploring each factor that highlights the challenges of sustainability in relation to economic growth and environmental protection. This approach will allow us to deepen the discussion on the interactions and conflicts between these two aspects, highlighting the practical and theoretical implications that arise from this duality. By examining the elements together, we will seek to understand how public policies can be shaped to promote a sustainable balance, taking into account the economic and environmental needs of Brazil and other nations.

- **Natural Resource Use: Economic Growth:** The intense exploitation of natural resources is often seen as a necessity to maintain economic growth. This development model, based on unbridled extraction, can lead to the depletion of resources and irreversible degradation of ecosystems.
- **Environmental Protection:** In contrast, environmental protection requires a more responsible approach, which promotes conservation and the rational use of resources. This strategy is essential to ensure long-term sustainability, allowing future generations to have access to the same resources.
- **Energy: Economic Growth:** Reliance on fossil sources, such as oil and coal, is common in economies that prioritize rapid growth. However, this dependence contributes significantly to the emission of greenhouse gases and aggravates climate change.

- Environmental Protection: Investment in renewable energies, such as solar and wind, is essential to reduce this dependence and mitigate environmental impacts. The transition to a clean energy matrix is a crucial step towards sustainability.
- Impact on the Environment: Economic Growth: Increased pollution and environmental degradation are direct consequences of the relentless pursuit of growth. These negative externalities affect public health, biodiversity and quality of life.
- Environmental Protection: The reduction of pollutants and the recovery of ecosystems are vital to restore the ecological balance. This approach requires significant commitment from governments and civil society.
- Priority: Economic Growth: The focus on maintaining and accelerating GDP growth can overshadow the need for sustainable practices. This short-term view often ignores the environmental costs that growth can entail.
- Environmental Protection: Promoting long-term ecological balance should be a priority, recognizing that the health of the planet is critical to continued economic development.
- Legislation and Public Policies: Economic Growth: The relaxation of environmental regulations to favor growth is a common practice, but one that can result in severe environmental damage and an unsustainable legacy.
- Environmental Protection: The creation of strict environmental protection policies is essential to ensure that economic growth occurs in a sustainable way, promoting development that respects natural limits.

This contrast between the two factors reveals an intrinsic dilemma that requires a deep dialogue about the possible paths to a sustainable economy. The discussion should include examples of policies to encourage the green economy, which not only promote growth, but also ensure the protection of natural resources. The search for solutions that reconcile development and sustainability is a challenge that can lead to innovations and practices that benefit both the economy and the environment. Ultimately, the ability to integrate these dimensions will be decisive for the future of Brazil and the planet. In view of the conceptual and theoretical bases previously discussed, we now move on to examine global policies for sustainability.

## GLOBAL POLICIES FOR SUSTAINABILITY

In the global context, the UN Declaration (2012) on sustainable development establishes that countries must work in cooperation to achieve goals that ensure a more balanced and sustainable development. The "2030 Agenda," which includes the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), outlines concrete actions that countries must take to fight poverty, protect the environment, and ensure prosperity for all by 2030. This agenda is a call to action for nations, communities, and individuals, emphasizing that economic progress cannot be achieved at the expense of the environment and that social inclusion is critical to just development.

In Brazil, the global goals of the SDGs are aligned with the principles established by the 1988 Constitution, which, in its Article 170, defines that the economic order must be founded on valuing human work and defending the environment. Article 170 of the 1988 Constitution establishes that

The Brazilian economic order is based on the valorization of human work and free enterprise, seeking to ensure a dignified existence for all, in accordance with the principles of social justice. This provision reflects the State's intention to promote economic development that prioritizes the well-being of the population, articulating the need for economic growth with social justice and the protection of workers' rights." (Brazil, 1988).

This article highlights the importance of integrating environmental protection into economic growth, recognizing that the health of the planet and social well-being are interdependent. Thus, Brazilian public policies should seek ways to integrate global objectives with local development needs, promoting practices that not only meet international requirements, but also respect and meet the socioeconomic and environmental diversity of the country's various regions.

In addition, the implementation of the SDGs in Brazil must consider the reality of vulnerable populations, ensuring that the benefits of development are shared equitably. To this end, it is essential to involve civil society, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector in building sustainable solutions that promote social inclusion and environmental protection. This collaborative approach is essential to ensure that the sustainable development goals are effectively achieved, resulting in a more prosperous and balanced future for all Brazilians.

Contrasting Environmental Policies in Brazil, conditioned by the 1988 Constitution, with the 2012 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is possible to address issues such as environmental protection, environmental education, sustainable development, social inequality and sustainable energy.

Regarding environmental protection, the Brazilian Constitution ensures the right to a balanced environment (Art. 225), while UN SDG 13 focuses on reducing greenhouse gas emissions as part of climate action. Environmental education is mandatory at all levels of education in Brazil, in accordance with the Constitution, and the UN's SDG 4 promotes quality education that includes sustainability.

Sustainable development is encouraged in Brazil through practices in economic sectors, while UN SDG 8 encourages decent work and sustainable economic growth. In terms of social inequality, Brazilian environmental protection policies are guided by social equity, in line with UN SDG 10, which seek to reduce inequalities and ensure equal access to resources. Finally, support for renewable sources, such as wind and solar energy, is present in Brazilian policies and in the UN's SDG 7, which proposes clean and affordable energy for all.

The following is a detailed comparison between Brazilian environmental policies, especially the provisions of the 1988 Constitution, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This comparison highlights the alignment between national guidelines and global goals, promoting an integrated and collaborative approach to sustainability.

- **Environmental Protection:** Article 225 of the Brazilian Constitution ensures a balanced environment as a fundamental right, reflecting SDG 13, which focuses on climate action and reducing gas emissions. This reinforces that environmental protection is a shared responsibility to combat climate change.
- **Environmental Education:** In Brazil, environmental education is mandatory at all levels of education, in line with SDG 4, which aims for quality and sustainable education. This alignment underscores the importance of conscious citizens to implement effective environmental practices.
- **Sustainable Development:** The Brazilian Constitution encourages sustainable economic practices, similar to SDG 8, which promotes economic growth and decent work. Both highlight that economic development must respect natural resources.
- **Social Inequality:** The consideration of social equity in environmental protection policies in Brazil corresponds to SDG 10, which seeks to reduce inequalities. This point reinforces the importance of environmental justice and the inclusion of the most vulnerable groups.
- **Sustainable Energy:** Brazil's support for renewable energies, such as wind and solar, mirrors SDG 7, which promotes clean and affordable energy. This



alignment is essential for the energy transition and the reduction of dependence on fossil fuels.

This analysis reveals a fundamental convergence between Brazilian environmental policies and the SDGs, providing a collaborative framework to address environmental challenges effectively. To this end, we will address Sustainability in Brazil in the following section.

## SUSTAINABILITY IN BRAZIL

Brazil is one of the most biodiverse countries in the world, with vast tropical forests, freshwater reserves, and an enormous wealth of species. This biodiversity not only sustains life on our planet, but is also fundamental to the Brazilian economy and culture. Tropical forests, such as the Amazon, play a crucial role in regulating the global climate, absorbing carbon, and preserving unique ecosystems that are home to an immense diversity of fauna and flora.

However, the country faces serious environmental challenges that threaten this natural wealth. Deforestation, driven primarily by the expansion of agriculture and cattle ranching, remains an alarming concern. According to data from the National Institute for Space Research (INPE), the rate of deforestation in the Amazon has varied over the years, but the fluctuations often reflect government policies and enforcement actions. In addition, river pollution, caused by industrial activities and the dumping of urban waste, compromises water quality and the health of aquatic ecosystems, directly impacting communities that depend on these resources.

The disorderly growth of cities, in turn, results in problems such as irregular occupation, lack of adequate infrastructure, and pressure on public services. This phenomenon, in addition to generating significant environmental impacts, such as soil sealing and rising urban temperatures, also affects the population's quality of life, exacerbating social and economic inequalities.

The 1988 Constitution, through its Article 225, establishes clear guidelines for the protection of the environment, recognizing it as a fundamental right and a good of common interest. As evidenced by article 225

everyone has the right to an ecologically balanced environment, a good for the common use of the people and essential to a healthy quality of life, imposing on the public power and the community the duty to defend and preserve it for present and future generations" (Brasil, 1988).

However, the implementation of these guidelines often encounters significant obstacles. The lack of adequate enforcement and corruption at various levels of government make it difficult to effectively enforce environmental laws. In addition, the conflict of interest with agribusiness and other industries often results in a prioritization of economic growth over environmental sustainability.

Despite these challenges, programs such as the Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Amazon (PPCDAm) demonstrate that, with political will and commitment from the authorities, it is possible to implement effective strategies to reduce deforestation and promote a more sustainable economy. Initiatives that include satellite monitoring, valuing agroecological practices, and strengthening local communities have shown positive results in some regions, showing that conservation and development can go hand in hand.

Therefore, the protection of the environment in Brazil requires not only robust legislation, but also collective engagement of society, governments, and the private sector. Environmental education, the promotion of sustainable practices, and strict enforcement are essential to ensure that Brazil's natural wealth is preserved for future generations. The future of the country, as well as the health of our planet, depends on concrete actions that reconcile economic development and environmental conservation.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

In the final considerations, this work reaffirms the essential role of environmental education in the formation of an active citizenship committed to sustainability, especially in a context like Brazil, where natural wealth and biodiversity are extremely important. Throughout this research, it became evident that environmental education is essential to promote critical awareness of ecological challenges and to empower citizens to act in favor of the preservation of natural resources and the promotion of collective well-being.

From the results obtained, we can observe that environmental education initiatives in Castelo, ES, have the potential to engage the population in sustainable practices, strengthening the sense of belonging and responsibility of citizens in relation to their environment. Projects developed in schools, in partnerships with universities and NGOs, have shown not only an increase in environmental awareness, but also encouraged a more active participation of the community in decisions that impact their quality of life and the preservation of the local ecosystem.

However, the path to sustainability in Castelo and other regions of Brazil faces significant challenges, such as the need to transform consumption and production patterns

and to strengthen society's participation in the defense of its environmental rights. The effective implementation of constitutional guidelines for environmental protection still faces obstacles, such as the lack of inspection, corruption and pressure from economic sectors, such as agribusiness, which sometimes prioritize financial interests to the detriment of environmental conservation. Therefore, in addition to social mobilization, political will is crucial to ensure that public policies actually promote sustainable development and environmental protection.

Environmental problems such as deforestation, pollution of water resources and disorderly urban growth directly compromise the quality of life in Castelo. The Brazilian experience with the Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Amazon (PPCDAm) demonstrates that it is possible, with political determination and societal engagement, to reverse significant environmental damage. This example reinforces the need for sound public policies and the involvement of citizens in actions for the conservation and recovery of local ecosystems.

Castelo's situation reflects, to a lesser extent, a broader picture of the challenges facing Brazil and the world in pursuit of ecologically-sensitive development. Integrating public policies that address environmental, social, and economic issues in an equitable way is essential to achieving a sustainable future. In this sense, the alignment between the constitutional goals of 1988 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represents an important step towards directing Brazilian development in favor of a fairer and more environmentally conscious society.

Given this context, the continuity and strengthening of environmental education policies in Castelo are crucial, especially through the constant engagement of the population in practical sustainability activities, such as reforestation, clean-up efforts, and awareness campaigns. These actions not only promote environmental preservation, but also encourage the construction of a community identity committed to collective responsibility and sustainability.

Finally, this study contributes to academia and society by highlighting environmental education as a tool for social and ecological transformation. Building a sustainable future requires a joint effort between government, citizens, educational institutions, and civil society organizations. Castelo's experience exemplifies how collaboration and social mobilization, based on strong environmental education, can foster a society that is more aware and committed to protecting the environment.

This study has limitations, such as the restriction of empirical data on the long-term impact of environmental education initiatives on changing the behavior of the citizens of

Castelo. In addition, it would be relevant to explore the differences in perceptions and engagement between different age groups and socioeconomic groups in the community. It is recommended that future research investigate these aspects to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the scope of environmental education.

Future studies could also focus on comparative analysis between different municipalities with similar socioeconomic and environmental characteristics, in order to assess how variation in policies and investments in environmental education influences population engagement and the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives. These investigations can contribute to the development of more adaptable and effective policies, not only in Castelo, but in other regions, strengthening the commitment to sustainable development throughout the country.

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