



Environmental education: The importance of talking about this topic



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ABSTRACT

When we talk about the importance of Environmental Education, it means education to raise awareness, inform and educate people about the importance of environmental protection, conservation and protection of natural resources to promote sustainable practices to improve the quality of life. Environmental Education encourages the ability to establish a harmonious coexistence between man and nature, so that all living beings have dignity. The objective was to address the importance of preserving the environment and how this theme is relevant to the classroom, in order to make society more attentive to environmental issues. This article also analyzes the importance of Environmental Education in schools and its ability to form citizens, and considers the role of Environmental Education important for the formation and change of culture and attitudes towards socio-environmental issues.

Keywords: Environmental education, Environment, Education.

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INTRODUCTION

The environment has undergone major changes through human activities. These changes directly affect not only human life, but the entire ecosystem. The importance of Environmental Education in the Early Years of Elementary School lies in the ease of learning and engagement of children, to address important issues such as caring for the environment from an early age, through individual and collective actions and practices that last a lifetime and ensure a healthier environment.

For Reigota (2009), the environment is a defined or perceived place, in which natural and social conditions are in dynamic relationship and in constant interaction. These connections include creative and technological processes, as well as historical and political processes that transform the environment and society. In this sense, quality education is essential to help create responsible citizens.

Environmental Education is a necessary measure, as it is known that most ecological imbalances are related to inappropriate human behavior, which leads to waste and uncontrolled consumption of natural resources.

It is understood that schools play an important role in education and are social places where minds can be formed, without necessarily just transmitting biological concepts. It is a way to promote understanding of the relationship between man and the environment.

Building a more informed citizenship requires serious and continuous work. By adopting more sustainable practices, you can reduce the environmental impact by reducing the amount of waste that is left in the rivers. Educators, because they have a long curriculum, often end up not including the correct approaches focused on environmental preservation. Many teachers do not feel that it is their responsibility to deal with the topic, even though it is very important.

Environmental awareness is a social, cultural, and educational concept. Through Environmental Education, people must understand the environment, define its social nature through it, identify the errors that occur and correct their attitudes.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PRINCIPLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN BRAZIL

After the Stockholm Conference of 1972, the country began to create domestic legislation to intensify environmental protection measures. These concerns were registered in the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil of 1986, where its article 225 guarantees everyone an ecologically balanced environment and good for collective use, as well as the duty of the community to defend and preserve it for present and future generations, and in Law 9.795, of April 27, 1997, which provides for Environmental Education, and creates the National Policy for Environmental Education – PNEA.



From this conference, Brazil was able to formulate a federal decree that created in 1974 the Special Secretariat for the Environment, the body responsible for national policy, directly linked to the Presidency of the Republic. It is worth mentioning that at the Stockholm Conference, 1972, it was evident that it was underdevelopment that caused most of the environmental problems, since thousands of people survive below the minimum subsistence levels, and that industrialized countries have to redouble their efforts to help underdeveloped peoples to improve their situation (Bortolon; Mendes, 2014).

Today the problems are faced head-on, to the point that the whole world is already concerned about the environment and its needs. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, reaffirmed the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, adopted in Stockholm in 1972, and sought to go further towards consolidating the objective of establishing a new and just global partnership through the creation of new levels of cooperation among States, the fundamental sectors of each of our societies, with a view to protecting the environment (Bortolon; Mendes, 2014).

The National Environmental Education Program, known as PRONEA, was created in 1992 by the Ministries of Environment, Education, Culture, and Science and Technology. The Brazilian Institute of the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (Ibama) prepared the guidelines for the implementation of PRONEA, as it is the executor of the national environmental policy. In 1997, the National Curriculum Parameters (PCNs) were created by the Ministry of Education. The PCNs incorporated the environment as a cross-cutting theme in the basic curricula of elementary education. In April 1999, Law No. 9 was instituted. 795/99 that established Environmental Education in our country. Article 225, item VI of the Federal Constitution of 1988 was the pillar of support for this law. According to this law, Environmental Education can be developed inside and outside the school, but a Curricular Component is not necessarily provided for it (Medeiros, *et al.* 2011).

THE SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE AND THE TEACHING OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The socio-environmental issue is deeply related to the pedagogical approaches adopted in our education system. Education is implicated in both the origin and the solution of the major problems facing this nation. In general, the desired standards of democratization of knowledge are still far away, and serious quality challenges persist (Soffiati, 2002). This can be observed in the high rates of functional illiteracy, in children out of school and in institutions with precarious infrastructure and outdated methods. Such realities denote a vision that sees education as an expense rather than an investment in a country with a promising future.



It is necessary to sensitize students to their role as citizens, since Environmental Education has become a subject seen in a fragmented way, with few integrations with other sciences. The lack of training and updating of teachers shows how far we have to go in terms of improvements.

According to Dias (1993), Environmental Education is a set of materials and contents, as well as environmental practices, as both support solutions to problems of the physical environment, requiring an interdisciplinary approach and the active and responsible participation of all. In other words, Environmental Education is a continuous process that involves educating citizens to take responsibility for conserving the environment and improving the quality of our well-being.

The objective of Environmental Education is to overcome the barrier of school curricula that overload students with content, often dispersed, far from reality. According to Boff (2006), self-limitation and fair measure are two qualities that are expressions of the culture of care. Changes are necessary and the school will probably fulfill its role, which does not mean exempting other sectors of society from implementing it.

Precisely in this context, Environmental Education offers opportunities to promote quality education and ensure respect for the specificities of the subjects. The school space can offer those involved in daily pedagogical activities a dialogue with the assumptions of Environmental Education to reflect on the lifestyle of modern society.

There are many ways to solve the environmental problems that affect our society. They generally range from a modern technological point of view, which believes in the unlimited power of science to solve all problems, to another, which tries to understand these problems as essential to the lifestyle of men and women, and which consequently force us to reevaluate our patterns of thought and action in an increasingly interconnected world (Barcelos, 2003).

THE IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

One of the ways to teach students to live better with nature is to include environmental education in their classes. The school is a social space where students integrate with the community and form values with society. Therefore, the school would be an ideal place, where the subject worked on should be constantly addressed because it is more facial to learn as children and make this teaching intrinsic. Through school Environmental Education, students became future conscious citizens.

Today, school is the basis for making us think critically, developing ourselves and teaching us to take responsibility in order to improve our quality of life. As Environmental Education is not a specific Curricular Component, it is necessary that it be worked in an interdisciplinary way with the other mandatory components, promoting transversality between existing knowledge and connecting



them with environmental issues. In this process, knowledge about Environmental Education will already be inserted in the students.

The biggest challenge for teachers is to incorporate this content into the school curriculum. For the polyvalent teacher, pedagogue, it is a less complex task, since this teacher works with all the curricular components in the Early Years of Elementary School. For the area teacher, it is more complex, since there is an extensive curriculum and it is necessary to adapt it to insert knowledge about Environmental Education. Furthermore, it is emphasized that there is a lack of continuing education for teachers to adapt their practices together with the curriculum.

The understanding of the environment is relevant in the construction, training and behavioral patterns within the school, because from the understanding of Environmental Education, it is possible to identify the relationships of man with society and with nature (Sato, 2001).

Environmental Education becomes important in the school environment, because it is in the school where the formation of principles and changes in habits is introduced. Through guidance on the environment and the impact that human beings cause, it is possible to form a society that has conscious consumption, transforming reality, in addition to helping to overcome various problems that our society deals with daily.

Developing methodologies for the school environment will facilitate the process of harmony between people and the environment in which they live. When students have an environmental perception, it is easier to discuss this context within the school because they can identify the elements of the relationships they maintain with their environment in their daily lives.

It is important that everyone cooperates with nature, and for this, it is necessary to arouse the interest of students, making them aware that environmental problems are serious, for this, it is necessary that they use the "baggage of knowledge brought from home" as Freire (1987) says, so that this knowledge is improved and socialized among students.

Environmental Education should be understood as an educational and social activity based on the formation of knowledge, values, concepts, skills and attitudes that allow students to understand that the essence of the world in which they live depends on the actions of different social actors with nature (Loureiro, 2002).

Environmental Education aims to relate man to the environment with new ways of exercising citizenship, with actions that soften environmental impacts and that are based on sustainability. According to Morin (2002), Environmental Education should also train new educators to work with these ideas.

The school is essential in this process of orientation and awareness about responsibility for the environment, because, according to Carvalho (2006), most of the ecological imbalances related to



unsustainable human behavior are caused by consumer demands and the indiscriminate use of natural resources.

Education is the most powerful intervention tool for creating new ideas and changing culture. It is also a tool for the creation of knowledge and a means of intellectual advancement that can be passed down from generation to generation. This allows the maximum amount of evidence from each generation to advance in the field of scientific knowledge compared to the previous generation (Cuba, 2010).

In this context, the formation of citizens for environmental issues depends on Environmental Education developed by public policies, as well as by the sustainable practices developed by the school, through its Pedagogical Project. Aiming at Environmental Education, it is necessary for the school to make the student have this philosophy of life, reviewing its principles and the way human beings impact the planet.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

From what has been highlighted in this article, it can be concluded that education has the power to promote values, because it is more than a teaching method, it is a learning process that forms and characterizes a person's identity and worldview.

As a result of Environmental Education, there are great hopes that the environment will recover, that sustainability will be practiced by everyone in society, that the exploitation of natural resources will be done consciously, with minimal environmental impacts, and that technology will be an ally in this sustainable process.

Environmental Education can play an important role in changes and in social and environmental relations in the face of existing environmental problems. It is necessary for society to act in a critical and questioning way. By reconfiguring our performance with the environment, we can come up with solutions to man-made environmental impacts. Given that environmental science is a progressing field, we must also look throughout this history to find solutions to environmental problems.

Environmental Education, which includes all subjects, should be addressed dynamically in schools, including the environment as a transitory and permanent subject, emphasizing the inseparable relationship between people and the environment and seeking information in all disciplines for alternative approaches and solutions to existing problems.



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