

Environmental Education and Sustainable Development: the Contribution of Eco-Schools Program

Authors : Sara Rute Monteiro Silva Sousa

Abstract : Since the second half of the 20th century, environmental problems began to generate deep concern around the world. The harmful effects of human's irresponsible actions are increasingly evident, profoundly affecting biodiversity and even human health. Given the seriousness of this human footprint, governments, organizations, and civil society must all be more proactive and adopt more effective measures to solve environmental problems and promote sustainable development. This can be achieved through different tools, namely through a more efficient education that enables current and future generations to meet their needs in an integrated approach to the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. In this context, schools play a key role, being responsible for educating today's students and tomorrow's leaders, decision makers, intellectuals, managers, politicians, employers, and parents. Aware of this crucial role of education and schools, the Foundation for Environmental Education created the Eco-Schools program in 1992, ensuring that schools develop a whole-school approach to environmental and sus-tainable education. This research aims to increase knowledge and information about the efficiency of the Eco-Schools program as a promoter of more sustainable schools and communities. This research study analyses a specific case of a Portuguese higher education institution in the area of management, accounting, and administration. A description, reflection, and discussion are made on some of the main measures implemented in the last academic year of 2021/22 within the scope of the Eco-Schools program, concluding that, despite some implementation difficulties, the program was successfully developed, involving the participation of students, teachers, staff, and outside school community members, being awarded with the Green Flag as a recognition of its key contribution to a more sustainable society.

Keywords : sustainable development, environmental education, eco-schools program, higher education institutions, portugal

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