İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi ®
Jornal of the Human and Social Science Researches
[2147-1185]
11 th Years

[itobiad], 2022, 11 (2): 944-962

The Politics of EU Towards Environmental Education and Sustainable Development

AB'nin Çevre Eğitimi ve Sürdürülebilir Kalkınmaya Yönelik Siyaseti

Video Link: https://youtu.be/ujVYuyT_PQ8

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Makale Bilgisi / Article Information

Makale Türü / Article Type : Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article
Geliş Tarihi / Received : 01.12.2021
Kabul Tarihi / Accepted : 07.06.2022
Yayın Tarihi / Published : 12.06.2022
Yayın Sezonu : Nisan-Mayıs-Haziran
Pub Date Season : April-May-June

Atıf/Cite as: Cicioğlu, F. & Bulgur, N. (2022). The Politics of EU towards Environmental Education and Sustainable Development . İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi , 11 (2) , 944-962 . DOI: 10.15869/itobiad.1031172

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The Politics of EU towards Environmental Education and Sustainable Development

Abstract

Although there are many ways to overcome environmental problems, the threat of climate change and resource depletion, which has become a global problem, forces countries to make common policies. However, some economic costs that occur at the same time prevent countries from adopting sustainable environmental policies. Therefore, this article, which emphasizes environmental education, includes examples of cooperation between countries on environmental protection and sustainable development.

Environmental policies and development policies in the member states of the European Union are also among the subjects to be examined. In this way, the level of environmental policy in countries with different foreign policy priorities could be observed. The EU, which has rapidly developed its environmental policies with the effect of globalization, sets an example in this regard. Therefore, the research, it is aimed to discuss the place of environmental protection policies in the education system in European Union (EU) countries.

It is seen that the current education system does not adequately focus on climate change. It has been determined that the environmental policies carried out to overcome the negative effects of environmental problems cannot be integrated into the education system or their sustainability cannot be ensured. If it is desired to have environmentally sensitive societies: It is important to improve the curriculum and analyze the international repercussions of climate challenges on education. Indeed, education is one of the most important stages of this informing process.

In this article, "globalization" will also be discussed together with the EU's environmental policy and education system. Furthermore, it will be analyzed which subjects are included in the curriculum and what the differences are between European countries. There are three main titles in this study in which qualitative research method is preferred: "Introduction", "The Effects of The Globalization on Environmental Problem", "Environmental Education in EU and Sustainable Development".

As a result, in the light of the information obtained, it is seen that the effort to integrate the environmental policies of the European Union into the education system in economic, social, and political life dimensions continues. Considering the EU's 2030 and 2050 sustainable development goals; in addition to a sustainable environmental education policy, investments should be made in sustainable energy and sustainable urbanization policies.

Keywords: Globalization, Education, Environmental Challenges, Climate Change, EU

AB'nin Çevre Eğitimi ve Sürdürülebilir Kalkınmaya Yönelik Siyaseti

Öz

Çevre sorunlarının üstesinden gelmenin birçok yolu olmasına rağmen, küresel bir sorun haline gelen iklim değişikliği ve kaynak tükenmesi tehlikesi ülkeleri ortak politikalar yapmaya zorlamaktadır. Ancak aynı zamanda oluşan bazı ekonomik maliyetler de ülkeleri sürdürülebilir çevre politikalarından alıkoymaktadır. Dolayısıyla çevre eğitimine vurgu yapan bu makalede ülkelerin çevre koruma ve sürdürülebilir kalkınma konusunda iş birliği örneklerine yer verilmektedir. Avrupa Birliği'ne üye ülkelerdeki çevre politikaları ve kalkınma politikaları da incelenecek konular arasında yer almaktadır. Bu sayede farklı dış politika önceliklerine sahip ülkelerdeki çevre politikasının düzeyi gözlemlenebilmiştir.

Küreselleşmenin de etkisiyle çevre politikalarını hızla geliştiren AB, bu konuda bir örnek teşkil etmektedir. Dolayısıyla araştırmada, Avrupa Birliği (AB) ülkelerinde çevre koruma politikalarının eğitim sistemindeki yerinin tartışılması amaçlanmaktadır.

Mevcut eğitim sisteminin iklim değişikliğine yeterince odaklanmadığı görülmektedir. Çevre sorunlarının olumsuz etkilerinin üstesinden gelmek adına yürütülen çevre politikalarının, eğitim sistemine entegre edilemediği ya da sürdürülebilirliğinin sağlanamadığı tespit edilmiştir. Çevreye duyarlı toplumlara sahip olmak isteniyorsa, müfredatın daha iyi hale getirilmesi ve iklim zorluklarının eğitim üzerindeki uluslararası yansımalarının analiz edilmesi önemlidir. Nitekim eğitim bu bilgilendirme sürecinin en önemli aşamalarındandır.

Bu makalede; AB'nin çevre politikası ve eğitim sistemi ile birlikte "küreselleşme" de tartışılacaktır. Ayrıca, müfredata hangi konuların dâhil edildiği ve Avrupa ülkeleri arasındaki farkların neler olduğu analiz edilecektir. Nitel araştırma yönteminin tercih edildiği bu çalışmada üç ana başlık bulunmaktadır; "Giriş", "Küreselleşmenin Çevre Sorununa Etkileri", "AB'de Çevre Eğitimi ve Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma".

Sonuç olarak elde edilen bilgiler ışığında Avrupa Birliği'nin çevre politikalarının ekonomik, sosyal ve politik yaşam boyutlarında eğitim sistemine entegre edilmesi çabalarının devam ettiği görülmektedir. AB'nin 2030 ve 2050 sürdürülebilir kalkınma hedefleri göz önüne alındığında; sürdürülebilir bir çevre eğitim politikasının yanı sıra sürdürülebilir enerji ve sürdürülebilir kentleşme politikalarına da yatırımlar yapılmalıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Küreselleşme, Eğitim, Çevresel Sorunlar, İklim Değişikliği, AB

Introduction

Although there are many ways to overcome the environmental problems, the danger of climate change and resource depletion, which has become a global problem, forces countries to make common policies. But at the same time, some economic costs that occur prevent countries from sustainable environmental policies (Death, 2014, p.145-150). For this reason, countries' cooperation examples on environmental protection and sustainable development should be included in this article that emphasizes environmental education (Baker, 1997, p.85-90).

Environmental education (EE) reflects the organized efforts to teach how natural environments work and specifically how people can manage behaviors and ecosystems to live sustainably (Simonis, U., Ayşegül M., Ed., 2007, p. 18-20; Hoffman and Devereaux, 2015, p.20-25). It is a multi-disciplinary area that combines disciplines such as biology, chemistry, physics, ecology, earth science, atmospheric science, mathematics, and geography (Stevenson, 2007, p.140-145). For example, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) states that EE is vital in promoting natural respect for nature among society and in improving the environmental awareness of the public (UNESCO, 2014). The term EE, often implies education within the school system, from primary to post-secondary (Özbuğutu, E. and Karahan S. 2014, p.400-405). However, it sometimes includes all efforts to educate the public and other audiences, including print materials, websites, media campaigns, etc. There are also ways that environmental education is taught outside the traditional classroom. Aquariums, zoos, parks, and nature centers all have ways of teaching the public about the environment.

Education is the most enjoyable and practical way for people to improve themselves. For this reason, it is important to raise awareness of students, teachers, scholars, and society in each training phase. Besides basic scientific courses, environmental policies, environmental law, sustainable development, and national and international environmental practices should be added to the curriculum of primary, secondary level, and all university degrees like the bachelor's, Master's, and Ph.D. because the future is all of us.

We must protect the resources and be conscious of this. Education on environmental issues, for both younger generations and adults alike, with due consideration for the underprivileged is essential to broadening the basis for an enlightened view and responsible behavior by individuals, businesses, and communities in protecting and improving the environment. However, there are some difficulties in terms of the way environmental education is being implemented. According to Stevenson (2007, p.145), the recent critical and action orientation of environmental education creates a challenging task for schools. Contemporary environmental education strives to transform values that underlie decision-making from ones that aid environmental (and human) degradation to those that support a sustainable planet (Murphy, 2012, p.20-25). This contrasts with the traditional purpose of schools of conserving the existing social order by reproducing the norms and values that currently dominate environmental decision-making (Manners, 2000, p.25-30; Peterson, M. J., 2019, p.95-100).

This article will broaden the scope of education and will be the source of research for researchers, students, and institutions. After the introduction, it is planned to separate this article into some subtitles to be ensured that the subject is understandable. This may be a regional distinction, as well as segmentation on the level of economic development. For example, Europe will be examined with separate subtitles.

To provide a better understanding of sustainable development with another method, developed, underdeveloped and undeveloped countries can be separated by subtitles (Barnett, J. and Dovers S. 2001, p.160-162). Environmental policies and development policies in these countries can be examined. In this way, the level of environmental policy in countries with different foreign policy priorities can be observed. If a regional distinction is made, the EU, which carries out a comprehensive environmental policy, should be examined in a long and more detailed manner than other scopes. The EU, which rapidly improves its environmental policies with the impact of globalization, is an example in this regard. Some valid practices and successful examples for persuading the reader about environmental education will be worth mentioning.

The titling planned in this section will be as follows.

In the beginning, a separate title will be for globalization, which is one of the most important reasons for environmental problems to become international problems. The emergence of globalization and its acceleration after 1980 will be discussed with its economic, social, and environmental dimensions. The positive and negative effects of globalization on environmental policies will also be examined (Lewis and Maslin, 2015, p.171-72).

In the other title, what are the environmental challenges? What kind of problems does the world, economy, social life, and production suffer? A title will be placed to answer these questions. Then, national and international dimensions of environmental problems will be detailed. The emergence and the internationalization process of the climate change issue and the sustainable development norm will also be explained.

After making sure that environmental problems are adequately described, answers to other basic questions will be sought. First, it will be useful to mention why environmental policy and environmental education are necessary.

In this study, in which we need answers to four different questions in the light of this information, it was found that the EU has an environmental education programming that differs from country to country.

These four questions are as follows;

1. How environmental education is taught in different countries

2. Similarities and differences between countries in approaches to environmental education teaching;

3. Examples of initiatives and innovative practices in environmental education teaching;

4. Policy recommendations for the future coordination and dissemination of information on environmental education.

These research questions will help us investigate the issue systematically.

Methodology

The qualitative research method was preferred in this study. There are different methods and different perspectives for creating a research plan in a qualitative research process. If we need to elaborate on the methodological harmony concept that will be taken as the basis of this study; It means that "the research objectives, questions, and methods are all interrelated and related so that the study appears as a coherent whole rather than divided, isolated parts." In this process, the researcher tends to follow these interconnected parts. One of the researchers who care about the integrity of the method, purpose, and research questions is John Creswell. In his book titled "Research Design: Qualitative Quantitative And Mixed Methods Approaches", Creswell lists the main characteristics of qualitative research as follows: Natural environment, researcher as the basic tool, multiple methods, complex reasoning through inductive and deductive logic, time-emerging pattern, reflectivity, holistic explanation (Creswell, 2017, p.183-189).

This research, it is aimed to create a research plan by considering the basic features of the qualitative research method and academic ethical rules and analyzing the subject. Accordingly, within the scope of qualitative research methods such as resource review, theoretical research, and case study, universities, libraries, online databases will be used, and Turkish and foreign sources (scientific reports, academic articles, books, papers, etc.). Although the quantitative method was not preferred in the article, some statistical analysis, not a detailed one, will be made to understand the place of the economy in terms of environmental policy.

The Effects of The Globalization on Environmental Problems

With the rapid development of communication technologies, local issues can be moved to the global platform. Although globalization appears as a positive phenomenon in this sense, it also has negative aspects due to environmental problems, especially global warming, acts of terrorism, and transnationalization of illegal activities (Scholte, 2001, p.14). Furthermore, movement and innovations in smart technologies have also globalized consumption (Bulgur, 2020, p.22). Lack of awareness of consumption habits has led to environmental destruction and rapid depletion of resources. However, globalization has become a phenomenon that offers the possibility of cooperation in tackling these problems. The European Union is also an example of regional and international cooperation. The legal and economic regulations on the environment reveal the sensitivity of the Union on this issue.

Before mentioning the internationalization of environmental problems, it is necessary to mention the major environmental problems that push the states and international organizations to develop an environmental policy (Willetts, 2001, p.355; Simonis, U., Ayşegül M., Ed., 2007, p.20-22). It is possible to argue that different perspectives have been developed on the classification of global environmental problems. As an example, Ergin Duygu (2006, p.243-245) examined two main problems: local/global environmental problems related to the earth and sustainability.

In the UN "Global Sustainable Development Report" (2015, p.128-130), the depletion of natural resources and the negative impacts of environmental degradation, including desertification, drought, land degradation, freshwater scarcity, and biodiversity loss were ranked high on the list of challenges facing humanity. According to the report (2015, p.85-90), climate change is one of the biggest challenges of our time and its negative effects undermine the ability of all countries to achieve sustainable development. An increase in global temperature, sea-level rise, ocean acidification, and other climate change impacts are seriously affecting coastal and low-lying coastal areas, including least developed countries and developing countries (Seelarbokus, C., 2014b, p.295-297). The survival of many societies, countries, and ultimately the world's biological support systems is at risk. In this context, it is obvious that global solutions should be produced for global problems. That's why it is worth analyzing the role of the EU in terms of environmental politics as both regional and global actors.

The environmental field was given "policy" status for the Union thanks to the Maastricht Treaty. While implementing the environmental policy, the EU mainly aimed to eliminate, reduce and prevent pollution, ensure sustainable development by ensuring the use of natural resources in a way that does not harm the ecological balance, to ensure the integration of environmental protection with other aims of sectoral policies (energy, transportation, etc.). Environmental Action Programs, in which the following priority targets have been determined have also been very effective in the development of the environmental policy of the EU (Kraft, 2018, p. 150-165; Kaya et. al., 2011, p.206-209). These main nine targets are; protecting and strengthening natural capital, ensuring the transition to a resource-efficient, green, competitive low-carbon economy, protecting the health and well-being of citizens against environmental risks, improving the implementation of environmental legislation, increasing knowledge and experience in environmental legislation, ensuring the necessary investment for environmental and climate policies, ensuring the integration of the environment into other policy areas and consistency in policies, strengthening the sustainability of cities, strengthening the effectiveness of the Union on international environmental and climate problems ("Climate Action and The Green Deal").

With the Lisbon Treaty, which entered into force on 1 December 2009, the environment was accepted as one of the jurisdictions shared between the EU and its member states. Under the Lisbon Treaty, the Union's environmental policy contributes to the pursuit of the following objectives:

- Preserving, protecting, and improving environmental quality,
- Protection of human health,
- Prudent and rational use of natural resources

When it comes to the basic principles of the EU's environmental policy, there are six principles: "polluter pays", "complementarity", "high level of protection", "prevention at the source", "prevention" and "caution". Thus, the EU has adopted ambitious legislation in multiple policy areas to implement its international commitments on climate change. EU countries have set binding emissions targets for key sectors of the economy to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. By 2017, the EU had reduced its emissions

by almost 22% compared to 1990, meeting its 2020 emissions reduction target three years ahead of schedule.

In December 2020, in light of the EU's commitment to increase the climate target under the Paris Agreement, EU leaders approved a binding EU target of at least 55% net domestic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990. In April 2021, the Council and Parliament reached a tentative agreement on a European climate law aimed at enacting the 2030 emission reduction target. The agreement was adopted by EU ministers in June 2021. Moreover, since the cost analysis and economy are the basis for the implementation of these principles, information on the place of environmental expenditures in the EU economy is shared in the table below.

Table 1

	YEARS									
COUNTRIES	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Belgium	0.56	0.61	0.61	0.7	0.63	-	0.59	0.53	0.57	0.55
Bulgaria	0.59	0.64	0.51	0.6	0.73	1.06	0.54	0.57	0.62	0.7
Czech Republic	0.35	0.43	0.52	0.51	0.56	0.48	-	-	0.51	0.54
Denmark	0.55	0.63	0.6	0.54	0.55	-	0.64	0.53	-	0.57
Germany	0.33	0.34	0.33	-	-	-	0.33	0.36	0.37	0.38
Estonia	0.16	0.29	0.16	0.31	-	-	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.23
Ireland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Greece	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Spain	0.29	0.33	0.25	0.26	0.22	-	0.31	0.33	0.28	0.33
France	0.57	0.6	0.6	0.58	0.59	-	0.54	0.6	0.62	0.61
Croatia	0.02	0.02	0.07	0.32	0.26	0.32	-	0.3	0.32	0.36
Italy	0.84	0.89	0.88	0.88	-	-	0.86	0.87	0.88	0.89
Cyprus	-	-	0.59	0.58	0.43	0.51	-	-	0.45	0.5
Latvia	0.88	0.88	0.58	0.68	0.73	-	0.6	0.75	0.73	0.95
Lithuania	0.85	1.2	1.36	0.94	0.9	0.56	-	-	0.75	0.89
Luxembourg	0.51	0.68	0.55	0.53	0.56	0.57	0.68	0.72	0.63	0.52
Hungary	0.26	0.31	0.46	0.39	0.42	-	0.5	0.43	0.43	0.53
Malta	1.54	1.57	1.92	1.2	1.38	-	1.34	1.42	1.54	1.66
Holland	-	*1.48*	*1.44*	-	-	-	-	1.48	-	1.58
Austria	0.58	0.59	0.5	0.42	0.44	-	0.56	0.6	0.62	0.55
Poland	0.40	0.48	0.49	0.53	0.53	0.48	0.47	0.5	-	-
Portugal	0.54	0.59	0.51	0.48	0.51	0.44	0.47	0.48	0.56	0.52
Romania	0.58	0.59	0.81	0.95	0.6	0.46	0.54	0.57	-	0.93
Slovenia	0.77	0.91	0.73	0.8	0.7	-	0.95	0.82	0.71	0.71
Slovakia	0.24	0.27	0.28	0.31	0.32	0.28	0.28	0.26	0.26	0.3
Finland	0.56	0.59	0.64	0.59	0.64	-	0.58	0.59	0.6	0.55
Sweden	0.34	0.36	0.34	0.33	0.34	0.33	0.34	0.39	0.39	0.35
Great Britain	0.91	1.05	1.02	0.93	0.91	-	0.9	-	*0.9*	*0.96*

Source: (Ungureanu and Baldan, 2019, p. 19-20).

As can be seen from the table, in 2017, EU member states spent 297 billion Euros on environmental protection, which corresponds to 1.9% of the Gross Domestic Product

(GDP) ("National expenditure on environmental protection"). The purchase of environmental services by citizens and governments and investments by environmental service providers to reduce the environmental impact of their operations represented almost two-thirds of the expenditure. Between 2008 and 2017, spending on environmental services increased sharply over the entire period, corresponding to an average annual growth rate of 3.4% ("GDP - Gross Domestic Product", 2021). In 2017, the EU invested 64 billion Euros in key assets to provide environmental services such as wastewater treatment plants, waste transport vehicles, and the purchase of land to create a natural reserve or cleaner equipment for production with fewer polluting emissions.
Important environmental issues are also discussed and some directives are put forward via some economic and environmental legislation. An example is the Maritime Strategy Framework Directive, which outlines a coordinated approach to managing human activities affecting the maritime environment and cleaning waters. The Directive is also an important part of the waste management policy[1]. All these efforts ensure the integration of environmental expertise and education with the economy and politics.

Environmental Education in EU and Sustainable Development

EU Policy Background

The most important development contributing to the development of the EU's environmental policies is the United Nations' sensitivity to the environment and sustainable development after the 1970s and the fact that it has brought the issue to the global platform. (Carroll, 1979, p.500). Considering the agreements and regulations of the EU; Until the environmental policy was implemented with the Environmental Action Programs, the environmental issue remained in the background of the security issue until the 1970s (Seelarbokus, C., 2014a, p. 125-130). Since the 1970s, economy and development have been priority issues for a long time.

Environmental policy became a priority policy area with the 1987 Single European Act (Karluk, 2014, p. 225-230). The Community Council has been given powers based on taking measures on the protection of the environment and high-level protection. With this bill, the Treaty of Rome was amended. The environmental issue was added to the second article of the Treaty of Rome, which includes the establishment purposes. The Single European Act became a turning point as the basic principles and practices of the Union's environmental policies were more clearly put forward. In this way, issues such as global warming, and the danger of running out of resources have been brought to attention, and the principle of sustainable development has been adopted. In addition, the polluter pays principle is emphasized in the environmental section added to the 130th article of The Treaty of Rome. Environmental management of the EU consists of directives, decisions, environmental legislation, and many legal regulations. The establishment of a common environmental policy was possible with Maastricht Treaty, which established the EU by transforming the European Community (EC) into a political union as well as an economic and monetary union and entered into force in 1993.

[1] Austria, Germany, and Belgium recycled the largest proportion of municipal waste in Europe in 2010 (Ungureanu and Baldan, 2019, p. 22-24).

The basis of EU environmental policy is economy, education, politics, and social policies. Education is only one of the effective and important tools in the implementation of environmental policies. In the article, the stage of the environmental policy becoming a policy area is mentioned in the background section and its place in the economy is explained with statistics ("Environmental Protection Investments of Total Economy", 2021). However, the focus of the article is environmental education and the principle of sustainable development that forms its basis. Environmental education acts as a catalyst in the implementation of environmental policies of the EU. Increasing interest in environmental policies with globalization is observed in the changing policies of the EU.

In time, the content of the environmental issue has also been enriched and the environment has ceased to be an area that only covers the protection of ecosystems, but has started to be addressed with its social, political, economic, and social consequences. Sustained development has become one of the most fundamental norms shaping environmental policy.

The decision taken by the Council of Ministers on environmental education in 1988 became an important enlightening text for the awareness of societies and the place and importance of environmental education in environmental policy was explained. With this decision, which was announced during this period when the sustainability of development was discussed, the sustainability of environmental policies and prevention of environmental problems were also discussed (Stokes, E., Ann Edge, and Anne West. 2001, p.15-20).

The need to manage limited resources efficiently is a priority in all EU political strategies. To continue the process, the EU Commission has set up a high-level platform of national and international politicians, entrepreneurs, and experts with deep knowledge of the economy and environment. Including environmental education in all stages of education was discussed in 1993 and a comprehensive program was started to be developed. Furthermore, the environmental education policy has been consistently maintained until today.

Since these developments coincided with the implementation period of the fifth environmental action program, a process that supports each other was experienced and a fast and coordinated environmental policy was developed. There are two types of systems in Europe in terms of the scope of the curriculum (West et al., 2010, p.25-30):

1. The system in countries that determine the curriculum framework includes Denmark, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden.

2. Austria, France, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal, etc., with a more detailed curriculum (Giolitto, P. et. al., 1997, p.36-45).

Environmental education is a flexible subject in the curriculum (European Commission, 1997, p.55-65). Implementing a common environmental education also seems difficult due to differences in education systems.

The Main Programs Opened for Environmental Education in the EU

The modern environmental education movement, which gained significant momentum in the late 1960s and early 1970s, stems from Nature Study and Conservation Education.

During this period, many events – such as Civil Rights, the Vietnam War, and the Cold War – placed Americans at odds with one another and the U.S. government. Environmental education was born of the realization that solving complex local and global problems cannot be accomplished by politicians and experts alone but requires "the support and active participation of an informed public in their various roles as consumers, voters, employers, and business and community leaders" (Canadian Environmental Grantmakers Network, 2006, p.2). In 1960 the National Rural Studies Association (now known as the National Association for Environmental Education) was established in the UK to promote environmental education and support teachers in incorporating sustainability into their curricula (Biermann, 2009, p.25-30).

The main programs opened for environmental education in the EU and their contents are as follows.

- Sustainability Analysis:

Under this heading, it is aimed to control the economic and social outcomes of sustainable development by emphasizing the importance of minimizing carbon emission and unconscious resource use (Elkington, 1994, p.95). This topic is considered important for this reason and it is stated that sustainability can only be achieved with good waste management and recycling policy. Every member of the EU can bring waste management to a new level by suggesting ways to reduce costs and reduce the associated environmental impact. Distribution of waste generation and treatment reduce impacts on ecosystems and human health will be succeeded by avoiding landfills and encouraging more recycling ("Climate Change: What the EU is Doing").

- Multidimensional Analysis of Renewable Energy:

Considering the energy need on one side and the ecological balance and protection of the environment on the other, the use of environmentally friendly resources becomes important in meeting the increasing energy need in the long term. This approach brings to the agenda the provision of energy with the understanding of sustainable development.

The development of sustainable energy policies is one of the fundamental dimensions of sustainable development. The definition of the concept was accepted at the World Summit held in Rio in 1992 and was explained in the Rio Declaration as "the development that takes place today should not pose a threat to the needs of today and our future".

A multi-criteria analysis of alternative combinations of renewable energy technologies: solar, wind, etc., as well as traditional options such as gas, nuclear, coal, and biomass to meet a sustainable energy supply in the face of climate change. It is considered many criteria to reflect relevant environmental, social and economic aspects, capture the value of diversity, and reflect the innovative potential and learning capacity for sustainable development in the energy sector via this approach (Mulvik, 2021, p.6-10). It is important to balance environmental, social, and economic factors. For example, the fact that the products that can be preferred based on minimum cost or low CO2 emissions affect production relations, businesses, and employees, by making it necessary to evaluate all factors.

- New Sustainable Business Models

The concept of sustainable development with economic, social, and environmental dimensions; has sensitivities such as the continuation of the competitive understanding of the economic system, increasing welfare, and meeting consumer demands. In a global sense, the issue of sustainability was first addressed with economic growth and development in the United Nations Conference on Human Environment in 1972 in Stockholm ("Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment", 1972). In the study titled "Limits of Economic Growth" published in the same year, two different necessary components about each other to ensure economic and social development; were identified as physical and social needs.

Physical needs in general; consist of supporting all kinds of physiological and industrial activities such as food, raw materials, fossil, and nuclear fuels, natural disposal of waste, recycling of important chemicals, and protection of the world's ecological system. Physical components in the world are of great importance for economic development, as they are relatively easy to access. Although physical resources are abundant and fully meet human needs, social and environmental problems may prevent growth.

Social components such as ensuring peace and social stability, education, employment, and technological development throughout the world enable real achievement of economic and social progress. Likewise, the excessive use of resources creates an increasing effect on the ecological system of the World and this creates a great obstacle in front of sustainable development.

As it is mentioned in the sourcebook titled "World Conservation Strategy: Conserving Living Resources for Sustainable Development" (1980, p.5-10); natural resources and the carrying capacity of the ecosystem are limited due to the economic development created by the use of natural resources by humans, it was emphasized that the interests of future generations should be protected.

Although the concept of sustainable development was discussed with economic growth and development at the United Nations Conference on Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972, it became the world agenda on international platforms with the report named "Our Common Future", also known as the Brundtland Report, published in 1987 (Deters, 2018, p. 150-160). One of the most important contributions of this sustainability report is the definition of "meeting today's needs without compromising the possibilities of meeting the needs of future generations", which is the most common use today. This definition of "sustainability" was accepted at the World Summit in Rio in 1992 and is one of the most important basic principles of the Rio Declaration; It was explained as "development taking place today should not pose a threat to the needs of today and our future".

However, over time, the meaning of sustainable development has begun to be addressed with a more practical approach. At the UN Sustainable Development World Summit held in Johannesburg in 2002, it was emphasized that besides the distribution of intergenerational needs, economic growth, social development, and environmental continuity should be addressed with a holistic approach to reach the sustainable development goal. The holistic approach, in which economic, social and environmental

development is handled in an integrated manner, was explained as the aim of sustainable development in the final document named "Our Future" published at the Rio + 20 summit in 2012 (Sachs, 2015, p.1-7).

It includes The Egg of Sustainability model, designed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature in 1994. In this model, it is stated that the connection between people and the ecosystem is very strong and that people are at the center of the ecosystem. Although there are beneficial flows from the ecosystem to humans, humans also have positive and negative effects on the ecosystem. According to this model, changes occurring in sustainable development levels are shaped by fluctuations in the ecosystem and human welfare (CEE / SAYEN / SDC, 2007, p.12-13).

Any economic development that ignores environmental and social impacts; climate change leads to undesirable consequences such as overuse of freshwater resources, loss of biodiversity, and increasing inequalities (Perdan, 2004, p.4). It is possible to see the tight connection between the economic, environmental, and social dimensions of sustainable development. Sustainable development, as people, economic systems, and living spaces are interrelated; It can be achieved by handling society, economy, and environment in an integrated manner. An order in which future generations will benefit from today's facilities, in the same way, is possible only when social and environmental effects are taken into consideration besides economic development.

Besides governments and international organizations, the role of the business world will be very important in reducing/preventing the extraordinary, global impacts of climate change (WWF, 2020, p.120-125). In the Better Business, Better World Report, 'sustainable deve is defined as an important business opportunity by 2030 (BSDC, 2017). In addition to social, environmental, and economic developments; renewable energy, smart and sustainable cities, low carbon economy is among the new business areas that can occur.

Discussion and Conclusion

The European Union has short and long-term targets within the scope of environmental protection policies. In this context, the union appears to meet short-term objectives, including environmental education policies. Because education has a key role to play in promoting sustainable behavior and helping citizens bring their awareness to action (Dobson, 2005, p.210-215). Moreover, schools, educational institutions, and universities are essential to engaging students, parents, and the wider community on the changes necessary to sustain a successful environmental policy (Oberthür and Gehring, 2006, p.325-330; Zelli, F. and Van Asselt, H., 2013, p.7-10).

Another aspect of environmental education policy involves training individuals to thrive in a sustainable society. In addition to building a strong relationship with nature, citizens must have the skills and knowledge to succeed in a 21st-century workforce. Thus, environmental education policies fund both teacher training and worker training initiatives. Teachers train to effectively teach and incorporate environmental studies. On the other hand, the current workforce must be trained or re-trained so they can adapt to the new green economy. Environmental education policies that fund training programs are critical to educating citizens to prosper in a sustainable society. The European Commission is also working to provide member States with new financial resources to

make school buildings and activities more sustainable and is strengthening its cooperation with the European Investment Bank. Encouraging environmental protection policies in education will also increase employability in the green economy in the medium and long term.

Eventually, in the light of the obtained information, it is seen that the effort of the European Union to integrate environmental policies into the education system in the aspects of economic, social, and political life. As a result, considering the 2030 and 2050 sustainable development goals of the EU; there should be a sustainable environmental education policy as well as investment in sustainable energy and sustainable urbanization policies.

Environmental education is an education for people at all levels to understand the environment, realize their place and role in it, be aware of all the factors affecting the environment, and be conscious of this context (Rickinson, 2001, p.210-215). The human impact on the ecosystem, willingly or unwillingly, has increased to such an extent that it has become a necessity to use all available means in the most rational way to intervene in environmental destruction. However, the relations between disciplines, practitioners and academics, policymakers, and ordinary citizens involved in the process in terms of property relations have become so complex that a multidimensional intervention from the field of academia is needed (Erol, 2012, p.100-102).

When the Environmental Action Plans of the European Union are examined, it is seen that the issues of developing environmental awareness, conducting educational activities in this direction, and informing society are included (Cokgezen, 2007, p.100-105).

Greening the cities, reducing costs in environmental policies, and raising awareness of the society should be adopted as a principle and it is important to ensure the dissemination of correct information with environmental education. To green our cities and make them smart to reduce the environmental impact of their performance, increase employment and economic viability, and improve quality of life, a new strategic direction requires a comprehensive assessment of sustainability and smart urban performance. The European Union has committed to continue its support to national, local, and international projects/programs related to environmental education and zero carbon emissions in the 2050 targets. As a result, the EU, as a union to integrate environmental protection policy in all policy areas, determines the targets within the scope of sustainability.

Yazar Katkıları/ AuthorContributions

Çalışmanın Tasarlanması | Design of Study: FC (%50), NB (%50)

Veri Toplanması | Data Acquisition: FC (%50), NB (%50)

Veri Analizi | Data Analysis: FC (%50), NB (%50)

Makalenin Yazımı | Writing up: FC (%50), NB (%50)

Makale Gönderimi ve Revizyonu | Submission and Revision: FC (%50), NB (%50)

Finansman/ Grant Support

Yazarlar bu çalışma için finansal destek almadığını beyan etmiştir. | The authors declared that this study has received no financial support.

Çıkar Çatışması/ Conflict of Interest

Yazarlar çıkar çatışması bildirmemiştir. | The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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