


**CONSUMPTION ANALYSIS FOR HABIT CHANGES** <https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2024.041-041>**Ana Isabela Mafra<sup>1</sup>.****ABSTRACT**

To achieve sustainability, it is essential that there is moderation between individual comfort, society and the environment; in which some changes in attitudes in the consumption actions carried out by several people cause major transformations. One of the intentions of environmental educators is to teach to transform people's thinking about consumption, so that development occurs without destroying. Thus, this work had the purpose of informing students through lectures presented in a state school in Navegantes-SC, fostering analyses to mitigate environmental impacts. The collective research was carried out in a public school, totaling 443 elementary and high school students in 2015. The students participated in the lecture entitled "Small Gestures to change the World - Conscious Consumption", where the reports were recorded by the participation of the students in circles of ideas, debates after the lectures, oral presentations and proposals for changes in their daily lives. It was found that the students have the desire to socialize their daily practices and thus, they themselves began a movement of direct analysis of how their customs interfere in the environment and that the change in their practice can solve daily difficulties of the school and family environment.

**Keywords:** Environmental Education. Conscious Consumption. Students.

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## INTRODUCTION

Faced with such antagonistic situations between what the world population experiences as the waste of some and the hunger of others, it is necessary to rethink daily consumption habits, as everyone has the responsibility for so much waste of various materials that could be reused so that there is not so much environmental degradation occurring on planet Earth.

The desire to consume more and more is a creation of modernity, a moment in which people began to believe that it was possible to obtain, through consumption, personal satisfaction. That is why contemporary society is also the consumer society. Nevertheless, it is a society that has to find solutions to the ecological problems it creates, which expresses the conflict between consumption and environmental protection (ZANIRATO; ROTONDARO, 2016).

A major challenge for environmental educators is to inform to sensitize people to consumption, so that development occurs without causing major negative impacts on the environment. Thus, this research aimed to analyze the performance and conceptions of the students after they attended lectures on consumerism that were held to promote reflection and ecological awareness.

The moment needs environmental concern, to make each citizen rethink their way of consumption, considering the impacts caused on the environment. Thus, consumers can, through their preferences, foster the process of preserving what exists of nature and reduce negative impacts to contribute to a better world.

To encourage the population's perception, it is essential to have the environmental educator as an intervenor, a connection between science and environmental conservation, whose work must be based on reflection, critical thinking, socialization, sustainability, responsibility and social transformation.

With the increasing pace of environmental degradation, climate change, and resulting crises, it is increasingly urgent for people to transform their consumption behavior to become more sustainable to ensure safe and healthy living conditions for current and future generations (IPCC, 2018). However, most people still seem to consider the economy primarily linked to the production and consumption of physical products, even though researchers have shown that humans are consuming products and using services faster than the natural ecosystem can regenerate, process, or recycle (REES, 2020)

To practice sustainability, which implies a correct ecological model to live environmentally, socially and economically; it is necessary to have a balance between

personal comfort, society and the environment; where small changes in the consumption actions carried out by many people promote major transformations (MAFRA, 2010).

This research is justified because when carrying out environmental education with students, critical awareness is stimulated, which has the challenge of motivating the change of values, attitudes and customs, being relevant, to add their actions to ecological, cultural and ethical aspects.

The impacts that all living beings suffer need to be evidenced and presented to society at all times. Environmental education in the attribute of recognizing a growing set of socio-environmental degradation can influence the change of the current situation, as long as education helps to form environmental awareness to develop attitudes of a sustainable and consequently socio-environmental character.

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Conscious consumption is related to a way of life that values environmental responsibility, which observes the impacts that a product can have on the environment, whose focus is on preserving and maintaining a social environment with a higher quality of life. To consume without waste is to collaborate with the preservation and recovery of the planet, because by acquiring knowledge about what is consumed, the individual can choose to encourage commerce to adapt to sustainable principles, since consumers define the performance of the market (MATTIA; BECKER, 2021).

Consumerism is one of the contributing factors and influencers to environmental damage and quality of life. Modern society uses the consumption of goods as a way to manifest its social position, so exaggerated consumption represents a social identity and a feeling that we belong to a group. Innovation and improvement of consumer articles generate greater expectations of comfort and well-being with the aim of supplying happiness (ZANIRATO, 2016).

Environmental education, as a mechanism capable of improving the personal and professional behavior of individuals, acquires a prominent role. Educating for sustainable development (instrumental perspective), which is also a transmissive way of educating environmental issues, or educating for environmental issues, (emancipatory perspective), also characterized by being transformative, participatory and constructive (EARLE; LEYVA-DE, 2020).

Morin (2012) presents in his theory of complexity, the importance of distinguishing the various dimensions of reality, without separating them. On the contrary, it is important to integrate them, considering the effects of their mutual relationship. With regard to education

for the environment, this "means taking into account the influences of all social, cultural, economic, political, ecological, technical and ethical aspects, among others, that intervene dynamically in its theoretical-practical field".

Environmental Education, therefore, cannot escape its interdisciplinary and transversal character and, on the other hand, needs to adopt the perspective of a "relational approach" to everything that surrounds it (GUIMARÃES, 2018). Theories and information about conscious consumption are presented within schools, but informal education needs to go hand in hand, not only being promoted in essay contests for a certain date.

Environmental Education not only transmits scientific knowledge, but emphasizes and provokes the need for dialogue between all types of knowledge, including art, which allows citizens to better act and intervene daily in the search for socio-environmental solutions and alternatives (REIGOTA, 2014). According to Daros (2014), the consumerist person has an insatiable desire to possess and enjoy, as well as being centered on himself and his needs, which cannot be left for later. Because he is focused only on himself, the consumerist does not care about others who do not have possessions and does not recognize them as equally human.

Environmental knowledge plays an important role in predicting sustainable consumption behavior, this should be addressed by environmental education policies and initiatives. Therefore, environmental educational campaigns and materials should refer to the severity of current environmental risks (SAARI et al., 2021). This approach can result in a level of environmental concern that has a significant effect on sustainable consumption behavior. This could further facilitate the promotion of sustainable consumption practices and enable the transition to a circular economy (KORHONEN et al., 2018).

The educational path is a possibility of hope for the construction of a new posture towards nature and the issues that represent the degradation of the environment and society. In environmental education, the environmental, economic, and social dimensions are emphasized, raising questions that help to reflect on the necessary change in production modes that emphasize extreme consumption and do not understand the environment as a living and exhaustible system, especially when they interfere with its regeneration processes (MARTINELLI, 2020).

Education for sustainable consumption is undoubtedly part of this process. It is necessary to invest in an education that favors sustainability, which requires changing educational paradigms and moving towards an education based on critical thinking and questioning the world, rather than the passive transmission of information on environmental

and ethical issues. An education for consumption requires the learning of new habits, including the control of impulsivity, to avoid waste (ZANIRATO; ROTONDARO, 2016).

Education is not the only transforming force in society. It is not exclusively up to the school to assume this role, it would be unfair to feed this expectation, but without it, the potential for social transformation is greatly reduced. Therefore, it is not the educator alone who will operate an emancipatory project, however, without his contribution the change will hardly occur. The conception of the environment, from the perspective of critical EE, integrates the social and natural dimensions in the "socio-environmental" construct because it perceives that the problems studied are due to the way in which people, groups and classes relate socially and with the environment. In other words, it is an approach that goes beyond a merely ecological and conservationist consideration of nature. From there, the student begins to perceive the interrelationship between human action and the environment and the complexity of the causes and effects that make up this interaction (REBOUÇAS et al., 2021).

Education should provide students with the opportunity to develop skills that awaken in them restlessness in the face of the unknown, seeking logical and reasonable explanations, leading students to develop critical postures, make judgments and make decisions based on objective criteria, based on knowledge shared by a schooled community (HAYASHI et al., 2009).

## METHODOLOGY

For this work, the collective analysis called by Prada and Longarezi (2012) was used, whose theoretical-methodological assumptions are similar to other research models: action research and participatory research, both of which have a qualitative approach.

Collective research can be understood in what hurts the methodological approach, as a qualitative and quantitative research. In this aspect, there is a subject-subject relationship and knowledge is collectively erected. This work was based on the research of Shiroma et al. (2020) who affirm the importance of environmental education to promote education for sustainability, which should motivate, prepare and involve individuals and social groups in reflecting on our way of life, making informed decisions and establishing paths to a more sustainable world.

From lectures held in a state school located in the center of Navegantes-SC with the purpose of presenting information on conscious consumption and promoting reflections to rethink about possible changes in daily habits that reduce environmental degradation, the reports of the students were recorded during the discussions on the subject after the

lectures, oral presentations and proposals for changes in their daily lives. With the recording of data from the students' participation, their performance and conceptions about consumerism and ecological awareness were analyzed.

In total, there were fifteen classes and four hundred and eighty-two high school students during the second school semester of 2019. The students researched, in sources of printed and electronic newspapers and magazines, data regarding excessive consumption, which were used to contribute during the lectures entitled "Small sustainable actions transform your world into a better place", in addition to works prepared in pairs, with the production of posters and oral presentations.

After exhibitions of posters produced on the theme of conscious consumption, in the corridors of the school, the students presented sustainable suggestions to carry out in their daily actions in the classroom.

## RESULTS

During the lectures, it was recorded and analyzed that the students prefer actions whose methodologies are dynamic, enabling their interaction and the socialization of knowledge and experiences among the participants.

The students showed a desire to share their daily actions and in this way, they themselves began a method of direct recognition of how their attitudes intervene in the environment and that changing their practice can solve common problems in the school and family environment. Thus, it was found that it is essential to have scientific inclusion of the information acquired with the daily reality of the students, so that they can combine learning with their attitudes, choices and actions. According to this result of the students valuing their participation in the discussions describing their habits, it is perceived that this idea is in line with the research of Mafra (2010) who describes that at the end of a process of continuing education with lectures, the participants seem to develop even more critical sense, being convinced of the seriousness of disseminating and debating about the environmental changes that have occurred on the planet within the classroom. In addition to exposing the concern of linking their classes with Environmental Education, making it continuous, regardless of the joint realization with projects. Oliveira et al. (2019) state that the involvement of society in the generation and dissemination of scientific knowledge can promote more pro-environmental attitudes and reduce the release of plastics into the environment

More than half of the students (57%) emphasized that environmental degradation can be mitigated if the population acts responsibly, examining their habits in the face of so

many environmental disasters arising from human beings, where consequently there will be a more balanced and powerful environment to live in. According to Mafra (2018), environmental educators want to incorporate ecological actions that practice sustainability, but they know how essential it is to sensitize all those involved in the educational process, increasingly trying to work together with their colleagues.

The students presented posters that brought information about the amount of waste and its destination in the state of SC. From the research, the students were surprised to learn that most of the waste could be reused or recycled and, however, there is no planning in most municipalities and there are no cooperatives or many companies that received the inorganic materials for recycling. Dalu et al. (2020) report that in schools, the number of educational programs that address environmental issues has been growing, to increase awareness and more responsible behaviors in young citizens. To this end, environmental education can be an effective and low-cost agent of social change (HARTLEY et al., 2018).

Unfortunately, the shock of reality even caused an exaltation among three students who decided to inform that the school itself is not sustainable in small actions, as it makes use of disposable materials such as the plastic cup in the teachers' room (which should be replaced by permanent bottles), as well as the lack of scratch paper, the lack of attention and responsibility of students and teachers in not turning off the light when leaving the classroom class, in addition to the lack of education of some employees who smoke and discard the cigarette in the school garden. One of the main challenges is to achieve a change in habits, values and attitudes, much more than finding technical solutions. This is not easy at all, as it implies recognizing that the forms of consumption are not sustainable. If the path to sustainable development is that of the materialization of sustainability, that is, of the transformation of discourse into practice, it is impossible to defend sustainable fashion, since what is intended to be disposable cannot be sustainable (ZANIRATO; ROTONDARO, 2016)

Of the fifteen classes, the third years of high school showed greater interest in the lectures and 34% of the students wanted to present their new choices of sustainable actions such as: using the permanent bottle to drink water at school, turning off the lights in the rooms that are not being used, reusing the papers as draft sheets, doing selective collection at home and at school, take advantage of materials to produce new objects, deliver used cooking oil to employees who make soap and think before buying products so as not to accumulate useless objects at home. Queiroz et al. (2011) state that participatory methodologies emerge as an important tool in the sense of encouraging social mobilization and contributing to overcoming lethargy and social accommodation. In this critical



perspective, Environmental Education and the school are seen as great enhancers of an educational process in society in search of overcoming and social transformations.

The students had a great performance during the project with the lectures and activities proposed, presenting excellent posters and critical explanation about the actions of the school, the family and them as citizens who need to be sustainable. Almeida et al. (2019) state that the environmental education awareness activity carried out at school shows an effort to change students' attitudes about food and water waste, due to the importance of these elements, as well as to contribute to reinforcing the correct disposal of waste and the esteem for healthy habits. With the educational process, it is expected to contribute to the formation of citizens more concerned with the environment and health.

In view of the students' arguments, it was observed that saving, rethinking consumption and disposal habits, refusing products that harm the environment and health, reducing unnecessary consumption, reusing and recovering as much as possible before discarding, and recycling materials, are some actions that human beings need to practice to cooperate with more ecological attitudes and thus, Educators can provide lectures, different classes that involve students in an empirical way.

## CONCLUSIONS

Analyzing the performance and conceptions of the students after they attended lectures on consumerism, it was noted that there were some changes in behavior inside and outside the school environment, which was verified by the students' demand to bring materials to be reused or destined for recycling.

The development of the project exposed that sustainable consumption can happen if students are informed about the reality of the environmental, social and economic problems that the planet is going through at the moment; in order to be motivated to carry out sustainable actions in the school and family environment, and transversality happens when the student learns, distinguishes the importance and takes teaching to life beyond the school environment, also reaching the people in society who have contact.

The proposals drafted to exercise sustainable consumption during and after the presentations of lectures and practices with the students were: to acquire only what is truly needed, so as not to originate more waste; promote the separation (selective collection) and recycling of garbage; use rechargeable batteries; dispose of batteries in appropriate collection places and not in 365 common garbage; take used cell phone batteries to resellers, as they should not be thrown in the common garbage, as they contain heavy metals (highly toxic); avoid replacing cell phones unnecessarily; try to improve the computer





instead of buying a new one, because 20 million tons of electronic waste are discarded annually and most of it is still not recycled; print emails and documents only when necessary; moderate the use of water and energy, preventing waste; acquire electronics that perform with little electricity consumption; opt for materials from companies that prove social and environmental concerns; purchase products exclusively with the issuance of an invoice; use returnable bags; consuming seasonal foods giving preference to organic ones, which do not use pesticides; avoid picking up plastic bags unnecessarily; use water-based paints to paint the house, as they are less toxic and less polluting; do not pick up pamphlets handed out on the street unless you are interested in the information; and, use calculators and flashlight that can work with solar energy or dynamo, thus avoiding the use of batteries.

The use of natural resources and resources produced for consumption occurs to promote satisfaction, but the example used of production and consumption has contributed to increase some aspects of social inequality and environmental imbalance; Thus, sustainable is also confused with the theme of education for sustainability, in which there is a change in the simple transmission of knowledge, transcending a change in behavior.

The great challenge is to build an Environmental Education that is reflective and innovative, and, above all, an action aimed at social transformation, whose focus should relate the human being and nature, based on the principle that natural resources run out quickly and the protagonist of degradation is the human being.

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