

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION POLICY: GLOBAL APPROACHES AND PROSPECTS

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**Abstract:** The article examines the theoretical foundations, international approaches, and future prospects of environmental education policy. It highlights the interconnection between environmental policy and education, explores global experiences, and emphasizes the significance of education for sustainable development. According to the authors, the integration of policy and education is an essential condition for effectively addressing environmental challenges.

**Keywords:** environmental policy, environmental education, sustainable development, global experience, ecological awareness

### Introduction

Since the beginning of the 21st century, one of the most pressing challenges facing humanity has been the ecological crisis. Global climate change, the increasing emission of carbon dioxide, deforestation, land degradation, and the pollution of marine ecosystems are placing the future of humanity at serious risk. International research indicates that if the current pace of resource consumption continues, the Earth's biosphere will experience a significant decline in its regenerative capacity in the second half of the 21st century (Rockström et al., 2009).

Consequently, global environmental policy has extended beyond the internal affairs of states, becoming an integral part of the global agenda that defines humanity's future. On the one hand, environmental policy represents the system of institutional decisions developed and implemented by governments; on the other, environmental education ensures the socio-cultural foundation of this policy. The effectiveness of political decisions depends directly on the level of ecological awareness and public consciousness.

For example, the Paris Agreement (2015) seeks to strengthen global solidarity in combating climate change, while UNESCO's "Education for Sustainable Development" (ESD) program aims to reinforce the social foundation of political goals through the promotion of ecological awareness. Hence, global challenges can only be addressed when environmental policy and education operate in harmony.

This article analyzes the theoretical basis of environmental education policy, international approaches, global practices, and its future prospects, drawing on works such as Environmental and Sustainability Education Policy (Van Poeck, Lysgaard, Reid), The Routledge Handbook of Global Sustainability Education (Michele John), and other contemporary studies.

### Theoretical Foundations of Environmental Education Policy

Environmental and Sustainability Education Policy (ESE) requires not only updating curricula but also a fundamental rethinking of the entire education system. Liza Ireland, in her work Ecological Principles for Sustainable Education, criticizes the "industrial model" of education

for reinforcing alienation from nature. She argues that schools and universities should not teach knowledge in isolation from the natural environment but rather in harmony with it.

Environmental education policy encompasses three core directions:

1. Enhancing ecological literacy – fostering an understanding of nature and environmental issues among learners.
2. Developing competencies for sustainable development – enabling participation in solving ecological problems.
3. Promoting ecological values and responsibility – instilling the perception of environmental protection as a civic duty.

### Global Experiences and Approaches

The formation of global environmental policy began with the 1972 Stockholm Conference, which brought ecological issues onto the international political agenda. Later, the 1992 Rio Earth Summit advanced the concept of sustainable development, and the 2015 Paris Agreement became a landmark international document aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Throughout this process, environmental education has played a vital role.

With UNESCO's initiative, the years 2005–2014 were declared the “Decade of Education for Sustainable Development,” encouraging the integration of ecological education into national systems worldwide.

**European Experience:** The European Union, through its “Green Deal” programs, has aligned environmental education with political strategies. As Van Poeck notes, in many European schools, ecology is not taught as a separate subject but integrated across disciplines, embedding ecological thinking into general culture.

**Scandinavian Countries:** Here, the alignment of education and policy has led to recycling rates exceeding 90%, reflecting high public ecological awareness.

**Asia-Pacific Region:** In Japan, Korea, and Australia, schools operate under the “Green Schools” model, applying sustainability principles not only in teaching but also in infrastructure (e.g., solar panels, water conservation systems).

Comparisons reveal that developed countries achieve effective results because environmental policy and education reinforce one another with strong public support. In contrast, in some developing countries, weak environmental education undermines the effectiveness of political initiatives.

**Global Citizenship and Justice Approach:** Namrata Sharma, in *Education for Sustainability and Global Citizenship*, emphasizes that environmental education should extend beyond ecological knowledge to foster social justice and global citizenship.

**Critical Pedagogy and Environmental Justice:** Greg W. Misiaszek, in *Ecopedagogy*, links environmental education policy to critical pedagogy, urging learners to recognize the roots of ecological problems—capitalism, consumerism, and inequality—and actively engage in societal transformation.

## Results

The analysis shows that the integration of environmental policy and education is crucial for sustainable development. They cannot be addressed separately, because:

1. If environmental policy relies only on legal and regulatory measures, it lacks public support and weakens top-down decision-making. Therefore, bottom-up initiatives—civic activism, NGOs, and education—are essential.
2. Environmental education should not be limited to imparting knowledge; its goal is to instill values, strengthen ecological responsibility, and promote sustainable lifestyles (Orr, 2004).
3. Solving global environmental issues requires international cooperation. Organizations such as UNESCO, UNEP, and OECD play a vital role in establishing unified principles of environmental education and integrating them into national policies.
4. Economic factors are directly linked to education. For instance, transitioning to a green economy requires training qualified personnel. Germany and Japan, through vocational colleges and universities, have successfully promoted “green professions.”
5. The lack of integration between environmental policy and education can lead to risks. In some countries, despite environmental legislation, low ecological literacy prevents effective waste management or rational use of water resources.

## Conclusion

To effectively address global environmental challenges, the integration of policy and education must be strengthened. While policy functions as an external governance mechanism, education serves as its internal cognitive and moral foundation.

The success of environmental policy depends on the ecological awareness of the population. If environmental education is not elevated to the level of state policy, its impact will remain limited. Therefore, by harmonizing policy and education, humanity can ensure ecological security for the future.

This process requires support through international cooperation, economic mechanisms, and innovative technologies. Only under these conditions will it be possible to mitigate the consequences of the global ecological crisis and ensure sustainable development.

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