

## **ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND CONSERVATION UNITS: A NECESSARY PARTNERSHIP**

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### **SUMMARY:**

The environmental crisis and social reproduction models do not prioritize the protection of biodiversity, causing a large portion of natural resources to reach a state of exhaustion. One of the alternatives to minimize the crisis is the creation of Conservation Units, which in turn are suitable places for the development of environmental education activities, a partnership that represents a two-way street that can benefit both parties.

**KEYWORDS:** Environmental education; Conservation Units; Biodiversity protection.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The current model of development, consumer relations, and the anthropocentric view that leads humans to believe they are on a different level from other elements of nature are factors that contribute to the increase of problems related to environmental imbalances. Thus, there is an urgent need for the proposition of strategies aimed at mitigating the environmental crisis and promoting sustainability.

On environmental crisis and models of social reproduction, we have in the words of Quintas (2009, p. 37) that: [...] "the environmental damages and risks arise from a certain social order, which was historically constituted and is maintained through relations of domination, whether of nature by human beings, or of humans by other humans."

The challenge to overcome the current development model involves several factors that together can indicate a path to strengthen the bonds between humans and

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nature, awaken new perspectives, promote dialogues, partnerships, and public policies.

In this sense, environmental education can play a crucial role in promoting the protection of nature, strengthening the relationship between humans and natural resources, and gradually distancing them from the anthropocentric view deeply rooted in society.

The creation of Conservation Units was one of the ways found to protect natural resources. From a historical perspective, the creation of protected areas began in the United States with Yellowstone Park in 1872, and from then on, other units have been created worldwide.

According to the SNUC (National System of Conservation Units), Conservation Units can be classified into two groups: those for full protection and those for sustainable use. The administration of these areas can be the responsibility of the Union, the states, the municipalities, or even private individuals. (BRAZIL, 2000).

There are many possibilities to combine environmental education with social, collective, and individual practices. Here we will address these possibilities from the perspective of conservation units, which are places that, in addition to protecting biodiversity, should also engage in environmental education activities, scientific research, and related endeavors.

In Conservation Units, environmental education activities are allowed with the aim of fostering community awareness about the purpose of creating such protected spaces and their objectives.

Some possible strategies for the development of environmental education in these spaces would be the courses developed for teachers, unit staff, and other organized groups, as well as the production of didactic materials and programs that involve the surrounding communities (CERVANTES, et. al., 1992, p. 1077).

In this way, the partnership between environmental education and Conservation Units is justified with a view to raising awareness among the human population and the use they make of protected areas. Thus, this text aims to contribute to strengthening this

partnership and promoting actions that maximize healthy relationships between society and nature.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology is based on bibliographic research, through the analysis of literature already published in the form of books, articles, and gray literature (theses, dissertations, conference papers, reports, etc.) on the subject in question.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The partnerships between Conservation Units and environmental education do not aim to make these areas free from the anthropic pressure represented by the presence of human populations within protected areas or in adjacent areas.

By recognizing the risks that human presence can pose to protected areas, environmental education takes on the role of raising awareness and mitigating the harm to environmental resources, encouraging community participation in conservation processes and the adoption of new habits.

It is necessary to pay attention to the characteristics of the target audience that will be involved in environmental education activities in Conservation Units, observing how they interact with the CUs. From this, environmental education will be designed taking into account the particularities of both parties.

For Passos & Sato (2001), "The trajectory outlined for EA should look ahead, challenge, and by its very movement, advance, opening dimensions yet unseen, expanding horizons, and lending meaning to the very act of moving forward."

These are some alternatives that provide access to ways of thinking that lead society to understand the meanings of conservation, the pursuit of citizenship, aligned with the purposes of environmental education. From this, it is possible to infer that the Conservation Units may have more success in their propositions.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Protected Areas are important tools for biodiversity protection, but most of these areas are under strong anthropogenic pressure, whether due to the presence of human populations within the protected areas, or from adjacent communities and/or visitors, factors that represent a loss of environmental quality.

In this context, there is a lot of resistance from residents and visitors of these areas regarding the restrictions that govern the management of Conservation Units. Environmental education strengthens the protection process as it raises awareness among people through the exercise of citizenship.

Even though they are incipient and sporadic, environmental education actions are important and necessary; it is essential to expand these actions and seek partnerships that assist in the structuring and implementation of this type of work in communities.

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