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Teacher Education Students' Misconceptions on Sustainable Development and Nowadays Ecological Problems

The world's political leadership has adopted sustainable development as the leading model of social development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was launched in 2015 to eradicate poverty and pave the way for a better world of peace, prosperity, and opportunity for every person on the planet. Different forms of action are proposed for each area, including policy making, sectoral strategies, and the implementation of plans and projects. The proposed measures align with specific objectives, making their implementation measurable. Education for Sustainable Development enables students of all age groups to acquire the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary to address these interconnected global challenges. In modern society, characterized by rapid changes, environmental problems are becoming an increasingly serious challenge. Fast fashion, mass tourism, and sea pollution stand out as key factors with a negative impact on the environment. Fast fashion, with its emphasis on mass production and rapid consumption of clothes, significantly contributes to environmental pollution. Meanwhile, sea pollution, particularly microplastics, poses a serious threat to marine ecosystems. Although it brings economic benefits, tourism also often leads to the depletion of natural resources and the disruption of the ecological balance. Considering these challenges, educational institutions play a key role in shaping the attitudes and behaviour of young people, especially future teachers, who will continue to impart knowledge to new generations.

Teacher Education students in Split (generation 2020/2021-2023/2024) participated in a quantitative research study that employed the survey method. The primary objective of the study was to identify students' misconceptions about sustainable development, with a special emphasis on their environmental awareness and understanding of the impacts of fast fashion, tourism, and marine pollution on the environment. The results showed that students have misconceptions about the concept of sustainable development. A statement highlighting the importance of ensuring inclusion and quality education, as well as promoting lifelong learning, as a key goal of sustainable development reveals a divided opinion among students, which poses a significant challenge requiring ongoing efforts to deliver high-quality lifelong education. Furthermore, students in junior and senior years of study, as well as those who attended Comprehensive and Vocational high schools, showed no difference in their knowledge of sustainable development. However, Teacher Education students are very aware of environmental issues, but their attitudes and thoughts are not

consistent with their behaviour. To foster a deeper understanding of sustainable lifestyles and more informed environmental issues, additional educational reforms and curriculum enhancements are necessary to ensure comprehensive education within the context of primary and secondary schools, as well as for future teachers.

Keywords: sustainable development, Education for Sustainability, environmental issues, students, misconceptions