

## **Sustainability in Pictures: Photography as a Tool for Participatory Environmental Education**

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### **Abstract**

The urgency of addressing climate change, pollution and unsustainable practices highlights the need for innovative educational approaches that promote environmental literacy. Research highlights the importance of engaging younger generations in sustainability discussions, as they will play a crucial role in shaping the future. However, traditional teaching methods often fail to connect students' personal experiences to broader environmental issues in a meaningful way.

This research uses the Photovoice method with 5th and 6th grade students who took pictures illustrating energy waste, renewable energy sources and sustainable practices in their schools, homes and neighbourhoods. These images served as the basis for focus group discussions in which students analysed environmental challenges, their causes and possible solutions. Photovoice is proving to be a powerful participatory tool that encourages students to document their lived experiences, critically reflect on their role in sustainability, and actively engage in environmental discourse. By combining visual storytelling with structured reflection, this approach promotes critical thinking, participatory learning and sustainability awareness.

The expected outcomes of this research include increased environmental awareness among students, improved critical reflection on sustainability practices, and the development of actionable solutions to local environmental challenges. In addition, the results are expected to contribute to the broader discourse on integrating sustainability into educational curricula and could provide valuable insights for educators and policy makers. By equipping students with the knowledge and motivation to engage in environmental advocacy, the Photovoice method has significant potential to foster a generation of informed and responsible citizens committed to sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Critical thinking, Environmental literacy, Participatory education, Sustainability, Visual storytelling