

## **From Anthropocentrism to Ecocentrism: A Paradigm Shift and Its Relevance to Ecological Education**

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| ARTICLE INFO                                                                                                                                   | ABSTRACT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| <b>Keywords:</b><br>Ecological Crisis,<br>Paradigm,<br>Anthropocentrism,<br>Ecocentrism, Ecological<br>Education                               | The dangers of the ecological crisis can affect all aspects of human life, such as the environment, health, and social and economic aspects. In the environmental aspect, it is easy to find ecosystem destruction, species extinction, extreme natural disasters such as floods, landslides, and others. In the health aspect, the ecological crisis can cause infectious diseases due to pollution and water scarcity. Meanwhile, the social and economic impacts include the destruction of productive land and a food crisis that has the potential to cause conflict between people and threaten the economy. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the urgent role of both anthropocentrism and ecocentrism paradigms in changing human perspectives. In addition, it is to include the role of Ecological Education in filling the related paradigm shift from one that was originally centered on humans to nature as the center. The method for this study uses library research with the theory of reading paradigm shifts. The results of this study are the emergence of general human awareness to be able to see the environment as a partner whose existence is respected, no longer an entity that must be exploited completely. Thus, the most concrete and beneficial impact is the preservation of nature, and its ideal function that can be enjoyed by future generations. |
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## INTRODUCTION

The ecological crisis that is currently sweeping the world is clear evidence that the relationship between humans and nature has reached an unbalanced phase. According to a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2023), global temperatures have risen by an average of 1.1°C since the pre-industrial era, causing an increase in the intensity of ecological disasters such as droughts, floods, and forest fires in various parts of the world.<sup>1</sup>

In Indonesia, as reported by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK, 2024), deforestation covering an area of 257,384 hectares occurred in just one year. Meanwhile, river pollution and soil degradation continue to increase due to uncontrolled industrial and urbanization activities.<sup>2</sup> This fact further emphasizes that the perspective rooted in the anthropocentric paradigm, which places humans at the centre and as rulers of nature, has contributed significantly to the ecological crisis, not only locally but also globally.

The anthropocentric paradigm considers nature to be an object of exploitation for human interests alone. This view cannot be separated from the history of Western modernity, which emphasizes rationality and technological domination over the sustainability of nature. As a result, the relationship between humans and nature has become hierarchical and utilitarian. In other words, humans are allowed to control nature

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<sup>1</sup> “Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2023) Menunjukkan Bahwa Suhu Global Telah Meningkatkan Rata-Rata 1,1°C - Penelusuran Google,” accessed November 7, 2025, [https://www.google.com/search?q=Intergovernmental+Panel+on+Climate+Change+%28IPCC%2C+2023%29+menunjukkan+bahwa+suhu+global+telah+meningkat+rata-rata+1%2C1%2C%20B0C+&sca\\_esv=f9a4d5dbb28ed665&biw=1242&bih=575&tbm=nws&ei=HdsNacuBCsvDjuMP68mv6Ao&ved=0ahUKEwiLhKfl-t-QAxXLoWMGHevkC60Q4dUDCA4&uact=5&oq=Intergovernmental+Panel+on+Climate+Change+%28IPCC%2C+2023%29+menunjukkan+bahwa+suhu+global+telah+meningkat+rata-rata+1%2C1%2C%20B0C+&gs\\_lp=Egxnd3Mtd2l6LW5ld3MidkludGVyZ292ZXJubWVudGFsIFBhbmVsIG9uIENsaW1hdGUgQ2hhbmdlIChJUENDLCAYMDIzKSbtZW51bnp1a2thbiBiYW3YsBzdWh1IGdsb2JhbCB0ZWxhaCBtZW5pbmdrYXQgcmF0YS1yYXRhIDEsMcKwQyBI\\_yhQ2xVY2xVwAXgAkAEAmAEAoAEAqgEAuAEDyAEA-AEB-AECmAIAoAIAqAIAmAMLkgcAoAcAsgcAuAcAwgcAyAcA&sclient=gws-wiz-news](https://www.google.com/search?q=Intergovernmental+Panel+on+Climate+Change+%28IPCC%2C+2023%29+menunjukkan+bahwa+suhu+global+telah+meningkat+rata-rata+1%2C1%2C%20B0C+&sca_esv=f9a4d5dbb28ed665&biw=1242&bih=575&tbm=nws&ei=HdsNacuBCsvDjuMP68mv6Ao&ved=0ahUKEwiLhKfl-t-QAxXLoWMGHevkC60Q4dUDCA4&uact=5&oq=Intergovernmental+Panel+on+Climate+Change+%28IPCC%2C+2023%29+menunjukkan+bahwa+suhu+global+telah+meningkat+rata-rata+1%2C1%2C%20B0C+&gs_lp=Egxnd3Mtd2l6LW5ld3MidkludGVyZ292ZXJubWVudGFsIFBhbmVsIG9uIENsaW1hdGUgQ2hhbmdlIChJUENDLCAYMDIzKSbtZW51bnp1a2thbiBiYW3YsBzdWh1IGdsb2JhbCB0ZWxhaCBtZW5pbmdrYXQgcmF0YS1yYXRhIDEsMcKwQyBI_yhQ2xVY2xVwAXgAkAEAmAEAoAEAqgEAuAEDyAEA-AEB-AECmAIAoAIAqAIAmAMLkgcAoAcAsgcAuAcAwgcAyAcA&sclient=gws-wiz-news)

<sup>2</sup> “Kementerian Lingkungan Hidup Dan Kehutanan (KLHK, 2024) Mencatat Deforestasi Seluas 257.384 Hektar - Penelusuran Google,” accessed November 7, 2025, [https://www.google.com/search?sca\\_esv=f9a4d5dbb28ed665&q=Kementerian+Lingkungan+Hidup+dan+Kehutanan+\(KLHK,+2024\)+mencatat+deforestasi+seluas+257.384+hektar&tbm=nws&source=lnms&fbs=AIijpHyT\\_SxYVhARa94nMDCzZuVE0arryPEhLekpbC7r6xABFKLMG1ndy20DTaZoCITXw-5TKES38DRnSgkHqutbEY5BfINKZgOVJxMbPz3do6OUCSKboKGoSNsSltxyS8kf-MHfzJ0Bd1N9AfiVbOejJ5Zp9R54td-EzqwLMMUxZgCsOBSrbNwn5-Ka2cSfy1U4fMz7BNFlpk-\\_W0iychiegOAqccAN2Q&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiJrPbi-t-QAxWGzzgGHWinFisQ0pQJegQIFRAB&biw=1242&bih=575&dpr=1.1](https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=f9a4d5dbb28ed665&q=Kementerian+Lingkungan+Hidup+dan+Kehutanan+(KLHK,+2024)+mencatat+deforestasi+seluas+257.384+hektar&tbm=nws&source=lnms&fbs=AIijpHyT_SxYVhARa94nMDCzZuVE0arryPEhLekpbC7r6xABFKLMG1ndy20DTaZoCITXw-5TKES38DRnSgkHqutbEY5BfINKZgOVJxMbPz3do6OUCSKboKGoSNsSltxyS8kf-MHfzJ0Bd1N9AfiVbOejJ5Zp9R54td-EzqwLMMUxZgCsOBSrbNwn5-Ka2cSfy1U4fMz7BNFlpk-_W0iychiegOAqccAN2Q&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiJrPbi-t-QAxWGzzgGHWinFisQ0pQJegQIFRAB&biw=1242&bih=575&dpr=1.1)

and use it as they wish, whether for development, land expansion, or other purposes.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, this paradigm has become an unstoppable trend to this day.

In the context of education, this paradigm is also reflected in learning models that are only oriented towards achieving economic and technological competencies. In fact, many schools are very proud if their alumni are able to thrive in the world of technology and bring in a lot of economic opportunities. However, at the same time, ecological values and natural sustainability, which are actually more important, are often neglected. Given this fact, anthropocentric education tends to produce a generation that is considered intellectually intelligent but lacks ecological sensitivity and moral responsibility towards the environment, even though education should be the last bastion in producing a generation that is sensitive to the environment and capable of producing graduates who are not only concerned about nature but also become the driving force behind various concrete environmental conservation efforts.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, as a response to the previous paradigm, an alternative paradigm has emerged, namely ecocentrism, a paradigm that places all elements of life, including humans, animals, plants, and ecosystems, as part of a moral and existential unity that is interconnected. This paradigm shift from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism is not merely a conceptual change, but an ethical and spiritual transformation in viewing the meaning of human existence on earth.<sup>5</sup>

Based on the above background, several questions arise that will be the focus of this study. First, what are the characteristics of the anthropocentric paradigm that dominates human views of nature? Second, what exactly is behind the emergence of the ecocentric paradigm as a critique of anthropocentrism? Third, what is the relevance and implication of the paradigm shift from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism for ecological education?

The researcher will review all three in this study and attempt to bridge the roles of the two paradigms above, thereby contributing to an understanding of the importance of being able to distinguish and position the two paradigms according to their respective

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<sup>3</sup> Ronald E. Purser et al., "Limits to Anthropocentrism: Toward an Ecocentric Organization Paradigm?," *The Academy of Management Review* 20, no. 4 (1995): 1053, <https://doi.org/10.2307/258965>.

<sup>4</sup> Maila DH Rahiem, "Implementasi Pendidikan Lingkungan Hidup Di Raudhatul Athfal Nisa Fadhliyah Rahmani," *Jurnal Ilmiah Potensia* 8, no. 1 (2022): 12–25.

<sup>5</sup> Yusuf Siswantara et al., "Inklusif: Pertobatan Ekologis Melalui Pendidikan Karakter Religius," *Kajian Sastra Nusantara Linggau (KASTRAL)* 2, no. 2 (2022): 34–47.

roles and benefits.

## RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the author used the library research method, which is a research method conducted by reviewing various literature sources relevant to the study theme. This method does not involve direct data collection in the field but focuses on in-depth analysis of theories, concepts, and previous research results relevant to the researcher's study.<sup>6</sup>

Through library research, the researcher seeks to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issues being studied, identify research gaps, and strengthen the theoretical basis that will be used in analyzing the data.<sup>7</sup> The data sources used in this study include scientific books, national and international journal articles, previous studies, dissertation and thesis results, and relevant documents.

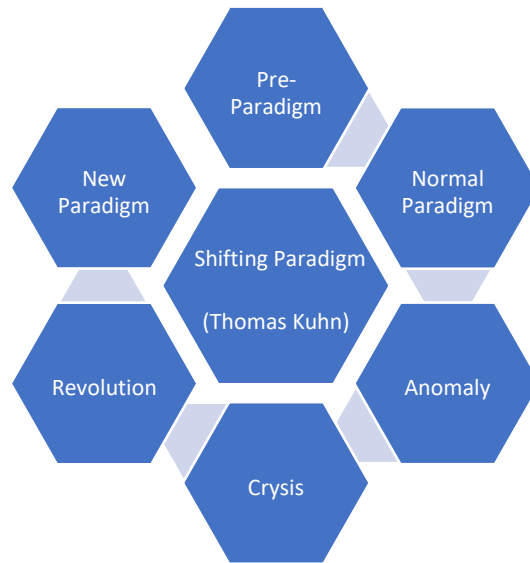
The steps taken in this literature study include: (1) determining the focus or theme of the research; (2) identifying and determining keywords for literature searches; (3) collecting library materials from various academic sources; (4) critically reading the contents of the literature; (5) analyzing and categorizing data based on themes and theories; and (6) compiling a synthesis of the study results to construct a scientific argument.

The reading theory used by the researcher in this study is Thomas Kuhn's Paradigm Shift theory. The scheme of this theory can be described as follows:

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<sup>6</sup> Dimas Assyakurrohim et al., "Metode Studi Kasus Dalam Penelitian Kualitatif," *Jurnal Pendidikan Sains Dan Komputer* 3, no. 01 (2022): 1–9.

<sup>7</sup> Mahanum Mahanum, "Tinjauan Kepustakaan," *ALACRITY: Journal of Education*, 2021, 1–12.



It can be explained through the following stages: Kuhn divides the development of science into several stages.<sup>8</sup>

#### **a. Pre-Paradigm**

At this stage, there is no agreement on basic theory among scientists, so scientists have their own personal opinions that have not been tested for validity in general and therefore cannot be categorized as a paradigm. Therefore, no matter how intelligent scientists are, they only have their own thoughts. In addition, many theories emerge but are still very personal in nature and can even be considered competitive, but in fact, they lack a clear direction. In the context of this research, at that time, there was no consensus on the importance of anthropocentrism as a paradigm, meaning that there was no paradigm that could be considered valid.

#### **b. Normal Science**

At this stage, there is already an agreed-upon dominant paradigm, meaning that the battle of discoveries and ideas possessed by each scientist has resulted in an agreement because it has passed the test of other scientists. In addition, at this stage, scientists work within the framework of that paradigm to "solve puzzles" and are

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<sup>8</sup> Iftahul Digarizki and Arif Al Anang, "Epistemologi Thomas S. Kuhn: Kajian Teori Pergeseran Paradigma Dan Revolusi Ilmiah," *Jurnal Humanitas* 7, no. 1 (2020): 23–34.

considered effective. It is during this period that the anthropocentric paradigm can be called a paradigm because it has been agreed upon by other scientists.

### **c. Anomalies**

Next is the emergence of phenomena that cannot be explained by the old paradigm (anthropocentrism). On the contrary, the old paradigm actually inspires the occurrence of negative phenomena within a community. In other words, the agreed-upon paradigm itself becomes an anomaly, something that was previously considered normal but, due to its increasing intensity, has become potentially dangerous.

### **d. Crisis**

In this context, as the anomalies worsen and more and more negative phenomena cannot be overcome, a crisis is inevitable. The result of this crisis is scientific anxiety and the urgent need to search for a new paradigm. This is because the old paradigm is considered ineffective in dealing with existing problems. In this context, it is because anthropocentrism is considered the only paradigm that ultimately gives rise to many ecological crises, such as floods, forest fires, and others.

### **e. Scientific Revolution**

In this phase, the old paradigm is considered to be ineffective in responding to facts in the field, because it is considered to no longer be a solution and even tends to have negative connotations. Ultimately, a new paradigm emerges that is ready to replace or at least complement the old paradigm. The new paradigm is considered appropriate because it offers a balanced view between the proportion of nature and the role of humans. In other words, humans may utilize their environment but may not exploit it.

### **f. New Paradigm**

Ultimately, the scientific community shifted to a new framework of thinking or paradigm that was better able to explain the phenomena occurring. This paradigm is

ecocentrism, which is more effective than the previous paradigm. After adopting this paradigm, a new cycle began. This new paradigm gave rise to many different perspectives, including ecological education.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Characteristics of the Anthropocentric Paradigm

The anthropocentric paradigm is actually a classic perspective in human history, which places humans at the centre of everything, including the relationship between nature and humans. In this perspective, the value and existence of nature is determined by the extent to which it benefits humans.<sup>9</sup> This view grew alongside the development of rationalism and the industrial revolution in the West, which was characterized by human domination over nature through science and technology. Thus, it can be said that the main actor in determining the fate of nature is in the hands of humans. If humans are just, then there will be ecological justice; conversely, if humans are evil, then ecological justice will surely disappear.

The anthropocentric paradigm is rooted in the classical philosophical tradition that strictly separates humans (*subjects*) and nature (*objects*). Descartes' view of "*Cogito ergo sum*" affirms the superiority of humans as thinking beings who have the right to control nature, which is considered passive and worthy of control. Worse still, in the economic and political spheres, this paradigm is manifested in a capitalist system that pursues unlimited economic growth, which unfortunately often sacrifices ecological balance.<sup>10</sup>

The implications for the ecological crisis are very real and dire. Humans brutally exploit natural resources without considering environmental sustainability. Trees and forests that provide oxygen are cut down, rivers and seas are polluted by waste, the air is polluted by production machines and vehicles, and biodiversity is declining dramatically and becoming increasingly rare. Thus, anthropocentrism is not only an ethical issue, but also an epistemological one because it shapes the way humans think, separating themselves from the environment that they should protect and respect.

Furthermore, the question that must be answered is why does the anthropocentric

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<sup>9</sup> Dorothy Kleffel, "Environmental Paradigms: Moving Toward an Ecocentric Perspective," *Advances in Nursing Science* 18, no. 4 (1996): 1.

<sup>10</sup> David P. Robertson and R. Bruce Hull, "Public Ecology: An Environmental Science and Policy for Global Society," *Environmental Science & Policy* 6, no. 5 (2003): 399–410.

paradigm dominate human views of nature? The answer is because the anthropocentric paradigm gained scientific legitimacy through the development of the scientific revolution and industrialization. Descartes' thinking, as explained above, became the starting point for a mechanistic view of nature. Nature is no longer understood as a living entity with intrinsic value, but rather as a system that can be controlled and exploited for human progress.<sup>11</sup> This conception gave birth to an instrumental ethos, namely the belief that the value of nature lies solely in its usefulness to humans (*instrumental value of nature*).

The dominance of the anthropocentric paradigm was also reinforced by the ideology of modernity, which glorified material progress, efficiency, and economic growth. In the context of development, nature was reduced to nothing more than an *economic* resource, while ecological sustainability was often sacrificed for the sake of accelerating industrialization and global market interests. Economic rationality based on utilitarian logic has shifted ecological awareness to exploitative awareness.

In addition, social and cultural structures perpetuate the anthropocentric view through education systems, the media, and development policies that emphasize the superiority of humans over nature. Ecological values that should foster a sense of responsibility towards the environment are not widely internalized in modern consumerist culture. As a result, the relationship between humans and nature has lost its spiritual and ethical dimensions.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, the dominance of the anthropocentric paradigm did not emerge suddenly, but is the result of a long historical, epistemological, and cultural process. It was built through the interaction between rationalistic philosophy, anthropocentric theology, and a modern economic system oriented towards unlimited growth. Therefore, efforts to shift this view towards an ecocentric paradigm require fundamental changes in the way humans understand themselves, their position in the universe, and their moral responsibility for the sustainability of life.

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<sup>11</sup> Charles C. Adams, "The Relation of General Ecology to Human Ecology," *Ecology* 16, no. 3 (1935): 316–35.

<sup>12</sup> Gordan Matas and Ivo Donelli, "Ecological Systems Theory," *Zbornik Radova Filozofskog Fakulteta u Splitu*, ahead of print, January 1, 2014, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5\\_101080](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5_101080).

## Ecocentrist Criticism of Anthropocentrism

As a reaction to the ecological crisis caused by the anthropocentric view, the ecocentric paradigm emerged, which places nature at the center of ethics and morality.<sup>13</sup> This paradigm is based on the belief that all living entities, such as humans, animals, plants, soil, and ecosystems, have *intrinsic* value that must be respected, not merely *instrumental* value that is positioned as a complement to human interests.

Through the concept of *deep ecology*, Naess emphasizes the importance of ecological "self-realization," which is the awareness that human identity is one with the universe. Similarly, Leopold (1949) in *The Land Ethic* states that humans are members of the biotic community who have a moral obligation to maintain the balance and integrity of ecosystems.<sup>14</sup> This is because humans are endowed with the potential for reason, which enables them to view things honestly and objectively.

The ecocentric paradigm actually demands quite extreme changes in the way humans think and act towards nature. It is not only about conservation or environmental preservation, but also about a transformation of consciousness, that human well-being cannot be separated from the well-being of nature. In practice, this view has given rise to various movements such as *environmental education*, *green pedagogy*, and *ecological citizenship*.

The paradigm shift from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism is not only a conceptual change, but also a reflection of the moral and spiritual crisis of modern humanity. Capra (2002) calls it *the turning point*, namely the turning point of human civilization from the logic of domination to the logic of connectedness.<sup>15</sup>

This paradigm shift demands the emergence of a new ecological consciousness that views nature not as an object of exploitation, but as an existential partner. In this context, humans are required to develop *ecological wisdom*, which is the wisdom to live in harmony with other life systems.

This shift also has an epistemological dimension: science is no longer seen as a tool for controlling nature, but as a means of understanding the order and harmony of

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<sup>13</sup> David Molina-Motos, "Ecophilosophical Principles for an Ecocentric Environmental Education," *Education Sciences* 9, no. 1 (2019): 37, <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci9010037>.

<sup>14</sup> Chukwuma Joseph Nnaemeka et al., "Arne Naess on Environmental Ethics & Its Implications for National Development," *Specialty Journal of Agricultural Sciences* 2, nos. 2–2016 (2016): 77–97.

<sup>15</sup> Purser et al., "Limits to Anthropocentrism."

ecosystems. Thus, the ecocentric paradigm can become the philosophical basis for sustainable development that is not only oriented towards economic growth, but also ecological balance and justice for future generations.

### **Ecocentrism and its relevance to Ecological Education**

The ecocentric paradigm has strong relevance to ecological education, as education is a strategic medium for building ecological awareness and behavior. According to Tilbury (1995), ecological education aims to foster *awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills, and participation* to address environmental issues.<sup>16</sup>

Ecological education based on ecocentrism emphasizes a holistic, integrative, and value-based approach. Students are not only taught ecological concepts cognitively, but are also invited to experience and feel their connection with nature through direct activities, such as conservation projects, green schools, or ecosystem observation.

In addition, the ecocentric paradigm also encourages transformative education, which is education that changes the awareness and behavior of students to become active participants in preserving the sustainability of the earth.<sup>17</sup> In the Indonesian context, the application of this paradigm is in line with the vision of *Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)* launched by UNESCO (2020) and integrated into the national environmental education policy.

Thus, ecocentric-based ecological education not only teaches knowledge about the environment but also shapes ecological character based on empathy, responsibility, and balance in living with all living beings, including the environment.<sup>18</sup>

The implementation of ecocentric-based ecological education can be realized through:

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<sup>16</sup> Robert B. Stevenson, "Schooling and Environmental Education: Contradictions in Purpose and Practice," *Environmental Education Research* 13, no. 2 (2007): 139–53, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504620701295726>.

<sup>17</sup> Michael J. Harte, "Ecology, Sustainability, and Environment as Capital," *Ecological Economics* 15, no. 2 (1995): 157–64.

<sup>18</sup> Jesse Gale, "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: In That Order.," *Clinical & Experimental Ophthalmology* 51, no. 1 (2023), <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&profile=ehost&scope=site&authtype=crawler&jrnl=14426404&asa=N&AN=161743767&h=fQTcwCYIYZCknxIkwnG2FQhuq9Ut4XrPNdDeKn4sXXYUq4agOdFKQ%2BBiCmVv%2BhvkC1mRk%2FTBjKt9t3bEPobcw%3D%3D&crl=c>.

1. Integrating ecological values into the curriculum, for example, by incorporating themes of sustainability, biodiversity, and ecological responsibility into every subject, including religious studies.
2. Project-based learning where students are directly involved in environmental conservation activities such as the 3 R (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), reforestation, and waste management (ecobricks).
3. Ecological character education shapes attitudes of empathy, responsibility, and independence in protecting the environment.

This approach is in line with the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) program launched by UNESCO (2020), which emphasizes the transformation of values and behaviors towards sustainable living. In the Indonesian context, this paradigm can strengthen the vision of *the Pancasila Student Profile*, which is characterized by mutual cooperation, critical thinking, and ecological justice.

## CONCLUSION

In the perspective of Thomas Kuhn's paradigm shift theory, the change from anthropocentric to ecocentric is a form of scientific revolution as well as a revolution in consciousness. The global ecological crisis is an anomaly that marks the failure of the old paradigm and paves the way for the birth of a new paradigm (ecocentrism) that is considered more in line with the sustainability of life. The ecocentric paradigm offers a holistic and ethical view of nature, emphasizing the connection between humans and all living things. In fact, this relationship occurs because of the reciprocity between the two.

The practical implications of this shift are evident in the importance of developing ecological education that is not only oriented towards knowledge, but also towards the formation of ecological attitudes and behaviors. Thus, the ecocentric paradigm becomes the foundation for efforts to build a generation with smart ecological character, capable of maintaining harmony between humans, nature, and God.

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