

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ECOLOGIC EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE HUMAN BEHAVIOUR(*)

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Abstract. *The ecologic crisis is a general problem that is why it must be solved all over the world and the main causes of this degradation of the environment, are because there is not a balance between the economical reality and the ecological requirements. The protection of the environment has become the most important world-wide problem, that is why the ecologic education has become an important component of the education. The pupils' training as future citizens with an ecologic conscience and behaviour has become very important and the protection and preventing measures of the degradation of the environment will be more eloquent and lasting, the sooner the ecological activity will start in their mind. Nature must be respected not dominated, because it is a huge whole, in which the human being is forced to integrate in an harmonious way. Children will be the real beneficiary of our concerning about the environment if the objectives of the environment protection will be fulfilled all over the world at all levels.*

Keywords: the environment factors, pollution, the environment protection, the ecological education

1. The pollution and the environment

The pollution, as a world-wide problem is the prerogative of our century. The economical development has determined the increasing of the resources request, these being affected in such a manner that some of them are in danger of disappearing. The environment factors: water, air, ground are exposed to human aggressive activity, and their degradation leaves a mark on the quality of life. Human has the most important responsibility for the pollution of the environment because it is the result of the physiological activity, but especially of his social-economical one. But if we are referring to pollution in general and to its harmful effects, it is useful to remember that beside auto-pollution the environment also suffers three kinds of pollution:

- The physical pollution, generated by radiations, nuclear and thermic accidents and also by noises;
- The biological pollution, determined by micro-biological contaminations, as a result of the abusive or accidental introducing of some species of plants or animals;
- The chemical pollution, determined by some substances poured into nature.

*To accomplish this work, the author has been financed through POSTDRU/6/1.5/S/23/2008.

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With about two hundred years ago, for the necessity of saving a rare species they adopted the first measures to protect the environment, but with the passing years the motifs have been diversified: the global heating, the getting thinner of the ozone stratum, the acid rains, the pollution.

Nowadays, according to the climate changes all over the world, the aspects of the environment protection are a part of the European Union politics. These contain more than three hundred legal measures (norms, decisions, arrangements), which have tried to solve all the problems according to the environment, establishing a series of objectives:

1. Environment protection and improving its quality;
2. Public health protection;
3. Prudent and rational using of the natural resources;
4. Promoting the measures all over the world about the solving of the environment problems;
5. Integrating the environment dimension in all of the important domains of activity;
6. Enlarging the instruments spectrum (education and training, technological development, incorporating the environment costs in carpets, financial mechanisms) used to implement The Environment Politics;
7. Dividing the responsibilities for all the social actors: government, companies, citizens and consumers;
8. Improving the present legislation;
9. Making people responsible and also helping them to change their attitude about the environment and its problems;
10. Taking into consideration the environment problems in using the land – the planning and the management of the decisions;
11. Preventing pollution;
12. International relationships;
13. The development of the environment protection research;
14. Identifying the economical resources;
15. Climate changing;
16. Nature and bio-diversity;
17. Environment and health;
18. Natural resources and deserts management.

Man realized how much the quality of life was affected through the changing of the quality of environment, late enough, while he has tried for a long time to change environment according to his personal needs, although it is well known that all the creatures adapt themselves to the conditions offered by nature. The environment protection has become a “problem”, especially in the last years, when the heating resources have been seriously affected, so that the future of

mankind is uncertain if we do not adopt some measures to protect environment.

The ecological crisis is a general problem and it must be solved all over the world, because the main causes for this degradation due to the inexistence of a balance between economical reality and the ecological requirements. That is why MAN has understood that EARTH and its resources are limited, and that he belongs to this ecosystem and any degradation made in a specific place can have effects for the whole system.

Our society focused on “profit rush,” being ignored the social costs of the development. It is time for all of us to be aware of the fact that saving and protecting environment must be taking into account as a main organizing objective of the new civilization. People are tempted to use resources, substances and energy, for their own satisfaction without thinking of the consequences.

The economical development had an exponential increasing, such of development affected the environment as follows:

- biologically, pollution with harmful substances, sound pollution etc.
- functionally, damaging the three components of the environment: water, air and ground.
- aesthetically, creating some modified landscapes.

Mankind cannot give up economical development, but we have to be aware of the maintaining of a good quality of environment. The exploitation of the resources should be made so that they can regenerate and conserve all the time.

Our ideals and fulfilments materialize in “nature”, which we often forget to look after, to respect, being the main inheritance which we leave to our successors. Ignoring these aspects will lead to some ecological lack of balance but also to increase the gravity of those already present, with bad consequences on people’s quality of life, but also on the economical development.

Businesses should be more efficient, producing the same quantities of products with fewer materials, producing in this way fewer quantities of waste materials. They affect in a violent way the environment (pollution). The economical development should be based on a rational administration of the resources, in agreement with nature.

We should be optimistic, to look with an open-mind to the future and to act positively, to think about the things we can initiate and we can do to live in a healthy environment. Nature has protected man since its appearance, offering him whatever he needed for his own living, that is why man should also offer nature love and respect. We should not forget that environment is a system and as any system it has a structure and an organizing, and a correct functioning of it provides man’s development.

The protection of the environment has become a main world-wide problem, that is why all the inhabitants of this planet should assume this responsibility. From the point of view of the importance, the environment protection has become the second problem in Europe, after the social one.

2. The education and the environment protection

In 1995 it was also adopted in our country “The Law of the Environment Protection” (no: 137/1995), which considers nature, the centre of the modern civilization and also admits the right of all of us to live in a healthy environment. The successful implementing of the environment politics is determined by the education and the training of people to protect environment. Through the minister’s order M.E.C.T. was approved to be included in the schedule of the optional object “Ecological education and environment protection”. It addresses to: pre-school education, elementary and gymnasium education, containing syllabus and auxiliary materials. Through the contents which suggests, through their undertaking ways, through the using of some interactive strategies, through the promotion of some values, which are managed by the community school asked by society, this optional discipline is a valuable element of the curriculum to the school decision. The optional: “Ecological education and environment protection” has an interdisciplinary aspect and it has been designed for one hour per week, teachers having the possibility to organize the contents in learning units according to their specific and pupils ‘age and individual features.

The general and the reference objectives determine the formation of some skills and attitudes related to the environment problems and protection. These objectives have been established for each education series as follows:

The pre-school education:

1. Knowing the environment through stimulating to investigate the surrounding reality;
2. Building up and rehearsing some practical skills to achieve some functional objectives, practical-useful, from recycling materials;
3. Building up a positive attitude towards nature by carrying out some ecological education activities.

The elementary-school education:

1. Understanding and using the elementary concepts about the environment protection;
2. Building up and rehearsing the exploitation / investigation capacities of the environment;
3. Building up a motivating and responsible attitude towards the maintaining and improving the quality of the environment.

The gymnasium education:

1. Using some notions, concepts and elements specific to the education for the protection of the environment;
2. Improving the investigating capacity of reality;
3. Assuming and practicing a responsible behaviour towards the environment.

The ecological education has become in the later years, an important component of education. The role of school is to educate, to train, to influence children so that they can integrate themselves in the social life, according to its exigencies. Through a tight relationship with the other components of the education, it can have real effects in children's behaviour. Its purpose is to train citizens, conscious and preoccupied of the environment in which they live, trying to understand it and to protect it. It does not ignore the classical objects, it has a tight relationship with them. Concerning the integrating of the education for the protection of the environment in the educative process, this is made in a different way, according to the age and the training level of the pupils. School offers a proper space for the training of the pupils both educative and instructive, that is why an important requirement is the training of pupils with a good ecological conception and behaviour. In the first years at school it is very important the impact with the environment, and the teachers should train their pupils to have self -ecological education and instruction.

3. Projects to change our behaviour towards the environment

The purpose of the ecological education is to lead pupils to understand the fact that the man's life, the future generations' life depends on the care we take towards the environment. An efficient method with visible results is the pupils' taking part in the ecological activities. It is well known their availability to discover new things, and the finality is in their behaviour and attitude towards the environment: more protective, more responsible.

During each activity, children are put in different states such as: small specialists, investigators, they are responsible, they involve themselves, finally adopting an ecological attitude and behaviour, contributing to building up their own valences of the EGO. Schools had a positive answer to these challenges and they initiated a series of projects and activities at all levels through which they intend to increase pupils' interest about the environment problems. Here are some of them and their objectives:

• “Ecological Education – The Education for Life“ (Suceava)

A project coordinated by the Speleology Foundation, The Speo Bucovina, addressed both for pupils and teachers, and its purpose was to make pupils responsible, as future European citizens, of the relationship established between

environment and man, and also of their involving in the protection of the environment quality taking into account the ecological lack of balance and the major climate changing.

- **“Together for the future of the Earth!” (Argeş)**

Symposium coordinated by The County Scholar Inspectorate Argeş and School no. 11 “Mihai Eminescu” – Piteşti in the “ECO – SCHOOL world project.” Its purpose being to promote the ecological education preoccupations in schools.

- **“The Education for the Environment” (Bistriţa)**

The project was coordinated by The County Scholar Inspectorate Bistriţa and its purpose was to increase the ecological education rate, by respecting and protecting the nature being aware of the main pollution sources but also of the methods to diminish and to stop the pollution.

- **“The International Polar Year – the most important searching program in the world” (Dâmbovită)**

Symposium coordinated by “Matei Gr. Vlădeanu” school, Căndeşti-Vale, the main themes being: the global heating on Earth, causes, effects, the melting of the icebergs, the uncontrolled cutting of the trees, the water pollution.

- **“The Ecological Education for orphan children in the asylums in Bucharest” (Bucureşti)**

The project took place in the “Chance for life” asylum in Bucharest and had the purpose to increase our preoccupation for the environment problems and also to promote some activities to reduce the quantities of waste materials.

- **“The protection of vitality, of diversity and Earth’s beauty with the Eco-school world-wide program” (Dolj)**

Project coordinated by The County Scholar Inspectorate Dolj is suggesting: whole community being aware of maintaining the health of the environment and as well as one’s health; identification of teenagers’ responsibility strategies concerning maintaining clean the environment; presenting the ecological principles and durable development of human life.

- **“The Earth is our home” (Mureş)**

National Ecological Education Contest, booked in Educative Activities Calendar of MECI, developed with the help of CCDG, APM Mureş and Decesfera Printing House. The competitors make clothes of biological materials or of utility refuse.

- **“Eco-Art Contest “ (Neamţ)**

Belongs to the project about “Carrying on of the tradition through creative-

recycling” and has as objectives: assuming the notions of “ waste” and “ utility refuse materials”; creating a system integrated by selective collecting, management and capitalization of utility refuse, efficient from the ecological and economical point of view; capitalization of utility refuse at the hours of “ Practical abilities” and “ Technological education” in elementary series; increasing the awareness degree of children concerning the environment problems.

• **“The life of Earth depends on us! “ (Iași)**

Inter-county symposium having as partners The County Scholar Inspectorate in Iași, The Environment Protection Agency and Eco – School “ Otilia Cazimir” Iași. This addresses to the teachers but also to pupils. The activities are about presenting some scientific intercourses and practical works.

• **“Green ideas – the bio – bag” (Dolj)**

The national project – Recycle, Re-use – is based on a selective collection and a creative recycling of wastes, leading to a change of behaviour towards environment launching: “Eco friendly”, that situates in the category – education for a durably development. The Eco Industry uses recycling materials, and the materials can be introduced in the production circuit. The project suggests us to learn how to recycle materials in a modern, efficient and durable way. The project objectives: recycling, re-using the bio-degradable materials to produce some natural products to replace the plastic bags or to adorn the educational and familial place with natural products; the propagation of some ecological, civilized attitudes being aware of the role of globalization to stop the global heating.

All these presented projects wanted to achieve a new form of training, undertook interdisciplinary, which can be put in practice through specific methods by every school/person no matter of the age.

The remarks in the project are considered activities with an almost precise structure which includes two main parts of the knowing process: the contemplation of the reality, the organized perception of the objects, establishing a simple generalization on the basis of those percept to make a general representation.

To know nature, the environment in which he lives, the child should be put to action directly, to observe and to inter-react with the objects and the phenomena at all their aspects and relations.

In school all the objects, both the realistic ones (Biology, Geography, Physics and Chemistry) and also the humanistic ones (History, Psychology, Sociology), contribute to develop pupils some skills, necessary to understand that environment and human are inseparable, and the negative effects of human’s actions against environment will affect him later.

Conclusions:

1. The necessary conditions for life are ensured by environment which is polluted every day in an aggressive way, that is why the Earth protection and the fight against pollution need international cooperation.
2. Pupils' education represents a long time investment, and the actions to protect the environment and to prevent its degradation will be more eloquent and durable the sooner the ecological activity will start in their minds.
3. Through implementing these projects, children have started to understand how important is to protect the environment in which they live, changing their behaviour towards nature.

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