



TEACHING THE SUBJECT TEACHING METHODS OF NATURE AND SOCIETY STUDIES IN THE FUNCTION OF ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION

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SYNOPSIS

In this text we give routes how is implemented ecological content in subject of methodic on teaching for nature and society, which will help people, especially young population, to get knowledge how they can assess the value of ecological situation, to realized appositely or rather to get ecological behavior.

Also we give and routes how to help students and wider region to discover real reason for ecological and developing problems – building ecological, devolutionary and population dimension in educational process in Balkan country. We expect that ecological education will be lasting process and important factor in future scientifically exploration, which will contribute for real learning environment which will serve in their entire live.

Ecological education is an important educational component for mankind in general that enables reaching the level of awareness of the environment encouraging critical thinking, building up ability, resourcefulness for individual study of ecological culture, thus enriching knowledge of ecological information, their strategies, goals and tasks. Ecological education is not a separate part of ecological action, enlightenment lasting only a few days, or a seminar lasting several hours, but, on the contrary, it is an incessant social activity finishing at the moment when all citizens become sentient guardians of their environment. This education can help to achieve a safe, clean and perspective world that will provide social, economic and cultural progress, tolerance and international cooperation.

In the last years the interest for the pedagogization of the environment grows together with ecological problems. This is discussed at increasingly more frequent scientific conferences and meetings. Numerous researches of ecological issues

indicate that ecological education must not be entrusted solely to schools. Beside school, family, mass media and work environment are important factors for the development and shaping of ecological awareness.¹

A task is being put in front of modern ecological education to prepare and educate a person who will not by his/her action pollute the environment, but, on the contrary, who will create pleasant conditions for its further development and improvement.

The primary goal of ecological education is creating and establishing harmony between nature and society. It is about prevention that will be realized by means of qualitative placement of ecological culture, moral and ethics. As we need "ecology of soul and ecology of thoughts" as well as environment ecology. The needs are compelling, but they will be meaningful and authentic provided they come out of us.

Ecological education means favoring a new life style, new ethical-cultural values, and a new free but also responsible person. This must not be limited only to one given population (school, student, expert) but its lifelong consumers should be members of all generations. Apart from this, ecological education should have primarily global character.

Bringing up a person responsible towards nature starts from the earliest age in the family, preschool institutions, school, and it continues throughout his/her life. However, the greatest results of an appropriate attitude to the environment are achieved by means of education in schools.

School and teachers can do a lot in educating about the environment; they can play the main role in mobilizing and arousing pupils to act upon the development of this segment, which is of great importance for human life. We should understand that our pupils and citizens generally know little about the level of pollution of the environment in our country; according to international standards and agreements each individual, regardless his/her age, sex, religion and nationality has the right to be informed about the condition of the environment. This is well illustrated by the words of the Bulgarian author Cicilija Rangelova who, in the paper "My rights and responsibilities in school" writes that pupils should: "learn about their rights and responsibilities, laws of human moral and aesthetic rights that are not written down in any special documents but in the ethics of human mutual behavior, regardless of their age, sex, race, and nationality".²

Every man has the right to live in a healthy and progressive environment. Creating a healthy environment should be the goal of our society, our schools and respective institutions such as the Ministry of Ecology, Ministry of Education, and many other non-governmental organizations. As we all enjoy this right, we should all demand it and practice it.

¹ Vasovic, V., *Ethical-ecological education*, 32. national conference of quality, Kragujevac, 19-21 May 2005

² Cicilija Rangelova, *My rights and responsibilities in school*, Civic education, Sofia, 2000, p. 87

The program of ecological education refers to: children, pupils, teachers in preschool institutions, teachers in elementary and secondary education, students at universities, and all other citizens.³

Visiting schools we can notice different levels of knowledge about the issues concerning the environment. Most pupils know about the consequences of pollution, but there is still need to initiate new ideas about what they can do alone, as individuals, to shape themselves into aware guardians of their environment and wider.

The goal of ecological education is arousing ecological awareness, behavior and life style related to the environment. Thus ecological education comprises four main components "cognitive domain, affective domain, responsible ecological behavior and assumption of personal responsibility". That is why as pedagogical researchers we should be interested in changes coming from pupils who are influenced by teaching and learning. These changes can be classified into three basic categories: cognitive, affective and motor. The first are connected with reproduction or recognition of knowledge and with the development of intellectual abilities and skills. Affective requirements are contained in the goals where changes of interest and attitudes, as well as development of evaluation and adequate adaptation are described. The third area contains motor skills.

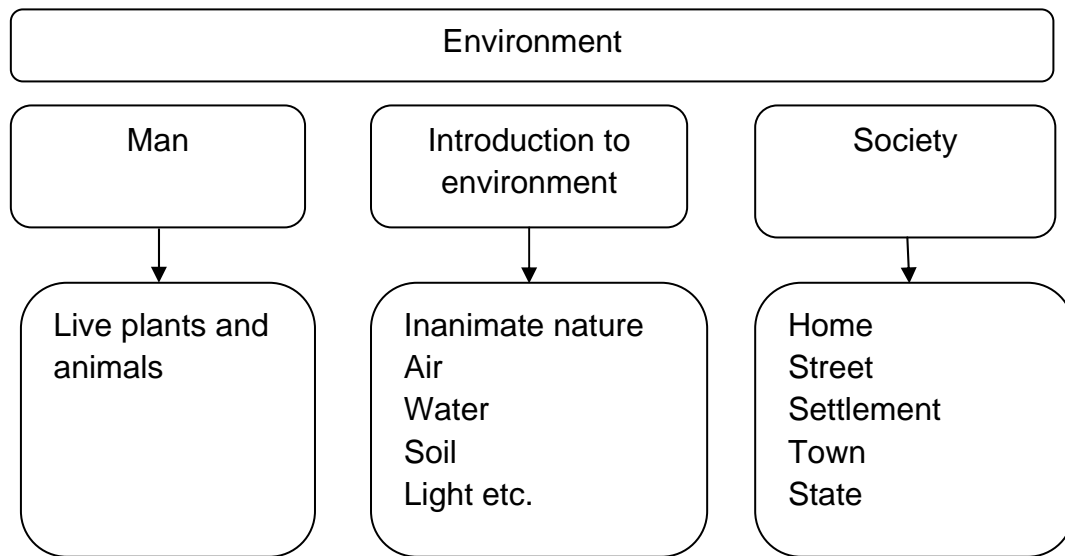
When we speak about conscious knowledge and need for ecological education, then there are no dilemmas about the fact that these habits can be most easily accepted by pupils in the first four years of elementary school through the subject nature and society. We say this because a great part of the contents about natural and social environment are contained in this subject. Through teaching this subject, we can initiate new ideas about how to get insight into all the dangers influencing environment pollution not only theoretically, but also in a practical and concrete way.

For a great number of pupils, their personal world is usually small and limited to their home, school, street, playgrounds, and the homes of their wider family. At a very early age pupils can be exposed to a variety of risks of dangers coming from their surrounding, from natural phenomena and processes, and these risks are increasingly more frequent and wide-spread

Teaching contents of Nature and Society creates conditions for gradual discovery of mutual relations and dependence between plant and animal world, between live and inanimate nature, and the meaning of human actions in maintaining balance in a society.

This is how the structure of the environment area, which is base for ecological education in elementary school, would look like, especially represented in the programs of the subjects Introduction to the environment and Introduction to the society.

³ Expert group of ANORM, Ecological education as a world problem, Educational Crossroads, 2003, p. 52



The anticipated teaching contents, goals and tasks, their definition based on the environment where pupils spend time daily and act from school and family. Through these contents, goals and tasks, pupils can observe processes and phenomena in nature and society and, at the same time, pupils will be enabled to acquire habits about how to act towards the surrounding nature in a moral, aesthetical and ethical manner.

Basic goals of ecological education are: pupils' acquiring knowledge about building ecological culture, insight and behavior

The tasks of the subject Introduction to the environment and Introduction to the society can be listed as:

- Motivation for studying the environment
- Learning a knowledge system about the environment and the man's place in it, creating and knowing how to apply knowledge and skills for collecting new information
- Forming personal and civic responsibility towards other citizens in the social

Such formulated goals and tasks are the starting point for determining the contents of ecological education in these two subjects.

- System of knowledge about nature, society and mutual relations among man, society and

- System of skills and habits of noticing the environment and living in accordance with it

- System of laws, standards, rules and values that determine the role and place of man in the environment

- Actions for studying, noticing and determining the environment

Lately, because of more current problems concerning global ecological problems and catastrophes, there is need for deeper and more detailed study of ecological contents in elementary school. The actuality of the problems imposes the need for teachers to teach, organize and apply parts of these contents with their pupils in school-related activities, although they are partly comprised in regular teaching.

There are three kinds of school-related activities that are realized in the frames of teaching the subjects Introduction to environment and Society, and they are individual, collective and mass.

<p>Individual</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading ecological literature suitable for this age • Growing plants and animals • Keeping a nature calendar • Collecting natural materials • Herbarium • Aquarium
<p>Collective</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecological games for teaching subject Introduction to the environment and society • Organizing excursions for observing the environment • Perceiving natural phenomena, objects and processes • Excursions for enabling students to comprehend natural resources of their country (streams, rivers, lakes, mountains, valleys, plains, national parks, mineral springs and spas, visits to the Zoo, etc.) • Visits to medical institutions
<p>Mass</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing actions marking the day of ecology (collecting old paper, waste, cleaning schoolyards, classrooms) • Mountaineering actions (that help pupils become familiar with cartographical literacy: orientation in space and time, recognition of sides of the world, familiarizing with the relief, etc.) • Visits to experts who are professionally interested in ecology • Publishing ecological school papers • Forestation of bare regions and taking care of them • Organizing workshops for debates about ecology

Finally, we would like to mention that great attention should be paid to the representation of ecological contents in schools' curricula, as a country that does not have any tradition in ecological education, ecological culture, or is not able to realize it in its educational system, is a country with a risky future, and without a successful perspective. Ecological education is not an innate characteristic, but it begins to be learnt at the earliest age, in all life situations, and has immense importance for the survival of human society.

Ecological education is necessary to prevent further disturbance of the biospherical balance at the relation man – nature, and to establish it where it is possible in the highest possible way.

All these requirements will be realized if ecological education and behavior is given more meaning and so people, especially young generations, would be able to learn and evaluate ecological situations, react accordingly, in a nutshell, behave ecologically. International standards and programs could be successfully realized if they were included into national programs, i.e. into school curricula of every country, of course, according to needs and conditions, and if everybody was included in their realization: pupils, their teachers and all others.

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