

## **DIDACTICAL - METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOLUTION OF ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AT PRESCHOOL INSTITUTIONS**

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**Abstract:** The ecological crisis, arising as a result of the highest aspirations of mankind for the production of goods, is getting wider and wider. The significance of the problem and a real threat to the environment, leads us to conclude, that today more than ever before, there is a need to develop environmental awareness and culture from the earliest period of life. This means that contemporary environmental issues should have a significant place and role in the organization of educational work in kindergartens. The need to start with environmental education at the preschool level results from the psychophysical characteristics of child development, and the fact that this is a period when the foundations for future personality are being formed.

Taking into account the above listed requirements and findings, we intend to work on pointing out the importance of the environment studies in the course of institutional preschool education, and focus our attention on certain didactic-methodological assumptions and conditions, which should be respected, and to ensure the implementation of the environmental education in preschool period.

**Keywords:** ecological education, preschool, preschool period, the environment...

### **Introduction**

The time in which we live is characterized by rapid scientific and technological, socio-economic and cultural changes. These changes have multiple effects on the environment, but also on the knowledge of a new individual and social need, which indicates the need for ongoing review and improvement of the quality and efficiency of the educational system as a whole, and thus pre-school education as a component part.

In a complex and universal system of environmental protection,

environmental education has a very important role, which in the broadest sense is a process of "permanent acquisition of environmental knowledge, concepts and skills, while developing environmental awareness, culture, and behavior in the working environment in order to preserve, protect and, if possible, improve the future of the communities". [6] These requirements impose the need for Greening the process of education, and its essence is reflected in the introduction of ideas, concepts, principles and approaches at all levels and in all forms of educational work.

The preschool period is one of the most important periods in the development of personality and the results, that are achieved, depend on the success of the later stages of the educational work. It also means that the preschool period is an important period for learning about the environment, especially since "there is no age limit below at which children cannot be educated and taught the environmental issues". [2] Preschools are thus playing a very important role as an integral part of the educational system, which start educational activities with children from 3 years to school age, which leads us to the conclusion that the development of environmental awareness and environmentally friendly behavior requires that environmental education to become the goal of educational activities in them.

## 1. Developing the understanding of ecological education

In the second half of the 20th century, many ecological problems caused by the ecological crisis, which arose as a result of the highest aspirations of mankind for the production of goods, imposed the need for a reconsideration of the role of a man in the world around him. However, the awareness and knowledge of ecological issues are more recent achievements. On the contrary the pursuit of environmental protection has always existed. This statement causes us to reflect on the problem that can be found in the works of ancient philosophers and thinkers (Aristotle, Hippocrates, Democritus), and in the works of some writers of ancient Rome, along with such poets and philosophers as Lucretius, Virgil. The fact of the identity of man and nature, which was discovered by Chateaubriand, was mentioned later in the writings by Victor Hugo, A.S. Pushkin, and many Serbian poets, for example, Branko Radičević, Jovan Jovanović Zmaj, Djura Jakšić, Laza Kostić, Jovan Dučić and others.

J. A. Komenski believed that schools with architecture and neatness should be attractive to children, and advocated for that school premises be bright, clean and tidy. This is the particular set of environmental standards which are relevant today.

I. A. S. Makarenko has attached great importance to order in the area, where pupils live and work, and insisted that they themselves should govern this order and take care of the area.

Nevertheless, the ideas of environmental education has been in existence since the earliest period of the development of civilization, yet in the second half of the 20th century as a result of threats to human health "the need for concentration of knowledge about the possibilities of rational use of natural resources and environmental protection"

[3] was reported. The attitude towards this problem preconditioned *The first UN conference on the Human environment* that was held in Stockholm in 1972. , in the foreground is a highlight request constitution international, interdisciplinary environmental education program for young and old. At this conference the declaration was adopted, according to which all countries in the world agreed to make every effort to protect the environment, the latter becoming the part of the general strategy of education among young people. Subsequently, in 1975. the UNESCO and UNEP published the first *International program of environmental education*, the main goal of which was focused on providing the interdisciplinary approach to learn the environmental issues and facilitate coordination among states on planning this education. A significant contribution to the understanding of ecological education was given at the International Conference of *Education of man's environment*, which was organized by UNESCO and the United Nations (UNEP) held in 1975 in Belgrade. At this conference, the main attention was focused on reviewing and defining the goals and objectives of environmental education and it was recommended that the design of programs should serve the adoption of the necessary knowledge to understand the biophysical, social and economic mechanisms that affect the functioning of the environment. This created the conditions for the formation of theory and practice of education for environmental protection.

Later on, the, international conferences and international symposiums on the subject of education for environmental protection organized in Tbilisi (1977), Sofia (1981), Nairobi (1982), Vienna (1983), Moscow (1987), Estergonu (1989), Bergen-Australia (1990), Rio (1992) ...

When it comes to understanding the development of ecological education

in the area of "former" Yugoslavia, based on the analysis of available sources and literature that specifically addresses this issue, we conclude that SASA was among the first to actualize the issue of environmental protection. For this purpose, it organized two scientific conferences including Man and Environment in SR Serbia (1973) and Man - Society - Environment (1979). These parties expressed their opinions and attitudes that gave great impetus to the development of environmental education, and in terms of the problems that occupy our attention it is particularly interesting that, during those sessions the idea appeared that the environmental education should start as early as at pre-school. (Papers presented at a symposium man - society - environment, published by SANU, printed and published in the same name publication 1981). Afterwards the "former" Yugoslavia organized several conferences and round tables, which studied the objects related to environmental education (Education and Environment (Ohrid, 1983), Environmentalism in Primary and Secondary Education (Bled, 1983), Science - Ecology - Schools (Zagreb, 1990), the National Parks in the function of environmental education (Kopaonik, 1992).

A significant moment in the development of understanding of the needs and problems of ecological education in Serbia was the "Ten January game master Serbia", held in Belgrade in year 1992. The main theme in operation of the conference was Ecology Education, and it featured the 30-odd statements and reports concerning the practical experience of environmental education and education in the elementary grades. Also, the 11-th International scientific conference "Vlasina's meetings" held in 2005 at The Vlasina's lake, with the theme of rural development and environmental protection, nearly 150 different profiles

of scientists (sociologists, philosophers, political scientists, demographers ...) through 80 papers highlight the complexity and seriousness of this issue and the need to protect the environment (Papers presented at the 11th International scientific conference "Vlasina's meetings" were published in 2006. Proceedings of the title Rural Development and Environment, published by the Institute of Sociology and Rural Development, British Association for the study of agriculture and rural areas, the Yugoslav Association for Rural Sociology and the Institute for Agriculture and agricultural economy Faculty of Agriculture in Zemun, 2006).

However, despite the fact that at the present stage of social development, environmental education has great importance, we have to note that scientific conferences held on this problem did not pay the necessary attention and we come to the almost identical conclusion when it comes to textbook pedagogics. The exception is the Chapter on Educational ecology in the monograph guidance on education by Franz Pediček, and a positive effort towards improving the understanding and awareness of the need and importance of environmental education found in monographs by prof. Milenko Kundačina (factors of ecological education, Teachers College, Uzice, in 1995.) and prof. Milica Andevski (Introduction to environmental education, University of Novi Sad, 1997), and his doctoral thesis, professor Jasmine Klemanović (Ecological education of preschool children defended at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad, 2004). Resorting to the pedagogical journals, we can conclude that there are individual efforts of some authors towards actualization and solving problems related to environmental education but the general impression is that it is not enough to practice successfully implemented proclaimed

requirements certain legal provisions in this field.

## **2. Goal and objectives of ecological education**

It is well known, that the educational ideal, and therefore the aims and objectives of education in general, results from specific social, economic, political, social and cultural conditions that are predetermined by a certain society. They can change during development as a result of such relationship in educational science; the need arose for concretization goals and objectives of education. Recognizing this demand the concretization is conducted through five fundamental educational areas-physical, intellectual, moral, labor and technical aesthetic, each of which has its cognitive, affective and conative component. However, the development of science and technology and the effects that this development has on the environment, imposed the need for the development of pedagogical science (and not only of it) and the awareness that in the domain of fundamental areas includes educational and environmental education.

### **2.1. The goal of environmental education**

Education of Environmental Protection established a series of documents as preliminary, and the legal program. At the level of the former Yugoslavia it is "Resolution on the goals and objectives of the educational work of protecting and improving the environment" (Belgrade, 1975), and "common core curriculum for basic education and vocational education in the field of Human Environment and Spatial Planning" (Bled 1983).

In 2004 Serbia enacted the Law on Environmental Protection. [7] It deals with the most important issues relating to the preservation and improvement of the

environment, the realization of the human right to live and develop in a healthy environment and the balance between economic development and environmental protection. Moreover, the law defines the basic concepts and terms in this field as well as basic principles, among which stands out the principle of integration, the principle of prevention and precaution, the principle of conservation of natural resources, the principle of sustainable development and the principle of polluters.

The ultimate range, i.e. goal to be reached in the environmental education and education relates to the acquisition of knowledge and awareness, and the practice of the environmentally desirable behavior among students and protégés in preschool. This is a very important aspect of personality development in general, and the realization of this objective relies upon a wide range of issues that directly affect success in this domain. One of them refers, of course, to the need and possibility of categorizing and parsing the overall objective of environmental education in the narrower, i.e. specific areas. Trying to adequately address this problem, Ljubisa Rakić in his work subdivides overall goals of education for the protection of the environment into three groups:

- The academic goal (gaining basic knowledge of the biological, physical and social characteristics of the environment)
  - The social, economic and aesthetic objective (understanding social values and attitudes related to the natural resources of the social environment)
  - The cultural goal (raising awareness of belonging to an individual's own community in which he appears as the subject of protection of their culture).
- [4]

Professor Alexander Rančić, who also deals with the categorization problem, i.e. that of the general goal of education for environmental protection,

in his monograph Education for the protection of labor and Environmental goals and objectives of Education for the Environment classifies the aims into two groups:

- General (have an educational character and include actions and activities for systematic development of the attitudes and opinions towards humanization and cultural life) and
- Special (have a predominantly educational character and consist of direct acquaintance of students with certain dangers or hazards in a particular environment). [5]

The above-mentioned opinions and observations point at the conclusion, that the essence of the education for environmental protection is reflected in the fact, that the subjects of the educational process, in accordance with social needs and achievements of modern science and educational practice, ensure the acquisition of the basic knowledge about the state of the environment and the processes, that threaten the developing of proper habits and decent treatment of the natural objects. Therefore, there is the necessity of creating the conditions for the inclusion of these subjects into the educational process in order to solve practical problems of environmental protection and improvement. This process should take into account the needs and interests of individuals with regard to the fact, that goals have a complex structure, since they incorporate in themselves cognitive, affective and conative components.

## **2.2. The tasks of environmental education**

The goals of environmental education experience its operational implementation of certain tasks. Analysis of the literature that closely studies this phenomenon points us at the conclusion that in this area there are some differences, both in the formulation of

tasks and in their purpose. For example, some authors include a task while others do two, three or more tasks. In the formulation of the tasks of the environmental education most commonly used terms are: to acquire, to understand, to meet, to develop, to inform, to create, to build, to train, to direct, etc..; that indicates that in the foreground cognitive processes are emphasized, while affective cognitive ones are in the background. The attitude towards this problem is not in accordance with the declared requirements, as it is well known that the process of environmental education cannot be reduced to the memorization of facts and generalizations, but should have a broader meaning. Certain problems in this area arise from inconsistently treated tasks' set, which results in the existence of the contradictions between the defined curriculum and educational curricula as it is offered in the official documents and in some documents related to specific situations. Also, clearly and precisely defined tasks of environmental education are too extensive and more declarative, and as such are vague for teachers, which further complicates their work, because under such circumstances they are not sure what, when and how should be done.

Given the fact that the tasks of environmental education are derived from the overall goals and objectives of environmental education, as well as the problems that exist when it comes to their determination, we believe that Professor Milenko Kundačina in the monograph "Elements of ecological education system" gave students assignments on environmental education.. That is consistent with the declared requirements on which depends the successful work in this area. A given system of tasks in ecological education can serve to overcome the problems discussed above. The system tasks ecological education consists of the following tasks:



- Development of the skills of perception of the environment,
- Adoption of a system of environmental knowledge,
- Building the value-ecological systems,
- Ecological habit-forming and
- Mastering ecological culture.[3]

### **2.2.1. Developing the ability of perception of the environment**

It is well known that in the environment there is much that points at the lack of environmental awareness, which results in the formation of negative attitudes towards the youngest community. In such circumstances, one of the priority tasks of environmental education is related to the assessment of the threat, which is not possible without the development of the ability to perceive of the environment. The essence of the task is reflected in building the opportunities within the subjects of the educational process to properly assess the threat. It primarily depends on the knowledge, skills and intellectual capabilities of each person individually. In the context of the problem, the subject activities in the educational process should be primarily directed to:

- the critical assessment of the composition of the environment in each case,
- personal and critical evaluation procedures and other environmentally based forecasting the adverse effects,
- the analysis of individual behavior, attitudes towards the environment. [3]

At the present stage of social development actors in the educational process as a source of information, increasingly use mass media in which it occupies a special place. Therefore, the protégés and students are more informed and the basic task of teachers will have to be focused rather on how to make them

more critical than on assessing the vulnerability of the environment, because general ideas about the environmental threats are not a sufficient incentive to concrete actions.

### **2.2.2. Adoption of a system of environmental knowledge**

Knowledge is a philosophical, logical, epistemological, gnoseological, pedagogical, psychological and didactic-methodological category. Clear definition of the term knowledge is the basis for sound policy and determination of the content issues related to human knowledge, such as, for example, the problem of the nature, origin, of the boundaries of cognition or knowledge of the structure and relationship of the individual. From the aspect of the problem, which is the subject of our interest, we are particularly interested in how the concept of knowledge, didactics, i.e. scientific discipline, whose subject matter is teaching, was looked upon in the educational process at all levels of the educational system, since the systematic adoption of environmental knowledge. However, given the nature and structure of this work at this time we do not have the opportunity to present a critical and comparative analysis of the definition of knowledge given in the textbooks, pedagogy and didactics, as well as in the rest of the literature, in which this issue has been processed at certain stages of social development. Therefore, we will mention here that the definition of knowledge given in the work "Problems of modern teaching" by Professor Svetozar Čanović, which is based on the notion, that knowledge determines the system of scientific facts (facts, data, phenomena, details) and generalizations (concepts, courts, conclusions of law the theory) of the objective reality, which are entities that are understood, remembered and permanently retained in the mind.[1] We have chosen this definition as the

most complete, scientifically based, and acceptable, for it incorporates in itself all the relevant elements and guidelines, that the definition of knowledge should include.

Ecological knowledge consists in the concepts, terms, facts, basic laws, the knowledge of the standards of behavior, the knowledge about the qualities of the environment and is an important condition for the adoption of an ecological way of thinking and proper attitude towards the environment as well as the development of other dimensions of awareness. The essence of the task related to the adoption of a system of environmental knowledge relates primarily to:

- Introduction to the basic natural processes that provide consistency and integrity of nature within the limits of the biosphere,
- Introduction to the basic contradictions that exist between nature and society,
- Introduction to the various phenomena of transformation of the environment for the benefit of human health,
- Introduction to the basic aims and means of protection of the environment
- Introduction to the coherence and mutual conditionality of positive solutions to the problems of environmental protection, social and political objectives, the socio-economy of a society and the level of achievement of ecological knowledge. [11]

In addition, in order to adequately adopt the environmental knowledge, it is necessary to know:

- Social, natural, historical, geographical, occupational, technical and aesthetic values of natural and populated areas,
- Ecological processes and principles, which take place in the community life, the causes, conditions,

consequences and ways to overcome the situation

- Measures taken by the company in the field of protection and improvement of the environment. [3]

### **2.2.3. Building of the environmental value system**

Each community needs creating its own value system, which meets the protection by its members, including adequate relationship to the values of the environment, whether it is natural or constructed. The rule of the individual's ecological value orientation is variable in structure, due to the value and intensity of emotional relationships. Therefore, the system of education should be directed towards creating conditions that will allow the establishment of ecological value orientation. This process should involve all factors that in any way affect him, starting with the family, peer groups in pre-class firms in the schools and community in general.

There are many examples of positive as well as negative attitudes towards it in the environment, which can result in disorientation that children and young people in the formation of value systems use. For this reason, the process of building up the value of ecological systems is essential, more concrete educational tasks to protect the environment may be developed by responsible behavior of individuals and society, and the realization of the proclaimed task in this area was satisfactory.

### **2.2.4. Establishment of environmental practices**

Life is made up of people from a variety of habits many of which are, for example, hygiene, formed and developed during infancy. Giving that habits is the usual way of movement and behavior, we accept the definition by B. M. Tjeplova

where habits determined to be "aware of the automotive components business, which is trained in the process of carrying out these activities".[10]

It is known that once formed to change habits is difficult. The truth of the claim is that the habit of "iron shirt" and the saying goes, "the habit is an annoyance, and two unlearned." Therefore, it is particularly important to prevent the formation of bad habits. Only those who have the ability of unwavering determination and who are able to consistently carry out without making any concessions, they can learn to manage their habits, and then their behavior.

During the educational process participants have to form habits and environmental assume that is an individual's relationship to the surrounding area. Just like every other and long- formed ecological habit is difficult and slow to change. Their formation is influenced by numerous factors, the most important ones are families, the educational environment and the community and social environment. The aim of establishment environmental practices is to grow into specific forms of behavior personality, and the most favourable period for their formation is pre-school age and younger. The pre-school age level is that when the child is in pre-school and family adjusts to environmental behavior, doing it, we often do not know that this is the case.

Habits are, at least, solid in pre-school children, and therefore, this period is considered the most favourable period for achieving environmental tranquility of personal behavior. Working in this field, the expected results in the family, especially the pre-school ones, should insist on the development and formation of habits:

- Personal hygiene and hygiene of the premises where the child resides,
- The rational use of natural resources,

- Proper and polite attitude towards the various objects of nature,
- Proper treatment of animals and plants,
- Preservation and cultivation of flowers and greenery and going and spending time outdoors.

### **2.2.5. Mastering the ecological culture**

When it comes to problems related to the mastery of ecological culture, we have to stress mode this process is determined by the possession of knowledge, attitudes, habits, skills, beliefs, norms and moral responsibility towards nature. Ecological culture includes the culture of living, culture, fostering green areas, sanitation and hygiene culture, health, culture and hygiene, work and leisure culture, transport culture, visual communication culture, cultivation of flowers and animals culture, human relations, cultural outings, culture of accountability, horticulture... All these forms of ecological culture can be classified into two groups:

- And residential (use the rooms of the residence) and
- Urban or populated (populated whole).[3]

The formation of ecological culture is a complex process, because there are many factors involved, and what should be pointed out when the problem in focus is, what level of environmental culture of the individual inevitably follows the general level of development of society.

### **3. Methodological prerequisites and conditions for the successful implementation of environmental problems in preschool education**

Among the authors who are in any way with the problem of development and education of children, there is a strong consensus on this, there is no age



limit below which children cannot be educated and educate. Taking this point into consideration, at the beginning of our work, we've concluded that there is no age limit below which children cannot be educated and to educate both the environment and preschool period is an important period for learning the environment, regardless of the fact that a child in this period is not mature enough to understand why this is important. However, taking the goals and objectives of environmental education which were previously discussed, we operationalize that his experience in the educational process technology that is being implemented in preschools, is essential to create the right atmosphere for them, or to make appropriate assumptions and conditions that may be a function of their achievement.

### **3.1. The methodological requirements for successful implementation of the tasks of environmental education in preschool**

The fact that the methods of educational work is the basic prerequisite for the success and implementation of educational activities, one of the central questions that occupy the attention of those, dealing with education and education in general, refers to the problem of their selection and application. Since the development of pre-school period, apart from their development in other levels of education, the methods used in the school cannot be applied to pre-school education and, for this reason, it is necessary to transform according to the characteristics and rules development of that age. We should start with the principle of educational work, respect for children's needs and potential and implementation of educational tasks. In addition, the process should be taken into account and the fact that applied methods of educational work are aimed at stimulating children's internal activities,

but without compromising the quantitative and qualitative role of the child in their own development.

The acquisition of diverse knowledge, experience and the awakening of emotions related to the protection and enhancement of the environment can be provided only by active methods and a variety of interactive forms of work.[9] The acquisition of ecological knowledge skills teachers, depending on the conditions in which they implement the educational work opportunities of children and their interests, the nature of materials that children learn, as well as the objectives to be achieved, it may be applied to indirect (going children in the selected objects from the natural and social environment) and direct (immediate indication that . demonstrations and storytelling) methods of educational work. One of the direct methods is that teachers can apply in their educational work, the realization of the goals and objectives of environmental education in pre-school period is the organization of environmental workshops. The workshop includes "specific process of educational work in which the conditions favorable pedagogical and psycho-social climate, gaining new skills or previously acquired knowledge, skills and experience and to check for the plan to be implemented under the guidance of teachers." [8]

What is really important and what we should insists on is the application of relevant direct and indirect methods, referring to a requirement that priority should be given with respect to the inductive deductive approach, especially concerning young children.

One of the most important prerequisites of successful educational work in kindergartens is that coming to the implementation of the goals and objectives of environmental education, related to the recognition and separation of certain environmental principles. However, when it touches upon this

problem, it has to be stressed that there is disagreement among the authors of both the classification and the method of formulating the principles of ecological education. However, considering the demand arising from the goals and objectives of environmental education in pre-school, as particularly important we have selected the following principles:

- Principle-conscious adoption of environmental knowledge a disciple of activities,
- Life-principle of ecological knowledge, skills and habits,
- The principle of respect for individual differences educators in the adoption of environmental knowledge, skills and habits,
- The principle of interdisciplinary,
- Principle link environmental education activities with immediate reality of life and
- The principle of functional application of acquired knowledge in environmental direct life and work situations.

Featured principles of ecological education are interrelated and refer to the entire educational work in kindergartens. Educators should be guided in the organization and implementation of practical educational activities.

In addition to learning the methods and principles, that may also be a function of the successful implementation of the tasks of environmental education in pre-school, which falls within the scope of their teaching methodology assumptions relating to:

- Introduction of educators with knowledge sources (immediate reality textbooks and other printed literature, teaching aids),
- Providing more direct contact with the environment of children (not only workshops),
- Equipment for the kindergarten-appropriate learning tools.

### **3.2. Conditions for a successful implementation of the tasks of environmental education in preschool**

If preschool want to adequately fulfill the goals and objectives of environmental education is necessary, first, to its environment is appropriate. Under the word “environment” in this case we mean the material and technical basis of pre-school institutions, including: the necessary space to work properly, inventory and equipment for physical recreation room, sports court and ecological yard. Architectural properly designed and constructed building preschools with equipment in accordance with modern medicine, sanitation, educational and other requirements a space, where ecological habits and skills of students in the educational process at the pre-degree educational system come to the fore. The structure of building and layout of rooms, courtyards, playgrounds, proper use of equipment and inventory windows and other equipment deserve full attention, too, because all this affects the environmental education of children in preschools. Well-decorated nursery positive impact on children's health, their mood, motivation, and environmental activities, and in some ways is at the heart of ecological culture.

Of course, for the successful realization of the goals and objectives of environmental education in pre-school it is necessary to provide quality, pedagogical-psychological and didactic-methodical and qualified staff. So form a team of experts. There's one more reason, the other services (medical, sanitation, hygiene, nutrition ...) which in any way participate in the overall implementation of the activities in preschools, should be organized in accordance with the requirements of the implementation of which may be the overcoming of problems in this domain exists.

#### 4. Conclusion

The time we live in is characterized by the rapid development of science and technology. As a result of this situation, we have a phenomenon known as "civilizational risk" and the statement that "the ecological crisis became global total and its consequences" can be frequently heard. The ecological crisis reveals the scope and depth of the social crisis and threatens the overall natural and social wealth, and man as a biological being.

Front man and mankind there are only two options-to take care of nature, or in the case of conflict with it to move toward self-destruction. In order to overcome the current situation, you create a culture where the basic idea would be a life, not just human life, but life in general. Education of a system, process and outcome has a key role. It all generations, should allow to adopt ecological culture and develop environmental awareness to be able to think ecologically and environmentally friendly act. From these requirements stems role of those institutions in education for the protection and improvement of the environment, because of the habits that develop and acquire knowledge at this stage, largely depends on the development of environmental awareness of environmental culture and personality in the later stages of development.

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