



CHANGE THE CONTENTS OF ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION: INTERNATIONAL-LEGAL BASIS

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Abstract

The problem of changing the contents of ecological education is considered in connection with the acceptance of the international legal arrangements. The particular principles of the international laws influencing the changes, role of state bodies, NGOs in realization of the programs of ecological education are displayed.

Key words: environmental education, international law.

Ecological illiteracy – one of the most main reasons for ecological disaster and destructions of the environment. At all stages of the development of human society the following negative socio-ecological regularity functions: the lower is the level of ecological literacy and higher the hierarchical level of an official person's ecological non-competence, the more powerful is the destroying influence of any managing decision on natural surroundings. Not accidentally in UN and UNESCO ecological programs the first task on the realization of which nature protection investments must be spent, is elimination of lack of ecological knowledge with an individual.

Ecological education at present is one of the most important factors of overcoming of the global ecological crisis. A strategic direction in this area is becoming the influence on values, beliefs and behaviour of separate persons, groups and different categories of people.

As N. Katovich (1995) notes, the ecological orientation of education has turned into principle state policy in the Republic of Belarus. One of the leading goals of the educational system is announced to be moulding the ecological consciousness of the inhabitants of our country.

It is necessary to teach people to live and work in consent with the environment. This is possible to reach by means of qualitative transformation and renovations of the established practice in the sphere of ecological education, which presupposes use of international documents regulating this sort of activity.

In the course of our studies normative documents of the international and national level, specifying contents of ecological education were studied.

The main documents providing the development of national concepts (programs) of the ecological education are Materials of the 1st International conference on environmental education problems (Tbilisi, 1977), Materials of the UNESCO/UNEP International congress "Tbilisi+10" (Moscow, 1987), documents of UNO Rio-de-Janciro-conference (the Declaration on Environment and Development, Agenda 21), Managing principles of UN European Economic commission on providing access to ecological information and public participation in the process of decision-making, being due to the 3d Conference of ministers on the environment (Sofia, 1995). During the 5th European Conference of ministers on the environment (Kiew, Mai 2003) within the framework of the process "Environmental for Europe" the decision on the development of European Strategy of education for sustainable development was accepted. In the ministers of environmental state's Statement accepted as a result of this conference it is noted that ecological education in a greater degrees touches upon the whole complex of global problems, considered in Agenda 21 and within the framework of all large conferences of the United Nations, and is, thereby, one of the key elements of education in the interests of sustainable development. In 2005 according to the UNO decision the decennial event of sustainable development formation began. Ecological education for adults is being realized more actively. Ecological education presents itself area narrow professional activity. The main audience covered by ecological education is children and teenager. Meanwhile ecological problems are mainly bound with the activity of adult population. Besides, the role of dynamic qualified human resources and information in the development the world is increasing. These aspects will be reflected in the international programs of Decada.

We consider the influence of the international right to the change of the contents of ecological education, first of all, taking into account specific principles of this right:

- the environment is general care of mankind;
- the environment outside of the state border is general property of mankind;
- liberty of study and use of the environment and its components;
- rational use of the environment; assistance in international-legal cooperation in the study and use of the environment;
- interdependence of environmental protection, world, development, ensuring the human rights and fundamental liberty;
- right to development;
- prevention of harm;
- prevention of contamination of the environment;
- responsibility of a state;
- refusal from jurisdiction of international or foreign judicial bodies (Калиниченко, 2003).

Significant experience of work on ecological education which is considered as a united unceasing process is accumulated in the Republic of Belarus. However, as a whole efficiency of ecological education remains not high enough and does not satisfy modern requirements (Концепция..., 2001, г. 7). Analysis of contents, forms and methods of ecological education organization has shown that if at the beginning of the early 1970s it was considered in Belarus only being enlightenment, in the second half of the 1980s its goal was understood as moulding of ecological culture, and since the 1990s the formation of ecological thinking and responsible attitude to nature has become the main task.

At present the project of the Republican multi-stages' integrated program on education and enlightenment in the field of the environment for the 2006–2010s is at the stage of discussion.

It is stated that education and enlightenment in the field of the environment is one of the most important conditions for the solution to problems of conservation and is bound to promote forming of the social base for realization an idea of sustainable development by means of creating in a person responsibility for nature, realizing the necessity for its protection and rational use, forming a person's moral qualities corresponding to the scale of changes in modern world.

In the Program the international term "*environmental education*" is used, which is accepted by UN-Convention on problems of the environment held in Stockholm in 1972 (Sweden). In accordance with its recommendations, in 1975 UNESCO / UNEP the International program on education in the field of the environment was accepted.

The Program is a continuation of measures on shaping efficient state policy in the field of environment protection and rational use of natural resources and is based on the Conception of education in the field of the environment, as well as National strategy of sustainable socio-economic development of the Republic of Belarus for the period ending in 2020 and international documents worked out within the framework of UN Decennial event on education for sustainable development which provide realization of presently accepted goals of ecological education (tabl. 1).

Table 1. Purposes of Republican multi-stages' integrated program on education and enlightenment in the field of the environment for the 2006–2010s. for different levels of education.

Pre-school education	forming in children the basics of ecological culture by passing over initial knowledge about the environment and its importance for a person in available and interesting for a child form, education of love to nature and self-realization as its integral part, forming the ecological thinking, initiating of emotional-effective participation in nature protection and its correct use
Primary education (1–4 forms)	forming in junior schoolchildren scientifically cognitive, emotional and careful attitude to the environment and to one's health on the basis of a unity of perceptual and emotional study of natural and social encirclement of a person
Basic education (5–10 forms)	forming the system of scientific knowledge, views and beliefs, providing forming responsible attitude of teenagers to the environment in all types of activity, as well as skills of practical activity dealing with nature
General comprehensive education	Summing up of knowledge about the environment into the scientific picture of the world
Extra-school education	creation of a mechanism of steady development of the system of education in the field of the environment, development of ecological culture in children and young people, forming ecological orientation, skills and experience of creative ecologically valuable activity and behaviour in nature and society

Vocational and comprehensive special education	forming professionally significant knowledge about the unity of nature and person, ways of harmonization of this interaction, education of ecological culture, ecological consciousness as an internal regulator of acting in the environment and in professional activity
Higher education	preparing specialists, possessing alongside with professional knowledge, intellectual and cultural level, knowledge and skills in the field of nature protection and steady development, capable of using obtained ecological knowledge in their future professional activity
Post-graduate education	development of scientific approaches in the interests of steady socio-economic development of society
Getting further qualification and preparing specialists by conducting refresher course in the field of the environment	obtaining of knowledge in the field of environmental protection and steady development, ecological law, managing of nature use by state employees, leaders of industrial enterprises and specialists, working out and making decisions; as well as change of the orientation of pedagogical personnel of all levels at ecological awareness in the educational process

The system of ecological education, according to Belarusian and foreign researchers (Katovich, 1995; Lavrenenko, 1996; Bolscho, Seybold, 1996; Domka, 1997), must be built among others using the principle of continuity of education. Continuity of ecological education is reached within the framework of formal education first of all, which includes pre-school, school, professional (vocational, comprehensive, higher) levels, as well as post-graduate education, and getting further qualification and refresher courses of the personnel.

In modern international law it is possible to select the vivid trend to admit and keep the right of people to the favourable environment as the most important natural human right. Bright acknowledgement of this is Convention on the access to information, public participation in the process of decision making and access to justice on questions, concerning the environment, signed on June 25, 1998 by ministers on the environment in the Danish city Aarhus (Aarhus Convention).

Aarhus Convention points at the need for assistance to ecological education from the part of both states bodies and educational institutions, public bodies, non-associated people (understood as “public”) (Balashenko, Laevskaya, Makarova, 2000). Aarhus Convention opens new horizons for ecological education. As it is noted, there is need for deeper study of interdependence between the problems of the environment, social sphere, economy, safety. It is necessary to take into account ecological aspects while shaping the structure of consumption and individual behaviour. Active involvement of main groups of the population, including the youth, is considered as one of the factors of working out modern ecological policy both at the global and national level.

It is possible to consider participation of public organizations (NGO) in decision making on problems concerning the environment (including problems of ecological education), as a established conception of the international law (Endroska, 2001, p. 30). NGO have the possibility to be more mobile in determination of the contents, methods and forms of organization of ecological education, to broader use of the leading experience and examples of good practice, to promote their adaptation and spreading amongst social groups of the population of different age. NGO contribute to a higher level of ecological culture in all groups of population, involvement of people into taking up ecological activity, forming conditions for popularization and mastering of ecological knowledge, values and skills by main groups of the population.

In the Republic of Belarus there acts the Public coordination ecological council at the Ministry of natural resources and environmental protection members of which are representatives of 17 NGO. The council is one of the forms of public participation in discussing the directions of ecological policy, for instance, realization of points of Aarhus Convention, the List of activities on accomplishment of UN-Convention concerning fight with devastation, practicability of joining Kioto Protocol as well as Stockholm Convention on steadfast organic pollutants by the Republic of Belarus.

Ecological and educational projects and programs are realized by NGO “EcoLaw” (Minsk), NGO “Ahova ptushak Batskaushchyny (BirdLife Belarus)”, the environmental public association “Nerush” (Baranovichi), NGO “Green Region” (Brest), NGO “Ecoproject” (Minsk) (carrying out some work on popularization of energy and resources safety), Gomel association of children and youth (ASDEMO), etc. Ecological NGO as well as structures of formal education – schools, comprehensive special and higher educational institutions, extra-school educational institutions make it possible to mould ecological culture, professionalism of future specialists in different spheres of activity. Ecological NGOs are one of the forms of social adaptation of a future specialist.

As far as we believe, contents of modern ecological education based on realization by each person his / her involvement in arising of ecological problems and responsibility for the condition of the environment at the local, national and global levels must become teaching strategies of positive changes. Realization of international-legal agreements, which embrace the experience of different states, contributes to the full-fledged fulfillment of the goal of ecological education – providing steady, ecologically safe existence of a person.

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