

**icCSBs 2020****The Annual International Conference on Cognitive - Social, and Behavioural  
Sciences****ECOLOGICAL ETHICS AS VECTOR FOR UPDATING THE  
CONTENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION**

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***Abstract***

As the main vector for updating the content of environmental education, the article substantiates its humanitarian, which will realize the powerful potential of humanitarian knowledge in the development of ecological culture of children. The importance of strengthening the axiological component in connection with the need to reorient from a utilitarian approach to nature, from nature management to a value attitude to nature in all aspects, including moral and aesthetic, is substantiated; including the new meaning and motives of habitual norms. It is important to take care of nature not only as a human life resource, but as a self-valuable phenomenon that has its own right for life. It is important to develop the value-semantic foundations of a responsible attitude to nature, which should be motivated not only by calculating and rational knowledge about a person's dependence on the ecological state of the environment, but, most importantly, by a sense of love for nature, and a value attitude to the life of all living beings and the planet in general, feelings of compassion, mercy, empathy, harmony with nature. The humanitarian component of environmental education, which should be the leading one in childhood, taking into account its psychological characteristics, is called to in the article as environmental ethics - an educational module that integrates cultural and axiological, moral, spiritual and emotional-sensual components along with natural science ideas about the world around us in the process of development of the environmental culture of the personality.

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**Keywords:** Environmental ethics, preschool education, content updating.



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## **1. Introduction**

Technocratic civilization came into conflict with the laws of nature: consuming, humanity exceeded the ability of the biosphere to restore what was lost by consuming. Awareness of the root cause of this state of the environment led experts in various fields of knowledge to conclude that the environmental crisis is essentially a worldview, spiritual and moral character. This means that the way out of it is associated with a reorientation of the ideas of the younger generations about the immense wealth of nature and about man as its conqueror, with the perception of nature as a utilitarian value, i.e. from consumer culture, to the values of environmental ethics, the harmonious coexistence of nature and society, co-evolution, sustainable development. Obviously, environmental problems cannot be solved outside the problems of the development of the personality's ecological culture, the formation of her eco-cultural values, ecological thinking, ideals of harmony with the environment and herself, the ideals of environmental ethics with her value attitude to life, reverence for her, value and responsibility to nature, to people, to oneself, to spiritual and physical health; positive environmental experience, readiness for environmentally significant activities. In this regard, it is necessary to update the content of environmental education at all levels of the education system, including preschool.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The problem is the development of the humanitarian vector of environmental education, updating the content of education for the formation in children of an emotional, moral attitude to nature.

## **3. Research Questions**

- 3.1. How to ensure the humanization of environmental education and include environmental ethics in it for the development of ecological culture of children?

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

To develop a concept for the humanization of environmental education and update its content based on the inclusion of environmental ethics for the development of the ecological culture of preschool children.

## **5. Research Methods**

Theoretical modeling, content analysis, comparison of teaching aids, analysis of educational standards, analysis of the practice of preschool education, designing updated educational content based on the inclusion of environmental ethics.

## **6. Findings**

The deepening environmental crisis is expressed not only in the deterioration of the environmental situation, but also in dangerous trends in environmental thinking, consciousness, perceptions against the background of the alarming dynamics of environmental experience and insufficiently productive

strategies and technologies of environmental education and awareness. Children and youth are particularly affected by these trends. In modern Russia, a controversial situation is emerging in the field of environmental education and upbringing. The priority of environmental principles of socio-economic development of the country, declared at the state level, contradicts the low status of ecology in the education system, poor resource provision of environmental education. The dominance of the ideology of environmental management, consumption in environmental education is sharply at odds with the need for a cardinal cultural, axiological revolution in the attitude of modern man to nature, the approval of the moral imperative of his interaction with it.

Environmental culture is a multidimensional large-scale concept in which different authors include different contents (Glazachev & Gagarin, 2013, 2015; Kashlev & Grishaeva, 2020; Klemyashova, 2018; Lixachev, 2010; Nikolaeva, 2016, 2017). Common to all at present is the definition of the essence of ecological culture in contrast to its destructive behavior in nature, predatory attitude to natural resources. However, it would be important to emphasize the need to differentiate approaches to the consideration of the essence of ecological culture not only from the perspective of “good - bad”, but to analyze, and primarily from an axiological point of view, what quality of ecological culture can be taken as “good”. It is necessary to distinguish at least two contexts: ecological culture, interpreted from the standpoint of consumption, i.e., the type of consumer ecological culture, which is formed in the context of the competent use of natural resources (essentially a nature management culture based on rational consumption), and ecological culture as harmonious coexistence of man and nature, recognition of nature as an equal value. Today, unfortunately, another type of environmental culture is being formed, let's call it “flight from the boomerang” - it is a culture of environmental safety, which is dominated by a person's desire to protect himself from the effects of human impact on nature

A dangerous manifestation of the current stage of the ecological crisis is not the fact of the participating environmental disasters, but the fact that these environmental disasters in conjunction become the environmental experience of the younger generation, the starting point of their ideas about the "environmental norm, well-being." The ecological experience of the modern child is oversaturated with negative examples of the interaction of man and nature. Environmental education, which follows the path of educating “from the contrary”, demonstrating that “how to deal with nature”, is going nowhere, because the amount of unfavorable environmental experience of a child leads not only to the formation of his readiness for productive environmental activities, but to distortion of the concepts of "environmental norms", "environmental well-being."

Another manifestation of the ecological crisis is the tendency for the child to become estranged from nature. Civilization rises between a child and a wildlife like an irresistibly colorful, informative, comfortable and deadly artificial wall. The statements of children aged 6–7 years of the metropolis, who often believe that on our planet there are more traffic lights than trees, more mobile phones than mushrooms, and that the area of roads covered with asphalt, clearly testify to how it affects the subjective representation of children about nature, more than living land with grass and flowers. They get used to seeing nature on the computer screen and video player; they hardly distinguish “real” animals and images that fill the computer world. It is no coincidence that when children are asked to draw a fungus or a birch

from memory, almost 40% of them recall and reproduce drawings from books, plots from a television screen, or photographs from the Internet. They only notice living birch during trips.

The intensification of negative environmental experience, together with the alienation of man from nature, acquires a natural continuation in the alarming trend in the development of environmental education in the context of environmental safety. Environmental education focuses on instilling in a child the skills to ensure personal environmental well-being in a single “I am the world” ecosystem and helps to strengthen his mind about environmental well-being as protection from the effects of anthropogenic impact on nature. It is not easy to find a place in such logic for the formation of a value attitude to nature, since in this case the nature is not a victim of human egoism, but a source of evil, danger, something hostile to man. The measurement of the degree of pollution of water, atmosphere, soil, widely practiced in environmental programs, will lead any sane person to the desire to protect their health from the effects of this water, atmosphere and soil. We need a solid bridge over which a child will reach a culture of harmony with nature, recognition of its intrinsic value and awareness of the need to protect nature from anthropogenic impact for its sake and in order not to bring absurdity of civilization from an ecological boomerang. In our opinion, such a bridge should be a humanitarian environmental education.

Humanitarian ecology is needed in order to form children's knowledge of the moral and moral foundations of the interaction of Human and Nature; ecological and cultural values and ecological and aesthetic ideals that determined different models of man's attitude to nature at different times; on environmental norms and traditions of people of different countries; about the positive experience of the interaction of Man and Nature; skills in the implementation of eco-cultural values in the practice of interacting with the outside world, comprehending ethical categories in relation to the system of Human-Nature relations. These findings are the result of many years of work by the author in the field of environmental culture and environmental education; environmental ethics and humanization of environmental education (1993 -2020) – for example (Wagner, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2015, 2017; Wagner, Glazachev, & Glazachev, 2013).

The cognitive sphere, environmental competence are also characterized by the presence of a humanitarian component - knowledge of eco-cultural values, experience and skills in implementing environmental ethics in social and environmental practice. Such a humanitarian environmental education is needed that will form the need for children to dialogue with wildlife, expand the experience of observing nature, and ensure the formation of an emotional-sensual attitude towards it. In this sense, foreign experience in organizing the interaction of children with wildlife is of particular interest, in particular, the German Waldpädagogik (forest pedagogy), Erlebnispädagogik (pedagogy of experiences), involving direct contact of children with natural objects, observing nature, a wide range of creative activities on environmental motives.

It is necessary to ensure the formation in children of an ecologically developed emotional and sensual sphere, the ability to experience and the desire to comprehend a sense of harmony with nature, to enjoy its beauty, compassion, sympathy for it in tragic situations; nurturing among them an active moral and environmental position. Humanitarian ecology, thanks to the potential of fine art, literature, music, should help the child to form a positive picture of nature, genuine ideas about harmony with it, its uniqueness, and aesthetic value. It is important to formulate children's experience of observing moral

standards in relation to nature, the interpretation of emotional experience in various types of creative activity; assessment and self-esteem from the ethical standpoint of human behavior in nature, his relationship to the world; analysis of the eco-cultural situation and the subjective attitude of a person to the environment; designing models of one's own behavior and activity in accordance with eco-cultural values, ecological and aesthetic ideals and ethical principles of interaction with nature.

For preschool children, who are characterized by a mythological perception of nature, pedagogical support and support in mastering and comprehending the surrounding world, creating conditions for the full-fledged living of a unique children's interaction with nature - equal dialogue with her, friendship, communication, surprise, contemplation, enjoyment are especially important, caring, expressing emotions from communication with nature in creativity, etc.

In the conditions of informatization, urbanization, the child is alienated from nature. It is important to understand in time that virtual nature will not replace real wildlife for a child. There can only be a lively dialogue with living nature. Emotional contact with nature, with its living energy, is possible only "alive" - „face to face“. Emotional contact, a lively dialogue of equal subjects with nature - this is what a person needs to stop in his destructive activity, to cease to be a conqueror of nature, a nature user. Emotional contact is the most reliable mechanism for protecting nature from anthropogenic pollution, from destructive effects. Harmony with nature is a love of nature, emotional contact and dialogue with it, which a person has in his inner spiritual world. The principle of live communication involves the development of a person's feelings of love for nature, the formation of an ecologically developed emotional and sensual sphere of personality. Love for nature is a feeling that can become a reliable obstacle to its predatory destruction: to love means the inability to harm. In development of the ideas of reverence for life, the principle of live communication should help modern media generation without a monitor feel wildlife, learn to distinguish between the virtual world and the wildlife world, and finally, make a choice in favor of wildlife so that it does not remain just a picture on a computer on The background of man-made is empty. The principle of reverence for life should help the media generation to see aesthetic value in wildlife, be able to appreciate the natural beauty of wildlife, its fragility, originality, uniqueness. In the virtual world, as well as in interaction with wildlife, the boundary between good and evil is human morality. The ethical imperative means everyone's moral responsibility for the quality of the information space and the environmental situation on the planet. This is the moral responsibility of the subjects of informational activities and interaction with nature for each choice, each act, its interpretation from the standpoint of the values of environmental and information ethics. This is a moral responsibility before the future for the quality of the transmitted information, behavioral patterns, the nature of interaction with nature and interactions in the information network. The principle of the ethical imperative presupposes the development of axiological models of education, upbringing and socialization, which will ensure the development of the ecological and informational culture of the younger generations. The ethical imperative of informational and environmental activities of each person means that the importance of external control and external evaluation is not decisive for him, instead of external regulators of the act, the leading role is played by the internal moral imperative. The information space is unlimited, and nature is silent. Only the internal moral core, spirituality, values, decency, culture, moral responsibility, conscience, dignity determine the nature of a person's actions in the absence of

external control. The principle of the ethical imperative implies the creation of conditions for the formation of a highly moral personality, capable of making an independent choice in favor of the values of environmental ethics in the real and virtual worlds

We suggest to update the content of preschool education in accordance with the vector of its humanization and actualization of environmental ethics in two main forms:

1) The inclusion in the content of environmental classes of children's dialogues with wildlife, reading works of children's literature on nature, expanding the range of environmentally oriented activities of children, realizing the potential of children's literature, music, visual arts, theater, etc. in forming the foundations of ecological culture in children

2) Conducting classes on environmental ethics, the content of which is to teach children to be kind to nature, animals and plants

After all, our studies show that environmental education will not get rid of the "prohibitory" approach. Children know how to deal with nature: you cannot tear, break, stomp, kill etc. But they cannot answer the question, but how can it be, what should be the interaction with nature, which will bring joy not only to children but also to animals, plants, will be an expression of a person's good attitude towards nature. The adult population, perhaps, also does not immediately understand the answer to this question, since it still approaches nature mainly from an exclusively consumer point of view: there is still hunting as entertainment, still if in the forest, then for barbecue or mushrooms, nature is still overloaded with garbage, there are still very few who can go into nature to see and hear it, feed birds and animals in difficult times for them, to give nature their time and clear at least a small part of it from garbage simply out of a love of love for her, simply because nature cannot do it on her own, because the "crown of nature" that a person is considered to be is not his exceptional value, not the basis for plundering nature, cruel attitude to it and destroying it more weak, and exclusive responsibility for all living things, for our common home, our planet, for our common life with it. I think that the roots of Russian spirituality, its moral values and best traditions are the roots of oak groves and trunks of birch trees, these are the springs of Russian forests, these are the free winds of chamomile fields and the aromas of grasses under a scattered matinee. The Russian person has always been strongly connected with his roots, his nature, love for his land, for his birches, fields, forests, full-flowing rivers - after all, Russian soldiers fought for their land, for their native birches and fields. We need to help our children feel love for their land, unity with it, its strength, the joy of caring for it. It is these ideals that environmental ethics will bring to environmental education.

Humanitarian ecology, demanding the rich potential of knowledge in environmental education, will ensure the formation of such ecological culture in children, which will mean their reorientation from the standpoint of nature management to the position of harmony between human and nature, the unity of ecologically developed intellectual, emotional, sensual and active spheres of personality.

## **7. Conclusion**

Thus, as the main vector for updating the content of environmental education in general and preschool in particular, we consider its humanization, which will allow us to realize the powerful potential of humanitarian knowledge in the development of ecological culture of children. It is important to strengthen

the axiological component in connection with the need to reorient from a utilitarian approach to nature - from nature management to a value attitude to nature in all aspects, including spiritual, moral and aesthetic; including the new meaning and motives of habitual norms - such as respect for nature. It is important to take care of nature not only as a resource for human life, but as a self-valuable phenomenon that has its own right to life. It is important to develop the value-semantic foundations of a responsible attitude to nature, which should be motivated not only by calculating and rational knowledge about a person's dependence on the ecological state of the environment, but, most importantly, by a sense of love for nature, and a value attitude to the life of all living beings and the planet in in general, feelings of compassion, mercy, empathy, harmony with nature. The humanitarian component of environmental education, which should be leading in childhood, taking into account its psychological characteristics, we called environmental ethics - an educational module that integrates cultural and axiological, spiritual, moral, and emotional-sensual representations of the world around us components of the process of educating the environmental culture of the personality. Environmental ethics can be considered as an independent humanitarian module of environmental education, which ensures the formation in children of an emotional, moral attitude to nature, environmental culture.

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