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ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AS A CONDITION OF HUMAN POTENTIAL

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ЭКОЛОГИЧЕСКОЕ ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ КАК СОСТОЯНИЕ ЧЕЛОВЕЧЕСКОГО ПОТЕНЦИАЛА

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Abstract. The article explains the directions of the formation of human potential of the concept of ecological education. The concept of human potential is understood as a reflection of an individual's self-confidence and their capacity for growth and transformation. The factor of development and real exploration of human potential is the individual's satisfaction with his activity, combined with the desire to grow and develop in a certain area. Human potential encompasses the physical and spiritual capabilities of individuals that can be directed toward achieving both personal and societal objectives, particularly through the pursuit of self-actualization. The main content is the preservation and development of people's individual spiritual, cultural and humanistic world, in which environmental education plays a special role. The main component of environmental education is educational potential and is indicated as human potential concerning a person through one of the main areas. The principles of human potential development in the field of environmental education are substantiated: stimulation of raising the level of ecological culture of the population, especially young people; establishment of effective interaction between regional authorities, large enterprises, public organizations and environmental activists; identification of the functions of human potential in the provision of resources in the field of environmental education. Here, environmental education and awareness, which contribute to the humanistic, spiritual, moral and social development of the individual, are currently becoming relevant in the context of the formation of human potential. The ecological education carried out by representatives of formal and non-formal education, as well as their interaction techniques with other institutions of society, are analyzed. The substantial aspects of the modern development of ecological education, as well as the primary problems in this area, are considered.

Аннотация. Раскрываются направления концепции экологического образования в формировании человеческого потенциала. Понятие человеческого потенциала является показателем уверенности человека в себе и его способности меняться и развиваться. Здесь фактором развития и реального раскрытия человеческого потенциала является удовлетворенность индивида собственной деятельностью в сочетании со стремлением расти и развиваться в определенной области. Человеческий потенциал — это сумма физических и духовных сил граждан, которые могут быть использованы для достижения индивидуальных и общественных целей, в том числе для расширения возможностей самореализации человека. Основным содержанием является сохранение и развитие его индивидуального духовного, культурного и гуманистического мира, в чем особую роль играет экологическое образование. Главной составляющей экологического образования является образовательный потенциал, который проявляется как человеческий потенциал по отношению к человеку через одно из основных направлений. Обоснованы принципы развития человеческого потенциала в сфере экологического образования: стимулирование повышения уровня

экологической культуры населения, особенно молодежи; налаживание эффективного взаимодействия региональных органов власти, крупных предприятий, общественных организаций и экологических активистов; Определение функций человеческого потенциала в ресурсном обеспечении сферы экологического образования. При этом в контексте формирования человеческого потенциала в настоящее время актуальным становится экологическое образование и просвещение, способствующие гуманистическому, духовно-нравственному и социальному развитию личности. Анализируется экологическое просвещение, осуществляемое представителями формального и неформального образования, а также способы их взаимодействия с другими институтами общества. Рассмотрены основные аспекты современного развития экологического образования, а также основные проблемы в этой области.

Keywords: environmental education, environmental awareness, human potential, environmental non-profit organizations, environmental education initiatives, project activities.

Ключевые слова: экологическое образование, экологическое сознание, человеческий потенциал, экологические некоммерческие организации, эколого-просветительская деятельность, проектная деятельность.

The category of “human potential” is far-reaching in numerous fields of knowledge, especially in economics and sociology. It has been accepted as both an indicator of the development of social systems and a process of individual development [1-3].

Thus, I.V. Soboleva defines human potential as “the accumulated reserve of physical and moral health, general cultural and general professional competence, creative, entrepreneurial and civic activity, realized in various fields of activity, as well as at the level and structure of needs” [4].

According to T.I. Zaslavskaya, human potential is a set of physical and spiritual forces of citizens that can be used to achieve individual and social goals, including expanding the possibilities of human self-realization. The concept of “human potential” indicates a person’s self-confidence, his ability to change and develop [5].

Even the Russian economist A. O. Verenik does not pay attention to the market basis of a person in his definition, considering it “the set of creative abilities of an individual, each of whose potentials is used in the appropriate form in the life process of an individual” [6].

Foreign scholars interpret the development of human potential as an expansion of the possibilities of realizing goals [7].

V. V. Sinitsina offers both a broad and a narrow interpretation of human potential. For us, the definition in a broad sense is more important. Here, the factor of development and real exploration of human potential is the satisfaction of the individual from his or her activity, combined with the desire to grow and develop in a certain area. It, in turn, ensures cultural development and self-improvement, the creation of a favorable environment for people from an ecological point of view [8].

As a rule, the following forms of human potential are distinguished: educational, cultural, spiritual, intellectual and others. Its components are also noted: human health potential (physical and mental), readiness to start a family, environmental behavior, civic activity, adaptation to social infrastructure, knowledge and qualities, cultural and value orientations and psychological competence [9].

It is also feasible to distinguish between life potential, which reflects certain features of human life processes, and individual potential, which includes both spiritual, intellectual and

creative, and motivational development of a person. As O. I. Ivanov noted, at the personal level, the characteristics of human potential are qualities that reflect the level of his activity and significantly affect the results achieved in the process of activity, and at the same time indicate a person's participation in his or her activity. At the organizational level, in his opinion, the mentioned features of human potential are conceptually preserved, but the results achieved are scaled following the levels of the state management hierarchy [10].

Provided that we consider, we are likely to notice that the primary component of ecological education is educational potential and "human potential" concerning a person through one of the main areas. At the same time, the human potential of an individual may not be embodied in professional activities, but can be realized within the framework of his self-development, spiritual and cultural improvement, hobbies [11].

Environmental education and enlightenment, which contribute to the humanistic, spiritual, moral and social development of the personality, are currently becoming relevant in the context of the formation of human potential. Indeed, raising the level of ecological culture for human health as a key component of human potential is especially required in the context of the spread of the technocratic world. However, the low level of development of ecological culture does not permit a person to realize the extent of his or her responsibility for the state of the external environment [12].

Ecological education, in turn, is one of the main factors in the formation of ecological culture, which is "expressed in readiness for responsible behavior and action under moral duty and legal norms" [13].

Ecological culture has a direct impact on the motivational qualities of the individual in the field of increasing and accumulating human potential, aimed at creative self-expression and self-realization. The issue of the comprehensive and continuous nature of environmental education, the penetration of modern environmental ideas and values into all spheres of social activity remains relevant. Educators emphasize the difficulty of introducing environmental education as a compulsory subject in connection with the need for constant updating of curricula. Currently, the effectiveness of the transition from environmental education to greening of education is noted, which ensures the application of an ecological approach and principles to all components of the educational process [14].

Environmental education is also considered within the framework of a cultural model, which consists in its humanization, giving it a general cultural and value-worldview orientation [15].

The importance of implementing environmental education is reflected in the primary principles of state policy in the field of environmental education and education of the population of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Environmental Education and Education of the Population", which entered into force on January 29, 2003, which determines the legal, economic and organizational foundations of the state policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan on environmental education and education of the population, and regulates relations in this area [16].

According to the legislation, since January 2003, environmental education of the population, environmental education and education of the growing generation and young people in our country have been general and mandatory under the procedure established by legislation.

The law presents environmental education as a process of teaching and learning norms, special knowledge, experience on environmental protection and use of natural resources. Ecological knowledge is provided as information on the environment, ecology, and mutual relations between man and nature. A key objective in the field of ecology is to enhance the environmental culture of the population, along with their educational level, professional skills, and ecological awareness.

Ecological education is a process of personality change based on continuous training, upbringing and development, the formation of a system of scientific and practical knowledge and

skills, value orientations, behaviors, responsible, harmonious attitude to the environment. Also, children develop an understanding of the “correct” interaction with the environment and the necessary basic competencies.

In the context of modern environmental education, it is essential to consider the attitudes of the Azerbaijani population toward environmental issues. According to a survey conducted in recent years, more than half of the respondents believe that the ecological situation is worsening rather than improving. According to the results of the conducted studies, pollution of the banks of the city and surrounding water bodies, waste discharged into the atmosphere, illegal deforestation, etc. are considered to be the most urgent environmental problems. Moreover, the population is concerned about both the ecological situation in the country and issues related to creating conditions for receiving environmental education and training. One of the priority areas related to environmental protection is the implementation of environmental education, as well as the creation of the necessary conditions for the formation of an ecological culture. Therefore, the development of human potential and the formation of ecological culture can be achieved by involving students more in environmental education through the personal participation of teachers and students in creating conditions for understanding the meanings of the environment.

To date, various environmental education programs, textbooks and teaching aids aimed at developing a holistic understanding of natural phenomena, as well as humanistic education, have been published in general and higher education institutions.

According to scientific research, the development of a responsible attitude toward the environment, as well as the formation of ecological culture and worldview, can be effectively achieved through a two-level educational approach. The first level is theoretical and practical, consistent and foundational, and is delivered within the framework of school education. For instance, through the subject “Ecology”, students learn key ecological concepts, laws, theories, and the basics of social and urban ecology, along with both global and national environmental issues. The second level operates at a practical-theoretical, flexible, regional, and local level. At this stage, students explore “regional and local environmental problems, urban ecology, social ecology, and aspects of human ecology” [17].

Importantly, this educational process is supported by the active involvement of local authorities, public associations, media outlets, educational organizations, cultural institutions, museums, libraries, environmental agencies, and even sports and tourism organizations [18], all of which contribute meaningfully to environmental education across various sectors.

In addition to this, collaborative project initiatives involving educational institutions, public organizations, major industrial enterprises, business entities, and regional and local authorities in the fields of education and public awareness are gaining increasing popularity. Participation in such projects offers valuable opportunities for experimentation, creative thinking, and the development of knowledge and practical skills [19].

As a result of this collective effort by environmental advocates, methodological frameworks for environmental lessons have been developed, a resource conservation center has been established, and volunteer groups are actively operating. The study revealed that involving students in project-based activities, thematic lessons, excursions, and similar events significantly enhances environmental education, especially when combined with active participation in sustainable environmental learning. Such involvement contributes meaningfully to the development of human potential. Research indicates that the successful organization of environmental education initiatives largely depends on the collaboration between various societal institutions. In several regions, coordinating bodies focused on environmental issues have been established. These typically include general education institutions, museums, libraries, national parks, as well as both commercial and

non-commercial environmental organizations. National parks and historical-geographical museums play a crucial role in helping students develop an understanding of the biodiversity of their native ecosystems, as well as the environmental challenges and risks specific to their regions. In many cases, the initiative for additional environmental education for schoolchildren originates from the teaching staff of general education institutions themselves. Additionally, in contrast to findings from earlier studies, recent observations indicate that the activation of project-based activities is now driven not only by educational and public organizations but also by enterprises and administrative bodies. A notable example of this involvement is the provision of grant support by enterprises to fund and implement environmental education initiatives for the wider population. Thus, three main directions in the development of environmental education can be identified. The first is the theoretical (scientific) approach, which is integrated into school subjects, ecological clubs, and academic sections. The second is the practical aspect, involving youth participation in various projects, events, competitions, and volunteer initiatives. The third is the cultural and educational dimension, which includes ethnocultural, scientific, environmental, tourist, and other activities aimed at raising awareness and fostering a deeper connection with nature and local environmental heritage.

Currently, attempts are being made to balance various aspects of environmental education by combining scientific, general cultural and project activities. At the same time, the question arises of the need to choose a certain model of the concept of greening education, which determines the functions, principles and ways of implementation to form the ecological culture of students and develop their ecological awareness. In turn, increasing the level of participation of each person in solving global and local environmental problems of the territory in which he lives, his active participation in project activities contributes to the expansion of the scope of social responsibility, the development of the human potential not only of society, community, but also of the person himself or herself.

President Ilham Aliyev's declaration of 2010 as the "Year of Ecology" in our country is a clear example of the great attention and sensitivity to the solution of environmental problems. The declaration of 2024 as the "Year of Solidarity for a Green World" by the Decree of the President of Azerbaijan dated December 25, 2023 once again highlights that our country has demonstrated great will by contributing to the fight against the consequences of climate change. It is reported that one of the five national priorities of Azerbaijan for socio-economic development by 2030 has been determined as "A country with a clean environment and green growth". Following this priority, work is being carried out to improve the environment, restore and increase greenery, and ensure the efficient use of water resources and sustainable energy sources. The organization of the 29th session of the COP in Baku in November 2024 under the chairmanship of Azerbaijan was one of the significant historical events in the life of our people. It should be noted that the holding of this prestigious event in our country is based on serious political and economic reasons. In particular, the activity shown at the national and international levels to protect the environment within the framework of sustainable development and solve global ecological problems are important factors that determine our country's hosting of COP29 (<https://president.az/az/articles/view/738>).

The "Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement" was approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated July 13, 2024. The "Memorandum of Understanding on Information Exchange between the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement" was approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated October 10, 2024. The Law of the Republic of

Azerbaijan “On Ratification of the Paris Agreement Adopted at the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change” (October 28, 2016) was signed.

The aforementioned agreements and conventions envisage the establishment of cooperation between the parties in the areas of climate change, prevention of environmental pollution, waste management and reuse, land protection, assessment of negative impacts on the environment, as well as other areas. Our country, by gaining the opportunity to closely participate in the discussion of issues related to global climate change, also influences the formation of international policy in this area. Provided that we summarize the above, it becomes perceptible that global environmental problems seriously concern humanity. The Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change is one of the institutional mechanisms that plays a significant role in ensuring environmental security at the global level. The sustainable development of our country, the successes achieved in the field of environmental protection as one of its components, and the targets set for the next stage play a decisive role in the decision to hold the 29th session of the COP in Azerbaijan. COP29 creates new prospects for cooperation between our country and foreign states and international organizations to prevent climate change.

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