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Didactic Issues in Environmental Education^(*)



<http://www.clab.edc.uoc.gr/aestit/>

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**Εκεί που φύτερωνε φλισκούνη κι άγρια μέντα κι έβγαζε η γη το πρώτο της κυκλάμινο
τώρα χωριάτες παζαρεύουν τα τσιμέντα και τα πουλιά πέφτουν νεκρά στην υψικάμινο.
Εκεί που σμίγανε τα χέρια τους οι μύστες ευλαβικά πριν μπουν στο θυσιαστήριο
τώρα πετάνε τ' αποτσιγάρα οι τουρίστες και το καινούργιο παν να δουν διυλιστήριο.
Εκεί που η θάλασσα γινόταν ευλογία κι ήταν ευχή του κάμπου τα βελάσματα
τώρα καμιόνια κουβαλάν στα ναυπηγεία άδεια κορμιά σιδερικά παιδιά κι ελάσματα.
Κοιμήσου Περσεφόνη στην αγκαλιά της Γης στου κόσμου το μπαλκόνι ποτέ μην ξαναβγείς.
song by Melina Merkouri in the album of M. Hatzidakis-N. Gatsos "Τα παράλογα"**

Didactic Issues in Environmental Education

Environmental issues constitute an urgency in all societies and dominate the modern, knowledge based, ones. This situation may be attributed to various reasons, real (advanced technology, increased population, higher living standards, ...) and subjective (increased awareness, more information, ...). As a result, a large percentage of the society is active on environmental issues and (real or factitious) controversies have emerged. Quite often the views and intentions of different groups are pursued on a dogmatic way and not on logic deductions based on relevant factual data. This approach creates intense confrontations and public divide.

Environmental education, consequently, appears as a process useful the 'restoration of the rationalism' to the discussions related to environmental issues. This, of course, may be achieved if the teaching will aim, not the to the inculcation of 'preconstructed ideas', but to the development of critical and creative thinking for the process of relevant factual data.

Within the above context, Environmental Education constitutes an integral part of the Didactics of Science and Technology.

In this course:

- ✓ **The context and the organization of Environmental Education in Greece are presented.**
- ✓ **Techniques on Environmental Education teaching are recommended together with a commentary on the textbooks used in the (Greek) schools^(*).**
- ✓ **Relevant literature for further reading is indicated.**

^(*)the elaboration of the topics is used also as examples on different approaches on the didactics of Science and Technology.

Introduction

Current technology advanced societies are preoccupied with Environmental problems to a degree higher than in the past.

Possible(?) reasons:

- They did not exist in the past,
- They did exist but to a lesser extent,
- They did exist but they were not known – lack of information (news-coverage),
- They did exist but they were not appreciated as such – lack of knowledge,
- Lack of society awareness,
- People had other priorities e.g.. security, food, ... (survival),

- All of the above (!)

- Other reasons (?)

Introduction (continued)

The **environment** was always **highly valued**, for example:

- ✓ **The beliefs on hell** (=a hostile-bad environment) **and on paradise** (all cults),
- ✓ **The demerit attributed to the destroyers of environment**
(quote examples from history – from local traditions)
- ✓ **The (world wide) appreciation towards caring for the environment** (examples?)

In the past **caring for the environment** was simply:

- **selecting** as a home a good healthy natural environment,
- **maintaining** it in good (and clean?) condition,
- useful – appropriate as a **shelter – refuge**.

In our times environmental problems are **more acute** for reasons:

- **Actual - real**, and
- **Subjective**.

Introduction (continued)

Some **actual – real** reasons:

- ✓ **Intensified human made environmental disturbances** because:
 - **More advanced technology,**
 - **Larger populations.**
- ✓ **Specialized social organization** (large cities vs. country – rural areas),
- ✓ **Higher living standards** and higher consumption rates(!)
- ✓ **Accumulation of problems** from the past.

Some **subjective** reasons:

- ✓ **More information and from many sources** (prejudiced or unbiased),
- ✓ **Increased awareness and suspicion** (not always justified),
- ✓ **Accumulated knowledge and public literacy** (not always reliable).

Environment:

from **environ = encircle, surround (esp. hostilely or protectively)**. [Middle English via Old French environer from environ 'surroundings', from en 'in' + viron = 'circuit' from virer = 'turn, veer = change direction] Concise Oxford Dictionary

The totality of conditions:

- in which organism live and grow,
- which influence the life and growth of an organism.

common interest is usually on the **environment in relation to human people.**

interest on the environment in which animals live is usually in relation to human life
e.g. the EEC directive on poultry farms.

Environment:

- **Natural environment** (air, water, earth, ...)
- **Human made (social) environment** (economic, cultural, historic, religious, ...)

Environmental Education:

Education on subjects

- ✓ concerning the- ,
 - ✓ related to-
 - ✓ influencing the
- environment.

Objectives (attainment targets) of Environmental Education

quite often there is vagueness, ambiguity, dogmatism – e.g..

- ❖ *the development and maintenance of an environmental (ecological) conscience,*
- ❖ *love (respect, ...) to the environment (to Nature, ...)*

environmental (ecological) conscience – is there an obvious common perception?

love (like what?), **respect** (like respect to God?, to parents?, to what?) **to the environment**

→evidence of an existing confusion

a more specific outline:

- ❖ *to preserve the environment (as it is?),*
- ❖ *not to destroy it, not to pollute it (negative approaches!),*
- ❖ *etc.*

A naïve approach:

up to now the environment has preserved (human) life consecutively, if preserved it will keep preserving life.

Leads to standstill e.g.:

- not to reclaim marsh land?
- not to build houses?
- not to construct roads, ports, ...?
- not to destroy weeds – pests?
- not to construct dams or irrigate land?

Objectives (attainment targets) **of Environmental Education** (another approach)

The environment is raised to a high value in human life because:

➤ **it supports and preserves (human) life, and**

having secured the existence and preservation of life

➤ **we pursue a better life.**

Consequently:

➤ **the environment is used to support and preserve life, human life especially,**

➤ **environmental works** (should) **aim at improving the environment** for a better life.

Now practical issues arise:

Practical issues:

What constitutes an improvement to the environment;

an assumed improvement to the environment

is it really an improvement? is it a long term one? (case of DDT)

Better conditions to whom?

- to me?
- to the neighbour?
- to the population of whole region?
- to all?

When conflicting interests – views exist: how will they be resolved?

Issues delicate with a strong political component (load) **to confront to:**

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Αποτελούν σημαντικό παράγοντα
επιτυχίας προγράμματος περιβαλλοντικής εκπαίδευσης

Συχνά αποφεύγονται – δεν συζητούνται
περιβαλλοντικά θέματα τοπικού ενδιαφέροντος

Άμεσες απαγορεύσεις **δεν υπάρχουν στον τόπο μας (αλλού;)**

Ενίοτε έμμεση αποθάρρυνση **από τον κοινωνικό περίγυρο**

Η μη αντιμετώπιση των θεμάτων αυτών
οδηγεί σε ελλιπή περιβαλλοντική εκπαίδευση.