

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN SOCIETY

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Abstract. This article examines the essence of environmental education, its role in shaping the younger generation, and its impact on the development of society. It analyzes the theoretical foundations of environmental education and upbringing, the state policy pursued in this field in Uzbekistan, and the forms and methods of providing environmental knowledge in educational institutions. Furthermore, the article substantiates the social significance of forming an ecological culture and its connection with sustainable development.

Keywords: environmental education, ecological upbringing, ecological culture, environment, sustainable development, ecological consciousness, nature conservation.

INTRODUCTION

Today, one of the most pressing problems facing humanity is the ecological crisis associated with environmental pollution, the depletion of natural resources, and climate change. The root cause of these problems lies, above all, in the improper attitude of humans toward nature and the insufficient level of their ecological knowledge and culture. Therefore, one of the most important tasks facing modern society is to shape ecological consciousness in the younger generation, to instill in them a responsible attitude toward nature — in other words, to develop the system of environmental education and upbringing.

Environmental education is a continuous process aimed at forming scientific knowledge in a person about the interrelationship between nature and society, raising ecological culture, and cultivating a conscious, responsible attitude toward the environment. This process begins in the family and in preschool institutions, continues through general secondary schools, vocational education, and higher education, and encompasses all stages of a person's life.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The concept of environmental education is complex and multifaceted: it includes not only knowledge within the framework of the natural sciences (biology, geography, chemistry) but also values within the social and humanitarian sphere. According to scholars, environmental education performs three main functions: first, providing knowledge about the laws of nature and human–nature relations; second, forming aesthetic and moral values toward nature; third, developing practical skills and competencies in environmental protection.

The goal of environmental education is to shape not merely theoretical knowledge but an ecological consciousness that manifests itself in practical activity. Ecological consciousness is the totality of a person's views, beliefs, and behavior regarding nature and environmental issues. A person with a high level of ecological consciousness strives to avoid causing harm to nature, to use resources economically, and to actively participate in efforts to protect the environment.

POLICY FOR DEVELOPING THE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION SYSTEM IN UZBEKISTAN

During the years of independence, the development of environmental education and upbringing has become one of the priority directions of state policy in Uzbekistan. The Law "On Education," the Law "On Nature Protection," and a number of state programs define tasks for improving environmental education. In particular, subjects such as "The World Around Us,"

"Natural Science," and "Fundamentals of Ecology" have been introduced into the curricula of general secondary schools, through which a sense of respect for nature is instilled in pupils from an early age.

Educational programs in the field of ecology are also being expanded within the higher education system: the subject "Ecology and Environmental Protection" is taught as a compulsory course not only in ecology and natural science specialties but also in technical, economic, and humanitarian fields. In addition, active research and practical projects are being carried out on topics such as the ecological situation in the Aral Sea region, the rational use of water resources, and waste recycling, which enables students to link theoretical knowledge with practice.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETY

The social significance of environmental education manifests itself in several aspects. First, it is an important tool for realizing the idea of sustainable development, since if economic progress is not harmonized with environmental preservation, the interests of future generations remain at risk. Second, an ecologically literate population is conscious of and prepared for natural disasters and environmental risks, which serves to ensure the safety of society.

Third, qualities such as thrift, responsibility, and discipline, formed through environmental education, have a positive influence not only on nature but also on other spheres of society. The ecological culture formed in young people from an early age directly influences the decisions they make in the future, as well as their production and consumption behavior. For this reason, it is advisable to develop environmental education not merely as a separate subject but as an integrated approach embedded throughout the entire system of subjects and educational activities.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, environmental education is an integral part of the development of modern society, serving to form a conscious, responsible, and caring attitude toward nature in a person. Given the ever-expanding scale of environmental problems, it is of great importance to raise the level of ecological knowledge and culture in educational institutions and to actively involve the family, the public, and state institutions in this process. Only through a comprehensive and continuous system of environmental education is it possible to build an ecologically sustainable and healthy society.

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