

## THE ESSENCE AND CONTENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION BASED ON AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the essence and content of environmental education based on an inclusive approach from scientific-theoretical and methodological perspectives. The role of environmental education in shaping an individual's ecological consciousness, culture, and responsible behavior is examined in close connection with the principles of inclusive education. Furthermore, the importance of differentiated pedagogical technologies, individual adaptation, interdisciplinary integration, and the ideas of sustainable development in implementing environmental education based on an inclusive approach is revealed.

**Keywords:** inclusive approach, environmental education, ecological consciousness, ecological culture, ecological competence, sustainable development, interdisciplinary integration, pedagogical technologies, socio-pedagogical environment.

Environmental education is an important component of the modern education system and is interpreted as a continuous pedagogical process aimed at forming a conscious and responsible attitude toward the environment in individuals. This process implies not only the acquisition of environmental knowledge but also the development of ecological awareness, ecological culture, and behavior aligned with the principles of sustainable development. In this sense, environmental education is considered a multifaceted socio-pedagogical phenomenon that ensures the integrated development of an individual's intellectual, axiological, and practical activities.

The ideas of environmental education began to take shape in the second half of the 20th century against the backdrop of intensifying global environmental problems. In particular, the Tbilisi Declaration adopted in 1977 at the initiative of UNESCO clearly defined the goals, objectives, principles, and methodological directions of environmental education. This document recognized continuity, interdisciplinary integration, and practical orientation as key principles of environmental education.

The concept of sustainable development promoted by the United Nations (notably in the 1987 report *Our Common Future* and the decisions of the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Summit) interpreted environmental education as an integral part of the global development strategy. This concept emphasizes the need to ensure harmony between environmental balance, economic development, and social justice. Environmental education, in turn, is regarded as an essential social mechanism for achieving this balance.

From a scientific-theoretical perspective, environmental education is based on several fundamental foundations. First, the science of ecology—founded by the German scientist Ernst Haeckel—studies the interactions between living organisms and their environment. Pedagogical and didactic theories provide the basis for teaching, learning, and applying environmental knowledge in practice. The concept of sustainable development considers environmental education in integration with socio-economic development, while systems theory enables the analysis of nature–society–human relationships as complex, interconnected systems.

The essence and content of environmental education are manifested through its structural components. It not only aims to develop ecological thinking but also to establish a system of



environmental values and prepare individuals for practical activities. In modern pedagogical interpretation, environmental education is based on the harmony of knowledge, values, activity, and behavior components.

First, the knowledge component forms the cognitive foundation of environmental education. It involves developing learners' scientific understanding of ecosystem structure and functions, the laws of the biosphere, and global environmental problems. Understanding issues such as climate change, desertification, and biodiversity loss fosters a systemic approach to environmental processes. This process is closely linked with the ideas of sustainable development and is reflected in the conceptual approaches promoted by the United Nations.

The value component constitutes the axiological basis of environmental education. At this stage, a careful attitude toward nature, environmental responsibility, and a sense of accountability to future generations are formed. The system of environmental values determines an individual's moral position toward the environment. The principles of environmental education developed by UNESCO also emphasize the formation of ecological awareness and responsibility as key objectives.

The activity component represents the practical expression of environmental knowledge and values. Activities such as environmental monitoring, participation in nature conservation initiatives, and the rational use of resources contribute to the development of environmental competencies. In this process, environmental education goes beyond theoretical knowledge and fosters practical skills applicable in real-life situations.

Finally, the behavioral component serves to establish ecological culture and a sustainable lifestyle. Ecological culture is understood as a system of environmentally responsible behaviors manifested in an individual's daily life. This component is considered the final outcome of environmental education, as it translates ecological awareness into real-life practice.

Environmental education is not merely a set of knowledge within a specific subject but a socio-cultural process and a comprehensive pedagogical system that contributes to sustainable societal development. Its content is expressed through the unity of knowledge, values, activity, and behavior, aiming to develop ecological competence in individuals.

The effective implementation of these components in an inclusive environment requires the use of differentiated and adaptive pedagogical technologies. Individual learning trajectories, multisensory teaching, and the use of visual and practical methods make environmental education accessible and understandable for all learners. In this process, interdisciplinary integration plays a crucial role, as environmental problems are complex and require the integration of natural sciences, social sciences, and technological knowledge.

Thus, the essence and content of environmental education based on an inclusive approach go beyond merely providing ecological knowledge and are manifested as a systematic pedagogical process aimed at forming ecological consciousness, culture, and a responsible life position oriented toward sustainable development. By harmonizing the principles of equal opportunities, social justice, and sustainable development within the educational process, it seeks to develop the ecological competence of every learner.

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