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## **Citizenship and environmental education**

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### **Introduction**

The aim of this paper is to present environmental education as an integral part of citizenship education. It is obvious that the main task of schools today is to educate and bring up. As Sevčíková (2003, p 9) says, education has the function of creating a harmonious and dignified participation of people in a shared life style. This life style, stress on self-imposed moderation, on non-consuming, and the spiritual qualities of human life are the key points in environmental education. It is important to mention the crucial role of environment education, with an emphasis on the out-of-school environment. The ordinary school environment does not seem to accomplish the needs of environmental education. The school in the Czech Republic is structured to make all educational processes effective. Classrooms are uniform – three rows of five desks, blackboard, teacher's desk, etc. This environment is very far from the everyday life of adult citizens. The school should prepare pupils for the real life, for the life as it really is. Learners should see that what they learn at school is visible or applicable in everyday life. This is the aspect where we see the opportunity of organising walks, trips and excursions. These should not serve as merely additional activities but as equal organisational forms to those used in everyday instruction.

### **Citizenship and environmental education**

The Pedagogical Dictionary (Průcha, Walterová, Mareš, 1995, p135) describes citizenship education as an education that aims at creating values and attitudes that are shared by a democratic society, and at developing the ability to live in a society and fulfil the role of a citizen, and consequently at equipping young people with appropriate knowledge. So outlined citizenship education guides primary school pupils to identify themselves with the society they live in and to accept its values, caring for them and purveying them. Citizenship education educates a citizen. Petrucijová (Petrucijová, 2002, p126) defines a citizen as an independent and critically thinking individual, who is interested in the common good and tries to act responsibly in support of their community. Kučerová (Kučerová, 2001, p21) gives five key factors in educating a citizen. The first is forming identity, which is a process leading to the individual's identification with large or small social groups. The important point within this process is accepting and keeping the values of the particular social group. Another key factor is education for humanism and tolerance. Kučerová claims that this is the way to overcome class and party differences in society. The values of humanity and tolerance are based on a wide consensus of political and religious opinions. Kučerová also stresses readiness to discuss as another key factor, with the discussion based on factual knowledge of the problem. An important point in citizenship education is leading the pupils to grasp the rights and duties of a citizen, and accepting the responsibility for them. Last but not least, the education to moral autonomy is listed. A democratic way of upbringing within the family is highlighted. The goal of citizenship education is that the children should gradually identify with the society they live in, accept its values, respect them, and purvey them to further generations. Another difficult task for schools and teachers.

One of the pillars of the citizenship education is environmental education. Thus within the scope of citizenship education the pupils gain a knowledge of environmental education alongside a knowledge of geography, law, economy, anthropology and political science. The pupils are, within environmental education, led to a certain degree of responsibility for today's, but also the future's, condition of nature and environment. Environmental education constructs pro-environmental value orientation. If we return to the five key factors of citizenship education in Kučerová, we stress the transmission of values as an important point in citizenship education. Pro-environmental values should become a part of the value orientation of the young generation. However, accepting and identifying with the values does not mean reaching the goal, because the goal is to teach the pupils to respect and keep these values in the future. Pro-environmental values become more and more a part of the values equipment of modern citizens.

### **The out-of-school environment and its place in environmental education as a part of citizenship education**

Kraus (Kraus, Poláčková, 2001, p 99) gives two basic functions for the environment in education. The first is situational, based on the assumption that every educational situation takes place in a concrete environment which plays a background role, with a positive, negative or neutral role. A positive function means that the influence of the environment accords with the educational goal. With a negative function, the influence of the environment runs against the educational goal, and with the neutral function it is not possible to decide. The second function of the environment is the educational (formative) function. Kraus shows that the environment has an immediate influence on the behaviour of an individual. Pupils behave differently when they are in the classroom than when on a school trip. When planning activities teachers should incorporate this environmental influence and make use of it make the educational process more effective.

Examining the environment from the viewpoint of a participant in the educational process, we can distinguish the school environment (the building where education takes place) and the out-of-school environment (the area outside the school). Most educational processes take place in the school environment, and the importance of the out-of-school environment is underestimated. As Obst (Kalhous, Obst, 2002, p 165) says, the knowledge and skills of primary school pupils are gained from a culture different from that in which they began. This is particularly so with special schools: children with special needs who are not (or perhaps cannot be) integrated into mainstream schools attend special schools. The environment of a special school is restricted: it is not only remote from other primary schools but largely also from the reality of the surrounding world. Within the building the pupils have ideal conditions for learning: accessibility enables free movement, but this freedom often ends at the school gates.

Organising trips and excursions is one way to use the out-of-school environment in citizenship education. Learners have the opportunity of meeting the subject in an environment completely different from that they are used to. Teaching in an authentic environment is very important: Obst (Kalhous, Obst, 2002, p 168) characterises authenticity as purity, trustfulness and reality. Thus, teaching and learning must be real and practical. The authenticity of learning reaches over not only the learning unit, but over the borders of a subject, class, school and region. The pupils meet the notions in authentic activities. Trip and excursion fulfil the requirements of authentic learning: the pupils learn in an out-of-school environment and in gain new information.

The trip and the excursion can also be understood as learning in the community. Community-based learning covers, according to Obst (Kalhous, Obst, 2002, p 172), a wide range of activities, including practical instruction in apprenticeship education, social work and part-time work. The aim is to bring education closer to the real world, so that instruction takes place in an environment that was not created only for learning as such.

### **Excursion – organisation in the out-of-school environment**

The Pedagogical Dictionary ( Průcha, Walterová, Mareš, 1995, p 66) defines an excursion as ‘a group visit to an important or interesting place or facility that has a noetic goal. One of organisational forms of instruction held in out-of-school environment, it has direct relation to the content of instruction: it illustrates, accomplishes and widens the learner’s experience’. Janiš (2003, p 37) defines an excursion as instruction held in out-of-school environment and during which the pupils go out into the real environment.

Both definitions make it clear that the excursion is a form of educational process that is arranged by the school in an out-of-school environment. The fact that it takes place out-of-school does not mean that it should not follow certain rules. As well as the safety rules, which are the responsibility of the teacher organising the excursion, there are rules to enhance the positive educational results. The teacher organising the excursion must not forget three phases – preparation, realisation and evaluation.

During the preparation the teacher and the pupils plan the excursion. The teacher, in cooperation with the pupils, determines the content of the excursion and assesses its cognitive possibilities. First, the teacher must set the goals clearly, then assign the pupils tasks to realise these. The pupils also specify questions that are to be answered during this.

The realisation is the excursion itself. The venues for excursions can be factories, service companies, judicial and legislative institutions, school institutions etc. This is not chosen by chance, but in coherence with the goals of the particular subjects at school. For environmental education, places like sewage water treatment plants, natural parks and reservations or waste sorting plants might be chosen: the pupils can visit places they have learned about in civics lessons. But seeing the place is not the only part: pupils should not be a passive audience but should participate actively in the excursion. Discussion with an ecologist, participating in cleaning the riverbed, planting trees – these are just a few examples of activities which could be used to engage the pupils during an excursion.

The final phase of an excursion should be the evaluation of the preparation and realisation, and make the results of the excursion more permanent. Again, the teacher as well as the pupils participates in this. Pupils recapitulate the excursion and answer questions set during the preparation. The teacher should evaluate if the goals set during preparation were fulfilled.

Although the excursion has been discussed here for use in environmental education, this organisational form can be reflected in other subjects, even if it is arranged only as a part of a single school subject. Many factors will make it work across the curriculum of the school.

### **Environmental education as a cross-sectional topic in the Curriculum Framework for Primary Education**

The Ministry of Education issued an important conceptual document – *The Curriculum Framework for Primary Education*, which shows the government regards environmental education as a key independent cross-sectional topic. In the Curriculum Framework a cross-sectional topic is an area of topical problems and thus is an important and integral part of primary education. The topics of environmental education reach across all subjects, connecting the educational content of various subjects. Education becomes more complex and positively influences the process of creating pupils key competences. Pupils gain the possibility of creating an integrated view of a problem and use a wide spectrum of skills. Cross-sectional topics are an obligatory part of primary education.

### **The cross-sectional topic ‘Environmental Education’ in the Curriculum Framework**

Environmental education leads to an understanding of the complex relationships between people and their environment, and the need for sustainable development. It enables pupils to realise the development of this relationship through learning aspects of ecology, economics, science and technology, politics and citizenship, relationships of time and space (between local, regional and global problems) and the variety of possible solutions to environmental problems. It leads to active participation in protecting and creating the environment, an understanding its influences on lifestyles, and the value of sustainable development.

Many subjects are involved in this cross-sectional topic. Gradually connecting, fostering and systematising knowledge and skills in these subjects enables the formations of a complex viewpoint. Each has its specific importance in influencing the rational and the emotional. The topic ‘Man and his World’ offers a compact initial view of nature and the environment, teaching pupils to sensitively observe and evaluate the consequences of human behaviour. It contributes to the acquisition of basic skills and an active and responsible approach to environment in everyday life. It uses to the maximum direct contact between the pupils and the local environment and links thinking with the emotional side of the individual. In ‘Man and Nature’ the understanding of the objective validity of basic natural laws is stressed, as well as the dynamic links between the simplest ecosystems and the biosphere, the position of people in nature. It develops the complex functioning of the ecosystem in relation to human society – for sustaining the conditions for life, gaining renewable resources of materials and energy, and also for non-productive values (such as inspiration and leisure). This establishes the foundations for a systematic approach linking the systems, their hierarchy and their relations to the surrounding environment. ‘Man and Society’ links ecological, technical-economic and social phenomena with the importance of care and the principles of sustainable development.

‘Man and Health’ deals with the influence of the environment on one’s own health and that of others. It leads includes the significance of caring for nature when organising large-scale sporting events. In ‘Information and Communication Technologies’ the topic enables pupils to use computers to actively investigate current conditions of the environment, differentiating and linking ecological problems. Communication technologies stimulate interest in solving ecological problems through creating contacts and exchanging information within the region, the republic, the EU and globally. ‘Art and Culture’ provides opportunities for thinking about the relationship between mankind and

the environment using the natural and social environment as an inspiration for cultural and artistic values: it contributes to the aesthetic qualities of the environment. A link between this and 'Man and the World of Work' through work activities that support the environment enables pupils to learn of the role of various professions in relation to the environment.

### **The contribution of the cross-sectional topic to the personality development of the learner**

In the area of knowledge, skills and abilities the topics:

- develop an understanding of the links between the biosphere, people and the environment and the consequence of human activities on the environment
- lead to an understanding of the conditions for life and how they can be threatened
- contributes to understanding the links between population development and the environment in different parts of the world
- enables understanding the connection between local and global problems and of individual responsibility for the environment
- provides knowledge, skills and necessary habits for daily conduct towards the environment
- provides examples of desirable and undesirable behaviour regarding the environment and sustainable development
- develops cooperation in caring for the environment at local, regional, European and international levels
- mediates principles of sustainability for the development of society
- teaches pupils to evaluate the significance of information about ecological problems
- teaches pupils to reason and communicate about environment issues, to express and defend opinions and standpoints.

In terms of attitudes and values, the cross-sectional topic:

- contributes to perceiving life as the highest value
- leads to responsibility in relationship to biosphere and protecting nature and natural resources
- leads to understanding the importance and necessity of sustainable development
- stimulates activity, creativity, tolerance, helpfulness and consideration in relation to the environment
- contributes to creating a healthy life style and to perceiving the aesthetic values of the environment
- leads to involvement in solving problems connected with environment protection
- leads to a receptive and sensitive attitude to nature and to the natural and cultural heritage.

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