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## THE SYSTEM OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN THE USA

### ABSTRACT

*The article deals with studying the peculiarities of environmental education system in the USA. It has been defined that US environmental policy includes governmental actions at the federal, state and local level. It has been identified that US environmental education is characterized by an extraordinary variety of forms, directions and methodological approaches, deep penetration of the ideas of environmental ethics in the content of all the disciplines, extensive involvement of communities and, in particular, public non-governmental organizations in the process of forming US citizens' careful and responsible attitude to the environment. It has been stated that the system of US Environmental Education aims to provide a solution to such problems: to ensure citizens' close contact with the environment; to contribute to the forming of environmentally friendly styles of behaviour and activities; to form a set of knowledge about the environment as a system of interconnected natural, economic and social factors; to involve students in solving local environmental problems. It has been found out that since 1970 Environmental Protection Agency has been operating in the USA. It has been mentioned that Environmental Protection Agency implements an environmental law by writing regulations and set national environmental standards. It has been indicated that Environmental Protection Agency has created the Office of Environmental Education so that national leadership may be provided and environmental literacy may be increased. It has been denoted that main goals of the the Office of Environmental Education include design and implementation of curricula and training programs for environmental education for both pupils and adults; organization of seminars, conferences and discussions on urgent environmental issues; cooperation with state education departments and other agencies. Consequently, recommendations that may be used by native educators to improve the national system of environmental education have been presented.*

**Key words:** federal government, Environmental Protection Agency, environmental education, environment protection, state environmental policy, sustainable development, the USA.

### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, environmental education (EE) is considered as an aspect of school education humanization that provides mastering social spiritual values, because spirituality is impossible without understanding both man and nature. This feeling is rather organic for harmonious development of personality as a member of society willing to protect the environment.

In a world context the coordination and institutional support of EE is carried out by intergovernmental organizations, primarily the United Nations (UN) system. Leading



among them are the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). The development of environmental policy on the European continent is coordinated by the Committee on Environmental Policy of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

In the USA environmental policy includes governmental actions at the federal, state and local level so that the environment may be protected and the natural resources may be conserved. In addition, environmental protection is balanced with other public policy concerns, namely, the economic growth, the affordability of energy and the rights of both businesses and individuals (Ballotpedia, 2016).

Environmental education in Ukraine is based on the environmental policy developed at the international and national levels, whereupon the international level includes global (planetary) and regional (within one or more continents) dimensions. Today, the legal norms in any way related to environmental education are mostly presented in the environmental legislation of Ukraine and education legislation. However, most of them are rather programmatic and conceptual. Therefore, it is necessary to study the peculiarities of environmental education systems abroad to outline relevant positive aspects that consequently may be used to improve the system of environmental education in Ukraine.

#### **THE AIM OF THE STUDY**

Thus, the aim of our study consists in the following: 1) to analyze the peculiarities of the US system of environmental education and based on the study performed 2) to present the recommendations that may be used by native educators to improve the national system of environmental education.

#### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS**

National issues of education and scientific support in sustainable development and, consequently, the prospects of environmental education, have been studied by such leading Ukrainian scientists as G. Bilyavskiy, O. Pashchenko, G. Tymochko and others; environmental consciousness as a phenomenon of educational space has been justified in M. Kyselov's work; environmental upbringing of pupils has been analyzed by A. Volkov; the purpose and objectives of the All-Ukrainian League in Ecological Education – by H. Tymochko.

Native scholars have also considered the system of environmental education abroad. Thus, environmental education of pupils in Germany has been studied by I. Lobachuk and V. Lomakovych; environmental education of pupils at schools in Europe as well as Northern America – by V. Chervonetskyi; environmental education at Polish universities – by N. Demeshkant; environmental education at schools in the Scandinavian region – V. Stepchuk; environmental education of pupils in Japan – O. Svystak-Yarotska.

However, the peculiarities of environmental education system in the USA have not been properly revealed yet.

Our study has been performed with the use of such methods as analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, systematization and generalization.

#### **RESULTS**

In the USA it is common to suppose that if a person does not know the concept of environment and does not understand his/her own attitude to the environment, he/she is considered to be illiterate.



To begin with, US environmental education is characterized by an extraordinary variety of forms, directions and methodological approaches, deep penetration of the ideas of environmental ethics in the content of all the disciplines, extensive involvement of communities and, in particular, public non-governmental organizations in the process of forming US citizens' careful and responsible attitude to the environment. As well as the European model, the system of US Environmental Education aims to provide a solution to such problems:

- ✓ to ensure citizens' close contact with the environment;
- ✓ to contribute to the forming of environmentally friendly styles of behaviour and activities;
- ✓ to form a set of knowledge about the environment as a system of interconnected natural, economic and social factors;
- ✓ to involve students in solving local environmental problems (Грищенко, 2015).

So, the main aim of US EE is the forming of students' environmental literacy.

In the USA there is no uniform state policy towards environmental education, thereby most of the decisions on education are adopted at federal, state or local (schools) level. The role of the federal government is, first and foremost, to finance various environmental education programmes and projects implemented by most social organizations or initiative groups of environmental educators (Морозова, 2007).

Environmental legislation and institutions in the USA have undergone a long evolution from disparate statutes to a coherent, multi-level system of laws ensuring the protection of resources.

Federal legislation is divided into legal acts in the field of environmental expertise and acts on specific resources. The first group includes the "The 1969 National Policy Act" (NEPA) that imposes on federal authorities a liability to protect the environment, realises environmental standards and preliminary assess the impact on the environment, long-term programming of environmental activities. It is complemented by the "The 1970 Environmental Quality Improvement Act" (EQIA). The second group of legal acts consists of "The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act" (RCRA), "The Toxic Substances Control Act" (TSCA), "Clean Water Act" (CWA), "Clean Air Act" (CAA) and others.

The US state environmental regulation is carried out at the federal and regional levels. The activities of the US Congress on the formulation of the country's environment protection policy consist in passing the bills, holding hearings on specific aspects of environmental protection, monitoring the environmental legislation implementation, approving funding environmental programmes.

Since 1970 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has been operating in the USA. The agency aims at improving the environment quality, assessing federal programmes for environmental protection, organizing measures on scientific and practical protection of air and water resources, developing control measures against noise, radiation, pesticides, etc.

In 1990 the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America enacted the National Environmental Education Act to promote environmental education. In the document it is stated that threats to environmental quality are increasing which is why the Federal Government with the help of EPA is to cooperate with local education authorities, state education agencies, environmental organizations to promote the design of curricula and training programmes, etc. to enhance comprehending the significant role of



the environment and to increase people's awareness of environmental issues.

It should be mentioned that EPA plays a crucial role in promoting environmental education in the USA. Thus, Congress creates an environmental law, when Environmental Protection Agency implements it by means of creating regulations. Moreover, it sets national standards that consequently are enforced through regulations of states and tribes.

According to EPA EE allows studying environmental problems, involving in problem-solving as well as taking measures to help the environment. Consequently, pupils enhance a profound understanding of environmental problems and obtain those skills needed to take right decisions.

The components of EE are the following:

- 1) comprehending the essence of environment and issues occurring within it;
- 2) awareness and knowledge of the environment and issues occurring within it;
- 3) positive attitude towards the environment and striving to enhance or promote the quality of the environment;
- 4) skills and abilities needed to detect and solve environmental issues;
- 5) taking part in activities leading to environmental issues resolving (US Environmental Protection Agency, 2016).

In order to enhance students' environmental literacy the Environmental Protection Agency opened the Office of Environmental Education (OEE).

Main goals of the OEE are:

- 1) to design and contribute to the training programmes via cooperation with state agencies to enhance comprehending the role of the environment and the interactions between people and nature;
- 2) to promote design and implementation of curricula, training programs, educational materials for both pupils and adults;
- 3) to promote design and implementation of publications on EE and media materials;
- 4) to design and contribute to seminars on EE, training programs, workshops and conferences for EE specialists;
- 5) to provide local education agencies, higher education institutions and other organizations with necessary assistance;
- 6) to organize the fellowship programs and internship for EE;
- 7) to launch the environmental awards program;
- 8) to provide the Advisory Council and Task Force with staff support;
- 9) to evaluate the demand on professional skills and training necessary to solve modern environmental issues and co-work with relevant establishments, agencies and organizations to design curricula, training programs and advancement curricula for instructors, school managers, etc.;
- 10) to ensure the collaboration of federal statutes and the programs established by EPA related to EE, correspondent with aims of those programs;
- 11) to work with the Department of Education, the Federal Interagency Committee on Education and with other Federal agencies, including Federal natural resource management agencies, to assure the effective coordination of programs related to environmental education, including environmental education programs relating to national parks, national forests, and wild-life refuges;



12) to provide information on environmental education and training programs to local education agencies, State education and natural resource agencies and others (US Environmental Protection Agency, 2016).

There is hereby established an Environmental Education and Training Program. The purpose of the program should be to train educational professionals in the development and delivery of environmental education and training programs and studies.

The functions and activities of the program should include:

a) classroom training in environmental education and studies including environmental sciences and theory, educational methods and practices, environmental career or occupational education, and topical environmental issues and problems;

b) demonstration of the design and conduct of environmental field studies and assessments;

c) development of environmental education programs and curriculum, including programs and curriculum to meet the needs of diverse ethnic and cultural groups;

d) sponsorship and management of international exchanges of teachers and other educational professionals between the United States, Canada, and Mexico involved in environmental programs and issues;

e) maintenance or support of a library of environmental education materials, information, literature and technologies, with electronic as well as hard copy accessibility;

f) evaluation and dissemination of environmental education materials, training methods and related programs;

g) sponsorship of conferences, seminars, and related forums for the advancement and development of environmental education and training curricula and materials, including international conferences, seminars and forums;

h) supporting effective partnerships and networks and the use of distant learning technologies (US Environmental Protection Agency, 2016).

Special emphasis should be placed on developing environmental education programs, workshops, and training tools that are portable and can be broadly disseminated.

### CONCLUSIONS

So, environmental education is a process allowing studying environmental issues, involving in the process of problem solving and taking measures to improve the environment.

In the USA environmental regulation is carried out at the federal and regional levels. A crucial role in promoting environmental education in the USA belongs to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that has been improving the environment quality, assessing federal programmes for environmental protection, organizing measures on scientific and practical protection of natural resources since 1970. EPA implements an environmental law by writing regulations and set national environmental standards. Thereby, EPA established the Office of Environmental Education to provide national leadership to increase environmental literacy. Main goals of the the Office of Environmental Education mostly include development and implementation of environmental curricula, educational materials and training programs for both pupils and adults; to organize seminars, conferences and discussions on urgent environmental issues; cooperation with the Department of Education, the Federal Interagency Committee on Education and other agencies to ensure the sustainable development of environmental education in the USA. In addition, there has been established an Environmental Education and Training Program aimed at training educational specialists in the development and



delivery of environmental education, training programs and studies.

Based on the above we can state that to improve the mechanism of legal regulation of the citizens' right to obtain proper environmental education in Ukraine, it is necessary to justify the enactment of environmental education as well as state registration of "The Environmental Education Concept" to provide it with legal force. At the same time legal acts on environmental education must be systematized and proclaimed and the executives charged with responsibilities for environmental education enhancement should be clearly identified. Moreover, state and local authorities should cooperate so that the significance of environmental education may be promoted at schools and higher education institutions.

Prospects for further research we consider the study of the foreign organizations' experience in developing projects aimed at promoting environmental education in the world educational space.

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