

LITERATURE'S ROLE IN EDUCATING THE ECOLOGICAL SPIRIT OF THE PUPILS

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In the following study, the author proposes to emphasize the special role of school in what concerns the education of the pupils in the spirit of showing respect towards the environment and for the true values of humanity. The present paper presents an investigation among the pupils, at the subject Romanian and Universal Literature, having as a discussion topic- The Education of the Ecological Spirit in the Works of the Great Writers. As a result of questioning a sample of pupils with different ages, it has been ascertained that literature has a decisive impact in the formation of the teenagers' conduct towards the environment, and mostly in acquiring certain behaviour norms which are necessary for ensuring its equilibrium. Study initiated in schools showed that students consider it particularly important that the education of each individual in the spirit of protecting the environment, starting from early ages. This research is an additional reason for teachers to strongly support the introduction of discipline in the school: environment for education at all levels of age, but also it is necessary an approach to this problem from the perspective trans/interdisciplinary, in order to further field environmental education.

Key words: environment, literature, ecological spirit

Ecological education has certain goals: sensitizing man's attention on the existence of the natural environment, the correct management of the elements leading to forming an adequate behaviour toward the relationship between man and nature, and last but not least, developing an ecological conscience [1]. School is an essential factor in modelling the individual's behaviour, regarding the environment [2]. Through the content of the subject, Romanian and universal literature guide the pupils using a series of patterns of attitude and aptitude needed for a balanced living of a human being in his or her environment [4, 5].

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The initial survey among the pupils of secondary school no. 24 in Galați featured *Educating the ecological spirit in literary works of great authors* as a topic. Following inquiries with a group of pupils of different ages (3rd – 8th grade), it has been noticed that literature has a fundamental impact in modelling young people's conduit toward the environment and especially in getting used to behavioural norms needed for ensuring the balance of this environmental conduit. The questionnaire for pupils in elementary and middle school cycles focused on the following aspects: to what extent literature features a greater impact on forming the pupils' ecological conscience, as compared to

other school subjects or activities not related to school; which are the representative texts from Romanian and universal literature which influenced modelling the individual ecological conduit and how may the content of ecological education link on the interdisciplinary and extracurricular levels.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Following the investigation on a sample of 90 pupils aged 10 to 14, it has been noticed that the ones in elementary school have especially discovered the beauties of nature through the poetry and stories of childhood: *La mijloc de codru / Among the Woods*, *Povestea codrului / The Tale of the Forest*, *Somnoroase păsărele / Drowsy Birds* (Mihai Eminescu); *Gândăcelul / Little Bug* (Elena Farago); *Pinul singuratic / The Lone Pine* (Alexandru Mitru); *Regina albinelor / Queen of the Bees* (Frații Grimm) etc., which led to a certain type of behaviour in their relationship with the natural environment. The literary text is for the pupil an extremely efficient means of achieving the process of knowing; thus, by means of artistic images, a widening of the sphere of representations of those things perceived before, finally leading to forming an adequate attitude toward the surrounding environment, both human and natural. In middle school, pupils confirm that they study a variety of subjects (geography, biology, physics, chemistry, history, religion), which include in their learning activities theoretical notions about the natural environment and its transformations. However, young pupils consider that literary works have a special role in modelling the attitude of the individual regarding the environment, and at the same time they recognize that their sensitization toward nature has occurred along with their being transposed by the descriptive texts of Vlahuță – *România pitorească / Quaint Romania*, Coșovei – *Pădurea Letea / Letea Woods*, Sadoveanu – *Taine / Mysteries*, Țara de dincolo de negură / *The Land Beyond the Haze*, Hogaș – *Pe drumuri de munte / Mountain Trails*, Hemingway – *Bătrânul și marea / The Old Man and the Sea*, Swift – *Călătoriile lui Gulliver / Gulliver's Travels*, etc. The answers of the pupils regarding the subjects or activities not related to school which had an important role in their ecological education are synthesised in the following chart (tab. 1).

Table 1

Pupils' Answers Conclusions

Areas	Elementary school	Middle school
Literature	43 %	26 %
Other subjects	35 %	45 %
Extracurricular activities	22 %	29 %

Ecological education can also take shape interdisciplinary, by means of the integrated approach of the knowledge specific for each of the school subjects. Because of its complexity, ecologic education offers to the pupils the possibility of understanding correctly the inter-conditioning relationship between objects and phenomena, concurrently identifying the factors causing natural disorder. The

analysis and synthesis of the data gathered from the pupils' answers show us the extent to which the pupils consider that they can apply scientific elements from various educative fields, depending on their individual school experience, within ecological practice developed through extracurricular activities: road trips, fun games, touristic orientations, collections, exhibits, shows, watching TV documentaries, expeditions, ecological literary sketches, contests. (*diagram 1*)

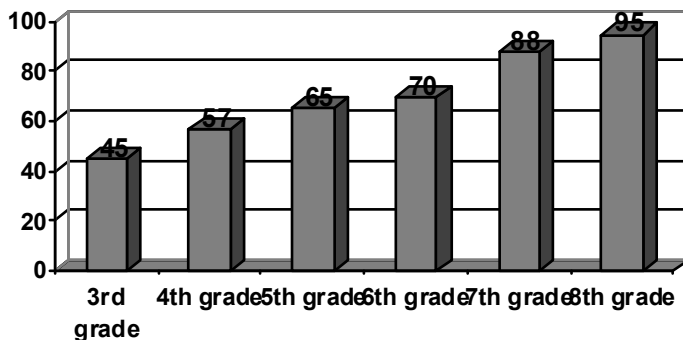


Diagram 1 The variation of the degree of usability of scientific elements in ecological practice, based on age groups

CONCLUSIONS

Although a series of compulsory and optional subjects which, through their contents, deal with the birth of the natural environment and its evolution in time, are integrated in the curricula specific to the elementary and middle school cycles, questioning a representative sample of pupils has pointed out the fact that literary texts for children, both lyric and epic, especially incite their interest and love for nature. Implementing a fundamental curriculum regarding ecological education is necessary on all levels of pre-school education, elementary, middle and high school, as developing an ecological conscience, a sense of responsibility, solidarity among individuals for safekeeping and improving the environment is a long-term process. Ecological Education may become a standalone school subject, but, in creating the analytical school programme, it is recommended that the suggested goals and themes be linked not only with the tangent subjects, like natural science, but also solid connections must be established between environmental education and artistic subjects (drawing, music, literature).

The present study confirms the conclusions of the specialists' in the field, who state that the purpose of ecological education is to help those in study gain environment-related knowledge, acquire skills, become dedicated individuals, ready to work by themselves or in a group, in order to achieve or maintain a dynamic equilibrium between life and environmental standards [3].

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