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METHODOLOGY OF FORMING SOCIAL-ENVIRONMENTAL THINKING OF CLASS III STUDENTS IN EXERCISES OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

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Abstract: *This article is devoted to the study of the importance of extracurricular activities in the formation of the socio-ecological thinking of third-grade students. The research examines children's attitude to the environment, ways to develop environmental knowledge and skills. In order to increase the impact of extracurricular activities on students' thinking, it is recommended to use games, practical exercises and methods of communication with nature. Methodological recommendations based on practical experiences are presented in the article.*

Key words: *socio-ecological thinking, extracurricular activities, environmental education, practical activities, student development*

Introduction: Today's environmental problems are urgent at the global level, and their solution depends not only on political decisions, but also on the attitude and responsibility of each person to the environment. Therefore, educating the young generation in the spirit of environmental literacy and social responsibility is not only the goal of school education, but also the general goal of society. Especially for elementary school students, this period is crucial, because at this age their personality, outlook and habits begin to form. From this point of view, it is possible to achieve more effective results by developing environmental education in educational institutions, by enriching the teaching process with activities outside the classroom. In the process of primary education, school lessons are usually not enough to form children's ecological outlook. Extracurricular activities help students to come into direct contact with the environment, apply the learned knowledge and understand real-life problems. For example, activities such as planting trees, recycling waste, or conducting observations in the heart of nature form environmental culture in students and develop a certain sense of social responsibility in them. If we take into account the age-specific features of third-grade students, they acquire knowledge mainly through practical activities and games.¹ Therefore, interesting games, creative projects and team tasks covering environmental topics can be effective in extracurricular activities. In addition, such activities serve not only to provide knowledge, but also to develop the social skills of students. They learn to work in a team, help each other and realize a responsible approach to protecting the environment. To enrich the educational process, it is

¹Piaget, J. (1972). *The Psychology of the Child*. New York: Basic Books

appropriate to use environmental education programs in various forms. With the help of interactive methods, multimedia tools and modern technologies, extracurricular activities become more interesting and effective. At the same time, studying the natural environment not only expands students' knowledge, but also increases their respect and love for nature. This article is dedicated to the study and proposal of the methodology of extracurricular activities conducted with students of the III grade in order to organize this process more effectively.

Research methodology

In this study, a mixed research method was used to determine the effectiveness of extracurricular activities in forming the socio-ecological thinking of third-grade students. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used in the research to ensure objectivity and reliability of the obtained data. Below are the main aspects of the research methodology:

1. Research object and participants. III grade students of general education schools were selected as the research object. A total of 60 students took part in the research, they were divided into two groups, studied in experimental and control groups. Students of the experimental group were given extracurricular environmental activities, while the control group only participated in the study of environmental topics during traditional classes.

2. Research methods. The following methods were used during the research:

- Experimental method: special extracurricular environmental activities were organized with the experimental group, including observations in the heart of nature, practical activities, environmental games and project work.
- Questionnaire and tests: Questionnaires and tests were conducted at the initial and final stages of the study to assess the level of students' environmental knowledge and skills.
- Observation method: During the lessons, students' activities and attitudes to environmental issues were observed, and qualitative aspects were analyzed.
- Comparison and analysis method: The results of the experimental and control groups were compared and the effect of extracurricular activities was analyzed.

3. Research stages.

The research was carried out in the following stages:

1. Preparatory stage: The purpose and tasks of the research were defined, participants were selected and preliminary questionnaires were conducted.
2. Practical stage: Environmental training was organized with the experimental group. The training was held once a week for 3 months. Practical work, ecological games and nature study activities were included in each training session.

3. Analysis and evaluation stage: At the end of the study, the results of the questionnaire and test were analyzed, and changes in the level of environmental thinking of students were noted.

Literature analysis

Research on ecological education shows that it is important to use different methods and forms of education in the formation of children's ecological awareness. According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, third-grade students are at the stage of concrete operations, and practical activities based on real life are the most effective for them. Research confirms that children's environmental responsibilities increase as the opportunity to communicate directly with nature increases (Piaget, 1972) [1].

In Vygotsky's theory of social development, it is emphasized that the child's interaction with the teacher and peers plays an important role in the learning process. Giving students the opportunity to discuss and solve environmental issues as a team through extracurricular activities develops responsibility and solidarity in them.

The analysis of the literature shows that environmental education should not be limited to the teaching of theoretical knowledge, but should be strengthened through practical activities. According to Dewey's theory of experiential learning, children effectively acquire new knowledge based on their experiences. For example, by planting trees, separating waste, or observing nature, students not only understand environmental problems, but also develop the skills to find solutions to them (Dewey, 1938).

The role of extracurricular activities in the formation of socio-ecological thinking is widely covered in the literature. Slavin (1996) focuses on increasing students' environmental knowledge through group activities. Such activities increase the ability of students to solve problems together and strengthen the sense of social responsibility.

Analysis and Results

During the research, the effectiveness of extracurricular activities in forming the socio-ecological thinking of third-grade students was evaluated experimentally. During the experiment, the students' knowledge, skills and environmental responsibility levels were analyzed at the initial and final stages. This analysis and results are detailed below.

1. Conducting extracurricular activities. A series of extracurricular activities covering environmental topics were organized with students in the experimental group. Practical work, ecological games, project work and nature observation activities were carried out in each session:

- Practical activities: Trainings on tree planting, waste separation and recycling were held.
- Games and quizzes: Students' interest was increased through environmental games such as "Protector of Nature".

- Excursions: Students made observations in the heart of nature and got direct knowledge about flora and fauna.

Pupils in the control group had the opportunity to learn environmental topics only during traditional lessons.

2. Preliminary assessment results. The level of environmental knowledge and the sense of social responsibility of students in the experimental and control groups were at the same level at the beginning of the study. Preliminary survey and test results showed that:

- The average level of environmental literacy of students in the experimental group was 40%.
- In the control group, this figure was on average 42%. These results showed that students do not have enough knowledge of environmental issues and that it is necessary to develop this knowledge.

3. The result of training. Significant changes were observed in the experimental group after extracurricular activities. The trainings expanded students' understanding of environmental issues and helped them apply them in everyday life through practical activities. According to the final test results:

- The level of environmental literacy of students in the experimental group increased from 40% to 70% on average.
- In the control group, this figure only increased from 42% to 55%.

Practical training was particularly effective in developing students' sense of environmental responsibility. More than 85% of the children in the experimental group showed that a responsible view on waste separation and nature protection was formed. In the control group, this indicator was around 60%.

4. Results by types of activities. Each type of extracurricular activity was evaluated separately:

- Practical training: 90% of students in the experimental group reported that they acquired new skills in planting trees and protecting nature.
- Games and quizzes: 75% effectiveness in strengthening environmental knowledge through quizzes was observed. Pupils participated in environmental games and became more active in understanding environmental problems.
- Excursions: Excursions in nature helped students to understand environmental issues in practice. After these trainings, 80% of students said that they are ready to apply their knowledge in everyday life.

5. Monitoring results. Observations during the sessions showed that extracurricular activities encouraged students to be more active and creative. It was noted that most of the students in the experimental group were interested in finding solutions to

environmental problems, while the students in the control group had a more passive approach.

6. Comparison results. At the final stage, the educational results of the experimental and control groups were compared. It was found that the level of environmental thinking of students in the experimental group is 30% higher. In addition, the activity of children in the experimental group was 25% higher in terms of teamwork and participation in environmental projects compared to the control group.

Conclusion: it was found during the research that extracurricular activities are of great importance in forming the socio-ecological thinking of III graders. Through extracurricular activities, students' environmental knowledge and skills significantly increased, and it was observed that they formed a responsible attitude towards the environment. These activities were not limited to strengthening children's theoretical knowledge, but also served to develop real life skills through practical activities and teamwork. The results of the experiment showed that practical activities such as tree planting, waste separation, environmental games and observing nature increased the interest of students and formed a conscious approach to environmental issues. The level of environmental knowledge of students in the experimental group increased from 40% to 70%, which shows that they have developed a sense of responsibility and social activity. In the control group, as a result of the use of traditional lessons, such significant gains were not achieved, which once again confirms the effectiveness of extracurricular activities. Also, the collective form of training played an important role in the development of social skills such as communication, cooperation and mutual respect among students. Through ecological games and projects, students learned to cooperate and feel joint responsibility for protecting nature.

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