

CHILDREN-CREATED ECOLOGICAL TALES AND GAMES AS A PART OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

The article deals with the principles of the use of children’s creativity in writing their ecological tales, target games or presentations in the context of environmental education of youth and middle age population in Ukraine and Armenia.

Keywords: ecological tales, ecological games, ecological presentations, environmental education

Introduction

Fast climate changes show inadequate and predatory use of natural resources by the humankind. These changes are caused mainly by unreasonable consumption of non-renewable resources and non-balanced use of renewable ones, by unwanted consequences of the development of industrial technologies and some other reasons. That is why rational and systematic environmental education seems to be an important component in the formation of environment-oriented human behavior and thinking.

Main part

From ancient times, the game is being used as a method of education and knowledge transfer. Its importance is much wider than just a matter of amusement. Even though the basic nature of the game is mostly entertaining and recreational, it can also become an educational, therapeutic, creative and human relations-simulating matter. Game is the most common and attractive activity of beginner pupils. Its educational importance is thoroughly substantiated in numerous pedagogical works by S. Makarenko, V. Sukhomlinsky, K. Ushinsky, and Sh. Amonashvili [1].



It is known that nice and interesting things and artworks are greatly appreciated by children. They love to express themselves through art and can easily show their emotions and perception in this way.

The components of environmental education can be incorporated into various fairy tales, verses and stories, where some things related to nature conservation and rational consumption of natural resources are embedded into the plotline. Thematic pictures, brief stories, folk songs and dances, direct contact with the natural environment are also helpful in this context. The formation of the human mentality basement is usually completed by the age of 3-6. That is why it is important to lay the basics of proper environmental behavior from that age. A child should understand its personality as a part of the whole nature and be conscious about immediate and prolonged ecological consequences of its proper or improper actions.

Childhood is a special form of manifestation, a special state of social development, when biological patterns associated with age-related changes in the child largely manifest their action. Adults do not take into account that in the modern world there is not only an active process of self-development, self-determination of the child, but this process really affects the attitudes of the adult world, its development [2].

There is an opinion [3] that a child has thinking in early childhood, but it is mostly alllogical. The reason for the development of children's thinking lies in the spiritual communication of the child in people, in the interaction of the thoughts of the child and the adult. Understanding and cognition of the world goes through the perception of the external world, through feelings.

In preschool age, there is a transition from visual-active thinking, to visual-figurative, and then to visual-semantic [5]. J. Piaget, on the basis of a special study of children's understanding of physical causality, came to the conclusion that in the preschool age is favored by “pre-causality”. And only by the age of 7-8, the

child begins to distinguish between physical causation, motive, moral reason. But in the early childhood, the basis of intelligence are laid [5].

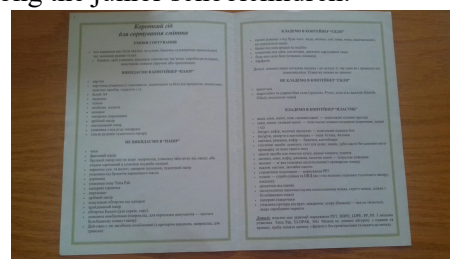
A set of own environmentally-oriented tales was proposed for readers by the first author of this article. They were posted on the children-parents site “Pustunchik” in the section “online school” [6]. In the second stage, the schoolchildren in Chernivtsi, Ukraine were proposed in 2016 to join an original game “Be a storyteller, be an artist, and be an ecologist!” In the framework of this initiative, the participants were proposed to create their ecologically oriented tales. As a result, a storybook “In the Search of Ecopokemons” was published in 2019 by the Publishing House “Misto” [7]. This book is especially important because it is based on the children’s tales narrated in their language and using their words and phrases. It deals with numerous environmental issues and is addressed to readers of different ages. The authors discuss such acute problems as increasing deforestation in the Carpathians, a necessity to resolve a problem of stray animals in the cities, demolition of the city parks and squares for the construction of the new business and living houses, air and water pollution, sick ecosystems, and violation of the basic rules of normal coexistence. Young co-authors, the schoolchildren of the 1st and 6th year have created a series of bright characters such as Fish Floaty; Shark Valery and Ramp fish Eletricson the teachers; Nature the Queen; Garbagetownsmen; Ecolanders; Tireless Ecoliker; Aquvy; Professor of the Cleanness Academy and so on. It should be emphasized that no pre-assigned frames were set for the plotlines of the tales except their environmental orientation. The children authors were free in the creation of their characters. Our book proved that ecological education can be realized efficiently in this way and that the children readers like to read the books written by the children authors.

Besides, the stage plays based on these tales were created by the author of this paper and played by the pupils of some local schools.



One of the tales from that book was translated into Armenian by the second author of this paper, and now it is used in the everyday activity of the ecological group “Aquamarin” [8]. This group widens the tales with the questions and answers related to the topics addressed in the quizzes conducted among the junior schoolchildren.

Members of the organization write their ecological tales, develop ecological games. The peculiarity of the activity lies in the fact that the games are created by the activists of the organization, develop in the plot of tales to a certain



situation, and then the children are invited to finish the game themselves, sometimes providing several versions for completion (pre-schoolers), or based on free creative imagination (junior schoolchildren). Ethical conversations and discussions are also considered as an alternative way of environmental education by the Armenian specialists. The Armenian creative group welcomes close cooperation with Ukrainian colleagues. In the future, we intend to build a strategy for the development and implementation of joint educational programs with the publication of children's books of an ecological nature in 3 languages (Ukrainian, Armenian, English), as well as methodological manuals for educators, teachers and methodologists. They also considers cooperation programs useful for the exchange of experience and the development of creative directions in the environmental education of target groups.

Ecological education is also realized through the activity of the eco-propaganda team at the Novoselitsa gymnasium (Chernivtsi region). First, it was initiated during conducting the GIS international project “Step by Step towards Waste Sorting and Separate Collection”, when the team presented a performance in four languages (Ukrainian, Romanian, English, and Russian) to explain the environmental importance of the proper waste collection. The performance included some dancing and acrobatic shows. Besides, the students also presented an information booklet “Waste-free Ukraine” [9]. As a result, Novoselitsa is rated now as one of the cleanest towns in Ukraine.

Conclusions

The creation of ecological tales or games by the children is considered as the culmination point of eco-education. It is an interesting and highly effective educational tool providing an opportunity to assess the depth and integrity of a child’s understanding of ecological issues.

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