
THE ECHO OF NATURE AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE FORMATION OF THE LITTLE CITIZEN

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Abstract

The perception of children about the protection of the environment is a very important educational problem that has become a major preoccupation for the Romanian School and not only. The children, the little pupils, are the agents of the social activity in the 21st century. The society in which they will live directly depends on the conception they embrace today, during their schooling days, about the protection and the unaltered preserve of the environment.

Ecology represents the science of the environment, a branch of Biology respectively, which studies the interactions between living creatures and their environment. The study of the Ecology in Primary School, in Science classes as well as during extracurricular activities, offers pupils the theoretical basis they need in order to understand all the preoccupations and the measures the human society undertakes to protect the Blue Planet. For this it is important to involve pupils in educational projects such as *The Echo of Nature. I Have My Own Tree!* in which they conceive and distribute instructive and informative materials on ecological themes, they participate in activities in which they ecologies the space of our work or in which they try to sensitize the public opinion on the environment problem. The project co-coordinated by School *Gheorghe Mârzescu*, Iași, Romania lasts 4 years and has as partners: *Miron Costin* High school Iași, *Junior* Kinder garden – of The *University A.I.Cuza* Iași, The Museum of Natural Sciences Iași, The Administration of Târgușor Copou Students' Campus, Botanical Garden, and Iași Branch of Romania's Scouts. Through the active participation in the proposed activities, with important partners, the little pupils will become aware of the fact that nature has its own laws which are compulsory in respecting.

A first step in reaching this goal is to change the present mentality according to which the solution to the problem of how to protect the environment is not only the authorities' responsibility or of the nongovernmental organizations which are seldom seen as „spare trash collectors” for the green areas but it is also a responsibility for each and every person. For this it is necessary to transform the implicated schools in central points of a public campaign. These schools will be an example to follow in protecting the green spaces and the involvement of the community, in creating a proper educational frame and a group of molders capable of sustain an educational process about the protection of nature on the long term, process that will have a practical component and shall be focused on the implication of the community.

Keywords: society, environment, educational project, public campaign

1. Argument

Nowadays realities show that we live in the time of the greatest discoveries and transformation of the civilization, but also in the times of uncontrolled intervention of man on nature. The project has emerged from the desire to offer pupils the possibility to check the information and to widen their sources of gathering information on the present preoccupations of humankind on preserving unaltered the environment but also to effectively participate in the activities that aim at the ecological behavior.

Man must understand the fact that he is part of the nature, that Terra and its resources are limited, that this planet functions as a system and that the disorders that appear in one place may have consequences on the entire system including on man. Nature is the perfect playground that is why they must be encouraged to keep it clean. It is also necessarily to warn the children that each person must take the responsibility not only for their own actions but also for the state of the environment around their home and school.

During the unfolding of the project we will follow the effects on the children, the sensitizing degree of the pupils and of the persons they contacted. One should not forget that bringing the children in the middle on nature is a necessity because nothing can compare to the personal experiences which help them understand the environment and its problems.

The project begins in the classroom with the clear assignment of the tasks and continues at home or in extracurricular activities – individual or collective – activities of research, information and cooperation.

2. A short description of the project: I Have My Own Tree!

2.1. Type

- Poly disciplinary (sciences, practical abilities, Romanian language, arts, optional classes).

2.2. Goals

- Educating young pupils and kinder gardeners – participating in the project – in the spirit of the respect for nature and it's elements;
- Developing the inter-relations between children through common educative activities.

2.3. Unfolding period

- 15th of March 2006 – 31st of August 2009

2.4. Direct beneficiaries

- Pupils, kinder gardeners, teachers.

2.5. Indirect beneficiaries

- Parents, other teachers or persons implicated in the project.

2.6. Partner institutions

- School No. 14 *Gheorghe Mârzescu*, Iași;
- *Miron Costin* High school, Iași;
- *Al.I.Cuza* University, Iași – *Junior* Kinder garden;
- *Al.I.Cuza* University, Iași – *Târgușor Copou* Students' Campus;
- *Anastasie Fătu* Botanical Garden, Iași;
- Museum of Natural Sciences, Iași;
- The Agency for the Environment's Protection, Iași.

2.7. Responsibles of the project

- Simina Grigoruță, Teacher, Principal of the *Gheorghe Mârzescu* School Iași;
- Elena Semen, Teacher, *Gheorghe Mârzescu* School Iași;
- Claudia Medrihan, Teacher, *Miron Costin* High school, Iași;
- Mihai Mititiuc, Professor Dr., Manager of the Botanical Garden Iași;
- Ion Iordache, Professor Dr., Manager of the Museum of Natural Sciences, Iași;
- Marcel Matianu, Engineer, Chief Administrator of the *Târgușor Copou* Students' Campus, *Al.I.Cuza* University, Iași;
- Galia Temneanu, Engineer, The Agency for the Environment's Protection, Iași;
- Liliana Minea, Teacher, Principal of *Junior* Kinder garden – *A.I.Cuza* University, Iași;
- Paul Pîntea, Teacher, *Gheorghe Mârzescu* School Iași.

2.8. Location

- Each of the participating schools, *Junior* Kinder garden, The Botanical Garden;
- *Al. I. Cuza* University's Park, Museum of Natural Sciences and Agency for Environment's Protection.

2.9. The necessity of the project

Is imposed by:

- Lack of education about the protection of the nature and it's elements;
- Lack of preoccupation on recycling different materials;
- Lack of a system of separate collection of recyclable materials;
- Lack on active implication of children and adults in activities of planting and taking care of green spaces;
- Lack of an organized frame which children can demonstrate their concern on protection the nature.

2.10. Objectives

- Selecting and processing the information gathered on different species of plants and animals tar are in danger to extinct;
- Sensitizing the communities by making a children's appeal to all those who do not respect nature;
- Developing an ecological behavior at children;
- Promoting the information on flyers that contain small texts about plants and animals and also on posters and billboards;
- Developing the competitive spirit and fair play among the teams or work groups;
- Collaborating with different educational institutions (kinder gardens, schools, high schools, universities).

2.11. Specific activities

- In the educational field: lessons, debates, contests, workshops;
- In the cultural field: exhibits, visits;
- In the Ecology and Tourism fields: trips, activities of planting shrubs and flowers, of cleaning green places and parks, practical activities at the Botanical Garden of nursing the plants under the specialized personnel's supervising, initiation in Ikebana techniques.

2.12. Expected results

- To assume of an individual or group responsibility;
- To create a Society of Ecology;
- To develop friendships and collaborations between the participant pupils in the project from all three educational institutions;
- To foster a positive attitude toward nature and to find a solution for the urgent problems.

2.13. Resources

- **Material:** paper cases, sheets of paper, flip chart, flyers, documentaries, cards, floodlight, markers, portfolios, photos, grains, bushes, gardening tools.
- **Human:** teachers, educative councilor, pupils, parents, horticulturists from the Botanical Garden.

3. Stages

All activities will go through various stages.

3.1. Organizing phase

- Establishing the theme with the pupils' help, considering the objectives;
- Organizing the groups;
- Assignment of the tasks.

3.1.1. The requirements and the responsibilities will be written and given to the pupils

- Seek information on plants threatened by extinction or that are protected by law in Romania;
- Interview your colleagues, museum employees, teachers, parents, people on the street on the present problem that humankind is facing: ecological catastrophes, pollution;
- Create a mini guide of the plants from The Botanical Garden's Greenhouse;
- Compose little reports about the places you have visited, using the information gathered before. The text may contain pictures;
- Create a map of the geographical places you have visited;
- Create a flyer in which you will promote the project in your school but also in other schools;
- Follow the gardening classes organized by the Botanical Garden Iași;
- Create a poster with the title: "Save the Nature! Save the Planet!" The poster will be exposed in your school's lobby;
- Create a photo album containing pictures you have taken in the nature;
- Create a portfolio about on plants;
- Create a collection of riddles and proverbs about plants and animals;
- Keep a journal of the project in which you shall write all the stages and the activities.

3.2. Detailed program of the project

3.2.1. March 2006

We have distributed questionnaires both to teachers (our colleagues) and to pupils participating into the project. We wanted to identify through them the best solution to prevent and hinder the degradation of the environment, the extinction of plants, the abusive cutting of trees.

3.2.2. March – April 2006

Meeting with all three classes from the schools implicated and with the kinder gardeners also, to meet, make friends and to establish a common schedule of activities.

3.2.2.1. Let's Green Up the Field!

The first stage of the project took place in our schoolyard and after that in Miron Costin High school's yard. The children draw with chalk, on asphalt their ideas, thoughts, proposals of how they wished their schools and schoolyards looked like.

The second stage consisted in planting flower on the green places around Junior Kinder garden and Miron Costin High school.

At this step we have created the flyer with which we wanted to sensitize all the pupils in the school on the problems of the environment. The flyer was called: Us and Nature!

3.2.3. 15th of March – 15th of April 2006: The Forest month

- Trips in the forested areas around Iași, activities of cleaning, creating posters: *Forest rights*, debates on the importance of the woods and the necessity of their responsible exploitation;
- Promoting the law on *Forest rights* and *All creatures rights* created with the help of all the partners participating in the project.

3.2.3.1. Forest rights

1. We have the right to be part of the biodiversity.
2. We have the right to grow on good soil, to cover even the mountains if we can.
3. We have the right to be periodically cleaned.
4. We have the right for sun, heat and unpolluted air.
5. We have the right to offer shadow, coolness and shelter to all creatures that visit us.
6. We have the right to have skilled forester to prescribe „recipes” for when we get sick.
7. We the right to be respected and protected by humans.

8. We have the right to the four seasons so we can grow up.
9. We have the right to „die” with dignity when we are too old and so to richen the soil.
10. We have the right to be protected against irrational exploitations, of irresponsible visitors or against fires.
11. We have the right to be given back the ancient land that you have taken from us so that our sprouts can grow up and spread.

3.2.3.2. All creatures rights

1. We, all creatures of the forests, no matter what size, colour, specie, have equal rights to live in the nature, respecting its laws.
2. We have the right to exercise when we seek food so that we won't become lazy or slow.
3. We have the right to raise our cubs in our law and in nature's laws, in cozy shelters.
4. We have the right to an equilibrated diet because God taught us what to eat.
5. We have the right not to be sold by man as he wishes because some of us are not food.
6. We have the right to keep our coats.
7. We have the right to be understood, protected, and loved so that we can live a quiet life.
8. We, *Forest's Sanitarians* have the right to practice our duty, to keep the forest clean and healthy.
9. We have the right to die of old age, in our place and not exploited by man.
10. We have the right to embellish the place you people enjoy.

3.2.4. 22nd of March 2006: *The International Day of Environment's Protection*

- Visit at The Agency for the Environment's Protection, Iași.

3.2.5. 22nd of April 2006: *Earth's Day*

- Visit at the Museum of Natural Sciences, at the Botanical Garden respectively. Flyers, pictures, photos were bought to be used in future activities.

3.2.6. *Holliday time*

In holidays pupils worked in groups of 4 or 5 (created in the 1st week) and had to inform themselves and to gather materials on the places visited (sources: library, magazines, books, and internet). Their final work consisted in portfolios.

The second task was to collect information on the **azaleas** and so to prepare for the contest proposed by the Manager of the Botanical Garden, Professor Mihai Mititiuc. This has been the perfect opportunity for them to meet specialists and workers in horticulture. All information will be studied in school,

thoroughly analyzed by all participants. Everyone must specify the source for their information.

3.2.7. 5th of June 2006: The International Day of the Environment

- Exhibition of draws, meetings, visits, debates and competitions.

3.2.8. October 2006

Groups of 6 pupils from each class have drawn up: draws, cartoons, collages on different ecological themes, essays. Proposed themes: water, air, soil, trash recycle, fire, wind, floods, greenhouse effect, rare species of plants.

These materials were presented in all participant schools. The principals and the teachers have been invited.

3.2.9. March 2007

- Watching documentary movies at the Museum of Natural Sciences; Drawing on the alleys of the Botanical Garden;
- Ikebana and gardening classes organized by the Botanical Garden;
- Organizing some exhibitions with works belonging to the children involved in the project.

3.2.10. 5th of June 2007

Competition organized at the Botanical Garden. At the *Quiz Contest* different pupils involved in the project took part. The presentation of a literary concept: *The Environment towards Pollution*.

During the project *Little Reporters out in Nature* will interview people on the street, pupils in the school to see how many of the present problems are known and if the citizens are aware of them. The articles, interviews will all be published in the magazines *La Minte Copiilor* and *În grădina copilăriei* respectively. Each class, at the end of the project, has to come up with one newspaper's sheet containing short texts, riddles, poems, proverbs about nature.

3.2.11. April 2008: The trip, way to fulfill the ecological education

During this trip children will have the opportunity to observe and to identify different types of pollution in the regions of Moldavia. They will also see actions of the local authorities by which they try to protect the environment (collecting trash on categories, planting flowers, arranging green places etc.). Children will discuss on the themes, take pictures, and try to take position towards those who pollute so many beautiful places.

We will pick up medicine plants, plants for the herbs collection, we will clean the areas and parts of the forests we have had visited. All these will be done with the help of *Romania's Scouts*.

Thus, even from young age, our pupils will turn from *viewers* to *producers* of their actions and will become step by step future responsible citizens who will protect nature and will love it.

3.2.12. May 2006 – June 2009

Activities held up together with the representatives of *University Al.I.Cuza Iași*, Botanical Garden, and The Agency for the Environment's Protection, The Museum of Natural Sciences Iași – activities that consist in meetings also with the children, practical classes on how to look after the plants and trees from the parks those children will adopt.

All plants gathered during the project will be grouped and placed in the collection of herbs.

3.3. *Ending the project*

A presentation of the project will be made on the computer, in Power Point and with the help of the floodlight. The presentation will have as major points the title of the project, its argument, its goal, activities that we have participated in and pictures taken.

Pupils that proved to be very capable in the project will be rewarded with diplomas and gifts. All pupils that have taken part at project will receive diplomas for the participation.

3.4. *Evaluation*

Each group leader chooses the members of the team. At their turn these prepare the materials needed for the proposed activities:

- Competition with natural science theme: *Save the Forest!*
- Creating a collage with different species of trees;
- Drawing some rare species of trees and plants;
- Cartoons, posters, flyers;
- Presentation of the portfolios, draws, collages, collection of the riddles and proverbs;
- Drama – each team will put into scene a play on ecological themes: *The Environment and the pollution; Forest rights; Ecologist's advices.*

The final evaluation of the project will be made in June 2009 with the organization of a conference at which will take part all our partners but also local media, members of the local authorities. We will also organize an exhibition with the best materials which will be awarded and published in a special number of each school's magazine.

4. Follow-up

The possibilities to go on with the project are various and numerous. It can be extended to the Copou Park from Iași city or to the Botanical Garden but also to the Natural Reservations around and near the city.