



“Environmental Education: Conceptual delimitations and approaches from the perspective of sustainability”

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- ✎ In this presentation, elements proceeding from the analysis of two fields are embedded. These elements are: a) the environmental reflection where the environmental issues are registered and b) the need to which the Environmental Education responds nowadays.
- ✎ Each one of these fields leads to suggestions concerning the orientation of Environmental Education towards the sustainability perspective.

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A) The frame in which environmental issues are created:

- ✂ On the base of environmental deterioration, lies a development model which is based on the idea of unlimited productivity and direct financial profit.
- ✂ It is about a financial dogma, which identifies progress only as a factor of financial development, ie. the expansion of the GDP and considers overconsumption as the highest value. This results in a development that devours everything, pollutes water, soil, air and of course is not value-neutral.

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- ✎ The exploitation of nature however is not something separate from the exploitation of human beings (Bell & Russell 2000).
- ✎ Development, by its current form, supports a set of values where the center of developments is not the harmonious cohabitation of man with the environment but the profits of the large and organized, national or transnational, financial interest (Passet 2004).

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- ✎ As a result, millions of people on the planet are doomed to poverty and they often pay with their lives.
- ✎ Within this model, there is the illusion that there are no limits to growth and that the latter is an endless adventure of the human race on a planet of infinite bearing capacity that can support any economic activity.

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- ✎ It is a development that has led and continues to lead to social and environmental crises, in conflicts associated with the occupation and exploitation of the natural resources of the planet and generates practices dangerous to mankind, because they are dangerous to the environment(Passet 2004).
- ✎ This kind of development has created serious ruptures that are closely linked to each other: rupture between man and nature, rupture among people, and ultimately rupture between societies.

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- ✎ The current economic growth model and resulting system of values are responsible for the inexperienced and unexpected use of natural resources, their exhaustion and the accumulation of environmental problems.
- ✎ In the long run, such a development can only exhaust the stocks of itself. By damaging the natural environment the economy is undermined (Latouche 2008).

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- ✧ **Sustainable development is not just environmental protection measures. We are very much aware that, although laws and regulations have multiplied, indicators have worsened, problems have increased and increased.**
- ✧ **Nowadays we understood that no matter how hard we try to reduce pollutants, rubbish, etc. we will try in vain if we continue to live at the same pace. The essence is deep changes that touch upon our society's value system, its moral base, choices, central and local, the priorities we have as a society.**

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- ✧ Environment is not a place, it is a relationship, a field of environmental, economic, social and political interactions and interdependencies.
- ✧ Therefore, environmental issues are complex situations, that gather social conflicts, since they are characterized by a strongly socio-economic and political dimension and show us that we need to redefine relations between state and society, between authorities and citizens.

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B) Environmental Education and its characteristics in the perspective of sustainability

- ✎ The hard core of the EE (Environmental Education) object is environmental problems and natural resource management issues (Giordan και Souchon, 1992). Therefore, we should not identify the EE as a lesson in ecology, phytology, zoology, physics or chemistry.

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- ✎ Environmental Education does not study the environment by itself, but our relationship with it.
- ✎ And this relationship can be seen through the way a society chooses to manage its natural resources, the results of this management, namely the environmental problems and the value system, ie. the priorities that society has in these fields (Souchon et al. 1996).

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- ✎ The EE today proves to be an incredibly necessary act to move, through this learning process, into the critical approach to the destructive model of development adopted by our societies in the east and west.

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- ✎ Environmental Education, in order to respond effectively to modern needs and create cracks in the established way of thinking, should function in the context of a political reflection, with the ancient Greek meaning of the term. To help the student to understand the concept of the citizen.

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- ✎ We can not understand the natural environment without taking into account the social and economic interactions with it (Gough 2002).
- ✎ The role of the EE is to foster and promote critical competencies in order to enable a person to evaluate behaviors and social choices in relation to the environment (Flogaiti 1993).

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- ✎ We can not do EE without questioning the structures, attitudes and manipulations that have led us to environmental deadlocks.**
- ✎ The environment is another way to talk about social function or perhaps about social malfunction.**

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- ✎ The EE can therefore not only be a set of steps to complete a project but have a strong critical dimension for the context in which the problematic environmental situations are created. The EE can not be neither neutral, nor lean, nor painless.
- ✎ To have a critical attitude towards policies, local or central, that are adopted to address or manage a natural resource. I.e. to involve society with the natural resource.

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EE in the perspective of sustainability :

- ✎ It seeks to change the environmental, social and educational reality (Robottom, 2004)
- ✎ It is inspired by an eco-centered eco-social environmental ideology and believes that radical changes to the economic growth model are needed (O’Riordan 1981; Fien 1993)

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- ✎ It highlights the complexity and complexity of the environmental issues it is studying.
- ✎ It involves trainers and trainees in reviews, collaborative research on environmental issues
- ✎ It cultivates mood for social responsibility and collective environmental action

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Concerning the choice of the topic:

☞ We choose real issues, preferably local ones.



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Concerning the framework of problem analysis we distinguish the 3 following directions:

- ☞ We seek to recognize and highlight the complexity of the subject to be studied.
- ☞ We look for alternative solutions to the problem being considered
- ☞ We choose ways of acting to implement the proposed solution(s)

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Concerning the goals we set

- ✎ It is desirable to have a variety of goals and not only cognitive ones. We generally pursue our goals:
- ✎ To lead to the emergence of the systemic and relational nature of society and the environment
- ✎ To aim at developing dexterities of recognition, analysis, synthesis and critical approach to the issues

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- ☞ To cultivate mood for social responsibility and action**
- ☞ To aim at cultivating values such as responsibility towards others, intergenerational solidarity, respect for all forms of life, equality, democracy, peace, etc.**

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- ✎ When we are dealing with younger ages, we mainly seek pupils to get to know and love the environment.
- ✎ For this reason, very often the subject of study of the EE in kindergarten and elementary school is ecology and natural environment

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- ✎ The study of the natural environment will gradually help them to understand the dynamic nature of ecosystems and the interdependence and interaction relationships that are developed between the organisms and their environment. (What will happen if.....?)

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So our goals for the younger people are mainly:

- ✎ The cultivation of love for the environment we live in
- ✎ The cultivation of values and positive attitudes towards the environment
- ✎ Acquiring knowledge about the environment, it's functions and it's problems

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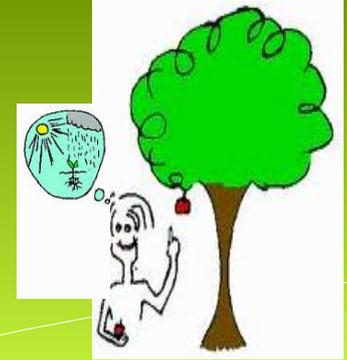
- ✧ Understanding the interdependencies between the elements of the environment, ie it's systemic character**
- ✧ The realisation that the quality of life is indissolubly linked to the quality of the environment**

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- ☞ Reflection on the impact of an individual or collective activity on the environment
- ☞ The realization that the degradation of the environment is not a fatal and inevitable fact. It is the result and reflection of our choices. We can act differently

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- ✎ By integrating the various factors, relationships and interactions involved in a complex situation into a functional module, EE could be the appropriate tool for the learner to gradually become aware of the interdependencies and complexity of environmental situations, to link environmental issues with social and economic parameters and to develop a holistic and synthetic way of thinking, seeking a more efficient education for environment, namely a civil education.

Thank you!

