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EKO-ZNANJA I VREDNOSTI BUDUĆIH VASPITAČA I UČITELJA

REZIME

Problem koji je prisutan u Srbiji, ali i u zemljama u okruženju, je činjenica da je veoma mali broj lokalnih inicijativa i aktivnosti u oblasti zaštite životne sredine u potpunosti realizovan i funkcionalan. U kolikoj meri obrazovanje i budući vaspitači i učitelji mogu uticati na povećanje ekološke svesti mladih i poboljšanje u ovoj oblasti pitanje je na koje sprovedeno istraživanje pokušava da odgovori, u meri i na način kako je to u ovom radu dokumentovano.

Najčešće se za ekološke aktivnosti vezuje pojam LEAP – lokalni ekološki akcioni plan (u originalu – Local Environmental Action Program), a u zemljama zapadnog Balkana od nedavno figurira i novi – Zelena agenda – inicijativa koja se temelji na sličnim ciljevima kao i LEAP, ali na novom, drugačijem, konceptu delovanja. U radu će biti date osnovne informacije, dometi i perspektive ovog projekta i rezultati sprovedenih istraživanja i aktivnosti u opštinama na teritoriji Južnog Banata.

U radu su predstavljeni rezultati istraživanja koje se u izvesnoj meri zasniva na metodologiji i principima Zelene agende, a sprovedeno je na Visokoj školi u Vršcu. Nakon detaljne analize iznose se zaključna razmatranja.

Na uzorku koji čini studentska populacija, budući vaspitači i učitelji, istraživanje pokušava da odgovori na više pitanja. Najveća pažnja posvećena je traganju za odgovorima: da li su i u kolikoj meri studenti stekli ekološka znanja i svest u prethodnom školovanju, koliko aktuelni studijski programi posvećuju pažnju oblasti zaštite čovekove okoline i koje su to vrednosti koje studenti identifikuju kao važne za svoj i opšti društveni prosperitet i opstanak.

Ključne reči: LEAP, Zelena agenda, studenti, ekologija

ECO-KNOWLEDGE AND VALUES OF FUTURE PRESCHOOL AND PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

ABSTRACT

The problem Serbia, as well as other countries in the region, is facing refers to the fact that a small number of local initiatives and activities in the field of environmental protection has been completely carried out and become functional. The research presented in the paper aims at providing an answer to the question: to what an extent education and future preschool and primary school teachers can influence the increase of ecological awareness of young people, leading to the improvement in the field.

The term LEAP (Local Environmental Action Program) has been most often related to ecological activities; on the other hand, a new term has just appeared in the states of the Western Balkans – the Green Agenda – an initiative based on the aims similar to those of LEAP, but different according to the new, different action concept. The paper gives the basic information, reaches and perspectives of the project, the results of the undertaken research, as well as the activities in the municipalities in the region of South Banat.

The paper also presents the results of a research to a degree grounded on the methodology and the principles of the Green Agenda, carried out at the Preschool Teacher Training College in Vrsac. Having provided a detailed analysis, the author reflects on the findings and gives concluding considerations.

Done on the sample consisting of student population, i.e. future preschool and primary school teachers, the research tries to get to answers to a number of questions. Great attention has been paid to the following: have the students acquired ecological knowledge and awareness during their previous schooling and to what an extent; how much attention is paid by the current curricula to the field of environmental protections and what are the values identified by students as those important for their own and social prosperity and survival in general.

Key words: LEAP, Green Agenda, students, ecology.

INTRODUCTION

A great determination of Serbia to become a member of the European Union and the attempts at reaching the aim at the beginning of 2012 have not given the expected results yet. Several-decades burden of the so called *Kosovo issue* has cast the shadow over the fact that a whole range of reforms have been introduced in political, economical and social life in the country. Two decades of transitions have produced visible results in a number of fields, before all regarding legislative issues and the harmonization of regulations with the European, etc. National strategic plans and programs have been adopted, as well as the related laws, regulations and enactments, while international conventions and agreements have been ratified. These changes have changed the life of the citizens of Serbia both at the level of a community as a whole and at the level of local communities. However, the current democratic ruling power has difficulties with parting from the *centralism* inherited from the 1990ies; as a consequence, the *lowering* of the reforms to local level and the harmonization of local regulations and practice with the central and European are missing, leading to the lack of full effects and results of the demanded reforms.

In order to improve life and create the conditions for faster social-economical development strived for nowadays, it is necessary for local authorities and citizens to take part in the creation and implementation of national policies, in accordance with the European standards and norms. The important precondition for meeting the demand depends on the knowledge and management skills of local authority representatives.

General considerations of the topic

The path towards the implementation of reforms is not always easy and, justified or not, the resistance present in the society as a whole transfers to local communities. The resolutions of essential issues – what direction should local development have, what are the aims of the community and what will be the choice of policies and instruments leading to realization of these aims – have to be reached at the level of broad and mutual agreement of the authorities and citizens. If this is not the case, citizens will not understand the offered solutions, neither will they accept them, creating a permanent resistance to them. The necessary political will leading to the realization of the aims is often replaced by fawning over the people and giving up the reforms.

On the other hand, it is a fact that there are a significant number of municipalities that have made a series of steps, adopted strategies, action plans and related decisions, built the institutions and the instruments for implementation of the plans, thus having formally changed the former functioning of local communities. However, the representatives of the civil sector in many communities have noticed, that in the creation of the mentioned documents and decisions there was either no partnership between the authorities and the citizens or it was not present to satisfactory extent. It was also perceivable that the public sector reluctantly involved the civil sector in the process of creation of local document and plans. The authorities are often content with the minimum of their participation through the public discussion, i.e. the forum proscribed by law; on the other hand the participation of citizens in the forums on crucial issues of public interest is symbolic, having in mind

that for a long time there has been a generally accepted belief that there was no way citizens could truly influence certain changes and a course of actions. Nevertheless, even though rarely, there are strategic documents created through the participation of citizens; on the other hand, having been adopted, they often do not have practical application, due to a whole range of reasons not originally anticipated and planned.

Talking about the essential acceptance of new procedures and habits in the field of environmental protection, there is a general standpoint of ecological public and civil sector representatives that in Serbia at local level, apart from obvious efforts, little has been done in making relevant progress and there are only small steps significantly smaller than the proclaimed aims and expectations. Harmonized with European demands, the Law on Environmental Protections is the cornerstone for serious improvement of environment quality, leading to better life in local communities. However, in the process of the implementation of the Law it has been noticed that there are problems in the application of some provisions, disabling the realization of reforms and hindering the processes that had already been initiated.

What is *LEAP*?

The Local Environmental Action Program (LEAP) is a process and a document harmonized with the international law and applied in many local communities in the world. The process has recently come to life in the countries of central and Eastern Europe. The implementation of the methodology when establishing ecological problems and determining priority actions is a precondition for international support and cooperation.

The local environmental plan implies the provision of information, training and education of the public, involvement of all the interested parties, i.e. stakeholders (local authorities, business sector, professional institutions, non-governmental organizations) in the process of establishing cooperation with the state and international organizations and institutions, fundraising in order to support ecological programs and plans for their realization. The local environmental action program is the document determining the strategy, activity plan, main actors, deadlines and the means necessary for its realization.

What is *Green Agenda*?

Green agenda was created according to the concept of the *Local agenda 21* introduced at the UN Conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Its methods are similar to the above described LEAP, but it is directed to the promotion and maintenance of local environmental values. The concept of the Green agenda has initially been developed in Romania by the Dutch organization *Milieukontakt international*. The concept has been applied in Moldova, Russia and Croatia, and its implementation has started in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kirgizia and Serbia. The *Aarhus Convention*, adopted in 1998 is a legal framework for the process of the Green agenda. The international convention proscribes the access to information on the environment, the participation in decision making and the access to judicature in the issues related to environmental protection.

The Green agenda is an open democratic process involving environmental protection associations, non-governmental ecology organizations, local and regional authorities, as well as business sector in the creation of the strategy of sustainable development, according to the “bottom to top” principle, aiming at establishing a

dialogue and agreement regarding important issues of environmental protection in order to overcome the differences between the present situation, the trends and the desired future. This is a true participatory way of dealing with the local problems, solutions, possibilities and threats to the environment from the beginning to the end. The Green agenda has a double aim – on the one hand, it is a process of mutual participation, cooperation and agreement reached by all the local community actors; on the other hand, its result is rather significant – a local action plan leading to the improvement of the quality of local life through the promotion of sustainable development. The Green agenda offers rational and economically sustainable solutions for environmental protection problems and affirms positive values that are to become a part of the official policies of the municipalities it is implemented in, regardless of the current political will. In such a way it opens up possibilities for the continuity in problem solving, disabling the interruption of positive processes that may occur due to the political change of local authorities. The document is an important precondition for international integrations, having in mind that it is an indicator of democracy in decision making and local politics in the field of environmental protection.

LEAP and/or Green Agenda

Even though at first sight these two concepts of environmental protection at local level seem rather similar, it is important to point out that there are differences between them, which are not essential, but significantly influence the outcomes of their implementation. So, Green agenda is primarily civil initiative with all the citizens claiming the right to it, before all the associations that have carried the whole process; consequently, it is logical that their demands imposed on local authorities are the same, regardless whose political party they belong to; in other words, they do not depend on political combinations and deals. There is a significant difference in comparison to LEAP. Its final stage, having adopted the Green agenda as a document, anticipates pilot projects implementing certain principles and provisions of the document and assessing them in practice. LEAP does not anticipate realization of pilot projects, so that it often turns out that the adopted document is nothing else but a *dead letter*.

The similarities and differences between the two concepts are shown in the following table:

Table 1: The two concepts: similarities and differences

LEAP	GREEN AGENDA
Sustainable development	Sustainable development
The process is initiated and managed by the local authorities	The process is initiated by citizens (NGO), local authorities is only one of the interested parties and adopts and verifies the document
“Ownership” of local authorities	“Ownership” of citizens (local community)
Participation of the public only in the stage of defining and ranking of problems, while other parts of the strategy are articulated by the experts (working groups + action plan)	Participation of the public throughout the process, together with the experts; desirable participation of marginalized groups that do not have the opportunity to express their opinion on certain social issue (working groups + action plan + the participation of the public)
“Scientific level“	Community level “people to people”
Deals exclusively with the issues of environmental protection	It can involve cultural heritage and social-economical development

The starting point of the process refers to problems	The starting point of the process refers to values of the community
The process ends with the adoption of the document	The process itself anticipates continuation and pilot projects
The process leads to results	Early success and result is important
Complex, large and not feasible in small communities and NGOs	Feasible in slam communities and NGOs
It exists and it is known as a process	It exists only in several countries, a new concept
In the case of some countries, it is mandatory by the law (e.g. Macedonia)	It is not mandatory by the law, but it is acceptable for EU standards

The real current state when the adoption of LEAP in Serbia is in question is that there is a proportionally small number of municipalities (slightly more than 30) that have ended the process or are heading towards its final stage. Unfortunately, the problems are persistent, the initial satisfaction and optimism have been replaced by disappointment, having in mind that the implementation of the LEAP document has not come into effect, or, in the smaller number of cases, it has not fulfilled the expectations. Some of the reasons for this are the following:

1. significant, large, persistent and long-lasting ecological problems;
2. over-ambitious aims;
3. the lack of international support and sources of financing (either from the state or international)
4. the change of authorities at local level who do not understand the process, do not see its benefits; it can also be the case that the new political power is not aware of the existence of the process and does not continue it. It is often the case that the process itself was too personalized within the institutions of local authorities and relied on the persistence and qualities of people who were in charge, not becoming a constituent part of institutional and systematic problem solving, since other parts of the local authorities were not ready for its implementation and did not include the document provisions into their annual plans.

The Green agenda has appeared as an alternative to LEAP, striving for overcoming some of the above stated problems. The project has been implemented in the states of the Western Balkans since 2008 and there are 8 municipalities in Serbia, supported by the Ministry of international affairs of the Netherlands that have started with the process; it seems important to mention here that 7 municipalities are from the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and only one municipality is from the so called Serbia proper or narrower Serbia (Knjazevac).

Having come to an end of these considerations, it seems rather important to mention that the municipality of Vrsac is the only municipality at the territory of the Republic that has adopted both documents. The progress in the field of environmental protection in this community is possible to notice; this certainly does not mean that all the problems are solved, having especially in mind the acute environmental protection problems.

Ecological education

The system of ecological education and upbringing has an important role to play in building ecological culture of a modern man. The synthesis of knowledge, skills and habits within natural and social sciences is a precondition for forming of a

comprehensive and complex ecological awareness of an individual. Conceived in such a way, knowledge acquisition on the environment, its characteristics, relations within it and attitudes to it, as well as on a place of a man within it, throughout individual's life is a cornerstone according to which an individual will permanently strive for environmental protection, promotion and improvement. Acquisition of long-lasting knowledge on basic ecological issues within contemporary society, the development of critical attitude towards the omnipresent degradation of the environment, emphasizing the necessity of rational exploitation of natural resources has to become a widespread and general component in educational system. *The basic principle of eco-education and upbringing is expressed in the demand for environmental protection education to be significantly more than informing on eco-facts* (Sehovic, Marjanovic, Biocanin 2008: 222). This means that the knowledge acquired by students should not remain at the level of being informed; it should rather be that the whole life in educational institutions is in accordance to environmental protection demands. When talking about environmental protection awareness, knowledge itself is not enough; we should deal with the development of beliefs and emotional-volitional components, initiating practical actions which are one of the most important aims of ecological education.

The importance of the role of educational-upbringing organizations at all levels of knowledge acquisition in the process of forming ecological way of thinking is obvious at the earliest age (preschool institutions) and continues to the level of higher education – faculty. Having in mind that the problems of environmental protection and need to overcome negative consequences of the disturbed ecological balance impose the demand for systematic knowledge, ecological education cannot be left to blind forces and a good will of the teacher. *The issue of organized teaching in the field of environmental protection has to be approached rather seriously and effectively, through the innovation of the existing curricula and introduction of regular ecological contents either as special courses or within other courses* (Sehovic, Marjanovic, Biocanin 2008: 222).

The problem and the aim of the research

Previous considerations imply that the motto *Think globally, act locally* in the field of environmental protection has not become an outlived idea; it rather seems that according to this demand new and more modern concepts of ecological activism have been developed. Taking this fact into consideration, it becomes clear why it is necessary to continually and more intensively pay attention to education and forming of ecological awareness in young generations. The problem we are facing is the fact that the attention to this component of education is paid only declaratively, with outcomes of the efforts not known to us. To some extent relying on the methodology implemented by the Green agenda in its activities, the research aims at finding out and objectively measuring the level of ecological awareness of students, future pre-school and primary school teachers, screening an interesting part of their value system.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The sample

Studying under the same roof, the students of the Preschool Teacher Training College and the Teacher Training Faculty – department in Vrsac seem to be an

adequate sample for the research. An anonymous questionnaire was distributed to the students of the first (N=46), second (N=34) and third (N=43) year.

The fact that the last Laws on primary and secondary education were adopted in the beginning of 1990ies (new are expected during this year) can be considered an indicator showing that the generation of present students has been educated according to outdated grounds not harmonized with those in Europe. The curricula have been modified in accordance with contemporary educational demands in the last 20 years, but there were no essential reforms in the field. On the other hand, the implementation of the Law on higher education (adopted in 2005) and the accreditation of new curricula has taken place in Serbia for the last five years. According to these facts, it can be assumed that the present students have not been exposed to the adequate contents in accordance with the current state in the sphere of environmental protection. Even if this assumption turns out to be false, it is beyond dispute that the teaching was carried out by the teachers who have not met the issues of environmental protection explicitly during the former schooling of the subject, i.e. the present students.

The gender structure deserves attention, too; traditionally *female* choice of the profession of a preschool teacher or primary school teacher results in the fact that only slightly more than 10% of the subjects are males. In another research this might be an obstacle to results validation, but having in mind that the structure to great extent reflects the ratio present in the case of acute-working engaged staff in these jobs, the results can be considered completely adequate.

The establishment of the method and the scope of the research

According to the available studies undertaken in the Republic of Croatia (Uzelac 2002 and Kantar, Svrznjak, Razum 2009) and the impossibility to identify similar studies in Serbia, we have faced the need to undertake it. It has been noticed that, on the one hand, the subject of the stated studies was *predominantly* ecological, while, on the other hand, it referred to the rather broad approach to the subject. The author of this paper is before all a supporter and an activist in the sphere of ecology; as a consequence, in his search for more adequate approach he has used the methodology based on the Green Agenda research. At the same time, noticing that it would be more appropriate for this year conference “*Ekologija za boljsi jutri*” to establish a link between natural, cultural and human values, the author has tried to emphasize the need to establish a *more comprehensive view* on the notion of ecological awareness. Namely, it seems that in some cases insisting on *ecological*, some other, not less important values are undeservingly pushed into the second plan. Such a statement is certainly not based on the principles of ecology itself, but on the activities of some of its actors, who, due to *political* or some other line, have found themselves in a position to defend something they do not understand.

The questionnaire

A combined questionnaire has been used in the research. The base of the questionnaire refers to open questions in some cases preceded by a close type (YES/NO) question. In the section intended to establish natural, cultural and human values the students regard most important, the subjects were offered multiple-choice questions and the possibility to offer their own choice.

At this point we will briefly outline the contents of the polls carried out in the territory of South Banat, in the municipalities of Bela Crkva, Plandiste and Vrsac. Namely, the data obtained in these polls have served as a list of answers offered to students, aiming at establishing the values (natural, cultural and human) they consider most important. Within the project *Regional Green Agenda* a poll was undertaken in order to get a clear picture of how citizens see their community today and in the future, what is most important to them and what they expect. The working groups chose an open questionnaire, according to which the subjects answered the questions according to their opinion, without suggested choices. Such a method is more difficult to process, having in mind that a vast variety of answers had been expected. The questionnaire consisted of 8 questions. The first three referred to the gender, age and education. Within the following three questions the subjects were to choose one natural, cultural and human value they regarded most important. In the 7th question the subjects were asked to rank the values, so that the most important got 3 points, the second 3 points and the third 1 point. In the last question the subjects were asked to describe how they see their community in 30 years, which values should be preserved and promoted. In the result analysis great variety of responses was noticed; at the same time the responses were also similar and their grouping was carried out. At the territory of the municipality of Bela Crkva, 174 subjects participated or about 1% of the total population – 73 male subjects and 101 female subjects (98 from Bela Crkva and 76 from the villages in the municipality). In the poll carried out at the territory of the municipality of Plandiste, 116 subjects participated or about 0,6% of the total population – 60 male subjects and 56 female subjects (40 subjects from the central municipal settling and 76 from the villages in the municipality). In the poll carried out at the territory of the municipality of Vrsac, 336 subjects were included – 155 men and 195 women, with the equal number of the subjects from urban and rural settings. Attention was paid to other aspects in order to get more comprehensive picture and results in the study. So, there were three groups according to age structure: between 15 and 30 years old, 30 – 50 and more than 50; according to education there were also three groups: elementary school, secondary school and higher education. The subjects were chosen in such a way to proportionally encompass all the stated groups. The results and more information about the stated polls can be found on the address: www.staniste.org.rs.

According to the above described local polls, the natural, cultural and human values have been identified dominant in all three surveys. Consulting the results gained in other municipalities in Serbia, or, to put it more precisely Vojvodina, a shorter list of the identified values has been used for the students' questionnaire. Having in mind that the students attending the College and the Faculty in Vrsac come from territorially much broader area, the local values present in the stated polls have been avoided, so that those encompassed by our survey can be conditionally considered *universal* for the broader area of the Republic of Serbia.

The contents of the questionnaire has been conceived in such a way to establish whether the students during their previous schooling had attended courses explicitly dealing with the subject of ecology, i.e. if they had recognized ecological contents in certain subjects they had in their primary and secondary school. The students were also asked whether their curriculum at the college or faculty has contents dedicated to the issues of environmental protection. Finally, the undertaken survey should have establish what is the attitude of the polled subjects towards ecology in general, if they are active in the field, as well as what is their opinion in

view of the importance of environmental protection for their future profession, i.e. their future job.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

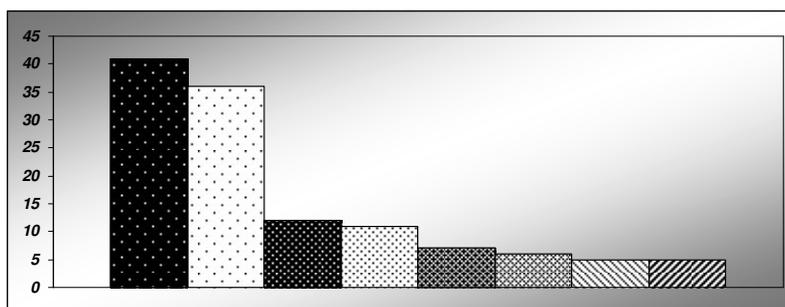
Having in mind that at this point the research results are to be discussed, we will once again point out to the basic assumption that the present students have not been exposed to adequate contents in accordance with the current state in the sphere of environmental protection, due to the fact that there have not been relevant reforms within primary and secondary school education for almost 20 years; furthermore, the teaching in their former primary and secondary school was carried out by the teachers who did not deal with the issue of environmental protection during their own education.

The research included 123 student of the Preschool Teacher Training College and Teacher Training Faculty in Vrsac, which is, in comparison to the total number of students studying at the two higher education institutions about 20%, taking care that the students from both study programs are equally represented. In regard to sample gender structure, 12% are male students and 88% are female students, which has been pointed out above. The fact (in the sense of the obtained research results) could be interesting having in mind the generally accepted standpoint according to which women are far more sensible than men; consequently they should express similar sensitivity towards nature, especially to the issue of it being so endangered. At this point we will refer to the existence of eco-feminism based on the theory that the suppression of women and the suppression of nature are generally connected; as a consequence, the advocates of the movement have concluded that due to the fact that women take care of their families and hoses, they are more likely to be aware of the problem of environmental protection than men.

One third of the subject comes from the municipality of Vrsac, and other subjects are from the territories of other municipalities; however it is not possible to form another group of students that would according to this criterion exceed 10%. What could be relevant for the research is that 75% of the subjects are from the territory of Vojvodina and 25% of subjects are from the *Serbia proper*; this is especially interesting having in mind that one of the offered natural values is the *plain*, characteristic for the municipality of Vojvodina. The Table 2 offers an overview of the structure of the sample according to the secondary school they attended. This is simultaneously shown in a graph. It should be noticed that the majority of students had acquired knowledge according to the curriculum of the economic secondary school or general secondary school. We will get back to this in the part dealing with their prior-knowledge on ecology.

Table 2: Finished secondary school

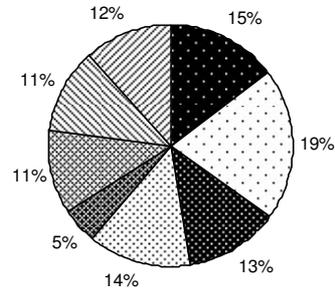
Secondary school	No of subjects
Economic	41
General high school	36
Chemical	12
Technical	11
Agricultural	7
Tourist	6
Medical	5
Others	5
Total	123



After the details referring to the sample structure, we will deal with the three questions created according to the results of the surveys undertaken within to project *Green Agenda*, as it has been explained in the text above.

Table 3: Natural values

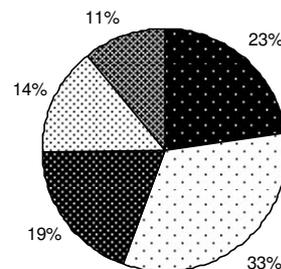
Value	Answers in %
cultivated land	15
rivers, lakes...	19
mountains and hills	13
forests and parks	14
plain	5
animals	11
plants	11
unpolluted environment	12
Total	100



Compared to rather balanced responses, the choice of *rivers and lakes...* is more expressed (19%), which could be explained according to the territory the subjects come from. Namely, since $\frac{3}{4}$ of the subjects come from Vojvodina, mostly South Banat, we would point to the fact that this region does not have any significant water streams and the finding could be described as an aspiration for something we actually *do not have*. Similar explanation could be expected for the finding regarding *mountains and hills*; it seems that the small percentage (5%) of the subjects who value plain as a natural value in accordance with the previous explanation: plain is not so important to students since they *have it*; this also supports the previous statement on the finding regarding *rivers and lakes*. The important finding refers to the fact that 15% of the polled students values *cultivated land*. The finding that the majority of the subjects come from village households that mostly deal with agriculture in Vojvodina, points to the insight that students are aware of this existential fact.

Table 4: Cultural values

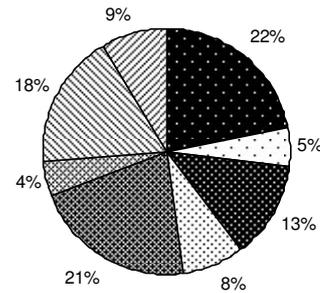
Value	Odgovora u %
institutions of culture (museums, theatres...)	23
educational institutions (schools, faculties...)	33
spiritual institutions (churches)	19
Sports fields	14
Cultural manifestations	11
Total	100



One third of all the answers refers to *educational institutions* which is completely in accordance to the fact that the research subjects are future pre-school and primary school teachers. Having in mind that, as it has already been explained in the text above, it was possible to choose more than one answer, we will just refer to the finding that even 84 subjects chose *educational institutions* leading to a conclusion that there are 68% of students who are fully aware *why they are here*. The rest of the results we could consider expectable; thus they do not deserve special discussion.

Table 5: Human values

Value	Answers in %
morality	22
ecological awareness	5
sports activities	13
modesty	8
honesty	21
respect for multinational	4
tradition preservation	18
general and professional education	9
Total	100



The Table 5 shows that *morality* and *honesty*, and even *tradition* are rather highly valued, while the variables *respect for multinational* and *ecological awareness* are unfortunately estimated rather poorly. It is not so interesting from the angle of this research, but other researchers could find astonishing this huge difference between the two, for the author of the research somehow closely related values: *tradition* and *respect for multinational*. It is worth noticing that the value described as *general and professional education* is relatively lowly ranked; viewed individually, this value is supported by only 28 subjects, or less than one fourth.

The subsequent questions referred to prior education, i.e. the presence of ecology or ecological contents in the teaching subjects in primary and secondary school. It is found that the students who used to attend the secondary schools of economic orientation had a subject called *Ecology* – 35% of the polled students, while in other schools there was no subject matter with such an explicit title. Out of the total number of subjects, 65% identifies *Biology* as a subject containing ecological contents, while less than 10% identifies subjects like *General Science*, *Chemistry*, *Geography*, and *World around us*, or in individual cases the professional subjects like *Bio-chemistry*, *Botany* and *Tourism*. Up to 20% of former primary and secondary school students do not recognize any subjects at least to a small extent dealing with the issue of environmental protection.

The next question in the questionnaire is considered separately, i.e. the results obtained by the college students are processed apart from the answers offered by the Teacher Training Faculty students. Even during the process of the design of the questionnaire it had been found that the curricula according to which the students in these two higher education institutions study do not include a course called *Ecology* or a course containing the word *ecology* or something else that would refer to the notion of environmental protection (it should be mentioned here that there is a subject called *Ecology* within the specialist studies at the college; however, specialist students were not the subjects in the research). The students were asked to state a course or courses they recognize as having environmental protection contents. Apart from the course *Teaching Methodology of Getting to Know the Environment* (a course at the third year of studies), the students attending the college have not identified any other such courses. Future primary school teachers who will work with lower primary school grades have recognized the following courses, depending on the academic year they attend:

- I year – The basics of science (50%);
- II year – Introduction into science (50%);
- III and IV year – Science teaching methodology (16%)

Establishing the attitude of the students towards ecology in general, activism and their opinion on the relation between their future profession and environmental

protection, it can be preliminary stated that the students are aware of the importance of environmental protection, but they do not do anything in this regard and they are not able to explain why it is important to develop ecological awareness in young children and youth.

According to expectations, more than 95% of students offered a positive answer to the question *Do you think ecology is important for our present and future life?* However, asked if they are actively engaged in some ecological activity (either organized or individual) only 5% answer positively, while only 3% of the subjects were capable of explaining the activity:

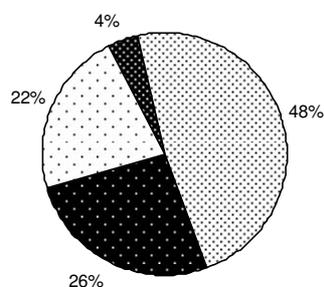
- within the Red Cross activities;
- within the municipal environmental movement;
- separating/recycling garbage and
- not using plastic bags.

The last question in the questionnaire is: *Do you consider that your future profession (you are now being trained for) demands ecological education so that you could provide your future students with ecological knowledge?* Positive answer was given by 90% of the subjects. It is worth noticing that there is a 5% difference in comparison to the more general attitude towards ecology (*Do you think ecology is important for...?*). It is interesting that almost 10% of negative answers were given almost exclusively by the students of the 1st year. Dealing with the above finding, it can be assumed that the newly enrolled generation of students (slightly less than one third – 29%) do not have completely build attitude on their own role in the education and upbringing of future generations. At the same time, we consider that when the students of senior years are in question this attitude is more comprehensively formed, thus reflecting the function of knowledge transfer aiming at environmental protection. Another explanation would be in favour of the thesis given in the beginning of the analysis of the results, confirming our assumptions: inadequate teaching contents and incompetent teaching staff in former education of those who are nowadays students.

Conceiving the questionnaire, the idea was to ask our subjects to briefly explain their attitude within the final question. According to the offered responses, i.e. the repeated phrases they used in them, they were classified in three groups. Only one untypical and comprehensive answer was offered: *The whole world is endangered, therefore we should increase the awareness on environmental protection form the earliest age and this is our profession – the profession of a true teacher.*

Table 6: Why is it necessary for your future profession to get ecological education?

Used phrase	Answers in %
education of children	26
environmental protection	22
ecologic awareness	4
no response	48
Total	100



An all-embracing view on the responses referring to the subject of ecology gives the impression that the students studying at these two institutions are generally aware of its importance in modern society. However, it can also be concluded that

they do not have a clear picture on the place and the role of a preschool teacher or a primary school teacher in the process; furthermore, they are not involved in concrete activities of environmental protection.

CONCLUSION

Pointing to the problem issue of ecology in Serbia, including the countries in the region, we have faced the lack of functionality of the state policy, the lack of means and a whole range of *more important* issues. Having ascertained that contemporary tendencies point to the need of *boiling* of ecology issue *down* to the local level, according to the motto *Think globally, act locally*, we have met two concepts present in Serbia (LEAP and Green agenda). According to these concepts it is beyond dispute that education and the increase of ecological awareness of the citizens is crucial for realization of visible results in the field.

Having outlined the general situations and the position of ecology in education, we have found that future educators, preschool teachers and teachers can expectably crucially influence the increase of ecological awareness of young people, leading to the improvement in the field of environmental protection.

The research carried out at the Preschool Teacher Training College and the Teacher Training Faculty in Vrsac provided us with the findings that to a certain level prove the existence of the relation between natural, cultural and human values and the sense of local belonging. Considering the obtained values our intention was to point to the fact that ecology should be considered in a way *broader* than usually; in other words, what is necessary is it *being built* into a value system as a whole, which is mostly not the case nowadays.

It has been found according to the research results that even though ecology is mostly not a constituent part of the curricula in the system of mandatory education, there is to certain degree continuity in acquisition of ecological contents in primary and secondary schools. The attitudes of the subjects point to the fact that environmental protection is only indirectly present in the syllabuses of higher education curricula in the institutions the research has been carried out and students recognize it as an element of some courses.

General attitudes of students towards ecology are in accordance with the expected, but they are not supported by appropriate activities. The responses of the subjects have not offered a picture showing clearly built attitude towards the place and the role of a preschool and primary school teacher in the process of forming of ecological awareness of younger generations. The impossibility to find their place in the process is most obvious in the case of the 1st year students, giving hope and opening up possibilities to overcome this shortcoming during subsequent years of their studies.

The lack of systematic approach to environmental protection present at the level of society and education is a problem we are facing every day and the solutions are offered sporadically and randomly. Therefore it is necessary for ecology to, before all, become a constituent and inevitable part of not only education, but also of the way of life of students and teachers.

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