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The role of nature in the development of ecological-valeological competence of preschool children

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***Abstract.** The article considers the problem of forming ecological-valeological competence of preschoolers as one of the important areas of modern education. The essence of this concept, its main components (cognitive, emotional-value and activity) and their relationship are determined. The importance of the natural environment in the process of educating ecological culture and health-preserving behavior in children is substantiated.*

Modern pedagogical approaches and methods of using nature in the educational process are analyzed, in particular, integrated learning, natural observations, research activities, valeological exercises, ecological games. The role of state educational standards and programs in the development of an ecologically and valeologically conscious personality of a preschooler is considered.

Promising directions for the development of ecological and valeological education are outlined, including the introduction of innovative methods, the use of information technologies, the expansion of environmental practice in kindergartens, and active cooperation between educational institutions and the family.

The results of the study indicate that the formation of ecological and valeological competence of preschoolers is a necessary condition for raising a personality capable of responsibly treating their own health and the environment, which in the future will contribute to preserving the health of the nation and improving the ecological situation.

Keywords: *ecological and valeological competence, preschool education, healthy lifestyle, ecological education, natural environment, valeology.*

Роль природи у розвитку еколого-валеологічної компетентності дошкільників

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Анотація. *У статті розглядається проблема формування еколого-валеологічної компетентності дошкільників як одного з важливих напрямів сучасної освіти. Визначено сутність цього поняття та окреслено його основні компоненти (когнітивний, емоційно-ціннісний та діяльнісний). Обґрунтовано значення природного середовища у процесі виховання екологічної культури та здоров'язбережувальної поведінки у дітей.*

Проаналізовано сучасні педагогічні підходи та методи використання природи у виховному процесі, зокрема інтегроване навчання, природничі спостереження, дослідницьку діяльність, валеологічні вправи, екологічні ігри. Розглянуто роль державних освітніх стандартів та програм у розвитку екологічно та валеологічносвідомої особистості дошкільника.

Окреслено перспективні напрями розвитку еколого-валеологічної освіти, що включають впровадження інноваційних методик, використання інформаційних технологій, розширення екологічної практики у дитячих садках та активну співпрацю освітніх установ із сім'єю.

Результати дослідження свідчать, що формування еколого-валеологічної компетентності дошкільників є необхідною умовою виховання особистості, здатної відповідально ставитися до власного здоров'я та навколишнього середовища, що в майбутньому сприятиме збереженню здоров'я нації та покращенню екологічної ситуації.

***Ключові слова:** еколого-валеологічна компетентність, дошкільна освіта, здоровий спосіб життя, екологічне виховання, природне середовище, валеологія.*

Problem statement. In a modern society based on humanistic and democratic principles, human health is recognized as the highest value and key asset of the state. Special attention is paid to children's health, since the problem of its preservation is gaining a global scale. The National Doctrine of Education Development defines the formation of motivation for a healthy lifestyle and the development of a health culture as one of the priority areas of education of the younger generation. The main aspects of ensuring children's health are regulated by the Law of Ukraine "On the Protection of Childhood" and the state programs "Children of Ukraine" and "Education" (Ukraine of the 21st Century).

The problem of human interaction with nature and its influence on the formation of personality has been studied by many scientists. The works of J. Comenius, D. Locke, J. Pestalozzi, S. Rusova, J.-J. Rousseau, V. Sukhomlynsky, K. Ushynsky, E. Florina reveal the importance of nature in the upbringing and development of a child. Modern researchers S. Deryabo, G. Pustovit, V. Yasvin emphasize the need to form an ecocentric type of ecological consciousness as the basis of harmonious interaction of man with the environment. At the same time, N.

Goropakha, N. Glukhov, N. Kot, N. Lysenko, S. Nikolaeva, Z. Plokhii, N. Ryzhova, N. Yarysheva emphasize that the foundations of ecological education are formed in preschool age, and ecological consciousness is an integral part of ecological culture. The concept of ecological culture, according to N. Reimers, includes the awareness of the importance of environmental problems and the need to solve them for the future of humanity. According to the approach of I. Pavlenko and G. Gorbulich, ecological culture is an integrative quality of a person that combines spiritual and moral values and determines environmentally responsible behavior. According to A. Zakhlebny, I. Zverev, I. Suravegina, environmental responsibility includes self-control, the ability to foresee the consequences of one's own actions, a critical attitude towards oneself and others [3].

In parallel with the development of environmental education, valeology was formed as a science of human health, combining knowledge of ecology, biology and psychology. I. I. Brekhman in 1976 laid the foundations of valeology, emphasizing its integrative nature. In pedagogical research of the 20th century (E. Vilchkovsky, N. Denysenko, O. Dubogai), children's health was mostly associated with physical education, but the modern approach has expanded this concept, covering issues of mental, emotional and social well-being.

The relevance of the study is due to the need for a comprehensive approach to the education of preschoolers, which combines ecological and valeological components. Preservation of children's health in modern conditions requires the search for effective methods of educating a culture of a healthy lifestyle and environmental awareness. The social significance of this problem, its connection with education, and the lack of methodological developments in the field of ecological and valeological education determine the relevance of research on the topic: "The role of nature in the development of ecological and valeological competence of preschoolers." [17]

The role of nature in the development of ecological and valeological competence of preschoolers is multifaceted, but some aspects of this problem remain

insufficiently researched and require further study. The following aspects of the problem remain unresolved: individual features of competence development - it has not been sufficiently researched how the natural environment affects the formation of ecological consciousness in children with different levels of sensory and cognitive development; the use of interactive teaching methods in the natural environment - requires additional study of the effectiveness of using game, project and research methods in natural conditions for the formation of ecological and valeological competence, etc. The significance of this article lies in the analysis of the modern methodological basis for the use of nature in the educational process, in particular integrated learning, natural observations, research activities, valeological exercises, ecological games, the role of state educational standards and programs in the development of an ecologically and valeologically conscious personality of a preschooler and promising directions for the development of ecological and valeological education.

Analysis of recent studies and publications. Many authors agree that it is necessary to begin the formation of ecological and valeological ideas at the stage of preschool childhood (L.V. Moiseeva, T.M. Nosova, Z.I. Tyumaseva, etc.), when the foundations of the attitude towards oneself and the surrounding social and natural environment are laid.

In recent years, Ukrainian scientists have been actively researching the issue of ecological and valeological education of preschoolers, focusing on the integration of environmental and valeological education to form a healthy lifestyle and environmental awareness in children.

In the work of Svitlana Tokar (2021) “Formation of ecological and valeological competence of preschoolers by means of nature”, pedagogical conditions are substantiated and the content and forms of work are developed aimed at effectively educating children in healthy lifestyle skills through interaction with the natural environment [16].

Natalia Biryuk in her study (2020) examines the effectiveness of environmental education of preschoolers under the condition of using integrative approaches that combine environmental and valeological aspects, emphasizing that the task of environmental education of preschoolers is to create conditions for the opportunity to see the multifacetedness, diversity of forms, colors, sounds in nature, to draw children's attention to the changes that occur in nature at different times of the year, to teach them to love and understand nature, to cultivate the desire to be an active participant in creating beauty in the natural world [2].

Anna Chaykovska in the article "Modern Trends in Environmental Education of Preschool Children" (2018) emphasizes the importance of environmental and valeological education as one of the leading directions, where nature is an inexhaustible resource for the comprehensive development of a child. Based on the analysis of foreign experience, the scientist identifies general approaches and key characteristics of environmental education, emphasizing that the main principles of forming environmental consciousness are ecocentrism, natural similarity, humanity, integrity, continuity and cultural similarity [4].

In foreign countries, the system of environmental and health education for preschoolers is based on the following priority areas: emotional and value, health-preserving, economic and social. The environmental orientation of national policy is supported by public initiatives focused on preserving a clean environment. It is important to note that the key trends of foreign environmental education, which are gradually being integrated into domestic educational practice, require active testing and further dissemination.

Olena Maksimova in the educational and methodological manual "Valeological education of preschool children (theoretical and methodological principles)" (2018) outlines the theoretical problems of forming, preserving and strengthening the individual health of a child, as well as methodological aspects of valeological education in preschool institutions. In particular, forms, methods, and means of working with children in this area are proposed; the methodology for familiarizing

children with vital organs, the formation of a caring attitude towards them; the problem of rational nutrition; the safety of the child's vital activity, etc [11].

In addition to the previously mentioned researchers, a significant contribution to the development of ecological and valeological education of preschoolers was made by such Ukrainian scientists as: Larysa Prysiashnyuk in her article “Modern approaches to introducing preschoolers to nature: theoretical analysis” (2019) considered various methodological approaches to environmental education, focusing on aesthetic-ecological and integrative approaches. The researcher says that a departure from traditionalism in introducing preschool children to nature, integrating the ecological component into its content, and moving to the activity dimension of educational results require new, non-standard approaches to organizing the pedagogical process, creating an innovative educational environment that would not only contribute to children mastering a certain amount of knowledge about nature and the relationships existing in it, but also ensure the development of the intellectual and spiritual spheres of the preschooler’s personality, the formation of his environmental position, and a responsible, careful attitude to the natural environment [13].

The issue of the formation of valeological culture in children of senior preschool age I.M. Tsyupak and N.Yu. Shyshchak investigated, emphasizing that the valeological culture of senior preschoolers is a complex concept that integrates: the child's value attitude to his health and life; a system of valeological knowledge, skills and abilities as components of valeological consciousness; mastery of health assessment techniques; readiness to independently or with the help of adults to solve tasks related to preserving and strengthening one's own health; positive motivation to follow the rules of health preservation in everyday life [19].

In the work "Ecological-valeological path of health - one of the ways of forming love for the native land in preschoolers" (2021) O.P. Krynytska investigated the use of ecological and valeological trails as a means of educating children in a love of nature and a healthy lifestyle and proved that a logically constructed ecological and valeological trail, using the example of a route along the Okhtyrka River, acts as the

main element of the ecological and valeological developmental environment of the preschool educational institution [12].

In the study of N.Yu. Ignatenko “Organization of valeological education of children 6-7 years old” (2019) theoretically substantiated and experimentally verified the conditions for organizing valeological education of children of senior preschool age in a preschool educational institution based on the developed criteria and indicators of valeological education of children of senior preschool age: the informational and content criterion was determined to be important in terms of clarifying the level of children's awareness of the basics of a healthy lifestyle, the motivational criterion provided for determining the orientation of children towards a healthy lifestyle, the desire not to get sick and be healthy, to participate in relevant classes, outdoor games, etc., the behavioral criterion provided an opportunity to determine the foundations of organizing the practice of working with children regarding the effectiveness of practical work in the field of children's valeology, their acquisition of the necessary skills to support and strengthen health [18].

The purpose of the article is to theoretically substantiate and analyze the importance of the natural environment in the formation of ecological and valeological competence of preschoolers, to determine pedagogical conditions, methods and approaches that contribute to the upbringing of a caring attitude towards nature, environmental awareness and a healthy lifestyle in children.

To achieve the goal, the following tasks were defined:

1. To reveal the concept of ecological and valeological competence of preschoolers - to determine the main components of this competence and its significance in the formation of a healthy lifestyle of children.
2. To substantiate the importance of the natural environment in the formation of the ecological and valeological culture of preschoolers - to analyze the influence of nature on the physical, mental and emotional development of preschool children.

3. To investigate the pedagogical aspects of using nature in the education of preschoolers - to consider the methods, forms and means of natural and health education in the educational process.
4. To outline effective approaches to the organization of ecological and valeological education in preschool educational institutions - to determine strategies and practical measures that contribute to the formation of ecological awareness and healthy lifestyle skills in children.
5. To analyze the current experience and prospects for the development of ecological and valeological education - to consider existing programs, methodological developments and innovative approaches in the formation of health-preserving behavior of preschoolers through interaction with nature.

Presentation of the main material. Ecological-valeological competence is an integrative concept that combines knowledge, skills and attitude of a child to preserving his own health and the environment. It is formed at the intersection of two educational directions - ecological and valeological education, aimed at the harmonious development of the individual in unity with nature.

According to the definition of I.I. Brekhman (1976), valeology is a science of health that covers the biological, psychological and ecological aspects of human existence. In further studies by V.P. Petlenko (1997) and G.I. Tsaregorodtseva (2001) it was determined that valeological education should include not only knowledge about a healthy lifestyle, but also the formation of motivation to preserve health from an early age [14].

The ecological aspect of competence was studied by M.M. Verzilin (1985), N.M. Sotska (1998), T.V. Kornienko (2003), who emphasized that awareness of the value of nature is the basis of a child's responsible attitude to the world around them. The components of ecological and valeological competence are:

- ❖ Cognitive component - knowledge about nature, its impact on human health, the foundations of a healthy lifestyle.

- ❖ Emotional and value component - a positive attitude towards nature, responsibility for its preservation.
- ❖ Activity component - practical skills of interaction with nature, the formation of health-preserving behavior [6].

The formation of ecological and valeological competence should take place on the basis of an integrated approach, which includes: didactic methods - the use of game, problem and interactive technologies; practical activities - caring for plants and animals, excursions, project activities; interaction with nature - the organization of observations, research experiments, valeological exercises [5].

Research by G.I. Belenka (2007) show that the most effective way to form ecological and valeological competence is to create a developing natural environment in preschool institutions, which promotes active knowledge of the surrounding world through experience.

It is worth noting that in the modern education system of Ukraine, the issue of forming ecological and valeological competence is regulated by the following regulatory documents:

- ✓ The Basic Component of Preschool Education of Ukraine (2012) - provides for the upbringing of ecological culture and valeological thinking in children [1].
- ✓ The Law of Ukraine "On Preschool Education" - emphasizes the importance of creating conditions for preserving the health of preschoolers.
- ✓ The programs "Child" and "Ukrainian Preschool" - include valeological and ecological directions of education.

The components of ecological and valeological competence are considered to be: cognitive - knowledge about nature, its importance for human health; emotional-value - emotional connection with the natural environment, the formation of ecological consciousness; activity – the formation of healthy lifestyle skills and environmentally appropriate behavior [9].

The main components of ecological and valeological competence

№	Name of component	Justification	How to form
1.	<p>The cognitive component includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge about the environment, its importance for humans. • Awareness of the relationship between human health and the state of nature. • Understanding the basics of a healthy lifestyle (proper nutrition, physical activity, hygiene). • Familiarization with the rules of environmental behavior. 	<p>Knowledge is the basis for the formation of a conscious attitude towards one's own health and nature. Research by G.O. Ball (1990), V.O. Sukhomlynsky (1969) proves that children who have systematized knowledge about nature and health are more prone to environmentally responsible behavior.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature observation – excursions, walks. • Conversations and interactive classes – discussion of the role of water, air, plants in human life. • Reading fiction and popular science literature about nature and health. • Solving problem situations – modeling ecological and valeological tasks
2.	<p>The emotional-value component includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love and caring attitude towards nature. • Responsibility for one's own health and the well-being of the surrounding world. • Positive attitude towards a healthy lifestyle. • Awareness of the value of nature for humans. 	<p>The formation of personal values and motives determines the extent to which a child will adhere to the rules of a healthy lifestyle and environmental behavior. Research by V.M. Petukhova (1998), O.V. Deli (2009) shows that children who have a positive emotional connection with nature are more conscious about its preservation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotionally colored stories and fairy tales about nature and health. • Involvement in caring for plants and animals (creating nature corners). • Role-playing games and dramatization - "I am an ecologist", "If I were a doctor of nature". • Positive example of adults - educators, parents, who demonstrate a healthy lifestyle and ecological behavior.
3.	<p>The activity component includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical application of knowledge about a healthy lifestyle. • Performing valeological procedures (charging, hygiene skills, hardening). • Using environmentally friendly behavior skills (saving water, sorting garbage, caring for plants). 	<p>Without practical application of knowledge and emotional-value perception, competence remains formal. Studies by E.P. Kravtsov (2002), L.V. Garaguli (2004) confirm that sustainable health-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valeological exercises and hardening - morning exercises, breathing exercises, walking barefoot. • Real environmental actions - planting trees, cleaning up garbage, caring for nature.

		<p>preserving and environmental habits are formed only through activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project activities - creating environmental posters, campaigns, experiments with natural materials. • Outdoor games in nature - orientation in the terrain, searching for "treasures of nature."
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It is important to emphasize that all three components – cognitive, emotional-value and activity – are interconnected and complement each other. Knowledge about nature and health without a positive attitude and practical application remains passive. Similarly, without an appropriate informational and emotional basis, activity can be formal or unconscious. Based on the research of N.F. Denysenko (2005), T.V. Kornienko (2012), G.I. Belenka (2007), it was established that the most effective approach to the development of ecological and valeological competence is a combination of interactive learning, active interaction with the natural environment and personal example of adults [8].

The implementation of natural health education requires the integration of ecological and valeological knowledge into the educational process. The main pedagogical methods include: excursions and walks – observation of natural phenomena, study of plants and animals; research activities – conducting simple experiments (for example, seed germination, observing changes in nature); game methods – ecological games, valeological tasks for the development of health-preserving skills [7].

In order to effectively form ecological and valeological competence in children, it is necessary to adhere to the following principles: the principle of nature compliance – taking into account the age characteristics of children in the process of familiarization with nature; the principle of integration – combining valeological knowledge with environmental aspects; the principle of activity-based learning – active involvement of children in natural games, observations, and research [15].

For the effective formation of ecological and valeological competence in the practice of preschool education, methods of environmental education are widely used, aimed at forming a caring attitude towards nature and a healthy lifestyle, among which promising areas of development are the introduction of innovative valeological methods (yoga for children, art therapy, sensory excursions), the use of information technologies in natural science education (ecological interactive games), the formation of environmentally responsible behavior through the involvement of children in environmental protection activities (planting plants, caring for animals) [10].

Conclusions. The formation of ecological and valeological competence of preschoolers is an important area of modern education, which contributes to the harmonious development of the personality, the upbringing of environmental responsibility and a conscious attitude to one's own health. The study of theoretical approaches allowed us to reveal the content of this concept and determine its key components: cognitive, emotional-value and activity. It is their interaction that ensures the conscious use of valeological knowledge and environmental behavior in the child's everyday life.

Analysis of the impact of the natural environment on the health and development of children has shown that nature plays a key role in the physical, psycho-emotional and cognitive development of preschoolers. Studies have proven that being in nature helps to strengthen immunity, reduce stress levels, activate cognitive activity and develop sensory perception. The importance of the natural environment is also confirmed in the works of scientists who emphasize that environmentally appropriate behavior is formed even in preschool age through personal experience of interaction with nature.

Determining the pedagogical conditions for using nature in the education of preschoolers made it possible to outline the main methods and approaches that contribute to the development of ecological and valeological culture. These include excursions, research activities, valeological exercises, interactive games, modeling

ecological situations and organizing natural observations. The use of these methods ensures not only the transfer of knowledge, but also the development of practical skills and emotional connection with the environment, which is the basis for a further conscious attitude to nature and health.

Analysis of approaches to the organization of ecological and valeological education in preschool institutions has shown that effective education in this area requires the integration of valeological and ecological components into the educational process. An important role in this is played by state programs and regulatory documents, in particular the Basic Component of Preschool Education of Ukraine, the Law of Ukraine "On Preschool Education" and specialized curricula. They determine the need to form health-preserving and environmental competence from early childhood.

Research into the modern experience of ecological and valeological education has allowed us to identify promising areas of its development, in particular the introduction of innovative methods, the integration of information technologies into natural science education, the development of environmental initiatives in kindergartens and active interaction between the family and preschool institutions. Thus, the problem of forming ecological and valeological competence of preschoolers is relevant and multifaceted. Its solution requires a comprehensive approach, which includes the creation of appropriate pedagogical conditions, the use of the natural environment as an educational space, the implementation of effective methods and active interaction of all participants in the educational process. The foundations of ecological culture and a healthy lifestyle laid in preschool age will contribute to the further harmonious development of the personality, the formation of a conscious attitude towards nature and a responsible attitude to one's own health.



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