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ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN UKRAINE: CURRENT STATE, LEGAL CHALLENGES AND DIRECTIONS OF IMPROVING THE LEGISLATION

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The article examines the current state of environmental education in Ukraine, legal challenges, that exist today in the context of legal regulation of environmental education, and directions of improving the national legislation with the aim of further developing environmental education, which is a fundamental prerequisite for environmental protection, sustainable development of Ukraine taking into account the European Green Deal, effective implementation of the green transformation policy, and further implementation of green post-war reconstruction of Ukraine.

It has been established, that despite the fact that youth potential is capable of ensuring the ecological future of the state and promoting sustainable development, in Ukraine there is an insufficient level of environmental awareness and environmental culture among youth.

In the course of the study the regulatory framework, that establishes the legal foundations of environmental education in Ukraine and in some foreign countries, was considered.

It is determined, that today in Ukraine there's a considerable amount of legal challenges in the context of legal regulation of environmental education. Thus, for a long time there is no separate specialized legislative act dedicated to environmental education in Ukraine. National legislation still does not contain a definition of the concept of «environmental education». The Conception of environmental education in Ukraine is outdated. There is insufficient synergy between the national youth policy and the state's environmental policy.

The article provides an author's definition for «environmental education», which is proposed to be fixed at the legislative level. The study emphasizes the need to modernize the Conception of environmental education and also to develop and adopt a separate Law of Ukraine «On Environmental Education». It is concluded that there is an urgent need to «green up» the regulatory framework of the youth sphere in order to bring together the youth and environmental policies of the state.

Key words: environmental education, environmental culture, environmental awareness, environment, environmental policy, sustainable development, green transformation, European Green Deal, youth, youth policy

Хрещева Олександра. Екологічна освіта в Україні: сучасний стан, правові виклики та напрями вдосконалення законодавства

У статті досліджуються сучасний стан екологічної освіти в Україні, правові виклики, що існують сьогодні в контексті правового регулювання екологічної освіти, та напрями вдосконалення національного законодавства з метою подальшого розвитку екологічної освіти, яка є фундаментальною передумовою збереження довкілля, сталого розвитку України з урахуванням Європейського зеленого курсу, ефективного впровадження політики зеленої трансформації та у подальшому реалізації зеленої повоєнної відбудови України.

Встановлено, що незважаючи на те, що молодіжний потенціал здатен забезпечити екологічне майбутнє держави, сприяти сталому, збалансованому розвитку, в Україні спостерігається недостатній рівень екологічної свідомості та екологічної культури молоді.

У роботі розглянуто нормативну базу, що закладає правові основи екологічної освіти в Україні та в окремих зарубіжних країнах.

Визначено, що сьогодні в Україні існує значна кількість правових викликів в контексті правового регулювання екологічної освіти. Так, на теренах України тривалий час відсутній окремий спеціалізований законодавчий акт, присвячений екологічній освіті. Концепція

екологічної освіти в Україні є застарілою. Національне законодавство досі не містить визначення поняття «екологічна освіта». Спостерігається недостатня синергія національної молодіжної політики та екологічної політики держави, що, на нашу думку, гальмує процеси популяризації екологічних знань серед молоді.

У статті сформовано авторське визначення поняття «екологічна освіта», яке пропонується закріпити на законодавчому рівні у статті 7 Закону України «Про охорону навколишнього природного середовища» та у статті 1 Закону України «Про освіту». У дослідженні наголошується на необхідності модернізації Концепції екологічної освіти, а також розробки та прийняття окремого профільного Закону України «Про екологічну освіту». Зроблено висновок, що існує нагальна потреба в «екологізації» нормативної бази молодіжної сфери задля зближення молодіжної та екологічної політик держави.

Ключові слова: екологічна освіта, екологічна культура, екологічна свідомість, навколишнє середовище, екологічна політика, сталий розвиток, зелена трансформація, Європейський зелений курс, молодь, молодіжна політика.

Formulation of the problem. In the 21st century, environmental problems are becoming increasingly acute: air pollution, exhaustion of natural resources, deforestation, biodiversity loss, climate change, etc.

It is important to note, that study conducted by the The United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health in 2026 highlighted that “the planet has entered the Global Water Bankruptcy era. In many basins and aquifers, long-term water use has exceeded renewable inflows and safe depletion limits, and parts of the water and natural capital—rivers, lakes, aquifers, wetlands, soils, and glaciers—have been damaged beyond realistic prospects of full recovery” [1, p. 10].

Also at the present stage, fast fashion causes catastrophic damage to the environment.

Antonio Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General, emphasized that “every second, the equivalent of one garbage truck full of clothing is incinerated or sent to landfill” [2].

Military actions in Ukraine cause “...large-scale environmental damage, including soil, water and air pollution, loss of biodiversity, destruction of protected areas and contamination with toxic waste” [3, p. 351].

In our opinion, in such circumstances, it is extremely important to pay attention to the comprehensive development of environmental education, to disseminate environmental knowledge, in particular, among young people, who are the drivers of positive change and who shape the future of the world.

At all levels, international, national, regional, local, efforts should be made to ensure that the population is environmen-

tally educated, has a high level of environmental awareness and culture.

Environmental education is a powerful tool for forming a responsible attitude of people, also youth, towards nature. Despite the fact that youth potential is capable of ensuring the ecological future of the state and promoting sustainable, balanced development, in Ukraine there is an insufficient level of environmental awareness and environmental culture among youth. Young people are not sufficiently knowledgeable about environmental problematic and are only partially aware of their role in creating safe and clean environment.

For a long time there is no separate specialized legislative act dedicated to environmental education in Ukraine. National legislation still does not contain a definition of the concept of “environmental education”. The conception of environmental education in Ukraine is outdated. There is insufficient synergy between the national youth policy and the state’s environmental policy. That, in our opinion, hinders the processes of popularizing environmental knowledge among youth and also in a way slows down the provision of sustainable development in Ukraine.

Analysis of recent research and publications indicates an increase in scientific interest in issues related to the development of environmental education in Ukraine and in the world. However, these scientific studies are carried out mainly in the field of pedagogy. Despite the lack of clear modern legal regulation of environmental education in Ukraine, legal aspects of the functioning and development of environmental education in Ukraine remain poorly studied. Certain issues in the context of improving the

legal framework of environmental education have been the subject of research by such scientists as: Ermolaeva T. V., Anisimova G. A., Donets O. V., Bredikhina V. L., Galaidyk A. R., etc.

The purpose of the article is to study the current state of environmental education in Ukraine, identify legal challenges that exist today in the context of legal regulation of environmental education, and determine areas for improving national legislation in order to the further development of environmental education, that is a fundamental prerequisite for environmental protection, sustainable development of Ukraine taking into account the European Green Deal, effective implementation of the policy of green transformation and further implementation of the green post-war reconstruction of Ukraine.

Presentation of the main material.

The World Environmental Education Day, which "...has its origins in 1972 with the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, that outlined the need for criteria and general principles for the preservation and improvement of the environment" [4], that is celebrated annually on 26 January.

At the international level, environmental education is recognized as one of the priority areas.

The goal of environmental education is defined in the Tbilisi Declaration (1977) as "to succeed in making individuals and communities understand the complex nature of the natural and the built environments resulting from the interaction of their biological, physical, social, economic, and cultural aspects, and acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes, and practical skills to participate in a responsible and effective way in anticipating and solving environmental problems, and in the management of the quality of the environment" [5].

We agree with the opinion that "among all the areas that are important within the framework of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, one of the priorities is the educational sphere, which determines the opportunity to influence the worldview and values of the young generation..." [6, p. 6].

In Ukraine, unlike a number of foreign countries, there is no separate specialized

law dedicated to environmental education for a long period of time.

For instance Japan has enacted Law for Enhancing Motivation on Environmental Conservation and Promoting of Environmental Education, which contains a definition of the concept "environmental education", that means "education and learning conducted to deepen understanding of environmental conservation" [7].

In the Republic of Korea there is Environmental education promotion act, which defines that the term "environmental education" means "education to help the nation cultivate knowledge, capacity, attitudes, values, etc. necessary for preserving and improving the environment and putting such knowledge, etc. into practice, with the purpose of contributing to the sustainable development of the State and the local communities" [8].

An act to promote environmental awareness through environmental education and for other purposes of Republic of the Philippines establishes that "environmental education shall encompass environmental concepts and principles, environmental laws, the state of international and local environment, local environmental best practices, the threats of environmental degradation and its impact on human well-being, the responsibility of the citizenry to the environment and the value of conservation, protection and rehabilitation of natural resources and the environment in the context of sustainable development" [9].

At the same time in Ukraine norms, regulating relations connected with environmental education, are scattered across various legislative acts, which only fragmentarily establish the legal basis for regulating environmental education.

The Law of Ukraine "On Environmental Protection" contains separate article dedicated to education and upbringing in the field of environmental protection.

It is noteworthy that Article 7 of the Law of Ukraine "On Environmental Protection" does not operate with the category of "environmental education", however, article 9 and 17 of the aforementioned act determine that "every citizen of Ukraine has the right to getting environmental education" [10]; "The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine in the field of

environmental protection organizes environmental upbringing and environmental education of citizens" [10].

According to the Law of Ukraine "On Education", the foundations of state policy in the field of education and the principles of educational activities include the formation of "... environmental culture and a caring attitude towards the environment" [11]. The law also uses categories "environmental competence", "environmental thinking and behavior". However, there is no mention of the concept of "environmental education", despite the fact that environmental education is a fundamental prerequisite for environmental protection, sustainable development of Ukraine taking into account the European Green Deal, effective implementation of the policy of green transformation and further implementation of the green post-war reconstruction of Ukraine.

On 20 December 2001, the Decision of the Board of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine approved the Conception of environmental education in Ukraine, which determined that "environmental education, as a holistic cultural phenomenon, including the processes of learning, upbringing, and personal development, should be aimed at the formation of an environmental culture as a component of the system of national and public education of all segments of the population of Ukraine (including through environmental education with the help of public environmental organizations), the greening of academic disciplines and training programs, as well as professional environmental training through basic environmental education" [12].

It should be emphasized that the Conception of environmental education, which has not been updated for 25 years, is outdated and needs modernization in order to meet the nowadays challenges.

Yermolaieva T. V. appropriately notes that "...the needs and interests of society change over time, as well as the pace of development of various industries, which today significantly exceed previous indicators" [13, p. 88].

The scientific literature is full of a considerable variety of interpretations of the concept of "environmental education", however, it is important to highlight the lack of

a legislative definition of the term "environmental education", which leads to a free interpretation of the specified concept.

Safranov T. A., Chugai A. V. and Ilyina V. G. appropriately emphasize that "environmental education should be a long-term and interdisciplinary process in its essence, study the main problems of the environment, provide young people with the opportunity to apply their knowledge and help consider the environment in all its entirety" [14, p. 5].

In our opinion, the concept of "environmental education" can be defined as a set of activities aimed at educating and upbringing of the civil society, which are organized and implemented in order to increase the level of environmental awareness, culture and literacy of the population, to form environmentally appropriate behavior and a responsible attitude towards the environment, as well as to promote sustainable development.

We propose to enshrine at the legislative level in the Article 7 of the Law of Ukraine "On Environmental Protection" and in the Article 1 of the Law of Ukraine "On Education" the above mentioned author's definition of the concept of "environmental education".

The next step should be drafting and adopting a specialised Law of Ukraine "On Environmental Education", which will become a full-fledged legal basis for regulating environmental education in our country.

It is important to emphasize that currently in the global context, not only the concept of "environmental education", but also "education for sustainable development", which are interconnected and complementary, is actively used.

In order to ensure the continuation of the UNESCO Global Action Programme (2015-2019), "that contributes to Agenda 2030 and its 17 goals, the Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the SDGs (ESD for 2030) framework was adopted with the aim of increasing the contribution of education to building a more just and sustainable world [15].

Despite the fact that the youth potential is able to ensure the environmental future of the state, to promote sustainable, balanced development, in Ukraine there is an

insufficient level of environmental awareness and environmental culture of youth.

Young people are not sufficiently knowledgeable about environmental problematic and are only partially aware of their role in creating safe and clean environment, as well as in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

There is insufficient synergy between the national youth policy and the state's environmental policy, that, in our opinion, hinders the processes of popularizing environmental knowledge among young people, increasing their level of environmental awareness and culture.

The Law of Ukraine "On the Key Principles (Strategy) of the State Environmental Policy of Ukraine for the Period Until 2030" establishes that "education for balanced (sustainable) development – will allow establishing methodological foundations and introducing continuous environmental education. Comprehensive environmental sensitisation and education of the younger generation should evolve at a faster pace by supporting the activities of extracurricular education institutions, ecological and naturalistic centres and natural science workshops for children and youth centres and specialised public organisations" [16].

However, the regulatory framework of the youth sphere, based on the Law of Ukraine "On the Basic Principles of Youth Policy", which outlines the vector of development of the young generation in Ukraine, establishes the goal, objectives of youth policy, etc., as well as the National Youth Strategy, which defines the priorities of youth policy, is not sufficiently focused on developing youth environmental education, raising the level of environmental awareness and culture, forming environmentally appropriate behavior and a responsible attitude of youth towards the environment, involving young people in the implementation of environmental projects and initiatives, etc.

In our opinion, given the fact that environmental education "... concerns the harmonization of human activity with nature on the basis of sustainable development to ensure the quality of life of future generations" [17], there is an urgent need to "green up" the regulatory framework of the youth sphere in order to bring youth and environmental policies of the state closer together.

Conclusions. Thus, based on the conducted research, it can be concluded that at the present stage, which is characterized by the existence of a significant number of environmental problems, it is extremely important to pay attention to the comprehensive development of environmental education, to disseminate environmental knowledge, in particular, among young people, who are the drivers of positive change and who shape the future of the world.

Today in Ukraine there's a considerable amount of legal challenges in the context of legal regulation of environmental education. For a long time in Ukraine, unlike Japan, Republic of Korea, Republic of the Philippines, there is no separate specialized legislative act dedicated to environmental education. National legislation still does not contain a definition of the concept of "environmental education". The Conception of environmental education in Ukraine is outdated. There is insufficient synergy between the national youth policy and the state's environmental policy.

In our opinion, the concept of "environmental education" can be defined as a set of activities aimed at educating and upbringing of the civil society, which are organized and implemented in order to increase the level of environmental awareness, culture and literacy of the population, to form environmentally appropriate behavior and a responsible attitude towards the environment, as well as to promote sustainable development. This author's definition of the concept of "environmental education" we propose to enshrine at the legislative level in the Article 7 of the Law of Ukraine "On Environmental Protection" and in the Article 1 of the Law of Ukraine "On Education".

There is an urgent need to update the Conception of environmental education in Ukraine, to develop and adopt separate specialized Law of Ukraine "On Environmental Education", and also to "green up" the regulatory framework of the youth sphere in order to bring youth and environmental policies of the state closer together, that will contribute to the formation of sustainable development of Ukraine, effective implementation of the green transformation policy, and further implementation of green post-war reconstruction of Ukraine.

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