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INTEGRATION OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING INTO THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS OF PRESCHOOL INSTITUTIONS AS A CONDITION FOR THE FORMATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL COMPETENCE IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

The modern system of preschool education in Ukraine sets not only educational and developmental tasks but also aims at forming key competencies in children, among which natural science and environmental (ecological) competence occupies a significant place. This is not merely an “additional” area: state documents define it as an essential outcome of preschool education and require institutions to create conditions for its development [1].

Moreover, legislation establishes the framework and requirements for the quality of the educational process. The Law of Ukraine “On Education” [2] and the updated Law “On Preschool Education” [3] emphasize the principles of holistic child development, continuity between educational levels, and institutional responsibility for the formation of life competencies. Therefore, integrating the environmental component into the daily practice of preschool institutions is not optional but a necessity.

Why project-based learning? Because it is an approach that enables a child to become a researcher, co-creator, and responsible participant in the learning process. It combines practical activity, interdisciplinary connections, and social interaction—all of which contribute to the development of environmental awareness and responsible behavior toward the environment.

Issues of organizing project-based activities in education have been explored in the works of many scholars, particularly in such areas as: the development of the project method (J. Dewey, W. Kilpatrick, H. Vashchenko); theoretical foundations of project technologies in pedagogy (O. Pehota, O. Polat, S. Sysoieva); psychological and pedagogical design of adult-child interaction (T. Pirozhenko); organization of project activities for preschool children (N. Havrysh, L. Linnyk, N. Tokarenko); and implementation of project technologies in preschool institutions (Yu. Burakova, H. Kravchenko, N. Kuhuienko, L. Shvaika) [4].

The issue of forming environmental competence in senior preschool children is addressed in the works of N. Lysenko, O. Bilan, N. Havrysh, A. Bohush, and T. Ponimanska. Environmental competence is considered an important component of behavioral culture and reflects a child’s ability to act appropriately in various life situations related to the environment, living organisms, and natural laws. Preschool age is the most favorable period for developing this competence, as it forms the basis for further competencies [5].

The integration of project-based activities into the preschool educational process creates conditions for hands-on exploration of nature and fosters children's ability to think critically, observe, compare, and draw conclusions. Through active participation in projects, children begin to understand relationships in nature, recognize the value of its components, and develop a sense of personal responsibility for environmental preservation.

Activities such as observing natural phenomena, caring for plants and animals, and implementing mini-projects ("My Green Corner," "Drop of Life," "Nature Helpers," etc.) promote not only cognitive interest but also an emotional and value-based attitude toward nature. Through direct interaction with living and non-living elements of the environment, children develop empathy, sensitivity, and awareness of the consequences of human actions.

Project-based learning in preschool education organically integrates various educational domains – language development, cognitive development, artistic and aesthetic education, and social-moral development. This ensures the implementation of the principle of integrated learning content defined in the State Standard for Preschool Education [1] and creates an environment in which the child is an active participant rather than a passive observer.

The effectiveness of implementing project-based activities in developing environmental competence depends on a systematic pedagogical approach: selecting topics relevant to children's lives, involving parents in joint initiatives, and applying interactive methods, research-based games, and experiments. It is essential that the teacher acts not only as a knowledge provider but also as a partner who explores, questions, and reflects together with the children.

Thus, project-based learning is not merely a teaching method but a pedagogical technology that fosters environmental thinking, ecological culture, and personal responsibility for the environment. Its integration into the preschool educational process aligns with current state requirements and the social demand for sustainable development.

Further research may focus on studying psychological and pedagogical conditions for the effective implementation of environmental projects in preschool institutions, as well as developing criteria and indicators for assessing the level of environmental competence in senior preschool children.

It is also perspective to develop and test interactive teaching materials and digital educational resources to support project-based learning, explore the role of family in shaping children's environmental awareness, and analyze the impact of project activities on the emotional and value-based development of preschoolers.

Overall, the systematic implementation of project-based learning in environmental education for preschool children opens broad opportunities for preparing a generation capable of responsible interaction with nature, environmentally oriented thinking, and contributing to sustainable societal development.

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