



**Environmental Lifelong Learning**

(qualification essay)

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1. **Demonstration of Environmental Educational System**

In our modern society not only every adult person and seniors, but also young population including children, already know about the global environmental problems. Even if they do not know exact information and precise details about this topic, they have surely heard about this serious issue in television, radio, or they have read about the topic in book, magazine, or internet.

In fact we can say that environment and its protection is one of the most important issues in 21. century.

Therefore we need to input environmental education to all the types of education including informal, non-formal and formal environmental education.

Formal environmental education in Slovak Republic starts in kindergarten.

First environmental knowledge reach children in kindergarten by playing outside, by going for walks to nature. Later in elementary school children of age approximately 7-9 years, have classes of national geography, where they familiarise themselves with the topic of environment. They are taught first rules, how to behave in nature, what is allowed to do and what is prohibited to do in nature in order to keep clean environment.

From thy psychological point of view, it is very important to teach children about environment in the early school age, because in this age, they are very likely to be persuade by their teacher, who the child in this age may respect more than his own parent. Teacher may even signify an idol for a kid. Therefore it is very important to impart the environmental awareness from their early childhood. (Moldan, 1992)

By passing to a higher grade on elementary school the amount of environmental information, knowledge, topics given by formal school curriculum to students is decreasing.

Children have acquired basic knowledge about environment and its protection, but unfortunately their environmental experiences are not developing, so they stagnate.

In the age of 15 every pupil can decide what kind of secondary school he or she is going to attend. Depending on the speciality of the secondary school, he will gain certain amount of environmental knowledge and skills. Unfortunately in Slovakia and in Europe, there are only few types of secondary schools which are teaching about environment in their study curriculum. These schools are secondary schools providing general education (Gymnasium) and secondary schools with specialising on Geodesy. Every other secondary school is specialised on different socio-economic subjects, which does not enrich student of any more environmental issues.

Not until studying at university, the adolescent will be allowed to choose the study field. But again, it is his/her own decision to select from wide range of study programs at various university faculties.

So if the student chooses the faculty, which is specialising on any aspect of environment, then he has chance to acquire sufficient amount of information, knowledge, experiences, skills.

According to previous paragraphs we had chance to see, how the formal educational system in Slovakia works.

But is the formal environmental education sufficient?

Are the pupils, students and adults aware of environmental problems on satisfactory level?

1. **Environmental Lifelong Learning**

According to the facts above, it is obvious that there is not enough effort put into informing, teaching, training, persuading people in order to reach a great amount of environmental knowledge. The general environmental awareness of population is weak. Even if people know about environmental problems, they do not have the will to fix them.

Obviously there is an enormous need of improving environmental education for children and youth and at the same time re-education and retraining of adults and elderly population.

The environmental aspect of lifelong learning needs to be improved, more structured, formalized and insert into national curriculum of every educational institution whether formal, non-formal, or informal. ( Kosova ,1996)

Due to ecological problems such as global warming, lack of drinking water, overpopulation, air pollution, water pollution, soil pollution, aging population, endangered spieces, consum society, loss of natural balance and devastated living conditions the importance of environmental teaching has risen significantly.

We need to teach all aged population to protect environment.

Coming back to the topic of lifelong learning, I would like to introduce the topic of lifelong learning in general context. I will be analysing the basic aspects of lifelong learning, definition of lifelong learning.

1. **Definition of Lifelong Learning**

Although lifelong learning has become a particularly popular concept in the last several years, it is as old as human history. Lifelong learning was embodied in the works of the ancient Greeks.

Lifelong Learning according to European Union (1995), is *“the development of human potential through a continuously supportive process which stimulates and enpowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require through their lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment in all roles, circumstances and environmentas.” (European Commission, 1995,P.5. Learning and Training: Towards the learning Society. Brussels: European Commission).*

Furthermore it is very important to mention, that lifelong learning process depends not only on the environment, and learning possibilities, but mostly on individual motivation.

Therefore, other scientists define Lifelong learning as an *"ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons.” (Cube,1988, p.212)*

Lifelong learning prevents individuals from social exclusion, it enhances active citizenship and improve personal development. Moreover education leads to better employment possibilities. The term explains that learning does not end in childhood or in the classroom, but obviously it takes place throughout all life in a wide range of situations.

Lifelong learning is a long-term educational process, which can be divided into three sectors:

Formal education, which is implemented in educational institutions, usually in schools. Its functions, objectives, content, organizational forms and methods of evaluation are defined by law. It involves the acquisition of a majority of the successive levels of education (primary education, secondary education, higher vocational education, higher education), which is confirmed by passing the relevant certificate (certificate, diploma, etc.).

Non- formal education is focused on the acquisition of knowledge skills and competencies that can improve the social and job opportunities of person. It is provided in employer´s facilities, private educational institutions, non-profit organizations, schools and other organizations. A necessary condition for the realization of this kind of education is the participation of a professional lecturer or teacher.

Informal learning is defined as a process of acquiring knowledge, acquisition of skills and competencies of everyday experiences and activities in work, family or leisure when person does not realize that he is in learning process. It includes self-education. Informal education is unorganized, unsystematic and generally uncoordinated institutional. (Slovakova, 2000)

Importance of Lifelong learning

 We live in knowledge age, which means that people need to be able to apply the right knowledge wisely and effectively.

Another reason why is lifelong learning very important for human is because it raises people’s personal values, it enhances our motivation to be better people. Lifelong learning enriches our minds from several various aspects and field which raise our general knowledge awareness, technical skills, interpersonal skills, intercultural skills, emotional intelligence and environmental awareness.

However, it is an natural process which is being proceed through our entire life, the purpose of this essay is to analyse lifelong learning policy and management, which is much higher sophisticated action.

# The Policy and Management of Lifelong Learning

# The Policy of Lifelong Learning in European Union is based in Lifelong Learning programme. European Funding programme in the field of education and training, called Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) enables people of all age to pursue stimulating learning opportunities across Europe. This programme integrates various educational and training initiatives. LLP is divided into four sub programmes. The Agency which is responsible for certain parts of the Lifelong learning programme Management of the LLP Programme is „The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Agency Executive Agency (EACEA)”. This institution is under supervision from its parent [Directorate-General for Education and Culture](http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/index_en.html) (DG EAC).

Lifelong learning program focuses on four key activities, which are [Policy cooperation and innovation](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/ka1/policy_cooperation_innovation_en.php), [Languages](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/ka2/languages_en.php), [Information and communication technologies - ICT](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/ka3/information_communication_technologies_en.php), [Dissemination and exploitation of results](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/ka4/dissemination_exploitation_results_en.php).

# The Structure of LLP is divided into formal or non-formal **sectorial sub programmes** focused on different stages of education and training:

* [Comenius](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/comenius/comenius_en.php) is focusing on raising educational level for schools
* [Erasmus](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/erasmus/erasmus_en.php) is opening study possibilities for higher education
* [Leonardo da Vinci](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/leonardo/leonardo_da_vinci_en.php) enables people to gain knowledge and skills through vocational education and training
* [Grundtvig](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/grundtvig/grundtvig_en.php) allows adult people to continue with their education
* The **transversal programmes** aim to complement the sectorial sub programmes. They aim to promote European cooperation in fields covering two or more of the sub-programmes. The program seeks to promote quality and transparency of Member States' education and training systems.
* Another LLP program is the [**Jean Monnet programme**](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/jean_monnet/jean_monnet_en.php) . This programme stimulates teaching, reflection and debate on the European integration process at higher education institutions.
* Finally, [Eurydice](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php), is an institutional network for gathering, monitoring, and processing reliable and comparable information on education systems and policies throughout Europe. Eurydice does not provide financial support or fund projects, it is a Network consisting of a [European Unit](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/contacts_en.php) and [National Units](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/contacts_national_units_en.php).

The European Units are funded by the European Commission, while the National Units are funded by the governments that establish them. They may also receive financial support from the European Commission. LLP has a budget of nearly 7 billion euro for the period 2007 to 2013.

The international environmental lifelong learning is covered by internationale nvironmental organisations.

One of the institution, which cares about global health of people, which is an result of environmental conditions is World Health Organization (WHO). The organisation conducted numbers of conferences, including Conference on Tobacco Control, Geneva, 2006 or the International Health Regulations (IHR). Other conferences were created by national action plans for monitoring environmental health, National Environmental Health Action Plan (NEHAP).

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (Stockholm 1972) laid the groundwork for an international legal framework for environmental protection, which includes different areas of human rights over the management of natural resources and pollution prevention for the relationship between economic development and the environment.

The key to the development of content is sustainability and the Treaties of the European Union.

Local environmental activities are organised according to Agenda 21.

Worldwide organizations such as UNICEF and UNESCO are special programs, which conduct scientific research of environmental care and education for its protection. Other organization dealing with environmental lifelong learning are World Food Programme (WFP) and Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations (FAO).

Furthermore there is organization focused on issues of population and human rights UNHCR, UNFPA and others. The result of their activities are different programs, conventions, agreements, contracts, etc., which are financed by private, national and international sources. (Polaskova, 2011).

The educational policy which European Union established, is embodied in 8 Key competences. These competences are necessary for personal fulfilment and development, social inclusion, active citizenship and employment of every individual living in knowledge society of EU.

Although, none of the competences mention environmental education directly, but environmental awareness is embodied in three of them. It is in our responsibility to explain, how can a person recognise them from the 8 key competences **set by European Union.**

**The third competence set by EU “Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology” does not mention environment directly, but this issue is covered by the expression science. Thus it mean, that it is one of the EU plans to improve environmental competences**.

**The competence number fife “Learning to learn**” can be applied into any type of learning. It covers a wide range of world aspects including learning about environment. It is vital for population all over the world to improve their learning skills. Environmental education is an activity involving a wide spectrum of contents, methodological and didactic knowledge of various science and social science disciplines. **Social and civic competences, with its number six is an competence which should every individual learn. Treating an environment is a highly social process, because our behaviour influences the community around us.**

There are a number of initiatives utilizing the effect of citizen solidarity with the smallest legal unit, community: Healthy City Project (WHO, 1988) Local Agenda 21 (Earth Summit, 1992), the Charter of European cities towards sustainable development, Indicators for sustainable development (ECI - European Common Indicarors).

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|  In this essay environmental lifelong learning education will be analyzed and we will suggest new solutions for improving environmental education, which could be applied to educational policy of every European country. As Ďurčík (1998) says, human beings are no longer passive elements of nature, but active creatures, who transform the environment for their comfort. Therefore the man should be an active factor and take part in the search of ways and approaches how to deal with the global issues.  Environmental education (Vincíková, 1998) is personal reached level of education, when person acts wisely, sensitively and environmentally friendly to the nature. A person is willing to protect biodiversity and respect environment. This state may be also called “ecological literacy”, “environmental literacy”, “environmental awareness” or “environmental behaviour”. An environmentally literate person is able to use this environmental knowledge friendly behaviour e and perform his environmental in his study, work, leisure activities or in his daily life.  Finally, we are going to demonstrate a concrete methods, which are very effective methodology of teaching environmental knowledge and skills 1. **Effective Teaching Methods for Environmental Lifelong Learning**

Methods are certain procedures that teachers, lecturers, tutors and professors use. Educational methods work as a way of stimulating adult learner and encourage him to gain all the necessary skills, knowledge and experience, which have been set at the beginning of the educational process. There is no universal method of education. Only a good educator, who knows his students well, is able to find suitable teaching method.   According to Vincíková (1996) the experiential learning method is very popular and effective. This method is focused on the personal development of the individual through emotionally powerful experience, and also supports an increase in the perception of nature and its balance. For illustration environmental game drama, role-playing and simulation tasks, is very efficient teaching tool for adults. Due to psychological analysis some authors consider playing to be very important teaching and learning methods of environmental education. Another frequently used method of adult education to environmental protection is workshop. Through personal involvement in a particular environmental project a learner gains new knowledge and experience in the field of environmental protection. His activity contributes to positive change in the environment. Workshop has a positive impact on people's moral, professional, aesthetic, social, emotional but also a health values. However these methods are usually used in informal learning, they can be used also in formal educationAn important activity in adult environmental education is experimentation, testing and work in laboratory, which enable learners to work individually under professor’s control. In this method, learner gets into contact with the natural material. (Kminiak, 1997) This method allows person see, how the chemical process work practice, so participants are motivated to protecting environment.Field-observation can also be included among the environmental educational method. It is the observation of natural phenomena directly in nature. Learners are learning of the knowledge, skills, that tend to gather opinions and attitudes towards the environment. (Gallayová, 2007)  Case study is theoretical-practical method. J. Halaj (1978) writes, that this method enhances adult learner to active thinking. The problem is based on the theoretical issue, which solution depends on the student's intellectual abilities, skills and experiences. S. Vincíková (1998) declares that the goal of case study is to investigate the real problem. In this method is usually used qualitative research and an interview.  One of the effective way how to teach people about environmental protection is to use means of mass media. Using environmental advertisement in TV, radio, on billboards, or using famous people to talk about environment may be a very effective way of persuading people to change their behaviour to be more environmentally friendly behaviour.  The last group of educational methods used in environmental education of adults are theoretical methods. This group includes traditional lecture, lecture with discussion, exercises and seminars. This methods enable presentation of a large amount of information in a short time, but on the other hand, the low activity of student‘s attention and personal participation which reduces its efficiency. During the seminars there can be used the method of brainstorming, dialogue and working with text. Dialogue enables teacher the immediate feedback from students, which is very effective. (Vincíková, 1996) A method of demonstration such as working with text, with literature and other informative sources (textbook, workbook, working papers, atlas, working with television, radio, internet according to Gallayová (2007) lead to the acquisition of new knowledge, stimulate interest. "Environmental education and training are effective when it will be oriented on all socio-economic groups including children, youth and adults. "(Krchňák, 1998, p. 39).**Conclusion** This essay allowed me to express my opinion about where can be lifelong learning applied and which socio –economic aspect need to be improve by education and lifelong learning. Lifelong learning is very wide term, which covers huge range of activities and processes.  Not only because of my interest in environment and protection of environment but also because of global problems I am convinced that lifelong learning can be a way how to bring the environmental awareness into people‘s minds and after structured and prepared teaching program we will be able to persuade them to change their behaviour in order to protect our environment. Environmental education has to be insert into all the socio-economic educated subjects, which are employers, employees and individuals.In conclusion, I would say, that there is enough policy, satisfactory amount of laws, enough knowledge, but we as a human being are not able to take it and respect it. We need to improve our own environmental behaviour, and then, we can teach other people. It is so easy, but we must want to change the way of living. **Bibliography**CUBE, F., STROCH, V., a kol., 1988. Umweltpadagogik. Ansatze, Analysen, Ausblicke. Heidelberg: Edit. Schindele, 212 s. *Europaen Commission, 1995,P.5. 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