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*Електронний науковий журнал «Перспективи та інновації науки» заснований з метою висвітлення актуальних питань теорії та практики медицини, біології, біотехнології та реабілітації в Україні, за кордоном. Видання розраховано на науковців, викладачів, педагогів-практиків, представників органів державної влади та місцевого самоврядування, здобувачів вищої освіти, громадсько-політичних діячів*

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### **THE ISSUE OF ECOLOGICAL AND NATURALISTIC WORK IN OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN CONTEMPORARY SCIENTIFIC DISCOURSE**

**Abstract.** The article provides a theoretical analysis of the issue of ecological and naturalistic work in the out-of-school education institutions within the context of contemporary scientific discourse. The relevance of the study is determined by the aggravation of environmental problems, the need to develop environmental awareness and culture among student youth, as well as the necessity to update the content of the out-of-school education in accordance with current societal and European educational guidelines. The paper substantiates the need for a clear distinction between the concepts of «activity» and «work», which are often used as synonyms but have different semantic emphases in philosophical and pedagogical contexts.

The content and structural components of the concepts of «ecological activity», «naturalistic work», and «young naturalists» are analyzed, and their historical and pedagogical evolution as well as contemporary interpretations are identified. It is established that naturalistic work has traditionally been associated with the study of nature, research activities, and socially useful labor, particularly in the field of agriculture; however, under modern conditions it acquires a broader meaning, encompassing environmental protection, research, educational, and developmental components. Particular attention is paid to the characterization of ecological and naturalistic work as an integrated form of students' cognitive and practical activity aimed at the development of environmental culture, the formation of research skills, a responsible attitude toward nature, and readiness to address environmental problems.

The specifics of the implementation of ecological and naturalistic work in the out-of-school education institutions are revealed, as these institutions ensure the variability of forms and methods of activity, the individualization and differentiation of learning, and the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical experience. The generalization of scientific approaches made it possible to formulate the author's

definition of the concept of «ecological and naturalistic work in the out-of-school education institutions» as a holistic educational process regulated by the program component, implemented through a system of educational activities, and aimed at the study, research, preservation, and reproduction of objects of living and non-living nature.

The results of the study can be used in the process of further theoretical substantiation of the content of out-of-school education, the development of educational programs of ecological and naturalistic orientation, and the training of pedagogical staff to implement the relevant activities.

**Keywords:** ecological and naturalistic work, out-of-school education institutions, ecological activity, naturalistic work, environmental education, student youth, out-of-school education.

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## **ПРОБЛЕМА ЕКОЛОГО-НАТУРАЛІСТИЧНОЇ РОБОТИ В ЗАКЛАДАХ ПОЗАШКІЛЬНОЇ ОСВІТИ В СУЧАСНОМУ НАУКОВОМУ ДИСКУСІ**

**Анотація.** У статті здійснено теоретичний аналіз проблеми еколого-натуралістичної роботи в закладах позашкільної освіти в контексті сучасного наукового дискурсу. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена загостренням екологічних проблем, необхідністю формування екологічної свідомості та культури учнівської молоді, а також потребою оновлення змісту позашкільної освіти відповідно до сучасних суспільних і європейських освітніх орієнтирів. У роботі обґрунтовано необхідність чіткого розмежування понять «діяльність» і «робота», що часто використовуються як синонімічні, проте мають різні змістові акценти у філософському й педагогічному контекстах.

Проаналізовано зміст і структурні компоненти понять «екологічна діяльність», «натуралістична робота», «юні натуралісти», визначено їх історико-педагогічну еволюцію та сучасне трактування. Встановлено, що натуралістична робота традиційно пов'язувалася з вивченням природи, дослідницькою діяльністю та суспільно корисною працею, зокрема в галузі сільського господарства, однак у сучасних умовах вона набуває ширшого змісту, охоплюючи природоохоронну, дослідницьку, освітню та виховну складові. Особливу увагу приділено характеристиці еколого-натуралістичної роботи як інтегрованої форми пізнавальної та практичної діяльності учнів, спрямованої на

формування екологічної культури, розвитку дослідницьких умінь, відповідального ставлення до природи та готовності до розв'язання екологічних проблем.

Розкрито специфіку реалізації еколого-натуралістичної роботи в закладах позашкільної освіти, які забезпечують варіативність форм і методів діяльності, індивідуалізацію та диференціацію навчання, поєднання теоретичних знань із практичним досвідом. Узагальнення наукових підходів дало змогу сформулювати авторське визначення поняття «еколого-натуралістична робота в закладах позашкільної освіти» як цілісного освітнього процесу, що регламентується програмним компонентом, реалізується через систему навчально-виховних заходів та спрямований на вивчення, дослідження, збереження й відтворення об'єктів живої та неживої природи.

Результати дослідження можуть бути використані у процесі подальшого теоретичного обґрунтування змісту позашкільної освіти, розроблення освітніх програм еколого-натуралістичного спрямування та підготовки педагогічних кадрів до здійснення відповідної діяльності.

**Ключові слова:** еколого-натуралістична робота, заклади позашкільної освіти, екологічна діяльність, натуралістична робота, екологічна освіта, учнівська молодь, позашкільна освіта.

**Problem statement.** Under contemporary conditions marked by environmental challenges of both global and national scale – associated with the degradation of natural resources, climate change, biodiversity loss, and the consequences of military actions on the territory of Ukraine – the issue of developing environmental awareness and culture among the younger generation becomes particularly relevant. An important role in this process belongs to ecological and naturalistic work in the out-of-school education institutions, which combines cognitive, research, environmental protection, and socially significant activities of students.

At the same time, modern scientific discourse reveals a certain terminological ambiguity and inconsistency in the interpretation of the concepts of «activity», «work», «ecological activity», «naturalistic work» and «ecological and naturalistic work». The absence of a unified approach to understanding the essence and structure of ecological and naturalistic work complicates its theoretical interpretation and practical implementation within the system of out-of-school education in Ukraine. Moreover, the transformation of the content of out-of-school education in accordance with contemporary humanistic, competence-based, and European educational orientations requires an updated scientific substantiation of the role and place of ecological and naturalistic work as an integral educational process. Thus, the relevance of the study is determined by the need to clarify the conceptual and categorical framework, systematize scientific approaches, and define the essence of ecological and naturalistic work in the out-of-school education institutions in the context of contemporary educational and sociocultural transformations.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** The theoretical and methodological foundations of research on ecological and naturalistic work in the out-of-school education institutions have been formed in the philosophical and pedagogical works of V. Shynkaruk and S. Honcharenko, as well as in explanatory and encyclopedic publications by V. Shapar, V. Busel, and O. Melnychuk, which contribute to clarifying the categories of «environmental education», «naturalistic activity» and «out-of-school education». The psychological and pedagogical context of the problem is outlined in the works of S. Shandruk, M. Varii, and M. Zabrotskyi, where the role of the activity-based approach and teachers' professional training is substantiated.

The historical and pedagogical aspect of the ecological and naturalistic education development has been systematically revealed by V. Verbytskyi, while the theoretical and methodological foundations of students' environmental education in the out-of-school institutions have been explored by H. Pustovit. Organizational and methodological foundations of naturalistic work and the training of pedagogical staff are presented in the works of B. Kotsun, M. Bilianska, and O. Sorochynska.

The historical experience of the naturalist movement has been analyzed by D. Bauman, S. Vasylevska, L. Borovska, and E. Volchkova; methodological approaches to integrating educational and extracurricular activities have been studied by M. Verzilin and V. Korsunsk. Contemporary trends in the modernization of out-of-school education, the integration of the non-formal component, and orientation toward the European educational space have been examined in the studies of L. Kostenko, O. Lytovchenko, N. Pavlyk, and N. Shaha.

Thus, the scientific discourse demonstrates the existence of a well-developed theoretical and methodological basis for ecological and naturalistic work, while simultaneously highlighting the need for its conceptual renewal in accordance with contemporary educational transformations.

**The purpose of the article** is to conduct a theoretical analysis and generalization of scientific approaches to defining the essence of the concept of «ecological and naturalistic work» and substantiating its content in the context of the activities of the out-of-school education institutions in Ukraine.

**Presentation of the main material.** To determine the essence of the concept of «ecological and naturalistic work» (hereinafter – ENW), it is necessary to clearly understand and distinguish between the concepts of «activity», «work», «environmental activity» and «naturalistic work». First, it is important to identify the fundamental difference between the concepts of «activity» and «work», since these terms are often used as synonyms in scientific literature. In the philosophical encyclopedic dictionary, «activity» is interpreted as a form of activity that enables a person and the systems associated with this person to cause changes in existence. It influences the material, energy, or informational state of objects. Activity involves the transformation of the external into the internal, the combination of objectification and de-objectification of meanings that determine its parameters. It is associated with the choice of possibilities and decision-making, as well as the constant transformation of

the subjective into the objective and vice versa, which reflects the essence of the human spirit and forms its potential [1, p. 163].

Activity is interpreted as a system of purposeful actions and operations through which a person expresses his/her attitude toward the world, other people, objects, and him/herself. Unlike behavior, it is a conscious and object-oriented form of activity that includes four components: motivational (motives, goals), prognostic (forecasting, choice, planning), executive (methods, means), and evaluative (analysis of results, reflection). Activity is the highest form of human activity, the main characteristic of which is its conscious nature [2, p. 7; 3, pp. 718–719]. Activity is closely related to the motive that determines the purpose for which it is carried out. At the same time, activity represents a set of actions conditioned by a motive. Thus, activity can be considered as a system of actions that arise under the influence of certain motives [4, pp. 101–102].

From a pedagogical perspective, activity is a form of human existence in the world that reflects the ability of a person to transform reality and achieve set goals. Its universal objects are nature and society, while the general result is the process of humanization of nature [5, p. 98]. According to the definition provided in the pedagogical encyclopedic dictionary, activity is considered a mode of human existence that involves introducing changes into the surrounding reality. The main components of activity include: the subject together with its problems; the goal that determines the process of transforming an object into the object of activity; the means of achieving the goal; and the result. Nature and society act as universal objects of activity, while its overall consequence is the humanization of nature [6, p. 282].

In the dictionary-reference book on professional pedagogy [7, p. 60], activity is defined as an inherent human form of activity regulated by consciousness, driven by needs, and aimed at cognition and transformation of the surrounding world [8]. It is also interpreted as a physical and psychological form of the subject's activity, representing a motivated process of achieving a consciously defined goal. In this context, ecological activity is understood as a system of actions performed by an individual aimed at overcoming contradictions between the aspiration for improvement in the broadest sense of the term and the necessity of ensuring an ecologically safe environment. In other words, ecological activity is the practical implementation of measures that guarantee environmental safety through compliance with the laws of nature [9, p. 17].

According to A. Sorochnyńska, developed ecological activity among young people may manifest itself through such indicators as interest in environmental problems, the desire to understand the laws of nature, awareness of environmental knowledge, a value-based attitude toward nature, activity in accordance with natural laws, responsible behavior, the need to preserve natural beauty, active environmental protection activities, and interaction with the natural environment without disturbing ecological balance [9]. M. Bilianska identifies a separate form of activity – ecological and pedagogical activity. In her view, this is a form of pedagogical activity associated with organizing and conducting environmentally oriented activities within the process

of biology education, aimed at developing environmental culture among school pupils and students, fostering their interest in environmental protection and conservation, and forming the need to participate in environmental activities [10, p. 16].

In addition to ecological activity, it is also important to highlight such a form of work as ecological and naturalistic work, which is actively implemented in institutions of general secondary and out-of-school education. Under modern conditions, the term «naturalist» has many synonyms. At the beginning of the Soviet era, a naturalist was considered a school student who observed nature and was engaged in the protection of useful plants and animals. It also referred to a person capable of perceiving nature in all its diversity [11, p. 74].

In the dictionary of foreign words, «naturalist» (French *Naturaliste*) is defined as a natural scientist, a researcher who studies living nature, primarily animals and plants [12, p. 456]. In the modern Ukrainian explanatory dictionary, the term «naturalist» is defined as a natural scientist, a person engaged in the study of nature [13, p. 741]. A synonym for the term «naturalist» is the concept of «young naturalist», which emerged in the 1960's. This term refers to participants in children's clubs devoted to the study of nature and natural sciences [14, p. 316], as well as to an organization of school students engaged in observing nature and protecting it (trees, useful birds, etc.) [15, p. 7].

In the «Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Young Naturalist», young naturalists are described as active friends and defenders of nature. They protect the animal and plant world and participate in hikes and expeditions aimed at studying nature. They engage in research activities at educational research plots, in school nature corners, forestry units, and similar environments. Young naturalists also carry out significant and useful work as part of blue and green patrol units [16, pp. 376–379]. The «Pedagogical Dictionary» notes that «young naturalists» are school students who participate in extracurricular activities related to the study of nature and agricultural experimentation. The primary organizational form of their work is clubs supervised by teachers and agricultural specialists. Within these clubs, students conduct observations, participate in excursions, and perform practical tasks and experiments at school, in nature corners, and on educational research plots [5, p. 371].

Thus, since the object of study is nature (*Natura*), and in European languages a person who studies or is interested in nature is called a «naturalist», students who participate in general educational programs of a natural science orientation may be referred to as «young naturalists». In this context, it does not matter whether the objects of research belong to living or non-living nature. Consequently, even after the formal disappearance of the ecological and biological orientation of the concept, the notion of «young naturalists» regains relevance, but in a broader sense than during the Soviet period, without an emphasis on the agricultural component. In this meaning, the expression «young naturalist» corresponds to terms widely used in other countries, such as *young naturalist* (English), *jeune naturaliste* (French), *junge Naturforscher* (German), *joven naturalista* (Spanish), and *giovane naturalista* (Italian).

In the Great Soviet Encyclopedia, the term «naturalistic work» is interpreted as the activity of school students associated with the study and protection of nature, research in the field of biology, and socially useful agricultural work [14]. As evidenced by the presented definitions of the terms «naturalist», «young naturalist», and «naturalistic work», they encompass a broad range of issues addressed by naturalists in the course of their activities; however, these issues are often not specified in detail. Some methodologists have attempted to clarify this concept, but they have mostly limited themselves to describing the types of activities carried out by students.

For example, in the dissertation by S. Vasylevska, «Development of Students' Creative Activity in the Process of Extracurricular and Out-of-School Naturalistic Work in Zoology», it is noted that during naturalistic work school students study local nature, investigate the species composition and biological characteristics of plants and animals, observe seasonal changes, and carry out measures aimed at their protection and increasing their numbers [17, p. 54]. L. Borovska defines naturalistic work as an organized activity of school students aimed at observing and studying natural objects and phenomena in the surrounding environment. This process takes place in the context of socially useful and productive work, during which students acquire new knowledge, develop skills and abilities, or improve those already obtained [18, p. 44].

A broader definition is proposed by E. Volchkova in the dissertation «The System of Preparing Students for Agricultural Work and Career Choice in Young Naturalists' Clubs». She interprets naturalistic work as a purposeful and multifaceted production and research activity that creates optimal conditions for achieving educational, developmental, and upbringing goals and has a pronounced socially useful orientation [19, p. 4]. In her view, this activity requires searching and observation both of external phenomena accessible to the age capabilities of students and of internal processes through understanding causal relationships and the practical application of acquired knowledge.

According to B. Kotsun, naturalistic work is a purposeful and systematic activity of students carried out under the guidance of a teacher. In the process of such activity, school students explore the nature of their region and get acquainted with representatives of the flora and fauna of other territories through direct interaction with them [20, p. 42]. In her dissertation «Preparation of Future Biology Teachers for Extracurricular Ecological and Naturalistic Work with Basic School Students», O. Sorochnytska identifies three key structural components of naturalistic work: 1) the study and observation of natural objects and phenomena in order to expand, deepen, and specify biological knowledge; 2) the combination of activities with socially useful productive work, particularly in the field of agriculture; and 3) environmental protection activities aimed at improving and preserving the natural resources of the native region [9, pp. 26–27].

As noted by O. Sorochnytska, due to changes over time and the growing requirements for the knowledge and skills of student youth, the concept of naturalistic work acquires a new character, setting specific tasks for young researchers and users

of natural resources. In our view, ecological and naturalistic work of student youth is a form of cognitive activity that includes acquiring knowledge about the environment, gaining experience in solving environmental problems, participation in practical environmental protection and research activities, and the development of environmental culture, social experience, and skills in various fields of agriculture (floriculture, forestry, horticulture, mushroom cultivation, and beekeeping) [21]. Thus, this form of work is the result of active creative cooperation between the teacher and students, reflects the teacher's orientation toward the future, and determines the prospects for the development of the student's personality aimed at preserving and multiplying natural resources.

In the process of research-oriented naturalistic activity, the teacher not only facilitates the understanding of nature but also ensures the comprehensive education of students through nature, including aesthetic, hygienic, labor, and moral education. School students develop basic research skills, the ability to work with simple instruments and equipment, and their cognitive interest and observational abilities are enhanced. Knowledge obtained through practical interaction with natural objects becomes clearer, more convincing, and is remembered much better compared to information from textbooks or illustrations. It should be noted that this type of activity does not exclude other methods of studying living nature; on the contrary, it complements them harmoniously. The results of naturalistic work are actively used during lessons through the application of traditional teaching methods. Moreover, this activity contributes to organizing meaningful leisure for students during extracurricular and holiday periods and satisfies the high cognitive needs of gifted school students [22, p. 33].

According to V. Verbytskyi, the purpose of ecological and naturalistic work (ENW) is to ensure that pupils, students, and listeners acquire knowledge about the environment, develop environmental culture, foster environmental awareness, gain practical experience in solving environmental problems, and become involved in biological, agricultural, environmental protection, and other practical activities [23, p. 73]. The renewal of the content of out-of-school ENW is based on considering the positive experience accumulated over nearly a century of the Ukrainian youth naturalist movement. At the same time, it involves significant changes determined by contemporary social trends that require the introduction of modern psychological and pedagogical technologies.

The renewal of the content of out-of-school ENW is carried out based on the following principles: 1) humanization and ecologization; 2) individualization and differentiation; 3) strengthening the practical and creative components in its content; and 4) ensuring the continuity of out-of-school activities [23, p. 77]. According to A. Sorochnytska, the purpose of ENW is to develop in students the following components: 1) intellectual skills, including identification, systematization, generalization, analysis, justification, forecasting, modeling, and the practical application of knowledge; 2) social values, particularly the awareness of the undeniable value of

nature and its components, their preservation, and the formation of a positive attitude toward interaction with nature; and 3) practical skills in nature protection, including the study, decision-making, protection, and restoration of natural resources, as well as the application of acquired knowledge in real-life situations [9].

The main tasks of ecological and naturalistic work include: 1) providing in-depth knowledge about the environment and fostering environmental vigilance; 2) developing practical skills and experience in solving environmental problems and participating in environmental protection activities; 3) strengthening the creative and practical components of environmental education; and 4) ensuring the continuity of extracurricular ecological and naturalistic work [24, p. 109]. Organized and effectively implemented ecological and naturalistic activities contribute to the development in children of the desire and ability to protect and preserve the ecosystems of the Earth. Particular attention is given to biological diversity and natural processes that support life. Such activities foster in the younger generation a sense of responsibility for the present and the future of humanity and all living beings on the planet [24, p. 110].

At the present stage of the development of environmental education, ecological and naturalistic activity encompasses the following areas [25]: educational and upbringing work; informational and methodological support; organizational and mass activities; the development of students' environmental awareness and creative potential; the involvement of youth in the study and preservation of the environment. The effectiveness of this activity depends on adherence to the following principles [26, pp. 18–19]: humanization and ecologization of the content of extracurricular activities; individualization and differentiation of work; orientation toward an active and interested student; students' awareness of their interaction with nature and the universality of connections within the «nature-human-society» system; an interdisciplinary approach to the development of environmental thinking, culture, and rational use of natural resources; the social significance of fundamental knowledge that can serve as the basis for further education or practical activity; and a scientific approach combined with the practical acquisition of skills and competences.

Having analyzed various approaches to defining key concepts such as «activity», «work», «environmental activity», «naturalist», «young naturalist», «naturalistic work», and «ecological and naturalistic work», it can be concluded that these concepts are closely interconnected. The analysis of the basic terms demonstrates a diversity of approaches to their interpretation, highlighting both the complexity of their formation and the common and distinctive features within the conceptual framework of the study.

Ecological and naturalistic work is carried out on the basis of education institutions at all levels, including out-of-school education institutions (hereinafter – OEIs). Therefore, the next component of the conceptual framework of our research is the concept of «out-of-school education institutions». The direct coordinators of ecological and naturalistic work were specialized out-of-school education institutions of the ecological and naturalistic orientation – stations of young naturalists. Over the specified period, the tasks assigned to out-of-school education institutions have

undergone significant transformations. During the Soviet period, these education institutions were primarily focused on developing students' professional interests, preparing them for socially useful work, as well as protecting biodiversity and conserving natural resources. In contrast, contemporary out-of-school education institutions in Ukraine are characterized by a humanistic and learner-centered orientation. They focus on meeting individual needs in spiritual and physical development, creative self-realization, social protection, the organization of meaningful leisure activities, the formation of an active civic position, and support for professional self-determination. Ecological and naturalistic work in the regions is implemented through close and stable cooperation between regional out-of-school education institutions and the National Ecological and Naturalistic Center of Student Youth, particularly in organizing methodological and pedagogical activities for club leaders and methodologists, as well as large-scale events for children devoted to ecological and naturalistic themes.

Based on the analysis of definitions and interpretations of the concepts «ecological and naturalistic work» and «out-of-school education institutions» proposed by Soviet and contemporary scholars and educational practitioners, an attempt was made to formulate a definition of the concept of «ecological and naturalistic work in out-of-school education institutions». The key concept of this study is defined as an educational process regulated by a program component and characterized by the variability of forms and methods of educational and instructional activities aimed at the study, research, preservation, and reproduction of objects of living and non-living nature within the system of out-of-school education in Ukraine. Out-of-school education relies on its own traditions and accumulated experience while simultaneously developing in line with broader European trends. It actively integrates the best international practices, particularly the experience of institutions and organizations of non-formal education in the European countries [27; 28, pp. 15–17].

In the current legislation of Ukraine, the terms formal, non-formal, and informal learning and education are not officially established and are not widely used. Non-formal and out-of-school education share the characteristic that they are generally implemented through study programs; however, they do not provide for the awarding of state-recognized educational qualifications corresponding to specific levels of education. At the same time, the system of non-formal education abroad differs significantly in its content, structure, and objectives compared with out-of-school education, and these differences are largely oriented toward the specific needs of each country [29, pp. 6–20].

According to its purpose, the system of non-formal education abroad is typically divided into adult education and education for children and youth, including extracurricular learning for school students. The system of non-formal education includes specialized out-of-school education institutions that operate based on formal education institutions, as well as specialized education institutions for adults and cultural leisure centers. The overall structure of the non-formal education system

abroad largely depends on the organization of formal education, particularly on the existing educational profiles and fields of study [30, p. 41].

**Conclusions.** The analysis of scholarly sources has shown that the concept of «ecological and naturalistic work» is formed at the intersection of the categories «activity», «ecological activity» and «naturalistic work», each of which has its own content and historical-pedagogical features of development. It has been established that activity as a philosophical and pedagogical category is characterized by consciousness, purposefulness, motivation, and effectiveness, whereas work represents a more specific form of implementing activity within specific organizational conditions. Based on the conducted analysis, the author's definition of the concept of «ecological and naturalistic work in the out-of-school education institutions» is formulated as an educational process regulated by program frameworks and implemented through variable forms and methods of educational and instructional activity aimed at studying, researching, preserving, and reproducing objects of living and non-living nature within the system of out-of-school education in Ukraine.

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