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FORMATION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ECOLOGICAL CULTURE BY VIRTUAL MASS MEDIA

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Abstract. The paper is devoted to the actual problem of modern pedagogical science such as forming university students' ecological culture by virtual mass media. Nowadays mass media supports environmental information and education; forms understanding of the problems of environment, and motivate to their decision. In this way virtual media provides the ecological culture formation, in particularly university students' ecological culture.

Key words: ecological culture, ecological education, university students, virtual mass media, university students' ecological culture

In modern Ukrainian society the importance of problems that are connected with youth ecological education, ecological culture formation is obvious. It is determined by the relevance of environmental competencies of student youth, destined to carry

out further professional activities considering the environmental activities that is needed for the harmonious development of Ukrainian society in the whole.

Today we discuss the peculiarities of a new generation of Ukrainians that are belonged to “Generation Z” (often abbreviated as Gen Z). This term is well-known all over the world. The earliest children of Gen Z are those born in and after 1995. Most of them are students of High Education Institutions now. Modern university students are unique as they represent the generation that has grown up with the Internet. Probably they even have not known a time without the Internet that is the main mean of communication and entertainment for them. The fact is that nowadays university youth feels comfortable interacting and learning online. They value online communities because such communities allow connecting with people from different countries and social groups 24 hours a day. In our days university students are self-learners and mainly absorb knowledge online than offline (in traditional educational institutions). Thus, we consider that online or virtual media is attractive for university students, and provides university youth’s cultural, social and professional development that includes the increasing of the general level of ecological culture as well.

In pedagogical, ecological and social theory and practice, a considerable number of researches on the issue of ecological education and ecological culture have been conducted (N. Bibik, V. Chernovetskyi, V. Ilchenko, O. Verbytskyi, O. Zakhliebnyi and others), and in particular, university students’ ecological culture (H. Chaikovska, V. Dubovyi, N. Yefymenko, N. Hlushkova, V. Onopriienko, etc.). The phenomena of mass media influence on the formation of ecological culture in society was the subject of researches of such scholars as A. Aldasheva, V. Medvediev, A. Orzhakhovska, V. Pustovoitov, V. Sytarov and more. Nevertheless, the impact of virtual mass media on environmental competencies of student youth formation is not yet defined as well.

Therefore, *the purpose of the article* is to examine the role and effects of virtual mass media on the development of university students’ ecological culture.

Summarizing the opinions of a number of scholars (L. Kurniak [1]; M. Lapka et al. [2]; O. Yeremenko [3]) noticed that ecological culture is a branch of knowledge and human practices that defines the nature and ways of man's relationship with it. Ecological culture is seen as a result of human environmental education and a measure of individual environmental competence; it is a number of skills to solve environmental problems and to make responsible decisions for environment protection and progress of mankind.

Marya B. Zatsepina offers the definition of ecological culture of university students “as a personal construct, which includes a set of ecological knowledge, personal meanings, attitude to nature as a value, an orientation to a constructive transformation of reality from the position of conservation of nature, as well as motivational readiness for independent actions to protect the natural environment in the professional sphere” [4, p. 676].

From our point of view, ecological culture of university students is considered as a certain level of social and personal development, creative powers and abilities, expressed in forms of human values, which is characterized by a general awareness of ecological issues and includes the careful use of natural resources on the basis of knowledge of the biosphere laws.

Modern virtual mass media is the most fundamental element of university students' community. Knowledge, experience, cultural values are widely shared by them. Virtual media reflects and creates the culture, in particularly ecological culture. They support environmental information and education; forms knowledge and understanding of the problems of environment, motivate to participate in activities that lead to the resolution of the environmental challenges and others.

Among virtual mass media's functions that provide the necessary support to student youth ecological culture formation are:

- to inform and popularize ecological news;
- to teach the variety of ecological norms, rules and values;

- to promote knowledge about modern environmental issues;
- to form opinions and responsible attitudes to environmental concerns in modern society;
- to unite the university students' community for performing environmental protection activities and solving different environmental problems;
- to correlate university student youth with other social communities, in particular for effective implementation of environmental protection projects in society, etc.

The research results have shown that virtual mass media is an effective factor of student youth ecological culture formation and development.

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