

PROMOTING EDUCATION FOR THE ENVIROMENT THROUGH INTEGRATED AND  
COMPLEX EDUCATIONAL THERAPY WITH PUPILS SUFFERING FROM SEVER  
MENTAL DEFICIENCY

Promoting education for the environment through integrated and complex educational therapy  
with pupils suffering from sever mental deficiency

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**Abstract**

Owing to a sustained economic activity in the recent years the environment has suffered from the increasing rate of pollution. In addition to this there is a lack of education concerning the protection of the environment. Consequently this paper tries to promote education for the environment with pupils suffering from severe mental deficiencies through integrated and complex educational therapy. Through these activities that have been suggested as part of programme aiming at promoting the education for the environment we wish to make pupils conscions of the importance of the environment as well as to give reasons for keeping it clean and taking care of it. All this will increase the quality of their health and life on the whole.

**Key words:** education for environment, educational therapy, sever deficiencies, games.

**Zusammenfassung**

Wegen des intensiven Umfeld umgeben ulimii Jahres-Wachstumsrate Schulden litt seine Verschmutzung. Hinzu kommt die mangelnde Ausbildung in Bezug auf Umweltschutz aufgenommen. Deshalb Dieses Dokument soll die Umweltbildung unter den Studierenden mit schweren geistigen Behinderungen zu fördern durch umfassende und integrierte Bildungs-Therapie. Der Vorschlag für das Arbeitsprogramm der Umweltbildung ist es, Bewusstsein für die Umwelt sein und zu motivieren, Studenten zu halten, die Umwelt sauber und Behandlung all ihrer avieții Steigerung von Qualität und Gesundheit im Allgemeinen.

**Schlüsselwörter:** Umwelterziehung, Bildungs-Therapie, schwerwiegende Mängel, Spiele.

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**I. Introduction**

In the context of a society permanently in progress and changing, in a full crisis of time and seized by everyday stress, people often forget about the importance of keeping the environment clean and unpolluted. It is a matter of education, whose task is that of calling on specialists and promoting, among pupils, the education for the environment taking as an example a clean and preserved environment.

In the recent years, the education for the environment and ecological activities have become very popular among extracurricular activities in different schools. In spite of that, the education for the environment does not have to be thought in terms of different activities of cleaning or preserving this one. It must become the real link between pupils and the environment. These activities aim at teaching them love for a clean, preserved and unpolluted environment. The education for the environment deals with increasing love for nature in order to involve pupils in activities of preserving and taking care of the environment (such as cleaning parks, looking after the plants in their school garden or classroom, recycling plastic products, paper and glass) and to give them information about the consequences that a polluted environment could have on people`s health.

During the time within specialized books there have been presented and tested series of examples and theories that could really help to promote the education for the environment. The theory of behavioural planning is a cognitive theory that explains the forming of proper or risky behaviour by its three constituents: attitude towards a typical behavior, subjective standards, towards the behavior and perception of behavioural controlling (internal or external) (Băban, A . 2001, p.118). This theory is useful when the ecological habits and a positive attitude of the pupils towards the environment are built up. The theory of self-efficiency emphasized the individual`s

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ability to summon up as to his conscious mental process and motivation for taking a suitable conduct ( towards the environment in this case). This Theory represents an important part in the process of building up the pupils` motivation to show and take as well a suitable conduct towards the environment where they live.

In schools programs of preventing pollution and those for environmental education are essential in order to develop a positive attitude towards the environment. Prevention is focused on three constituent parts: primary (emphasized the decreasing risk of having a polluted environment), secondary (takes into account the decrease of risky factors as to environmental pollution) and tertiary (it is designed to increase the quality of life for people living in a polluted environment, following the lake of environmental education).

Considering the specific nature of pupils having severe mental deficiency it is necessary to draw up some educational courses according to the objectives of environmental education, this opposing the influence of primary instincts by which this sort of pupils are led in showing their attitude towards the environment. So much the more, these pupils need a chief reasons in the process of developing their ecological habits that will be required later when they are integrated into society. Integrated and complex educational therapy aims at stimulating pupils` real experiences by reinforcing their knowledge and habits acquired within the learning process, promotes the total approach of the pupil and a permanent evaluation of this one`s development in accordance with the five competences: mobility, language, setting up and developing communication, self-awareness and socio-emotional maturation (Vlad, M. 2007, p.7-8). Thus by its modules: work therapy, cognitive stimulation, ludotherapy (game therapy), developing self-awareness and socializing , this kind of therapy gives the possibility to promote the education for the environment among pupils suffering from severe deficiencies. By means of each module of this kind of therapy we can approach various subjects typical to environmental educational, offer information relating to the environment, developing attitudes, abilities and habits that will be practiced later. All these matters results in acquiring the necessary parts to promote the education for the environment as follows:

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1. Developping the ability of observing and exploring the environment through the senses;
2. The ability of identifying plants, animals and what they are useful for;
3. The ability of understanding nature changes;
4. Practical skills and habits for everyday life;
5. Abilities for becoming familiar with the needs of the group and for team-work;
6. Civic and entrepreneurial habits and abilities . (Vlad, M. 2007).

### **II. The specific nature of pupils having severe mental deficiency**

A short classification divides mental deficiency into: mental deficiency of the first degree, of the second degree and of the third degree. Severe mental deficiency joins to the second degree, the subjects having an IQ between 20/30 and 35/40. The pupils belonging to this disabled group acquire few abilities of communication in their early life, but later as adults, they will carry out a series of easy tasks being monitored. Thus, the deficiency in mental capacity keeps the disabled pupils from judging the limits, between taking a positive attitude towards the environment and a negative one. At the same time he is deprived of predicting the risks of taking an inadequate behaviour towards the environment, being unable to understand the importance of a preserved and clean environment and the bad consequences of a polluted one.

According to the objectives aimed by the integrated and complex educational therapy we wish to build up and practice the devices in making a decision by the severely disabled pupil by using his stored knowledge acquired habits and creating operative means of integration. Following those, the severely disabled pupils will be able to take a positive attitude towards the environment to be concerned with loving it and ready to look after it in order to keep it clean and unpolluted.

Besides the education for environment may be an opportunity for such a pupil to be integrated into society to put to work his abilities acquired during his school years and why not to practice a monitored job that could help him to support himself after finishing classes.

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**III. The presence of environmental education within integrated and complex educational therapy**

The achievement of the objectives for environmental education will be done by proposing a planning of required matters to the pupils:

1. On the environment
2. The plant world
3. The animal world
4. Pollution (water, soil, air)
5. Nature friends
6. The little ecologists

These matters will be fitted to the personal peculiarities of each pupil while the teacher will determine relying on necessity the number of classes allotted to each matter. Once these matters and the time necessary for them to be debated are fixed , there will be identified the necessary methods and means to achieve the suggested objectives and drawn up strictly speaking, a planning of promoting the education for the environment to the disabled pupils. Concerning the methods to be used, there are suitable narration, role game, demonstration, teaching game and any other active method provided that it fits to personal peculiarities of the severe disabled pupils. As to the means to be used they have to be the more diverse as possible known by the pupils in order to set them to work and real (we use a shovel not its picture). After fixing all these, we will go on to draw up a programme for promoting the education for the environment with the mentally disabled pupils which will be carried on stages we will focus on building up developing the behavior in taking care of the environment. The pupils are given some ideas about the environment, the animal and plant world. They may learn some things concerning animals and plants, even to see them in their natural environment (this being possible through activities within the typical socializing module. Once the pupils will master these ideas, we will go on to make use of them so that they could name animals and plants link the animal to its environment or to its specific food as well as to look after plants in the classroom. In the second

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stage of the programme the pupils are told about the good effects of a clean environment, the causes and consequences of pollution as well as ways of keeping the environment clean. These matters will be tackled in an active and interactive manner , without giving a lecture in order to observe the learning characteristics of the disabled pupils. They will be followed by practical activities . The third stage of the programme will give to the pupils the possibility to apply the knowledge on protecting the environment they have acquired. This kind of activity will take place in the open air and the pupils will be given clear orders as to the minimal rules for labour protection. In this stage of the programme the pupils will be encouraged to suggest solution for protecting the environment. All of them will be involved in ecological activities.

When planning an activity regardless of the stage of programme he is dealing with, the teacher will take into account:

1. *Learning task.* This will be drawn up in noticeable and measuring terms considering the personal peculiarities of the pupils. When drawing it up the teacher will have in view: who will achieve this task? what this one consists of? how will he achieve it? How successful will it be?

2. *Predicting pupils behaviour when applying the programme for promoting the education for the environment.*

3. *Analysing the learning task as part of an activity.* It consists in dividing task into several stages that the pupil has to learn in order to carry out the task.

After setting up this programme, there will be done an evaluation of it in order to take the real decisions and measures to improve the programme and of the impact it has on the severly disabled pupils.

Considering the same objectives and observing the same framework of the programme for promoting the education for the environment we will propose some other examples of activities being carried out with all the modules of integrated and complex educational therapy.

**A. Promoting the education for the environment with the ludotherapy will be achieved by some sorts games.**

1. *The pouch with surprises:* this game aims at identifying and naming some plants,

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animals or the necessary objects for protecting the environment. The teacher will put , for instance some animals, into a pouch. Each pupil will stuff his hand into it without taking out the animal and name it. Then he will show it to his classmates and try to tell them many things as possible about it (where he lives, what he feeds itself on, what it is useful for, size, colour).

2. *The nature wheel*: each pupil will get a card on which there will be a picture of an animal or of its food. The pupils will join into pairs according to the link between the animal and its food (for instance hen-grain). Finally every pair will hold their hands and make the nature wheel.

3. *Where does it live?* The pupils will be placed in a circle. One of them having been chosen by the teacher will stay in the middle having a ball in his hand. He will throw it to one of his classmates and utter one of the following words: water, air, land. The pupil who will catch the ball will have to name an animal living in these environments (dog-land). Then that one will take the place of the pupil in the middle of the circle and throw the ball to another classmate.

4. *Save the water*: three pupils will hold their hands and imitate the flow of a river water. Two others will mime the fish swimming into it. Another two pupils will have on their chest some cards with pictures of some bottles, garbage, packaging, chemicals that pollute the water. Once these are in the river, they become ill, crouch and do not swim any more. Then another pair of children come and clear the river of rubbish. The fish recover and swim into the river (the pupils may change the role among them).

5. *Ecological relay race*: the pupils are divided into two groups, one behind the other. In front of each group there are two waste paper baskets two meters away. Bothe groups will get some packaging. Each pupil will take a piece of them and throw into the basket while running. The team that will put first all the pieces into it, will be the winner .

### **B. Promoting the education for the environment through the cognitive stimulation module will be achieved by:**

1. *Protecting the nature competition*. The pupils are divided into two groups. The competition will consist three trials. In the first one the pupils will get a set of ten pictures. They will have to arrange them into two categories: ones illustrating the protection of the environment while the others its damage. The team that will finish first will be winner. In the next trial the



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pupils will have to make up sentences by using a set of given words relating to the protection of the environment. The team that will finish first by doing it correctly will win. In the third trial they will have to list as many ways of protecting the environment as possible.

2. *Answer properly game*. It applies to each one. The pupils will have in front of them a panel with pictures illustrating the environment of some animals. Each of them will take a card picture of an animal from the small table next to the panel. The pupil will have to name it and point to where this one lives. Finally, he will make up a sentence about the animal or its environment.

3. *Answer and win*. It is a team game. The pupils will have to answer some questions about protecting the environment as well as its polluting agents. The team that gives the largest number of right answer will win (this game is suitable for the end of programme on promoting the education for the environment).

4. *That`s right, that`s wrong*. This is an activity of reinforcing knowledge concerning the environment the pupils have acquired. All of them will make up a panel with pictures on protecting the environment and its pollution.

### **C. Promoting the education for the environment through the socializing module will be achieved by:**

1. *Ecological activities*: “My friend ... the three”. One day while walking into the park the pupils will be advised to chose a tree to look after and to make it his friend (they will be explained that this is not a real one but existing only in their mind and they will look after the tree as they do regarding their real friends).

2. *Going on a trip into the forest*. The pupils and the teacher will go together on a trip into the forest nor far from the town. The pupils are given the opportunity to look at the trees, to breathe fresh air. During the trip the teacher will tell them about the importance of green forests and the necessity of keeping them clean.

3. Within this module the pupils will take part together with their mates from others schools in contests and ecological activities.

### **D. Promoting the education for the environment through the Work therapy module**

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### **will be achieved by:**

1. The pupils will be encouraged to take care of the plants in the classroom. They will water the flowers, will clear them of day leaves, will add earth and dust their leaves.
2. Besides, the pupils will carry out ecological activities in the school yard at times. They will gather some rubbish, will sweep the ground, will plant flowers, will clear and cover with lime the trees.
3. Drawing some pictures and posters on different matters: the education for the environment, its protection and pollution. Representing the environmental elements on a small scale.
4. Moreover each pupil will plant different seeds in a flower pot and look after his plant during the year.

### **E. Promoting the education for environment through the Developing self-awareness module will be achieved by:**

1. Making some albums with pictures representing animals and plants.
2. Activities on noticing some polluting materials: plastic, waste, packaging, bags.
3. Reading texts about strange facts in the animal and plant world.
4. Doing experiments in order to prove the importance of water and soil for the living beings.

## **IV. Conclusions**

The activities being carried out within the integrated and complex educational therapy help the teacher to promote the education for the environment among the severely disabled pupils. These ones will be able to learn as many information as possible concerning the environment, animal and plant lives, the importance of protecting nature its polluting agents as well as ways of preventing pollution of the environment. Besides, the practical activities being carried out within the work therapy and socializing modules will also play a part in developing self-awareness with these pupils. The successful outcome of these activities hangs on the pupils continued

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involvement in carrying them out and pointing out constantly their practical aspect. The programme for promoting the education for the environment will certainly result in training the pupils having severe mental deficiency on both educational and personal levels.

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