

Potentialities to promote environmental awareness in economics student's education



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ABSTRACT

Universities are responsible for developing the educational work of committed-to-their-social-mission professionals. The need to improve the

teaching and learning process to favor students' integral formation constitutes the basis of the problem investigated. Since it requires making use of all the educational potentialities, taking advantage of the curriculum, the university environment and the extracurricular sphere to favor the insertion of the environmental dimension in such task is the essence of this work. As a result of this research, a methodological strategy for Environmental Education is presented as a contribution to the B.A. in Economics-to-be teaching-learning process. It regards the relationship between environmental knowledge, values, and attitudes as an environmental content repository, which articulates the environmental dimension in the comprehensive education process.

Keywords: Environmental education, teaching-learning process, methodological strategy, B.A. in Economics.

1 INTRODUCTION

Currently, the progressive man-made environmental damage and, along with it, the resurgence of environmental problems at a global scale, sets a challenge for humanity: protection, conservation, and improvement of the environment to maintain its survival on the planet.

Fidel Castro, in his speech at the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, expressed: "There's an important biological species at risk of disappearing due to the fast and progressive liquidation of its natural living conditions: man." Thus, in a few words, it expressed the threat the planet suffers from the environmental perspective to the point of endangering man's existence on Earth.

With the irrational use of science, technology, and natural resources, mankind is the one who causes damage to the environment; hence economic, social, and environmental integration is not achieved. Therefore, it is required the development of a profoundly human new behavior toward the environment, in which solitary, critical, and participatory men, who recognize and accept responsibility for themselves and future generations, are formed.



In this sense, UNESCO (2008), quoted by (Mejías; 2010), in its international application plan, emphasizes the need to redirect education towards sustainable development so that it addresses its three spheres: society, economy, and environment; for which it is essential its expansion by emphasizing on Environmental Education contents and students' axiological education.

Cuba regards environmental issues as one of its main priorities, therefore, it has been defined as an environmental policy showing the ways for practical, effective, and conscious application of actions favoring the environment's protection, conservation, and improvement, closely linked to the country's economic, social and cultural development, where the preservation of man and the elevation of the quality of life are essential elements.

Education is a process of transmission and appropriation of deposited-by-humanity-historical-cultural experiences which leads man throughout his life and plays a leading role when solving this problem. Hence, promoting environmental culture development in the population is one of its challenges.

Cuba conceives Environmental Education as sustainable development. This comes about through the introduction of the environmental dimension in the educational processes, considering the systemic nature of a set of elements with a particular environmental orientation; and through environment-development linkages, which consequently are interconnected and where the functions or behavior of some, act and can modify that of the others.

Proenza (2009) considers Environmental Education as a continuous and permanent process that constitutes a dimension of all citizens' comprehensive education; oriented towards harmonizing the relations between men, and among them, the rest of society and the environment, in the knowledge acquisition, skills development, attitudes and values forming process, to promote the orientation of economic, social, and cultural processes.

It is not about preserving and living in harmony with nature, but about recovering what can be recovered. Therefore, it is vital to create an environmental education allowing sustainable development to start from universities, that is, from the local to the global scale.

In this sense, universities play an important role in achieving this requirement, since their purpose is to prepare the new generations, which involves their learning to live in harmony with the environment, and having the necessary tools to value and solve the problems they face.

Thereafter, the objective of this work is to develop a methodological strategy that favors Environmental Education for the education of economics students.

2 RESEARCH ELABORATIONS

The information collected in scientific publications, dissertations, and books on this subject was reviewed, aiming at verifying the main limitations existing from the methodological order in the



Degree in Economics. Its study plan “E” and Resolution 47/2022 on Organizational Regulation of the teaching process and teaching and methodological work management for university majors are also analyzed.

3 RESULTS OR FINDING

University, as an educational institution, is historically conditioned, in other words, it responds to the demands and imperatives of a given time. Given the task that it must assume in the development of all areas of humanity, it has an active role to play as a setting where knowledge is generated and from which knowledge is disseminated into society.

The Degree in Economics was created at the University of Havana in 1962, as a homegrown project and an expression of the national, regional social reality and the international economic order transforming vocation. Graduates must solve, with creativity, independence, and honesty, the problems related to the production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of social wealth that arise in the economic system, to achieve the objectives of the Cuban socialist development model. This must be achieved by applying the scientific research methodology, as a reality’s critical transformation process, based on ethical, economic, environmental protection, and country defense considerations that allow him to make decisions, with a high sense of responsibility and political and social commitment, as well as paying tribute to the consolidation of the Cuban socialist project’s theoretical reference in the different areas.

The teaching process is carried out through the development of different disciplines and subject contents making up the major’s study plan; and promotes the appropriation of the profession’s knowledge, skills, and values students need to perform in the labor market. Research is a central process where it is not possible to conceive a university without research: in it, the teaching process must be developed using research.

The major’s staff, in its role as professional educators, is responsible for guaranteeing knowledge and skills formation, as well as motivations, attitudes, and values in students to reach an effective solution to environmental problems. A key aspect in the integration of environmental theoretical content with the practice is the methodological work throughout curricular and extracurricular activities, in which the environmental dimension can be inserted to improve a professional's comprehensive education. The methodological variants constitute actions for the teaching-methodological work that assume its declared organizational forms- methodological meetings, methodological workshops, and methodological preparation- as teachers’ permanent improvement forms. The topics below are proposed to be developed as part of the methodological teaching work at each of the organizational levels.

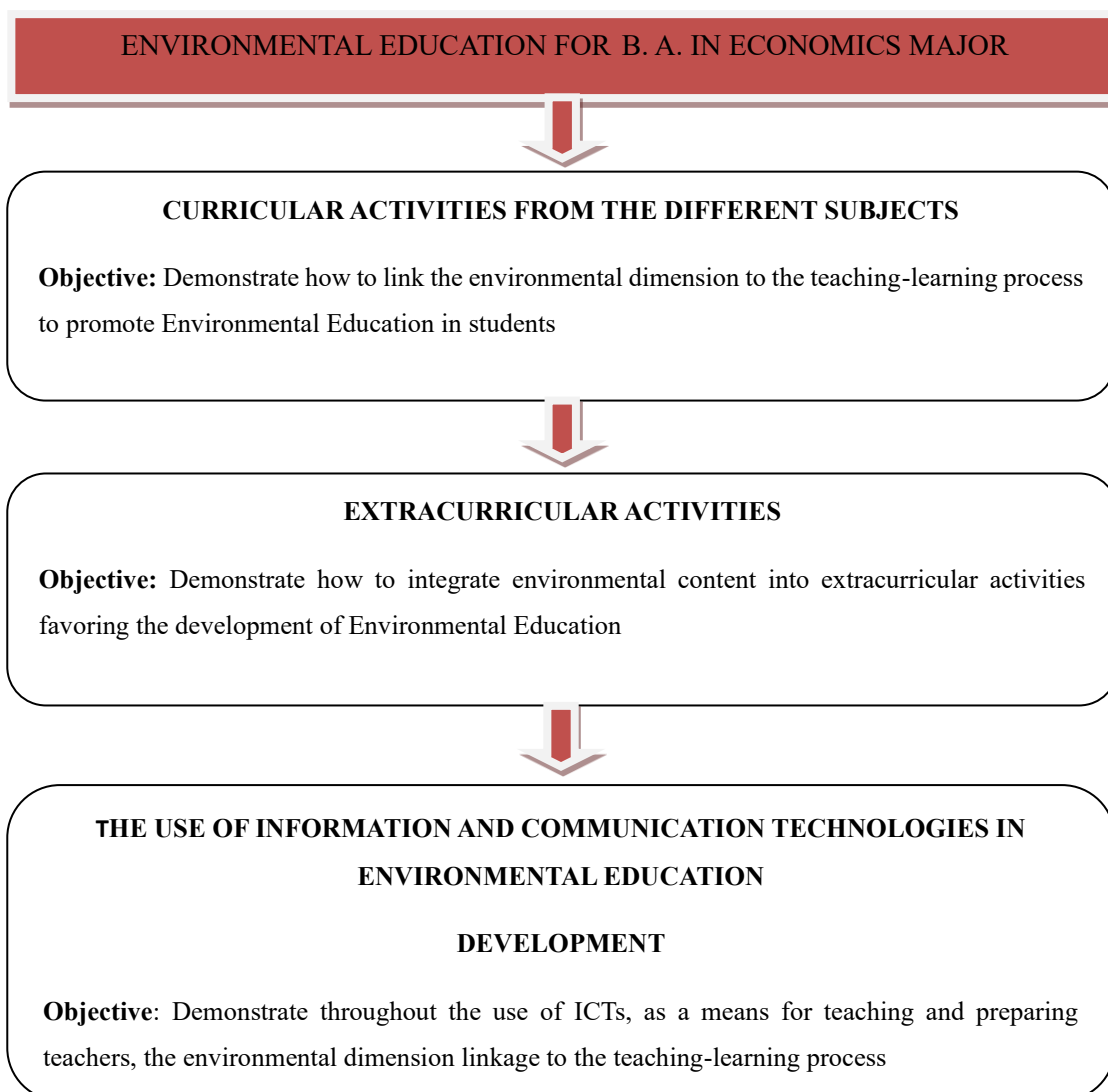


Methodological Strategy for Implementing the Pedagogical Approach for Environmental Education into Economics Students' teaching-learning process.

The authors consider a methodological strategy to implement Environmental Education that favors the theoretical and practical understanding of environmental problems in the university practice. It is structured into three stages, where it's explained, starting from their objective the relationship with the components of the conception, actions, and orientations.

Conclusions- The University, in its professional educating role, has the responsibility to guarantee the formation of knowledge and skills, as well as motivations, attitudes, and values in students to achieve an effective solution to environmental problems. This establishes a curricular environmentalization process as a configuration of Environmental Education.

Thereof, the proposal of the methodological strategy for Environmental Education allows the articulation of the environmental dimension in the comprehensive education of future graduates in economics.





CELEBRATION OF WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Objective: Demonstrate how to plan, organize, execute, and control curricular and extracurricular activities to treat environmental content so that it is coherently integrated into the celebration of the Environment's Day



ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES IN THE COMMUNITY

Objective: Demonstrate how to provide methodological treatment to local environmental problems from the environmental contents through actions in the community



FEU (UNIVERSITY STUDENT FEDERATION) ACTIVITIES AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN STUDENTS

Objective: Demonstrate how to take advantage of the potential of FEU's activities to develop environmental content and promote university students' environmental education

4 METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION INTO ECONOMICS STUDENTS' TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS

The authors consider a methodological strategy to implement Environmental Education that favors the theoretical and practical understanding of environmental problems in the university practice. It is structured into three stages, where it's explained, starting from their objective the relationship with the components of the conception, actions, and orientations.



Stage 1. Environmental theoretical- methodological orientation

Objective: Prepare, on the teaching-learning's theoretical side, the pedagogical conception of Environmental Education's components, in the process and methodological terms, from its applicability in university practice.

Its purpose is to guarantee the implementation in university practice so that the established objective is achieved. In this stage, it is oriented toward the different theoretical elements of the environmental dimension in the teaching-learning process.

The staff must be prepared with the pedagogical principles' premises and updating as a starting point for the process of scientific guiding. Also, they must know the environmental dimension basic concepts.

This step will allow the majors, discipline, and year staff to be holders of an environmental culture that allows them to take advantage of the environmental educational potential offered by the Economy, emphasizing a systemic relationship with economic, social processes and the environment, to foster in university students, knowledge, skills, habits, values and attitudes that allow them to relate, harmoniously, with themselves, others and the environment.



Stage 2. Concreting the env

Objective: Offer guidelines for the preparation of the environmental educational diagnosis that allows knowing the comprehensive education's current state, from the environmental dimension of university students in the teaching-learning process.

This constitutes an element of great importance to articulate the environmental dimension in the teaching-learning process. It is a set of actions that must be carried out to specify the existing potentialities and insufficiencies to achieve it; hence, qualitative techniques allow the observation of attitudes, and university students' behaviors at different times and activities of the process, as well as surveys, interviews, and document review must be used.

This stage is related to the second basic component of Environmental Education for sustainable development modeling in the future B. A. in Economics-to-be's education that allows evaluating, providing feedback, and enriching the relationship between knowledge, attitudes, and environmental values. In short, achieve environmental content learning.

This process results enables to characterize of each student regarding the environmental aspect and; over this knowledge, achieve the environmental dimension linkage to the teaching-learning process.



Stage 3. Proposal's implementation and evaluation.

Objective: Implement methodological variants in the teaching-learning process, as well as socialize curricular and extracurricular activities that can be planned for such materialization. Carrying out methodological workshops will allow for feedback and elaboration of new activities proposals that enrich the methodological alternatives.

The proposed methodological strategy plans how to link the dimension to the process; therefore, it must be selected, in a coherent, systemic, and systematic way, in the different instructional and educational processes, the environmental content, and the alternatives for knowledge, values, and environmental attitudes integration in the academic year, contributing to a more scientific teaching-learning process in such a way the university students' comprehensive education is favored, they are provided with guidance and get prepared to participate in the solution, mitigation or prevention of environmental problems in their immediate surroundings.

The methodological alternatives must start from the students' psychopedagogical characteristics, the environmental content educational potentialities, and the teacher's creativity.

For its efficient achievement, the importance of using methods that imprint an investigative nature to the process is recognized, such as action research, problem-based learning, heuristic teaching, and, in general, active methods in the process that cover both, learning in the cognitive scenario and axiological education.

Par excellence, it is considered appropriate, as a fundamental evaluation form of this process, the assessment, argumentation, and solutions or variants proposition to mitigate environmental situations and, in general terms, qualitative evaluations that reveal the ways of feeling regarding the behaviors in certain situations, besides, the intervention itself will demonstrate the knowledge achieved in the cognitive order by the students.



4 CONCLUSIONS

The University, in its professional educating role, has the responsibility to guarantee the formation of knowledge and skills, as well as motivations, attitudes, and values in students to achieve an effective solution to environmental problems. This establishes a curricular environmentalization process as a configuration of Environmental Education.

Thereof, the proposal of the methodological strategy for Environmental Education allows the articulation of the environmental dimension in the comprehensive education of future graduates in economics.



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