

## Ecology of Education as a New Interdisciplinary Research Trend

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The semantics of the concept *ecology* for many scientists is still related merely to the research in the field of natural sciences, first of all, in the field of animal and/or plant ecology as well as to the solution of nature protection and sustainability problems nowadays. It has its substantiation, since the term *ecology* in the scientific terminology was introduced by a German zoologist E. Haeckel who was also the founder of the new interdisciplinary research trend *bioecology*. Thanks to the research performed by an American scientist Ellen S. Richards and her colleagues, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the USA became the grounds for the new interdisciplinary research trend — *human ecology*, which, alongside with *bioecology*, develops nowadays as an independent trend of ecology. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century there emerged and developed new scientific conceptions and theories, representing different sub-trends of human ecology, because the ecological paradigm became a transdisciplinary scientific paradigm. The new trends of human ecology began to develop on the basis of particular sciences, focusing the scientists' attention towards one or several environmental contexts. In human ecology we can distinguish *psychological ecology/ecology of psychology*, *economic ecology*, *politecology/ecological politology*, *social ecology*, *cultural ecology*, *art ecology*, *family ecology*, *anthropological ecology*, *deep ecology/ecosophy as environmental ethics* etc. Human ecology is the *universal scientific* trend, which provides new — *ecological perspectives* — for the innovative, up to now unconventional research in different scientific disciplines.

The philosophical-methodological basis of the various trends of modern human ecology became also the grounds for the development of *ecology of education* as an interdisciplinary trend of human ecology. *Ecology of Education* is one of the trends of human ecology; the interdiscipline integrating natural, social sciences, and the humanities, which studies the interaction between a human being as individual and/or social systems and the multidimensional environment from the holistic perspective, viewing education as the facilitator of the sphere, process, result, and development of human activity in the aspect of human and environmental quality/trait. Due to the variety of the trends of human ecology, the varied explanations and interpretation of the concept *environment* are also transferred to educational ecology: 1) environment — it is *us* (social environment); 2) *environment is everything that surrounds us and is outside us*; 3) environment — *the totality of the reflections of real things, phenomena, processes in the human psyche*; 4) *environment is a multilevel ecological system (ecosystem), within which a human being is as an endosystem, sub-structure of ecosystem*; 5) environment is a *multi-component and multi-functional system* of interaction, where a human being is an *integral part of environment*; 6) environment as an *interaction process*; 7) environment as *the sphere of human activities*; 8) environment as *the field of semantics*; 9) environment as a *resource*; 10) environment as a *means for social stratification*.

Educational ecology possesses the significant potential for interdisciplinary research and several developmental perspectives, as a result of which through research it is possible to solve several modern topical problems: 1) promotion of human development, self-realisation in the educational environment; 2) studies and development of different human qualities and their totality (viability; competitiveness; competences; creativity; thinking, mental and emotional flexibility; attitudes etc.) in the educational environment; 3) education for: human socialisation and culturalisation; the successful human adaptation, integration and development in the changeable and multi-functional environment: social, cultural, different professions etc. environment; the development and improvement of home environment; 4) education for the development of human basic competencies for living on changeable conditions, in the rapidly changing human-built, including environment of information and latest technologies; 5) ensuring of lifelong learning in the varied educational environment for the development of knowledge society; 6) sustainable development of educational environment systems, including schools, higher education institutions, on the changeable conditions; 7) the development, experimental approbation and implementation into practice of conceptions and models of an open,

accessible, appropriate and developing educational environment which conform with the needs of modern society and each individuality, 8) education for the sustainable and balanced development of social, economic, and natural environment; 9) environmental values, career education as a over-content and the contextual approach to its integration into the study process; respecting of the balance principle *I – Ego* and *I – Eco* in the thinking and activity of a human being and the whole society, in the development of values and attitude systems for the sustainable development etc.

Research at the Institute of Education and Home Economics of the Faculty of Engineering of Latvia University of Agriculture performed in the field of educational ecology, has been acknowledged not only in Latvia, but also by the international level scientists from various countries.

**Key words:** ecological paradigm, ecological approach, educational ecology, educational environment, sustainable development.