

WELLSO 2015 - II International Scientific Symposium on Lifelong Wellbeing in the World

Environmental Well-Being and Quality of Life of a Modern Person

Kashchuk Irina*^a, Timofeeva Yana^a

* Corresponding author: Irusiya_Kashuk@mail.ru

^a National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University, Lenin avenue, building 30, 634050, Tomsk, Russia, E-mail: tpu@tpu.ru, telephone number: 89039550943

Abstract

<http://dx.doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2016.02.25>

The paper is devoted to enhance quality of life and well-being of a modern person. The ambiguity of the concepts such as "quality of life", "standard of living" and "well-being" is taken into consideration. The most important problem of modern humanity – "saving health" is highlighted. Environmental aspects are identified as the most important factors of life. The analysis of the situation of the world's countries and Russia in the rating of Environmental Performance Index and well-being is conducted. The possibility of improving the environmental well-being through the development of environmental culture of the human is investigated. Five basic functions of environmental awareness ensuring the development of environmental culture have been isolated and analyzed. The formation's process of an environmental culture in people's minds is developed. A model of ecological well-being in modern society is represented.

© 2016 Published by Future Academy www.FutureAcademy.org.uk

Keywords: Quality of life; standard of living; environmental safety; environmental well-being; Environmental Performance Index; environmental culture; environmental consciousness.

1. Introduction

In today's world, the problem of well-being of the person has become a global character. Matter how person is well-being the economic, social and environmental transformation of the country will depend on.

Today the various layers of the population do not have a common understanding of what the well-being is. Which indicators do determine the well-being? May «a standard of living", "quality of life" be the very well-being? What is actually important for a person: "quality of life", "standard of living" or "well-being"? Do these concepts have the same meaning or not? The theme of improving the quality

of life and well-being attracted the attention of many researchers and is a subject of scientific debate that speaks about its relevance.

It is worth noting that the main indicators of development of any country are economic, social and environmental well-being. They are the vector of development of people's lives, they cannot be separated. However, the most attention is paid to social and economic development, and the smallest one to environmental issues (Zdanova E., 2013).

The future of the people is directly related to environmental conditions and is completely dependent on the attitude of the people themselves to the conditions of their lives. Fatherland naturalist, philosopher and researcher V.I. Vernadsky said, "The future of human is always the most part created by him."

In today's world ecological aspects increasingly begin to determine the well-being of the country, region. Habitat is considered as the most important and integral component of modern human's life quality.

From an environmental perspective, the concept of "quality of life" - a set of conditions which would assure a healthy person, that is, matching the needs of the living environment.

Environmental pollution in the process of industrial development of mankind in the last century has defined the global problem of saving people's health today.

For many years, the problems of ecology and environmental protection in our country are paid attention to from time to time. Environmental security was not given a proper attention to also. The modern world as a result of natural and man-made disasters is exposed to new dangers and threats, which leads to reduce quality of life and well-being.

2. Rating of the Environmental Performance Index and well-being

For many years the center of environmental policy and law at Yale University in collaboration with Columbia University and the World Economic Forum has being developed international codes of environmental sustainability.

In 2006 the Environmental Performance Index was published. The Environmental Performance Index — is a global research and accompanying rating countries in terms of load on the environment and natural resources management. This index indicates how well countries are resolving priority environmental issues in two the broad areas: the protection of human health from environmental damage and preservation of ecosystems.

The index is aimed at: reducing the pressure on the environment and as a consequence on human health: stimulating the viability of ecological systems; ensuring sustainable management of natural resources.

Environmental Performance Index is used to calculate Human Development Index as part of a special report series of the Human Development in the frames of United Nations Development's Programme (UNDP).

The index measures a country's achievements in terms of the environmental conditions and natural resources management on the basis of twenty-two. These indicators include ten categories which reflect different aspects of the natural environment and the viability of its ecosystems, biodiversity,

prevention of climate change, public health, the practice of economic activity and the extent of its impact on the environment, as well as effectiveness of public policy in the field of ecology.

In 2014, the research covered 178 countries. The countries below have entered the top ten at the end of 2014. Switzerland, Luxembourg, Australia, Singapore, the Czech Republic received the highest rating of EPI. These are the most environmentally friendly countries in the world (The Environmental Performance Index, 2014).

Table 1. Rating of countries on environmental performance.

Column A (Rating)	Column B (Country)	Column C (Index)
1	Switzerland	87.67
2	Luxembourg	83.29
3	Australia	82.40
4	Singapore	81.78
5	the Czech Republic	81.47
6	Germany	80.47
7	Spain	79.79
8	Austria	78.32
9	Sweden	78.09
10	Norway	78.04
70	Uruguay	53.61
71	Surinam	53.57
72	South Africa	53.51
73	Russia	53.45
74	Moldova	53.36
75	Dominicana	53.24

Russia among 178 countries is on 73d place and is one of the most environmentally polluted countries on the planet. Constantly growing population requires more and more food, housing and consumer goods, that in turn, leads to urban growth and increasing industry.

For comparison we present a rating of the countries according to the well-being among 142 countries.

This index is based on the following categories: 1.Economics, 2. Entrepreneurship, 3. Management, 4.Education, 5.Healthcare, 6. Security, 7. Personal freedoms, 8. Social capital.

For each of the eight categories in the table a rating is given - from 0 to 110 grades that indicates country's place among other states.

Table 2. Rating of the countries on well-being

Place	Country	# 1	# 2	# 3	# 4	# 5	# 6	# 7	# 8
1	Norway	3	7	7	5	5	6	2	1
2	Switzerland	1	3	1	21	3	11	12	9
3	New Zealand	15	18	2	7	20	10	1	2
4	Denmark	18	2	3	3	13	8	9	3
5	Canada	5	17	8	2	11	9	5	4
6	Sweden	4	1	4	16	12	4	6	11
7	Australia	12	13	9	1	14	16	3	6
8	Finland	26	4	5	6	15	3	16	5
9	Netherlands	25	10	11	4	6	18	7	8
10	the United States	17	11	12	11	1	31	21	7
66	Colombia	39	61	64	84	72	127	52	66
67	Philippines	40	75	55	76	97	111	50	59
68	Russia	57	46	113	37	44	96	124	67
69	Macedonia	110	63	69	74	52	67	77	82
70	Paraguay	38	86	110	100	84	73	35	61

From the data ratings in 2014 it can be seen that Russia takes low positions. It is worth noting in this rating the category of environment is not mentioned (The index of the prosperity of the world countries, 2014).

Thus we can note the absence of the environmental component in the rating of well-being.

Mankind has cut down forests, draining the ponds, pollutes the environment, destroys the surface layer of the soil and does not think, what will happen next? What will children get in the future? What kind of future will be waiting for them?

There is a need to change the relationship between man and nature.

For today humanity is on the way of expensive material civilization to the global ecological catastrophe. That is, at a certain stage of growth of tangible well-being, the problem of providing of "inner peace" of human, his social needs will move to the first place. The human surrounds himself with an artificial environment, which protects him from the wild not noticing that nature suffers from this.

If the cause of the ecological crisis is a thoughtless promotion of consumer instincts of human, the nature's rescue is possible only through moral perception of people and spiritual elevation of their needs. No matter how much we do call to protect nature, it will change a little in the current environmental situation, while in people' understanding tangible assets are higher than the spiritual ones, and the conquest of nature is more than the environmental protection. We will not be able to solve the environmental problem as long as there is no a reconsidered ideology of the society and consumer psychology of people.

Quality of life cannot be imagined without harmony with nature, refusal of thoughtless consumption and waste, as environment is one of the major factors in living standards.

Today, as the world's environmental problems exist, no country can stay away from thinking about the ongoing changes

At a global level, the result of scientific developments in the search for the optimum ratio of development and preservation of the environment has become "The concept of sustainable development." Given concept is a process of changes in which all vital functions in the global world are performed by law in order to strengthen existing capacity to meet people. That is to say it is about ensuring the quality of life.

3. Environmental culture and mentality of people

A necessary prerequisite to improve the quality of life and well-being is a lifelong development of people. The completeness and the harmony depend on internal state of a person. Consequently, the development of life begins with the internal development of the individual. Dynamic internal process defines active without any stagnation, and hence the crises of external life. Lifelong development is a prerequisite for a happy life.

Changes in the relationship of man and nature must begin with the local level, especially with the daily life of the people themselves, to be more precise with the ecology of each ones' soul. It is necessary to develop a new civilization ecological culture to make society go ahead.

First, we need to understand what is "environmental culture"?

Environmental culture is a part of human culture, the system of social relations, social and individual moral and ethical norms, beliefs, attitudes and values concerning the relationship between man and nature. It is the harmonious coexistence of human society and the natural environment, the integrity of the person and the nature.

Formation of **environmental culture of the person** is a long and complex process.

For the formation and development of environmental culture the state should create a legal regulatory framework that would regulate the system of environment and inserts the basics of environmental education into the educational.

The family plays a huge role in the formation of environmental culture, as the ideological and moral values grafted since childhood are the most stable in later life.

Development of environmental culture of society is more favorable in terms of: increasing life expectancy, reducing the number of pathologies and diseases; improving moral and ethical indicators; saving and multiplying of natural resources. Thus, all this results in an improvement in life quality (The National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020 year, 2012).

So is there any point in formation of environmental culture of society? It's definitely - yes. Environmental culture is a personal responsibility towards the environment and an important factor for sustainable development of the society.

A popular wisdom says: «A good turn deserves another», and who knows how can wise «Mother - Nature" repay if we'll keep reckless attitude towards the environment.

To form in persons' mind environmental culture, it is necessary to implement the functions of environmental consciousness. For example, some scientists define **five functions**:

Informative. This function helps the individual to understand nature as their habitat, as an aesthetic phenomenon, as well as to learn the idea that it is necessary to use the knowledge of nature in order to preserve it, to prevent irreversible damage to its integrity.

Developmental. It forms among young people skills to comprehend the environmental effects.

Educational. It forms in the individual moral and aesthetic attitude towards nature. Educational function evokes a sense of admiration for the greatness of nature, its beauty as well as a sense of duty and responsibility to preserve the beauty in nature.

Organizing. It stimulates an active personality on nature protection, constructs a system implementation of incentives to individual conservation efforts.

Predictive. It develops an individual ability to predict the consequences of certain actions of man in nature. It provides the disruption of biological relationships in nature, what actions are environmentally neutral, which environmental activities will be beneficial for nature.

Highlighted functions of consciousness provide relationship between people and nature in the process of environmental education (Zdanova E., 2013 or Lecley H., 2009). The process of formation of environmental culture in people's consciousness is shown in Figure 1.

Environmental education originally was supposed go out of the education system, pre-school institutions, schools and higher education institutions. They are designed to lay the foundations of individual environmental culture, to give environmental knowledge and cultivate a love of nature.

In Russia, it is necessary to establish a system of environmental education.

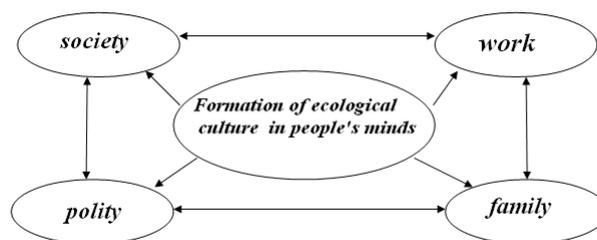


Fig. 1. The process of formation of environmental culture in people's consciousness.

Environmental culture can be seen as the spiritual and intellectual foundations of civilization of stable type. An objective assessment of ecological conditions is needed for making informed economic and social decisions in the present and in the future.

On the basis of the conducted research including basic concepts, factors and indicators which determine life quality and well-being of a modern person, the model of environmental well-being was developed (represented in Figure 2).

Environmental security determines genetic and environmental well-being of people's consciousness. Genetic welfare system determines savings of human health. Environmental consciousness forms environmental culture. In its turn the health system of saving and environmental culture determines the level of life quality, and therefore its continuous prosperity. Hierarchically structured model is characterized by the formation of different levels of well-being, the base of which is the state of the environment - the conditions of people's existence.

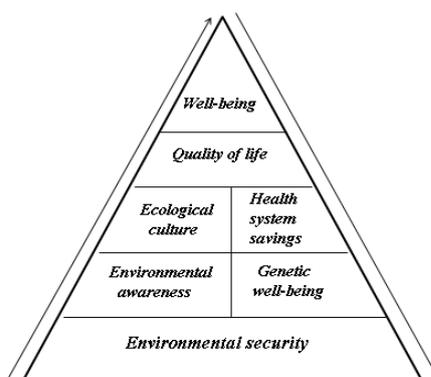


Fig. 2. The process of creating a model of environmental well-being

4. Conclusion

The problem of providing a high life quality cannot be considered without the environmental component. Environmental safety of life creates the conditions for the development of the individual, ensure good health and form a harmonious society.

Problems of ecological safety must be solved in integrated and systematic approaches, involving public resources and most of the population.

Formation and development of environmental culture should be both a consequence and a basis saving nation's health and genetic well-being of mankind. Basis for formation of environmental culture is environmental consciousness that is formed by a system of environmental education.

In Russia there is no system of environmental education. While we consciously and most unconsciously are destroying the natural environment and the nature of man, thus reducing the life quality of each us.

Currently, Russia is one of the most environmentally polluted countries on the planet and one of the least prosperous countries in the world. Today, when it is not an easy task to improve the life quality of the population in conditions of deteriorating of environmental conditions, it is necessary to form a new environmental consciousness of citizens; build a new environmental legislation; establish mutual cooperation of numerous non-governmental organizations for the protection of the environment with public authorities and local governments.

Acknowledgements

This work was performed by the authors in collaboration with Tomsk Polytechnic University within the project in Evaluation and enhancement of social, economic and emotional wellbeing of older adults under the Agreement No.14.Z50.31.0029 (19th of March, 2014).

References

- Zdanova E. (2013). Theoretical aspects and problems of measuring the current state of the quality of life in Russia. *Economic, humanitarian and legal studies*, 64-66.
- The Environmental Performance Index.(2014) Available at: <http://epi.yale.edu> (the date of access 06/02/2015).
- The index of the prosperity of the world countries (The Legatum Prosperity Index). 2014 Available at: <http://gtmarket.ru/ratings/legatum-prosperity-index/info> (the date of access 02.07.2015).
- The National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020 year. (2012) Available at: <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/99.html> (the date of access 07/02/2015).
- Lecley H. (2009). Cultural ecology: adaptation - retrofitting a concept? *GeoQuEST Research Centre and School of Earth & Environmental Sciences, University of Wollongong, Wollongong 2522, Australia*.