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Environmental Awareness at a Young Age: An Essential Element of a Sustainable Society and a Model of Best Practice

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ABSTRACT

Early adoption of ecological values, such as caring for nature, respecting plants and animals, and rational use of resources, creates a solid foundation that is more difficult to change later in life. The most favorable period for easily and quickly instilling positive attitudes toward the environment and conservation is the kindergarten and preschool years. Recognizing one's role in protecting nature and developing children's ecological literacy and awareness is possible not only through formal education but also through informal approaches, such as camps, eco-workshops, time spent in nature, and various outdoor interactive activities. One of the significant examples of good practice in environmental education, particularly regarding the importance and preservation of forests, is the Economic Society for Forest Management "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade, which, in addition to its core activities, works to raise environmental awareness among citizens. It manages state forests and forest land covering an area of 892,029 ha, provides expert advisory services in privately owned forests covering an area of 1,221,265 ha, manages hunting grounds, and oversees fishing, and protected areas. The aim of this paper is to analyze the contribution of informal environmental education conducted by "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade to the development of cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of environmental awareness in preschool- and school-aged children, as well as to underscore the importance of education about ecology, the protection and preservation of forests, and nature in general.

1. Introduction

In the midst of climate change, humanity is facing numerous challenges in preserving nature and the environment and addressing the threat to and reduction of biodiversity. The ecological crisis we are witnessing, and which according to all estimates is yet to intensify, is a problem that affects not only well-being but also the very survival of humanity. The direct and clear connection between these problems and human health has initiated various activities aimed at protecting planet Earth. Disturbances in ecological balance indicate the

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necessity of forming and strengthening ecological awareness as part of individual and collective culture (UNESCO, 1978). Ecological awareness represents a set of knowledge, attitudes, values, and behaviors aimed at protecting and preserving the environment. It is critical to understand that ecological awareness does not develop spontaneously but rather over time through education, socialization, and cultural influence. The formation of ecological awareness not only involves acquiring knowledge about the environment but also the development of value-based attitudes, emotional connections with nature, and a willingness to take concrete action for its protection (Simić and Saramandić, 2015). Education – both formal and extracurricular – the media, families, and the wider community play a significant role in cultivating ecological awareness, especially among young people. Environmental education is increasingly recognized not only as a way to raise awareness but also as a strategic tool for the sustainable management of natural resources. It enhances understanding of ecosystems, biodiversity, and the interconnectedness of natural factors, thereby providing a foundation for informed decision-making and reducing environmental pressures (UNESCO, 1978; Monroe et al., 2008; Wheaton et al., 2018). Although there is a positive correlation between the level of education and environmentally responsible behavior, knowledge alone is not a sufficient prerequisite for action and ecological conduct.

The development of internal motivation, a sense of responsibility, and a connection to the environment is a crucial factor in environmentally responsible behavior. Only when individuals develop a personal relationship with nature and understand their role in its preservation or degradation can we expect them to take part in environmental protection. Such engagement may be reflected in participation in ecological initiatives, changes in everyday habits, and the adoption of sustainable lifestyle choices. These actions can contribute to long-term positive effects on both the community and the environment. Beyond raising individual awareness, environmental education plays a crucial role in engaging communities in decision-making and policy development, serving as a catalyst for social change to preserve nature for future generations (Amu et al., 2024). This approach aligns closely with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Specifically, Goal 4 mandates that by 2030, all learners should acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development. Additionally, Goals 13 and 15 highlight education and awareness-raising as vital tools for combating climate change and conserving terrestrial ecosystems (United Nations, 2015).

2. Materials and methods

The aim of the paper is to analyze the scope, content, and educational characteristics of non-formal environmental education activities implemented by "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade between 2022 and 2024, and to examine their potential contribution to fostering the cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of environmental awareness among preschool and school-aged children. It also examines the role of educational activities and workshops as tools for sustainable natural resource management. A qualitative research approach based on documentary analysis was applied. A comprehensive collection and analysis were conducted, including scientific and professional papers as well as the internal documentation of "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade. This documentation details the educational activities implemented in partnership with various educational institutions and other relevant organizations, providing valuable insights into the scope, methods, and outcomes of these collaborative efforts. The analysis focuses on documentary data regarding the educational activities implemented by "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade from 2022 to 2024, collected from the company's internal reports, including descriptive information on the number and scope of activities and participants. The descriptive numerical data serve to illustrate the extent and variety of activities conducted, rather than to quantify children's environmental awareness. The results were interpreted using the theoretical model of ecological awareness, which includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral components, with the aim of highlighting the potential of non-formal educational activities to foster environmentally responsible behavior in children. Based on the collected data, the results were interpreted through content analysis and reasoning by analogy, leading to the formulation of the key research conclusions.

2.1. The Role of Environmental Education in Building a Sustainable Society

The close connection between sustainable development and the circular economy lies in their shared goals: rational use of natural resources, extended product lifespans, waste reduction, and resource conservation. The circular economy is characterized by closing material and energy loops through reuse, repair, recycling, and regeneration of natural resources, positioning it as a viable strategy for resource conservation (European Parliament, 2023). While the circular economy has recently gained prominence as a practical policy approach, the principles of sustainable development have been integrated into educational frameworks for much longer (Kirchherr and Piscicelli, 2019). Circular economy principles – specifically, ideas such as reuse, waste reduction, and the extension of

material lifecycles – are being integrated into modern approaches to environmental education, going beyond simply promoting environmental awareness in the traditional sense (Kosta et al., 2025). According to Bonnett (2012), D'Amato et al. (2017), Kopnina (2018), and Kirchherr and Piscicelli (2019), education on the circular economy not only promotes and articulates its concepts but also provides successful implementation pathways and accelerates the shift from linear to circular models. Environmental education accelerates the transition to sustainable development and challenges linear economic models (D'Amato et al., 2017). Education remains the primary social catalyst for changing dominant lifestyles, knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral patterns (Kosta et al., 2025). Students' social behavior and understanding of sustainability are influenced by programs that prioritize experiential, practical knowledge (Andrews, 2015). In this regard, the educational workshops run by the public company "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade can be seen as a hands-on introduction to the tenets of the circular economy. One such example is planting in biodegradable cardboard pots that children take home to monitor the plants' growth and development; this introduces children to materials that return to the natural cycle rather than ending up as waste. Additionally, the "catch-and-release" exercise teaches children the fundamentals of the appropriate use of natural resources, namely that their use should be balanced with population renewal and conservation rather than leading to irreversible depletion. In this way, young people learn the principles of circular thinking, reinforcing the idea that hands-on learning has more lasting impact than purely academic education.

2.2. Components of ecological awareness

Environmental awareness is defined as a set of knowledge, beliefs, emotions, and attitudes that shape an individual's behavior toward the environment (Karadžić, 2012). According to the model developed by Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002), ecological awareness encompasses three main components:

- cognitive-knowledge of ecological concepts, problems, and the causes of the ecological crisis;
- affective -empathy and a sense of connection with nature, as well as the development of personal responsibility; and
- behavioral-specific actions and habits that an individual applies in their daily life.

The cognitive component refers to an individual's ability to identify, explore, analyze, and evaluate ecological problems and issues based on knowledge of ecological and socio-political foundations (Kalmar and Marić Jurišin, 2023). The purpose of this component of ecological awareness is to enable individuals to assess their understanding of natural systems, environmental issues, and problems such as pollution, climate change, loss of biodiversity, and strategies for action, including concepts like sustainable development, and circular economy. A common phenomenon defined as the "value - action gap" occurs precisely between knowledge and action in the form of a discrepancy, implying that informed individuals do not act in accordance with their own knowledge and values (Hungerford and Volk, 1990; Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002). In addition to a fundamental understanding of environmental concepts, the cognitive component includes the capacity to establish causal connections between human actions and environmental conditions, as well as awareness of one's own role in these processes (Hines et al., 1987).

The affective component refers to an individual's emotional relationship with nature, including empathy, respect, aesthetic sensitivity, and a sense of connection to the environment, which can be a primary driver of intrinsic motivation for ecological action. Certain studies show that positive affective experiences in nature during childhood strongly influence the later development of environmentally responsible values and habits (Bogner, 1998). This component of ecological awareness is greatly influenced by growing up with activities that foster the development of an emotional connection with nature, primarily: planting trees, spending time in nature, contact with animals, various ecological workshops, and opportunities to understand the concept of "recycling". Because an emotional bond with nature developed in early childhood frequently precedes and influences the development of the behavioral aspects of environmental awareness, the affective component is regarded as one of the best indicators of long-term environmental behavior (Bogner, 1998).

The behavioral component of ecological awareness includes specific actions, habits, and activities intended to preserve the ecosystem. It concerns a person's willingness and habit to put their knowledge and feelings into practice through tangible actions, including recycling, cutting back on plastic use, protecting plant and animal species, acting responsibly toward them, and taking part in ecological activities. Pro-environmental behavior is a broad term that includes a variety of activities, from activism and involvement in organizations to modifications in private consumer habits and behaviors (Stern, 2000). Among these individual-level behaviors, everyday habits and modeling play a particularly important role in shaping the values of those

around us, especially in educational contexts where adults directly influence children's early understanding of sustainability. Sustainable development does not begin with systems - it begins with individuals who live and model it daily for the youngest generations (Šindić et al., 2025).

Affective and social elements may have a greater impact on behavior than cognitive knowledge alone, due to the complex interplay between these three components, which is neither linear nor unidirectional (Pirmoradi et al., 2021).

2.3. Early development of empathy and relationship with nature

Anthropocentrism, as a global problem, is one of the key factors behind insufficiently developed ecological awareness, which is a prerequisite for preserving the Earth. Ecological education and the appreciation of ecological literacy, as a key to survival and a way out of the ecological crisis, stand out. Environmental education involves acquiring contemporary knowledge, skills, and attitudes about ecology, as well as forming a proper relationship with the environment. It should provide knowledge about the fundamental ecological issues of contemporary society, foster a critical attitude toward the growing degradation of the environment, and highlight the necessity of the rational use of natural resources (Minić and Jovanović, 2019). The researchers have confirmed that the early preschool age has been extremely important for the development of environmental awareness because they believe that environmental education in early childhood has a lifelong impact since this period is crucial for the development of ecological literacy in future adults (Lepičnik Vodopivec and Šindić, 2025).

Through research conducted, Lepičnik Vodopivec and Šindić (2025), found that the reason for the difference between behaviour and knowledge about sustainability in all kindergartens is the specific of early age and the inability of children to fully understand the complexity of the concept of sustainability in all its segments. The experiences of scientists who work with the youngest children show that children up to 10 years old are very capable of accepting many scientific facts, but only on the condition that teachers encourage them to discover these facts themselves, since they are too young to simply memorize them (Matanović, 2003). During each learning session or implementations of new activities related to acquiring knowledge that enriches ecological literacy, the instructor should actively participate, monitor the child's work, ask various questions and follow-up questions that can lead to new conclusions, and ensure that no activity lasts too long, in order to prevent loss of focus and interest.

It is believed that children aged 3 to 7 naturally show interest in and connection with living beings, which provides a solid foundation for developing ecological empathy. Building on such an innate feeling toward nature involves spending time outdoors, creating opportunities for the child to develop imagination and explore the world around them, as well as direct experiences with plants and animals. A clear indicator of successfully fostering healthy habits in a child from the earliest age is the impressions the child shares after activities of this type and their need to convey those impressions to others. These impressions can vary, whether it is excitement from a new experience, concern over a dry leaf on a plant, sadness for an injured animal, or fear of the darkness in the forest, but it is undeniable that reactions to nature and natural phenomena are essential. Children perceive nature as freedom, a space for play and imagination – where leaves become plates, stones turn into cars, and branches transform into magic wands. According to Lepičnik Vodopivec and Šindić (2025), teachers at preschools that are part of the eco-school/eco-kindergarten program play a crucial role in helping children develop sustainable behavior through the use of particular eco-program procedures and activities. These kindergartens not only promote ecological awareness but alsto intergrate sustainable practices into children's daily lives, thus laying the foundations for long-term sustainable behaviour (Lepičnik Vodopivec and Šindić, 2025).

The most significant factors in ecological upbringing and education that operate during childhood, alongside the immediate environment, are primarily the family, preschool institutions, schools, extracurricular activities, and peer groups (Vidosavljević, 2010).

Considering that the family and its environment are the most important factors in personality development, the influence of the family on the development of ecological awareness and education can be both positive and negative. The positive role is evident where there is awareness that the protection, restoration, and improvement of the environment are the responsibility of all people and that environmental education is an integral part of the culture of living. The development of environmental education as an integral part of the culture of living is most effective through setting a personal example. On the other hand, in families where ecological awareness is not developed, children, by mirroring their parents' behavior, treat nature in the same way as their parents.

Children acquire their initial habits and knowledge about their relationship with animals, plants, space, and

the environment they live in from their parents, not only through good examples but also through learning via songs, stories, fairy tales, and other texts, all of which can be more easily understood if connected to outings in nature. The modernization of parenting in the context of media, television, and other information technologies can be directed in a much better way than the current trend, specifically by choosing content about nature, ecology, and similar topics. Additionally, ecological activities through play or social games leave a significant impression on a child, as knowledge gained in this way has a more lasting impact on connecting children with nature.

2.4. Public Enterprise "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade - guardian of ecological values

The large number and diversity of plant and animal species, their communities, and ecosystems make Serbia a "Europe in miniature" and one of the centers of its biological diversity (Aleksić and Jančić, 2006). In accordance with the Law on Nature Protection, and with the aim of preserving Serbia's natural values, measures for the protection and enhancement of species, their populations, natural habitats, and ecosystems are actively being implemented. Protected areas, protected species, and movable protected natural assets have emerged as a direct result of these measures.

Areas with pronounced geological, biological, ecosystem, and/or landscape diversity that are significant as habitats for bird species and other migratory species important under international regulations can be designated as protected areas of general interest (Law on Nature Protection, 2009).

Public Enterprise "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade is the leading company in the management of protected natural resources in the Republic of Serbia, given that the area of protected land it manages amounts to 431,986.97 ha, which constitutes 51.86 % of the total area of protected areas in Serbia. According to data from the Central Register of Protected Areas, 832,953 ha are protected in Serbia, accounting for 9.41 % of the total area of the Republic of Serbia (Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia, status as of July 21, 2025). Within its management jurisdiction, "Srbijašume" LCC Belgrade oversees 57 protected areas, of which 17 are protected areas of local significance covering 5,937.31 ha, and 40 are protected areas of national significance covering 426,049.66 ha.

One of the problems that "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade has indentified through its management of protected areas is the poorly developed awareness of the importance of biodiversity conservation and the poorly informed public regarding the wealth of natural areas the country possesses. The lack of information about biodiversity, the scarcity of content on this topic in official educational programs and curricula, the quality and continuity of reporting in leading national media, as well as insufficient cooperation among relevant institutions and organizations that could collaborate to educate about the importance of biodiversity conservation and raise ecological awareness, are among the main causes of these problems. For this reason, for nearly a decade, "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade has successfully conducted various educational programs on this topic, targeting primarily the youngest children from kindergartens and preschool institutions, as well as older children.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To examine the practical application of the aforementioned principles of environmental education, as well as the need for a more detailed presentation of the results of the environmental education conducted by "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade, an analysis of the educational activities carried out during the reporting period of 2022-2024 is presented. The data were collected based on internal reports from Forest Management Units, or parts of the company, and primarily relate to the number of activities carried out, the educational institutions where the activities took place, and the total number of participants.

As part of the project "Forest in School", which the "Srbijašume" LLC has been successfully implementing in Belgrade for nearly a decade, various educational workshops are held throughout the year. The "Forest in School" project involves marking ecologically significant dates with thematic activities, various ecological actions throughout Serbia in collaboration with local governments and schools or preschool institutions, as well as eco-workshops where, through engaging and interactive presentations, information is shared with children to stimulate their interest in ecology, environmental preservation, the importance of forests, and related topics.

During its regular, pre-scheduled visits to preschools and elementary schools, coordinated with the dynamics of the school year, the professional service of "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade conducts educational workshops on fishing, among other topics. One of the more interesting workshops is "How to Read Fish – How to Determine Where a Fish Lives and What It Eats by the Appearance of Its Body." Through an engaging presentation, students had the opportunity to learn that fish are fully adapted to life in water and to explore the

great diversity in the shape and structure of their bodies. Practical examples demonstrated how the position of the eyes, mouth, fins, and body shape can reveal where a fish lives and what it feeds on. In this way, the workshop aims to introduce children to the richness of fish species and their role in preserving the ecosystem through play and interactive learning. One of the children's favorite activities is the game "Catch and Release," designed to promote recreational fishing as a healthy and educational way to spend time in nature. Through the game, children are introduced to the importance of preserving fish stocks in accordance with the principles of responsible fishing and the significance of returning caught fish to their natural habitat. In this way, the activity is designed to encourage awareness of nature conservation and to develop a proper relationship between humans and the living world in a manner that is acceptable and fun for the youngest.

Representatives of "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade participated in the program "European Researchers' Night," an event that has been held for the 15th time in Serbia under the patronage of the European Commission and simultaneously brings together more than 400 cities in 23 European countries. "European Researchers' Night" is known for its interactive workshops, inspiring scientific challenges, and engaging content that brings the world of science closer to citizens of all generations in a fun way. In the city square in Leskovac, experts from "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade organized creative workshops and educational presentations about nature. Visitors, especially children, enjoyed activities such as educational games, interactive questions, and hands-on tasks. Particular attention was devoted to the planting of seedlings, through which the youngest could learn how important it is to preserve forests and reforest as part of caring for the environment. Through this participation, "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade continues to promote responsible forest management and to bring the values of nature conservation closer to the public as a foundation for sustainable development.

Analysis of the available data determined that, in the period from 2022 to 2024, nearly 200 educational workshops were conducted at the level of "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade. These activities were carried out in various locations and were aimed at different target groups, primarily children of preschool and school age, including participants from kindergarten groups, preschool children, and elementary school students, as well as participants from various educational academies and centers for professional development. According to data from internal reports, approximately 3.000 children of various ages were involved in educational activities during the observed period. In addition to direct educational activities, public information and awareness-raising about the importance of nature conservation and ecological issues were also carried out through various media channels, including television and radio appearances by employees, as well as communication via social networks.

Through workshops, children have the opportunity to expand their knowledge and develop a love for nature. The workshops usually begin with engaging presentations, where the youngest participants can share their observations and past experiences. Then come the creative activities – pantomime, drawing, and making items inspired by nature in craft workshops – and the final and most joyful part is planting seedlings in the institution's yard, provided by "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade. Children experience this segment of the workshop as particularly exciting: they are divided into groups, take shovels, picks, and spades, plant the seedlings, and give each one a name, an activity intended to foster a sense of community, teamwork, and responsibility for nature. Additionally, during the workshops, they plant herbaceous, decorative species in cardboard, environmentally friendly pots that they can take home and continue to monitor as they grow and develop.

In addition to various educational programs, "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade also participates in numerous projects aimed at preserving and improving forest ecosystems, one of which is the "Plant a Tree" project, whose seventh cycle began in the second half of 2025. The goal of this project is to plant an additional 200,000 seedlings across 50 locations in the Republic of Serbia, so that the total number of planted trees reaches 1,200,000. The project is aimed at increasing forest cover, enhancing biodiversity, reducing erosion processes, and contributing to the mitigation of climate change by increasing carbon sequestration capacity. During the afforestation actions, expert teams from "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade from various parts of the company were involved, as well as students of different ages and volunteers. The participation of children in such projects may have multiple significance. From the perspective of ecological pedagogy, direct involvement in the planting process may contribute to the development of ecological awareness, the formation of pro-ecological attitudes, and the adoption of a responsible relationship toward natural resources. Research in the field of education for sustainable development indicates that experiential learning in a natural environment has a stronger and more long-lasting effect compared to purely theoretical instruction. Practical participation in afforestation may help students understand the complexity of forest ecosystems, the

importance of biodiversity, and the role of forests in regulating climatic and hydrological processes. On the other hand, involving children may contribute to strengthening social responsibility and developing civic awareness, as young people engage in activities of public interest from an early age. In this way, a foundation may be created for the formation of generations that will be ready to actively participate in the preservation of natural resources and the implementation of sustainable development principles. In this context, the "Plant a Tree" project represents not only an ecological initiative but also a significant educational and social initiative of strategic importance for the Republic of Serbia.

Table 1 gives a systematic review of the examined activities, including their target populations, scope and their association with the cognitive, affective and behavioral components of environmental awareness.

The recorded activities seem to relate, to varied degrees, to the three elements of this theoretical model when analyzed through it. Workshops such as “How to read fish” are primarily associated with the cognitive component, as they focus on transferring specific factual knowledge about fish species, their habitats, and feeding habits.

Activities that involve direct interaction with nature, such as seedling planting, naming planted plants, and participation in events like “European Researchers’ Night”-appear more closely linked to the affective component, insofar as they may support the formation of emotional connections with the natural environment.

Finally, activities that involve longer engagement or follow up, such as “Catch and Release” and taking home potted plants for care, exhibit attributes related to the behavioral component, as they carry with them a level of ongoing responsibility beyond the workshop itself.

It should be noted that this association between specific activities and components of environmental awareness is based on the authors’ interpretation of the design and content of the activities, informed by the theoretical framework of Stern (2000) rather than on direct measurement of children’s cognitive, affective or behavioral outcomes.

The results should therefore be interpreted as showing the potential of non-formal educational activities of

Table 1
Overview of the analyzed activities

Type of activity	Target group	Scope/Number of participants	Educational characteristics	Cognitive component	Affective component	Behavioral component
"Forest in School" eco-workshops	Preschool and school-age children	Conducted continuously over ~10 years; part of ~200 workshops (2022-2024)	Interactive presentations on ecology; forest protection, biodiversity	Moderate-high	Moderate	-
“How to read fish” workshop	Elementary school childrens	Held during regular scheduled visits	Practical/demonstrative teaching on fish anatomy and habitat	High	-	-
“Catch and release” game	Preschool and school-age children	Recurring activity within fishing workshops	Simulated responsible fishing practice	Moderate	Moderate	High
European Researchers’ night	General public, primarily children	One event (part of event, 400+ cities)	Creative workshops, seedling planting, interactive Q&A	Moderate	High	Moderate
Seedling planting in institutions	Preschool and school-age children	Component of regular workshops (part of ~3,000 participants)	Group teamwork, naming/caring for planted seedling	-	High	Moderate
Take-home potted plants	Preschool and school-age children	Component of regular workshops	Ongoing home-based plant care	-	Moderate	High
"Plant a tree" project	Children, volunteer	Target: 200,000 new seedlings, 50 locations	Direct afforestation participation, experiential learning	Moderate	High	High

"Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade to contribute to environmental awareness, and not as empirical proof of their actual effects on children participating in them. Also, it is interesting to note that individual activities tend to emphasize different aspects of environmental awareness rather than addressing all three simultaneously, while the overall set of activities implemented by "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade – taken as a whole – appears to engage cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions through its combined and diverse design. This is consistent with the view that development of pro-environmental behavior requires a combined engagement of knowledge, emotions, and concrete practice, rather than information alone (Stern, 2000).

4. Conclusions

Given Serbia's long-standing tradition of environmental protection and systematic management of protected areas, led by "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade, it is imperative to emphasize broader social responsibility by actively participating in educating the next generation about environmental issues.

Through initiatives such as "Forest in School," "Plant a Tree," and events like "European Researchers' Night," "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade successfully integrates the three elements of environmental awareness – cognitive, affective, and behavioral – into a distinctive, informal educational approach. Analysis of the educational activities conducted between 2022 and 2024 shows that these initiatives combine workshops that focus on specific knowledge, activities that foster an emotional connection with nature and its elements, and activities aimed at promoting responsible behavior toward natural resources. In this sense, the content and design of the analyzed activities are theoretically well aligned with contemporary frameworks of environmental awareness (Stern, 2000; Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002).

Based on the present analysis, this study is able to demonstrate the diversity, scope, and educational potential of the activities implemented by "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade, and to offer a theoretically grounded interpretation of how these activities may relate to the cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of environmental awareness. It can be assumed that activities like learning, direct contact with nature, planting and caring for plants, and participation in concrete environmental tasks can support the development of various facets of environmental awareness in children. As the available documentation does not include direct empirical measurements of children's knowledge, attitudes or behaviour, these findings should be interpreted as an assessment of the activities' educational potential rather than as evidence of their effects on participants.

Thus, "Srbijašume" LLC Belgrade's involvement aligns with the broader framework of sustainable development and the United Nations Agenda 2030, particularly with regard to objectives related to high-quality education, climate action, and the preservation of life on land (United Nations, 2015). Implemented in collaboration with educational institutions, this form of non-formal environmental education appears to be a promising tool for the sustainable management of natural resources, insofar as it not only supports the direct protection of nature but may also encourage the development of a more environmentally conscious society.

Future research should be based on these findings by directly assessing participants – through observation, interviews, questionnaires or other suitable instruments – to empirically test the extent to which these activities actually lead to measurable changes in children's environmental knowledge, attitudes and behaviour.

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Ekološka svest u ranom uzrastu: ključni element održivog društva i primer dobre prakse

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I Z V O D

Usvajanje ekoloških vrednosti u ranom uzrastu, kao što su briga o prirodi, poštovanje biljnog i životinjskog sveta i racionalno korišćenje resursa, stvara čvrstu osnovu koju je kasnije u životu teže promeniti. Najpovoljniji period za lako i brzo usvajanje pozitivnih stavova prema životnoj sredini i njenom očuvanju jeste rano detinjstvo i predškolski uzrast. Razumevanje sopstvene uloge u zaštiti prirode i razvoj ekološke pismenosti i svesti kod dece mogući su ne samo kroz formalno obrazovanje već i kroz neformalne oblike edukacije, kao što su kampovi, eko-radionice, boravak u prirodi i različite interaktivne aktivnosti na otvorenom. Jedan od značajnih primera dobre prakse u oblasti ekološkog obrazovanja, posebno kada je reč o značaju i očuvanju šuma, jeste Javno preduzeće za gazdovanje šumama „Srbijašume" Beograd, koje, pored obavljanja svojih osnovnih delatnosti, radi i na podizanju ekološke svesti građana. Preduzeće gazduje šumama u državnoj svojini i šumskim zemljištem na površini od 892.029 ha, obavlja stručno-savetodavne poslove u šumama sopstvenika na površini od 1.221.265 ha, gazduje lovištima i upravlja ribarskim i zaštićenim područjima. Cilj ovog rada je analiza doprinosa neformalnog ekološkog obrazovanja koje sprovodi JP „Srbijašume" Beograd razvoju kognitivne, afektivne i bihevioralne komponente ekološke svesti kod dece predškolskog i školskog uzrasta, kao i ukazivanje na značaj obrazovanja u oblasti ekologije, zaštite i očuvanja šuma i prirode u celini.