

WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE: ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERSPECTIVES

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1 THE WATER PROBLEMS OR THE URGENCY OF A NEW PARADIGM

The approach to the water theme is placed taking into account its environmental administration along the times (figure 1) - Maksimovic and Tejada – Guibert (2001).

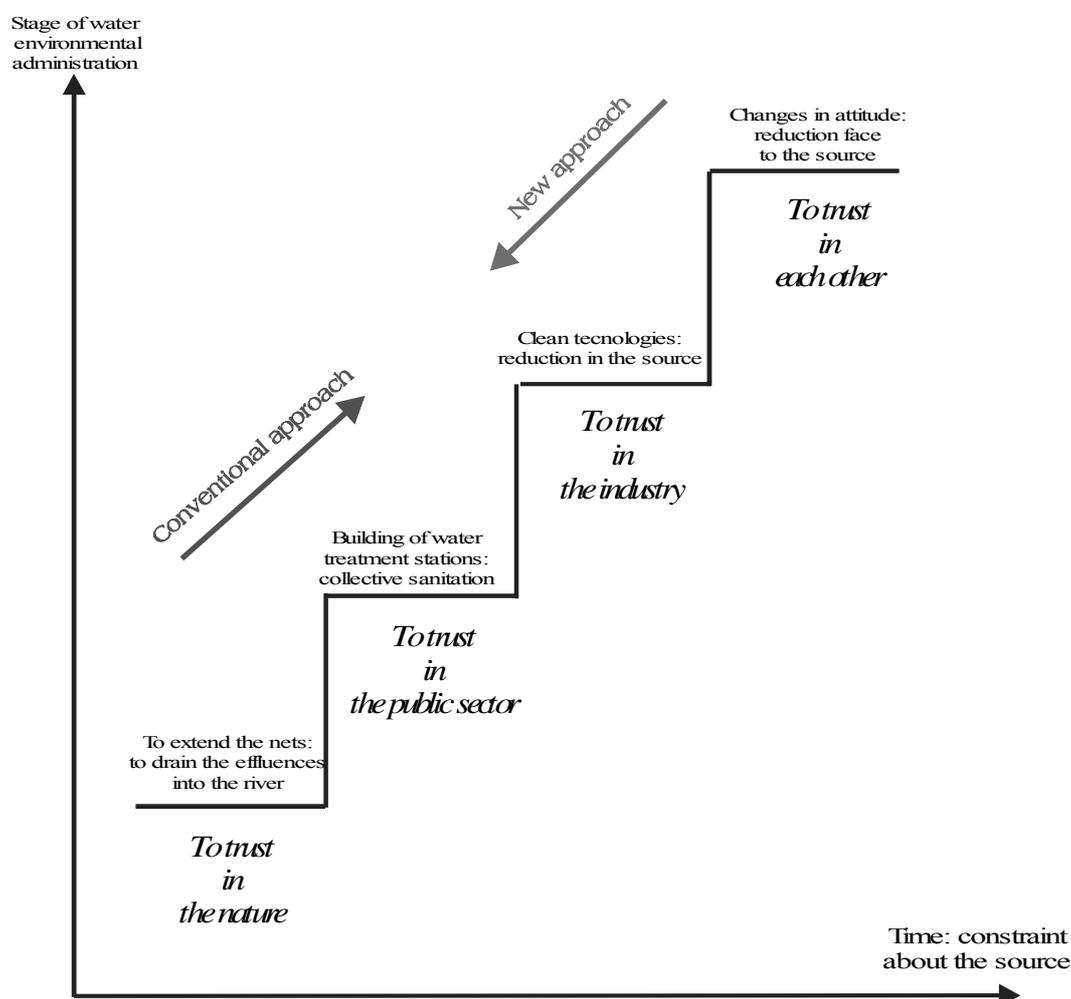


Figure 1 – Schematic presentation of the main stages of the water environmental administration

The first three stages show that the strategies to prevent the water use problems are generally insufficient, badly conceptualized, and normally set down in an approach that privileges the structural solutions.

A fourth phase in the water use politics and in the reduction of the pollution presupposes, besides the transformations resulting from the application of new production technologies, a more active role on the part of the citizens:

- the constitution of pressure groups starting from very informed and participative social nets, in order to legitimate the intervention in the formulation or modification of the water politics, to demand a better acting in what concerns the environmental parameters on the part of the public sector;
- the local collectivities show a growing need to dispose from information about the water on its multiple aspects – it is an essential condition the transparency in this proceeding and in the one of the environmental public politics so that the population can participate in the water resource administration;
- the resolution of the water problem demands, that way, a new transparency and responsibility culture and a high degree of co-partner discipline.

This frame of present reference (in the ambit of the environment, in general, and in the hydric resources, in particular) enhances 2 fundamental ideas:

- the need to invest in the information broadcasting in communication channels appropriated to the sought population, based on innovative strategies of information broadcasting; and on the other hand;
- the development of a culture of shared responsibility based on the local agents' participation in what concerns the definition, implementation and administration of environmental projects – OCDE (1996).

The information becomes this way a fundamental instrument for the civil society's participation in the environmental matters. The Environmental education appears in this context as a privileged conveyance since it is “a formation and information process directed to the development of the critical conscience about the environmental matters, and to activities that lead the communities to participate in the preservation of the environmental balance.” (National Council for the Environment, 1991) - Nova (1994).

2 THE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION: BRIEF CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

The Environmental Education can be defined as a permanent process in which the individuals and the communities acquire conscience of their environment and learn the knowledge, the values, the competences, the experience and also the determination that will qualify them for acting, individual or collectively, in the resolution of the present and future environmental problems – Nova (1994).

The goals for the environmental education were internationally defined in the Belgrade Conferences (1975) and in the Tblissi ones (1977), as a way of developing certain attitudes and competences that aid the individuals and the social groups to:

- not only to take conscience of the global environment and of its inherent problems but also to create a new sensibility to those matters - the act of acquiring knowledge;

- the acquisition of an environmental understanding, of its problems, of the man's presence in that environment and of the responsibility and critical role that are due to him - the knowledge;
- the acquisition of social values, of alert interest feelings for the environment and a strong motivation in the sense of an active participation in the environment protection and improvement - the attitude;
- to acquire the necessary competences for the solution of the environmental problems - the competences;
- to evaluate the steps and the education programs in what concerns environment, ecological, political, economic, social, aesthetic and educational agents - the evaluation capacity;
- to develop society's sense of responsibility and the feeling of urgency face to the environment problems, so that they can guarantee the real increment of the most appropriate measures to the resolution of those problems - the participation - Alexandre and Diogo, (1990).

To reach the purposes of the Environmental Education, it is necessary to be always conscious that this is a complete educational work and that, therefore, it should accomplish all the phases of the process. The integrant phases of the Environmental Education are four:

- the sensitization - it is necessary that the used procedures produce emotional impact, that is, wake up concerns, alert for erroneous behaviours and request the people's involvement and participation, throwing into relief a situation, or a group of situations, that form an environmental problem;
- the mobilization - it aims at guiding people, institutions and communities to make available efforts in the sense of presenting resolution alternatives for a certain problem, what demands individual and collective action, everybody's involvement and participation and the execution of solution proposals;
- the information - it is indispensable to attribute technical consistency to the work in environmental education. Whatever the situation is, it should be approached with the right technical knowledge about the subject, by specialists, adapting the language to the involved population. This approach should compose an amount of information that can be related to the reality of the place, that is to say, they should be contextualized, associated to what the public already knows or does; for that it has always to be sustained in complete and up to date theoretical and practical information, which gives safety and credibility to the presented proposals;
- the action. The most important phase, because it is the practical execution of the wished environmental projects. This action means a group formed through organization, systematic action and proposals continuity, decentralization and incentive to the groups and communities' self-management.

3 WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE – A PERSPECTIVE ON THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POINT OF VIEW

The European Parliament and the Council Directive that establishes the Action Framework for the European Union Water Politics, Water Framework Directive, has an aim: to establish a common frame for the protection of the interior waters, surface waters and underground ones, of the transition waters and of the European Union coastal waters, aiming to prevent the

degradation and to protect the waters quality, to promote the water maintainable use and to contribute for the mitigation of the floods and of the droughts effects.

The Water Framework Directive fixes four aims hierarchised this way:

- the environment protection;
- the provisioning of drinking-water to the populations;
- the provisioning of water for other uses;
- the reduction of the floods and of the droughts' consequences.

It is essential to make converge these aims in space and time in a way to:

- prevent any degradation and improve the quality of the ecosystems as a whole;
- promote the maintainable use of the fresh water organizing its long term protection;
- to assure the fulfilment of the international agreements in what concerns the protection of the continental and marine waters.
- The materialization of these aims will be obtained by the priority given by the several nations in the elaboration of action programs adapted to the local and regional conditions: the final decision will be taken at the possible closest level of the use positions or of the degradation of the aquatic ways.

The Water Framework Directive wants to give effective answers to invert the growing deterioration of the waters quality, introducing innovative aspects in the politics of waters administration, enhancing the public's consultation and participation. In this sense, the article 14th refers - point 1- that "*the several States shall encourage the active involvement of all interested parties in the implementation of this Directive, in private in the production, review and updating of the river basin management plans.*" The success of the present directive depends on the close and coherent collaboration between the several States and the Community local authorities, and it also requests the public's information, consultation and participation, including the users. This means that the several States should present actions of:

- diffusion of the Water Framework Directive;
- development of the access structure to the information related to the implementation of Water Framework Directive;
- definition of mechanisms to promote the public's participation;

4 THE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: THE CHALLENGES FACE TO WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE

The systematic analysis of Water Framework Directive reveals an almost absolute absence in what concerns the environmental education role and intervention forms. The information and the sensitization but above all the local communities' participation in the implementation of the Programme of measures, are defined in the article 11th, namely through some supplemental measures presented (part B of the additament VI) - examples:

“... (vi) codes of good practice;

- (vii) recreation and restoration of wetlands areas...;
- (xv) educational projects;
- (xvi) research, development and demonstration projects...”

It emerges now a new challenge related to the methodology to be adopted in order to realize the practices of the environmental education in the materialization of the Water Framework Directive current programs implementation at a national level. Independently from the models that will be adopted face to the presented projects, it emerges a group of presuppositions that should be an object of study in the ambit of Water Framework Directive and of the planning instruments of the hydric resources:

- the environmental education should be made taking into account the local, regional and national environmental problems, and at its turn to extend to the European Community's contexts and this way framed in the ambit of Water Framework Directive;
- the water theme should be inserted in the educational practice in a systematic and coordinate way, simulating problems, analyzing situations, reinforcing habits or developing attitudes, motivating, this way, a more active participation in the matters related to Water Framework Directive. That presupposes the coordination among the institutions entrusted with the put in practice of the hydric resources politics defined by Water Framework Directive and the specifically educational politics; - it is fundamental increasing and diversifying the offers and programs of environmental education in what concerns the hydric resources (besides the school context) in a way to contribute to the generalization of processes and in the widest mobilization to the need of a new society face to the purposes stated in Water Framework Directive;
- the participation of the Non-Government Organizations, more specifically, Environment Associations, Consumer Associations, of the several Public Interest Associations and Sector-based ones, namely those related to Agriculture, Industry, Energy and Tourism, as well as the organizations that represent several water users; it should be reinforced, not only at the level of debate of the hydric resources administration plans, or the representation in the respective board of directors, but also in the construction and administration of structures linked to the water provisioning and basic sanitation and in the control of the public works.

The environmental education should promote and guarantee the active participation of the whole interested parts in the execution of the Water Framework Directive what will allow to execute local actions that lead to an improvement of the global hydrologic system, and this way – *thinking globally and acting locally*.

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