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### **THE PEDAGOGICAL POTENTIAL OF THE NATURE CORNER IN THE EDUCATION AND UPBRINGING OF CHILDREN**

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#### **Abstract:**

This article examines the pedagogical potential of the nature corner in the education and upbringing of preschool and primary school children. The nature corner is considered not merely as a decorative element of the educational environment, but as an important pedagogical space that contributes to children's cognitive activity, ecological culture, aesthetic perception, labor skills, responsibility, and social-emotional development. The article analyzes the educational significance of children's direct interaction with nature, caring for plants, working with natural materials, observing natural phenomena, and conducting simple experiments. It also reveals the possibilities of forming kindness, carefulness, observation skills, independent thinking, and ecological responsibility through activities organized in the nature corner. The study uses methods of pedagogical observation, theoretical analysis, comparison, and generalization. At the end of the article, methodological recommendations are provided for the effective organization and use of the nature corner in educational practice.



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**Keywords:** nature corner, child upbringing, ecological education, preschool education, pedagogical potential, observation, aesthetic education, labor education, ecological culture.

### Introduction

In contemporary education, the issue of creating a developing, meaningful, and emotionally rich environment for children is becoming increasingly important. Education is no longer understood only as the transmission of ready-made knowledge from teacher to child. It is also considered a process of forming personality, values, social behavior, responsibility, creativity, and the ability to understand the surrounding world. In this regard, the educational environment plays a decisive role, especially in preschool and primary school age, when the child's worldview, emotional attitude, habits, and elementary scientific concepts are actively formed.

Preschool and early school age is a sensitive period for developing curiosity, observation, emotional responsiveness, and moral attitudes toward the world. At this stage, children perceive reality mainly through direct experience, movement, play, observation, imitation, and practical activity. Therefore, educational work with children should be based on vivid impressions, real objects, emotional involvement, and practical actions. One of the effective means of organizing such education is the nature corner.

A nature corner is a specially organized part of a group room or classroom where children can observe plants, natural materials, seasonal changes, and sometimes small living organisms under the guidance of a teacher. It may include indoor plants, seeds, leaves, stones, shells, cones, herbariums, aquariums, terrariums, weather calendars, seasonal displays, pictures of animals and plants, and materials for simple experiments. However, the nature corner should not be viewed only as



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a collection of natural objects. It is a pedagogical environment that provides children with opportunities for observation, communication, practical activity, experimentation, aesthetic perception, and moral education.

The relevance of the topic is determined by the growing need to form ecological consciousness and responsible attitudes toward nature from early childhood. Today, environmental problems, climate change, irrational use of natural resources, and the weakening of children's direct contact with nature make ecological education one of the important tasks of modern pedagogy. Richard Louv emphasizes that modern children are increasingly separated from the natural world, and this separation negatively affects their emotional, cognitive, and social development.[4] Therefore, educational institutions should create conditions that bring children closer to nature and help them understand its value.

The nature corner is especially valuable because it connects education with real life. When children water plants, observe the growth of seeds, compare leaves, notice changes in weather, or take care of natural materials, they do not simply receive information; they acquire knowledge through personal experience. John Dewey argued that real education takes place through experience and meaningful activity.[5] From this point of view, the nature corner fully corresponds to the principles of experiential learning.

The pedagogical value of the nature corner is also related to the development of speech and thinking. During observation, children ask questions, describe objects, compare phenomena, and express their impressions. In such activities, the child's vocabulary expands, coherent speech develops, and thinking becomes more concrete and logical. According to L. S. Vygotsky, the development of thinking and speech is closely connected with social interaction and guided activity.[8] The teacher's questions, explanations, and dialogue with children during activities in the nature corner create favorable conditions for this development.



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The purpose of this article is to analyze the pedagogical potential of the nature corner in the education and upbringing of children and to identify its role in cognitive, moral, ecological, aesthetic, labor, and social development.

The objectives of the article are as follows: to clarify the concept and educational essence of the nature corner; to analyze its influence on different aspects of child development; to reveal the methods of organizing children's activities in the nature corner; to identify pedagogical conditions for its effective use; and to provide methodological recommendations for teachers.

### Methods

The study is based on theoretical and pedagogical analysis of scientific literature, comparison of pedagogical approaches, generalization of educational experience, and observation of children's activities in a nature-based educational environment. Since the article has a theoretical-methodological character, the main attention is paid to analyzing the educational functions and practical possibilities of the nature corner.

The theoretical basis of the study includes the ideas of experiential learning, developmental education, ecological education, and child-centered pedagogy. Dewey's concept of learning through experience is important for understanding the nature corner as a space where children gain knowledge through direct contact with natural objects.[1] Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development helps to explain the teacher's role in guiding children's observation and practical activities.[9] Montessori's pedagogical approach is also relevant because it emphasizes the importance of a prepared environment, independence, sensory development, and respect for the child's natural activity.[12]

The method of theoretical analysis was used to study pedagogical, psychological, and methodological sources related to environmental education, preschool



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education, and children's development. The comparison method made it possible to identify common and specific features of different pedagogical approaches to using nature in education. The generalization method was used to summarize the pedagogical functions of the nature corner and formulate practical recommendations.

Pedagogical observation was considered as one of the most important methods for studying children's behavior in the nature corner. Observation allows the teacher to identify children's interests, emotional reactions, level of independence, attitude toward living objects, communication skills, and cognitive activity. For example, some children show strong interest in watering plants, others prefer to observe leaves or stones, while others ask questions about animals and seasons. These observations help the teacher organize differentiated activities according to children's needs and interests.

In addition, the study uses a functional approach. According to this approach, the nature corner is analyzed not only as a physical space, but also as a means of performing different educational functions: cognitive, moral, ecological, aesthetic, labor, communicative, and emotional. This makes it possible to reveal the multidimensional pedagogical potential of the nature corner.

The article also relies on the principle of integration. Activities in the nature corner can be connected with different educational areas: speech development, mathematics, visual arts, environmental studies, labor education, and moral education. This interdisciplinary character increases the educational effectiveness of the nature corner and makes it a universal pedagogical tool.

### **Results**

The analysis shows that the nature corner has broad pedagogical potential and can influence several aspects of children's development. First of all, it contributes to



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cognitive development. Children learn to observe, compare, classify, describe, and draw simple conclusions. They become familiar with the properties of plants, natural materials, weather phenomena, seasonal changes, and the basic needs of living organisms. For example, when children observe how a seed turns into a sprout, they begin to understand the process of growth. When they compare dry and wet soil, they learn about the importance of water. When they observe leaves of different shapes and colors, they develop the ability to compare and classify.

Observation is one of the main forms of activity in the nature corner. It develops attention, patience, visual perception, and thinking. Unlike a short explanation, observation teaches children to notice changes gradually. This is very important because many natural processes are slow and require regular attention. Through observation, children understand that nature changes according to certain laws. This develops elementary scientific thinking.

The second important result is the development of ecological culture. Ecological education begins not with complex theoretical concepts, but with simple actions and emotional experience. A child who waters a flower, cleans its leaves, or observes its growth begins to understand that living organisms need care. This creates the basis for a careful and responsible attitude toward nature. According to E. O. Wilson's biophilia hypothesis, human beings have a natural tendency to connect with living systems and nature.[10] The nature corner supports and develops this natural tendency from childhood.

The third result is moral education. Activities in the nature corner form responsibility, kindness, patience, compassion, and diligence. When children are entrusted with caring for plants, they learn that their actions have consequences. If they forget to water a plant, it may become weak; if they care for it regularly, it grows better. Such experiences are morally significant because they teach children responsibility not through abstract moralizing, but through real action.



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The fourth result is labor education. Simple labor activities such as watering plants, planting seeds, loosening soil, wiping leaves, arranging natural materials, and cleaning the nature corner develop practical skills. These activities teach children accuracy, order, independence, and respect for work. Labor in the nature corner is emotionally attractive because children see the results of their efforts. For example, after planting seeds, they can observe how their work leads to growth and flowering.

The fifth result is speech development. The nature corner provides many opportunities for developing vocabulary and coherent speech. Children learn words related to plants, animals, seasons, colors, shapes, sizes, textures, and actions. They describe what they see, answer questions, compare objects, tell short stories, and express their emotions. For instance, a teacher may ask: “What color are the leaves?”, “What changed in the plant today?”, “Why do we need to water it?”, “How can we help the flower grow?” Such questions stimulate speech and thinking.

The sixth result is aesthetic education. Nature is one of the richest sources of beauty. Flowers, leaves, stones, shells, branches, seeds, and seasonal compositions help children perceive colors, harmony, shapes, and natural patterns. A well-organized nature corner develops aesthetic taste and emotional sensitivity. Children learn to see beauty in simple natural objects and to value the harmony of the natural world.

The seventh result is emotional development. Contact with nature has a calming and positive effect on children. Plants and natural materials create a warm, comfortable, and emotionally safe atmosphere in the classroom or group room. Children often feel joy, surprise, interest, and care when they interact with natural objects. These emotions make learning more meaningful and memorable.



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The eighth result is social development. Many activities in the nature corner are organized collectively. Children work together, distribute responsibilities, discuss observations, help each other, and share impressions. This develops cooperation, communication, mutual respect, and the ability to follow common rules. Thus, the nature corner supports not only individual development, but also the formation of social behavior.

The results of the analysis also show that the effectiveness of the nature corner depends on several pedagogical conditions. It should be safe, accessible, aesthetically organized, regularly updated, and methodically integrated into the educational process. If the nature corner is used only as decoration, its pedagogical potential remains limited. It becomes truly effective when children are actively involved in observation, care, experimentation, discussion, and creative work.

### **Discussion**

The nature corner can be considered a small model of the natural world within an educational institution. Its importance lies in the fact that it makes nature close, visible, and accessible to children. In urban conditions, many children have limited opportunities to communicate with nature. They spend much time indoors, use digital devices, and often perceive nature only through pictures or screens. In such conditions, the nature corner becomes a necessary means of restoring direct contact between the child and the natural world.

The pedagogical potential of the nature corner is connected with its multifunctionality. It can be used in different types of activities: observation, conversation, didactic games, experiments, labor tasks, art activities, storytelling, and environmental projects. For example, in speech development lessons, children may describe a plant or tell a story about a flower. In mathematics, they may count leaves, compare the sizes of stones, or classify seeds. In art, they may draw flowers



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or create crafts from natural materials. In environmental education, they may study the needs of plants and the importance of water and light. Such integration increases the educational value of the nature corner.

The teacher's role is central in organizing activities in the nature corner. Children's observation should be guided but not overly controlled. The teacher should encourage children to ask questions, make assumptions, compare objects, and express their own opinions. The teacher should not immediately give ready answers to every question. It is often more useful to guide children toward independent discovery. For example, instead of saying, "The plant needs light," the teacher may ask, "Why do you think this plant grows better near the window?" This approach develops problem-based thinking.

The nature corner also allows the teacher to implement the principle of age appropriateness. For younger children, activities should be simple and emotionally attractive: watering flowers, touching safe natural materials, observing colors, and naming objects. Older preschool and primary school children can perform more complex tasks: planting seeds, keeping a nature calendar, conducting simple experiments, comparing conditions for plant growth, and making conclusions. Thus, the same nature corner can be used at different developmental levels.

Another important aspect is the formation of ecological responsibility. Environmental education is effective when children participate in real actions. Abstract conversations about protecting nature may be difficult for young children to understand. However, caring for a plant, feeding birds in winter, saving water during watering, and keeping the nature corner clean are concrete actions that children can understand and perform. These actions gradually form ecological habits.

The nature corner also supports inclusive education. Many activities in it can be adapted to children with different abilities. Children who find it difficult to express



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themselves verbally may show interest through practical actions. Children with high activity levels may be involved in labor tasks. Children who are shy may feel more comfortable observing and caring for plants. Therefore, the nature corner can become a flexible educational space that supports individual differences.

However, the organization of a nature corner also requires responsibility. Safety is the first requirement. Plants should not be poisonous, thorny, or allergenic. If animals or fish are included, sanitary and ethical rules must be strictly observed. Children should be taught to treat living organisms carefully. The teacher must supervise all activities and ensure that children understand the rules of interaction with natural objects.

The nature corner should also be regularly renewed. Seasonal changes are an excellent opportunity for education. In autumn, children can observe colorful leaves, fruits, seeds, and cones. In winter, they can discuss snow, cold weather, evergreen plants, and bird feeding. In spring, they can plant seeds and observe germination. In summer, they can study flowers, insects, and garden plants. Seasonal renewal makes the nature corner dynamic and keeps children's interest alive.

One of the most effective tools is the nature calendar. Children can mark sunny, cloudy, rainy, snowy, windy, or warm days. This develops observation, memory, and understanding of time. It also helps children notice regularities in nature. The nature calendar can be combined with conversations, drawings, and simple weather reports.

Creative tasks also play an important role. Children may draw plants, make applications from leaves, create compositions from natural materials, write or tell short stories, and prepare small exhibitions. This connects ecological education with creativity and aesthetic development. David Sobel emphasizes that children's environmental education should begin with emotional connection and local natural



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experience rather than abstract global problems.[7] The nature corner provides exactly such a close and emotionally meaningful experience.

The discussion of the nature corner's pedagogical possibilities shows that it should be included in the general educational plan. It is not enough to create a beautiful corner once. The teacher should plan weekly and monthly activities, define educational objectives, involve children in responsibilities, and evaluate developmental results. Parents can also be involved. For example, children may bring safe natural materials from home, grow plants with their family, or share observations about nature. Cooperation with parents strengthens the educational influence of the nature corner.

Thus, the nature corner is a powerful pedagogical resource when it is organized systematically, safely, creatively, and purposefully. It develops not only knowledge about nature, but also the child's personality, values, emotions, behavior, and practical skills.

### Conclusion

The nature corner has significant pedagogical potential in the education and upbringing of children. It creates favorable conditions for the comprehensive development of the child's personality by combining cognitive, moral, ecological, aesthetic, labor, communicative, and emotional education. Through direct interaction with natural objects, children gain knowledge not in an abstract form, but through personal experience, observation, practical activity, and emotional involvement.

The study shows that the nature corner contributes to the development of curiosity, observation, speech, thinking, responsibility, kindness, patience, and ecological culture. Children learn to care for plants, notice changes in nature, understand cause-and-effect relationships, and respect living organisms. These qualities are



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important not only for ecological education, but also for the general moral and social development of the child.

The educational effectiveness of the nature corner depends on its correct organization and systematic use. It should be safe, accessible, regularly updated, aesthetically attractive, and connected with different educational activities. Teachers should use observation, practical work, simple experiments, didactic games, creative tasks, and conversations. They should also encourage children's independence, questions, and emotional response.

The nature corner should not be treated as a passive decorative element. It is an active pedagogical environment that helps children learn about the world, develop positive qualities, and form a respectful attitude toward nature. In modern education, where ecological awareness and responsible behavior are becoming increasingly important, the nature corner can serve as one of the most effective means of early ecological and moral education.

In conclusion, the systematic use of the nature corner in preschool and primary education contributes to the harmonious development of children and prepares them to become caring, responsible, observant, and environmentally conscious members of society.

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