



## **Environmental approach and anthropocentrism in environmental studies of Hungarian higher education with special respect to the natural hazards**

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Hungarian higher education has not yet received enough attention in the review and reform of its environmental approach. Yet, in my opinion, detailed analysis and monitoring would be just as important as it is in public education. So far, my studies in the field have been based on a survey of 600 university students. Unfortunately, the results confirmed my earlier suspicion that when it comes to the relationship of man and nature, and the role that humans play, many students do not possess the scientifically acceptable view that they should acquire at higher and public educational institutions. Thus, I inferred that there are serious problems with the environmental approach in higher education. The task is thus not only to create, improve, and widen the scope of environmental education, but also to find a comprehensive solution to forming the environmental attitudes of those who enter the real world through the gates of higher education. My studies include sampling and analyzing data collected from university students. This can potentially answer questions such as:

- the effectiveness of environmental education in primary and secondary education (the study involves first year undergraduates between 18 and 20 years of age)
- the success of environmental higher education and the quality of exiting graduates (the study involves final year undergraduates between 21 and 23 years of age)

The following points shall be important to examine the practical side of the study:

- how typical the answers are (answers based on stereotypes or misconceptions, which are not necessarily acceptable when placed in the wider scheme of environmental systems)
- how well students comprehend the issues at hand, its context, and how well they can propose short and long-term solutions
- what priorities they set up in case of dealing or possibly not dealing with various environmental conflicts

I plan a qualitative, empirical study (explicit). The research strategy will be deductive, to reveal parallels. Thus I plan to base my conclusion on constructive theories. There is no need to separate a control group since I will restrict the sample to students of environmental studies - consequently a formation of environmental attitudes is to be expected. The methodology shall include a nationwide questionnaire coupled with detailed interviews. I plan to focus especially on the prevalence of anthropocentric attitudes, since my previous studies have led me to believe that this is often the driving force behind the development of stereotypes and misconceptions.

The reasons behind choosing the groups involved in the study are twofold. First, I wanted to focus on students who are “directly involved” in environmental issues (as future decision-makers). Second, due to the nature of their studies (including the lesson plans and credit requirements), they should acquire professional expertise regarding environmental issues, be familiar with the processes, effects, and relationships of environmental systems, and be able to present alternative solutions. The main question is thus the following: can those who finish their studies in the field truly be considered experts (as is to be expected from the requirements)? The following hypotheses shall help us uncover the answer:

1st hypothesis: The students’ environmental attitudes, and the potential of pollution-reduction is not sufficient, but years of higher education (progressively from beginning to end) leads to a clear positive change.

2nd hypothesis: Students view the causes, effects, and potential solutions of environmental issues with an anthropocentric attitude.

3rd hypothesis: The ecological attitudes of students mirrors the unsustainable nature of society as a whole.

4th hypothesis: There are several misconceptions in students’ attitudes that were taken

from public opinion, while we can also show clear deficiencies upon examining specific problems.

Upon conclusion of the study, the introduction of a complex education plan will likely be recommended.