

N. Malchenko¹, I. Martynova², T. Miklush³

School of Business of BSU, Minsk, Belarus,

¹nmalchenko@sbmt.by, ²martynova@sbmt.by, ³miklush@tut.by

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY FROM STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE AND ITS FORMATION IN THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION

Under consideration are the issues of environmental education and the need for broader promotion of the concept of environmental responsibility through teaching in a business school, which will contribute to the development of an environmental and safety culture among future managers, as well as the implementation of sustainable development principles into business practices and business processes after their graduation. The article provides the definition of environmental responsibility and describes its components; it presents the results of an empirical study carried out by the authors among SB BSU students and determines the possibilities for more effective inclusion of environmental responsibility ideas into the teaching process.

Keywords: *environmental responsibility, corporate social responsibility, professional competencies, business education.*

Н. С. Мальченко¹, И. В. Мартынова², Т. А. Миклуш³

Институт бизнеса БГУ, Минск, Беларусь,

¹nmalchenko@sbmt.by, ²martynova@sbmt.by, ³miklush@tut.by

ЭКОЛОГИЧЕСКАЯ ОТВЕТСТВЕННОСТЬ ГЛАЗАМИ СТУДЕНТОВ И ЕЕ ФОРМИРОВАНИЕ В ПРОЦЕССЕ ОБУЧЕНИЯ

В статье рассматриваются вопросы экологического образования и необходимость более широкого продвижения концепции экологической ответственности в процессе преподавания в бизнес-школе, что будет способствовать развитию экологической культуры и культуры безопасности у будущих менеджеров, а также внедрению принципов устойчивого развития в бизнес-практику и бизнес-процессы ими после окончания вуза. Дается определение экологической ответственности и описание ее составляющих, приводятся данные эмпирического исследования, проведенного авторами среди студентов ИБ БГУ, а также определяются возможности более эффективного внедрения идей экологической ответственности в процесс обучения.

Ключевые слова: *экологическая ответственность, корпоративная социальная ответственность, профессиональные компетенции, бизнес-образование*

It is a well-known fact that the planet has long been in a state of environmental stress. The information about the causes and consequences of various global, regional and local environmental problems is increasingly available to the public and beyond doubt. However, the concept of environmental responsibility, of both citizens and businesses, calls for attention, especially in the context of training future managers and economists whose task will be to ensure the promotion and implementation of sustainable development goals.

The concept of environmental legal responsibility. Environmental legal responsibility (or environmental obligations) is a complex legal institution that combines the norms of environmental legislation that define violations and applicable types of liability and the norms of administrative, criminal, civil, and labor legislation that establish penalties for non-compliance.

Environmental legal responsibility in Belarus covers the compliance with the following:

- the general environmental protection requirements established by President;
- the requirements of environmental standards and regulations;
- the requirements of environmental protection regulations [1].

A common type of liability for environmental violations in Belarus is administrative liability. The updated “Code of the Republic of Belarus on Administrative Offenses dated January 6, 2021 No. 91-Z” has been in force in this country since 03.01.2021, which provides details regulatory legal acts in the field of environmental protection. In accordance with Chapter 16. “Administrative offenses against environmental safety, the environment and the management of natural resources,” violation of legal requirements and norms is subject to a fine. The chapter includes 45 types of offenses, and the maximum penalties are as follows:

- for an individual - 20 basic units (BU);
- for an individual entrepreneur – 50 BU;
- for a legal entity - 100 BU [2].

The concept of environmental responsibility as part of CSR. In the relatively recent past, the activities of enterprises, companies and organizations were aimed exclusively at achieving one goal – the of maximization profit. However, with the emergence of the triple bottom line, which requires businesses to be responsible for their social and environmental impact and to strive for sustainability alongside profit, organizations have been guided by the principles of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its three pillars of “profit, people, and planet”.

Thus, environmental responsibility of business is one of the main components and common forms of corporate social responsibility of companies. Environmental responsibility is the belief that organizations should behave as environmentally friendly as possible and take environmental initiatives.

Companies that seek to take environmental responsibility can do so in a number of ways [3]:

1. Reduction of harmful practices (minimization of activities that harm the environment): reducing pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, use of single-use plastics, wasteful water consumption and general waste production.

2. Energy efficiency and energy consumption management: increasing dependence on renewable energy, sustainable resources and recycled or partially recycled materials.

3. Offset of the negative impact on the environment: planting trees, funding research and donating to environmental causes.

Environmental responsibility in this understanding is voluntary. Moreover, being environmentally responsible is fully consistent with sustainable development goals.

Research question and methodology. University students do not always realize the importance of environmental responsibility in their future professional activities. We assume that some students have insufficient knowledge about ER. So, is their level of environmental responsibility sufficient? We also believe that academic disciplines addressing environmental topics have significant potential for developing environmental responsibility.

This study has the following **objectives**:

1. Identifying the level of environmental responsibility awareness among students of the School of Business of BSU, as well as the extent of their everyday behavioral practice compliance with the concepts of environmental responsibility and sustainable development.

2. Determining the potential of academic disciplines taught at the School of Business of BSU in increasing the level of environmental responsibility among students, in developing skills of environmentally responsible behavior in future managers and economists.

The empirical research is quantitative and qualitative in nature. The survey is conducted among SBB students via Google Forms and consists of 22 questions. The questions are obligatory and include

the following types: one from a list and several from a list with an “other” option, as well as free-response questions. The questionnaire covers the following areas:

- students’ awareness of the “environmental responsibility” concept and of its content;
- the need to promote environmental responsibility issues at the university and in society as a whole;
- awareness of global, regional and local environmental problems, ecological footprint, current legislation and offenses in this area, international organizations working in the field of environmental protection;
- compliance of students’ everyday activities with the concept of environmental responsibility and sustainable development.

To achieve the second goal, a content analysis of the relevant syllabi is carried out, as well as an analysis of teaching methods. The study is descriptive and qualitative in nature.

Research results and discussion. The number of students who took part in the survey was 45 people; the study was a pilot one and requires continuation. The surveyed students are aged 16-18 (55.6 %) and 19-21 (40 %). Since the sample is limited, the conclusions should not be generalized to all economics students at the university. However, the results are worthy of discussion and show certain trends.

Firstly, it should be noted that the awareness of survey participants about environmental responsibility is high: 77.8% are aware of its existence; however, 20% have a vague idea, and 2.2 % (1 student) have not heard of the concept; 75.6% (34 students) answered that the issues of environmental responsibility have been (were) part of the academic course they have taken at the School of Business.

Secondly, in terms of the concept content, not all the surveyed students fully understand the areas of issues covered by the environmental responsibility concept, as evidenced by the data in Fig. 1. “Issues covered by the environmental responsibility concept”, where the majority of the students gave priority to preventing environmental pollution (95.6 %), waste management (86.7 %) and compliance with environmental legislation (82.2 %). At the same time, only 26.7 % of respondents can name some Belarusian or international laws and legislative acts regulating environmental issues and relations in the field of the environment.

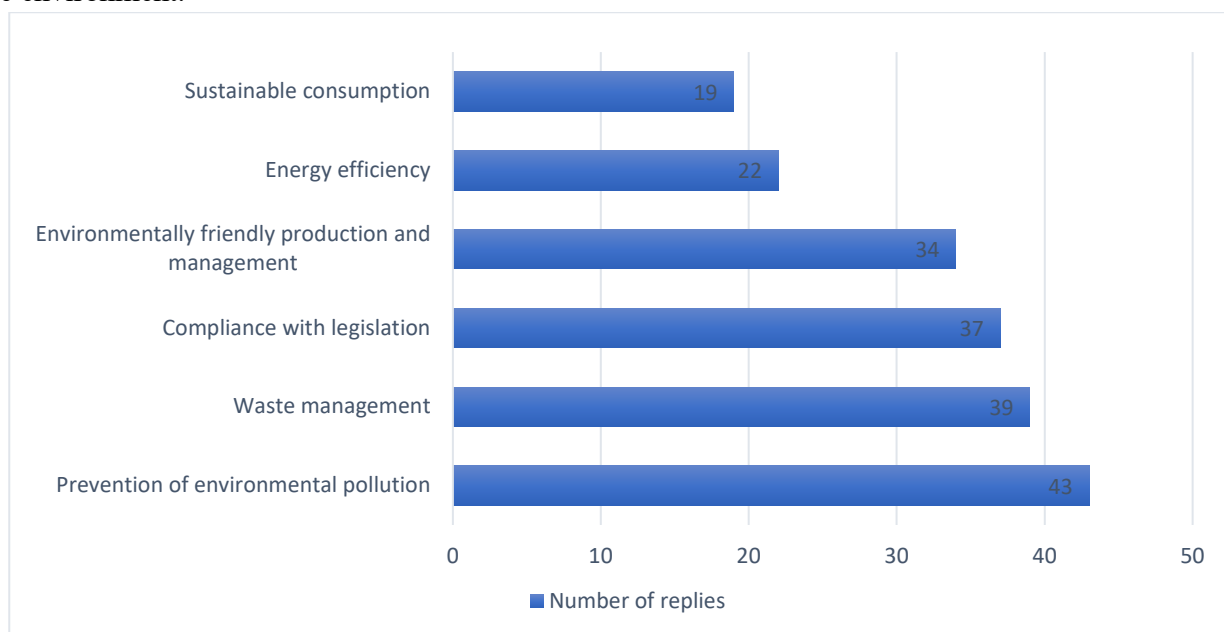


Fig.1. Issues covered by environmental responsibility concept

Understanding the importance to comply with environmental legislation is high among the surveyed students (82.2 % of respondents); at the same time, however, only 26.7 % can name any

Belarusian or international laws and legal acts regulating environmental issues and relations in the field of the environment.

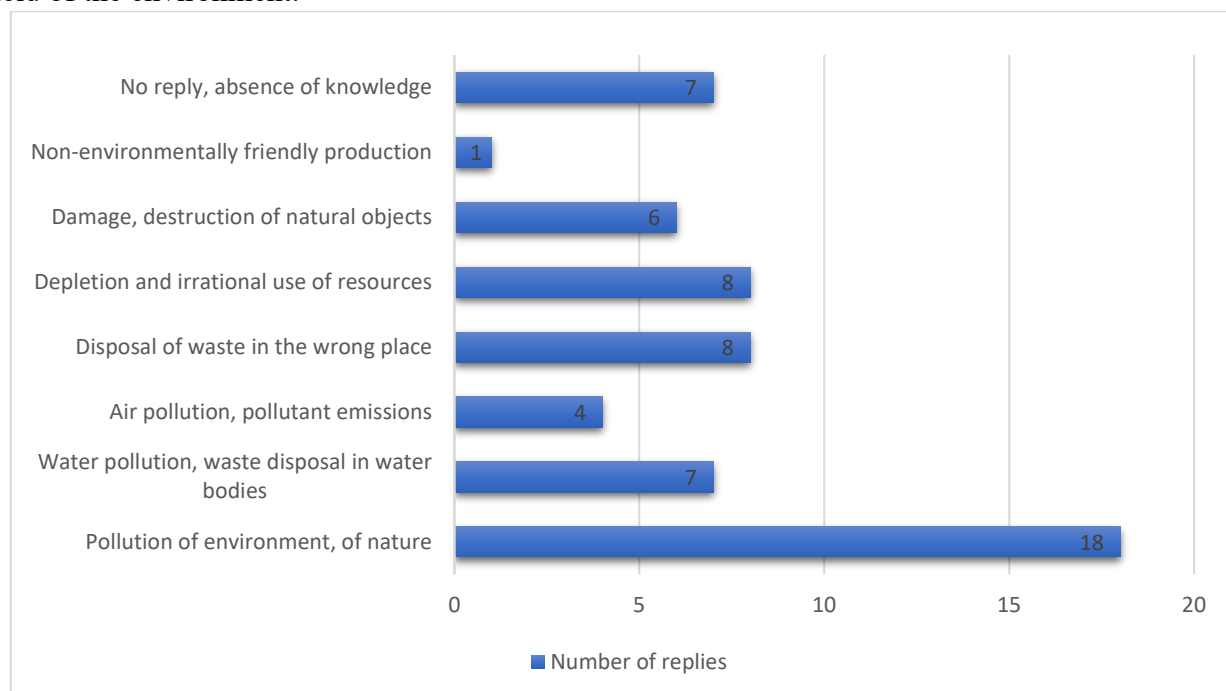


Fig.2. Types of environmental crimes listed by students

Related to compliance with legislation and worthy of attention is the issue of environmental crimes; the students were asked to list the types of environmental crimes known to them. The most frequent answer, as shown in Fig. 2 “Types of environmental crimes listed by students,” was the answer “environmental pollution” (40 % of respondents), while some students specified “pollution of water bodies” (15.6 %), and “air pollution” (8.9%). Next in frequency are the following answers: “disposing of garbage in the wrong place, violation of waste disposal rules” (17.8 %), depletion (irrational use) of natural resources (17.8 %) and illegal deforestation, including for construction (15.6 %).

According to the students, environmental responsibility should encompass the activities of government organizations (86.7 % of replies), companies (82.2%) and individuals (77.8 %). Government organizations (77.8% of replies), public organizations (84.4 %), educational institutions (64.4 %) and citizens (55.6 %) should be involved in encouraging and promoting environmental responsibility in society. As for the promotion of environmental responsibility in educational institutions, some students do not see any need for this at all (11.1 %), while the majority believes that the implementation of this task is within the competence of student organizations (75.6 %) and teachers (62.2 %).

As the survey shows, 60 % of students can call their own lifestyle, activities and behavior environmentally responsible; 57.8 % believe that their family lives in accordance with the principles of sustainable development (most likely, yes), and 15.6% are completely sure of this. At the same time, the answers to specific questions about the compliance of lifestyle with the principles of environmental friendliness demonstrate some discrepancy between the students’ views and daily practices. Most of the students surveyed often use taxi and delivery services; when choosing goods and services from various companies, only a part of the respondents pay attention to the environmental friendliness of these companies.

The analysis of the survey results shows that the students are aware of environmental responsibility, but partially know what this concept entails. The students consider compliance with environmental legislation to be an integral part of environmental responsibility, but a significant part of them

cannot name any current laws and are not aware of the majority of violations in the environmental sphere.

Thus, we can conclude that there is a need to adjust the learning process in order for students to look into the concept of environmental responsibility in depth and include more specific information in the content of academic disciplines, such as “Life Safety”. In particular, the study of environmental problems of our time, about which the majority of students have solid knowledge according to our prior research [4], must be broadened by such issues as current environmental legislation, types of environmental crimes and sanctions for non-compliance. The topic of environmental responsibility can also be discussed when considering issues of sustainable development, sustainable consumption and corporate social responsibility.

Conclusion. The formation of environmental responsibility in future managers and economists is part of the formation of an environmental culture and a safety culture in general. This study confirmed the need to promote the concept of environmental responsibility among economics students at university and to expand the field of environmental issues in terms of environmental legislation, environmental offences and sanctions. The need to develop the environmental competence of students at an economics university is quite logical to implement in the learning process within such academic courses as “Life Safety”.

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