

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY – OUR COMMON FUTURE

Daniela FOBELOVÁ

University of Matej Bel, Banská Bystrica; daniela.fobelova@umb.sk, ORCID: 0000-0003-2972-315X

Abstract: The European area should become a competitive dynamic and science supporting economic, dynamic and living area of the world in the 21st century. The Ministries of Education and Research in the European Union meet this intention in the strategy of the various framework programs of the national universities aimed at sustainable development.

Keywords: Applied Ethics, sustainable development, higher education.

Human behaviour and activity are carried out according to relatively stable principles. However, unlike animals and other living organisms, the man differs in particular by realizing his own death. He has long been driven by the desire to avoid it, or at least for a moment, to delay it. Fear of death, the end of life is the driving force behind it. And thus, he produces objects and various other material things, develops them, and invents other means to achieve his desires, goals, and the meaning of life. The warning, however, is that he does not realize that it is the riskiest way of the existence of survival of the man, the humanity and the Earth itself. Man, and mankind of the 21st century, does not adopt his needs as well as life itself to the environment. On the contrary, it must be the environment that adapts to the turbo-consumption needs of the humanity. Everything happens thanks to the development of science and technology, which is paradoxically developed for the people and ourselves (the humans) and its results (science and technology) are against them, humanity and, ultimately, against the planet Earth.

The quality, way, and style of a man's life on Earth are interconnected to the quality of the natural and the living environment. From generation to generation, the mankind uses the values of the nature that have been given to him to manage (govern). It should be handed over in a usable form. However, turbo-consumption society does not take into account the value relationship to the nature in the form of moral values such as modesty, reverence, respect, love, but only as the value of the economic gain. Therefore, wise and responsible people are increasingly asking the question of whether our behaviour and activity towards the environment will change on its own in the near future or we will be forced to do so by a personal, disastrous experience with the ecological crisis.

The change has begun in the late 1970s and early 1980s of the 20th century by so-called Brundtland Report in the form of a sustainable development regulation. It is a way of development that meets the needs of the present generation without jeopardizing the ability to meet the needs of the future generations. Based on a sustainable development strategy, that uses the three principles (triple bottom line) that correspond to the three most significant aspects of our life – economic, social, and environmental (profit, people, planet), we should move away from preferring only the economic aspect, profit-only efforts. Despite the great efforts of the protectionists of the Earth, who would rather welcome the position of a sustainable life (Vavroušek, 1990) than economic development, we are witnessing only slow changes. That is why we most often encounter a discussion regarding the pillar of the Earth, i.e. whether the promotion of the concept of sustainable development in organizational practice also supports the implementation and subsequent maintenance of the environmental management system. Environmental management should be complementary to the organization's management system, to the extent that it respects the organization's relations towards the environment to the optimum level, as well as the relations with the public and the organization's environment from the point of view of their environmental interests. In accordance with what is necessary for applied ethics, the emphasis should be on the prevention and not on the "extinction" of the issues in line with sustainable development (life). Such behaviour and activity of the organizations is in accord with state-of-the-art management styles of the organizations. By implementing the proposals resulting from all documents for environmental protection, the organizations are committed to meeting the ten principles of sustainable development. (www.tur.vlada.gov.sk).

Years of "implementation" of the sustainable development strategy have shown its weaknesses, i.e. the weakness of the human factor. His reluctance to closer integration and global cooperation. We should not be astonished, either, by the initiative of some experts, who are calling for a new strategy based on the rejection of sustainable development and the demand for the reduction of growth, i.e. planned lag strategy.

It turns out that the 21st century cannot do without ethics in this serious area of human life, humanity, the Earth. "21st the century will be ethical, or it will not be at all." (Lipovetsky, 1999, p. 11) According to Lipovetsky, it is the environmental ethics which "reconciles ecology and economics, morality and efficiency, quality and growth, nature and profit." (Lipovetsky, 1992, p. 227).

In the area of political activities, it is mainly the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, which formed the basis for the Rio de Janeiro sustainable development concept in 1992. As it is notoriously known, the document discusses the social and economic aspects of the development of the 21st century society, also taking into account the environmental context. From the Summit of the Earth, the calls were sent to the national governments for their implementation into the national programs for the development and into the society. Gradually, more and more important meetings of mainly the politicians, but also

the economists, the protectors were held in order to change the value approach to the environment.

If we think about these messages, we need to look for the ways to manage this change, for example, also in the academic environment.

The Lisbon Strategy plans to make European area a competitive, dynamic and science-friendly economic area of the world. This strategy requires, in regard to the upcoming EU innovations, considerably increased attention to be paid to the regulations of the sustainable development as well as in the field of education.

An interesting model is being offered in Germany: Theoretical background, concept and understanding of education as a framework for the reflection on learning processes:

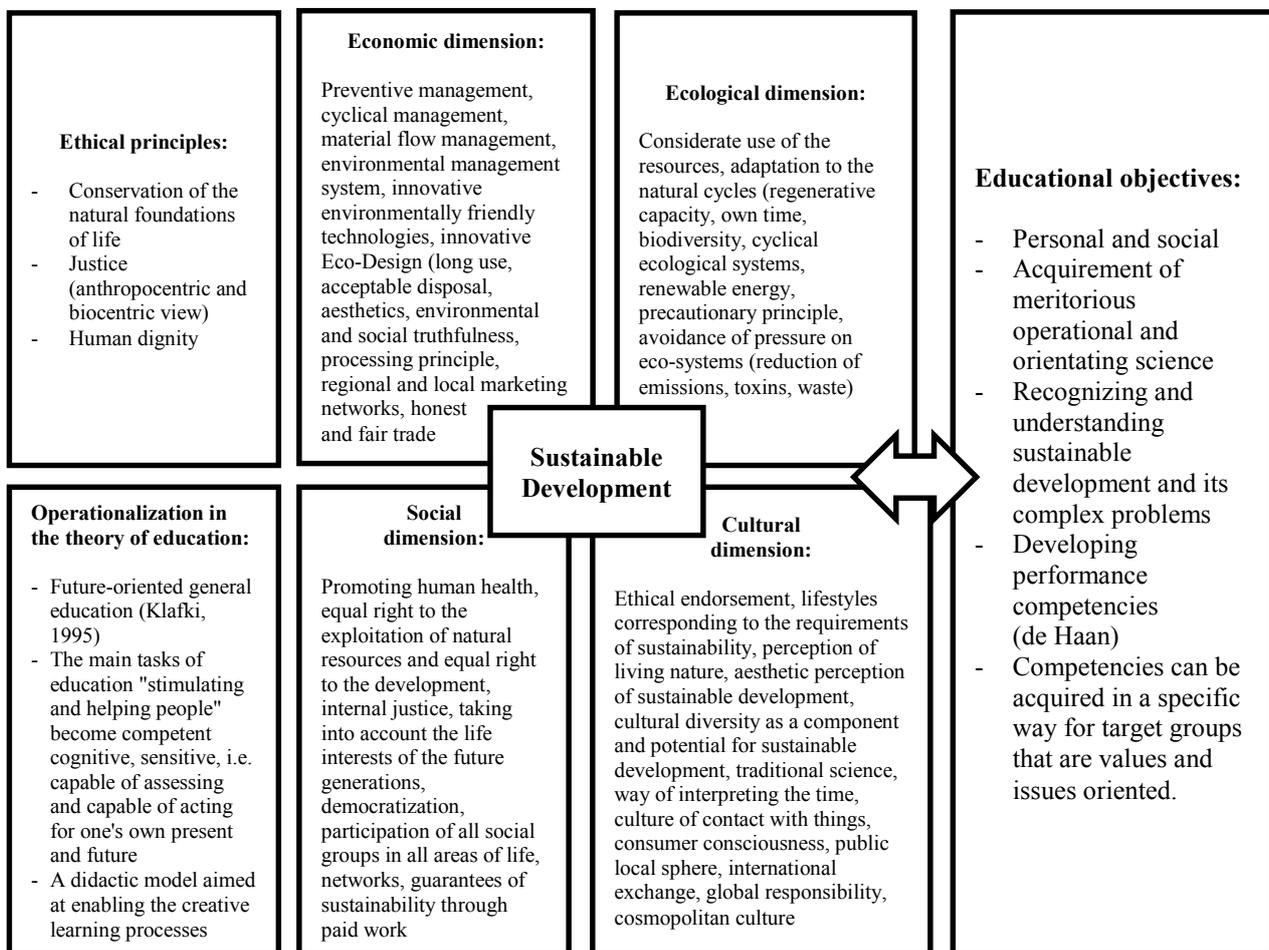


Figure 1. Theoretical background, concept and understanding of education as a framework for the reflection on learning processes. Source: Holz, V., Stoltenberg, U. (2001). Herausforderungen einer Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung im Spannungsfeld von Alltagstauglichkeit, strukturellen Bedingungen und dem Transfer konzeptueller Komplexität. In G. Banse, R. Janikowski, A. Kiepas (Hg.), *Nachhaltige Entwicklung – transnational*. Berlin: Sigma, S. 190.

Universities and academic institutions in Slovakia play an increasingly important role in the training of specialists in the field of sustainable development (life). A number of workplaces performing lectures in a given field is increasing. The departments were even established in some universities, specializing in the problem of sustainable development. Based on our experience, this field is very popular with the students. Within the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAV), the Institute of Geography of the Slovak Academy of Sciences has the role of a leader in this field of research and scientific education, but also in the field of popularization of sustainable development.

The social environment and atmosphere at the time of euphoria at the turn of 1989-1990 did not favour this issue because the human rights issues and fundamental questions related to the economic and political reform resonated at the forefront. The reform in the area of values has been awaiting us and the harmonization of this issue with the priorities of the current world and the humanist challenges have proved to be an important element of integration into the developed world. Over the following 30 years, we had to adopt a lot of new problems, to perceive them as part of the complex problems – these are phenomena such as violence, senseless consumption, egoism, but also the ability to recognize new pluralistic tendencies of the society, i.e. what is right and decent. In principle, it has often been the interpretation of the problems that have not immediately been perceived in the context of sustainable development. The question of value priorities and the reconstruction of moral values has become a fundamental issue for academic institutions in the process of transformational changes. We understood that a declarative approach, a simple recognition of principles, and reflective thoughts on morality and current issues are not sufficiently effective. They had to be more focused on the practice and on those sciences dealing with this issue from different aspects. This created the demand for interdisciplinary discourses as well as the necessity of new educational trends within which the social ethos was to resonate expressively. It was a project in which moral self-reflection should grow stronger on the background of important problems of life. The study programs pursued the goal and didactic procedures aimed at internalizing of the pro-ecological values in the context of societal risks, societal changes, solution of the dichotomy of ethical and economic rationality through the creation of good life and the importance of co-operation in order to adopt methods of balanced behaviour (activity) through institutionalization of the ethics.

In the study programs of applied ethics at the Faculty of Arts, University of Matej Bel in Banská Bystrica, at all three levels of the study, the intent is pursued for two decades which does not favour the reflexive, declarative perception of the values and principles, but rather the possibilities of their institutionalization and recovery in various fields of social practice. A constructive search for a new moral ethos should become the intellectual competence of our students. Our researches confirm the strong identification of the students with the principles of sustainable development and their implementation. The sub-disciplines of applied ethics such as, for example, environmental ethics, ethics of the technology and ethics of the science, as well

as a wide range of selective subjects that complement the practical-applicational ambition become relevant for the sustainable development. We can include here the mastering of transcultural dialogue, the introduction of the models of social responsibility of the business, performance models, the mastering of consulting skills, mediation techniques, the application of effective altruism or moral imagination. We consider it is important to master especially the methodology of coherency (broad) and flexible contextualism. Significant attention in pedagogical and scientific training is devoted to the ways of institutionalization of ethics in organizations and social institutions, to the creation and implementation of ethical programs, to the ways of implementation of ethical strategy. These tools and mechanisms should be seen in a broad context of sustainable development, as they constitute an important preventive precondition against moral failures. Mastering these approaches and competences should create the conditions for such decisions that are consistent with the visions of good life, balance (coherence). An important factor in the preparation of applied ethicists is the trainings in imaginative sympathy at organizational and global level, ecological, economic as well as socio-political area. In the practical preparation of experts for the implementation of the ethics, the attention is also paid to the development of critical thinking, i.e. the ability to critically assess the current situation in different areas of social practice, identify moral conflicts and risks (ethical diagnosis and expertise) with the aim of proposing the measures in accordance with the concept of humanity and sustainability.

This paper has been written within the framework of KEGA No.001 UPJŠ-4/2017.

Bibliography

1. Agenda 21 (1996). *Agenda 21 and Sustainable Development Indicator*. Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic.
2. Fobelová, D. (2005). Etika – hodnoty – environment. In *Aplikované etiky v kontextoch súčasnosti*. Banská Bystrica: FHV UMB, p. 9-51.
3. Holz, V., Stolberg, U. (2011). Herausforderungen einer Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung im Spannungsfeld von Alltagstauglichkeit, strukturellen Bedingungen und dem Transfer konzeptueller Komplexität. In G. Banse, R. Janikowski, A. Kiepas (Hg.), *Nachhaltige Entwicklung – transnational. Sichten und Erfahrungen aus Mitteleuropa*. Berlin, p. 171-187.
4. Jemczura, T., Kretek, H.A. (2014). *Zrównowazony rozwój. Debiut naukowy. Redakcja naukowa*. Wydawnictwo Państwowej Wyższej Szkoły Zawodowej w Raciborzu.
5. Kuzior, A., Kiepas, A., Leks-Bujak, E. (2011). *Zrównowazony rozwój. Sustainable development*. Politechnika Śląska, Starostwo Powiatowe w Bedzinie.

6. Lipovetsky, G. (1992). *Soumrak povinnosti*. Prostor, s. 311.
7. Resolution (1996). *Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic, No. 350*. National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) for 2000-2010. Bratislava.
8. Resolution (2000). *Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic, No. 685*. 2000 on the Concept of Further Higher Education in Slovakia for the 21st Century. Bratislava.
9. Vavroušek, J. (1990). *Životní prostředí a sebeřízení společnosti*. Institut Řízení, Praha. 1. Act. 1995. Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, No.74. National Strategy of Sustainable Development until 2002. Bratislava.
10. Ústav Vlády Slovenskej Republiky (2011). *Trvalo udržateľný rozvoj*, <http://www.tur.vlada.gov.sk/>.