CALL FOR HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE POSTMODERN SOCIETY CONCEPTION

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Abstract: The effects of the modern world globalization which have been noticeable since the previous century, have left their imprint on the socio-natural environment. The development of countries located in the area of the so called global north is proceeding at a dizzying pace, often at the expense of countries belonging to the poor south. The "Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030" elaborated by the United Nations provides a response to the contemporary problems faced by the world. The document contains seventeen clearly specified objectives, one of which addresses the need for providing good education. The article presents the question of implementing high quality education in the post-modern society necessitated by, among others, a prevalent educational crisis.

Keywords: postmodern society, education, high quality education, sustainable development goals.

1. Introduction

Since their first appearance on earth, people have invariably been forced to organize their own living space. It seems that so far human attempts at adapting to the existing conditions as well as all the actions undertaken by them have been of an intuitive and emotional character. This interaction with the environment, despite taking on various forms, is still continued and it does not affect the overall developmental trends of humanity. It reached its apogee on the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries along with the widespread approval for socio-economic as well as scientific and technical growth manifested throughout societies. Unfortunately, the people in the past did not foresee, as it was perhaps not possible, the potential, destructive consequences ensuing from the implementation of the rationalist assumptions formulated in the Enlightenment. In listing a whole range of consequences following the progressing world globalization, one can point out, among others, the degradation of the natural environment, spread of diseases, growing scale of poverty, hunger, lack of meaning and purpose in life, cult

of the consumer lifestyle and, consequently, rejection of moral values and norms (Szymański, 2014). All those factors make it impediment to take rational steps aimed at halting the existing impasse and counteracting its further negative effects.

Based on the information reaching the ordinary citizen, indicating the scale of the problem that has been generated in a society availing itself of the benefits of modernity, the following statement can be made: the more aware people are of the surrounding reality, the greater the benefits derived by them in the course of their functioning in it. In order to shape proper human awareness of the problems existing in the socio-natural environment, it is necessary to implement high-quality education in the post-modern society.

2. The goals of sustainable development as the epitomy of contemporary needs

On September 25, 2015, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution "We are transforming our world: Agenda for sustainable development 2030", a document resulting from the work of the UN Summit on the adoption of the development agenda after 2015. The preamble of this Agenda highlights the issues which are important from the point of view of continuing socio-natural relations, the issues that are part of sustainable development implementation. A priority task is to fight all forms of poverty, including its extreme forms. The agenda assumes intensified forms of partnership cooperation between all countries of our Globe. It is worth emphasizing that the goals and related tasks which are aimed at identifying the most important problems faced daily by contemporary humans, have a certain universal character. At the same time, they constitute equal implementation of the three pillars of sustainable development, namely, the economic, environmental and social issues (UNIC, 2018).

The goals of sustainable development have been formulated as follows:
1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries.
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (ONZ, 2015).

Implementation of the above objectives, in the perspective of fifteen years, provides a response to the real needs of the modern world. Those needs can only be met providing that the Sustainable Development Goals are fairly and consistently implemented into the practice of everyday life with simultaneous cooperation of all countries.

3. Educational crisis in the post-modern society

The education process is practically continued throughout almost the whole human life. Frequently, a person may not be aware that he or she is the subject of this process at a given moment. Curricular education is nowadays complemented by informal education and it often helps in developing additional skills and attitudes among recipients. Knowledge is also transferred via mass media, which sometimes provide unreliable, unverified or outdated information.

Education constitutes one of the basic mechanisms of development, therefore, improving its quality seems to be a matter of priority. However, problems generated by the modern world contribute to the complexity of educational tasks and the pace of changes occurring in social, economic and political spheres as well as in the natural environment require immediate actions aimed at raising social awareness of the risks posed by them. The crisis that affects the sphere of education and which represents a global problem of the modern world is an obstacle here. This is clearly evidenced by empirical premises, however, its theoretical context shows some deficiencies. The nature of the educational crisis, its civilizational and cultural conditionings and, above all, the consequences that it has for society still require a more

thorough analysis. This crisis ensues from a holistically understood civilizational crisis manifesting itself in the social, political, ecological, demographic, axiological and moral spheres (Szmyd, 2011). The contemporary educational crisis affects man himself, his existential condition. This is due to the fact that nowadays people are guided in their choices by an inclination towards material values, which means that spiritual values are widely marginalized. This is also evidenced by attitudes prevalent in the post-modern society which are based on the assumption that "it is better to have than to be". When analyzing the phenomenon of the educational crisis, it is worth emphasizing that in different countries of our globe it is manifested with various levels of intensity, forms and ranges. It can be manifested in a different way in the circle of western civilization and culture, which is conditioned by, among others, the local educational system, and in a different way in Eastern civilizations (Szmyd, 2011). As Jan Szmyd notes "(...) global phenomena along with socio-political, economic and cultural processes have influenced and still influence the education and upbringing of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century in a diversified but always negative manner". The author adds that "(...) axiological reorientation of the majority of individuals and entire societies from the circle of modern civilization and Western culture, preference and absolutization in their mentality and attitudes of material values and the consumerist model of life is the primary (...) cause of the contemporary educational crisis" (Szmyd, 2011, pp. 303-304).

The changes that are currently taking place are often a consequence of the undertaken unidirectional actions understood as the need to achieve various benefits. The reasons behind such an orientation of human practices can be traced back to many areas of social life in the post-modern perspective of a globalizing world. Literature addressing the issue emphasizes a certain characteristic feature of post-modern society representatives, namely, consumerism. In a post-modern society focused on various forms of consumerism, there emerge processes leading to the modelling of specific groups. As a consequence, actions are taken to create a specific group or community in order to win the acceptance of other groups and even of the whole community. An example of such ring-fenced social groups are people who support a particular form of physical activity or enthusiasts of a particular hobby. Representatives of a given group who share the same interests spend time together and concentrate on common themes. On the one hand, this form of consumerism tightens social ties, but on the other hand, it contributes to the social division between the affluent and the poor (Płachciak, 2008).

The outlined division into the countries of the global north and the global south is also a consequence of attitudes prevalent in postmodern societies which are often guided in their choices are by their own interests. It is worth emphasizing at this point that the economic aspect is not the only factor deciding on a country's membership in the global north. Apart from financial problems, the countries of the poor south are also affected by limited access to education, including high-quality education, lack of compliance with gender equality and human rights, inability to use environmental resources, inadequate social security, political or

armed conflicts, etc. "More and more is being said about the danger of widening the scale of marginalization and excluding a large part of the population, condemned to existence that has little to do with the level and development trends of modern society (Szymański, 2014).

A postmodern society that remains at an adequate consumption level is able to overcome the barrier of broadly understood mobility. Those who use goods without any restrictions, including real and virtual mobility, are able to ensure their own security in a very short time when it is put at risk. Living at a lower level decidedly reduces people's chances with respect to mobility and often prevents any possibility of relocation even in situations in which human health or life is at risk. Thus, the post-modern society is inevitably divided into two worlds, one of which is governed by a cultural and business machine, and the other is confined to the means of local solutions (Płachciak, 2008).

As regards specific objectives related to the development agenda after 2015, high quality education seems to be one of the ways of eliminating crisis situations in the post-modern society. The fourth goal of sustainable development, generally referred to as good quality of education, provides a response to global problems. Its more detailed purport expressed in specific tasks is aimed at improving the quality of life and achieving sustainable development. The time frame that has been set in the agenda allows for a gradual withdrawal from the educational crisis, and thus ensures implementation of the following tasks:

- By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.
- By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.
- By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.
- By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.
- By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.
- By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.
- By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

- Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

- By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries.

- By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States (ONZ, 2015).

The detailed formulation of the fourth objective, expressed in the above-listed tasks, clearly indicates that the educational and upbringing crisis is still continuing and, consequently, it demands taking the necessary steps to overcome this deadlock. On the one hand, it is hard to imagine that the issues comprised in the fourth goal, are still relevant in the 21st century, but on the other hand, it is worth remembering the existing differences between communities inhabiting various corners of the world.

4. Good quality education in the face of contemporary problems of post-modern societies

On the basis of the above, it can be concluded that the educational crisis is one of the negative consequences of the changes observed in the post-modern society. It affects not only individuals but often also the whole societies which are constituted by them. This gives rise to questions about the character of modern education and the form it should have in order to provide a response to current problems and challenges faced by the post-modern society. What are the ways of implementing education so that it could be considered as good quality education?

The educational process related to upbringing concerns man. It is man who becomes the subject of education, but he also has a substantial influence on it through his active participation in it. Referring to the words of Wojciech Bołoza, one can point out that education "(...) is supposed to be a process of going out and leading others out to a wider world, which is achieved by showing them new horizons, providing incentives to look for them, encouraging others to adopt appropriate behaviors (...)" (Bołoz, 2010, p. 151). Education understood in this way emphasizes the important role of the mutual relation between two parts involved in the whole process. The first of them, becomes a role model and at the same time a carrier of the content to be implemented. The second party, is the recipient

of the transmitted content. The success of both parties in the process of good quality education depends on their mutual commitment and on the quality of the relation itself.

All manifestations of human activity in the socio-natural environment are a consequence of the previously chosen course of action. This refers both to the education of the youngest age groups and adults. Due to humanistic reflection on values, human beings are geared towards performing appropriate decision-making acts and, as a consequence, towards the right choices and deeds. This can only be achieved on the basis of an appropriately categorized catalog of values. Its nature will depend on, among others, the educational process. Man, who is a social being, inevitably functions in a defined environment, and this compels him to adopt and take into account the rules prevailing in it (Kaniewska, Klimski, 2017). Therefore, a society with its specific culture is in a sense responsible for creating the necessary conditions to conduct the education process and, consequently, for upbringing. If individuals form a society and culture is created by society, they should be aware of their real influence on the educational process. Adhering to group responsibility is out of the question here. The educational crisis of the postmodern society consists in overlooking, among others, values that become an objective by way of different choices. The modern world focuses on values that bring measurable benefits - often material ones. The fourth goal of sustainable development indicates the need to respond to the problems specified in it. The authors of the document containing seventeen sustainable development goals see the possibility of reacting to global problems, among others by conducting such education that will take into account the relevant catalog of values. Therefore, it seems that the process of implementing quality education, should not overlook values and norms developed on the basis of philosophical and ethical reflection.

Education is a process enabling people to make informed choices in the future based on the ability to analyze in a critical way the information received from the environment. It is a mistake to allude to a certain thinking pattern developed by an individual subjected to education. It cannot be said, that the educational process consists in instilling certain habits that in the future will be automatically used without deeper consideration. Education is the object of research in many scientific disciplines, including pedagogy, philosophy, psychology or sociology. Each of them points from a different angle to the need of implementing the so-called good quality education. Within individual disciplines, it is substantiated that education enables us to shape a society that will be able to respond to real threats emerging in the socio-natural environment. Among many definitions that are used in the literature, it is worth quoting the one that specifies the planes of changes that a person subjected to the educational process undergoes. Wojciech Kojs' research shows that education should be equated with "(…) inducing desired information and emotional as well as volitional changes in individuals and social groups, in acts of conscious learning, teaching, upbringing, self-education, education and studying. (...) Education is an integral, inalienable part of personal and social life - a condition that defines life and its quality" (Kojs, 2010, p. 38). While implementing

educational programs, in order to direct or sensitize the subject of education to specific problems, it is worth remembering the spheres affected by the educational process. It will enable implementing the postulate of good quality education in the post-modern society.

5. Conclusion

Since the dawn of time, man has been the agent of manifold educational activities embracing both the creation and implementation of educational systems. Those systems helped protect communities and secure the values cultivated by them. Moreover, education provides a solid foundation in an attempt to adapt to the changing world. In order to ensure proper functioning of the educational system, it is necessary to constantly update knowledge about the surrounding social and natural world (Kojs, 2010). The call for implementing good quality education seems to be a vital contribution to an attempt at overcoming the crisis arising from the need for knowledge and implementing it in educational systems. The identified problems of the globalizing world, grasped in the seventeen goals of sustainable development, in a way define the effects of the post-modern society activities. Education has to keep pace with the problems of the modern world including those which have not been known before. It is faced with a wide range of difficulties, among which the most essential one consists in the very fact that the pace of changes occurring in the world requires taking immediate action, which will determine the further direction of socio-economic development. Therefore, "the awareness of constant and unpredictable change should determine our thinking about the world and education. We cannot rely on solutions developed in the past. (...) It is necessary to prepare for the struggle with the unknown (...), to use information, not to focus on information in itself. Critical thinking and responsible commitment are the attributes of the citizens of the modern world" (Mazurkiewicz, 2012, p. 7). Developing the skills of critical thinking and responsible reaction to current problems among individuals is a special task of education and the realization of this task will constitute a measurable effect of implementing the fourth goal of sustainable development.

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