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**EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

*Sustainable development is the development that aims at meeting the needs of the current generations, without compromising the possibility of future generations to satisfy their own needs. To understand this, we must be educated in this spirit. Education for sustainable development also brings new motivation for educational act, therefore giving the possibility to those involved to participate creatively in identifying the solutions and evaluating the alternatives for creating a sustainable development.*

*Education should be based on values, healthy values, such as responsibility, tolerance, honesty and respect for what is around us and it should accept the challenges that complexities may cause.*

**Keywords:** *sustainable development, education, equilibrium, environment.*

**1. Introductory notions**

Human-nature relationship is manifested in several ways: in urban, industrial, cultural, etc life. Man, through his intervention, fundamentally changed the natural environment, in accordance with his requirements. Through the uninterrupted progress of science and technology, man has manifested his tendency – often irrational – of domination and exploitation of nature. The changes he caused over the last 200 years exceed by far the natural changes of millions of years. The need for a new approach of the human-environment-economic triad was felt necessary.

Although, initially, the sustainable development was meant to be a solution to the ecological crisis caused by the intense industrial exploitation of resources and permanent degradation of the environment and it primarily looks at preserving the quality of the environment, the concept has now expanded to the quality of life, in its complexity, and also under economic and social aspect. Also subject of the sustainable development there is the concern for justice and equity between states, not only between generations.

The essence of sustainable development of human society is given by the current and future management of its natural, energetic, material and informational resources, in relation to the objectives of economic growth and ensuring an increasingly better quality of life and environment. Most human entities aspire to achieve economic development to secure to increase the living standards and to protect and improve the environment, both for themselves and for future generations. Is, however, the concept really understood in its complexity and depth?

Each generation should carry out its tasks and must not leave them on the account of the generations to come – this is the basic idea of sustainable development. And this includes expressly the global perspective [1].

Adding the social and economic aspects makes the education for sustainable development be different from the “green” education – although this remains part of the concept. Moreover, the holistic approach of education for sustainable development sometimes involves concepts that are hardly understandable by children and youth, that is why, most often, the pedagogical process begins with ecological education. Later on, progressively, topics related to the influence of human activity on the environment may be tackled, thus completing the educational process with its economic and social elements. Ultimately, the educational

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objective we have in mind is not to indoctrinate, but rather to prepare informed and involved citizens who are able to exercise, based on a personal reflection, their free will.

Education for sustainable development is not "just an extension of environmental education, which includes, in addition, social and economic aspects..., but it also has to be a strong element of connection between political education, global education, environmental education or health education [2]." This is an active learning process, based on values of solidarity, equality, inclusion and cooperation. It allows people move from an awareness of international development priorities and sustainable human development, by understanding the causes and effects of global issues, towards an active and informed personal involvement.

## **2. Sustainable development and the education for sustainable development.**

I do not know if there is an exact date for the emergence of the concept of sustainable development, we know, however, that increasingly more debates and warning signs on this topic have appeared in the last thirty-forty years, especially after the energy crisis of the last century's '70s, when, for the first time, at the Conference on environment in Stockholm, it is acknowledged that human activity contributes to the degradation of the environment and endangers the future of the planet. To emphasize furthermore the importance of human-nature connection, the United Nations declared the period 2005-2014 the "**Decade of Education for Sustainable Development**". Consequently, education for sustainable development also brings new motivation for the educational act, therefore giving the possibility to those involved to participate creatively in identifying the solutions and evaluating the alternatives for creating a sustainable development.

Given the worsening of environmental tendencies, EU's economic and social challenges, coupled with the new competitive pressures and international commitments, the EU Sustainable Development Strategy identifies 7 key challenges, and also the goals, operational objectives and their corresponding actions [3]

1. Climate changes and clean energy
2. Sustainable transport
3. Sustainable consumption and production
4. Preservation and natural resources management
5. Public health
6. Social inclusion, demography and migration
7. Global poverty and sustainable development challenges.

Under this Strategy for Sustainable Development, education and training are among the main instruments of intersectoral policies.

Education is a prerequisite for the promotion of behavioural changes and supply of strategic skills to all citizens, which are necessary for achieving the sustainable development, being able to contribute to a better social cohesion.

Once the concept of sustainable development was first approved by the United Nations General Assembly in 1987, the concept of education for the support of sustainable development was also developed in parallel. The first references to this subject can be found in Chapter 36 of Agenda 21 "Promoting Education, Public Awareness and Training". This chapter has identified four ways to begin work towards Education for Sustainability [4]:

1. Improving basic education,
2. Reorienting the existing forms of education towards addressing sustainable development,
3. Developing awareness and understanding of the public
4. Providing training for all sectors of society, including the business, industry and the government.

UE Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) illustrates the importance given to education in the efforts aimed at achieving a sustainable development. Under the leadership of the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) a Regional Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development was established, in order to facilitate the introduction and promotion of Education for Sustainable Development. The Regional Strategy was developed within a participatory process which included governments, international organisations, non-governmental organisations, academic community, other interested parties (the stakeholders), being adopted within the Summit for the Economic Commission for Europe of the United Nations (UNECE) held in Vilnius, on March the 18<sup>th</sup> 2005 for the launch of the Decade of Education in Europe [5].

### **3. Education for Sustainable Development**

Currently, there is no universal model of education for sustainable development, but such a model could undoubtedly not be developed because, despite the agreement regarding general concepts, there are educational country-specific approaches, which vary as a result of the economic development, religious or cultural beliefs. Each country should establish its priorities and actions to be taken, starting from the existing ecological, social and economic conditions, education for sustainable development being a very important subject both for the developed countries and for the those under development, since, we are finally talking about protecting the entire planet, not about individual cases. Authentic leaders have always acknowledged that the educated human resource is the most important factor for an entity and the educated human resource is a real treasure. Regarding each country as an entity, which we mentioned above, we can see what educating citizens in the spirit of sustainable development means, especially since preventing a negative situation is cheaper than removing the negative results that might occur.

Quality education is a prerequisite for an education for sustainable development; therefore in the spirit of sustainable development, we can define education as the transposition of abstract into reality. Turning abstract into reality and strengthening the national potential, but also the potential of some individuals in view of providing a sustainable development, is basically “a learning organisation”. Education will provide support for young people in particular, in a world of permanent change, global and full of challenges and uncertainties, making them aware of the complex relations and the mode of action they should take. Education should be based on values, healthy values, such as responsibility, tolerance, honesty and respect for what is around us and it should accept the challenges that complexities may cause. Among such identified challenges, we mention:

- Increase awareness of the population that education regarding the education for sustainable development is essential;
- Promoting the concept of sustainability in popular culture. A man has to be explained a thing, a concept, so that, without distorting the reality, you make him understand what you want from him;
- Developing educational programmes on sustainable development with community involvement. If you want to create a benefit for the community, then this process will begin from that environment, in order to first identify the requests and needs, and then to adapt what is intended to be transmitted;
  - Developing a creative and innovating working climate;
  - Complexity of the concept of sustainable development, etc.

Education helps develop skills to learn, live together, i.e. to belong to a group, to do something and nonetheless live. Therefore, education is a key element of sustainable development transformation, offering people the possibility to translate their vision into a reality of the society. This not only provides scientific skills, but it also gives the motivation to use

them, gives the explanation and offers social support to develop skills and to apply them. This educational process is nothing but a process of learning, skill, of how to take the necessary decisions to ensure future prosperity of the economy, ecology, and also equity of everybody in society, thus, the development of future-oriented thinking should become an essential task of education.

All these processes are an integral part of a system, and we are talking of course about the educational system, so how should this system be structured in terms of sustainable development? A democratic society may feel safe and constantly grow, if the education system meets at least two requirements:

- The education process should be such that even the weakest students are educated so that their current and future actions are not a danger to the society or to themselves.
- The quality of training pupils / students should be undisputable, so that they become professionals and able to handle the most complex issues and challenges of the modern life.

If the education system does not meet those two minimum conditions, we cannot speak of sustainable education or even more about sustainable development of the society. Those who represent this system are part of it and they should have certain qualities, so that they contribute to its continuous development and improvement. They should be able to take competent decisions, in unusual situations, which require flexible thinking and thorough knowledge in certain areas, to be responsible, to have the ability to demonstrate the initiative and social skills, to work as a team when they implement important social projects. It is pretty difficult to determine, “or maybe easy!?” some level of existence of a sustainable development, but, at least for initially, it would be useful to consider the following aspects:

- Creating methodological support to enable the integration of issues related to sustainable development within the already existing disciplines (chemistry, geography, economics, etc.);
- Developing courses related to sustainable development to be offered / taught in specialised faculties;
- Developing appropriate educational materials;
- Creating a stimulating system, by organising competitions, contests, conferences, etc.

The educational system must be recognized as a process by which, both people and the society can trace objectives and reach the maximum of potential, thus education for or in the spirit of sustainable development requires a shift of the current system, based exclusively on providing information, to one based on solving problems and identifying possible solutions.

In regions where the population does not have high level of education, the economy generally consists of agriculture and resource extraction. The more the education level increases – increasingly sophisticated industries and high level of consumption, the higher the pollution is, etc. The relationship between sustainable development and education is thus complex. Research shows that education is the one helping countries achieve their sustainable development goals. The impact is on increasing productivity in agriculture, increasing attention to health, reducing the rate of population’s growth and generally raising the living standards. In the reorientation of education towards sustainable development, those who develop education programmes must find the balance between the knowledge of the future and the traditional way of living. Most of the times, the traditional way of living amazes us with highly ecological solutions to problems related to the use of resources.

Education for and in the spirit of sustainable development should put the society to challenge, adopt new behaviours and measures to ensure a decent future. This dismisses traditional customs and makes room to new approaches, based on values, critical thinking and analysis, encourages participation in decision making, and identifying relevant information

locally rather than globally, the way forward being that from unitary to whole. In conclusion, the decade of education for sustainable development aims to change the approach on education so that the principles and practices of sustainable development are integrated.

#### 4. Conclusions

Finding a balance between the existing natural abilities and needs (current and future) of the society is the key issue. The human ecological hall-mark has become so overwhelming that the planet can no longer support it. The predatory character of “the consumer society” is strongly denounced. This is why we need a new approach of the issue, a different education, an education for sustainable development.

Many universities in Romania are still in the pioneering stage of introducing the sustainable development in the curriculum and turning them into sustainable universities. As we mentioned, Education for Sustainable Development should be conceived and implemented in close relation to the economic, social and environmental realities locally, wearing various aspects and shapes, adapted to the unique profile of each region. This can be achieved by elaborating the implementation methods of sustainable education in the curriculum, so that graduated become agents of change, able to transform the society by understanding how the economic, ecologic and environmental system works and acts, while at the same time exploring the dynamic tension between economic growth and management of environmental issues.

In the reorientation of education towards sustainable development, those who develop education programmes must find the balance between the knowledge of the future and the traditional way of living. Most of the times, the traditional way of living amazes us with highly ecological solutions to problems related to the use of resources.

Paradoxically or not, however, the more educated and wealthy the society is, the more negative its impact is on the environment, consumption needs are greater so is pollution. This leads to the conclusion that the education of citizens is not enough to achieve sustainable development. The challenge is to educate without increasing the population’s need of consumption, changing consumption tendencies and limiting pollution, namely motivating them to use consciously.

It is hoped that policy makers in education, curriculum developers, teacher trainers, directors, professors and parents’ associations will recognize and give more support to bring education for sustainable development at the heart of the learning process. Education reform is a complex process that requires a considerable amount of research, experimentation, analysis and validation.

The correct evaluation of the human capital and medium and long-term evolution tendencies are fundamental for designing a realistic prospect of a sustainable development model in all its essential components: economic, socio-cultural and environmental.

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Джорж Белан

### **ОСВІТА ДЛЯ СТАЛОГО РОЗВИТКУ**

*Сталий розвиток є розвитком, спрямованим на задоволення потреб нинішніх поколінь, не ставлячи під загрозу можливості майбутніх поколінь задовольняти свої власні потреби. Щоб зрозуміти це, ми повинні бути освічені у цьому дусі. Освіта для стійкого розвитку також дає нову мотивацію для освітніх законів, таким чином даючи можливість творчо брати участь у визначенні рішень та оцінки альтернатив для створення стійкого розвитку.*

*Освіта повинна бути заснована на цінностях, здорових цінностях, таких як відповідальність, терпимість, чесність і повага до того, хто навколо нас, і вона повинна прийняти виклик, що може викликати складності.*

**Ключові слова:** *сталий розвиток, освіта, рівновага навколишнього середовища.*

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Джорже Бэлан

### **ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ ДЛЯ УСТОЙЧИВОГО РАЗВИТИЯ**

*Устойчивое развитие является развитием, которое направлено на удовлетворение потребностей нынешних поколений, не ставя под угрозу возможности будущих поколений удовлетворять свои собственные потребности. Чтобы понять это, мы должны быть образованы в этом духе. Образование для устойчивого развития также приносит новую мотивацию для образовательных законов, таким образом давая возможность творчески участвовать в определении решений и оценки альтернатив для создания устойчивого развития.*

*Образование должно быть основано на ценностях, здоровых ценностях, таких как ответственность, терпимость, честность и уважение к тому, кто вокруг нас, и оно должно принять вызов, что может вызвать сложности.*

**Ключевые слова:** *устойчивое развитие, образование, равновесие окружающей среды.*

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