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MACIEJ CIEPIELA¹, OKSANA NAGORNIUK²,
WIKTORIA SOBCZYK³

Ecological Education as a Function of the International Idea of Sustainable Development

¹ ORCID: 0000-0003-0362-8461, M.Eng., AGH University of Science & Technology, Dept. of Environmental Engineering, AGH Doctoral School, Poland

² ORCID: 0000-0002-6694-9142, Ph.D., Department of Agricultural Economics in the Agrosphere of the Institute of Agroecology and Environmental Management of NAAS, Kyiv, Ukraine

³ ORCID: 0000-0003-2082-9644, Prof. Ph.D., Eng., AGH University of Science & Technology, Dept. of Fuel Technology, Poland

Abstract

An indispensable element of the social and economic programme aimed at realising the new environmentally friendly era is environmental education. The leading principle of the National Environmental Policy is the principle of sustainable development, implemented through effective educational, informational and promotional activities. They consist in changing the environmental awareness of the society and in shaping proper human attitudes towards nature. The idea of sustainable development is understood as socio-economic development that takes into account the rights of nature and a dignified life for future generations. The functioning of this global concept is based on reconciling environmental, economic and social rationales. As a global trend, it ensures peace and a decent standard of living for all countries of the world. Education emphasises the need to respect human dignity, to respect diversity, to protect the environment and the resources of our planet.

Keywords: education, goals of sustainable development, environment

Introduction. The role of education in raising environmental awareness

Education is the transmission and acquisition of knowledge, the formation of skills and values. Education enables us to understand ourselves, those close to us, and the world we live in. Through education, people all over the world have the chance for a better future. The International Strategy for Environmental Education assumes that environmental education is an open-ended process during which

society acquires experience, forms the will to act to solve environmental problems (Wiatr, Marczak, 2004). In environmental education, it is necessary to understand the interdependence between ecology and economics, to learn about the consequences of environmental degradation, to represent a lifestyle that respects the environment. Environmental education is a component of the multifaceted development of the human personality, the formation of a pro-environmental attitude, an understanding of the threats to the environment, sensitivity and activity in responding to its degradation (Buchcic, 2009).

Educational establishments at all levels implement teaching and education in the spirit of respect for nature. In practice, environmental education is a form of activity aimed at and for the public. In education today, more and more attention is being paid to practical knowledge, which manifests itself in activating young people and involving them in solving environmental problems. These activities help to shape pupils' sensitivity and responsibility for the environment from an early age.

The subject matter of the study. Principles of the National Environmental Policy

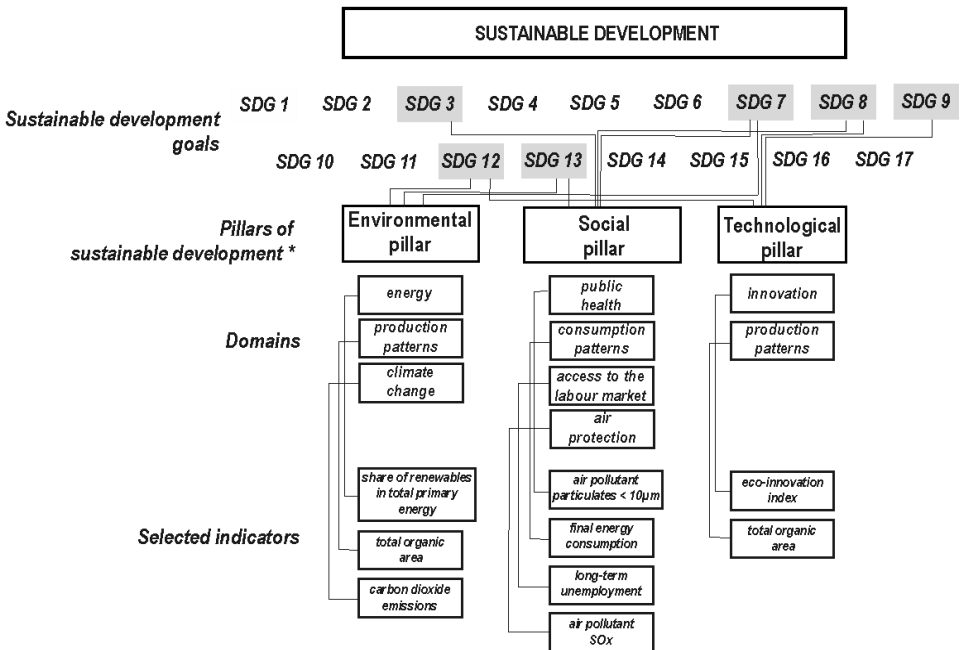
The principles of the National Environmental Policy determine how it is shaped and implemented. They depend on the general policy of the country, the state of the natural environment, the level of development and condition of the economy, the public mood, international obligations. The leading principle of the National Environmental Policy is the principle of sustainable development (<http://www.mos.gov.pl>). It is enshrined in Art. 5 of the Basic Law of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, thus gaining constitutional status. In this article we can read that: "The Republic of Poland shall safeguard the independence and inviolability of its territory, ensure the freedom and rights of man and citizen and the security of citizens, protect the national heritage and ensure the protection of the environment, guided by the principle of sustainable development".

There are several sectors in the Environmental Policy, dealing with specific aspects. For example, the Nature Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Policy is based on the Nature Protection Act of 16 April 2004, which sets out the following objectives: maintaining the stability of ecosystems, protecting landscape values, preserving geological and palaeontological heritage and shaping appropriate human attitudes towards nature through educational, informational and promotional activities (Ustawa, 2004). An efficient system for disseminating information and enabling effective public participation in environmental protection enables the public to access information and environmental education. Popularising environmental issues among children and young people, and shaping pro-ecological attitudes is the guiding principle of the national environmental policy.

Analysis of research results

Education for sustainable development

Sustainable development is understood as socio-economic development that takes into account the laws of nature and a dignified life for future generations. The functioning of this global concept is based on reconciling environmental, economic and social rationales. As a global trend, it ensures peace and a decent standard of living for all countries of the world. As we know, there are currently 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 Intermediate Goals and 232 Sustainable Development Indicators (SDIs), and the range of goals and indicators is constantly being updated and newly designed (Steward, 2015).



* SDG 1: No poverty, SDG 2: Zero hunger, SDG 3: Good health and well-being, SDG 4: Quality education, SDG 5: Gender equality, SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation, SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy, SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth, SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure, SDG 10: Reduced inequalities, SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities, SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production, SDG 13: Climate action, SDG 14: Life below water, SDG 15: Life on land, SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions, SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals.

Figure 1. A flow chart showing the pursuit of sustainable development through the implementation of selected indicators in the context of diversification of energy sources (Sobczyk, Sobczyk, 2021)

Sustainable development indicators are an essential monitoring tool, representing in a measurable way the essence of this development concept. They make it possible to create a statistical picture of a country from the point of view of implementing the new development paradigm. The most important feature of an indicator is the comparability of its values, making it possible to determine the position of an object/country in relation to other objects/countries. In this

sense, an indicator is a function of one or more characteristics. Indicators are implemented within areas (domain), and these in turn form pillars (deals): green, economic and social. The introduction of eco-development is based on the realisation of the individual deals and the degree of their integrity (interference) (Sobczyk, Biedrawa, Kowalska, Pawul, 2010). For example, Picture 1 shows a flow chart illustrating the pursuit of sustainable development through the implementation of selected indicators in the context of energy diversification.

The aim of education for sustainable development is to strive for a balance between social and economic well-being and the Earth's culture, traditions and conservation of natural resources. Education emphasises the need to respect human dignity, to respect diversity, to protect the environment and the resources of our planet. Efforts should be made to provide each person with educational opportunities in accordance with their abilities. The learning process should instill values without which social sustainability would be impossible. Continuous monitoring of the quality of the education process is a prerequisite.

The implementation of the idea of sustainable development is aided by educational tools aimed at increasing the public's knowledge of environmental processes and human-environment interactions. Formal education (curricular and extracurricular) can take place in national parks, landscape parks, botanical gardens. Informal education takes place through mass media, local environment, NGOs.

Level of environmental awareness among Poles

Can we speak of a high level of environmental awareness among Poles? Environmental awareness is the area of social consciousness directed towards the relationship between man and the natural environment. The elements of environmental awareness are: knowledge, eco-friendly imagination, and a value system. Let us look into our household. Almost every Pole declares to sort their waste. But what does it look like in practice? Are we responsible for the state of our environment?

Legislative changes introduced 10 years ago are extremely slow to produce results (Ustawa, 2012). Gradually, individual environmental goals are being achieved, but the process of improving the functioning of waste management is proceeding lazily and sluggishly, and its effects will only become apparent in the future. Long-term observations of the behaviour of a housing estate community in a large Polish city confirm a sad reality: the awareness of the inhabitants is very low and the unwillingness to segregate waste is widespread. The containers for segregated waste contain raw materials that should not be there. Bags of waste are thrown thoughtlessly anywhere. Waste segregation is a fairy tale from another world. Society has not been prepared to implement the principles of the new Waste Act. In the face of the Covid pandemic, the Russian-Ukrainian war,

the energy crisis, the political situation in the country, the fall of the zloty and the deterioration of living conditions, the issue of saving the planet has receded into the background.

Conclusions

The transformation of acquired environmental knowledge into norms for everyday life, into habits resulting from a natural relationship to the surrounding nature, is the formation of personality and ethics. Everyday behaviour and actions should go in harmony with beliefs, and should flow from them. It is not an easy thing to do. Our attitudes and habits need to be critically evaluated. The way to do this is through environmental education: creating sensitivity and developing environmental awareness, creating ethics and self-criticism. Systematic educational measures must be taken in this regard. In a few years it will be too late to shape attitudes. Efforts should be made now to do sound educational work with young people.

Some believe that acting locally has a negligible impact on the future of our planet. Being aware of being integrated into the environment will allow an emotional approach to environmental issues. An individual should feel part of the environment and society. Through their everyday behaviour they can do something good for themselves and for future generations. Each of us should, on a small scale, take action to minimise our harmful impact on the environment (Kowalska, Sobczyk, Korzec, 2020). Each of us can make a difference in the world. The effects of these actions, multiplied on a regional, national or continental scale, will have a tangible impact.

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