



**Aneta Rogalska-Marasińska**

Uniwersytet Łódzki

ORCID 0000-0003-4899-5441

## **Creating Stories by Student Teachers as a Space for Multifaceted Adult Learning. Sustainable and intercultural perspective**

**Tworzenie opowiadań przez przyszłych nauczycieli przestrzenią wieloaspektowego uczenia się dorosłych w perspektywie zrównoważonego rozwoju i międzykulturowego poznania**

**Abstract.** W artykule omówiony został udział IV celu Zrównoważonego Rozwoju „Dobra jakość edukacji”, V kompetencji kluczowej w procesie uczenia się przez całe życie „Kompetencje osobiste, społeczne i w zakresie umiejętności uczenia się” i IV kompetencji (nauczyciel jest kimś, kto...) Kompetencji nauczycielskich w ramach edukacji na rzecz ZR w uniwersyteckim kształceniu przyszłych pedagogów. Na ich podstawie zaprezentowano rozważania dotyczące ukazania możliwości wprowadzania zmian w treściach i formach kształcenia. Wnioski na temat oczekiwanych zmian w rozwoju osobistym i zawodowym studentów poparto omówieniem rezultatów zajęć warsztatowych dla doktorantów pedagogiki realizowanych na Uniwersytecie Łódzkim. Warsztaty miały na celu rozwój studenckich kompetencji międzykulturowych i dotyczących ZR przez tworzenie własnych opowiadań (streszczenie jednego z nich przywołano w II części artykułu). W zajęciach zastosowano podejście wypracowane przez autorkę artykułu „Ja i ty na rzecz zrównowazenia”, a inspirowane książką S. L. Robbinsa, *What if? Short Stories to Spark Inclusion & Diversity Dialogue* (2018). Wniosek płynący z artykułu zawiera się w myśli, że uczenie się przez kreację daje największe szanse na odkrywanie siebie i drugiego człowieka.

**Keywords:** kształcenie przyszłych nauczycieli, opowiadania dydaktyczne, edukacja na rzecz zrównoważonego rozwoju, międzykulturowe środowisko kształcenia i wychowania.

## **Introduction**

The world is undergoing huge and too often irreversible changes in many aspects of natural and human/social spheres of existence. Worldwide social movements with clear ideological background inflame strong and opposite feelings, often full of reciprocal biases, prejudice, and animosities. Hostile opinions and shocking behaviours generate social instability, common astonishment, and influence the state of individual insecurity. People tend to express polarized judgements and choose utmost and short-sighted decisions. Moreover, the overwhelming lack of broader look at reality and its future conditions results in an alarming state of the natural environment. A typical and “smart” representative of dominating culture of consumption concentrates on a quick profit leaving aside knowledge about all of the consequences being a pivotal part of every issue. An imbalance has become one of the most dominating categories of present times. Therefore naturally complex (not “zero-one”) context of life should become the core challenge of human existence and educational interest.

The acceptance of the premise entails the approval to retain the existing level of teachers’ presence in the education realm, especially if we take into account the LLL concept of human development. Teachers are expected to be agents of change. If that principle is to last, some essential questions should be submitted, i. a. What should be the direction of changes that educators ought to engage in? If people plan to cope with contemporary challenges they need to be responsibly prepared, meaning: thoroughly educated. The game has already started, but now only a few of world inhabitants take the position of strong chess pieces. Other play the role of pawns. To implement positive solutions and give them reasonable time to become firmly embedded in our fluid reality – if at all possible – it is important to put educators, especially pre-service teachers on the front-line of changes. Therefore they should learn how to manage various uncertain situations, how to interpret them, being aware of many factors and cultural backgrounds that influence their own and other people’s responses and actions. The goal is absolutely a long-lasting one, thus it is the core element of LLL education.

In the light of above-mentioned reflections, the direct aim of the paper is to discuss ways of developing student teachers’ abilities and competences to take the self-education challenge, which ought to be a LLL process and an inspiration to undertake constructive efforts in understanding oneself and others (Malewski, 2010). In the optics of such assumptions, the idea of SD comes to mind as the most suitable concept of upbringing contemporary and next generations. The idea of SD embodies endless realizations depending on

aims, contexts, backgrounds and further expectations. Thus in the general perspective ESD emerges as the most important part of education processes of adults, including teachers themselves. Properly prepared educators will be able to help younger generations to become responsible inhabitants of the Earth.

### **Materials and methods**

The issue of including SD problems in future teachers' learning becomes one of the most expected educational challenges<sup>1</sup>. To understand the significance of the whole concept of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) it is indispensable to outline the most important and current documents of global reach and influence. Principles of ESD for years 2015–2030 can be found in documents yielded as a result of Aichi-Nagoya UNESCO world conference, Japan 2014: the final report *Shaping the Future We Want* (UNESCO, 2014) and *Aichi-Nagoya Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development* (UNESCO, 2015). The second document presents the conviction that ESD should help students to develop critical and systemic thinking, encourage them to look for creative solutions, foster efforts towards various ways of cooperation, and develop skills and abilities to make responsible decisions in unpredicted situations.

To accelerate the changes conference participants proclaimed a new educational document, called *Post-2015 GAP – Global Action Programme* (UN, 2015). They intended to make the SD ideas practical. For that reason, the principle of *Quality Education* (SDG 4) was considered as one of prime importance. The “quality of education” in SD context started to be understood as inclusive, equitable, and lifelong learning education, accessible to both genders and all stages of life, presented at all levels of formal, non-formal, and informal education (UN, 2016). Participants of the conference specified five action areas to advance the ESD agenda. The third one refers to building capacities of educators and trainers. As they have a huge impact on students' directions of development, it is very important to prepare them under SD priorities. Therefore higher education institutions should provide such type of training that would be adequate in content, forms, and methods to the complexity of SD challenges (Lotz-Sisitka, 2015).

---

<sup>1</sup> There are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) planned for years 2015–2030. They refer to all of the pivotal spheres of human existence and include a recommendation for global improvement by moving towards sustainability.

The documents show that the concept of ESD with the significant role of every teacher engagement has been thought out and lucidly presented. It bases on broad humanistic foundations and explains the need for permanent pre-service teacher development (Rogalska-Marasińska, 2018). It means that educators have to acquire competencies that would finally lead them to create a multidimensional competence for sustainable living and well-being.

For this paper, it is reasonable to refer to EU key competences for lifelong learning (Council of EU, 2018), especially to the 5<sup>th</sup> one: *Personal, social, and learning to learn competence*. The competence develops “the ability to reflect upon oneself, effectively manage time and information, constructively work with others, remain resilient and manage one’s own learning and career. It includes the ability to cope with uncertainty and complexity, learn to learn, support one’s physical and emotional well-being” (p. 10). The competence is built on an attitude of collaboration, assertiveness and compromise, as well as on reciprocal motivation along with tolerance, confidence and empathy. Respect for others and oneself constitutes the set of goals to be succeeded in LLL.

Speaking about the development of crucial for sustainability competences it is worth to focus on *Learning for the Future* document targeted at student teachers and working educators (Rogalska-Marasińska, 2017). The cluster of competences represents a conceptual structure that is useful and inspiring in working with student teachers. There is a clear reference between the document and *Learning: The Treasure Within* report (Delorse et al., 1996). The new text is understood as a continuation of the famous predecessor with the transition to developing SD competences. One can find clear references to Delorse’s document. It possesses 4 sets of categories (learning areas) which include directions for educator’s learning engagement, gaining competences and self-development in the perspective of SD challenges. Areas are divided into subcategories. Each of them includes a couple of competences. Thanks to that complexity and diversity, planning work on developing student teacher’s learning competencies in the ESD field may refer to variants of problems and ideas. An academic may choose one competence or may make a compilation of them.

Thinking about student-centred learning approaches one may employ various methods and techniques: trendy ones, though not yet embedded in adult learning, like gamification (Landers et al., 2019) or some more “traditional”, like story writing. I have chosen the latter approach being inspired by two books of S.L. Robbins (2008, 2018). He specializes in communication, human

behaviour and unconscious biases with the intension to make vocational relations “more inclusive and human”. In both books, Robbins introduces unobvious questions and inspires the reader to find out unconventional solutions.

The core concept of both books, expressed by ambiguous questions (starting with the eponymous phrase *What if...?*), makes the perfect match with the need to develop students’ individual and divergence thinking, search for inventive solutions and freely submit bold ideas. Those possibilities encouraged me to use them during my workshops with PhD students of pedagogy at the University of Lodz. The whole concept of the workshop was subordinated to my learning approach which I called “Me and you toward sustainability”. The method assumed a three-step procedure. In the paper, I concentrate only on the first one – writing individual stories. Students were free to invent the plot, create the chain of episodes and entitle the story. The indispensable criteria related to use the SDG 4, the 5th EU competence for lifelong learning, some competences of *Learning for the Future* framework and problems formulated by Robbins himself.

## Results

Below, I present the essence of the one of my students’ story “Time passes while we stay stuck in our old ideas”:

*An alternative secondary school in England was organizing Erasmus+ exchange. The school invited students from European countries: Poland, Norway, Slovakia, and Turkey. The group of 12 Polish students with their teacher Mr Nowak called “Darwin” (he taught biology), were to spend a week in a multicultural environment, learning English, and experiencing British patterns of education. Though the Polish school – like many in the West – implemented progressive paradigm of education and the phrase “learning by doing” was fully used in school practice, Nowak was to encounter many unexpected situations in the close future.*

*He was in his middle age, he liked to work systematically and responsibly. Darwin was passionate about the natural environment, animals, and wildlife. He was deeply concerned about damages made by civilization against nature.*

*At the beginning of the stay in the British school, Darwin noticed some crucial differences: all of the students called their teachers by first names (not acceptable in Poland), there were no school marks, no tests, no school lessons. For the first three days, students stayed out of school, making some projects and realizing group tasks in the field. Nowak stayed critical to what he saw.*

He wondered what actual results would bring such “relaxing” education. Observations led him to ambiguous conclusions. As there was no systematic working, no structured learning Darwin declared to conduct thematic lesson about monkeys and their unique abilities: ways how they observe each other, how they learn from that observation, and what kind of natural tools they use (as a result of learning) to get tasty food.

Next day kids from all 5 countries gathered in a classroom and listened to Nowak with big interest and attention. Then they actively asked and answered questions. To move his story to a higher level of difficulty he raised a question “What would be the world if monkeys could learn some activities from other animals, birds, or even from humans?”. Then he planned to pose further ones: What would happen if different species could learn from one another? How far such modifications would rely on mutual observation and the desire to gain knowledge? Unexpectedly Darwin’s lecture was interrupted by Steve – an animator from the host school who thanked him for the presentation and suggested students next activities. Darwin felt angry with him and couldn’t understand such behaviour.

Next day Steve came up to Nowak and shared with his thoughts. He asked Darwin for accepting his apology about the wrong assessment of the Polish colleague. He admitted that the presentation was truly engaging and worth further reflection. Steve agreed that the exchange of experiences, possibility to make observations, to dialogue, and to have the opportunity to understand between cultural, historical and economical interdependences became fundamental to fair and independent education. He highly appreciated Darwin’s passion for biology and animal abilities especially coming out from observation and mutual learning. Steve expressed the belief that **the world would be better if we listened more to each other and reduced the tendency to diminish their standpoints.**

At that moment Darwin – this time being positively thrilled – thought that during the stay he should be less critical to Steve’s methods of working. Instead of silently rejecting them he should be more courageous and try to experience them in person. Now he felt that he missed a lot, especially to learn different ways of getting closer to students. He understood that **in professional life we can constantly learn new approaches from various people (of different age and background) and sources.**

## Discussion

Moving backwards from more practical issues to general statements and goals (introduced earlier in this paper) it is worth to present the investigation and possible interpretation of the student's story.

Referring to Robbins' endeavours to open "crucial conversations" I find links between episodes and the message of the story and his two pivotal questions: *What if ... we could listen more and judge less? What if ... every day we told someone that we value him or her?* (Robbins, 2008, p. X–XI). I also see connections with questions following a witty story from his second book: "What may happen if you decided to 'encounter new and novel things' more often? How could that change your life in a positive manner?" (Robbins, 2018, p. 50).

Looking at *Learning for the Future* framework I perceive possible connections with SD educator competences. The student created a cluster of competences as a scaffolding for her story. She referred to all four competences: *The educator understands ...* (1<sup>st</sup> category) – the plot of the story presents the clash between the way people think, live and work, and interpretation of sustainable features of human environment of their living; *The educator is able to ...* (2<sup>nd</sup> category) – the author creates opportunities for sharing ideas and experiences from different disciplines/places/cultures/generations without prejudice and preconceptions; *The educator works with others in ways that ...* (3<sup>rd</sup> category) – the student helps readers clarify their own and others worldviews tracing dialogue between the main characters and recognize that alternative frameworks exist; *The educator is someone who ...* (4<sup>th</sup> category) – the author convinces us that it is worth to take considered/learned actions even in situations of uncertainty or lasting doubts and questions (*Learning for the Future*, p. 7–8).

In the part of the next document concerning the 5<sup>th</sup> competence of EU key competences for LLL, I would emphasize the ability to reflect upon oneself with the regard to interpersonal and intercultural codes of conduct and rules of communication. Learning to learn in an unknown, obscure and complex setting is a hard challenge but still possible to undertake. It seeks confidence and openness to diversity and alliance. Inspirations to self-development may come from different directions, various people and unexpected cases.

The most general documents – world conferences' issues and reports explaining the expected process of SD highlight the significance of work with student teachers. Educators need special attention as they have a huge influence on next generations. Being representatives of a global society

on whom we pin our hopes they should endeavour to constantly improve themselves to tackle new challenges. SDG 4 speaks about promoting LLL opportunities for all, so educators should be vividly interested in managing to respond to that need (Szarota, 2019). If the transition of our life to more sustainable one is the actual goal of humanity, ESD must become a core part of student teachers' preparation.

The presented story proves that it is worth to raise the bar of education and inspire students to create ambitious realizations. Multifaceted expectations along with understandable aims are a reasonable motivation to step into unknown and often difficult spheres of reality.

Sustainability desires the ability to communicate with others and to learn from them thanks to conscious observation and dialogue. As a core rule, it should also accept reciprocity and multicultural respect. Student teachers should be also aware of younger generations' expectations. Different perspectives enhance one's development and give hope to make it more adequate and satisfying to specific conditions.

Creating stories as a method of self-development inspires students to autobiographic reflection and to make creative comparisons between life experiences and new challenges coming from the external world. Artistic formula (story-writing) seems to be a perfect way to interweave one's rational and spiritual forces to cope with unknown challenges, which are contradictory and imbalanced. Continuity and change mix together bringing a fusion of expectations (Dubas, 2018). Therefore student teacher training must be sane and intentional. Such arguments prove that multifaceted tasks become adequate practice for contemporary adult learning. They spark student's authentic creativity with the support of grounded knowledge and individual worldviews reflecting impulses and inspirations coming from the Others.

### **References:**

- Council of EU (2018). COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning. *Official Journal of the European Union*. Retrieved from: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604(01)&from=EN), (Accessed: 13.02.2019).
- Delors, J. et al. (1996). *Learning: The Treasure Within*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.
- Dubas, E. (2018). Ciągłość i zmiana w polskiej andragogice – wybrane aspekty z perspektywy czasu. *Edukacja dorosłych, Vol. 2 (79)*, 27–41.



- Landers, R.N., Auer, E.M., Helms, A., Marin, S., Armstrong, M.B. (2019). Gamification of Adult Learning: Gamifying Employee Training and Development. In R.N. Landers (Ed.), *Cambridge Handbook of Technology and Employee Behavior*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Learning for the future: Competences in Education for Sustainable Development, ECE/CEP/AC.13/2011/6. Retrieved from: [http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/esd/6thMeetSC/Learning%20for%20the%20Future\\_%20Competences%20for%20Educators%20in%20ESD/ece.cep.ac.13.2011.6%20ADVANCED%20COPY.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/esd/6thMeetSC/Learning%20for%20the%20Future_%20Competences%20for%20Educators%20in%20ESD/ece.cep.ac.13.2011.6%20ADVANCED%20COPY.pdf), (Accessed: 13.10.2014).
- Lotz-Sisitka, H. (2015). *UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development Conference Report*. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002328/232888E.pdf>, (Accessed: 07.11.2016).
- Malewski, M. (2010). *Od nauczania do uczenia się. O paradygmatycznej zmianie w andragogice*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej.
- Robbins, S.L. (2008). *What if? Short Stories to Spark Diversity Dialogue*. Mountain View CA: Davies-Black Publishing.
- Robbins, S.L. (2018). *What if? Short Stories to Spark Inclusion & Diversity Dialogue*. Boston-London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.
- Rogalska-Marasińska, A. (2017). *Edukacja międzykulturowa na rzecz zrównoważonego rozwoju*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego.
- Rogalska-Marasińska, A. (2018). Effects of Using Musical Fairy Tales in the Classroom: Action Research in Poland. *Journal of Language and Cultural Education*, Vol. 6, 48–70. DOI: 10.2478/jolace-2018-0015.
- Szarota, Z (2019). *Priorytety i funkcje społeczne edukacji w dorosłości – perspektywa celów Zrównoważonego Rozwoju UNESCO 2030, „e-mentor” 1(78)/2019*. DOI: 10.15219/em77.1399.
- UN (2015). *General Assembly. Follow-up to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014): Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development, A/RES/69/211*. Retrieved from: [http://www.unesco.at/bildung/gap\\_res\\_n1471200.pdf](http://www.unesco.at/bildung/gap_res_n1471200.pdf), (Accessed: 07.11.2016).
- UN (2016). *United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2004-2015), A/RES/70/209*. Retrieved from: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/450/84/pdf/N1545084.pdf?OpenElement>, (Accessed: 14.01.2017).
- UNESCO (2014). *Shaping the future we want*. Retrieved from: [http://www.unesco.pl/fileadmin/user\\_upload/pdf/Koncowy\\_Raport\\_DESD\\_The\\_Future\\_we\\_Want.pdf](http://www.unesco.pl/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Koncowy_Raport_DESD_The_Future_we_Want.pdf), (Accessed: 28.04.2019).

UNESCO (2015). *Aichi-Nagoya Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development*. Retrieved from: [http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ERI/pdf/Aichi-Nagoya\\_Declaration\\_EN.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ERI/pdf/Aichi-Nagoya_Declaration_EN.pdf), (Accessed: 28.14.2019).