On the Need of Ethical Foundations for Global Education

HELENA CIĄŻELA
Katedra Filozofii Moralności i Etyki Globalnej, Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii,
Akademia Pedagogiki Specjalnej im. M. Grzegorzewskiej,
ul. Szczęśliwicka 40, 02-353 Warszawa,
E-mail: hciazela@aps.edu.pl

PAWEŁ BERNAT
Katedra Filozofii Moralności i Etyki Globalnej, Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii,
Akademia Pedagogiki Specjalnej im. M. Grzegorzewskiej,
ul. Szczęśliwicka 40, 02-353 Warszawa,
E-mail: pbernat@aps.edu.pl

Abstract
The concept of global education is based on the recognition of the world as a network of interdependencies and on realizing the fact that the current direction of the development of civilization is leading to environmental and humanitarian disaster. On the other hand, there is a belief that there is still a chance to change this state of affairs by means of education. The purpose of education is recognized as not only a transfer of knowledge, but also as a transfer of morals that are able to generate a shift in attitudes. In order to strengthen the impact of the global education project, it is necessary to provide a coherent description and axiological analysis of the values behind it. In the paper, we argue that ethicists should work on building philosophical arguments for the development and implementation of global education programs. We argue further that such a philosophical framework should be based on the ideas of new humanism (proposed by Aurelio Peccei) and global responsibility (formulated by Hans Jonas).

Key words: ecological conscience, global education, global responsibility, moral education, new humanism, sustainable development, sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Pondering upon the potential need for ethical foundations of global education one has to answer a crucial question of why we it is at all needed. The immediate answer that comes to mind is simple, but at the same time, quite weighty – we need it to change the world. It has to be altered because it is not sustainable. The current trend of global civilization development is moving in a direction that threatens not only the quality of life and survival of humankind, but also life on the planet. From that perspective, global education is a medium of sustainable development to reverse the trend.

If there still is a chance to escape a global catastrophe, it can be achieved by means of education that would have the power to change the morality and behavior of not only the ones responsible for making politically bearing decisions, but also those, whose actions have an impact on the natural environment, that is, every living human being. In order to bring forth that change, moral philosophers should propose a coherent and transparent axiological system that would possess a sufficient persuasive power to promote the values that constitute the framework of sustainable development.

A lot of work has been done so far to provide the policy-makers and the public with such a system. In our view, however, these propositions should be ameliorated by a thorough axiological analysis of the fundamental values that have led to the conception of sustainable development. Such an analysis, accompanied by a set of convincing arguments supporting the promoted values should become a basis for global education programs. For, it would positively influence their reception and impact on students.

In the section entitled "Sustainable Development and Global Education," the basic facts about the current state of the planet are provided. Sustainable development and global education, the latter conceived as a means to promote the former, are described as a response to a constantly worsening environmental situation. The main definitions of sustainable development, as well as their cardinal components are discussed and analyzed. The following part of the paper critically examines the existing characterizations of global education and its ethical foundations. The argument is given that these should be expanded to include responsibility as a constitutional factor of any axiological framework of global education. Further, it is argued that the need for ethical foundations for global education arises from, and is determined by the fact that it is not merely a transfer of knowledge, but also a tool of changing people's moral mindset, and in consequence, their behavior. The article concludes with the claim that knowledge about the environmental and socio-economic interdependencies of the current world is a necessary but not

sufficient condition to bring forth the required changes. Hence, there is a need for a well thought-through system of values and justifications to support global education and to strengthen its persuasiveness.

1. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBAL EDUCATION

In the opinion of the researchers working in the environmental sciences, climate scientists, economists, political scientists and sociologists, the current trend of civilization development is moving in a direction that threatens the quality of life and survival not only of the human race as the whole, but also the life on the planet. This diagnosis is not new. Already in 1972, the first report published for the Club of Rome – *The Limits to Growth*, in which the authors, by recognizing the challenges posed by the increasing human impact on the environment, sought to further define the future potential of the Earth's non-renewable resources (Meadows at al., 1972). The solution proposed by the Report's authors was an economic postulate of "zero growth," which is still present in the discourse on how to control technological development of human civilization, e.g. by reducing consumption (e.g. Elgin 2009), extending the product life cycle (e.g., Ekvall et al., 2005; Curran, 2012), or retardation (Kostecka 2010). However, the assumptions of the Report are not just confined to the sphere of consumption of resources, and the concept itself largely coincides with the formula of sustainability developed several years later (Ciążela 2007, 60). Axiologically the Report referred to the concept of "new humanism" developed by Aurelio Peccei (Peccei 1977; Peccei 1981), whose main postulate was the development of human conceived as a vocation to cross the existing divisions, so the condition for survival of humanity would become a global revolution of the spiritual and peaceful nature that allows for overcoming the limitations of existing inequalities and prejudices (Ciążela 2007, 63-64). The same assumptions are inscribed in the concept of sustainable development developed by the World Commission for Environment and Development, i.e. the Brundtland Commission and presented in the report *Our Common Future* in 1987, where sustainable development is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED 1987, 54). This very important global initiative is important not only because of its wide range, but also because of the moral questions it poses to all humanity.

The concept of sustainable development is an attempt to change the destructive trend in the development of civilization. It is a vision of a more just world that takes into account the interests of people living now, future generations as well as other living organisms.

This diagnosis of the current world situation and hence the prognoses for the future are not optimistic. We are dealing with a progressive deterioration of the environment. According to the report of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Committee that worked under the UN Secretary General entitled *Ecosystems and Human Well-being* (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005), approximately 60% of the existing ecosystems on the planet is threatened (degraded or used unsustainably), the number of species inhabiting the Earth is decreasing – today, approximately 10%-30% of the species of mammals, birds and reptiles are threatened with extinction, and the geographical distribution of species is becoming more homogeneous. Moreover, there is a noticeable decrease in genetic diversity within species, especially those grown / cultured by humans (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005, 1-8). Global warming is a fact – a report published by the US Agency National Climatic Data Center (NCDC 2014) states that October 2014 was the hottest month in terms of land and water surface since 1880, i.e. the year when the measurements began. The temperature was higher than the global average for October in the twentieth century by 0.74 degrees Celsius. The world of science no longer questions the anthropogenic causes of global warming. The latest, the fifth report of the International Panel on Climate Change leaves no room for doubt: "Human influence on the climate system is clear, and recent anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases are the highest in history. Recent climate changes have had widespread impacts on human and natural systems" (IPCC Climate Change 2014, 2). Awareness of the obvious fact that the human being is a part of the global ecosystem, and that the quality of life of individuals, societies, or even the survival of the entire species is directly dependent on the state of the environment should be an explicit call to action to address the situation.

The concept of sustainable development is not confined to the environmental dimension – it is also a socio-economic program of "equal opportunities" based on the principles of equality and justice. Right now, the increase in wealth does not translate into improving the quality of life of the poorest, nor does it positively influence a more just distribution of resources. Due to uneven distribution and redistribution of income within the national states, as well as on the global level, massive wealth is still accompanied by hunger and the inability to fulfil basic needs. According to the latest OECD report *How Was Life? Global Well-being since 1820* published in 2014, the income stratification within the vast majority of countries has been on the rise since the early eighties (Van Zanden 2014, 207). What particularly draws attention on the global level is a growing income gap between the increasingly rich North and the progressively impoverished countries of the South. Measured by the Gini coefficient, the inequality between countries of the world soared from 16 in 1820 to 54 in 2000. (Van Zanden 2014, 208).

From the above reports and data, it is clear that the development of technological civilization is not accompanied by an adequate development of consciousness, i.e. such, on account of which the resources are divided responsibly among the people living today in a way that does not detract from the ability of future generations to fulfill their needs. When analyzing the current development trend one has to, unfortunately, agree with the Austrian philosopher Dietrich von Hildebrand, who claimed that development does not always mean progress (von Hildebrand 1960, 74). The fact is that the development of culture and morality in particular, is progressing much slower, than the development of civilization understood as the structure of technological, economic, social, and political relationships.

Aurelio Peccei's concept mentioned above of "new humanism," the Report to the Club of Rome, and finally, the idea and the program (i.e., practical attempts to implement these ideas) of sustainable development were developed as an attempt to eliminate the difference in the rate of development of these two spheres of human activity – technologically determined civilization and ethics; as an attempt to divert the development of civilization in the direction of 'sustainability.' At the origin of these concepts and programs there is an idea to diminish the differences between the development of civilization and the spread of values and attitudes that may direct it to a proper, i.e. ethically responsible direction. For the recognition of the need of sustainable development speaks the fact that the current model of civilization ultimately leads to the destruction of the planet and the human race. What follows from this fact, assuming the value of humanity in general, is the obligation to change the current trend for sustainable development, i.e. to one that would avert global disaster.

Altering the prevailing destructive practices requires changes in attitudes and behaviors of policy-makers, businesses and individual consumers. A measure to achieve that is a shift in the public's awareness fostered by factual knowledge about the progressive deterioration of the natural environment, anthropogenic impact on the climate system and the escalation of socio-economic disparities. Hence, we need a global education that disseminates and perpetuates knowledge about the actual state of affairs of the planet and the possible ways to mend it, i.e. theoretical and practical sustainable development programs.

Sustainable development is a vision of a more just world which takes into account the interests of people living now, the future generations, as well as other living organisms. In order to realize that vision and reverse the current trend we need a change in knowledge and attitudes. The change should take place parallely on two interdependent levels: (1) top-down – legislation at all levels of government, including the transnational bodies has to be improved, and (2) bottom-up – the acceptance of pro-sustainability laws and regulations, grassroots initiatives and changes

7

behavior in everyday life. In both cases, it is necessary to generate conscious, eco-friendly and pro-sustainability attitudes, in other words, an ecological conscience (Tyburski 2003, 334-337), which can be achieved by implementing proper global educational programs.

The first step in bringing forth change is an adequate and thorough understanding of sustainable development, sustainability itself, as well the values they are built upon. It is not an easy task since the concepts are extremely complex and not unequivocal from the semantic point of view. In addition to the common-sense notion of sustainability as an attempt to achieve optimal results for both people and nature now and in the future, there are many definitions that focus on and emphasize different aspects of sustainability. Woodward, for example, defines sustainability as an inter-generational justice (2000, 581), for Cairns it is a utopian vision that requires a harmonious living with nature (2003, 43), while Kermath believes that sustainability represents an idealized social condition where people lead long, dignified, comfortable, and productive life by meeting their needs in an environmentally wise and socially equitable way that does not endanger other people's opportunity to live in the same way now and in the distant future (Kermanth 2007). On the other hand, Thomson gives a completely different approach – he introduces two general categories of sustainability, namely, balancing the sufficiency of resources and the functional integrity (in this concept sustainable development aims for an integrated order) (1997, 77-81).

Taking into account the most important theoretical approaches to sustainable development and sustainability and their axiological elaborations (e.g., Becker 2012, Gawor 2010, Hull 2008, Langhelle 1999, Papuziński 2013, Tyburski 2013) it is possible to explicitly indicate fundamental values underlying the concepts of sustainable development and sustainability, i.e. equality, justice and responsibility.

Articulation of these values is extremely important, because in order to be able to shift to a sustainable model of development, it is necessary, at the global level, to change the state of knowledge and morality conceived as historically shaped, biding in a given society set of values, ideals, norms, axiological motivations and assessments, principles and rules that regulate the conduct and coexistence of individuals and social groups in terms of good and evil. Essential changes, in this context, can only occur by increasing the level of knowledge of the environmental and social interdependence and by generating a pro-environment and pro-sustainable attitude at every level of decision making – from singular decisions made by individuals to legislative directives of national and supranational bodies.

This idea is not new. Many authors have tried to indicate the direction and methods to achieve a new sustainable trend of the development of civilization. Hans Jonas, whose concept of

the principle of responsibility (Jonas 1985) converges with the project of sustainable development. The philosopher gives a diagnosis that an ethical vacuum emerges as a result of the increasing power of the human being. The power that gives them the tools to such far-reaching intervention into the natural world, the consequences of which can cause irreversible changes leading to the extinction of humanity (Ciążela 2006, 108); the power that already has significantly changed the way humans think about reality and their place in it (Bernat 2010). Nigel Dower, on the other hand, focuses on the concept of "global citizenship," understood as both an ethical obligation and institutional structure. The author believes that it may become an efficient means for creating a sense of identity with other people, which then could translate into the sense of responsibility for the world (Dower, Williams 2002). Other authors, such as Gosseries (2001), Shelton (2010) and Woodward (2000) derived axiologically motivated need to implement sustainable development from intra- and inter-generational equity and justice.

However, regardless of where the stronger accents are placed, the condition to reverse the current trend is the change in knowledge and attitudes, which can be obtained i.e., by global education.

2. GLOBAL EDUCATION IS MORAL EDUCATION

The concept of global education is based on the recognition of the interdependence of the world as a network, on realizing the fact that the current direction of the development of civilization leads to disaster, but also on the belief that there is still time to change this state of affairs by means of education. The purpose of education comprehended in such a way is not only a transfer of knowledge about the contemporary world, but also generating attitudes and changing the perspectives of thinking. Suchodolski in his book *Education for the Future* claims that this current new situation requires from people a new attitude, which would include the ability to think in terms of global, not only local problems. Such an attitude would require, above all, the awareness of the consequences of our actions, which are not immediately visible, because they have an impact on distant places and people as well as the realization that we are also dependent on the analogous distant conditions (1947, 25-26). Suchodolski, as in the case of Jonas and Peccei, recognizes the lack of symmetry in the pace of the economic and technical development and in the emergence of the new attitude, on account of which a sense of global human unity could arise (Suchodolski 1974, 26). In other words, in order to change the level of knowledge and people's mindset an "education for the future" or global education is required."

As defined in the Maastricht Global Education Declaration, "Global Education is education that opens people's eyes and minds to the realities of the world, and awakens them to

bring about a world of greater justice, equity and human rights for all;" and further on: "Global Education is understood to encompass Development Education, Human Rights Education, Education for Sustainability, Education for Peace and Conflict Prevention and Intercultural Education; being the global dimensions of Education for Citizenship" (MGED 2002, 2). In the definition promoted by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Education the accents are distributed somewhat differently. The aim of global education, as elucidated here, is to broaden the scope of civic education by adding a global perspective so students become aware of the existence of the phenomena and relationships that connect people and places. The purpose of global education is to prepare the public to meet the challenges shared by the whole of humanity (Lipska-Badoti et al. 2011, 4). The definition further explains that dignity, justice, solidarity, equality, peace, freedom are the values that global education is based upon. The incentive of teaching and promotion of these values is to shape the attitudes of responsibility, respect, honesty, openness, accountability, personal involvement and readiness for lifelong learning (Lipska-Badoti et al. 2011, 4).

From the perspective of moral philosophy this definition is not fully adequate. The need for global education is based on several fundamental values. Dignity, equality (including intergenerational), and justice should be accompanied by responsibility. For, it is responsibility, as argued by Jonas and Peccei that can ensure the realization of global education and sustainable development projects.

In previous studies on global education (*Global Education Guide* 2009; *Global Perspectives* 2008; Hicks 2003; Lipska-Badoti et al. 2011; MGED 2002), the authors refer to human rights, the principles of sustainability and justice, sometimes name the values global education should be built upon but never properly analyze them systemically and do not try to examine the dynamics between them. In order to strengthen the impact of the global education project, it is necessary to provide a coherent description of the values promoted by this framework of education and upbringing. Such an elucidation should include a thorough philosophical justification of the discussed values.

That gap must be bridged. A coherent description of the values supporting the idea of global education, their analysis in the special context of the challenges that we, humankind, face today and will have to deal with in the future, and finally, deeply embedded philosophical arguments for the development and implementation of global education programs are crucial, we believe, for the success of global education. While carrying out this task, one should remember who the potential recipients are and on that account prepare arguments that can be understood not only by a narrow circle of philosophers, but which will also intellectually, conceptually and

terminologically be available to other groups, including teachers and educators, managers, politicians, legislators and representatives of the authorities at all levels. It is important to keep in mind that global education is a practical project. It, as we argue in this paper, requires solid theoretical foundations, but its goal is to reverse the destructive trend and assist in implementing sustainable development, which can be achieved only by cooperation of many various people from many various walks of life. Hence, our postulate for communication between philosophers, providing the axiological analysis of global education, and the recipients of that work to be as simple and clear as possible.

Global education should be conceived as one of the means of making sustainable development become reality. Its very concept, just like sustainable development, is based on the recognition of the interdependence of the world as a network, and on realizing the fact that the current direction of the development of human civilization posts a dire threat. On the other hand, there is a belief that there is still a chance to change this state of affairs through education. The purpose of global education should be recognized as not only a transfer of knowledge, but also as is a transfer of morals, which would generate and a shift in the mindset and, what is even more significant, a change of attitudes and everyday practices.

It is a crucial moment to understand the need for a complex, well- adjusted and justified axiological framework for global education. For, the fact that it aims at altering people's morality bears severe consequences. If we want to change people, their moral world-view and hierarchy of values, as we do, we have to, in order to keep our integrity, be entirely convinced about the validity of our claims. Moreover, we need a well-worked out system of values and justifications also because of its persuading power. We need it to be compelling enough to urge the people responsible for education, as well as the students. In other words, in order to be effective, global education has to be perceived as moral education, as a coherent set of educational programs that are based on and promote certain values, i.e. the values of sustainable development.

CONCLUSION

The goal of the paper was to present a preliminary reflection on global education as a tool for implementing sustainable development. It was argued that axiological analyses of the sustainability point at its three cardinal values, i.e. equality, justice, and responsibility, so, in consequence, the global education programs should convey and promote them. In order to change people's morality, which is a necessary step in changing their behavior to become more sustainable, they have to acknowledge an obligation they have towards other people, both, the currently living, and those who will come after us, as well as towards the global ecosystem. To

divert the disastrous trend we need our laws and everyday life practices to be more environment-friendly. It is impossible to achieve without people taking responsibility for their actions, i.e. perceive themselves as accountable for their decisions and behavior.

For global education programs to be successful, it is not sufficient to reduce it to teaching about the current global state of affairs. The outcomes of the sustainable development project depend on a change in human morality (achieved by means of proper global education) towards taking more responsibility for the natural environment and the well-being of current and future generations. To realize this goal, global education must include teaching global ethics that assumes and promotes sustainability values like equality, justice and responsibility. Furthermore, those values, in order to be adopted and fostered, must be expressed in a coherent and understandable manner, what will strengthen a persuasive power of such a framework.

REFERENCES

[MGED] Maastricht Global Education Declaration (2002). Retrieved from: http://www.jcyl.es/web/jcyl/binarios/345/211/Declaracio¦ün-Mastrichts-app1.pdf (19.12.2016).

[NCDC] National Climatic Data Center (2014). Retrieved from: http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/global/2014/10 (14.12.2016).

Becker C. (2012). Sustainability Ethics and Sustainability Research. Dordrecht: Springer.

Bernat P. (2010). Techno-science as a New Paradigm of Thinking about Reality: The Role of Contemporary Knowledge in Organization. Academic Research, 25 (2), 19-29.

Cairns J., Jr. (2003). A Preliminary Declaration of Sustainability Ethics: Making Peace with the Ultimate Bioexecutioner. Ethics in Science and Environmental Politics (ESEP), 2003, 43-48.

Ciążela H. (2006). Etyka odpowiedzialności Hansa Jonasa a 'trwały i zrównoważony rozwój' (Imperatywy i dylematy). Problemy Ekorozwoju, 1, 107-114.

Ciążela H. (2007). Antycypacja idei 'rozwoju trwałego i zrównoważonego' w koncepcji 'nowego humanizmu' Aurelio Peccei. Problemy Ekorozwoju, 2, 60-67.

Curran M.A. (2012). Life Cycle Assessment Handbook: A Guide for Environmentally Sustainable Products. Hoboken: Wiley-Scrivener.

Dower N., J. Williams. (2002). Global Citizenship: A Critical Reader. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Ekvall T. et al. (2005). Normative Ethics and Methodology for Life Cycle Assessment. Journal of Cleaner Production, 13 (13-14), 1225-1234.

Elgin D. (2009). Voluntary Simplicity: Toward a Way of Life That is Outwardly Simple, Inwardly Rich, 2nd rev. ed. New York: HarperCollins.

Gawor L. (2010). Filozofia zrównoważonego rozwoju – preliminaria. Problems of Sustainable Development, 5(2), 69-76.

GENE [Global Education Network Europe] (2009). Edukacja Globalna w Polsce: Europejski proces partnerskiego przeglądu edukacji globalnej. Krajowy raport na temat edukacji globalnej w Polsce. Warszawa: Global Education Network Europe.

Global Education Guide: Concepts and Methodologies on Global Education for Educators and Policy Makers (2008). Lisbon: North-South Centre of the Council of Europe. Retrieved from: http://fed.home.pl/teg/images/geguidelines-web.pdf (18.12.2016).

Global Perspectives: A Framework for Global Education in Australian Schools (2011). Retrieved from: http://www.globaleducation.edu.au/verve/_resources/GPS_web.pdf (18.12.2016).

Gosseries A.P. (2001). What Do We Owe the Next Generations. Loyola of Los Angeles Review, 35, 293-355.

Hicks D. (2003). Thirty Years of Global Education: A Reminder of Key Principles and Precedents. Educational Review, 55, 265-275.

Hildebrand D. von. (1960). Technology and its Dangers. In: Technology and Christian Culture, Robert Paul Mohan (ed.). The Catholic University of America Press.

IPCC Climate Change (2014). Synthesis Report (2014). Retrieved from: https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/SYR_AR5_FINAL_full_wcover.pdf (19.12.2016)

Jonas H. (1985). The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Kermath, B.M. (2007). What is Sustainability? University of Wisconsin: The Global Environmental Management Education Center (GEM). Retrieved from: http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/gem/ambassador/What_is_sustainability.htm (16.11.2016).

Kostecka J. (2010). Retardacja przekształcania zasobów przyrodniczych jako element zrównoważonego rozwoju. Biuletyn KPZK PAN, 242, 27-49.

Langhelle O. (1999). Sustainable Development: Exploring the Ethics of "Our Common Future". International Political Science Review, 20(2,: 129-149.

Lipska-Badoti, G., et al. (2011). Edukacja Globalna w Szkole. Warszawa: Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej.

Meadows D. at al. (1972). The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind. New York: Universe Books.

Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005). Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Synthesis. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Papuziński A. (2013). Aksjologia zrównoważonego rozwoju: próba typologizacji. Problemy Ekorozwoju – Problems of Sustainable Development, 8(1), 5-25.

Peccei, A. (1977). Die Qualität des Menschen. Plädoyer für einen neuen Humanismus. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags – Anstalt GmbH.

Peccei, A. (1981). One Hundred Pages for the Future: Reflections of the President of the Club of Rome. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Shelton D.L. (2010). Intergenerational Equity. In: Solidarity: A Structural Principle of International Law, Rüdige Wolfrum, Chie Kojima (eds.). Heidelberg: Springer.

Suchodolski B. (1947). Wychowanie dla przyszłości. Warszawa: Książnica Polska.

Thomson P.B. (1997). Sustainability as a Norm. Philosophy and Technology, 2(2), 75-94.

Tyburski W. (2013). Dyscypliny humanistyczne i ekologia. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM.

Van Zanden J.L., et al. (2005). How Was Life? Global Well-being since 1820. OECD Publishing.

WCED (1987). Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987. The UN General Assembly document A/42/427.

Woodward R.T. (2000). Sustainability and Intergenerational Fairness: Efficiency, Uncertainty, and Numerical Methods. American Journal of Agricultural Economics, 82(3), 581-593.