

TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH GLOBAL THINKING

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Education basically remains the domain of nation states. They feel primarily responsible for the education and qualification of those children, pupils and students living within the borders of their countries. In schools, teachers tutor in separate subjects, preparing learners for exams and for the step into the labour market.

This, in turn, encourages learners to value such subjects and knowledge higher, which helps them to be successful and to start a career in the future. That means: knowledge has to be applicable, has to be of rational and instrumental use. Subjects like mathematics, sciences and economics are favoured by students in most countries. As a consequence of that, humanistic subjects like arts, religion/ethics and civil education are considered less relevant or even irrelevant to students' personal development in school and beyond. Correspondingly, national education systems often do not offer taking up courses in humanistic subjects until graduation to deepen and refine the global awareness and holistic abilities of young grown ups.

International organisations like the EU, the Council of Europe, the UN/UNESCO and the OECD try to raise the quality and international orientation of education by giving recommendations and showing examples of good practice. But if nation states do not comply with them, nobody can force them to fundamentally reform their educational systems.

In this current situation, we should not be surprised that most nation states not only educate young generations with a narrow view on world issues, but also prolong egoist attitudes to the needs of global thinking and sustainable development.

Besides that, National Educational Ministries are not willing to provide more money and political back-up for real and virtual exchanges in the

way of visits, traineeships as well as information and communication technology (Internet, video conferencing, chat rooms).

The lack of fundamental reorganisation and reorientation of education towards global justice and a sustainable development is a big problem. It means that the world-wide gap between poor and rich as well as developing and developed countries is not closing but rather widening. Together with that, patterns of the consumption of resources (oil, gas, water, wood, energy) are also extremely different throughout the world, generally showing an upward tendency even though reduction has become more important than ever before. In any case, all countries know that serious reports of the UN and the Club of Rome warn about the ending of resources in the near future.

Against this background, a group of nations, especially nations with a lot of resources (e.g. the Scandinavian countries, Canada, Russia, Malaysia and Indonesia), takes the lead in trying to shift their economic policies away from wasting to saving and dealing with them in a sustainable way. The motives for these countries are the following:

For one, their national economies depend on natural resources, which is the reason why they can only maintain their standard of living when preservation becomes more important than exploitation.

Secondly, this group of nations is ambitious to invent and manufacture energy-saving and recycling technology because it offers great potential for numerous new jobs as well as for reducing the costs for consumers while it increases export-sales. Widespread acceptance by popular majorities, which have to feel that their quality of life gains from that, is needed for preservation and energy-saving technology to be successful. Yet, it takes quite some time to acquire support of the people for a fundamental reorientation in society. Especially in education and at home, young generations continue to be raised in the expectation that progressive wealth and economic growth are impossible without the consumption of resources at a high level. In order to make sure that the shift in economic policy will be supported by a shift towards sustainability in values and behaviour, governments of these leading nations decide to change their educational priorities.

Different projects, aimed at education for SD, have been worked-out: Education begins in the kindergarden at the age of 3 and it is designed to be a lifelong process. In schools, teachers are encouraged to work together in a cross-curricular project, involving various subjects such as sciences, geography, history, civil education, religion/ethics and even foreign languages. These projects may centre around environmental topics such as water, soil, air, energy, potatoes or trees/plants, but they might as well deal with fair trade, tensions between religions and genetic/genetic, or between traditional and modern cultures. Besides that, teachers pay more attention to aesthetical and ethical education based on a universal philosophical heritage (Schiller, Goethe, Kant, Tolstoy, Schweitzer...).

They give an insight to the aesthetic world where everything has the same value and everything alive deserves respect. Concepts of moral and rational freedom, creative thinking, the perception of art and the value of nature are being analysed and discussed in schools, museums and heritage foundations.

For delivering this content, teachers and learners would cooperate in a very different way, stressing participation of pupils and students and looking for partnerships with institutions outside school. A variety of new, experimental methods goes hand in hand with that: simulative exercises, companies of pupils, peer-group learning with 'team GLOBAL', the scenario-technique designing plausible but uncertain futures, etc. In short: learners learn to know, learn to live together, learn to do and learn to be. This implies adopting global perspectives and views on issues of environment, social imbalance and economic well-being, but it also involves taking over responsibility for a sustainable future development.

Practically orientated educational programmes - such as adoption programmes to take care of poor children, orphans or wild-life animals - are widely spread. National heritage in different spheres of science, art and traditional culture, together with recent scientific research, contributes to the awareness of a pressing situation and the willingness to take over responsibility.

This educational approach in some leading countries becomes attractive to other states. The obvious advantages of it (high qualification of generalists, their creative skills and eagerness for lifelong learning; higher politi-

cal maturity and tolerance, social and communication skills) are a great impulse to implement such an educational system in other countries.

In order to profit from these examples of good practice, they adopt the same guide lines, content and methods of global sustainable education into their own educational systems.

Parallel to that, almost simultaneously in different places around the world, parties, movements and educational institutions focused on the creation of the ability of global thinking emerge.

In addition to these fundamental reforms in education, a process of decentralization of power in developing countries contributes to sustainable development, too. Better informed about the needs of their regions, the local authorities take over responsibility in solving their ecological, economical and educational problems. Facing the problem of over-consumption of water, electricity and gas, local authorities launch projects for a sustainable way of thinking and acting in everyday life. They set up water and gas registers and the real incomes from saving stimulate a larger section of the population to join these projects. Post materialist and conventional-authoritarian groups are the most interested ones in limiting consumption. Separating and recycling waste gets a positive personal response when people see that it obviously has advantages (new jobs in recycling factories, lower prices of goods). In this way, self-ruling and personal responsibility of regions leads to positive changes in the people's lives.