The Relationship between the Content of Lifelong Education for Sustainable Development and Needs of the Educational Environment

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**Abstract**

Of the many challenges facing a global society the fundamental one is related to sustainable development. Parallel with this, there is a need for an adequate response to the challenges of sustainable development that can be recognized only in the timeliness and quality of education of new generations. Thus, teaching and learning becomes an imperative and what is recognizable in these requirements is the need to educate young people through the institutions of the system, organized by the school system at all levels. Aims, objectives and content of education for sustainable development should be compatible with the environmental, economic, political, educational, cultural and other needs (external aims of education), and demands of social reality, whilst innovative methods of education should be in line with education for sustainable development, as well as with the curriculum.

**Key words**: education policy, lifelong learning, sustainable development

**Introduction**

The concept of lifelong learning within which lies the concept of lifelong education, has emerged as a result of increasing demands for a greater amount of knowledge, because the existing knowledge became insufficient or outdated. It is based on a continuous approach to teaching and learning in terms of acquiring new knowledge which is needed in new social conditions, and new positions at work and in the society of knowledge, which implies participation in society. Considering and reviewing the given topic, along with the construct lifelong learning there is also an expression which implies permanent (continuous) education, which according to Pastuović, is not the same. Differences between lifelong learning and lifelong education is that “lifelong education refers to education throughout life (from birth to death) while continuous education (permanent) refers to education since the end of a degree of formal education (usually after compulsory education) until death, or until the end of their working life. While lifelong learning and education encompasses and coordinates the education and upbringing of children, adolescents and adults (according to the principle of vertical connectivity), the continuous education, on the other hand, adjusts only forms of formal, non-formal and informal adult learning (according to the principle of horizontal integration)”. (Pastuović, 1999:53)

**UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development**

The period 2005-2014 the United Nations through UNESCO have declared as Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, which aims to implement educational values, ​​which are important for sustainable development, into all educational facilities and educational curriculum that will support changes in behavior and lead to a sustainable society. The very choice of UNESCO, as the implementer of this project, represents (along with the Program on Climate Change for Sustainable Development and Program of Education for all) the key to sustainable development. In order for Decade to achieve its goals and satisfies its creators (UN and UNESCO), as well as society and community, it is necessary to create the curriculum so that it will integrate previous experiences of social and emotional (emotional, moral) context with the addition of willing (connotative) component.

For education policy-makers the most complex issue of the Decade is the question of how to design services and develop curriculum (curricula) that will be able to train young people for social development in the future, in the society of knowledge, in order to cope with many challenges, as well as problems carried by globalization processes.

Only the contents of education for sustainable development in the curricula that are on the trail of the unity of science and the teaching process can meet the needs of young people through formal education to acquire the necessary competencies for sustainable development. As the curriculum must align according to the Bologna Process, which means that three year, or four-year cycle is expected to provide students with the academic skills and professions according to the standards of the Bologna Declaration.

It is important to ensure the cooperation of the management of institutions providing educational services (education for sustainable development) and the educational environment as external educational objectives to the educational process and the content customized needs (development), the needs of local communities (regions) to the development needs of the community at the national level. In addition to teaching content in the curriculum, it is essential to provide high-quality services through the scientific research in institutions of higher education, including services for sustainable development to a greater number of young people qualified for sustainable development.

***Curriculum content for Sustainable Development***

Curriculum content including education for sustainable development which will be adopted by educational productions (graduates of all educational levels) and transmit it to end users in the environment, needs to raise the quality of life of future generations.

Educational production coming from teachers' colleges have a special responsibility because they have the most experience when it comes to activities that are in line with lifelong learning for sustainable development.

Changes are necessary. They should start from the higher education system for the educational outputs have the strongest influence on the inputs to segments of educational environment (economic, social, cultural, and environmental).

In order for graduates, especially those from teaching faculties, to acquire more skills, through facilities for sustainable development, it is necessary to educate the university teachers through workshops and projects which along with the general civic awareness and strengthening of the necessary knowledge, skills, and capabilities (competencies) for each individual, it can be a guarantee for successful preparation of future educators to teach young people of all educational levels for sustainable development. So far, this system has not been solved, and the teachers are generally satisfied with their knowledge in the field of ecology and democracy, which is definitely not enough.

Learning objectives as internal goals of education represent training for a specific type of behavior. The aim is to meet universal human needs which include, apart from the existential, social and self-actualization. Learning objectives, according to Gagne, serve as a selection of learning content, provide the prerequisites to learning and implement them, and conduct a review of outcomes. Components of learning objectives Gagne (1988) identified as:

1. type of learned proficiency,
2. description of the situation in which a learned behavior is performed,
3. object on which the behavior is applied,
4. description of the specific activities that students use in the execution of learned behavior,
5. Funds, restrictions and special conditions governing the learned behavior. (Gagne, et.al. 1988:23)

***Learning objectives for sustainable development***

In order for the educational outputs (educational production) to acquire the necessary competencies (knowledge, abilities, skills, habits, values, attitudes, etc.) in formal education (institutions at all levels of occupation and level of education), and particularly for sustainable development, it is necessary for teaching facilities, plans and programs (curriculum), to be adapted to the needs of the educational environment (external educational objectives). Learned behaviors (competencies) acquired through internal learning objectives are divided into the areas of cognitive (strategy, intellectual skills and information), psychomotor (psychomotor skills) and affective behavior (attitudes, habits, values).

Learning objectives in taxonomy objectives (Bloom) are composed of more groups of goals and are divided into:

1. **Cognitive goals** (goals related to knowledge and the development of intellectual skills necessary for the application of knowledge), (Bloom, 1970:35): knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

2. **Affective goals** (goals related to the values, attitudes and assessment) (Krathwohl et al 1964:78): receiving, responding, valuing, organization values, characterization of people with value system.

3. **Psychomotor objectives** (motor skills). (Bloom, 1970:35)

For our discussion it is important that we define social development and out of many of its definitions we opted for the following: social development is the system of changes within the man and his environment that leads to satisfying his needs (not just existential) which influence the quality of his life. The development of man is not and should not be limited to only meet its basic needs; it includes more needs, goals and other values ​​such as the need for relationships with other people, the need for a relationship with his own development (self-actualization). The higher need for achievement makes the quality of life of each individual higher. Quality of life of the individual as a member of society makes society more developed.

The meaning of social development is to improve all aspects of human life, meaning that man should satisfy the universal human needs, including social and self-actualization (to satisfy the motives for the growth and development and not only the existential).

In the process of social development, education plays an important role; therefore, it contributes to the development of society, so we can say that the purpose of education supports quality of life of all members of the community. As a result, there is the need for education as generators of quality of life and social development.

The question of educational needs can be analyzed at three levels: (Bahtijarević-Šiber, 1999)

* individual,
* work, and
* institutional level.

Educational needs can be viewed through its four levels:

* educational needs aimed at training employees for jobs that await them (training for the current job),
* educational needs related to the expansion of individual knowledge and skills (the expansion and deepening of knowledge and skills to adapt to changes in business and technology),
* educational needs related to the development of individual career and training graduate of a certain educational level (educational production) to perform complex tasks (preparing for a career progression and performance is more complex and demanding tasks),
* educational needs related to the future (education and preparation for future changes and jobs and education for the future, and flexibility). (Bahtijarević-Šiber, 1999:741)

Figure 1 Levels of educational needs (Bahtijarević-Šiber, 1999:741)

***Lifelong Education for Sustainable Development: Economic Development***

Technological development is strongly influenced by the necessity of its sequence, because science and scientific advances are changing daily and, as a result a need for life-long education (full day) becomes a requirement. Thus, old knowledge expires, so there is a need for new knowledge, which educational policy "forces" to create a curriculum that will include a system of lifelong learning which will acquire competencies that will be able to meet the challenges of technological development. Strengthening of human resources will strengthen interaction and inclusion of education and the economy.

Economic part of the educational environment (external goals of education) is in the interdependent relationship with education and learning (internal goals of education) and since education is strongly influenced by the economy (through educational inputs: facilities, equipment, staff salaries), it can be said that education and the economy influence the economic development. Neglecting the economical dimension of the interaction, the lack of investment in education and the labor market will be felt simply because the insufficient investment in training and development of employees directly affects the loss of market share (Bahtijarević-Šiber, 1999).[[1]](#footnote-1)

This interaction of education and economics is based on the theory of human capital (health, knowledge, motivation) which strengthens through education and directly influences all parts of its quality (Fagerlind and Saha, 1989).

Economic development, in question, is to strengthen the efficiency of the economy, which is again a consequence of links between education and the economy, which is treated as the ratio of primary, secondary and tertiary level of formal education and the growth rate of gross domestic product (Psacharopoulos, 1985 in Obralić, H. 2012).

Economic development, as a powerful factor in the educational environment, as its main developmental elements sees science, education and upbringing because they define the quality of human capital (the greatest wealth and investment in education a priority), which is directly dependent on the quality of the use of financial (and other) resources of a country.

***Lifelong Education for Sustainable Development: Political Development***

Political development in our circumstances is almost always in the context of development of political parties, though political development is based on the process that needs to improve citizens' participation (political) and political integration. Processes should be seen as a consequence of political socialization, such as understanding the political values, opinions, attitudes, habits, which should encourage all actors in the political community on integration and participation (Saha and Fagerlind, 1994). (Meyer and Rubinson, 1975) Political socialization is simply impossible without education and it is geared towards the survival of the current political situation. Besides having significant impact on political socialization, education plays significant role in the identity formation (especially national) and national integration. This is especially true in developing countries, then the countries in transition, and finally in the new entities as is the example of the former Yugoslav republics that formed their own states. Particularly important is the construction of national identity, as it is an essential aspect of national identity on the one hand political, and on the other, cultural development. Political integration cannot be without a national identity, and it is built by consensus of all political actors in building political rights, a unique political system and basic recognizable symbols of the state and statehood, such as the constitution, national anthem, flag, and coat of arms).

Relation between education and political development is not unidirectional. Politics is a segment of the educational environment and it is subject to the influence of education through external educational goals, whereas a political system and important political values ​​strongly influence the education, which results in an interactive relationship of these two elements of external goals of education, which is accomplished in the following manner:

1. initial operation of society (politics) has the strongest influence on education (programs, system structure, evaluation, funding, teacher education), which is expressed in the education reforms undertaken after the radical political changes, such as those in post-communist (transition) countries,
2. reformed education and upbringing affect the stabilization and development of the existing social order (politics)
3. further social (political) development generates new needs for change (development) of the existing educational system (Saha and Fagerlind 1994, 1655 in Obralić, H. 2012).

***Lifelong Education for Sustainable Development: Cultural Development***

Integrative part of the educational environment (and it's an important part of) is culture. Culture, as a system of values ​​that is manifested in the practices of social behavior in attitudes and habits directly affect the quality of life, human rights, and human values. Educational production affects the environment (economic, political, cultural), and then we talk about the work of education in parts of the environment, as well as the culture, that through all forms of education (youth through formal - education and adult formal and informal - learning) affects values, attitudes and habits.

Educational production (graduates of various educational levels), with all its knowledge, skills, and habits (competencies) strongly affects all segments of the educational environment - outer education goals (desirable educational effects) as well as the culture, which both directly and indirectly affect the development of society (the economic, social and political development, of which largely depends rational use of human resources) what is in the scientific discourse explained through the theory of modernization (Inkeles and Smith, 1974). Modernization is seen as a trend of strengthening the knowledge and use of rational, in caring for the environment so as that man can control (natural, cultural, political) supervise and manage it. Here, education plays an important role because it strongly influences the modernity of attitudes, values, family, as well as the choice and duration of formal education. According to Pastuović (1999), modern values ​​and attitudes affect social behavior, if they lead to desirable outcomes for the person, i.e. desired material, social, and self-actualizing effects. It depends on the modernity of the society or of its aspects in which the individual acts (Pastuović, 1999, 408, 409). Scientific discourse unreservedly recognizes that social development has no grounding and sustainability without its citizens as the creator of universal values ​​that carry the attribute of modernity.

Many have defined modernity through persons who are considered to be modern, and such descriptions of modern people in works of Inkeles and Smith (1974) contain a confirmation of what was said before:

1. readiness for social change,
2. awareness of the diversity of views and opinions of others and the ability to design and maintain own opinions,
3. determination in collecting data and facts which are the basis of the thought process,
4. temporal orientation toward the present and the future instead of the past,
5. feeling of success or belief that one can influence their own environment,
6. orientation towards long-term planning in public affairs and private life,
7. fundamental confidence in the predictability of the surrounding world, and confidence that the institutions and individuals will meet their obligations,
8. high evaluation of technical skills and their acceptance as criteria for the distribution of prizes,
9. high valuation of formal education and training, and high expectations for educational and work achievements,
10. understanding of manufacturing and industry. (Inkeles and Smith, 1974: 19-25 in Obralić, H. 2012).

Finally, through curricula that are supported by Bologna process, through courses, workshops and projects, it is necessary to allow students to develop social, economic, environmental and political competencies (knowledge, abilities, skills and habits) in order to resolve the problems of society and the development of society for sustainable development, for life, for the coexistence of nature, society and each individual.

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