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EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MIECZYSŁAW GOGACZ'S REALISTIC PEDAGOGY

Abstract

In the face of the "weakness of indicators" of the progress in the implementation of the postulates of sustainable development, opinions appear about "the depletion of the paradigm of sustainable development". So far, strengthening the practice of sustainable development, involved, among others, implementation of education for sustainable development. However, certain omissions have been revealed in the area of educational activities. education. Taking into account these failures, it seems that it is worth "humanizing" education. The article is an attempt to embed education for sustainable development in the realistic pedagogy of M. Gogacz, built on the basis of consistent Thomism.

Keywords: realistic pedagogy, education for sustainable development, ethics of protecting people, sustainable development

EDUKACJA NA RZECZ ZRÓWNOWAŻONEGO ROZWOJU Z PERSPEKTYWY PEDAGOGIKI REALISTYCZNEJ MIECZYSŁAWA GOGACZA

Abstrakt

Współcześnie coraz częściej mówi się o kryzysie paradygmatu zrównoważonego rozwoju, wskazując na nieskuteczność eliminacji problemów globalnych. W obliczu „słabości wskaźników" postępu realizacji postulatów zrównoważonego rozwoju pojawiają się opinie o „wyczerpywaniu się paradygmatu zrównoważonego rozwoju". Dotychczas wzmacnianie praktyki zrównoważonego rozwoju wiązało się m.in. z realizacją edukacji na rzecz zrównoważonego rozwoju. Jednak w obszarze działań edukacyjnych ujawnia się określone zaniedbania. Mając na uwadze te niepowodzenia, warto edukację „humanizować". Artykuł jest próbą osadzenia edukacji sustensywnej w pedagogice realistycznej M. Gogacza, zbudowanej w oparciu o tomizm konsekwentny.

Słowa kluczowe: pedagogika realistyczna, edukacja sustensywna, etyka chronienia osób, zrównoważony rozwój

Introduction

Nowadays, the issue of the crisis of the sustainable development paradigm is being brought up more and more frequently; the ineffectiveness in eliminating global problems is being pointed out. Strategies and programs aimed at reducing human impact on the natural environment and the methods of implementing the sustainable development goals are under assessment. In the face of the "weakness of indicators" of the progress in carrying out the postulates of sustainable development, opinions about "the depletion of the paradigm of sustainable development" emerge (Bińczyk 2018, 173-180).

So far, strengthening the practice of sustainable development, including programs for the protection of the social and natural environment, was connected with, inter alia, the implementation of education for sustainable development (ESD). However, in the area of educational activities, their ineffectiveness and certain negligence are observed. Therefore, taking into account the educational setbacks resulting from the rather elementary implementation of solely environmental education, the "humanization" of education is in order. This article is an attempt to embed education for sustainable development in the realistic pedagogy of Mieczysław Gogacz; a pedagogy built based on consequential Thomism and related to the concept of ethics for the protection of people.

1. Education for sustainable development – vision and practice

The idea of sustainable development, which gained particular publicity after the publication of the Brundtland Report in 1987 (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987), outlined a vision of the further development of humanity. Numerous sustainable development strategies and programs call for radical action to change the megatrends that increase the world's unsustainability. For several decades, scientists have been warning about climate change and its effects, the loss of biodiversity, the disappearance of natural wild areas, the increasing scale of poverty, and the deepening division between the rich and the poor. Despite numerous aid programs, the gap between the countries of the rich North and the poor South is not only not narrowing down but on the contrary – it is systematically widening. It has been pointed out that crises (social, environmental, energy, agricultural, etc.) are not independent of each other. "This is one global crisis relating to man's approach to the environment that cannot be resolved within national jurisdictions anymore" (Pawłowski 2017, 54). These problems were included in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals 2030 as challenges for joint actions to ensure living conditions for future generations and improve the quality of life for the present. Conducting effective education is part of the implementation of each of the goals. Recognition of ESD as a necessary condition for achieving sustainable development is constantly growing. The

need and rationale for this kind of education were strongly articulated during three ground-breaking global summits for sustainable development: the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, and the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development, also in Rio de Janeiro. The development and implementation of ESD are supported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Additionally, the Decade of ESD (2005-2014) was established, the adoption of which was tantamount to the obligation to include a new development paradigm in the content and forms of education. It was clear from the document that the human being is to become a key factor of change, which is why it is so important to improve the quality of education and to incorporate aspirations promoting sustainable development in the social, economic, and environmental dimensions into the broadly understood education (formal, informal, and non-formal) (Borys 2010, 60). As emphasized by A. Kalinowska, the implementation of the Decade was to strengthen the importance of ESD and contribute to the activities such as: promoting peace in the world, combating global warming, reducing the development gap between rich and poor countries, combating poverty, and preventing marginalization of women and girls (Kalinowska 2007, 45). Education in this area was also being developed after the end of the Decade of ESD. An important event was the adoption of the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development and the created "Roadmap for implementing the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development" (UNESCO 2014). It was emphasized then that "political agreements, financial incentives, and modern technologies are not sufficient to achieve sustainable development. A radical change is needed in the ways we think and act, which are shaping our relationships with other people and the entire ecosystem of the Earth. To ensure sustainable development that will meet the needs of present and future generations, it is necessary to equip all individuals and entire societies with the appropriate knowledge and skills and shape an appropriate system of values" (Batorczak and Klimska 2020, 20).

In the pedagogical theory, sustainable development is based, among other things, on constructivism, humanism, and pragmatism. Constructivism emphasizes the individual's activity in the process of acquiring knowledge. However, gaining knowledge is associated with constant interaction with the environment, and knowledge itself is a construct of the mind depending on the experiences and views one has. It is certain research independence of man, within which he reaches the understanding of meanings (Bałachowicz 2003, 22). Humanism, on the other hand, is related to the development of independent and free of prejudice critical thinking skills, and education towards values. Humanistic education, as emphasized by H. Żuraw, assumes the maintenance of universal values that determine the quality of humanity, such as truth, goodness, beauty, justice, peace, and tolerance (Żuraw 2015, 70). Pragmatism in the pedagogy of sustainable development is associated

with practical activities, based on the experience of the individual, which enable the acquisition of skills and competencies (Kołodziejska and Czerniak-Czyżniak 2017, 255). The presented assumptions of this pedagogy are correct and important, but they are more often reflected in nature and ecological education than in education for sustainable development. Most programs that provide ESD cover only its environmental dimension, concerning the protection of our planet, climate change, human-nature relations, etc. Therefore the challenge is the achievement of education focused on matters directly affecting human existence, in which it is recognized that "human rights and social justice are as crucial for sustainable development as maintaining the biological balance of the natural environment" (Gajuś-Lankamer 2010, 30).

2. An appeal for a revolution in education for sustainable development

Education is considered to be an effective tool for the implementation of the demands of sustainable development. Its importance is emphasized in most programs and strategies for the protection of the social and natural environment. The formal education system takes into account some issues related to sustainable development, but these are mainly programs based on the transfer of knowledge, usually limited by the teacher, to ecological content. Many organizations in Poland promote sustainable development by offering interesting educational programs, often dedicated to schools. It is still education "for enthusiasts", which is conducted only in institutions managed by principals who are aware of threats to the social and natural environment and open to the issues of sustainable development (Batorczak and Klimska 2020, 24). Therefore, there is a large gap that needs to be filled through programs involving society in action for sustainable development, encouraging reflective thinking or recognition of cause-and-effect relationships and directed at shaping attitudes such as responsibility, moderation, justice, solidarity, care, altruism, thriftiness, restraint, diligence, etc. It is worth emphasizing that the assumptions of education for sustainable development go beyond the classical pedagogical categories, which are often accused of "dehumanizing".

As noted by M. Krasnodębski, contemporary education consists of training erudites by enriching their knowledge, but without concern for their personal development. As a result, the value of education (upbringing and training), understood by the author as a service that a human performs towards another human, is lost (Krasnodębski 2009, 23-50). The various currently functioning models of upbringing and training (the so-called educational pluralism), apart from their undisputed advantages, also have many drawbacks. They quite often ignore the ethical assumptions that determine specific ways of acting and perceiving reality.

This problem can be seen precisely in education for sustainable development. Sustainable development is an idea that integrates various areas of human activity that relate to the following levels: moral, ecological, social, economic, technological,

legal, and political. A relatively simple rule – "act so that the effects of your actions do not harm the future existence of man on Earth" (Jonas 1996) – according to A. Pawłowski, leads to the formulation of complicated strategies of action relating to various levels of human activity. It is not always possible to implement them, and what is more, some of them function improperly (Pawłowski 2006, 31). It is visible in many educational programs which, apart from knowledge about threats to the social and natural environment and certain skills, do not equip people with moral competencies. This is a significant deficiency, because morality, as emphasized by C. Hendryk, indicates the required way of relating to others and determines the desired shape of the relationship. The author, referring to the definition of J. J. Liszka, explains that "moral competence is the integration of many important abilities: moral feelings, the desire for the right things, moral strength and the power (agency) to implement it, righteousness (virtue) and the ability to constantly keep it, wisdom and the ability to get it, and knowledge of what it is to do the right things" (Hendryk 2010, 136).

The call for an educational revolution is not a new phenomenon. Similarly, the postulates of humanistic education are also well known in the pedagogical discourse. One can recall, for example, Edgar Faure's report created by the International Commission for the Development of Education in 1972, titled *Learning to be*. The authors of the document drew attention to the new scopes of human responsibility and the related educational needs, i.e. preparation for taking actions to overcome civilization threats, facing global problems, and managing the further development of the world (Faure et al. 1975).

In the context of sustainable development, W. Tyburski wrote about the educational revolution, stressing that its goal would be to "balance the dynamic development of science, biology, and technology through in-depth 'humanistic' education, which, on the basis of a specific hierarchy of values, would pave the way to the emergence of a new civilization" (Tyburski 2017, 43). K. Olbrycht, on the other hand, notes that "today's education is (...) in practice, education for effective functioning in contemporary civilization, for ruthless, uncompromised competing (often at the expense of others), for fighting to achieve success (material or social position), or at least for agile adaptation to the situation" (Olbrycht 2012, 95-96). According to the author, there is a clear contradiction of values between the declared and practically realized goals of formal and non-formal education. The declared ones such as developing subjectivity, creative attitudes, criticism, responsibility for oneself, others, and the world, openness and dialogical attitude towards others, or sensitizing to the fate of those in need are in practice replaced with instrumental values (Olbrycht 2012, 95-96).

3. Realistic pedagogy by Mieczysław Gogacz as the starting point for "humanized" education for sustainable development

Bearing in mind the more and more clearly perceived "depletion of the paradigm of sustainable development" (Bińczyk 2018, 173-180) and some educational setbacks or even negligence in this area, the "humanization" of education is worth pursuing. Education without humanization is not education but at the very best training of "posthuman people" (Wojnar 2000, 28). "Pedagogy must be extended to new problem horizons (human-world; past-present-future)" (Bałachowicz 2016, 27) and include education for a collective vision of development, and thus for sustainable development. Therefore, according to Krasnodębski's standpoint, idealistically oriented pedagogy should be abandoned, in which the man himself is forgotten and upbringing is reduced to implementing patterns and models that do not fit into the real world (Krasnodębski 2009). The educational process should be enriched with axiological education, within which attention is paid to the values in the existential dimension. They are seen as something valuable, desirable, and are the goal of human aspirations. Axiological education can be considered a part of humanistic pedagogy or pedagogy of culture, in which values play a significant role in shaping the humanistic development of the world and man. Through axiological education, a person develops the ability to choose values and then act in accordance with this choice. This education is one of the scopes of education for values, and through it, the ability to perceive, choose, update, implement values, etc. is created (Olbrycht 2012, 92). The relationship between values and action is important in this education. Values affect people who relate themselves to them, e.g. through their actions. Some values are so vital to a person that they urge one to act. Action is reflected in specific attitudes showing the relation of a person to the selected aspect of reality, as well as in behavior. "Values acquire an individual dimension through action, the general slogan becomes a concrete reality, and declarations are transformed into a work" (Żuk 2016, 58).

Nowadays, traditional values are more and more often questioned, and in their place, those that have not yet received sufficient social acceptance are proposed. The present day is characterized by diversity in most areas of life. A comprehensive vision of the world with generally recognized values and norms is lacking. It even occurs that visible contradictions are observed. Values shared in one sphere of social life (e.g. economy, science, culture, politics) are not necessarily accepted in another. A feature of today's societies is the constant change that affects the approach to traditional models of morality, usually reducing their significance (Mariański 2014, 294). Various sectors of life are oriented towards inconsistent and often conflicting values and systems of meaning. Hence, integrating them into a coherent system or effectively persuading them to implement certain values, adopt specific patterns of behavior or attitudes is more and more difficult.

Therefore, in the face of the crisis of the sustainable development paradigm, axiological education should become a priority. Its essential element should be

education, first of all, in the spirit of the value of responsibility, so that this value is not only declared by society but also individually implemented. Responsibility can be considered a fundamental value that is common for a variety of cultures. Furthermore, other values should be considered in relation to responsibility (Jedynak 1999, 23) for contemporary and future generations. Responsibility for other people results from the need to protect them, largely against their hedonistic and self-centered abuses and their thieving actions (World Heritage Watch Report 2020). Therefore, an important task of the pedagogy of sustainable development is to educate people to be responsible for the social and natural environment, and above all for other human beings. For this purpose, it is worth relying on the philosophy of man and ethics, because "philosophical anthropology determines the good of people, ethics informs which actions to undertake in order to protect this good, and pedagogy shows how to use these actions" (Kluzowicz 2011, 66). In this way, Mieczysław Gogacz created the concept of realistic pedagogy, that is, one that remains consistent with the realistic theory of man. It is closely related to the ethics of protecting people proposed by the author. It is Thomistic ethics conditioned by the theory of personal relations formulated by Gogacz. Among the personal relationships listed by him, love was considered the most important. Together with the faith and hope that complement it, these relationships constitute the natural environment of man and are considered the first need of a personal being. Relations with other beings that create the natural environment are secondary to personal relationships. The ethics of protecting people understood in this way "is a philosophical, methodologically distinct from others, discipline (...), the subject of which are (in line with the nature of philosophy itself) the principles of choosing actions to protect people and personal relationships" (Andrzejuk 2014, 24-25). As Gogacz emphasizes, ethics is not only about making choices, as they are also culturally determined. "Ethics, then, is not concerned with identifying the principles of being but identifying the principles of choosing actions that protect personal relationships and persons" (Gogacz 1998a, 92). Thus, ethics is "the science of protecting the welfare of people and their personal relationships by actions of the intellect and will, consistent with truth and goodness" (Gogacz 1998b, 36). The material object of this ethics is human behavior as a result of the transition from encountering to co-existence. Consequently, the formal object is to protect people and personal relationships. Protecting people and personal relationships depends on the actions of the intellect and will. The very creation of personal relationships is something that a person needs, appreciates, and protects. By protecting personal relations, their subjects are also protected: reality, truth, and good. Gogacz defines personal relations precisely as the subject or place of value. Value, in turn, is the creation of relationships, the state of duration, which is the result of cognitive and decision-making activities as well as the products of cognition, decisions, and physical actions (Gogacz 1991, 178).

As Gogacz emphasizes, thanks to pedagogy, an educated person is guided by rationality and freedom, acquires his own personality, understood as a unique basis for the nature of relationships with other people. In this sense, pedagogy offers relationships with people (Gogacz 1993, 22). Moreover, it points to the value of the duration of relationships that are not outside of man in merely mental constructs. It binds people here and now and makes them strive for this connectedness with their thinking and decisions. "Therefore we are not doomed to be tied only to goals, tasks, or an idea. They only mobilize the intellect, and through it the will, to establish ties with people that nurture us" (Gogacz 1993, 34).

Justifying the need to develop realistic pedagogy, Gogacz warns that its various contemporary versions propose an upbringing based on dreaming, shaping a personality dominated by dreams. A nation, which is a group of people who are mainly driven by a dream, in the author's opinion, cannot achieve the common good (Gogacz 1993, 36).

According to Gogacz, to properly develop and bring their moral qualities to society, people should strive to acquire the intellectual virtue of knowledge that will enable them to recognize goals. Achieving these goals will develop in them, inter alia, the efficiency of honesty, prudent trust, bravery, undertaking what is difficult and requiring long-term effort, sensitivity to suffering and the fate of other people, or the ability to treat oneself and others seriously (Gogacz 1985, 71). Gogacz's realistic pedagogy, in contrast to many idealistic concepts of pedagogy, focuses on the human being in its starting point. It is the person, not theories, views, or the figments of imagination, that is the task of pedagogy. "Gogacz's pedagogy teaches the affirmation of a person. It sees man as an individual being characterized by realness, unity, uniqueness, separateness, truth, goodness, and beauty. It indicates an entity that loves and trusts, who needs love, friendship, kindness, support, and the presence of other human beings. It emphasizes that upbringing and training should aim at the correct deciphering of reality, understanding oneself, and noticing other people" (Gondek 2016, 110).

Gogacz's realistic pedagogy can be the starting point for the pedagogical theory of sustainable development, which should be embedded in the ethics of protecting people. The author emphasizes the legitimacy of education aimed at acquiring skills and virtues, transforming thinking and behavior, and, consequently, the protection of people and personal relationships. This direction should be adopted in education for sustainable development. According to Gogacz: "We have a poorly functioning education system. It does not take into account genuine human needs in its programs. (…) We should teach those subjects that activate thinking" (Gogacz 1999, 73). Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals requires a profound transformation of the way we think and act. Effective education has a chance to awaken in an individual the need to protect not only the natural environment but above all other people.

Realistic pedagogy, like most sustainable development programs, takes an anthropocentric view. Gogacz clearly indicates that the first need of personal being

is relationships built with other people in the natural environment. In the native environment, the man enters into relationships with other beings, but they are secondary to personal relationships. They are not insignificant or unnecessary. It is worth emphasizing, however, that man is the subject of sustainable development, which is being pursued, above all, in efforts to enhance the survival of the human species and the improvement of the quality of life of people on Earth.

Gogacz points out that the starting point for building pedagogy will always be a certain understanding of man and a concept of morality. The pedagogical programs of sustainable development lack a clearly defined concept of man and morality, which poses a threat to education based on inconsistent, sometimes conflicting values and systems of meanings. Good upbringing and training of a human being, in Gogacz's opinion, is possible when we have knowledge about the essence of a human being and what is to be improved and perfected, what factors can influence his proper development and what he should implement in his life.

Conclusions

Gogacz's realistic pedagogy should be included in strategies or educational programs for sustainable development, basing those, inter alia, on the ethics of protecting people. However, one should avoid developing a pedagogy of sustainable development, in which education would be based on dreaming. Sustainable development is an idea that is often accused of being a utopian vision of the future world. The pedagogy of sustainable development and educational practice should express the pursuit of the common good, which is not a dream, but a real program and action for the poor, disease-laden, excluded, or deprived of access to food or water, people and should counteract practices leading to the collapse of natural systems supporting life. Therefore, according to the teachings of Gogacz, upbringing and training for sustainable development ought to be oriented toward the result, not the goal. The author warns against idealistic pedagogies, the aim of which is to implement unattainable models. Pedagogy for sustainable development will not be effective and properly conducted if it adopts an idealistic understanding of education and upbringing as a starting point. Hence the need to "humanize" education for sustainable development and base it on pedagogy reinforced by realistic human philosophy and realistic ethics.

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