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Humanitarian Education as a Resource for Sustainable Development

I Kuznetsov[1]

[1]Vladimir State University, Vladimir, Russia

Abstract. This article studies the role of humanitarian education in providing conditions for sustained economic growth. The study is based on the analysis of contemporary tendencies of economical, social and ecological development. Sustainable development in the current context creates a need for the new type of engineers and workers with such qualities as responsibility, creativity, openness to innovations. The author maid the conclusion that it's impossible to achieve new employee's qualities, demanded by modern economic growth, only by means of professional education because they depend of human development which is a product of humanitarian education. Thus the study of philosophy and other humanitarian disciplines should be an important part of specialist's education in modern world.

1. Need for a new quality of a personal identity

The concept of sustained economic growth is very important for the modern world. Modern economical theory considers the achieving sustained economic growth as a main target both for a separate enterprise and for national economy as a whole because it is crucial for economic and social development. Sustained economic growth provides the basis for enhancing social welfare and strengthening social stability.

At the beginning of 1970s Simon Kuznets defined such a growth "as a long-term rise in capacity to supply increasingly diverse economic goods to its population, this growing capacity based on advancing technology and the institutional and ideological adjustments that it demands." [1] So, the sustained growth now is possible only as an innovative one. Innovations – creation of new technologies or supplement of new products and services – provide adaptation to the rapidly changing conditions of development. Enterprises and whole nations, lost innovative potential, inevitable lose competition and slow down growth rate. Thus, there is an increasing demand for creative abilities in economy and other spheres. Creativity became a basic value of modern society.

But at modern conditions understanding of sustained growth concept goes beyond the economic sphere and is not limited to the increase in quantitative indicators. The reason is that now conception of sustained economic growth is implemented under the expanding global ecological, social, cultural and other problems, which produce various threats to the existence of mankind itself. These threats are directly connected to the human activity, changes in its essence and conditions.

The Club of Rome was the first to draw attention to this problem in famous report Limits to Growth", published in 1972 by Dennis Meadows and his colleagues. [2] they demonstrated that if the present growth trends continue unchanged the limits of growth will be reached in next hundred years. Existing economic models will led man kind to the depletion of natural resources, global ecological catastrophe and to sharp decline in industrial capacity and living standards.

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Ecological concern, provoked by Club of Rome's reports, gives the way to the idea of responsible development, based on the reasonable balance between the economic growth's needs and its negative environmental effects. This idea seriously changes the content of sustained growth concept. As a result it was transformed in the notion of sustainable development, first used in the report prepared by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) adopted common concept of sustainable economic development, which focuses on maintaining of ecological balance in order to prevent the risk of destruction of a natural habitat and provide conditions for sustainable development of present and future generations.

Principle 1 of Rio declaration proclaims that "human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature". [3] This means the need for humanization and deep changes in the basic values of modern civilization. Social progress now should be measured not by consumption value but by the full development of the human personality inseparable from nature. We must acknowledge nature as a value in its own right equal to the value of the human life.

It's worth to add that along with changes in "society - nature" relations modern concept of sustainable development inevitably raises the question of humanistic attitude to the technique. This question certainly has the cultural content because technique became a fundamental part of our civilization and culture. Modern engineers and technicians, who project and maintain technical devices, are the creators of society's culture no less than writers, artists or composers. Devices and technologies, designed by them, form new social and cultural practices, affected human development process as well as the existence of nature and society.

Meanwhile development of technical systems reached a level where technological disasters have proved to the global risks of destroying mankind and the Earth. Hence, the problem of engineers and scientists social responsibility sharply increases. Every technological advance before society adopts it, should be subjected to the expertise in order to estimate its social and ecological side-effects. Such expertise demands not only professional knowledge and skills but also wide cultural background and understanding of social implications of technical innovations. It is equally important to form an active attitude to the negative consequences of technical progress.

Based on the above it can be concluded that sustainable development is a multidimensional process which requires coordination of various cultural, economic, resource and other factors. Such coordination is possible only in frame of human existence and the core problem of the sustainable development is the problem of human capital. It implies the formation of new values and personal qualities centered on responsible attitude toward both nature and society. Mankind must find appropriate means to achieve this goal, but the problem is that education still does not meet these requirements. We need to transform education content for securing the sustainable development.

2. Forming the new personality

The main way to develop human capital is education and its role for sustainable development is out of discussion. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015, puts the goal "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" on the fourth place among the goals of world development. This document also defines what the education for sustainable development includes: "education for sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development".[4]

Today the concept "education for sustainable development" (ESD) has achieved universal recognition. ESD is represented as an entirely new educational system aimed "at developing competencies that empower individuals to reflect on their own actions, taking into account their current and future social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts, from a local and a global perspective". [5] Basic principles, content and programs of implementation of ESD had been enshrined in resolutions of nu-

merous international conferences. [6,7] As the development of these decisions many countries adopted their national strategies for promotion of ESD.

Analyzing the experience of realization of ESD, D.S. Ermakov identifies main tendencies of this process: 1) identification of ESD with ecological education and incorporation of ecologically oriented courses in training curricula at all levels of education; 2) informing of learners about the aims and principles of sustainable development; 3) formation of new type of creative thinking providing ability to adjust to the changing conditions and challenges of new millennium's global problems. [8]

However, these new features seem to be not enough. New priorities of development inevitable raise the problems rooted in the contradictory nature of the social progress. Development of "green economy" and ecologization of mass consciousness and consumption will help to slow down environmental destruction, but they can not solve other global problems. Moreover, they could increase the gap between developed and developing countries. We can only agree with the opinion of N. Vlasyuk and B. Mayer that "the concept of sustainable development reveals a new moral problem for mankind which goes beyond individual egocentrism and public utilitarianism." [9] Achievement of sustainable development goal is possible only by the complex resolving of ecological, social, economic and other problem. For this purpose mankind needs holistic worldview in which every human and non-human being will be treated as an ultimate value. So, ecologization is only a part of agenda for education for sustainable development. The other part should be gumanitarization of education.

The aim of gumanitarization can be achieved by means of humanitarian education. Such education concentrates on human dimension of all processes and presumes humanity as the basis of philosophical outlook. Humanitarian worldview is able to integrate various goals of sustainable development since the development of human personality is recognized as the most universal measure of progress. Sustainable development is first of all an attitudinal phenomenon and it could be entrenched in people's mind only through humanities courses, such as philosophy, cultural studies, antropology, history etc., which form the basic values of consciousness. Study of humanities should remain mandatory part of the curricula in educational institutions of all levels.

At the same time the content of humanitarian courses, especially at the system of high education, needs to be amended toward interdisciplinary multidimensional view instead of study isolated disciplines. Integrated courses will provide ability to analyze and estimate technical, environmental and economic problems from the human personality point of view, to see the development in a holistic manner and from historical perspective.

Humanities help to put the concept of sustainable development into broader context of cultural and intellectual heritage of modern civilization. Abdurahmanov G.M. et alia point at the traditions of Russian philosophical thought which discussed the similar issues long before the Club of Rome's reports were published.[10] National strategy of education for sustainable development at Russian Federation also mentions the achievements of national scientific schools among the preconditions for proliferation of ESD. [11]

It's worth to note that Russian philosophers and scientists like Vladimir Soloviev, Vladimir Vernadsky, Nikita Moiseev and others saw the change of personal and public values as the only way to solve future problems. Thus, humanitarian education reveals deep roots of the discussed concept.

Humanitarian education should develop as life-long education since values, lifestyles and attitudes are formed throughout all human life. Humanitarian ideas need to be introduced into the system of supplementary education which now focuses solely on the development of professional skills. Along with the improvement of the vocational training supplementary education should also form the basis for humanitarian expertise of professional skills. Such expertise will ensure that the scientific and technical knowledge will be used in accordance with the interests of human development. Content of vocational training courses should draw attention to the new technologies' impact on the existence of human beings and nature. This could be achieved through the inclusion of humanitarian issues in the programs of professional training and retraining.

In this context cooperation between educational institutions and various public organizations becomes very important, because professional societies have a great influence on specialists and population. They could play a significant role in propaganda of human oriented development. Humanitarian principles should be enshrined in codes of ethics which create the framework for professional's activities in different spheres. In cooperation with humanitarians professional associations can form the atmosphere where the human values will determine the consciousness of engineers and technicians. System of professional attestation must necessarily include the knowledge of human and ecological issues.

Other stakeholders also should be involved. First of all, it referred to state and governmental bodies, which must do their best in order to secure wide public and political agreement on the humanitarian principles of the sustainable development. Such agreement is one of the essential conditions for the strengthening of new kind of consciousness, based on the recognition of human beings and nature as the highest value.

3. Conclusion

Continuing build-up of global challenges currently led to the reconsideration of concept of sustained economic growth in favor of the sustainable development one. Sustainable development presumes new type of interrelations between human, society and nature. Its goals require formations of new attitudinal background based on responsible treatment of human and non-human beings.

This need provoked the emergence of education for sustainable development aimed at proliferation of knowledge, professional skills and personal qualities relevant to the requirements of sustainable development. From our point of view, such education should go beyond ecological issues and integrate them with humanitarian education.

Humanitarian paradigm in education for sustainable development should be implemented through interdisciplinary courses combined philosophical, ecological and social content. This approach will provide the most appropriate system of values for achievement of sustainable development goals. It will place the concept of sustainable development into the culture and historical traditions of modern society, strengthening it commitment to the new development paradigm.

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