

ETHICS AND EDUCATION AS A FOUNDATION OF SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: Human creative potential is basically unlimited, accordingly, the knowledge economy has resources that are theoretically unlimited. In the current turbulent period of the transition to the knowledge economy, every influential social and economic entity, guided by the basic humanistic and democratic values, should harmonize the principles of its action with the rules of conduct imposed by the new transformative educational and economic-political reality. The importance of philosophy in the designing of philosophical-axiological humanistic conceptions of socio-cultural reality is irreplaceable. One of the most important tasks of philosophy is precisely its social-pedagogical role which is aimed at the education of free, responsible and humane individuals. Philosophy, especially ethics, philosophy of education, philosophy of politics, philosophy of culture and axiology, conceive their philosophical thought on the basic principles of social development based on fundamental humanistic values, through the focus on crystallization of the fundamental settings as the foundation of the educational process as the essence of the process of humanization of man, but also of the process of shaping and continuously redesigning general spiritual values of man and society. The sustainable development of society in order to strengthen democratic relations and individual freedoms implies establishment of an ethically grounded complex social structure that is formed and promoted through direct social activity while anticipating development of culture and the existing way of life of the citizens conditioned by the present social cultural and political-economic reality. Education and ethics are basically a general foundation of the process of sustainable development of society. The ethically grounded educational activity and practice directly aims the basic flows of the general social development and is a workshop and a direct factor of democratization of the society. Every sustainable social development, according to the teachings of the great German philosopher and an important figure in German idealism Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, is based on an ethically based idea and vision of the possibility, need and usefulness of a given social process whose bearers are always courageous, self-conscious and free individuals. In order to enable sustainable social development, according to the philosophical teaching of great American philosopher, thinker, pedagogue, psychologist, and educational reformer John Dewey, it is necessary through the educational process for students to gain awareness of personal role and responsibility in social life, as well as their role in the design and development of society and social relations.

Keywords: ethics, moral responsibility, philosophy of education, social development, sustainable development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern education is based on a special constellation of modern philosophical spirit and great ethical goals that are embedded in human life and education and are a foundation of sustainability of overall modern social development. Education realizes the intention of mankind - proper pedagogical action to be an expression of today's important philosophical knowledge and necessary ethical values. Thus, our epoch has its own specific educational ideal based on modern human values and achievements, and accordingly on special knowledge of the philosophy of education and ethics. Modernity of mankind needs ethically grounded, high quality and long-lasting education. All individuals, members of modern society should be educated. Education is today the most important and broadest human activity. Education should really prepare young people both for their profession and their living in the new complex world. An essential precondition for a proper conception and construction of a self-sustaining, functional, prosperous, more humane society is for the mankind with proper efforts to find the strength to form adequate solutions to overcome the dominant worldview based on an arrogant attitude towards nature and in general, world that surrounds us. At global level, arrogant attitudes need to be overcome by caring, solidarity must overcome selfishness, and the urge for domination, governing, submission, humiliation, and discrimination must be overcome by a sense of respect and dignity. It is the education that has a potential to promote the values of "dignity" and "respect" as dominant elements of any all-inclusive process that would enable sustainable social development. Dignity and respect enable humanization of man power, which is a prerequisite for building a happier and more virtuous society. Humanized power would never and nowhere be abused as a means of subjugation, but instead it would be a potential for building better and more dignified living conditions through cooperation between people and through interaction of man and nature. Dignity and respect are ethical principles that have the potential to influence reconstruction of the hierarchy of values that will enable sustainable social development, with education having the potential to be an

essential factor in the process of reconceptualizing essential social human values and in humanizing of mankind and promoting of essential importance of the values "dignity" and "respect" in all aspects of man's attitude towards himself, his neighbors and to the world around him. Education is a fundamental ethically grounded social activity of man.

2. PRESERVATION OF VALUES AS A METEMPIRICAL GOAL OF EDUCATION

The material, cultural and spiritual wealth of mankind has been created for thousands of years with dedicated and painstaking creative activity. Development of civilization is a monument to the creative potentials of man, but also an expression of his aspiration for spiritual ascension and self-development, based on a clear knowledge of his own nature, his own desires and values, as well as on a vision of his own creative goals. Development of civilization and human culture is a fruit of human vision of spiritual progress of humanity, but also it is a result of conceptually conceived human practical activity. Education, according to its basic function, as a morally grounded activity, is the foundation and precondition of the survival and sustainable development of human civilization and society. A morally formed person strives for the creation and survival of spiritual values. It strives to promote ethical values and seeks for their expression and preservation in the present and in the future. When man as a spiritual being aspires to the future, then he should ethically-axiologically fertilize the present, seeking a touch with something that is beyond the transient passage of time and above it. Aiming at the future, he must constantly strive for the valuable present, he must constantly think that the present moment should not run away from him, unfertilized with a value.¹ Man as an individual alone or a single human generation alone could not lay the foundations of any civilized human and social life. The basic role of education in terms of its function of humanization of man refers to the transmission of basic human values from generation to generation. Without getting to know, understanding, acceptance and implementation of the said values, man would be a creature without self-awareness and dignity, without goals and a well-directed way of life, without a desire to ennoble the world and to find the meaning of existence. It is the value-based foundation of education that enables individual humanization of every human being to take place through the educational process. The emerging form of educational process is a conceived and expedient educational activity through which is transmitted to each individual human being a well developed human identity that is both general and common to all people, but it is realized in a specific and unique form in each person individually, on which the development of human individuality is enabled and based upon. Thus, education enables preservation, transmission and development of general human values, continuously, from generation to generation, which humanizes every human being and transmits and develops human culture and civilization on the basis of universal principles of humanity. Commitment to education is not only an essential task of people of every generation and era but is also one of the most necessary and most noble human functions. With it, people help young people to develop into self-aware, responsible, autonomous personalities, who will contribute to the humane existence of humanity and its progress. Therefore, educational tasks are an integral part of the civilization fund of the people and one of the most valuable benefits of humanity.

Education has an immediate essential impact on general and sustainable social development, as well as a substantial impact on preservation of the benefits of human culture and civilization. Of particular importance is the impact of education on establishment and deepening of moral social principles and social values as a prerequisite for achieving sustainable social development. There is an inextricable link and direct influence and conditionality between education and the development and upgrading of social morality. Education as a conceived and purposeful social activity continuously and thoroughly follows, and also directly affects, the development of social relations, as well as changes in people's daily lives - their customs, habits, their worldview and attitude towards themselves and the world around them, which emerge as a result of the accelerated development of science and technology, and thus society as a whole.

Human creative potential is basically unlimited, accordingly, the knowledge economy has resources that are theoretically unlimited. In the current turbulent period of the transition to the knowledge economy, every influential social and economic entity, guided by the basic humanistic and democratic values, should harmonize the principles of its action with the rules of conduct imposed by the new transformative educational and economic-political reality. The importance of philosophy in the designing of philosophical-axiological humanistic conceptions of socio-cultural reality is irreplaceable. One of the most important tasks of philosophy is precisely its social-pedagogical role which is aimed at the education of free, responsible and humane individuals. Philosophy, especially ethics, philosophy of education, philosophy of politics, philosophy of culture and axiology, conceive their philosophical thought on the basic principles of social development based on fundamental humanistic values, through the focus on crystallization of the fundamental settings as the foundation of the educational process as the essence of the process of

¹ Pavao Vuk-Pavlović: *Ličnost i odgoj*, Zagreb: Tipografija, (1932).

humanization of man, but also of the process of shaping and continuously redesigning general spiritual values of man and society. The sustainable development of society in order to strengthen democratic relations and individual freedoms implies establishment of an ethically grounded complex social structure that is formed and promoted through direct social activity while anticipating development of culture and the existing way of life of the citizens conditioned by the present social cultural and political-economic reality. Education and ethics are basically a general foundation of the process of sustainable development of society. The ethically grounded educational activity and practice directly aims the basic flows of the general social development and is a workshop and a direct factor of democratization of the society. Every sustainable social development, according to the teachings of the great German philosopher and an important figure in German idealism Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, is based on an ethically based idea and vision of the possibility, need and usefulness of a given social process whose bearers are always courageous, self-conscious and free individuals. In order to enable sustainable social development, according to the philosophical teaching of great American philosopher, thinker, pedagogue, psychologist, and educational reformer John Dewey, it is necessary through the educational process for students to gain awareness of personal role and responsibility in social life, as well as their role in the design and development of society and social relations. It is an essential attitude towards human values as a fundamental attribute of human existence. Hegel points out that freedom begins where the subject has acquired an awareness of his personality, that is, where he prefers to have the right to be a bearer of values for himself.² Basic task of education is not to generate new values that will be more appropriate for modern society and modern way of life than the traditional values, nor to design and promote a new, modern moral system, but rather to help students recognize fundamental human values and to follow basic ethical principles as a precondition that will enable them to live with dignity within modern society and in accordance with modern lifestyle. Accordingly, it is neither necessary to hinder modern rapid social development and rapid advancement of science and technology, nor to find new values that would interact with the newly created reality, but to preserve spiritual and moral continuity of development of human culture and civilization, by articulating modern development within already formed human spiritual and civilizational values. Thus, the development of society and the advancement of science and technology are primarily directed to act in the interest of man, but the society has a responsibility to understand them and to guide and control them, in order to preserve and secure humanistic foundations of human existence. In this process, education has a fundamental role as a thoughtful and purposeful activity of transmitting knowledge and fundamental humanistic values to future generations, and in enabling them to be formed into free and humane individuals who will take responsibility for advancing the benefits of civilization.

3. EDUCATION AS AN ACT OF BUILDING A FREE AND RESPONSIBLE PERSONALITY

Society and education are directly intertwined and conditioned by each other. Education is neither, nor can it be, neutral in relation to social movements. Education, at its core, is in fact a socio-political act. If education is developed encouraged and supported by constructive social structures and if within the society there is awareness of the fundamental role of education on cultural development and the spiritual formation and integrity of citizens, education will be the foundation and it will directly contribute to continuous sustainable development of the society, which means economic, political, cultural and spiritual advancement of social potentials. It is very important for the relevant social structures to see the general connection between education, society and the potentials for sustainable social development, and guided by the essential social and ethical values, to encourage development of education in order to enable a positive outcome of basic social movements, aiming their action on construction of an ethically grounded vision and conception for a long-term sustainable development of society. In the same way in which education can contribute to the development of society, social institutions, and above all, state administration, can directly influence the development and the overall situation in education. Social forces that control social movements directly, often cannot adequately perceive essential role that education has in providing conditions and potentials for ensuring sustainable social development. Thus, education, instead of being an activity aimed at creating educated, free, humane and responsible persons prepared to independently determine their own destiny and to have direct involvement in the construction of social prosperity, becomes an aid to maintaining existing arrangement of relations in the society. Thus, instead of developing students' awareness of their potentials and opportunity to contribute to development of their community through responsible and dedicated work, the overall educational process is aimed at their adaptation to existing social conditions that may result in developing them as individuals without their own clearly defined attitude towards key social and ethical issues, individuals who show no desire for personal initiative and who will be voiceless members of society who do not feel a clearly differentiated

² Georg Vilhelm Fridrih Hegel: *Lectures on the History of Philosophy I*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, (1955).

responsibility to the community to which they belong. That is why it is of fundamental importance to properly define the social role of education, educational and social priorities and to realize the importance of educational and cultural progress on the development of society and social well-being, both regionally and globally. The emerging form of educational process is a conceived and expedient educational activity through which it is transmitted, ie developed in each individual human being, ie, it develops a human identity that is both general and common to all people, but is realized in a specific and unique form in each person individually, thus enabling and founding a construction of human individuality. Education as a social practice in all its richness and complexity is a phenomenon characteristic of human existence and belongs only to human.³ It is essential to enable education to focus on creation of free and independent individuals who through free choice of their social engagement will become active actors in social life and social development. In order to form a free and responsible person, it is necessary in the process of education for students to develop the ability for critical thinking as a way of direct perceiving truth and reality. Man does not realize things abstractly, in their pure form, but by knowing their causal relations. Critical thinking implies the most exhaustive possible penetration into the causal connection of certain entities, for the best possible exhaustive and faithful determination of reality. Only through critical thinking is it possible to achieve a valid knowledge of reality that enables critical awareness, which is directly penetrated and integrated into reality and which is the antipode of uncritical understanding of the world and entities, leading to the formation of a worldview characteristic of naive consciousness. Within educational process, students should be instructed and enabled to directly participate in solving practical issues and problems of general interest. In this way, students are guided and trained through practice in the methodology and approach of individual and team engagement in activities purposefully aimed at solving specific tasks that are part of complex issues and challenges posed on the modern society. These educational tasks and goals can be fulfilled only by establishing direct cooperation between educational institutions and institutions in the field of culture, social administration and public administration, health, direct production and scientific research centers and institutes. In order to establish serious, long-term and fruitful cooperation between educational institutions and institutions for which education is not a primary activity, it is necessary first of all to meet the precondition of professional openness as a kind of cooperation, based on transparent operation of institutions, the potential participants in that cooperation. Openness of the institutions is a kind of business culture and consists above all in the timely and appropriate information of all parties involved about the achievements of the institution and its current activities. It is impossible to establish fruitful and long-term cooperation if the managerial and executive potentials, equipment, current activities, long-term orientation and development conception of potential partner in the cooperation are not known. Proper information is a fundamental premise for achieving beneficial cooperation. Humane relationship, based on equal cooperation and dialogue, which implies mutual sharing of interests, knowledge, hopes and beliefs between all factors in the educational process and education in general, enables construction and profiling of an educational system and educational practice that will, with its deep ethical foundation and philanthropy, enable transformation and development of the existing social relations and sustainable social development, in the direction of building a righteous and humane society that will allow all citizens to freely develop their intellectual and spiritual potentials, that will encourage their creativity and inventiveness, that will respect their dignity and human integrity.

4. CONCLUSION

Metempirical goal of human existence refers to the meaning and development of human personality, human nature and the power of man for spiritual creation. Immanent to his creative nature, by developing himself, man designs his life and the directions and values of his action. He strives to conceive, ennoble, and exalt his own existence. It is education that is an activity that enables and encourages refinement and exaltation of man and humanity. Education has the task of enabling students to recognize fundamental human values and to follow basic ethical principles as a prerequisite that will enable them to live with dignity within modern society and in accordance with modern lifestyle. Advances in science and technology and the continuous development of society have enormous potential, but the society has a responsibility to understand them and to learn to direct and control them, in order to preserve and secure humanistic foundations of human existence. In this process, education has a fundamental role as a thoughtful and purposeful activity of transmitting knowledge and fundamental humanistic values to future generations, and in enabling them to be formed into free, responsible and humane individuals who will take the responsibility for preserving and promoting the benefits of civilization. Recognizing the essential importance of education for the intellectual, spiritual and professional development of each person, but also of society and mankind as a whole, the philosophy of education and educational sciences have exceptional task of constantly designing education, in order to continuously improve and modernize it to meet the needs and respond to the tasks

³ Paulo Freire: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, London: Penguin Books, (1996).

and challenges of the current social reality. Modernization of education should be a continuous and expedient process, which due to its complexity and social significance should be studiously and responsibly conceived and designed, whereupon fast and radical successful reforms of education are not possible. In order to enable establishment of sustainable social development, educational reforms should be a result of many years of systematic work in which experts from a various scientific fields will participate and cooperate.

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