

THE REQUIREMENTS OF SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION

Z.. Gareiou, E. Zervas

School of Science and Technology, Hellenic Open University, 26335, Patras, Greece

zervas@eap.gr

Introduction

The concept of sustainable development is quite old, but it evolved significantly during the second half of the 20th century. It also has a broad definition, in the sense that the current needs of humankind are satisfied through the rational use of natural resources in order to preserve the earth for future generations. In light of the sustainable development concept, education is one of the sectors where this concept is broadly implemented and analysed [1].

On 25 September 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are at the core of the 2030 Agenda. These goals cover global challenges that are crucial for the survival of humanity. They address a range of social needs including education [2].



Specifically, SDG4 refers to “Quality Education – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” [2]. SDG4 consists for the follow Learning Objectives [2]:

- Cognitive learning objectives
- Socio-emotional learning objectives
- Behavioural learning objectives.

Examples of learning approaches and methods for SDG 4 “Quality Education” [2]:

- Develop partnerships between schools, universities and other institutions offering education in different regions of the world (South and North, South and South)
- Plan and run an ESD project at a school or university, or for the local community
- Develop an enquiry-based project: “What is a sustainable school?”

Sustainable Education

As described in the SDGs, a condition for the creation of a more sustainable world, individuals must become sustainability change-makers. They require the knowledge, the skills, the values and the attitudes that empower them to contribute to sustainable development. Education, therefore, is crucial for the achievement of sustainable development [2]. However, the SDGs are interconnected and it is difficult to isolate education from other SDGs, as it is the key to fighting poverty and promoting healthy lives among others [3].

The now well-established approach of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) empowers learners to take informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society for present and future generations. ESD has to be understood as an integral part of quality education, inherent in the concept of lifelong learning. ESD has application in all curricula of non-formal, informal and formal education, including early childhood care and education, primary and secondary education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and higher education [2].

For ESD to be more effective, the educational institution as a whole has to be transformed. Such a whole institution approach aims at mainstreaming sustainability into all aspects of the educational institution. It involves rethinking the curriculum, campus operations, organizational culture, student participation, leadership and management, community relationships and research [5].

In this way, sustainable learning environments (ecoschools or green campuses), allow educators and learners to integrate sustainability principles into their daily practices and facilitate capacity-building, competency development and value education in a comprehensive manner [2].

Sustainable Development Report

For the implementation of the SDGs, there is an annual Sustainable Development Report, which presents for each country the evolution of each SDS. In the Sustainable Development Report 2020 there are short-term impacts of Covid-19 on the Sustainable Development Goals. In the case of SDG4, there is mixed or moderately negative impact as [4]:

- School and day-care closures
- Loss in the development of human capital
- Poorer nutrition due to interruption of school meals

In the case of Greece, in general, the indexes are reported to be: “on track or maintaining SDG achievement” [4].

References

- [1] Labanauskis, R., 2017, Key features of sustainable universities: a literature review. *Journal of Business Management*, 13, 15-1.
- [2] UNESCO, 2017, *Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives*. France: UNESCO. pp. 1-68. ISBN 978-92-3-100209-0.
- [3] Mattos, T., MacKinnon, M., Boorse, D., 2012, The Intersection of Gender, Education, and Health: A Community level Survey of Education and Health Outcomes for Women in Southeastern Togo Gordon College. *Public Health Research*, 1-22.
- [4] Sachs, J., Schmidt-Traub, G., Kroll, C., Lafortune, G., Fuller, G., Woelm, F., 2020, *The Sustainable Development Goals and COVID-19. Sustainable Development Report 2020*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [5] UNESCO. 2014. *Shaping the Future We Want. UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014). Final Report*. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002301/230171e.pdf>.