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Education for the future: sustainable development and ethic economy

This paper deals with the Education for a sustainable future focusing at the role of education to enhance civic responsible behaviour, sustainable development and ethic economy. The importance of civic education is underlined, as a mean for developing the civic awareness, the competence and the engagement of citizens both for the daily life and for influencing the decision making process in cultural, political and economic fields.

The text is structured as follows. Section I deals with human and sustainable development, addressing some basic issues related to ethic economy and citizenship while Section II discusses education for a sustainable future, debating ideas for improving the practice of education, in view of enhancing responsible behaviour of people, both individually and in groups or organisations.

Development as it has proceeded over the last half-century has remained inequitable, and has had negative environmental impacts. In the twenty-first century; the absolute gaps between rich and poor nations, and between rich and poor groups within individual countries, are widening, not narrowing. Development patterns that perpetuate today's inequities are neither sustainable nor worth sustaining (UNDP, 1994).

Education for citizenship, in formal, non formal and informal way improves the awareness for the implications of the behaviour of everybody and can strengthen the commitment to work with ethic aims in all sectors, included the enterprises (agriculture etc.), commerce, banking, even culture/ research, fashion, communication, education and sport, fostering human development and a sustainable future.

Sustainable Development

Following the Brundtland Commission Report, “sustainable development” is a development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland Report, 1987, p. 43); it means not just current well-being, but well-being across generations.

The concept of sustainable development raises the issue of whether present life-styles are acceptable looking at the next generations and whether intergenerational equity goes hand

in hand with intragenerational justice, intergenerational fairness. Resource constraints along with a major restructuring of the world's income and consumption patterns is a necessary precondition for any viable strategy of sustainable development.

The literatures on human development on the one hand and sustainability on the other share much in common (Neumayer E., 2010, Akire S., 2010, Sudhir A., Sen A., 2000). According to the Human Development Report „People are the real wealth of a nation“ (UNDP 1990), and „Human Development is development of the people, for the people and by the people“ (UNDP, 2000, p. 17).

The new global society is characterized by recurrent crises, uncertainties, anxieties for the future related to both peace and welfare. Sustainability in human and environmental fields is one of the most promising answers to the global crisis. The challenge is combining the economic, ecological, and social perspectives to provide a new kind of development, caring at the fulfilment of social equity, inclusive education and democracy, promoting social cohesion.

Among many other measures, good corporate entrepreneurship contributes to sustainable development, aiming to transform socially responsible principles into commercial value (Schwab K., 2008, p.107). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a recognition that a business has social, cultural and environmental responsibilities, along with the economic and financial ones, in order to achieve, and maintain long term sustainable success for the organization, and for the community at large. CSR is when a company complies with legislation even by extending beyond its statutory obligations too, with the contributions of all them involved at all levels (shareholders, owners, investors, employees, employers and purchasers of goods and services, consumers etc.), developing business ethics codes and improving deontology.

Corporate philanthropy has been one of the ways for corporations to give back to society but it has not to be the only one. Ethic economy poses fresh challenges at all levels. In fact responsible actions are in many fields: environment, energy, resources (especially water etc.), human rights, employee's relations (recruitment and retention, management, attention to diversity and to disadvantages etc.), health care (clean and safe working conditions, etc.), trade purchases, finance and lobbying (respecting transparency and accountability requirements) (Crane, A., et. al. 2008).

Thinking at the direction of sustainable development as a multidimensional process is necessary to define indicators that can provide essential and reliable information about the viability of the total system and of each part of it (Bossell, H., 1999). Indeed, the dominant

contemporary tradition of focusing on such variables as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) doesn't measure in appropriate way the social well-being.

Given the need of sustainable development in the international scenario, an improvement in the use of suitable indexes is needed with which to check whether current policies are consistent with sustainable development. The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) produced the Human Development Index (HDI), which uses health and education measures, combines life expectancy, adult literacy, and school enrolment ratios with per capita GDP to calculate an overall index of development success. Eleven headlines of Sustainable Development Indicators - SDIs have been identified to monitor the EU Sustainable Development Strategy in the reports published by Eurostat: Socioeconomic development, Sustainable consumption and production, Social inclusion, Demographic changes, Public health, Climate change and Energy, Sustainable transport, Natural resources, Global partnership, Good governance.

Many Institutions adopt different indicators to measure different dimensions of sustainability, f. i. informal and formal volunteering (Source Citizenship Survey CLG); perceptions of anti-social behaviour (Source BCS Home Office); children in relative low-income households (Source DWP) etc..

Global Corporate Citizenship starts to find the support of many political and economic bodies such as the OECD (s. the OECD Annual Meeting of Sustainable Development Experts -AMSDE), the European Commission (s. the Presidency Report 2009), UNO, the Holy Site (s. *Caritas in Veritate* 2009), the World Bank etc.. Although many business leaders are reluctant to accept that role and perceive CSR as incongruent with the very nature and purpose of business, some pioneering enterprises integrate social entrepreneurship into their core activities by actively channeling their research-and-development capabilities into socially innovative products and services.

A demanding challenge of the international CSR factories is operating as corporate citizens at global level, observing the same labour standards and impacts on the society and the environment. In order to implement corporate citizenship globally, it is essential to stick to only one global standard, because the competition is at global level, and most problems are global in scope, even if their solutions can be locally focused.

The globe is getting smaller and smaller. Fast transportation links and the speedy flow of information have reduced the relevance of geographic borders. Information, technology, communication, commerce and migrations closely connect countries to each other.

Increasingly the global space is shaped by forces beyond the control of nation-states.

Sovereign power still rests with national governments, but authentic and effective leadership often lays at global level. Globalisation implies diminishing State influence and new global orders in the multipolarity of the planet and such phenomenon can produce either wild deregulation or self control by global players.

In the neo-classical economic model a linear conception of economic development was dominant, markets are presumed to be the best resource allocators, and the regulating role of the government was seen as limited. J. Stiglitz is returning to the more goal-oriented perspective of the original theorists of development, except that the goals which now seem appropriate have much stronger social and environmental components. This in turn justifies social and governmental action at both the micro and macro levels, and opens the way to a more explicitly normative theory of development (Stiglitz, J., 1997, and Stiglitz, J., 1998).

Even if it is difficult, governments and Intergovernmental organisations have the task of setting social and environmental norms to guide sustainable development policy, finding together the way to provide a framework for engagement and to set the agenda for social responsibility. Anyway ethic economy is a free choice; law and coercion are not enough and responsible citizenship needs convinced responsibility. The awareness of the long term advantages of Sustainable Development in the society and of the disadvantages of the lack of civic habits in human and economic field does matter much more than superficial respect of law and can be enhanced by education for responsible citizenship.

Responsible Citizenship

Many people are indifferent, most of them feel harmless and look unable to react; there is a widespread apathy towards the public good as well as related to the civic basic values (reliability, civic engagement, etc.). Unfortunately there are no high levels of citizenship in most countries, not only because of the lack of proper education in the school systems, but even because of the features of the wide life learning, due to the lack of good examples in the political life and in the mass-media as well.

People develop their political understanding and awareness, and act out their roles as citizens in societies largely within the contexts of their homes and communities and civic behaviour seems to be close connected with national traditions. It is task of the school systems to educate for citizenship.

The study ICCS 2009, conducted by IEA, compared with the previous survey CIVED (IEA 1999), suggested, for seven of the 15 countries already studied, a significant decline in

students' civic content knowledge across the 10 years. In 1999, the average score on the civic content knowledge scale across the 15 countries was 100 scale points; the average score for the same countries in ICCS 2009 was 96 scale points (ICCS, 2010).

There are interesting findings from many surveys about citizenship: Eurostat, OECD's Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competences (PIAAC), the Adult Education Survey and the Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC- 2009), the Regioplan study, the European Social Survey, the European Election Study (EES), and finally the World Values Survey (WVS).

Citizenship is not only a legal status, it can be perceived also as related to the knowledge and exercise of rights and responsibilities. Active citizenship is defined as "participation in civil society, community and/or political life characterized by mutual respect and non violence, in accordance with human rights and democracy" (Hoskins, 2006, p. 6).

It ranges from socio-cultural to political and economical dimension, all closely connected to each other. Political citizenship means that citizens are part of the decision-making system and that they participate in policy at various levels: in caring for political rights and duties; in activities related to elections, to membership in parties and NGOs. Social citizenship refers also to participating in the living environment and includes: participation in activities of religious and cultural groups; consciousness of a common cultural heritage; sharing of the norms and values of the society. Intercultural competence means knowledge of other cultures, capacity to accept them and the respect for diversity.

Economic participation refers to the relation of an individual towards the labor-and-consumer market, because citizens are also workers, potential investors, customers and employees. It implies: a contribution to production process, membership of the company workers unions, care for workers' both rights and duties, care for social security and payment of taxes, support for sick leave and unemployment.

At the basis are the traits of the own identity, in the personal and the community aspects, the values and the coherence of everyone, the own care for social justice, loyalty, and peace; very important are the independent thinking and the sense of belonging to one's own community, to the Nation, to Europe, and to the World.

Responsible citizenship is the first component of human capital. There are young people involved in community-based action with peers and internet-based campaigns relating to such issues as the environment and ethical consumerism (Sherrod L., Torney-Purta J., Flanagan C., 2010). Alternative forms of participation are becoming popular, such as: fluid networks of people with no membership required, participating in projects for political change or for

support the community in times of environmental or other crises, etc., adopting ethical consumption preferring the purchase of a certain goods because it is made and traded in a way that is not damaging the environment or that is not unfair to producers

Fostering good governance and CSR needs engagement by the politicians and administrators, and also by the citizens; responsible choices in the daily life, web sites on the Internet and new media channels such as blogs for responsible consumption may push government and business leaders to long term thinking and planning.

When citizens, Institutions and non-governmental organisations are aware of the value of human and sustainable development; they understand the advantages of responsible citizenship and appreciate the complex challenges CSR companies face, while choosing their products and services, these companies are more able to benchmark themselves against the performance of different enterprises, do grow and increase their competitiveness and their motivation to engage in society. Their greater reputation related to such special selling proposition can separate them from the competitors in the minds of consumers and give them commercial benefits.

Education for Responsible Citizenship aims at ensuring that citizens become conscious of the own possible contribution to the situations and to be involved for preventing and solving the problems. In the so-called Lisbon Agenda 2000 and 2010, active citizenship is a major issue in the programs of the European Commission.

Education for Responsible Citizenship

There are many different uses of the concepts of civic education in the research on the topic. Recently the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS 2010), a project of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) studied the ways in which countries prepare their young people to undertake their roles as citizens, it investigated student knowledge and understanding of civics and citizenship as well as student attitudes, perceptions, and activities related to civics and citizenship.

According to the IEA - ICCS study 2010, „civic education“ focuses on knowledge and understanding of formal institutions and processes of civic life; „citizenship education“ focuses on knowledge and understanding and on opportunities for participation and engagement in both civic and civil society. It is concerned with the wider range of ways through which citizens interact with and shape their communities (including schools) and societies.

Many countries now use the narrower term civic education alongside civic and citizenship education or they have superseded the latter with the broader term citizenship education. Education for responsible Citizenship means teaching/ learning civic issues and practicing responsibility, it interacts with related areas such as education for democratic citizenship and human rights education, with intercultural education, peace education, all connected with education for sustainable development.

Education is not to be confused with notionism, it concerns people's knowledge and skills, conceptual understandings, interest, and dispositions to engage. The best models of education are the *paideia* in the ancient Greece and the *Bildung* in the German educational scenario. Very helpful in general are the suggestions of the report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, based upon four pillars: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be (Delors, 1996).

Pupils need to acquire: background, factual and functional knowledge, political literacy, knowledge about human rights and responsibilities, democracy and sustainable development. Basic skills and competences are to be reached: research capability, communication, empathic and social skills, debating skills, understanding the opinions of others and defending their owns, problem solving, coping with ambiguity, conflict prevention and solution, informed decision-making. Media literacy, and media skills are a good premise in order to distinguish between objective information and indoctrination, between documented statements and emotional influence, for acquiring solid habits critical fruition and critical thinking.

Of course these lists are never meant to be exhaustive; official documents by the National Institutions, mostly inspired by international bodies, regulate civic-political education. Most countries include citizenship education in the formal school curriculum and highlight the importance of promoting a participatory school culture that is shaped by democratic values; especially National Ministries (in Italy, D.L. 17 august 2008, Circular Letter 100, December 2008. Cittadinanza e Costituzione) and the School Authorities. The Council of Europe is an important reference points for all of Europe (Council of Europe - European Year of Citizenship Through Education - EYCE 2005; Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education), but there is still a compliance gap between policy and implementation.

The European Parliament and the Council in the RECOMMENDATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning described civic competences in terms of knowledge and

skills as follows: knowledge of main events, trends and agents of change in national, European and world history and the present, with a specific view on sustainable development.

The United Nations launched the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), underlining the importance of the environmental, social, cultural and economic implications of education. The overall goal of the DESD is to integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning. It implies improving access to quality basic education, reorienting existing education programs, developing public understanding and awareness, and finally providing training (DESD, 2005-2014).

Very important is the development of the following attitudes and dispositions: political trust, political interest, political efficacy, autonomy, resilience, respect for diversity (gender, cultures, religion, age, learning styles etc), recognising and accepting the role of the law, responsibility and readiness to involvement.

Education for Responsible citizenship can help in developing awareness of population and willingness of corporations for sustainable development, in practicing sustainable life, in preferring ethic economy and requiring honest government (fighting corruption, voting responsible representatives, building public opinion, educating new generations, etc.).

All means of education, teaching and training, whether formal, non-formal or informal, in general implies civic aspects, have a part to play in the learning process for civics and are valuable in promoting principles and achieving objectives of responsible citizenship and sustainable development.

The formal education covers many aspects of school and education systems: school educational processes, curriculum content, structure and delivery, teaching and learning strategies. Important are the links between formal, informal and non formal education, which takes place in families, neighbourhood, and mass media. Social and youth organisations are powerful education sources and accordingly need opportunities and support in order to give their contribution to responsible citizenship.

All subjects, not only civics, can emphasise education for responsible citizenship in order to develop active citizenship, and the whole school life. Education for citizenship may be provided as a single separate subject, or integrated into several conventional subjects (such as history, social studies, geography, philosophy or religious education/ethics) or/and be conceived as a cross curricular theme. According to the survey „International Civic and Citizenship Education Study“ (ICCS, 2010), twenty-one of the 38 countries provide a specific subject or course in civic and citizenship education that is compulsory in general education

(or both general education and vocational education) in Grade 8.

At the school level, the following factors are likely to be important: the instruction students receive, how teachers perceive civic and citizenship education, the classroom climate for respectful discussion, the school ethos composed and confidence in school participation, the respect for conventional citizenship norms and social movement norms and the general environment in which the school exists.

School organisation should include opportunities for engagement in the school community to participate in governance processes, and to be involved in decision making process. Appropriate learning opportunities at any stage of life cycle according to the age interests encourage learning knowledge and practice of active citizenship.

Effective teaching methods are interactive and experiential learning, open debate, reflective learning, using updated curriculum materials and resources, media inputs (films, TV, videos, radio, Internet, newspaper, books, games), fostering the dialogue and the cooperation process. In fact the schoolbooks still pay little attention to sustainable development (Bombardelli, 2009).

The school has to codify and exchange good practices throughout different countries in Europe and abroad. The school evaluation should take into consideration how civic education is offered in structural resources, and in the teacher training, while monitoring the performance of schools in providing education in citizenship as well. Assessment procedures for pupils and teachers /schools should encourage consciousness and sensitivity to "world problems".

Each teacher is involved in this difficult task, anyway teachers don't feel able to teach the contents of active citizenship education. The Eurydice report 2005 documented that the training of teachers in many countries does not include civics (Eurydice, 2005, p. 2).

ERC should be a major goal of educational policies in the teacher initial and in-service training in the fields of methodology, material & resources used to support teaching, interactive lectures, student-led seminars, case studies, small group exercises and discussions, work experiences in ERC, community services, critical self-reflection, debates, co-operation, collaborative research, mobility of students and for staff, model lessons, good school practices, NGO's materials, projects, aiming to harmonise existing efforts and to ensure coordination of on-going teacher related initiatives at the local, regional, national and European- global level.

A good starting point is thinking with students and pupils about possible realistic scenarios for the future and analysing the role of citizens, Institutions, and enterprises in order

to prepare it, we can figure out different possible approaches in a time of interdependence at global level, from the clash of civilisations of Huntington (1993) to a peaceful sustainable cohabitation. Inclusive education and sustainable development can contribute in preventing socio-economic, religious, cultural conflicts between different groups and countries, in each region and worldwide.

For a Sustainable Future. Conclusive remarks

Any nation or community can only have future as long as the people, especially the youth, the leaders in political, cultural and economic fields have a vision that put the collective benefit and human sustainable development in the first place.

In this paper, I argued that connecting education for responsible citizenship and sustainable human development (corporate citizenship etc.), preparing young people for their role of citizens are, is a way to improve the efforts for giving a constructive contribution to the common future. Dissemination and training in the field of Education for Responsible Citizenship in formal and informal way is likely to be one of the most successful ways in supporting civic and economic action with ethical implications.

The challenge is very demanding, the current crisis precipitates attention to the Development of Corporate Social Responsibility, anyway the future is not predictable. CSR enterprises and inclusive social practices can grow if governments, citizens and non governmental organisations all over the world are aware of the question, do appreciate and price ethic economy and make efforts to support sustainability.

Education for responsible citizenship should motivate pupils and families during the whole process of lifelong learning to become more and more aware of the need for ethic and solidarity to increasingly accept the concept of sustainable development and to take steps together for it.

The level of information and the awareness of citizens (as voters, investors, shareholder and consumers), related to the implications of their day-to-day decisions in economic, environmental and ethical concerns, their education in ERC, together with the social entrepreneurship (cooperative groups, NGO, no-profit sector etc.) promote the expansion of human sustainable development which protects the environment, and advances social justice.

Top down and bottom up approaches aiming together to increase human sustainable development can have far-reaching implications for the common future.

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