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Barriers and limits in activities for sustainable development based on the example of the Polish public pedagogical university – current status, perspectives and good models of intersectoral partnership

Sustainable development is now a widely recognized concept of social and economic changes, according to which they should be carried out with respect for the natural environment (not only for the present but also for future generations). Pedagogy, as a social science based on values, aims to raise a man responsible for himself and the environment, and thus also for the optimal development of civilization. For this reason, pedagogy is the most natural ally of the idea of sustainable development.

However, the experience of recent years and problems with the implementation of the idea of sustainable development in teacher education in Poland show that academic pedagogy needs support from third parties able to finance some non-standard educational projects.

First of all, it is about promoting education for sustainable development within lifelong education (so that every member of the society understands the essence and principles of sustainable development, but above all, that these values can be expressed in his attitude and everyday choices). In the teacher training, this is particularly important because they are, due to the professions related to upbringing, the natural leaders of social, and therefore civilization changes.

Their educational leadership in local communities is not limited to responsibility for children education. Through children, but also in direct contact with all other members of local communities from the school's orbit, teachers are responsible for lifelong education in this environment. Intersectoral partnership could here consist of joint responsibility for training of the leaders of education for sustainable development, which teachers should become in their local communities.

The benefit seems to be mutual. Academic pedagogy in Poland has a long tradition of education in relation to the cultural needs of society, but it is not very sure in the field of education in relation to civilization needs (especially those that translate into the economy) and needs external partners. Unfortunately, in the field of business in Poland, we do not have a tradition of understanding "implementation projects" as such, which begin at the level of education system, where business objectives begin to develop by raising young generations, and even a step earlier: in

the professional preparation of those who in the future will be responsible for up-bringing. It seems, therefore, that both parties would benefit from the intersectoral partnership in educating pedagogues for sustainable development: academic pedagogy and the economy.

The ideal model of lifelong education in relation to the cultural and civilization needs of contemporary societies is described in the Report of J. Delors, for the International Commission for Education of UNESCO for the 21st century. There are four pillars of education which worth reinterpreting. The report is entitled: Education: there is treasure hidden in it.

The first of the four pillars – “Learning to know” – emphasizes that learning is not about acquiring and possessing knowledge, but about mastering the tools that are necessary to understand the world and to take advantage of the opportunities offered by education. This understanding of education is the domain of constructivism. It assumes that knowledge is the own construction of the mind, dependent on the experiences and possessed views. The constructivist approach encourages constant questioning of possessed knowledge – it becomes a dynamic resource that still leaves field for new discoveries. Therefore, an effective teacher should know and use the cognitive models that students use to explain the environment in which they live. These models are focused on research independence, drawing conclusions based on the source data available to the student. The teacher becomes a co-creator of the student’s knowledge, he stops only passing and enforcing, and becomes a guide and translator (Brooks, 1993)¹.

“Learning to do” – learning to act is the second pillar of lifelong education. This includes the idea of education, as acquiring competences that allow you to deal with different situations, act within various social experiences, in different contexts and needs of yours and your environment. The principle of “learning to act”, postulates education to constant readiness, “predisposition”, openness and sensitivity to the changing reality.

“Learning to live together” – the third pillar – emphasizes the need for continuous enrichment of knowledge about others, which helps to avoid conflicts or solve them peacefully. Sustainable education, caring for the welfare of humanity now and in the future, is education based on the understanding that both successes and failures usually have many fathers, facilitating the perception of interdependence and understanding of the other. Man is a social being, he develops optimally only in relationships. This community creates conditions for cooperation and competition, and these mobilize for activity. Model education for sustainable development is a training to care for common.

The fourth pillar of modern education should be the principle “Learning to be” – referring to humanism. It formulates towards the education system a postulate to stimulate the human mind to research itself and its own needs. Man absorbs knowledge faster, the more he satisfies his specific inner need. Education should help in discovering, naming and valuing the individual’s needs, and thus raising them.

1 Brooks J.G., Brooks M.G., (1993), *In Search of Understanding: The Case for Constructivist Classrooms*. Alexandria, VA: Association for the Supervision and Curriculum Development.

All these pillars had a postulative character twenty years ago. Their role was to direct education to raise integral and mature people so that they would create “sustainable” societies. Although Poland in the sphere of political declarations joined the international activities for education for sustainable development, it quickly turned out that institutional support is insufficient and there are no systemic solutions².

The main animators of education for sustainable development have become natural science teachers and the academic environment related to environmental protection. Several international pedagogical projects were created with the participation of Polish teachers (e.g. “Education for Change” – a project financed from the European Union funds under Comenius 2.1.). Almost all these activities were limited to narrowly understood education for sustainable development as pro-ecological activities. Unfortunately, the idea of education for sustainable development has not broken through in Poland as an impulse for community-based, upbringing activities far beyond the natural aspect.

This situation has many causes. In the inheritance after the socialist era, practical training, closer to the economic needs of society, still carries a less prestigious stigma. Hence, universities in Poland consider it a point of honor to conduct academic studies, although Polish law gives the opportunity to conduct them in the form of studies with a practical profile. In the area of pedagogical sciences, practical studies are even considered as proof that the university has failed to achieve university standards. For this reason, the postulate “Learning to Act” is present in the content of educational curricula in Poland only as a theory. More often, the future teacher hears about learning in action than works to learn it. The minimum of action enforced by law is the practice in educational institutions related to the field of study. Volunteering, related to over-personal personal commitment and dedication, nowhere in Poland is an integral part of the studies. The state does not require the university to promote voluntary activities, and the lack of a social tradition of such activities is not conducive to their self-reliance among students. In Poland, the ethos of social involvement is still low – it is also a remnant of the era of forced “common” domination over “individual” in socialist times. As pedagogy at the academic level is not involved in projects related to community activities, the local community, especially business, does not see any benefits in cooperating with the academics’ environment, and in particular the sense of engaging financial resources in this cooperation. It will not be an exaggeration to say that there is a kind of undercoat between the two sides, a sense of superiority between the French model of separation of the state and the Church.

A major obstacle to the implementation of the idea of sustainable development is also dominant in Poland substantive type of patriotism. Unlike the conventional type, it focuses on the community of territory and blood. Historical conditions have meant that belonging to the community, in the belief of the majority of Poles, is acquired due to birth, not because of its usefulness for the community or its own contribution and merit in building its cohesion and prosperity – as it is in the United

2 T. Borys, P. Rogala (eds.), (2008), *Jakość życia na poziomie lokalnym*, UNDP Polska, Warszawa 2008.

States, a country built by immigrants. Although the “substantial” understanding of patriotism now brings many negative effects, new obstacles constantly appear to change this situation. In education in Poland, the emphasis is now on individualization – this is not conducive to building a sense of positive reciprocity between people. Individuality is built in opposition to others. As a consequence, the “stranger” will always remain “foreign” and “different”, and as many Poles think this is good. That is why it is difficult to implement the American model of a citizen as a shareholder in Poland: you can draw on a common if you have invested first (“Do not ask what the country can do for you, ask what you can do for the country”). Perhaps this is also why the implementation of the idea of “Learning to Live”, emphasizing personal responsibility for the community, still faces resistance in Poland.

To better understand at what stage, after twenty years from the J. Delors Report, education for sustainable development in Poland is, in 2017 an analysis of educational programs in pedagogy faculties in sixteen of the largest universities in Poland was undertaken. It turned out that neither in the name nor the contents of any of the currently run subjects there is the term “sustainable development”. At the Maria Grzegorzewska University in Warsaw, in the academic year 2017/2018, for the first time a general university subject called Education for Sustainable Development was included in the education program. The subject is obligatory for students of the second year of MA studies in the field of pedagogy (for all specialties, teachers and non-masters). Its introduction created an opportunity to implement the second part of the research project: at the beginning of the classes, the lecturers conducted a survey diagnosing the level of students’ awareness of the goals, tasks and manifestations of sustainable development. The group covered by research included 23–25 year-olds, who would soon receive the right to take positions of educators at various levels of education and care for children and youth, they would also deal with shaping educational policy in Poland and with pedagogical counseling (N = 226 = 100%). The participants of the study have completed first degree pedagogical studies at various universities in Poland. A large part of the surveyed group, in parallel with the second-cycle studies, have already started work in accordance with the qualifications granted to them by bachelor studies: 82% of respondents declared employment in various educational institutions. The rest also work, and even though outside the profession it can be said that all respondents have a certain professional and life experience.

The study did not require the respondents to know terminology or the theory of sustainable development. For the purposes of the survey, “awareness of sustainability issues” was understood as (also intuitive) knowledge, views, declared skills and readiness to take actions for the benefit of the environment in the spirit of the idea of sustainable development. The problems diagnosed in the study mainly concerned:

- general knowledge of students about: the condition of the human environment, its responsibility for this state, the personal sense of student’s efficiency in this area and their diagnosis of social demand for education in the scope of sustainable development goals,
- views on human responsibility for sustainable development,

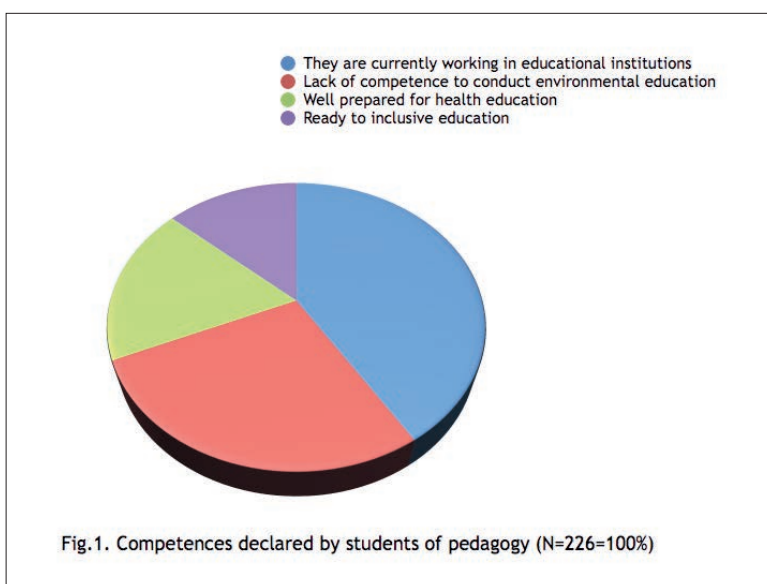
- own activities and students' readiness to take actions for sustainable development.

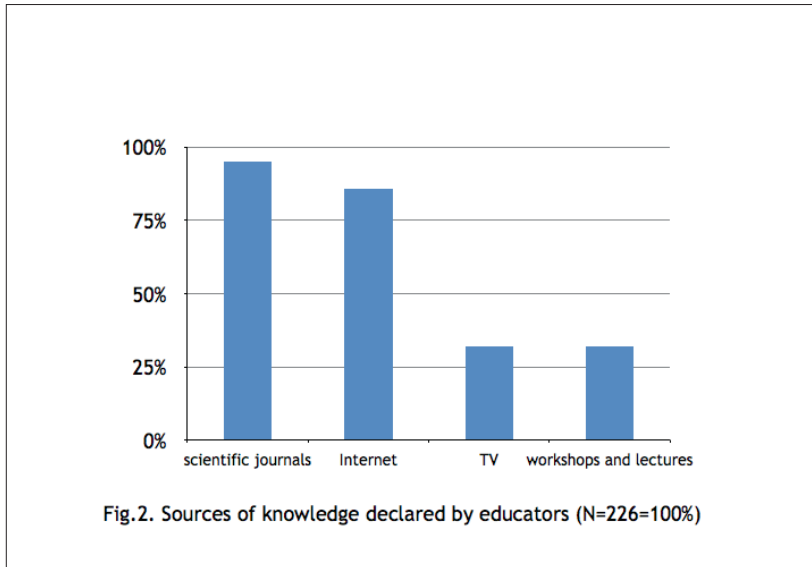
Although the researchers are aware that only questionnaires, opinions and feelings can be examined using the questionnaire, the results seem symptomatic and worth describing.

Over a third of respondents (36%) are considered to be well prepared to conduct health education activities among children, slightly more than a quarter (27%) is ready to engage in inclusive education (Fig. 1). Both these areas – thematic and methodical – belong to the issues that are of particular interest to education for sustainable development. At the same time, more than half of respondents (55%) declare lack of competence to conduct education for their environment (Fig. 1). A large percentage (20%) chose the answer “I have no opinion”, revealing the lack of prior interest in the subject, and thus probably lack of competence.

Already from the first cursory analysis, it follows that the understanding of the social role of teachers is narrowed only by students of pedagogical studies to those activities that are confined by school walls and related to the transfer of knowledge.

The weight that the subjects attach to knowledge can be seen in other areas of the study. In verifying questions (on sources of information about the environment, on education for the environment and man's responsibility for the environment), students declare that their information comes from scientific journals (95%). Internet (86%) and television (32%) ranked second (Fig. 2.). Declarations on scientific journals should probably be treated as an attempt to create their own image, but it is an interesting attempt. It seems that here also the students confirm how deeply important the image of “the teacher as a person who knows” (knowledge as



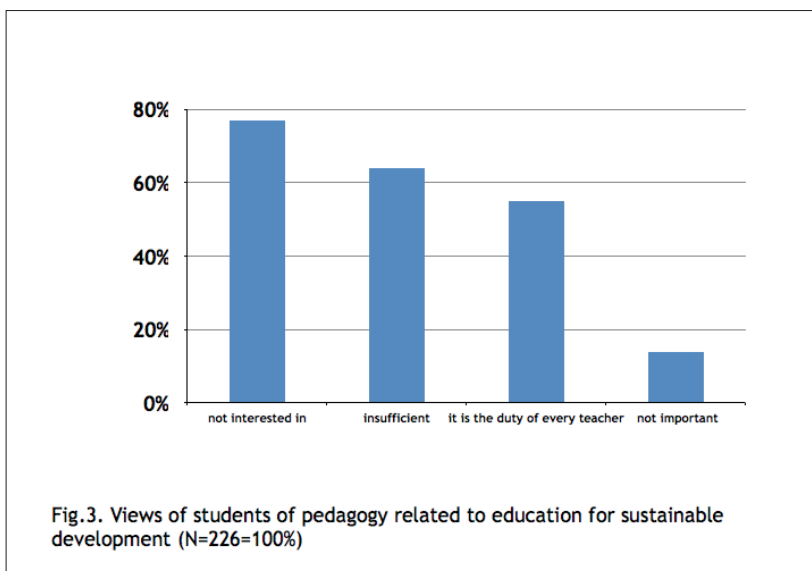


legitimization of the role) is and how they perceive the teacher's role: "I know and transmit this knowledge myself".

It is also significant that only a very small percentage of respondents give academic and other forms of education as a source of information on sustainable development. Most of the respondents are people who have completed undergraduate studies at various universities and teacher studies. Only 32% of them have ever participated in courses or trainings concerning education for the environment, there were few declarations that the knowledge and skills in education for sustainable development were acquired in practice and outside the walls of the facility (e.g. during field activities) (Fig. 3). And yet the whole of Poland is covered by a network of field nature trails, social, and historical, designed to educate local communities in the spirit of responsibility for their surroundings. There are countless organizations and non-governmental institutions in Poland that conduct such activities. This shows another problem of the Polish education system at all levels: the poor cooperation of educational institutions with the environment. Respondents, when asked about examples of environmental educational paths in their area, in 77% refused to answer ("I do not know" or no answer).

The results of this study should be treated as a red card for us, representing academic pedagogy. It should be noted, in the context of the first pillar of education for sustainable development, that attempts made for years to make education less encyclopedic and more focused on the learning processes, action, and especially cooperation, remain only in the stage of postulates. Students at the end of preparation for the teaching profession still present the conviction that their role is mainly the transfer of knowledge and the way they were taught: in the walls of the school hall.

The presented research allows for, on the other hand, cautious optimism in looking into the future. Over half of the respondents (55%) agree with the statement



“The duty of each teacher is to conduct education for sustainable development, e.g. through the implementation of educational projects”. Only 14% of respondents considered only insignificant content and tasks of sustainable development in education (Fig. 3).

Since most of the respondents admitted to work and have experience in pedagogical professions, it seemed reasonable to ask their opinions about the desired forms of teacher training. Up to now 74% of respondents considered completed studies and forms of improvement as insufficient (Fig. 2). It turned out that half of the respondents considered the updating and supplementary workshops run by academic centers as the most valuable (guaranteeing the quality of transmitted content) form of professional development. To confirm this thesis, it is worth mentioning that some of the students admitted to studying in parallel at post-graduate studies, giving various additional professional qualifications.

Respondents expressed interest primarily in such forms of professional development that would enhance their creative competence. They are expecting more methodological classes to teach children to become active and to design teaching aids useful also for students with special educational needs. Many of the respondents showed a need for training in the area of implementing joint projects with the local community. It seems that here finally, from the declarations calculated on the self-creation of the image fitting into the traditional image of the teacher, there is a need for tools that will actually reach the students. Interestingly, the study clearly marked a positive correlation between the level of professional experience in the teaching profession and the demand for training in methods of working with children. This confirms the role of practice in teacher education. Practice allows you to verify theory and mature in the belief that knowledge is not possible without having the ability to acquire, process and transfer it.

The second goal of the survey was to diagnose the current state of education for sustainable development in educational institutions in which our students work. Therefore, the respondents were asked how it looks in their workplace, whether the principles of sustainable development are well-known, respected and propagated.

Very good condition of education for sustainable development in their workplaces was assessed only by a marginal number of people working in professions related to upbringing and teaching. The vast majority (64%) described this state as “weak” and “bad”. Poorly educated students become defective teachers who raise the next generation of students ill-prepared to take responsibility for the common good. Polish teachers are well prepared theoretically, worse in practical terms. Their professional preparation process is still taking place primarily in the lecture halls and they will work with the pupils themselves later. In Polish educational colleges there is a lack of good practices on a larger scale for the benefit of the local environment and university associations with the environment. Cooperation with business is practically non-existent. It is not easy to understand the goals and knowledge of ways to raise money for the education of future educators from sources other than scientific grants and state funds.

This weakness of academic education for sustainable development in Poland can only be fully understood when we look at the model program of student education based on the practice and cooperation of many environments. We want to describe such a model using the example of a program functioning at the American University of Madonna in Michigan. The following observations and conclusions are the result of a three-month scholarship by a co-author of the article – Agnieszka Pawlak, PhD – at Madonna University, and her monthly stay in Haiti as part of volunteering.

Madonna University is a small university for American conditions. Annually, it educates nearly 5,000 students, including teachers. Last year (2017) it celebrated its 80th anniversary.

In education, the university has a model status, awarded by federal bodies, and has numerous accreditations of offices, organizations and associations supporting and controlling academic education. The quality of education at Madonna University is best confirmed by the passing rate of certifying teacher examinations (Madonna graduates in 90% pass them on the first attempt).

The university can boast of having technologically advanced solutions (students have at their disposal TV studios, scientific laboratories, modern equipment of lecture halls). A lot of pioneer and unique courses are run there. Among other things, students are trained in international programs in cooperation with China and the United Arab Emirates.

In all decisions, a lot of attention is paid to sustainable development. It finds expression not only in promoting pro-ecological architectural solutions, but above all in the social involvement of the entire university community. Madonna is the first college in Michigan with the Community Engagement Classification award from the Carnegie Foundation, created by the United States Congress. The Carnegie Foundation is involved in promoting those institutions that can be called institutions perfecting themselves through researching and satisfying the needs

of the environment. He defines social involvement in the Carnegie Foundation as cooperation between higher education institutions and communities (local, national and supranational) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and human resources. In this spirit, Madonna University's mission is to "stop waiting for others to solve problems and fix the wrongs of our times". The university sets itself an ambitious goal of educating change leaders: referring to the work of Paul Schmitz "Everyone Leads. Building Leadership from the Community Up", in the Madonna University environment, leadership is defined as an action to which everyone is obliged to practice values and engage in cooperation for the benefit of the community³.

Consistently, the involvement of the Madonna University community in volunteering is impressive. On average, except for compulsory hours resulting from the education program, the staff and students devote approximately 27,000 hours to environmental activities outside the university. Students teach sign language to people with disabilities and their families, work in hospices and nursing homes, run on-site fundraising to support the poor in their environment, but also in Third World countries. One of the regular forms of volunteering practiced at Madonna University are 7-10-day trips to Haiti, in groups of several students with carers. Trips are organized outside the program of studies, always during the student's free time (during holiday breaks and holidays). Part of the costs are borne by the students themselves. In Haiti, they carry out a voluntary activities program based on the competences obtained from studies and those expanding competencies. Above all, however, these are trips of charity and education – their goal is to help people in Haiti, but also the personal development of students.

How does Madonna University finance such projects?

Madonna University, like all universities in the States, is financed from tuition income. However, it covers only 80% of its expenses. The remaining 20% and all additional costs coincide with the income from cooperation with the environment. The Madonna emphasizes the role of rooting a university in the local community. Many students (and later graduates who then perform various functions in business and society) come from the immediate vicinity of the University. That is why there is a mutual support program "Preferred Partners" at the university. It combines business and organizations operating in the immediate vicinity of the University with the academic community. Students among "Privileged Partners" are looking for places to practice, and later and permanent work. The business cooperating with the university are often companies founded or run by graduates of Madonna

3 "In Paul Schmitz's book, 'Everyone Leads: Building Leadership from the Community Up' the definition of leadership has three parts. The first: that leadership is an action that many can take and not just a position that a few people hold. The second: leadership is about taking personal and social responsibility to work with others for common goals. The third: that leadership is about the practice of values that engage diverse community members and groups in working together effectively. How many of us have heard this definition of leadership before? We are at a point in history that demands that we stop waiting for others to solve problems and right the wrongs of our Times", <https://www.madonna.edu/about/mission-and-history/> [9.09.2018].

University. A lively bond with graduates is a pillar of university identity: "Our graduates and friends help shape our traditions, sustain our success and build our future". Graduates are the group of university benefactors most involved in the assistance. Active contributors include writers, business owners, directors, religious leaders, doctors, lawyers and artists – in the past Madonna University students. There are so many graduates who want to participate in the life of the University, that their association is divided into regional chapters. They deal with the organization of social events, cultural events, take care of the official guests of the University and organize fundraising for various purposes. Fundraising does not mean the publication of the relevant account number. Graduates organize film screenings with discussions, promotions of valuable books, concerts, guided tours, golf competitions, "University Night", jubilees and celebrations, charity marches, balls and auctions. The benefits of cooperation are mutual: local companies, in addition to tax deduction in connection with donations for the university and its individual programs, gain access to know-how, consultations in various areas, but also advertising in a prestigious environment. Cooperation with the University gives them access to a larger cooperation network: those who meet in graduate associations support not only their university but also each other.

From the Polish perspective, the level of understanding in the local environment of the role played by the university is surprising. This understanding is expressed by the number of entities applying for inclusion in the list of "Preferred Partners". If you take into account that small business cooperating with the university is not only hotels, training and recreation centers, nursing homes, but also doctor's offices, small computer companies and even an exclusive tailor's workshop, you can see how wide, sometimes unobvious, maybe even for Polish people amazing, the a range of potential mutual benefits is.

Madonna University also finances its educational and volunteer programs with funds from foundations and special purpose funds set up at the university. They are also strongly associated with graduates. The Patrick Moore Foundation supports the development of sport. He manages the money saved to the university by her former student, Patrick Moore, a well-known sports journalist in the United States.

The second foundation, Nancy L. Grandillo Leadership Fund for Women, which is operating at the university, acquires funds to support women's education as leaders in their communities.

The widest scope of activity, however, is the Madonna Foundation, which raises funds for activity, in Poland called the "third mission of the university" (the university as a forum for social activity). Thanks to her collections Madonna from 2013 leads, for example, the already mentioned program of regular help to families with deaf children in learning sign language. Sign language teachers, mostly students, visit the homes of families with deaf children once a week throughout the school year and devote two hours to preparing them for living in a bilingual world. Classes serve not only to learn sign language, but also to strengthen family ties and family activities in the local community. The activities of the program are addressed especially to groups with low cultural competences and material status. The program, moreover, was launched in the context of the financial procedure of the great industrial

center that was then the first in the history of the United States, which was Detroit throughout the 20th century. As a result of bankruptcy, the city ended financing all additional social programs, including the only school in the region for the deaf children, Detroit Day School for the Deaf.

There are also special-purpose funds at the university, which are financed entirely from public collections. Mosaic Leadership Academy grants scholarships to students from minority backgrounds, whose access to education at the academic level is difficult due to their origin. The fund acquires partners who sponsor the acquisition of additional competences by selected students: a student internship at reputable companies, job fairs, conferences, and sometimes tuition fees at other universities where the student may acquire additional skills or perform research. Broadcast & Cinema Arts Guild is an association of graduates, parents and people supporting the technological development of the University.

Thanks to the funds obtained from outside, since 2010 Madonna University also runs the first distance learning program in Haiti in the United States. The social responsibility of the University is not limited only to the immediate environment. In 2010, an earthquake killed over 300,000 people, one-third of the Haitians have suffered injuries, lost their homes and livelihoods. The cataclysm destroyed almost the entire infrastructure of this country. Then the community of Madonna University decided to get involved in the reconstruction of Haiti. However, it was recognized that help should not be a one-off reflex. Haiti had the status of the poorest country in the western hemisphere even before the earthquake. Therefore, it was recognized that what is most needed there is access to education and training of elites who are able to take responsibility for the future of Haiti. Since the majority of Haiti's economic problems have been for years dealt with in a demotivating way for Haitians – either through the transfer of food and other basic necessities to the island or the economic migration of Haitians – the aid proposed by Madonna University was innovative. Experiences and preparation of the university to conduct courses on Internet platforms and the fact that in the mission of the university an important role is played by reaching out to marginalized communities and providing such help is aimed at the future. A special undergraduate program in the field of running a business was created. In addition to the courses normally offered to American students, elements of the ESL (English as a Second Language) course were introduced – intensive English learning for foreigners, and the type of obligatory practices in institutions and organizations operating locally – in the local community in Haiti. To reduce the risk of fast migration of graduates of the course and motivate them to act on the spot, the recruitment of candidates included local companies and organizations, which then guarantee the graduates employment on preferential terms. In the selection of candidates for studies, their age or material status does not play a greater role. Preference is given to candidates already involved in the life of local communities, especially in educational activities.

The Haiti program requires a huge financial and organizational effort. It would not have been possible without the involvement of many institutions and companies at the international level. American foundations and companies from outside the nearest circle of Madonna University participate in financing the course (e.g.

Fulbright Foundation, banks and individual sponsors). Americans, for many years shaped cooperation culture, allowed to work out mechanisms of matching sponsors and seeking support. It also takes place thanks to external organizations specialized in such intermediation, such as the Volunteer Match – an international cooperation forum in which parties interested in support and support meet.

Thanks to this approach to responsibility for sustainable development, in the current academic year, Madonna University is already educating the sixth year of the Haitians. The money obtained for this activity is not only enough to fund the online course itself, but also to fly professors and students between Haiti and Detroit (not all classes and exams can take place online) and optimistic thinking about developing a study offer for Haitians (plans for further courses, among others in the field of tourism and hospitality).

Conclusion

The above-described observations and our experience indicate that the intersectoral exchange of experience in higher education should meet the conditions enabling a better transition of students to the labor market and didactic and scientific-research development of the staff. In this context, cooperation at the university-business line is important to define the areas and principles of cooperation and the transfer of innovation and creative solutions⁴.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development announced by the United Nations and its objectives have historical significance for the whole world – for our planet and for all people.⁵

Seventeen Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of related tasks can contribute to building societies where restrictions on sustainable development activities will be lifted. Poverty will be eliminated and people will not suffer because of it. The objectives of the Agenda are focused on economic growth, social development and environmental protection. Tasks related to goals apply to both developing and developed countries. They concern everyone, because the focus is on improving people's quality of life, social protection and the natural environment. These optimistic prospects for achieving the goals, which are the above-mentioned values, will not be achieved without the general involvement of educators in conducting education for the benefit of ZR. However, in order for this to happen, it is worth paying attention and postulating an obligatory education in the field of ZR of this professional group. The review of international and national desk research practices, review of indicators, development of methodologies, talks with interested stakeholders and pilot studies seem to be of particular importance.

4 <https://www.frse.org.pl/wspolpraca-sektora-szkolnictwa-wyszego-ze-swiatem-biznesu-kategorie-obszarow-i-wskazniki-realizacji/>

5 <http://www.unic.un.org.pl/zrownowazony-rozwoj---cele/agenda-na-rzecz-zrownowazonego-rozwoju-2030/3042>

Barriers and limits in activities for sustainable development based on the example of the Polish public pedagogical university – current status, perspectives and good models of intersectoral partnership

Abstract

Academic education, which truly meets the needs of the present, is necessarily connected with building a cross-sector partnership. Also in non-traditional areas related to the economy – as in the case of pedagogical studies. Pedagogy, as a social science based on values, aims to bring up a man responsible for himself and the environment, and therefore also for the optimal development of civilization in the interests of present and future generations. It needs support from entities able to finance some non-standard educational projects.

This paper is connected with the research carried out in one of the largest Polish pedagogical universities. The level of awareness of pedagogy students in the area of sustainable development issues was examined. It turned out that the pedagogues are not prepared to take on the role of local community leaders in activities for sustainable development.

This is due to the limits of the current method of their education, culturally and historically conditioned. The Polish educational system is still releasing the years of socialism, preferring individualism over the interests of the community.

Injuries from the past are a barrier in promoting and taking responsibility for the needs of a wider circle of beneficiaries (which is expressed, inter alia, in the absence of the tradition of volunteering). The fruit of the previous era is also the lack of elaborated procedures for universities and colleges to obtain education in humanities and social fields that could co-finance long-term activities related to upbringing.

The authors postulate introducing to pedagogical education subjects related to the concept and principles of sustainable development understood as education for responsibility for present and future generations. They also want to show, as a result of experiences from their own volunteering, good practices in this field applied at Madonna University in the USA. From 2015, there is an educational program for sustainable development, in which students from Haiti are educated remotely at an academic level from several to several dozen each year, giving them a university degree, enabling them to undertake activities for their country.

The program consists of the work of many tens of people: business entities responsible for financing, academic staff responsible for the education program and classes, students implementing various voluntary programs and technical service responsible for maintaining the internet platform and access to it from a country where electricity is not an obvious thing.

Keywords: partnership, education, responsibility, sustainable development, good practices

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