

CITIZENSHIP, LOCAL SOCIETIES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

By Dr. Anastasia ATHANASSOULA-REPPA

Professor at SELETE Institute

Introduction

The purpose of this work is to contribute to the dialogue for the sensitization and action of the citizens and particularly of the citizen of the local community since he is the key to sustainable development. The Citizen, when acting, is characterized by decisions and attitudes that have to do with his own interests as well as with the correlated powers which prevail in every social, historical phase and therefore his action on issues concerning the environment is dictated by the same rules of the “management game” and authority competition.

At this stage, for the best rational decision taking, the intervention of the environmental study is considered very important, it appears or at least it should appear as an institution breakthrough not only in the education mechanisms but in the sociopolitical ones as well. It is an institution which does not simply, serve the existent socioeconomic situation passively but it intervenes dynamically in the local communities and educates its members in the light of the notion of the Citizen, who, although knows how to face competition, he must nevertheless find the way to a common future.

Considerable emphasis is placed on the environmental education of adults and since the average adult is considered to be mature and stable in his behavior, therefore further education is not required since the protection of the environment is a product of his maturity and logic. Nevertheless, things are not as they appear to be, especially if one takes into consideration that adults take part in centers of local decision making and their behavior is usually dictated by the purposes they wish to achieve. This means that the decision that adults take concerning the environment are not rational and they violate the principles of sustainable development (Athanassoula-Reppa 1997).

Therefore, the question which arises at this point is what must be done with the adults? How can we sensitize them and make them take rational decisions about sustainable development?

A series of answers can be given to the above questions possibly laying emphasis on the answers which are related to the notion of education of the local Citizen and his participation in individual and public affairs. That is how the local Citizen can be educated so as to become the cell and multiplier of sustainable development in his

Country and the contributor to the development of the local sustainable democracy.

The methodology used in this work, aiming to answer the posed questions goes as follows:

First, the citizenship is examined in the light of the ecological dimension and sustainable development. Second, there is an analysis of the relationships which characterize local societies with the local endogenous and sustainable development. Third, the intervention of the environmental education on the subject of the sensitization mainly of the adult Citizens, for the support of sustainable development as well as for the development of Democracy, is examined. There is also a reference to various areas of opposing interests of the local societies as well as to some techniques that will offer solutions to the environmental problems. Finally, some conclusions are drawn concerning the intervention of the environmental education for the political and pedagogical socialization.

1. CITIZENSHIP IN THE LIGHT OF THE ECOLOGICAL DIMENSION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Citizenship in contemporary societies is associated with 3 dimensions which refer to the relevant categories of rights: the civil, political and social citizenship; these rights have been gradually given to the Citizens since the Age of Enlightenment and mainly after World War II, with the development of the Welfare State (C. Stamatis 1996:135-136). Although today, the social dimension of the citizenship appears dwindling thus affecting the two other ones, the civil and political, nevertheless it is widely accepted that the human civilization has been enriched with new values which constitute the stable base of the citizenship itself.

Therefore, a dynamic contemporary citizenship can be built based on these values, which will function under the new historical, ideological and political lines within the framework of the Universal and European dimension. On the one hand the new quality content citizenship will continue to be built on the relationship of the reestablishment of Political democracy to social and economic and on the other hand it will be continually enriched with the awareness of the ecological interdependence among the human beings on the Planet (C. Stamatis 1996:139, Twine Fred 1994: 7-46, Papademitriou G. 1997:173-182).

It is therefore obvious that if the natural environment will be destroyed humanity will also become extinct. That is why the request for sustainable development, equal responsibility and solidarity is a world-wide issue, which without preventing the present generations development will allow the future ones to live an ecological way of life. However, the desired universal ecological principles of responsibility must be expressed in a new way, thus equalizing the inconsistency which is created between the internationalized, commercialized production- consumption system and the finite potential of the Planet. If we take as granted that development is the basic element of Democracy, then we can hope that there will be a worldwide ecological consciousness. This consciousness demands for a common definition concerning the issue of the real economic and cultural needs that are worth meeting. (Fotopoulos T. 1994).

The universal ecological dimension of the citizenship is defined by the fact that the performance of rights and the enjoyment of independence, take place within the exchange of society and nature (C. Stamatis 1996:142).

The citizenship's ecological dimension contains rights and duties towards the natural

ΝΙΚ. Ι. ΚΟΝΣΟΛΑΣ

ΣΥΓΧΡΟΝΗ ΠΕΡΙΦΕΡΕΙΑΚΗ ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΚΗ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗ

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and human environment. Every Citizen of local, national, international and universal society should exercise his rights and duties towards the natural and human environment in such a way that a future ecological peace would be ensured in the civic societies. Today, it is known that environmental problems are universal rather than local. The idea of sustainable development poses complicated and significant problems, which are in inconsistency with the present main values, mechanisms and behaviors, not only in the industrialized areas but in the developed countries too (P. Kazakos 1997:58). Each one of the above countries faces the subject of development in a different way and it sometimes uses completely different models. Therefore, the creation of a universal concept for sustaining development is sometimes not easy to be accomplished. Joint action and systematic intervention is needed, mainly in the form of motives so as to change behavior and values in the universal, international, national, regional and local level.

In the case of worldwide and international establishments, the institutions of cooperation for the protection of the environment, function in a more complicated and slow way than in the case of national and local institutions. This means that the national and local societies can deal in a flexible way with the problems of sustainable development. However, if this kind of management on sustainable development does not become universally respected then we cannot set our hopes only on the participation of the local Citizen. The action of every local society must find ways to overcome the contradictions of their opposing interests and support a local sustainable development, having as a target a universal ecological consciousness.

2. LOCAL SOCIETIES AND LOCAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Every local society was formed according to its social relationships and social juxtaposition of interests and of course according to the common social identity and culture which differentiated it from any other society. It participates though in the national division of labor according to its special character and its history. All local societies have some natural, technological, economic, human, institutional and cultural resources which comprise the potential of their endogenous development (Athansoula-Reppa 1997).

When the local society will create the appropriate conditions that will allow it to utilize its available resources, which limit local development, then it is almost certain that it will succeed its target, in other words endogenous development. It is certain that this development will not only be the result of technical infrastructure and economic enlargement, but it will also concern the whole human entity throughout a process of sustainable development and balance of the human beings' activities with their natural environment.

However, local development and local modernization are both hindered by various

factors that have to do with the economic dimension, the politicoadministrative and sociopolitical one (S. Papaioannou:1995 103-104). Each one of these dimensions is characterized by a group of positive and negative actions which have an impact on local development. Therefore we notice the following:

A. Concerning the economic dimension, local businessmen try to organize the local factors of production to satisfactory levels, so that they will become competitive in various markets. Nevertheless, it is a fact that economic reality usually develops based on central government regulations, of a permanent character, which most of the times are in incongruity with the local situation and needs. This means that the local initiative must intervene in order to build up the appropriate resistance that will get round the central government regulations, thus freeing potential for the sake of local sustainable development.

B. On the politicoadministrative dimension, local societies must develop policies in order to protect their environment from external influences and also promote their development according to their own special needs. At this point it is worth mentioning that, an institutional politicoadministrative modernization is not enough if there is no simultaneous attempt to lead to the change of the invariable social awareness and to the way of thinking. That means that the local society Citizens should be encouraged to support new forms of participating actions within the framework of the autonomous local regulations and environmental protection. The above can be achieved through clear patterns of behavior which will enable people to reverse the potential and administrative stereotypes.

C. Within the sociocultural dimension, values and local institutions constitute the basis of local development; furthermore, nowadays local societies copy and try to adjust successfully to consumption and other kinds of patterns that characterize central societies. This is an issue which creates additional problems to local development, because the meaning of social solidarity and respect declines, the disorganization of local social structures occurs, indifference for the common affairs emerges and thus the esthetics of the natural and human environment deteriorates.

If people really want to correct all these inconsistencies then the local society must first educate its Citizens so as to become able to decide on the type of local society that they like and still be in the position to react against the external regulations which threaten social coherence and lead to homogeneous situations, standardization and alienated coexistence.

A local initiative mainly uses local sources under local control, for better local benefits. This can happen provided that localism does not function as a negative reaction in the modernization process of local social structures. It should give to its members the feeling that they belong to their "local country". As a result they would be able to decide upon the acquisition of their roles and keep the right to be culturally different (S. Papaioannou 1995:109). The participation of public, private and voluntary bodies may lead to significant results thus creating development programs and positive answers for the external environment. One of the basic ways that will help social coherence and development is the sensible exertion of authority and the political wisdom in local authority management not only by its elected people but by every Citizen who wishes to support Democracy and Sustainable development. This however means a new way of thinking and a new lifestyle which may lead to sacrifices for the sake of Democracy and Sustainable development.

But, how can we support the local society's constant desire for sustainable development? This is a question that has a lot of answers. We will attempt to answer the question concerning the constant life-long education of the local society members on subjects of sustainable development.

3. LONG LIFE EDUCATION TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The environmental education is considered to be one of the basic means of education for the local Citizens' sensitization on environmental problems. It is the most important institution which teaches the members of a society their rights and duties towards the environment. However, if we want to have effective rights we should take into consideration the following: a) The Citizens should be aware and able to claim their rights. b) The State and the political leaders should believe in democratic principles and not in manipulated democratic processes and c) there should be mutual respect between the State and the Citizens concerning their duties (M. Skoulos 1977:24).

The Greek State has enacted important institutions for the environmental education of its members since it does not consider environmental protection as a constitutional right but as the essential element of Democracy (Athanasoula-Reppa 1995 b). This means that the State has the obligation to make the individual able either alone or in groups to protect the environment (G. Siouti 1988:9). One of the obligations that the State has undertaken for the protection of the environment, is to educate Citizens to respect the legitimate, complicated and collective goods including the environment.

Environmental education as part of the school curriculum is a policy that leads to the development of ecological awareness and is also the first step for environmentally responsible Citizens (Flogaiti E. 1993:188). In the present work, we will not discuss the subject of formal school education, which we consider as the basis of systematic behavior for a friendly treatment of the environment, instead our emphasis will be placed on informal adult education. In other words what happens after school, how an adult behaves and acts in relation to the environment. How he continues to be educated so as to become the most important contributor to sustainable development.

Various researches carried out in Greece or abroad have shown that young people are more sensitive towards environmental problems than the older ones (Pantis I. et al 1996:216). This is either due to the developed ecological movement in some Countries or just because ecology is in fashion (is "in"). However the positive attitude of the young towards the environment does not necessarily become a positive attitude throughout their lives. Moreover, the change of behavior means more complicated things and more active participation in the sustaining process.

The attitude of adults, participating in the centers of decision taking on environmental problems, has to do more with their own group benefits and less with the common benefit. This explains why individuals take an active part in environmental issues only when the problem concerns them personally or collectively and not when the problem is general thus concerning everyone. The variety of the Citizens' suggestions on sustainable development issues, may arise from the opposing interests between people or groups of people, political opinions, habits, moral standard, religious beliefs and generally from differences that result from these elements which compose each one's cosmotheory.

The approval may result from the common education on environmental problems and the systematic education of the Citizens to act in favor of the environment. This

means that the education process on environmental issues should not stop when someone graduates from school but should be a continuous life long process, which will continue to have as a target awareness, knowledge, attitudes, abilities and mainly participation.

The adult's education associated with prognostic pedagogy and social sciences, offer the best techniques for the sensitization of the people in order to take action in the environment, in such a way so as to be able to face present and future environmental needs in an active society. When the environmental education succeeds in accomplishing its targets concerning the adults then we can expect that the dialogue and approval will lead to common action and understanding of various environmental problems.

Therefore, subjects which are not well understood from the beginning and raise objections among various groups, will be faced by using a better way at least by the local adult side. Some of the subjects are for example : the suggestion of the municipality of Thessaloniki for an underwater road, the biological waste of the city of Ioannina to the Kalama river, the circulation of the vehicles in the center of Athens in turns according to their license plates (even-odd numbers), finding the proper spot for burring the thousands of tones of waste of our capital and so on.

Disagreement starts when, some groups of people believe that the suggested solutions to these issues could create greater problems or that the local environment could change completely. However, when Citizens are well informed of the benefits of sustainable development and when the expected results are proven to them, then their attitudes and behaviors change and they get actively involved. If on the other hand they are excluded from the overall procedures and are not adequately informed of the general benefits offered by sustainable development, then as expected they are in no position to react and care for the common interest, apart from their own (Athanassoula-Reppa 1995 a). So, institutions should educate people on the environmental concept and action.

4. Conclusions

Summing up, someone could notice that today the citizenship and mainly the local citizenship is enriched with new aspects about the rights and duties, the so-called "environmental rights" Local communities have to develop the local citizenship with global action for the environment. This means that they should try to find ways of sustainable endogenous development using local resources.

At the same time the most important concern of the local communities is or at least should be the organization of long-life education on environmental processes, where all social bodies (political parties, church, mass media, enterprises, communities etc.. will cooperate on the common route of ecological peace. The intervention of the environmental education of the adults is considered important for: the political socialization of the people, the democratization of social institutions, the decentralization of decision making, the participation of the people in sustainable development.

This means that the environmental education does not stop as soon as someone completes his studies at school but it continues to enrich the idea of citizenship in every citizen and mainly the local one, who is the most responsible in decision making or in arranging subjects concerning the environment in local areas. Both his participation and action within local institutions, having as a target sustainable development, enhance and build the local democracy.