



Third Millenium Education

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The XXI century that we live in displays the highest level of development in the fields like gene engineering, microelectronics, information technology, means of communication, nanotechnologies, microbiology, energy industry... The list is endless. These achievements are a result of efforts by highly educated specialists and scientists, whose successful work has become possible mainly thanks to the education they had been given which is the basis of human civilization.

Contemporary educational tendencies, especially, in higher education, presuppose the students' mobility, development of their skills in self-sufficing work with information, developing trans-border education and its internationalization. It is necessary to notice a growing importance of specialist field differentiation, reorientation to multiple applied sciences and departure from the common mainstream humanitarian education system.

But at the same time, the XXI century made current contradictions which become sharper every day as clear as they had never been. This has been explicitly demonstrated by economic, environmental, political and social crises around the globe. Factors of unstable development are evident. It is thus logic that the studies on how to make development sustainable include the largest and unprecedented in the History of Science range of environmental, philosophical, political, financial, social problems and many others.

Will the XXI century become the last one in human history?

For the first time, human civilization faces the phenomenon of possible death due to its own activity. Evolution provided all of the living beings including people with instinct for self-preservation. But we should recognize that human race taken as a whole did not succeed in generating such an instinct. That makes sense, as evolution has been going on for many hundred millions years, while the civilization's hasty growth in technological power lasted only two or three centuries.

Scientific and technical progress lifted human race to a new level, allowing us to considerably increase production and consumption. Scientific discoveries, technical revolution, developing technologies created a false illusion of almighty power and an ambition to govern nature.

In science, in the knowledge field, we notice a shift towards technicism. Faith in infinite possibilities of technical progress somehow played down the significance of human individuality pushing

humanitarian values into the background. This is exactly within that period of time that a retarded development of Man's consciousness outlined (above all, in moral and ethical terms) compared with technical development, and the cult of consumption evolved.

Consequently, we observe a discontinuity that has been formed and keeps on growing steadily between the rate of technological activity and the level of responsibility for the consequences of this activity. Reaching its heights by the end of the XX century, this discontinuity made the environmental crises inevitable.

The degeneration of biosphere, which includes humans, raises the question of survival for the entire human race as a species.

Personal human attributes have undergone serious changes during the lifetime of only two generations. Under the pressure of a hastily growing scope of information, education was mainly and imperceptibly reoriented towards getting knowledge, developing competency and gaining focused specialization. This was harmful for the bringing up process, which for many centuries, was inseparably associated with education, was not only aimed at transferring knowledge from generation to generation but also taught how to use the knowledge gained. The balance necessary for a harmonious development of humans was disrupted in the prejudice of the people's personal qualities.

Everywhere we observe a decline in the level of common culture among school and university graduates, corruption of their ethical and aesthetical vision. Besides, we notice an increase in aggressiveness, asociality, egocentrism, ultimatism and people's will to gain object at whatever the cost.

These are the consequences of educational dehumanization which are already evident today. But there are also less evident ones: taste for relentless and dishonest competition, neglecting other people's interests, cultural values, ability to violate the law and rules of morality.

Today, in the shadow of growing local and global crises another educational model is gaining vital importance, which is aimed at training specialists ready to not only fulfill their tasks as single-discipline professionals, but also to resolve conflicts, keep in mind partners interests, preserve natural, historical, cultural and material values and, finally, responsible for the consequences of their activity.

International Conferences on Environment and Sustainable Development (Stockholm, Rio de Janeiro, Manchester, Kyoto, and Johannesburg) have marked a new era in human history. These summits helped to raise interest to environmental issues from the great masses of international society, and led to signing several important international treaties.

The transformation of public conscience has thus become a pressing global human task and a must for a sustainable development of the civilization. Education is the only way to persistently accomplish this mission within a reasonable time (taking into consideration the forecasted exacerbation of the ecological crisis by mid-century). Traditional education has never had this task to carry out.

To make sustainable development possible, we need a more dynamic educational system capable of self-improving and first of all capable of staying ahead (anticipating education) among other fields of human activity, knowing how to use prognostic and probabilistic methods, learn from the future. But the main objective of education for sustainable development must be the formation of a new kind of person who has an environmental world view and a developed responsibility.

Educational model for sustainable development was elaborated in the Moscow Environmental and Humanitarian Institute in 1992-1993 and keeps on upgrading ever since. The basis of this model features expended humanitarian and ecological components integrated in the educational and bringing up process. Meanwhile, the basic component, specifically, national education standard has remained unchanged. The model combines principles of both anticipating and ecological education. Humanitarian component is meant to develop student's common and inner culture,

communication skills and includes culturology, ethics, law, foreign languages, imagology etc.

Another important fact is to be mentioned concerning this humanitarian and environmental education system. Educational and bringing up process is active and practical. Students participate in research projects performed by Students Scientific Society where they use the knowledge they have just gained.

This year, the institute took up residence in a new specially designed building in south west Moscow in the valley of a little river, Samorodinka. The new building is equipped with everything to meet educational needs: comfortable classrooms, ICT rooms, laboratories, a first-class conference hall, a multifunctional sports and dancing hall, a student café. The Institute is being prepared to merge with another Moscow institute and thus transform into a university.

The humanitarian and environmental education system is a well-thought-out and fundamental alternative to the educational dehumanization. It proved to be effective both in training specialists and forming graduates personal qualities fully oriented to modern challenges, to a constructive social, natural and co-evolutionary activity.

The expansion of the System may become the main step towards the transformation of public conscience in order to turn principles of sustainable civilization development into reality.

We are ready to share our experience with you and give a helping hand to people and organizations wishing to develop this type of education in all of the countries and regions around the globe. Within this framework, we create a foundation featuring big financiers, manufacturers, entrepreneurs, journalists, and just partners interested in developing the University of Future.