

## The interpretative valences of the relationship between sustainable development and the quality of life

Vladimir-Aurelian Enachescu<sup>1</sup>, Diana Andreia Hristache<sup>2</sup>, Claudia Elena Paicu<sup>2</sup>  
Faculty of Economics, Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies

<sup>1</sup> Teacher`s Training Department

<sup>2</sup> Department of Economic Doctrines and Communication

**Abstract.** *In the context of the modern human societies, the conceptualization of the quality of life involves other approaches. The scientific “refining” of the concept leads to finding “intimate resorts”, both theoretical and practical, called to lead to new results. Building a coherent image on the quality of life and on the implications it generates, in various facets of economic and social life, is the core of our scientific approach. Our purpose is to highlight the results considered by us to be significant in terms of correlations between sustainable development and the quality of life. At the same time we consider necessary to enrich the multidisciplinary nature of the concept of quality of life with new approaches. This is what we identify as key pillars, namely, educational and communicational sustainability, for the objective, relevant and modern treatment of the phenomenon itself.*

**Keywords:** quality of life; educational sustainability; communicational sustainability.

**JEL Codes:** I25, I31, O15, P46, Q01

### 1. Introduction

Sustainable development in modern society is no longer simply a goal. It is closely related to ensuring a certain level of the quality of life. In the 50's we were talking about quality of life in terms of quantifying the macroeconomic welfare society through sociological perception of the degree of happiness of individuals. Today the concept of quality of life related to sustainability and vice versa. Thus, between the two concepts, a genuine communicative feedback was being build. Only based on these terms of the concept of quality of life, the development of modern human societies, built on sustainable principles, is not a nonsense. In support of our statements we identify the concerns of a series of international bodies to redefine sustainability as a result of the process of improving the quality of human life, taking into account the maintenance and support capacities of ecosystems. (IUCN / UNEP / WWF, 1991)

### 2. Interpretive valences of the quality of life

The multidisciplinary the concept of quality of life generates is especially relevant since, the reporting to a research area or another would reduce its use of theoretical and practical significance. Therefore the interpretation process, in the first sense, highlights the approach of the quality of life in close relation to the sustainable development of society (Van de Kerk and Manuel, 2008). The latter is now identified also through the construction of the "Sustainable Society Index" (SSI). The importance of this defining composite indicator is to implement, develop and monitor the sustainability concept at national and / or regional level concomitantly with the responsibilities it generates. (Hales and Prescott-Allen, 2002)

The implementation of the sustainable development policies is a major concern for Romania. Peculiarities of SSI-Romania, identified by five additional indicators - Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Poverty Rate, Research and Development, Transportation, Ecological Agriculture - serve to reinforce the relevance of the 22 indicators originally built to provide a complete view about this complex process. Recent estimates express, in a broader sense, the quantification of welfare, according to the Human Development

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author: PhD student, [vld\\_enachescu@yahoo.com](mailto:vld_enachescu@yahoo.com)

Index (HDI), resulting in a holistic approach to the individual location in the center of the complex processes underlying societal development. (Fig. 1)

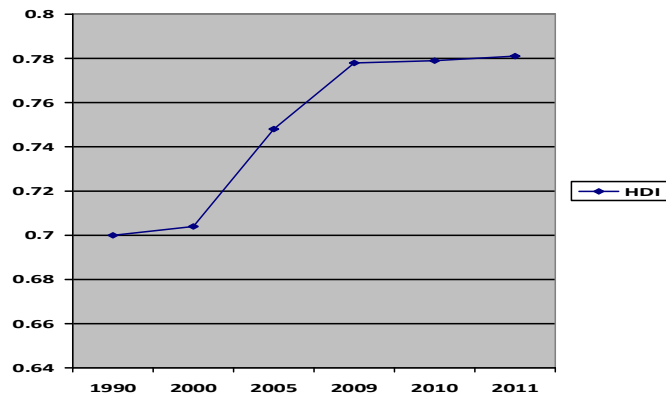


Fig. 1: Evolution of Human Development Index (HDI), Romania

Its value for 2011 is 0.781, which gives Romania the position 50 of 187 countries with comparable data. The HDI evolution places Romania above the regional average, in the context of the index quantization of health is 0.851, plus 0.831 the value of the index of education and only 0.674, the value of the standard of living. (Fig. 2)

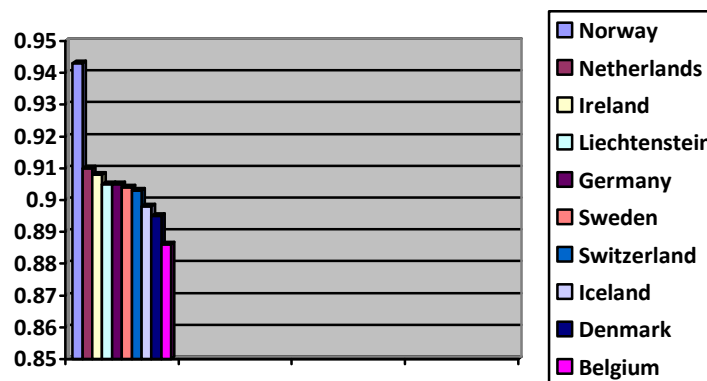


Fig. 2: Evolution of Human Development Index (HDI) in Europe

Also, observe the upward trend of the Human Development Index (HDI) in Romania, even if the values are modest compared to the top 10 ranking countries in Europe: Norway, first place with HDI score of 0.943 followed closely by the Netherlands with an accumulated score of 0.910, to that at the opposite at the end of the table, lie Belgium, with a HDI score of 0.886 estimated for 2011 (HDI, 2011).

Because HDI analysis relates to three dimensions through which identifies: health, education and standard of living of the population, at some point in this triad, the educational dimension turns to be, for our research too, a key aspect. Our argument is strengthened by its own central positioning in highlighting HDI. At the same time, we believe that the educational dimension participates as a true "intermediate communication", to messaging correlation between sustainable development and quality of life.

Considering these aspects, we undertake the research from a new perspective that treats quality of life. It's what we call "sustainability education".

Through its we want to generate also how to respond to current needs, objectives of human communities concomitantly with subjectivism of perception of individual and group welfare. (Constanza, 2008)

We consider building sustainability education necessary, in so far as it leads to the development and sociological definition of human comportamentamentale typologies. Moreover, through its correlation with the typology of motivational values, defined through the "Schwartz Model" (2006), our research converges to supplement the model with two additional items: education and communication. They are, in our opinion,

the glue that ensures the creation functionality, in good terms, so much needed for sustainable development and social welfare.

Today, education sustainability must be perceived in the EU Member States, ranging all the way from achieving a comprehensive and integrative vision (WEF, 2010) where the issue of its compatibility with the labor market should be a priority.

According to the strategy "Europe 2020" the main aim is to focus the efforts of the Member States to develop "knowledge and innovation economy", with high employment work rate through which to ensure social and territorial cohesion. Therefore, the specific objectives that must be achieved at EU level by 2020 aims to: increase employment rate by 75% of the active population aged between 20-64 years, reducing the dropout school rate below 10%, concomitantly with increasing the percentage of educated population (higher education) at least 40%, and not least, combating poverty (European Commission, 2010). Note that sustainability education plays an important role in the successful implementation of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy.

Therefore, we consider that educational sustainability is built by activating a genuine "behavioral-institutional matrix" based on facts. Only if we consider the period 2003-2010 in EU Member States, notice that it was characterized by a number of favorable trends in the field, even if targets were only partially achieved: the school dropout rate dropped to 14.1% in the EU members in 2010, the proportion of adults with low levels of education diminished from 35.6% in 2000 to 27.3% in 2010. Progress has been made in terms of public participation in continuing education and long-life learning. However, the target of 12.5% was not achieved for the latter indicator, it registered only 9.1% for 2010 (Eurostat, 2011). Therefore further to the implementation of a set of strategies and policies aimed at increasing the availability of occupational structures and at achieving skills necessary for the labor market is required. At the same time it is necessary to take into account the characteristics of the specific occupational structures and the situation of each state.

In this context, we also consider necessary the development of the relationship between sustainable education and sustainable communication. Communicative sustainability is in our opinion the result of changes caused by activation at the societal level, of the communication paradigm. The finality of our arguments converges to the need to solve the problem brought to debate given the fact that any modern human community is maintained today precisely by communication networks (Dragan, 1980). In this, the individual acquires and develops a series of skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, taking initiative in decision-making processes, skills considered essential for the new configuration of the European model of sustainability. (EUR-Lex, 2010)

Through the latter, changing the attitudes and behaviors of human communities provides another perspective of interpretation and construction of a consistent image of quality of life. Regardless of how we analyze the interpretive valences of the relationship that is established between sustainable development and the quality of life, one thing is certain: improving the quality of life in sustainable communities is required. Required is also the need to efficiently manage and use the resources available, along with the potential for ecological and social innovation economy to ensure environmental protection, social cohesion and welfare, in the modern human societies.

### 3. Conclusions

Redefining the concept of 'quality of life', both at the individual and societal level, requires today new interpretative meanings. The assessment of the specific dimensions of the quality of life, through the key role of the education domain for the human communities, is becoming "sine qua non" of the achievement of sustainable development. It must be connected to the communication domain, because only by activating the latter, the enhancement of skills and competencies acquired by individuals through education and training can be valued realistic. It is the only way to move from a mostly static interpretation of the concept of quality of life to a dynamic one, in the sense of its adaptability to the conditions and messages obtained using communication feed-back.

The realization of enriched conceptualization of this phenomenon, basically subjective, through its reporting on sustainable development, we believe that it will be, in its transitional process, from the abstract

to the concrete, the way to generate clarity, consistency and adaptability that is needed, according to the existing realities.

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