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## Education for Sustainable Development: Imperative, Realistic, or Chimera?

**Abstract:** *Sustainable development* has become the mantra seized upon by the global community as a catch-all phrase for its vision of the world by 2030, and education has been selected as the vehicle to achieve that goal. This schema calls two questions to the fore. Firstly, how valid is the concept of sustainable development as an index subsuming the full panoply of challenges facing humanity? Secondly, how well does education lend itself to the mission of ensuring sustainable development? Education, at least in its present form in the world, has been criticised from many angles, including neo-institutionalism, neo-colonial and post-colonial studies, world system analysis, dependency theories, and reproduction theories, as not being an unqualifiedly benevolent force. This article attempts to come to an answer to these two questions, from the vantage point of the scholarly field of comparative and international education. The article concludes (1) that sustainable development is, at least in its current definition, a somewhat reductionistic conceptualisation to serve as common denominator for the full raft of challenges facing humanity and (2) that apart from deficiencies in the current figuring of education as one of the Sustainable Development Goals, the leverage of education is contingent on a host of other, extra-education factors in society. However, education is indispensable in pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals, and in employing education for these goals, humanity should appreciate the value of the scholarly field of comparative and international education.

**Keywords:** comparative and international education, education, existential crises, human rights, Sustainable Development Goals, technological development

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## **Introduction**

Sustainable Development has become the mantra seized upon by the global community as a catch-all phrase for its vision of the world by 2030, and education has been selected as the vehicle to achieve that goal. This vision is refined into seventeen specified Sustainable Developmental Goals. One of these, Goal 4, is education, reading »Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all.« What distinguishes this Goal from the other sixteen is that apart from being a goal in itself (calling for the explication of what this goal entails), Goal 4 is seen as an instrument for the attainment of the other goals. This schema calls two questions to the fore. Firstly, how valid is the concept of sustainable development as an index subsuming the full panoply of challenges facing humanity? Secondly, how well does education lend itself to the mission of ensuring sustainable development? This article attempts to come to an answer to these two questions, from the vantage point of the scholarly field of comparative and international education.

The article commences with a note on research methodology and with the explanation of the vantage point of comparative and international education on the issue of Education for Sustainable Development, as well as why the conceptual tools of comparative and international education lend themselves to the investigation of the two questions. This is followed by a survey of the challenges facing humanity and the Sustainable Goals as the grand strategy in addressing them. The beliefs in education's role in achieving these goals and in education as panacea for the entire round of challenges facing humanity are then assessed. In view of the evidence, the article will conclude by attempting to answer the two research questions.

## **A note on research methodology**

This is a position paper. A position paper is a common type of academic argument written after the author has read about and reflected on a particular issue

(Myers 2020). Drawing on his experience of over forty years in teaching and doing research in the field of comparative and international education, the author of this paper surveys, interrogates, and synthesises a body of relevant published material in order to answer the two research questions formulated above. In doing this exercise, the conceptual and methodological instrumentaria of comparative and international education are employed. Therefore, the concept of comparative and international education, its basic premises and ground theorems, and its value in illuminating education issues will now be clarified.

## Comparative and international education

The purpose of this section is to clarify the scope of the scholarly field of comparative and international education and to explain why its perspective and conceptual tools are appropriate for investigating the two research questions posed in this article.

Comparative and international education can be described as a field of scholarship studying education from a three-in-one perspective (see Wolhuter 2020). These are an education system perspective, a contextual perspective, and a comparative perspective. In the first instance, education systems are studied. These can be national education systems or education systems at a national, sub-national (e.g. a province or state), or supra-national (e.g., the European Union) level (see Manzon 2014, pp. 104–127). Such systems are always studied within the societal contexts in which they are embedded. Comparative and international education has in its scope of study both directions of the interrelationships between education systems and the societal contexts in which these systems are embedded. On the one hand, societal context (geography, demography, social system, economics, politics, religion, and life and world philosophy) as forces shaping education systems are explicated. On the other hand, comparative and international education also has within its purview the effect of education systems on society, such as their effects on social mobility or on economic growth.

The third part of the three-in-one perspective is the comparative perspective. Education systems are compared in the societal contexts in which they are embedded. From such comparisons, statements can be made regarding the operation of education systems, and on relationships between education systems and societal contexts.

In view of the strong societal trend of globalisation, a call has been rising in recent times that the name of the field should change to *comparative and international education*. The old term, *international education*, has a long history with a huge diversity of meanings. However, here, *international education* is used as specified by Phillips and Schweisfurth (2014, p. 60), referring to scholarship studying education from a global perspective. With the scholarly field of international education then evolving into comparative and international education, the idea is that single/limited area studies and comparisons then eventually feed the all-encompassing, global study of the international education project (Wolhuter 2021).

The significance of this field of scholarly endeavour is manifold. Two of these that are often tabled in the literature are the improvement and evaluation of education systems (see Wolhuter 2021). While these two purposes of the field are usually argued from the point of view of taking best ideas, policies, and practices from foreign education systems and measuring outcomes of one education system with those of others (by means of, for example, the International Programme for Student Assessment [PISA] tests) (see Wolhuter 2021). For the purposes of this article, the value of comparative and international education with respect to improving and assessing education systems will be argued from another angle. As explained, a fundamental theorem of comparative and international education is that education systems are shaped by societal forces – i.e. they are created by society to serve a particular need or series of needs experienced by society. Therefore, education systems can only be understood or explained from studying the societal contexts in which they are embedded (hence comparative education's study of societal forces shaping education). Conversely, education systems can only be fully evaluated by assessing how they serve the societal needs for which they were called into existence (hence comparative education's study of the societal outcomes of education).

Therefore, the global panorama of societal trends, each directing an imperative to education, will be surveyed in this article. An assessment will then be made as to how well the denominator of sustainable development covers these trends and imperatives. Next, the potential of education as instrument to achieve the entire gamut of Sustainable Development Goals is estimated against the track record of education as a society-elevating power during the past sixty years.

## **Sustainable Development: An appropriate Grand Plan for Humanity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?**

### *Current challenges facing humanity*

A literature survey of the current state of humanity and of salient societal trends reveals a number of pressing interrelated challenges. The first of these is the ecological crisis. A powerful combination of population growth, economic expansion, and increasing levels of affluence and technological prowess is placing atmospheric, fresh-water, soil, and marine resources under growing pressure, while biodiversity decreases as species are driven to extinction by human action. In 2021, the Earth Overshoot Day (that is, the day after which humanity's use of resources outstrips what the earth can replenish naturally during the course of one year) falls on 29 July, a date that has been steadily and ominously moving forward every year (Earth Overshoot Day 2021).

One of the reasons for the pressure on natural resources is rampant population growth, the second challenge facing humanity. In recent history, the earth has experienced a population explosion, reaching a crescendo during the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While the annual population growth rate peaked at 2.1 percent

per year in 1968 and has since steadily dropped to its currently rate of 1.0 percent per year, 81 million people are added to the global population every year, dropping from the 93 million per year peak reached in 1988. While large parts of the Global North are approaching or at the point of zero population growth, and a few countries have even moved into the zone of negative growth, the bulk of the increase takes place in the Global South – i.e. those countries with the worst infrastructure and economic strength to absorb such increases.

Surging, unabated, and seemingly unstoppable advances in technology are also taking place. In the narrative of Yuval Harari (2015), the human species is approximating the status of an omnipotent god (as the title of his book, *Homo Deus*, suggests). In that of Toby Ord (2020), the human species is being thrown into an existential crisis, with the survival of the species at stake. Ord argues that safeguarding humanity's future is among the most important moral issues of our time. Nuclear war, laboratory-produced pathogens and deliberately engineered pandemics, genetic manipulation and programming, and artificial intelligence have the potential to precipitate the annihilation of the human species, or even the planet, if not successfully managed. As recently as 1990, when Roger Penrose (2020 Nobel Laureate for Physics, known for his prediction of the existence of black holes in Space) together with anaesthesiologist Stuart Hameroff, suggested that the consciousness of the human brain or neuron system can be explained by quantum mechanics, their allegation was met by incredulity (Smith 2021). Yet recent research has demonstrated how quantum particles can move in a complex structure such as the brain (Xu et al. 2021).

At the same time, technological development has the potential to be used to inflict serious damage, even to wipe out humanity. The development of nuclear bombs in the final stage of the Second World War brought frightening possibilities, a development highlighted by a joint declaration by physicist Albert Einstein and philosopher Bertrand Russell (the Russell-Einstein Manifesto) in 1955 (Russell and Einstein 1955). Modern thinking on the human species annihilating itself was taken a step further by John Leslie's (1996) book *The End of the World*. Leslie broadened the focus from nuclear threat to threats of human extinction in general. Nick Bostrom (2002) then enumerated an exhaustive list of existential threats to humanity. These have been expatiated upon in a recent book by Toby Ord (2020). Besides the existential risk to the human species, another concerning effect of technology is the degree of surveillance and invasion of privacy enabled by it, splendidly explained in the recent publication of Zuboff (2019).

Another implication of advancing technology is that it will make more jobs redundant and put more people out of work (see International Labour Organization 2021). In 2018, there were about 185.8 million unemployed persons worldwide (Statista 2021), a figure the United Nations estimate will rise after the Covid-19 pandemic to over two hundred million in 2022 (United Nations 2021-1).

The next problem is poverty. Although diminishing (if the International Poverty Line is taken as yardstick), widespread poverty persists in the world. The percentage of the world population surviving on less than US\$1.90 per day (International Poverty Line) has declined from 36.2 percent in 1990, to 16.0 percent in

2010, to 10.1 percent in 2015 (World Bank 2021). This means 1.9 billion people in 1990, 1.6 billion in 2010, but still 744 million in 2015 (*Ibid.*).

Despite the aggregate growth of affluence in the world and the diminishing incidence of poverty the last decades, inequality has grown, reaching obscene and (for socio-political stability) dangerous levels. A stark illustration of the level of inequality in the world of today is that the 22 wealthiest men in the world have between them more wealth than all the women in Africa (Herman 2020, str. 328). Another simple but graphic depiction of the scope of inequality in the world is the webpage titled »If the world were a village of 100 people,« which shows that, for example, only one would have a university degree, only 20 would have access to clean, drinkable water, and 59% of the wealth would be concentrated in six people (all living in the United States of America) (Meadows 2020). How ominous such stark and growing inequality bodes for socio-political stability and peace, has been meticulously and alarmingly portrayed in a recent spate of books on the relationship between inequality and violence throughout human history by a range of scholars across the political spectrum, from Thomas Piketty (2020), to Walter Scheidel (2017), to Joseph Stiglitz (2012).

Under the more mobile global population, and the empowerment which the information and communications technology revolution brought for groups with diverse interests, societies are become increasingly diverse. In contrast to the past, diversity has become valued by society, as evidenced by the creed of multiculturalism, multicultural education, and intercultural education (see Pica-Smith et al. 2020). However, as, for example, recent events in the United States of America (widely looked up to as a citadel of civil rights) ignited by the tragic death of George Floyd have demonstrated, creating a society where members of all groups share a positive lived experience of society remains a challenge.

In the early 1990s, a strong trend of democratisation was visible in the world, spreading through the erstwhile East Bloc, followed by the Global South; the last of the wave was the 2011 Arab Spring. Political analysts have detected a decline in the advance of democracy in many countries in recent years (see Lührmann and Lindberg 2019), and Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, in their book *How Democracies Die* (2018), identify a number of alarming threats to democracy in the contemporary world, of which populism can be named as the most salient.

One particular facet of diversity which is challenging, and for which no final, all-satisfying answer has been found, is that of religion. In contrast to what is often proclaimed, Pew Research surveys (the world's most extensive and authoritative surveys on religion) show that religion remains a strong force in the world, and the numbers of people who identify as religious (whether they belong to an organised religious community or not) are ever rising. Ensuring interreligious co-existence is still an elusive ideal, as events of interreligious conflict continue to flare up in the world (such as 9/11 in the USA and the current problems in Myanmar, China, India, Nigeria, and other parts of the world). Resorting to secularism (banning all religion from the public domain) and the many attempts to accommodate religion in public education institutions has not yielded an arrangement satisfying to the whole, or even a large section of, the population.

In recent decades, the creed of human rights has acquired the stature of the moral code or moral compass for humanity in the globalised 21<sup>st</sup>-century world. However lofty and praiseworthy, a number of challenges surround this. The most obvious of these problems is the widespread incidence of cases in which human rights cannot be secured, or cannot be enforced, even in jurisdictions subscribing to these rights, be it due to dishonesty, self-interested bureaucracies (see Wahl 2016), such jurisdictions simply lacking the means, infrastructure, and power to enforce these rights (as in the case of failed or weak states).

To supplement the above description based on a literature survey, we have the UNESCO (2021) survey, taken by over 15,000 people worldwide, as the most extensive survey asking what the people of the world view as the most pressing challenges facing humanity in the run-up to 2030. According to this survey, people view the following as the four most serious challenges: climate change and loss of biodiversity, violence and conflict, discrimination and inequality, and lack of food, water, and housing.

### *The Seventeen Sustainable Development Goals Chosen as Rallying Point*

For all the challenges facing humanity, after the expiry date of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015, the international community chose the 17 Sustainable Development Goals as its vision for the world by 2030. On 25 September 2015, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted Resolution 70/1: »Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development« (United Nations, 2015). The document does not define or analyse the term »sustainable development,« but its use by the United Nations stretches back to the 1987 Report by the World Commission on Environment and Development (»Our Common Future,« or the Brundtland Report), in which the term is defined as »*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*« (United Nations 1987).

While the 2015 Document does not define *sustainable development*, it does enumerate the following 17 Sustainable Development Goals:

- Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

- Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

The lexical definition of »sustainable« is that a »system is designed to continue at the same rate or level of activity without any problem« (Collins Dictionary 2021) and that of »development« is »the process in which something grows or becomes more advanced« (Cambridge Dictionary 2021). While the first word in the term *Sustainable Development Goals* is a good response to the ecological crisis, identified in both the literature study and global survey above as a grave challenge facing humanity, and while the 17 goals should, if realised, promote proper care of the ecosystem and attention to most of the challenges facing humanity, a note of caution should be added here. Firstly, challenges facing humanity are not explicitly encapsulated in the Sustainable Development Goals. These include rampant population growth in large parts of the world, the need to secure meaningful employment for everyone, the full realisation of the creed of human rights, remedies for the obscene (and potentially conflict-igniting) inequality in the world, and an ethically responsible response to the humankind's growing, seemingly limitless technological prowess. At best, it can be stated that these are subsumed under or implied by the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Blind faith in education as vehicle towards sustainable development and as response to all challenges facing humanity**

Even before the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals, the importance of education as an integral part of both sustainable development and its promotion was proclaimed in paragraph 233 of the document »The Future We Want,« which was the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, of 2012 (United Nations 2012). In 2005, UNESCO launched the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development,

which reaffirmed the key role of education in shaping values that are supportive of sustainable development and in consolidating sustainable societies.

In the 2015 Document of the United Nations, the term *education* appears 22 times, reflecting the importance of education both as a goal in itself and as an instrument to promote the realisation of the other 16 goals. In a meeting convened by UNESCO in Incheon, South Korea, 19 to 21 May 2015, and attended by over 1,600 participants from 160 countries, including over 120 ministers, Goal 4 was unpacked. In the document produced by the meeting, the INCHEON Declaration, it was stated at the outset, in Section 5: »Our vision is to transform lives through education, recognizing the important role of education as a main driver of development and in achieving the other proposed SDG [...] We reaffirm that education is a public good, a fundamental human right and a basis for guaranteeing the realization of other rights.« (UNESCO 2015).

Similarly, in the UNESCO Global Survey mentioned earlier, education-related solutions were selected first for seven of the 11 global challenges and among the top five for all of the challenges (UNESCO 2020).

As such global opinion as well as the contention of the global community expressed in the Sustainable Development Goals vision, chimes in with a worldwide belief in the societal ameliorative potential of education, that has been gathering momentum the past seventy-five years. For most of its history, since the inception of schools some five millennia ago, education existed at the margins of society, as the etymological meaning of the name *school* (derived from the Greek word meaning »spending of free time«) suggests: the pastime of the idle rich. Then, in a sleight of hand in the decades after the Second World War, among political and business and industrial leaders, in the mass media, and in the public discourse at large, the belief in education as total panacea for all problems in society suddenly gained traction. This is not only a belief that education is an instrument for modernisation, economic growth, and the eradication of unemployment, but, as Brezinka (1981, p. 2) wrote: »[...]When someone wants to do something for peace, he introduces ‚peace education‘, the person wanting to reduce the number of traffic accidents recommends ‚traffic education‘[...]«

This new, unmitigated faith in the society-elevating power of education gained its backing from the scholarly community, which likewise held up education as the solution to every societal challenge. Scholars leading the field of comparative and international education set a goal of changing this field into a fully-fledged social science, the main thrust of which should be to test hypotheses between education as an independent variable and societal outcomes as a dependent variable. The leading scholars of the time published trend-setting research methodology textbooks, including physicist-turned-comparativist Brian Holmes (1965) and Harold Noah and Max Eckstein (1969) at Teacher College of Columbia University, who set out their vision of comparative and international education as a field whose main objective would be to derive universal, scientific laws of the effect of education. Indeed, according to Smith (1995, p. 215) education has (by the time of the publication of his paper in 1995) become one of the most important variables in social science research; he even claimed that it was the most frequent-

ly used variable in sociology research. Central in this drive stood human capital theory, spearheaded by economist and Nobel laureate Theodor Schultz, and by scholars attached to C. Arnold Anderson's Comparative Education Center at the University of Chicago, as well as modernisation theory, led by Stanford scholars Alex Inkeles and David Bell and taken over by the World Bank (see Carnoy 2019, pp. 52–90).

Already in the 1970s, however, a host of rival paradigms emerged in the social sciences in general and in comparative and international education in particular, taking issue with the limitless belief of the society-elevating power of education expressed or implied by human capital theory, modernisation theory, and structural functionalism. These include theories or paradigms of socio-economic reproduction, cultural reproduction, world systems theory or neo-institutionalism, dependency theory, neo-colonialism, and, of late, post-colonial and decolonisation theory. The general thesis of these theories is that power relations in society and/or the powerful effect of family background render education ineffective for societal improvement. On the potential of education to realise the Sustainable Development Goals, soon after the INCHEON Declaration, leading comparative and international education scholar Leon Tikly (2017) of Bristol University published an article in the top journal *Comparative Education Review* casting a negative verdict, on the basis that this declaration, as its predecessor, the Education For All movement, was too much in the clutches of the existing hegemonic structures in the world, the principals of the international economy, located in the Global North.

Looking back today, 70 years after the mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century birth of the belief in the ameliorative power of education on society, the track record of education as portrayed in the scholarly literature shows evidence of the society-elevating dividend of investment in education – at least, if the aggregate values of large databases are considered. An early and good example is Harbison and Meyer's (1964) study, calculating the correlation between education development and economic strength in 75 countries and finding a correlation coefficient of 0.88. Indeed, Lutz and Klingholz (2017) list an interesting range of studies in which, for a large population, on aggregate, a positive correlation between education and outcomes in the lives of people or in society were demonstrated. For example, in Malawi, a positive correlation was found between people's health and the education level of their nearest neighbours. Research in Indonesia, Cuba, and Haiti found that level of education is a strong predictor of people's chances of surviving a hurricane or a tsunami.

However impressive these large-scale results, zooming down to smaller units – especially the individual person – it is not difficult to find wide deviations and even the inverse of aggregate patterns. To link to the above example, not long after Harbison and Meyer's publication, Denison and Pullier's (1967) monumental study of the economic recovery and growth of nine European countries in the decades after the Second World War showed that economic growth is contingent upon the interplay of a host of contextual factors, of which education is but one. This leads to what the scholarly fields of education and comparative and international

education in particular can contribute to clear up the conundrum.

From comparative and international education arises the insight that education systems are interrelated with the societal contexts in which they are embedded (see Wolhuter 2021). These societal contexts span geographical, demographic, social, economic, political, religious, and philosophical aspects. While education is interrelated with, and may exert an outcome on, each of these, this effect or outcome is mediated by all the other aspects, as all are interrelated. Two other properties of education which have been made clear by educational scholars preclude the formulation of scientific, deterministic laws regarding the effect of education on society. Education is an extremely complex phenomenon, and so are education systems. One caveat that Smith (1995) highlights in publications taking education as independent variable is that to measure one (of an infinite) number of aspects of education, or of an education system, and take that as index of the entire education system is fraught with difficulties. Secondly, as Biesta (2013, 2020) explained, education is an act involving humans (at least two parties of them – educator and educand), each with their own volition and agency. Therefore, education will defy iron-cast, universal rules. The best that the scholarly fields of education, and comparative and international education in particular, can offer is statements regarding regular patterns. While useful, these should never be elevated to the absolute.

## Conclusion

However pivotal the ecological crisis facing humanity at the present point in time, and no matter how compelling the case for sustainable development, the panoply of challenges facing humanity goes beyond the ecological crisis. There are other challenges, including existential threats, which cannot be subsumed under the label »sustainable development« (which is primarily an answer to the ecological crisis). Even the extended conceptualisation of sustainable development, as unpacked in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, does not address all these challenges.

Secondly, while education is a tool (and, it should be added, an indispensable and perhaps the best tool) in the hands of humanity towards ensuring the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals, there is no guarantee that any kind of education investment or expansion will automatically produce a dividend to that end. The vision of Harold Noah and Max Eckstein, as well as the followers of the 1960s mandate to find natural law certainties regarding the societal outcomes or dividends of education, has proved to be unattainable.

To conclude, the Sustainable Development Goals are timely and critical, but it should be kept in mind that they do not provide solutions to all the pivotal challenges facing humanity. Similarly, while education has rightfully been identified as a powerful tool to achieve these goals, it is no omnipotent tool. Elaborating on that, the author of this article, billeted in the scholarly field of comparative and international education and writing from that vantage point, call attention to the insights arising all the time from comparative and international education schol-

arship regarding ways to equip education and to make societal contexts congenial for it to live up to its potential to make the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality.

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## VZGOJA IN IZOBRAŽEVANJE ZA TRAJNOSTNI RAZVOJ: NUJA, RESNIČNOST ALI UTVARA?

**Povzetek:** »Trajnostni razvoj« je postal mantra, ki jo je svetovna skupnost prevzela kot skupen izraz za vizijo sveta do leta 2030, izobraževanje pa je postalo sredstvo za doseg tega cilja. Ta shema postavlja dve temeljni vprašanji. Prvič, kako uporaben je koncept trajnostnega razvoja kot indikator vseh raznolikih izzivov, s katerimi se sooča človeštvo? Drugič, kako prilagojena sta vzgoja in izobraževanje izpolnjevanju poslanstva zagotavljanja trajnostnega razvoja? Vzgoja in izobraževanje sta, vsaj v sedanji obliki, deležna očitkov mnogih – vključno z neoinstitucionalizmom, neokolonialnimi in postkolonialnimi študijami, analizo svetovnega sistema, teorijami odvisnosti in teorijami reprodukcije –, da nista brezpogojno dobredelna sila. Članek poskuša na postavljeni vprašanji odgovoriti z vidika znanstvenega področja primerjalne in mednarodne pedagogike. Avtor ugotavlja, (1) da je trajnostni razvoj, vsaj v svoji sedanji opredelitvi, nekoliko redukcionističen koncept, ki ga uporabljamo kot skupni imenovalec za vse izzive, s katerimi se sooča človeštvo, in (2) da je – poleg pomanjkljivosti v sedanji opredelitvi vzgoje in izobraževanja kot enega od ciljev trajnostnega razvoja – vpliv vzgoje in izobraževanja odvisen od številnih izvenšolskih družbenih dejavnikov. Kljub temu sta vzgoja in izobraževanje nepogrešljiva pri uresničevanju ciljev trajnostnega razvoja, pri uporabi vzgoje in izobraževanja za doseganje teh ciljev pa bi moralo človeštvo upoštevati znanstveno področje primerjalne in mednarodne pedagogike.

**Ključne besede:** primerjalna in mednarodna pedagogika, vzgoja in izobraževanje, eksistencialne krize, človekove pravice, cilji trajnostnega razvoja, tehnološki razvoj

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