

## PRINCIPLES OF A DEEP REFORM OF EDUCATION, AS SUGGESTED BY INTERVIEWING STUDENTS IN AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES

Codrin ȚAPU

University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Bucharest, 59 Marasti Blvd., District 1, 011464, Bucharest, Romania, Phone: +40213182564, Fax:+40213182888, Mobile:+40744 6474 10, Email: tapucodrin@yahoo.com

*Corresponding author:* tapucodrin@yahoo.com

### *Abstract*

*The goal of this paper is to outline the draft of the General plan of social optimization through deep reform of education at all levels, obtained through interviewing life sciences first year students. It is well-known that no authentic social change could be made without a deep reform of education, starting from early age and continuing throughout the life span. Implementing such reforms will allow durable solving of urging social problems like violence, injustice, poverty, corruption, poor financing. Interviewing agricultural management students led us to a new perspective of education, resulting from the new directions of contemporary and future society. The ideas resulted from discussions outlined a plan of educational reform for the global society. This plan is designed within a intercultural perspective, being inspired both by the great ethical systems of humanity, and psycho-socio-educational research. Applying the plan at a regional, European, and international level will be able to further humankind on the way of a life whose quality will answer both the scientific demands of a society of knowledge, and the spiritual needs of humans.*

*Key words:* education, ethics, globalization, reform, spirituality

### INTRODUCTION

It is well-known that no authentic social change could be made without a deep reform of education, starting from early age and continuing throughout the life span. Implementing such reforms will allow durable solving of urging social problems like violence, injustice, poverty, corruption, poor financing, based on a global ethic [4].

The goal of this paper is to shortly present the draft of a general plan of social optimization through deep reform of education at all levels, resulted from discussions with first year life sciences students at the University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine in Bucharest.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to outline the main ideas of a plan for deep educational reform, we used a non-structured interview on the topic of how education of the future should look like. The subjects were 323 students, (221 females and

102 males) from the University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine in Bucharest. Discussions with students were recorded, and data were organized according to the principles of qualitative research. The discussions took place over the course of three university years, during the period 2012-2015. The material of the discussions with students was processed by the author, resulting in a literary work called *Teachings on Being: The Holy Book of Religious Leaders, Followers, and Non-Believers* [6], which earned positive reviews from several publications in the United States [1][2][3][5]. The book was conceived in the spirit of the great collective creations of humanity, like the Bible, the Iliad, or the Hippocratic Corpus, trying to embody the changing spirit of an age of change.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The qualitative analysis of the recorded answers of the students allowed us to extract nine main principles of deep educational

reform, and a quantitative analysis showed that they had different percents of popularity among students (Figure 1).

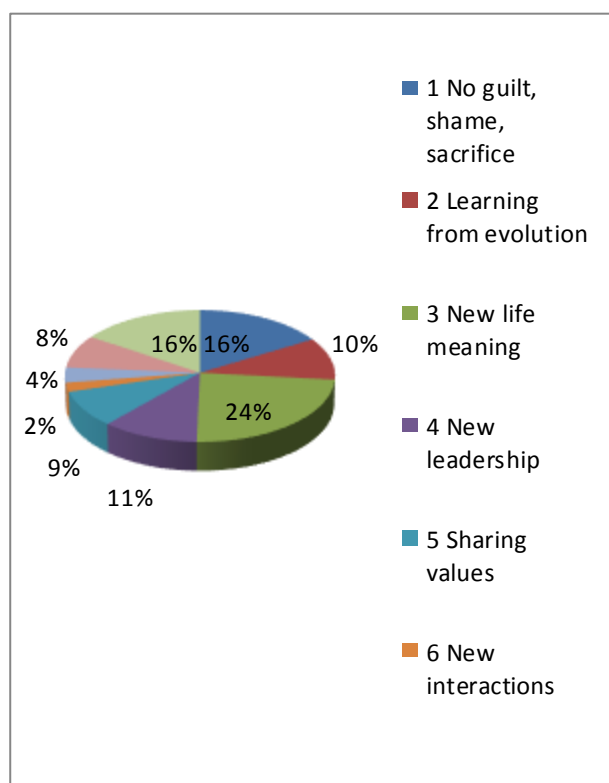


Fig. 1. Percents of popularity of reforms among students

### 1. An education without guilt, shame, and sacrifice (16%)

Guilt, shame, and sacrifice should not be "taught" in school, family, and society. The notions and the feelings of **guilt** and **shame** are seen as dangerous by the students, and their cultivation should be abandoned, as they legitimate and perpetuate violence, failure, and resentment. **Guilt** is misleading and useless: it is often felt by "good people" who have no reason to feel guilty, and can lead to self-punishment and even to suicide, whereas people who usually transgress norms, rarely feel guilty. **Shame** enslaves people to the opinion of others. Justice and ethics should be voided of emotion and resentment: the ideas of **crime and punishment / sin and atonement** should be replaced with the concepts of **fault and correction**.

**Sacrifice and self-sacrifice** perpetuate violence within society. The cult of heroes and self-sacrifice is not encouraged. Nothing

deserves people's sacrifice. Sacrifice is never needed. Where there are will and reason, there is no sacrifice. Martyrs are victims, and they should not necessarily serve as role models. Sacrifice is frustration (see 'sacrificed generations'), and always implies an expected reward (e.g. paradise promised to those who die in combat, or 'I sacrificed myself for you, and that's what I get in return!'). To do something one loves, or to do something for someone dear must not be viewed as sacrifice, but prioritizing.

### 2. Learning from evolution (10%)

Culture and consciousness do not necessarily make people superior to other animals. **Culture is not a perfection of nature, and when culture deliberately goes against nature, it is inferior to it.** People should modestly see themselves not as the most complex and evolved animals, but as **the youngest brothers of all living beings.**

When they **cannot behave humanely**, people **do behave more destructively than animals.** Specifically human shortcomings, such as social passivity, apathy, lack of involvement and solidarity, greed, vanity, arrogance, cowardice, dishonesty, all originate in **fear** of losing what some people do not really possess: **a true sense of their value** as humans. People's value does not lie in their social statuses, but in what they can actually do. People should give up living isolated in an imaginary world with artificial values (e.g., status), where they feel important and superior, and **start living in the real world**, where their **true value** lies.

Evolution shows that **increased complexity** and differentiation are generally attained at the price of **reducing the lifespan** of organisms. Simple organisms are less functional, but virtually immortal. Sexual reproduction is a form of **biological altruism**, that can help complex organisms multiply, but also brings them **mortality**. Human consciousness is a very complex phenomenon, and cannot be very long-lived. People are the only beings that know they will die, but that does not give them the right to not let others live. People should not be addicted to consciousness and obsessed with immortality; although consciousness may be

addictive, it need not be eternal in the traditional sense. Throughout history, people have generally accepted their biological mortality, and decided to get along and be altruistic enough to share with descendants the gift of life.

The deeper understanding of **afterlife** is that it is, in fact, **this life complete**. The notions of hereafter or the world to come do not refer to other worlds, but to this world, seen from outside time and space. Thus, people should concentrate on living a full and good life, not awaiting punishment or reward from the outside. The end of life is not destruction, but completion. To simply be is more important than to always be conscious and aware. Because the world is a whole, people cannot really and completely separate from life and from the ones they love.

### **3. Understanding the true meaning of life (24%)**

**People do not need salvation from an external danger**, but from a **wrong take on their own life**. The real danger is an "ethics of catastrophe". Life does not necessarily mean suffering or trying to liberate oneself from suffering. To search for happiness means to be an unhappy person. The need for an "eternally happy life" may in fact indicate a deep discontent with life. Life is more than seeking reward and avoiding punishment. **Life should be lived primarily for its own sake**.

### **4. A new approach of leadership (11%)**

Leadership is provided by myths and institutions, and not by flesh and bone people. The legend is always greater than the man or the woman. **The power of leadership is in the minds of the governed, and not in the hands of the leaders**. Sometimes, the desire to lead is not a desire to help others, but a desire to dominate and to feel important by achieving status, in people lacking the sense of their intrinsic value. Everybody should do their work with modesty, **without trying to exercise power on others**.

### **5. Sharing of values within society (9%)**

**Traditional age- and gender-specific values** should be cultivated and shared within society. Children's values of honesty, curiosity, and attachment, as well as

traditional feminine values of caution and tolerance should be promoted in society, as they contribute to a more creative, kind, and secure world. Personal and family relationships should prevail over patriotism ("women would never send their children to die in war"). Also, the **exchange of values** between people is encouraged (e.g., men sharing feminine values, and women sharing masculine values). A world where men share traditionally feminine values is described as being more peaceful, and one where women share traditionally masculine values as more powerful.

### **6. Changing human interaction (2%)**

People are **too centered on appearance**, and too keen on making **evaluations**. As soon as they see or meet other people, they tend to **classify** them as appealing or disgusting, beautiful or ugly, rich or poor, healthy or sick, and ultimately, **good or bad**. People should learn to treat themselves and others not with admiration, contempt, or pity, but with the **respect** owed to every human being.

### **7. Changing the views on tradition (4%)**

Tradition should not be seen as opposing the progress of society. Views on tradition and religion, though different, as they pertain to different cultural and linguistic contexts, are generally complementary. Sometimes, to be "politically correct" means to be humanly wrong, as when someone is ashamed of their traditions thinking they may offend others. **To cultivate one's difference is not isolation, and to acknowledge the difference in others is not discrimination**. Everybody's symbols and traditions should be cultivated and may be proudly displayed in public, as long as they are common sense.

### **8. A new understanding of diversity (8%)**

Diversity is viewed not only as a characteristic of society, but also of the individual. The diversity within every person reflects the diversity of humankind. **Everybody is in everyone, so all can be as one**: though different from each other, all people can and should **understand others** and get along with each other, because **each person has in them a bit of everyone else's character**.

### **9. A new ethics (16%)**

An ethics that **highly values both the individual and the world** was proposed following discussions: the best way to behave involves feeling responsible for the whole world, and for every person with whom one relates. Every person should behave as responsibly as if they were world leaders that could influence the fate of humankind, and should treat each and everyone as if they were the only other - the person without whom they would be the only living human. Any person, whatever simple they may be, could influence the whole world for better or worse, just like a world leader. For example, a rescuer in a disaster, or a terrorist attacker do influence, via mass media, the state of the whole world. From an early age, children must do the exercises of imagining themselves influencing the state of the world, in order to understand how powerful, important, and hence, responsible they will be as adults, and of imagining what would happen if they were the only living human, in order to realize that any person with whom one relates, even the worse, is better than no person at all.

## CONCLUSIONS

Interviewing life sciences students led us to a new perspective of education, resulting from the new directions of contemporary and future society.

The ideas resulted from discussions outlined a plan of educational reform for the global society. This plan is designed within an intercultural perspective, being in accord both with the great ethical systems of humanity, and with psycho-socio-educational research.

Applying the plan at a regional, European, and international level will require radical change of education from early age to adulthood, and will be able to further humankind on the way of a life whose quality will answer both the scientific demands of a society of knowledge, and the spiritual needs of humans.

## REFERENCES

[1]Bamberger-Scott Barbara, 2015, Teachings on Being, Book Review, The US Review of Books.

[2]Baum Henry, 2016, Teachings on Being, Book Review, Self Publishing Review, 3 February.

[3]Donovan Diane, 2015, Teachings on Being, Book Review, Midwest Book Review, Issue 5, May

[4]Küng, H., Bowden, J., editors, 1996. Yes to a Global Ethic: Voices from Religion and Politics. SCM PRESS. ISBN 9780334026334

[5]Lock Anita, 2015, Teachings on Being, Book Review , San Francisco Book Review, 12 June.

[6]Tapu Codrin Stefan, 2015, Teachings on Being: The Holy Book of Religious Leaders, Followers, and Non-Believers, Lulu Press.