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International Proposals for Environmental Education: Analysing a Ruling Discourseⁱ

Lucie Sauvé, Tom Berryman, Renée Brunelle
Groupe ERE-UQAM, Université du Québec à Montréal,
C.P. 8888 Succursale Centre-Ville, Montréal (Québec), Canada, H3C 3P8
Email: ere-uqam@er.uqam.ca

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ABSTRACT

The great impetus provided by the UNESCO-UNEP meetings and documents for spreading, legitimising and institutionalising environmental education (EE) is incalculable. Their proposals have acted and still act as real beacons for conceiving and implementing educational reforms and programs throughout the world. While wholly acknowledging the critical importance of this kind of international support, and precisely because of its importance, it is necessary to analyse the content of the associated ruling discourse.

The main findings of our analytical and critical research on six international proposals related to EE are that education is generally seen as an instrument for the environment, itself being generally subsumed to problems of resource management to be solved through development, and development itself being ill-defined or mainly associated to sustained economic growth. Solving environmental problems and achieving a sustainable development call for necessary global changes for which the strategy of integration becomes a master key. Aside identifying and discussing these main assertions, this paper also reports some elements that are generally neglected in the international proposals, as complementary or divergent viewpoints concerning the basic concepts of an environmental education theory.

INTRODUCTION

After more than 30 years of formal international efforts to promote environmental education, mainly through the UNESCO-UNEP International Environmental Education Program (1975-1995), concrete initiatives towards the institutionalisation of environmental education in the school system can now be observed. One of the main features of the actual international educational reform movement is the integration of environment in the curricula.

This integration takes diverse forms. In some cases (like in Quebec's reform – MEQ, 1999), environment is considered as a transversal theme or field of competencies, which cuts across the academic disciplines but which also calls for a specific educational transdisciplinary “niche”. In other cases, environmental education is explicitly mentioned as a specific and fundamental dimension of a global educational project (as in Colombia – MEN, 1994a, 1994b). But often, according to the more recent UNESCO proposal of *Education for a sustainable future*, environment is presented as a theme amongst others in the integrating framework of education

for sustainable development (for example, República de Bolivia, 1994). It appears that in the actual international context characterised by a security crisis (Jonas, 1984) and by the globalisation process associated with the economization of human activities, the recent recognition of the legitimacy of environmental education (named as such or evoked) as an essential part of a holistic educational process, is facilitated when associated with the idea of sustainable development.

However it is looked at, the introduction of an environmental dimension in the curricula is a demanding task for the countries. The inspiration and beacons of international proposals to this effect has always been and is more than ever important, especially if there is a need or a desire to find strategic or financial support from leading international organisations in the field or to legitimate the initiatives and get help from national organisations.

In this regard, it is for sure a necessary task to analyse the content of the international proposals concerning environmental education. Which ideological foundations, which epistemological, ethical, curricular and pedagogical guidelines are there to be found? How are defined the main associated concepts of education, environment and development? Aiming at characterising such proposals and tracing their influence in the national reforms, research activities have been undertaken, adopting a critical perspective. In a first phase, 29 international proposals related to environmental education have been identified, emanating from diverse international organisations such as UNESCO, UICN, World Bank, UNICEF, OCDE, etc. These proposals have been systematically analysed (lexicometric and thematic content analysis)ⁱⁱ, so as to characterise the specificity of each one and also to identify common elements as core components of a hypothetical globalised social representation of environmental education and of the main underlying concepts. In this paper, we will present some results of the analysis of six major documents (table 1), emanating from the United Nations, four of them coming more precisely from UNESCO.

TABLE 1: International proposals related to environmental education reviewed in this paper

YEAR	PLACE AND ORGANISATION	EVENT	DOCUMENTS REVIEWED
1975	Belgrade UNESCO-UNEP	International Environmental Education Workshop	<i>Belgrade Charter: A Global Framework for Environmental Education</i>
1977	Tbilisi UNESCO-UNEP	Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education	<i>Conference Report Tbilisi Declaration</i>
1987	Moscow UNESCO-UNEP	Environmental Education and Training Congress	<i>International Strategy for Action in the Field of Environmental Education and Training in 1990's</i>
1992	Rio de Janeiro UN	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development:	<i>Rio Declaration Agenda 21</i>
1994	Cairo UN	United Nations International Conference on Population and Development	<i>United Nations Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development</i>
1997	Thessaloniki UNESCO	International Conference on Environment and Society : Educating for a Sustainable Future: A Transdisciplinary Vision for Concerted Action	<i>Final Report Thessaloniki Declaration</i>

MAIN RESULTS AND ELEMENTS OF DISCUSSION

Subsuming has its reductive dangers. Still, major general assertions emerge from the current analysis of the international proposals' perspectives on education, environment and development. Each assertion is a core to be further explored in the coming sections whose respective titles give a glimpse of this core. They are: education as an instrument, environment as a problem of resources, development as ill defined or mainly associated to sustained economic growth. Finally, "integration" will be highlighted as a key word and a macro strategy.

The following sections focus on what the proposals generally assert and what they generally neglectⁱⁱⁱ concerning the main concepts analysed. The frequently overshadowed aspects are sometimes just the opposite of the general assertions highlighted. At other times, the overshadowed aspects are samples of some of the other views known to exist in the field of environmental education. Such a presentation of neglected aspects does not aim to be thorough. It is one way to shed some light in the shadow of the international proposals in order to uncover some possible pitfalls and orphans of the ruling discourse.

EDUCATION AS AN INSTRUMENT

Defining education is not an easy task and it could tend to fix and reify some ideas that need to remain dynamic and open. However not defining education can also lead to undesired results. It can be observed that most of the documents analysed do not propose a definition of education. Instead, they identify an end, an urgent end in fact, and then affirm that education must be reformed, urgently reformed, to serve such an end. Basically, education is thus an instrument to a predetermined finality. In the proposals analysed, education is essentially instrumental into the service of environmental and developmental ends and almost no invitation is made to discuss those ends. Education is presented as an instrument to solve problems and to act directly upon these problems. All of the educational systems around the world are invited and expected to be reformed for such a purpose.

When the documents do define education, they usually provide a short humanistic definition which runs counter to pages and pages of prescriptions about how to educate in order to act on an environment mostly reduced to problems of resources that need to be better managed. "Agenda 21" thus asserts that "education, including formal education, public awareness and training should be recognised as a process by which human beings and societies can reach their fullest potential" (UNCED, 1993). The Declaration of Thessaloniki also states a view of education somewhat consistent with the humanistic dream:

Education is an indispensable means to give all women and men in the world the capacity to own their own lives, to exercise personal choice and responsibility, to learn throughout life without frontiers, be they geographical, political, cultural, religious, linguistic or gender. (UNESCO, 1997)

However it is difficult to reconcile such humanistic definitions with Agenda 21's more than two hundred and thirty action principles which form the heart of the proposal. In fact, the chapter on education, chapter 36, is embedded in the section whose revealing title, "Means of implementation", also contains chapters such as "Financial resources and mechanisms", "Transfer of environmentally sound technology ...", "Science for sustainable development", etc.

The final report from the Thessaloniki Conference also focuses on such an instrumental view of education to predetermined ends.

The conference took place against the backdrop of the new vision of the role of education and public awareness in achieving sustainability which had emerged during the last few years. Education was no longer seen as an objective in and for itself but as a means to bring about changes in behavior and lifestyles, to disseminate knowledge and develop skills, and to prepare the public to support changes towards sustainability emanating from other sectors of society. (UNESCO 1997)

Without going into the details of a debate about education as a finality (which could be the integral development of human beings) or as an instrument, it is important to point out that the international proposals often posit education as an instrument for a finality they assert. Basically, that instrumental view can be subsumed as training people to implement the ordered agenda, as preparing “the public to support changes towards sustainability emanating from other sectors of society” (quoted above). In the same vein, a recent UNESCO document bears the subtitle “Mobilizing minds for a sustainable future” (UNESCO, 1999).

These instrumental trends are most evident in recent proposals that deal with the training of people reduced – or elevated, depending on the vision adopted – to the status of “human resources” (UNCED, 1993; UN, 1995) and “human capital” (UNESCO, 1992; UNCED, 1993). This aspect was however manifest right from the beginning where the Belgrade Charter asserts that “the reform of educational processes and systems is central to the building of this new development ethic and world economic order” (UNESCO-UNEP, 1976). In the same vein, the “International Strategy for Action in the Field of Environmental Education and Training for the 1990’s” asserts at the outset that:

In recent years there has been a gradual awareness, both world wide and within each individual State, of the role to be played by education in understanding, preventing and solving environmental problems. (UNESCO-UNEP, 1987)

A few paragraphs further, the same report of the Moscow UNESCO-UNEP Congress states: All these problems unquestionably result from socio-economic situations and inappropriate human behaviour patterns (poverty, uncontrolled economic growth, squandering of natural resources, etc.). It is therefore by acting upon systems of knowledge and values that we may hope to find adequate solutions to environmental problems. (UNESCO-UNEP, 1987)

It is also interesting to note how a semiotic change came about in 1987 in the Moscow program with the emphasis on training that was added to education: “Environmental Education and Training Congress”.

While the proposals analysed tend to focus on education as a tool to achieve predefined ends, what remains in the shadow of this instrumental view of education is the necessity of reflecting on the environmental and developmental realities which are viewed as problems. Even more in the shadow is the idea of an education to reflect upon the notion of environment itself as upon the notion of development. With the constant affirmation of the need to learn to act urgently on critical problems, there remains in the shadow the idea that education involves reflexivity. In fact,

the word thinking never appears in the “United Nations Programme of Action” of the “International Conference on Population and Development Action Plan” and it appears only once in “Agenda 21”. The word reflexivity or the expression critical thinking are totally absent from both plans.

Another characteristic of the documents reviewed is that they rarely contain any references. When they do have references they are almost exclusively self referential, only referring to United Nations documents. The proposals are never explicitly linked to one or another of the schools of thought represented by major authors such as Albert Bandura, Urie Bronfenbrenner, John Dewey, Erik Erikson, Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Jean Piaget, Carl Rogers, Burrhus Frederic Skinner, Lev Semenovich Vygostky and others. Of course, the analysed documents are not pedagogical documents. However, the choice of authors of some of the pedagogical material produced through the UNESCO-UNEP International Environmental Education Program (IEEP) could indicate that the favoured approaches are behavioural, structuralist and pragmatic. This would need to be further explored.

An additional feature of the proposals in the context of the actual “security crisis” (Jonas, 1984) is the legitimate calls for changes, for reforms, for problem solving and for international mobilization. But these urgent calls overshadow the necessary prudence towards radical changes and they also overshadow the possibly legitimate forms or manifestations of resistance in some social milieu, including those in education as a social system. Such prudence should be associated to reflexivity and critical thinking.

Table 2 synthesizes the main results of the analysis of the notion of education in the documents reviewed.

TABLE 2: The perspective on education in international proposals addressing issues of education, environment and development: pairing highlighted elements with some neglected ones.

EDUCATION	
International proposals generally highlight:	International proposals generally neglect:
1. Education as an instrument.	1. Education as a process towards human development.
2. Education calls for acting to solve real life problems.	2. Education calls for reflecting on realities.
3. The need to adhere to a consensus.	3. The major importance of critical thinking.
4. The whole educational system must be reformed. The proposed perspective can mightily contribute to the renewal of the educational system.	4. The interest of recognizing, preserving and promoting relevant educational experiences and initiatives.
5. No references or auto-referential.	5. References to the privileged educational currents and the justification of the adopted school of thought.

ENVIRONMENT AS A PROBLEM OF RESOURCES

The scarcity of definitions of education is compensated by some references as to what the environment is. There are two main ideas appearing boldly in the proposals analysed. The first idea is a very large and total definition of the environment such as in the Belgrade Charter: “Environmental education should consider the environment in its totality – natural and man-made, ecological, political, economic, technological, social, legislative, cultural and aesthetic” (UNESCO-UNEP, 1976). The second idea is that however large is the environment thus defined, environmental education is essentially centred on a conception of the environment reduced to a set of problems and mainly problems related to resources of this environment, that need to be managed in more efficient ways. The 1975 Belgrade Charter thus states:

the goal of environmental education is to develop a world population that is aware of and concerned about, the environment and its associated problems, and which has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivations, and commitment to work individually and collectively toward solutions of current problems and the prevention of new ones. (UNESCO-UNEP, 1976)

The proposals thus focus on problems and mostly highlight the environment as a reservoir of resources. There is such a resourcist thread that runs from the Belgrade Charter stating that “the resources of the world should be developed in ways which will benefit all of humanity” (UNESCO-UNEP, 1976) to “Agenda 21” asserting “the crucial role of the environment as a source of natural capital and as a sink for by-products generated during the production of man-made capital and other human activities” (UNCED, 1993).

In most recent proposals, the notion of environment seems to take less and less place. What is put forward is the notion of sustainability or sustainable future which both subsume many notions including the environment. No definitions of the environment is proposed in the Declaration of Thessaloniki but it appears as “environmental degradation” (UNESCO, 1997) or as being somewhat encompassed by sustainability. The Declaration also asserts:

environmental education, as developed within the framework of the Tbilisi recommendations and as it has evolved since then, addressing the entire range of global issues included in Agenda 21 and the major UN Conferences, has also been dealt with as education for sustainability. (UNESCO, 1997)

The environment, conceived as a set of problems and as a reservoir of resources, is to be addressed within the boundaries of a developmental framework, thus as a support for development. Should not international proposals open up to some other possibilities of representation of the environment such as “environment as nature”, “environment as a place to live and dwell” or “environment as a shared community project to be conducted in a critical and a political perspective” (Sauvé, 1996). Specifically within an educational context and perspective, should not one of the first goals of environmental education be to open up to explore the various ideas about what is that contemporary notion of environment. Where does this notion “environment” come from? What are its different representations and meanings? Who says what and who acts how? WHY?

Numerous dimensions of relating to the environment are thus shadowed by this sort of economic approach to our relations to the surrounding world as highlighted in the proposals analysed. Just

to name a few of the possible alternative approaches, one can think of place based approaches, literary approaches, artistic approaches, spiritual approaches, psychological approaches and the possible combination of these such as the place based and literary approaches to environmental education that are conveyed by organisations such as the “Orion Society” and the “Association for the Study of Literature and Environment” (Berryman, 1997). Some of these approaches stress the importance of not focusing only on working on an environment “out-there”, but also to work on the relationship and the inner dimensions of the relationships. The proposals reviewed, while often acknowledging in a sentence some of these dimensions and some of the alternative approaches, tend to downplay them and focus on the need to manage environmental problems of resources. There is none or very little consideration for the epistemological, philosophical, spiritual, psychological or physiological aspects of our relations to the world.

Another characteristic of the proposals is their manifest anthropocentrism as bear witness the title of the section of “Agenda 21” that addresses environmental issues, “Conservation and management of resources for development” (UNCED, 1993). The fourteen chapters of that section are subsumed under such a heading. The biosphere is destined to serve us, is destined for development through improving the productivity of its resources. Other ways of relating to the land, such as Aldo Leopold’s land ethic of 1949, do not seem to be part of the Agenda. Other tensions and issues related to the differences within and between classes, age groups, cultures and nations are also subsumed in a global occidental anthropocentrism encompassing the whole humanity.

Furthermore, the proposals, while rapidly acknowledging the importance of social issues, rely heavily on sciences and more specifically on environmental sciences and technological transfers as keys to the solution of environmental problems and thus to environmental education. Even when the proposals stress the importance of taking into account society, environment, economy and development, and their integration, the proposal do not dwell at length on this and the ways in which it can be done. And social and psychological sciences are mostly seen as means of mobilizing people.

A recurrent pattern can be observed in the successive proposals, which take the same historical view to assess the situation. The reports take into account the progress made since the last conference or report. The pattern is fixed in the following manner:

- 1) There have been good efforts made.
- 2) However the results are not sufficient.
- 3) The situation is thus degrading.
- 4) There is an emergency.

From there on, it is easy to understand that the proposals tend to fidget with impatience for environmental changes. This could explain why the proposals tend to focus more and more on actions, results, competencies and behavior changes while neglecting reflexivity and critical thinking. The Declaration of Thessaloniki thus stresses that:

in order to achieve sustainability, an enormous co-ordination and integration of efforts is required in a number of crucial sectors and rapid and radical change of behaviours and lifestyles, including changing consumption and production patterns.
(UNESCO, 1997)

Another frequent pattern manifest in the proposals reviewed is their stressing on the crucial necessity of enrolling children for the environment. However, the reverse idea of providing diverse and healthy environments and providing specific environmental experiences for children development is generally absent. The notion of developmentally appropriate curriculum (referring to human personal and social development) is also noticeably absent.

Finally, as for the searches for a key or a root problem and for a total solution to the problem, the proposals tend to identify poverty as the main problem and to look at development and growth as the main solution. Here again a thread runs from the Belgrade Charter to the Thessaloniki Conference. This thread is rather well subsumed in the 1987 Environmental Education and Training Congress, asserting that “in most developing countries, regardless of the region to which they belong, the basic problem is one of dire poverty, which in turn leads to deterioration of natural resources” (UNESCO-UNEP, 1987). Rarely are the causes of poverty researched nor is explored the notion that development and growth could be leading factors of social and environmental problems. Every proposal calls for some sort of economic growth to solve environmental problems. Again, this theme runs from the Belgrade Charter calling for “measures that will support the kind of economic growth which will not have harmful repercussions on people; that will not in any way diminish their environment and their living conditions” (UNESCO-UNEP, 1976), to the “Rio Declaration” principle asserting that “states should cooperate to promote a supportive and open international economic system that would lead to economic growth and sustainable development in all countries, to better address the problems of environmental degradation” (UNCED, 1993). Table 3 presents the main features of the perspective on the environment in the proposals reviewed.

TABLE 3: The perspective on the environment in international proposals addressing issues of education, environment and development: pairing highlighted elements with some neglected ones.

ENVIRONMENT	
International proposals generally highlight:	International proposals generally neglect:
1. General and broad definition of the total environment.	1. Precise and focalized definition of the environment. Contextually significant and operational definition.
2. The environment represented as a problem and approached for its resources.	2. The environment considered for its own intrinsic value and approached for other dimensions such as nature, home or shared community project.
3. The environment needs to be acted upon. There is a need to manage the environment.	3. The need to think about environment and our relations to it. There is a need to manage our uses of the environment.
4. Anthropocentrism: the biosphere is destined to serve humans.	4. Ecocentrism, biocentrism.
5. Economization of the environment. From nature to capital.	5. Ecologization of economics. From capital to nature.
6. Reliance on environmental sciences and technological transfers.	6. Reliance on other approaches to the environment, not seen as an exterior object to be investigated and managed but focusing on relations such as in holistic, experiential, literary or artistic approaches.
7. Valuing of sciences and natural sciences.	7. Valuing natural history.
8. The importance of taking into account the relations between society, environment, economy and development.	8. The importance of taking into account epistemological, philosophical, psychological, spiritual and the many other dimensions of relating to the environment.
9. Up to now, the results are unsatisfactory.	9. Some results are promising.
10. There is an emergency.	10. There is a need to proceed energetically but with prudence, rigor and circumspection.
11. Engage children for the environment.	11. Provide environments for child development. Let children engage in the world.
12. Poverty is the key problem, the main cause of problems.	12. Poverty is a symptom of deeper forms of alienation. Contemporary poverty is caused by the appropriation of the economic resources and environmental and social abuses by the privileged minority.
13. Development and growth will solve environmental problems.	13. Development and growth could worsen environmental and social problems.

DEVELOPMENT AS MAINLY ASSOCIATED TO SUSTAINED ECONOMIC GROWTH

The integration of environmental concerns into development issues was strongly put forward by the 1987 report from the World Commission on Environment and Development. This preoccupation was already manifest in the Belgrade conference of 1975 and in the Tbilisi conference of 1977. Each of the conference called for a new form of development, but always somewhat embedded in some sort of economic growth.

In 1974, the United Nations “Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order” came out of “a special session of the General Assembly to study for the first time the problems of the raw materials and development, devoted to the consideration of the most important economic problems facing the world community” (UN, 1974). Such a statement indicates a view of the biosphere as a reservoir to serve the development of economic growth. It illustrates how the environment, “problems of the raw materials”, is linked to development and how they are both subsumed as “most important economic problems”. The International Environmental Education Program (IEEP) launched in 1975 is firmly rooted in this establishment of a new economic order where the environment must be preserved for the raw materials so as to afford a continuous and equitable development throughout the world.

As for the concept of education, the notion of development is generally ill defined in the documents analysed. Rarely is there a formal definition. However, since the issues of the environment are being framed in an international perspective, poverty is seen as the major problem to be addressed and development is looked at as a key element of solution. The lumping of environment and development in this perspective of an emerging global market thus calls for economic growth to eliminate poverty. This integration of the environment within development, as a necessary condition and an “incontournable” constraint, overshadows representations of the environment as something other than a problem of resources for economic development. Stepping back to reflect on educational practices taking into account the surrounding world, it is manifest that environment and development can sometimes be dissociated, even more so in an educational perspective. This fusing of the environment with the idea of development now defined as not dissociable, can very easily hide the specific contexts of environmental abuse and of developmental problems. It should be possible to explore in depth environmental issues from a variety of perspectives, sometimes with a developmental perspective, sometimes without.

The notion of development suffers somewhat the same fate as the notions of education and environment. In the same way that the humanistic vision of education or total vision of the environment forwarded by the proposals tend to collapse respectively under the weigh of the instrumental view of education and the view of the environment as resources, the notion of development tends to bear the weigh of economic growth. The Belgrade Charter loudly calls for new patterns of development.

The recent United Nations Declaration for a New International Economic Order calls for a new concept of development – one which takes into account the satisfaction of the needs and wants of every citizen on earth, of the pluralism of societies and of the balance and harmony between humanity and the environment. What is called for is the eradication of the basic causes of poverty, hunger, illiteracy, pollution, exploitation and domination. The previous pattern of dealing with these crucial problems on a fragmentary basis is no longer workable. (UNESCO-UNEP, 1976)

The last sentence of this call has a familiar ring since it is the call for the idea of integration, explored in the following section, that was to climax with the Brundtland report and “Agenda 21”. However strong the call “for a new concept of development” in the Belgrade Charter, the next paragraph of the same 1976 document asserts that “the resources of the world should be developed in ways which will benefit all of humanity and provide the potential for raising the quality of life for everyone (UNESCO, 1976). Such a goal bears the weight of an economic view of development. There is then a tension in the notions of development forwarded by the proposals reviewed: on the one hand a vision of human development and on the other hand a view of resources development, of economic development and of economic growth. Even the single terms of the tension are ill defined and thus open the way to very diverse and sometimes opposite interpretation. What is meant by quality of life? What is meant by human development? In such a confusion, gauging development with the indicators of economic growth seems to exert a strong appeal.

The tension between the two discourses concerning development carries through the proposals and is manifest again in the Declaration of Thessaloniki.

Poverty makes the delivery of education and other social services more difficult and leads to population growth and environmental degradation. Poverty reduction is thus an essential goal and indispensable condition of sustainability. (UNESCO, 1997)

Economic growth can thus easily appear as a major solution. The reasoning can all too easily become the following: there is a need for economic development to eliminate poverty and sustain human development. From then on, there is an easy perversion to the idea that human development is based on economic growth. And since environmental and developmental issues are not dissociable, a new form of economic growth will also solve environmental problems of resources. But this “new form” of economic growth or development is very poorly characterised. References to endogenous (or local, or alternative) development are shadowed by the preoccupation of managing environment as a backstore of “raw material”. Even more overshadowed is the idea, forwarded by Sachs (1999) for example, that development in and by itself is a problem and that such an idea, should be discarded in the perspective of a post-development era. Such contrasting views of development appear in table 4.

It seems that however the problems of development be recognized, and the proposals analysed do mention numerous and interrelated problems of development, some sort of economic growth becomes a key element of the solution.

Subsuming environmental and developmental issues with sustained economic growth appears more bluntly within the “United Nations Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development”. In the document, calls for “sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development” or for “sustained economic growth and sustainable development” appear more than twenty times. The first item in the preamble subsumes, in only five sentences, so many themes highlighted in the discourse.

The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development occurs at a defining moment in the history of international cooperation. With the growing recognition of global population, development and environmental interdependence,

the opportunity to adopt suitable macro- and socio-economic policies to promote sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development in all countries and to mobilize human and financial resources for global problem-solving has never been greater. Never before has the world community had so many resources, so much knowledge and such powerful technologies at its disposal which, if suitably redirected, could foster sustained economic growth and sustainable development. None the less, the effective use of resources, knowledge and technologies is conditioned by political and economic obstacles at the national and international levels. Therefore, although ample resources have been available for some time, their use for socially equitable and environmentally sound development has been seriously limited. (UN, 1995)

Development is thus presented as a right and an obligation strongly associated to economic growth. Such a proposal overshadows the idea of looking at development as an option, as a choice and minimally of exploring the notion of development and its different meanings. Is there not a fear that an endogenous or alternative vision of development could be a “political and economic obstacle” to the global sustainable growth solution?

In an educational context, the exploration of the very contemporary and polysemic notion of development can be envisioned in a fashion similar to the exploration of the notion of environment. Where does this notion of development come from? What are its different meanings to different people? WHY?

All the proposals being framed in a paradoxical context of post cold war negotiation between delegates of nations, thus being “inter-national” and at the same time the new vision of the single finite earth seen from the moon “one-world”, the authors insist on the need for cooperation, for solidarity and interdependency. In the shadow of this call for fraternity between delegates of nations striving for a common goal are the notions of autonomy, self-management, self-reliance. There would be an interest to question the inherent idea of solidarity in the sustainability proposal in light of the assertion found in the President’s Council on Sustainable Development (U.S.) document (1997, p. 98) following which education for sustainable development is a means to increase national competitiveness in a global economy.

TABLE 4: The perspective on development in international proposals addressing issues of education, environment and development: pairing highlighted elements with some neglected ones.

DEVELOPMENT	
International proposals generally highlight:	International proposals generally neglect:
1. Development as a requirement, an obligation, a destiny.	1. Development as an option, a choice. The requirement is to reflect upon the notion of development and justify a particular conception.
2. Development as economic growth.	2. Development as human development.
3. Development as a global affair for world management.	3. Development as an endogenous project.
4. Development as the solution.	4. Development as a possible problem.
5. Development is indissociable from environment.	5. The approaches to development can sometimes be dissociated from environmental issues and the approaches to the environment can sometimes be dissociated from developmental issues.
6. Economy is an autonomous force field outside the society, which determines the relation between society and environment.	6. Economy is part of the social sphere, is an aspect of social reality, a set of responsible choices.
7. Importance of cooperation, solidarity and interdependency.	7. Importance of autonomy, self-management and self-reliance.

INTEGRATION AS A MACRO-STRATEGY

One of the objectives of this research is to analyse how the international proposals address the idea of integration, which has been revealed by a simple statistic lexicometric treatment as a key word. For now, at least six aspects or meanings have been uncovered for the notion of integration. They are more manifest with “Agenda 21” which seem to be a climax call to integrate.

A first facet of integration has to do with the educational system. In the proposals, environmental education has to be integrated in all disciplines, in every program, at all levels. This is the multidisciplinary and multisector view of integration. This is manifest in 1987, in the Moscow Congress, “it has been clear that environmental education should be a dimension of all subjects and areas of education” (UNESCO-UNEP, 1987), and again in 1992, in Chapter 36 of “Agenda 21”, “to be effective, environment and development education (...) should be integrated in all disciplines” (UNCED, 1993).

There would also be a need to insist on the necessity to introduce environmental policies and practices in the planning and management of physical infrastructures and with daily life activities of educational institutions: schools, colleges, universities, etc. While this preoccupation is sometimes apparent in some of the proposals, it is not strongly highlighted but rather overshadowed. The academic discourse has to be coherent with the “hidden curriculum” of the institution, taking into account the “pedagogy of place” as highlighted by Orr (1992).

A second aspect of integration becomes rapidly evident in that all the proposals stress the importance of interdisciplinary approaches. While acknowledging the difficulty of it, it is wholeheartedly recommended. Such an interdisciplinary view of integration runs from the Belgrade Charter “Guiding Principles of Environmental Education Programmes” stating “environmental education should be interdisciplinary in its approach” (UNESCO-UNEP, 1976) to the Thessaloniki Declaration stating “addressing sustainability requires a holistic, interdisciplinary approach which brings together the different disciplines and institutions while retaining their different identities” (UNESCO, 1997). This is the second aspect of integration: the integration of academic disciplines for EE.

It may be observed here that knowledge is necessarily considered in reference to the modern notion of discipline, may it be inter-discipline. There are few mentions of the possible integration of diverse types of knowledge that are not yet or rarely legitimated, such as traditional knowledge or experiential knowledge. When traditional knowledge is valued, it is generally for its potential to sustain and promote the worldview forwarded by the proposal, not for its own intrinsic value.

A third aspect of integration has to do with the extension of environmental education outside of the formal educational system. Environmental education has to be extended and integrated to every social milieu, in every profession, throughout the world and in a life long process. Such a notion of integration starts with the Belgrade Charter identification of audiences and is manifest in every proposal such as in the program of action plan stemming from the Conference on population and development and in the Declaration of Thessaloniki:

Greater public knowledge, understanding and commitment at all levels, from the individual to the international, are vital to the achievement of the goals and objectives of the present Programme of Action. In all countries and among all groups, therefore, information, education and communication activities concerning population and sustainable development issues must be strengthened. (UN, 1995)

The reorientation of education as a whole towards sustainability involves all levels of formal, non formal and informal education in all countries. (UNESCO, 1997)

In this level of integration, there is a need to insist on the idea of achieving a real educational society, operationalized in educational communities (Orellana, 1999), where the different actors (schools, OGs, ONGs, museums, parks, media, etc.) cooperate to play a specific and complementary role in the shared essential responsibility of engaging in environmental education, adopting a critical approach to socio-environmental realities. Such a perspective is clearly different from mobilizing populations for predetermined goals, which seems to lie at the core of many proposals. As for mobilizing the media for environmental issues, one can doubt the

ease with which such a goal may be achieved in some context where the media are strongly dependent on revenues coming from a sort of runaway growth economy.

A fourth view of integration deals with the notion of the environment. As noted earlier, the proposals assert that environmental education has to consider the totality of the environment however that totality be defined. Is it not problematic to consider environment as such a big whole that there is no more specificity or angle to grasp it?

A fifth meaning to the notion of integration appears more drastically with the Rio Declaration. Environment and development are now said to have to be integrated together with some other issues such as peace, health and others. Within the body of the proposals reviewed, it is with the Rio conference that environment and development become glued together within typical formulas. The following excerpts from the beginning of Chapter 36 of “Agenda 21” are typical. The emphasis on the key terms is added.

Education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address *environment and development* issues. While basic education provides the underpinning for any *environmental and development* education, the latter needs to be incorporated as an essential part of learning. Both formal and non-formal education are indispensable to changing people's attitudes so that they have the capacity to assess and address their sustainable development concerns. It is also critical for achieving environmental and ethical awareness, values and attitudes, skills and behaviour consistent with sustainable development and for effective public participation in decision-making. To be effective, *environment and development* education should deal with the dynamics of both the physical/biological and socio-economic *environment and human (which may include spiritual) development*, should be integrated in all disciplines, and should employ formal and non-formal methods and effective means of communication. (UNCED, 1993)

The Rio Declaration on *Environment and Development* states, in “Principle 25” that “Peace, *development and environmental* protection are interdependent and indivisible” (UNCED, 1993). “Agenda 21” and the Rio Declaration contain no less than 150 mentions of “environment and development”. In a little more than 3500 words that Chapter 36 contains, “environment” is linked to “development” 35 times. Once in every 100 words.

The Declaration of Thessaloniki also builds on this multidimensional view of integration when it states that “sustainability encompasses not only environment but also poverty, population, health, food, security, democracy, human rights and peace” (UNESCO, 1997). The importance of considering the integration of these different aspects in a holistic and systemic understanding of the realities, should not bring though to embrace all of a sudden and unreflexively a disproportionate educational task, where the mixing up of a huge quantity of diverse and specific objectives could lead to confusion and inefficacy. It would be important to avoid the sinking of the disquieting and demanding environmental preoccupation in a single overbooked agenda.

Finally, a sixth aspect of integration has a clear economic bent. The solution to the environmental and developmental problems calls for the integration of all countries in a world economy and international trade system. Here is the integration within globalization.

Economic integration processes have intensified in recent years and should impart dynamism to global trade and enhance the trade and development possibilities for developing countries. In recent years, a growing number of these countries have adopted courageous policy reforms involving ambitious autonomous trade liberalization, while far-reaching reforms and profound restructuring processes are taking place in Central and Eastern European countries, paving the way for their integration into the world economy and the international trading system. (UNCED, 1993)

Integration really sounds as a key word in the proposals. Climaxing with the Rio and Cairo reports, such a call for a total integration justifies the title of this section: integration as a macro-strategy. Of course, this idea of integration may be fruitful, even necessary in some respects. It is a way to avoid the breakdown of complex realities and to search for a global vision of these realities, so as to take pertinent decisions. But in the shadow of such a multidimensional and global call to integrate almost everything is the nitty-gritty task of concretely trying to do some integration to address, let us not forget, the environmental issues originally lying at the base of this whole international scaffolding. What does one integrate? WHY? How does one integrate? What are the limits to integration? Is not a total and global call for integration an omnipotent dream? Is there not the danger that such an integration necessarily calls for a lowest common denominator? Could such a desire of global integration call for a lowest common denominator that will paradoxically cause environmental and social disintegration?

In this perspective, it seems that the expression “Think globally, act locally” has been the crucible of an important confusion. It consists in attaining a complete, systemic and global vision of a truly complex object (environment, development), in order to act in an appropriate way. Now, this object, this reality can very well be situated at the local level, the level of the community. The invitation to global thinking (holistic) does not necessarily mean the adoption of a planetary or international perspective, or of an “integrating” global whole. As noted by Esteva and Prakash (1998), such a perspective is neither always attainable nor always appropriate. Global thinking (holistic) applies first locally, at this first scale where becomes possible a real knowledge and the mobilization of the power to act linked to the exercise of an intrinsic responsibility.

Table 5 summarizes these diverse aspects of the notion of integration.

TABLE 5: The perspective on integration in international proposals addressing issues of education, environment and development: pairing highlighted elements with some neglected ones.

INTEGRATION	
International proposals generally highlight:	International proposals generally neglect:
1. All disciplines	1. All aspects of planning and managing physical infrastructures and daily life activities of educational institutions. Search for coherence between discourse and practice.
2. Interdisciplinarity	2. The specifications of the contribution of disciplines. The contribution of other types of knowledge which do not refer to a discipline.
3. All levels	3. Specifications for different levels
4. Every social milieu	4. Specifications for different social milieu. Collaboration between diverse social actors of an educational society to promote a critical environmental education process.
5. Life long from preschool to old age	5. Specifications for different ages
6. For everyone	6. For specific populations
7. Total perspective	7. Focalized perspective, contextually relevant
8. Global perspective	8. Specific perspective, contextually significant
9. World perspective	9. Smaller-scale perspective; local perspective
10. International perspective	10. Communitarian perspective

CONCLUSION

There is a consistency in the content of the proposals analysed thus far. The views on education, environment, development and integration do not vary much in the 25-year span of the proposals reviewed. Table 6 presents some principles from three different conferences, which are presented according to their numbering in the proposals. Upon reading the series of six principles, one has a clear impression that they could all be borne out of the same conference.

TABLE 6: Consistency of a ruling discourse. Only the date and the name of the conference seem to change.

Principle 4 In order to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it. (UNCED, 1993)
Principle 6 Sustainable development as a means to ensure human well-being, equitably shared by all people today and in the future, requires that the interrelationships between population, resources, the environment and development should be fully recognized, properly managed and brought into harmonious, dynamic balance... (UN, 1995)
Principle 8 Economic and social development is essential for ensuring a favourable living and working environment for man and for creating conditions on earth that are necessary for the improvement of the quality of life. (UN, 1972)
Principle 14 Rational planning constitutes an essential tool for reconciling any conflict between the needs of development and the need to protect and improve the environment. (UN, 1972)
Principle 15 Sustained economic growth, in the context of sustainable development, and social progress require that growth be broadly based, offering equal opportunities to all people... (UN, 1995)
Principle 25 Peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible. (UNCED, 1993)

There are of course some variations and nuances between the proposals. Some of these are between the documents of the UN and those of the UNESCO. The later seems to have a view of education slightly less instrumental, a view of the environment slightly less reduced to problems of resources, a view of development more open to other dimensions than economic growth and a view on integration more focused on educational issues. It will be interesting to study the future of such trends since UNESCO has become the “Task Manager” for chapter 36 of “Agenda 21”.

In the context of the educational reforms happening in many regions, it is crucial to reflect upon the integration of environmental education in the curricula. Once again, it is important to acknowledge the critical importance and the monumental task of convening delegates from hundreds of nations from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe to conferences and drafting charters, declarations and programs of action. These truly act as beacons providing rays of hope and some footing to contemplate human situation and issues of education, environment and development.

However, while these documents reflect strategic goals for nations, they should not be confused with educational finalities or objectives. They should not be taken as educational credos. It must be considered that they have generally been written or directed by anonymous author or team of authors. These persons may be competent and involved for the environment and/or development, but are they educators? Are they well documented, cultivated and experimented in the educational domain? Which or whose agenda are they following? The educational perspective of

the analysed documents appears definitely weak, particularly concerning the ethical, epistemological and strategic foundations of the educational proposal. Noticeably, the few pages written about education in the Brundtland Report, as in the Chapter 36 of the Agenda 21, are poor educational discourses. Is it then surprising if the educational actors have not been inspired or appealed with it?

The international proposals appear like menus elaborated by delegates of nations, to guide the delegates of nations. Taking these proposals literally as menus to feed children and everyone on Earth about environment and development is quite disturbing to say the least. This observation reinforces the necessity of inviting educators to take a critical distance from the official proposals. If environmental education has not yet succeeded in contributing to the necessary social changes in regards to the relation of people to the environment, could it not be related to the quality of the “menu” and to the narrow use of it?

As it was insisted upon throughout this paper, there is a common thread linking the global conferences of Stockholm, Belgrade, Tbilisi, Moscow, Rio de Janeiro, Cairo and Thessaloniki. One element of this thread is to call in education to implement a program of action to reform the world towards sustainability. This can very easily overshadow diverse educational approaches to experiencing the world and reflecting upon the environment and our own relation to it. The proposals problematically forward a view of the environment as problems of resources and a view of development as mainly associated with economic growth presented as a condition to human development. It becomes all too easy to forget (even if in some proposals it has been shortly mentioned) how such a construct of environment and development are bounded in space and time in a culture and need to be studied and reflected upon. That is not to say that the program of actions should not be implemented. This is not the angle chosen for our analysis. That is however to say that in an educational perspective, they should be very seriously appraised, reframed and enriched.

NOTE

While the text does neither associate directly nor quote sources inspiring our critical analysis, it appears important to us to indicate the main authors that enriched our thinking: Gregory Bateson (1984), Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966), Wendell Berry (1992), Yves Bertrand (1998), Wilfred Carr and Stephen Kemmis (1986), David Ehrenfeld (1978), Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash (1998), Neil Evernden (1985), Henry Giroux (1989), Édgar González Gaudiano (1997), Bob Jickling (1992), Aldo Leopold (1982), John Livingston (1986, 1992, 1994), Isabel Orellana and Stéphane Fauteux (1999), David Orr (1994), David Pepper (1989), Neil Postman (1995), Ian Robottom and Paul Hart (1993), Wolfgang Sachs (1999), Paul Shepard (1982, 1996), Ian Simmons (1993), David Sobel (1993, 1995, 1998) and Watzlawick *et al.* (1975). Their reflexivity is inspiring.

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ⁱⁱ The grids for gathering the data were made after a first “*lecture flottante*” (Bardin, 1996). With a first grid, every mention or reference in each document, to education, environment, development, environmental education, education for sustainable development, education for sustainability and integration were systematically identified and analysed. Another grid has also been constructed to analyse other components of the proposal, such as: main problem diagnosed, favoured fields of knowledge, values and competency, type of discourse, presence or call for reflexivity and critical thinking, types of reference, etc.

ⁱⁱⁱ Let us remember here Bateson’s observation : “Zero, the absence of any significative element, may bear a message.” (Bateson, 1984, p. 53)