

The Economic Education Related to Environmental Values in the Romanian University Area

[Mioara Borza]

Abstract - The human values belong to various fields of reference mainly related to social and economic life, and depending on the style and goals. For this research, we propose to debate the environmental values, as an important nowadays reference point for the human development. In addition, the evolution of humanity supposes the reference to the economic development. In this context, the eco-economic issue it appears as a common path for the economic and human development. To engage in the new processes of social and economic development, it requires the presence and involvement of specialists or to up the new idea of new development form concentrated to eco-economics. For this reason, the university area must be implied with the adaptations of university curricula. Through this paper, we propose to conduct a content analysis related to the academic curricula adaptation to the new educational requirements, especially about the environmental values and eco-economic education. We will analyse the study of eco-economics, together with the promotion of environmental values in the Romanian university systems.

The aim of the research is to identify how the universities in economics from Romania are adapted to the new society requirements. The research, prevalently empirical, is mainly qualitative, based on the methods: the content analysis, historiography and interpretation. The descriptive-exploratory character of the research is supported by some quantitative techniques, which allows an objective and systematic description of research subject. The database used consists of 30 universities from Romania, for which we analyse the curricula on the topic of eco-economics and sustainability, for the last 5 academic years. We will complete our methodological demarche with a qualitative analysis based on the student's opinions related to the interest to study the eco-economic disciplines in the university system and about their information about the environmental values. The focus group represent the main tools for this goal. The results of research indicate the current state about the eco-economics education in the Romanian universities and, especially, the interest for the environmental values approach. The education in eco-economics in Romanian university is of reduced level, and the environmental values are mainly a curiosity and interest for study, but are not yet assimilated through the learning and education system. By comparison with other countries this conclusion is not favourable for the eco-economic development.

Keywords - eco-economics, development, values education, universities, sustainability

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I. Introduction

To approach educational issue in an economic and environmental context is a real interdisciplinary challenge. Although in the educational environment each area of study is claiming a significant hierarchical place, in reality, interdisciplinarity is a way that makes it much easier to recognize the role and importance of each field of study. Education undoubtedly represents the corollary of the evolution and the progress of human society, and to undertake educational actions in a one-sided manner is a non-sense. The current world, increasingly exposed to a major suite of changes and related needs adaptation to change, is facing a new challenge: interdisciplinary education. We consider that this approach is a main request for the nowadays society where the environmental values represent a new orientation for progress and development.

For the present paper, we have chosen to refer to the importance of eco-economic education, in a context in which sustainability and lasting development strategies at the international level are the desideratum for economic and social policies. In order to continue our demarche so that it is well founded notionally, we explain what the eco-economy actually means, and the sustainable development. Essentially, eco-economy is a new, modern and widely accepted international formula for the expression of the environmental economy.

However, we are of the opinion that eco-economics does not only refer to the way resources are managed, as it has as its main object of study the economy of the environment. It includes: ecological growth and development style, value recognition of environmental resources as a basis for ensuring economic growth, adopting a lifestyle in harmony with environmental values, understanding the functionality of economic mechanisms not only from a financial perspective, adopting a style of consumption in relation to the real needs that, in their turn, need to be properly understood, etc. Moreover, given that sustainable development, both conceptual and applicative, is an issue that can be reduced at the way current resources are managed so that they are used rationally and ensure their availability for future generations, we consider that economic education from the environmental perspective is an approach more than needed at present. More importantly, however, in the context of this paper, is that all these aspects need to be inspired and taught, especially in the education and tuition environment. All these aspects are components of human development. This is one of the most appropriate frameworks for recognizing, learning and appreciating environmental values. If we were to ask ourselves why we have opted for this topic for the present paper, one of the basic reasons is it: to identify some very different attitudes and perceptions of the European university world compared to the autochthonous university world regarding the eco-economic. The study of the profile literature along with the

opportunity to exchange views with members of the international academic community was a source of reflection on a dilemma. So: why in Eastern European universities, with a direct reference to the situation of Romania, the university study focusing on sustainability, environmental values or eco-economics is much less significant than in the Western European countries? Likewise, the dilemma deepened after the implementation of the Bologna educational system in the Romanian universities, the occasion that we considered it would be appropriate for the adoption of consecutive education models to harmonize, including qualitatively, the national education system with the European one. Other issues put under discussion and research in this paper are related to finding the non-synchronization of the content of sustainable development strategies with what is learned in the specific institutional environment, alongside to the jejune approach of the environmental value system in university education. In other words, the difference between theory and practice can become significant if there is no support for the training of specialists in sustainability, eco-economics and the promotion of environmental values, or if there is no emphasis on strong study subjects in accordance with the reality of human development.

II. Literature Review

Approaches referring to the issues of environmental values, resources, the environment economy, and other associated areas of interest have become increasingly numerous, especially in the last 20-30 years. A considerable difference is observed between autochthonous approaches, compared to international ones. These differences are both quantitative and qualitative. Our profile literature is recent, relatively elusive, mainly based on translations and theoretical approaches, while international literature has an older and better-quality orientation, with an emphasis on the pragmatic aspects of the studied subject. In order to establish some delimitation of the topics addressed in this paper, it is important to stress that many terms are easily associated with eco-economics in this area of interest, which is why we will consider them when analysing analytical programs or curriculum of the university profile.

From the point of view of conceptual-disciplinary clarification, we consider that eco-economic education involves studying the relationships and interactions between the economy and the ecosystems that support the processes of socio-economic development. It is a collaborative or interdisciplinary approach between economics, ecology and other social or natural sciences that seek to explain what sustainable development is and, most importantly, how it can be achieved. The international and native literature has treated in a variety of manners in over 30 years various aspects of educational values, environmental economics, sustainable development, etc., but much less those of eco-economics and, above all, of eco-economic education. If the international literature treats this subject in detail, especially after the 2000s, the topic in the autochthonous literature is poorly represented, being addressed only in strict contexts, without any echo among the population. Thus, native authors highlights, through the books, textbooks and treaties addressed inclusively to students, the necessity and importance of approaching the eco-economy in the educational environment. For example: "Small explanatory dictionary of eco-economic terms", (Bran, F., Ioan, I.,

Rădulescu, C.V., Popa, C., 2011), "The economics in entropic hourglass" (Bran, F., Manea, G., Ioan, I., Rădulescu, C.V., 2015), "Economy of environment - treaty" (Ghereș, M., ș.a., 2010). For all that, is remarkable the fact that the profile local literature remains limited and with very narrow target audience. Most of the references identified are about environmental economics addressed as study disciplines, but we notice the oldness in editing. The issues of eco-economic education are rare and less relevant from addressed curriculum point of view. The international profile literature of the eco-friendly well-known term is very rich, especially since the 1970s when the first signs of concern about the consumption of natural resources appeared. Although we did not expect this, literature on education in the eco-economic or environmental sphere is rich, with most sources of information appear especially since 2000. Consecrated authors to graduate education in ecological economics and environmental values are: Polimeni (2004), Gowdy & Erickson (2005), Sterling & Thomas (2006), Barth et al. (2007), Attfield, R. (2018), Szita, K., Jármai, J.K. & Voith, K. (2019). According to Polimeni (2004), "although ecological economics is considered to be a small, specialized area of study within the field of economics, it is the core of a new and rapidly developing approach to economics that can be incorporated into many other specialized fields of study" and "ecological economics focuses on the economy as a social system imbedded in its environmental surroundings; the environmental economics focuses on the environment as a subsystem of the economy and requiring a specialization in environmental economics would confirm these differences in the mind of the student and prepare him/her for a career after graduate school."

We found particularly suggestive the author's statement that says: "consensus has developed that sustainability education should include a variety of capacity-building pathways that engage head, hands, and heart" (Bloom et al., 1964; Orr, 2002; Sipos et al., 2008 cited in Brundiers, K., Wiek, A., Redman, C.L., 2010, pp. 310). It was provocative and satisfying to find out that the concern to identify to what degree the study programs of faculties included eco-economics aspects were manifested by other authors. I discovered that Lozano, R. (2011) has analyzed the results from the curricula audit of over 5800 course descriptions from 19 of the 28 schools from Cardiff University and has developed appropriate analysis tools: the Sustainability Tool for Auditing UNiversities Curricula in Higher Education - STAUNCH (Lozano, pp. 637). As well, some authors such as Walter Leal Filho (2019) say that sustainable development at universities is not only a matter of study, but is an institutional policy which includes many important documents. We present some examples of these documents: the Talloires Declaration of University Presidents for a Sustainable Future (1990); the Halifax document 'Creating a Common Future: an Action Plan for Universities' (1991); the Copernicus 'Universities Charter on Sustainable Development' (1994); G8 University Summit Sapporo Sustainability Declaration (2008); G8 University Summit: Statement of Action (2010). We noted that many higher education institutions have responded to this major challenge by making sustainability central to the critical dimensions of university life: curriculum, research and scholarship, student opportunities, institutional mission and structure. According to Charatsari & Lioutas (2018), it is

remarked “the positive impacts of environmental education in higher education” and it is suggested “the introduction of environmental education in curricula to facilitate the development of environmental thinking among students.”

III. Material and Method

In the demarche of this work, which is rather an alarming signal to the attention of environmental values in the economic education, we set the following objectives:

O1. To identify the orientation of the Romanian university economic education towards the study of the disciplines associated with the eco-economy or environmental economics;

O2. To compare the national orientation with that of the European university environment; identifying students' interest in studying eco-economics related disciplines;

O3. To determine the possible causes for which disciplines in this field are not of interest to the autochthonous university curriculum.

To achieve these objectives, we proposed and followed a methodological approach based on an empirical research, of a predominantly qualitative nature, supplemented by a quantitative approach in support of the hypotheses formulated. The working methods used: observation, content analysis, historiography, investigation and interpretation. We used as tools for collecting information: the focus group - for collecting the opinions and information from the Romanian university, and the documentation and the curricular analysis - in order to identify the comparative situation of the auto-learning environment with the European one. We mention that the references in this paper have been made to the economic field, given that we have set the eco-economy and environmental values as the benchmark. In order to facilitate the understanding of our approach, emphasizing the option of highlighting the role of eco-economics as a discipline of study in the university area and to accentuate the importance of environmental values for a balanced development, first, the content representativeness of the two selected concepts for analysis: eco-economy and environmental values. Eco-economy is a field of study, but also a field of life that involves taking into account aspects of modelling, understanding, equity, evaluation, vision, development, etc. In essence, we are studying how to integrate and better blend economic, environmental and psychosocial models. Then, psychosocial aspects are considered, organizing the system of values and equity is at the forefront, namely, efforts are being made to identify how equity between individuals, nations or generations can generate benefits. Afterwards, eco-economics is committed to answer the question: who is responsible, and to what extent, of the control of resources, the management of environmental systems with all the values they contain and the distribution of welfare? In this regard is useful to mention the main environmental values recognized according to literature (Schroede, 2011): materials, physical and biological, values of direct interaction between man and nature (the joy of the interaction of the man with the environment, the pleasure of being a part of it, the appreciation of

landscapes, etc.), values of direct interaction (reflect the psycho-social aspects and results of the interaction man-environment: recreational values, mental fatigue, general quality of life), values of strictly personal significance for the man (the place of the environment in a person's life, the community identity, natural, historical and cultural knowledge, symbols, rituals, refuge etc.).

In agreement with the proposal to highlight the necessity of studying the economic aspects in direct connection with the environmental aspects, we use the comparative analysis of the study programs from the European countries with university and well-developed economic tradition with Romania. We mention that for the analysis of the discipline records we will consider not only the term of eco-economics, because there is the risk of greatly restraining the area of analysis, but we will consider the terms associated with the concept: environmental economy and politics, environmental management, ecological economics, sustainable development, economy of resources.

The methodological demarche was completed by following these steps:

- identification/ selection of terms considered for analysis
- selection of the universities with economic profile (from Romania)
- selection the profile specialties of these faculties, regardless of the level of study (license or master)
- identification of the interest disciplines in similar study programs in European states
- selection of the most representative European universities in the context of this research
- comparison of the situation in Romania with that in other countries
- interpretation of the results obtained

The research methods we have based on: observation, comparison, synthesis, investigation. The working steps consisted of: identify the European universities that offer eco-economics-related curricula at different degree level, collect and analyse eco-economics related-business courses offered by the universities identified in step 1. The approach was laborious, given the very large number of universities at European level and many of them have been incorporating the subjects of ecological economics, economy of environment or economy of natural resources into their curricula. Numerically, we have referred to 30 universities from Romania (out of 56 public and 37 accredited private) and 50 universities from Europe. For the analysis regarding Romania, the Ministry of Education was used as the main source of information. Our study has taken into account the license level for economics faculties in which direct or additional eco-economics subjects are studied. Of all the Romanian universities, we have chosen only those who have the specialization of economics. We note that the programs studied were approved starting with the academic year 2015-2016. To complete the results of the first part of the research, in which it is observable a tendency for the local curriculum, we continued the demarche to the area of students' interest to pursue related disciplines with ecological economics. This way, we realized a focus-group interview, based on the subject in which we seek: the knowledge of aspects of environmental values and interest in studying aspects of the environment economy. The focus group was conducted with 12 students in the first year of economics. In this way, we have analysed the opinion about

disciplines in this field, which are studied only in isolation, compared to the reality from European universities; we also seek to identify students' interest in future learning modules of ecological economics and environmental values.

IV. Results and Comments

The analysis of the study programs of the economics faculties (bachelor and master level) of the 30 universities included in the research shows the following results regarding the study of the disciplines that connect the economic system with the environmental system:

- 9 universities (of which 7 are public and 2 of them are top universities in Romania) do not have not even one discipline associated with eco-economic education at economics faculties;
- 5 universities have the discipline of “Environmental economics”, but only at one faculty this is compulsory - at the specialization General Economics, at 4 faculties being optional - at Accounting and Political Economics;
- 4 universities have the Environmental Management discipline, of which only at one is compulsory;
- in 4 universities we have identified some disciplines such as Ecology, Ecology and Environmental Protection, Environmental Policies, as optional subjects;
- Sustainable Development is a compulsory subject studied at one faculty, and in another is an optional discipline;
- 2 public universities have the specialization “Agro-Food Economics” (University “Dunărea de Jos” of Galați and University ”Babeş Bolyai” Cluj Napoca), respectively one private university is dedicated mainly to the study of eco-economic disciplines (“Bioterra” Bucharest), where several eco-economic disciplines are studied.

A first conclusion shows that in the undergraduate and master level studies, eco-economic disciplines are rare, appearing as optional or not at all in study programs. The exception is the University ”Babeş Bolyai” Cluj-Napoca, which has two master specializations on the profile: ”Environmental Economics” and „Sustainable Regional Development”, where several disciplines in the field of ecological economics are studied. We mention that in Iași, in the field of economic sciences, there is no such field of study. In the period 2002-2006, Environmental Economics was studied as an optional discipline, but it was excluded from the curriculum.

A second preliminary conclusion is that the results of the analysis of the situation in European universities are considerably different.

Given that the number of higher education institutions in Europe (EU-28) is impressively high, we have used the ”top universities” as the first selection criterion, after which we selected economically-oriented universities. At the European level, the top universities in the economic field, following a public hierarchy set up in partnership with Elsevier, are: London School of Economics and Political Sciences, Oxford, Cambridge (U.K.), Bocconi (Italy), University College London, London Business School, University of Warwick (U.K.), Pompeu Fabra (Spain), Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (Switzerland), Stockholm Schools of Economics (Sweden) and other universities of

Madrid, Bologna, Barcelona. Based on the analysis of the study subjects associated with Ecological Economics, we extracted and synthesized the following European recognitions of the importance of studying in the university aspects of the economy and the environment (Table 1).

TABLE 1. PRESTIGIOUS EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES FROM UNITED KINGDOM STUDYING PROGRAMS IN ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS FIELD

University	The mission in sustainable manner approach	Additional remarks
Keele University	”You’ll explore the crucial relationship between humans and the environment, drawing upon the humanities and the social sciences”. ”Environmental studies it focuses on the socio-political nature of environmental problems and the responses to them from individuals, businesses, institutions and civil organisations.”	The study program is very different from that of the East European countries and includes over 70% of the disciplines on: environmental ethics, international relations of the environment, politics of sustainability, environment and sustainability case study.
The London School of Economics and Political Science	”One of the critical questions in modern society is how to manage processes of economic and social development so that we can make sustainable improvements in human welfare without destroying the environmental resource on which all life depends.”	It is the no.1 in the top of the economic universities and it offers advanced study programs in the eco-economic field. It has an outstanding reputation for academic excellence.
University of York	”A unique degree exploring the relationship between economic and social pressures and their impacts upon our environment.”	Fields studied for disciplines: environmental, economics and ecology.
The University of Manchester	„We need a good understanding of the environment and its many interactive processes, and of the wider environmental contexts within which interventions take place as societies develop and move forward.” The students develop social skills which enable them to act responsibly in ethically challenging decision-making situations.	”Environmental Management” is a 3-year degree programme about managing environmental resources and the interactions with human societies. The curriculum includes: Environment & Society, Cities and Society, Environmental Law, Managing Rural Environments, Environmental Impact Assessment.

Source: personal processing and synthesis from the virtual presentations of the European universities

The sustainable development concept represents another very vocal approach and an important way to improve the economic and social development at the international level. In this regard, by our investigation, we identified many administrative, legislative, political, governmental or researches approaches with theories, measures or challenges for this new manner of development. But, less represented or at very slow level is the education for the sustainable development. In our opinion, to achieve good results for the practical sustainable development, first time is need to disseminate the concept and this idea among the young people in schools and universities. So, an integration into

research, teaching, and practical activities is a substantial element for the sustainability achievement. For this pattern and in this orientation, the universities must take a main role and essential decision for the sustainability promotion. In the Table 2 is a selection of universities where the sustainable development is in good represented in curricula.

TABLE 2. SPECIALIZATIONS IN THE FIELD OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT - AT PRESTIGIOUS EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES

University	The mission according to sustainable development approach	Additional remarks
Sustainability Management School (SUMAS) Gland, Switzerland	BBA in Sustainability Management program is to offer a theoretical and practical degree that addresses challenges in sustainability facing leaders in today's global business.	The program ensures that sustainability is incorporated strategically in all aspects of every business's operations to provide the extra competitive edge of today's complex business environment.
University of Warwick Coventry, United Kingdom	Approaches the world's problems, in order to learn more about them and have a social conscience. The main goal is to consider the global issues from different perspectives and think creatively about potential solutions. *Global Sustainable Development at Warwick.	Bachelor of Business Administration Sustainability Management Psychology and Global Sustainable Development Subjects: economic and sociological issues; principles of global sustainable development
Manchester Metropolitan University Manchester, United Kingdom	Is studying on principles of economic and environmental change and the fundamental areas of sustainability. Basic idea of studies: environmental challenges require understanding the relationships between social, environmental and economic factors.	Environmental Management and Sustainability, B.Sc. Subjects for 3 years cycle: principles of sustainability, environmental management and decision making, natural resources and pollution, sustainable production and consumption, environmental risk management.

Source: personal processing and synthesis from virtual presentations of the European universities

From the selection presented in the tables above, but also based on selected and analysed study programs for the field of ecological economics, we came to the following conclusions:

- the most universities studying the issue of ecological economics are from the United Kingdom;
- in these universities, the study programs have a deep interdisciplinary character, the disciplines being aimed at creating an overall picture of the connection between the environment, society and economic systems;
- study subjects are both at the undergraduate and master level and we have not identified them as being included in the optional category (just in very few cases);
- studying aspects of sustainable development is done

through specific and customized study programs, not as a complement or a chapter for other disciplines.

In the Table 3 we present a selection of the ESEE group (European Society for Ecological Economics) with the universities included in the study and the learning areas related to the topic took under consideration in this paper.

TABLE 3. EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES STUDYING SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS OF ECO-ECONOMY

The University	Study Programs
University of Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines	Ecological economics, Environmental integrated analysis for sustainable development
Université Paris Dauphine	Applied sustainable development
Autonomous University of Barcelona	Ecological economics and Environmental management
Vienna University of Economics & Business	Socio-Ecological Economics & Policy
University of Edinburg	Ecological economics
University of Leeds	Sustainability, Ecological Economics
University of Nordland, Norway	Ecological economics

Source: European Society for Ecological Economics

A study that can strengthen the arguments in the present research, was carried out by the European Society for Ecological Economics (2017). By this has made a group of European universities studying specializations from ecological economics. We mention that the study programs are individualized, we are not talking about just study subjects included in the curricula occasionally.

Other European universities studying the field of ecological economics are: Klagenfurt University (Austria), Norwegian University of Life Sciences (Norway), Pablo de Olavide University (Seville, Spain), New University of Lisbon (Portugal), University of Grenoble Alpes, University of Graz (Austria). Specialists in sustainable development are being prepared in: University of Leipzig, University of Graz, University of Utrecht, University of Venice. Thus, it is remarkable that in most of the developed European states, the aspects of the environmental values along with those of the sustainable development, as well as the joining of the economic studies with environmental concerns, is of great interest for university programs that are exclusively dedicated to this orientation. Another reference in regard with the future intention to study ecological economics in Romanian universities is extracted from an investigation perceived as a large interview conducted among 140 students and they who participated in the particular focus group with 12 students. Overall, the survey results show the following:

- over 60% of students recognize the values of the environment and their importance for economic development;
- the most part (about 75%) agree with the importance of education for environmental values and believes that if they receive more information, they could better understand the concrete aspects;
- in terms to recognize the environmental values, students

have acquired some principles in the family or in the pre-university learning environment, but that these are rather personal than professional aspects;

- very few of them, about 15%, knew that at other universities in the country is occasionally studied ecological economics and, in this context, they are declaring themselves interested in learning more details;
- the majority (over 90%) believe that studying ecological economics in Western European universities is normal, given the more open vision of socio-economic functionality and, above all, the level of economic development; in this context, the students express their opinion that the minus indicated in the Romanian university is due rather to the mentality and to the lack of openness to a new vision of the study programs;
- almost all (92%), students declare that they would be interested in studying economics related subjects even from the first year of university and would be interested in attending a specialization or a master in the field (63%);
- students also declare to have a 4 to 6 hour / week availability to gather information from the ecological economics sphere.

The reasons why the local university is confronting with a lack of adaptation of the curricula to the new learning requirements are:

- low or even absent motivation to adapt to the new;
- non-recognition of the importance of environmental factors in the educational context;
- active interest groups and coalitions against society;
- nepotism and lack of academic credibility;
- confusion and malfunctioning management system;
- lack of financial resources;
- lack of closeness to current reality;
- crowded and redundant study programs, etc.

Therefore, since the direct beneficiaries of such study programs show their interest and availability to study, we feel that steps can be taken to align with the programs from European learning environment. Understanding the human economy requires an appreciation of the importance of hierarchies, contingency and self-organisation, and recognition of the fragility of market economies in biophysical space and cultural specificity. (Gowdy, 2005). Ecological economics is barely ten years old, and it has not yet coalesced into a coherent school of thought, but it is a leading contender among heterodox schools to become a comprehensive alternative to neoclassical orthodoxy. "Nature's services are crucial to our well-being, prosperity and happiness, and to our very survival. So, we must continue to shift from being irresponsible exploiters to careful stewards and managers of the planet's essential, finite resources." (Gowdy, pp. 219)

v. Conclusions

At present, there is a growing need to ensure a balance and mutual support between economy, society and the environment. People, without the basic resources taken from

the environment, cannot progress economically and can face barriers in social development. Human society cannot make any progress without economic support or investments, nor without ensuring its existence in an unpolluted environment. For its part, the environment cannot provide the resources and services needed for socio-economic development if it is not protected and supported. From an economic point of view, these issues are directly related to resource management, an aspect that is significantly taken into account in financial and accounting approaches, in natural science, but to a very small extent in an interdisciplinary manner. In other words, each discipline claims its object of study in a unidirectional manner, although there is a common point between them - in our case, the natural resources. This is the context in which the theme of eco-economic education proves to be of major interest for the present, and, especially, for the future.

The university education market shows that most European universities, but especially American ones, have been successful in pursuing sustainability programmes, have also successfully implemented the requirements and needs related to new challenges of market and society. In this regard, have been facilitated and stimulated the introduction of sustainability initiatives as part of their teaching and research programmes. This is just one of the reasons why we consider it appropriate to revise the autochthonous curricula and to prepare the specialists that society now, and especially in the future, needs. Withal, the orientation towards interdisciplinarity, is proven and acknowledged as a success factor in the university area.

The paper was elaborated with the goal to research the association between the environmental topic - with its values - and the key elements from economic education. The appreciation of the association manner was conceived from the perspective of the transition to new, sustainable socio-economic systems because the eco-economics is seen as future trends of implementation of sustainable development systems. We thought that the analysis of environmental values in the light of the economic education is essential for the university area, because it would be almost impossible to have access to these new, sustainable economic and social systems if the people do not know, recognize and appreciate the environmental values and their benefits or the consequences resulted from their interaction. First and foremost, the individual is the beneficiary of the advantages of the transition to the new economic models, therefore through and for "him" we can transition from a linear economy which consumes resources and is depreciative from a socio-economic and emotional point of view to a "eco", "bio", environmental-friendly economy. We chose to point out the environmental values because the socio-human progress has reached the stage when the material needs are overstepped, at least according to Maslow's pyramid. The research from this paper was based on specialty studies that clearly showed that currently people are more inclined to recognise the values that determine the growth of well-being level than the outspoken appreciation of material values. We focused mainly on the convergence aspects between the environmental problems, perceived as major reference human values, and the education in university area related to this subject.

In fact, we directed the research to the idea that a conscious connection to the environmental values alongside

getting a favourable attitude and a "pro" behaviour are predictive elements that facilitate the transition to new economic systems more connected to the environment. The concern for the study of educational system implication towards the environmental values is a novelty in our country while in other states it has an over 20-year long history. This can be a strong point for the ongoing research from this paper together with other elements such as the novelty and the topicality of the topic, the introduction of aspects belonging to environmental values in the eco-economic problematic studied in the universities and the approach of a new set of values. Still, we are also aware of some limitations of the paper among which the most obvious are: the lack of an instrument for measuring the dimensions under study, subjectivism, limitation related to different approaches of the sustainable development concept, the great number of universities where is possible to identify the preoccupation for our subject, mainly qualitative approach and statistical limitations regarding the use of more advanced methods, reduced number of participants, etc. Despite the identified constraints and given that we intend to continue our study, we believe that the orientation towards further research is not only a desirable aspiration but also a needed one. We are convinced that the results of this research can be improved and used in future research as we think that the topic of associating the environmental values with the education systems from the universities with economic faculties and specializations.

In essence, eco-economic education is a major challenge for Romanian university education, this being the environment where is possible to learn how to apply economics to the analysis of education policy, in the conditions of environmental changes and environmental values recognition.

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