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No wisdom, no future: The education factor in the sustainability discourse

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Author:
Bernhard Ott[1] 🔟

Affiliation:
[1]Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology, Faculty of Missiology, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

Corresponding author:
Bernhard Ott,
bernhard.ott@atticstudio.ch

In the context of the topic of sustainable leadership, this literature study addresses the relationship between education and sustainability. While in the literature this connection is mostly discussed in terms of education for sustainability, or sustainability in education, this study shows that education and sustainability are essentially interrelated at an even deeper level.

This thesis is based on biblical–theological foundations, with the concept of 'wisdom' at the centre (chapter one). Subsequently, topics of recent discourses on education and philosophy were examined with regard to their relationship to the concern of sustainability. In particular, the concepts 'fitness for purpose', 'reflective practitioner', 'character education', and 'paradigm shifts' were examined.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: The study comes to the conclusion, that education is, by its very nature, the transmission of wisdom from generation to generation, with the purpose of making the flourishing life of the human community possible in the long term. Based on this insight, it must be demanded that the education factor be given highest attention in the sustainability discussion. This is not just a matter of addressing the issue of sustainability in education or advocating for the sustainability of educational institutions. It is about education as a whole serving to cultivate wise people who live responsible lives in all their being and actions, aimed at a healthy development of the human community in God's creation from generation to generation.

Keywords: sustainability; education; wisdom; Bible; character formation; paradigm shift; reflective practitioner.

Introduction

This study focusses on the contribution of education to sustainability and sustainable leadership. It will be argued that education and sustainability are inherently and essentially interrelated. Of course, education is mentioned frequently in the sustainability discourse, however in most cases in one of the following two ways. Firstly, it is often referred to education *for* sustainability in the sense that education must serve sustainability. What this means in terms of aim and content depends on the respective definition of sustainability, for example, the three pillars of environment, economy and society. In this case, the focus is on how education prepares for the implementation of a certain vision of sustainability. Secondly, the emphasis can also be on the sustainability of educational provisions themselves. In this case, it is about the kind of leadership that is required to develop educational institutions in a healthy way for the long term.

This article will look at the interrelatedness of education and sustainability at an even deeper level. In the 'Biblical foundations' section, I will argue that education and sustainability are at the centre of the biblical tradition. Education is, by its very nature, the transmission of wisdom from generation to generation, with the purpose of making the flourishing life of the human community possible in the long term.

In the subsequent sections, I will discuss how this biblical–theological premise of the connection between education and sustainability can be realised today in conversation with contemporary thoughts in education and philosophy. To this end, I will enter into conversation with the following concepts: 'fitness for purpose', 'reflective practitioner', 'character formation', and 'paradigm shifts'. The aim is to highlight the education factor in the sustainability discourse.

It is my intention to contribute to the theory and practice of leadership at a time when 'leadership qualities in an increasingly chaotic age' are in demand (WU Executive Academy, with reference to Cascio 2020).

Biblical foundations

Numerous biblical scholars have convincingly shown that education in the Bible is not only a topic that is addressed now and then, among other topics, no, the Bible is rather an educational book by its very nature (cf. Breitmaier 2004; Brueggemann 2015; Finsterbusch 2005; Söding 2016). At the same time, it is also undisputed that the Bible documents God's project of realising a flourishing humanity in and with his creation (Beale & Kim 2015; Ott 2005; Sears & Loom 2009; Volf & Croasmun 2019). These two factors alone suggest that the sustainable development of the human race is essentially linked to education.

The importance of the continuity of a flourishing life is made clear in the Old Testament by the frequent formula 'from generation to generation'. This is about sustainability and viability. In a society that did not have the technical knowledge and means that we have today, the exploitation of resources and the destruction of the environment were naturally not yet in focus.

In the tradition, which is to be passed on from generation to generation in the family as well as in the village and nation community, it is clear, however, that the purpose and responsibility of human beings is not only to dominate God's creation but also to cultivate it and keep it. The community of human beings is placed in creation as God's stewards (Gn 1 and 2). This is a commonplace of Christian ethics and does not need to be elaborated on here.

The main concern is to argue that education is not merely necessary to learn certain skills within the overall project of 'sustainability'; education belongs to the essence of sustainability. This becomes clear in the biblical tradition above all in the concept of wisdom.

Biblical wisdom is based on the assumption, 'that God has created and maintained an orderly universe' (Janzen 1994:119). Waldemar Janzen (1982:94; cf. Janzen 1994:119–120) describes the origin of wisdom sayings, as we find them in the Book of Proverbs, as follows:

> They were transmitted from generation to generation, and each encapsulated in its terse form the result of long and perspective observation of the patterns and interrelationships placed into life by God. In this sense, this wisdom, based on empirical observation, constituted the Israelites' natural and social sciences. There is one difference however. While our sciences formulate into laws that must *always* happen in the controlled environment of an experiment, the proverbs of the wise put in focus what will *often* happen in the less controlled setting of daily life. That is the difference between wisdom and science.
>
> Much of this wisdom was 'secular', by our definition, dealing with wealth and poverty, work and leisure, neighborly relations, marriage, agriculture, and other topics. But again, the religious sphere is not separated from daily life.

And later he points to:

> [T]he assumption underlying all wisdom, namely that it is based on observation of the order of *God's* world. And by including such proverbs, the Old Testament acknowledges that revelation of God can indeed come through empirical observation. (Janzen 1982:95)

It can be concluded that the wise person knows and respects these 'laws' of creation and life and orders his/her conduct of life accordingly. It is foolish to disregard these principles of life. The future belongs to the wise, not the foolish. In short: No wisdom! No future!

Furthermore, we should note that wisdom education is more than training for short-term pragmatic action; it is character formation, which means the cultivation of virtues (Janzen 1994:121, 123–125). This leads us to the book of Psalms. It has been argued that the Book of Psalms was not intended merely as a spiritual prayer and songbook for personal and corporate worship, but as a textbook for shaping the next generation in wisdom and character formation (Weber 2005). Beat Weber (2005, 2010, 2016) and others have shown that Psalm 1 must be understood as the gateway to the book of the Psalms. 'The subject is the recitation and memorising of the Torah with a view to its transmission to the following generations' (Weber 2020:193). Here the basic decisions in the formation of the coming generation are made. Not least, it is about the formation of the elite who will later assume leadership responsibility (note the relation of Psalm 1 to Psalm 2, which focusses on the king).

Christoph Stückelberger, founder of Globethics, points to the importance of character education in the context of the current major global challenges in economics, politics and education. In this context, he also draws on the wisdom of the Psalms, especially the virtues listed in Psalm 15, which he formulates in today's terms as follows (Stückelberger 2016):

> This is an excellent description of a truthful person with the eleven following traits: he is rightful, honest and true, he controls his words, he is fair, nonviolent without excess, he does not fear wrongdoers, but follows those who behave truthfully, he keeps his promises, does not let himself being exploited, is free of corruption and is incorruptible. (pp. 319–320)

In addition to the emphasis on continuity through generation-to-generation education, however, flexibility, that is situational adaptability and the innovation required for sustainable development must also be taken into account.

In this context, it is important to observe that wisdom neither means unchanging legal instructions (apodictic legal texts) nor the transmission of laws and regulations that are tied to a specific situation (casuistic legal texts).[1] Wisdom is guided by basic attitudes, values, virtues and character and is open to developments that are necessary in new situations.

This is most obvious in the great epochal transitions in Israel's history: from life as semi-nomads in the desert to

1. The distinction of different legal texts in the Old Testament is explained in detail by Grünwaldt (2011).

settlement in the land and later from national existence to exile. Walter Brueggemann (2001) has convincingly shown how the realisation of shalom is articulated differently in these different epochs. The same can be observed in the organisational structures: the form of a loose confederation of tribes in the desert proved to be deficient in building a nation in the land. Now the form of a monarchy was chosen – with all the risks and side effects. Later – in the exile era – a form of organisation had to be found that corresponded to the diaspora situation.

It is not necessary to go into details here; I just want to show that the understanding of education from generation to generation, as we find it in the biblical tradition, is not a tradition of once and for all defined doctrines and laws. In this connection of continuity and discontinuity lies precisely the character of wisdom. This is how God himself is, whose stability does not consist in some sort of static unchangeableness, but in his thoroughly dynamic and flexible faithfulness. Interestingly, in these developments, God not infrequently proves to be much more innovative and flexible than his people (e.g. when it comes to restructuring into a monarchy).

This fundamental concern to develop a stable yet dynamic tradition through education in a viable and sustainable way can also be observed in the New Testament. When God came into this world in the person of Jesus, he established himself neither as a king (occupying a political office) nor as a priest (occupying a religious office), but as a teacher – he founded a school. He called followers into his school and began to teach them in view of the dawning reign of God. This required a significant rethinking; a radical reorientation. At the same time, Jesus as a teacher stood firmly on the ground of the Hebrew–Jewish tradition, which he himself had received 'from generation to generation'. This becomes clearest in the Sermon on the Mount. Deeply grounded in tradition and with great innovative power, Jesus prepares his disciple for a new era in human history.[2] And again, wisdom and character formation play the central role.[3] Finally, in the well-known Great Commission, Jesus initiates the continuation of his school: the apostles are sent to invite people in all nations to the Jesus school and to teach them to keep all that he has taught (Mt 28:18–20). Paul and the other apostles understood and carried out their mission in precisely this way. It is therefore only logical when Thomas Söding (2016) speaks of Christianity as an 'educational religion'.

The aim was to show that in the biblical narrative, in a simultaneously stable and flexible tradition, viability and sustainability with regard to God's shalom is pursued through education – and wisdom education plays a central role in this.

Starting from these basics, reference is made to contemporary pedagogical and philosophical theories which show examples of how much education and sustainability are interrelated.

'Fitness of purpose' and the education of 'reflective practitioners'

The formula 'fitness for purpose' has become a dominant guiding principle of education in recent decades. John West-Burnham (2005:323) called it 'the most powerful axiom of the quality movement'. However, it was rightly criticised that 'fitness for purpose' 'operates within the boundaries set by the purpose itself, and so it is totally dependent on how well the latter has been framed and constructed' (Lester 1999a:104). Consequently, the 'fitness *of* purpose' will have to be defined first. For a long time, the fitness of purpose of education was based on the assumption that the future must be shaped according to the same principles as the past. It was therefore assumed that people would be well equipped for the future if they learned how the past was successfully managed (cf. Lester 1999b). In this worldview, the emphasis is on continuity. Now, however, it has long since become clear that we are in the midst of massive processes of change and transitions. We observe discontinuity at all levels. This reality is already evident in the terms Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity (VUCA), which have been in use since the 1980s, and in the terms Brittle, Anxious, Non-linear and Incomprehensible (BANI), which have become even more prevalent since 2020, as the way people experience the world at the beginning of the 21st century.[4] One consequence of this is that education, too, can no longer be primarily concerned with continuity; rather, it must face the challenges of discontinuity.

Already at the end of last century educators have pointed to these educational challenges, such as Stan Lester (1999b:45–53), who introduced the metaphor 'from map-readers to map-makers' to describe the required shift in education. For education to be sustainable and fit for the future, it is not enough to be able to read the maps of the past; education must enable people to design their own maps on unknown terrain. We therefore need – according to Lester and many with him – education that makes us fit to navigate successfully on uncharted territory. This requires a reversal of traditional notions of education. Practice is not the place where known and learned theories and ways of acting are applied; practice is the place where theories and ways of acting are discovered and generated.

It should be clearly observed that Lester does not neglect the importance of the maps acquired in the tradition (1999b:47–48). Map-reading is of great importance as a guidance structure that helps to understand a particular professional field and to read new situations in the light of previous experience. There is always continuity in the midst of change. However, this map-reading competence will not

2. Beautifully presented by Lesslie Newbigin in his lectures at the World Council of Churches (1980).

3. I have dealt with the significance of the Sermon on the Mount for a Christian understanding of education in detail elsewhere (Ott 2021).

4. The acronym BANI and the theory it represents go back to Jamais Cascio especially his initial publication on the framework in March 2020 (see https://ageofbani.com/, viewed 05 December 2022).

be sufficient to act sustainably on new terrain. It must progress to map-making.

This discussion about map-reading and map-making takes place in the context of the discourse on the 'Reflective Practitioner'. This term has multiple meanings in education.[5] It is often understood as practitioners reflecting *on* their practice. It is then about the reflection *of* practice. In the learning process, reflection *on* practice follows the action. Originally, however, the concept probably goes back to the American philosopher Donald Schön, who explained in his classic book *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983–2016) how professionals think *in* action. Here the focus is on reflection *in* action. Schön argues that professionals not only apply theories in action, and they not only reflect on action afterwards, they reflect and create theories *in* action – while they are acting. A key concept in this connection is tacit or implicit knowledge. People 'know' how it works and what to do in a new and unexpected situation without consciously 'knowing' it in terms of articulated theories.

In this context, it has also been asked whether the term 'competence', which is often used today, is helpful. Some have suggested that it would be better to speak of 'capability' (O'Reilly, Cunningham & Lester 1999). Much will probably depend on how these terms are defined. It has been suggested (Nagarajan & Prabhuto 2015) to define competency as 'the possession of the skills, knowledge and capacity to fulfil **Current** needs', while capability 'focuses on the ability to develop and flex to meet **Future** needs'.[6] In other words if the term 'competence' only refers to the sensible and responsible application of existing knowledge and skills, it is certainly not enough. The dimension of innovative generation of sustainable action and knowledge in new situations must be included.

Without going deeper into the expert discussion on these educational concepts here, we can say that education for sustainable practice must point beyond the learning of already-known theories, skills and competences. People must be empowered to act responsibly and in a sustainable manner on as yet unexplored territory. This is an educational challenge that is still largely ahead of us.

What we know, however, is the fact that knowledge and skills, competences and capability will not be sufficient to lead the church, economy and society into the future in a sustainable way. We need to address deeper layers, such as character and paradigms. And we need to ask what contribution education makes to shaping these deeper levels.

Cultivating virtues and character

It is an ancient wisdom in all cultures that a flourishing society is based on the cultivation of virtues and character. In recent decades, there has been a renewed interest in character education. It is not surprising that we ask about these deeper

levels of our inner drives especially in times of crisis. When the Jew Martin Buber left Germany for Jerusalem in 1938 to help build a Jewish society, he formulated the importance of education in a memorable lecture on *The Education of Character*, and he starts with the statement (1947):

> Education worthy of the name is essentially education of character. For the genuine educator does not merely consider individual functions of his pupil, as one intending to teach him only to know or be capable of certain definite things; but his concern is always the person as a whole. (p. 104)

Only a few years later, in 1943, Dietrich Bonhoeffer formulated the famous text 'After Ten Years' (1953:13–27) in which he asks the serious question: 'Are we still useful'? Bonhoeffer does not use the terms virtues and character explicitly, but he speaks precisely of them when he says:

> It is not the genius that we shall need, not the cynic, not the misanthropist, not the adroit tactician, but honest, straightforward men. Will our spiritual reserves prove adequate and our candour with ourselves remorseless enough to enable us to find our way back again to simplicity and straightforwardness? (p. 27)

In the same year (1943), C.S. Lewis gave his remarkable lecture at Durham University under the title 'The Abolition of Man' (1944). He clearly points out that a humanity that relies only on reason and feelings will ultimately be abolished. He speaks of a human being 'without chest', that is without heart.[7] What he calls for is once again the cultivation of virtues and character through appropriate education.

The list of examples could go on. It becomes clear. In crisis situations, people ask more urgently than usual how the future can be shaped sustainably, and it seems clear that the level of virtues and character must be addressed. So we can already say that knowledge and technology will not be enough to shape the future in a sustainable way. We will have to turn to the question of character formation.

In recent times, philosophers, theologians and ethicists have reminded us of the importance of character formation, most notably Stanley Hauerwas (1975) and Alasdair MacIntyre (1981), followed by a multitude of contributions that have specified the importance of virtues and character for the sustainable development of humanity in all spheres of life (cf. Oxenham 2013, 2019; Wright 2010).

In connection with the topic of this volume, I would like to draw particular attention to the contribution by Globethics. This international network, founded by the Swiss theologian Christoph Stückelberger, is – as the name suggests – particularly concerned with the ethical dimension of sustainability efforts. A wealth of 'courses, publications, collections and resources' are available online in the network's extensive library.[8]

5. The different variations of the formula are discussed in Berman Brown and McCartney (1999).

6. Bold in the original.

7. In the title of chapter one, he uses the term 'chest'; however, in the text itself he more often uses 'heart'.

8. This statement is only in the German text he delivered as a lecture at the University of Basel, 02 November 2016. Unpublished manuscript. Translation by this author. (p. 12)

At this point, reference is made to two publications that were among various contributions to the Third Annual International Conference on Sustainability, SusCon III in Shillong, India, have been published under the title *Sustainability Ethics. Ecology, Economy and Ethics* (eds. Mukherjee & Stückelberger 2015). With regard to the interface between sustainable leadership and education, two articles are worth mentioning. First, Sharad R. Kulkarni, Sharwari S. Kulkarni in 'Responsible Managment Education. An Emerging Tool for Sustainability' (2014) present the result of an empirical study on the implementation of responsible management education (RME) in business schools. The study shows some awareness among faculty and students of issues related to ethical and moral aspects, but compared with the other contents of the curriculum, ethical practices are rated as the least important factor. In addition, a weakness in the design of the study is that it only asks about factual topics in the curriculum. The deeper aspects of cultivating virtues and character are not addressed at all. This would go beyond the analysis of factual content (knowledge and skills), assessing the willingness to let inner attitudes and convictions be changed.

Second, Mike Thompson, in his essay, entitled 'From Knowing and Doing to Being: New Path for the Personal Dimension of Sustainability in Management Education' (2015), presses on. Under the heading of 'personal sustainability', he addresses a holistic development of the person who takes into account the physiological, psychological and spiritual needs of the individual. First of all, it is about 'lifestyle vulnerability' and an 'overloaded lifestyle' that leads to 'sub-optimal performance' and 'burnout'. That all sounds rather pragmatic. Later, Thompson goes further by emphasising being beyond knowing and doing. With reference to Polanyi, he introduces the term 'tacit knowledge' and emphasises the importance of 'spiritual reality'. In this context, he also mentions values, attitudes and virtues that must be part of a 'whole person education'. He admits that pedagogical implementation is difficult. How should and can these dimensions be incorporated into the curriculum?

These two contributions are indicators of a growing interest in business education in issues of personal sustainability and ethics. These areas are seen as fundamental to sustainability. However, these approaches still fall far short of what Buber, Bonhoeffer, Lewis and others mean by character building.

Values and virtues are explicitly addressed in the volume edited by Christoph Stückelberger, Walter Fust and Obiora Ike, *Global Ethics for Leadership: Values and Virtues for Life* (2016). In his contribution, Stückelberger makes it unmistakably clear that laws, regulations and ordinances have their relative importance, but that they remain external controls and are not capable of bringing about sustainable change. They are merely damage limitation measures. What we need, says Stückelberger, is character education that starts with internal control, that is with the cultivation of virtues. In 23 chapters, values and virtues are presented and discussed that are fundamental for a just and sustainable development of the world.

It is time to summarise the argument of this section. Education for sustainability, which only operates on the level of knowledge and instructions for action, tends to instrumentalise education for the purposes of certain ideas of sustainability. Moreover, such educational measures often remain at the level of external control. Certain actions should be avoided or done, because otherwise there is the threat of misfortune (punishment) or, on the other hand, the promise of benefit (reward). Pedagogically speaking, this is behaviourism and it remains superficial. The authors presented in this chapter – from Martin Buber to Christoph Stückelberger – call for character formation that works deeper into the being of the person.

With regard to education and sustainable leadership, the thoughts of the Austrian Catholic philosopher and theologian, Clemens Sedmak, may be helpful (2012:99–100). He suggests distinguishing between 'cooperative goods' (become more through sharing) and 'competitive goods' (become less through sharing). In other words, quantitative goods, which are available in limited quantities, decrease for the individual when he or she shares. At the same time, however, qualitative goods such as satisfaction, happiness, participation, solidarity and ultimately quality of life increase through sharing. Following a phrase by Hans-Georg Gadamer, Sedmak states that culture is constituted by those goods that are increased through sharing. Consequently, Sedmak calls for the cultivation of 'cooperative attitudes' and 'cooperative virtues' in view of a flourishing life in community. This is exactly what sustainability is – and it makes clear that character education must be a crucial factor in education for sustainability.

This requires what we may call a paradigm shift and mastering paradigmatic changes is exactly another essential ingredient of sustainability education.

Successfully mastering paradigm shifts

In theological terms, education is seen in the context of human destiny (Preul 2013:74–80). This means that the goal and path of education must be defined from a biblical anthropology. This understands the destiny and purpose of humanity within the framework of God's plan with his creation (Schneider-Flume 2013:11–15). In this history the task and the responsibility of humanity is to cultivate creation in relation to the Creator. In the language of the first chapters of the Bible: the expansion from Eden to the end of the earth (Beale & Kim 2015). The connection to the mission of the Christian church in Acts 1 is obvious. The biblical narrative reveals that this history of God with humanity is experienced as a process characterised by purpose, continuity and change.

For example, in his book *Peace* (2001), Walter Brueggemann convincingly shows how shalom as a continuum of biblical salvation history is configured differently in the different eras of Israel's history. For the Hebrew 'have-nots' in Egypt, shalom meant first and foremost deliverance and

becoming a covenant community. For the 'haves' in the monarchy period, it meant gift and responsibility. In exile, one had to learn to engage in a diaspora situation for peace in a foreign land.

This path of Israel, which finds its continuation in the New Testament, is a learning journey. Israel had to learn to sustainably realise God's mission in ever new and changing contexts. The shaping of change processes is therefore one of the central purposes and contents of education. To stay with the example of shalom we can say: It was the task of wisdom education to enable people to hold on to the vision of shalom on the one hand and at the same time to reconfigure what this means in concrete terms in ever new contexts. In today's educational language, education must enable people to shape paradigm shifts responsibly and sustainably.

This leads us to paradigm shift theories. These usually tie in with Thomas S. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (1970). Hans Küng has applied Kuhn's theory to the history of theology (1984) and David Bosch has adopted it as the basic framework for his account of developments in the theology of mission (1991:181–189). Kuhn's theory obviously has the potential to show realities of change processes and to provide tools for a responsible shaping of change processes. However, his theory focuses primarily on revolutionary changes, that is on the replacement of old paradigms that have become obsolete by new paradigms that replace them. This may be true in the case of paradigm shifts in scientific theories, but it cannot do full justice to the historical developments of communities.

Alasdair MacIntyre has carried Kuhn's theory further in that he argues that paradigmatic shifts take place within the framework of traditions, and that they include what he calls a 'reconstruction' of the narrative of a given tradition. There is, according to MacIntyre, a 'rationality of tradition' which allows such a reconstruction of the narrative and 'epistemological crises are occasions for such reconstruction' (1977:456, 464).

The author has been working with Kuhn's and MacIntyre's paradigm theories for several decades (cf. Ott 2001:294–315) and his conviction has grown that McIntyre's theory of tradition-based reconstruction processes in particular is very helpful in understanding and justifying sustainable educational processes.

In the light of MacIntyre's theory, it can be said that the task of educational processes is (among other things) to enable a community to reconfigure its identity and action-determining narrative in such a way as to ensure the sustainable development of that community.

One can speak of an epistemological crisis when the current narrative is no longer able to provide identity and orientation for action in new and changed contexts. This requires – according to MacIntyre – a 'reconstruction of the narrative' in such a way that, on the one hand, the historical continuity of the community is preserved and, on the other hand, identity and orientation for action are re-established in the new context.

There are several stumbling blocks on this path. On the one hand, a reconfigured paradigm can break off any reference to the history of a community and thus lose sight of its historical purpose and mission. On the other hand, we observe constructed narratives that seek to justify the status quo in order to protect the community from changes. MacIntyre speaks of 'invented epistemological defences' and of 'degenerate traditions'. Such traditions are not able to develop sustainably. They lack the wisdom that would make them fit for the future.

Some aspects of MacIntyre's theory in broad brushstrokes have been outlined here that can show that sustainable change processes are complex entities that require careful and competent leadership. Education must aim at cultivating such competences.

Conclusion

Based on a biblical understanding of the destiny of human beings as God's stewards in creation and an understanding of community, tradition and change, I have tried to show that education is essential for sustainability. In biblical terms, it is about wisdom education. This leads to the definition of education as the transmission of wisdom from generation to generation, with the purpose of making the flourishing life of a community possible in the long term. Based on the biblical findings, it also became clear that wisdom education was focused on the formation of the next generation of leaders.

This basic theological thesis was brought into conversation with contemporary discourses in education and philosophy. The result can be summarised as follows: education that serves sustainability is more than imparting knowledge and more than acquiring skills. It is about human formation in the best sense of the word. The focus is on the formation of reflective practitioners, the cultivation of virtues and character, and the acquisition of the competence to understand and lead paradigm shifts through a healthy reconstruction of the narrative of a given community. In this context, the formation of leaders has an outstanding and priority importance (cf. the publications of Globethics.net).

With this, the hope is to show how essential education is for sustainability. In short: No wisdom – no future and no education – no wisdom.

Based on this insights, it becomes evident, that the education factor deserves highest attention in the sustainability discussion. It is not just a matter of addressing the issue of sustainability in education or advocating for the sustainability of educational institutions. It is about education as a whole serving to cultivate wise people who live responsible lives in all their being and actions, aimed at a healthy development of the human community in God's creation from generation to generation.

At this point, of course, the question must arise as to how all this can be achieved. Are we talking about the humanly possible or do we need resources beyond the humanly possible? It cannot be overlooked that even in the secular discourse on sustainability we observe talk about 'spiritual resources'. A recent example is Günter Banzhaf's book *So entsteht Zukunft* (2021). Banzhaf was involved in the establishment and development of Oikocredit, a cooperation for sustainable investment, as early as the 1980s. In his latest publication, he argues that the necessary turnaround in sustainability can only be achieved if we turn to the spiritual and religious resources of humanity. Is this to be interpreted as an indicator that there is a growing realisation that human beings have reached the limits of their abilities and possibilities?

What can and must be the contribution of the Christian faith to this? Christoph Stückelberger of Globethics put it this way in a public lecture given at the University of Basel a few years ago:[9]

> The specifically Christian contribution lies not so much in the content of these virtues as in enabling believers to live integrity out of the liberating promise of God's blessing, out of the courage and inner independence that comes from the Christ relationship and with the energy and certainty of the Holy Spirit.

This could very well be a leading statement for sustainability education on Christian foundations.

Acknowledgements

9. https://www.globethics.net/home.

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