

HIGHER EDUCATION AS A FACTOR TO ENSURE HUMAN RIGHTS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETY

A EDUCAÇÃO SUPERIOR COMO FATOR DE GARANTIA DOS DIREITOS HUMANOS E DO DESENVOLVIMENTO SUSTENTÁVEL DA SOCIEDADE

Article received on: 7/18/2025

Article accepted on: 9/19/2025

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest

Abstract

The purpose of the study is to substantiate principles of importance of higher education in ensuring human rights and sustainable development of society in modern conditions. Methodological basis of the study to determine relevance of higher education in ensuring human

Resumo

O objetivo do estudo é fundamentar os princípios da importância do ensino superior na garantia dos direitos humanos e no desenvolvimento sustentável da sociedade nas condições modernas. A base metodológica do estudo para determinar a relevância do ensino superior na



rights and formation of sustainable development of society is the methodology of systemic and human-centered approaches, which do not contradict and complement each other, providing an opportunity to more thoroughly approach to the essence and clarify the role of higher education in formation of sustainable development of society. A vector for the higher education modernization is proposed to implement principles of sustainable development, taking into account harmonization of three components, which include as follows: improving institutional principles of the higher education development, taking into account the best practices of the world educational community and national characteristics; forming effective strategies to ensure sustainable development at the university level, as well as forming competencies of highly qualified specialists through inclusion of sustainable development principles in educational programs and educational components. Harmonization of the outlined areas at the state level, the higher education system and the learning process gives impetus to ensure human rights and establishment of sustainable development by increasing the awareness level of sustainable development principles; understanding the depth of the issues of meeting individual and social needs.

Keywords: Higher Education. Human Rights. Sustainable Development. Systemic Approach. Human-Centered Approach. Institutional Support for the Higher Education Development. Strategies of the University Development.

garantia dos direitos humanos e na formação do desenvolvimento sustentável da sociedade é a metodologia de abordagens sistêmicas e centradas no ser humano, que não se contradizem e se complementam, proporcionando uma oportunidade para uma abordagem mais aprofundada da essência e esclarecimento do papel do ensino superior na formação do desenvolvimento sustentável da sociedade. Um vetor para a modernização do ensino superior é proposto para implementar os princípios do desenvolvimento sustentável, levando em consideração a harmonização de três componentes, que incluem o seguinte: aprimorar os princípios institucionais do desenvolvimento do ensino superior, considerando as melhores práticas da comunidade educacional mundial e as características nacionais; formular estratégias eficazes para garantir o desenvolvimento sustentável no nível universitário, bem como formar competências de especialistas altamente qualificados por meio da inclusão dos princípios do desenvolvimento sustentável em programas e componentes educacionais. A harmonização das áreas delineadas em nível estadual, o sistema de ensino superior e o processo de aprendizagem impulsionam a garantia dos direitos humanos e o estabelecimento do desenvolvimento sustentável, aumentando o nível de conscientização sobre os princípios do desenvolvimento sustentável; Compreendendo a profundidade das questões de atendimento às necessidades individuais e sociais.

Palavras-chave: Ensino Superior. Direitos Humanos. Desenvolvimento Sustentável. Abordagem Sistêmica. Abordagem Centrada no Ser Humano. Apoio Institucional ao Desenvolvimento do Ensino Superior. Estratégias de Desenvolvimento Universitário.

1 INTRODUCTION

The higher education system plays a key role in social development, well-being of people, state of culture and spirituality in society, further socio-economic and security development of systems at all levels from the enterprise to the country depend on it. Issues of higher education are interdisciplinary, it is studied by representatives of legal, economic, philosophical, pedagogical and other sciences. Modern trends in the society development in the post-industrial direction in accordance with sustainable development

principles are increasingly relevant to the issue of increasing efficiency of higher education, since there is a gap between the higher education system and the labor market, demand for innovative, modern specialties and graduates - university specialists, establishing density of relationships between stakeholders and higher education institutions. Transformational global changes of technological determinism, urbanization, formation of society of mass consumption and production, which led to depletion and pollution of the ecosystem, have posed challenges to public community in overcoming crisis phenomena, environmental problems, and careful attitude to natural resources. This led to formation of the sustainable development concept, which focuses on ensuring sustainable economic and social development, taking into account careful attitude to the environment. Higher education plays a major role in ensuring human rights and adhering to sustainable development principles. Higher education serves as the basis for formation of intellectual potential, as it indirectly contributes to improving the quality of life of the population and economic development.

The purpose of the study is to substantiate principles of relevance higher education in ensuring human rights and sustainable development of society in modern conditions.

To achieve the outlined goal, the authors set and achieved a number of tasks, in particular:

- proving timeliness and feasibility of the research, supported by an in-depth analysis of publication activity of the international community;
- identification of the methodological basis of research on the higher education relevnec in ensuring human rights and formation of sustainable development of society, based on the methodology of systemic and human-centered approaches;
- determining direction of the higher education system towards advanced, innovative development and continuity, as well as functions of universities;
- justification of the higher education modernization in terms of implementing sustainable development principles, taking into account harmonization of the improvement of the institutional foundations of the higher education development, formation of effective strategies to ensure sustainable development at the university level, as well as formation of competencies of highly qualified specialists to ensure establishment of sustainable development.

2 METHODOLOGY

The methodological basis for studying the role of higher education in ensuring human rights and sustainable development is the systemic and human-centered approach. The systemic approach is due to the fact that higher education is a system of many interconnected and interacting elements and meets all signs of systemicity. The extensive system of universities interacts: with each other, with foreign partners, stakeholders, employers, government structures and organizations, national and regional socio-economic systems. At the same time, the higher education system is characterized by features as follows: common goal of functioning; integrity, which determines mutual influence of common development of all components of the system-forming elements of higher education; signs of orderliness of interconnected elements; emergence; structuring, which is manifested in possible dividing the higher education system into components, as well as the fact that the higher system is a component element of higher-order systems. It is also important that functioning of higher education as a system provides possible obtaining of synergistic effect for the society development as a whole.

At the same time, sustainable development also represents a system in the form of interaction of social, economic and environmental components, where an important element is interconnection and interaction of these three components. Making unbalanced decisions, for example, in the economic subsystem without taking into account the impact on other subsystems, leads to negative manifestations in social development and poses the threat to existence and satisfaction of needs of future generations. Researching the higher education role in ensuring human rights and formation of sustainable development of society from the standpoint of the systemic approach makes it possible to ensure the balance of interests, harmonious combination of interaction of higher education with economic interests of man, business, social needs and environmental requirements in accordance with sustainable development principles.

Human-centeredness today is the main condition for the higher education functioning, which is due to democratization and humanization of requirements for the future specialist, his self-sufficiency and competencies acquired during his studies at the university. Only by adhering to the human-centered methodological approach in the higher education system can one achieve high self-realization of the individual in all spheres of life. The human-centered approach is the driver of changes in higher education,

improving its quality, and constantly searching for something new in providing higher education services to reveal and realize potential of the individual. Under conditions of adhering to the methodology of the human-centered approach in higher education, one can achieve the way of life of the individual, which is aimed at continuous self-development, constant improvement, and realization of latent opportunities in achieving sustainable development principles.

The systemic and human-centered approaches do not contradict, but only complement each other, providing an opportunity to more thoroughly approach to the essence and role of higher education in ensuring formation of sustainable development of society.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of higher education in social development at present stage has transformed from a narrowly pragmatic task of training highly qualified specialists for various spheres of life to transformation of higher education into the determining factor in the civilization development. Well-being of the population, secure development of socio-economic systems at all levels, as well as provision of human rights and establishment of sustainable development depend on higher education functioning, which determines relevance of scientific research in this area.

Mendelson S.E. (2025) note that innovation in higher education is an important topic that will contribute to raising the next generation that will ensure human rights and sustainable development even after 2030. Tibbitts F. (2024) are convinced that the human rights mission includes regular university policies focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. According to scholars, the human rights-oriented university is a university that will implement changes focusing on deep transformations that will allow the university to achieve its core goals of fostering values including respect, empathy, equality, and solidarity, and promoting active citizenship to meet pressing needs of society.

According to scholars (Calvin Swords et al., 2024), incorporating human rights-based approaches into mental health service delivery is essential to support recovery of service users and their family members/carers/supporters. Scholars (Skadegård C.M., 2024) analyze ways of navigating and understanding discrimination and racism in Danish higher education. Scholars rely on structural discrimination as the analytical framework

and human rights as international common starting point for defining and identifying discrimination.

Jorge Antonio Contreras Domínguez (2024) demonstrated effectiveness of Lego Serious Play as educational innovation in higher education. According to researchers, intervention aims to bridge the gap in collaborative methodologies within humanities and equip students with skills necessary to identify, analyze, and propose solutions to social problems. Popelo O. et al. (2024; Popelo O. et al. (2023; Marhasova V. et al. (2023) consider various aspects of universities digitalization in the context of development of digital technologies and within the sustainable development concept.

Waddington L. (2023) review 70 opinions in this area and examine whether persons with certain forms of disability or chronic conditions are overrepresented in the cases brought; the main areas in which cases of disability discrimination in the higher education context have arisen; and types of discrimination at issue. Harpur P. (2023) note that, guided by anti-discrimination laws and a desire to protect human rights, universities have made strategic efforts to support their students with disabilities and have provided some support to their staff with disabilities. The authors analyze attempts of the Australian institution to use existing structures in disability discrimination laws to provide leadership opportunities for people with disabilities as a blueprint for further change.

Heryansyah Despan (2023) investigates specificities of realization of human rights for people with physical and non-physical disabilities in education at six universities in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. It focuses on barriers faced by people with disabilities. Monteiro S.S. et al. (2023) have directed research towards promoting knowledge of what human rights are, their meaning, inherent values and principles, the main legal instruments that proclaim and protect them, and their importance and focus in general and specific contexts, mainly educational and social contexts.

Shevchuk N. et al. (2021); Tulchynska S. et al. (2021) investigate transformation of industrial parks into eco-industrial ones in the sustainable development context and the role of higher education institutions in these processes. Tibbitts F. (2024) examine application of human rights in higher education through critical lens, combining theoretical and applied perspectives, and establish what the human rights framework based on liberation and justice can offer for ways of working and teaching practices in higher education. The authors note that human rights call for continuous critical engagement around the project on higher education transformation.

Nag Shivani. (2022) explore experiences of students entering higher education in India from disadvantaged backgrounds, focusing on language as an important factor shaping their participation in the educational process. The authors argue that recognizing linguistic human rights at multiple levels of education is essential for education to be democratic, socially just, and transformative. Beck Jonathan C. (2021) examine issues in the area of socio-economic rights by analyzing mobilization of human rights law in the German civil society movement against tuition fees. The authors rely on the content analysis of movement and political party documents, court decisions and news reports, as well as semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Prats Emilio Lecuona (2021) are convinced that strategies on human rights teaching remain the problem at the university.

However, despite existing publications, the higher education development as a factor to ensure human rights and sustainable development of society requires in-depth further analysis.

4 RESULTS

The higher education system today has determining influence on further development of society due to its direct functions of influencing transmission and assimilation of social values, norms, social experience, culture, etc. Ensuring formation of competencies in future specialists in accordance with sustainable development principles makes it possible to obtain synergistic effect for further social development through meeting needs in the environmentally sound and socially acceptable manner both in current period and in the future. A competitive, highly professional, responsible specialist today must be socially mature and environmentally conscious, oriented towards activity in a market economy without violating and destroying opportunities for future generations to meet their needs.

The previously outlined methodology of human-centered and systemic approaches to higher education makes it possible to adhere to principles to ensure human rights. International documents, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as the Constitutions of states, declare requirements for accessibility of higher education, taking into account inclusiveness for all segments of the population, providing opportunities for

people to obtain knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary for full life in society. Higher education contributes to development of critical thinking, including in relation to principles of ensuring human rights and implementation of sustainable development principles, which increases activity of people to protect their rights and rights of others, to ensure justice, and contributes to formation of active citizens ready to participate in democratic processes. Also, higher education contributes to formation of the active public position, which activates participation in political and democratic processes, and determines development of civil society organizations, forming the educated, active and responsible society.

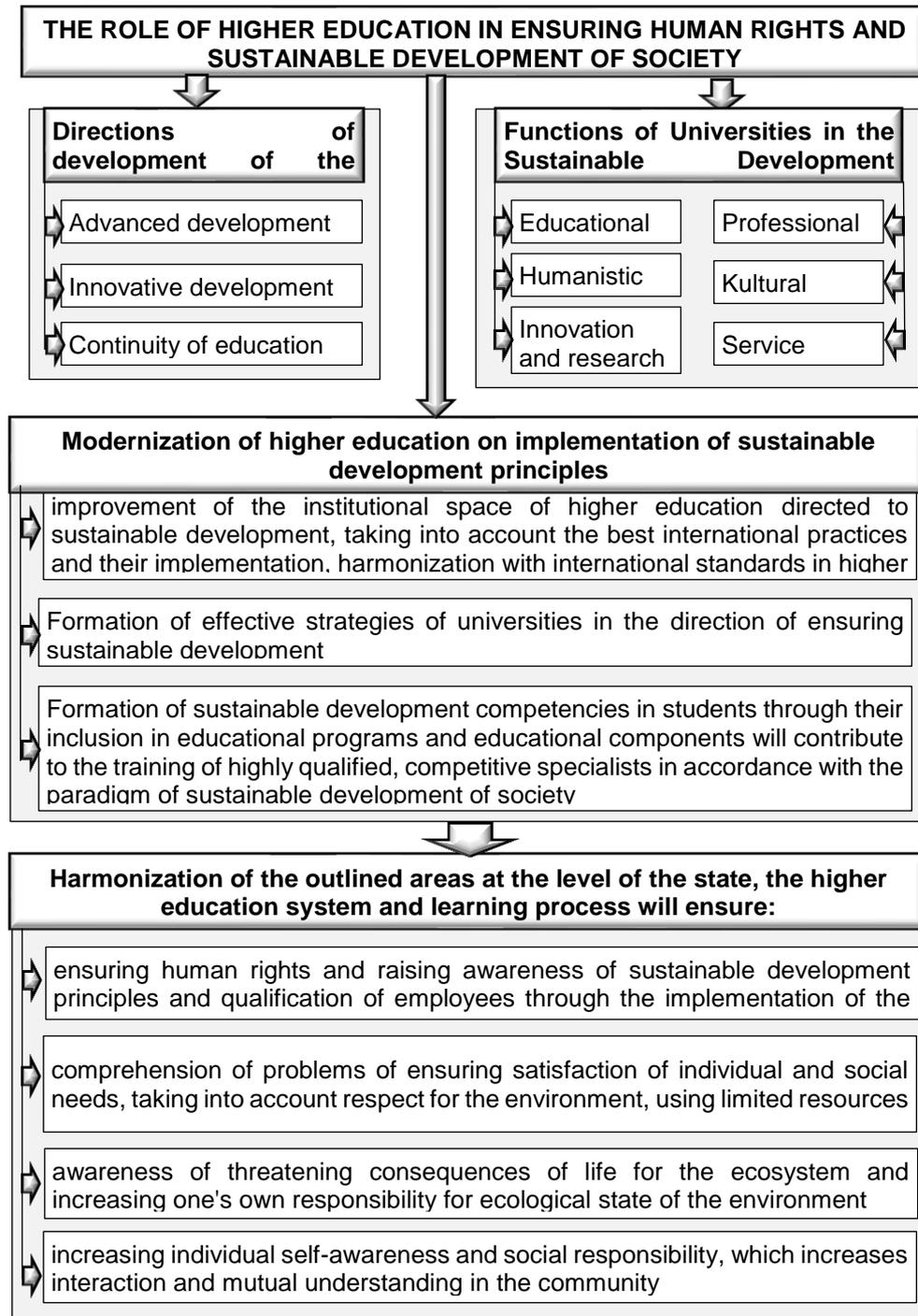
Therefore, higher education is a significant factor in ensuring human rights, forming democratic society and contributing to strengthening legal status of a person, as well as forming global consciousness and understanding of importance of sustainable development.

The higher education system today is developing in the following directions (Fig. 1):

- proactive development, which consists in rapid adaptation of higher education to changes in the labor market and ensuring training of specialists in accordance with realities of social development, as well as forecasting necessary specialties to meet the future demand of employers for labor resources of certain qualifications;
- innovative development, which involves implementation of innovative modern educational projects with participation of authorities, international partners, business, public organizations, public institutions, and stakeholders;
- continuity: community has long since changed the slogan "lifelong education" to "lifelong education" and only lifelong continuous education ensures competitiveness of an individual, gives opportunity to change, improve their qualifications, and acquire new competencies in accordance with rapid changes of progress and social development.

Figure 1

The role of higher education in ensuring human rights and sustainable development of Society



Source: developed by the authors

Modern universities in the sustainable development context are multifunctional and simultaneously aimed at the following functions:

- educational, which is at the origins of the higher education formation in terms of preserving and transferring scientific knowledge and culture to the younger generation;
- innovative research, which expands possibilities of finding truth by conducting scientific research in various fields of science;
- professional, which involves formation of students' competencies in training highly qualified specialists in various fields of economic activity;
- service, which is manifested in provision of various services, production of various analytical materials, performance of expert assessments and developments;
- cultural, which involves formation of intellectual abilities, development of potential opportunities of future specialists,
- humanistic, which consists in forming students' knowledge about fundamental concepts, theories, and adoption of basic social values.

The set of outlined functions of universities and their implementation through formation of scientific schools, interaction with business and government bodies ensure achievement of strategic priorities for sustainable development of society.

Advanced and innovative development, continuity enable higher education to meet society's needs for highly qualified competitive specialists who meet social demands, including in sustainable development.

Modernization of higher education to implement sustainable development principles should cover three areas:

- first, improving the national institutional space of higher education in direction of sustainable development, taking into account the best international practices and their implementation, harmonization with international standards in higher education. In this context, modernization of national higher education should combine humanistic national traditions and the best practices of foreign experience in the higher education development. This contributes to improving the quality of education and formation of the competitive model of the higher education system and its integration in the international market. This combination of the best national and world practices will contribute to formation of young generation of specialists, taking into account demands of society and needs of socio-economic systems of different levels in the direction of ensuring sustainable development;

- second, formation of effective strategies in the direction of ensuring sustainable development of universities. Institutional support for the higher education modernization should be based on practical effectiveness and be part of the general policy of implementing the sustainable development concept and higher education development. For example, at one of the leading universities of Ukraine, the National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute", the University Development Strategy for 2025-2030 is harmonized with the Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in Ukraine for 2022-2032 and with the European Strategy for Universities. The University strategy is aimed at adaptation of the University to transformational changes of the changing environment and development of the University towards becoming a center of innovative development aimed at solving social, economic and environmental problems both at the national level and in the international arena. The University Strategy declares “the mission is to implement scientific, educational and innovative potential of the University to achieve sustainable development goals of society, high-tech transformation of the state and strengthening its defense capability...” (Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute, 2024). This combination declares not only creation of foundations for formation of socially responsible specialists, but also importance and irreplaceability of sustainable development as determining concept of social development. In addition, the University has a “Strategy for Sustainable Development of Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute for 2023-2028”, according to which the University implements the sustainable development concept within the framework of educational, scientific and educational activities. The goal of this Strategy is “to provide students with a set of relevant knowledge and skills necessary to understand their role in achieving sustainable development goals both in the professional sphere and at the personal level” (Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute, 2025). Under conditions of this harmonious combination of international and state level strategies with University strategies, constant analysis of current situation and challenges, positive result of higher education's participation in establishment of sustainable development is achieved;

third, the focus on activating intellectual potential in higher education in accordance with principles of humanism for harmonious development of a person, formation of competencies of highly qualified specialists and social responsibility, which will contribute to sustainable development. Higher education forms integrative thinking regarding further process of cognition and development of the individual, therefore

sustainable development principles should be included in all educational programs of all levels as a component of constant, continuous learning and education of the individual. This will ensure formation of the higher education system in interests of sustainable development of society. In addition, in this direction, it is important to fill the content of educational programs of all levels with thematic components that reflect principles of achieving sustainable development in society. Formation of competencies in students of future specialists in their chosen specialties, capable of generating and implementing creative, innovative solutions in accordance with the main principles of the sustainable development concept of society. Cohesion of society around issues of achieving sustainable development goals is possible by forming humanistic worldview among university students, developing critical thinking, and cultivating values of civil society in accordance with sustainable development principles.

Modernization of higher education in the direction of harmonizing improvement of national institutional support for higher education in accordance with the sustainable development concept, taking into account the best practices of the global community and national characteristics, with formation of effective strategies for achieving sustainable development goals of universities and formation of sustainable development competencies in students through inclusion in educational programs and educational components will contribute to training of highly qualified, competitive specialists in accordance with the paradigm of formation of sustainable development of society.

Harmonization of the outlined directions at the state level, the higher education system, and the learning process provides an impetus for establishment of sustainable development due to:

- increasing awareness of sustainable development principles and employee qualifications through implementation of the lifelong learning concept, which has positive impact on labor productivity, increasing intellectual potential, increasing efficiency of the use of intangible factors of production, promoting caring attitude towards the ecosystem, which overall leads to increase in the rate of economic growth based on sustainability;
- helping a person understand issues of ensuring satisfaction of individual and social needs, taking into account careful attitude towards the environment and using limited resources;

- awareness of threatening consequences of life activities for the ecosystem and increasing personal responsibility for ecological state, which positively affects environmentally conscious behavior of the individual;
- increasing individual self-awareness and social responsibility, which improves interaction and mutual understanding in the community.

Higher education is aimed not only at producing highly qualified specialists in accordance with needs of the labor market, but also at developing the individual, his spiritual, cultural, cognitive, intellectual, creative abilities in accordance with sustainable development principles. This reveals the axiological function of higher education, which consists in introducing ideological, political, legal, cultural, moral, aesthetic, environmental and other values in the learning process. In turn, the outlined values reveal the essence of personality, social position, beliefs, and views of the individual in his everyday life, creative and professional activities.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the higher education system plays decisive role in future life of society, shaping its further democratic prospects, including in the direction of sustainable development. Future development of the state depends on intellectual potential, accumulated knowledge, and ability to generate new knowledge, which determines relevance of higher education in sustainable development of society.

Scientific novelty of the study lies in substantiation, using the methodology of systemic and human-centered approaches, of the role of higher education in ensuring human rights and establishment of sustainable development, which involves directing higher education towards advanced, innovative development and continuity, taking into account multifunctionality of universities, as well as modernization of higher education in the direction of harmonious improvement of the national institutional support for development of higher education with formation of effective strategies to achieve sustainable development goals of universities and formation of sustainable development competencies in students through inclusion in educational programs and educational components, which will contribute to obtaining synergistic effect in ensuring establishment of sustainable development of society.

Further scientific developments require improvement of methodological approaches to assessing the impact of higher education on development of the social, economic, and environmental components of the national economy.

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Authors' Contribution

Both authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

How to cite this article (APA):

Melnychenko, A., Derhaliuk, M., Pohrebniak, A., Oliinyk, Y., Svynarenko, D., & Derevianko, D. (2025). HIGHER EDUCATION AS A FACTOR TO ENSURE HUMAN RIGHTS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETY. *Veredas Do Direito*, 22(2), e223473. <https://doi.org/10.18623/rvd.v22.n2.3473>