



TOWARDS OTHER SUSTAINABILITY IN SCHOOL: BRIEF REFLECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The aim is to reflect on the neglected sustainability in the school curriculum, aiming to redirect it to learning towards socio-ecological sustainability. The reflections followed a qualitative research strategy, using sources and methodological procedures such as a survey of theoretical references, documentary research and investigative experiences of the researcher. The results achieved suggest that this sustainability has not been integrated or addressed in the school for several reasons. This results in learning processes that drive hyper consumption and exacerbated economic growth to the detriment of more equitable attentions and knowledge of the limits of nature.



KEYWORDS: Socio-ecological sustainability. Curriculum. School.

INTRODUCTION

At this threshold of the Capitalocene, as expressed by Malm&Hornborg (2014), we find ourselves immersed in a technical-scientific-informational environment (Santos, 1994) never imagined, but, above all, in the face of imminent ecological crises and outside the objectives of the action plan Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations. Where are we headed? We know that the current environment shows socio-ecological challenges that are nowhere near school spaces due to overcrowded curricula. However, to create a sustainable world, people need to learn the necessary knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that give them the ability to contribute to Socio-ecological Sustainability (SES), points out Wals (2020).

Learning about SSE can allow every student to acquire not fragmented and incommunicable knowledge from the different areas of knowledge, necessary to shape a sustainable future, but rather, knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that express relationality (Walsh, Böhme & Wamsler, 2020). Students cannot acquire the knowledge, skills and ethical values necessary to achieve a sustainable society without education and, therefore, without SES. Thus, SES seems to be the primary instrument to achieve sustainability fully, as it provides an outbreak of socio-ecological literacy and understanding and change in relation to the living environment. Another more serene, convivial and pertinent sustainability needs to be integrated into the school curriculum, at all levels, to put an end to the "collateral learning" ignored by schools (Dewey, 1938) or to transgress the "hidden curriculum" of unsustainability (Alsubaie, 2015; Wals, 2020) that has only broadened the lifestyle of overconsumption, socioecological degradation, continuous homogenization of economic culture

incompatible with the limits of the planet, growth of poverty, inequality and pandemics such as that of Covid-19.

Therefore, we seek to reflect on the sustainability neglected by the school curriculum, aiming to redirect it to learning towards socio-ecological sustainability.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on a qualitative research strategy, using sources and procedures such as surveys and readings of theoretical references, documentary research and researcher's previous research experiences. Such a strategy, according to Cresweel (2014), is based on the researcher's interpretations; contemplates the holistic form; is reflective; uses inductive and deductive reasoning; and applies an investigative strategy: the examination of attitudes and behavioral changes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this period of socio-environmental changes and challenges, the role of teaching and learning, at all school levels, is increasingly under examination. In this context, some concerns are focused on facing the socioecological obstacles.

Many warnings have been given by several international organizations about environmental degradation and the worsening of extreme poverty across the planet. The latter came in the 2030 Agenda as one of the greatest planetary challenges and as an indispensable requirement for achieving sustainability. But what is sustainability? It means a sustainable, bearable, equitable and viable condition, based on three pillars of genuine sustainability, such as social, ecological and economic dimensions.

Sustainability is a deified term; but also, contested and ambiguous, or another metaphor for capitalism. It has gained prominence and has been used, without criticism in schools, since the "sustainable development" – of the Brundtland Report or Our Common Future of the United Nations –, which means that it meets the needs of current generations without compromising the capacity of future generations to meet their needs.

Schools have hastily taken on the term, coming from international organizations, without critically reflecting the real interests, above all, the economic ones, which have persisted in the meantime until today, disregarding the future of humanity due to economic growth. In general, the term has become a marketing, a slogan or a fashion word for everyone, including those who have created the most socio-ecological challenges (government and corporations). All of them now claim to be sustainable, even generating environmental collapses and social inequalities.

In Parr's perspective (2009), sustainability was hijacked by neoliberal interests, becoming popular in all social areas, including at school. The results of all of this have been the dissemination of school curricula not focused on the ethics of care, solidarity, sharing, mindfulness and sensitivity towards others, says Wals (2020), but conceals the SES that strives for values and for moderate eco-social skills of a less eco-socially degrading lifestyle. We cannot fail to reflect on the non-integration of the SES in the school due to obstacles such as lack of knowledge, overcrowded curriculum, inexistence of didactic material, teaching disinterest, among others, which only favors the economic bias without people and their living environment.

The school urgently needs to integrate SES into the classroom through innovative and creative learning processes which are propellers of interdisciplinary critical thinking, learning based on everyday school problems and complex thinking. Otherwise, if the school is distant from the local reality about and for SES, disconnected between what is done and what has been taught, it will strengthen the hidden curriculum of unsustainability, which is not contributory to critical thinking. Schools need to co-create skills and values that allow students to think about "how to resolve" ecosystem crises in the broadest sense of the word sustainability. Thus, a sustainable world is possible based on schools, according to Leff (2010), as it is the best laboratory, the best relational learning space for changes in socioecological behavior, thus making the hidden curriculum visible to society as a whole.

CONCLUSIONS

It is concluded that the SES is hidden or has not been integrated in the school, in the curriculum and in the teaching practice for several reasons. This results in teaching processes that drive hyper consumption and economic growth at all costs instead of transformative social learning geared towards equitable challenges and knowledge about the ecological limits of the planet.

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