

GADOTTI, M. *Education for sustainability: a contribution to the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development*. Translation: Marcia Macedo. São Paulo: Instituto Paulo Freire, 2009.

 **Ângela de Carvalho Bernardes**

Mestre em Educação, Universidade Nove de Julho (UNINOVE)

São Paulo, SP – Brasil

angeladecbernardes@gmail.com

Para citar– (ABNT NBR 6023:2018)

BERNARDES, Ângela de Carvalho. Resenha. *Eccos - Revista Científica*, São Paulo, n. 54, p. 1-4, e16138, jul./set., 2020. Resenha da obra de GADOTTI, M. *Education for sustainability: a contribution to the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development*. Translation: Marcia Macedo. São Paulo: Instituto Paulo Freire, 2009. Disponível em: <https://doi.org/10.5585/eccos.n54.16138>.

Moacir Gadotti, Doctor of Educational Sciences by the University of Geneva, is a retired professor of Philosophy of Education at the University of São Paulo and Director of Paulo Freire Institute. Author of many widely-read and translated books, among others, **History of Pedagogical Ideas** (1993), **Pedagogy of Praxis** (1994), **Pedagogy of the Earth** (2001), **The Masters of Rousseau** (2004), and **Educating for Another Possible World** (2007), in which he develops an educational proposal, oriented by the paradigm of the sustainability. He took part in the Global Forum Rio 92, working on the elaboration of the Earth Charter's first draft also on the Treaty on Environmental Education for Sustainable Societies and Global Responsibilities. He is a member of the Reference Group of the United Nation's Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014).

The basis of the educational proposal, that may be seen on his productions, involves the support for a critical education of teachers and other professionals working on education: the development of a citizen school, on a dialectical perspective of education, guided by the planetary paradigm, what can also be confirmed by this work.

This is a timeless book, even though it has been written in 2009, by an author extremely engaged in the cause for a sustainable development, education and, mainly, life for all, the people and the planet. It focuses on important events and legal documents, that had been organized since the 1960's decade, and their relationship with pedagogical practices, including debates throughout the world about what is called a sustainable development.

Despite of thinking and proposing any action about sustainability, it may not be an easy task, considering that there are different ways of understanding the same concept. Human beings bring an ontological condition of having hope and this is straight related to sustainability, according to the author. Therefore, education has an essential role to be played, as it might be seen all over the book.

In 2002, the United Nations General Assembly established the United Nation's Decade of Education for a Sustainable Development (DESD), which recommended to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) the organization of a program emphasizing what education must do in promoting sustainability. This should seem a contemporary matter, however, the process of globalization and the way it was and it is developed may be included in the comprehension of the sustainability concept, and it is historical. Everybody recognizes that this process is irreversible, though there are other possibilities of a globalized life, like a shared one, for example, than the competitive and exploratory paths the countries all over the world live, contextualizing the capitalist way of life.

Gadotti understands that the development of a planetary citizenship is more important than an environmental education “[...] because poverty, illiteracy, ethnic wars, discrimination, prejudice, greed, traffic¹ and corruption destroy our home and take the life of the planet away” (p. 30), so when considering sustainability, these contexts have to be also discussed. Thus, it is essential to recognize the need of changing the educational systems, also to understand environmental and social issues in an interconnected manner.

The author highlights some ideas, included in the concept of development, which expand the comprehension about what is considered developed, developing and underdeveloped, indicating that it is not a neutral term. These variations were used to define and divide countries according to an ideology of progress, which contemplated “a single standard of industrialization and consumption” (p. 47). Some of this process results were the increase of people living in poverty conditions, unemployment and violence, besides the extermination of other nations, what can be called a predatory development.

There is, similarly, an ambiguity in understanding concepts related to citizenship, democracy, culture, for example, that Gadotti distinguishes from what are, in his opinion, the real unsustainable conditions: poverty, hunger, illiteracy, violence, among others. Sustainability must consider a harmonic balance between the well-being and well-living of people and the environment, which seems incompatible with the current capitalism turned to profit, labor

¹ According to the sentence, the expression drug trafficking would be more appropriate to exemplify the kind of contemporary problems we have around the world.



E
C
C
O
S
-
R
E
V
I
S
T
A

C
I
E
N
T
Í
F
I
C
A

exploitation and unlimited accumulation. Living on a system that has imposed barriers to the autonomy of the States, forcing them to exist according to big companies' rules, the common citizen, who is neither the employer nor the State, is widest influenced by his education, which has an essential role in the development of his citizenship.

The author neither declares himself against capitalism when developing these reflections, nor claims that technology and humanism opposite each other, but he suggests that the way of living, oriented by an unlimited consumption and by the economic paradigm, is unsustainable and causes enormous damages to our lives and our planet.

It is possible to verify a practical way of dealing with an apparent insolvable problem when Gadotti describes the concept of Ecopedagogy, an educational process that considers Earth and the people with their culture and lifestyle, respecting the diversity and establishing life in the center of its interests, thus, very close to the concept of sustainability. Ecopedagogy demands the citizens' participation to bring out daily learnings from their lives, once the experience is essential, which may establish a supportive and democratic pedagogy. It is a passage from an anthropocentric comprehension to a planetary one.

Sustainability, according to the author, might be understood from aspects related to nature and society as well, so the environment and its limits are as important as the people's social, cultural and political demands, which also represents the development of their citizenship. It includes "[...] a new perception of the Earth, considering it as a single community of human beings, it becomes a basis for a culture of peace" (p. 73).

It is clear, along the whole book, that the education for a sustainable development implies an education for a sustainable consumption. Thus, how would it be possible to make people aware of what and how they consume if they do not even have their basic needs satisfied?, the author asks. That is why he says that an unsustainable way of living has been built and it is "[...] responsible for the biggest current crisis, which are all interlinked: world social crisis [...]; drinking water crisis [...]; food crisis [...]; greenhouse effect crisis [...]; energy crisis [...]" (p. 87).

Another world is possible, but it requires the changing of people's mind and practices, which formal and non-formal education have an essential role in building up critical ways of thinking, not only "workforce for the market [...]" (p. 102). The author supports his arguments by suggesting different strategies according to the teaching levels at school, for example, including experiences for children in elementary school, discussions about biodiversity, alternative energy and environmental issues at higher levels and the production of knowledge

through researches at the University, for a cooperative way “of production and reproduction of the human existence [...]” (p. 102).

A sustainable existence, by the way, includes more than reducing, recycling and reusing, even if these processes are extremely important, as Gadotti declares, but it demands a planetary view that connects the social, political and economic contexts in a solidarity concept. The author smartly relates sustainability to solidarity, even in the economic field, expanding the possibilities of production and consumption based on the establishment of a solidarity network, called solidarity economy².

Even if considerable changes had not been made yet in public policies and in the current economic system, many countries have been presenting meaningful experiences in fighting against problems like the increase of violence, lack of housing and unemployment, which points towards a sustainable city and world.

In Gadotti’s opinion, sustainability has to do with the understanding of “[...] who we are, where we came from and where we are going to, as human beings” (p. 44). Therefore, it is imperative that we develop a planetary conscience which recognizes each one of us as an Earth citizen, and that our lives are strictly connected and dependent on the Earth’s survival.

Although this subject seems to have been exhaustingly discussed among environmental workers and researchers, it is still far from promoting an effective sustainable way of life in any part of the world. That is why books like this one might be read by everyone, from students to teachers, from the simplest citizen to politicians, whenever it will be necessary, until the predatory system of living may be extinguished or, at least, decreased.

² This concept may be linked to another one, currently spread around the world, called green economy, understood by UN Environment Programme as “[...] one that improves human well-being and builds social equity while reducing environmental risks and scarcities [...] an alternative to today’s dominant economic model, which exacerbates inequalities, encourages waste, triggers resource scarcities, and generates widespread threats to the environment and human health”. Available in: <<https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/green-economy/why-does-green-economy-matter>>.