

Sociology of Education for a Sustainable Future

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Abstract: The Special Issue of the journal *Sustainability—The importance of Sociology of Education for a sustainable future*, aims to offer a contribution to the deepening of the relationship between the Sociology of Education and sustainability. There are seven published papers that, to a greater or lesser degree, problematize this relationship. This editorial presents this Special Issue, the published papers, contextualising this topic in contemporary science, concluding that this potential has room to be fully developed.

Keywords: Sociology of Education for a sustainable future; Sociology of Education; sustainability; socio-educational intervention; education

The relationship between the Sociology of Education and sustainability is not sufficiently explored in the literature, and there is room to develop the potentialities of this relationship [1]. The Sociology of Education is a speciality of Sociology—a pluri-paradigmatic science itself [2]—whose object of study is the influence of the social in formal and non-formal school and non-school processes [3,4]. In this sense, it can offer a contribution to the understanding and improvement of educational processes. In the present case, this is in the development of sustainability, to dismantle preconceived ideas [5] and to contribute to an education as integral development of the individual: “the study of Sociology of Education is understood as a contribution not only to the understanding but also to the critical questioning of the educational realities that hopefully bring about the change of perspectives, attitudes, and possibly even practices” [4] (p. 62).

However, the academic, social, and political status of the Sociology of Education is not very high [1,2], which also hinders its mobilisation—even in an interdisciplinary dialogue with other scientific areas—in the promotion of a “sustainability literacy”, through which individuals will be able to “display competencies and attitudes of respect for the present thinking about the future, safeguarding it in a mindful and intentional way” [1] (p. 102). This may result, inter alia, from the interconnection scale levels, from sociological imagination, from the multi-paradigmatic nature, from heuristic interdisciplinarity, and from the reflexivity and use of Sociology for action [1].

In this scenario, there are several challenges to be faced in fostering the learning of sustainability as economics, ecology, and social equity, and balance for the future [1,6] by all of us. However, studies that articulate the Sociology of Education with the complex phenomenon of sustainability or sustainable development are still scarce [1].

In this context, and thanking the invitation of the *Sustainability* journal to act as editors of this special edition, this Special Issue has been produced. Within the scope of the *Sustainability* journal as a “cross-disciplinary journal of environmental, cultural, economic, and social sustainability of human beings” [7] and as a part of the “Sustainable Education and Approaches” section, this Special

Issue considers that “education in diverse forms and multiple contexts provides the means whereby each generation passes on its culture, discoveries, successes and failures to the next. Without inter-generational education, very little in a human context can be sustainable. Education is also important to formulate, challenge and disseminate ideas, knowledge, skills, and values within communities, from young to not so young, and between communities, nations and continents. Education is identified as a key element of sustainability-focused strategies” [8]. This Special Issue, “The Importance of Sociology of Education for a Sustainable Future”, acknowledges that “sustainable development is a critical concept in the present, and for the future, of humanity, for which Sociology can provide further, new, and valuable contributions” [9] and has the purpose of focusing “on the contributions that Sociology of Education, in a broad sense (encompassing the most diverse formal, non-formal, and informal processes of education, instruction, schooling, and/or socialisation) can provide in the analysis of sustainable development, in different contexts and audiences.” [9].

In order to attain this purpose of this Special Issue—“The importance of Sociology of Education for a Sustainable Future”—11 manuscripts were submitted for assessment. After their review and several enhancements, seven papers were published. This edition encompasses seven contributions, six of which are research papers and one of which is an essay. A brief presentation of these contributions follows.

Başarı, Latifoğlu, and Güneyli, from the Faculty of Education, near East University, Cyprus, present the research entitled “Influence of Bibliotherapy Education on the Social-Emotional Skills for Sustainable Future”. In this paper, the authors acknowledge the high relevance of social-emotional skills and sustainable education, and aim to “evaluate the influence of bibliotherapy education on the social-emotional skills of psychological counselling and guidance candidates” [10] (p. 1). This research concluded that, regarding the differences between men and women in this field, “female students’ scores in the sub-dimensions of emotional expressivity and social control were significantly higher than those of male students. However, it was concluded that male students’ scores in the sub-dimension of emotional control were higher than those of female students” (p. 1); “it can be seen that after receiving bibliotherapy education, females retain the ability to adapt their behaviours according to their situation, developing the skills of playing a role, expressing themselves and maintaining their social adaptivity. [. . .] Nevertheless, it can be seen that the male students’ scores in the sub-dimension of emotional control were higher than those of female students. Based on this result, it can be said that the skills of the male students in combining certain emotions and hiding their feelings under a mask in an effective manner is better than the female students. Hence, it is obvious that bibliotherapy education contributes to male students in terms of developing emotional control skills. [. . .] When the findings of this study are evaluated in the context of the Sociology of Education, the first observation is that the participants in the study contributed to the socialization process. Bibliotherapy training has positively affected the socialization skills of school counsellor candidates” [10] (p. 9).

Pérez-Fuentes, Molero Jurado, and Barragán Martín (from the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, University of Almería, Spain), and Gázquez Linares (also from the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Universidad Autónoma de Chile, Chile), analyse the “Profiles of Violence and Alcohol and Tobacco Use in Relation to Impulsivity: Sustainable Consumption in Adolescents”. This article seeks “to identify different adolescent profiles identified by their tobacco and alcohol use and patterns of violent behavior, as well as to analyze the extent to which such adolescents show impulsivity traits” [11] (p. 1), concluding that “social problems derived from risk behaviors in the adolescent population require intervention directed at developing prosocial behavior while reducing risk behaviour” [11] (p. 2). It is also advocated that “programs must also be designed to promote successful adolescent decision-making for the sustainable development of responsibility, the acquisition of individual resources, and the prevalence of prosocial competencies over involvement in substance use and risk behavior” [11] (p. 9). The authors argue that, as a contribution, the Sociology of Education “proposes priorities for action, such as the following: (1) achieving consequent articulation

between education and strategies for the social development of a community and its current problems, and (2) promoting participation of social sectors in approaching these problems” [11] (p. 7).

Păvăloaia, Georgescu, Popescu, and Radu (from the Department of Accounting, Business Information Systems and Statistics, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Romania), in their article entitled “ESD for Public Administration: An Essential Challenge for Inventing the Future of Our Society”, approach “the role of local and central public administrations in promoting sustainable development and building up a better future for society is essential. In order to fulfil this mission, employees in public administration sector must engage in long life learning processes, for the purpose of developing skills such as: anticipation, interdisciplinarity, diversity of perspectives, working with incomplete or complex information, participation in sustainable development processes, cooperation, individual decision-making capacities, empathy, solidarity, and self-motivation” [12] (p. 1). The purpose of this paper was to investigate “what is the Romanian public sector employees’ perception of long life learning as an essential premise of Education for Sustainable Development, by analysing on the one hand the degree of digital maturity of public institutions in Romania, and on the other hand the interest of employees in such institutions to engage in Education for Sustainable Development function of the following disjunct behavioural/emotional states: Disappointment, Conflicts, Satisfaction/Contentment, Doubt, Exhaustion, Attachment. [. . .] The role of non-formal and informal education for individual evolution, without mitigating the importance of formal learning. The three forms of learning complement each other” [12] (pp. 1–2). The Sociology of Education can make an extremely important contribution to these processes, inasmuch as, “from the sociocultural point of view, learning cannot be separated by the context in which it takes place” [12] (p. 3).

Istrate, Horea-Serban, and Muntele (from the Faculty of Geography and Geology, University Al. I. Cuza, Romania) focus on “Young Romanians’ Transition from School to Work in a Path Dependence Context”. This study analyses this issue in Romania, in a context in which, “from the inflexible educational system of the totalitarian regime, when all graduates from different levels of education immediately received a job (to avoid unemployment—a phenomenon that the communist authorities did not tolerate), there was a transition to an educational system marked by frequent structural and methodological changes and by an increasing gap between the educational offer and the real necessities of the labor market” [13] (p. 1). Furthermore, the authors argue that “in the light of the Sociology of Education, the difficulties met by the new generations that enter the labor market after following a previously established educational model, often intended to be changed according to European sociological principles, but with deeply rooted mentalities and structure, actually difficult to alter” [13] (p. 1). This paper concludes that, “when evaluating the results of this study in the context of the Sociology of Education and sustainable development, it can be noticed that the previously established educational model, along the evolution of contemporary Romania, still plays a major role, with the mentalities and structure of the educational system being difficult to change. However, following the results and progress of other central and eastern European countries, it can be noticed that the changes and increasing adaptability of the labor market can be achieved through sustainable education, by creating a durable link between education and economic development policies. A future-oriented education system has to promote values, attitudes, and behavioral patterns suitable for a reality in which both the principles of the Sociology of Education and sustainable development can be found” [13] (p. 18).

Carrasco-Sáez (from the Faculty of Education, Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción, Concepción, Chile), Careaga Butter, and Badilla-Quintana (both from the Educational Informatics and Knowledge Management Unit, Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción, Chile, and from the CIEDE-UCSC, Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción, Chile), Jiménez Pérez (from the ICT Nucleus TIC in Educational and Intercultural Contexts, Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción, Chile) and Molina Farfán (from the Educational Informatics and Knowledge Management Unit, Faculty of Education, Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción, Chile, and the Faculty of Education, Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción, Chile) present the “Sociological

Importance and Validation of a Questionnaire for the Sustainability of Personal Learning Environments (PLE) in 8th Grade Students of the Biobío Region in Chile". In this paper, the authors advocate that "this process of deep social and cultural transformations is characterized by a technological disruption, in which virtuality forms a new dimension that behaves as an extension of human intelligence. This new form of human interaction impacts on the social imagination, demanding one to rethink social and educational paradigms for the two-dimensional citizen. In this context, this research article describes the sociological importance and the process of social adaptation of users to a personal learning environment (PLE). It includes the validation process of an instrument for the study of PLE [...], [which is] a frame of reference that can help to understand how two-dimensional citizens socially adapt and influence the sustainability of local and global systems" [14] (p. 1). In this piece of research, the authors argue that "the sociological change is important when there are two-dimensional performances, i.e., performed in physical spaces and through digital interactions [1–7]. [...] The concept of a two-dimensional citizen refers to the double face-to-face and virtual dimension of postmodern subjects. They are exposed to the demands of technological disruption. Postmodern citizens solve problems by using the time and space categories of modernity, and at the same time, they communicate, relate, manage information, and manage knowledge in virtual environments. [...] This shows that the new complexities of learning are still not identified and the difference between being a consumer of information and being a knowledge manager cannot yet be recognized. [...] This requires a new sociological conceptualization, since cultural processes such as transculturation, acculturation, and endoculturation have become more dynamic" [14] (p. 2). The paper concludes that "the digital citizens of the cultural transition are exposed to profound changes in their human behavior. These tendencies are associated with the technological disruption that we experience and which characterize the so-called fourth industrial revolution, provoking new needs and demanding redefinitions of roles and new scenarios in education. [...] These questions pose challenges for education in this cultural transition. It is possible to confirm, according to different authors, that the formal education system" [14] (p. 11).

Agirreazkuenaga (from the Research Group on Human Security, Local Human Development and International Cooperation (2016–2021) Consolidated Group of the Basque Research System (IT1037-16), Hegoa Institute, University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU), Spain) in "Embedding Sustainable Development Goals in Education. Teachers' Perspective about Education for Sustainability in the Basque Autonomous Community" analyzes "the implementation of educational practical experiences of the education for sustainability programs from the perspective of teachers working in secondary schools in the Basque Autonomous Community" [15] (p. 1). The paper concludes, in short, that "the involvement of the teaching staff, personal motivation and good leadership are essential for the success of the program, together with the support of school authorities. A stable teaching staff and a sense of identity with the project are decisive factors" [15] (p. 1) for the successful learning of the Sustainable Development Goals, and that the potential contribution of the perspective of the Sociology of Education should be considered in a process that is necessarily interdisciplinary.

Finally, there is the essay by Sommer (from the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, Harvard University, USA) and Sacco (from FBK-IRVAPP, Italy; Department of Humanities, IULM University, Italy; and metaLAB (at) Harvard, USA), entitled "Optimism of the Will. Antonio Gramsci Takes in Max Weber", which puts forth a critical dialogue between Max Weber and António Gramsci, in which "Gramsci's confidence in the transformational role of creative culture provides a framework for understanding a new wave of inclusive artistic practices that originate in the Global South and that revive the arts as vehicles for active citizenship. Participatory art can re-enchant today's sorely disenchanted socio-cultural world of mature capitalism" [16] (p. 1), ultimately, for a sustainable democracy.

In summary, and as a conclusion to this editorial that presents the Special Issue "The Importance of Sociology of Education for a Sustainable Future", it is evident from the articles published in it that there is a wide variety of themes where the Sociology of Education can, in articulation with other scientific areas, offer a valuable heuristic contribution to the understanding of this field of knowledge

and to the improvement of its practices. The published articles are clearly relevant contributions to the development of this topic and leave room for its subsequent deepening and questioning. This special issue seeks to be a contribution to bridge this gap, insofar as it is clear that “the potential of Sociology and its specialties has not yet been attained in addressing these issues, despite its heuristic ability in the study and promotion of the teaching of sustainability” [1] (p. 111).

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