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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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## EDUCATION AS A SOLUTION FOR A SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY

\*Clovis Demarchi

University of Vale do Itajaí, Stricto Sensu Graduate Program in Legal Science – Itajaí, Santa Catarina - Brazil

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\*Corresponding author: Clovis Demarchi

### ABSTRACT

The article presents ideas to demonstrate that Education is the instrument for building a sustainable society. Education is the training instrument that thinks about “man as a whole, in his relationships with others, with himself and with the world”. The construction of a Sustainable Society without compromising the continuity of the planet and the quality of life of the next generations depends on the values that involve this same society. The amount of financial resources, economic growth and the ability to consume alone do not provide a significant improvement in the quality of collective life. Sustainability, in the most varied dimensions, will not be achieved as long as society is based on “having” and not “being”. Education must establish an understanding of the importance of people being in the world and being part of it. The article is divided into three moments, namely: the first deals with sustainability, regarding its origin, concept and dimensions, the next discusses the relationship between sustainability and consumption and the third, the relationship between sustainability and Education. For the elaboration of the text, the inductive method was used with bibliographic and documentary research.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the current global context, one of the major concerns concerns the sustainability of the planet. This issue in itself presents itself as transnational as it affects all people, regardless of where they are. Today's society, in the most diverse corners of the planet, which, having caused or not the degradation, is being held responsible for it. Given this context, it is necessary to find alternatives to protect the planet itself, as well as protect it from human actions. The contradiction lies in the need to find alternatives that protect it from society itself, which, by the way, depends on it, as society itself is responsible for the degradation. There is a paradox between the way the planet is used and the human species' need for survival. For the survival of the species, the host, that is, the planet, is gradually eliminated. Given this context, it becomes urgent to find ways and resources to change this logic. We need to rethink the practices of use/degradation of the space in which we live. The simple establishment of norms/rules alone does not solve the situation. Transformation goes through the education process. We need to review, rethink and rewrite the social and environmental framework if we want to continue being part of history, otherwise, continuing with the level of degradation we are at, the trend is not favorable for the species to remain on the planet. This reality, in which the issue of plant sustainability is at stake, is the result of a history constructed by man himself, it is not something natural.

History built by the need to meet individual whims, caused by insane consumerism. The current capitalist society needs consumption so that the productive/industrial process can make the “wheel turn”. There is a need to create a consumerist society to strengthen trade and the production of wealth, but which presents as a reaction the degradation of the planet. In this context, education has not adequately prepared the person to think, to understand the meaning of things, to live in this context of consumption. Therefore, more and more information is required from people so that they can make decisions since the consequences and responsibilities are common. It is necessary that education be the instrument for the awareness of society. Teach in a language that reaches everyone, that establishes an understanding of the importance of people being in the world and being part of it. The text is divided into three items. The first deals with sustainability, in terms of its origin, concept and dimensions. The following item discusses the relationship between sustainability and consumption. Next, the relationship between sustainability and education. For the elaboration of the text, the inductive method was used with the use of bibliographic and documentary research.

**The idea of sustainability: origin, concept and dimensions:** The meaning of sustainability begins to transcend the mere protection of the natural environment to encompass several factors aimed at balancing economic and social development with the preservation of nature. Etymologically, it derives from the Latin “sustentare”

(sustain; defend; conserve, care) (HOUAISS; VILLAR, 2001), which can designate an ability in the sense of being in changes in time and space. Sustainability comes to mean the ability to organize society itself. Society that is committed or not with its own maintenance, that is, according to Milaré (2007, p. 68) condition of society to organize itself to establish an adequate relationship between the natural support capacity (existing natural resources) and the support capacity (social, political and economic activities generated by society itself for its own benefit). In view of this, sustainability comes to be understood, according to Boff (2014, p. 107), as the relationship between maintaining the conditions for the sustenance of all beings (Live Earth) and, at the same time, meeting the needs of this environment. same "community of life". In this sense, just as human life has a multidimensional character, the same is understood for Sustainability. It is necessary to understand that, regardless of the number of dimensions, sustainability is a necessity to promote the full development of peoples and communities, for present and future generations, in which case the dimensions are connected to each other as in a network. Failure to implement any of them may reflect or harm the others, as "the material deterioration of the planet is unsustainable, but poverty is also unsustainable, social exclusion is also unsustainable, as are injustice, oppression, [...]]" (MAFRA, 2015, p. 555).

There is no understanding regarding the number of dimensions that sustainability has, but the social, economic and environmental are present in all doctrinal proposals regarding dimensions. The social dimension of sustainability is associated with rights such as housing, education, health, work, among others, suggesting the eradication of differences in social and economic development and the realization of human dignity. In other words, when one thinks of a society, one cannot admit an excluding model, a society where few live with much and many live with little. Specifically in Brazil, the social dimension of Sustainability is closely related to the proposal of social rights provided for in article 6 of the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil (BRASIL, 2019). This dimension is completed when there is access to education, health, and conditions to guarantee the inclusion of people. The social dimension will be met when poverty is eliminated, there is respect for human rights and a more equitable distribution of income, conditions that are still a little distant in the Brazilian reality. The economic dimension is related to the balance between production and consumption. It is related to the way of working this relationship because the environment cannot be thought of and used as being inexhaustible. Economic sustainability will be achieved when an adequate relationship is reached between the use of natural resources and the production and circulation of wealth. The Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil of 1988 to ensure sustainable development, expressly contemplates the defense of the environment in the economic order in article 170, stating that it is based on the appreciation of human work and free initiative, as well as seeking to ensure a dignified existence. observing "VI - defense of the environment, including through differentiated treatment according to the environmental impact of products and services and their preparation and provision processes" (BRAZIL, 2019). For Derani (2008, p. 228), a sustainable economy seeks to integrate the environment with the market economy, ensuring a sustainable relationship and thus adjusting the conservation of natural resources with an effective improvement in people's quality of life. Therefore, economic sustainability must be understood as an instrument for the conservation of life and not as an end to be achieved. The production and circulation of wealth must be designed with a view to ensuring collective well-being based on the sustainable use of the environment. We are not denying the importance and relevance of economic development, but that it is necessary and urgent to think of an economy with greater environmental responsibility, which produces less waste and uses more renewable energy. In this context, Latouche's (2009, p. 16) criticism with the aim of instituting a serene and sustainable material degrowth process, de-characterizing the idea of "growth for growth's sake" becomes necessary. That is, to carry out adequate production according to the needs, aiming at ecological preservation and social justice, in order to build a society that is aware that "infinite growth is incompatible with a finite world", so there is a

need for control in environmental exploitation. The economic dimension of sustainability requires a new economic model that aims to improve the quality of life for all. The environmental dimension of Sustainability, for many, is equivalent to sustainability itself. That is, when many hear the word sustainability, they only relate it to the environmental issue, this is justified by the fact that this is the most studied and commented dimension, or even, there are those who understand that Sustainability is just an environmental issue. It is also justified by the historical aspect of the formation of the idea, as seen above, since the discussions at the international level on the environment began in the 70s of the last century. In this way, the environmental dimension encompasses the preservation and maintenance of natural resources, limiting the consumption of exhaustible resources, or harmful to the environment, and reducing the volume of waste and pollution. Therefore, there is a need to promote environmental education in order to reach a balance in the way of thinking and protecting the environment. Demarchi, Costa and Monte (2016, p. 47), in their research on environmental sustainability, consider that nowadays it cannot be analyzed in isolation, but rather considering the universe of multiple dimensions, that is, "the idea of preservation, which has always been linked to nature, was far from social, cultural, economic aspects" this, according to the authors, because the idea of "quality of life was not linked to economic and social standards, but to the air that was breathed".

## SUSTAINABILITY AND CONSUMPTION

Modern society is a consumer society. This consumption, mostly based on the exploitation of natural resources (oil, gas, minerals, wood, etc.) has fostered a great debate on environmental sustainability and conservation of the environment. The discussion gets even worse when the climate problems, the finitude of some resources and the irreparable destruction of natural environments are brought up. Although there are serious discussions about the environmental debate, any rational analysis of the reality of the world, even if it does not conceive climate change and global warming from a catastrophic point of view, can still perceive that there is much to be done. Problems such as the disposal of non-biodegradable plastics, solid waste, polluting agents for land and water, the extinction of some animal or plant species, in short, themes and reasons are not lacking for a serious debate on the planet. Of course, consumption is a necessity in the current context in order to meet basic subsistence needs, since consumption itself is characterized as the satisfaction of the person's needs. In this sense, consumption is not a problem, but a necessity. It is consumed to feed, to maintain itself. The problem occurs when people cannot control consumption. In this case, we come to consumerism, to excess. Consumption goes beyond the limit of need. Excess consumption is characterized by the acquisition of goods that do not have the function of meeting survival or basic needs. This type of consumption aims to meet needs that are created, induced by seduction, manipulation and desires. (SILVA (2014, p. 67), It becomes an attempt to satisfy emotional and social deficiencies through purchases (LEONARD, 2011 p.129). In other words, capitalist society needs consumption so that the productive/industrial process manages to "turn the wheel." There is a need to create a consumerist society that is based on "the act of purchasing superfluous products, based on a type of impulsive, uncontrolled, irresponsible and often irrational consumption., commerce and technology, using advertising, has been creating in people" (DEMARCHI; AMAYA, 2019, p. 110).

In this context, education did not prepare the person to think, to understand the meaning of things, to live in this context of consumption. When it is said that education has not prepared a person to think, to understand the meaning of things, it is related to the fact that changes are constant and very fast, needs and desires are created and informed in a very playful and convincing way. This reality requires more and more information from people, and almost always they are not prepared, educated, or aware of the posture they need to take as well as their responsibilities, or even the consequences, in the face of the new that presents itself. This excess consumption caused what Boff (2014, p. 23) characterized as "such a level of aggression

that it amounts to a kind of total war". The Planet as a whole is being attacked by man, aiming at the production of wealth and products to feed this consumerist logic. The Industrial Revolution changed the lifestyle of society, especially with regard to production and consumption and this relationship also affected the relationship between man and the environment in which he lives. Man began to face problems, according to the dimensions of sustainability. According to Siqueira (2016, p. 134), environmental problems such as "the reduction of the ozone layer, climate change, scarcity of drinking water", social problems such as "concentration of the population in cities, poverty, lack of education, infant mortality" in economic terms one can verify unemployment, income concentration and "technological dependence". What is observed is that personal life is constantly being remodeled. What is important in this technological world is how individuals create identities and how quickly identities can be reinvented and transformed. According to Elliot (2018, p. 471) there is a new reality in which values are related to individualism and consumerism and in this context: There is a relentless emphasis on reinventing oneself. The aim is to transform the individual pattern, for which "fads regarding careers, food, clothes, faces, minds, bodies [...]" are created at all times. The need for instant changes was created. We are compulsive consumerists, we want instant gratification, immediate results. We buy with the click of a mouse. The remodeling industry propagates that there is nothing to stop you from reinventing yourself however you want. (Elliot, 2018, p. 474). There is a fascination with speed. Live life faster, busier and faster. We live in constant technological changes. Digital technologies, communication networks, global processes. Everything became expressed. (Elliot, 2018, p. 477-478). There is a concern with the short term, with the moment, with the episode. World in constant transformation that affects all aspects of life. (Elliot, 2018, p. 479). Relationships and relationships are fleeting. "Technology comes at every moment to present a new fact, a new version, an innovation that starts to reduce the value/importance of the previous version" (DEMARCHI, 2020, p. 101). In a recent WHO/UNICEF report (2018) it can be seen that: "1 in 3 people in the world does not have access to drinking water", in the same direction is "4.2 billion individuals do not have access to sewage treatment", safe toilet", on basic facilities, the report states: "3 billion people do not have basic facilities to wash their hands properly" (it is important to note that we are living in a time when a disease caused by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is characterized worldwide as a pandemic in which the act of washing hands is one of the most requested as a way to reduce the spread). Observing these data and making a simple analysis, they immediately "destroy the idea of sustainability, when imagined in its essence. In other words, as a form of quality of life for all". (DEMARCHI, 2020, p. 100).

**Sustainability and Education:** The idea of sustainability, regardless of size, does not automatically or mechanically appear in people's minds. It is the result of a process of formation, that is, of preparation so that people in general and some groups in a specific way understand a certain reality. According to Demarchi (2014, p. 111), education consists of preparing the person to carry out a broad analysis with the ability to relate the human being with the world that surrounds him, not reduced only to formal knowledge, which is passed on inside the classrooms. class. In this way, the relationship between sustainability and education becomes more necessary when there is a need for social change, or even a break with the idea of consumption and economic growth based on the exploitation of nature and people. This is because education is an effective instrument of transformation and awareness that can happen in the classroom or outside it. In other words, education in or out of school should be a tool to strengthen sustainability in the most diverse dimensions. Education as a right for all is set out in article 205 of the Federal Constitution, and it is the duty of the State and the family to strive for it; however, it must be provided and encouraged with the collaboration of society, aiming to meet three main objectives: the full development of the person, preparation for the exercise of citizenship and qualification for work (BRASIL, 1988, article 205). In this way, the 1988 Constitution allows the expansion of the school/society relationship with the purpose of developing the subject of rights, this

one as an educating, preparing him to assume his role as a citizen and also qualifying him for the job market. Thus, education plays a fundamental role in raising awareness of the importance of sustainability and conservation of the environment, and by doing so, it will guarantee the achievement of the first objective, that is, the full development of the person. Education presents itself as an instrument for raising awareness of what sustainability is and what it represents. Therefore, it must be taught, in a language that reaches all members of society, literate or not. In this way, it is possible to establish an understanding of the importance of people being in the world and being part of it, respecting and protecting it. Education is essential for people to understand that they are agents who can and should use the means that present themselves in society in order to gather knowledge about the best way to live. That is why the idea that is strengthened in a teacher in relation to a school curriculum (it runs through everything the student does, in the classroom or outside it) must be present in the mind of anyone in society. We need a social curriculum in which all actions developed by people take into account the need to reflect and act in the preservation and maintenance inherent to the balance of the environment.

We need people to be more curious, seek more information and knowledge. According to Freire, (2001, p. 12/34), "learning and teaching are part of human existence [...] curious to learn, to transform and reinvent the world". That is why it is necessary to revisit article 225 of the 1988 Constitution, as it does not establish that the right is for the school, or for the teacher or even for the student. The right to an ecologically balanced environment is for everyone. The article guarantees everyone the right to learn and teach that not only the Public Power, but the community, above all, has a duty to defend and preserve the environment. Article 225 is a demonstration of the wide range that the Constitution opens for the participation of society as an essential instrument for environmental protection, and in this sense, the school space, the community, the company, the street becomes a suitable place for promote debates on the topic. Only men and women, as "open" beings, are capable of carrying out the complex operation of simultaneously transforming the world through action (FREIRE, 1981, p. 53). In other words, only knowledge or information about the environmental, economic and social reality is not enough to guarantee socio-environmental protection or to reverse the situation of socio-environmental degradation that is observed today, which is why action is necessary. The same reality can be seen with the number of existing laws and regulations, which alone do not guarantee the effectiveness of socio-environmental protection. Thinking about sustainability and education requires a new process. With the speed of artificial intelligence, accumulating information does not mean having knowledge, just as knowledge itself ages by the speed with which it is produced. Faced with this new context, it is essential to learn/know how to think, and to think about reality.

Not thinking thoughts that have already been thought, but as proposed by Delors et al (1996, p. 89-102), "Learning to know", that is, making the act of understanding, discovering, building and rebuilding knowledge pleasurable, valuing curiosity, autonomy and permanent attention. "It is also necessary to think about the new, rebuild the old and reinvent thinking". "Learning to do", that is, it is not enough to prepare carefully to enter the work sector, but to be "able to face new employment situations and to work as a team, developing a cooperative spirit and humility. Have initiative and intuition". "Learning to live together", that is, learning to live with others, to understand them, to develop the perception of interdependence, to manage conflicts and to take pleasure in the common effort. "Learning to be", that is, developing sensitivity, ethical and aesthetic sense, personal responsibility, autonomous and critical thinking, imagination, creativity. This learning/known process must happen anywhere and by all people. We need a planetary consciousness. We are interdependent. The Earth is one nation and we, its citizens, regardless of where we are, will be agents, but also recipients of the actions that are carried out. This awareness (thinking/known/known/informing/acting) about the environmental, economic and social reality is what will guarantee socio-environmental protection

and the reversal of the degradation scenario that is observed today, which is why education in this context becomes essential. In September 2015, the United Nations (UN) formally adopted an agenda for sustainable development consisting of 17 Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015). The general objective of this agenda is to guarantee the sustainability of the planet. These are actions to be implemented by 2030. Actions that aim to reduce, perhaps, eliminate poverty, gender inequality, guarantee food, water and sanitation and seek to create sustainable cities for all. It is in this context that Education is necessary and presents itself as a fundamental instrument for the achievement of these objectives. According to Demarchi (2014, p. 112), Education as a training instrument that thinks about “man as a whole, in his relationships with others, with himself and with the world”.

## CONCLUSION

The construction of a Sustainable Society without compromising the continuity of the planet and the quality of life of the next generations depends on the values that involve this same society. The simple concern with economic growth, the production of wealth and excess consumption need to leave space for other more important aspects for the human being that characterize the quality of life. It is clear that the amount of financial resources, economic growth and the ability to consume by themselves do not provide a significant improvement in the quality of collective life, since, on the one hand, it is observed that society has been educated/formatted to work hard and consume products and thereby guarantee economic growth, but this situation has resulted in a society that produces environmental, social and economic problems that, instead of guaranteeing quality, is destroying the planet. As long as society is not aware that growth at all costs, the acquisition of unnecessary goods and accumulation alone do not guarantee happiness and quality of life, a Sustainable Society will not be achieved. Sustainability, in the most varied dimensions, will not be achieved as long as society is based on “having” and not “being”. In this context, education has not adequately prepared the person to think, to understand the meaning of things, to live in this context of consumption. Therefore, education must become the instrument for raising awareness of what sustainability is and what it represents. Therefore, it must be taught, in a language that reaches all members of society, literate or not. In this way, it is possible to establish an understanding of the importance of people being in the world and being part of it, respecting and protecting it. It is necessary for people to understand that they are agents who can and should use the means that present themselves in society in order to gather knowledge about the best way to live. We need a social curriculum in which all actions developed by people take into account the need to reflect and act in the preservation and maintenance inherent to the balance of the environment. The legalistic model that allows the elaboration of very well written norms does not solve the problem because they do not become effective by themselves. For a Sustainable Society, we need to change our behavior. To become aware that the cycle of consumerism is incompatible with the finitude of natural resources. That unlimited consumption by some makes it impossible for others to access necessary goods. That sustainability is associated with rights such as housing, education, health, work, among others, suggesting the eradication of differences in social and economic development and the realization of human dignity.

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