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MONOGRÁFICO

Youth Empowerment  
and Social Pedagogy



# PEDAGOGÍA SOCIAL

REVISTA INTERUNIVERSITARIA

TERCERA ÉPOCA  
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# SUMARIO

Pedagogía Social. Revista Interuniversitaria  
Nº 30. Julio / July / Julho - Diciembre / December / Dezembro 2017

## Publishing

José V. Merino Fernández..... 9

## Presentation

Pere Soler Masó..... 13

## Monograph

The construction of a pedagogical model of youth empowerment: spaces, moments and processes  
*Pere Soler Maso, Jaume Trilla Bernet, Manel Jiménez-Morales, Xavier Úcar Martínez..... 19*

Empowerment or emancipation? Interpretations from finland and beyond  
*Sanna Ryyänen, Elina Nivala..... 33*

Youth perception on spaces and moments in the process of empowerment.  
A quantitative approach  
*Ingrid Agud-Morell, Anna Ciraso-Calí, Pilar Pineda-Herrero, Pere Soler-Masó..... 47*

Participatory evaluation of youth empowerment in youth groups. Cases analysis  
*Xavier Úcar, Anna Planas, Ana Novella, M. Pilar Rodrigo Moriche..... 63*

Exploring key moments of empowerment of young people through their own life stories  
*Asun Llena-Berñe, Ingrid Agud-Morell, Sonia Páez de La Torre, Carles Vila Mumbú..... 77*

The interactive documentary as a creative and artistic experience for youth empowerment:  
the hebe webdoc as a case of study  
*Alan Salvadó Romero, Manel Jiménez-Morales, Carolina Sourdis..... 91*

The performing arts and empowerment of youth with disabilities  
*Melvin Delgado, Denise Humm-Delgado..... 105*

## Research

Adults' motivating factors to study a foreign language  
*Margarita González-Peiteado, Beatriz Rodríguez-López..... 123*

Proposals for the development of interculturality in educational programmes carried out during  
leisure time and with a community approach in catalonia  
*Edgar Iglesias-Vidal, Berta Espona-Barcons..... 139*

[SUMARIO]

SIPS - PEDAGOGÍA SOCIAL. REVISTA INTERUNIVERSITARIA [(2017) 30, 7-8] TERCERA ÉPOCA

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The retirement and the social bond: reflections on transition's convergences and divergences <i>Teresa Martins</i> .....	153
Diagnosis about the use of leisure and free time among the students of the universidad nacional experimental del táchira <i>Nelly sandoval</i> .....	163
Education in human rights: ethical-civic formation of the social educators as way to anticipate the cyberbullying <i>María José Albert Gómez, Isabel Ortega Sánchez, María García Pérez</i> .....	181
Backstage: approach to methodological decisions in a study on immigrant youth and empowerment <i>Sonia Páez de La Torre</i> .....	195

## Information

Thesis abstract .....	207
Book reviews .....	209



## PUBLISHING

### ECOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: AN UNAVOIDABLE EXIGENCY FOR OUR GLOBALIZED SOCIETY

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It can be argued that sustaining and enhancing the dignity, capacity and welfare of the human person in relation to others, and to nature, should be the fundamental purpose of education in the twenty-first century. The humanistic values that should be the foundations and purpose of education include: respect for life and human dignity, equal rights and social justice, cultural and social diversity, and a sense of human solidarity and shared responsibility for our common future.

(UNESCO, 2015, 38)

The current trend on citizenship processes, *citizenship education and ecological education* is not a coincidence. It answers real needs against the important dangers that are threatening the environment and therefore, the human being. *Educating for an ecological citizenship* arises here as an urgent challenge

The objective of this text is to show that the human being cannot be indifferent against this problem and it has to compromise with the objective of a solidary working towards a sustainable present and future.

#### **1. Are we feeding the catastrophe culture or the compromise and common action towards a sustainable future?**

Our planet is on serious danger of destruction due to the constant looting that we submit it to. The idea reflected in this sentences is already a cliché. Nonetheless, it is a real threat. The

insistence coming from international and national organisations on this danger and on the necessity to counter it, could have a double effect:

- To normalise living with this danger, by being afraid or indifferent and keep living irresponsibly within a superficial and damaging consumerism.
- To work responsibly on the construction of a sustainable future.

The simple enumeration of strategies and behaviours that endangers our planet exceeds the objective desired for this article. However, I will refer to two lifestyles. These arise not only because they are common in the configuration of our current lifestyle but also because they are the base of the majority of strategies and damaging behaviours for the conservation and survival of life in Earth's ecosystem.

The unsustainable economist and consumerist growth model predominant in developed societies is one of these. This model engages an aggressive and predatory relationship of the human being towards its environment. The complaint of the monstrous economisation of the social, cultural, political and labour areas and its influence on people's life (Russell, 2008) is a known place for institutions, media, social media and all sorts of publications. The economisation of the social sphere detracts the perception of the 'wellbeing society' as it is understood from the parameters of the vicious circle of 'produce-have-consume'. The economisation of the cultural sphere transforms

knowledge and other cultural demonstrations in merchandise and amusement. The economisation of the political sphere submits politics to economy. The economisation of the labour dehumanizes the motivations behind workers on their development and promotion as well as the relationships between individuals, groups and nations. This economist-mercantilist life strategy generates an abusive use of resources. This applied to human relationships generates insolidarity, poverty, social inequality, exclusion, violence, war, abuses, traffic and mutual exploitation of individuals and nations.

The processes of '*rapidacion*' and '*globalisation*' make up the second lifestyle. '*Rapidacion*' refers to the accelerated change process that the current world is experienced. Everything is rush and urgency. The sequence of ideas and events happens on such a dizzying pace that floods the ability of assimilation, reflexion and analysis of individuals and groups. Applied to globalisation, it exists a contradiction between what is said and what it is being done. On one hand, current theories and statements from organisations and institutions about globalisation sustain that the social and political organisational systems should be enabling people's ability to agree within the Diversity and Difference frameworks. As a consequence, the historical models of social and political organisation, based on the homogenization and assimilation, must be substituted by models based on interculturality (Merino, 2009). On the other hand, the facts result to be on a different path to the theory and statements. It is widely known that the social and political reality is controlled by an alarming economic globalisation and, on a cultural level, by subtle processes of cultural homogenization, for example on the mainstream (Martel, 2012) and other ways of invasion and cultural assimilation. Some generates more homogenisation than respect to Diversity and Difference.

## 2. Need to develop an ecological citizenship

The gravity of this double danger of social and time acceleration (Berriain, 2008; Torres Naverro, 2015), joined to the economical-technological type of consumerist-developer globalisation (Radrikan, 2001; Evans, 2007), awakens the peoples' and institutions' conscience. Nonetheless, the protection of the environment and the construction of a more sustainable world are currently constituting one of the objectives for many people, associations and institutions that compromised with the protection of the environment and with the task of activating a relationship and harmonious and integral link between the human being and its

environment as well as between humans in order to recover the lost balance. This challenge was picked up on the Agenda 2030 of the General Secretary of the United Nations for the sustainable development. This task implies the worldwide compromise, working together in a solidary way in order to achieve a sustainable human development. This is based and articulated in a social and moral process, where scientific and economical-technological development is a means rather than an end. This objective require a behavioural and mental change for individuals and institutions (Collado and Corraliza, 2016).

The challenge is not to stand against globalisation or development on the face of the fear generated by the denominated '*catástrofe culture*' (Latouche, 2008). It is not about choosing recession and localism. It is about building and developing models and processes within globalisation from the sustainable development. These processes need to consider a solidary human being that respect biodiversity. It is important to remind that the term '*ecology-ecologic*' is not limited only to the natural environment but also to the human environment<sup>1</sup>. It could be thought that this ecological objective based on sustainability is an utopia similar to the ones in the past that can be reflected on the work of Tomas Moro, Tomasso Campanella and Francis Bacon. It could be, but the problem and danger of the destruction of the natural environment and human self-destruction is standing. If the utopia helps walking, we march.

The Ecological Citizenship Education unveils, in this context, as an urgent need for improve peoples' awareness and responsibility of our behaviours and the importance of behaving and working on a double aim:

- a) Awareness of the dangers and compromise for responsible and solidary action towards the protection of the natural environment.
  - b) Compromise and responsible action to avoid personal, cultural, ethnical and religious diversity becoming a controversial factor opposed to a factor of respect, understanding and meeting. The novelty of this challenge is not on the Diversity, as it has always existed, it is in the way it is faced. We can keep being anchored to those assimilationist ways from the past that tried to destroy the human Diversity or create new ways to take advantage of the great value of Diversity. The educative action has here a big task. This task requires, as UNESCO (2015) points out, '*rethinking education*' in this ecological and solidary sense.
3. Compromise inherent to the ecological citizenship.

The concept of ecological citizenship is becoming a classic on sociologic, pedagogic and political literature. This is due to its complexity and because it requires changes in people's behaviours and structures as well as in the general social dynamics. (Valencia Saiz, 2003; Viche, 2015). The extent of the moral, social and political compromise that contains the sustainable development demands a transformation in our world from an integral and ecological perspective. This transformation is based on the principle of sustainability as it is reflected in the 2030 Agenda and in the latter efforts to evaluate its fulfilment<sup>2</sup>. This transformation needs consciousness, compromise and solidary action of every human being in a triple direction.

- *Sustainability*: The principle of sustainability guaranties the balance between present development and future, e.g. between developments to satisfy current needs without jeopardising the resources for future development.
- *Co responsibility and active co participation in the building of a more sustainable and solidary world*. "We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less is there room for the globalization of indifference" (Laudatio, nº 52, pág. 39).
- *Ethical and moral progress*. The obsession for change, scientific and technical development without an ethical and moral conscience could drive to us a situation where the human being is a cog in the process of scientific and technical progress. This would be a mistake because change, science and technique are means that should serve the human being. To follow scientific and technological progress with an ethical, moral and social progress is one of the key aspects of human sustainable development.

To sum up, to assign ecological citizenship to the superficial and aseptic relationships of individuals and groups with the human environment, or even worse, with governments or Estates drives to a reductionism of the concept.

#### 4. Objectives for an ecological citizenship education

The ecologic citizenship education is education. As such, this is an integral and permanent human optimization process in its individualisation and socialisation processes throughout its life (Delors 1996). As ecological, it integrates the human and natural environments. It cannot limit itself to the mere transmission of knowledge, it needs to be more complex, integral and inclusive in a way that by educating it will be gaining awareness of its responsibility with the environment and "starting acquiring its own identity, (...) building and fulfilling as a person and as a citizen able to live in an integrated, active, responsible, critical, compromised and solidary way within society, contributing at the same time to its development, improvement and transformation" (Cieza Garcia, 2010,124).

This educational task is a compromise and action of the entire society instead of only the schools. This compromise can be focussed in two main directions:

- 1) To counter attitudes and behavioural routines that are negative for a sustainable development, such as, lack of recycling, abusive and unjustified water, paper or energy consume.
- 2) To activate and develop values, attitudes, habits and pro-ecological behaviours.

The 17 objectives described on the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development constitute the best action plan whilst offering appropriate contents to design programs in order to achieve an ecological citizenship education.

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