


**TEACHING GEOGRAPHY FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT** <https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2024.033-004>**Renato Marchesini<sup>1</sup>****ABSTRACT**

Geography, education for sustainability and specifically geographic education for sustainability are called to respond to a demand with profound social, economic and environmental connotations: globalization, climate change, human development, diversity (biological, socioeconomic and cultural), sustainable development, which involves not only the individualization of interrelationships, but also the positioning in an ethical dimension and solidarity with the new generations. Thus, the general objective of this work is to present a study on what are the contributions of geography to education and sustainable local development. The following work is classified as a literature review, in which a search was carried out to books, dissertations and scientific articles selected through a search in the following databases (books, database sites, etc.): Scielo, CAPES Portal and Google Academics for the investigation. The keywords used in the search were: "environmental education", "sustainable development" and "geography". to teach Geography is to commit oneself to the formation of the citizen, taking into account Vygotsky's socio-interactionist conception defended by the authors studied. Teachers, with regard to this human science, need to rely on other professionals in the area to guide them, improving their work with the contents that involve the discipline. It is also very important that the departments of education provide better courses and resources so that teachers can do a satisfactory job in this discipline totally in harmony with the environment in which the students are inserted.

**Keywords:** Sustainable development. Sustainability. Geography Teaching.

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## INTRODUCTION

The school fulfills the duty to play a formative and developmental role in society so that these institutions prepare people to be "free" and capable adults tomorrow. The school must transmit knowledge, values and healthy habits so that they are integral people, responsible for their actions and capable of solving life's problems.

There are numerous social functions that are present in the school, educational centers and others. These environments are nothing more than a combination based on the social reality of the "adult world" with order, hierarchy, established norms, goals, etc. This form is part of the social whole. The school plays a formative role in society; prepare the adults of the future, transmitting knowledge, habits and values to be useful, efficient and happy members (DE OLIVEIRA; DA SILVA; GONÇALVES, 2020).

It is the school, the family, the most important place for the socialization of the individual. It is the area where he will learn to share, to limit himself, to discover the world around him and where he is building his identity. You will get to know your place in the world, the history of your community, the development of science; and in the case of a person, they will learn to fight for their rights and must fulfill the obligations arising from the rules, which temper their character when entering the adult world.

The school is a social union, necessary and convenient for the adaptation of new members to its midst, and it is a means that allows social mobility among the members of free societies, allowing the progress of the most intellectually and civilly trained. I should even give equal opportunities to all students, financially supporting those who are most disadvantaged in this regard.

The integration between scientific and educational knowledge, applied to local problems, is a necessary process for the development of the goal of sustainability. For this, a convergence of geographic and educational subthemes is necessary that allow the interrelated study of the global and local environment.

There is a growing awareness of the conflict between the tasks of human beings and the fragility of the environment. Natural resources, instead of being exploited in many regions of the planet, will have to sustain an economy that in a relatively short period of time can be five to ten times larger than the one that currently exists. This cannot be achieved if humanity continues to carry out the same activities within current consumption patterns.

In this context, Geography, education for sustainability and specifically geographic education for sustainability are called upon to respond to a demand with profound social, economic and environmental connotations: globalization, climate change, human development, diversity (biological, socioeconomic and cultural), sustainable development,



which involves not only the individualization of interrelationships, but also the positioning in an ethical and solidary dimension with the new generations (SILVA; GRYBOVSKI, 2019).

Thus, the general objective of this work is to present a study on what are the contributions of geography to education and sustainable local development.

The following research is classified as a literature review defined by Gil (2008) as one that uses texts (or other printed or recorded intellectual material) as primary sources to obtain its data. It is not only a collection of data contained in books, but, on the contrary, it focuses on the innovative and critical reflection of certain texts and the concepts raised in them, in which a consultation of books, dissertations and scientific articles selected through a search in the following databases (books, database sites, etc.) was carried out. The databases used in this investigation were: Scielo, CAPES Portal and Google Academics. The keywords used in the search were: "*environmental education*", "*environment*", "*sustainable development*" and "*geography*".

## **EDUCATION AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT: CONTRIBUTIONS OF GEOGRAPHY**

The teaching professional is responsible for the teaching-learning process, which takes place in different formal educational institutions. The function that the teacher performs has characteristics that are specific to his profession, to the way of teaching, its importance and the demands of what is expected of the teacher in the face of the challenges and uncertainties in the contemporary world, that is, as a profession, teaching presupposes training for its exercise.

However, the teacher's work, as an agent of education, when well directed and with well-established guidelines, acquires an educational, instructive nature, capable of awakening in the student the ability to seek knowledge hitherto unknown, conducted only by the conscious guidance of the teacher (GOMES; PEDROSO, 2022).

According to Monteiro (2015), a good teacher should remain where the staff and the public meet, dealing with the fantastic flow of traffic at an intersection where intertwining a network of connectivity is more like an attempt to cross a highway on foot.

The teaching work involves the complex process in the relationship between teaching and learning. We understand teaching as a complex, historical social practice that is determined by human society. According to Monteiro (2015), teaching as a social practice needs to be problematized, understood and transformed, enabling dialogue resulting from the relationships between teachers and students.

Society is a horizon where groups emerge, develop their own lives and share their goods. If education is dialogue, encounter and communication of one subject with the other,



where the educator and the student educate each other, and if man is only fulfilled to the extent that he is a being with the other, and if the school, in a certain sense, institutionalizes this social and practical character of human nature, it cannot be seen as an isolated and artificial space. It is not the school that brings together students and teachers, but the need for education that gives rise to the school. The understanding of this phenomenon explains and substantiates the community meaning of the school and its relations with the regional context (DE OLIVEIRA; DA SILVA; GONÇALVES, 2020).

Since the Federal Constitution of 1988, school management must be democratic and participatory in favor of the exercise directed to the people. In its article 206 of the Magna Carta, the pluralism of ideas and pedagogical conceptions and the democratic management of education are established as "basic principles" (BRASIL, 1988). Therefore, the principles considered in Democratic Management must be focused on decentralization, which includes non-hierarchical forms of discussion, decisions and different actions.

It is necessary that everyone involved in the internal and external daily life of the school participates in the management, from teachers to the community that exists around the school. Only in this way does democratic management achieve transparency, since each and every decision or action made in the school has to be known to all.

Democratic management seeks the autonomy of the school in three major areas: financial; the administrative; and, the pedagogical. For Gadotti (1994), democratic management is important, and, above all, fundamental to promote general improvements in education. For him, as the school should train for citizenship, it should set an example.

Democratic and decentralizing processes encompass a different definition in the current century, having a centralization in relation to contextual specificities within school situations. According to Libâneo (2008), people begin to have responsibilities for their competence and ability to survive, and a new individual emerges in this changeable society who needs care and rights. According to the author:

The democratic public school, therefore, should be understood here as a place to expand educational opportunities, disseminate knowledge and its critical re-elaboration, improve school educational practice aiming at the cultural and scientific elevation of the popular strata, contributing, at the same time, to respond to their most immediate needs and aspirations and to their insertion in a collective project of change in society (LIBÂNEO, 2008, p.46).

In this sense of encounters and disagreements regarding public policies, it is perceived that there are paths that contradict each other, in the historical series of public administration, accusing that social and cultural movements have changed traditions and changed the course of this path.



Management similarly fosters the emergence of representative bodies, such as school unions, parent-teacher associations. It is believed that in this way, with an agreement between representative units, the activity becomes more democratic and effective. The management also fosters the creation of representative bodies, such as school unions, parent-teacher associations. It is believed that in this way, with an articulation in representative units, participation becomes more democratic and efficient.

The educational issue, globally, has the social attribution of generating the development of specific capacities of the human being. The human being, being a cultural entity and having its values, needs a place for socialization. However, there is a socially tense experience, in the same way, which needs to have respect for diversity, needing to follow equal rules for all, it is necessary to make a joint effort through participation (GOMES; PEDROSO, 2022).

It is worth mentioning that community is understood as the neighborhood, life, associations, societies, institutions. Implicit in the concept of community is a certain degree of solidarity, cultural integration, action and feeling of reality, and even certain geographical, economic and historical aspects (VIEIRA, FARIA, 2019).

It is a fact, then, that the centralization that still prevails in most school units needs to give way to decentralization so that the community has more autonomy and starts to act in a way that will benefit everyone. The problem persists because the State and the Municipality themselves do not work with the idea of cooperation, when it comes to managing schools.

Thus, we can only examine the relations between the school and the community to the extent that we inquire about the role of the school in relation to the conflicting elements that weave the relations of the community itself. In this same perspective, we can question how and who represents the community in the school. In a more direct way, the question is the following: does the school serve the interests of some or all members of the community? In fact, most of our schools reproduce the society in which we live, that is, they serve only a part of the community (VIEIRA, FARIA, 2019).

To the extent that the school is unaware of the experience and thought of the student and the community, it can only act as if it had a monopoly on knowledge. The pedagogical posture becomes authoritarian and, in general, purely verbalist. Without cultivating reciprocity, the essential exchange of the entire act of learning, imposes on the student the dominant worldview (GOMES; PEDROSO, 2022).

A school without the physiognomy of a community, without eyes, hands, arms, in short, without a body capable of feeling the external world, cannot communicate knowledge, experiences, cannot become a cultural center and without its own identity, specific



objectives and political guidelines, it can leave its mark on the student and its influence on the community.

An institution truly integrated into the environment has the function of analyzing and evaluating the very conditions of this environment, its internal and external relations. In addition to the changes in attitudes of the members of the school community, where some people cannot impose everything on others, they cannot be the origin of all ideas and decisions. It is necessary to bear in mind that education is not limited to teaching itself, and this is not reduced to the so-called scientific knowledge. Knowledge takes several forms: common sense, art, religion, technology, science, etc. (VIEIRA, FARIA, 2019).

Knowledge in its various modalities, and even in the form of culture, can be developed through activities such as theater, music, cinema, visual arts, dance, reading, and also effective means of exchange of ideas and experiences between the school and the community. These activities allow the participation and coexistence of the student with parents, colleagues, authorities in a more direct way (GOMES; PEDROSO, 2022).

They provide a longer permanence of the student in school, preventing them from moving to other parts of the city, as happens today with those who want to improve their creative potential, and who attend formal education for one period, in one school, and, in the other period, study languages, ballet, music in other establishments.

In reality, activities mistakenly called extra-class are fundamental in the educational process. Through these extension activities such as short courses, lectures, games, etc., people from the community, from all social and intellectual levels, can contribute with their opinions, experiences, skills for debate and the deepening of knowledge for the full realization of the functions of education.

## **CONTRIBUTIONS OF GEOGRAPHY TO THE ENVIRONMENT**

The national curriculum parameters (1997) indicate that the objective of teaching Geography should enable the student to exercise citizenship, permeating the feeling of belonging to a reality in which the relations between nature and society form an integrated whole (BRASIL, 1997).

To study Geography is to think and understand the environment in which it is inserted: the contemporary world, it is to situate oneself, position oneself and act as a transforming subject in a rational and critical way.

(...) Geography should enable students to have autonomy, understanding, limits and the potentialities of science and technology, as well as the developments that such development has brought in the construction of geographical spatialities. (BUENO, 2004, 90)



The new reflections linked to the teaching of the discipline in question undo the simple descriptions of places and numerical data which were priorities in traditional education. Current teaching should make the student understand the geographical space in its totality. Cavalcanti (2010) says:

As for the pedagogical-didactic aspects of the proposals for teaching Geography, the belief persists, explicit or not, that in order to teach well, knowledge of the content of the subject critically focused is enough. (CAVALCANTI, 2010, p. 78).

According to this reality, it is necessary to review the attitude of many teachers who, when feeling insecure in the insecure teaching process, tend to a conservative attitude, and choose to perform various routine activities in the classroom, being afraid of discovering new paths, new pedagogical practices (DE ARAÚJO, 2021).

Spegiorin (2007), concluded:

Such actions can reveal new teaching possibilities, which would possibly not be developed without a more voluntary mediation and less involved with routine procedures, students must create, discover, explore and enable new learning and be in a constant process of learning and discovery (SPEGIORIN, 2007, p.30).

Teachers, then, must have a vision of greater practicality, develop their classes in a meaningful way, favoring the learning of the contents they teach, involving students. It is necessary to intentionally articulate their professional and social projects, favoring the breadth of each one.

Also according to the PCNs (1997), when the student is led to think about geography, he acquires a subjective understanding of the landscape as a place, since it starts to have meaning. They are perceptions responsible for establishing part of the process of construction and representation of the environment in which we live, which are essential for geographical knowledge.

Thus, among the different roles attributed to geographic education today, there is the perception of space and everything that this space can determine for people. According to Matias (2006) the following definition is given:

Geographic education has many objectives, among them, the importance of the transformation of space and its impact on the daily lives of citizens stands out. Perceiving this dynamic of change in geographic space is extremely complex, given the multiple relationships and areas of knowledge involved in this process. Thus, the great challenge of Geography in a dynamic society is to make geographical knowledge a significant instrument for social transformation and the student, being the central agent of this teaching and learning process, transforming knowledge into a daily tool (MATIAS, 2006, p. 250).



Understanding the relationship between Geography and spatial orientation skills is the purpose of this social intervention project. In other words, it is intended to know how and at what moments geographical knowledge helps citizens in their socio-spatial practice. Before that, it is necessary to observe that the current school practice demands recognizing the student as a sociocultural subject, and it is necessary, then, to ascertain their cognitive and psychological development, perception of space and language (MONTEIRO, 2015).

It is notorious that, with these perceptions, the educator will be able to invest in teaching strategies that diagnose the spatial knowledge that the student has. Knowledge about space, as spatial perception, is directly fundamental in the construction of geographical knowledge. It is through it that man, in society, has the ability to establish relationships that demarcate the social, cultural, technological, economic and environmental context.

When teaching, the teacher must act as a mediator in the students' learning process; must stimulate and motivate, provide criteria and diagnose learning situations of each student and the whole class, clarify and provide values and help students develop their own, finally, must promote and facilitate human relations in the classroom and at school, and be their personal and professional advisor.

Given the current educational demands, the teaching work will be reoriented towards a tutorial attitude, similar to that of the coordination, advice and facilitation of educational experiences in which the student can learn. Likewise, in classrooms, a climate of free expression will be privileged and educational experiences will be initiated by the planned, intentional, and significant use of the issue as an activator of integral processes (DE ARAÚJO, 2021).

If pedagogy is a reflection on the practice by which the new theory is constructed and the practice is modified, becoming practice, then geographic pedagogy reflects on the formation of the student of geographical knowledge, on what geography teaches in each of the forms of education (Formal, non-formal and informal), on the teaching of geography, it is to indicate identified and selected subjects, problems, the aspects of geography should be taught in basic education and at each level of schooling, of education. Pedagogy reflects on the characteristics of training and the specificities of the geographical discipline that should be taught to basic education teachers, on the singularities of culture and on the cognitive, social, affective and intellectual characteristics of population culture (MONTEIRO, 2015).

In other words, collaborating with the MEC Portal (BRASIL, 2010) on the teaching of geography concludes that:





Therefore, teaching geographic contents, with the contribution of school knowledge, requires a lively, true dialogue, in which everyone, students and teachers, have the legitimacy to manifest themselves, based on the debate of really relevant themes and the confrontation of perceptions, experiences, analyses, seeking a real meaning of the contents studied for the students (BRASIL, 2010, p. 03).

It is evident that contemporaneity, especially with regard to the teaching of geography, points to the globalization process as a guide for the teaching-learning relationship. It is necessary to consider, however, that this process is complex, given the number of several participating countries and, given their differences, this aspect does not denote social justice or overcoming social inequalities.

When making considerations about the globalization process, Cavalcanti (2010) argues that:

In this process, there is greater interdependence between the scales at which spatial phenomena and facts occur, greater and more intense communication between people, companies and institutions, leading to simultaneous (but not homogeneous) experience with these phenomena and facts, to the densification of people in global and globalized urban territories, to standardization of lifestyles, but also to the accentuation of cultural diversity (CAVALCANTI, 2010, p. 04).

Thus, the investment is centered on the production of knowledge with greater openness, articulation and integration to the different fields of science. It is also necessary to consider the attempt to overcome technical rationality for a more practical rationality that considers the social phenomena and facts experienced. Thus, "[...] it seeks to understand the complexity inherent to these phenomena and facts, expressed in interdisciplinary knowledge". (MONTEIRO, 2015, p. 04).

Likewise, it is necessary to consider that geographical science is a fertile field when understanding the social aspect of phenomena by choosing geographic space as the object of analysis.

One aspect that has regained importance in recent years is epistemology; In all curricula of undergraduate studies in education, the epistemology of the social sciences and history and geography is included. However, epistemology, as its name implies, refers to knowledge and is an important aspect, but it is not the main function of the teacher: to transmit knowledge, like the priest who communicates communion, but to form this is a broader and more complex task than giving knowledge (VIEIRA, FARIA, 2019).

For the reason given, I believe that pedagogical reflection should explain the role of knowledge in school and the epistemology of geography, insofar as it allows the selection of



the contents and concepts that are the object of examination in school. With the same line of thought, Cavalcanti (2010) points out that:

Research in the line of Geography teaching in Brazil has been produced with the aim of understanding the dynamics of this process and indicating paths and approaches that produce (or can produce) the best results in the learning and formation of the citizen. Therefore, it is to be expected that the orientations of Didactics and geographical science are present in some way in the teaching practice (CAVALCANTI, 2010, p. 05)

The teaching of Geography implies the existence of a Didactics of Geography; However, at the university level, each geographer progresses in research and knowledge of Geography, but when teaching courses, in general, procedures are not applied to efficiently transmit geographical knowledge to students. Geographers in universities are more researchers than teachers, not considering knowledge, concepts, and teaching methods based on students' abilities (VIEIRA, FARIA, 2019).

On many occasions, it is indicated that the teaching of geography in schools and colleges is routine, theoretical, repetitive of concepts, passive, not very motivating and the responsibility for these deficiencies is attributed to primary school teachers and high school teachers for little teaching the contents of Geography within the program of Studies; However, when these professors passed through the university classrooms, they did not receive the necessary training on how to transmit geographical concepts, what methods to use, what practices to carry out, so that they only master the simple transmission of knowledge in the geographies they approved (GUERRA, 2021).

When the objective is to emphasize the ways in which school and the teaching of geography are inserted in social relations, we think of an education for citizenship. Currently, it is necessary to constantly review the criteria for selecting geographic contents, the construction of new didactic models, the selection of clear and precise concepts used by this discipline, to define the learning objectives, the guidelines used for the sequencing of contents, the curricular development models and the new proposals in the teaching of Geography. Therefore, it is necessary to make a profound change in the teaching and learning processes (VIEIRA, FARIA, 2019).

It is also worth noting that when it comes to teaching the Human Sciences such as Geography, there are many challenges encountered by teachers, due to the constant transformations that the subjects involved in the social environment go through. Gasperazzo (2010) says:

During the process of analysis and changes in the curricula in the nineteenth century, the change to a more humanistic curriculum was evidenced, with priorities for more literary activities and the formation of intellectuality, other lines sought a



more scientific, more technical and practical curriculum appropriate to the processes of change that are developed in the country. (GASPERAZZO, 2010, p. 44)

Various criticisms have been raised and put in check the traditional education systems, the pedagogical models that are implemented. It is essential to consider the essence of Geography as a human science in the process of building the human being. To understand this relevance is to allow man to write his history, producing culture by perceiving himself as a subject.

The teaching of these two disciplines that go hand in hand plays an important role in the construction of citizenship and in the social and political emancipation of human beings. For this reason, geographical knowledge takes into account different peoples and cultures in different spaces and temporalities in the simplicity of their manifestations (VIEIRA, FARIA, 2019).

In the teaching of geography (GUERRA, 2021):

1. It is necessary to situate the instruction process in the zone of proximal development, that is, to go beyond spatial knowledge in which the student manifests total autonomy.
  2. The spatial representations that the students are building form a welcoming network that conditions the integration of new knowledge.
  3. The selection of spatial content as school knowledge and its sequencing throughout teaching must take into account its degree of order of complexity: spatial content from the most perceptive to those of the most abstract nature
  4. It is convenient to propose spatial knowledge of situations that have problems for the learner, that have a meaning, a functional value and that provide an active context for learning.
  5. Although the reconstruction of knowledge is an individual process, teaching must consider social interaction as a basic instrument to facilitate learning.
- Intentionality in the teaching of geography is important to determine the learning to be achieved, in this project it is considered that geography is important to the extent that it is an instrument to develop skills and values around space and teach how to think about space to favor the development of a critical social awareness.

The great challenge of teaching Geography is to be able to provide the student with the ability to understand the various interactions between society and nature in the conceptions of territory, place and region, identifying and evaluating the actions of human beings in society and their consequences in its multiple spaces and times. It is necessary to



create conditions so that the student, through his locality and his daily life, is able to develop his ideas in the social environment (DE OLIVEIRA; DA SILVA; GONÇALVES, 2020).

The work with different sources of information is extremely significant in this procedure, because although the specific interdisciplinary node allows the relationship of Economic and Social Geography with other disciplines, there are elements in its study that are necessary from different sources, as it speaks of economic-geographical, biological and/or chemical contents. This allows it to be in better conditions to develop the environmental treatment of the selected content (SILVA; GRYBOVSKI, 2019).

Undoubtedly, cartographic representations allow for greater interpretation in their entirety as an object of study, therefore, the geographical map, in this context, is an essential means of teaching. As well explained in various literatures, in the school context the map is usually presented as a paratext, that is, as an accessory sign around a linguistic text. It is believed that it is necessary to return to the value of the map not only as a paratext, but as a visual text and to highlight the communication processes that can be established in the classroom based on them (DE OLIVEIRA; DA SILVA; GONÇALVES, 2020).

In this sense, the map, as well as other cartographic materials, contains a series of information that is represented by a system of signs, therefore, in the teaching-learning process of geographic contents, the student combines images, such as the words of a sentence, forming a logical series, which is like the grammar of graphic language.

In the case of geographical maps, take into account their classification, whether by the extent of the territory, content or scale; since the content of the cartographic material must correspond to the theme under study. When locating on the geographical map the geographical economic process or phenomenon to which mention is made, it must be specified how it affects the environment where it occurs at the same time, the environmental dynamics will allow how this impact behaves in the geographical space, but over time. This phase seeks to demonstrate that geographic space is not inert, but on the contrary dynamic and that the impact of geographic economic processes does not behave or remains the same over time (DE ARAÚJO, 2021).

The treatment of environmental education in the discipline of Economic and Social Geography is currently a challenge, since scientific and technical advances based on the development of countries do not always imply standards that allow the development of a process that does not harm the environment (SILVA; GRYBOVSKI, 2019).

Therefore, the treatment of environmental education in the teaching-learning process of the discipline Economic and Social Geography should promote an environmentalist



geographical culture, a responsible mode of action with regard to the care and protection of the material resources that are at its disposal, interdisciplinary thinking of environmental education, to understand the importance of its study in the face of environmental problems as a social need.

## CONCLUSION

The human sciences play an essential role in education, for this reason, the curriculum has been transformed over time, so that it can be adapted to current realities and needs.

It is essential that lesson plans are not only in textbooks, often decontextualized, and in the still, mostly traditional system that prioritizes reading and repetition, it is therefore necessary to seek an education in which the student can experience the processes of knowledge and bring them to their reality so that they can make a difference, transforming them.

It is fundamental for the country that its citizens understand space, life, value the socio-cultural heritage of their region or locality. That they are able to identify the social relations in their own social group, that they know how to situate themselves in the face of events in the context in which they are inserted.

Thus, teaching Geography is to commit oneself to the formation of the citizen, taking into account Vygotsky's socio-interactionist conception defended by the authors studied. Teachers, with regard to this human science, need to rely on other professionals in the area to guide them, improving their work with the contents that involve the discipline. It is also very important that the departments of education provide better courses and resources so that teachers can do a satisfactory job in this discipline totally in harmony with the environment in which the students are inserted.



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