

Critical Review

Kagawa, Fumiyo et Selby, David (ed) (2011). *Education and Climate Change. Living and learning in interesting times*. New York: Routledge: 259 pp. ISBN10: 0-415-80585-6

by Brígida Rocha Brito

email: brigidabrito@netcabo.pt

Holder of a PhD in African Studies by ISCTE-IUL.
Lecturer at the Department of International Relations at Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa,
Deputy Director of JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations.
Researcher at OBSERVARE (UAL) and the Centre for African studies (ISCTE-IUL).
Guest Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Sociology of the University of Évora.

“Education and Climate Change. Living and learning in interesting times” is a co-authored book coordinated by Fumiyo Kagawa and David Selby published in 2010 by Routledge.

The book arouses interest for two main reasons, and any one of them is valid and sufficient to justify a careful reading: one the one hand, it is the central topic of the book and, on the other, the curricula of the authors. Accordingly:

1. The first reason lies in the subject under discussion – the pedagogical approach on climate change worldwide, bearing in mind its multiple impacts on several aspects of human life (health, food security, several types of economic production, ...) – which no doubt is a current topic of major importance. Implicitly, the analysis refers to the importance of International Relations in the context of environmental issues, and considers sustainability as the central goal. However, in this book the reverse is equally true, since environmental issues are equally important for International Relations, given that all examples presented and discussed are advanced from a holistic perspective;
2. The second reason has to do with the coordinators, co-authors of the book and of the preface. Fumiyo Kagawa is research coordinator at the Centre for Sustainable Futures at the University of Plymouth, United Kingdom, and David Selby is a Professor at Mount St. Vincent University, Canada, and Director of Sustainability Frontiers, a virtual research centre on climate change and sustainable education. In addition to the articles written by the coordinators, the book includes texts authored by lecturers from international renowned universities and researchers from research centres recognized worldwide by their peers¹. The preface was written by Bishop

¹ Virginia Cawagas (Associate Professor at the United Nations University for Peace, Costa Rica), Darlene Elower (Associate Professor at the University of Victoria, Canada), Ian Davis (Professor at the University of York), George Seja Dei (Full Professor at the University of Toronto, Canada), Edgar González-



Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate in 1984. In the first words of the preface, he reinforces the idea that climate change, besides being global, has a human cause, for which reason, more than vital, it is urgent to adopt and implement a wide range of measures, adjusted by sectorial areas, and which must be undertaken by all states and embraced by the world's population with a sense of responsibility. Desmond Tutu defines climate change as one of the main world crisis carried out by Humanity, and which has proven to be unbalanced in terms of its impacts.

"Climate change is the greatest human-induced crisis facing the World today. It is totally indiscriminate of race, culture and religion. It affects every human being on the Planet. But, so far, its impacts have fallen disproportionately. In response to climate change, the World «adaptation» has become part of standard vocabulary" (pp: XV)

As a work of joint authorship, it arouses a wide-ranging interest, allowing different perspectives on the same problem to come to the fore and, in addition, relate thematic areas, cross indicators, complement readings and reinvent methodologies to address the desired sustainability concept.

Above all, this book is pedagogical in that it allows the reader to learn about environmental issues from a critical theoretical approach. Readers also become familiar with the technical and scientific explanation about the processes that lead to climate change and corresponding consequences and, ultimately, benefit from the sharing of research experiences carried out by the respective authors.

The book is organised around twelve thematic texts² which, despite the specificities of each analysis, present a set of common concerns, mostly centred on the concept of social and environmental sustainability worldwide. All authors agree on three major issues: the urgency that the matter requires, involving reflection, debate,

Gaudiano (Senior Researcher at Universidade Autónoma de Nuevo Leon, Mexico, and member of the Commission on Education and Communication of the International Union for Conservation of Nature IUCN UICN), Magnus Haavelsrud (Professor at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, Norway), Bud Hall (Director of the Office of Community-based research at the University of Victoria, Canada), Heila Lotz-Sisitka (Full Professor in Environmental Education and sustainability at the University of Rhodes, South Africa), Pablo Meira Cartea (Professor at the University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain), James Pitt (Senior Researcher at the University of York, United Kingdom), Jane Reed (Coordinator of the International Network for School Improvement at the London Centre for Leadership, University of London), Janet Richardson (Professor at the University of Plymouth, United Kingdom), Toh Swee-Hin (Professor and Director at Griffith University Multi Faith Centre, Australia), Margareth Wade (Professor at the University of Plymouth, United Kingdom).

² The twelve articles are: 1) *Climate change education and communication: a critical perspective on obstacles and resistances*; 2) *Go, go, go, said the Bird: sustainability-related education in interesting times*; 3) *Peace learning: universalism in interesting times*; 4) *Climate injustice: how should education respond?*; 5) *The environment, climate change, ecological sustainability, and antiracist education*; 6) *Learning in emergencies: defense of Humanity for a livable World*; 7) *Sustainable democracy: issues, challenges and proposals for citizenship education in an age of climate change*; 8) *School improvement in transition: an emerging agenda for interesting times*; 9) *Critique, create and act: environmental adult and social movement learning in an era of climate change*; 10) *Transforming the ecological crisis: challenges for faith and interfaith education in interesting times*; 11) *Public health threats in a changing climate: meeting the challenges through sustainable health education*; 12) *Weaving change: improvising global wisdom in interesting and dangerous times*.



methodological redefinition and global intervention; 2) the need for a participatory methodological approach with the active involvement of everyone, ranging from ordinary citizens to the rulers; 3= sustainability as a goal, with continual reference to the new generations.

One of the major concerns highlighted in the twelve texts is the strategy to be adopted after awareness that, besides being an undisputable reality, climate change has major impacts that linger over time. The strategy advocated, which was shared by all authors, focuses on a conscious and responsible Environmental Education embraced by all regardless of origin or place of residence, economic and financial capacity or culture.

Given the awareness that climate change is global and world-encompassing, it is necessary to create a new universalism (Haavelsrud, 2010: 57 and following) based on a dynamic concept of Humanity guided by common objectives ("commonality"), including Peace, using a "transformative learning" methodology.

On an international level, dialogue is also considered from a global perspective (Sisitka, 2010: 73 and following) due to the urgent need to find contextualized answers to problems posed by climate change. This idea is based on the perception that negative socio-environmental impacts, including economic and political actions, are becoming more intense and difficult to resolve and also on the findings that those who feel the effects of climate change the most are not the same as the ones causing it. And ultimately, on the awareness that the consequences of climate change are so structural that what is at stake is the continuity of life in the entire planet. Thus, the relationship between climate change, equity and justice is equated, which, to some extent, does away with the conventional concept of territorial boundaries, incorporating educational enabling methodologies that are transnational and global, since the problems felt also have those characteristics.

The educational strategy is designed transversally so as to be an opportunity to rethink attitudes and behaviours and also to refocus priorities and objectives at what is deemed to be "interesting times" (Kagawa *et Selby*, 2010). This period in time is considered to be unique because it is characterised both by multiple changes in the climate and by the chance to shape attitudes and learn from previous mistakes. This stimulates a transformative process on a individual and social basis (group-based, whatever it may be) that calls for ethical and moral principles, producing positive impacts in terms of effective and active involvement (engagement) that leads to a "mirror response" (Kagawa *et Selby*, 2010: 5 and following). The "mirror response" is shown very clearly, and is brought into evidence by the proven perception that climate change stems, in part, from unplanned human activity without associated impact studies and also from the awareness that the effects of this change may be felt by human communities in such a radical manner that, more than economic or purely environmental, it undermines the sustainability of human life.

This idea of a "mirror response" goes beyond the conventional principles of environmental determinism and is particularly advocated in a pedagogical sense, regardless of the groups involved (children, youth, adults, specific socio-professional groups, managers and entrepreneurs, politicians and rulers,...). This educational strategy encompasses society on the whole at micro and macro level, and it takes into consideration the entire world dynamics. This idea is often advanced by referring to Al Gore:



"It gives us an opportunity to experience something that few generations ever have the privilege of knowing: a common moral purpose compelling enough to lift us above our limitations" (Gore apud Kagawa et Selby, 2010: 4)

As one of the elements that all the analyses presented agree about, the educational strategy implies the ability for participatory involvement and may be differentiated into "education for sustainable contraction" and "education for sustainable moderation" (Selby, 2010: 41 and following), both of which aiming at indentifying alternative intervention methodologies for a reversal of the effects of climate change in the long term.

The participatory methodological approach towards the creation and strengthening of active citizenship is not new, but the relational view bringing together participation and global environmental citizenship fostered internationally as a means to overcome crisis situations is innovative (Davies, 2010: 128 and following). Likewise, this socio-environmental learning process, which empowers and creates "new" citizens who experience problems from a local dimension but are aware of their inherent global nature, is basically critical, creative and focuses on action and intervention (Clover, 2010: 162). Accordingly, it moves away from purely theoretical and descriptive approaches and from listings of intent with no practical application (Reed, 2010: 141 and following) and which will get down in history as well written documents that, for distinct reasons, were never implemented.

Thus, the environmental problems brought about by climate change are presented as a learning paradigm with the potential to promote social change, based on systemic and holistic principles (Swee-Hin, 2010: 180 and following). In other words, it is guided by integrating criteria based on local, national and regional and, above all, international ethics. Once more, these elements are guided by critical and constructive dialogue regulated by values in order to ensure the sustainability of life worldwide.

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