

# Highlighting Ethics, Subjectivity and Democratic Participation in Sustainability Education: Challenges and Contributions

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## INTRODUCTION: CHALLENGES OF DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

In this chapter the challenge of developing democratic education for sustainability, where the aim is not that the students will be fostered into taking specific moral positions but rather that they will become aware of the right to deliberately choose ethical actions and strategies as moral and social subjects, is highlighted.

Democratic education constitutes an arena where it is of great importance to continuously discuss its fundamentals and its prerequisites in the light of threats that might challenge the idea of performing education which satisfies basic democratic standards. Not least within ethics education are such threats significant.

One challenge is shaped on the fact that democratic relations between grown-up teachers and young students might be threatened if and when the former are treated as the omniscient and active, and the latter as the

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O. Franck, C. Osbeck (eds.), *Ethical Literacies and Education for Sustainable Development*, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-49010-6\_1

passive receivers of more or less definite ethical knowledge. Another challenge stems from the risk that undemocratic—or pseudodemocratic—relations between teachers and students take the form of indoctrination in the sense that students are taught how to act in moral matters without having an opportunity to question and criticize the reasons and intentions behind such prescriptive teaching. A third challenge is that indoctrinatory, undemocratic ethics education might become focused on policy issues where all that seems important is to get the students to reach measurable outcomes by handling specific decision scenarios, with no room for philosophical reflection and creativity (Hartner 2015; Franck 2017).

These challenges are more or less visible also with regard to democratic sustainability education, which is not surprising because ethics is counted as one of the main dimensions of sustainability, and one that relates in various ways to the strands often mentioned: the environmental, the social, the cultural and the economic (UNEP 2015). In this chapter I shall discuss how these challenges can be interpreted, and I will also say something about what kinds of strategy might be relevant when trying to address them, considering that sustainability education often seems to be conceived as a forum for the transmission of values. The aim is to elaborate on a concept of democratic sustainability education where the development of ethical skills is in focus with regard to all participating actors, and where such a development is shown to constitute a firm but flexible basis for significant teaching about sustainability.

## CLASSIFYING ETHICS EDUCATION

Before outlining a possible classification of various strands within sustainability education, I shall, as a starting point, highlight a characterization of the aims and structure of ethics education. This characterization has its roots in a distinction of religious education (RE), presented by Michael Grimmitt and Garth Read (1975). Starting the classificatory outline in this way is relevant because ethics has a natural place within both sustainability education and RE.

Grimmitt and Read (1975) make a distinction between two dimensions of learning in RE: learning *about* and learning *from* religion. Learning about religion refers to learning within phenomenological teaching about world religions, teaching which is not thought to lack space for critical discussion and analysis but which makes room for an “emphatic” study of religious thought and religious traditions (ibid.). Learning from religion

explores an existential dimension which is built around an apprehension according to which theological ideas and dogmas are not to be seen as the primarily important content within RE. Rather, a wider context mirroring various strands of human faith and beliefs, including ethical apprehensions, moral practice and existential issues regarding meaning and purpose in life, is what should be at the centre of RE. According to Grimmitt, both dimensions ought to be involved in RE (1987).

A prerequisite for such double-dimensional education is, to quote one commentator, an emphasis not of “knowledge of religion per se ... but the way in which a religious believer perceives the world and how these insights can inform how the learner sees the world” (Teece 2010). What should be in focus is the aim of opening up for identification processes where learners, reflecting on fundamental existential and ethical issues, might become inspired by studying religious believers’ ways of handling such issues, recognizing some of these ways, perhaps, while not being able to understand or feel comfortable about others. Moreover, here Grimmitt stresses that it ought to be a mutual interpretive process—in the sense that learners within secular RE might be influenced both by knowledge about how universal existential and ethical questions are dealt with by religious believers and by their own life experience—that puts new interpretive dimensions and perspectives in focus in RE. This is, in fact, what is meant by “emphatic” education about religions, through which learners can develop the ability to identify with life experiences of religious believers, and their existential and ethical interpretations of the same. Students will also be able to recognize such interpretations as less alien and less far-reaching than otherwise (Grimmitt 1987).

It is possible to use Grimmitt’s distinction, at least as a tentative frame of reference, as a means of classifying ethics education. Such education *about* ethics would mean that various issues and questions are highlighted and made the objects of reflection and analysis, but without any demands being raised that these examinations should pave the way for a more or less explicit moral positioning, putting forth personal standpoints and opinions. Education from ethics would, following Grimmitt’s model, be performed with the aim that the participating students should be able to relate to more or less fundamental ethical issues by having the opportunity to identify with people engaged in moral struggles. They could then try to find ethical, or ethically relevant, tools to handle challenges of various kinds, and search for a basis with regard to which moral choices could be made in their lives.

## RATIONALITY AND PRESCRIPTIVE DIMENSIONS OF ETHICS EDUCATION

However, the above classification of ethics education suffers from two shortcomings. First, it is based on the notion that people in their moral lives, more or less consistently, act like rational agents who weigh reasons for and against before, on supposedly objective grounds, they consider how to address the challenges they face. It may be true that we all, though certainly not always, strive to try to choose constructive ways to meet life's challenges and opportunities. However, such choices cannot be interpreted in purely rational terms: they are constituted of thought, reason, emotions, attitudes and values, and are therefore complex (Franck 2017).

Far too often it appears that schools' ethics education is based on a picture of what it means to be a moral agent. Students receive information about scenarios in which they should consider different options to deal with moral dilemmas—dilemmas that are often located quite far from their everyday lives. Their comments must be justified by an ethical theory or an ethical model, but such theoretical or “objective” considerations represent only one dimension of what it means to make moral decisions. Therefore this kind of teaching does not reflect people's everyday moral life (Skilbeck 2016).

The second shortcoming is that the classification in question does not provide sufficient tools to be able to capture the breadth of the perceived ethics teaching. Grimmitt mentions in connection with his categorization that besides learning *about* and *from* religion, there is a confessional teaching of “pure religion” (1987). As has been pointed out (Teece 2010), it can be formulated as education *in* religion.

As for non-denominational ethics education, it is essential to highlight teaching whose aim is that students should be notified of norms and values that they are expected to follow. In focus is an ethics instruction based on more or less explicit ethical axioms on which the teaching is performed. Here a need for a broader model of categorization is worth considering when it comes to classifying sustainability education.

### MODELLING CATEGORIES OF ETHICS EDUCATION

To build a classification of sustainability education on a broader model for categorization, that is to say one that includes an ethics instruction dimension, I shall use a proposal presented by Gardelli et al. (2014). This proposal of categorization of ethics education highlights three approaches

that are supposed to capture different ways of understanding the teaching of ethics: (1) the descriptive facts about ethics (DE) approach; (2) the moral fostering (MF) approach; and (3) the philosophical ethics (PE) approach (p. 16).

Regarding “ethics in school”, the DE approach is said to refer to a concept according to which education will be directed towards social facts about people’s ethical behaviour and reasoning in morals. Students can, within such a kind of ethics education, examine how certain groups or individuals take a stand on different ethical issues and act in different social contexts. The aim of such an approach is “teaching (or helping the student learn) social, statistical, psychological, or sociological facts about moral issues” (p. 17).

The MF approach is said to refer to a range of interpretations and concepts. However, Gardelli et al. choose to use the label in a “rather narrow” sense, more precisely as the transmission of values in “some kind of rather straightforward” sense, focusing “moral fostering” (p. 18).

Finally the PE approach is said to highlight not empirical or sociological studies of people’s moral attitudes or behaviour or the fostering of students to accept certain norms and values (p. 18), but normative skills, such as the formulation of arguments for and against moral positions, and the ability to make assessment judgements with reference to the evaluation of reasons (p. 18).

After having discussed these approaches, Gardelli et al. reach the conclusion that “ethics in school” should be built primarily around the PE approach, while also giving recognition to the possibility of making room for some moral fostering (p. 25) and that there might be other “strong arguments” to consider with regard to ethics education which could lead to “other conclusions” (p. 25). The DE approach is left out since it does not focus on is what important in school contexts—namely, “engaging in” ethical matters and “*doing* normative ethics” (p. 18).

I do not, in the present context, want to go further into the discussion presented by Gardelli et al. However, I mention their distinction to help in trying to categorize ethics education—and, as we shall now see, also in the classification of sustainability education where dimensions of ethical skills are highlighted.

## EDUCATION FROM SUSTAINABILITY

The label “sustainability education” is, in the present context, for pedagogical reasons, replacing “education for sustainable development (ESD). Leaving the discussion regarding possible challenges related to the concept

of “development” behind (Knutsson 2014), one might ask what kind of aims and content would be significant for sustainability education? Is it education *in* sustainability? Would the aims and the content differ from education *about* and *from* sustainability? If so, in what sense?<sup>1</sup>

If we choose to talk about “education *in* sustainability”, we shall, firstly, find ourselves forced to consider some challenges that are the same as those associated with ESD. Certain more or less well-defined values and norms are assumed to be important to transmit to the students involved, and then there appear to be opportunities to introduce activities that are interpreted to be consistent with those values and standards.

However, such a concept of sustainability education threatens other fundamental norms and values, especially those often characterized as keystones in democratic communities: personal freedom and integrity, and the right of individuals to make free choices, to mention just two. Many writers have criticized ESD for including prescriptive methods and aiming to nurture what has been described as “eco-certified children” (Ideland and Malmberg 2015), and thus failing to take into account a student’s right to be critical of the sustainability education they are forced to participate in and of the normative and value-based aims governing it (Jickling 1994; Dahlbeck 2014; Davies and Elliott 2014).

Second, education in sustainability is connected to another and no less acute challenge—namely, the one that the term sustainability is porous and allows for a plethora of interpretations. “Sustainable development” has been criticized on many grounds, not least for signifying a Western concept of developmental optimism (Hellberg and Knutsson 2016). Changing the concept from “sustainable development” to “sustainability” may help to shift slightly the emphasis in the education we are talking about, but previous objections remain. The “post-political” consensus often signalled in the policy documents and speeches is a chimera which conceals the strong conflicts of interest and claims to power that control the processes that operate under the concept of sustainability (Rist 2008; Knutsson 2014).

What kind of sustainability education could serve as a trustworthy alternative to a normative and prescriptive one? From the discussion of the categorization of ethics education, we remember the criticism that Gardelli et al. hinted at in “education about ethics”: it is not about *engaging in* or *doing* normative ethics. In a sense, this course is a relevant objection. On the other hand, “education about ethics” may perhaps be perceived to be not that defensive or even irrelevant. (Grice & Franck 2014) As we saw

earlier, Grimmitt does not mean that teaching about religion is the most important thing in schools' RE. He understands, though, the knowledge which was treated as a prerequisite for the students to be able to implement engaged participation in the education on existential and ethical matters. Education *about* religion is, one could say, to be apprehended as relevant in an instrumental sense, and maybe one can—even if education *about* ethics can be described as having at least partly other content—say that education about ethics could be apprehended in a parallel way.

Given the fact that sustainability education includes fundamental ethical dimensions, one could consider whether it is not also the case that education about sustainability, if it can be categorized reasonably clearly, could be attributed an instrumental role? But, one might ask, is it at all possible to give a both reliable and more or less universally accepted categorization of the purpose and content of education about sustainability that is needed to be able to speak of it as “an instrument” for another and perhaps more important kind of sustainability education?

Can one imagine that it is reasonable to consider education *about* sustainability, where students might have access to historical and current discussions about how environmental, social, economic and cultural issues have been discussed in debates and documents that are described as more or less fundamental points of reference within sustainability discourses? Could it be considered instrumental in relation to education *from* sustainability, where these discussions, often in combination with relevant statistical data concerning emissions, energy consumption, poverty, economic imbalances and so on, are treated critically and with a focus on ethical perspectives, as well as theories in science and social sciences? Would this be a strategy that might lay the ground for the development of sustainability education? What is looked for is a development which crosses between the pitfalls of either failing to satisfy democratic and ethical demands of respecting students' freedom and integrity, or nurturing a kind of distant study where participants refrain from engaging in sustainability issues. The latter alternative would hinder the participants from doing normative ethics in the sense that they get the opportunity to critically examine and discuss ethical questions with regard to environmental, social, economic and cultural dimensions of these issues.

It is relevant and important to investigate this strategy, not least because it offers the opportunity to involve students as independent subjects in the teaching and learning processes to be elaborated under the designation “sustainability education”. Here there is, at least in principle, a space for building a foundation on which democratic values can govern the aims, the

structure and the content of the education in question. Students can be partners in both the planning and the implementation of courses, lessons, excursions and exhibitions, and the issues that are to be prioritized with regard to this or that consideration, which may be matters for democratic dialogue and decision.

I should like to emphasize that I am now describing a *possible* scenario which *might* be realized. It is important to discuss the roads along which we want democratic, ethically well-founded sustainability education to be structured. Which roads are to be found between education *about* and education *in* sustainability, given that “about” and “in”, if they are to be interpreted in a bold and exclusivist way, both seem to challenge reliable and democratic sustainability education? Students have the right to come to know about information that is relevant to the development of personal, substantiated standpoints and the motivation for action. They also have the right to critically examine other standpoints and other actions than those that they have made their own. Education *from* sustainability, where “from” is understood as signifying a structure where the starting point for teaching and learning is students’ existential and moral experiences in relation to whatever environmental, social, economic and/or cultural issues are treated and highlighted, is a candidate for filling a need for a democratic and ethically well-founded educational strategy.

## SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION AND THE TRANSMISSION OF VALUES

This is not, of course, to say that this strategy is unproblematic. In the next section I shall discuss one important difficulty. Even if we find the criticism of the normative and prescriptive approach discussed above reasonable, we could take a further step and ask: What exactly does this criticism mean? We may approve of the rejection of—undemocratic and indoctrinatory—aims and moves where students are forced to accept certain norms and values without resistance, but does that mean that we would also like to hold on to a position where all kinds of value transmission in education are thought to be objectionable?

This is probably one of the most challenging issues to examine with regard to a democratic and ethically well-founded sustainability education. It touches on important ethical, philosophical and pedagogical questions related to not only sustainability education but also education in general. It points to what might seem to be a frustration among teachers



when trying to develop democratic education at the same time as they feel responsible for transmitting certain values: is it possible to shape a reasonable consistency between students' right to freedom, integrity and personal decisions in existential and ethical matters, and the nurturing of certain values which they, within the school system, are expected to shoulder (Osbeck et al. 2015)?

### AIMS AND OUTCOMES, PROCESSES AND RESULTS

A first issue to penetrate here is one that focuses on what aims there are for structuring sustainability education of the kind mentioned. All education reflects certain values that shape the educational organization in terms of courses, lessons, exercises, tests and so on. If the guiding principle here first and foremost, explicitly or implicitly, is directed towards achieving specified objectives in terms of “results” and “outcomes”, there will be a risk that the value and the importance of the teaching-learning process, where teachers and students cooperate in reflection, discussion and dialogue, is underestimated—and, worse, not prevalent at all. Such a concept of education where measurability is thought of as the solution to all kinds of challenge facing today's teachers and students does not lay a foundation for well-founded, reflective knowing. Such a knowing does not only reproduce dominating apprehensions of what “knowledge” and “values” are and should be, but also makes room for the criticism and realization of emancipatory visions and ideals (Franck 2017).

In the foregoing analysis a philosophically structured education *from* sustainability was tentatively sanctioned, at the same time as it was emphasized that the teaching-learning *in* sustainability, including values that frame an ethical basis for sustainability concepts, should be taken into account. It is fundamental that education *from* sustainability is governed not by focusing on specific outcomes or results but rather within a communicative process where the participants—teachers as well as students—are engaged in a dialogue regarding what aims should be highlighted, given present and historical conditions they find relevant to a constructive and reliable cooperation in sustainability issues, and how these aims are going to be applied within the education in question.

This is a guiding principle which harmonizes with a concept of a democratic education where *democracy* is structuring education rather than apprehended as the intended outcome. One representative of such

a concept is Gert Biesta, who has emphasized the importance of education to open up arenas where participant students will have, and can see, opportunities to advocate and develop as knowing and acting subjects. It is through differences that humans are able to develop a subjectivity (Biesta 2003), and “diversity” may refer to age, gender, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, sexuality, health and so on.

*Being* and *becoming* are to my mind fundamental concepts to elaborate on when trying to understand what is at stake here. Within democratic educational contexts, students are realizing that they are part of the community with the same rights and duties as all participants, and this means that they take part in the educational processes regarding structure as well as content. *Being* part of the societal community, they, like other participants, are expected to think and act as responsible agents, not in order to reach an aim definable in terms of “democracy” in the future but by practising democracy here and now (ibid.). Such practice will do something with the subject. They will act in a state of *becoming*, developing a subjectivity in relation to other agents (Franck 2016). The issue for democratic education is, as Biesta states, “not about how to ‘create’ or ‘produce’ democratic citizens, but about how to create opportunities for action, for being a subject, both in schools and other educational institutions, and in society as a whole” (Biesta 2003, p. 59).

### EQUALITY AS A PREREQUISITE IN THE RELATIONAL EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

According to the approach described above, democratic educational processes can be pictured as communicative processes where dialogue, understood perhaps in deliberative (Englund 2007) or agonistic (Mouffe 2005) terms, structures the relations between the participating subjects. This creates a need to highlight another issue with regard to education *from* sustainability—namely, that concerning teachers’ and students’ collaboration in educational processes.

In *The ignorant schoolmaster: Five lessons in intellectual emancipation*, the French philosopher Jacques (Rancière 1991) pictures the structure of a communicative educational process where teachers and students, within the framework of teaching, together are trying to grasp something that for them is unknown. When they thus collaborate and jointly try to understand, according to Rancière, the equality that exists between them

is manifested. They go into the knowledge process as equals, even if they come from different places with different experiences and thoughts.

Rancière criticizes a concept according to which teachers are seeking to lower themselves to the learner's level in order to impart knowledge to them that will grow step by step according to a definite course of development where the goal, the "outcome" or the "result" is that the student should achieve a body of knowledge and quality, measuring themselves against those of the teacher. Equal education is about liberation (cf. Säfström 2015).

Rancière has something important to contribute when we consider how teachers and students can interact in a democratic manner in a teaching-learning process regarding sustainability issues. If they go into this teaching as equals in that none of them makes a claim to have exclusive access to the knowledge that the others lack, they may shape an epistemological and existential project where curiosity and criticism together pave the way for the realization of emancipatory aims and visions. They can approach sustainability issues without either producing or reproducing established hegemonic frameworks where one of them, "the inferior" student, is expected to strive to approach the other, "the superior" teacher, and where the power to judge form, content and value of what is supposed to be worth knowing is reserved for the latter of the two (Franck 2017).

### CHILDREN AS KNOWLEDGEABLE EQUALS

A third issue to be highlighted with regard to the structuring of education *from* sustainability concerns what might be demanded by a democratic educational system regarding educational relations between teachers and young students. Rancière seems primarily to be discussing questions of democracy with reference to examples from academic contexts. In this chapter, however, I am interested in an analysis of what democratic and ethically relevant sustainability education for children might mean. Are children treated as equals within the educational processes going on in such education? John Wall, an American advocate of "a childist approach", has argued that children's experiences and interpretations of life are too often set aside. Ethics and morals are perceived as disciplines that reflect adult life, relationships and challenges, and that must therefore be handled with the adult's proposed solutions. According to Wall, children are considered more or less consistently to be moral individuals according to the standards formulated and authorized on the basis of

images of what adults find to be worth problematizing and their way of discussing issues of right and wrong, good and evil, and so on (2010).

Wall stresses that what needs to be done in a time when children are denied the right to act as morally full subjects is to try to improve their rights, protection and freedom (p. 2). Moreover, it is required that the whole ethos of the children and their relationship to adults must be reconstructed in a way that does not give unlimited focus on difference. Children's experiences of meaning, value, challenges, difficulties, setbacks, opportunities, trust, hope, security and so forth must constitute a basis for a general reflection of what life as a human being can mean. This makes the child's life interpretations not only interesting as objects of reflection, analysis or perhaps research; rather, the interpretation of the life of the child formulates help to influence how people—children as well as adults—perceive life, what is important and valuable, and what one ought to do to contribute to the development of good relations and a good society (p. 3–4).

### BEING AND BECOMING “SUSTAINABILISTS”

Wall's “childist approach” can be developed with reference to research done in preschool contexts, where young children interact with each other and with teachers, shaping teaching-learning processes that reach into epistemological and pedagogical, as well as ontological and existential, fields. The recognition that “playing” and “learning” cannot be the object of any exclusive distinction seems to be generally, or almost generally, established (Coates and Coates 2006).

Research has been done on preschool children's ability to learn mathematics within the complex discourses in which they and their teachers participate. One result from a few of those studies is that children experience when they are positioning themselves as “mathematicians”, and such a positioning is encouraged and confirmed by the teachers—that is, that they *are knowledgeable* in mathematics (Lembrér and Meaney 2015, p. 6f.). However, this does not mean that they look on themselves as experts. On the contrary: by having self-confidence they can see both that they have considerable knowledge about a lot of important issues in the field of mathematics and that, by discovering where this knowledge has to be deepened and broadened in order for them to handle and solve more complex mathematical problems, there is still a lot to learn (p. 10). They are having the experience of both *being* and *becoming* mathematicians.

They are neither ignorant nor experts. They are participating in a teaching-learning process in which they are given freedom and responsibility to study relevant disciplinary issues, at the same time as they are developing their skills and competence in the field.

Perhaps it would be reasonable to assume that something like this is also going on in—democratic—teaching-learning processes within education *from* sustainability? If so, young children are to be conceived as *being* and *becoming* “sustainabilists” in the sense that they have the capability of discerning, reflecting on and assessing issues to be highlighted, interpreted, discussed, and critically and constructively penetrated within sustainability education. Not least, this may hold for the discernment of ethical dimensions: there is preschool research that supports the fact that very young children express and explore moral practice, in the sense that they show empathy and engagement in other children who feel sad and lonely, or who are in need of help (Johansson 2001).

## DISCUSSION

It has to be emphasized that the concept of education *from* sustainability, as it has been elaborated above, does not refer to a definite and fixed content, or to a methodological strategy which is planned and formulated in detail. The content in such education is to be negotiated in democratic, communicative teaching-learning processes. The same holds for the choice of educational methods. What is clear, however, is that education *from* sustainability will be influenced by certain general aims. These aims support the development of dynamic sustainability education where not only the concept of sustainability but also educational methods, strategies and approaches related to this concept are critically examined. Teachers and students are expected to discuss and criticize various concepts of sustainability, and also different approaches to establishing and developing pedagogies to reliably explore such concepts.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the concept of sustainability is porous. Any post-political stance according to which this concept refers, a content which may be the object of general agreement, will, as has been stated, obscure conflicts between powerful interests of different kinds, and claims of influence or even hegemony, which have to be analysed and critically investigated. This is one fundamental area to highlight within a substantial education *from* sustainability.

Another fundamental area within such education is the values which are thought to be related to the concept of sustainability. Not the least issues focusing what ethical norms and what moral practices that may be important to sanction and to follow in communities striving for sustainability, have to be critically and constructively examined within a democratic, communicative education *from* sustainability.

In this chapter, Biesta's approach regarding democracy and subjectivity in education as well as Rancière's interpretation of teachers and students as equal participants in educational processes have been referred to. Furthermore, Wall's emphasis of the need to include children's concepts of life, not in order to interpret or even judge them in terms of grown-ups' apprehensions but as important and valuable in themselves, has been discussed. We have also seen that there is interesting research regarding children's ways of positioning themselves as both *being* and *becoming* knowledgeable in teaching-learning contexts to study and to develop with reference to sustainability education.

Do these four references provide a foundation for forming a pattern which could serve as a base for a concept of education *from* sustainability, in which the challenge regarding how to handle the question regarding a need for the transmission of values may be taken care of? I think that they do, in a tentative way.

First, if the concept of children as independent subjects with the capability of moral discernment is accepted, there seems to be no democratically satisfying reason for not involving them as equals within a relational education *from* sustainability.

Second, the research on preschool children's positioning of themselves as both "being" and "becoming" mathematicians invites more comprehensive research if this self-characterization, including the fact that they see themselves as knowing things in the field while with regard to other relevant issues they have to study and examine relevant issues more, is possible to identify in the field of sustainability, including ethical dimensions.

This may be related to what Biesta has pointed out—namely, that teachers' activities within education may not be optimal if they exclusively take the form of refraining from giving hints, clues and suggestions as to how the subjects treated could be interpreted and developed, as long as the students have the opportunity to respond to and take a stand in relation to these (Biesta 2013).

Within education *from* sustainability, children and teachers will act together in communicative and democratic knowledge processes, and both are expected to take responsibility for contributing to creativity and development. More precisely, both may transcend formal and dualistic concepts of teaching-learning processes by sharing their experiences, knowledge and apprehension with each other.

It is within such a process that the “transmission” of values is to take place, not only in one direction but between the participants taking responsibility for a critical and constructive exchange of arguments, aims and visions. This is a process which presents not only challenges but also possibilities. First and foremost, it is important that it is continuously made the object of analysis, discussion and research. Education *from* sustainability will, from time to time and from place to place, be in need of being rethought, reinterpreted and reconstructed. This is neither a theoretical nor a practical defect; it is a demand which may militate against unsound conservatism, paving the way for undemocratic, unfair relations between grown-ups and children, between teachers and students.

## NOTE

1. Compare this with the arguments presented in Kassahun Weldemariam’s contribution to this volume (Chap. 7).

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