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## **Human Rights and Citizenship Education: A Project**

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### **Abstract**

*In this paper we present the main guidelines and founding ideas of a project we have been carrying out on Human Rights and Citizenship Education at our institution, Escola Superior de Educação de Coimbra of the Instituto Politécnico de Coimbra. The project is the result of an initial cooperation between the Council of Europe - European Youth Centre Budapest and Escola Superior de Educação de Coimbra and has given birth to an already considerable number of initiatives.*

*According to that initial cooperation, the main training tool is Compass. A Manual on Human Rights Education with Young People, which was published by the Council of Europe in 2002. The educational approach involved in the work performed is the non-formal one, and it has shown itself to be a particularly useful working perspective when used in formal educational contexts and with different sorts of public.*

### **Introduction**

The project will be presented in three sections. The *first* one will deal with the connection established in the project between *Non-Formal Education* and *Teacher Training*, and the main reasons justifying the relevance it gives to Human Rights and Citizenship Education: the care of the future Teacher's Person. Our project is not limited to teacher training; it also aims at adult learning, adolescents and young people. We will limit the scope of this paper to teacher training, since it represents, through its dissemination capability, a major and powerful source for the implementation of *Human Rights and Citizenship Education* in formal educational settings. The *second* section will deal with the presentation of some of its basic educational notions and general practical principles which structure the educational initiatives included in this Project. In the *third* and last one, we will present some notes on the internationalisation process of the project and some of its most significant initiatives.

### **Teacher Training and Non-Formal Education: the care of the future Teacher's Person**

We begin by establishing a link between *Teacher Training* and *Non-formal education*, since it is our understanding that this is a requirement for a serious reflection on the *sense of education*. Education in itself, as well as the concept and act of *being a teacher* should be seen under the reference to the original and fundamental *inter-subjectivity* of the Person. The idea of the *Person* as an eminent reality, whose dignity ought to be promoted in every school activity - whether class-centred or otherwise - has to be focussed on by education. This is aligned, in sense, with the definition of non-formal

education accepted by the Council of Europe, which insists on the improvement of skills and competencies (Brander; Keen; Lemineur, 2002: 21). For our purposes, the procedures used under this educational perspective should be taken into formal educational settings, for they provide excellent working perspectives for the personal and social development of students.

This basic idea may be synthesised in four others:

- a) Education is to be seen as a *service* (Reboul, 1982), which means that *being a teacher* is to be *at the service* of the person of the student;
- b) The Human Being, seen as a *Person*, has an essentially inter-subjective and relational essence - that is to say, he is referred ontologically to the Other, especially the other Person;
- c) The Human Being also has to be seen as a historical and practical being, meaning that he produces himself through his action in time and the consequent values and freedom which allow for that ontological structure (Gehlen, 1987: 35-36; Honoré, 1990; 1992; Scheler, 1957 : 24; Mirandola, 2008: 53-61; Jaspers, 1978: 61-64; Heidegger, 1986: 229-282); these initial ideas point out to the need for postulating<sup>1</sup> an *anthropological* or *personalist* criterion (Vicente; Lourenço, 1993: p 183), which implies as something fundamental the promotion of the Person as a practical demand; hence, an action may be evaluated by its pertinence/conformity (or lack of) to the promotion of the person;
- d) The person of the Teacher is a fundamental element of the educative process and relationship.

We derive the theme of this part of the paper from these basic points, which affirm that the human quality and the inter-subjective relationship are fundamental to Education and that, therefore, there is a need for caring about the personal development of Teachers, as well as their axiological and deontological preparation (Ramos; Reis, 2005).

The formative care we have pointed out previously must be a considerable pedagogical concern within the frame of formal educational settings which prepare teachers. We have had the opportunity to conduct a considerable number of training initiatives along the years, which have shown us the recognition of its formative usefulness and pertinence (Vaz; Gonçalves; Ramos, 2003; Gonçalves; Vaz; Ramos, 2003; Ramos; Reis, 2005; Ramos, 2008; 2005).

The above-mentioned personal development is the object of non-formal education and has played a remarkable role in the training work which the *Escola Superior de Educação de Coimbra* has developed for many years (Reis; Ramos; Cunha, 2007). It shapes the training performed in specific curricular disciplinary areas and in extracurricular activities, such as seminars, courses and projects on *Human Rights and Citizenship Education*.

### **Basic Concepts of Human Rights and Citizenship Education**

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<sup>1</sup> In the Kantian sense; the practical criterion alluded to is also rooted in Kantian ethics.

*Human Rights and Citizenship Education* and the consequent preparation of teachers to employ it are a very special request and demand of our time. The continuous challenges raised by contemporary society force human thought and educational praxis to face it with a never-ending attitude of producing new ideas, methods and ways of dealing with the personal and social development of the students.

This implies that Human Rights are in process, *in fieri*, and thus have to be permanently redrawn, created and reinvented. Human Dignity is still – increasingly, each and every day – violated in an unacceptable manner as a result of a whole set of factors, like the consequences of the capitalist system, racist and fundamentalist movements, terrorism, environmental problems and many others. This makes the issue of Human Rights and Human Rights Education increasingly important, as we may see in a lot of recognition events. The United Nations Organisation recognised this importance by declaring the period of 1995-2004 as the *United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education*. The Council of Europe also considers this kind of education essential, and, for instance, has dedicated the year of 2005 to the promotion of citizenship. The activity of this organization must be underlined with particular relevance. Within it we would stress the importance of the institution of the *Human Rights Education Programme*, part of the Youth Programme of the Council of Europe's Directorate of Youth and Sport, launched in 2000 with the commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights. In this context came the initiative of editing and publishing the book *Compass*, in 2002. Similarly, the *Human Rights and Citizenship Education Project* was launched in 2002 and has given rise to an impressive number of initiatives along the years of its implementation.

Since education is never axiologically neutral (Freire, 1974; 2003), it always implies a political and ethical practical sense. This means that the assumption of the presuppositions underlying an educational praxis ought to be the first step taken in an educational initiative (Freire, 2003). We will then proceed, this time, by presenting the general features of the concepts of *Citizenship* and *Human Rights*, which support our work.

The first task is to draw the main lines defining the concept of *citizenship* (Nogueira; Silva, 2001: pp 5-108; Cabrera, 2002: pp 83-101). Since its creation, this concept carries in itself the idea of *exclusion* (the identity of the citizen is defined by the exclusion of the other in terms of sex, nationality, slavery or income, for example), from which derives the deprivation of rights and duties, a consequence of discrimination and exclusion. History has shown us a gradual process of access to existing rights by those excluded or the creation of new rights, which points to the fact that a progressive notion of citizenship should encompass the feature of *inclusiveness*. Once this feature is accepted, it is followed by adding the features of *tolerance* and *respect for difference* to that concept, which in turn – combined with the idea of *Otherness* and inter-subjectivity – demand the assumption of *interculturality*<sup>2</sup> as an important feature of the concept of identity. The recognition of such is crucial to redefining *citizenship*. Then, the capability of seeing things through the other's viewpoint and, above all, of seeing that the other is

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<sup>2</sup> In accordance with the Council of Europe's understanding, we would rather use the term "intercultural" instead of "multicultural" (Perotti, 1994).

already in us and in what we are, becomes something both precious and decisive to human conviviality while the world becomes smaller each and every day. Therefore, a progressive notion of *citizenship* should accept *inclusiveness* and *interculturality* in its essence, in accordance to the task of a 21<sup>st</sup> century education (Stavenhagen, 1996). The idea of *multiplicity* also has to be considered, since in our present societies citizens have to act on several levels of citizenship (for instance, in an intimate, local, national, supranational or cosmopolitan sense).

These features of citizenship should be grounded on the ontological idea of the *Person* as an *individual* being, not reducible to whatever generic and abstract notion of Humanity we may conceive. The individual and unrepeatably intersubjective person is what really exists and, for this reason, the correlative philosophical anthropology is essential to the philosophy of Human Rights (Rocha, 1985).

The notion of *Citizenship* which has been developed can only be consistent if it refers to Human Rights. The *universalisation* of Human Rights has to be considered – no matter how problematic it may be – and it may be grounded on four major criteria, which may be able to help us confront the relativistic and multicultural criticism. These criteria for an *axiological universalisation* may become the frame of the necessary reflective contemporary debate, as well as a set of guidelines for action. We would refer, in an effort of synthesis, to these criteria:

- a) The absolute value of the promotion of the Person's dignity – *personalist* or *anthropological criterion* - is to be stressed out, and constantly affirmed and pursued;
- b) The *dialogic* or *communicative intersubjectivity criterion*, which presupposes that dialogue and communication are the necessary conditions to solve differences in viewpoints on the sense of our praxis, comes next;
- c) It is followed by the *argumentative* or *rational criterion*, demanding the use of argumentation (from Logic, Dialectics and Rhetoric), in order to support the exchange of ideas and deal with the confrontation of different perspectives and interests;
- d) Finally, the urge to act leaves us with a need for decision-making, which ought to be carried out after applying the previous criteria; here, the *democratic criterion* is to be applied, placing the decision in the hands of the majority, though with the constant moral and political obligation to respect the rights of minorities (Vicente; Lourenço, 1993: 183).

Education has a particularly remarkable responsibility regarding the promotion of this understanding of Citizenship and Human Rights. With its potential to criticise reality, to raise the awareness of people by revealing what is not there, but ought to be, it enables us to promote the changing of what exists. Therefore, Education is committed to a daring challenge, that of promoting, through all of its initiatives, the living and learning of this kind of Citizenship. This means that all its agents ought to become aware of their power to communicate values and so change the World.

Some basic notions relative to the concept of Human Rights should be referred here<sup>3</sup>. Human Rights are inherent to the Human Being, in the sense that in order to provide the demand of *Dignity* with the status of a *natural* and *legitimate* feature, it is sufficient to be human. From here derives their *universality* - all Human Beings are equal regarding their natural Dignity – and *inalienability* (no one can relinquish his Human Rights). They are also *interdependent* – Human Dignity cannot be cut into pieces, and every Human Right is correlated with the others. The Rights of Liberty cannot be exerted in the absence of the Rights of Equality, for instance. As such, Human Rights are a declension of the essential value of Human Dignity.

From these fundamental presuppositions, the essential aim of *Human Rights and Citizenship Education* is that of contributing to the development of a culture in which Human Rights are part of the life and action of its members. As such, they should see them as something to be preserved, as the first and main condition for the promotion of Human Dignity and a life worth living. Such culture should be present in the individual and social praxis, directed towards both maintaining its conquests and promoting new dimensions of Human Dignity through the criticism of the *status quo* and the insertion of new values in reality.

Education is, by its own nature, a particularly relevant field in order to attain this desideratum, and has therefore a strong component of Citizenship. As its agents, we may always contribute to the respect for Human Rights.

The issues to be dealt with in a *Human Rights and Citizenship Education* programme may be, without excluding other possibilities and proposals, the following:

1. Knowledge and practice of human rights, values of human dignity and democracy;
2. Awareness-raising of the constitutive freedom that allows for humanisation of the Human Being, as well as anthropological identity and difference;
3. Development of interpersonal and intellectual competences, as well as pragmatic language competences;
4. To promote empowerment, in order to nurture active and participative Citizenship.

In order to reach the goals of *Human Rights and Citizenship Education*, several educational methodologies and resources may prove useful and effective, mainly if we take into account a lifelong learning standpoint. In *Human Rights and Citizenship Education Project*, a particularly relevant part is given to non-formal education and its proceedings, even in formal educational settings. As stated previously, the personal and social development of students and those involved in educational activities through intervention in their competences and processes of development is the essence of this perspective.

To do this, it is essential to deal with the Student/Trainee globally, by using learner-centred processes, which appeal to his/her interests, needs and previous knowledge and competences, as well as his/her autonomous activity and participation. The use of meaningful, experiential and cooperative learning, centred on processes rather than

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<sup>3</sup> In this case, as well as in the next section, we will take into account and follow closely the text of *Compass* (Brander; Keen; Lemineur, 2002). It may also refer to our text in Ramos, 2010c.

products, is also fundamental. The presupposition that Citizenship and Human Rights are better learned from their practice in living contexts, in which they are a structuring and respected value, is of import as well. This way, students also develop critical thinking, communication competences and the attitude of standing for the value of human rights when facing situations where they are disrespected.

### **Internationalisation of the Project**

The Project has been developed through a considerable number of dimensions and initiatives (Ramos, 2005b; 2005c; 2009a), of which we present the most significant one in terms of its internationalisation process – the Project *Encontro de Primavera*<sup>®</sup>.

This Project has been active since 2006, involving teachers, researchers, artists and students of the *Escola Superior de Educação* of the *Instituto Politécnico de Coimbra*, the *Grupo de Investigación HUM-742 D.E.Di.C.A. – Desarrollo Educativo de las Didácticas en la Comunidad Andaluza*, the *Universidade de Granada (Espanha)* and the *CIMA – Centre for Intercultural Music Arts* (which gave way to the *SIEMAI – Simpósio Internacional Educação Música Artes Interculturais*<sup>®</sup> on April 2010). Its scope includes research, curricular development projects, international conventions aimed at sharing research results, pedagogical experiences and theoretical work, all of which materialise in their respective papers.

The *Encontro de Primavera*<sup>®</sup> project's main strategic vectors are the promotion of Intercultural Education towards Citizenship and Human Rights, under a platform of Integral Education, in the context of which Art, Humanities and Art in Education become very relevant. Its underlying Philosophy of Training and Education presupposes a concept of Person as *primordial intersubjectivity* (Ramos, 2007b; 2003), from which derives the idea of *encounter*. It results in an annual international meeting, where the articulating theme of the previously conducted work is presented and elaborated, together with the publishing of the respective book(s) and other materials. The meetings, in light of the intention to internationalise the project, have been taking place in Portugal and Spain.

The understanding summarised in the previous lines originated the mottos which lead the projects and associated events carried out/to be carried out since 2006, namely:

- 2006: *Human Dignity in Polyphony* (College of Education – Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal);
- 2007: *European Citizenship Education through Arts* (College of Education – Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal);
- 2008: *Music. Arte. Dialogue. Civilisation* (College of Education – Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal);
- 2009: *Investigation on Education and Human Rights* (Faculty of Educational Sciences – University of Granada, Granada, Spain);
- 2010: *Art and Science: Creation and Responsibility* (Faculty of Education and Humanities of Melilla, University of Granada, Melilla, Spain).

The following initiatives will come next:

- 2011: *Building Bridges towards Interculturality* (Civic Centre of the Deputation of Málaga, Málaga, Spain);
- 2012: *Folk Art and Culture* (Cultural Centre of the Town Hall of Vila Nova de Foz-Côa, Vila Nova de Foz-Côa, Portugal).
- 2014: *Education, Music and Art from the frontier(s)* (Palace of the Autonomous City of Ceuta, Ceuta, Spain).

Considerable theoretical and pedagogical production has stemmed from these initiatives onto the following books: (Reis; Ramos, 2007); (Ramos, 2007); (Ortiz Molina, 2008); (Ramos, 2009b); (Ortiz Molina, 2009); (Ortiz Molina, 2010a); (Ortiz Molina, 2010b); (Ramos, 2010a); (Ramos, 2010b). Thus, the theoretical background of the Project has been enhanced and its practical initiatives' depth and support have been growing considerably.

### Conclusion

An understanding of Education and of Teacher Training as an activity ruled by values and aiming at social transformation (Freire, 1974; 2003) would need to face the challenge of dealing in its core with the question of values, Human Rights and Citizenship Education. For these purposes, non-formal methodologies are particularly adequate and allow value education – in all its variants, but considering for our purpose Intercultural, Human Rights and Citizenship Education – to become effective. This training perspective has proven itself very rewarding and useful. Teacher training that involves the previous and daily experience of the trainees, appeals to their participation and autonomy, resorts to their emotions and feelings and requires from them a personal expression and commitment, as well as their personal interaction, has brought us very good results in the development of *Human Rights and Citizenship Education Project*. Such a course of action has allowed the students to develop themselves personally and socially in a sense that is not only useful to themselves as individuals, but above all as teachers charged with producing the same educational effects on their own students. At the same time, they experience considerable satisfaction through their training. These are important conditions to achieve better personal and professional achievement as teachers. The development of the Spring Meeting Project has also given us the opportunity to involve a considerable number of researchers, artists, teachers and professors in a project which produces a considerable amount of knowledge and materials susceptible of contributing to this educational perspective.

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