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In Search of a Universal Value Base of Education in a Pluralistic School. From Human Rights to Global Ethic and Responsibility

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Alla ricerca di una base universale di valori educativi nella scuola pluralistica. Dai diritti umani all'etica globale e alla responsabilità

The present paper argues that as basic schools become more pluralistic, it is important to (re)discuss the value base on which education should be built. Many see human rights as a universal principle of Western democratic societies and thus a universal value base of education. However, human rights seem to be insufficient — first, because many question their universality, and second, because they are understood mainly as legal rather than ethical principles. The concept that is known to ethically support human rights is the global ethic. And from one of the main pillars of the global ethic we derive the universal value base of education — the responsibility for the other, understood as care for the other, being for the other, treating and approaching the other with respect. To this end, teachers should encourage social interactions, based on active listening and exotopy.

Il presente articolo sostiene che nella misura in cui la scuola di base diventa sempre più pluralistica è importante (ri)discutere i valori essenziali sui quali l'educazione dovrebbe fondarsi. I diritti umani sono spesso considerati principio universale delle società democratiche occidentali e quindi base di valori universali per l'istruzione. Ciò nonostante, sembrano essere insufficienti, in primo luogo perché ne viene spesso messa in dubbio l'universalità e, in secondo luogo, perché sono intesi soprattutto come principi giuridici piuttosto che etici. Il concetto su cui notoriamente si fonda l'etica dei diritti umani è quello di etica globale. E da uno dei principali pilastri dell'etica globale derivano i valori universali dell'educazione: la responsabilità per l'altro, intesa come prendersi cura dell'altro, essere per l'altro, trattare e avvicinarsi all'altro con rispetto. A tal fine gli insegnanti dovrebbero incoraggiare interazioni sociali basate sull'ascolto attivo e sull'exotopia.

Keywords: Human Rights; Global Ethic; Responsibility; Exotopy; Active Listening.

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1. Introduction

Contemporary European society is characterized, on the one hand, by diversity and pluralism and, on the other, as a postmodern society, by the absence of grand narratives (Lyotard, 1984) and universalisms (Kobylinski, 1998). Even if this absence prevents ideological violence (Lyotard, 1984; Vattimo, 1987), it leaves individuals in a world of uncertainty, without a stable, clear system to rely on (Campa, 2008). Moreover, the individual is left without faith in moral values that are universal and clearly defined in content (Kroflič, 2002).

However, humans have the need to rely on shared, commonly accepted (universal) values (Halstead, 1996; Küng, 2010a). Thus, the question arises as to which values can be considered universal, i.e., that every person, regardless of background, could commit to them without feeling that their identity is being denied. This issue is even more important when we think about the universal value base of education[1] in basic schools (Halstead, 1996).

When we think of universal and commonly accepted values of European democratic societies, we usually think of human rights (Henkin, 1996; Kovač Šebart & Krek, 2007). However, human rights have been subjected to numerous critiques claiming that they cannot be considered universal and that their legal dimension is above the ethical one (Badiou, 1996; Benhabib, 2012; Medveš, 2007b; Onuma, 2010; Rorty, 2012). For this reason, Küng (2010a) argues that we should focus on an ethical consensus of shared human values, criteria, and basic attitudes that would ethically underpin human rights. Similarly, Bauman (2011; Evans & Bauman, 2016) argues that human rights, developed in the time of modernity, require critical reflection on their ethical foundation and need to be reconsidered in light of postmodern ethics, whose starting point is subjective responsibility.

When we consider that "any agreed upon values framework itself becomes generative of curriculum and teaching and learning processes" (Tibbitts, 2020, p. 80), that rights framework have become the primary organizing force for educational scholars (Bajaj, 2014), and that more than eighty governments around the world have already incorporated human rights education into school curricula (Moon, 2009), it seems clear that the preeminent value base of education in basic schools is represented by human rights. But can human rights (still) represent a universal value base of education in today's pluralistic basic school? Or should we base education on the global ethic, which ethically complements human rights, as Küng suggests?

In this article, we first analyse human rights from the perspective of their universality and their legal and ethical connotations. From this we derive their place in a pluralistic basic school. Moreover, we analyse the concept of global ethic, because it is the concept that has been developed to offer a universal ethical consensus that could ethically support human rights. The global ethic serves as a starting point for us to think about a universal value base of education in a pluralistic basic school. A base that should allow pupils to build and develop their own value systems without denying, but accepting, other value systems that differ from theirs. We outline why such a base should be represented by responsibility for the other. In this context, we further discuss that in order to develop responsibility for the other, we should provide pupils with experiences of relationships and interactions based on respect, susceptibility to the other, and acceptance of the other's otherness. We argue that this is possible if teachers focus not only on empathy, but also on exotopy, and active listening.

2. Human Rights — the question of their universality and ethics

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) defines human rights as individual, inalienable rights to which a human being is entitled as a free being, "without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status" (Article 2). Even though human rights are formulated as a common ideal for all people (Medveš, 2018), they are subject to criticism. On the one hand, there is the question of their universal-

1. In the meaning of education for values, the "formation of spiritual image (internalisation of an image of humanity or the social)" (Medveš, 2018, p. 73).

ity in today's pluralistic world. On the other hand, their implementation in the legal system raises the question of the loss of their ethical component.

For some, the claim that human rights are universal is limiting, especially in today's pluralistic society. Bobbio (2014), for example, claims that an absolute, objective foundation of human rights is not to be found in the rights themselves (a philosophical basis), but in the *consensus omnium gentium* expressed through the Declaration of human rights (a political and legal basis). In this sense, as Bobbio states, the Declaration could represent a system of commonly, i.e. universally, accepted values. In other words, human rights as universal values expressed through the Declaration are not objectively given, but "subjectively accepted by the universe of humanity" (Bobbio, 2014, p. 20). However, for others, the Declaration itself cannot be considered universal. The main criticism in this regard relates to the fact that human rights are a product of the Western world and as such are subject to the cultural imperialism of the West (Said, 1979; Vitkauskaite-Meurice, 2010). Western society often gives the impression that its interpretation of human rights is the only correct one and, as critics point out, seeks to impose this interpretation on the rest of the world (Küng, 2010a; Onuma, 2010; Penna & Campbell, 1998; Said, 1979; Vitkauskaite-Meurice, 2010). Penna and Campbell (1998) go even further, arguing that dialog between cultures will be possible only when Western society stops arrogating human rights to itself (see also Tibbitts & Katz, 2017). The authors point out that we should think about how to incorporate non-Western concepts of human rights into Western concepts. It is important "to identify traditions, practices, laws or events from many cultures that can serve as cross-cultural symbols of human rights" (Penna & Campbell, 1998, p. 9).

Some of the most important theorists in the field of human rights (e.g., Bobbio, 2014; Ignatieff, 2003) argue that the basis of human rights should be a consensus among countries in the form of tracts, making human rights primarily legal norms. But, as Medveš asserts, "human rights are not implemented in the legal order as ethical values but as legal norms," and because of their legal codification, "the ultimate responsibility for their understanding and interpretation lies with the court" (2018, p. 82). Or, as Keet (2015) contends, human rights have collapsed into law and are thus imprisoned in the service of regulation, with the legal system being the arbiter. Through the legal instrumentalization of human rights, their value core is devaluated and their ethical dimension is lost (Kroflič, 2013; Medveš, 2018). Bajaj (2011), for example, emphasizes the need to develop a "critical human rights consciousness" (see also Tibbitts, 2017, 2020). We agree with Keet that the juridification of human rights is not in itself negative, but "the complexities emerge when juridification, uncritically and without substantive deliberation, steps onto the terrain of values related to human rights" (2015, p. 29). Today we have many special laws protecting the rights of specific groups (e.g., of women, immigrants, persons with special needs). But if we are content to protect human rights mainly at the formal/declarative level (e.g., through special laws), this will not necessarily lead to positive outcomes for these groups. Law, as Küng (2010a) asserts, needs ethics. The most important question in this context is whether members of these groups are recognized as *human beings* or whether they are *de-humanized* (Bauman, 1995; Dal Lago, 2004; Evans & Bauman, 2016; Mucci, 2002; Rorty, 1996). Indeed, if they were considered as human beings, they would need to be protected not only at the declarative/formal level (through special laws), but above all at the practical level (Arendt, 1992). But this would mean recognizing our human responsibility towards them. We should therefore critically rethink human rights as legal norms, moving beyond their juridical orientation and placing them on an ethical footing that is appropriate for everyone. A critical view of human rights is especially important in terms of human rights education (Keet, 2015, 2017).

2.1. A critical view on human rights education

As mentioned earlier, we need to rely on commonly accepted standards to live in a cohesive society, and human rights could, for some, constitute such universal standards. The role of human rights education becomes crucial in this case (Starkey, 2012). Yet, this role needs to be critically considered, especially from the point of view that human rights are both an instrument of empowerment and constraint, which is often forgotten when talking about human rights education (Lewis, 2014).

One of the main problems, also when it comes to human rights education, is universalism, which assumes a relative homogeneity of the population living in a country as a population with the same

values, norms and standards (Osler, 2015). Consequently, when it comes to the school system, it is often national(istic), which means that it can lead to the creation and/or reinforcement of power relations where minorities are the ones who are inferior and denied their humanity and thus human rights (Osler & Leung, 2011) and are expected to assimilate, even in terms of human rights (Osler, 2015). This poses a problem for human rights education as rights violations and the struggle for the rights of people (especially minorities) are often neglected, if not erased, in schools as well. In this case, human rights education becomes an education about the rights of people living in a non-democratic world, which is consequently seen as (morally) inferior (Osler, 2015).

Therefore, the question to ask when talking about human rights education in pluralistic basic schools is whether it contributes in any way to perpetuating power relations between minorities and majorities and thus to the construction of social injustices and inequalities (Osler, 2015; Todd, 2010; Zembylas & Keet, 2019). Lewis (2014), drawing on feminist, anthropologist and queer theorists, argues that human rights framing and linguistic codification are aligned to a particular value system and understanding of relationships in society (e.g., masculinity discourse, traditional nuclear family, liberal political worldview) and therefore cannot be universal. Interestingly, Zembylas and Keet suggest to "abandon their claim to universality and replace that by a pluriversal understanding of rights" (2019, p. 150). This does not mean that they should not be globally meaningful, but it is essential to rethink and revise them theoretically, abandoning their Eurocentric framing as universal (Osler, 2015; Zembylas & Keet, 2019). For example, Osler (2015) suggests that revising the universality as well as the recognition of human rights is one of the most important things that needs to be done to enable the development of human rights education theory and practice.

In recent years, authors (e.g., Becker, 2021; Keet, 2015; Mignolo, 2006; Osler & Skarra, 2021; Tibbitts, 2020; Zembylas & Keet, 2019) have pointed to the importance of critical, transformative and pluriversal human rights education. Therefore, despite school curricula and education acts being based on human rights, such legal framework, as Osler (2015) points out, while important, is not sufficient, especially if it is directly linked to specific traditions that not all pupils can relate to and therefore may feel that their identity is not taken into account, or worse, that they feel that human rights do not relate to them.

One of the most important points in this context is the pluralism of societies and the need to rethink human rights and human rights education from a critical, hermeneutic, geopolitical and historical perspective (Zembylas & Keet, 2019). In doing so, as we mentioned, it is also crucial to consider the power relations in society and consequently in the basic school system. Such relations can, namely, also be hidden in curricula that deal with human rights (Osler, 2015).

But, as Zembylas and Keet (2019) note, this is a long-term and difficult process (see also Becker, 2021). There is also a need to create teaching materials, textbooks, etc. that address human rights from a critical perspective, and to train teachers to educate pupils in this way (Osler & Yahya, 2013). The newly established World Educational Research Network (Osler, Starkey, Stokke, & Flatås, 2021) also opens up new possibilities for reframing and transforming human rights education. However, until this process is completed or at least globally and deeply embedded, what could be a solution? We argue that the concept that could offer the possibility of creating a unified ethical consciousness and complement the concept of human rights from an ethnical perspective is the concept of global ethic as developed by Küng (2008). The global ethic represents the language of moral principles that cannot be codified, and thus a value framework that adds a new vision and motivation for personal moral stance to the logic of human rights (Kroflič, 2014; Küng, 2010a).

3. The Global Ethic as a Completion of Human Rights

Küng (1998, 2010a) claims that human rights are not the result of an agreement between religions/civilizations and therefore cannot be understood as universal. He also claims that they are not understood as a moral imperative and therefore it is impossible to be morally committed to them. But, he asserts, a minimal ethical consensus on shared values is necessary in today's pluralistic world. Such a consensus must be established by people of different nations, cultures, and religions and must constitute a basic moral stance of every human being. So, what, for Küng, is the ethical consensus that

would be considered universal and that would give ethical support to human rights? The answer is the global ethic, which is based on the values shared by the various theisms and atheisms (Hribar, 2006; Küng, 2008).

The global ethic is based on what is common to all people, regardless of their beliefs and background, and is not codified as human rights (Kovačič Peršin, 2005; Kroflič, 2014; Küng, 2010a). As Gebhardt (2011) points out, the global ethic is a universally shared ethic whose foundation can be found in the ethical teachings of all world religions as well as in the traditions of humanistic philosophy and ethics. It is not a new ideology coming from the West, but something that unites the common religious and ethical norms of all humanity (Küng, 2010a, 2010b).

The global ethic is based on two fundamental principles (the humane treatment of every human being and respect for the Golden Rule) and five guidelines/values (culture of nonviolence and respect for life; culture of solidarity and a just economic order; culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness; culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women; culture of sustainability and care for the earth) (Küng, 2010a; Parliament of the World's Religions, 2018). Unlike human rights, which are enshrined as international law, the global ethic "is something like the shared moral impulse that underlies and sustains international law" (Global Citizenship Commission, 2016, p. 106). Therefore, as Kroflič (2014) asserts, the global ethic, with its principles, derived from all religions, cultures, and philosophical concepts, could guarantee a more consistent fulfilment of the world standards of coexistence that were enforced after the World War II with the concept of human rights.

4. The value base of a pluralistic basic school

The transmission of universal social norms from the adult generation to the younger was typical of the Age of Enlightenment because of cultural hegemony (Medveš, 1991a, 1991b). This changed with postmodernism with its multiplicity of truths and values, which also influenced the school. Therefore, the question arose what should be the universal value base on which to build education. Furthermore, can human rights and/or the global ethic provide such a base?

4.1. From human rights to the global ethic and the responsibility for the other

We often hear that schools should be based on respect for human rights (Clark *et al.*, 2007; Council of Europe, OSCE/ODIHR, UNESCO, & OHCHR, 2011; Devjak, 2008; Štefanc, 2002). However, human rights have downsides, not only in society, but also in the education system. Even in schools, they are criticized for being formalized into legal norms, thus losing their ethical dimension. Keet goes even further, claiming that the " 'juridification' of values might be one explanation for the crisis of values in education" and that this crisis "can best be addressed by a critical posture towards its juridical form" (2015, pp. 26–27).

We argue that the legal formulation — expressed through the concept of what is right and wrong, typical of human rights (Küng, 1998) — would suffice if we understand the main task of education as disciplining the pupil (Kroflič, 2014). The legal formulation is indeed sufficient if we want to regulate the acceptable (right) or unacceptable (wrong) behaviour of pupils — disciplining is, namely, based on the fear of punishment for breaking the law/rules (Medveš, 2018). Since education is much more than disciplining, it is not enough to base it (only) on human rights as legal norms (Kroflič, 2014).

Because of the reasons expressed above, we contend that human rights should represent the legal basis for basic schools, as they can regulate behaviour. However, from an ethical perspective, this is not sufficient. The solution could be found in the global ethic, which can reinforce the message and role of the language of human rights (Kroflič, 2012a). As Kroflič (2014) asserts, human rights in the basic school system represent a legally codified language, while the global ethic represents the language of moral principles that cannot be codified and as such enables the development of interpersonal relationships based on respect and positive recognition of the other as a value in itself. Studies, even in pluralistic settings (Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004; Clark, McQuail, & Moss, 2003; Derman-Sparks, Olsen Edwards, & Goins, 2020; Eisenberg *et al.*, 2003; Kroflič & Smrtnik Vitulić, 2015; Mlinar, 2019; Rinaldi, 2009; Todd, 2003), show that education focused on these kinds of relationships promotes understanding of

the other as different, respect for them, and growth in the desire to be with the other regardless of differences and/or similarities. The global ethic, therefore, offers us a new perspective on our main concern — on what universal value base should education in basic schools be built.

Since the global ethic represents coexistence with the other as different (Kocijančič, 2008), education and its goals should be focused on preparation for coexistence (Medveš, 1991a, 1991b). In a school based on coexistence, universality lies in the recognition and respect of differences and in responsibility for the other, understood as care for the well-being of the other (Bauman, 1993; Lévinas, 2004). Thus, we argue that the universal value base should be basic human responsibility for one another (Global Citizenship Commission, 2016; Küng, 2010a), which permeates the entire concept of global ethic.

Today, we are dealing with a growing plurality of society and thus a growing plurality of value systems on the one hand, and a crisis of values and relationships on the other (Bauman, 2012). Bauman (1990) already in the 1990s drew our attention to the problem that the development of technology, (bureaucratic) social organization and instrumental rationality poses for humanity and human relations. His words thirty years later seem prophetic: "The 'distance technology' has eliminated face-to-face contact between the actors and the objects of their actions, and with that neutralized its morally constraining impact" (Bauman, 1990, p. 31). With the development of technology, the (abusive) use of social media, the increasing dehumanization and subjugation, as well as exploitation (modern slavery) of refugees and immigrants from the so called Third World in particular (Carchedi, 2010; Dal Lago, 2004; Evans & Bauman, 2016) and the growing fear of the other and their proximity as a result of the Covid 19 (Taylor, Landry, Paluszek, Fergus, McKay, & Asmundson, 2020), we are making the other increasingly faceless. Or, in the words of Bauman, we are "effacing the face" of the other, "abolishing the other as the source and the natural object of responsibility" (1990, p. 30). Indeed, it is the face of the other that calls for responsibility (Lévinas, 2017).

For all of these reasons, it is important to break this pattern, and the role of schools and teachers is crucial in doing so. On the one hand, at a systemic and procedural level, the school system should emphasize respect and recognition of all identities and actively address the many challenges related to inequality, social injustice, and discrimination, especially by promoting a model of justice as equity (Malusà, 2017). Teachers should also be open to actively bring about change towards social justice by being there for their (vulnerable) pupils, but also by planning and using didactic strategies and processes that are aligned with a school ethos based on openness and respect for diversity (Malusà, 2019; Milani, 2019). Additionally, as teachers, we need to provide pupils with opportunities to develop and take responsibility for the other by experiencing social relationships based on mutual respect, susceptibility to the other, and acceptance of the other's otherness (Kroflič, 2009; Kroflič & Smrtnik Vitulić, 2015; Todd, 2001). "Responsibility comes from the other and so is located in the human relation — a relation [...] that does not presuppose that self and other are fundamentally the same" (Todd, 2001, p. 70).

We argue that for this reason teachers should focus on two main principles: exotopy and active listening. Both principles promote the building of respectful relationships through which pupils can experience respectful coexistence, develop their morals, and ultimately take responsibility in the form of caring, respecting, and being for the other.

4.2. The Role of Active Listening

In order to provide pupils with experiences of respectful relationships, the teacher must be the first to understand the pupils' world, their feelings, and their ways of expressing themselves and accept their initiatives (Sommer, Pramling Samuelsson, & Hundeide, 2013), even more so when these are different from those of the teacher. In other words, the importance of developed socio-emotional skills amid teachers is essential in this regard (Milani, 2019). One of the main points in this regard is building meaningful and positive relationships, based on trust and caring, with pupils, but also with their families — showing them appreciation and recognizing their needs and being able to connect with them, regardless of their different backgrounds (Malusà, 2019; Milani, 2019). In addition, it is crucial that the teacher uses appropriate strategies and decision-making processes and provides pupils with positive incentives and encouragement so that they believe they *can do it* (Malusà, 2019). This is only possible if the teacher stops judging and opens up mentally to understand and listen to the pupils' story, thus recognizing them as individuals with their own identity (Milani, 2019). The teacher should see the class

as a group of individuals who interpret reality and participate in dialog in their own way (Kubli, 2005). Pupils should therefore be seen as someone who, together with the adult, form the social reality (Brembeck, Johansson, & Kampmann, 2004) and be seen as competent, active protagonists with exceptional potential who create their own interpretations and unique theories (Kroflič, 2012c, 2012b; Rinaldi, 2009). Pupils need to be enabled to express their own ideas and listen to the ideas and truths of others, thereby developing openness to the other (Malaguzzi, 1993, 1996; Milani, 2019; Rinaldi, 1999, 2009). Every pupil should have the opportunity to talk about their good or bad experiences, their fears, feelings of insecurity, sadness, anger, exclusion, discrimination, stigmatization, etc. (Aquario *et al*., 2009).

Teachers can encourage this by using different approaches to listening, such as autobiographical, participatory, and metaphorical listening (Demetrio & Favaro, 1997), which are even more important in pluralistic settings. In autobiographical listening, pupils learn about the life stories of peers with immigrant experience, while immigrant pupils recognize the value of their own experiences. Participative listening is possible when majority and minority pupils engage in various activities together. Metaphorical listening is especially important for pupils with trauma or bad experiences who rarely speak. The importance of developing the right educational strategies for these pupils is also emphasized by Vaccarelli, who calls for an "emergency pedagogy". One of its most important measures is to stimulate pupils to express their emotions and elaborate negative experiences, also through self-narratives in different languages (Vaccarelli, 2016, 2017, 2018). As Vaccarelli (2016) notes, it is important that these pupils develop resilience (e.g., coping strategies, self-esteem, appraisal, creativity, optimism), i.e., the ability to confront and actively respond to traumatic, harsh experiences and to find resources and a new balance and perspective for a good future. Allowing pupils to confront and cope with adverse situations, including at the emotional level, by expressing themselves metaphorically, e.g., through a drawing, helps them in the process of personal growth (Demetrio & Favaro, 1997; Vaccarelli, 2016). The artistic experience, according to Kroflič (2012c, 2017), is here of great importance, since it facilitates the development of empathy, compassion, the desire to help the other, and understanding the other as different, marginalized, and invisible. As Nanni and Curci (2005) have pointed out, teachers can also use fairy tales as a universal narrative form through which pupils can better learn about their own and other cultures. Using a character that occurs in different cultures (e.g., a dwarf) as a bridge between cultures is also very useful. Last but not least, the so-called wordless or silent books can be very useful for this purpose. Silent books have been shown to be of great importance, especially for children with migration experience, because they feel valued in their experiences, narratives and thus in their unique identity, contributing to the strengthening of their self-esteem, self-confidence and social inclusion. In addition, silent books provide a great opportunity to create group cohesion and dialog based on recognition, respect and acceptance of each individual (Grilli & Terrusi, 2014).

When pupils tell their stories, teachers should avoid the desire or need to interpret them without asking pupils about their own interpretations (Kroflič & Smrtnik Vitulić, 2015; Rinaldi, 2009). Instead, teachers should allow pupils to interpret the story and their feelings. In this way, teachers give dignity to the pupil's story without ascribing meanings to it. This means that, as much as possible, teachers should encourage: self-interpretation, self-reflection, and the development of individual meanings (Sabatano, 2015). The role of the teacher is mainly to show the pupil other possibilities and other ways of interpretation that the pupil does not see, giving them the freedom to accept or reject these interpretations. The most important thing is that the pupil has the time to process everything (Sabatano, 2015).

However, we must emphasize that listening alone is not enough (Sidorkin, 2002). It is crucial that the teacher talks to the pupils, especially when it comes to identity. When teachers do not do this, they are essentially denying the pupil's identity. In a dialog based on active listening, the different voices never blend, but rather exchange. Each participant's voice defines the other (Burbules, 1993; Ricoeur, 1994) and develops its own "self" which, as Bakhtin (2011) asserts, is always dialogic and develops in relation to others. Only when we are able to learn *from* the other and avoid learning only *about* the other, only when we recognize that the other is "infinitely unknowable" and "unassimilable" (Todd, 2001), will we be able to see the face of the other and assume responsibility. As Todd says "it is only when we learn from the stories that others have to tell that we can respond with humility and assume responsibility" (2001, p. 73).

4.3. From Empathy to Exotopy

When we try to understand the feelings of the other, we usually think of empathy. Empathy can be defined as the ability to understand the feelings of others by putting ourselves in their shoes (Depalmas & Ferro Allodola, 2013). Consequently, empathy requires decontextualizing the experiences of others so that we can understand the experiences of others in relation to our own experiences. For example, when pupils try to resolve a conflict, they look for a solution based on their own understanding of the circumstances, their past experiences, and what would help them in a similar situation. In this way, they maintain the validity of their context. As Caon (2016) says, we try to put ourselves in the other person's shoes, but end up putting the other person in our shoes.

Indeed, we often ascribe to others an identity similar to ours, thus denying the others with all their particularities (Legros, 2014). If we are to truly understand the other, we must step out of our own perspective, not view the others through the lens of our preconceptions and assumptions, but let ourselves explore the world of the other, allowing ourselves to generate new meanings and change (Baker, 1995). This process provokes a dialogic tension between two points of view, namely the gaze of the other and the gaze of the one who sees the other (De Sousa & Carvalho da Silva Rocha, 2019), what Bakhtin (1990) called *exotopy* [vnenachodimost], namely being-outside-of-oneself. The latter does not presuppose that one feels what the other feels, but that one sees the other as holding a meaningful, autonomous perspective that cannot be reduced to that of the observer (Sclavi, 2003). Such exotopic position makes it possible to "validate values, to accept all the data of the inner existence of the other in its actuality" (Cerqueira Gomes & Dazzani, 2018, p. 193). In other words, when we place ourselves outside the other, only then we recognize the other as a subject and can truly see the other and help them see themselves from a different perspective, recreating them but ourselves as well (De Sousa & Carvalho da Silva Rocha, 2019; Cerqueira Gomes & Dazzani, 2018; Marsico, Tateo, Cerqueira Gomes, & Dazzani, 2020).

Sclavi (2003) claims that understanding the other really begins when we realize that the other's shoes do not necessarily fit us, and from this perspective her argument is compatible with that of Lévinas, Bauman and Todd. It would be wrong, however, to suggest that we should not help pupils develop empathy. Empathy is important because it allows us to have primary emotional contact with the other. But exotopy goes even further. It allows us to recognize ourselves as different from the other and the other as different (from us) (Caon, 2016). Exotopy enables us to understand that the others have their own and unique perspective that is not reduced to the perspective of the observer (Sclavi, 2003). When we realize that we may never understand the other (their shoes do not fit us), we initially feel uncomfortable because the context we know is challenged. As Sclavi (2003) notes, this discomfort represents the moment of realization and awareness. At this point, we disengage from the frame of discomfort and see what is happening around us. We then reevaluate our primary frame of reference and begin to interpret everything in a different way; a new way that does not block us, but allows us to explore new views and new worlds. Portera (2003) also asserts that a conflict with diversity can be a unique opportunity for personal growth and enrichment. Similarly, Novara (2011) notes that conflict can be a resource for learning and personal development and growth for those involved if we learn to stay in conflict rather than forcibly seek a (pretend) way out of it. Namely, "co-staying" in a conflict can enable those involved to acknowledge the otherness of the other, to rethink positions and find other perspectives, including creative ones, and to emerge not with a feigned harmony but with a change within themselves. The importance of a creative conflict management for personal growth and change is also highlighted by Sclavi (2013; see also Vaccarelli, 2016).

Therefore, teachers should promote understanding of the other not only through their similarities to us, but also through their differences from us. This means fostering the exotopic view of the other that enables pupils to understand that the other has their own and unique perspective that is not reduced to the perspective of the observer (Sclavi, 2003). As we have argued, we can only truly see the other if we understand that the other's shoes do not fit us. Thus, difference is a necessary condition for understanding the other (Depalmas & Ferro Allodola, 2013).

Another very important factor is to encourage pupils to decentralize their position. This means encouraging them to understand that all their actions, words and behaviours are related to their culture and context. This skill is crucial in a pluralistic context because it makes other cultures visible and recognizable in their diversity (Caon, 2016).

However, as mentioned, it is important that empathy and exotopy go hand in hand (Pedersen, Walker, Rapley, & Wise, 2003). The teacher can promote empathy with questions such as "How would you feel in their place?" or "How do you think they feel?" and the exotopic by encouraging the pupil to ask the other about their feelings and the reason for those feelings. Therefore, it is very important that the teacher first considers the pupil as an intelligent and competent being (Chakir, 2016; Rinaldi, 2009; Sclavi, 2003).

Thus, empathy enables us to understand the part of the other that is similar to us, while exotopy allows us to accept and respect the part of the other that is different. In this way, we develop susceptibility and openness to the other. Traits, these ones, closely related to emotional intelligence, namely the capacity and ability to recognize, express, evaluate, and analyse our own emotions and the emotions of others, as well as to understand and interpret and distinguish between them (Goleman, 1995; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). An important element is the regulation of emotions in ourselves as well as in relationships with others, which enable us to grow emotionally and intellectually, or more precisely, personally. Emotional intelligence enables us to use these informations to guide our thoughts and actions (Goleman, 1995; Mayer & Salovey, 1997), which facilitates the building of quality relationships and stress management, which is crucial for the conflict management mentioned above. In pluralistic settings, this is even more important, as studies have shown that emotional intelligence can also influence the understanding and appreciation of others, which is the basis for developing intercultural competence (Arghode, Lakshmanan, & Nafukho, 2022; Guntersdorfer & Golubeva, 2018). The latter represents the persons' "capacity to change one's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours so as to be open and flexible to other cultures" (Penbek, Yurdakul, & Cerit, 2009). And according to Todd (2001), it is precisely receptivity and openness to the other that enables us to develop responsibility for the other.

5. Conclusions

The growing plurality of society and schools encourages teachers to reconsider the universal value base on which education in basic schools is to be built and legitimized. Although human rights are often referred to as such (Kovač Šebart & Krek, 2007) and that they are ethical/moral values by their very nature (Berlin, 2002; Campbell, 2005; Griffin, 2008; Kovač Šebart & Krek, 2007), they are often criticized for being formalized into legal norms, deprived of their ethical element, and not universal (Badiou, 1996; Cerar, 1996; Medveš, 2007a; Peček, 2000; Rorty, 2012). Or, as Keet (2017) claims, human rights have lost their original meaning, as their practice and promise seem to be far apart nowadays.

Does this mean that we should forget about human rights in basic schools? Not at all. As we have argued, because human rights are understood primarily as legal norms and are therefore linked to the disciplinary view of education (Kroflič, 2014), they should be the framework for regulating pupils' behaviour. From an ethical point of view, the global ethic takes a step forward. Not only because its focus is of ethical rather than legal nature, but also because it represents a universally shared ethic (Gebhardt, 2011), a minimal basic consensus of common human beliefs (Küng, 2010a).

The global ethic, characterized by responsibility for the other (Global Citizenship Commission, 2016), offers us a new starting point for reflection on such a universal value base. Thus, we have argued that such a base should be represented by responsibility for the other, understood as care for the other, being for the other, treating and approaching the other with respect. For this reason, instead of a classical teaching of moral principles that the pupil must understand and internalize, we should focus on the affirmation of interpersonal relationships that allow pupils to respect the other not only in their similarity, but also and especially in their difference.

Teachers should encourage pupils to be empathetic towards the other, because empathy helps us feel what the other feels. As we mentioned earlier, the question is whether empathy can open the way to respect and to the recognition of the other as different. Empathy is based on the assumption that people are similar. For this reason, it is also important to develop an exotopic view of the other; a view that does not start from us, but from the other. Such a view assumes that we are willing to accept a possible error in our beliefs and to allow for the possibility that the other is (also) right. It is therefore important not only to understand how someone feels, but also why they feel that way. This opens

the way to understanding the other person's differences. In this process, active listening is crucial. Every pupil should have a voice and no one should feel neglected. Teachers should encourage pupils to express their ideas and actively listen to the ideas and truths of others, thus fostering intellectual openness to and appreciation of the other (Malaguzzi, 1993, 1996; Rinaldi, 1999, 2009). When the teacher gives importance to pupils by listening to them and respecting their ideas and conceptions, pupils learn to be listened to and to listen themselves to the others and their views, overcoming their own egocentricity (Kroflič, 2012c). By allowing pupils to express themselves and their truths and to critically rethink the truths conveyed by society, the teacher encourages them to become critical and autonomous thinkers. In this way, pupils gradually become aware of their ability to change reality (Lin, Lake, & Rice, 2008).

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