

# School, comprehensive education and Human Rights Education

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## ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the growing importance of the school in increasingly complex societies and the consequent need for a comprehensive education that conceives the human being in his multidimensionality and focuses on the humanization of students. Ethical and citizenship training through Human Rights Education is proposed. This type of education, mandatory at all levels and modalities of education in the country, is structured based on knowledge about Human Rights, values such as equality, freedom and solidarity and practices that generate actions and instruments in favor of promotion, protection and the defense of human rights, as well as the repair of violations. This knowledge is developed by problematizing reality, contributing to critical social and citizen insertion in relation to the violations of rights that occur in the country.

**KEYWORDS:** Human Rights Education. Comprehensive education. School. Ethical training. Human rights.

*Escola, educação integral e a Educação em Direitos Humanos*

## RESUMO

O presente ensaio aborda a crescente importância da escola em sociedades cada vez mais complexas e a consequente necessidade de

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uma educação integral que conceba o ser humano em sua multidimensionalidade e volte-se para a humanização dos estudantes. Propõe-se a formação ética e para a cidadania por meio da Educação em Direitos Humanos. Este tipo de educação, obrigatória em todos os níveis e modalidades de ensino no país, estrutura-se a partir de conhecimentos sobre os Direitos Humanos, valores como igualdade, liberdade e solidariedade e práticas que gerem ações e instrumentos em favor da promoção, da proteção e da defesa dos direitos humanos, bem como da reparação de suas violações. Este conhecimento desenvolve-se pela problematização da realidade contribuindo para a inserção social e cidadã crítica em relação às violações de direitos que ocorrem no país.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Educação em Direitos Humanos. Educação integral. Escola. Formação ética. Direitos Humanos.

*Escuela, educación integral y educación en derechos humanos*

#### **RESUMEN**

El presente ensayo aborda la creciente importancia de la escuela en sociedades cada vez más complejas y la consecuente necesidad de una educación integral que conciba al ser humano en su multidimensionalidad y se enfoque en la humanización de los estudiantes. Se propone la formación ética y ciudadana a través de la educación en derechos humanos. Este tipo de educación, obligatoria en todos los niveles y modalidades de educación, se estructura en base al conocimiento sobre los Derechos Humanos, valores como la igualdad, la libertad y la solidaridad y prácticas que generan acciones e instrumentos a favor de la promoción, protección y la defensa de los derechos humanos, así como la reparación de violaciones. Este conocimiento se desarrolla problematizando la realidad, contribuyendo a la inserción social y ciudadana crítica en relación a las violaciones de derechos que ocurren en el país.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Educación en derechos humanos. Educación integral. Escuela. Formación ética. Derechos humanos.

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## Introduction

The theme of this dossier urges us to reflect on changes in the educational system and their direction. It is a question of glimpsing the possibilities of education that we socially aspire to. Education is such an important and central process for human development and formation for social coexistence that we have an institution destined exclusively for this purpose: the school.

The more complex societies are, the more important school education becomes, assuming an instructive role in the transmission of knowledge and a formative role that focuses on the ethical and citizen formation of the new generations. In this sense, the desired school should act through an education and its practices should be guided by Human Rights.

This essay seeks to defend Human Rights Education as a necessary and desirable path for a humanizing education that transcends the mere transmission of content. The methodology adopted is the bibliographic revision that used works in Portuguese as a linguistic parameter, since the discussion is limited to Brazilian school education. As a chronological parameter, we adopted works published in the last 15 years, after the launch of Plano Nacional de Educação em Direitos Humanos (BRASIL, 2007b). The thematic parameter comprised the fields of Human Rights Education and comprehensive education. We consulted physical sources, such as printed books and platforms such as Scielo.

This essay is organized in 4 parts, the first part brings a reflection on the role of school in societies, the second part approaches comprehensive education from the perspective of the comprehensive formation of the human being; the third part presents the foundations and practices of Human Rights Education that correspond to the proposal of an comprehensive education and the fourth part brings the final considerations.

## School

The school fulfills a social function essential to the formation of new generations in that it transmits knowledge and values considered essential to life in society. School education, compulsory in Brazil from the age of 4 and extending through high school, occupies at least 13 years of the lives of children and adolescents. In this institution they stay for at least four hours a day, five days a week, nine months a year. It is a social institution that all children and adolescents must go through (or should go through).

The school years mark the social condition of children and young people, implying commitments and responsibilities that are socially valued and transcend the bonds of family or community life (ENGUITA, 1989). But this has not always been the case, as societies become more complex, the school assumes new responsibilities and becomes more embracing and extensive.

Vila (2007, p.12) highlights, in Enguita's work, three moments of change in the relations between school and society: supragenerational, intergenerational and intragenerational. The first moment is characterized by stability and few social changes between one generation and another, located in antiquity, when only small groups composed of scribes, priests and other members of an elite needed institutionalized education. Most people were educated by family and community, since the knowledge needed to participate in social life could be learned through daily life. It is a school with little social outreach and intended only for an elite.

The second change comes from the industrial revolution and the social transformations driven by it. At this moment the social changes are perceived between one generation and another. Modernity has brought the passage from agrarian societies to the industrialized ones, scientific

and technological development, the rise of the press and modern states; ultimately, changes that have affected different orders of life and have been reflected in new educational needs. Parents, grandparents and the communities were no longer able to transmit all the knowledge necessary to participate in this society that demanded new solutions. For this reason, part of the education of the new generations started to be performed by the school. The extension of the institution among the children and youth population expanded, but only at a complementary level, since the continuity of studies implied constant selection of students, perpetuating its elitist and excluding character.

The third change is related to the acceleration of transformations that substantially affect people's lives, requiring the new generations to incorporate themselves into a world in which information and knowledge assume an increasingly decisive role in all orders of life. Nowadays, social changes take place within the same generation. Initial training focused on transmitting content is no longer capable of meeting the educational needs of individuals throughout their lives, it is necessary to have a broader training that is adequate to the new demands of contemporary life. In this scenario, school education has changed and now fulfill the family and community in functions that were once theirs; the social extension of school has become essential, providing access for all to basic schooling and universalizing high school.

In the same line, we have the work of Esteve (2004) that points out three moments that characterize the relations between school and society, named by the author as educational revolutions. The first revolution creates and generalizes the school as an institution dedicated to education. Historical documents, dating from 2,500 years before Christ, point to the existence of schools in ancient Egypt, destined to the priestly elite and the administration of the state, where writing was taught. The few who had access to this privilege were dispensed from bodily work and occupied a relevant and economically advantageous

social position, compatible with their level of education.

The second revolution, dating from the 18th century, is related to the State's responsibility for the education of children: schools are no longer just the result of random initiatives by the private sector. The state's commitment to schooling was restricted to primary education, limited to literacy and mastery of elementary schooling, with clear intentions of boosting economic development. The shortage of vacancies offered led to a new elitization: only those students who obtained good grades and were adapted to the institution, meeting its requirements, were able to continue their studies. Institutionally, this "selection" led to the formation of a homogeneous student body, with similar school incomes and convergent expectations. Socially, this elitization resulted in the distinction of individuals by their level of schooling, guaranteeing to the most graduates a promising future.

The first and second revolutions are therefore characterized by an elitist and exclusionary school education, conceived as a privilege and which gave its beneficiaries social and economic status.

The third revolution, which began in the second half of the 20th century, is characterized by the understanding of school education as a right, therefore primary education is extended to the entire population and secondary education is compulsory. To contemplate school education as a right of all opens the doors of the institution to a great part of the youth population. In Brazil, the Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação (BRASIL, 2004), enacted in 1996, determines that secondary education integrates basic education. Since then, the State has assumed the offer of this level of education, that objectify to provide a formation for citizenship that goes beyond studies and work preparation, with ethical and critical formation and a knowledge acquired that is capable of relating theory to practice.

In the analysis of Klein and Pátaro (2008, p.2); Enguita (1989) and Esteve (2004), both authors highlight the social importance of the

school that has been growing throughout the centuries, in distinct periods, during which it has been accomplished precise functions: who to form, for which functions these individuals are being trained and content of their formation. The education of the new generations, in its historical course, follows an orientation that points to the increasing formalization through school's universalization.

The periodization proposed by the authors, based on societies transformations through generations and the extension of the school, highlights the growing importance of the institution in face of social complexity. Faced with a stable society, in which the changes took place very slowly and the knowledge necessary for social life was maintained for generations and generations, institutional education was restricted in its scope and was reduced to specific knowledge, such as reading and writing. As social changes intensified, between one generation and another, participation in the new order began to demand capabilities that could no longer be transmitted only by the family and the community; thus, the school institution was called to this function at an elementary level, with the objective of transmitting knowledge such as reading and calculus, essential to the performance of new functions.

We are now living in a third phase, in which social changes take place within each generation and the knowledge necessary for social participation includes the capacity to adapt to an unstable order. Social institutions face the challenge of adapting to an uncertain order, becoming more open and flexible. Social coexistence confronts people with the need to develop social and citizen skills that favor coexistence in a context marked by diversity. This challenge requires learning processes mediated by the school that are able to transcend specific knowledge and act aiming at a broader formation, oriented to new social challenges and committed to an comprehensive education.

## **Comprehensive education and ethical formation**

The discussion about an comprehensive education is not recent, Anísio Teixeira, in the first half of the 20th century, when proposing a quality public education already defended comprehensive education. At the end of the 1920s, Teixeira, on a trip to the United States, learned about John Dewey's work that influenced him in the face of a national scenario marked by processes of urbanization and industrialization with a serious and visible picture of social inequality.

Cavalieri (2010, p. 249) analyzes the socio-historical-political context in which the ideas of a full-time education proposed by Teixeira, who, although he did not use the expression full-time education, advocated the increase of the students' journey in all levels of education. Teixeira's proposal highlights the importance of an comprehensive education, based on the experience and daily experiences as a base and source for the construction of knowledge and moral formation of students.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the experience of the CIEPs (Centros Integrados de Educação Pública) implemented during the two administrations of Leonel Brizola as governor of Rio de Janeiro, materialized the proposal of a quality education, articulated to the community and full time.

Brazil has a law (Lei 9,394/96; BRAZIL, 1996) that establishes the guidelines and bases of national education in its articles 34 and 87, §5 provides for a minimum of 4 hours of work in the classroom with a progressive extension of the time spent in school and the joint efforts of the Union, States and Municipalities aiming at the progression of urban public school from elementary to full-time schools.

In 2007, the Ministry of Education created the Programa Mais Educação, through the Portaria Interministerial nº 17/2007 (BRAZIL, 2007a) and regulated by Decreto 7.083/10 (BRAZIL, 2010). The Program was a strategy of the Ministry of Education to promote comprehensive



education in State and Municipal education, extending the school day in public schools to at least 7 hours a day, through optional activities, such as: pedagogical monitoring; environmental education; sports and leisure; human rights in education; culture and arts; digital culture; health promotion; communication and media use; research in the field of nature sciences and economic education.

Throughout the last decades of the 20th century and until today, there are full-time school experiences developed by Brazilian states and municipalities. The government of the state of São Paulo has been investing in Escolas em Tempo Integral (ETI) that offer sports and cultural activities in the regular classes. There is also a course in progress - Programa de Ensino Integral – and its curriculum includes study guidance, preparation for the world of work and assistance in the elaboration of a life project.

As we have seen, comprehensive education is strongly related to the extension of time spent in school, which is socially desired. In our opinion, this discussion, associated with the quantitative aspects, should not overlap with the idea of comprehensive education conceived in its qualitative aspects, whether in the comprehensive school or in the part-time school. In other words, it is not enough to extend the time of the school day without reflection on the quality of the day, on the type of classes and content that will be offered.

Offering a formation that considers human complexity is defended by Gonçalves (2006), who defines comprehensive education considering the subject in its multidimensionality, not only in its cognitive dimension, but also in the understanding of a corporeal subject, with affections and inserted in a context of relationships. The same understanding is present in the work of Tavares (2009), for whom comprehensive education is related to the complete formation of the human being, considering his multidimensional condition. Araújo and Klein (2006) associate comprehensive education to the formation of citizens through a

pedagogical practice that aims the formation in ethical values.

The comprehensive education thought in this essay concerns the conception of the human being in its different dimensions: cognitive, social, affective and ethical. At birth we are biologically human, but we are still unable to have the behavior expected of a human being in society, we need to learn about our culture, about values and ethical behavior, we need to know our feelings and learn how to relate and participate socially. Only after learning we are able to live as humans based on our history and our culture. In that respect, education is a process that can humanize us, if it foresees actions intentionally directed to human development in its multidimensionality.

We defend here the proposal of an education that transcends the transmission of contents and is directed to the ethical and citizenship formation of the new generations, a humanizing education, based on Human Rights.

The fact that humans are indetermined and incomplete make us be able to value, compare, intervene, choose, decide, burst and, for all that, to become ethical. However, we are not born ethical, behaviors of this nature requires learning.

The Catalan author, Josep Maria Puig (ARAUJO, PUIG, ARANTES, 2007), inspired by Delors, Morin and Jonas, highlights 4 areas related to human experience and ethical learning: self-ethical, alter-ethical, socioethical, ecoethical.

Self-ethics refers to learning how to be, including autonomous thinking (knowing what to do in different situations); moral sensitivity (being outraged about unacceptable situations); regulating one's own conduct (being prudent in decisions-making); self-observation (coherence). Alter-ethics corresponds to learning to live together and involves the understanding and recognition of the other through the establishment of bonds and commitment to common projects. Working in groups and collaborating in projects has become an ethical value.

Socioethics is related to learning to participate and means learning to live together, forming an active citizenship. This implies participation, deliberation, democratization of knowledge (it must serve to understand the world), democratic virtues. Finally, ecoethics is about learning to inhabit the world, responsibility for the present and future of the human kind and the planet. It is the concrete search for acceptable points of view that help us think of a way of life that is fair and sustainable for humanity.

Learning to live together, to respect, to participate in society are essential behaviors for citizenship. The concept of citizenship, in contemporary discourses of the social sciences, is not limited to the level of formal political involvement, but extends to the social and interpersonal level. Modern conceptions of citizenship believe that involvement is a possible catalyzing path for a person to become free, autonomous and to be invested in participating (OSER & VEUGELERS, 2008). Thus, citizenship education is not limited to learning about politics, but also refers to the ability to live a social and political life. Extending the concept of citizenship to the personal level means that we must provide the new generations with wide space for dialogic relations and participation in social processes. Becoming a citizen is not a personal career, but the result of the collective effort of individuals who have connections with each other.

The formative dimension of the school is the target of Puig's work (2000). The author highlights that among the functions socially delegated to this institution is the formation for citizenship. Each political regime requires a type of action and the same happens with democracy, especially if we take into account the importance and the tendency to seek in the active participation of citizens a way to expand and legitimize this system. The author defends that the formation in values socially desirable to democratic citizenship be developed through educational practices that makes them concrete. His proposal is based

on a critical analysis of the school we currently experience, it discourse emphasizes the formation for citizenship and democratic values, but contradicts itself in its practices.

Machado (2000) says that citizenship must be understood in a broad sense, which transcends the right to have rights and also implies an education that contributes to the promotion of these rights, through active participation in society, with the assumption of responsibilities related to the collectivities's interests and destinies, which represents the essence of citizenship.

An comprehensive education committed to ethical formation and for democratic citizenship must be guided by knowledge, values and pedagogical practices that enables the coexistence in a fair society that respects and promotes the rights of all people.

## **Human Rights Education**

The following text is attributed to a victim of Nazism and was found in a concentration camp.

Dear Teacher, I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no man should witness. Gas chambers built by learned engineers. Children poisoned by educated physicians. Infants killed by trained nurses. Women and babies shot and burned by high school and college graduates. So, I am suspicious of education. My request is: Help your students become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmanns. Reading, writing, arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human.

The letter addressed to the teachers leads us to some inquiries. Is it enough to form the new generations to work? Is mastering school content and knowing how to develop a profession enough to integrate society? Is it enough to adapt people to society as it is?

Our answers to all previous inquiries are "no". Education must be a process of humanization that not only happens in school, but has in this institution its main way for the new generations member's formation.

What do we expect from people in their social actions, in their relations with people, in their citizenship participation? Our expectations, our vision of society and of being human, are what guide the educational actions.

In a democratic society, we expect a recognition that all human beings are worthy and that no one can receive cruel, discriminatory treatment, torture or be discriminated in any way. Human dignity recognizes the eminent position of the human being in relation to other species, while being endowed with reason and feelings; it is an attribute that is independent of personal or social merit, since it is inherent in life. Democratic societies composed by diversities, like the Brazilian one, need an education that enables people to recognize in the other a being of rights and dignity. We are in a country marked by colossal social inequalities that often lead to the invisibility of the other and the denial of his/hers rights. Most of the times that we refer to Human Rights in Brazil, we have a sad and revolting scenario of violations that wound human dignity, a central principle of Human Rights.

Human rights are the conquer of the struggle for recognition, realization and universalization of human dignity. They are principles and values based on equality, which presupposes the consideration and recognition of the "other" as a human being, just like me. It's issues that involve the concepts of otherness and reciprocity, which place the self and the other as subjects and objects of ethics. Acting in the promotion of rights and in the awareness about them leads us to the importance of education and the possibilities of what can be done.

Education and Human Rights are interdependent and articulate in two ways: education is a human right that enables human beings to develop their potential; at the same time, Human Rights depend on

education so that they are known, valued and socially promoted. This dual relationship between education and human rights is present in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948): in the preamble of the document, education is highlighted as a path to the realization of all rights and in article 26 education is conceived as a right.

In Brazil, the State's commitment to an education based on Human Rights was made through the Plano Nacional de Educação em Direitos Humanos, PNEDH (BRAZIL, 2018), whose first version dates from 2003. In 2012, the Conselho Nacional de Educação promulgated the Diretrizes Nacionais para Educação em Direitos Humanos (BRAZIL, 2012b), making this type of education compulsory in all stages and educational modalities in the country.

The Plano Nacional de Educação em Direitos Humanos, PNEDH, defines Human Rights Education as a systematic and multidimensional process, i.e., it is not a punctual or a milestone, it is a path that is followed daily and involves different dimensions: knowledge about Human Rights, ethical values, citizenship formation, participatory methodologies and practices that generate actions and instruments in favor of the promotion, protection and defense of human rights, as well as reparation for violations (BRAZIL, 2018, p. 11)

The Parecer CNE/CP n° 8/2012 (BRAZIL, 2012a) that originates the Diretrizes Nacionais para a Educação em Direitos Humanos highlights the formation of legal subjects and responsibilities committed to democracy and the strengthening of groups that have their rights violated in a social context marked by inequalities and injustices. This document adopts the perspective of an ethical, critical and emancipatory education. The intended education is ethical as far as it is guided by humanizing values; critical, since it implies reflection and practice that problematize social, cultural, economic and political contexts; and political, since it provides for the formation of subjects of rights capable of actively exercising their citizenship, organizing themselves to

dialogue, claiming rights and fighting for their conquest.

The document highlights seven principles that found Human Rights Education:

1. Human dignity;
2. Equal rights;
3. Recognition and appreciation of diversities and differences;
4. Laicity in the State;
5. Democracy in education;
6. Transversality, experience and globality;
7. Environmental sustainability.

Such principles refer to the rights of the subjects and to an existence guided by values of justice and equity, highlights democracy as a process that should guide institutional relations, marks the importance of the relationship between human rights and the experience of all those involved in the school community and the rights of future generations.

The insertion of Human Rights Education in the curriculum can take place in different ways: by transversality, through themes related to Human Rights and treated interdisciplinarily; as a specific content of one of the disciplines already existing in the school curriculum; and in a mixed way, that is, combining transversality and disciplinarity.

However, Human Rights Education is not limited to classes, regardless of the chosen way, it requires a broad space for reflection involving the entire school community in order to plan actions aimed at creating an environment committed to human rights. This should be a work intentionally aimed at such purpose during which forms of relationship and norms of coexistence should be discussed; work methodologies and evaluation techniques that consider the student as a central element in the teaching-learning process, democratic and humanizing values that become concrete in daily relationships.

Human Rights Education aims at building rights promoting educational environments, this type of education constitutes a way of

life capable of guiding all relationships that have space in school environments and in society.

Human Rights are basically about relationships, consequently it involves power relations between individuals, groups, society or the State, so they are historical, social and political. It is necessary to be aware of this dimension so that Human Rights Education does not become just a transmission of information about rights already established and disconnected from its context of struggle and conquest.

[...] qualquer esperança de promover o contato das pessoas com a consciência crítica e com a ação social está diretamente relacionada à sua capacidade de refletir sobre experiências e situações que tocam profundamente a sua vida (BUTKUS apud MEINTJES, 2007, p. 134).

The variety of relationships between human beings is wide, which makes human rights dynamic objective of constant discussion, claims and transformation. Therefore, Human Rights Education develops in real contexts, based on the experiences, needs and problems of the subjects (students, school community, community in which the school is located) and their relationships with each other, their school, their community and their government.

## **Conclusions**

The complexity of today's societies increasingly requires the expansion of the school's performance as a social institution destined to the formation of new generations aiming at social coexistence and participation. For this reason, comprehensive education, conceiving the multidimensionality of the human being, becomes desirable as it returns to the ethical and citizen formation of students. This intended formation must move towards the humanization of people, through the recognition of equality, dignity and Human Rights.



Human Rights Education includes knowledge and information about Human Rights, ethical training (positive valuation of rights and their principles) and practice (knowing how to assert these rights and social responsibility with their realization). This formative process must take place from and through social reality, so the learning takes place through the problematization of reality and in doing so, situations of violations of rights are highlighted, violations that could be made invisible if it were not for the critical position in relation to them. It is a matter of denaturalizing discrimination and violence, in this way students are expected to build a critical and citizenship vision of the world and become able to understand reality and, hopefully, act in the sense of transforming it.

Finally, taking up the initial idea of reflecting on changes in the educational system and their direction, we lack a humanizing education that educates boys and girls to recognize and value human beings in all their diversity in ways being, living, thinking, feeling and existing. New generations which are incapable of committing the atrocities that educated people were capable of committing in the name of a discriminatory ideology such as Nazism. To educate so that the passionate blindness driven by hatred and radical nationalist ideals are not repeated in the history of humanity.

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