

**MULTIPLE VOICES TO THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF A CRITICAL AND RESPONSIBLE CITIZENSHIP**

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper presents reflections on education and citizenship and the issues addressed, arising from three research projects with distinct methodologies. These projects have transversely advocated human dignity and the value of participation, interdependency, and responsibility among human beings, particularly those involved in more vulnerable situations. In the project *Cyberbullying — a diagnostic of the situation in Portugal*, the importance of understanding violence phenomena by identifying risk and protection factors has been evidenced, highlighting the relevance of an education based on co-responsibility, and an ethic of care. In the critical ethnographic project *Urban Boundaries — the dynamics of cultural encounters*, discussions evolved around communitarian education, and education was understood as a movement aggregating several dimensions of the project and including members of the local communities actively advocating their rights. In the project *Voices of youth in the development of intercultural education*, the value of children and youngsters' participation in social transformation was highlighted, streamlining initiatives with the school community through dialogic, artistic, and technologic processes that promoted the development of intercultural competences.

**KEY WORDS**

Participation; Responsibility; Commitment; Citizenship; Hope; Research Projects.



SISYPHUS

JOURNAL OF EDUCATION

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 3,

2014, PP. 100-119

# Multiple Voices to the Development of a Critical and Responsible Citizenship

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper tackles the relationship between education and citizenship, deriving from the contributions of three research projects that focused on the voice of youth and adults in the construction of a critical and responsible citizenship. The theoretical framework of the concepts underlining this issue will be presented along with a brief summary of the three projects, regarding their methodologies, processes, and results.

The overall goal is to question the concept of citizenship and the role of formal and non-formal education in citizenship development, while highlighting situations where this citizenship is challenged and deepened, and to emphasize the role of research and educational processes towards a new, co-responsible, participative, and emancipatory citizenship.

## WHAT CITIZENSHIP IN AN INTERCONNECTED WORLD?

To be a citizen of the world is here understood as someone who has developed the sense of belonging and of responsibility towards the planet we inhabit, not as a person who has lost their roots and origins and is both indifferent



to and independent of others. These are assumptions worth addressing under a wider framework, where human societies' style of living and development must be questioned and where the future of the planet should be considered with care. Hence commitment, shared responsibility, and concerted action are key concepts (Bauman, 2007).

This means a collective and individual responsibility, together with commitment, in order to invert the predatory way we regard others, humans and non-humans, considering them as inferior and unworthy beings that exist to serve our needs and desires, and makes us all slaves of an undetermined system. This implies an

awareness of the intimate connection (and not the contradiction!) between the autonomous citizen, morally independent and self-governing (and so often undisciplined, little temporizing and cumbersome), on the one hand, and a political community in its own right, capable of self-reflection and to correct itself, by the other. The two terms can only appear together, and each one without the other is unthinkable (Unofficial translation — Bauman, 2007, p. 292).

In this sense, there is also the need to raise awareness of the alienating collective process in which part of humanity dwells, eager for transient pleasure and insatiable in its escalating need for consumerism, and novelty. We live in empty air bubbles ready to burst, projecting us into the void, or worse, revealing a violent and incomprehensible reality where we are but pawns in a game with rules we neither understand nor control, a game with a life of its own and not understood by its own players.

All these may define a citizen in our society, but there is also room for resistance. A passive or active resistance, in all ways creative, in which we can place ourselves in order to find meaning in us and those around us, subverting the rules.

Reality is movement and interdependence. Hence global exists in local, and local is part of the global and is also a place where paths can be tested and reverberated into the global.

It is not an uncritical citizenship that is being addressed here, one characterised by rule abiding citizens, but a critical citizenship that problematizes our societies and discuss our assumptions and its concretizations, such as the so called universal human rights. Universality has to be addressed from dif-



ferent angles, in the face of human multiplicity, differences of culture, and polyphony of perspectives. This universality is neither abstract, nor faceless. This mean to “*affirm hybridity as the place of Universal*” (Unofficial translation — Žižek, 2006, p. 86). This is an active universality, rooted in a common matrix (Duhm, 2005) of an interconnected world (Lorimer, 2005) that may expand and transform itself, for it already holds in itself that possibility. We discuss here our power to transform old structures into new ones, moving towards new possibilities in the future without denying or eradicating our past.

For a wider perspective, we need to step out of the box. And in doing so, it seems we must listen to those who are in the boundaries of the systems, those who look around and realize that boundaries are only conceptual, and those who realize that there is a world beyond their own and who dare to explore it.

How to make a change? By acknowledging its possibility, and daring. On the one hand, acknowledging the possibility of change through analysis and through a critical reflection that deconstructs assumptions, a reflection that questions this same deconstruction, benefits from revealing contradictions, and is in constant movement and incessantly strives to move forward. On the other hand, daring through our actions, manifesting this movement within our local settings, interacting with those who are willing to dare. In this sense, also “schools must become places of production of critical knowledge and socio-political action” (Unofficial translation — McLaren, 2007, p. 280).

Is interculturality a hoax, in the sense it yields attenuating processes that delay the necessary changes towards a true justice founded in a broader social system? Or is it, instead, a deeper political movement founded in heterodoxy, flowing against the hegemony of common perspectives, the assimilationist western culture, and the neoliberal economy?

Should we assume each part of the whole, for without the parts there is no whole? The shadow, the minorities, the excluded...

Paradoxes and contradictions are assumed along with those who personify and embody them, the weaker links who may lead the system into self-doubt or destruction and may transform the system into something entirely different. It is vital to understand that we are all part of an interdependent whole, and that the welfare of some must not be the misery of many others.

Which word drives a profound change? Love, freeing us at the same time that we commit ourselves. To break the boundaries of the system, creating connections outside of it and finding new rules to a new matrix. The driving word is (re)connection.



## EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP IN A PLURAL AND COMPLEX SOCIETY

There exists an intrinsic relationship between education and the preparation of men and women for their integration in the society in which they belong. Education is inherent to the socialization processes and formal or non-formal education has played this role throughout the history of mankind in a multitude of socio-historic contexts.

The concept of citizenship arises in the Ancient Times, associated with the allocation of rights and duties within a given community, primarily a city. However, many have failed and still fail to benefit from their rights over time, even though they were (are) part of the community. With the establishment of constitutional regimes and contemporary democracy, rights and duties were enshrined into fundamental law — the Constitution, and gained universal prominence, being applied to men and women around the world. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the recognition of the nation-states, citizenship is strongly emphasized at the national scale, even though there is a trend for a universalization of rights (e.g. Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Declaration of the Rights of the Child), which are transverse to all democratic constitutions. In the last few decades, for political, social, cultural, and technological reasons, the concept of citizenship is expanding towards a globally shared citizenship, materialized in the dynamics of identification among citizens from distinct parts of the world, rooted in mobilization processes for common causes. These citizens are advocating their rights around the world and are sharing responsibilities with others and with the planet, in a global citizenship. Together with the expansion of the concept, the contents of citizenship are also under modification. The idea and practice of citizenship progressively arises in association with participation, which is not a new concept, but incorporates other modes of thinking and acting. According to Bresson (2014), the concept of participation is developed around three models: *public participation* (determined by imposed authorities and expressed, for example, in the act of voting or paying taxes); *collective participation* or *participative democracy* (where actors of the civil society are organized in associations, or other forms of organization, that work as anti-authorities to the imposed authority); and *mobilization* (where processes of shared power and authority are advocated through social movements driven by citizens — inhabitants, consumers, etc.; co-producing the projects that change their own lives).



During the twentieth century, in Western democratic countries, there is a trend for change from a passive to an active citizenship, from public to collective participation and ultimately mobilization, with the nuances that are specific to each age and each country (Bresson, 2014). Notwithstanding, it is visible in this trend an increased demobilization of the citizens from democratic countries regarding formal public participation (e.g., higher abstention rates in European countries), which is frequently not “compensated” by a dynamic and collective or mobilizing participation that focuses on strengthening the voice of the excluded minority.

Economic globalisation processes manifest the successive loss of rights by the citizens in general (increasing unemployment, loss of workers’ rights, dismantlement of the social state, concentration of poverty and exclusion at the periphery of major cities, the large number of abandoned and lonely people [completely devoid of a voice to defend their rights], and of citizens considered useless to the production system and excluded from the labour market, etc.). In the face of these changes and convulsions, when referring to education for (and in) citizenship, we must question the society in which we are committed to educate citizens, and the citizenship we intend to promote in these (and future) societies. To think and to investigate about the relationship between education and citizenship implies questioning the means and the ends, in the sense of clarifying which kind of citizenship is intended and which kind of society we want to construct.

The modern democratic ideal is founded, as defined by Habermas (1999), in a “common political culture”. In other words, a shared culture independent of its social, cultural or religious status, where a set of fundamental rights are associated with ensuring dignity for all human beings. As such, citizenship education is aimed at all and each of us. It is aimed at those who, in their differences, are building themselves towards a common goal and a fairer and more solidarity-oriented society.

Contemporary societies are increasingly plural and more complex. They are culturally and ethnically plural (feeding off the integration of citizens coming from a variety of places), but also sociologically plural. This reality challenges education in the promotion of an integrative and intercultural citizenship, which requests the pedagogy of alterity. A pedagogy rooted in the recognition of the other, in his integrity (including culture) and in an ethical position of care, particularly towards those in more vulnerable situations. The pedagogy of alterity refers to the acknowledgement and empowerment



of people rather than cultures. The intercultural perspective facilitates the analysis of cultural diversity by focusing on variations rather than on differences, on interactions rather than on conflicts, on processes rather than on conditions, and on cultural traits rather than on structures. It is inserted in a logic of complexity. Between cultural relativism and assimilationism, intercultural education reaffirms the right to be different and openness to the universal (Abdallah-Preteceille, 2005).

In the field of ethics in education, there exists nowadays a trend moving from rational ethics supported in the concept of justice to a relational ethics supported in the concept of responsibility<sup>1</sup>, which underlines the relational and social role of education (Estrela, 2010).

Care is not only a life exercise; it is also a political and ethical responsibility. Care is an essential and inherent condition of human development; it therefore incorporates the educational process. As such, care should be present throughout the life of the individual, providing conditions of emancipation and protection, of socialization, and of autonomy. Care refers not only to self-care, but to care for other citizens, humanity, and nature (Boff, 1999). Both the family and school (the latter, in its multiple faces, from curricular schools to relational, social, and organizational schools) can provide life experiences in which children and youngsters can feel cared for and learn to care for, truly learning to live with themselves, with other human beings, and with nature, reflecting what Charney (1993) defines as *ethical literacy*.

In terms of ends, education for citizenship should be oriented to the development of conscientious, critical, and caring citizens. But, how to achieve this?

Education for democratic participation in society arises with the Progressive Education movement and especially with the work of the pragmatic philosopher John Dewey, who addresses experience as a key concept in pedagogy (Dewey, 2007). In the wake of the phenomenological approach, experience brings together action and reflection (in action and about action) in a transformative and emancipative process of human development (Fabre, 1994).

Experience is therefore a process of self-consciousness, awareness of others, and awareness of the contexts surrounding each. In Dewey's conception,

<sup>1</sup> According to Jonas (1990), the principle of responsibility is the structural axis of contemporary ethics (the ethics of the technologic civilization), and it is framed by concerns with the future, where global humanity becomes a reference. To the author, this implies a non-reciprocity, as it relies mainly in the assurance of contributing to the future of Earth and humanity ("I owe it all to men of the future, without expecting anything in return", p. 30).



the idea and practice of a project (which should follow the canons of scientific method) are pivotal in the developmental process of democratic communities. Other authors have conceived development models based on the concept of communities of practice and education for reasoning, which closely relates to Dewey's perspective. For example, the work of Mathew Lipman values the power of argument, questioning, and reflection on children and youngsters, through educational process based on philosophical research (Lipman, 2001). Also Morin (2002a), in his work entitled *Seven Complex Lessons in Education for the Future*, proposes a "principle of rational uncertainty" as educational guidance to the promotion of a critical and argumentative rationality. These are educational models primarily designed for educating for reasoning, where interaction with the other and with the social reality is emphasized.

Closely related to this experientialist perspective, Paulo Freire (1980) introduces the concept of *conscientization*, adding political and ethical commitment (namely to the marginalized, the discriminated, and the excluded) to the scientific rigor proposed by Dewey. The concept of *conscientization* demands criticality, perceived as a critical and epistemological curiosity that surmounts the natural and naïve curiosity of human beings. In his own words, "one of the essential tasks of progressive educational praxis is the promotion of a critical curiosity, unsatisfied, restless" (Freire, 1997, p. 36). Founded in these dimensions of a conscientizing (and therefore emancipatory) education, Freire conceptualizes two other demanding factors, presented in two educational principles: the principle of hope, which the author defines as an ontological human necessity (the desire and need to exceed expectations and go further); and the principle of dialogue, which is defined as an existential human condition. Dialogue demands availability, openness, empathy, and the ability to listen, all these are indispensable to educators. In education, as in life, dialogue (as a tool in the recognition of the other) and criticality (as the ability to overcome challenges through argumentation and self-questioning) must go hand-in-hand with hope, triggering in the other a willingness to self-transcend. Criticality without hope would disappoint students and take away their will to act (Freire, 1997).

In short, citizenship education requires the establishment of educational strategies and conditions that promote reasoning and feeling, in the completeness of the human being, "getting involved in policy and emotional and corporal investment, which means 'putting practices into practice' and working in the same communities we intend to service" (Unofficial translation —



McLaren, 2007, p. 268). Citizenship education is about developing the capacity of reflection upon the self, the others, and the world, in the context of experienced education. It is about claiming a critical, ethical, and political stance in the face of reality, which requires dialogue and hope.

#### THE URBAN BOUNDARIES PROJECT: THE DYNAMIC OF CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS IN COMMUNITARIAN EDUCATION<sup>2</sup>

This Project was conceived and developed from a transdisciplinary perspective<sup>3</sup>, based on the methodological approach of critical ethnography (Thomas, 1993)<sup>4</sup>. The Project envisioned the promotion of cultural encounters between the academic community and two local, marginalized and voiceless communities<sup>5</sup>. The goal was to respond to the needs and desires expressed by these two local communities, promoting social and cultural dynamics in which education played an aggregating role. To this end, several initiatives took place, such as the creation of a Critical Alphabetization School based on Freire (1980), the establishment of a group of *batuko*<sup>6</sup>, the democratic establishment and support of a Neighborhood Committee, the promotion of circles of culture with youngsters (supporting them to reduce school abandonment rates and promote their reintegration in the formal school system), and the promotion of visual arts involving both children and adults (Mesquita, 2014). Critical Alphabetization initiatives supported other dimensions of the project, namely multiple Cartography, life histories, and mediation (linguistic, intercultural, and community). As described in Freire, Caetano e Mesquita (in press), these encounters, and the project itself, were rooted in three fundamental principles:

2 Project funded by FCT — Foundation for Science and Technology (PTDC/CPE-CED/119695/2010).

3 The research team included researchers and consultant from multiple fields such as Anthropology, Physics, Architecture, Education, Arts, History, and Biology.

4 Critical ethnography uses the procedures and techniques of classic ethnography, envisioning the involvement of community member in processes of intentional change, to which ethnography can add information and critic perspectives.

5 A fishing community, whose history dates back to the early twentieth century and a community in a clandestine neighborhood for which converge mostly immigrants from Cape Verde.

6 Traditional music from Santiago Island, Cape Verde, with rhythm, chants, and dances as main characterizing elements.



- All people belong to a planetary civilization and are enriched by cultural encounters (Morin, 2002b);
- Transcultural and transdisciplinary dialogue is pivotal in the recovery of the cultural dignity of people (D'Ambrósio, 1999);
- Dialogue is an existential condition of human beings (Freire, 1980).

Given these principles, the Project focused on the participation of local communities in the transformation of their social and cultural realities, in a framework of respect for and recognition of their culture. The participative processes with members of these communities reflected experiences of true internal democracy, oriented to the advocacy of community rights. As true cultural re-encounters, these processes have strengthened the bonds between different groups and the sense of community<sup>7</sup> (Caetano & Freire, 2014; Freire & Caetano, 2014; Mesquita, 2014).

The learning process in itself is an experience of identity (re)building. Observation data<sup>8</sup> shows that critical alphabetization played an important role in the construction of self-esteem and social image, in which the individual identity grows strong and confident to circulate/participate in wider and more culturally dominant scenarios. It is also a road to consciousness of social injustices and, consequently, to vindication of professional and social rights. In *terms of relations*, the observed dynamics have contributed to the transformation of relationships and to overcoming internal and neighbouring conflicts among the group. In terms of collectiveness, the created dynamics of participation targeted pacification and the establishment, and reinforcement, of safety and trust feelings. In this ongoing process, approximation to the dominant culture prevailed initially but progressively gave place to the intercultural dynamics and more transcultural human relations (Caetano & Freire, 2014; Freire & Caetano, 2014). Still, there was a greater approximation between the two local communities and among them and the wider surrounding community. These processes brought visibility to the local communities,

7 The concept of community, based on the sharing of meanings, is nowadays a key concept to the comprehension and development of human societies and, therefore, it is a central concept in education. Feeling part of a community develops protection and safety feelings, which allows for awaking of the collective dimension of the human being and the restitution of a collective and individual dignity that is often lost (Caetano & Freire, 2014).

8 Collected through participant observation (field notes, informal and focus group interviews, photography, videography, and other means). See <https://www.facebook.com/fronteirasurbanas> and <http://fronteirasurbanas.ie.ul.pt/>.



particularly through participation in local forums and vindications of rights with the local authorities. Through their leaders, they have raised their voice and advocated their rights as citizens.

Here we might ask: To what extent were the dynamics experienced in these communities responsible for the increase in internal social cohesion and value-sharing observed? To what extent were these dynamics responsible for the construction of a community identity? To what extent are true communities organized and centred places, with internal cohesion, identity, and shared values, languages, and rituals?

And also: to what extent have these dynamics contributed to the construction of a wider identity, in which the members of these communities feel more integrated in Portuguese society? To what extent can members of other communities, namely the academic community, better relate to the local communities?

Such questions comprise challenges to the maintenance of this participatory and critical research line with excluded communities. A research ethically committed, with people, in scenarios of political and social exclusion.

Throughout this Project, its critical research was driven by the willingness to break down segregating boundaries that shadow the weakest and the ones deprived of their basic rights (such as access to water, as experienced in one of the communities, and the right to work as fishermen, in the other), and the right to live in peace, without violence of any sort. The Project developed itself in a rationale of comprehension based on dialogue, rooted in “the recognition of the value of the other, without denial of eventual objections” (Guillaume-Hofnung, 2013, p. 92). This is contrary to the absence of dialogue, where neither the discovery of common values nor the acceptance of differences can exist.

The critical citizenship in question refers to the youngsters, who have left school and therefore are mobilized to reinvest in their own lives for dignity and a sense of future. It is also the citizenship of children proud of their mothers for now being able to read. It is the citizenship of African women reviving their traditions through dances and chants. It is the citizenship of community leaders advocating their rights and gathering in assemblies to solve their problems. It is the citizenship of whole communities organized in committees in order to have a voice in local politics. It is the citizenship of those who learn to exist beyond the invisible boundaries and dare to enjoy other cultures in public spaces dedicated to the arts and the books. It is the



citizenship of those who gain a new consciousness and realize the importance of preserving the environment and resources as a common good.

## THE PROJECT VOICES OF YOUTH IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

Interculturality is one of the foundational axes of the *Voices Project*, where listening to each other, assuming in actions the corporification of voice and its amplification through interaction are core assumptions. The Project aims at the development of a critical citizenship, along the lines proposed by authors like McLaren: “Any institution that deserves the title of ‘school’ must educate students to become critical agents in social transformation and for critical citizenship” (Unofficial translation — McLaren, 2007, p. 280).

Field researchers in this Project are educators/teachers developing their own post-graduate studies in universities, as part of participant research projects that require their involvement with the learning communities as well as academia. These researchers develop educational processes with children and youngsters not only in formal educational settings but also in non-formal places in which they were active. These processes comprised dialogue, new technologies, arts, and the promotion of projects involving various actors of the educational community, both inside and outside schools.

In its first year, the Project started with 4 subprojects, collectively designed by researchers and applied by educators/teachers in the field. Meanwhile, common research tools were being developed. In the second year, two new subprojects have started, successfully adapted by benefiting from the experience of the previous ones (in terms of research and intervention) and from the research tools meanwhile constructed and tested (as was the case of the focus group interview’s script, the field journals, and the data analysis process). So far, four Master of Science dissertations have been completed and defended in the context of these subprojects (Accioly, 2012; Bicho, 2012; Machado, 2012; Vassalo, 2012).

The knowledge being built is rooted in action and follows interaction among various subjects, who are also involved in the process of observing the impact of these learning experiences. From the analysis of the four already concluded studies, the diversity of practices and dynamics are evidenced, as expected due to the interactive and participatory nature of the processes



(following collective decision-making), and of the contexts, problems, values, and interests addressed in each subproject. Despite the differences, the subprojects shared foundations such as intense internal dialogue about alterity and personal, social, and family identity, which preceded decision-making and the development of activities; the interdisciplinary involvement of teachers and technicians; or the promotion of activities by children and youngsters, together with other actors of the educational community. The confluence of artistic practices in all subprojects is also worth mentioning, as was the case with the filming of a documentary about the lives of the students involved; the promotion of a poetry/drawing workshop; the organization of a fashion show with clothes made from recycled material; and the intergenerational exchange between children and elders, sharing life histories and affection through dancing, singing, eating, and creating origami and other craftworks. Technologies were a very useful resource in the organization of information and products and for the communication of the subprojects. On *Facebook*, a community has been established and was expanded, in a more intense way in two of the subprojects and between them (with the involvement of other actors of the educational community — teachers, parents, and friends).

Enriching and significant experiences have thus been developed. Children and youngsters engaged in intercultural learning, strengthening their individual and collective identity, recognizing the other and their surrounding diversity, and building up their capacity to interact attentively and responsibly in the face of the needs of others and their own.

Group projects develop internal cohesion and create dynamics of acknowledgement in the educational community and appreciation by others (teachers, schoolmates, school board, and families), that are transformative in the sense of consciousness and reduction of cultural stereotypes and preconceptions, towards the development of a participant and interdisciplinary culture. Such impacts have been reported in the dissertations mentioned, in *in press* publications (Vassalo & Caetano, *in press*). These findings are in accordance with other authors, such as Bauman (2007) who defend the need of a consciousness of the connection between autonomous citizens and fully-fledged political communities.

Interculturality is about not neglecting what has been considered private, not removing from our eyes and actions those non-assumed postures that are nonetheless present and that dramatically condition the public domain. Transforming through interculturality means increasing awareness of what is at

the basis of our identity and uniqueness, while drawing strength from what is at the basis of our shared existence and commons. Interculturality is to be assumed as a profound social posture rooted in critical perspective and actions committed to social, political, cultural, and educational transformation.

THE CYBERBULLYING PROJECT —  
PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AND THE ETHICS OF CARE

New technologies are like permeable channels that trespass walls of schools and, through which violence may also circulate. Violence exists in the planet, the human city, the educational spaces, and the people that inhabit it. And through these technologies, there remains a violence that is spaceless and timeless, slowly affecting the existence of those who fail to defend themselves from it. Violence also affects the lives of those who are building their identities from experiencing oppression against others, persuaded of the legitimacy of this type of discretionary power.

In a global world where communication can be instantaneous and can connect distant parts of the planet, violence becomes spaceless and timeless. In this sense, cyberbullying challenges education. It is important to understand it, perceive its outlines, the way (and places) it is experienced, and how it can be overcome. We must understand in order to act upon it, and to comprehend the impacts of our actions. In the Project “*Cyberbullying — a diagnostic of the situation in Portugal*”, we have emphasized the comprehension of this phenomenon that, by itself, is a window to comprehend the phenomenon of violence.

In this extensive study, a diagnostic questionnaire on cyberbullying was administered to 3525 adolescents attending the 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grades at 23 schools and schools clusters belonging to 18 different districts in Portugal. Results allowed for a characterization of the prevalence of cyberbullying, its associated behaviours, emotions, and motives, as well as risk and protection factors associated with the family and the school. 7.6% of the interviewed students reported being cybervictims, whereas 3.9% reported being cyber aggressors (Matos, Vieira, Amado, Pessoa & Martins, in press). Many Portuguese teenagers and youngsters are daily affected by cyberbullying situations, as is the case in many other parts of the world. Most often, victims and aggressors are vulnerable people facing great suffering, which is reflected in their responses when questioned about their emotions regarding cyberbullying:



Data shows that sadness, revenge, and fear are the most frequently reported emotions by victims, whereas satisfaction, indifference, and relief are most often experienced by aggressors. These results denote the reversibility of roles within this phenomenon, as seen in literature (e.g., Cassidy, Faucher & Jackson, 2013). In other words, there exists a vicious circle of suffering that involves both victims and aggressors, and which results in victims becoming potential aggressors and vice-versa. While investigating the motives associated with cyberaggression, lack of empathy and inability to express affection were evident in aggressors, together with asymmetric patterns of authority and power among those involved in cyberbullying, which has been reported in other acts of violence, such as traditional bullying.

Similarly to what has been concluded in studies regarding other acts of violence, this research has underlined the importance of school and family environment in the prevention of cyberbullying. In terms of school environment, we emphasize school ethos, reflected in an adequate supervision and clearly-defined rules (namely regarding the use of technologies in school), together with emotional support. In terms of family environment, results suggest that “lack of family support appears to be more predictive of cyber-victimization and lack of family rules is more predictive of cyberaggression” (Martins, Veiga Simão, Freire, Caetano & Matos, in press).

These results underline the importance of preventive educational processes, through which the educational communities come together in coordinated and ethically committed initiatives; where families, schools, and schoolmates can undertake a responsible surveillance, and where students develop social and emotional competences that make them resilient, sensitive to others, and capable of dealing with situations in a peaceful, creative, and compassionate way. This is about creating assumed relations of interdependency and reciprocity in schools and families, inserting them in the ethic of care towards each other (Brugère, 2014. An ethic founded in the concept of justice (underlying rules that control human relationships in a given social context), but going beyond justice. This is an ethics that combines a concern for the other with the willingness and the action of care, and in which the dignity of each and every one is respected. An ethic that is based on the principle of responsibility, one that is increasingly necessary and emergent in current societies due to the growing vulnerabilities humans are faced with, particularly children and youngsters. From the principle of responsibility comes the principle of “precaution” (Russ & Leguil, 2012, p. 118), or prevention,

which refers to risk forecasting and anticipating, accounting for the risks, the protection factors, and the consequences for human dignity.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In summary, we have assumed in this paper a critical perspective — socially, educationally, and economically speaking — in which we assert that our daily actions may shape alternatives and develop individual autonomy and the sense of collective responsibility. In this transformative movement, we are clearing roads together with those along the way, getting involved, taking part, and assuming unconditional responsibilities towards the other that is different from them, as “recovering the citizens’ voice that has been lost or is no longer audible” (Unofficial translation — Bauman, 2007, p. 288).

We live in a globalized world, dominated by the neoliberal fatalism of the end of utopia, by the lack of problematization of the future, and by the conviction that everything is natural (like unemployment and poverty) and everything depends on the individual. In the words of Paulo Freire, over seventeen years ago but still very relevant to educators nowadays:

Unquestioning the future through a mechanistic comprehension of our past History (either from a left- or right-wing perspective), necessarily leads to the destruction or authoritarian denial of our dreams, hope, and utopia. The future is already known to the mechanistic and therefore deterministic intelligence of History. No hope is required in the fight for the *a priori* known future (Unofficial translation — 1997, p. 82).

We need to question our relations of independency (autonomy) and interdependency. We need to reconnect the ethic of justice, which has been dominating both education and research on education, to a relational ethics, the ethic of care and protection, one that contributes to the education of self-respecting citizens capable of respecting others and the environment. So that hope may be reinvented.

We need to achieve all this together with the youngsters and adults in our communities, in educational scenarios that bring together critical action and reflection. To a certain extent, this is stated in the work of Sousa Santos:



Global cognitive justice refers to a new relationship capable of creating a bottom-up vernacular cosmopolitanism. In other words, a new relationship among races, genders, and modes of knowledge and existence. The frailty of human rights, in the domain of global cognitive injustice, pertains to the fact that its conceptions and dominant practices are, by itself, promoters of cognitive injustice — not because of its occidental assumptions, but in its unilateral way of building on assumptions to create abstract universal pretensions. Here, the solution is once again not the relativism but a new relationalism (Unofficial translation — Santos, 2013, p. 97).

Education and research may invaluablely contribute to the fight against fatalisms that destroy the hope of men and women, destroy the hope of generations one after the other (particularly younger ones), and destroy the hope of mankind. The definition of ideal citizenship and societies for tomorrow is pivotal to the sustainability of policies and educational practices that may change the *status-quo*. Research has a relevant role to play in the construction of such policies and practices to which educators, learners, and researchers may contribute through a dialogical process where theorization is in close connection to practice.

What is here in question is not a vague idea of hope, or a totalitarian utopia where everything is predefined. It is about clearing a road mile after mile with all those involved at a local scale. It is not about recognizing only the value of intellectuals, scientists, thinkers, economists, and politicians that reflect and act on global problems at a global scale, but the value of all of us, thinking and acting on concrete problems at a local scale, embodying broader problems and solutions. In other words, for an active citizenship it is necessary to assume a re-politicization that places certain fundamental decisions in the hand of the individuals and groups involved (Žižek, 2006). This is a vision of “the ‘we-power’ citizen of an interconnected world” (Titus, 2005, p. 31).

In this sense there is a need to understand the relational and embodied nature of humans (Bishop, 2005). In a society of knowledge and communication, ideas circulate increasingly faster and easier. Virtual communication, however, is not enough. We need to find spaces where we meet face to face, we feel the presence of the other, we sense their desires and anguish. We need to find ways of assuming the human existence in its multi- and inter-dimensionality, including dimensions that seem to be taboos in some intellectual contexts, such as the spiritual and emotional ones. Moreover, we need to regain the sacredness of cities, as places where organization promotes encounter.



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**Received:** December 8, 2014

**Final version received:** December 23, 2014

**Published online:** December 29, 2014

