

## EDUKACJA / EDUCATION

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### **CIVIC EDUCATION BETWEEN THE YOUTH UNIVERSE AND THE EDUCATIONAL ECOSYSTEM**

#### **1. Civic education in the educational system**

Civic education, which has just been reintroduced into the training system, aims to develop moral and civil aspects in young students, aspects that should permeate everyone's daily life. Civic education represents a borderline topic between philosophical, ethical and political dimensions on the one hand and fundamentally educational problems on the other, traceable in contemporary society, involving more than ever man and his destiny and emerging from the vast and complex articulation of the universe in which we live, in which technological development and information are taking on ever greater consistency.

All this requires a precise cultural commitment, a recovery of the ethical dimension in the various sectors of school and extracurricular life, an interdisciplinary and educational stance on the problems of our society and a rigorous orientation of educators in order to exercise the will of the pupils. with regard to commitments in daily life and reflection on the great issues of our time. Civic education, as a civil commitment in the gradual aspiration to the values of freedom and democracy, requires schools to have an educational strategy aimed at promoting, especially among pupils, the reflected awareness of the rights and duties of citizens, enshrined in the Constitution, present in the our cultural tradition<sup>1</sup>.

Precisely in this sector should emerge the attitude of teachers to draw on that unity of education within which the pupil finds the reasons for his own existence, the meaning of others, the moral and civil value of the “pedagogy of small things”.

The citizen, the mature person who acts for intrinsic motivation and not for extrinsic motivation, the pupil who gradually draws on his own moral autonomy, all those who benefit from information, concepts, direct experiences, need

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. F. Da Re, *Costituzione & cittadinanza per educare cittadini globali. Riflessioni per un curriculum di educazione civica*, Pearson, Milano 2019.

a guide to interpret and mediate the meaning of the rules in order to be able to embody them in everyday life.

Hence the urgency to give life to authentic opportunities for self-promotion to civil and cultural commitment substantiated by a foundation and a moral purpose in the light of which, and with the help of families and the community, it is more appropriate than ever to reflect on the participation, the dignity of schools and teachers, the authority of the latter, often in crisis or under conditions of delegation or indifference, as well as on freedom frequently manifested as disengagement, poor sense of others, habit of perceiving school as a reality detached from their life<sup>2</sup>.

The maturation of the “ethical sense” in the current cultural context seems to have to deal with ideologies, with the lack of conscience reflected with the spiritual alienation of man who, due to endogenous but above all exogenous conditions, is found more and more frequently reduced to an instrument and object of political and economic life<sup>3</sup>.

The pre-adolescent is certainly not immune from this cultural climate in which certain structures, certain institutions, certain educational agencies, instead of promoting the humanity of each one and guaranteeing democratic coexistence, stifle individual and group initiative and create serious problems for the development of common good.

Civic education that is not committed to concrete problems, to the foundations of democratic coexistence of the particular context in which the child lives, to the positive and negative aspects that political-administrative life presents, does not allow them to offer the possibility of understanding, in a way sufficiently critical, their insertion and their integration in a well-defined school and social context that tends more and more to escape the ethical dimensions of life<sup>4</sup>.

The task that awaits the school is to commit itself to making young people understand that it can teach them to think about events and behaviors. Today, the opportunities for these goals should not be lacking<sup>5</sup>.

Space and time require people gradually matured in the ethics of commitment and employment by virtue of an education attentive to the personal development of children, to the vital worlds in which this maturation takes place and to the international context in which it is possible to grasp, today more than in the past, a common call to human value, peace, collaboration between peoples, respect for the environment<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Cfr. *Cittadinanza e convivenza civile nella scuola europea. Saggi in onore di Luciano Corradini*, a cura di S. Chistolini, Armando Editore, Roma 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. G. Gangemi, *Innovazione democratica e cittadinanza attiva*, Gangemi Editore, Roma 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. R. Indelicato, *La dispersione scolastica nel terzo millennio. Analisi e prospettive pedagogiche nel terzo millennio tra vecchi bisogni e nuove sfide*, PensaMultimedia, Lecce 2020, in particolare capitoli II, III e IV.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. *Scuola dell'autonomia e Educazione civica. Problemi e prospettive*, a cura di C. De Luca, Falco editore, Cosenza 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Cfr. R. Indelicato, *Educare al rispetto dell'ambiente*, in: *L'emergenza ambientale a Taranto: le risposte del mondo scientifico e le attività del polo scientifico Magna Grecia*, a cura di A.F. Uricchio, Cacucci, Bari 2014, pp. 509–523.

Civic education cannot ignore valid relationships and processes between pupils and teachers. In a particularly interesting moment with regard to the resumption of the underlying reasons for school and extracurricular education, it is not superfluous to emphasize the importance of education in its methodological and didactic concreteness and in its typically existential implications.

A first goal to be achieved in a school community, which is more attentive to the problems and needs of children and society, is to change the basic attitude of teachers<sup>7</sup>. For the purposes of training in the values of democracy, the importance of the teacher is irreplaceable on a psychological, educational, socio-cultural level, and it is precisely in social behavior, in the quality of relationships with his students and colleagues and with the school community. whole, which the professor offers the first democratic training.

Political commitment to teaching does not mean transforming the educational relationship into an occasion for ideological indoctrination and conditioning. Today, attention should be paid to indifference and delegation, conditions of progressive orientation of young people towards de-responsibility.

## 2. Civic and environmental education: a common goal

From pre-adolescence, important opportunities arise in order to orient young people to think systematically and scientifically everything that concerns the possibility of a social ethics, built on the principle of I care, an ethics of taking care «the commitment of taking care is aimed at entities with respect to which there is a distance from the commonality that unites us to other human beings. [...] In the Western tradition the ethical sphere is conceived as applicable to the human world, but not to nature which has always been considered as the non-human sphere. But if we reinterpret the human condition in the light of an ecological vision, then the paradigm of thought is changed from which the area of relevance of ethics is decided»<sup>8</sup>.

The planetary and ecumenical space in which the educator and learner live their time cannot replace the reflection on the institutions that every day require the contribution of all and without which the pupil, “citizen of the world” would not be sufficiently supported by tools and by valid landmarks.

Knowledge of the Constitution in schools would be much more difficult than it already appears to be if it were not accompanied by research, concrete experiences, interviews, investigations on community problems, on the way of administering public affairs and on the way of living the problem of rights and of duties<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Cfr. *L'orientamento e la formazione degli insegnanti del futuro*, a cura di A. Mariani, Firenze University Press, Firenze 2014.

<sup>8</sup> L. Mortari, *Educazione ecologica*, Laterza, Bari–Roma 2020, pp. 146–147.

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. P. Mulè, *Dall'insegnamento di cittadinanza e costituzione a quello dell'educazione civica. La dimensione pratico-riflessiva e la ricerca-formazione dell'intervento sul campo*, PensaMultimedia, Lecce 2020.

The identity of civic education and its need to be expressed in terms of interdisciplinarity and harmonious and gradual approach to the issues of “local, regional, national, international society”, captured in their historical processes and in their future prospects, should reinforce in the pupil the motivation to be useful to others and participate in the history of today and tomorrow<sup>10</sup>. Civic education should also guide the pre-adolescent in resolving the various antinomies that maturing to existential problems poses every day.

The school could provide the means to solicit basic issues and to guide the critical spirit of children on the efficiency of bodies and institutions. Maritain opportunely points out that education must put an end to the discord between social and individual needs in man himself. It must therefore develop together the sense of freedom and that of responsibility, that of human rights and human duties, the courage to take risks and exercise authority for the general good and, at the same time, respect for humanity in each individual person<sup>11</sup>. Educating the integral person in the light of strong ideals means giving strength to values that are axiologically founded and anthropologically and methodologically attentive to the man of our time. Such an educational task would be above all the right and duty of the family and of the school. The school as an educational learning environment, as a reality in which cultural and socialization processes take place, has many requisites to act as an affirmator of life and as a promoter of the values of life<sup>12</sup>. School education in its complementary moments of interaction and culturalization guides us to live personal freedom in the spirit of truth. The young person also matures the concept, which is very difficult to hold firm, that freedom in truth entails a responsible commitment on an individual, relational and friendly level in everyday life.

Currently, the Miur guidelines adopted for the introduction of civic education teaching in schools (law 20 August 2019, n. 92)<sup>13</sup> pay attention, in the content and methodological aspects for the formation of the future citizen, to environmental education, sustainable development and protection of the environmental heritage with reference to the 2030 Agenda. It is emphasized how important it is in the environmental field to identify an interconnection with other knowledge such as the natural sciences, geography, education to legality (contrast to mafias, inalienable human rights and of the citizen). The goal is to bring out topics not present in the teaching plans and to make their interconnection possible while respecting the growth path of each individual student.

Within the lines there are three macro-areas that concern: constitution (national and international law, legality and solidarity), sustainable development (environmental education, knowledge and protection of heritage and the territory) and digital citizenship.

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<sup>10</sup> Cfr. M. Parricchi, *Vivere il mondo. Sentieri di educazione alla cittadinanza, dalla partecipazione all'educazione economica*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Cfr. J. Maritain, *L'educazione della persona*, tr.it., La Scuola Editrice, Brescia 1962.

<sup>12</sup> Cfr. S. Ulivieri, *Le emergenze educative della società contemporanea. Progetti e proposte per il cambiamento*, PensaMultimedia, Lecce 2018.

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/ALL.+Linee\\_guida\\_educazione\\_civica\\_dopo\\_CSPI.pdf/8ed02589-e25e-1aed-1afb-291ce7cd119e?t=1592916355306](https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/ALL.+Linee_guida_educazione_civica_dopo_CSPI.pdf/8ed02589-e25e-1aed-1afb-291ce7cd119e?t=1592916355306).

Dwelling on the second area that concerns sustainable development, it can be said that today more than ever the environmental issue<sup>14</sup> is of significant importance in light of the ecological crisis we are experiencing. The current era generated by profound transformations has given rise to disastrous consequences such as climate change, thinning of the ozone hole, global warming, pollution and exploitation of natural resources<sup>15</sup>.

All this has given impetus to ethical-educational reflection by posing new questions. The recent developments obtained in the technical-scientific and biomedical fields have greatly expanded the possibilities of human action in contexts that were once inaccessible to him<sup>16</sup>. The decisive changes that our post-modern society is undergoing, as a result of economic and cultural globalization, the revolution of communication systems and so on, have led to a radical disfigurement of the natural landscape.

The problems that grip the planet from an ecological, social and economic point of view are a demonstration of what can happen when there is no developed, universally acceptable ethical-educational thought. Then we ask ourselves:

Would it be useful to sensitize the new generations to these issues? What will happen to our planet and humanity if we continue along this line?

### 3. For a future of sustainability towards the planet

The disappearance of values and the radical changes that have occurred in our society have favored the spread of an excessive relativism in which the only solution seemed to be to enhance freedom at the expense of the well-being of the community<sup>17</sup>.

The teaching of civic education can give us useful information to answer the questions we have asked ourselves, starting above all from the sense of responsibility that must be developed in young people.

The philosopher Hannah Arendt proposes responsible action<sup>18</sup> starting from the individual's ability to engage in a hypothetical communication with the other and finally Hans Jonas, with his "principle of responsibility"<sup>19</sup>, highlights the need for the individual to take care of the destiny of other, but not only, also of the entire planet. Jonas' proposal is to recover respect for the integrity of man

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<sup>14</sup> Cfr. E. Barberis, *Educazione civica e Costituzione: cittadinanza globale e sostenibilità*, Maggioli, Milano 2020.

<sup>15</sup> Cfr. G. Rantucci, *La Crisi Ambientale Globale: Una prospettiva globale per un futuro sostenibile ed una proposta non esclusiva all'Europa Unita*, tr.it., CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, Scotts Valley 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Cfr. L. Mortari, *Educazione ecologica*, cit., in particolare pp. 3–11.

<sup>17</sup> Cfr. Z. Bauman, L. Donskis, *Cecità morale. La perdita di sensibilità nella modernità liquida*, Laterza, Roma–Bari 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Cfr. H. Arendt, *Responsabilità e giudizio*, tr.it., Einaudi, Torino 2010. Cfr. anche L. Perla, M.G. Riva, *L'agire educativo*, La Scuola, Brescia 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Cfr. H. Jonas, *Il principio responsabilità. Un'etica per la civiltà tecnologica*, tr.it., Einaudi, Torino 2009.

and the planet, all through careful action. In this sense, education, which has always been the guarantor of human development, must prepare the generations through a path of internalization of an ethic of shared responsibility, making the human being mature a fundamental awareness, that of a single destiny that unites everyone. human beings and that overcomes any particular difference. This awareness in turn implies the perception of the mutual interdependence that exists between each individual, and which constitutes the stimulus for committed and responsible actions aimed at achieving the common good. This awareness would allow man to manage in a more appropriate way the resources he needs for his own survival, but also not to damage elements that, although apparently distant from human life, are in reality intimately connected to it and where they were compromised, would affect consequently this too.

In reality, what is needed is a radical change of perspective, from anthropocentric to biocentric and ecocentric<sup>20</sup>, based on respect for all living forms, interconnected and part of a single system. Man is therefore physically and spiritually linked to a whole which he cannot ignore, if he damages a part of the system, he will inevitably damage himself, in fact «the traces of all things that have happened persist; nothing is completely evanescent, nothing that exists today will ever completely disappear tomorrow [...]. We are part of each other and of nature; we are not strangers in the universe. We are a coherent part of a coherent world; neither more nor less than a particle, a star and a galaxy. Only that we are a conscious part of the world, beings through which the cosmos can know itself. This understanding constitutes a solid basis for the recovery of a deeper meaning in life, and for a new, more reliable orientation in this crucial passage of history»<sup>21</sup>.

The world is not given by the whole of its parts, but it is a coherent whole in which each element is inevitably linked to the other: this means that if something happens to one part, it also affects all the others, involving the whole system.

For this reason, civic education aimed at developing the young student's sense of responsibility is very urgent and this must start from personalistic needs that place not only the person at the center, but also the whole ecosystem. In order to carry out this project, education cannot act alone, it needs the support of public and private institutions which must give the highest priority to educational objectives over others of lesser entity, and devote attention and economic resources to provide all the tools and the means necessary to meet the new educational needs of our society.

Undoubtedly, in recent years little has been invested in the education of the younger generations, ignoring that the new generations represent the key for the change and for the collective internalization of a shared morality which in turn translates into responsible subjects, who put their knowledge and intelligence in favor of solving the world's problems and the fair progress of the latter.

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<sup>20</sup> Cfr. M. Andreozzi, *Biocentrismo ed ecocentrismo a confronto. Verso una teoria non-anthropocentrica del valore intrinseco*, LED Edizioni Universitarie, Milano 2017.

<sup>21</sup> E. László, *Risacralizzare il Cosmo. Per una via integrale della realtà*, tr.it., Urra, Milano 2008, pp. 7–9.

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AND THE EDUCATIONAL ECOSYSTEM**

SUMMARY

Civic education aims to develop and sensitize children, young people and even adults to the problems associated with organized social structures, both nationally and internationally. Its purpose is to make the pupil aware of those problems, of the need to work to solve them in the best possible way, to fully create a democratic society. For this reason, civic education aimed at developing the young student's sense of responsibility is very urgent and this must start from personalistic needs that place not only the person at the center, but also the whole ecosystem.

**KEY WORDS:** civic education, educational ecosystem

