THE AVEIRO CHARTER OF RIGHTS FOR HUMAN BEINGS, A MILESTONE FOR THE SECOND DECADE OF THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

BEING HUMAN is an extraordinary privilege. Every woman and every man that is born has something to learn and a project to build throughout their lives. Designing futures in the present and affirming what makes them BE HUMAN requires work, study and fun. Since the first decade of the 21st century, the Human Rights in Action project, by Civitas Aveiro, has helped, through its work with children, young people and teachers, to construct answers to the question: what makes us truly human? What are the effects of technologies' in our life?

The Aveiro charter of rights of the Human Being is one of the results of the 10th edition of the project developed in partnership with the University of Aveiro, with the backing of the Municipality and local Businesses. Twenty-five education and teaching institutions, from Nursery School to University, and a total of eight hundred Children and Young People, joined by around fifty teachers, from various subject areas, were involved in the development of the one hundred and twenty six rights inscribed in the Charter of Rights of the Human Being, which has been turned into an agenda for 2010.

The dissemination of the charter by Civitas Aveiro aims to make a contribution in order that the citizens of the city of Aveiro, upon hearing the voices that speak out in this charter, may take steps toward making Aveiro a city blessed + dreamed with the Rights of the Human Being. The purpose of this presentation is to lay out and encourage discussion on the process of collective participation in the construction of the Charter of Rights of the Human Being, in various contexts, the methodology used and the analysis of the rights inscribed in it.

Keywords: Being Human rights, communication, ludicity, education, technique.

1   HUMAN RIGHTS: THE TEMPLATE FOR TECHNOLOGICAL MEDIATION OF COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION

The first decade of the 21st century saw significant emphasis on the uses of electronic technologies, including the Web, the iPad, Youtube, the iPhone, GPS, sensors and information storage devices. Some see them as catalysts for both social progress and the strengthening of communication between people. Others, while acknowledging their merits as experiencing and sharing systems that enliven online social networks, see them as promoters of social divergence and the isolation of those who do not keep up-to-date or who do not adapt to performance evaluation criteria based on utility, efficiency and power, dominated by instrumental rationality.

We may add to this fact the results of the 2010 survey carried out by INE [1] – The National Institute for Statistics – in collaboration with UMIC – The Agency for the Knowledge Society – into the use of information and communication technology in Portuguese families. This survey indicates that more than half the homes in Portugal have access to the internet and around 50% have a broadband connection: "in 2010, 60% of homes have a computer at home, 54% have access to the intent and around half have broadband access (...) 55% of individuals between the ages of 15 and 74 use a computer 51% the internet (...) in the 10 to 15 age group, 96% use a computer and 91% the internet." As regards broadband access, INE concludes that there has been an average annual growth of 21% in this type of access since 2006 (www.ine.pt). The studies carried out in 2007 by Chaves and Dustsche [2] show that 39% of children between the ages of 4 and 5 regularly use the internet and that 67% of children between the ages of 6 and 7 use the internet on an everyday basis. We may, therefore, conclude that those involved in education cannot afford to ignore this data and should reflect on what it means and how it may affect their practices.

It is generally the case that technology is playing a greater role in the communication process. We are closer to everything and everyone, just as we can move away from those who are close to us. A

conversation on Skype does not replace a face-to-face conversation, just as a kiss or a hug at the end of an SMS does not signal the existence of an affective relationship between the people involved. Machines may turn off at any moment, the human experience may not. Online social networks cannot replace face-to-face social networks because these are as old as human beings and inseparable from the relationship between the I and society. We know from Gregory Bateson [3] [4], Paul Watzlawick et al. [5], Thompson [6], Adriano Duarte Rodrigues [7], Lance Strate [8] and others, who emphasise the connection of face-to-face interactions, mediated and mediatised, in the human communication process.

In this understanding, one of the challenges put to educators, content designers and communication technologists is to reflect on the technique, and the essence of the technique, which, according to Heidegger, has nothing of technique but everything of human [9]. These techniques and essences are human creations and are contextualised in the life worlds of their users. Educators confronted by this reality cannot but interrogate and integrate into the educational process the social learning of the rights of the human being. They need to tutor (encourage acquisition) and advise (support) the experiences that children and young people live in the educational communities for which they are responsible. Given that the forming of a critical attitude is essential if the technological tsunami of dominant instrumental reasoning is to be controlled by its users who, by acting, may prevent the disappearance of the ethics in communication. In this sense, the Millennium Declaration is a template that sustains reflection in action and about action.

2   BEING HUMAN

Being human is an extraordinary privilege. Each man and woman born has learning to do and a project to build, throughout their life. To design futures in the present and to affirm that which makes them BEING HUMAN involves work, study and fun. Education is an interpersonal communication strategy designed for this purposes - to tutor and advise each person's social autonomy, encouraging thought, interaction and the sustained defence of the values relating to the notion of being human which underpin the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Around the world, there are currently 6.6 billion brains engaged in thinking. Three hundred years ago we were just 300 million. There have never been such fascinating conditions under which humankind might try to achieve those objectives that it has always sought out: increase life expectancy, delay death, do away with pain, end poverty, eliminate tiredness and the numerous forms of slavery, protect the forest and nature, avoid tedium, overcome tradition, discourage authoritarianism and ensure that beauty is for all and on equal terms for all.

The future is chosen in the present, The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights [10] and the Duties set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Duties proposed by the Interaction Council [11] form a heritage of beauty and hope. They serve as the pretext for conversations in the nursery school, the school, at home, in the café and in the street and they lead us to think, to act and interact.

The social learning of active citizenship is like a door that can be opened inside each of us. The willingness of adults to understand and allow themselves to be understood by children and young people who, in conversations on themes that generate thought and the construction of arguments, look for debate, seek solutions to problems and write rights that everyone wants to safeguard, in their everyday actions. The NGO Civitas Aveiro – The Association for the Promotion and Defence of Citizens' Rights – was set up in Aveiro in 2000. Since the first decade of the 21st Century it has contributed, through its work with children, young people, educators, teachers, families and local communities, to the social learning of human rights. Its work can be divided into three main pragmatic areas – intervention, training and research. It engages in these through a partnership with the University of Aveiro, and other national and international institutions and organisations, specifically National Civitas, Local Authorities, Parish Councils and International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH).

3   THE PROPOSAL – THE GAME IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS BOOKLET: THE RULES OF PLAY

The Human Rights in Action Booklet is the first conversational discursive strategy for ludic mediation and interpersonal communication put into practice by the educators and teachers, from all levels of teaching, participating in the project. It contains 22 short narratives of infringements of human rights and non-performance of duties. As a group, children, young people and their families are tutored and

advised by educational and teaching staff as they build solutions to the problems set out in the booklet. A copy of the booklet-game is given to each participant, the game is explained and each person receives an individual card, on which is 'I know', 'I may' and 'I can'. These phrases indicate the commitment that each individual gives to starting a process that will last the whole school year and which culminates with a district-level forum on human rights at the University of Aveiro and at which the results of the work done locally are presented. The parameters are decided together by all. The process of the social learning of human rights is based on the communication pact that, itself, is based on the principle of autonomy of will and the acknowledgement and value given to that which each person says they are, do and think and what they want to say, do and think. Once agreed, this is symbolised by the ribbon that each participant wears around their wrist. This ribbon symbolises their commitment to contribute, in a small way, to changing their behaviour as regards human rights and duties.

Some questions are made for group brainstorming: what do you think about the forms of violence found in each story? If we were in this situation what could be do to prevent the same outcome as in the story?

For each constructed solution other activities emerge, such as drawing, painting, recounting the story with the proposed solution, observational trips, organic playtime in which the adult participates and spontaneous social play in which the children play amongst themselves without the participation of the educator and in which they construct dramatic and socio-dramatic scripts for their actions. Before the day ends, the group gathers together to receive their stickers - the coloured smileys, the larger of which is stuck on the booklet and the smaller on the personal card that they carry in their schoolbag.

Story 1 – our freedom doesn't include the right to neglect our duties (articles 1 and 29), 40 points. Story 2 – Black on white (articles 1,2,7 and 26), 25 points. Story 3 – The foreigner (articles 1, 2 and 23), 25 points. Story 4 – Numbers are not the tragedy, tragedy is what the numbers reveal (articles 1,3 and 5). Story 5 – the death penalty (articles 1 and 3), 20 points. Story 6 – One is more child than the other (articles 1 and 25), 20 points. Story 7 – Orphans before their time and those that die before they become orphans (articles 1,2,3,5,25,27,28), 30 points. Story 8 – Praying in the wrong place (articles 1 and 18), 25 points. Story 9 – More data: with and without numbers (articles 1,2,3,5 and 19), 20 points. Story 10 – Education and cultural and scientific assets: are they for all or not? (articles 1 and 27), 30 points. Story 11 – In a demographics class (articles 23,26 and 29), 25 points. Story 12 – Nomads from India (articles 1,2,23 and 26), 30 points. Story 13 – The most right was the least certain (articles 1,19, 23 and 24), 20 points. Story 14 – The tragedy of the refugees (articles 1,2,3,6,7,14,15 and 17), 35 points. Story 15 – A slave at teatime (articles 1,3 and 4), 20 points. Story 16 – The guilt of the accused (articles 1 and 11), 20 points. Story 17 – The affiliates in the AP (articles 1 and 20), 20 points. Story 18 – A capable or incapable order (articles 1 and 28), 30 points. Story 19 – Water and air on earth: condemned: but not to death, right? (articles 1,3 and 28), 35 points. Story 20 – The suspect (articles 1,12 and 13), 25 points. Story 21 – So many infringements and so few words …(articles 1,2,3,7,15,16,21,22,23,25), 35 points. Story 22 – The human rights worker (articles 1,3,9,19 and 20) 40 points. [12]

Solutions found by the educational community of the Gafanha da Encarnação Norte nursery school, under the guidance of nursery teacher Haydée:

1. People should separate rubbish in the recycling bins: paper in the blue one, glass in the green and plastic in the yellow, to protect the environment. People who smoke should respect those that don't. E.g. Be careful not to smoke in public places. We should respect others so that they may respect us (at home).

2. If we have a black boy in our school, we should give him kisses, play with him and be his friends. We don't have two 'babies' in the school, one black and one white. We give milk to both of them, food to both of them, dress both of them and give affection to both of them.

3. The Chinese have got different eyes but they see the same things we do. The Chinese are people and we have to treat them well.

4. Don't drink too much wine / Don't take drugs / Don't hit / Don't kick / We should all be friends to children / Let's help each other / Only mummies and daddies can work, not little children.

5. People must be good and for them to be good we have to look after them from when they are babies.

6. Both children have the same rights. Segismundo should behave in the same way with both daughters. If he gives a chocolate to one, he should give the same to the other. If he gives a pullover to one, he should give the same to the other and the same for affection, kisses, etc. (at home).

7. We shall destroy/hide all the guns so there is no war, no killing. If we all had a good house, a good doctor, a good teacher, good fathers, good mothers, there would be no war.

8. People shouldn't fight because of religion. We should all be friends. Let's destroy all the bombs.

9. They should not arrest people for thinking different things from us. We shouldn't steal things because we can get arrested. Children who work get sore hands. We should only work when we are big.

10. Everyone should have a house so they don't have to sleep on the grass, in the cold and rain and with light! Have money to buy medicine so they don't die of sickness. There have to be schools for everyone, for everyone to know how to read, write, count, have friends, have boy/girlfriends and for when we are big to know how to do things and to be friends to people, animals and the earth.

11. It's not right that little, or big, children should work. It's right to have schools, home, friends, family, doctors, medicine and love.

12. Gypsies are people just like others and they like to go from place to place. Like everyone, if they are well treated when they are little they won't be bad when they are big. They have a right to good parents, to go to school, to work and to have someone to treat them well, like us.

13. Everybody has the right to speak. To have holidays, to rest on Saturday and Sunday.

14. If refugees come here we will let them come in, get them a job, a house with electricity, water, food and we will be their friends.

15. All human beings should be equal; some can't be slaves to others and if people work for us we should pay them. Everyone has the same right (at home).

16. It's not fair to say he is guilty without being sure that he did something wrong. Let's talk to him first.

17. My parents voted for who they wanted to run our country.

18. All over the world everyone has to have a good life. Let's help, we are friends.

19. In our school / We put the rubbish in the recycling / We put a small bottle of water in the toilet cisterns to save water / We always close the doors to save gas / We are friends of the animals, of the earth and of the ladies and gentlemen and the children.

20. We have to treat people from other countries well and the other countries should also treat the people that go to work there well.

21. Some people don't live well. People who do live well should be told and they should treat these people well and help them.

22. Don't ruin other people's lives. We should be friends, helping and treating well. Everyone has the right to a good life.

4 THE CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS - AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SECOND DECADE OF THE 21ST CENTURY – A WAY OF CELEBRATING THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MILLENNIUM DECLARATION

The Charter of Human Rights is the result of the work done as part of the Human Rights in Action VIII (2009) project. A total of eight hundred children and young people, plus about fifty educators from a variety of curricular areas, were involved in the construction of one hundred and twenty-six human rights in the form of the Chart of Rights for Human Beings [13]. This charter was transformed into guidelines that its authors wished to follow. Every day is a day to celebrate the rights of human beings.

Here we describe some of the rights written into the charter, just as they were written by their authors.

Right to cuddles from grandparents. Right to affection and love. We have the right to live in peace in our family To be happy we must have a happy family and not be violent. Right for parents to have the patience to play with their children. Right to more time with parents. Parents should not attack each

other verbally or physically. Grandparents have the right to cuddles. All children have the right to spend some quality time each day with their family. All children have the right to a brother. All adopted children have the right to know who their parents are.

Right to equality between men and women. Right to homosexual marriage. All children have the right to be adopted by homosexual couples. Freedom to marry. All infertile humans have the right to medical assistance and the infertility treatment they need to conceive.

Right to be safe when going out. All human beings have the right to privacy and security in the use of new technologies, whether in private or public places. To have the right to a speed limiting traffic light near the school. I have the right to obey the law, I shouldn't fight, I should be protected by the law.

All children have the right to be good-looking to have a lot of energy. Right to food, home and good medical care. I have the right to play. To rest. To go out.

May – Right to imperfection. All children have the right not to be perfect (as some adults want). Right to be happy. Right to have friends. Right to play. All children have a right to love, cuddles, hugs, kisses and affection. Children have the right to ride on the boats on the Ria de Aveiro, without paying. I have the right to play because I feel good playing. Every child has the right to a pet. Right to a house with a room of my own. Children should have the right to vote. Right to a name and a nationality. Children have the right to rights. I have the right to say. All children have a right to participate in the political life of the country. Electing one or more representatives to parliament, to the city council and to the parish council. Right to discover the world. We all have the right to learn to read and write. Children have the right not to watch TV all day. I have the right to go to school. Right to education and leisure. Right to read. The government should offer books so that all children can read well. Every child with special needs should have the right to special teaching. Children have the right to special protection for their physical, mental and social development. All children have the right to freedom of expression. I have the right to live in peace. All children have the right not to go to war. Children have the right to grow up in a spirit of solidarity, understanding, friendship and justice between peoples.

All children should have their rights safeguarded by the children's ombudsman who should listen to children when they complain that their rights are not being respected. Right to drinkable water. Right to care for the environment. Right to play outside and have more playgrounds. Everybody, individually or collectively, has the right to live in a healthy environment that will give them water, air and good food.

Right to difference. All gypsies have the right to work and a have a home. All children have the right to a present at Christmas.

Children should have the right to pocket money. Right to equality, without care for race, religion or nationality. Everybody who reaches retirement age should have the right to a salary, The law is the same for everyone; it should be applied equally to all.

5   INTERMEDIATION METHODOLOGY

The methodology designed by the author [14] is theoretically grounded in the methodologies of action research [15] [16], in the Paulo Freire method [17] [18] and in Habermas' theory of communicational acting [19] [20] and it promotes the process of spontaneous, free, rational and critical communication as opposed to instrumental rationality.

The work is developed within a structure that is organised, and disorganised, along three main axes (circles 1, 2 and 3), around which are arranged all the mechanisms by which interpersonal communication operates. Through this system of interactions, participated in by the various subjects, each one is connected to all the others and all the others to each one in the contexts of their life worlds (a,b,c...) (Fig. 1).
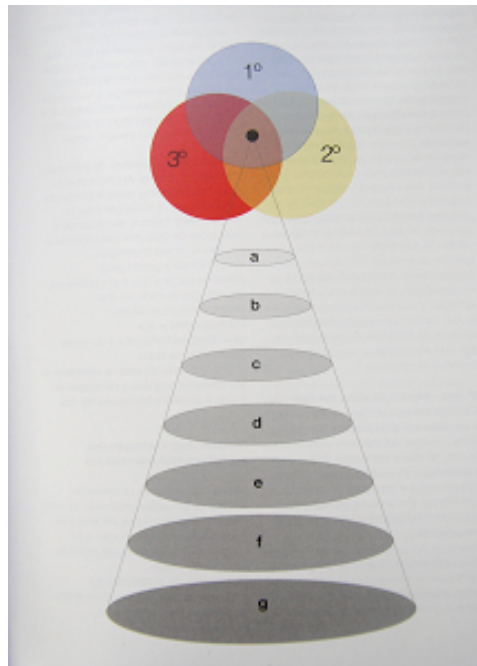
Figure 1 – Representation of the intermediation methodology

1st Circle – Mediator – this relates to the work of the participant-trainer or researcher responsible for making the whole process work and for mediating with the children, the families and the institutions with which the educational community is involved.

2nd Circle – Mediant – refers to the communicational, ludic and creative action designed by the methodology of ludicity stated in the action plan that gets the subjects involved.

3rd Circle – Mediated – identifies the action of the group of participants who build the project.

The areas encompassed by the lines correspond to the various contexts of the life worlds of the participating subjects (mediators and mediated). These increase in size as a function of complexity: a) family, b) educational community, c) local community, d) district, e) Portugal, f) Europe and g) World.

If, in the initial phase, the mediator who occupies the central position is represented by the citizen point, this position becomes increasingly diluted as the other mediators begin to carry out and internalise the methodology and corresponding procedures.

The interaction between participants implies an iterative process of performance tutored and advised by the mediator which, at any given moment, is occurring in a range of situations: intrapersonal, interpersonal, intra-group, inter-group, intra-institutional, inter-institutional or mediated by technology.

This is how the common and singular process of the construction of the change plays out, encouraging the types of learning that communication anthropologist Gregory Bateson calls "learning to learn" and "learning how you learned to learn" [3].

5.1   Iterative process of the coproduction of practices

1st moment – listen actively, and with informality, the perception of intentions and conscience. 2nd moment – support for the verbalisation of accomplishments and the identification of the meaning of these accomplishments. 3rd moment – support for the questioning looping of the intentions verbalised from the meaning of accomplished actions, from the confrontation between the saying of doing and the doing compared to saying. 4th moment - jointly construct the action alternatives which implies i) analysis of the situation, ii) identification of problems, iii) selection of priority and secondary problems and setting aside of others which may, however, be reintegrated at any moment, construction of various action scenarios, iv) construction of solutions, v) carrying out the actions. 5th moment – shared reflection on the process of carrying out the actions. 6th moment – systemise (write). 7th moment – prepare to inform about the construction processes making up the practices and the products of these practices. 8th moment – celebrate the rights of human beings with all participants.

This iterative process emerges from the use of the octagon co-participative method (Fig. 2). The circularity, the interdependence and redundancies dominate the construction of processes and the co-production of learning. Of note is the diversity of content of the interaction carried out by the participants and the order in which the mediator intervenes.
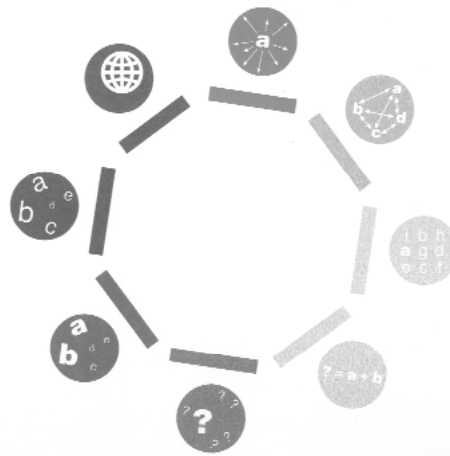
Figure 2 – Co-participative octagon

This method begins with the circle marked a) and ends with the circle containing the world icon.

6   FINAL COMMENTS

We would like to finish with a few comments from the families involved in designing the booklet game and drawing up the Charter of Human Rights: "irrespective of our different ways of living, thinking and even acting, this booklet made us stop to think a little about others. We saw how we act when in similar situations". "It is educational, the children and the family felt an obligation to work with the school; they learned a sense of responsibility. This booklet helps children learn to have more respect for themselves, and for other people, mainly as regards prejudice. In our home we feel that this booklet was really important for our daughter, it helped us deal with a lot of different problems and we even found out about some very important things that are going on in the everyday world around us. Thank you for the joy you gave my daughter". (participants in the DHA project)

We side with Raoul Vaneigem [21] in stating that there are certain propitious conditions for engendering the will to change: human rights may be transformed into the Rights of Human Beings and the difference is substantively different and the place for this transformation is the educational communities, particular the home and the school. The gauntlet has been thrown down to those educators who want to acknowledge the will to live, that have in them the wish of all wishes to construct change.

The process and the results of the booklet-game and the charter of human rights all contribute to both reflection and action in cooperation. Together, all together, we can take steps to turn the life places that we inhabit into blessed and dreamed of (dream-blessed) foci of the Rights of Human Beings.

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