

NONKILLING EDUCATION

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Center for Global **Nonkilling**

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Recognition and Compassion at Stake

Towards a Nonkilling Education

Irene Comins Mingol and Sonia París Albert
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How should we teach? What educational tools should be used in the classroom? In formal education it is no easy task to identify and apply the most appropriate and efficient tools available to teachers so that students learn properly in line with the competences established for each subject and, at the same time, so the subject matter and the way it is dealt with are meaningful for the students' personal and professional futures. Although this chapter focuses on formal education, many concepts and problems also are applicable to non-formal and informal education. The interrelations are evident, including the links between schools and families (García Moriyón, 2004). The complexities of teaching practice includes elements such as *the system*, *the teaching staff*, and *the students*. We will refer to these three components of formal education in what follows. This chapter is based on the review of three pedagogical models in current use and aims to verify how they contribute to create a nonkilling education. These models are structured in three stages, taking into account their approach to the curriculum and the interpersonal dynamics in the classroom.

First stage: Banking education and formally equal recognition

Most current research concludes that the *banking educational model* continues to prevail in educational practice. This model has been widely challenged by eminent scholars such as Freire (1972, 1994, 2004) for the role it assigns to both students and teachers in the classroom: it regards teachers as sources of knowledge to be deposited in passive students, whose function is simply to listen and assimilate the teacher's message (París Albert and Martínez Guzmán, 2012). The teaching-learning relationship is heavily weighted towards the teacher's role, which is to educate, while the student's much more secondary role is merely as a recipient of this education. By the same token, the relationship between the two main

agents in education—teachers and students—is unequal, and generates hierarchical social power structures within it. Bourdieu and Passeron (1967: 71) noted the infrequency with which teachers consult students about their needs, and when they do so, they are met with surprise at their questions from passive students. This surprise is clearly the result of their conditioning in an education system based on the banking model, according to which it is the teacher who steers what has to be done, how it has to be done and what takes priority. In other words, the teacher takes all the decisions in this system, from deciding what the group needs and the design of the content to be taught, to how much fantasy and imagination is allowed in the classroom. Teachers become a ‘statutory authority’ worthy of transmitting, inculcating, authorising and controlling everything that they pass on, following Bourdieu and Passeron (1990: 109):

[...] The mere fact of transmitting a message within a relation of pedagogic communication implies and imposes a social definition (and the more institutionalized the relation, the more explicit and codified the definition) of what merits transmission, the code in which the message is to be transmitted, the persons entitled to transmit it or, better, impose its reception, the persons worthy of receiving it and consequently obliged to receive it, and finally, the mode of imposition and inculcation of the message which confers on the information transmitted its legitimacy and thereby its full meaning.

This argument reveals the privileged position teachers hold in the banking education system, a position that is further favoured by the arrangement of the desks and chairs in the classroom due, in part, to the way ‘the professor, remote and intangible, shrouded in vague and terrifying rumour, is condemned to theatrical monologue and virtuoso exhibition by a necessity of position far more coercive than the most imperious regulations’ (id.). The ‘theatrical monologue’ routine is so commonplace that the teacher ‘can call for participation or objection without fear of it really happening’, student passivity becoming the greatest ally of the banking model.

For Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) the ultimate responsibility for this asymmetrical pedagogical relationship lies with neither the teacher nor the student, but with the institutions, where each party’s obligations are determined and at the same time inculcated, through a relation among the teacher, the academic institution, language and culture. In this way the education system also fulfils a function of social conservation.

Banking pedagogy gives rise to an education dominated by teachers that is used as a tool to reproduce an unequal social system in the classroom. The condition of inequality is particularly evident for two reasons: (1) the

prime role of the teacher, and (2) the way students are recognised as *formally equal subjects*, whose different social backgrounds are not taken into account (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1967: 47). In the banking educational model students are recognised according to certain socially and culturally constructed *hierarchies of excellence* (Perrenoud, 1990) that do not take into account students' social differences even formally, because in the end they are defined by numerous differences, including diverse social origins.

Hierarchies of excellence relate to the formally equal recognition of students within the system created by the banking model. For Perrenoud (1990: 13) *excellence* refers to the possibility of mastering a given practice to perfection, a concept that gains importance in the context of education, especially in light of the fact that in the banking pedagogy model students are classified according to the level of proficiency they show in a given technique. Based on this conception of excellence, hierarchies of excellence are defined as a hierarchy grounded on the extent to which a practice approaches excellence, understood as effective mastering, high degree of perfection. Hierarchies of excellence from a norm of excellence that serves as a benchmark to compare what each person does.

Such hierarchies exist in all social contexts, not only education, and in the educational setting there are as many excellences as there are different practices. For this reason, for example, students are labelled as 'good' or 'bad' depending on the subject studied, and identified as 'good' at mathematics, reading and so on. Teachers obviously play an important role in this type of judgement of students, to the extent that in certain moments hierarchies arise, they congratulate the best in public and point out those who do worse. It goes without saying that these judgements have a direct impact on students, an impact that is also framed in the *production*, according to Perrenoud (1990: 17), of students through the school organisation and with the contents of the school culture, pedagogical practices and school work. This idea is also expressed by Bourdieu and Passeron (1967: 73) arguing that teachers perceive the student's production as a fictitious performance with the goal of manifesting essential capacities.

Hierarchies of excellence in the educational setting are clearly culturally constructed according to what each culture understands by 'a good student'. In the banking model the good student is the one who is capable of reproducing the teachers' messages to perfection. Thus, teachers never assume responsibility for school failures, which they justify by alluding to the students' misunderstanding of their messages:

a mixture of tyrannical stringency and disillusioned indulgence which inclines the teacher to regard all communication failures, however unforeseen, as integral to a relationship which inherently implies poor reception of the best messages by the worst receivers (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990: 111).

Banking pedagogy fosters the recognition of students as passive subjects who repeat the teachers' messages 'parrot fashion', whose *job* it is to learn (Perrenoud, 2006: 12), and who bear full responsibility for reproducing these messages to the highest level of perfection. In addition, students are recognised according to hierarchies of excellence, usually constructed according to the criteria of the elite, inevitably having direct influence on the way students are evaluated. In this evaluation, differences deriving from students' diverse social backgrounds are left out of the agenda, and therefore, all students are formally regarded as equal.

Second stage: Liberatory education and dialectic recognition

While the banking model pedagogy still prevails, many authors are calling for the introduction of alternative pedagogies based on new educational tools. Freire's proposals for *liberatory education*, also known as *problematising education* (Freire, 1972, 1994, 2004, 2015; París Albert, 2015), subverts the roles of teachers and students in the classroom in such a way that the authority to educate does not lie exclusively with the teacher, with students also playing a significant role, and likewise, students are not the only ones there to learn, but teachers can also learn from the students' contributions (París Albert and Martínez Guzmán, 2012). This subversion of roles is related to the greater recognition given to the active role students must take; students are no longer merely passive deposits for the teacher's message. In this model students must express their opinions about the learning process, make their voices heard, appraise the contents they are asked to work on, complement the perspectives with which they analyse this content using their own life experiences and knowledge, and above all, take a critical position and line of thought. Students are no longer kept in line, they no longer assume their own ignorance and they recognise themselves as important subjects, committed to the teaching-learning process (Freire, 2015: 152).

Rather than focusing its attention on the teacher liberatory pedagogy gives students a greater presence establishing a dialectic relationship between student and teacher. Unlike the banking education model, 'learning' takes precedence over 'teaching' and turns the classroom into a place for debate and reflection. It embraces the revolutionary, practical aspect of education,

placing dialogue at the centre of its *modus operandi* (Freire, 2009). In this way education can relinquish its former domesticating quality, bring about freedom for students and make them participants in their own learning. Students also become aware of the role they play in the liberatory education system that emphasizes their capacity for imagination and creativity, which, following Freire (2015: 153), stimulate true action and reflection on reality, including commitment to transformation. Creative transformation at the same time turns students into explorers motivated by surprise and by the unexpected (Marina and Marina, 2013), and with moral and empathetic capacity that enables them to imagine themselves in other people's shoes (Greene, 2005).

But what kind of recognition do students receive in the framework of this liberatory pedagogy? In contrast to the banking pedagogy model, liberatory pedagogy recognises each student as an active subject, acknowledging differences among students. By giving students a voice it recognises the plurality of their voices and the diversity of our classrooms because, as Perrenoud (2007) states, just like life itself, classrooms are undoubtedly plural spaces. This is also a contradiction of the traditional banking system, as life is plural but school sets out to prepare for life in singular (Perrenoud, 2012).

Recognising students as active subjects and acknowledging their plurality can be done by taking into account the dialectic relationship that occurs between teachers and students in the liberatory education system. *Dialectic recognition* replaces the traditional formally equal recognition. Liberatory pedagogy focuses on the two-way relationship between teacher and student, bringing about a subversion of roles that both agents enjoy in the teaching-learning process. An intersubjective relationship is established between the parties, making each party's identity in the classroom dependent on the recognition granted by the other. In contrast, the banking model places much more emphasis on the one-way relationship from teacher to student, since the responsibility for teaching lies firmly with the teacher as the prime agent in the education system, and at the same time any role the student may have in the classroom is limited to its minimum expression.

Dialectic recognition has been widely theorised by various philosophers, notably Honneth (1994, 2007, 2008, 2009) for whom full configuration of a person's identity depends on recognition. Indeed, Honneth argues that absence of recognition is the expression of contempt for human identity, and he defines history as a succession of struggles for recognition in which subjects, aware of the contempt they have personally experienced, strive to achieve greater recognition, thus turning these struggles into the means necessary for social justice (París Albert, in press).

Bringing these ideas into education, in Freire's proposals both the students' and the teachers' identities depend on their relationship with the other (on dialectic recognition, also referred to as mutual or reciprocal recognition). When the students' identity is recognised in its plurality and they are acknowledged as active subjects, there is no doubt that they also enjoy greater recognition of their rights and duties in the classroom. Following the three types of recognition Honneth identifies, students can be recognised in terms of the diversity of their physical integrity, their differences as full members of the classroom community and the plurality of their particular ways of life (Honneth, 1994).

Teachers still have a visible influence on students in this system, although this influence may be more positive, not simply driving them to repeat the teacher's message. Liberatory education not only promotes a much more comprehensive recognition of the student, but can also awaken a greater commitment on their part, more enthusiasm to know, to learn and participate, and better results. This is connected to what is known as the *Pygmalion effect* (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1980) that highlights how recognition by the teacher influences students and shows that the greater the recognition and approachability of the teacher, the better the students' results. Problematising pedagogy linked to the idea of dialectic recognition leads to better achievement from more motivated students (Marina, 2011).

This also incites affective styles that favour well-being and coexistence (Marina, 2010: 87) in the framework of an *enthusiastic pedagogy* able to inspire students with the desire to learn and know. According to the 2015 *Vasa Statement on Education for a Killing-free World*:

There is a need to shift from education and play that foster competition and individualistic behaviour to approaches oriented toward cooperative and experiential learning that enable social-emotional competencies and active critical thinking.

Third stage: Pedagogy of caring or bonding beyond recognition

Human connections are of fundamental value and importance, since the quality of relationships established in the classroom is, as we shall see, perhaps the most crucial factor for successful teaching practice. According to Comer (2001) no significant learning occurs without a significant relationship. A special type of human connection is required to awaken inspiration and foster learning. As Pierson (2013) states, "kids don't learn from people they don't like".

Noddings (2012: 185) and other scholars point out that very little attention is paid to what is understood by critical thinking and its conditions of possibility. The components of critical thinking—the arguments to be considered, logical coherence and commitment to transformation—arise from and in a certain emotional climate, essentially defined by the type of bonds, of human relationships, established in the classroom. A warm relationship must be developed and nurtured with the student; this is what generates the necessary trust and self-esteem that gives students the confidence to make mistakes, to learn, to look at the world with curiosity, to question what is given, and to cultivate their capacity to wonder and empathise. Nurturing and paying attention to interpersonal relationships is not only an educational means but also an end, essential for preparing individuals who will be aware of our inherent human vulnerability and interdependence. This approach is known as the *pedagogy of care*.

From the Ethics to the Pedagogy of Care

In her book *In a Different Voice*, Gilligan first described the different moral development women experience as a result of socialisation and the practice of care, challenging Kohlberg's hitherto prevailing theory of moral development. It should be noted that Gilligan's proposal was to extend the theory of moral development to include an analysis of women's moral experiences, since Kohlberg's theory was constructed exclusively on a study of 84 male subjects (Gilligan, 1982). In her analysis of women, Gilligan detected a different, more relational moral voice that prioritised the nurturing of relationships over the *ethics of justice* of Kohlberg's theory, in which obedience to universal moral norms predominates. Gilligan argues that women have a different moral perspective resulting from the sexual division of labour and the sharp divide between public and private in the social world in which we live. Men and women develop two different moral perspectives in accordance with this unequal attribution of responsibilities that are now known as *ethics of justice* and *ethics of care*.

For ethics of care, morality is less an issue of rational recognition—which it also is—than an issue of assuming responsibility, above all for other people in need (Held, 2014). Noddings (1984) conceives care as a way of being in relation with others and as an especially relevant component for teaching practice. Noddings understands teaching as a special type of caring that pays attention to the needs of others. Both Noddings and Page regard the ethics of care not only as a *means* but also an *end* of teaching, since the educational curriculum should be designed to nurture attentive, caring people. Nod-

dings therefore explicitly considers “caring as the primary aim of education” (1984: 174), *a way of being in relation* that aims to teach *a way of being in the world*. In relation to this, Page (2008) differentiates two levels in which caring relationships occur in the classroom: *microcosmic* (the teacher-student relationship in the classroom context) and *macrocosmic* (the contents we want to teach about caring).

Macrocosmic: Teaching to Care

In his book *The Aims of Education*, Whitehead denounced the weakening of *educational* ideals—now reduced to the mere teaching of subject matter—to the teaching of what he referred to as *inert ideas* (1967). With the growing privatisation of education and the development of the consumer society, the aim of education is increasingly more modest, and more inert. As Nussbaum cautions, in the 21st century we are witnessing a silent crisis that is more dangerous for the future of humanity than the economic crisis: the silent crisis in education (2010).

For those supprting the pedagogy of care, education should go beyond the unrealistic organisation of knowledge in isolated disciplines and begin to take on board the major universal objectives such as life, justice, happiness, existential meaning, what it is to be a moral person and our function as individuals and members of wide-ranging groups to promote peace and killing-free societies. Vázquez Verdera and López Francés (2011: 172) argue that in the field of education we must pay more attention to personal, family and ethical life, and take seriously the emotional and care needs that all humans have. This is the purpose of the pedagogy of care: to incorporate the values and habits of caring for life into the school curriculum from a co-educational perspective, that is, from a universal, not gendered, perspective.

The value and practice of caring should appear in the curriculum content as a public good, as a way to help ensure they will be equally shared. We must teach our students to recognise the vulnerability of human beings and the planet, and to question who holds the responsibility to take care of people and ensure the sustainable development of the planet. As a public good, care is a responsibility that must be universalised and learned by all. Because the survival and welfare of people and the planet depend on care work, it must therefore be incorporated into educational curricula. The hegemonic, androcentric educational curriculum has not included values traditionally associated with women’s experience, such as care. If these skills are not learnt in the school, they have to be learned informally and in a way that is based on expectations skewed by gender stereotypes.

Peace scholars have been instrumental in advocating for the inclusion of care values in the educational curriculum. While Noddings introduced the pedagogy of care from the general education perspective, authors such as Betty Reardon and Riane Eisler highlight the particular potential of the pedagogy of care applied to education for peace. Reardon, the renowned peace education theorist and follower of the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, states that education for peace emphasises the transformative objectives of all education. In the framework of these transformative objectives, which include building killing-free societies, the pedagogy of care has great potential because of its focus on relationships, responsibility and initiatives to improve living conditions for people and the environment.

In eliciting awareness, the intent is to strengthen capacity to care, to develop a sincere concern for those who suffer because of the problems and a commitment to resolving them through action. Awareness infused by caring becomes concern that can lead to such commitment when one action is followed by other actions, and when action for peace becomes a sustained behavioural pattern, part of the learner's way of life (Reardon and Snauwaert, 2015: xiii).

Eisler also connects *caring* and peace education by considering that teaching people the skills and habits of caring for life is a basic aim of all education. She expresses this idea in a three-way understanding of caring: caring for oneself, caring for others and caring for the natural environment. This also correlates Paige's (2009) understanding of nonkilling by eliminating the threats of lethality, be it self-directed, interpersonal and collective, or against the life-sustaining biosphere.

Eisler advocates for what she calls a partnership rather than a dominator education model. The challenge is to teach the skills of partnership and solidarity; in other words, the skills to care for oneself, for other people and for the environment (Comins Mingol, 2016). By acknowledging that "a peaceful world is a world where individuals will care and work to alleviate suffering" (Page, 2008: 181), we recognise the importance of degendering care and teaching care skills as human capabilities, not as gendered roles (Comins Mingol, 2009). Care can be included as content or as a way of seeing.

In the banking education model the relationship with knowledge is accumulative, and does not recognise the links and affinities between theories. It is 'separate thinking' (Bucciarelli, 2004), a perspective that distances the subject from what he or she is studying. Critical education goes one step further by questioning and therefore liberating. However, here we propose

not only an education that encourages critical thinking but also ‘critical connected thinking’ (Bucciarelli, 2004: 149), which takes another step to reveal the relationships between things and particularly with oneself. A caring, linked investigation: a *connected thinking* rooted in daily experiences and in the numerous bonds that join people with each other and with nature.

In contrast to the abstract, decontextualised thinking of banking education, the aim is to connect, not separate the subject from his or her object of study, to promote knowledge that is not only free and critical but also empathetic. What can teachers do to show students how to view the world from this connection? One way is by studying real-life cases:

Feminist and other scholars have identified a relational understanding or *connected knowing* that seeks to make emotional connections with its subjects of investigation, and in essence, demands that we think morally within the framework of the disciplines’ (Bucciarelli, 2004: 137).

However, pedagogy of care refers not only to the importance of including the perspective and values of care in the curriculum, but to the relevance of caring for teaching practice.

Microcosmic: Caring Teaching

When educating for a killing-free world we need to move away from models that focus solely on extrinsic motivation to models that are founded in our basic human needs for belonging, participation, creativity, recognition compassion and kindness (*Vasa Statement*, 2015).

Many studies point to the importance of including care as an integral part of the pedagogical methods used in schools. Building quality relations is essential to connect with students, inspire them and help to raise their desire to learn (Opalewski and Unkovich, 2011: 18). Although students benefit enormously from schools with well-designed curricula and up-to-date equipment and technology, “providing a caring classroom environment is also an important part of helping students succeed” (Roberts, 2010: 449). As Narinasamy and Logeswaran (2015: 11) explain, “the teaching and learning process will be enriched and complemented by the comprehension and execution of care by teacher modelers in the classrooms”.

Teachers must be consistent in applying and practising what they teach in the classroom. If we regard concern and caring for others as important capabilities to develop in learners, then teachers must be able to model these abilities in the classroom. According to Campbell (2003), teachers should take care over their attitudes and behaviour, as their task is not only

to spread knowledge but to help students become good human beings. Teachers are moral models who play a crucial role in developing caring among their students (Skoe, 2010) and must provide additional attention to the human relationships that are conveyed in the classroom (Narinasamy and Logeswaran, 2015: 1). Noddings (2008) also highlights the importance of teachers as models. When teachers display genuine concern for students, relationships of trust are established between the two parties. A good teacher listens to his or her students' problems and offers suitable responses, which in turn can open up more effective opportunities for learning. The teacher's attentive caring attitude creates a moral climate in the classroom that encourages the learners' support and response.

As well as being good models for the care values theorised in the classroom, teachers must also apply the pedagogy of care in their teaching practice in order to achieve the desired transformational impact on the students. Indeed, "caring teachers have enormous influence on students" (Narinasamy and Logeswaran, 2015: 2), which helps us to also visibilise the Pygmalion effect. A caring teacher not only creates a good emotional climate but also raises his or her students' self-esteem, commitment and learning capacity.

Narinasamy and Logeswaran (2015) identify six characteristics of a caring teacher following a case study: praising students, concern for students, displaying patience, listening to students, treating students fairly and empathising with students. The teacher not only recognised the capabilities and skills of her students and listened to them, but she was also actively concerned for their welfare. Making an effort to understand the learners' feelings, praising and recognising their skills and taking an interest in their welfare and its impact on their learning are some of the components of a pedagogy of care that, as well as recognition, stresses the importance of human connections.

One constant factor observed among caring teachers is their trust in the wisdom of human nature and the goodness of learners, as well as their conviction that students naturally want to learn and that they will learn if given the opportunity to do so. Good teachers "would always try to look at each child with 'loving eyes'" (Lange de Souza, 2004: 103). Nurturing an emotional atmosphere and a climate of trust and empathy in the classroom calls for attitudes such as those described in the following teacher's account: "I try as much as it is humanly possible to think the best of the situation and not put a negative judgment on something" (id.).

Concern for maintaining interpersonal bonds, a moral priority in the ethics of care, is transferred from the pedagogy of care to the classroom

context. In classroom nobody must be excluded or judged, and there must be a constant process of involving learners, bringing them together and repeatedly telling them how wonderful they are. A meaningful, compassionate and emancipating learning cannot be developed without a classroom climate that generates trust and inspiration.

The teacher's behaviour, attitude and way of being are essential in building a caring community to encourage a sense of community and a culture of peace in the classroom based not only on principles and norms, but on love and compassion. Human relationships are the result of the flow and circulation of affective energy (Oliver, 2001: 14). The idea of the classroom as a *caring community* brings us closer to otherness, from this vision of the subject as part of a dynamic affective system.

The pedagogy of care is also particularly valuable in attending to diversity in the classroom. Caring helps to empower, make visible and include in relationships those who were previously invisible. One illustration is the intercultural vision and the interest of the pedagogy of care in including subordinated voices (Johnson, 2011), as shown by a study of Afro-American students in the USA (Roberts, 2010). School failure is widespread among Afro-American students and tragically many of these young people drop out of school or are expelled, pushed to the edges of the education system. Despite the numerous pedagogical programmes claiming not to leave any students behind, it seems apparent that there is a need to re-evaluate the methods used to try and help these students. Many African-American teachers successfully use the caring approach, which is associated with positive results such as reduced absenteeism and improved self-perception. These teachers, motivated by their own experiences, display greater empathy and concern for the future of their students, although teachers from other ethnic groups can and do show care towards Afro-American students as well. The teacher-student bond, one of the most powerful pieces in the puzzle of students' academic success, is crucial in achieving inclusive classes in which each student can feel equally valid and recognised.

Clearly, this pedagogical model requires high levels of teacher commitment; therefore if we wish to go beyond the individual, vocational and voluntary attitude of relatively few teachers, education policy conditions need to be established that will guarantee the widespread application of the model. Thus, for example, several authors highlight the importance of time factor in the development of caring relationships between teachers and students (Narinasamy and Logeswaran, 2015: 9). Conditioning factors to consider should include lower student-teacher ratios, and finding the right balance with

other management and research responsibilities of university lecturers, for instance. Similarly, teacher training should take on board this pedagogy of care. As Bridget Cooper states, caring and empathy are basic elements of the professional deontology of all teachers (2010) and teacher education programmes need to take on care ethics and empathy as core aspects in the development of future educators (Narinasamy and Logeswaran, 2015: 10).

Conclusion

Unfortunately, banking pedagogy continues to predominate in the formal education system. An exploration of the three pedagogical models in this paper allows us to rekindle key values such as critical thinking from problematising education, and the affective and relational dimension from the pedagogy of care. A combination of these two latter perspectives would contribute to generating a truly nonkilling education. We need an educational model that nourishes compassion, caring and respect for diversity, thereby promoting better interpersonal and intercultural understanding.

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