
THE ETHICAL DIMENSION AND VALUES INVOLVED IN SOCIAL EDUCATION. PERSPECTIVES OF SCHOLARS, EDUCATORS AND PARTICIPANTS

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Abstract: There are three dimensions to consider in the profession of Social Education: knowledge, practice and ethics. While the former two have been widely developed, that of ethics has been largely ignored. Currently, there is an open theoretical debate on how to develop this ethical dimension, and this affects professionals in the field, who do not know how to incorporate it into their daily practice. This article aims to explore the ethical dimension and values involved in socio-educational relationships based on the discourses of scholars, professionals and participants or learners within the framework of Social Education. To this end, a qualitative research process was designed in two phases, namely, a systematic review of the academic literature and a multiple case study of four socio-educational relationships from two different fields of intervention: mental health and children at risk. The main findings of this study confirm that the dimension related to ethics and values plays a fundamental role in the socio-educational relationship, which will be useful when building an analytical framework to analyse said dimension. Finally, the study allows us to describe how social educators incorporate values into their daily practice, providing a snapshot



of how this dimension of Social Education is currently evolving in the Spanish context.

Keywords: ethics, values, professional ethics, social education, social pedagogy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social education has a fairly short historical background in Spain. The recent birth of the profession (Official State Gazette, 10/X/1991) means its foundations have been shaped during its ongoing development.

It has developed in the following three spheres: knowledge, practices and attitudes or values. Generally speaking, we can say that special importance has been awarded to the profession's scientific-technical development (Pascual et al., 2017), with the attitudes and values that make up its identity being left to one side. This implies that throughout these years a great deal of theory and a great variety of methodological and technical strategies have been developed, while the ethical dimension and its values have been ignored and left to the 'common sense' of each individual professional.

Several authors have highlighted the need to develop the ethical dimension in Social Education in recent years (Campillo & Sáez, 2012; Campillo, Sáez, & Sánchez, 2014; Caride, 2002; Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011; Román, 2013; Sánchez-Valverde, 2015; Vilar, 2013, 2014; Vilar, Riberas, & Rosa, 2015). We understand this dimension to be the set of ideals and values that govern social educators' behaviour. Adding an ethical dimension involves all socio-educational actions being governed by a methodology based on knowledge and techniques, and this methodology, in turn, being based on a set of values that comprise it (Storø, 2013), resulting in all actions undertaken by professionals being soaked with a practice of values (Sánchez-Valverde, 2016).

A first step in this development was the constitution of a Spanish code of ethics for the profession of social education in 2007. This code was a result of the pact established in the 2001 Barcelona Declaration on Ethics and Quality in Socio-educational Action, which proposed that the profession adopts certain ethical commitments (Campos & Lázaro, 2007). It includes those principles and ideals that should guide the actions of social



educators (Asociación Estatal de Educación Social & Consejo General de Colegios de Educadoras y Educadores Sociales, 2007). Defining the code of ethics was a starting point for reflection on the moral and ethical issues educators deal with in their day-to-day practice, obliging them to reveal the ideals and values they bring to their work.

However, Storø (2012) has highlighted the difficulty of linking the ethical dimension to the professional practice, as have Vilar & Riberas (2017) when referring to ethical conflicts in the profession. Vilar (2001, 2013) has called for the consideration of applied ethics and professional ethics, since, from his point of view, these help analyse the influence of values and ideals on the daily practices of the profession and on the people involved.

To develop this ethical dimension in everyday life it is necessary to determine what form it takes in the professional practice of social education. That is, we must observe and analyse the sociocultural framework in which professionals work, or the socio-educational relationship. This will allow us to determine how the theoretical ethical constructs and values that guide this profession are implemented in the Spanish context.

The present study seeks to determine how the ethical dimension and values involved in the socio-educational relationships established between the educator and the learners or participants are developed, starting from an empirical view of socio-educational practice and the interpersonal relationships established in said framework. It is a base pilot study for the later development of a broader doctoral research project.

The question that guides this work is: How do the ethical dimension and values develop in the social-educational relationships established by social educators with learners or participants? To answer this question, we have analysed the discourses on ethics and values offered by scholars, professionals and learners within the framework of social education.

2. METHOD

This research entailed a qualitative study that addressed the socio-educational relationship from a triple perspective: (1) the discourses of scholars; (2) those of professionals, and (3) those of learners. It provides an interpretative view, since the aim of its qualitative design is not to obtain generalized or representative data, but rather to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation analysed through the meanings provided



by the study participants (Hernández-Sampieri, Fernández-Collado & Baptista-Lucio, 2006).

The research was carried out in two phases:

1st phase. Theoretical analysis via a systematic review of the academic literature, identifying the theoretical discourses on ethics and values in Social Education. This review allowed us to have a current snapshot of the subject that concerns us here. A systematic search of the literature was carried out using the descriptors ‘ética’ AND ‘valores’ AND ‘educación social’, and ‘ethics’ AND ‘values’ AND ‘social education’ OR ‘social pedagogy’¹. The databases consulted were: SCOPUS, WEB OF SCIENCE, ERIC, ISOC, DIALNET and Trobador+². The following criteria were used to select documents:

- texts published from the year 2000 onwards; in Spanish, Catalan or English;
- texts addressing the field of social education and socio-educational intervention;
- texts focusing on ethics and values, which required the explicit presence of the descriptors in the title, abstract or keywords;
- documents were rejected that mentioned ethics but did not present theories or ideas on it, as were theoretical philosophical discourses, since the aim was to address the subject on the basis of specific discourses in social education.

2nd phase. A multiple case study of four socio-educational relationships. Since it was a pilot test, the discourses of four educators and four learners were analysed in content blocks through semi-structured in-

¹ In English it has been necessary to introduce the descriptor ‘social pedagogy’, since it is more widely used than the descriptor ‘social education’ at the international level.

² Resource offered by the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) that in a single search allows access to the following databases: PROQUEST, Latin America and Iberian Database, Education Collection, Continental Europe Database, Directory of Open Access Journals, Dialnet, Ingenta Connect, ScienceDirect Journals (Elsevier), ABI/INFORM complete/global, Linguistics database, RECERCAT; Taylor and Francis Online Journals, SAGE journals, East and Central Europe Database, ERIC, ABI/INFORM Complete/global, JSTOR Archival Journals, Natural Science Collection.



terviews. Interview scripts were designed for both educators and learners (Appendix 1), which were validated by experts and via a pilot test. The interviews were complemented with the analysis of the written educational projects linking the participants, since these were the contextual framework in which the socio-educational relationship took place.

The study participants were four educator-learner pairs from two institutions in different spheres of intervention. For reasons of easy access, the educators were chosen using intentional sampling to meet the criteria of: being active social educators, working individually or in groups with the participant and in two different spheres of intervention. The spheres of intervention studied were:

- a) Mental health. Leisure resource which the learner attends voluntarily. The characteristics of the relationships studied were:
 - Socio-educational relationship 1: length of relationship, 1 year 7 months. Including one educator (E1) with little work experience who had received no specific training on ethics and values, and one adult learner (L1).
 - Socio-educational relationship 2: length of relationship, 5 years. Including one educator (E2) with 10 years of professional experience who held a Master in emotional intelligence where she had received specific training on ethics and values, and one adult learner (L2).
- b) Children at risk. Resource provided by the social services, where families are referred to by a professional.
 - Socio-educational relationship 3: length of relationship, 1 year. Including one educator (E3) with 20 years of professional experience and one adult learner (L3). The educator had completed two Master degrees in emotional intelligence and had specific training on ethics and values due to her participation on the social services ethics committee.
 - Socio-educational relationship 4: length of relationship, 2 years. Including one educator (E4) with 17 years of professional experience and one adult learner (L4). The educator had completed one Master in childhood intervention and another one in pedagogical training, in which she had specifically worked on the code of ethics.

In total, we conducted four interviews with educators, four interviews with learners and four analyses of written projects. The analytical dimen-



sions used to gather information from the empirical phase were constructed on the basis of the results obtained from the theoretical analysis phase. The data were analysed using a coding based on a mixed deductive-inductive process via the *Nvivo v.11* software. That is, the data obtained were subjected to a content analysis based on a deductive design of dimensions and analytical codes established during the first phase of the study (Appendix 2), which allowed us to categorize the information according to the topics defined in the theoretical analysis. At the same time, there was the possibility for new categories and units of analysis to emerge and be considered through inductive coding.

3. FINDINGS

In this section we are presenting the results obtained from the two research phases. On the one hand, the results of the theoretical discourse analysis, and on the other hand those related to the empirical discourse.

3.1. ACADEMIC DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: A CURRENT SNAPSHOT OF ETHICS AND VALUES IN THE SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF SOCIAL EDUCATION

Table 1 provides a list of the results obtained and documents saved in Spanish and English for each database consulted during the systematic review. The same document can be found indexed in more than one database at a time. There are more results for Spanish, possibly due to the influence of and familiarity with our own context and our more in-depth knowledge regarding the constructs used in our geographical area (Table 1).

Eighty-five documents were selected and distributed by subject matter based on a general review (Table 2).

Most of the texts reviewed correspond to theoretical reviews on the subject and to a lesser degree to empirical research. Little research was found on the ethical dimension and values within the socio-educational field. The topics discussed included: professional ethics and ethical conflicts; initial university education; the values of individuals; professional characteristics and competences, and methodologies for working with values in practice.



Table 1. Number of results returned by the databases

DATABASE	RESULTS (Spanish)	RETAINED (Spanish)	RESULTS (English)	RETAINED (English)
SCOPUS	-	-	30	3
WEB OF SCIENCE	-	-	12	1
ERIC	-	-	507	8
ISOC	36	9	0	0
Trobador	129	12	339	5
Dialnet	400	17	97	7

Authors' own data

Table 2. Documents reviewed by subject

Total documents:	85
Social education and ethics	38
Reflections based on professional practice	4
Professional ethics	7
Values and education	14
Research	14
Discarded	8

Authors' own data

Our analysis of the academic discourse in relation to the ethical dimension and values in social education was based on 38 documents that had social education, ethics and values as their central axis.

3.1.1. Social Education and ethics

Following the definitions provided by several authors (ASEDES & GGCEED, 2007; Banks, 2003; Campillo, Sáez, & Sánchez 2014; Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011), we understand Social Education to be both a social profession and a right of the citizens, which is pedagogical in nature and aimed at achieving the subject's social inclusion in terms of education, the cultural and social spheres and the fight against social inequality. Its aims are guided by values related to justice and human dignity and it

entails a strong ethical component. These values that guide the actions of educators allow us to assume an ethical dimension to socio-educational action (Campillo & Sáez, 2012; Vilar, 2013).

Three perspectives can be distinguished from those that address ethical issues and values in the theoretical discourses analysed:

Deriving from philosophy: the perspective of great thinkers and philosophers. These have not been taken into account because this study focuses on the theory specifically constructed from social education. They are characterized by a difficulty in implementing them in professional practice (Banks, 2003; Campillo & Sáez, 2012).

*Deriving from professionalism*³: the most developed perspective, on the theoretical level, in social education and social pedagogy at this time (Banks, 2003; Campillo & Sáez, 2012; Campillo et al., 2014; Canimas, 2009; Caride, 2002; Pantoja, 2012; Sáez & García-Molina, 2003; Vilar, 2001; Vilar et al., 2015). It corresponds to the norms and principles embodied in all those protocols, codes and processes that allow professionals to establish an identity and mark the ethical limits of socio-educational action. This is, for example, where the code of ethics would be found.

Deriving from practice: this perspective is connected to day-to-day professional practice and understands that the ethical dimension develops out of everyday life and the relationship with the other (Campillo & Sáez, 2012; Campillo et al., 2014; Sánchez-Valverde, 2015). That is, it aims to transform the context of the socio-educational relationship into an ethical scenario where values are practiced (Sáez & García-Molina, 2003; Sánchez-Valverde, 2016).

Analysing them carefully, we observe how these three perspectives complement one another. Even so, to develop the ethical dimension in the daily practices of social education, it is interesting to focus on the perspective of practice, since it allows us to connect with the core work of the profession, that is, the socio-educational relationship. Úcar (2017) defines this relationship as a process framed within a sociocultural context where educators work together with subjects for the latter to acquire the necessary learning resources to increase and improve their capacity to be,

³ Professionalism as understood by Legault, is 'the mastery of the desirable, of the ideal in a professional relationship. [...] It proposes values and ideal behaviors, [...] it is not a question of fact, but of an ideal proposed to professional behaviours and that refers to ethics' (2003, p.41).



behave and act in the world in a dignified way. The fact that the ultimate goal of the socio-educational relationship is to achieve dignity for people awards it a fundamentally ethical basis. Throughout the article, we will distinguish the socio-educational relationship from the socio-educational practice. We should clarify the fact that when we talk about socio-educational practice we are referring to the direct actions of the educator, while when we talk about the socio-educational relationship we are referring to the framework of interaction that is established between educator and learner; a framework in which different socio-educational practices can be activated.

3.1.2. An ethical view of the socio-educational relationship

The word ethics derives from the Greek “ethos”, which means custom. It is the set of good customs that become obligatory norms in people’s daily behaviour (Pantoja, 2012). It is a reflection on human acts from the field of personal freedom that judges these as good or bad. This gives rise to a certain way of acting that leads people to make decisions and choose a certain form of behaviour, practice and relationship (Martín & Vila, 2012; Pantoja, 2012; Vilar, 2014). Ethics seeks the dignity and happiness of all people (Ocampo, 2009). Specifically, ethics applied to social education connects professional knowledge with moral reflection and the real problems of practice (Riberas & Vilar, 2014; Vilar et al., 2015). It therefore regulates the activities of a profession insofar as it is more linked to duty and a commitment to people’s well-being and dignity (Martín & Vila, 2012). In addition to this, it is composed of internalized values that govern the professional practice (Pantoja, 2012).

In the socio-educational field, Caride (2002) characterized the ethical view as an individual or collective process where behaviours and attitudes are introduced with the aim of achieving social cohesion and promoting collective well-being. Campillo & Sáez (2012), and Ronda (2012) were more specific and directly link ethics to the educational relationship, conceiving it as a practice that materializes within the professional relationship. On the other hand, Sáez & García-Molina (2003) understood educational ethics as the educator’s power to create spaces and times in which to teach socially acceptable cultural contents that allow subjects to achieve a better life within society.

From these definitions we understand the ethical view as an individual and collective process; as a relationship with oneself and with



others, and as a process that allows realities and contexts to be mobilized with the aim of improving society and achieving collective well-being. Incorporating an ethical view into everyday practice will provide (1) a guide for social educators' daily practice and action; (2) the possibility of building an ethical relationship with the other, and (3) an aid for decision-making in the face of moral dilemmas in the relationship with the other.

3.1.3. Dimensions of the socio-educational relationship

The authors refer to certain spaces within the framework of socio-educational relationships where ethics and values can be introduced in a tangible way. Using an inductive-analytical process, we have grouped these spaces to build a framework that allows us to characterize the ethical dimension of the socio-educational relationship. That is, although these spaces are presented separately in the original data-gathering process, we have organized this information to constitute an analytical framework from which to analyse the ethical dimension in socio-educational relationships. On the basis of our analysis we have identified four dimensions of the relationship where it is possible to find ethical content:

- 1) *The normative dimension*: the most developed dimension at the theoretical level. It represents the set of agreed norms and principles within the field of social education that shape the ethical limits of the profession. It comprises those documents that establish the rules of behaviour for professionals, such as: the Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and specific legislation relating to each individual group (Caride, 2005; Martín & Vila, 2012; Mínguez, 2005; Sánchez-Valverde, 2016; Vilar, 2014); the code of ethics for social education (Martín & Vila, 2012; Vilar, 2014), and good practice guides (Vilar, 2014).
- 2) *The institutional dimension*: socio-educational relationships take place within a public or private institutional context. It is this institution that establishes its own code of principles, which lends legitimacy to its actions and provides an answer to the moral problems it encounters (Campillo & Sáez, 2012). One of the great moral dilemmas faced by social educators in this dimension is related to the tension that arises between satisfying the mission of the institu-



tion and attending to the needs and rights of learners (Pantoja, 2012; Sánchez-Valverde, 2015; Vilar, 2013; Vilar et al., 2016). This dimension takes shape in internal documents, the centre's educational projects, organization and management at the institutional level and the work team.

- 3) The *subject dimension*: awareness of the knowledge and powers an educator holds and how they will influence the relationship with learners (Campillo & Sáez, 2012; Sáez, 2003). Ronda describes it thus: 'the educator carries his ethical world with him, which he must be able to know and explain' (2012, p.56). This ethical world may be characterized as the "virtues"⁴ that the educator activates in the socio-educational relationship. A virtue is a moral conduct that materializes those values or ideals that define the "ethical world" of the educator. Different authors identify a series of attitudes that the educator can adopt to become aware of oneself in the socio-educational relationship. Examples of these are: reflectivity (Caride, 2002; Riberas & Vilar, 2014; Román, 2013); criticism (Banks, 2003; Campillo et al., 2014; Caride, 2002, 2005; Pantoja, 2012; Ronda, 2012; Sánchez-Valverde, 2016); moral sensitivity (Caride, 2005; Sáez, 2003; Vilar et al., 2015); empathic understanding (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011), and, finally, coherence (Caride, 2005; Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011).
- 4) The *relational dimension*: this dimension appears in the interaction with others when people express their fundamental beliefs and values (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011). It is the least developed dimension in the theoretical discourses and it is shaped by the bond, by everyday life and by the spaces (Ronda, 2012). These three components make it possible to create ethical scenarios in which values can be tangibly worked on, and an ethical dimension built from practice, reality and relationships.

3.1.4. Values present in the relationship

Values are the tangible expression of ethics since every action and relationship is totally soaked, at different levels, with those ideals and values that guide people's actions. This is why these values will directly influence socio-educational practices (Janer & Úcar, 2016). Caride states that the

⁴ Term widely used in Aristotelian ethics.



values inherent in social education should promote ‘a significant improvement in the collective well-being’ (2005, p.35) in order to build fairer societies; something that he understands to be a collective moral obligation. That is, as well as serving to define the identity of the professions in the social field, he highlights the fact that educators consciously introduce into their educational action a series of values that enable the learner to achieve maximum integral development. Because, as Sánchez-Valverde explains, ‘the best way to educate about values is to practise them’ (2016, p.100).

During the theoretical analysis, two proposals were found for classifying the values that guide professionals in the socio-educational relationship. Ronda (2012) established three principles guiding socio-educational intervention: those of care, equity and autonomy. Úcar (2016) presents a classification on the values that guide professionals in the socio-educational relationship, which is an extended version of the principles and values established by Ronda (2012). Úcar believes there are five broad principles or sets of values that guide socio-educational intervention: (1) dialogue and trust in the possibility of understanding existing between people, groups, communities and cultures, (2) collaboration, cooperation and self-organization among people, groups and communities, (3) autonomy, self-regulation and self-government, (4) commitment to the human good, justice and equity, and (5) training and self-training.

We have identified those values the current theoretical discourse considers important and catalogued them based on the proposal posited by Úcar (2016)⁵. Table 3 presents those values that in our view can be mindfully incorporated into the socio-educational relationship by social education professionals.

3.1.5. Conflicts of ethics or values

Conflicts of ethics or values are continuously present in social education (Vilar, 2014; Vilar & Riberas, 2017; Vilar et al., 2015, 2016). Through his work, Vilar has found that 80% of professionals do not have a structured support system on which to base their decision when facing a conflict of values. This is negative for both the professionals themselves

⁵ The value of training and self-training defended by Úcar (2016) has been discarded due to not having found other authors who refer to it. It has been added to the set ‘value of autonomy’ to be defined as a precondition for achieving it.



Table 3. Values involved in socio-educational relationships

Dialogue and trust in the possibility of understanding existing between people, groups, communities and cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Citizenship, democracy and democratic pluralism - Active listening - Honesty, truthfulness and legality - Dialogue - Coexistence
Collaboration, cooperation and self-organization among people, groups and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cooperation - Commitment - Identity - Mutual help - Community and value of the public good - Participation - Common good - Solidarity, benevolence, hospitality and altruism
Autonomy, self-regulation and self-government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Freedom - Capacity of decision - Autonomy - Empowerment - Training and self-training
Commitment to the human good, justice and equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-discrimination and inclusion - Diversity, tolerance, respect and recognition - Dignity - Equality - Justice and social justice - Responsibility - Peace - Compassion - Care - Equity - Otherness

Authors' own data based on different authors (Banks, 2003; Campillo et al., 2014; Caride, 2002, 2005; Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011; Martín & Vila, 2012; Mínguez, 2005; Ocampo, 2009; Román, 2012; Ronda, 2012; Sáez & García-Molina, 2003; Sánchez-Valverde, 2015, 2016; Úcar, 2016)

–because having a moral sensibility but not the strategies to implement it in practice generates emotional discomfort–, and for the learners –because each professional will act differently and stress can result from bad intervention decisions that will affect them–.

Vilar & Riberas (2017) define types of value conflicts and ways of managing them. They are summarized in the following table 4.



Table 4. Types of conflicts and ways of managing them (Vilar & Riberas, 2017)

Types of conflict	Conflicts in relation to the people attended to	Refers to difficulties and contradictions in ways of defining and exercising the role when relating to the other. Includes involvement, authority and emotional aspects.
	Conflicts in relation to the task and the mission	Tension arising between the professional's morality and the work demanded by the institution results in the work losing its meaning.
	Interprofessional conflicts	Refers to confrontations that occur in the way different professionals understand their work or relate to one another.
Types of management	Non-management	The instructions provided by an external person are followed, or no action is taken.
	Personal management	Perceived as a personal problem that is managed on the private level. A person outside the work context or institution may be consulted privately (e.g. a friend or an external supervisor).
	Public	Managed via public mechanisms that may be: semi-structured, when managed in team meetings; or systematized, when there is a systematized structure in place to address this type of conflict.

Value conflicts will always be present in professional practice, regardless of whether there has been preventative or ethical training. Even so, an ethical view needs to be developed at the subjective, structural and strategic levels in order to address them in the most efficient way possible once they arise.

3.2. EMPIRICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: THE ROLE PLAYED BY ETHICS IN SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS ACCORDING TO THE DISCOURSE OF THOSE INVOLVED

The written educational projects necessarily comprised the first phase of the empirical analysis, since they are the referential framework for the socio-educational relationship. From our analysis, we observe that the



mental health group's educational projects analysed address the wishes and needs felt by the learner. On the other hand, those educational projects analysed pertaining to children at risk are influenced by the mission of the institution and clearly detail the limits of the law and the obligations it entails. In addition, they provide a detailed explanation of the motives, procedures and aims pursued, even if these are agreed with the learner.

In both cases there are objectives, goals or content that involve the incorporation of values. However, none of them contain explicit references to, or directly work on, ethical aspects or values. That is to say, although certain values can be inferred from this written discourse that partially coincide with real practice, these do not correspond with the actual work performed in the socio-educational relationship.

3.2.1. Practice in the socio-educational relationship

In reference to practice in the socio-educational relationship, educators and learners were asked what was important to incorporate into the relationship. All place special emphasis on adopting an ethical and value-oriented attitude towards socio-educational practice, as would be the case in any interpersonal relationship. The learners and educators in both groups consider ethics and values to be fundamental, since they derive from their own personal principles and govern the character of the person both personally and professionally. In relation to continuous training, it should be noted that the educator with the least training and experience believes that specific training in ethics is not necessary. On the other hand, those educators who have received specific training consider that this training was not enough and was focused more on conflict resolution.

The educators did not know how to respond when asked how to incorporate the ethical dimension into the socio-educational relationship. They consider ethics to be fundamental but did not know how to integrate it into their socio-educational practice.

In reference to values, the educators and learners in both of the analysed groups state that values can be observed in a tangible way in the direct relationship, at the individual and group level, and especially in moments when emotions are high, whether these are pleasant or unpleasant (L1, L2, L3 & L4). The educators consider that when the situation is more emotionally complex, there is a greater need to be aware of values (E1, E2, E3 & E4).



3.2.2. Analytical framework for the socio-educational relationship

Below is a summary of the educators' and learners' discourses in relation to the dimensions of the socio-educational relationship established in the theoretical analysis:

Normative dimension: neither the educators nor the learners take into account the documents that comprise the normative dimension in their daily routine. They consider them to represent a theoretical base that is difficult to apply and of little practical use, characterizing them as too generalized and not adaptable to specific situations. For example, they question the code of ethics, stating that it is just common sense (E1 & E3). On the other hand, they have a higher consideration of the good practice guides (E1 & E4) and specific training; an example of the latter would be in emotional intelligence training (E2).

Institutional dimension: the four educators agree that their institutions have very clear missions. The difference is that, in those case studies analysed in the mental health sphere, the educators have complete freedom of action for managing and organizing practice, while in those case studies where they work with children at risk, the educator is technically the representative of the institution, which has a strong influence on the educator's actions. In the latter sphere, the educators mention the existence of conflict between the mission and the work actually carried out, which can lead to ethical dilemmas. They make particular reference to the political implications of the institution.

As for organization and management, although there is no space for ethical reflection in the mental health institution analysed, the educators state that in the event of a serious problem they can turn to the institution. In contrast, those educators at the institution that deals with children at risk do have a space for reflection on ethics and a supervisor to go to when there is a conflict of ethics or values. In both cases, it is in team meetings that these issues are informally addressed. In the case of the latter institution, there are moments of reflection even when there is no conflict, but these occur at an informal and private level between professionals and without direct implications for their professional practice. Good communication and team cohesion are seen as being of vital importance in addressing these conflicts.

The subject dimension: both educators and learners recognize the importance of incorporating their personal experience into the relationship. They believe that it is from said experience that values are reflected



more intensively. In the discourses, importance is awarded to all of the attitudes and strategies mentioned in the theoretical analysis. Likewise, they also attach importance to flexibility in the relationship, the presence of the educator and establishing a relationship of trust.

Relational dimension: both learners and educators recognize the importance of consciously and intentionally incorporating ethics and values into the relationship with the other. The bond between the two is considered a very powerful space for the relationship. They emphasize that learners must be well informed and given the tools to express themselves. However, the educators do not agree on the nature of this bond. While some (E1 & E4) consider that there should be very clear limits, E2 & E3 question this distance and believe it should be adjusted according to the needs of each individual learner. Everyday life also plays an important role, since it is where the full relationship occurs at the individual and group level. The educators state that they transmit values implicitly through their daily work and that is when the learner perceives them most. On the other hand, it is thought that educators must make not only the physical and value-oriented space but also the time to respect and be adaptable to and flexible with the pace and desires of the individual.

3.2.3. Values involved in socio-educational relationships

We conducted an analysis of the values, both inferred and communicated, present in the four socio-educational relationships and divided them into groups. By inferred we mean their non-conscious and communicated incorporation as opposed to their conscious incorporation. In the former case, the researchers inferred them from the discourse, while in the latter they were directly communicated by the people interviewed.

In the cases analysed in the mental health sphere, the set of values most present was 'Autonomy, self-regulation and self-government', followed by 'Commitment to the human', and to a lesser extent 'Dialogue and understanding' and 'Collaboration, cooperation and self-organization'. In those cases referring to children at risk, the set of values most present was 'Commitment to the human', followed by 'Dialogue and understanding', 'Autonomy, self-regulation and self-government' and the one worked on least was 'Collaboration, cooperation and self-organization'.

There are three noteworthy findings from our analysis of the presence of these values in the socio-educational relationships analysed. Firstly, the



values that educators consciously incorporate are the same ones that learners perceive in a conscious way, something that does not happen with values incorporated in an unconscious way. Secondly, there is a predominant set of values; that is, each educator has a predilection for a particular set of values that they incorporate more frequently than others in the socio-educational relationship. And thirdly, the educator with more experience and training is the one who incorporates more values in the relationship, both consciously and unconsciously, and bears all sets of values in mind.

3.2.4. Conflicts of ethics or values

In the cases analysed in the mental health sphere, the educators encounter value conflicts in relation to the people they serve. The most common problem is related to issues of confidentiality; for example, when learners are at risk but do not want to alert family members. The type of management employed by educators in this case is unified and public in nature. They implement a process consisting of three parts: individual reflection, group reflection and discussion with the individual concerned. The conflicts reported by the learner were related to a lack of involvement and closeness on the part of the educator, which made the individual feel unvalued (A1). In this case, the educators did not feel that this was a conflict and the situation was not managed. Conflicts can also be found with other learners (A2); in this case they were public in nature and discussed with the individual concerned.

In the case of children at risk, the educators encounter two types of conflict: tension between the professional mission and the work actually carried out, and conflicts with the people attended to. In the former case, immediate results are requested from the institution due to its public and political nature, even if socio-educational work is not characterized by its immediacy. The resolution of the conflict in this case corresponds to non-management. In the second case, different conflicts are reported with the people being attended to. For example, clashes of culture and values between the individual concerned and the educator. In this case, the resolution is first worked out on a personal management level and then transferred to the public sphere. There are also issues related to confidentiality, such as receiving information about learners via an unofficial route and not being able to check it with them. In this case, the type of resolution adopted is non-management. Under no



circumstances are the learners involved in this or is it discussed with them.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The specific characteristics of this research in the form of a pilot study make it impossible to generalize the conclusions presented here. In spite of that, however, they do offer a general perspective of the state of affairs with regard to the professional framework of social education, which allows for further and more in-depth research to be carried out.

4.1. AN ETHICAL VIEW OF THE SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL RELATIONSHIP

We have found that written educational projects, although they are the framework of any socio-educational relationship, do not reflect a real image of the values that are consciously worked on in the socio-educational relationship.

The dimension of ethics and values is an underdeveloped topic in social education, despite being one of the fundamental pillars of professional practice. The educators and learners in our study agree with Storø (2012) in considering ethics to be a complex and difficult topic to connect with professional practice and one on which there is not sufficient reflection. In fact, they perceive the ethical dimension to be of greater importance than the theoretical or practical one, even though, conversely, it is the least developed pillar at the theoretical-empirical level (Pascual et al., 2017).

Training has a key place in developing the ethical dimension (Vilar & Riberas, 2017; Pascual et al., 2017; Sayko, 2017). Our empirical analysis detected three reasons for this: firstly, educators express the need to develop the ethical dimension but do not know how to implement it in practice. Secondly, scholars and educators agree that training in ethics is necessary but insufficient and traditionally focuses on conflict. And thirdly, the more training and experience educators have, the greater their perception of the need to develop the ethical dimension. Having more specific training on the subject would provide educators with more tools to work on the socio-educational relationship from an ethical perspective and not only when a conflict of values is already present, as well as ensur-



ing a practice consistent with the three pillars of social education (theory, practice, values). We can conclude that there is a need to promote ethics training within social education from a practical perspective. This would allow educators to be aware of the ethical perspective, to have strategies to implement it in practice and to become aware of which values are worked on in the socio-educational relationship.

Theoretical discourses on ethics have traditionally been developed from the perspective of the professional, especially in relation to the code of ethics (Banks, 2003; Campillo & Sáez, 2012; Campillo et al., 2014; Canimas, 2009; Caride, 2002; Pantoja, 2012; Sáez & García-Molina, 2003; Vilar, 2001; Vilar et al., 2015). This perspective focuses on the educator, ignoring the fact that the centre of all educational action should be the subject of education, as indicated by the code of ethics itself. Although work was initially undertaken from this perspective, due to the need to establish a minimum level of ethics and the limits of the profession, this is no longer enough. Therefore, an increasing number of practical and relational discourses have been incorporated within the profession. In contrast, the educators and learners who participated in our study share the practical ethical perspective that is currently gaining ground. This divergence of perspectives hinders the connection between theory and practice called for by both discourses, so it is necessary to take into account the practical perspective if we are to develop an ethical dimension in the socio-educational relationship.

4.2. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL RELATIONSHIP

Through our empirical analysis we were able to identify explicit ethical content in the dimensions of the socio-educational relationship identified in the theoretical discourses. With this, as Figure 1 shows, it has been possible to validate a referential framework that can serve to analyse how the ethical dimension evolves in the socio-educational relationship. We have reviewed the most important aspects emerging from both discourses, taking into account the structure proposed in the framework.

Although the normative has traditionally been the most developed dimension in the theoretical discourses due to the need to establish a minimum level of ethics (Caride, 2005; Martín & Vila, 2012; Mínguez, 2005; Pantoja, 2012; Sánchez-Valverde, 2016; Vargas, 2012; Vilar, 2014;



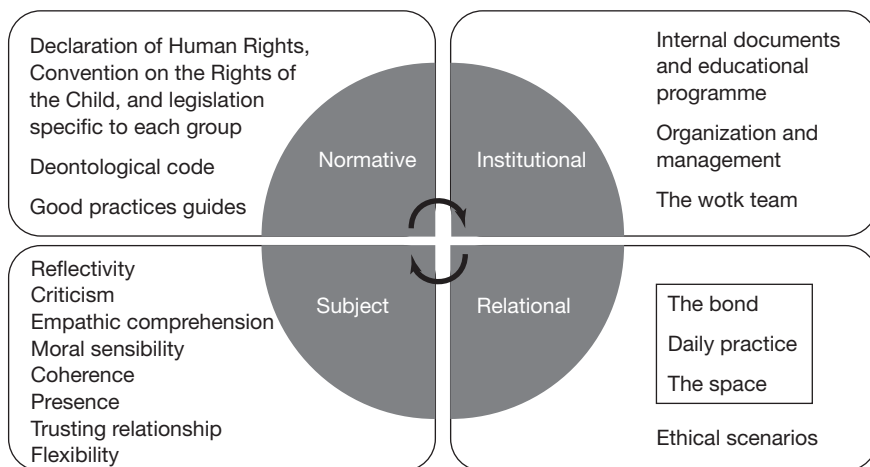


Figure 1. Analytical framework for the socio-educational relationship. Authors' own data.

Vilar, Riberas & Rosa, 2015), the learners and educators who participated in this study consider it to be of little practical use. They perceive these documents as being simple common sense and they are not present in their day-to-day work. They are documents that should govern socio-educational action as supported by the theoretical discourses. That said, it is necessary to give greater prominence to good practice guides, as highlighted by Vilar (2014), since they are more highly valued by educators and considered more useful than the code of ethics, for example.

In the institutional dimension, the nature of the resource and its mission can have an impact on the role of the educator as an agent in the socio-educational relationship according to the case studied here. In this sense, the institution analysed that is publicly run and exerts most influence in these matters has more strategies and resources to address moral issues and conflicts, whereas the one that gives greater freedom to the educator does not have the formal resources to address these issues, even if institutions theoretically should have such mechanisms in place. In both cases, spaces for reflection and dialogue regarding ethics are always available when an ethical conflict already exists. On the other hand, those ethical reflections that take place before conflicts occur do so on an informal and private level, while the theory recommends that this happen at a formal and public level (Vilar & Riberas, 2017; Vilar, Riberas & Rosa, 2016).



The conflict-managing process followed by the educators participating in the study is as follows: a personal reflection on the subject, a joint reflection with the team even if a solution has already been reached, and then, in some cases, a discussion with the individual concerned. Incorporating the individuals involved makes them part of it and, on the surface at least, seems to be an ethical approach to take. Future research should analyse whether it really is appropriate.

It is important to point out that many of the actions being carried out in the institutions analysed at a managerial, organizational and training level are focused on resolving conflicts in relation to values when these have already occurred. Consequently, no spaces exist within the cases analysed that provide room for a joint and formal ethical reflection to promote the development of an ethical perspective in socio-educational relationships before there is a conflict of ethics or values.

In the subject dimension, the discourse of scholars, educators and learners analysed awards importance to incorporating their personal experience into the relationship, since that is where values are most intensely expressed. This means that in the socio-educational relationships studied the educator's skills and strategies will play a key role in the development of an ethical socio-educational relationship.

In the relational dimension, several authors (Campillo & S  ez, 2012; Caride, 2002; Vargas, 2012; Vilar, Riberas & Rosa, 2015) have already pointed out that educational intentionality plays a key role in building the ethical dimension on the basis of practice, reality and the relationship, and this is confirmed by the learners and educators in our study. This dimension, along with the practice perspective, is the least developed one at the theoretical level and considered the most important one at the empirical level. The development of a bond that intentionally incorporates an ethical perspective will allow the tangible transmission of values. At the same time, incorporating these values into daily life helps award them the time and space they require, which gives rise to an ethical scenario in which to relate to the learner.

Taking these dimensions into account helps us understand how ethics evolves in practice and, in addition, to establish lines of action that serve as a starting point for developing this dimension. For example, developing practical guides on the subject, creating spaces for formal reflection, developing specific skills and incorporating educational intentionality are examples of starting points that will allow the ethical dimension to be developed within the socio-educational relationship and in social education in general.



4.3. VALUES IN THE SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL RELATIONSHIP

The classification of sets of values proposed in the theoretical analysis has been validated since they are present in the relationships analysed here, although not all the values proposed in the academic discourses have been identified in the socio-educational relationship. The set of values most present at the theoretical and empirical level is that of ‘Commitment to the human’, and the least present one is that of ‘Collaboration, cooperation and self-organization’, which makes the latter a subject for further development in professional practice.

Values are the tangible expression of ethics and every action is soaked with them. For this reason, it is necessary for educators to become aware of the values they incorporate into the relationship since, as we have seen, the ones participating in this study may have a predilection for some values to the detriment of others. This is worth taking into account. Although Sanmartin (2000) stated that the values that end up being imposed are those which are unconsciously internalized, the empirical discourse analysed here shows that these values are only consciously perceived by the learner when the educator also incorporates them consciously. We can therefore once more confirm the importance of educational intentionality and training, since they are what make ethics tangible in the relationship, and the learner really aware of those values. Being aware of which values are important and into which dimensions of the relationship they can be incorporated can help socio-educational professionals to have a broader and more reflective view of practice and the relationship with the other.

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

7.1. APPENDIX 1

7.1.1. Interview script for educators

General information:

1. What training do you have?
2. How long have you been working as a social educator?
3. Do you have any complementary training?
4. What areas have you worked in and/or with which groups? Which area are you working in currently?
5. What type of resource are you working in?
 - Pedagogical
 - Mission
 - Ideological (religious/non-religious)



6. In your training and experience, have you specifically worked on ethics and values? Do you think that the training you received was sufficient or appropriate?

The socio-educational relationship and values:

7. Which aspects do you consider important to incorporate as an educator in the relationship with the other so that the other can develop their full potential?
- Knowledge
 - Strategies
 - Values
8. What role do you think ethics and values play in this relationship with the other?
9. What values do you consider important to incorporate in the relationship with the other?
10. In what ways do you work with values in your relationship with the other?
- Difference between explicit and implicit
 - Conscious / unconscious
 - Concrete examples

Ethical dimensions in the relationship:

11. Could you tell me in which parts of your work is it possible to incorporate these values we have spoken about?
12. Do you think that documents such as the declaration of human rights, the code of ethics or good practices guides are of help in this respect?
- Do you take them into account in some way in your daily professional practice?
 - Do you think they can be applied practically in the socio-educational relationship?
13. What role does the institution play in this ethical or evaluative view? Does it have any direct influence on your relationship with the other? Does it give you spaces and strategies to reflect on the ethical and evaluative dilemmas that arise in your day-to-day work?
- At the mission and project level
 - At the level of organization and management
 - At the team level
14. Aside from your own experience as a person, do you incorporate any specific values into the relationship, beyond the tasks assigned by the institution?



- Do you incorporate values and attitudes from your personal life in your relationship with the other?
 - Which of your own attitudes do you use to have an ethical relationship with the other? What internal processes can you call upon to have an ethical relationship with the other?
 - a) Empathy
 - b) Reflectivity
 - c) Criticism
 - d) Coherence
 - Have you encountered an ethical dilemma and if so how have you resolved it?
 - a) Personally
 - b) Via the institution
 - c) Via the relationship
15. Do you think that the other also incorporates values in the relationship? How?
- To finish:
16. In what aspects of the day-to-day relationship with the other are values reflected and how are they introduced?
17. Could you tell me what it is essential to have in an ethical socio-educational relationship with the other?
18. Would you like to add anything else?

7.1.2. Interview script for learner

General information:

1. How did you come to use the resource?
2. How long have you known the educator?
3. Could you briefly describe what your relationship with him/her is like?

The socio-educational relationship and values:

4. What is it important to have in your relationship so that you can develop your full potential?
 - Knowledge
 - Strategies
 - Values
5. Do you think that your and the educator's values are important to the relationship? Why?
6. What values do you think the educator has transmitted to you? Could you give examples of how you have worked on them?



7. How do you work on these values?
 - Difference between explicit and implicit
 - Conscious and unconscious
 - Concrete examples

Ethical dimensions in the relationship:

8. Can you tell me at what times of the relationship with the educator you have perceived these values?
9. Do you know of the declaration of human rights, the code of ethics or the good practices guides? Did the educator tell you about any of these documents? How?
10. What role does the institution play in this ethical or evaluative view? Does it have a direct influence on your relationship with the educator?
 - At the mission and project level
 - At the level of organization and management
 - At the team level
11. Do you think that the personal experience of the educator influences the way that he/she relates to you? Can you give me an example?
 - What attitudes do you perceive from the educator that help to make your relationship with him/her more ethical?
 - a) Empathy
 - b) Reflectivity
 - c) Criticism
 - d) Coherence
 - Have you ever found that your values and those of the educator are not the same? How have you resolved this?
 - a) Personally
 - b) Via the institution
 - c) Via the relationship
12. Do you think that you also contribute values to the relationship with the educator? How?

To finish:

13. At what times of the day-to-day relationship with the educator are values expressed most visibly?
14. Could you tell me what it is essential for you to feel in order for your relationship with the educator to be ethical?
15. Would you like to add anything else?



7.2. APPENDIX 2

Table 5. Units of analysis in the socio-educational relationship and the values present in it

Categories	Sub-categories	Units of analysis
0. General information	Educators	Training Professional experience Resource
	Learners	Access to resource Length of relationship Opinion of relationship
1. Socio-educational practice and values	Axes of socio-educational practice	Knowledge Techniques Values
	Practice in ethics and values	Explicit / implicit Conscious / unconscious Specific practices
2. Analytical framework of the socio-educational relationship	Normative dimension	The Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child and specific legislation The code of ethics The good practice guides
	Institutional dimension	Mission (IRD and ECP) ¹ Organization and management Team of professionals
	Subject dimension	Reflexivity Criticism Moral sensibility Empathic understanding Congruence
	Relational dimension	Bond Everyday life Space

(Continue)

Table 5. Units of analysis in the socio-educational relationship and the values present in it (cont.)

Categories	Sub-categories	Units of analysis
3. Conflicts of values ²	Types of conflict	Mission and task People attended to Interprofessional
	Managing conflict	Non-management Personal Public
4. Values present in the socio-educational relationship	Dialogue and understanding	Citizenship, democracy and democratic pluralism Active listening Honesty, truthfulness and legality Dialogue Coexistence
	Collaboration, cooperation and self-organization	Cooperation Commitment Identity Mutual help Community and valuing what is public Participation Common good Solidarity, benevolence, hospitality and altruism
	Autonomy, self-regulation and self-government	Freedom Decision-making capacity Autonomy Empowerment Training and self-training
	Commitment to what is human, justice and equity	Non-discrimination and inclusion Diversity, tolerance, respect and recognition Dignity Equality Justice and social justice Responsibility Peace Compassion Care Equity Alterity

1 IRD (Internal Regime Documents) and ECP (Educational Centre Projects).

2 Following the classification proposed by Vilar & Ribera (2017) and defined in the theoretical analysis.



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